

A Hong Kong Critique of Identity: Belonging and Becoming in the Aberrant Post-Colony

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Abstract

Hong Kong is undergoing a drastic cultural-political transformation in which moments of people's protests of the ruling regime are re-articulated in the history of the post-colony. As resistance against statist re-inscription takes place on the streets and amid institutional transformations, "Hong Kongers" fight for freedom and stand up in massive movements against identity encroachment by the power bloc. Struggling to belong among a desirable community, they stand by their lived imagination for the collective shaken by disjointed modes of subject formation. This paper probes the complex historical issues of belonging and exclusion in the context of contemporary ideological and ethnic contestations. As the eclectic politics of affect permeates ethnicity amid deep-rooted contradictions, subjectivity takes shape on the fractured landscape of postcolonial nationhood—with Hong Kong becoming Chinese. This aberrant formation displaces a trajectory of the "Hong Kong local" with identity traces ostensibly mapped vis-a-vis the national-global regime under transnational capitalism.

Keywords: identity, postcoloniality, Hong Kong, belonging and becoming, resistance movement, politics of affect

Hong Kong is undergoing a drastic transformation in which certain critical moments of popular protest of the changing regime are being re-written in the history of the post-colony. Acts of critique and resistance engage Hong Kongers today in the discourse and practice of intense identity struggles, which take the form of massive, widespread, and persistent counter-interventions across a broad spectrum of the civic and oppositional discourse. As social unrest gets entangled in cultural dissensus and political resistance, struggle against the all-pervasive statist encroachments on core values, individual freedoms and territorial autonomy as promised by The Basic Law of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (SAR) takes place on the streets and against institutions of various kinds, including crucially that of the police. This paper draws on the ramifications of the current resistance to such encroachments by the Beijing-led power bloc and its authoritarian rule before and after the 2014 Umbrella Movement.¹ My task is to probe the multiple dimensions of Hong Kongers' collective sense of belonging in the wider context of contemporary political, ideological, and sociocultural contestations. With a critical account of aspects of the resistance movement, I aim to provide a cultural-political understanding of the local identity struggles and their implications for the shaping of an emergent postcolonial subject-position. I argue that one obvious and significant outcome of the ongoing critique so far has been the concrete shaping of Hong Kongers as a people.

Hong Kong Becoming China: The Will to Resist

There is little doubt that the latest historic currents of struggle by the Hong Kong people in their opposition to the amendment of the Extradition Law were initially rooted in fear—the fear of being sent to China for trial under its very dubious and unreliable judiciary system.² This upsurge of initial but far-reaching fear is rooted in people's deep concern for the imminent loss of freedom if the law is passed. And when the government refused to listen to the widespread concerns and objections to the bill, fear soon led to anger and even more widespread discontent and distrust of the "One Country, Two System" model under

which the Hong Kong SAR polity has been administered since 1997.³ Since early June 2019, after a million, and then two million people marched on the streets to oppose the law, the massive civic protests against the authoritarian regime (both locally and in Beijing) engulfed all sectors of society. These protests have been made possible by the arousal of a shared consciousness of common identity, which in turn has helped shape a collective subjectivity through every act and setback in popular resistance. And the fight is ongoing, in the face of Beijing's latest move to implement a National Security Law for Hong Kong in May 2020 despite strong local and international objections, when the world is still busy with various efforts to contain the coronavirus pandemic that broke out in January 2020 in Wuhan, China. Since 2014, the continuous existence of a widespread social movement has helped to build solidarity among Hong Kongers, especially between the so-called frontline, "militant" protestors and the relatively mild, "peaceful" ones.⁴ Indeed, these two "groups" have since come to be understood not so much as opposite types of people in resistance rather than as different but complementary positions taken by protestors in the ongoing movement. This set the ground for the dynamic formation of common values and goals, condensed in the Five Demands of the people, as well as a deep sense of commitment to becoming an indispensable part of the whole: Hong Kong as homeland.⁵ As a corollary, the negative affect of fear, panic, anger, and abhorrence (as embodied in one of the first slogans "NO! No extradition to China!") soon transformed into the unprecedented assertion of a strong collective presence of Hong Kong identity, both online and offline. For the first time, people see themselves prominently and substantially as one—the people of Hong Kong (*Heung-gong yan*, or Hong Kongers).

The simple (and most satisfactory) example of this is the crisp interpellation *Ga yau* (literally, "Add oil!"), expressed as an empowering imperative almost everywhere and anywhere in the movement, whether online, in the shopping malls or on the streets.⁶ This popular call to identity, "Hong Kongers, add oil!" has been the most widely shared slogan in the civil society, and across borders—or was, until the government's enactment of the anti-Mask ordinance on October 4, when the call to *Faan*

kong (“Resist!”) took its place as the most pertinent collective response to the interpellation on the streets of Hong Kong.⁷ A distinctive feature in the dominant discourse and emergent practices of intervention is the discrimination of identity rooted in the experience as well as in the politics of locality. How did the theme of local identity, associated with spatial demarcations, take shape in the context of (post-)colonial changes? What politics of identity has been at play in the process of place-identity construction leading to the formation of a mode of belonging to the local as home?

Crucial in this turn of events was the indiscriminate terrorist attack on protestors and passers-by alike by men in white t-shirts at the Yuen Long metro station on July 21, 2019. In light of the bizarre, extraordinary and prolonged absence of any police during this live transmitted attack, the apparent collusion between police and gangsters (known locally as the “black/triad society”) became a daily threat to both the security of social life and the integrity of what constitutes the core values and prevailing way of life in Hong Kong.⁸ For when the personal safety and the freedom of ordinary residents can no longer be assured in urban public spaces, the average resident believes that life can no longer be the same for the local people.⁹ The recognition that such blatant acts of corruption have come to intervene in ordinary civic liberties poses severe danger to what people see as their home, their place of abode and their source of identity. This nightmarish event has become a watershed in the history of Hong Kong, with people from all walks of life condemning not only the brutality of the police force but its likely collusion with gangsters in the excessive, illegal use of violence on protestors and bystanders alike (before, during and after possible arrests, if there are any).¹⁰ This marks a significant turning point in the radical resistance against authoritarian postcolonial rule, which has gone beyond the amendment bill for extradition to China to become a fundamental crisis of cultural-political identity and survival.¹¹

Right after the incident, prominent media commentator and China watcher Siu-To Poon put the acute situation most pertinently in the vivid context of systemic fear:

When a government must resort to the triad society to handle its people, it is evident that it has fallen very low—to prefer sharing power with gangsters to giving people the power they deserve. It follows that the triad society [or gangsters] would become more active and blatant in its exercise of power, which eventually emerge from the underground. When law enforcers become gangsters, there will be no rule of law whatsoever. The civilized society gradually loses its color and becomes only black (triad society). This is what life in China is like! (My translation)¹²

No doubt Hong Kong people cannot bear to see their homeland being destroyed and turned into something they utterly despise, something they are opposed to, something they cannot tolerate. And yet the failures of a responsive government and effective governance have led to popular shock, despair, and outrage, leaving many with the belief that there exist blatant acts of police-gangster collusion which they consider to have been captured under the flood of the media spotlight that no ordinary person could have otherwise imagined. Such terror has fundamentally affected the normal public life of the citizens, insofar as it reminds them of the police presence. To date, nobody can comprehend or tolerate the horrific scenario of police allowing, or indeed deploying, gangsters to beat up black-clad protestors and normal passengers in a metro station in front of live cameras. This, in turn, led people to further consolidate their resistance against state-sanctioned brutality in defence of Hong Kong's cultural formation built on the backbone of a relatively free, just, and lawful society. Hence, the latest, widely supported resistance to *becoming* Chinese is aligned to the critique of identity to which individual citizens are committed. This locality is where the inhabitants of the community are situated and, by implication, is why people will *not* sacrifice the place, the environment, and the everyday world they inhabit. Thus, the lived space of freedom is fundamental for the local people whose core values they can uphold in everyday practices—or they used to think. In the protests we find today, this allegiance to locality is strong among protestors who are determined to cling to the community of values

Hong Kongers live by. Hence, since June 2019, as the backbone cultural formation has been put under threat, the positionality of local subjects has been re-articulated: the interpellation of “Hong Kong” can never be the same and the social performance of “Hong Kong-ness” is being re-appreciated by the population at large.

