

Even Eide

Rejecting Mainlandization

How the efforts of integrating Hong Kong has led to anti-China sentiments and the rise of the Hongkonger identity

Master's thesis in Master of Science in Political Science

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Samandrag

I denne masteroppgåva konkludera eg at ein veksande identitet i Hong Kong er basert på ei avvising av fastlandisering – forsøket på å integrere Hong Kong – og dette held protestane gåande i sin limboperiode. Forsøket på å fastlandisere Hong Kong har slått hardt tilbake og ført til framveksten av det motsatte av den originale intensjonen til regjeringa i Hong Kong og Beijing. Formålet var å fostre ein populasjon som ville samarbeide, føle stoltheit til sin kinesiske identitet og spele si rolle som ein del av Kina. Dei fekk i staden ein fiendtleg Hong Kong identitet med ungdomen i avantgarden, og denne identiteten er basert på å ikkje identifisere på å ikkje identifisere seg som kinesisk. Dette er eitt opprop frå eitt stort segment av populasjonen i Hong Kong etter å være distinkt frå fastlandet.

Denne masteroppgåva viser at denne avvisinga har sine røter tilbake til perioden etter den britiske overleveringa av Hong Kong til fastlandet i 1997. Gjennom ein kvalitativ studie som tek i bruk prosessoring, testar denne masteroppgåva tre hypotesar. Desse innebera at den veksande identiteten i Hong Kong anten er basert på: ei avvising av fastlandisering, eitt ynskje for demokrati eller opposisjon til Kina sin økonomiske vekst.

Abstract

My conclusion in this thesis is that an emerging Hong Kong identity based on a rejection of Mainlandization – the efforts of integrating Hong Kong – is fueling the protests in its period of limbo. These efforts have massively backfired, giving birth to the opposite of what was intended by the Hong Kong and Beijing government: a population that would cooperate, feel prideful in their Chinese identity and play their role as a part of China. What they got instead was an increasingly hostile Hongkonger identity, spearheaded by the youth, predicated on not being identifying as Chinese. This is a call by large segments of Hong Kong's population to be distinct from the Mainland.

This thesis argues that this rejection has its roots back to the period after the British handover of Hong Kong to China in 1997. Through a qualitative study utilizing process tracing, this thesis traces three hypothesizes from 1997 and onwards, hypothesizing that the emergence of a Hongkonger identity might be either: a rejection of Mainlandization, a desire for democracy, or opposition to the economic rise of China.

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A huge shoutout also goes to those who have allowed me to interview them over Zoom, followed up with sending articles and showing interest in the subject. This all provided valuable insights.

This thesis is heavily inspired by the time I lived, worked, and volunteered in China from 2018 to 2019. I first and foremost learned through listening to people. I remember this being a very sensitive issue for friends and people I engaged with in Hong Kong and in Guangzhou and Shenzhen. I vividly remember these encounters, and how remarkably different almost every answer was. The relationship between people all across the Mainland is complicated, city to city, province to province, and of course with Hong Kong.

During my stay in China, I sometimes got the label 中國通/中国通 – which translates to “China hand”. I wanted to stay true to those who gave me that label and be as factual and gather as much information as I possibly could throughout this thesis. However, I did reach a roadblock overstepping the 19,000 word-limit with 19,187 words (footnotes, literature etc. not included), and had to cut extensively to stay within that limit.

永別了，我的母校！

Even Eide, 2020

List of Abbreviations

CE	Chief Executive
CEPA	Closer Economic Partnership Arrangement
CCP	Chinese Communist Party
GDP	Gross domestic product
HK	Hong Kong
HKD	Hong Kong Dollar
HKFS	Hong Kong Federation of Students
HKUPOP	Hong Kong University Public Opinion Programme
HKSAR	Hong Kong Special Administrative Region of The People's Republic of China
LegCo	Legislative Council
MTR	Mass Transit Railway
NPCSC	The Standing Committee of the National People's Congress of the People's Republic of China
SARS	Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome
SCMP	South China Morning Post
SIS	Social Indicators Survey

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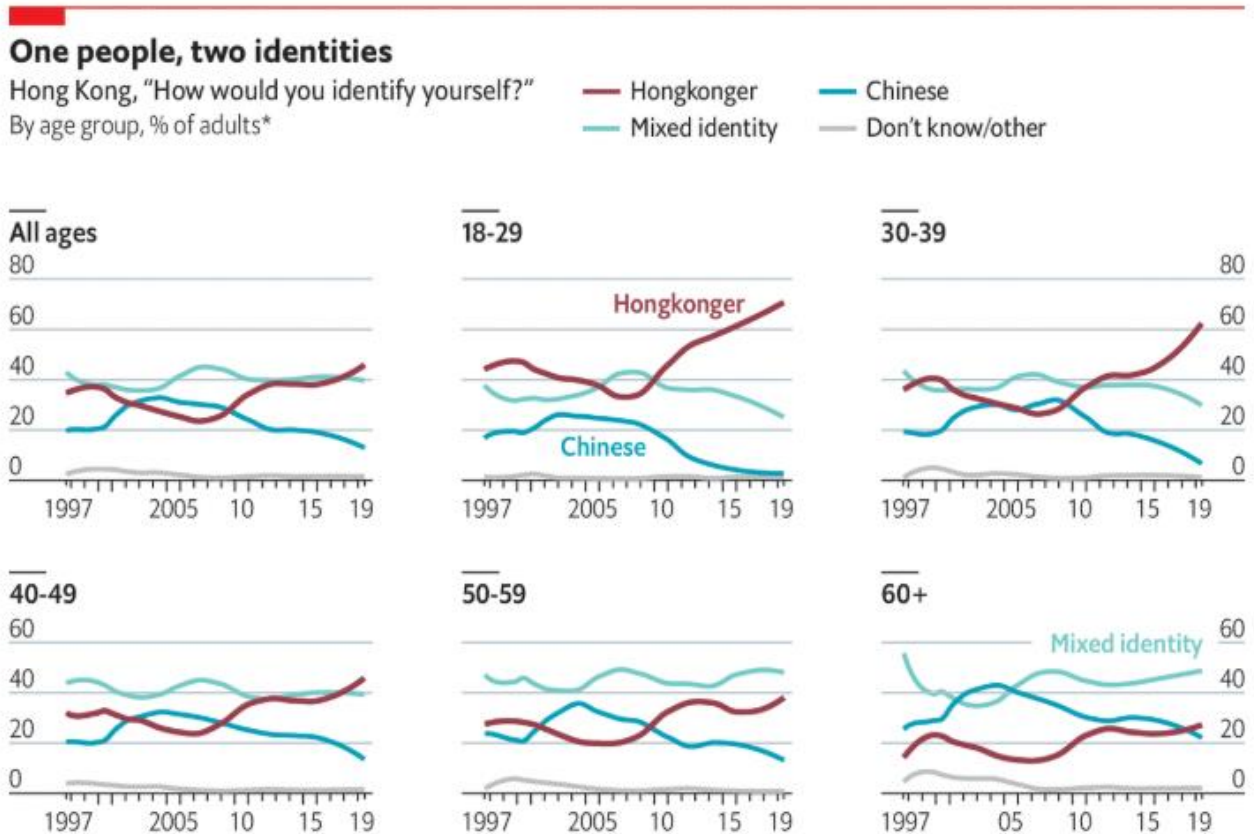
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Introduction and research question

Hongkongers¹ are increasingly rejecting their Chinese identity, identifying as “Hongkonger” or “Mixed identity” instead of solely “Chinese”. Figure 1 makes the trend evident, and there is a trend going on where segments of the population in Hong Kong are actively distancing and showing animosity towards their counterparts in the Mainland.

Figure 1 Identity trends in Hong Kong since the British handover in 1997



Source: The Economist, Published August 26th, 2019, accessed May 20th, 2020 from <https://www.economist.com/graphic-detail/2019/08/26/almost-nobody-in-hong-kong-under-30-identifies-as-chinese>

During the course of the protests in 2019-2020, behavior such as: exclusively targeting mainland firms, targeting firms affiliated with anti-protest figures while apologizing when Taiwanese or Japanese firms were mistakenly targeted (Wai, 2019), Taiwanese and Chinese-Americans journalists being harassed when speaking Mandarin until their citizenship was confirmed, blocking the airport, vandalizing the metro, attacking

¹ According to the Oxford English Dictionary, a Hongkonger is a “native or inhabitant of Hong Kong” accessed June 20th, 2020 from <https://www.scmp.com/news/hong-kong/article/1451929/finally-hongkonger-arrives-world-stage>

Mainlanders when identified through their usage of Mandarin (J. Lam, 2020a). At the same time, the protesters' slogans are heavily linked to Hong Kong being distinct from China "Hong Kong is not China" and linked to Hong Kong being under siege and in need of liberation from its captors, thus the protesters' slogan: "Liberate Hong Kong, revolution of our times". The length certain protesters are willing to go to, with the threat of imprisonment and physical harm, gives an indication of a deep-felt commitment to the cause – many expressing their willingness to "sacrifice everything".

The scale of the animus towards China can be seen everywhere in the streets Hong Kong, by overseas Hongkongers, on the internet, and in news outlets – a "us" and "them" are taking shape. This thesis aims to explore how this could occur, how the anti-Chinese sentiments were built over time, and why Hongkongers have felt the need to assert their identity. This thesis therefore asks: *how can the emerging Hongkonger identity be explained?* This thesis generates one main hypothesis (3) and two competing hypotheses (1 and 2) in order to explain this emerging identity trend in Hong Kong:

- Hypothesis 1: *The emergence of a Hongkonger identity is driven in opposition to the economic rise of China*
- Hypothesis 2: *The emergence of a Hongkonger identity is driven by a desire for democracy*
- Hypothesis 3: *The emergence of a Hongkonger identity is driven by rejecting Mainlandization*

Method

The author leans on David Collier and Colin Elman's (2008, p. 781) description of the operating procedure for qualitative research to "routinely rely on rich, dense information concerning specific cases". This thesis is densely packed with empirics of polling data, statistics, historical events, and recent publications in newspapers and books for testing the hypothesized as presented. The "dense information" is explored through qualitative case studies through the aforementioned empirics, but analyzed through "process tracing" - which refers to the analysis of evidence, usually in an explanatory sequence - in order to find support or overturning causal hypotheses (Crasnow, 2012, p. 658). The researcher that employs process tracing "looks closely at 'the decision process by which various initial conditions are translated into outcomes'" which would enable the researcher to find the reasons for the emergence of a particular phenomenon (Brady & Collier, 2010, pp. 173-174). Process tracing also fits this thesis due to its search for context to states of affairs through the lived experience of history and argues that events are to be traced rather than sporadically studied without context, as David Waldner (2012, p. 69) put it "it is precisely through the very concrete sequence of historical events that states of affairs come into being". This thesis employs a qualitative case study method by using the guidelines mentioned above, and this is fitting as the thesis concerns itself with only one case, analyzed from three different angles. The 19 000-word limit and the nature of the research question leads the author to conclude that this method is the most sufficient.

The reasoning for choosing the case of Hong Kong and trying to explain the emerging identity is itself a case where process tracing is needed: I lived in China between September 2018 to August 2019 and spent the period between February 2019 to August 2019 working in Guangzhou. I initially did not understand the extent of the tensions in Hong

Kong, but after traveling there three times for extended trips, I was made aware by friends, bartenders, tour guides, and uber drivers whenever the subject of the Mainland came up. I collected a diverse set of opinions from Mainlanders, Hongkongers, Europeans living in Guangzhou and a person from the Macao Special Administrative Region, during the protests. I initially left it at that, but when I had the opportunity to write about the subject in a class I took back in Norway, combined with exploring the identification trends of Hongkongers through an article in *The Economist* I knew this was something that would be interesting to explore.

I do not speak Cantonese, and my Mandarin level is only at intermediate (HSK3), which allows me to understand some conversational Mandarin in videos, but has led me to rely on translation software when researching. This is a clear weakness of this thesis, exacerbated by me not being able to do any independent polling. Due to COVID-19 a research trip to Hong Kong was canceled. I have tried to compensate by doing Zoom interviews, email exchanges, and social media exchanges with informants with first-hand knowledge. This has been people mainly living in Hong Kong, but also people living in Shenzhen, Macao, and the US. In the process of transcribing the recordings, I have cross-checked and verified the most interesting claims and included them in this thesis – though not by any direct quotes or referring – but rather through the cross-checked reference.

Furthermore, this thesis has employed a document and literature analysis, while at the same time staying up to date with the most recent books on the matter. I do rely to some extent on these books in certain parts of the thesis, especially South China Morning Post's (SCMP) most recent publication by its reporting team of June 9th, 2020, *Rebel City Hong Kong's Year of Water and Fire*. I have found that many newspapers also rely on SCMP as a source for information, which has led me to use SCMP's original publication instead of the newspapers that have relied on SCMP. However, I have been able to find newspapers and outlets that send their own reporters, which has been very useful.

This thesis is split into three parts testing the hypotheses, and then a final fourth part discussing the findings of the thesis, before the thesis's findings are applied to the on-going protests.

Theory

Formation of nations and memes

The philosopher Ernest Renan famously proclaimed in his Sorbonne lecture of 1882: "the existence of a nation is an everyday plebiscite", highlighting that national identity is civically constituted, rather than ethnically determined – disagreeing with German writers of his time like Johann Gottlieb Fichte who would connect more objective criteria such as race or an ethnic group for the basis of a nation (Roshwald, 2015, p. 443). Renan goes even further in his denunciation of the nation's ethnic determinism, pointing out that "race is confused with nation" (Renan, 1882, p. 1) and that "forgetting, I would even go so far as to say historical error, is a crucial factor in the creation of a nation" and explains his reasoning given the context of his time:

the essence of a nation is that all individuals have many things in common; and also that they have forgotten many things. No French citizen knows whether he is Burgundian, an Alan, a Taifale, or a Visigoth, yet every French citizen has to have forgotten the massacre of Saint Bartholomew (Renan, 1882, p. 3).

Benedict Anderson picks up on Renan's notion of forgetting one's ancient identity and pushes it further to claim that the nation was already from its infancy imagined. In his 1983 book, *Imagined Communities*, Anderson lays forth his theory of nationalism, emphasizing a social creationist view of the nation. He proposes that the nation is an imagined political community - imagined to be both sovereign and inherently limited. His usage of the word "imagined" comes from the fact that most citizens of a nation will never hear of, meet or know of each other, and still, the mind of each citizen lives the image of their fellowship to their co-citizens. Thus, the way of analyzing communities are by the outline or style of how they are imagined - instead of whether they are "false" or "real" (Anderson, [1983] 2006, p. 6).

A nation, according to Anderson has four properties to it: it is imagined, imagined to be sovereign, imagined as limited and imagined as a community. The nation is imagined as *limited* because of the existence of borders or boundaries with other nations. The nation does not imagine itself as adjoining with mankind - even the most messianic nationalists do not envision a day where all of humanity joins their nations. A nation is also imagined to be *sovereign*, and this Anderson explains has its roots in the Enlightenment and revolutions that destroyed the dynastic and divinely ordained political system. The nation is also imagined to be a *community*, because even with the exploitations and inequalities occurring inside a nation, a nation is seen as a deep, horizontal fellowship. The imagined fellowship generates of the nation colossal sacrifices, seen throughout the generations of people willingly dying for the cause of the nation (Anderson, [1983] 2006, p. 7).

Anderson argues that the modern nation has its roots in the combination of the invention of the printing press and the advent of capitalism. Spreading a common language and in search of larger markets writing in an understandable language - exemplified by Latin, which was spoken by a fraction of the population came to be replaced with an understandable language for the general populace. Although Anderson defines the modern nation's origins as an unselfconscious process, he emphasizes how the control of the printing press would have been consciously exploited in a Machiavellian spirit and how languages lose their unity (Anderson, [1983] 2006, pp. 45-46). This speaks for an elite-driven model of nationalism, which would make sense in today's traditional forms of media seen in newspapers, television, and radio broadcasts - as they can be captured by interest groups. However, not in the era of a free² internet powered by social media - the point is that elites are not capturing "the means of communication" to paraphrase Karl Marx, and to the degree elites are capturing, it can and are being worked around. Today any Game of

² Even if the internet is being censored or being manipulated, dissent can still be spread through code words and later on be censored. Also, in free societies if one believes that for instance Google is manipulating one's searches, there are many alternative search engines - Bing, Duckduckgo etc. Even in Mainland China, I remember people would get their meanings across, often through stickers made on WeChat - I even still have a bunch on my old phone of Xi Jinping that I got while I was studying in China. I am however convinced censoring has an effect, but it cannot stop people from sharing their opinion on social media or a comment section.

