

The Underlying Factors Driving the Push For Universal Suffrage in Hong Kong

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Abstract

This paper examines the current civil unrest in Hong Kong to determine the underlying causes that are driving Occupy Central and its affiliates to pressure the Central Government in Beijing and the Hong Kong government for universal suffrage. Drawing upon data from the 2003, 2007, and 2010 Asian Barometer, there has been a gradual decline in the level of trust in the Legislative Council and Hong Kong government as the majority of Hong Kong residents have expressed increasing uncertainty about their future economic situation along with their continual distrust in the abilities of government officials to serve the public. From these findings, this paper discovered that the systemic shortage of affordable and safe housing coupled with systemic deficiencies in employment and income, rather than the sole lack of universal suffrage, may be some of the more probable factors driving the push for universal suffrage in Hong Kong.

The Current Situation in Hong Kong

On June 10, 2014, the South China Morning Post (SCMP) reported that the Central People's Government (Central Government) released the white paper, "The Practice of 'One Country, Two Systems' Policy in the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region," outlining the future of universal suffrage in Hong Kong.¹ According to the white paper's stipulations, the Central Government asserts that the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (HKSAR) is an inseparable administrative region under the complete jurisdiction of the People's Republic of China (PRC).² As a local administrative region, the Central Government argues that the high degree of autonomy granted to the HKSAR under the Sino-British Joint Declaration does not mean that Hong Kong is a fully autonomous region or a decentralized city-state since it is still subjected to the constraints found in the Chinese Constitution.³ Furthermore, the Central Government, operating under this rationale, stipulates that government officials and the judiciary have to display loyal and patriotism to the PRC in order to successfully exercise their "responsibility of correctly understanding and implementing the Basic Law" to ensure the continued stability and prosperity of Hong Kong.⁴ Due to the white paper's explicit stipulations, Gary Cheung and Tony Cheung of the SCMP reported that this action is an aberration as the Central Government has traditionally relied on a low-key approach to governing Hong Kong.⁵

In the wake of this announcement, pro-democracy grassroots organizations, most notably Occupy Central, have pledged to stage a massive civil disobedience protest to disrupt Hong Kong's

¹ Staff Reporters, "Beijing emphasizes its total control over Hong Kong in white paper," *South China Morning Post*, June 10, 2014.

² State Council of the People's Republic of China, *The Practice of the "One Country, Two Systems" Policy in the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region*, 2014, 12th State Council (Beijing: State Council Information Office, 2014), 17-18.

³ State Council, 18-20.

⁴ State Council, 20.

⁵ Gary Cheung and Tony Cheung, "Beijing's white paper: writing on the wall back in 2004," *South China Morning Post*, June 12, 2014.

financial districts to compel the Central Government to allow the implementation of universal suffrage for the Chief Executive by 2017.⁶ Furthermore, the white paper has also been met with widespread opposition from many government officials, professional organizations, and private citizens who have expressed their disappointment with both the Central Government and the pro-Beijing Hong Kong government (HKGGOV). To express their disappointment with HKGOV's approval of the white paper, Tony Cheung of the *SCMP* reported that only 27 out of 70 lawmakers attended a luncheon with Chief Executive Leung Chun-ying.⁷ In addition to the disapproval of lawmakers, the Hong Kong Bar Association has also strongly protested against the Central Government's attempt to infringe and suppress Hong Kong's judicial independence by mandating political loyalty as a requirement for members of the judiciary.⁸ Following the judiciary's formal protest on June 11, 2014, several prominent lawyers and legal scholars lobbied Westminster to release classified documents, particularly those pertaining to Article 45 of the Basic Law, from the pre-handover Joint Liaison Group to help clarify the position of universal suffrage prior to Hong Kong's return to the PRC in 1997.⁹

Following the protests of government officials and professional organizations, the Central Government's stipulations regarding the future of universal suffrage in Hong Kong has also prompted private citizens to protest against Chinese interference in Hong Kong. In response to the

⁶ Tony Cheung and Tanna Chong, "Beijing's words will not halt Occupy Central's plans, says organizer Benny Tai," *South China Morning Post*, March 10, 2014.

⁷ Tony Cheung, "Lawmakers lose their appetite for lunch with Leung as fallout over Beijing's white paper continues: Lawmakers snub chief executive's reception following controversy over Beijing's white paper," *South China Morning Post*, June 14, 2014.

⁸ Gary Cheung, Tony Cheung, and Stuart Lau, "Hong Kong barristers hit out at Beijing's white paper, vow to protect judicial independence," *South China Morning Post*, June 11, 2014; Stuart Lau, Austin Chiu, and Brian Yap, "Hong Kong lawyers march to defend judiciary in the wake of Beijing's white paper," *South China Morning Post*, June 27, 2014.

⁹ Cliff Buddle, "Top lawyer calls from pre-handover Sino-British deals to be made public: Top lawyer calls on London to reveal details of agreements reached in the Sino-British meetings on contentious issues such as universal suffrage," *South China Morning Post*, June 13, 2014.

white paper, Occupy Central subsequently announced that they will hold an unofficial referendum to gauge public opinion about universal suffrage.¹⁰ Despite experiencing many technical setbacks, Occupy Central has reported that they have received over 37,202 registration confirmations for the upcoming referendum which has prompted organizers to open an additional fifteen mobile polling stations on June 22 along with an additional ten on June 29.¹¹ With additional polls setup throughout Hong Kong, Occupy Central has reported that nearly 800,000 people voted over the ten day period of the referendum.¹² Following the massive electoral turnout, the Hong Kong Police reported that over 98,000 participants attended the annual July 1st march to display their support for democracy in Hong Kong.¹³

In response to pro-democracy actions in Hong Kong, the Central Government operating in conjunction with the HKGOV and pro-Beijing political and business organizations have launched a campaign to discredit Occupy Central and its affiliates. According to the *SCMP*, Xu Ze, deputy director of the State Council's Hong Kong and Macau Affairs Office, declared that the Hong Kong Bar Association had misinterpreted the white paper's provisions regarding the judiciary.¹⁴ Further, President Xi Jinping, unlike his predecessors, is willing to tighten control over Hong Kong since the growing economic prosperity of other Chinese cities has rendered Hong Kong economically insignificant to the wellbeing of the PRC.¹⁵ Expanding on the Central Government's response,

¹⁰ Elizabeth Wong Chien Chi-lien, "It's crunch time as white paper waved like red flag to bull: Regaining trust will be worth the effort and lead city and China towards a better future," *South China Morning Post*, June 20, 2014.

¹¹ Jeffie Lam, "Occupy Central ponders mobile polling stations to fend off hackers," *South China Morning Post*, June 20, 2014.

¹² Chris Buckley, "Hong Kong Poll Turnout Buys Democracy Activists," *New York Times*, June 29, 2014.

¹³ Keith Bradsher, Chris Buckley, and Michael Forsythe, "Huge Crowds Turn Out for Pro-Democracy March in Hong Kong, Defying Beijing," *New York Times*, July 1, 2014; For more information about the participants' motives, consult the survey data in "Most marchers surveyed motivated by desire for public nomination of 2017 poll candidates," *South China Morning Post*, July 2, 2014.

¹⁴ Tony Cheung and Adrian Wan, "Barristers too sensitive on white paper, says Beijing official," *South China Morning Post*, June 14, 2014.

¹⁵ Shirley Yam, "Beijing's 'take it or leave it' attitude on Hong Kong autonomy a far cry from 2003," *South China Morning Post*, June 14, 2014.

HKGOV has begun to implement the goals that were stipulated in the white paper. According to the *SCMP*, the Hong Kong Education Bureau subsequently released a report stating that it will consider modifying the current curriculum to help students develop a better understanding of the Basic Law and the ‘one country, two systems’ model in Hong Kong.¹⁶ In addition to HKGOV’s response, Chief Secretary Carrie Lam along with many pro-Beijing business organizations and citizens have voiced their opposition toward the pro-democracy movement since it will lead to the economic destabilization of Hong Kong.¹⁷ Following this announcement, many pro-Beijing organizations and citizens started to stage rallies and community events to discredit pro-democracy groups.¹⁸

Despite the ideological conflicts separating the community, the Central Government ultimately announced its decision to implement stricter guidelines which limited the number of candidates and increased the nominating threshold requirement for candidates are trying to become Chief Executive.¹⁹ In response to this decision, Occupy Central has pledged to continue its civil disobedience movement to express its opposition with the Central Government’s election guidelines.²⁰ Following this declaration, Hong Kong universities students announced that they will stage a week-long boycott of classes, starting on September 22, 2014, to oppose the Central

¹⁶ Shirley Zhao, “Controversy as schools told to ‘deepen understanding’ of Basic Law” Release of curriculum guide two days after white paper sparks ‘brainwashing’ fears from activists,” *South China Morning Post*, June 14, 2014.