Belonging to Boon-Tou: “I’m a Hong Konger!”

Pre-dating the first massive demonstration of over one million people on June 9, overseas college student Frances Hui’s loud cry that “I’m from Hong Kong!” sent a firm call for personal and collective identification throughout the international media. The incident that snowballed after Hui was challenged about her identity was reported in high profile by *The Washington Post*. According to the report, the incident was triggered by the casual question “Where are you from?” posed to Hui by an “inquisitive fellow passenger” on a bus in Boston:

When she eventually replied “Hong Kong,” the man started to get aggressive, Hui recounted. He insisted that she should define herself as “from China”—which was handed control of the former British colony in 1997.

“He kept telling me, ‘You are Chinese, you need to fix your identity,’” Hui, a junior at Emerson College, said in an interview. “I felt really insulted. Identity is really personal. It is my thing.”

Hui penned a column at Emerson’s student paper, titled “I am from Hong Kong, not China.” She opened with the line: “I am from a city owned by a country I don’t belong to.”

It was soon followed by an intense and, at times, threatening backlash from mainland Chinese students at her college.¹³

Threats to individuals who chose to hold on to a Hong Kong identity have become common in different cities across many countries, where people associated with Hong Kong have come out to support their fellow citizens back home. In contrast, the Chinese protestors against the Hong Kong people have proclaimed: “Those who infringe on our Chinese-ness-

nationhood, wherever you are you must be gotten rid of!” drawing on a line by Wu Jing in *Wolf Warrior II* (2017). The gulf between the opposing groups has grown wider than ever. The division is dynamic, not least in the sense that it drives the weak or marginal side—the Hong Kongers—to stand firm together, and often with active identification by many in overseas locations. Dressed in an iconic black t-shirt (carrying the message, “I am a Hong Konger”) at a New York rally to support Hong Kong’s fight against the extradition law, Hui showed up to speak and called on fellow protestors and supporters from all over the world to “Defend Hong Kong!”

This latest wave of Hong Kong identity struggles has taken on momentum amid attempts by Beijing and the obedient Hong Kong government to control the territory tighter than ever for their own political motives. Among other things, the result is the consolidation among people of a strong sense of identifying with Hong Kongers, by upholding local interests, concerns, and values instead of markedly “Chinese” ones. The use of the term “local” (*boon-tou*, or *bentou*) can be traced back to the 2000s when Local Action led a powerful resistance campaign to oppose the demolition of Star Ferry Pier and Queen’s Pier.¹⁴ Since then, localist campaigns have spearheaded various currents of activism, though morale had dropped after the imprisonment following the Mongkok “Fishball Revolution” in 2016 of the charismatic student leader Edward Leung, the original creator of the now famous slogan “Reclaim (Liberate) Hong Kong; the Revolution of Our Times.”¹⁵ Notably too, former legislator Wai-Ching Yau put up a banner with the five English words “Hong Kong is NOT China” during her swearing-in session at the Legislative Council. The incident eventually led to her being “DQ” (Dis-Qualified), but that slogan has likewise remained popular since, drawing much international attention.¹⁶

Anti-China sentiment has been strong among the young and restless, sometimes with a tint of rightist populism. In 2014, those calling themselves the localist faction (*boon-tou pai*) initiated a series of “anti-locust” street actions in loud, localized community campaigns to urge mainland tourists to “go back to China.”¹⁷ The protest statement “Hong Kong is NOT China” has in the recent currents of resistance gained

widespread consent by a significant majority of the Hong Kong people supporting the movement. One should note that the slogan, originally proclaimed in English, does not so much affirm that “Hong Kong is not a part of China” as to stress the *difference* between Hong Kong and China, with the underlying tenet that Hong Kongers are categorically different from mainlanders (*daluren*). Strongly suggestive of the high degree of autonomy promised by The Basic Law, Hong Kong’s mini-constitution, the slogan is distinctive of contemporary localism with its aggressive resistant tactics and strategies.¹⁸ Although the formation of local consciousness and discourse in the territory must be traced back at least a decade to the moment when critical concerns on identity and locality, such as New Territories development, (post)colonial subjectivity, sexuality, and belonging, have begun to shape contemporary social agenda, “localism” in Hong Kong here stands “for a group with a high sense of anti-China sentiment and calling for either curbs on Beijing’s intervention or independence for Hong Kong.”¹⁹ Understood in the context of the dichotomy increasingly registered in the Chinese vis-à-vis Hong Kong popular identity, the embedded antagonism involves as much exclusionary acts as confrontational tactics of discrimination, with or without the implication of physical force or the concept of territorial independence. The dynamics of this identity politics articulates antagonism in the sense of the belonging of the local people, especially among the younger generations, whether or not they can be identified as populist versions of the “localist.”²⁰ Meanwhile, all over the world, the Chinese mainlanders’ response to the Hong Kong movement against the Extradition Law, not least among the so-called “little pinkies” (*xiao fenghong*) has added to the support by many non-Chinese people across the world for the Hong Kong cause.²¹ The support is typified by calls such as “Hong Kong Stay Strong,” to which the little pinkies have retorted with the four-letter word “CNMB” (in Putonghua), waving the PRC national flag (as in Toronto on August 20, 2019). Some mainlanders have urged the Chinese leadership (Chinese Communist Party) to keep the island (*dao*) of Hong Kong (the territory) but not its inhabitants (*ren*, the people)—to retain “only the city, not the people”—a strategy that has been taken up by some powerful political forces in the Chinese regime.

Indeed, the CCP's alleged scheme to "dilute" Hong Kong-ness is not seen by experts as a new strategy.²² Since at least 1997, the larger Chinese move has been to retain the place known as Hong Kong, but not necessarily its people, who identify themselves to be thoroughly and authentically Hong Kongers in the 2019 "revolution" of the times. Grounded in the cultural uprising of the 2000s led by the so-called post-80s generation, what Wing-Sang Law marks as the third wave of local consciousness has pioneered a path-breaking, non-essentialist form of critical local activism advocating "a new, post-materialist value system."²³ Driven by a thread of cosmopolitanism tied to situated commitments to the rights and values of an open and just society, the resultant *boon-tou* culture for the Hong Kong locals clearly aligns with "openness, diversity, transnationalism and [a] capacity for self-reflection."²⁴ This articulation of Hong Kong identity, when posited in contradistinction to nationalism, has effectively shaped a contemporary version of "localness."²⁵ Law observes that such "localness" does not submit to "Sinocentric nationalism," while it adheres to "the potential of the diversity, hybridity and subversive tendency of Hong Kong culture."²⁶ Across the generations, the postcolonial subjects strive to handle the dire situation of Hong Kong they now live in and live with through the mediation of critical *affective states* including deep personal engagement with fear, anxiety, anger, distress, agitation, despair, frustration, yearning, dedication, solidarity, and hope.