Thrones fan from a desolate village in Norway can find a community of like-minded one Google search away – the speed has become lightning fast, and the friction and barrier of entry have become minuscule.

A useful concept that helps illuminate how the advent of the internet works as a communicator of ideas is the concept of a *meme*, coined by the evolutionary biologist Richard Dawkins in the 1976 book *The Selfish Gene*. Dawkins uses the concepts to convey the idea of cultural transmission and explains

"Examples of memes are tunes, ideas, catch-phrases, clothes fashions, ways of making pots or of building arches. Just as genes propagate themselves in the gene pool by leaping body to body so memes propagate themselves by leaping from brain to brain via a process which, in the broad sense, can be called imitation" (Dawkins, 1976, p. 249).

What imitation would mean in the age of the internet can be seen through instant messaging, sharing on social media, writing blogs, and posting pictures, which are all activities that free and accessible to the citizens of Hong Kong. As Dawkins notes "imitation, in the broad sense, is how memes can replicate" and even though two people will misrepresent each other's ideas by not perfectly understanding each other, some essence of the idea will remain in the individual to be mutually understood – if not almost any statement with two people agreeing would be meaningless (Dawkins, 1976, pp. 251-254). Aaron Lynch (1991, p. 3) goes on to calling this imitation a process with "self-replicating ideas" which are not "exact replicas of their original" but rather where an "observer just selectively lumps these proliferated ideas along with their original(s) into a set, using an abstract inclusion criterion".

When asked about meme's implication on social networks, Dawkins remarked: "the internet of course, provides extremely rapid methods of transmission, before when I first coined the word the internet didn't exist I was thinking in terms of books, newspapers, broader radio, television and that kind of thing, now an idea can just leap around the world in all directions instantly" (Fridman, 11.04.2020). Seeing it through the framework of the meme, newspapers, television, and books were the earlier conveyor of the national memes. Elites, meant here in conventional terms as a small group of powerful people who holds privilege, wealth, or political power, might or might not be aligned to the memetic ideas spread throughout the populace. Memes can be manipulated by elites, but they do however, fight in a survival of the fittest contest with other memes, and therefore they must be based on something that is sufficiently fit to be self-propagated by the rest of conveyor of the memes that are not of their group. Memes are as Lynch put it, "thought contagion" and spreads like a software virus traveling the internet - usually understood and internalized by the people who like-minded. The geographic spread is just a matter of reception – for example, internet connection - and then it might self-replicate, exemplified by the "Chinazi"-meme below:

Picture 1



Picture 2



Hong Kong Protestors in Toronto, CA

Source: Picture 1, South China Morning Post, accessed May 16th, 2020 from <https://www.scmp.com/comment/opinion/article/3033220/how-hong-kong-protest-memes-can-spread-hatred-racism-and-patent>, Picture 2, me.me, accessed May 16th, 2020 from <https://me.me/i/begins-r-adragy-is-free-his-a-they-shot-he-d6e06190d2484b9881086f2e00c78bbf>

Identity formation, othering, and Mainlandization

According to Omar Dahbour there are two concepts of national identity that are prevalent – the “strict” and the “loose” definition. The strict definition, which Dahbour connects to proponents like Max Weber, “regards nationality as based on a belief in common ancestry or ethnicity” while the loose definition “views nationality as a malleable term without any fixed properties” (Dahbour, 2002, p. 17). This text falls into the latter category - and Hong Kong even with its lacking sovereignty would fit into nationalism scholars like Anthony Smith’s definition of a nation which he attributes to “named populations possessing a historic territory, shared myths and historical memories, a mass public culture, a single economy and common rights and duties for all members, which are legitimized by the principles of nationalism” (A. D. Smith, 2000, p. 1). While it is debatable what exact ingredients are more important for a nation, it is useful to unentangle oneself from the strictest of rules when analyzing a case like Hong Kong through the lens of nationalism. There is however, a way to find a good indication of what the most important ingredients are through Renan’s daily plebiscite, as one asks the question of how citizens inside the nation identify themselves.

Identity is one of those concepts that are challenging to define properly – and there has been widespread disagreement among political scientists, psychologists, anthropologists, sociologists, and so on as how to do so (Požarlik, 2013, p. 77). Alexander Wendt (1994, p. 385) captures the vagueness of it, as he defines what he calls “social identity” as having “both individual and social structural properties, being at once cognitive schemas that enable an actor to determine ‘who I am/we are’ in a situation and in a social role structure of shared understanding and expectations”. Adding even more vagueness to Wendt’s description is to say that these individuals and structural properties are changeable and not just determined by the situation. Christine Loh and Richard Cullen captures Wendt’s definition in a neat metaphor seeing identity as an image “being the background, experience, culture and values people have of themselves” (Loh & Cullen, 2018, p. 29).

Identities are, as Stuart Hall (1996, pp. 4-5) notes “constructed through, not outside, difference” which entails the “radically disturbing recognition that it is only through the relation to the Other, the relation to what is is not” that the term “can be constructed” and that “identities can function as points of identification and attachment only *because* of their capacity to exclude, to leave out, to render ‘outside’, abjected”. This is the background for the concept of “othering”, which this text employs to see what style Hongkongers identification trends are taking.

We saw in the introduction that Hongkongers association with their Chinese identity fluctuates, so this poses the necessary follow-up question: under which circumstances do people associate with a specific identity? Jungsik Kim and Sik Hung Ng suggests that “it seems that its[Hong Kong] reunification with China has brought a high level of uncertainty to the Hong Kong society” (Kim & Ng, 2008, p. 233). Kim and Ng, using a regression to test the effect for perceived pace of social change on social identity, concludes that “the perceived pace of social change was related to the participants’ preference for a single identity over dual identities” (Kim & Ng, 2008, p. 232) and that “the more rapidly people perceived social change the more they preferred a single identity over dual identities” (Kim & Ng, 2008, p. 236). Anthony Fung and Chi Kit Chan (2017, p. 410) support Kim and Ng’s claim, but finds China be a key factor in that social change: “The post-handover story of Hong Kong reveals that the identity formation of its citizens is vulnerable to both the intended and unintended consequences of China’s development”. The social psychologist Marilynn Brewer, writing in 1999, noted “The change in context is one in which the maintenance of a unique Hong Kong identity is no longer defined in terms of its distinctiveness from Western culture and values but in terms of its distinctiveness from the rest of China” (Brewer, 1999, p. 193). Brewer concludes that as the Hongkonger identity is defined vis-à-vis the Chinese identity “signs of identity conflict have become evident” and suggests that “a critical factor will be whether administrative actions on the part of Beijing authorities are seen as encouraging both assimilation and accommodation of differences or as demanding assimilation without respect for distinctiveness”. And for Brewer’s predictive statement about how the situation in Hong Kong evidently would unfold, she deserves to be quoted at length:

Those who have shifted their social identity in the direction of Chinese identification may be seen as placing the highest priority on the potential for successful assimilation and acceptance into the superordinate Chinese group membership. Those who have shifted their primary social identity in the direction of the Hong Kong regional identification seem to have placed their highest priority on the maintenance of distinctiveness and the potential accommodation to difference (Brewer, 1999, p. 195).

Brewer continues her prediction: “Perceived threats to Hong Kong’s distinctiveness may motivate withdrawal but the depth of regional identity with Hong Kong itself suggests that the more likely response would be political resistance and conflict (fight rather than flight) (Brewer, 1999, p. 196). This also attests to the two types of response to discontent that Albert Hirschman identified within a country, where the first one is “exit” which is leaving without trying to fix things, and the second is “voice” where one speaks up in an attempt to remedy the defects (Hirschmann, 1970, p. 272).

I also use the term “Mainlandization”, which is as mentioned in the introduction the

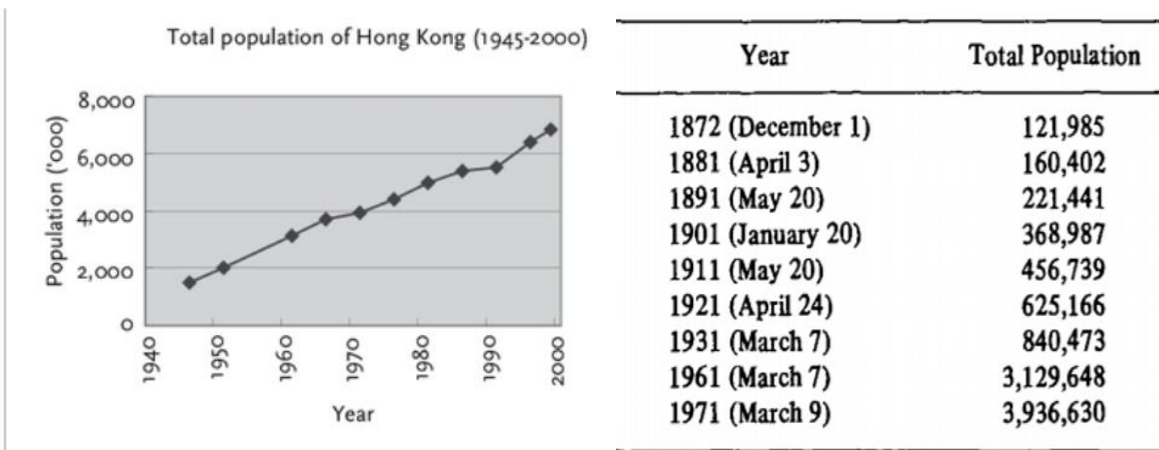
efforts of integrating Hong Kong. I cannot write about every measure taken, so therefore I operationalize the term within the three parts of this thesis, containing the hypothesizes, so Mainlandization will be discussed within economic, political, and educational integration. This is done in order to understand what “other” the identity formation Hong Kong is being formed against – who the person is not, define who he or she is.

Before we do that, we need to take a detour to the origins of the arrival of what today constitutes Hong Kong’s population, in order to get a clue of how recent this Hongkonger identity is and what is in the process of being forgotten as they downplay their Chinese identity.

The Immigrant Society

In an historical perspective, Hong Kong as an entity is rather a recent phenomenon. The Qing dynasty (1644-1912) never considered the area a city (P.-y. Ho, 2018, p. 1). When the British seized Hong Kong Island on January 26, 1841, the population counted only about 7,450 inhabitants (of whom around 2000 were boatpeople) (Swee-Hock & Kin, 1975, p. 124). As Figure 2 shows, the vast majority of Hong Kong’s population came after World War II, and mainly through immigration from the Mainland.

Figure 2 Population growth in Hong Kong and total population increase 1872-1971



Source: table showing Hong Kong’s total population growth, accessed from S. Wong (2007, p. 72) and population growth 1872-1971, before 1901 New Territories are excluded and the data is composed of census reports from various years, accessed from S. C. Fan (1974, p. 2).

The majority of Hong Kong’s populace are recent immigrants of their descendants, and the majority of Hong Kong citizens today cannot claim heritage back to the opening of the 20th century, and barely any to the original inhabitants or settlers of 1841. There is also a good case to be made that the large majority of Hong Kong’s citizens today have their roots in the post war era, as the Japanese occupation had by 1945 brought a population decrease from 1,6 million to 600,000, partly by a combination of mass deportation and voluntary returns to China, but a huge influx of Mainlanders had brought the total to 2.2 million by 1950 (Dudgeon, 1996, p. 55). This can be explained by events on the Mainland, as Hong Kong between 1945 and 1949 saw an estimated immigration wave of 1.28 million arrivals of farmers and a minority of Guomindang officials fleeing the Chinese Civil War. Between 1945

and 1951 the population saw a 210-percentage rise, going from 0,65 million to 2,02 million, which continued to add between one and one and half million every fifth year until the mid-1960s (Shelton, Karakiewicz, & Kvan, 2013, p. 2). These influxes of immigrants continued during the Great Leap Forward and the Cultural Revolution. This trend continued even after the Cultural Revolution, with Hong Kong counting a subsequent wave of 400,000 Chinese immigrants from 1976 to 1981 (S. Wong, 2007, pp. 74-75). This rapid immigration continued until the one way quota system of 1980 was introduced, but immigration continued to dominate the population growth in Hong Kong even with only 57 percent of the population was born in the territory in 1982 (D. R. Baker, 1983, p. 470)– in the period from 1983 and 2006 more than 14 percent of the population of was admitted through the system with over 960,000 new Mainland arrivals, which amounted for 70 percent of the population increase in that period (Bacon-Shone, Lam, & Yip, 2008, p. 14).

Figure 3 tells the story of where these arrivals came from. It is both evident in the reported “place of origin” and the “usual language” that the vast majority came from the Guangdong (Kwangtung) province and specifically from Guangzhou (Canton) and the area surrounding the Pearl River delta, where they of course also speak Cantonese. We see the overwhelming effects of immigration when only between four and five percent reported origins from Hong Kong, which could be due to emigration or due to re-clamation of ancestral home in China to be their “place of origin” (Wright & Kelly-Holmes, 1997, p. 29) . It is also evident that the other languages³ shown by for instance by the users of Taishanese (Sze Yap), Hakka or Hokkien (Hoklo) that reported a decrease in their usual language vis-à-vis Cantonese.

Figure 3 Language usage and Place of Origin 1961 and 1971 (measured in thousands)

Usual Language	1961	1971	Place of Origin	1961	1971
Cantonese	2,076.2	3,469.2	Hong Kong	260.5	185.7
Hakka, Hoklo or Sze Yap	407.5	315.6	Canton, Macau and adjacent places	1,521.7	2,072.1
Other Chinese languages	95.5	89.5	Sze Yap	573.9	684.8
English	31.8	41.1	Chiu Chau	257.3	391.4
Other languages	16.3	16.1	Elsewhere in Kwangtung	244.2	250.2
Dumb	1.6	5.1	Elsewhere in China	222.3	284.8
			Other countries	49.7	64.9
			Unknown	–	2.7
Total	2,628.9	3,936.6	Total	3,129.6	3,936.6

Source: tables showing language usual language usage, Mandarin was spoken by about 90,000 in 1971, the second table shows that merely four to five percent were of Hong Kong origin, accessed from S. C. Fan (1974, pp. 18-19), can also be found here: <http://www.cicred.org/Eng/Publications/pdf/c-c21.pdf>

This purposes an interesting contradiction as Hong Kong is to be returned to China per agreement by 2047. But the return of what? Hong Kong is a recent creation, and there are no deeper historical roots to its original form under China than the few thousand farmers and boat-people that inhabited the area in 1841. It is rather the return of the immigrants

³ I use the word «language» rather than dialects, which is often used when referring to the different ways of speaking in China. The reason why is because they are mutually unintelligible or have little intelligibility.

inhabiting an area that was taken from China during its century of humiliation.

PART 1: The Economics of Mainlandization

In this part, we explore hypothesis 1: *The emergence of a Hongkonger identity is driven in opposition to the economic rise of China.* We start off by analyzing the rise of China and the decrease of Hong Kong's economy weighed towards China. We find that it is not China's growth in itself that has caused animus towards China, but what the growth have entailed in terms of Mainlandization – trade, investments, tourism and flow of people – have led to animosity for segments of the Hong Kong populace. Politicians have capitalized on Hongkongers push towards post-materialism, and it is not clear that the economic opportunities in China, or through cooperation with China are of interest to the younger generation of Hong Kong. Both post-materialism and animosity towards Chinese people in Hong Kong, are both traits of the Hongkonger identity that we see today, thus this must be seen as a part of my main hypothesis on the emerging identity of Hongkong being a part of rejecting Mainlandization.

The Whale and the Shrimp

While the Korean proverb of "when whales fight, a shrimp's back is broken" (Ji, 2001, p. 3) seems a fitting description of Hong Kong's place between China and the US today, it was not always so. Figure 4 tells the story of a Hong Kong in the 1990s grossing over 20 percentages of the Chinese economy with a high-water mark of over 25 percentages at one point, and 18.4 percentages at the time of the handover. While these days it barely grosses in the 2-3 percentage range (Sin, 2019). So, what happened?