¹⁷ Ray Chan, Joyce Ng, and Jeanny Yu, “Occupy Central a danger to the Hong Kong property market, Barclays Bank warns,” *South China Morning Post*, July 8, 2014; Phila Siu, Gary Cheung, and Jeffie Lam, “Carrie Lam issues warning on Occupy shutdown at talk with civil servants,” *South China Morning Post*, July 10, 2014.

¹⁸ Gary Cheung and Tony Cheung, “Anti-Occupy activists say it’s impossible to force signatures,” *South China Morning Post*, July 19, 2014; Ng Kang-chung, “Hundreds join anti-Occupy Central run ahead of march,” *South China Morning Post*, August 17, 2014; Ng Kang-chung, Jeffie Lam, and Nectar Gan, “Police say anti-Occupy Central turnout was higher than July 1 march,” *South China Morning Post*, August 17, 2014.

¹⁹ State Council of the People’s Republic of China, “NPC Decision on Universal Suffrage for HKSAR Chief Selection,” People’s Republic of China, http://news.xinhuanet.com/english/china/2014-08/31/c_133609238.htm (accessed August 8, 2014).

²⁰ Ernest Kao, Jeffie Lam, and Shirley Zhao, “Hong Kong’s ‘era of disobedience’ has begun, says Occupy leader as protesters join forces,” *South China Morning Post*, September 1, 2014.

Government's decision.²¹ However, the week-long boycott quickly escalated as students, under the leadership of pro-democracy student organizations, have stormed multiple HKGOV complexes demanding the Central Government redact its decision and allow an open nomination process for the 2017 election.²² At the moment of this paper's writing, the civil disobedience movement has entered its fifth consecutive week and continues to occupy and disrupt key roads and businesses throughout Central, Admiralty, and Mong Kok.

With these development in mind, the Occupy Central civil disobedience movement indicates there are severe underlying problems in Hong Kong society. As these protests continue, Occupy Central can lead to severe ramifications for the Hong Kong people and on the future of the city under Chinese rule. Therefore, the continuing developments and its potential ramifications on Hong Kong's future have lead me to ask the following question: Why have the people of Hong Kong decided to pursue universal suffrage?

Methodology and Evidence

This paper relies on a mixed method approach to examine two explanatory variables to answer the research question. The first explanatory variable examines whether the push for universal suffrage was prompted by the increase in economic disparities in Hong Kong. The second explanatory variable examines whether the push for universal suffrage was prompted by the increase in social inequalities in Hong Kong. This paper relies on evidence from the following primary sources: the Asian Barometer, the Hong Kong Housing Authority, the CSSA-Alliance, The Hong Kong Council of Social Services, and the Society for Community Organization. Further,

²¹ Ernest Kao and Jeffie Lam, "Students plan one-week school boycott to protest Beijing's election restrictions," *South China Morning Post*, September 7, 2014.

²² Tony Cheung, Ng Kang-chung, and Peter So, "Students' march from Admiralty to Central takes police by surprise," *South China Morning Post*, September 25, 2014.

this paper also relies on evidence from the following secondary sources: newspapers, books, and peer-reviewed articles.

Theoretical Paradigm: Historical Institutionalism

This paper uses the theoretical paradigm, historical institutionalism, to frame and analyze the research question and two case studies. According to John Ikenberry, historical institutionalism makes several assumptions about how institutions shape the ability of political actors and the political landscape. Ikenberry asserts that historical institutionalism assumes that “state policy and orientations are mediated in decisive ways by political structures—such as institutional configurations of government” which “...shape and constrain the goals and opportunities, and actions of the groups and individuals operating within it.”²³ Further, Ikenberry asserts that historical institutionalism dictates that it is necessary to consider the historical trends in order to understand how institutions will develop and react.²⁴ Lastly, Ikenberry asserts that historical institutionalism states that institutions are also path-dependent and can affect the number of choices available to political actors.²⁵ With this theory in mind, historical institutionalism is an appropriate measure for this paper as it examines whether colonial policies have influenced HKGOV’s policymaking to determine whether it has contributed to the Hong Kong people’s push for universal suffrage.

Literature Review: The Past Three and a Half Decades in Hong Kong

During the late twentieth century, Hong Kong occupied an interesting place in the international community as one of the last remnants of colonialism. However, Hong Kong’s days as a colonial holding was gradually coming to an end as the United Kingdom, in 1982, decided to

²³ G. John Ikenberry, *After Victory: Institutions, Strategies Restraint, and the Rebuilding of Order after Major Wars* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2000), 16.

²⁴ Ikenberry, *Ibid.*

²⁵ Ikenberry, *Ibid.*

forgo its control over the city in exchange for stronger economic ties with the PRC. As a result, this decision has sparked an ongoing debate about the future of Hong Kong and her people after 1997. In order to understand the current developments in Hong Kong, it is necessary to first review and understand the debates surrounding Hong Kong's future under the PRC in the following manner. I begin by examining the literature written on the logistics of transferring Hong Kong to the PRC. Then I will proceed to examine the literature written on the social and economic effects on Hong Kong after the resumption of Chinese sovereignty. Following this examination, I will proceed to examine the literature written on the effects of the 'one country, two systems' model on present-day Hong Kong.

Before the resumption of Chinese sovereignty over Hong Kong, the ongoing negotiations between the United Kingdom and the PRC prompted a discussion on the logistical processes of transferring a capitalist city to an authoritative communist government. As the date of the transition drew closer, the predictions of Hong Kong's future were complemented with a substantial discussion on how the colonial common law system will function under the civil law system in the PRC. Berry Fong-Chung Hsu provides an extensive chronicle of the development of Hong Kong's common law system to determine if it will remain intact about 1997. During his research, Hsu asserts that the United Kingdom was initially supposed to develop two separate legal systems for the local and colonial communities.²⁶ However, this plan was never implemented as the colonial government feared that it would create political instability.²⁷ As a result, the common law system was gradually reshaped as local legal traditions were slowly incorporated.²⁸ Further, Hsu conducted several surveys where he found that the majority of people in Hong Kong supported the

²⁶ Berry Fong-Chung Hsu, *The Common Law System in Chinese Context: Hong Kong in Transition* (Armonk: M.E. Sharpe, 1992), 10.

²⁷ Hsu, 14.

²⁸ Hsu, 15-19.

current legal system.²⁹ Due to this strong public support, Hsu is optimistic that the common law system will remain in place after Hong Kong is returned to the PRC on July 1, 1997.³⁰

Building on Hsu's analysis of the common law system, Ming K. Chan and David J. Clark focused on the implications that the Central Government's newly minted Basic Law may have on Hong Kong. Chan and Clark, unlike Hsu, does not offer a sanguine view of Hong Kong's future as the Basic Law does not contain adequate measures to ensure that Hong Kong's high degree of autonomy will be maintained to June 30, 2047. To support this claim, Chan asserts the British and Chinese governments, with limited consultation from the local community, decided the terms and conditions of the Basic Law.³¹ From this finding, Chan argues that Westminster's unilateral action has led to complete breakdown of trust between the Central Government and the local community and jeopardized the development of democracy in Hong Kong.³² Further, Clark argues that the certain provisions in the Basic Law, particularly Articles 17, 18, 23, will enable the Central Government to unilaterally undermine the high degree of autonomy promised to Hong Kong under the Sino-British Joint Declaration in order to establish complete control over every aspect of Hong Kong society to their liking.³³ Therefore, Chan and Clark ultimately believe that the Basic Law is a farce designed to placate and distract the local community as the Central Government slowly erodes Hong Kong's high degree of autonomy.

As the date of the handover drew increasingly closer, many scholars have focused their attention on the potential implications that the "one country, two systems" model on the future development of Hong Kong's social system and policies. To explore the potential structure of

Hsu, 60-95.

³⁰ Hsu, 137-138.

³¹ Ming K. Chan and David J. Clark, eds. *The Hong Kong Basic Law: Blueprint for "Stability and Prosperity" under Chinese Sovereignty?* (Armonk: M.E. Sharpe, 1991), 25-29.

³² Chan and Clark, 29-32.

³³ Chan and Clark, 38-39; 41-54.

Hong Kong's social system, Gerard A. Postiglione and other scholars have compiled a series of essays in their edited volume, *Education and Society in Hong Kong: Toward One Country and Two Systems*, to provide some insights on the reversion's potential impacts on the Hong Kong's educational policies and institutions.