The Postcolonial Distance: Affect and Identity

The idea of Hong Kong being Chinese has met global challenges in nuanced ways. The social movement that first emerged from the fight to preserve Star Ferry and Queen's Pier in 2006 and 2007, respectively, has led to anti-urban renewal activism at Lee Tung Street in the Wanchai neighborhood, as well as to the anti-Express Rail Link protests in 2009.²⁷ As the world came to sympathize with the Hong Kong cause from the beginning of the anti-China extradition movement in early June 2019, Albert Chen, a conservative and a local member of Basic Law Consultative Committee, described it as "a perfect storm" generated

by the inevitable invocation of wayward forces in the system. In 2019, the proposed Extradition Amendment Bill, in Chen's opinion, would put the people of Hong Kong at risk of being extradited to face trial in the mainland whose legal system was not trusted by many Hong Kong people, who doubted whether it would provide a fair trial for the accused. However, given that the HKSAR government is appointed by and constitutionally subordinate to the central government in Beijing, it is difficult to see how the HKSAR government can reject any rendition request from Beijing that complies with the requirements of the Fugitive Offenders Ordinance and the Bill. Hence, as far as mainland China is concerned, there is in practice no difference between the adoption of the *ad hoc* rendition scheme in the Bill and the conclusion of a long-term rendition agreement of general application.²⁸

For the pro-Beijing law professor at the University of Hong Kong, the movement to oppose the Extradition Law illustrates "the peculiar and possibly unique feature of Hong Kong's semi-democratic political system, in which civil liberties (particularly freedom of speech, press, association, and assembly) and civil society flourish, and yet the government is not democratically elected and accountable to the people."²⁹ Worldwide, the inadequacies of the mainland Chinese legal system are rarely disputed; hence, concerns for the Bill are genuinely disturbing not only among Hong Kong residents, but anyone who may pass by the city in transit. The idea that inhabitants and visitors in Hong Kong will be subject to the legal and political practices of the mainland regime may generate imminent fear and real panic. And such fear and panic are in no way new either: after the establishment of the People's Republic of China, but during the era of British rule, the communist ideal impressed some young people with "progressive" thoughts in Hong Kong. But after the horrific riots of 1967 (when PRC Red Guards had such a direct impact on anti-colonialists in Hong Kong), the still colonized Hong Kong people—mostly refugees from the mainland and their children—found themselves fully alienated by the Communist cause.³⁰ After the Cold War, with postcoloniality re-articulated to the history of identity politics and civil liberties in the contemporary context binding the city once again to the mainland, Hong Kong's transformation to the odd political

entity of the SAR under PRC worked as a sharp marker of difference. The postcolonial gap has closed in for a systemic articulation of the two distinct jurisdictions and social habitats. This subject of terror invokes inevitably a crisis of subjectivity.

Political commentator and scholar Joseph Lian offers an account of three key historic moments in the formation of modern Hong Kong subjectivity in relation to what might be characterized as the people's affective *distance* from China.³¹ Initially, caught between East and West, Hong Kong in the 1950s was the place (a colony no doubt) for the rejuvenation (*fu-hsing*) of traditional Chinese culture. The neo-Confucian New Asia School opposed Marxism fiercely for the latter's total denial of tradition. In Lian's view, when the PRC restored the country to some peace and order after the upheavals of the Cultural Revolution, the New Asia neo-Confucianists saw the CCP reverting merely to the residual roots of Chinese feudalism. The Cultural China discourse thus formulated adopted a strong version of the anti-PRC cultural movement, not least in the cultural-historical landscape of subject formation in Hong Kong.³² As Hong Kong became the last guardian of Chinese tradition, the 1967 riots instigated by the underground CCP faction in Hong Kong prompted the emergence of the *Ming Pao Monthly* for a restoration of a genuine Hong Kong cultural space. One may now see this historical phase of rejuvenation in the light of the Maoist trauma confronting the Chinese people across the border. Instead of the preservation of Chinese-ness (traditionalism, culturalism), migrants from north of the Lo Wu border found that they had to cope with a refugee mentality then, and upheld the belief that having left China behind, people must manage to find refuge in a place which offered a secure environment for earning a livelihood, hard as it might be. Anxiety and concerns for what was left behind notwithstanding, Hong Kong could not be like China again, something these refugees fully understood through their escape from the motherland.

Meanwhile, after the pro-Cultural Revolution 1967 riots, Hong Kong became, for the first time, a self-identifiable "home" to local inhabitants.³³ Local industry took off, and the local culture grew to become significant sources of identity formation. This growth continued throughout the

1980s and 1990s, with the new phase marked by the *Hong Kong Economic Journal* founded by Lam Hang-Chi. For Lian, the threat that Hong Kong needed to handle was not only colonialism and its consequences, but the threat of its contemporary survival—an “existential threat” that shapes and informs Hong Kong people’s situated anxiety of being real.³⁴ Local consciousness has thus taken root, shaped and embedded in the sociocultural framework in which the (post)colonial enclave was turned into a politically neutral space. As Law also reiterates, however, decolonization *never* happened, nor was it put on any political agenda of the time as a significant issue. Hence, the subsequent power transition marked by 1997 “did not nurture a Hong Kong identity with concrete political values to accompany the image of the ‘urban economic people.’”³⁵ Consequentially, the politics of the transition period “praised the plebeian citizen characteristics of flexibility, quick wit and rejection of traditional norms, gradually developing a new self-image for Hong Kong people and a sense of pride and confidence based on the ‘economic person’ identity, opportunism and pragmatism.”³⁶

Disjointed Modes of Subjectivity: Nationalist, Anti-Colonial, Localist

Under this context, it is not surprising that growing up in Hong Kong, the post-war generations had little experience or understanding of the Chinese nation. Rather, the desire for autonomy gave rise to a growing sense of belonging and a sense that they had obligations to the place they lived in. Struggling to belong to a desirable community, the people stood by their lived imagination for the collective shaken nonetheless by “disjointed modes” of subject formation. In this specific sense, despite the 1997 transition, Hong Kong as a community and a polity was yet to be de-colonized:

The post-handover generation’s pursuit of a sense of belonging forms the essence of the local consciousness of the new generation. Local consciousness, as such, takes the following as its “other”: global capitalism, the political economic system, government-

business collusion and developer hegemony that monopolises Hong Kong's political lifeblood, and the state machine and establishment with vested interests that controls Hong Kong from miles away.³⁷

The 1990s witnessed the aftermath of the 1989 Tiananmen Massacre, giving rise to Law's second wave of local consciousness. Ironically, then, "the cultural sector saw an explosion of passion for self-reflecting, exploring and consolidating local cultures, as well as a solemn rethinking of the Hong Kong identity."³⁸ "Hong Kong, World City of Asia" became, once again, a central slogan, even for the local postcolonial SAR government. There is, to be sure, a clear trajectory for this line of disjointed development of city-identity since the days of colonial rule in the post-War period, when the colonial government "built a sense of belonging as a 'Hong Kong resident' through collective entertainment programs such as youth dances and the 'Hong Kong Festival.'"³⁹ Such a curious turn signifies for the localist, anti-nationalist subjects today an unexpected echo of the radical thought that drove the anti-imperialist youthful resistance in Hong Kong of the 1970s.