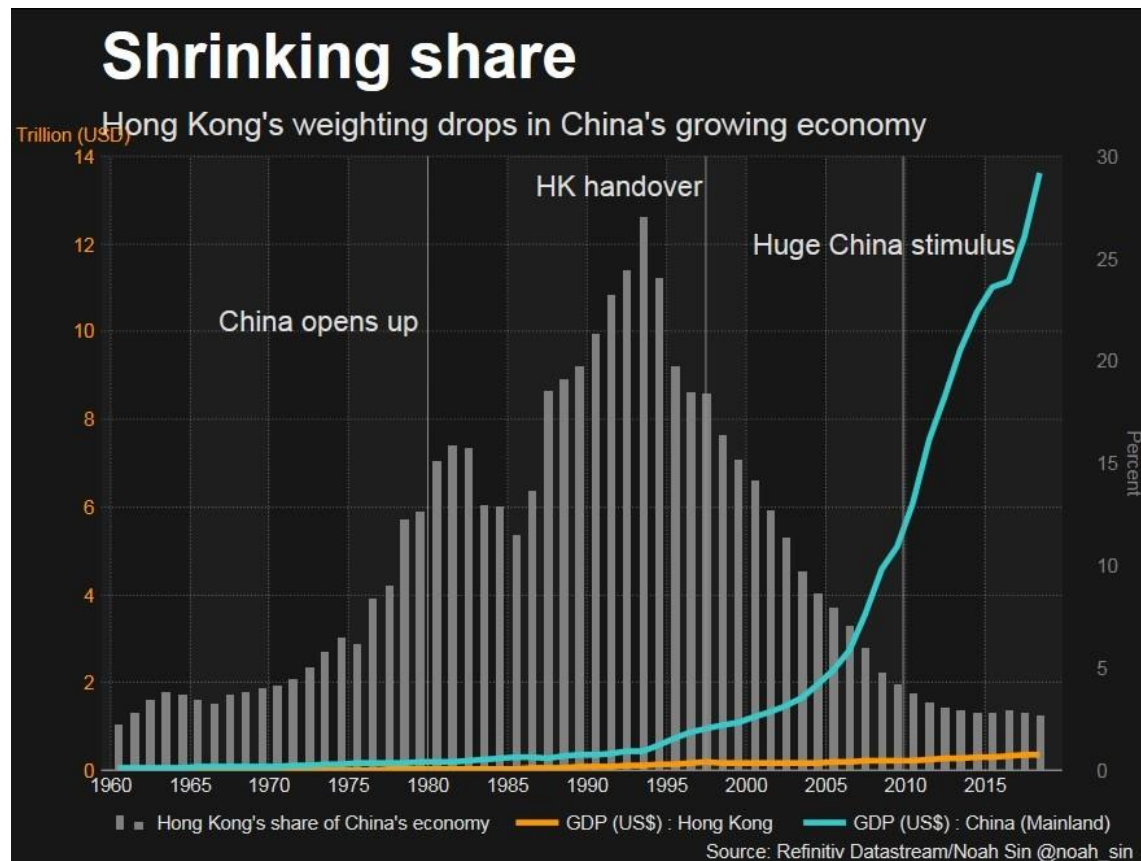
The coming of the whale can only be explained by China's meteoric rise, averaging growth in gross domestic product (GDP) of 10 percent for 30 plus years. This meant a doubling of the Chinese economy by the rules of compounding every 7-8 years from when the growth started (Deng Xiaoping's reform era of the late 1970s) until 2010s when the growth started flattening modestly, which resulted in China overtaking Japan as the world's second-largest economy by measures of GDP also by 2010. The significance of this growth can be illustrated by how poor a starting point China had, with a GDP per capita of \$220 rising to \$4,949 in 2011 (Christensen, 2015, p. 14). While China's GDP per capita still paled in comparison to Hong Kong's, and still does today⁴, Hong Kong still had an example of the force behind China's growth in its border city of Shenzhen⁵. Shenzhen is often portrayed as the "instant city" going from a poor fishing village, barely populated, to a rich and dynamic city of 20 million people in its greater area, and according to some challenging Silicon Valley – being the "Silicon Valley of Hardware" – bustling with the energy of the youngest and brightest China has to offer (Nylander, 2017). Hong Kong's loss of economic weight is also

⁴ Per 2018, according data from the World Bank, GDP per capita in Hong Kong was \$48,676 while China had a GDP per capita of \$9,770, World Bank (2018)

⁵ Shenzhen's GDP per capita is around 200 000 RMB per capita, approximately \$28,200 by today's exchange rates, but just measuring GDP per capita in this case might be misleading due to the purchasing power parity Shenzhen inhabitants enjoy vis-a-vis Hong Kong (Hongpei, 2019). Migrant workers also needs to be taken into account.

recognized on the Mainland, where Shenzhen is used as an example of surpassing Hong Kong “Shenzhen’s 2017 GDP already outperformed Hong Kong according to the real-exchange rate”, “flats or apartments in the city of 18 million are now more expensive than those in Hong Kong” (Chen, 2019) and a researcher “estimated that Guangzhou would also catch up with Hong Kong soon” (Hua, 2019)

Figure 4 Hong Kong's economy relative China



Source: Reuters, published September 5th, 2019, accessed May 21st, 2020 from: <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-hongkong-protests-markets-explainer/explainer-how-important-is-hong-kong-to-the-rest-of-china-idUSKCN1VP35H>

Notions of Hong Kong losing its economic stature vis-à-vis the Mainland are not something new, but they are usually brushed off by arguing for Hong Kong’s unique position within the “one country, two systems”-framework. Especially a city like Shanghai has often been brought up as “replacing” Hong Kong, with its larger stock exchange and explosive growth. Li Sheng (2018, pp. 186-187), however, in his analysis of the popular beliefs surrounding the theme “Hong Kong vs. Shanghai”, debunks the claims, arguing that Hong Kong’s GDP per capita, and “as an only Chinese international finance hub” is something Shanghai cannot compete with. The only way for Shanghai to surpass Hong Kong would be “if it continues to ignore the education of its population or to be reluctant to cooperate with the Mainland”. Sheng’s analysis raises an interesting paradox, that if Hongkongers are not sufficiently educated in a manner that makes the good times continue or does not use its unique position in cooperating with the Mainland, then Shanghai will overtake Hong Kong.

Sheng is by far not the only one to identify Hong Kong's economic situation as fine within the "one country, two systems"-framework, but points rather to internal factors as the greatest area of risk. It is more or less safe to assume that China's growth in of it-self have not been an issue and has rather been something that Hong Kong's GDP as a whole have benefitted from. However, the problem arises rather from the perspective of what China's growth have meant for Hong Kong internally. So, the issue at hand is rather if the "One Country, Two Systems"-framework is both the cause for the good times and its failure to integrate with the Mainland. The interesting question is therefore, "what happened to Hong Kong when China got rich?".

When China got Rich

Prior to the handover, Hongkongers talent for accumulating wealth strengthened their sense of superiority vis-à-vis their poor Mainland counterparts, often referred to as "Ah Chan" (unsophisticated country bumpkin) (Lowe & Tsang, 2017, p. 138). For the local population and immigrants, the city was a safe haven where one could escape hazardous Chinese politics, and a place where one could through hard work alone, make a decent living (Mathews, Ma, & Lui, 2007, pp. 39-40). This was the backdrop for the so-called "Hong Kong dream" – a dream, much like the American one, of class mobility, where one could through sheer hard work and a shed of luck achieve great success. Hong Kong before the handover experienced an average 6.5 percent growth during the 1980s and 1990s, which surely cemented their feeling of superiority vis-à-vis their poor counterparts on the Mainland (Ping & Kin-Ming, 2014, p. 1097).

However, after the handover in 1997 this was to change drastically with the advent of Asian Financial Crisis of the same year, which hit the economy of Hong Kong hard in subsequent years: a GDP decline of 5.1 percent in 1997, and a 5.8 percent fall in 1998 and property prices falling by over 40 percentages in October 1997 (Yam, 1998, p. 3). Just as the Hang Seng stock index had recovered, Hong Kong fell victim to the so-called "dot-com bubble" that burst in 2001, followed by the outbreak of the Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS) of 2003 and the housing bubble crisis that turned into the financial crisis in 2009. In the process of managing these economic reversals, the Mainland helped through establishing the Closer Economic Partnership Arrangement (CEPA) of 2003, with the intention of furthering economic integration. From 2004 to 2007, Hong Kong's economy rebounded, averaging a growth rate of 7.3 percentages. CEPA has since been supplemented ten times, and tons of clauses and new agreements have been added in the period of 2003-2019⁶, which has contributed greatly to China becoming the leading investor in Hong Kong, increasing China's share in Hong Kong's trade (from 36.3 percent in 1997 to 48.5 percent in 2011), and by the end of 2010 the Mainland stood for 36.7 percent of Hong Kong's inward foreign direct investment (FDI) (Ping & Kin-Ming, 2014, pp. 1097-1098). Chinese investments in the real estate sector, while small in the early 2000s, increased rapidly in the 2010s, and interestingly so rapidly that it constituted 64 percent of the average FDI in real estate in Hong Kong between 2004 and 2018. Per 2016 China's outward investment in real estate reached the record highs of \$15,25 billion, of which 60 percent were allocated to Hong Kong. This can be seen in Xin Li, Eddie Hui and Jianfu's (2020, pp. 1-2) study of the

⁶ See the Hong Kong governments page for all the agreements made through the CEPA-framework https://www.tid.gov.hk/english/cepa/legaltext/cepa_legaltext.html

land market in Hong Kong, where they surveyed 161 residential land parcels sold by the Hong Kong government between 2011 and August of 2019, and found that 26.93 percent of the dollar amount of the land parcels were acquired by Chinese developers. Their research also showed that Chinese developers are willing to pay significantly higher prices than local developers in land acquisition.

The increased investments, in combination with increased prominence of Chinese cities such as Shanghai and Shenzhen, and increasingly well-educated Mainland-born in Hong Kong contrary to the Ah Chan country bumpkin – for example Mainland-born women in Hong Kong are pursuing postsecondary education at the same relative rate as Hong Kong-born women (DeGolyer, 2013, p. 26) –, may have damaged Hongkongers' pride, who used to look to their Mainland counterparts with a sense of superiority. From the Beijing perspective however, CEPA was meant to assure the prosperity of Hong Kong, reduce social discontent and cultivate loyalty (Ping & Kin-Ming, 2014, p. 1098). The resistance to closer economic ties with the Mainland must however come to a shock to the CEPA-planners, especially in a society like Hong Kong who the likes of Milton Friedman (2006) had lionized as a capitalist frontrunner.

Distrust in business and a move towards post-materialism

The SARS epidemic of 2003 brought an increased shift in value orientation towards post-materialism. What is meant by post-materialism here is non-economic, non-materialistic ways of thinking, not maximizing profits through work etc., Ronald Inglehart (1977, p. 1) serves as a guide to the meaning of post-materialism: «the shift from overwhelming emphasis on material well-being and physical security toward a greater emphasis on the quality of life». The SARS epidemic took 299 lives⁷, and while it did lead to economic and psychological distress, it also facilitated a stronger sense of community in Hong Kong. The Social Indicators Survey (SIS)⁸ of 2004 saw an increasing number of respondents orienting their values towards community hygiene, personal health and the meaning of life, and fewer were concerned about work. By 2006, around 80 percent of the populace believed that the government ought to spend more on the environment – which got the highest amount of support among the 13 policy areas. This value change brought about environmental and heritage protection movements, spurring more hatred and resistance towards real estate developers and the business-oriented government. The 2004 protests against the reclamation of Victoria Harbor was one of those early movements, fueling nostalgic feelings in Hong Kong, blaming developers for their relentless reclamation endeavors, building skyscrapers that were destroying the skyline and hurting the air quality. These types of post-materialist movements also found public support when the HKSAR government faced drawn out sit-ins against the demolition of the Star Ferry Pier (2006) and the Queens Pier (2007), or the protests against redevelopment of Wedding Card Street (2007) (Wasserstrom, 2020, p. 58). These movements were composed of young people who

⁷ Much worse in terms of deaths than COVID-19 in time of writing, which have taken under 10 lives in Hong Kong <https://www.worldometers.info/coronavirus/>

⁸ The SIS is a long-term collaborative project by Hong Kong social scientists since 1988. Through biennial territory-wide surveys, the project focused on subjective indicators such as perceptions, values, beliefs, and sense of well-being, and explored their implications for the social development of Hong Kong (N. Ma, 2011, p. 688)

wanted to assert that Hong Kong was a city rich in political activism and social movements, and not as the Friedman view of a uniquely “economic city” (N. Ma, 2011, pp. 706-708).

These heritage and environmental movements have been exclusively built on, and the distrust towards investments from the government of HKSAR, and especially investment flows from the Mainland, which are seen as a “sweaty hand” reaching out with the malign intention of changing Hong Kong in the name of profits whilst bringing decay to the society. The distaste was well expressed in the anti-express railway campaign of 2009-2010⁹, where a small village was forced to relocate in order to make space for a new high-speed railway to the Mainland. The government justified the railway by arguing for the economic gain and enhanced integration with the Mainland – and had general support from the business sector. The activists on the other hand argued that the government was only seeing the land as a “commodity” rather than the communities and the meaning it held (N. Ma, 2011, pp. 709-710). The movement called for a reconsideration of the deep meaning between the land and the people, and a rediscovery of Hong Kong’s identity. The movement started pointing fingers at the Mainland’s growing influence in the economic and political affairs of Hong Kong. The distaste was seen in a subsequent integration project the following year, the 2011 Action Plan for the Bay Area of the Pearl River Estuary, was criticized as a plan that would enable the Guangdong Province to “annex” Hong Kong (Ping & Kin-Ming, 2014, p. 1099). The wording of “annex” is of course cataclysmic as it would infringe on Hong Kong’s promised “high degree of autonomy” as expressed in Article 12 of the Basic Law¹⁰. This was followed by another wave of protests leading the HKSAR government to put the proposed “Framework Agreement on Hong Kong” that would allow a Mainlanders to drive their private cars into Hong Kong, on hold (Fong, 2017, p. 544).

During the outcry, debates and commentary inside Hong Kong started to challenge the narrative of Hong Kong being reliant upon China. There was for instance commentary from a specialist on social welfare policies that Hong Kong had stable birth rates and thus did not need immigration from the Mainland, an economist changing his view on the benefits of being integrated, arguing that social problems of Mainland visitors outweighed its benefits. There was also an upspring in television programs and webpages, sharing pictures and memories of the old Hong Kong. In 2011 the ethnographer Chin Wan-kan published a book that became a bestseller - Hong Kong as a City-State which laid out the ideology of localism (S. Lau, 2013). The term “localism” was picked up by Chin Wan-kan as it was first expressed in the heritage preservation movements from 2006 and onwards (Veg, 2017, p. 325). Wan-kan took it further and argued that Hong Kong’s future rested not a democratic China, but Hong Kong’s resurgence as an independent city state (Sataline, 2015). Chin Wan-kan toned his ideas down a bit as he went on to found Hong Kong Resurgence in 2014 which advocated for reforming the Basic Law while keeping the «One Country, Two Systems» (Kwong, 2016, p. 65). The core idea of localism is have been expressed and taken many directions since it came to the public debate, but the core of it is that Hong Kong is different from China, and China’s influence in any way, shape or form is eroding the «authentic» Hong Kong. These sorts of ideas manifested themselves in a bunch of localist parties running for the Legislative Council in 2016, and they went from barely getting any

⁹ There is already a railway linking Guangzhou East Station to Hong Kong built in 1940 (and upgraded since) and takes about 2 hours since it goes through Dongguan, the new railway goes directly from another station – Guangzhou South and takes about 50 minutes until it reaches Hong Kong.

¹⁰ See chapter II, article 12 https://www.basiclaw.gov.hk/en/basiclawtext/chapter_2.html

votes in 2012 to 19 percent of the votes in 2016 (Kaeding, 2017, p. 161). Initially, post-materialism and localism are similar, but localism puts blame towards as to who is the villain in pushing overly materialistic values on the segments of the population who has more of a post-materialistic stand.

This new interest in post-materialist values of protecting and prioritizing local values, lifestyles, cultures, and interests, did also become a tool for political figures such as Gary Fan, Claudia Mo and the former Chief Executive, Chung-ying Leung in order to win support. One of Leung's suggestions during the 2012 election campaign were measures of limiting Mainlanders to access property – "Hong Kong Land for Hong Kongers" (Ping & Kin-Ming, 2014, pp. 1099-1100). The theme of localism has also stayed consistent, and even the much-hated Chief Executive Carrie Lam, initially ran her campaign on a slogan of taking local concerns into consideration (J. Lam & Cheung, 2017).