Gerard A. Postiglione provides an extensive overview of the transitional problems that HKGOV may face as it attempts to reform its colonial education system and social policies to meet the challenges of life under Chinese rule. Aside from this chronicle, Postiglione specifically examines whether a reformed education system will help streamline the transitional process and prepare the upcoming generation of leaders to lead Hong Kong into the future.³⁴ In his analysis, Postiglione determined that there are three possible trajectories that HKGOV may consider as it reforms the education system. First, Postiglione proposes that HKGOV may decide to maintain the current education system in order to ensure minimal social upheaval during the transitional process.³⁵ Second, Postiglione proposes that Hong Kong may become more democratized which could make educational reforms more difficult as interest groups compete to implement their respective ideas.³⁶ Lastly, Postiglione proposes the Central Government, upon resuming control of Hong Kong, may give more influence to pro-Beijing schools to determine which policies will be implemented to reform the education system.³⁷ After examining these options, Postiglione strongly believes that the second trajectory (democratization) is the surest way to ensure a harmonist relationship between Hong Kong and the PRC.³⁸ Despite this belief, Postiglione's

³⁴ Gerard A. Postiglione, "The Decolonization of Hong Kong Education," in *Education and Society in Hong Kong: Toward One Country and Two Systems*, ed. Gerard A. Postiglione (Armonk: M.E. Sharpe, 1991), 4-5.

³⁵ Postiglione, 10.

³⁶ Postiglione, *Ibid.*

³⁷ Postiglione, 10-11.

³⁸ Postiglione, 31-32.

research indicates that the reversion may prompt widespread changes in education that can impact the rest of society.

Besides Postiglione's survey on the future of Hong Kong's education system, Anthony E. Sweeting examines how certain historical processes have influenced the development of education policies. Sweeting examines several historical processes to illuminate its effects on the education system.³⁹ During his analysis of colonization, Sweeting asserts that the British did not plan for an independent Hong Kong since the majority of the population were transient migrants and refugees from the mainland which dissuaded the development of a formal education system.⁴⁰ Furthermore, Sweeting asserts that industrialization in Hong Kong influenced the development of new educational configurations as it led to a transition from all-age single-class schools to age-differentiated multi-class schools structured and taught by specialists.⁴¹ Due to this shift, Sweeting asserts that industrialization also prompted the use of modern technologies in the classroom which led to the introduction of modern sciences into classroom curriculum.⁴² In addition to these influences, Sweeting has also asserts that bureaucratization, despite the negative effects brought about by centralization, has addressed the gross inequalities in education.⁴³ With this in mind, Sweeting argues that these historical vestiges will continue to persist and influence the development of educational policies after the resumption of Chinese sovereignty.

Using this historical background, Cheng Kai Ming examines how Hong Kong was able to implement numerous reforms to radically expand and change its education system despite being

³⁹ Anthony E. Sweeting, "Hong Kong Education within Historical Processes," in *Education and Society in Hong Kong: Toward One Country and Two Systems*, ed. Gerard A. Postiglione (Armonk: M.E. Sharpe, 1991), 39.

⁴⁰ Sweeting, 40-44.

⁴¹ Sweeting, 50.

⁴² Sweeting, 53-55.

⁴³ Sweeting, 60.

governed by a departing autocratic government.⁴⁴ Through his research, Cheng provides a comprehensive overview on how the colonial government solely relied on both technical expertise and consultative measures to develop and implement educational policies.⁴⁵ Aside from this overview, Cheng asserts that the looming departure has prompted the colonial government to renege on its consultative processes that has traditionally been used to develop and implement policies.⁴⁶ Due to this shift, Cheng argues that the colonial government has established a dangerous precedent that will delegitimize the incoming government or enable the incoming government to unilaterally create and implement educational policies without any regards to its citizens.⁴⁷

Following up on Cheng's examination, Paul Morris explores how the transition of Hong Kong will impact the development of secondary school curriculum.⁴⁸ During his analysis, Morris found that the impending transition has led the Hong Kong Education Department to revise textbooks and curriculum to include pro-Beijing political and social lessons for secondary schools in order to ensure that students are able to integrate as Chinese citizens.⁴⁹ Furthermore, Morris found that Hong Kong Education also adopted the School-Based Curriculum Project Scheme to centralize the process of approving, developing, and implementing of educational projects.⁵⁰ With that in mind, Morris believes that these policies will easily enable any controlling party to singlehandedly determine the future of education in Hong Kong. Besides the transition's implications on the school curriculum, Ching-kwan Lee and Tak-sing Cheung chronicles the

⁴⁴ Cheng Kai Ming, "Educational Policymaking in Hong Kong: The Changing Legitimacy," in *Education and Society in Hong Kong: Toward One Country and Two Systems*, ed. Gerard A. Postiglione (Armonk: M.E. Sharpe, 1991), 97.

⁴⁵ Cheng, 102-111.

⁴⁶ Cheng, 112-113.

⁴⁷ Cheng, 113.

⁴⁸ Paul Morris, "Preparing Pupils as Citizens of the Special Administrative Region of Hong Kong: An Analysis of Curriculum Change and Control during the Transitional Period," in *Education and Society in Hong Kong: Toward One Country and Two Systems*, ed. Gerard A. Postiglione (Armonk: M.E. Sharpe, 1991), 118.

⁴⁹ Morris, 130-137.

⁵⁰ Morris, 137-141.

debates surrounding the process governing the allocation of spots in secondary schools throughout Hong Kong. In their analysis, Lee and Cheung found that the Hong Kong education system has traditionally been tailored to the political and economic elite.⁵¹ To address this social inequality, the colonial government implemented a series of reforms during the 1970s and 1980s to ensure that every child had an opportunity to receive an education.⁵² Due to these reforms, the political and economic elite successfully lobbied the colonial government to adopt the Direct Subsidy Scheme (DSS) which effectively rolled back the progressive reforms made in the 1970s and 1980s.⁵³ Under the DSS, Lee and Cheung noted that this policy would allow prestigious schools to selectively recruit wealthy students while less prestigious schools are left to recruit poorer students.⁵⁴ Despite the revival of classism under the DSS, Lee and Cheung believe the colonial government should focus on improving the quality of education rather than ensuring social equality in the education system in order to address Hong Kong's brain-drain problem. As a result, Lee and Cheung indicates that the Central Government may continue this policy to ensure Hong Kong's economic prowess.

Shifting from Lee and Cheung's general analysis on secondary school reforms, Grace C.L. Mak investigates whether educational reforms have created more opportunities for women in the workplace and classroom in her essay, "The Schooling of Girls in Hong Kong: Progress and Contradictions in the Transition." Throughout her analysis, Mak asserts that education reforms have allowed women to gradually attain a higher level of education.⁵⁵ As a result, Mak found that

⁵¹ Tak-sing Cheung and Ching-kwan Lee, "Egalitarianism and the Allocation of Secondary School Places in Hong Kong," in *Education and Society in Hong Kong: Toward One Country and Two Systems*, ed. Gerard A. Postiglione (Armonk: M.E. Sharpe, 1991), 149-150.

⁵² Lee and Cheung, 150-154.

⁵³ Lee and Cheung, 158-159.

⁵⁴ Lee and Cheung, 160-161.

⁵⁵ Grace C.L. Mak, "The Schooling of Girls in Hong Kong: Progress and Contradictions in the Transition," in *Education and Society in Hong Kong: Toward One Country and Two Systems*, ed. Gerard A. Postiglione (Armonk: M.E. Sharpe, 1991), 168-174.

women, despite their rising educational attainment, have made limited headway into the workplace as they still faced abject discrimination by employers.⁵⁶ Therefore, Mak predicts that the social inequalities and discrimination faced by women may continue to persist or even worsen after Hong Kong is returned to the PRC.

Aside from the issue of equality in the education system, Herbert Pierson provides an in-depth overview of the various language and communication issues that students may face after 1997. In his analysis, Pierson found that the Hong Kong Education Bureau has begun to implement pilot and training programs to introduce Putonghua into the general curriculum.⁵⁷ Coupled with this finding, Pierson also found that the majority of students perceived both Putonghua and English rather than Cantonese as a valuable skill.⁵⁸ Due to these findings, Pierson believes that Putonghua will most likely become the de jure language in Hong Kong after 1997. Further, Ora W.Y. Kwo expands on Pierson's analysis on language issues by examining the arguments and potential policies surrounding on which language should serve as the medium of instruction in Hong Kong schools.⁵⁹ After evaluating these options, Kwo agrees with Pierson that there should be more emphasis on incorporating Putonghua into the classroom curriculum, but only if the government, not the free-market, dictates its development. Therefore, Kwo and Pierson indicate that there may be an erosion of the local culture as Putonghua and other mainland cultural imports are adopted.