Youthful Drive and Antagonism

As Koon-Chung Chan suggests: "The word 'local' did not have a coherent meaning until the post-war local-born baby boomers came of age in the 1970s, when the identity of Hongkongers, in contrast to the mainlanders, was minted."⁴⁰ Before the issue of Hong Kong's return to Chinese sovereignty came to the forefront in the early 1980s, people were not keen to define local culture vis-à-vis the mainland culture.⁴¹ Subsequently, the way in which British colonial rule ended here did not naturally set the path for an identifiable, non-colonized, local culture to emerge for its people, much less a strong sense of political identification as we began to see in the past decade. But one would equally be blinded to "presume an essentialist Chinese culture, traditional or contemporary" in Hong Kong, even though, as Chan reminds us, elementary and secondary school students alike "were fed a fair dose of canonical classical texts."⁴² Thus,

ironically, Hong Kong has “out-Chinesed contemporary mainland China, rendering the idea of Chineseness problematic.”⁴³

Surely, that “Hong Kong is more Chinese than China” is no longer valid, even as one of the mildest set of beliefs held by the local people today. But “cultural” distinctions of the sort have been superseded in the years since Hong Kong came under Chinese rule again in 1997, if sovereignty and governmental rule are used as the sole criteria. When the SAR Chief Executive Carrie Lam insisted on pushing forward the Extradition Law amendment in spite of massive public protests, she neglected the strong views of people across many sectors that the proposed law would allow China to extradite unwanted individuals (“fugitives”) from Hong Kong to be tried under the Chinese legal system on the mainland. Indeed, the majority of Hong Kongers who supported the 2019 protests of Carrie Lam administration were angry because they believed she had betrayed and negated the core values cherished by Hong Kong society set in place in the 1960s. These are values that had been nurtured and developed over the last few decades, and firmly and publicly endorsed as the local people’s values since the One Country, Two Systems model started to fall apart at the beginning of the new millennium. Even the mainstream pro-business press took the view that Lam had betrayed Hong Kong and its people, especially the youth, in what she has done.⁴⁴ Asking, “Why are our young people antagonistic toward the country?” the reputable civic and religious leader Rev. Tin-Yau Yuen, summarizes pertinently what today’s youth care for:

1. It is not that the Hong Kong youth are antagonistic against the country (*guojia*); it is only because the country does not love her people. It is not a fact that they do not know the situation of the country.
2. The Hong Kong youth love Hong Kong; they only detest those in power who have betrayed Hong Kong. They advocate “localism” because they see such darkness in China. But they love this place they live in—they want to be able to live under One Country, Two Systems, with social core values, justice, fairness, rule of law, freedom, and democracy. Instead of grand projects such as Belt Road and Lantau Tomorrow, youth

today look for these core universal values and hope to live in a society free from fear. 3. Their hatred of the police is a transferral of their political antagonism against the government. 4. Hong Kong education has its problem, but not in General Education or Moral Education. Civic education should not be replaced by “patriotic education.” Higher education is increasingly being dominated by such trends of political orientation. University leaders have become political mouthpieces of the ruling regime. (My translation)⁴⁵

The youth’s drive and energy in social activism have allowed Hong Kong to stand firm. To date, the resistance movement triggered by the anti-China extradition protests by the Hong Kong people has facilitated the *yung-mo* (brave, forceful) protestors and the *wo-lei-fei* (mild, peaceful) protestors to join hands. A strong sense of trust and solidarity among the people has taken root.⁴⁶ The embedded politics of affect has set the stage for social solidarity and collective resistance, despite the state violence and police brutality witnessed thus far. With 40 percent of those arrested (over 8,000 in total by May 2020) being students, and approximately 15 percent falling under the age of 18, the youthful call for all citizens—regardless of their tactics or age-group—to come out and support the common cause for a free Hong Kong has set the stage for the post-colony to play its part on the ultimate terrain of a war of identity and survival.

Violence and Becoming

As the eclectic politics of affect permeates the collective sense of belonging amid deep-rooted contradictions and ambiguities, a contemporary local sensibility takes shape dynamically on the fractured, unsettling landscape of postcolonial nationhood—with Hong Kong fast becoming Chinese. This aberrant formation displaces the trajectory of the “Hong Kong local” with complex identity traces ostensibly mapped onto the national-global regime under the odd partnership between global capitalism and Chinese totalitarianism. Hence, in this critique, I ask how, when the political status quo and legitimacy are at stake, exclusionary

forms of violence must be remembered as much to resist amnesia in the social body as to fight inertia for a future imaginary about who you would *become*.⁴⁷

Ever since she took office in 2017, Carrie Lam has resorted to full use of the authoritarian state apparatus, including its police force, department of justice and education bureau, to accomplish various tasks in the service of maintaining “social order,” her proxy for patriotism, which, in the views of her critics, really entails the rhetorical “love of the party [CCP].”⁴⁸ The sustained “violence” resulting from such oppressive acts have taken many forms—including disqualifying duly elected legislators in the name of law; removing a history examination question in the public examination for secondary school students after it had taken place; and indirect threats to postpone or cancel the District Council Election on the pretext of street violence, some of which, as recorded on live video, had been instigated by full-gear and masked riot police.⁴⁹ The widely held view that the proposed Extradition Law would have submitted all inhabitants in Hong Kong to the practice of Chinese law and trials is grounded on the fear for the sort of system violence that has been used to lock up dissidents in China, a fact acknowledged by the international community. In setting off the amendment bill in question, Lam’s administration had chosen to ignore the widespread allegation that police had, in effect, allowed the white-T mob to beat up and terrorize protestors and civilians in Yuen Long.⁵⁰ Among the hundreds of gangsters involved in the July 21 mob attack in 2019, only about three dozen have been arrested and a handful charged. Moreover, no clear justification has been offered to account fully for the hostile, full-gear police brutality towards civilians in the Prince Edward metro-station on August 31. Neither has justification nor investigation been offered concerning the police action against and the subsequent mass arrest of protestors in the anti-totalitarianism rally on September 29. And when such terror has been inscribed in the living social memory of people, we also know that, as one of the most violent regimes today, the CCP-controlled “Chinese military can be deployed at Hong Kong’s request to contain protests,” as Beijing often reiterates.⁵¹ In the months since the anti-extradition movement exploded in June 2019, all the

arrested protestors have been those who have stood out to oppose the systemic violence affecting everyone and anyone in Hong Kong. Under this emergent regime of terror, they are accused of being “rioters”—including, most recently in August 2020, democratically elected legislator Cheuk Ting Lam, who had presented himself at the Yuen Long Station on July 21, 2019 in an attempt to help the innocent passengers as they were being attacked and terrorized by white-T mob; in reality, they are ordinary citizens fighting to resist injustice and political persecution; they merely seek to defend the rule of law and keep the freedom they have. In future, people will most likely have to face a new National Security Law forced upon Hong Kong by the National People’s Congress of PRC and be subject to its enforcement via special Chinese security forces in Hong Kong.