While these protests had fluctuating number of hundreds to thousands dedicated activists, similar to most advanced democracies protesting major development projects and not comparable in its scope at all to the extradition bill protests in its turnout, they are however important. The anti-railway protests initially started with villagers of the village that had to be relocated protesting, but their cause got the attention of the same protesters that engaged in the Star Ferry and Queen's Pier protest, who again got the attention of the pan-democrat legislators who tried to filibuster and derail the proceedings. The high speed rail way discussion remained a topic inside the Legislative Council, criticized for having to add additional funding, and proved give one of the protesters, Eddie Chu, the popular support to win a seat in the Legislative Council without any party backing, with his agenda of pro-environment, fairness in the use of land, and causes of anti-property-development (Dapiran, 2017, pp. 41-43). This was probably not only because of his protesting over the high speed rail construction, but he proves how these early movements are not to be shunned, and he also allied with Nathan Law (which we will discuss later) in the 2016 election, and Chu has been heavily been on the 2019-2020 protests supporters inside the Legislative Council (J. Lam, 2019; T. Siu & Jim, 2020).

Both the high-speed rail and the Hong Kong-Zhuhai-Macau Bridge were both completed in 2018, and both been taken issue with by segments of the population (Cabestan & Florence, 2018, p. 3). As I will explain in section below, these projects are not generating much enthusiasm, and for the government critics looked upon with suspicion – arguing that there is "zero chance of breaking even" with passenger on the railway 38 percent below the government's estimate at the end of 2018 and 40 percent below predicted numbers on vehicular trips on the bridge (K. Leung, 2019b). Whether these infrastructure projects will prove to be white elephants or critical infrastructure will depend on Hongkongers usage and enthusiasm for increased engagement with the Mainland, but as we will see in the next section, enthusiasm among young people are bottoming. The new express rail way have been further politicized as the security of the terminal (West Kowloon Station) is handled by mainland employees, and as Jeffrey Wasserstrom (2020, p. 14) writes "for the first time on Hong Kong soil, travelers are subject to mainland Chinese laws

Figure 5 Hong Kong-Zhuhai-Macau Bridge and Hong Kong-Guangzhou high-speed railway completed in 2018



Source: The Economist, published November 23rd 2017, accessed May 27th, 2020 from <https://www.economist.com/china/2017/11/23/border-checks-at-a-railway-station-in-hong-kong-spook-locals>

instead of Hong Kong laws¹¹. During the opening ceremony of the station, pro-democracy legislators boycotted the ceremony and rather staged a protest outside the station, claiming it undermined Hong Kong's autonomy – which the legal experts from the Hong Kong Bar

¹¹ See LegCo article 1 and 2, the Mainland Port Area in the West Kowloon Station, subjected to laws of the Mainland in the area it has jurisdiction over "Co-operation Arrangement between the Mainland and the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region on the Establishment of the Port at the West Kowloon Station of the Guangzhou-Shenzhen-Hong Kong Express Rail Link for Implementing Co-location Arrangement" accessed from: <https://www.legco.gov.hk/yr17-18/english/panels/tp/papers/tpcb4-441-4-e.pdf>, See ordinance to declare and enactment in the Legislative Council "to provide that the West Kowloon Station Mainland Port Area is to be regarded as an area lying outside Hong Kong but lying within the Mainland for certain purpose", accessed from <https://www.elegislation.gov.hk/hk/cap632>

Association also sees as a breach of the Basic Law (BBC, 2018). It did give a foothold in Hong Kong for Mainland personnel operating under Mainland laws under the designated area, leading one commentator to refer to it as a “trojan horse” (Stephy Chung, 2018). It is not important for this thesis whether or not the worst fears of these allegations bear fruit, but it is cases like this, and the Causeway Bay booksellers disappearance in 2015 (L. Chung, 2020), that plays a part in about 70 percent of people between the age of 18 to 29 distrusting Beijing and 66 percent having no confidence in the “One Country, Two Systems” in 2018 (J. Ma, 2018)¹².

This gives an indication that the social activists efforts since 2006 and underlying value orientation shifting since the SARS epidemic in 2003, have pushed forwards post-materialism, pushed it into the political agenda, and fueled debate in Hong Kong on self-sufficiency. This is in stark relation to their business-oriented government who in unison with their Mainland counterparts offers materialistic gains in if deeper collaboration was to be more accepting. This indicates that viewing Hongkongers strictly in the lens of a society that puts the “economy first” is wrong, and it has led to much dismay as a portion of Hongkongers are increasingly being offered unwanted greater economic opportunities, to the young people’s disinterest.

A lack of enthusiasm in the company of optimists

The completion of the Hong Kong-Zhuhai-Macao Bridge generated much initial hype as the “longest sea-crossing bridge in the world” stretching 55 kilometers, as did its impressive engineering feats, having a 6.7 kilometers undersea tunnel connected by two artificial islands¹³. The bridge however has so far been heavily underused, deserving of the name “the empty bridge”, because of a host of reasons – for instance fees, licenses, the crossing of three different regulatory zones (Hong Kong, Macao and China) who also have different traffic rules, where the most obvious one is Macao and Hong Kong driving on the left side per the British system and China the opposite. These are all issues that might be solved, but that would also require deeper integration. The stated purposes of these types of infrastructure projects is well expressed by Beijing in their 2019 Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area Plan, released by the Central Committee of the Communist Party and the State Council, of furthering economic growth and integration, and is a strategy at the highest levels which “Xi Jinping has planned for, made decisions about and promoted in person” (Xuequan, 2019). Both the previously mentioned bridge, railway and tons of other potential projects like an electronic identification system for “Bay Area residents” (proposed by Tencent CEO Pony Ma) are in order to accelerate the region, where the Chinese economic miracle started (Guangdong) (Wasserstrom, 2020, p. 15). The enthusiasm for the potential of such a project was captured by the chairman of the Chinese General Chamber of Commerce¹⁴, Jonathan Choi Koon-shum, who told a journalist: “We will no longer be Hong Kong people, but Greater Bay Area people” while encouraging the Hong Kong citizens to “focus on integration rather than on the interests of Hong Kong” (Yeung, 2018).

¹² Polling done by Public Opinion Programme of the University of Hong Kong.

¹³ See the <https://www.hzmb.gov.hk/en/> for pictures and regulations for crossing the bridge

¹⁴ A Hong Kong-based organization, more info and the organizations stated goals can be found here: <https://cgcc.org.hk/en/subcat.php?cid=2&sid=16>

The prospects of a “Greater Bay Area” people seems like a better compromise in an identity polarized Hong Kong than other options of Mainland China that are further away from Hong Kong, however this enthusiasm is not widely shared in Hong Kong. Hongkongers do, even though they share origin and many Cantonese language and cultural ties with Guangdong, find ways of differentiating themselves from people in Guangdong, as the political activist Joshua Wong recounted during his visit to Guangzhou:

Signage and menus were in simplified Chinese characters that looked familiar but not quite the same as the traditional ones we used in Hong Kong. Even Coca-Cola tasted different because the water they used had a funny aftertaste. 'I prefer the way things are in Hong Kong,' I remember telling myself. (J. Wong & Ng, 2020, p. 10)

The Hong Kong Federation of Youth Groups¹⁵ found that only one in a third of young people would consider applying for work in the Pearl River delta area, and per 2015 two-thirds of young Hongkongers were not willing to work across the border, and of those who said they were willing only 2 percent were “very keen to look for work on the Mainland” (P. Siu, 2015). The Hong Kong Youth Power Association¹⁶ interviewed 878 young local people in Hong Kong of whom 57 percent did not know what the plan was all about, while 42 percent said they did not want to be far away from Hong Kong (T. Cheung, 2018). The lack of enthusiasm in Hong Kong is also caught in the Mainland press, where one article in *China Daily* urges “young people in Hong Kong must open their eyes to the new China. It is not necessary for them to be ‘in full agreement with Beijing’” (Lok-sang, 2018). The Bauhinia Foundation Research Centre¹⁷, also found through telephone polling of 1,001 Hongkongers aged between 18 and 29, that none had actual working experience from the Mainland (P. Siu, 2015). Even as Universities in Hong Kong have built up close relations and new regulations have given Hongkongers same access to education in Guangdong as its inhabitants (Quinn, 2020), with the context of the 2019 protests, Hong Kong Guangdong Youth Association¹⁸ found that close to 60 percent of their interviewees believed the Greater Bay Area Plan would bring harm than good, and more than 70 percent of young people believed the city should keep its distance from the Mainland (Rui, 2020).

While the enthusiasm is low among the youth in Hong Kong for the prospects in the Mainland, the opposite has historically not been true for Mainlanders seeking out Hong Kong, with Mainland tourism increasing ever since the handover.

The “Locusts” of Hong Kong

Why the Mainland is unattractive for a large proportion of Hongkongers is because of a host

¹⁵ Hong Kong’s largest youth service organisation, more info can be found:

<https://hkfyg.org.hk/en/about-hkfyg/hkfyg-in-brief/>

¹⁶ Organisation dedicated to youth and community affairs, more info can be found:

<https://www.scmp.com/article/546400/hong-kong-youth-power-association>

¹⁷ An independent policy think tank, more info can be found:

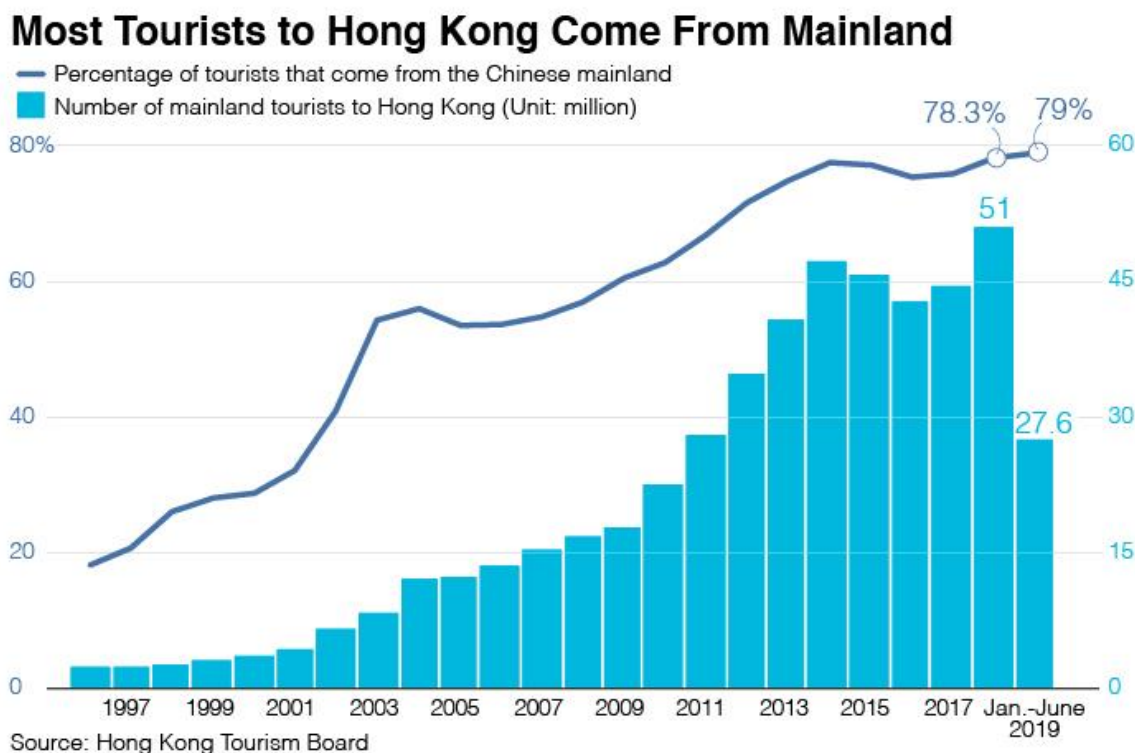
http://www.bauhinia.org/index.php/english/about_us

¹⁸ The study included 2000 interviewees in Hong Kong between the age of 15 to 65. A Hong Kong-based privately funded foundation focused on promoting cross-border exchanges, see

<https://www.hkgdya.org.hk/a-list/16953-cht>

of reasons, for the Mainlanders however the trend is strongly in the opposite direction, as evident in Figure 6 which tells the story of the 51 million tourists travelling to Hong Kong in 2018, representing almost 80 percent of total tourists in Hong Kong. Hong Kong was seen as “Shopping Paradise”, and Chinese tourists had great confidence in the quality of good in Hong Kong, such as milk powder, luxury leather brands and food items, which were regarded as safe and genuine (Piuchan, Chan, & Kaale, 2018, p. 11) – but the massive number of Mainland buyers stockpiling these goods led to shortages at the behest of Hong Kong’s own population forcing the HKSAR government to instill ordinances limited luggage allowances and a maximum of two milk powder cans¹⁹ (Ong & Lin, 2017, p. 1).

Figure 6 Mainland tourists share of total tourism in Hong Kong



Source: Graphics taken from Caixin Global, accessed May 28th, 2020 from <https://www.caixinglobal.com/2019-08-22/charts-of-the-day-hong-kong-and-the-mainlands-intertwined-economies-101453922.html> and data collected from Hong Kong Tourism Boards through Partner Net: https://partnernet.hktb.com/en/research_statistics/index.html

The excess and response to this tourism has given birth the term “locust”, which is a term for describing tourists, immigrants and traders from the Mainland as culturally inferior and

¹⁹ Milk powder had to be restricted due to it causing shortages for Hong Kong mothers, especially after a stockpiling spree after one incident on the Mainland where Mainland-produced milk powder was found to have caused deaths among infants (Ong & Lin, 2017, p. 1). The same demand for milk powder have also been seen in Western countries and Japan from Chinese consumers, especially after periods of negative news, like in July 2008 when 59 babies in Gansu province were diagnosed with kidney stones due to hazardous babyfood (W.-K. B. Wong, 2015, p. 12).

dangerous for Hong Kong's social welfare and public resources due to their perceived and seen exploitations of the society in Hong Kong (Lowe & Tsang, 2017, pp. 137-138). The increased Chinese tourism can be seen worldwide, counting a middle class of 400 million with about 150 million of them travelling overseas per 2018 and spending the most by far (\$277.3 billion per 2018) (O. Smith, 2019). The underlying trend for many Hongkongers is a taxing amount of people for a city of about 7,5 half million people, but what is emphasized by the critics of Mainland tourism is what it entails and behavioral traits among some of the tourists, which are being Othered through terms like "locust".

The massive influx of Mainlanders was not something the HKSAR government worried about back in the early days of the handover, it was rather the opposite. In 2001 the HKSAR government stressed the need to take advantage of its border to China in order to take leverage the economic opportunities that laid in the flow of capital of people. At that time, the idea met little resistance as Hong Kong were still feeling the effects of the 1997 Asian financial crisis, but since then, the public sentiment has taken a negative turn (Ping & Kin-Ming, 2014, p. 1105). With the implementation of the Individual Visitor Scheme (IVS) in 2003 visitors from the Mainland started becoming the majority and saw a small spike in terms of millions of visitors, and with the 2009 introduction of multiple-entry permits the visitations sky-rocketed to the degree that we see today²⁰ (Yip & Pratt, 2018, p. 7).

The massiveness of Chinese tourists is changing every market they go in to, which is exacerbated by their spending habits. The effects have been hard felt by Hong Kong populace and especially the extreme behavior that some "nouveau riche" are exhibit which are getting explosive coverage on the internet and through media reports - for instance anti-social behavior like queue-cutting, children urinating and excreting in public, spitting, talking loudly and so on. Even though this is only a small fraction of the Mainlanders²¹, it is becoming something that Hongkongers are hyper-reactive towards and have become a vital part of how Mainlanders are "othered". In addition, with 51 million tourists coming, combined with an awareness of such behavior, it is probably something most Hongkongers can refer to occurrences of (Ping & Kin-Ming, 2014, p. 1107). This have also manifested itself in anti-parallel trading protests²², which has been exercised by individual shops and through

²⁰ 63 percent go there for vacation purposes, which is comparable with domestic tourism elsewhere in the Asia Pacific, and places like the US, Spain and Italy. Mainland visitors in Hong Kong more often (62 percent) visit for the short periods rather than long periods (40 percent) (Yip & Pratt, 2018, p. 7)

²¹ The Chinese government has expressed concerns about such occurrences, and did, in response, through China's National Tourism Administration publish a guide to civilized tourism and travel (Guilford, 2019). I remember myself travelling to Hong Kong while using a mainland Chinese sim-card, and getting automated messages of the do's and dont's whenever I crossed the Shenzhen border.