Besides the speculations and debates on how the Central Government will shape social policies in Hong Kong, scholars have also focused on how the close-knit relationship between

⁵⁶ Mak, 174-177.

⁵⁷ Herbert Pierson, "Cantonese, English, or Putonghua—Unresolved Communicative Issue in Hong Kong's Future," in *Education and Society in Hong Kong: Toward One Country and Two Systems*, ed. Gerard A. Postiglione (Armonk: M.E. Sharpe, 1991), 187-189.

⁵⁸ Pierson, 192-196.

⁵⁹ Ora W.Y. Kwo, "The Teaching of Putonghua in Hong Kong Schools: Language Education in a Changing Economic and Political Context," in *Education and Society in Hong Kong: Toward One Country and Two Systems*, ed. Gerard A. Postiglione (Armonk: M.E. Sharpe, 1991), 204-211.

the ruling government and business elite have affected the lives of ordinary people. To understand the potential implications of this relationship, Leo F. Goodstadt offers a comprehensive historical account of this relationship and its effects from the late-nineteenth century to present-day over the course of three books, *Uneasy Partners: The Conflict Between Public Interest and Private Profits in Hong Kong*, *Profits and Politics and Panics: Hong Kong's Banks and the Making of a Miracle Economy, 1935-1985*, and *Poverty in the Midst of Affluence: How Hong Kong Mismanaged Its Prosperity*.

In his initial research, Goodstadt provides a comprehensive review of the colonial government's relationship with the local political and economic elite. In his analysis, Goodstadt found this collusion between colonial officials and the local political and economic elite enabled both parties to achieve private political and financial gain at the expense of the ordinary citizens.⁶⁰ As a result, Goodstadt asserts that the collusion between the colonial government and the local elite actually hindered the development of democracy which has set a dangerous precedent for Hong Kong's political future.⁶¹ Due to the efficiency of this public and private relationship, Goodstadt noted that the Central Government sought to continue this style of government by enshrining it into the Basic Law.⁶² As a result, Goodstadt strongly believes that continuation of this collusion will continue to exacerbate the existing political, social, and economic inequalities in Hong Kong.

Expanding on this initial research, Goodstadt delves further into the colonial government's relationship with the banking industry to discern the implications on economic development in Hong Kong. In his analysis, Goodstadt offers an in-depth historical analysis of the colonial

⁶⁰ Leo F. Goodstadt, *Uneasy Partners: The Conflict Between Public Interest and Private Profits in Hong Kong*, (Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 2005), 34-35, 117-138.

⁶¹ Goodstadt, 27-29, 54-57.

⁶² Goodstadt, 113-116.

government's economic policies and its effects on the local banking industry. In his analysis, Goodstadt found that the colonial government had intentionally neglected to develop and implement effective policies and regulations to control the local banking industry.⁶³ Due to the lack of effective controls, Goodstadt asserts that the colonial government's actions directly contributed the instability of the entire banking industry.⁶⁴ Despite the severity instability of the banking industry, Goodstadt asserts that the local community played an instrumental role in stabilizing the banking industry.⁶⁵ Therefore Goodstadt believes that the persistent lack of regulation and accountability has continued to contribute to a variety of economic problems in present-day Hong Kong.

Besides examining the implications of the collusion between the colonial government, local elite, and the banking industry, Goodstadt argues that HKGOV and the Central Government, to a certain extent, have contributed to the resurgence of poverty in Hong Kong. During his analysis, Goodstadt asserts that HKGOV has neglected to provide an adequate level of social services which has led to an increase in the amount of people living in poverty.⁶⁶ As a result, Goodstadt found that the effects of past colonial policies coupled with HKGOV's current policies have severely crippled the local community's ability to attain an appropriate standard of living. Further, Goodstadt asserts that the transition of Hong Kong also witnessed the persistence of the collusion between the public and private sectors and the patriarchal colonial mentality have continued the belief that the impoverished segments of the community is still a transient parasitic organism that does not deserve any form of assistance.⁶⁷

⁶³ Leo Goodstadt, *Profits, Politics, and Panics: Hong Kong's Banks and the Making of a Miracle Economy, 1935-1985* (Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 2007), 19-36.

⁶⁴ Goodstadt, 145-181.

⁶⁵ Goodstadt, 221-222.

⁶⁶ Leo F. Goodstadt, *Poverty in the Midst of Affluence: How Hong Kong Mismanaged Its Prosperity* (Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 2014), 2-21, 87-162.

⁶⁷ Goodstadt, 169-186.

Shortly after Hong Kong's revision back to the PRC, many scholars have examined the success and sustainability of the "one country, two systems" model. Throughout this field of research, several scholars have discovered that the "one country, two systems" model has promoted the resurgence of political and economic elitism while eroding the rule of law in Hong Kong. Steve Shipp offers three potential futures that may manifest in Hong Kong. First, Hong Kong may experience a similar fate of Weihai, a former special administrative zone, that was leased to the British in 1898 and returned to the Kuomintang in 1930 on the condition that the port city remained a duty-free trading area.⁶⁸ Despite this promise, Weihai eventually suffered an economic downturn which prompted the Kuomintang to raise taxes and end the city's duty-free status.⁶⁹ Applying this precedent to Hong Kong, Shipp argues that Hong Kong's reunification with the PRC may trigger an economic collapse which may prompt the Central Government to assert direct control over the city's affairs. Expanding on this prediction, Shipp offers two additional predictions from the authors, Nien Cheng and Ross Terrill. Differing from Shipp's moderately optimistic prediction, Nien Cheng paints a much starker picture of Hong Kong's future under the PRC. Drawing from her experiences of the Cultural Revolution, Cheng asserts that the Central Government will reduce Hong Kong from an international financial hub into an exclusive vacation resort for the political and economic elite to engage in activities that are prohibited in the mainland.⁷⁰ In contrast to Cheng's draconian outlook, Ross Terrill offers two different predictions on Hong Kong's future in which the Central Government will either maintain the status quo or will neglect to provide the necessary resources to maintain Hong Kong's infrastructure and standard of living.⁷¹

⁶⁸ Steve Shipp, *Hong Kong, China* (Jefferson: McFarland & Company, Inc., 1995), 122-123.

⁶⁹ Shipp, *Ibid.*

⁷⁰ Shipp, 123-124.

⁷¹ Shipp, 124.

Expanding on Shipp's analysis, Wong Yiu-Chung argues that the "one country, two system" has enabled the Central Government to slowly erode Hong Kong's autonomy.⁷² In his analysis, Wong highlights six instances where HKGOV directly intervened in the political and legal processes to assist individuals with ties to the Central Government while neglecting to assist individuals that were attempting to seek recourse from the Central Government.⁷³ Expanding on this Wong's findings, Kenneth Ka-Lok Chan asserts that the Central Government, through the "one country, two systems" model, can exert undue influence onto HKGOV.⁷⁴ Furthermore, Chan found that Hong Kong's growing economic integration with the PRC may negatively affect the city's status as an international financial hub.⁷⁵ With these implications in mind, Chan and Wong believe that the "one country, two systems" model does not protect, but rather weakens, Hong Kong's political, social, and economic institutions. Following Chan's analysis, Albert H.Y. Chen and Anne S.Y. Cheung examines a series of legal cases to determine the status of the rule of law in the HKSAR. In their analysis, Chen and Cheung found that there is a significant lack of judicial independence as the Central Government has overturned several key decisions from the Court of Final Appeals.⁷⁶ Furthermore, Chen and Cheung found that HKGOV, despite the guarantees of free speech and religion in the Basic Law, enacted legislation to specifically target certain "dissident" political organizations (e.g. Falun Gong) from exercising their legal rights in Hong Kong.⁷⁷ In addition to these instances, Chen and Cheung also found that there was a lack of

⁷² Yiu-Chung Wong, "'One Country' and 'Two Systems': Where is the Line?," in *"One Country, Two Systems" in Crisis: Hong Kong's Transformation since the Handover*, ed. Wong Yiu-Chung (Maryland: Lexington Books, 2004), 9-11.

⁷³ Wong, 11-24.

⁷⁴ Kenneth Ka-Lok Chan, "Taking Stock of "One Country, Two Systems," in *Crisis: Hong Kong's Transformation since the Handover*, ed. Wong Yiu-Chung (Maryland: Lexington Books, 2004), 41.

⁷⁵ Chan, 49-52.

⁷⁶ Albert H.Y. Chen and Anne S.Y. Cheung, "The Search for the Rule of Law in the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region, 1997-2003," in *Crisis: Hong Kong's Transformation since the Handover*, ed. Wong Yiu-Chung (Maryland: Lexington Books, 2004), 62-68.