The perception of Chief Executive Carrie Lam as someone who has abused legal, police, and other forms of violence is widely shared in Hong Kong civil society. As Fook-tsang Ying points out, the governmental violence today is not *ad hoc* or temporary; it is systematic. Perhaps self-interested against their own will, the police’s escalating brutality is a signal or symptom of a paradigm shift in the Hong Kong crisis situation.⁵² As humanitarian threats become real and suffocating even months after the Yuen Long terrorist attack, individual security and civic liberty remain at risk. Marked in late November 2019 by the outrageously inhumane siege by riot police first of the Chinese University of Hong Kong in Ma Lui Shui and then of the Hong Kong Polytechnic University in Hong Hum, the entire population of Hong Kong appears to face the coming of totalitarian rule, with violence and terror firmly inscribed as the dual motors of its contemporary history. Driven by the CCP, the political power at stake will no doubt be overwhelming in its penetration into and control over all domains of society. The regime will have people accept that their political demands cannot be realised, and that they must accept to live in the pseudo “order” imposed, with reliance on layers and layers of lies or half-truths, powered by the dominant discourse of the time driven and managed directly by the party-state machinery and its massive systems of social order maintenance (*weiwen*). The result of this on Hong Kong’s promised

future is given in the situation of political deadlock which has now become thoroughly *personal* for all Hong Kongers.

As Martin Purbick puts it in his essay, “A Report of the 2019 Hong Kong Protests”:

The lack of any political solution has left Hong Kong Police in the impossible solution as the face of government and the target of protestors. It has been clear from the prolonged and frequent violent protests that the Police use of force is not the political solution and cannot stop the protest movement. The early protesters’ anger at the Government has been increasingly angry in response. The Police have been caught in a “Catch 22” situation as they cannot tactically win the conflict with protestors . . . but because of the absence of a political solution every time the Police respond with force they alienate more of the public.⁵³

For however much the *colonised* people suffer, it would not affect the coloniser when the latter’s sovereign(s) are all elsewhere, far away from the local soil. But systemic violence is paradoxical in its exercise of power, as it is both alienating and motivating. With threats coming in the most physical form from the police, everything has changed for the myth of One Country, Two Systems as materialised in this post-colony currently under siege. The tyranny of its collective state of affect is both personal and political. For the people’s body in pain is as much alienated as it is situated and engaged by acts of violence.⁵⁴ All constraints and tacit rules upheld as core values by the people on the ground are thereby broken. Ironically, however, that final breach of connectivity and trust reinforces the centrality of those values. Whether or not they were associated with local or mainland security forces may well remain unknown for a long time, but the local mob in white t-shirts, allegedly deployed to attack and terrorize Hong Kong people amid the anti-government protests, has now been consolidated as the city’s collective nightmare. The event became the last straw on that camel back, to crush people’s trust in and respect for the police and the Carrie Lam administration under Beijing’s supervision. Neither fully anchored in the Chief Executive nor

in her non-democratic government, authoritarian rule in Hong Kong today inevitably invokes the spectre of lies, corruptions, collusions, and unrestrained exercise of state and police power—especially after the “7.21 terror.” Without doubt, this is a popular view held by pro-localist opinion leaders and shared by ordinary supporters involved in the resistance movement.⁵⁵

Incredible as it might sound, anarchism appears to be the rule of order, at times, as the government often becomes lost in its orientation and discourse. For the people, horror looms ahead, as well as uncertainty and outrage. Will there actually be opportunities where we see challenges, danger, and risk? “But this is reality. It has never been so real ever since the One Country, Two Systems issue arose ... [and] never have Hong Kong people been living with it in so ‘real’ a situation.”⁵⁶ Never have so many people been convinced at this moment that One Country, Two Systems is practically dead, even before the promulgation of the National Security Law for Hong Kong by Beijing on June 30, 2020. More and more ordinary citizens have come to share and feel the affective state of the lived situation on the ground. In total shock and sustained disappointment, people’s complex experience of betrayal, anxiety, and abhorrence articulates an identity based on resistance, which ties their undeterred sense of who they are to the common, though traumatic, sense of belonging to a collectively “imagined community,” if one may adopt Benedict Anderson’s famous term.

The Aberrant Formation of Postcoloniality

Grounded in the everyday access to and participation in a politics of affect, the emergent community of Hong Kong has been invoked by identifications framed by, but traversing, the limits of locality, or any form of essentialist identity. In the process, the politics of identity is effectively shaped through oppressive dichotomy, if not antagonism. On August 30, a report in *The Washington Post* states:

But on a deeper level, underlying the near impossibility of any resolution or consensus, is the unbridgeable chasm between the

demands and values heard on the streets of Hong Kong and the spread and consolidation of China's nationalism, amplified by its extensive and affective propaganda machine. ... But falsehood and distortion in Chinese propaganda are nothing new. What is most shocking is the unprecedented way in which ordinary mainland Chinese people and the world have organized themselves in defence of Beijing's rhetoric. ... Another patriotic gesture by some pro-Beijing protestors in Toronto was to drive their luxury cars—Ferraris, McLarens, Porsches and Aston Martins—to the site of the local rally. When confronted by pro-Hong Kong protestors, they shouted *qiongbi*, or 'poor losers'! These students exuded the arrogance of China's nouveau riche, and their insult coincides with one of China's narratives claiming that a lot of the grievances by Hong Kong's young protestors, dubbed *feiqing*, or 'wasted youth', are economic rather than political. For those Chinese rich kids, money talks, and political values don't matter.⁵⁷

Hence, not surprisingly, Hong Kong identity as a complex formation is mediated by the local consciousness and the embedded ethnic and identity politics as it has been shaped and manifested today.⁵⁸ In the context of a bottom-up, unfinished decolonization for the Hong Kong people, Law has contextualised this complexity in the collective histories and memories embedded in the (post)colonial formation both before and after 1997. "The collective memories exist in 'our' memories, experiences and imaginations, waiting to be recalled and mobilised. ... Hong Kong is now in the process of developing a stronger sense of a united civic/political community to safeguard itself from being recolonised again."⁵⁹ The sense and experience of belonging are thus configured with a new focal point: Hong Kong will not be the same ever again (as prefigured in 2014 by Fruit Chan's *The Midnight After*).⁶⁰ Decolonization as such is indeed the negation of the simple reversion to nationalism, not to say patriotism, a rhetoric repeatedly used by Beijing whenever the need arises to criticize and account for the lack of enthusiasm on the part of the people of Hong Kong in identifying themselves as Chinese. Presently, the collective desire for autonomy and a sense of self-determination,

not permitted by the dominant political authorities in place, has been growing, with more people finding themselves committed to a stronger imaginary for identity formation, stronger than anything they had the capacity to conceive of prior to the joining of hands between the brave frontliners and the peaceful protestors (in the millions). Both, in my analysis, may be taken now as subject-positions of the resistant Hong Konger.

For the place called home can no longer be Chinese anymore, in any simple terms, political, cultural, or ethical. “The (re-)localization of Hong Kong culture, starting in the 1960s but not achieving full speed until the late 1970s, had been a process of incessant hybridization. Ironically, it was in the labyrinth of such hybrid cultural localization that a distinct identity of the locals had emerged.”⁶¹ It is therefore important to uphold beliefs and values, to protect the hearts and minds (*renxin*) of all individuals on the ground, for only with that can one learn to prepare to fight the *war* of resistance in the long term. To quote the pro-Beijing law professor Albert Chen, again:

In authoritarian states, no demonstrations of any considerable size would be allowed, and the kind of protests that have taken place in Hong Kong ... would have been inconceivable. On the other hand, in liberal democracies, protests of the scale that took place in Hong Kong against the Bill on 9 June [over 1 million people marched peacefully on the streets in protest] was not able to move the government, and it was only when an estimated 40,000 people (outnumbering the total size of the Hong Kong police force) surrounded the legislature on the day of the proceedings on the Bill and violence broke out, that the government gave in. The ‘soft authoritarian’ nature of the HKSAR government is such that it would restrain itself from resorting to massive physical force against the protest of civil society.”⁶²