²² According to the South China Morning Post (SCMP), parallel trading refers to people from the Mainland who buys their goods tax-free in Hong Kong in order to resell it at a profit in the Mainland. This phenomon has caused tensions in Hong Kong, these types of protests are often found in Sheung Shui which is a border town to Shenzhen. Protests have been taking place since 2012, with the last protest according to SCMP in January 2020. Accessed June 15th 2020, from <https://www.scmp.com/topics/parallel-trading>.

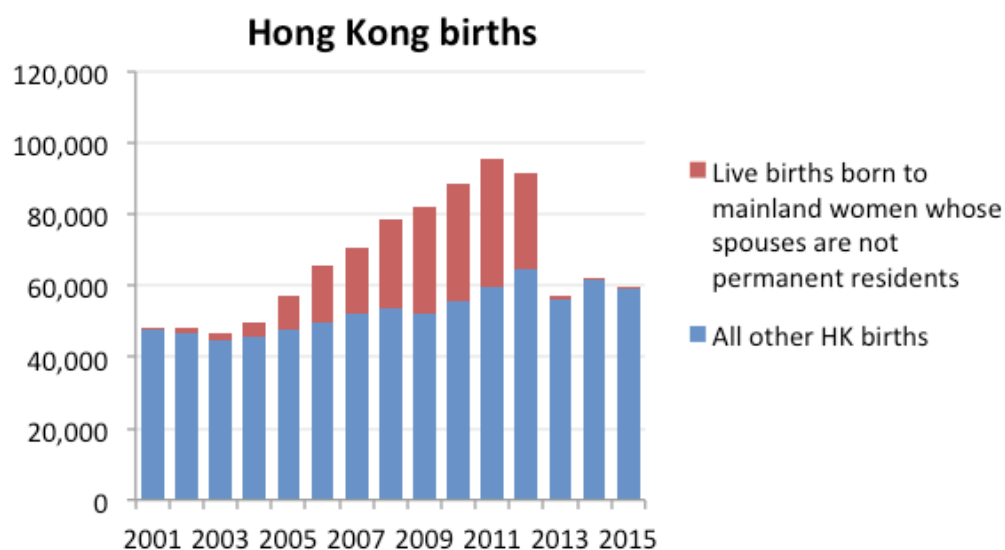
Another description by J. K.-K. Ho (2016, p. 11581) refers to traders taking advantage of the multiple entry visa policy to import goods from Hong Kong to Mainland China, causing shortages of household goods. As mentioned earlier, goods like milk powder from Hong Kong are highly praised in the Mainland.

organized protesters. This is especially evident at Sheng Shui MTR station (a place where Mainlanders often shop), which has seen a number of protests – for instance in 2012 protesters organized through Facebook and with the chants: “Reclaim Sheng shui! Protect our homes!” (Ng & Nip, 2012). Certain small shops have also adhered to not serving Mainlanders with signs saying “Forgive us for not serving mainlanders” (Xu, 2020). Other shops, like the *agnes b. café* in April 2012, were criticized for using simplified characters by netizens instead of the traditional characters conventionally used in Hong Kong, for which the café later apologized. Debates surrounding the cultural importance of using traditional characters have since occurred, with the proponents arguing that it shows Hong Kong’s superiority in preserving China’s cultural heritage, while the CCP has “ruined” Chinese culture on the Mainland (Ping & Kin-Ming, 2014, p. 1108). These reactions are not occurring in a vacuum though, as smaller shops are squeezed out by higher rents to the behest of luxury shops serving big spenders from the Mainland - as was pointed out in a press release by the Legislative Council:

Some members of the public have pointed out that, in the districts along the MTR East Rail Line, quite a number of shops serving local residents have been replaced by shops targeting at mainland visitors, thus affecting the daily lives of local residents. The conflicts between Hong Kong and mainland residents are deepening, which has resulted in the recent harassment of mainland visitors by some local residents in the vicinity of Canton Road, Tsim Sha Tsui, thus tarnishing the image of Hong Kong as a civilised metropolis. (LegCo, 2014)

Another issue regarding the inflow of Mainlanders that came under scrutiny has been at the

Figure 7 Share of new births in Hong Kong given to women from the Mainland



Source: British Council Education Services, published January 10th 2017, accessed May 28th, 2020 from <https://education-services.britishcouncil.org/insights-blog/hong-kong-demographics-will-shrinking-youth-population-kill-student-recruitment-market> and HKSAR Census and Statistics 2001-2016, <https://www.statistics.gov.hk/pub/B1120017042017XXXXB0100.pdf> p. 20

hospitals in Hong Kong. Figure 7 tells the story of birth tourism taking an increased share of new births in Hong Kong until 2012. In 2011 it reached a peak, with 38.9 percent (37,000) of all new births (95,000) in Hong Kong were born to Mainland women. Private hospitals capitalized on the relaxed borders since 2003, which resulted in the 10-year period since 2001 births by a 52-fold increase of Mainland mothers giving birth in Hong Kong. Picture 3 shows a full-page ad from February 1st, 2012, in *Apple Daily* of a giant locust hovering over the Hong Kong skyline with a commentary beside the locust estimating the costs Hong Kong taxpayers would have to bear for new births by Mainland mothers. This ad was funded on Facebook spontaneously together with members of *HKGolden.com* forum, and raised more than HK\$100,000 within a week from around 800 donors (Lowe & Tsang, 2017, pp. 137-138). This ad is an example of tensions boiling over, and the deep-seated resentment among its funders towards the “others”, here taking the shape of a locust which can be seen as migratory pest devastating the land²³.

The ad was calling for a stop of immigration from Mainland mothers in order to stop the government from “spending HK\$ 1,000,000²⁴ on their babies every 18 minutes”. The ad played on a momentum given by numbers released by the Hospital Authority in January 2012, showing more than 1,600 cases of Mainland mothers in 2011 being rushed to the emergency department in order to give birth. This was a doubling from the 2010 figure, and what angered Hongkongers was that more than 70 percent of the 2011 figures had no pre-booking, which indicated that they were probably not allowed to give birth in Hong Kong.

Picture 3 Apple Daily Ad



Source: CNN, published February 8th, 2012, accessed May 28th, 2020 from <https://edition.cnn.com/2012/02/01/world/asia/locust-mainlander-ad/index.html>

²³ Locust are related to grasshoppers, but are much more hazardous forming in large swarms, see <https://www.nationalgeographic.com/animals/invertebrates/group/locusts/>

²⁴ Around 129,025 US\$

The ad played on negative news coverage: in one case a doctor was assaulted by Mainland parents due to the long waiting time, attempting to use fraudulent documents in order to give birth, and others even seeking imprisonment to prolong their stay to the time of birth (Ping & Kin-Ming, 2014, pp. 1107-1108). All of this initially fueled the othering and generalizations that segments of Hongkongers make towards Mainlanders, and helps not only cementing superiority, but also causes fears of their society that their identity and society is in the process of being flooded by Mainlanders.

Their efforts payed off, as figure 7 shows, the numbers of Mainland mothers giving birth dramatically fell off with the April 2012 introduction of a new law limiting maternity services to pregnant women from the Mainland – the “zero quota”²⁵ proposals were made by the then soon-to-be Chief Executive Chun-ying Leung who took office July 1st that same year (BBC, 2012). Although the zero quota policy being a success, new debates sprang up as there was still 800 babies being born to Mainland mothers who gatecrashed the emergency wards, and they contributed to the public hospitals indebtedness as they “refused to pay for their treatment” (Tsang, 2016). What is remarkable here is that the HKSAR government reacted to the outrage of the increased Mainlandization, as this was at the time thought of something that might threaten Hong Kong’s identity long term, with what looked like a trend at the time of Mainland births outpacing Hong Kong births inside of Hong Kong.

PART 2: Democracy and social movements

In this part we explore hypothesis two: *The emergence of a Hongkonger identity is driven by a desire for democracy*. We start of by looking at the protests for democracy before the handover and discuss to what degree it was call a for democracy, we then look at Hong Kong’s role during the Tiananmen Square incident of 1989 and the subsequent ritualization of through holding a yearly vigil in Hong Kong to Tiananmen. We then move to look at the National Security Ordinance of 2003, before we discuss the coming of the later generation of democracy protesters. The key in this part is looking at how democratic the protesters aspirations are, and how it changes from the older to the younger generation.

Before the handover

The discourse surrounding post-war Hong Kong politics before the 1980s has been dominated by the “absence of politics” explanation – with the exception of riots in 1956 started by pro-Guomindang and pro-Communist factions, 1966 when the Star Ferry foot-passenger fare increased, and again in 1967 between pro-communists sympathizers and the Hong Kong government. The period before 1980s saw no significant movements for democracy, but this slowly started to change in the 1970s, with waves of labor, student and women’s marches, that started signaling the potential dynamism political movements had in

²⁵ Implied that public hospitals would not accept booking by non-local pregnant women for deliver in Hong Kong from January 1st, 2013. Private hospitals also unianimously agreed to stop accepting bookings from Mainland pregnant women whose husband is not permanent Hong Kong resident, more info can be found in HK government press release:
[https://www.info.gov.hk/gia/general/201212/28/P201212280415.htm#:~:text=A%20Government%20spokesman%20today%20\(December,from%20January%201%2C%202013%20onwards.](https://www.info.gov.hk/gia/general/201212/28/P201212280415.htm#:~:text=A%20Government%20spokesman%20today%20(December,from%20January%201%2C%202013%20onwards.)

Hong Kong (W.-m. Lam & Cooper, 2018, p. 3). The late 1970s however, saw the rise of pressure groups surrounding certain nationalist themes: making Cantonese the main language of the colony, the movement over protecting the Diaoyu Islands, protests over Japanese textbooks whitewashing its invasion of China (Nozaki, 2002, p. 606), but also issues surrounding social problems like the Golden Jubilee Incident and the Yaumati Boat People incident (N. Ma, 2017, pp. 34-36). At the same time as those pressure groups started forming, perceptions on new arrivals of Mainlanders changed from being warmly welcomed to the "Ah Chan" country bumpkin figure, popularized in a television drama of 1979 (Mathews et al., 2007, p. 37). These were important early movements for nurturing political participation and proved to be important precursor groups for creating social organizations, which also helped the creation of an imagined community where people felt a sense of belonging with a set of values that would morph and take form. But importantly it was also the early phases of a "we" (the locals) versus "them" (new arrivals) happening at the same time.

A democratic system was not a top priority either during Sino-British negotiations over Hong Kong's future in 1982-84, or the transition period of 1984-1997. Today it is often emphasized that Hongkongers themselves were not fully negotiating the terms, but the dominant narrative of the time was fear of communism and losing their way of life. The signing of the Joint Sino-British Declaration initially aroused anxiety and a mass departure of Hong Kong's best and brightest (Ping & Kin-Ming, 2014, p. 1096). What eventually won over the public debate and the opinion leaders was the propagation of "One Country, Two Systems" with the concepts of "50 years unchanged" and "Hong Kong people ruling Hong Kong". The democracy movement's theme of "resisting communism by democratization" was thought of as a way to defend Hong Kong against political interventions by the Chinese communists post 1997, as the communists could not be trusted (N. Ma, 2017, pp. 36-38). That theme got strengthened after the Tiananmen Square Incident of June 4th, 1989, where the Hong Kong Alliance took part in smuggling Tiananmen activists out of China through the "Operation Yellow Bird" campaign. June 4th has also become a yearly vigil in Hong Kong in memory of the victims, working as a symbol that Hong Kong is different from China (Cheng, 2009, p. 95). 1989 also served as a shock crushing the optimism in Hong Kong for a possible democratization in the Mainland, and the yearly vigil that has been organized from 1989 to today, have been a way for the attendees to psychologically distance themselves from the Mainland government, and most likely the Mainland overall. The consistency of these vigils in Hong Kong do indicate a persistent psychological distancing among the attendants in relation to the CCP, and a way of safeguarding the ideals of the Tiananmen protesters – "forgotten/suppressed in the Mainland, remembered/praised in Hong Kong". This is a clear conflict in the identity narratives of the Mainland and in Hong Kong, but it is also a way for Hongkongers to show how they expect the "One Country, Two Systems"-framework to work in practice. As this system differentiates in what rituals the people in the Mainland and Hong Kong are allowed to perform, it also works as a way for the Hongkonger identity to become more cemented, as Hongkongers double down on what differentiates them from Mainlanders – like the 2020 vigil where attendees were chanting protest slogans (Kirby, 2020).

Pragmatic nationalism

For about twenty years following 1989, the democrats were struggling with their Chinese and Hong Kong identity, as they assert their patriotism for being for reunion with China in the 1980s but opposed the Communist regime. The democracy movement was chief in force of speaking out against Chinese intervention both before and after 1997, and their efforts to protect Hong Kong's values, political autonomy, rule of law, democracy, and human rights were seen as "anti-Chinese" by the Chinese government and pro-Beijing press. This marked a large contradiction between the Hong Kong identity and their Chinese identity, as protecting these values were seen unpatriotic by the Chinese government. At the societal level, there was no clear support for a fully democratic Hong Kong as more and more Hongkongers took pride in China's achievements due to increased economic integration, more engagement and travelling, and patriotic propaganda (N. Ma, 2017, pp. 38-39). This has been dubbed "pragmatic nationalism" by Pui-ha Chow and Eric Ma (2005, p. 41) as more and more of the younger generation saw less advantages in opposing China as it was continuously improving and garnering economic strength.

The turning point for the democracy movement came July 1st, 2003, when an estimated half a million Hongkongers took to the street protesting the impending legislation of the National Security Ordinance. The bill which was supposed to deal with treason and sedition (much like the proposed National Security Law in time of writing), was seen as a direct threat to Hong Kong's lifestyle, civil liberties, and core values (J. Lam, 2020b). This was a landmark protest as the bill got derailed, but it also sparked stronger belief in political efficacy through protesting, showing that Hongkongers were able to oppose political directives from Beijing. The pan-democrats also were empowered as they had a strong showing in the elections from 2003-2004 and forced Chief Executive Tung in 2005 to step down before his term ended. This political shift also alarmed Beijing, which earlier was having a "hands-off" approach, and now stepped up its attempts to intervene in governance and deepening the social and economic integration (Ping & Kin-Ming, 2014, pp. 1096-1097). Throughout history until 2003, the democratic movement gained support when they were aligning with the protection of the Hong Kong identity narrative, rather than pushing in isolation the goal of becoming a full-fledged democracy. It is the protection of the "high autonomy" part as promised in the Basic Law, that was the basic narrative of the protest in 2003, leading to it being a part of the rejection of Mainlandization.

The debates then have many parallels to both the 2019 Fugitive Offenders amendment bill (called the "extradition bill") and the 2020 National Security Law. At the time according to Ngok N. Ma (2017, p. 39), the Hong Kong government, pro-Beijing politicians, Mainland officials and the press all emphasized the need of being able to punish crimes that related to matters of national security. For the opposition – pro democracy movement, legal professionals, and civil society groups – the law was too vague with the potential for abuse by the government to clamp down on dissidents, press freedom and civil liberties. For the protesters it thus became a struggle over their national identity as Chinese and what they perceived to be a threat to their lifestyle and identity as Hongkongers. Proving Brewer's prediction about Hongkongers choosing "voice" rather than "exit" if their uniqueness came under threat, the half a million that took to streets managed to produce the withdrawal of the 2003 National Security Ordinance bill.

From “hands-off” to “hands-on”

The 2003 protests led to the Chinese government fearing the potential incompetence of the Hong Kong government in handling the instability expected to follow the protests that would lead to democrats increasing their influence and seizing power. The response was twofold, one was the aforementioned CEPA, facilitating the economic relationship, and the second was on the political front. In April 2004, the Beijing government exercised its authority on constitutional reform of the Basic Law (effectively a reinterpretation of the Basic Law), by ruling that an approval from the Standing Committee of the National People’s Congress (NPCSC) was necessary before the initiation of any reforms towards democracy in Hong Kong. This worked in unison with the Central Government Liaison Office (CGLO) in Hong Kong gradually attempting to extend its control over Hong Kong affairs, among the maneuvers were taking an active role intervening in the elections. The CGLO, who is the representative office of Chinese government in Hong Kong, was pumping massive material resources into pro-government groups, which made the pro-Beijing camp a formidable machine with its residential associations, parties, unions, and enterprises in mobilizing during elections. Many Hongkongers gradually became alerted about a potential loss of the promised “high autonomy” in the Basic Law, and gradually became more concerned about increased intervention (N. Ma, 2017, p. 40).