⁷⁷ Chen and Cheung, 69-74, 77-82.

consistency in the application of laws as there were instances where the prosecution choose not to prosecute an individuals with ties to the Central Government or HKGOV.⁷⁸ Due to these legal inconsistencies, Chen and Cheung seem to convey that the rule of law is merely a façade in Hong Kong.

With these studies in mind, the literature covers a broad range of topics on the political, economic, and social developments in Hong Kong. Despite this comprehensive account, the literature is still incomplete since many of these works were written during the twentieth and twenty-first century. As a result, the majority studies do not directly offer any insights into the ongoing civil disobedience movement in Hong Kong. Therefore, this paper will contribute to the existing literature by examining the underlying circumstances that is driving the current push for universal suffrage.

Employment and Income Deficiencies in Hong Kong

After the promulgation of the Treaty of Nanking in 1842, the Qing Dynasty was forced to cede Hong Kong to the United Kingdom. Under the auspice of the British government, colonial officials instituted a laissez faire government as the primary policymaking mechanism to govern the indigenous population and the colonial population.⁷⁹ Over the course of their tenure, the colonial government recognized Hong Kong as a vital strategic economic and military hub in East Asia. Due to the colony's strategic importance, the colonial government, unlike their Indian and Southeast Asian counterparts, decided to not enact reforms to replace the authoritarian system with a representative government. Instead, the colonial officials appointed the local economic and political elites to serve as the liaison between the indigenous population and the colonial government. Despite being the liaison between the indigenous and colonial communities, the local

⁷⁸ Chen and Cheung, 74-77.

⁷⁹ Goodstadt, *Uneasy Partners: The Conflict Between Public Interest and Private Profits in Hong Kong*, 2-3.

elite exploited their relationship with colonial officials to establish a pro-business environment that significantly increase their economic standing rather than introduce economic and social reforms to increase the quality of life in Hong Kong.⁸⁰

Table I: Public Trust in the Legislative Council and HKGOV

	(2003)	(2007)	(2010)
Trust in the Legislative Council	Quite a Lot of Trust	Quite a Lot of Trust	Not Very Much Trust
Trust in the Hong Kong Govt.	Quite a Lot of Trust	Quite a Lot of Trust	Not Very Much Trust

Source: Asian Barometer Hong Kong Survey

As Table I indicates, the public’s trust in the Legislative Council (Legco) and HKGOV has gradually declined from 2003 to 2010. With the recent developments in Hong Kong, the ongoing civil unrest suggests that there has been a further decrease in the level of public trust in the Legco and HKGOV. Throughout the course of these protests, Occupy Central has repeatedly demanded that the Central Government in Beijing fulfill its prescribed duty in the Basic Law (see: Articles 46, 68, and Annexes I and II) and the Joint Sino-British Declaration to permit universal suffrage in elections for positions in the Executive Council and the Legco.⁸¹ Upon examining Occupy Central’s rationale behind its demands for universal suffrage, there is a positive correlation between the lack of universal suffrage (independent variable) and the decline of trust (dependent variable) in the Legco and HKGOV. Despite this positive correlation, there is no supporting evidence to suggest that a causal relationship exist as many authoritarian regimes have managed to survive throughout history without granting universal suffrage to its citizens. Therefore, the lack of direct causation suggests that there are other possible variables that may have an impact on the level of public trust in the Legco and HKGOV. Drawing upon the available literature, Goodstadt’s

⁸⁰ Goodstadt, 31-32; 124-128.

⁸¹ Occupy Central with Love and Peace, “Frequently Asked Question,” <https://oclpkenglish.wordpress.com/about-2/faq/> (accessed November 1, 2014).

research on the government-business nexus' negligence in promulgating social and economic reforms, Hsu's research on the potential implications brought about by the legal incompatibility of the common law system with the civil law system, Chan and Clark's research on the limited protections of the Basic Law, Postiglione et al.'s research on Beijing's interference into Hong Kong's social and cultural systems, and Wong et al.'s research on the favoritism shown by the legal system in matters pertaining to or involving individuals with political connections to the Central Government or with familial connections to local civil servants are several potential factors that may be responsible for the decline in trust and the subsequent demand for universal suffrage.

Table II: Economic and Political Well-Being and Trust in the Legislative Council

	β (2003)	Sig. (2003)	β (2007)	Sig. (2007)	β (2010)	Sig. (2010)
National Economic Condition	0.040	0.281	0.047	0.047	0.307	0.000
Current Economic Situation	0.073	0.064	0.124	0.336	0.014	0.850
Future Economic Situation	0.091	0.001	0.165	0.001	0.130	0.020
Political Efficacy	-0.035	0.574	0.143	0.002	-0.032	0.481
Trust in Government Officials	-0.251	0.000	0.090	0.000	0.241	0.000
Monthly Income	-0.010	0.638	0.001	0.607	0.002	0.230

Source: Asian Barometer Hong Kong Survey

Table III: Economic and Political Well-Being and Trust in Hong Kong Government

	β (2003)	Sig. (2003)	β (2007)	Sig. (2007)	β (2010)	Sig. (2010)
National Economic Condition	0.185	0.000	0.027	0.647	0.245	0.000
Personal Economic Situation	0.162	0.000	-0.072	0.295	-0.001	0.988
Future Economic Situation	0.045	0.110	0.112	0.000	0.100	0.043
Political Efficacy	0.058	0.379	0.044	0.267	0.052	0.193
Trust in Government Officials	-0.425	0.000	0.095	0.002	0.136	0.000
Monthly Income	-0.060	0.004	0.002	0.265	0.004	0.004

Source: Asian Barometer Hong Kong Survey

As Table II and III demonstrates, the public's lack of trust in government officials and the public's uncertainty in their future economic situation are consistent predictors that can be used to determine the level of public trust in the Legco and HKGOV. Aside from these two variables, there is no indication that the remaining variables have any significant effects on the level of public trust

in the Legco and HKGOV. The lack of statistical significance may be related to the varying effects that each remaining variable has on residents residing in different districts. With that in mind, the overall condition of the national economy may only affect the level of public trust of residents living in the New Territories rather than residents living in the Kowloon Peninsula. Furthermore, monthly income and current economic situation may also not be accurate predictors of public trust as a family living in Mong Kok may have higher living costs than a family living in the New Territories. Due to the variations in living costs and proximity to the mainland, an individual may have different opinions of the government. Lastly, political efficacy may not be an accurate predictor of public trust since elections are only limited to district-level positions and political participation has been traditionally discouraged by cultural norms and historical precedents. From these results, the public's distrust of government officials and uncertainty of their future economic situation may be some of the causal factors that are driving the push for universal suffrage.

Shortly after the resumption of Chinese sovereignty in 1997, the Central Government in Beijing adopted the colonial government's model of indirect government and continued to exclusively rely on the local elite to govern Hong Kong. Under the direction of local elite, HKGOV adopted austere private sector practices and gradually enacted additional pro-business legislation while neglecting to introduce any substantial employment protections, social services, and social security programs to protect the grassroots.⁸² As these policies came into effect, many government employees were forced to seek new employment in the private sector where they, despite their qualifications, had to accept lower wages which inadvertently triggered a further reduction in the median wage as the supply of workers surpassed the demand for workers.⁸³ Aside from enacting these draconian austerity measures, HKGOV also failed to implement legislation and policies

⁸² Goodstadt, *Poverty in the Midst of Affluence: How Hong Kong Mismanaged Its Property*, 57-62.

⁸³ Goodstadt, 35-36.

to mitigate the ramifications of the economic downturns on employment opportunities during the 1997 East Asian Financial Crisis and the 2003 SARS epidemic.⁸⁴

Coupled with these initial policies, HKGOV also enacted legislation to reduce the amount of social welfare assistance by ten to twenty percent, to tighten the eligibility threshold for social services, and to lengthen the requirement for permanent residency in Hong Kong to seven years.⁸⁵ According to the CSSA-Alliance, these policies significantly burdens new immigrants, especially those with children that are permanent residents, since it restricts their abilities to seek employment which forces them to live on their children's comprehensive social security assistance (CSSA) allowance. Further, the reduction in social services and welfare were followed by the enactment of additional legislation that mandated CSSA recipients to seek some form of employment or risk a reduction of their social benefits.⁸⁶ Due to the new regulations imposed on the disbursement of social benefits and the influx of overqualified government workers into the private sector, HKGOV effectively relegated the majority of lower-middle and working class employees (underclass) to short-term 'dead-end' jobs where the median wage ranges from HK\$4800 to HK\$5200.⁸⁷

With their limited earning power, the majority of the underclass are forced to spend the majority of their income and social welfare allowance in order to maintain a bare minimum standard of living as the cost of living continues to exponentially increase.⁸⁸ Aside from the plight of the underclass, the Hong Kong Council of Social Services (HKCSS) found that the purchasing power of all non-CSSA grassroots households, from FY1999-2000 to FY2009-2010, has gradually

⁸⁴ Dachu Ouyang 歐陽達初, *Social Assistance with Social Exclusion: A Critical Review*, (Hong Kong: CSSA-Alliance), 1-2.