Like the people of communist Czechoslovakia, as represented by the words of Václav Havel, the people of Hong Kong must from now on “live in truth” and prevent their everyday life from collapsing into

total lies. This is the least and the most valuable thing to do for Hong Kongers, clinging on to their “power of the powerless,” as Havel would have it.⁶³ Indeed, in the words of Koon-Chung Chan, Hong Kongers subjectively considered themselves different from mainlanders. It is first and foremost through this distinction from mainlanders that Hong Kong people constructed their strong identity.⁶⁴

This differentiation has never been truer for the post-colony, as a result of the kind of China encroachment we see. For sure, this had been partially a result of the British colonial government’s professed policy of “positive non-intervention.” As a matter of fact, the so-called cosmopolitan outlook that the local generations upheld was very much a hybrid product of British colonialism, the Cold War, neo-liberal globalization, and Chinese nationalism.⁶⁵ But today, fifty years after, the activism of our time has re-worked the unfinished decolonization *in situ* and prompted Hong Kongers to *become* the real subject of identity and of history, in the fights for freedom and dignity they want vis-à-vis the ruling regime.

With this making of unity and identity, people’s move to becoming one is rendered *effective* precisely in the ways in which the *affective* exchange and coming together of experiences are consolidated, notwithstanding the eclectic politics entailed and lived. On July 1, 2019, after protestors had broken into the Legislative Council chamber, frontliner Brian Leung removed his mask to make a most courageous and moving speech before the live camera. He recognized openly the collective transferral of affective flows as the *experience* of community. Later, he reflected on this affective commitment: “It occurs when you can imagine how others have suffered and are willing to share the pain incurred. ... In so far as we can stand together to share and imagine others’ suffering, the community of Hong Kongers will not be constrained by time or space.”⁶⁶ In re-imagining Hong Kong subjectivity through the prism of the 2019 protests, we see renewed bottom-up efforts on the ground to decolonize the collective narratives of what the local postcolonial subjects would become. We have witnessed how, as a crucial form of resistance against the master narratives externally imposed upon the people, the struggles for identity formation undermine the residual

desire “to maintain the self-image of the Hong Konger as an economically successful yet politically apathetic animal.”⁶⁷ As the ongoing movement continues to engage more people on the ground in the aberrant polity of Hong Kong, people are moving to re-invent the “power of the powerless” and speak with a dissenting voice by discarding for good the “apolitical” creature in their self-formation.⁶⁸ In its place, a postcolonial subjectivity of dissent and resistance may be taking shape on all fronts where local, quotidian engagement entails persistent identity struggle.

Notes

¹For some probing accounts and critical analyses of the implications of the 2014 Umbrella Movement, see Johannes Chan, “Hong Kong’s Umbrella Movement,” *The Round Table* 103, no. 6 (2014): 571–80; Samson Yuen, “Hong Kong After the Umbrella Movement: An Uncertain Future for ‘One Country Two Systems,’” *China Perspectives* 1 (2015): 49–53; Chor-Yung Cheung, “‘One Country, Two Systems’ after the Umbrella Movement: Problems and Prospects,” *Asian Education and Development Studies* 6, no. 4 (2017): 385–400.

²The proposed law to be amended is officially known as the “Fugitive Offenders and Mutual Legal Assistance in Criminal Matters Ordinance.” Should the amendment be passed by legislature, special surrender arrangements will be set up to allow the Hong Kong government to transfer any accused individuals, or fugitives, who happen to be in the territory at the time, to China, Taiwan, and Macau for trial, respectively. These three areas are currently excluded under the existing laws.

³The discontents about the “One Country, Two Systems” model for Hong Kong’s political status and governmental practices as Special Administrative Region under the People’s Republic of China have escalated significantly since the Umbrella Movement, though its root causes must be traced back to when the arrangements were made for the model well before the 1997 handover. For a critical overview of the spectrum of cultural-political problems involved in that whole historical transformation, see two special journal issues: “Hong Kong at a Crossroads,” *Inter-Asia Cultural Studies* 16, no. 3 (2015): 327–494; and “New Dimension and Cultural Crisis on (Post-)Colonialism in Hong Kong” (in Chinese), *Router: Journal of Cultural Studies* 23 (2016): 119–280.

⁴Since the Hong Kong pro-democracy resistance movement entered a new critical phase in 2014 with the Occupy Central/Umbrella Movement, supporters—mainly Hong Kong people standing up for its cause—have been broadly labelled as the *yung-mo* [勇武] or brave and forceful protestors and *wo-lei-fei* [和理非] or peaceful protestors based on their respective styles of resistance.

⁵Since June 2019, the five demands made by the Hong Kong people who came

out in the millions to demonstrate are: 1) the complete withdrawal of the proposed extradition bill; 2) the retraction of calling the protests “riot”; 3) the unconditional release of arrested protestors and the dropping of charges against them; 4) an independent inquiry into police behaviours; and 5) implementation of genuine universal suffrage. To date, only demand (1) has been met by the government. For a brief account on these, see Alison Rourke, “What Do the Hong Kong Protesters Want?” *The Guardian*, August 13, 2019, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2019/aug/13/what-do-the-hong-kong-protesters-want>; and Holmes Chan, “Explainer: Hong Kong’s Five Demands—Universal Suffrage,” *Hong Kong Free Press*, December 26, 2019, <https://www.hongkongfp.com/2019/12/26/explainer-hong-kongs-five-demands-universal-suffrage/>.

⁶*Heung-gong yan, Ga yau* [香港人, 加油] (“Hong Kongers, Add oil!”). The Hong Kong English term, “add oil,” newly included in the *Oxford English Dictionary*, is a phrase used to express encouragement, incitement, or support. It builds on the metaphor of injecting fuel into a tank or pressing on an accelerator to propel a vehicle forward.

⁷The Anti-Mask Ordinance was enacted by the Hong Kong government without recourse to the Legislative Council on October 4, 2019, by drawing on a colonial era emergency law, which empowers the Chief Executive to order the ban of mask or any kind of face-covering during public activities including protest. In rage, the people of Hong Kong responded immediately by chanting everywhere the phrase *Heung-gong yan, Faan kong* [香港人, 反抗] (“Hong Kongers, Resist!”). The anti-mask law was subsequently ruled by the High Court to be unconstitutional on November 15, 2019.

⁸The Yuen Long terror on July 21, 2019, refers to the mob attack that took place at the metro station in Yuen Long, a town located in north-western New Territories. A group of over 100 men dressed in white t-shirts indiscriminately attacked civilians with steel rods and rattan canes for about 30 minutes. Despite thousands of reports made to the 999 emergency hotline, no police had arrived until 39 minutes after when all the mob were gone. What happened at the station was captured on live camera by journalists, some of whom were also attacked. No arrest was made that night; and to date, the police insisted that the incident involved two groups of people in fights. For an in-depth analysis of the incident itself, see the award-winning investigative report, “Hong Kong Connection: 721 Yuen Long Nightmare,” *Radio Television Hong Kong*, July 29, 2019 (the English subtitled version was released on October 4, 2019), video, 21:37, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zpkFRsSo30o>. For coverage of the incident by local and international media, see journalistic reports such as: “When a Mob Attacked Protesters in Hong Kong, the Police Walked Away—Visual Investigations,” *New York Times*, July 31, 2019, video, 7:43, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fDtM3dEJdHo>; “Seven Men Arrested over Attacks at Hong Kong’s Yuen Long MTR Station,” *CNA Report* (Mediacorp, Singapore), July 23, 2019, video, 3:30, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0gQ5INxOcfI>; “Hong Kong Protests: Police Storm Yuen Long Station to Disperse Protesters,” *Global News* (Canadian Global Television

Network, Toronto), August 21, 2019, live coverage, 1:16:58, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xqlDvbxrkVY>; “Dark Night in Yuen Long,” *NOW TV Report*, Oct. 10, 2019, video, 24:01, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aG5DGG3YepCE>; “721 Yuen Long Black Night,” *i-Cable News*, July 22, 2019, video, 11:59, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=T9c4eVC7P98>; “Attack Victim at Hong Kong’s Yuen Long Station Recalls Horrific Ordeal,” *South China Morning Post*, July 25, 2019, video, 2:09, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=B6dnPCwHHfE>; and “Hong Kong MTR Passengers Attacked by Masked Men with Bamboo Sticks in Yuen Long,” *Hong Kong Free Press*, July 22, 2019, video, 5:00, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=plf9g07VoQ4>.