The democracy movement did oppose the increased intervention, but as we saw in the introduction 2003-2008 were the “golden years” for the strengthening of Chinese identity vis-à-vis Hongkonger identity, and the democracy movement first started regaining steam in correlation with the emergence of the Hongkonger identity in 2009-2010. I will discuss some of the reasons why 2003-2008 might have been the “golden years” in terms of integration if one judges it from identification trends, but it is important to notice that this did not last and during the 2003-2008 period the Hongkonger identity was not necessarily in stark conflict with its Chinese identity counterpart. This changed however as the growing up post the handover started feeling more and more alienated with their government, feeling that the whoever was the Chief Executive, only was like a lapdog that would only take orders from Beijing (Law, 2018, p. 27). This is best reflected in the “de facto referendum” movement of 2010, proposed in 2009 by the League of Social Democrats, who proposed asking five serving legislators in the Legislative Council to resign in order to trigger off a new snap election. The idea was to show the “true democratic spirit in Hong Kong”, because if the serving legislators would resign then it would require all voters in Hong Kong to cast a vote in Hong Kong the same day – serving as a symbol for a referendum on democracy, pressuring Beijing to deliver full democracy given that the democrats would win by a large margin. The pro-establishment parties were not allowed to participate in the referendum, and the voter turnout was only about 17.1 percent – 580,000 voters (Cheng, 2011, p. 55). As a referendum this was a failure, but being able to mobilize over 580,000 people can be as a satisfactory protest.

This was an important movement as it made evident the coming of a new political identity as it split into two factions, the old guard of democrats who thought the referendum was unrealistic and favored proceeding from the “One Country, Two Systems”-framework, and the younger generation of democrats who supported the “de facto referendum” as a movement about political identity and as a direct rejection of Beijing’s political control. The older generation found the “anti-China” sentiments of the younger generation difficult to fathom and began to lose touch of the identity issue (N. Ma, 2017, pp. 43-45), and this is

also evident looking back at figure 1 where the older generation tends to align more with a Chinese identity vis-à-vis their younger counterparts. It is in this regard of anti-China sentiments and not on the issue of democracy that the older and younger generation of democrats differed. While the older generation can be seen to be more pragmatic in its approach to want to work within the “One Country, Two Systems”-framework and cooperate with Beijing, the younger was clearly wanting to push the identity issue.

The New Democrats of the Umbrella Movement

It was in The Umbrella Movement of 2014 that we saw the clearest sign of the contours of the new generation of democrats imagined community. The movement lasted for 79 continuous days, peaking with tens of thousands of participants, and possibly 100,000 at its peak (Carvalho, 2020; Veg, 2016, p. 674). The main activists of the movement were post-1980s university students (Lowe & Tsang, 2017, p. 141). The movement was kick-started by Benny Tai’s “Occupy Central” movement, which was a civil disobedience movement demanding a genuine election for the Chief Executive election in 2017, based on genuine universal suffrage, not to be interfered with²⁶. This movement was a landmark in the sense that the older generations of democrats were succeeded by the younger generation, and it had far-reaching implications for the formation of the Hongkonger identity (Ping & Kin-Ming, 2014, pp. 1110-1111). The theme of the movement was that Hongkongers needed to come out and “defend our city”, and one of the big slogans were “Determining our fate”, both in regards to choosing the Chief Executive and deciding their political fate independent of Beijing. However, the rhetoric and imagery used and distributed around in Hong Kong during the protests represented anti-China slogans like “Hong Kong is not a part of China”, and much more²⁷. The protesters adopted a rhetoric and different imagination as to what Hong Kong is, compared to the older generation of democrats (N. Ma, 2017, pp. 46-47). The Umbrella Movement however, did not succeed in its stated goal, but it marked a new emergence of the Hong Kong identity, one as proclaimed at the end of the Umbrella Movement (see picture 4), was here to stay – “we’ll be back”.

²⁶ According to a decision by China’s National People’s Congress, a candidate running for Chief Executive needs to be endorsed by half of the members of a 1,200-person nominating committee, made up by mostly Beijing loyalists. This effectively made sure a non pre-vetted candidate could not run for the 2017 election making sure the five million eligible voters could only pick candidates Beijing accepted (Ping & Kin-Ming, 2014, pp. 1110-1111)

²⁷ See B. W.-K. Wong (2017) on “Discrimination against the mainland Chinese and Hong Kong’s defense of local identity”

Picture 4 “We’ll be back”



Source: Hong Kong Free Press, accessed June 15th, 2020 from <https://www.hongkongfp.com/2019/09/27/hkfp-lens-well-be-back-as-hong-kongs-umbrella-movement-camp-site-was-cleared-protesters-promised-to-return/>

The party candidates for the 2016 election saw no candidates campaigning for outright independence, but there were however two major candidates who advocated “self-determination” in various forms, but not sovereignty as an independent state (N. Ma, 2017, p. 47). This is also the issue of separating the rejection of Mainlandization and the desire for democracy, as they are both tied together. But one can affirm, going through the history that democracy is a part that has been something that has aligned to the rise of the Hongkonger identity, regarding rejecting Mainlandization. One can assert that a call for democracy on the local Hong Kong level, is a part of rejecting Mainlandization, as the perception among the protesters is that the Chief Executive is not genuinely elected and that they are not campaigning for a democracy on the Mainland. Hong Kong have never had a genuine democracy, the promised principle of “Hong Kong people ruling Hong Kong” has not been adhered to, and their type of democracy has the problem that the Chief Executive serves two masters – the Hong Kong people and the CCP in China. This is evident from the HKSAR government reacting to protesters when they are able to mobilize enough people, but we see a pattern of subsequent rebalancing by their governing partner in Beijing, in order not give protesters too much ground.

The Chief Executive is also paralyzed by the current protests as the protesters goals conflict with the goals of Mainlandization – as Carrie Lam, the current Chief Executive said: “if I had a choice, the first thing is to quit having made a deep apology” (Roantree, Torode, & Pomfret, 2019). The democratic imagination of being independent is why democracy is so important in Hong Kong, and by using “voice” they have had marginal successes in slowing down Mainlandization, but not in making Hong Kong more democratic. The consequences of not being able to influence politics at this level has led to a regime sleepwalking towards Mainlandization policies that were not wanted by large segments of the population. By

implementing these unwanted measures of Mainlandization the answer has been protest, and an independent push for democracy. However, large turnouts are more seldom, as they usually gain traction when they are opposing a law or policy proposal. The desire for democracy is tied with autonomy, as I have shown infringements on it have caused so much uproar. The desire for democracy cannot be explained as an isolated factor causing the protests today or in 2014, it is a part of a larger narrative.

It is useful to consider the democracy movement as a protective measure. It seems by looking at many of the uprisings before, and after the Umbrella Movement, that the democracy movement was part of a larger narrative of rejecting and trying to stop expansive Mainlandization policies. The older generation who operated more within the "One Country, Two Systems"-framework, is different from the younger generation are more expressive about not being cooperating with Beijing and Hong Kong's identity – its uniqueness and differentiation from the Mainland, rather than showing democratic solidarity and promoting democracy on the Mainland. An interesting question worth posing, but not answer, is who is most democratic of the older generation and the younger generation, where the former is more empathetic to reforming China, and the latter sees themselves more in the direction of being too different from China for such a tactic to be feasible. But one thing they are in unison about has been to safeguard the democratic characteristics that Hong Kong already possess, and which I see as part of the Hongkonger identity. The desire for democracy is a part of the Hongkonger identity, as they value freedom of speech, press freedom and non-interference in order to psychologically distance themselves from the Mainland, in no order age group is this seen more clearly than in the young generation of democrats.

We will bring this discussion full circle in the next part of this essay which talks about identity by illustrating how the policies meant to make a new generation of Hongkongers prideful about their Chinese identity, completely backfired.

PART 3: Identity and rejection of Mainlandization

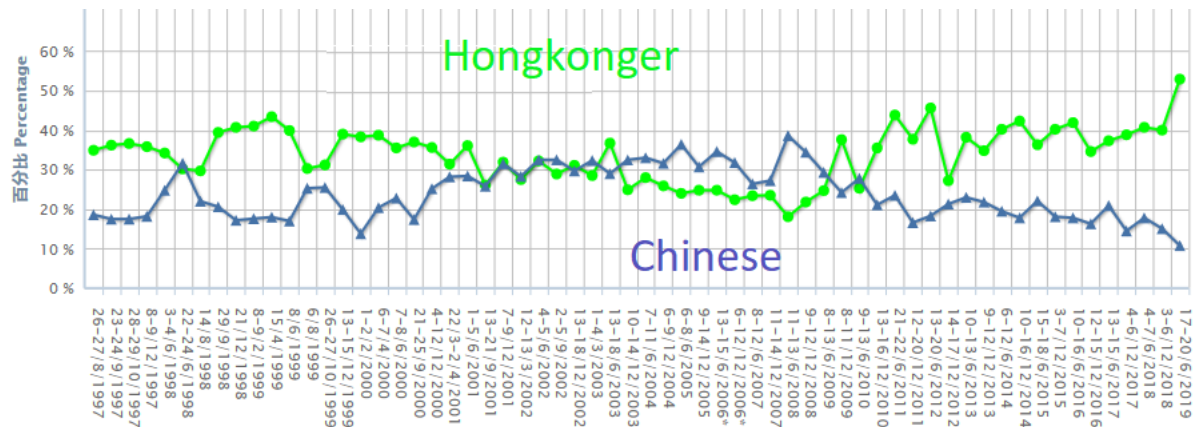
In this part, we look at the main hypothesis: *The emergence of a Hongkonger identity is driven by rejecting Mainlandization*. We analyze that by looking at events that I find are effecting the identification trends – Chinese identity versus Hongkonger identity. I also explain why the golden age of the Chinese identity in Hong Kong arose roughly from the end of 2003 to the end of 2008 based on China's achievements internationally, did not instill any lasting effect. Then we will look at a key institution for instilling national pride, namely the schooling system, before we consider statistics on the appraisal of freedom of the press and freedom of procession and demonstrations, arguing that these two are seen to be under threat especially among the younger generation – dubbed "Generation HK". This chapter is linked with the previous chapter on democracy, but here we focus on values and identity.

The Everyday Plebiscite of feeling Chinese

Renan's definition of a nation being an everyday plebiscite seems to attest to changing self-identification of Hongkongers vis-à-vis their Chinese relatives since 1997. Since the 1997 handover, the Hongkonger identity stood stronger for a while, until the trend reversed in 2003 and reached a peak with the Beijing Olympics in 2008, before it from 2009 yet again

saw another reversal again favoring a Hongkonger identity. This reversal reached historic highs in 2012 before it saw another spike with the extradition bill, which caused the largest disparities between those who identify as a Hongkonger and Chinese ever (see Figure 8).

Figure 8 Identity trends in Hong Kong from 1997 to 2019



Source: Public Opinion Program, University of Hong Kong (HKU POP), "Categorical Ethnic Identity", accessed May 20th, 2020 from https://www.hkupop.hku.hk/english/popexpress/ethnic/eidentity/poll/eid_poll_chart.html

Tung Chee-hwa, Hong Kong's first Chief Executive, outlined his vision for Hong Kong to the Asia Society in 1997, in which he wanted Hongkongers to take "Pride in being Chinese" and would "be willing at all times to contribute to the well-being not just of Hong Kong but also the entire Chinese nation" (Mathews et al., 2007, p. 83). Taking cues from his political idol Lee Kuan Yew, he went around preaching that Hong Kong was the bearer of the Chinese tradition and the civic education needed to reflect this (Beatty, 2003, pp. 44-45). Proposed curriculums reflecting the "One Country, Two Systems"-framework started popping up right from kindergarten, where a key lesson was that the child is a member of Hong Kong society, but that they were a citizen of China (Hughes & Stone, 1999, p. 482). In 2004 kindergarteners were subjected to a "I love China"-program with the aim of developing "a sense of belonging to the country, a respectful attitude to the national flag and national anthem" (Mathews et al., 2007, p. 83). The Beijing government followed up in 2003 by sending the first Chinese astronaut, Yang Liwei, to Hong Kong, followed up performances and visits from the 2004 and 2008 Chinese Olympic Games medalists – where Hong Kong was actively chosen as their first stop ahead of the cities and provinces on the Mainland. Hong Kong do of course have their Olympic team, but this was a way of bridging the gap, and Hong Kong was also the site of the equestrian venues during the 2008 Olympics. Furthermore, The Home Affairs Bureau of the HKSAR government started in cooperation with other organs to promote various activities outside of the regular civic education in order to promote national education – for example, the television announcement series "Our Home Our Country" which were broadcasted from 2004 (P. T. Y. Cheung, 2012, pp. 337-338). Tung's vision also had great success in the schooling system with wider use of Putonghua (standard Mandarin) as the language of instruction, increasing displays of the national anthem and the national flag, and strengthened instruction in Chinese history (Tse, 2004, p. 56).

These Mainlandization practices faced criticism from the get-go – in 2004, Arthur Li, the Secretary of Education and Manpower commented that the “I love China” program would teach the kindergartner to be able to “distinguish between ‘I love China’ and ‘I love the Communist Party of China’” (Mathews et al., 2007, p. 84). This captured the fact that love for China does not necessarily translate to love for the CCP among Hongkongers, but the notion of being “Chinese” was not at this point fully in conflict with being a Hongkonger. One debate in Hong Kong in 2004 about patriotism concluded that Hongkongers love toward China amounted to loving the classic culture, the long historical tradition, beautiful landscape, and original people, but not the regime. On the other hand, Hong Kong had shown staunch nationalism towards the Senkaku/Diaoyu Islands issue and showed deep concerns towards human rights and moral cases in China²⁸, which leans towards a dual loyalty to both China and its governance (Ping & Kin-Ming, 2014, p. 1101).

Sports short-lived success on instilling national pride

An issue with the success of the Chinese identity in this period of great sporting and Yang Liwei’s space exploration achievements was its staying power. Kristin Hallmann, Christoph Breuer and Benedikt Kühnreich (2013, pp. 226, 233) found that the success of elite sports and elite athletes have the most benefit on the feeling of national pride among those with a migration background within a country, meaning that sports are a way of bringing people together across different country backgrounds. The remarkable swift surge seen in Figure 8 from 2007 to 2008 of China’s greatest achievement to that date in the Olympics by topping the medal index shows that sporting success can have sporadic success in instilling pride, but have no lasting effect in the case of Hong Kong (Van Hilvoorde, Elling, & Stokvis, 2010, p. 94). Ivo Van Hilvoorde, Agned Elling, and Ruud Stokvis (2013, p. 99) explain that “in order to have a positive effect on national pride, identifying with sport success must be preceded by a sense of belonging to a specific nation”, which would explain why when these short-lived successes faded, the underlying discontents that started to surface from 2003 and onwards in Hong Kong again pushed Hongkongers in the opposite direction. Another study by Agnes Elling, Ivo Van Hilvoorde and Remko Van Den Dool (2014, p. 129) find that also when sporting events do increase national pride it is rather limited, small and short term.

Lastly, sporting events were not something that was inherently in conflict with the Chinese and Hongkonger identity at this time, and did have a positive effect, but as the Othering of Mainland China reached its boiling point, sports also became politicized – booing the national anthem for instance during a football match in Hong Kong (Cha, 2019; Chan, 2015).