⁸⁵ Dachu Ouyang 歐陽達初, *She hui gong zuo de xin zheng zhi: fu li gai ge yu yun dong* 社會工作的新政治: 福利改革與福利運動 [New Direction for Social Work: A Movement to Change Social Welfare Policies] (Hong Kong: CSSA-Alliance), 2.

⁸⁶ Ouyang, *Ibid.*

⁸⁷ Dachu Ouyang, *Social Assistance with Social Exclusion: A Critical Review*, 4-5.

⁸⁸ Ouyang, 8.

decreased as the inflation of basic necessities continue to outpace the increase in wages.⁸⁹ As a result, the combination of the lack of long-term employment opportunities and the rising price inflation of basic necessities have stifled social mobility in Hong Kong. To illustrate the ramifications of this general trend on the grassroots, this section examines how HKGOV's negligence and mismanagement have affected the residents living in Shum Shui Po, Tin Shui Wai, and Tung Chung.

Shum Shui Po is a district located in the northwestern part of the Kowloon Peninsula that played host to the majority of the manufacturing industry throughout the 1950s and 1970s. In comparison with the other seventeen districts, the median income and living conditions in Shum Shui Po are among the lowest in Hong Kong as employment shifted from the manufacturing sector to the service sector.⁹⁰ Despite the dismal state of Shum Shui Po, HKGOV has continued to neglect enacting legislation and policies to create long-term structural changes to alleviate and curb the rate of poverty.⁹¹ According to the HKCSS, the responsibilities of poverty alleviation and social assistance are delegated to non-governmental and local community-based organizations. Under the direction of these organizations, social workers and volunteers have developed temporary domestic worker employment opportunities for the unemployed in order to provide a source of income and to develop a community network in Shum Shui Po.⁹² Although these programs were generally successful, the finite power of non-governmental and community-based organizations

⁸⁹ Hong Kong Council of Social Services, *Research on Expenditure Patterns of Grassroots Household* (Hong Kong: HKCSS Publications, 2012): 24-26; 35-36.

⁹⁰ Shum Shui Po District Council, "District Highlights," Shum Shui Po District Council, <http://www.districtcouncils.gov.hk/ssp/en/dchighlights.html> (accessed November 15, 2014).

⁹¹ Frederick Fung 馮檢基, *Qu yi hui de fu pin jue se 區議會的扶貧角色* [The Role of Legco Representatives in Alleviating Poverty] (Hong Kong: HKCSS Publication, 2009), 2.

⁹² Hong Kong Council of Social Services, *Shen shui bu qu de fu pin gong zuo 深水埗區的扶貧工作* [Poverty Alleviation Projects and Outcomes in Shum Shui Po] (Hong Kong: HKCSS Publication, 2009), 1.

have only temporarily alleviate the symptoms rather than resolve the systemic factors underlying poverty.⁹³

Housing Deficiencies in Hong Kong

Aside from the lack of reforms in Shum Shui Po, HKGOV's mismanagement in urban planning and the construction of new urban developments in the New Territories and Lantau Island has led to major deficiencies of critical social and economic infrastructure. Among the different urban developments situated in the New Territories, Tin Shui Wai is the epitome of the dismal mismanagement of government planning as social and economic deficiencies have led to high rates of poverty and unemployment among its residents.⁹⁴ Since the inception of Tin Shui Wai in the early 1990s, HKGOV has only offered limited assistance to address the high rate of poverty and unemployment. In response to the lack of governmental support, various non-profits organizations have introduced several economic infrastructure to reduce unemployment and poverty. According to the HKCSS, non-profit organizations have established an organic mushroom farm in 2007 to provide residents with some form of income along with social programs to help residents build a community identity and network.⁹⁵ Despite the efforts of these organizations, these initiatives cannot guarantee that residents will have access to stable long-term employment and income to ensure an adequate standard of living. As a result, Tin Shui Wai residents are forced to continue living in a marginal state of existence.

Coupled with the humanitarian debacle in Tin Shui Wai, HKGOV's mismanagement has also affected the urban development of Tung Chung. Located near Lantau Island and Kai Tak

⁹³ Hong Kong Council of Social Services, 2.

⁹⁴ Mika Savela, "A City Formerly Known as Sadness-Tin Shui Wai," Failed Architecture Foundation, <http://failedarchitecture.com/a-city-formerly-known-as-sadness-tin-shui-wai/> (accessed November 16, 2014).

⁹⁵ Hong Kong Council of Social Services, *Tian shui wei fu pin gong zuo yu zheng ce xie tiao* 天水圍扶貧工作與政策協調 [Poverty Alleviation Policies in Tin Shui Wai] (Hong Kong: HKCSS Publications, 2009), 1.

International Airport, HKGOV began development the Tung Chun in 2007 in order to increase the availability of housing and amenities to accommodate white-collar workers and tourists visiting the surrounding tourist attractions.⁹⁶ Despite the surrounding economic opportunities and prosperity, Tung Chung has remained relatively economically underdeveloped since its inception in 2007. Coupled with the lack of economic opportunities, HKGOV has relocated the majority of recent public housing recipients to Tung Chung. As a result, the influx of low-income and low-educated residents and the lack of economic opportunities have forced Tung Chung residents to swallow the high-cost of transportation to neighboring cities to find employment.⁹⁷ Although residents are able to find employment, the low median income (ranging from HK\$4000 to HK\$6000) combined with high transportation costs (ranging from HK\$10 to HK\$23 per trip) have made Tung Chung the poorest area in Hong Kong.⁹⁸ In response to the lack of government intervention, local non-profits and community-based organizations have implemented an asset-based community development model to provide critical social, economic, and academic services along with stipends and household items to assist residents.⁹⁹

After nearly two decades in power, HKGOV has failed to implement sufficient safeguards and long-term development plans to ensure that its citizens are able to attain and maintain a stable standard of living. In response to these shortcomings, various non-profits, non-governmental, and community-based organizations have assumed the role of government by developing programs to provide critical economic and social assistance services. However, the finite power of these organizations means these assistance programs can only be maintained for a limited amount of

⁹⁶ Square Foot Online, “Tung Chung Development Traps in a Dilemma,” Square Foot Online, <http://www.squarefoot.com.hk/news/273/tung-chung-development-traps-in-a-dilemma/> (accessed November 17, 2014).

⁹⁷ Licai Huang 黃禮財 and Liling Zheng 鄭麗玲, *Dong chong qu pin qiong de tiao zhan* 東涌區貧窮的挑戰 [The Challenges of addressing poverty in Tung Chung] (Hong Kong: HKCSS Publications, 2009), 1.

⁹⁸ Huang and Zheng, *Ibid.*

⁹⁹ Huang and Zheng, 2-3.

time since they are completely dependent on community support. Due to the fragility of these programs, these organizations, until receiving additional government assistance, can only effect short-term changes rather than long-term reforms to reduce employment and income deficiencies plaguing society. As a result, the majority of citizens have continued to distrust both Legco and HKGOV officials since they have repeatedly broken promises to introduce legislation to ensure economic stability. Therefore, the lack of economic stability coupled with governmental negligence may be one of the key factors underlying the current civil unrest in Hong Kong.

Aside from HKGOV's failure to implement long-term reforms to ensure a stable economic future, the shortage of adequate and affordable public and private housing is another possible factor that may have triggered the current civil unrest in Hong Kong. Before examining the current housing issue, it is necessary to first have an understanding of the development of housing policies in Hong Kong. After the resumption of British sovereignty in 1945, the colonial government had to address the increasing influx of refugees entering Hong Kong to escape the political turmoil in the mainland.¹⁰⁰ Initially, the colonial government refused to directly intervene and exclusively relied on the Hong Kong Settlers' Housing Corporation (HKSHC) and Hong Kong Housing Society (HKHS) to construct or find housing for the incoming refugees.¹⁰¹ However, the colonial government's indirect approach ultimately failed to provide sufficient funding and support for the HKSHC and the HKHS to build adequate tenement buildings and temporary squatter settlements to accommodate the refugees. Due to the lack of basic sanitation and safety measures, the colonial government's lack of direct intervention resulted in a preventable major fire in 1953 that destroyed the entire squatter settlement in Shek Kip Mei.¹⁰² In response to the Shek Kip Mei disaster, the

¹⁰⁰ Peter K.W. Fong, *Housing Policy and the Public Housing Programme in Hong Kong* (working paper no. 19, University of Hong Kong, 1986), 4.