⁹Such a sentiment is widespread; see, for example, Yuen-Lung Yuen, “It Is Impossible for Hong Kong ‘to Become Hong Kong’ Again,” *Standnews*, July 23, 2019, <http://www.thestandnews.com/politics/香港唔可能-變返香港/>. Even pro-government media must admit the horrific July 21, 2019 to be a “Black Day for Hong Kong as White Shirts Rule.”; Mary Ma, “Black Day for HK as White Shirts Rule,” *The Standard*, July 23, 2019, <https://www.thestandard.com.hk/section-news/section/17/209873/Black-day-for-HK-as-white-shirts-rule>.

¹⁰To date, about thirty-seven people were arrested for the assaults done in and near the Yuen Long metro station on July 21, 2019. Among them seven have been charged (as of January 2020) and mostly identified as gang members of Triad Society.

¹¹The critical role of the Yuen Long incident in contemporary Hong Kong history and the trauma it left on the people have not been affected by the procrastinated release (in May 2020) of the government appointed Independent Police Complaints Council (IPCC) Report on the 2019 protests. IPCC had no power of investigation and did not conduct interview with any witness in writing up the report. The five international experts initially invited by the pro-government watchdog to join the “independent” investigation had resigned in December 2019 from their jobs upon learning about the limited terms of reference and power of the body.

¹²Siu-To Poon, “When a Government Must Resort to the Triad Society to Handle Its People,” Facebook, July 22, 2019, <http://www.facebook.com/潘小濤-27743445015/>; Triad Society (黑社會, literally “black society”) also generally refers to gangsters.

¹³Shibani Mahtani, “A Student in Boston Wrote ‘I Am from Hong Kong.’ An Onslaught of Chinese Anger Followed,” *The Washington Post*, May 25, 2019, https://wapo.st/2whZOMv?tid=ss_mail&utm_term=.c19629146e48.

¹⁴For in-depth analyses of this “progressive” formation of localism amid the myriad trends of its growth, see Yun-Chung Chen and Mirana M. Szeto, “The Forgotten Road of Progressive Localism: New Preservation Movement in Hong Kong,” *Inter-Asia Cultural Studies* 16, no. 3 (2015): 436–53; and Ying-Ho Kwong, “The Growth of ‘Localism’ in Hong Kong,” *China Perspectives* 3 (2016): 63–68.

¹⁵Known informally as the “Fishball Revolution,” the civil unrest on the streets of Mongkok occurred on the night of February 8, 2016 until early morning the next day,

during the Lunar New Year. The incident was initially about some street hawkers selling fishballs, a popular Hong Kong street food. Anti-government protests broke out and resulted in police clash with protestors. The government subsequently classified the violent incident as a riot. Edward Tin-kei Leung, a young student of the Hong Kong University and spokesperson of the localist activist group Hong Kong Indigenous, was one of the leaders of the protest. In June 2018, he was sentenced to imprisonment for 6 years for riot during his participation in the Mongkok unrest.

¹⁶ A member of the localist group Youngspiration, Regine Wai-Ching Yau was elected to the Legislative Council in 2016. During the sworn-in session she put a banner with the English words, “Hong Kong is not China,” on the table. Along with her fellow localist Baggio Chung-hang Leung (convenor of Youngspiration), Yau’s status as a legislator was subsequently disqualified as a result of this. This set an alarming precedent for the government’s repeated acts of disqualifying dissident council members as well as candidates. For a thorough analysis of the legality of such act of disqualification under the Oaths and Declarations Ordinance, see Johannes Chan, “A Storm of Unprecedented Ferocity: The Shrinking Space of the Right to Political Participation, Peaceful Demonstration, and Judicial Independence in Hong Kong,” *I.CON* 16, no. 2 (2018): 373–88.

¹⁷ Kwong, “The Growth of ‘Localism’ in Hong Kong,” 65.

¹⁸ See Wai-Man Lam, “Hong Kong’s Fragmented Soul: Exploring Brands of Localism,” in *Citizenship, Identity and Social Movements in the New Hong Kong*, eds. Wai-Man Lam and Luke Cooper (London and New York: Routledge, 2018), 72–93.

¹⁹ Kwong, “The Growth of ‘Localism’ in Hong Kong,” 66. For discussions of this peculiar trend of localism in the contemporary sociohistorical trajectory, see “Imagining New Territories” (in Chinese), *Journal of Local Discourse* (2011): 1–273; and “Government-Business Collusion,” (in Chinese), *Journal of Local Discourse* (2012): 1–197

²⁰ See Iam-Chong Ip, “Politics of Belonging: A Study of the Campaign against Mainland Visitors in Hong Kong,” *Inter-Asia Cultural Studies* 16, no. 3 (2015): 410–21.

²¹ “Little pinkies” (*xiao fenghong*) in this context refer to mainland Chinese who frequently make and spread nationalistic posts on the internet. Whether located in China or overseas, most of them are very patriotic and often appear to be under the influence of official or mainstream propaganda.

²² Joseph Lian, “On How Carrie Lam Has Betrayed Hong Kong by Selling Its People Out to China.” *Apple Daily*, June 20, 2019, http://s.nextmedia.com/apple/a.php?i=20190620&sec_id=4104&cs=0&a=20708412.

²³ Wing-Sang Law, “Decolonization Deferred: Hong Kong Identity in Historical Perspective,” in *Citizenship, Identity and Social Movements in the New Hong Kong*, eds. Wai-Man Lam and Luke Cooper (London: Routledge, 2018), 28.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 26.

²⁵ The complex articulation of local identity in relation to colonial and national

imagination has shaped the contemporary, hybrid version of “localness” in Hong Kong. For an overview of the trends and concerns in local scholarship on the topic, see the anthology *Hong Kong Studies as Method*, ed. Yiu-Wai Chu (Hong Kong: Chung Hwa Books, 2016).

²⁶ Law, “Decolonization Deferred,” 26–27.

²⁷ For a detailed account of the kind of alternative (anti-)urban activism as “New Preservation Movement,” see Chen and Szeto, “The Forgotten Road of Progressive Localism.” For a critical assessment of the impacts on social movement in Hong Kong by the foregrounding of “plebeian experiences” in various kinds of activism, see *An Epoch of Social Movement: The Trajectory of Contentious Politics in Hong Kong* (in Chinese), eds. Edmund W. Cheng and Samson Wai-hei Yuen (Hong Kong: The Chinese University Press, 2018).