²⁸ For example in 2010, when 18 workers at the Foxconn plant in Guangdong committed suicide due to extremely harsh working conditions, this created an uproar in Hong Kong, showing a distaste for China’s emphasis on «development first» (N. Ma, 2011, p. 712)

Education revolts

From 2007 and onwards, the HKSAR government began devoting a section in the Chief Executive's Policy Address to national education after being reminded²⁹ by the then-General Secretary of the CCP, Hu Jintao. This was given more attention in 2008-09 in an attempt of instilling more national passion in the youth – this included upping the quota of students signing up in subsidized exchange programs and funding activities tied to national education (P. T. Y. Cheung, 2012, p. 339). In 2010, the then-Chief Executive Donald Tsang, pushed ahead in his policy address to build on the earlier proposals to strengthen the national education curriculum, activities, and teaching timetables. These included encouraging students to support the national sports team, appreciate and understand Chinese culture (solidarity, filial piety etc.), attend flag-raising ceremonies, understanding the Basic Law and sing the national anthem. These proposals were met with resistance from headmasters, students, and teachers who were suspicious of taking part in “brainwashing” foisted upon them by the CCP. More fuel to the fire of resistance was added when the culture chief of the central government's Liaison Office, Hao Tiechuan, called the national education a “necessary brainwashing”, which suggested that the curriculum should promote the HKSAR government's thinking pattern (Ping & Kin-Ming, 2014, p. 1102). This culminated in the formation of the now known pro-democracy student activist group known as Scholarism, headed by Joshua Wong, who opposed the national education reform. The then-fourteen-year-old Wong recounts:

Secondary-school students didn't want this kind of brainwashing. But they also didn't want an additional subject of any kind, on top of their already heavy course loads, so even those who didn't care much about the content of Moral and National Education were against it, and came out in large numbers on the demonstrations we organized (Sanho Chung & Wong, 2016, p. 868)

The Scholarism movement snowballed well beyond purely teachers and students. The movement mobilized the general public and created a unified group of activists opposing the HKSAR government's Mainlandization policies – by September 2012 120 000 people protested outside the HKSAR government's headquarters (Dapiran, 2017, p. 44). Scholarism snowballed into launching hunger strikes in 2014 and boycotts together with the Hong Kong Federation of Students (HKFS) upon the August 31 2014 declaration (the so-called “8 31 decision”) made by the National People's Congress³⁰ that a Hong Kong Chief Executive would have to “love the country [China] and love Hong Kong” in order to run for the position, effectively preventing candidates ideologically opposed from running (Ip, 2016, p. 90). They also actively attempted to engage in the process of selecting the Chief Executive in 2017, which included signature campaigns at the metro exit stations, publishing commentaries and forming coalitions with groups like the Neo Democrats, People Power and League of Social Democrats (Sanho Chung & Wong, 2016, p. 869). Both Scholarism and the HKFS gained reputation for leading the Umbrella Movement in 2014

²⁹ Leaders in Beijing did not initially advise on Hong Kong affairs during the first years of the handover, but started reminding Chief Executives on the “deep seated problems” in Hong Kong: first instance was in 2005 during Donald Tsang's first duty visit with then-Premier Wen Jiabao, second happened when then-Vice President Xi Jinping 2009 (P. T. Y. Cheung, 2012, pp. 326-327)

³⁰ The national legislative body of the People's Republic of China

because of their active work in rallying and organizing before the breakout, and when it broke out these organizations were seen as the responsible parts in mobilizing large numbers and bargaining with the HKSAR government (Sanho Chung & Wong, 2016, p. 874). The key members³¹ of the movement and Scholarism went to expand its platform and formed the political party Demosistō with the stated goal to “push for the city’s political and economic autonomy from the oppression of the Communist Party of China (CPC) and capitalist hegemony.” (Demosistō, 2019) – which also brings the discussion on the push for post-materialism full circle.

Values under pressure

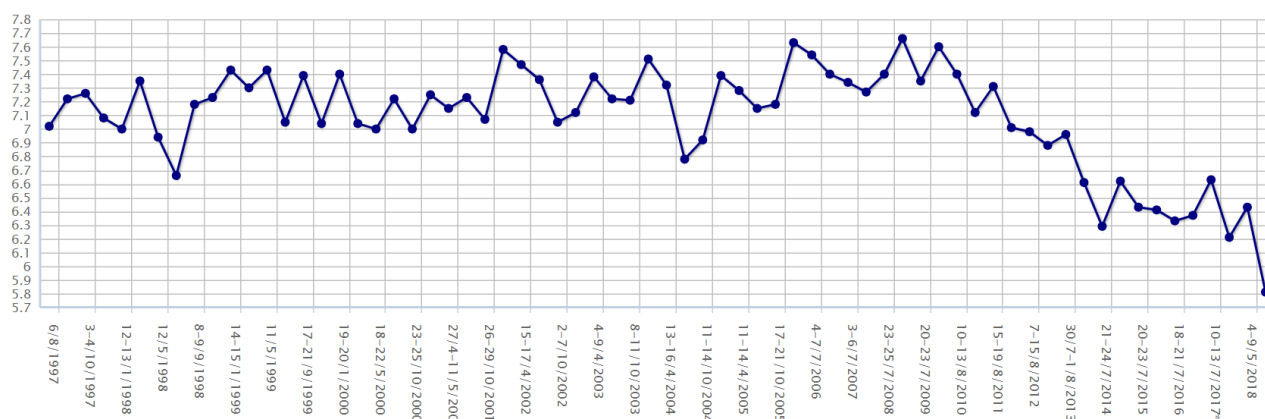
The rejection of the national education program can be seen in connection with a growing fear of Mainlandization, as it infringed on the autonomy of the “One Country, Two Systems” policy of “Hong Kong people ruling Hong Kong”. In 2004, 300 professionals issued in the press a goal to uphold the core values of human rights, democracy, rule of law and so on in the press, and they have seemingly had strong staying power, forcing the HKSAR government to enact countermeasures. For example, when the current Premier of China, Li Keqiang visited Hong Kong in August 2011, only a selected few of his activities were open to local reporters, and some reporters were denied entry by unidentified security guards. Reflecting his visit, the Press Freedom Index 2011-2012 had Hong Kong falling 20 places down to number 54 (by 2019 it has fallen to number 73) (RWB, 2019), and according to Reporters Without Borders “Hong Kong (54th) saw a sharp deterioration in press freedom in 2011 and its ranking fell sharply. Arrests, assaults and harassment worsened working conditions for journalists to an extent not previously seen, a sign of a worrying change in government policy.” (Ping & Kin-Ming, 2014, p. 1103). Also, as shown in Figure 9., since the Li visit, appraisal of freedom of the press have not recovered and started a trend towards the lowest levels seen since the polling started in 1997. The trend can also be seen in the stark contrast of the access given to the Hong Kong press upon visits from Chinese leaders, for instance when Xi Jinping visited Hong Kong in 2017 the city was put on a security lockdown, mobilizing 11,000 officers to guard Xi and first lady Peng Liyuan with the Police Public Relation Branch handling all press – for which the police were awarded for their security work (Leung, 2017; Lui, 2017). This is in stark contrast to then-General Secretary of the CCP Jiang Zemin’s visit in 2000 during the “golden age” of journalism in Hong Kong - Jiang allowed himself to take on a free press core to his subsequent annoyance³², and him shifting between Mandarin, Cantonese and English, ironically leading to the memes of “toad worship”³³(R. Cheung, 2016).

³¹ Joshua Wong, Agnes Chow and Nathan Law

³² The exchange that many of the memes are based on can be found here https://www.youtube.com/watch?time_continue=3&v=5GIj2BVJS2A&feature=emb_title

³³ This has its background in netizens comparing his looks to a toad.

Figure 9 Appraisal of Freedom of Press (8/1997-5/2019)



Source: HKUPOP accessed May 20th, 2020 from

<https://www.hkpop.hku.hk/english/popexpress/freeind/freeq58/index.html>

The police in Hong Kong also started putting more restrictions in 2011 regarding the Tiananmen candlelight memorial and the July first³⁴ protests. Furthermore, in October the same year when the Chief Executive gave his Policy Address, cameramen and reporters reported impolite behavior and blockings of taking pictures. Later that year in November followed up by the government-owned Radio Television Hong Kong firing of several radio hosts, which again was seen as controversial (Ping & Kin-Ming, 2014, p. 1103). The measures enforced against protests have led to the appraisal of freedom of procession and demonstrations following the same trend as with press freedom, which are evidently interlinked with each other. While previous protests in Hong Kong have affected the scale, it is in the aftermath of the Scholarism movement and the lead up to the Umbrella Movement that tipped both of these figures for new record lows. Leading up to the protests of 2019-2020, it is clear that Hongkongers were already seeing close held values of protesting and freedom of the press to be more in peril than ever before, and given that this is part of how they self-identify as being a Hongkonger, the response have been to voice rather than to exit.

Finally, for the elections to the District Council³⁵ in 2010, increasing fears rose due to vote rigging when dubious voter registrations after the election got uncovered by the media. Also, according to Peter Cheung there is evidence that the Liaison Office (LO) of the Central People's Government in Hong Kong played an active role the Legislative Council, Cheung notes "The LO [Liaison Office] was very active in influencing the 2008 Legislative Council election such as in coordinating different pro-government candidates behind the scene and nurturing more qualified candidates with pro-Beijing backgrounds" (P. T. Y. Cheung, 2012, p. 329). And as Ping & Kin-Ming (2014, p. 1104) notes that the same can be said for

³⁴ July first protests is an annual protest held since the British handover in 1997. They have changed in substance, but since 2003 with the introduction of Article 23, it have mostly been a call for a variety of concerns, involving democracy, protection of freedom of speech and so on.

³⁵ The District Council form the lowest political tier of elections in Hong Kong, electing members who are responsible for neighborhood issues, like transport and garbage collection etc. But these elections are fully democratic on paper and important in that sense (Gunia, 2019)

forming the outcomes of the Chief Executive elections between 2011 and 2012, the District Council, and the Legislative Council.

Generation HK

There have been numerous authors trying to describe this new generation of protests in Hong Kong, and how they differentiate both in tactics, rhetoric, and mindset in comparison to the generation who protested prior to 2010s. The journalist Ben Bland (2017) coined the term "Generation HK" in his book with the same name, see them as a pool of people with radically different backgrounds, but with the common legacy of not having much attachment to colonial Britain or today's China. Bland continues to explain that these youngsters see themselves as Hongkongers – an identity both being reinforced and threatened by Beijing's rapid expansion of influence. Though Bland received some initial criticism for over-representing activists and not surveying ordinal people (Gordon, 2017), his claims are supported by polls if we change the wording. Rather than just Beijing rapidly expanding its influence, it is a host of reasons predicated on Mainlandization that have led to discontent, lack of enthusiasm, and Hongkongers' identity being felt threatened.

The Chinese artist and activist Ai Weiwei (2020, p. ix) writes in Joshua Wong's memoirs that Wong represents a "new generation of rebel" who has a worldview not of the "established capitalist culture on profit above all else" but rather has only one demand, which is "freedom". Anthony Dapirin in his *City on Fire* (2017, p. 62) links the Umbrella Movement of 2014 as the formative protests for the young Hongkongers in decades to come energizing and politicizing the population to a record turnout in the 2016 elections in a quest for protecting their home, identity and their communities. While this is true, the protesters of "Generation HK" share many of the themes of the protesters of the 2000s, for instance during the so-called "Fishball Revolution" of 2016, they were opposing the government crackdown on unlicensed street hawkers (of whom many sold fishballs, thus the name). They came to the protection of many of the hawkers during the Lunar New Year festivities, leading them to first clash with masked men who were harassing the hawkers, and then the police, who jailed 61 people³⁶. Again, much like 2006 Star Ferry Pier, 2007 Wedding Card Street, 2008 Queens Pier protests, it has all the same in common of protecting Hong Kong's local identity (Wasserstrom, 2020, pp. 58-59).

The way they seem to differentiate is by their sense of threat of their identity, and the degree of which they are othering China – as Nathan Law, a student leader and the youngest (23 years old) lawmaker elected to the Legislative Council, expressed as his short term goals in office: "local agricultural incentives and water-purification facilities, all of which will reduce Hong Kong's dependency on the hard resources of mainland China" (Jenkins, 2016). This is exacerbated by a generation of youth lacking enthusiasm economic prospects for themselves in the Mainland. Per 2018, according to HKUPOP, about 68 percent of youth between 18 and 29 reported they distrusted Beijing, 66 percent lacked confidence in "One Country, Two Systems", compared to the age group over 50 or older of whom half trust the central government and 60 percent were confident in "One Country, Two Systems"

³⁶ Edward Leung of whom one might call «the spiritual leader» of the 2019-2020 protests for coining the slogan «Liberate Hong Kong, revolution of our times» were sentenced to six years in prison on riot charges for participating.

(J. Ma, 2018). There are also echoes of the Ah Chan country bumpkin, in how Mainlanders are viewed, for instance as Joshua Wong summarizes his first encounter with what he calls “One Country Two Systems”:

Back then, Guangzhou was still a backwater compared with Hong Kong. Internet connection was patchy and many websites were blocked. Even though people in Guangzhou spoke Cantonese like we do, they behaved differently – in Hong Kong we never squat or spit in the streets; we always queue up and wait our turn to speak to sales or service people. Not so in China. (J. Wong & Ng, 2020, p. 10)

The way that Wong turns from past to present, and how he goes on describing how different (rather than similar) the Mainland was compared to his treasured Hong Kong, parallelizes how the identity is seen through, and not despite, difference. While he assesses Japan as the “exporter of all things cool” he summarizes his generation as “Hong Kong is a city that isn’t British and doesn’t want to be Chinese, and its need to assert a distinct identity grows by the year.” (J. Wong & Ng, 2020, pp. 10-11).

Hongkongers need to be distinct by not being Chinese is exactly the point, and the way this manifests itself is through rejecting Mainlandization, which has reached new highs in terms of defining the other upon differences – that is the way Hong Kong is imagined as a community. And for many, the sense of urgency of rejecting Mainlandization is captured in the movie *Ten Years* from 2015, where an imagined Hong Kong of 2025 is filled with five narratives in an imagined Hong Kong: a taxi driver ostracized for not speaking Mandarin as the only official language; a person sacrificing by self-immolation in front of the British embassy, indoctrination; a local shop owner being harassed by Red Guard-alike figures for using the banned term “local” in his description of his eggs; a political conspiracy where a false flag is raised in order to pass a national security law; two people trying to preserve objects from homes that have been bulldozed down.³⁷ The movie ends with the quote “It is an evil time. Seek good, and not evil, that you may live” following by a provoking “already too late” fading out to be replaced by “not too late”. The movie was a low budget film, but it unexpectedly topped box office sales and contributed to creating widespread discussions. With a budget of around 500.000 thousand Hong Kong Dollars (HKD) (approximately 64 thousand \$US) the movie grossed around six million HKD (770 thousand \$US) - outperforming even *Star Wars: The Force Awakens* in Hong Kong (Carrico, 2017, pp. 3-4).

The negativity of such a perception of China also started popping up, Local Studio HK³⁸, which according to the Shanghaiist went viral, published 24 illustrations that reflected

³⁷ *Ten Years* (2015), five short films with the setting of an imagined Hong Kong in the year 2025 <https://www.imdb.com/title/tt5269560/>

³⁸ While their homepage <http://www.localstudiohk.com/> cannot be accessed at time of writing, their pictures can be found on their Facebook-page

https://www.facebook.com/pg/localstudiohongkong/photos/?ref=page_internal

Other meme’s can be found by independent users for instance here:

<https://www.instagram.com/memes.hk/?hl=en> or <https://www.instagram.com/hkmehmeh/?hl=en>.

Often reflecting police brutality, hostility towards the HKSAR government, China’s infringement and many battle scenes, some are also joking with Hong Kong burning down. But important notion is that is not always about the protests.

the negativity (C. Lau, 2018). While some of the pictures of the published pictures are factual, others are would be perceived as discrimination:

Picture 5: illustrations of certain Hongkongers differentiation with China



Source: Quartz, Annalisa Merelli (2015), accessed June 20th, 2020 from <https://qz.com/442887/how-hong-kong-is-different-from-china-in-a-series-of-offensive-stereotype-based-posters/>

This is the background for the increasing fear of Mainlandization in Hong Kong. These types of thought contagions have come to be more prevalent, and as we shall see when we discuss the protests, Hongkongers are very receptive across geographies and the internet in picking up memes.

PART 4 Summary and theoretical findings

The initial research question for this thesis was *how can the emerging Hongkonger identity be explained?* In order to answer this question, this thesis employed the method of process tracing in this thesis to trace the following hypothesizes:

- Hypothesis 1: *The emergence of a Hongkonger identity is driven in opposition to the economic rise of China*
- Hypothesis 2: *The emergence of a Hongkonger identity is driven by a desire for democracy*
- Hypothesis 3: *The emergence of a Hongkonger identity is driven by rejecting Mainlandization*

This thesis concludes that a rejection of Mainlandization is the major explanation throughout Hong Kong's history to the present. There is a red line throughout Hong Kong's history of opposing intended and unintended policies, initiatives, and interaction that reflects Mainlandization. This unifies the three hypothesizes under the umbrella of hypothesis 3, which this thesis will discuss next.