¹⁰¹ Fong, 5.

¹⁰² Fong, 6.

colonial government subsequently abandoned its non-interventionist stance to directly implement multiple reforms to resettle the displaced residents into apartment complexes.¹⁰³ Following these initial reforms, colonial officials continued to implement additional housing reforms throughout the next three decades to upgrade existing housing units and to construct additional housing units to ensure an ample supply of living space for the refugees.¹⁰⁴ Despite their focus on rehousing the refugees, colonial officials failed to develop any mechanisms or enact legislation to ensure that every public and private housing unit met a minimum safety and hygiene standard.¹⁰⁵

Following the resumption of Chinese sovereignty, HKGOV inherited a dismal housing policy that failed to include plans to improve an individual's average living space or their ability to purchase their own apartment.¹⁰⁶ However, instead of addressing these deficiencies, HKGOV, under the direction of the local elite, began to systemically dismantle the colonial housing reforms and institutions.¹⁰⁷ Throughout this process, HKGOV was pressured by the private sector to auction its inventory of 1,000 undeveloped housing sites (capable of providing about 730,000 public and private housing units) to private real estate developers on the premise that they will quickly rectify the existing housing problems.¹⁰⁸ Coupled with the liquation of government-owned land, HKGOV also further reduced the availability of public housing which has hindered the process of relocating people living in condemned or dilapidated housing units to acceptable living spaces.¹⁰⁹ In response to the private sector's monopoly, the public has placed enormous pressure on HKGOV to enact legislation to regulate the private housing market and to reenter the housing

¹⁰³ Fong, 6-8.

¹⁰⁴ Fong, 7-16.

¹⁰⁵ Fong, Ibid.

¹⁰⁶ Goodstadt, *Poverty in the Midst of Affluence: How Hong Kong Mismanaged Its Property*, 87.

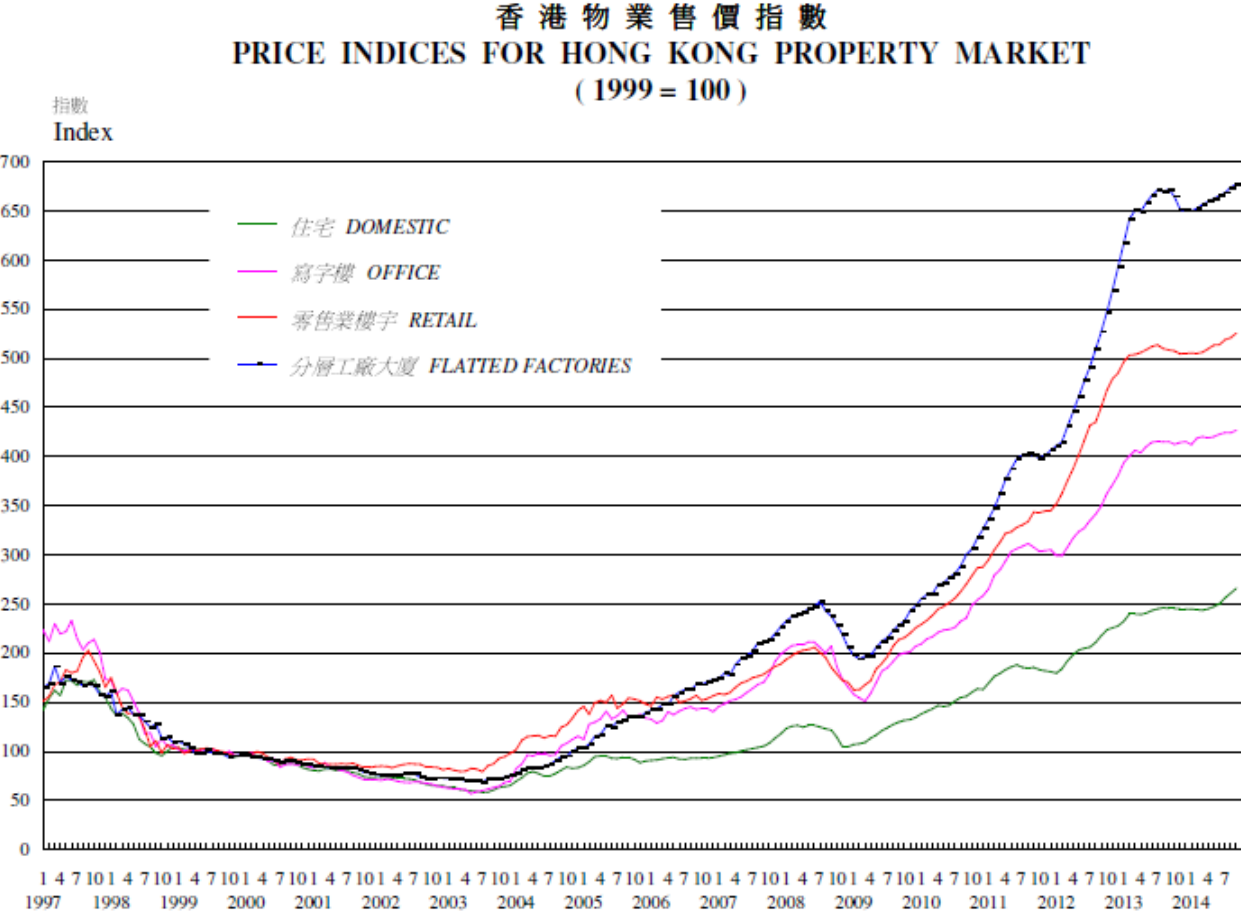
¹⁰⁷ Goodstadt, 96.

¹⁰⁸ Goodstadt, Ibid; Jianhua Zhong 鍾劍華, *Shi nian xiao ji zheng ce fang wu wen ti e hua* 十年消極政策房屋問題惡化 [Ten Years of Reluctant Governance: The Declining State of Housing in Hong Kong] (Hong Kong: HKCSS Publications, 2012), 1-2.

¹⁰⁹ Goodstadt, 95, 99-100; Zhong, 2-3.

market to ensure affordable public housing. Despite the public’s pressure, HKGOV has continued to refuse to address this issue on the premise that there is a shortage of land. However, there is no basis for HKGOV’s premise since private and public housing respectively occupy 76 sq. km and 16 sq. km out of the 1,104 sq. km of available developed and undeveloped land.¹¹⁰ As a result, the increasing housing disparity suggests that HKGOV and the local elite are actively colluding together to benefit from the private sector’s monopolization of the housing market over the past decade and a half.