²⁸ Albert H. Y. Chen, “A Perfect Storm: How the Proposed Law on Hong Kong–Mainland China Rendition Was Aborted,” *Verfassungsblog: On Matters Constitutional*, June 19, 2019, <https://verfassungsblog.de/a-perfect-storm/>, DOI: 10.17176/20190619-112654-0.

²⁹ *Ibid.*

³⁰ See John D. Young, “The Building Years: Maintaining a China–Hong Kong–Britain Equilibrium, 1950–71,” in *Precarious Balance: Hong Kong between China and Britain*, eds. Ming K. Chan and John D. Young (Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 1994), 140.

³¹ Joseph Lian, “New Asia,” *Ming-Pao Monthly*, and Lam Hang-Chi’s Hong Kong Economic Journal: Context of Post-War Intellectual Currents Marking China–Hong Kong Relationship,” *Apple Daily*, August 30, 2018, <https://hk.news.appledaily.com/local/daily/article/20180830/20487632>.

³² *Ibid.*

³³ For a definitive account of the 1967 riots, see Gary Ka-wai Cheung, *Hong Kong’s Watershed: The 1967 Riots* (Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 2009).

³⁴ Lian, “New Asia,” *Ming-Pao Monthly*.

³⁵ Law, “Decolonization Deferred,” 24.

³⁶ *Ibid.*

³⁷ *Ibid.*, 28.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, 25.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, 22.

⁴⁰ Koon-Chung Chan, “Hong Kong Viscera,” *Postcolonial Studies* 10, no. 4 (2007): 381.

⁴¹ Certainly not during the 1967 riots, when “the aim of the Hong Kong leftists [pro-Maoist Red Guard local communists and their supporters] at this state was to replicate Cultural Revolution tactics”; see John D. Young, “China’s Role in Two Hong Kong Disturbances: A Scenario for the Future?” *Journal of Oriental Studies* 19, no. 2 (1981): 166. For a critical re-appraisal of local Hong Kong identity formation vis-à-vis Chinese nationalist hegemony, see Allen Chun, *Forget Chineseness: On the Geopolitics of Cultural*

Identification (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 2017).

⁴² Koon-Chung Chan, "Hong Kong Viscera," 379.

⁴³ *Ibid.*

⁴⁴ Lian, "On How Carrie Lam Has Betrayed Hong Kong."

⁴⁵ Rev. Tin-Yau Yuen, "Why Are Our Young People Antagonistic toward the Country?" *Standnews*, June 28, 2019, <https://thestandnews.com/politics/%E6%88%91%E5%80%91%E7%9A%84%E5%B9%B4%E9%9D%92%E4%BA%BA%E7%82%BA%E7%94%9A%E9%BA%BC%E6%95%B5%E8%A6%96%E5%9C%8B%E5%AE%B6%E6%95%B5%E8%A6%96/>.

⁴⁶ The so-called *yung-mo* (or *yungwu*, brave and forceful) protestors and *wo-lei-fei* (or *helifei*, mild and peaceful) protestors initially refer to two different kinds of anti-government Hong Kong people since at least the Umbrella Movement of 2014. While the *yung-mo* group of protestors tend to be more "militant," the *wo-lei-fei* group are much greater in number and broader in their social base. Significantly, one key distinction of the 2019 resistance movement is the cooperation and solidarity between the two groups. Indeed, one might argue that the two now represent different positions one takes up in a protest, rather than two distinct groups of activists as such.

⁴⁷ In this light, the argument put forth here can be read alongside my other analysis of the current movement, see Stephen C. K. Chan, "Some Thoughts on the Endgame of Resistance: *Ngo-yiu Naam-chaau* as Terminal Reciprocity," *Inter-Asia Cultural Studies* 21, no. 2 (2020): 99–110, DOI: 10.1080/14649373.2020.1721110.

⁴⁸ Yee Lee, "On Violence," *Apple Daily*, July 24, 2019, http://s.nextmedia.com/apple/a.php?i=20190724&sec_id=4104&s=0&a=20736133.

⁴⁹ For details about street unrest during the protests and the police handling of them, see Martin Purbick, "A Report of the 2019 Hong Kong Protests," *Asian Affairs* 51, no. 4 (2019): 465–87.

⁵⁰ The SAR Government was quick to endorse the pro-government watchdog IPCC's Report on the 2019 protests released in May 2020, despite the fact that IPCC based its findings mainly on police reports, had no independent power of investigation, and held no meetings with any witnesses (whether government officials, police, or those allegedly affected by police brutality). On the Yuen Long mob attacks, though the Report mentions "deficiencies in police deployment and other Police action in response to the events," it found "no evidence of collusion with criminals 'despite our best efforts in searching publicly available sources'"; Tom Grundy, "Hong Kong Police Watchdog Clears Force of Misconduct Citing Online 'Propaganda,' but Says 'Room for Improvement,'" *Hong Kong Free Press*, May 15, 2020, <https://hongkongfp.com/2020/05/15/in-full-hong-kong-police-watchdog-releases-report-on-protest-conduct-but-no-evidence-of-yuen-long-mob-attack-collusion/>.

⁵¹ Catherine Wong, Teddy Ng, and Gary Cheng, "Chinese Military Can Be Deployed at Hong Kong's Request to Contain Protests," *South China Morning Post*, July 24, 2019,

<https://www.scmp.com/news/china/military/article/3019854/chinese-military-can-be-deployed-hong-kongs-request-contain>.

⁵² Fook-Tsang Ying, "Catching a Glimpse of Light as Tyranny Approaches," *Ming Pao Daily*, August 23, 2019, <https://news.mingpao.com/pns/觀點/article/20190723/s00012/1563820661089/邪福增-極權臨近中-要看見微光/>.

⁵³ Purbick, "A Report of the 2019 Hong Kong Protests," 476.

⁵⁴ In Stephen C. K. Chan, "Some Thoughts on the Endgame of Resistance," I discuss the escalating "gaming" pattern that tends to generate prospects on "triumph of violence" in relation to the tactics of *naam-chaau* (or mutual destruction).

⁵⁵ Si-Tat Lo, "July 21 Yuen Long Terrorist Attack," *Standnews*, July 22, 2019, <https://thestandnews.com/politics/7-21-元朗恐襲-清洗舊組織-裏政治-一國兩制的世界末日/>.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*

⁵⁷ Yifu Dong, "Chinese Citizens and the World Are Shamefully Siding with Beijing against Hong Kong," *The Washington Post*, August 30, 2019, <https://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/2019/08/30/chinese-citizens-around-world-are-shamefully-siding-with-beijing-against-hong-kong/?noredirect=on>.

⁵⁸ Law, "Decolonization Deferred," 31.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*

⁶⁰ *The Midnight After*, directed by Fruit Chan (2014; Hong Kong: The Midnight After Film and One Ninety Films).

⁶¹ Koon-Chung Chan, "Hong Kong Viscera," 383.

⁶² Albert Chen, "A Perfect Storm."

⁶³ Ying, "Catching a Glimpse of Light as Tyranny Approaches."

⁶⁴ Koon-Chung Chan, "Hong Kong Viscera," 383.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, 385.

⁶⁶ Brian Kai-ping Leung, "I am Leung Kai-ping," video-recorded public speech presented at the rally "Sovereignty in the People" held in Chater Garden, Central, on August 16, 2019, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xqlkZkEDvI8>.

⁶⁷ Law, "Decolonization Deferred," 22.

⁶⁸ Václav Havel, *The Power of the Powerless* (New York: Vintage Classics, 2018).

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