The relatively recent arrival of the population we now know as Hongkongers share the same common Chinese origin as their Mainland (mostly Guangdong) counterparts, but they are nevertheless separated by identity – which is based on sameness within and exclusion without. This became evident in the exploration of hypothesis 1, as China's growth in of itself has not caused animus, but rather the implications of the flow of goods, people, and capital. With terms like locusts, Ah Chan, anti-parallel trading, and dismay among portions of the Hong Kong population with the behavior of Mainlanders (across a spectrum of activities) they are progressively creating an ever more vile "Other", perceived to be "ruining" Hong Kong's culture and way of life. Othering has emerged due to rapid change (Chinese tourists constituting 20 percent in early 2000s to 80 percent of Hong Kong's total tourism 2018 – 51 million etc.), and this leads Hongkongers to choose one identity over the other. This gives way for the emergence of a Hongkonger identity, distancing themselves from their Mainland counterparts who are increasingly being put under one umbrella in their misdemeanors. How real this threat is, and whether or how representative it is of Mainlanders at large is not important in this thesis, as it is rather the contour of how the imagined community in Hong Kong is being imagined that is of importance. The way young Hongkongers have responded to the prospects of economic gain on the Mainland has been lacky in its enthusiasm, showing that it is not just with animus a segment of them see incoming Mainlanders to Hong Kong, but also disinterest in their role as a cooperating part of China. This is far removed from the integration goals of Tung Chee-hwa who hoped his efforts would make Hongkongers "take pride in being Chinese".

Hypothesis 2 predicates that the emerging Hongkonger identity is driven by the desire for democracy is seemingly a part of the Hongkonger identity. Throughout history, it has been mainly utilized and gathered large numbers when opposing a law or a policy proposal predicated on Mainlandization. It has been a useful tool though, as we have seen it leading to the withdrawal of the extradition bill in 2019, the 2003 national security ordinance, and the national education curriculum, but they have also been unsuccessful as with the Umbrella Movement of 2014. This suggests that the protest movement mostly functioned as a veto actor, as it can stop adverse legislative change but cannot push through changes it desires. The Umbrella Movement did however bring about a strong identity a spike in the strength of the Hongkonger identity and weakened the Chinese identity. Therefore, the desire for democracy plays an integral part, especially among the youth, but we also have to ask what is meant by democracy – is it maintaining their perceived values like a protection movement, or is it because they want genuine suffrage? A survey done early in 2020 by the centrist party Third Way of 120 protesters found that about 80 percent support "One Country, Two Systems", 45 percent believed vandalizing shops were okay as long they did not steal or loot, and 77 percent believed independence was impractical (Kang-chung, 2020). If this survey bears any merit, then it is what we earlier labeled the "old democrats" who prioritize democracy above all else, but lose on the identity issue. There is however little democratic aspirations to be seen in Hong Kong for the

prospects of spreading democracy into China, which is exacerbated by the young generation lack of enthusiasm for China, and pushing for an identity that often is “othering” China and Chinese people, causing them to rather fear, scorn, feel superior rather than promote democratic solidarity. The yearly Tiananmen vigil could be seen as a way that democratic solidarity is shown, but it might just as well also be a way for Hongkongers to psychologically distance themselves from the “other”.

There are certainly strong forces inside Hong Kong who imagines its sovereignty and would fit Benedict Anderson’s ([1983] 2006, p. 7) notion that “nations dream of being free ... The gage and emblem of this freedom is the sovereign state”. In Hong Kong’s sense, we can see these tendencies, especially with the localist movement of Chin Wan-kan, but as we saw while discussing hypothesis 1, that it was not China’s growth in itself, but the influx of Mainlanders that caused the animosity, leading to terms like locust and before that the Ah Chan country bumpkin stereotype. This is reminiscent of Renan’s notion of “race is confused with nation”, and even sharing the same origin, they are nevertheless separated by identity. Also shown in the heritage movements, the protesters were instead showing affection toward the British built Queen’s Pier and Victoria’s Harbor, while protesting and, being unenthusiastic about cooperation projects that would deepen economic integration with the Mainland. The adoption of post-materialism and the ideology of localism were something that political parties built further on, and in both movements, they often found themselves protesting Mainlandization projects. This has also worked in pushing Hongkongers towards preferring a single identity over the other throughout its years of rapid change “the more rapidly people perceived social change the more they preferred a single identity over dual identities” (Kim & Ng, 2008, p. 236).

Finally, the claims of the social psychologist Marilynn Brewer in 1999 seemed prophetic, namely that when Hong Kong’s identity was threatened, they were more inclined to choose to fight rather than flight. The crippling of Hong Kong’s identity and their newfound values to adhere to that identity, which this thesis has attributed to a rejection of Mainlandization. Hypothesis 3 emerges as the strongest hypothesis, but it also subsumes important aspects of hypothesis 1 and hypothesis 2. Let us now take a look at some ways Mainlandization has been rejected and how certain Hongkongers are identifying themselves and the “other” during the 2019-2020 protests.

The emergence of a Hongkonger identity

April 2019, the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (HKSAR) government formally introduced a proposal for updating its extradition laws, allowing it to consider requests to extradite criminals from any country, including China, Taiwan, and Macau where such arrangements were not in place. The official backdrop for the proposed bill was a Hong Kong citizen who was accused of committing murder in Taiwan in 2018 but had since returned to Hong Kong – and thus could not be extradited back to Taiwan in order to help out with the investigation (J. Li, 2019). The bill faced massive criticism from the get-go, and Hong Kong’s Chief Executive, Carrie Lam, was accused of being opportunistic. The Hong Kong government failed to realize the depth of the distrust Hongkongers had towards the legal system on the Mainland, resulting in the largest protest Hong Kong has ever seen, with an estimate of 1 million people taking to the streets on June 9th, 2019. Lam after initially saying that she would not budge, experienced a subsequent protest on June 12th that

turned violent, and then Lam finally came out June 15th and said the extradition bill was to be suspended, but then the next day, an estimated 2 million people took to the streets (G. Cheung & Lam, 2020). This time, they were demanding more than just a withdrawal, but also a commission of inquiry into alleged police brutality, retracting the classification of protesters as “rioters”, amnesty for those arrested during the protest, and dual universal suffrage for the Legislative Council and the Chief Executive election – this has been known as the “five demands” (T.-k. Wong, 2019). In the time of writing (June 2020), there is a new National Security Law in the process of being drafted by the Beijing government, likely to be passed in August or September. Carrie Lam already publicly said that she will cooperate, so the law could be introduced by decree in Hong Kong - by-passing Hong Kong’s Legislative Council due to Annex III³⁹ in the Basic Law – as an addition to existing laws (Tsoi, 2020).

These two laws are however about one year apart, and in the meantime, social unrest had continued, and even before National Security Law of 2020 was proposed the unrest in Hong Kong seemed to be in limbo and protesters were contemplating their next course of action, even with COVID-19 restrictions (Ibrahim, 2020). In its period of limbo, the protests morphed, debating who is the villain and victim, their Chief Executive⁴⁰, Chinese people, the CCP, and China-affiliated organizations and businesses have overwhelmingly been labeled as the villain.

There have certainly been many protesters during 2019-2020 who have accepted great risk, as thousands have been arrested, and many more have been to teargas and physical violence. We see mostly young people being subjected to arrests, risking their future prospects and multiple years in prison for the worst offenders, willing to “risk it all” in order to “protect Hong Kong”. It is not too far off to look to Benedict Anderson’s ([1983] 2006, p. 7) observation that the imagined fellowship of the nation generates colossal sacrifices, seen throughout the generations of people willingly dying for the cause of the nation. Though many people are not dying in Hong Kong, multiple protesters, especially those who are the most dedicated on the frontlines – of whom has been a part of a resistance that have mainstream support – say they are willing to die for the movement (Khan & Fan, 2019; Leung & Lo, 2019; McNicholas, 2019; Perper, 2019). The dedication can also be seen by some of older generation of activists, like the 71-year-old billionaire and activist Jimmy Lai, who in an interview was asked why he would not “accept Boris Johnson’s offer” and live out his days in England, instead of toiling on, unto which he teary-eyed replied:

Fight on, fight on. Now's the time, not the time for safety. This is a time for sacrifice. I came here with one daughter, all I have, wonderful family, a Mrs., with good

³⁹ See HKSAR government’s page: https://www.basiclaws.gov.hk/en/basiclaws/annex_3.html

⁴⁰ Her approval rating fell with more than 60 percent according to Hong Kong Public Opinion Research Institute surveys, from 47.4 out of 100 points in February 2019 to 18.1 in February 2020, but her handling of the COVID-crisis enabled her to climb to 25.5 points in April 2020 (G. Cheung & Lam, 2020)

*health. All this, this place gave me. I can't leave. I will have to fight to the last day. I'm not afraid.*⁴¹

Protesters also seem to celebrate the notion of Hong Kong not being China, and have expressed it through the of their own ("Glory to Hong Kong") while booing the Chinese national anthem, most famously under soccer matches (H. Leung, 2019). Protesters have actively targeted Chinese businesses and local chains that have criticized the protests (Low & Liu, 2019), and apologized when attacking what they presumed were Mainland-owned businesses like the Shanghai Commercial Bank (a Hong Kong company) or the bubble tea chain Yifang (Taiwanese) (Wai, 2019). Chinese students and workers in Hong Kong are also actively targeted, and Chinese students have been offered shelters by next-door Shenzhen authorities during the highest periods of tension (Mitchell & Liu, 2019).

The way Mainlanders are recognized is usually through their usage of Mandarin, and a piece of common advice for Mainlanders in Hong Kong has been "not to speak Mandarin when we're out in the street" (Huang, 2019). This is not without reason, as a Chinese J.P. Morgan employee experienced when he tried to tell the protesters "we are all Chinese" in Mandarin, which in turn led to him being attacked.⁴² A mob also surrounded a Taiwanese reporter speaking Mandarin, but in this case scattered after he showed his Taiwanese identity card.⁴³ Another incident happened to the Chinese-American The New Yorker reporter Jiayang Fan⁴⁴ in September 2019, accused of being a "commie agent" and a "yellow thug" upon speaking Mandarin (A. J. Li, 2019). Fan noted that her Chongqing accent to her Mandarin made a group of peaceful grow suspicious of her, and she had to prove that she was an American journalist by pulling up her passport and credentials, but in the process of doing that, a tight group had surrounded her – certain that she was a Communist Agent – and did first scatter when she started recording them (J. Fan, 12.09.2019). There are also discussions between Chinese netizens on the degree of politeness in Hong Kong, coming as a tourist, they ranked using English first, then Cantonese and finally Mandarin.⁴⁵ This development is underreported, but it is obviously a thing people are aware of as one browse through discussion forums.⁴⁶ The insistence of using Cantonese is an action proclaiming the Hongkonger identity, but attacking Mandarin, which most of the young

⁴¹ The transcripts of the interview, published June 8th 2020, accessed June 9th, 2020 from, transcripts found here: <https://www.hoover.org/research/jimmy-lai-last-best-hope-saving-democracy-hong-kong-1> and video found here <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GeaTPZB8h6E>

⁴² Videoclip about a Chinese J.P. Morgan employee responding to the protesters saying, "we are all Chinese!" (我们都是中国人) and then being attacked, accessed from YouTube, June 20th, 2020 from: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0rfVIZrHx1c>

⁴³ Chinese newsite reporting on a Taiwanese reporter being confronted by protesters believing he is a Mainlander, accessed June 20th 2020 from: https://www.guancha.cn/politics/2019_09_06_516772.shtml?fbclid=IwAR2mrUVVAfj3LTDjxs3zzZrCYzKGdW7AtAoSFG37VxUjcO6SEbDtwW9NTwk

⁴⁴ See Business Insider for her tweets, accessed June 20th 2020 from: <https://www.businessinsider.com/hong-kong-protests-racism-chinese-american-journalist-2019-9?r=US&IR=T>

⁴⁵ Advice on how to tactically behave in Hong Kong as a Mainlander, accessed June 20th, 2020 from: <https://www.ettoday.net/news/20170929/1021603.htm>

⁴⁶ Netizens discussing the problem of people speaking Mandarin in Hong Kong, accessed June 20th, 2020 from: https://www.reddit.com/r/HongKong/comments/beexjm/racism_towards_mainland_chinese_in_hong_kong/

people are fluent in, is a direct rejection of their Chinese national identity. Kai-chi Leung, a professor at the Chinese University of Hong Kong, noted: "People don't distinguish between different types of mainlanders," (Su, 2019), which has the unfortunate effect of putting all Mainlanders into one basket, not being able to distinguish from Mainlanders within China, and Chinese-looking Mandarin speakers. Hong Kong is today not a society based on a silent majority, but rather a terrified minority of Chinese Mandarin speakers.

The animus has also in some cases reached the level that if one interacts with, or uses the opportunities on the Mainland for one's own gain, one might also be excluded, as the 32-year-old Hong Kong-born Peter Yuan experienced as he founded a startup in Panyu (a booming district of Guangzhou): "My buddies from school in Hong Kong are no longer talking to me since the protests broke out last summer and I can't tell them how much the mainland has changed," but had to rather contemplate that "They have blacklisted me [on Facebook] and I don't think they would ever come visit me in China." (Rui, 2020). The political distress in Hong Kong is obviously very polarizing, but increasingly so, more actors are being drawn into the turmoil, as users of LIHKG (the online platform protesters use to organize) developed two apps for tracking the political position of stores, restaurants, and products (K. Leung, 2019a). This has come to be known as the "yellow" and "blue" economy, where yellow is supporting the protests and blue are seen as supporting the government or police. Getting a blue label can include boycotting and sometimes getting vandalized, while the yellow labels have often shown support for the protests (serving free meals or having "Hongkongers add oil!" on the recipe) (Sun & Yau, 2020).

The emphasis and symbolism surrounding the rise of the Hongkonger identity are today hyper-charged by the internet, making Benedict Anderson's initial claim of nationalism being elite-driven less useful in the case of Hong Kong. Elites do have a role to play, but today we see examples of a Boston-Emerson College student, Francis Hui, making headlines and slogans for the protesters from her initial article in a student-run newspaper with the title: "I am from Hong Kong, not China" (Hui, 2019). She captures the pride they have in their identity and the distaste for the other "Myself and many people from Hong Kong take pride in being somewhat politically separated from China, which is governed by the Chinese Communist Party that notoriously censors the internet and imprisons dissident people in China". On the other hand, this distaste is interesting because without meddling in the law-making, China has not intervened directly much in Hong Kong – the murky case of the kidnapping of a bookkeeper in Hong Kong and similar alleged kidnapping (Hunt & Joseph, 2016), but publicly only a clean-up of bricks in the streets by the Chinese military stationed in Hong Kong in 2019 (Hollingsworth & Lewis, 2019). It is rather how China is perceived, the lack of transparency, having a completely different world view, that fuels the tension. For the protesters themselves, their efforts have been rewarded with opposition candidates winning in 17 out of 18 in the recent district election (BBC, 2019), with a record voter turnout of 2.9 million voters (out of approx. 4.1 million eligible voters) (Khan, 2019), which indicates that protests have made its mark and a majority of the voters aligning with the broad theme of the protest movement. However, with the looming National Security Law, Hongkongers will again be using voice, but if it is enacted, then we will see whether exit is chosen, or a fiercer response will be adhered to.

But what would have happened if China actually decided to directly intervene? This thesis would predict, obviously, that the distaste for China at large would increase, no matter if it would be a "positive" intervention. As the Hongkonger identity is being more clearly defined

in opposition to the Chinese identity, more incidents will happen, and this will go on in tandem with the Mainlandization practices. Hong Kong is in a need for a disintegration.

Suggestions for further research:

This thesis could easily have been expanded upon and could have become a book. The framework of analysis can be extended to the following themes:

- Mainlandization of Macao – why has Macao been much more peaceful than Hong Kong while also experiencing Mainlandization?
- Rejecting Mainlandization in Taiwan – in Taiwan, people are increasingly rejecting their Chinese identity vis-à-vis a Taiwanese identity.
- Mainlandization abroad – study of Chinese tourism in for example Kyoto, which experiences overtourism, or study how overseas Hongkongers are responding to increased Mainlandization in Hong Kong
- “Becoming Singaporean” – how strong is Singaporean identity vis-à-vis their Chinese identity among Singaporeans of Chinese origin? How did people of Chinese origin become Singaporean?
- Mainlandization of Shanghai – Shanghainese are much richer their inland counterparts, they speak the distinct language of Shanghainese (very different from Mandarin), and Shanghainese are perceived to be prideful. Can we see similar trends in Shanghai? (data might be hard to gather in this case though)

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