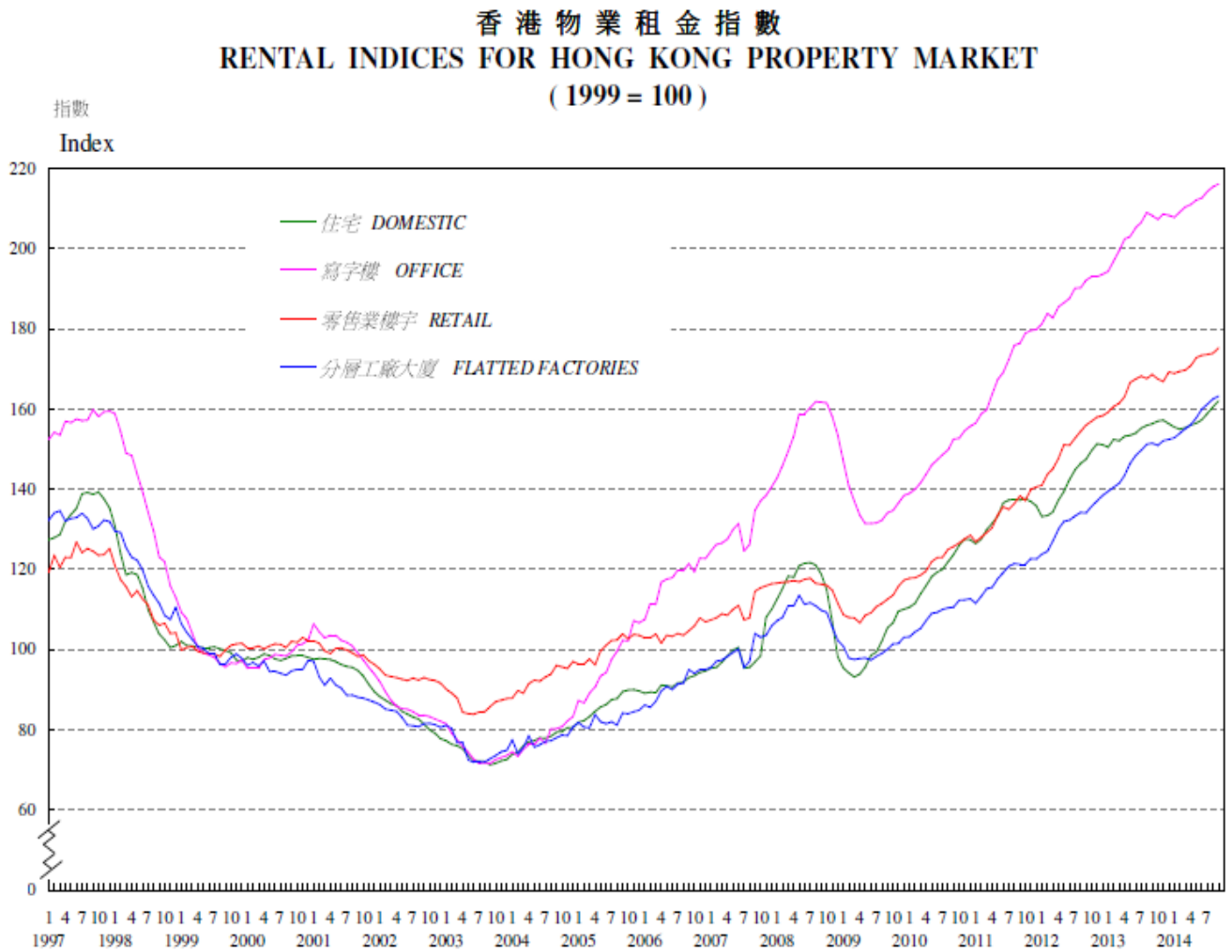
Figure I: The Growth of Property Purchase Prices in Hong Kong (1997-2014)



Source: Hong Kong Rating and Valuation Department

¹¹⁰ Jianwei Huang 黃健偉, *Fang wu zheng ce tao lun duo mian ti* 房屋政策討論多面體 [The Multiple Facets of Hong Kong’s Housing Policies] (Hong Kong: HKCSS Publications, 2011), 1-2.

Figure II: The Growth of Property Rental Rates in Hong Kong (1997-2014)



Source: Hong Kong Rating and Valuation Department

As Figures I and II demonstrates, the private sector's monopolization of the real estate market has exponentially increased the purchase and rental prices of existing and new housing units. Combined with the HKGOV's mismanagement of its housing policies, the employment deficiencies coupled with the slow increase of wages has rendered the underclass and the middle class unable to afford the exorbitant purchase or rental price. Besides the limitations imposed onto the underclass and the middle class' abilities to access housing, the majority of the post-80s and post-90s generations are further constrained as their wages cannot cover the purchase or rental cost

of private housing while rendering them ineligible for public housing.¹¹¹ Aside from the exorbitant cost of living in private housing market, the shortage of public housing has forced the eligible underclass and the post-80s and 90s generations applicants to wait three years or more before gaining access to a public rental apartment.¹¹² In response to this shortage, the Hong Kong Housing Authority (HKHA) announced plans to increase the supply of public housing by 9,900 units in FY2014-2015, 23,300 units in FY2015-2016, 14,300 units in FY2016-2017, 23,100 units in FY2017-2018, and 17,000 units in FY2018-2019.¹¹³ Despite these projections, the HKHA has failed to achieve its goal of 9,900 units since it has only managed to construct an additional 990 units in FY2014-2015.¹¹⁴

Due to the failure of HKGOV and the HKHA to provide additional public housing, the shortage of public housing units coupled with the increasing cost of private housing has forced the majority of the underclass and the post-80s and 90s generation to live in subdivided apartments, cubicle homes, illegally modified homes, and cage homes.¹¹⁵ With the demand for housing increasing, the number of partitioned apartments and its various variations have doubled over the past five years.¹¹⁶ However, despite the increased availability of these facilities, the tenants, due to the abolition of rent control and rental rights in 1998 and 2004, have virtually no bargaining

¹¹¹ Huang, 3-4; Ningyan Li 李寧衍, *Jie jue tu di wen ti jiu ke yi jie jue fang wu wen ti?* 解決土地問題就可以解決房屋問題? [The Issue of Land Availability and its Implications on the Housing Question in Hong Kong] (Hong Kong: HKCSS Publications, 2011), 1.

¹¹² Hong Kong Housing Authority, "Number of Applications and Average Waiting Time for Public Rental Housing," Hong Kong Housing Authority, <http://www.housingauthority.gov.hk/en/about-us/publications-and-statistics/prh-applications-average-waiting-time/index.html> (accessed November 10, 2014).

¹¹³ Hong Kong Housing Authority, "Forecast Public Housing Production," Hong Kong Housing Authority, <http://www.housingauthority.gov.hk/en/about-us/publications-and-statistics/forecast-public-housing-production/index.html> (accessed November 10, 2014).

¹¹⁴ Hong Kong Housing Authority, "Report on HA Project Completion," Hong Kong Housing Authority, <http://www.housingauthority.gov.hk/en/about-us/publications-and-statistics/report-on-ha-project-completion/index.html> (accessed November 10, 2014).

¹¹⁵ Goodstadt, *Poverty in the Midst of Affluence: How Hong Kong Mismanaged its Prosperity*, 100.

¹¹⁶ Danni Xu 許丹妮, (*Tangfang*) *Jie shi Xianggang zhu fang tiao jian de wen ti* 「劏房」揭示香港住房條件的問題許丹妮 [(Partitioned Homes): Hong Kong's Housing Accommodation Problem] (Hong Kong: HKCSS Publications, 2012), 1.

power with their landlords who are able to unilaterally increase the rent far beyond the inflation rate and subject them to at will evictions.¹¹⁷ Coupled with the lack of rights and protections, the increased demand for housing has also forced many tenants to accept subpar living conditions. For instance, tenants are forced to endure cramped and filthy conditions where they are forced to live in unhygienic environments and share limited hygiene and cooking facilities with numerous other tenants.¹¹⁸ Aside from deficiencies in environmental hygiene, tenants are also forced to cope with building degradation and safety deficiencies that place the residents at an increased risk of fire, building collapses and other hazardous situations.¹¹⁹

Despite the potential threats posed by these accommodations on human life, HKGOV and the HKHA has failed to implement the necessary reforms to ensure that its citizens have access to an adequate and safe living space. Furthermore, HKGOV, under the direction of Chief Executive Leung Chun-ying, have only taken token measures to address and resolve these deficiencies. As a result, the shortage of affordable housing has caused the majority of citizens to doubt their future stability of their economic and living situation which may have prompted a decline in trust of Legco and HKGOV officials. Therefore, HKGOV's inability to address the widespread shortage and the exorbitant costs of housing could be one of the key factors underlying the civil unrest in Hong Kong.

Conclusion: So why is Hong Kong protesting?

Throughout the course of the civil unrest in Hong Kong, many media outlets have portrayed the umbrella revolution as a movement toward universal suffrage and additional freedoms in Hong

¹¹⁷ Society of Community Organization, *2012/2013 Research Report on Cage Homes, Cubicles, and Subdivided Flats* (Hong Kong: Society of Community Organization, 2013), 5.

¹¹⁸ Daniel Dawn, "Subdivided Housing Issues of Hong Kong: Causes and Solutions" (PhD diss., Hong Kong Institute of Education, 2013), 23-24.

¹¹⁹ Dawn 25-26.

Kong. Despite this popular rendition of the social movement, the simple allegory of an oppressive government driving its citizens to push for universal suffrage or additional rights only occurs in a perfect world. As the paper shows, there are numerous systemic social and economic issues that have persisted throughout the colonial era to the present day that the British, Chinese, and Hong Kong governments have left partially or completely unresolved. Therefore, these systemic issues, many of which have widespread implications on the community's welfare, are more likely to be the primary grievances that are driving these elements to strive for universal suffrage to determine their own faith.

Although this paper only examines two potential factors to understand what are the causes behind the push for universal suffrage, the lack of safe and affordable housing and the deficiencies in employment and income have been long-term systemic issues in Hong Kong for the past three and a half decades. With that in mind, the Occupy Central movement along with the other factions participating in the civil unrest should not be perceived as a movement for democracy but rather as a movement that is trying to rectify the growing disparities in Hong Kong by pursuing universal suffrage to effect social changes.

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