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Deliberative Democracy in Social Movements in Taiwan and Hong Kong

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Abstract

This thesis explores conceptions and practices of democracy in Taiwan's Sunflower Movement and Hong Kong's Umbrella Movement, in order to reflect on broader questions of strategy, prefiguration, and deliberation. Both occupation movements were often compared to one another, not just by participants themselves, but also by local and international analysts who pointed to similarities in terms of underlying causes, organizational forms, and repertoires. However, the enactment of democracy in both movements has not yet been thoroughly compared. In both contexts activists experimented with "deliberative democracy," a notion of democracy that emphasizes the importance of open, transparent, and rational communication amongst informed citizens to the political process. But despite these experiments and the democratic aspirations underpinning both movements, major decisions concerning their strategic direction were taken behind closed doors by a core leadership rather than in a bottom-up fashion. My thesis seeks to make sense of the contradictory fashion in which these movements enacted democracy by exploring how participants conceived and practiced democracy. I bring together and contribute to literatures on deliberative democracy, prefiguration, and performative politics. I demonstrate that the two movements not just voiced democratic demands vis-à-vis the state, but also constituted enactments of democracy in and of themselves. Democracy was put to practice through civil disobedience, contestations over deliberative backstage leadership structures, and the creation of diverse spaces of participation and deliberation in the occupation zones.

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Contents

<i>Abbreviations</i>	6
<i>A Note on Romanization</i>	7
Introduction	8
1 Enacting Civil Disobedience	58
2 Deliberative Leadership Structures	108
3 Stages and Contestations over Occupied Space	154
4 Deliberations in Occupy Central and the Umbrella Movement	203
5 Deliberations in the Wild Strawberry and Sunflower Movement	249
Conclusion	293
<i>Appendix</i>	306
<i>Bibliography</i>	315

Abbreviations

BIY	Black Island Youth Front
CCP	Chinese Communist Party
CHRF	Civil Human Rights Front
CSSTA	Cross-Strait Service Trade Agreement
DAB	Democratic Alliance for the Betterment of Hong Kong
DF	Democratic Front against Cross-Strait Service Trade Agreement
DPP	Democratic Progressive Party
ELAB	Extradition Law Amendment Bill
HKASPDM	The Hong Kong Alliance in Support of Patriotic Democratic Movements
HKFS	Hong Kong Federation of Students
HKSAR	Hong Kong Special Administrative Region
KMT	Kuomintang
LegCo	Legislative Council
LGBTQ	Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer
NGO	Nongovernmental Organization
NPCSC	Standing Committee of the National People's Congress
NPP	New Power Party
OCLP	Occupy Central with Love and Peace
OCTS	One Country Two Systems
PRC	People's Republic of China
ROC	Republic of China
US	United States

A Note on Romanization

Where romanization from Chinese script is required, my thesis mostly relies on Hanyu Pinyin, as it is the most widely used system and the one I was trained in. For a few highly characteristic social movement terms and slogans used in Hong Kong, I rely on the Jyutping System for Cantonese romanization. When referring to the names of people or places, I use whichever seems to be the most common romanized spelling in the particular context.

Introduction

During the early 2010s a wave of popular occupation movements demonstrated that people across the world share hopes and aspirations for political change. There was a sense that it was “kicking of everywhere” (Mason 2012) as a series of notable anti-authoritarian uprisings emerged that included the “Arab Uprisings” in the Middle East and North Africa, the “Indignados Movement” in Spain, “Occupy Wall Street” in the United States (and its international offshoots) as well as the Gezi Park protests in Turkey amongst other movements (also Castells 2015; della Porta 2015; Gerbaudo 2017; Sitrin and Azzellini 2014; Tufekci 2017). Fittingly, these protests came to be regarded as the “movements of the squares” (Gerbaudo 2014). The particular circumstances, concerns, and dynamics differed across context. However, they did not only share a particular “repertoire” of protest (Tilly 1986) – most notably the occupation of public space –, but also a reliance on new digital technology and a rootedness in a legitimacy crisis of existing institutional arrangements (Castells 2015, pp. 222–223). Drawing on experiences with participatory and deliberative democracy in past social movements, participants experimented with innovative organizational and participatory forms in the encampments (della Porta 2015; Maeckelbergh 2012; Polletta 2014; Sitrin and Azzellini 2014).

Whilst the physical encampments eventually faded away, the questions that activists grappled with – many of them old questions that get to the core of democratic theory – remain: What does “democracy” mean? How “democratic” are existing representative arrangements? How can institutional democracy be deepened? To what extent do social movements contribute to democratization? Should activists construct alternative spaces outside the prevailing system? How to balance participation and

representation? Are democratic, horizontalist organizational forms more conducive to lasting social change than centralized movement leadership?

These and related questions also resurfaced during the two most notable East Asian occupation movements that emerged as part of the recent wave. During the “Sunflower Movement” (太陽花運動) of March 2014 activists occupied Taiwan’s parliament (Republic of China, ROC) and the surrounding streets to halt the ratification of a trade deal with the People’s Republic of China (PRC).¹ They questioned the democratic legitimacy of the ratification process and criticised the potential impact of closer economic ties with the PRC on Taiwan’s young representative democracy. In September of the same year, Hong Kong’s “Umbrella Movement” (雨傘運動) emerged in response to the PRC government’s restrictive decision on democratic reform in Hong Kong.² The participants, many of whom viewed the global protests as an inspiration, occupied streets in three districts in order to demand the introduction of what they called “genuine” universal suffrage. Democratic reform was deemed essential for maintaining Hong Kong’s relative autonomy under Chinese sovereignty. Whereas the Taiwanese movement resulted in the shelving of the trade deal that enabled a voluntary exit from the occupation after 24 days, the authorities in Hong Kong violently cleared the encampments after 79 days without making any concessions.

Beyond their reliance on the occupation of public space, the two East Asian movements also shared less visible similarities with “movements of the squares” elsewhere, including that they both were an indignant response to a perceived crisis of legitimacy of institutional arrangements, were facilitated by digital communication technology, involved a new generation of young

¹ The “Sunflower” label was inspired by a donation of sunflowers by a florist, see Rowen 2015, p. 8. The movement is also referred to as the “318 Movement” (318 運動) after the day on which the occupation first emerged.

² The movement name alludes to the umbrellas protesters used for protection against teargas and pepper spray.

people, and experiments with democracy. However, there were also things that set them apart from occupations elsewhere, most notably their particular setting: both movements had in common that they were struggles over political autonomy set at the periphery of the PRC, a powerful one-party state bound on squashing what it regards as “separatism” (Jones 2017b; Wu 2019). Given this shared background, previous comparative studies of the Sunflower and Umbrella Movement have tended to foreground the regional, geostrategic context of these protests as challenges to “Beijing’s mandate of heaven” (Ho 2019; also Jones 2017b; Kaeding 2015). Apart from some excellent comparativist scholarship, a large body of case studies elucidates similarities (and differences) in terms of their underlying causes, movement features, and repertoires, as well as their entanglement with the so-called “China-factor” (e.g. Beckershoff 2017; Lee and Chan 2018; Ma and Cheng 2019; Wu 2019).³ Whilst acknowledging the international context and commonalities with occupation protests elsewhere, the existing scholarship tends to focus on examining various aspects of these movements by drawing both upon the established analytical vocabulary of social movement studies and regional histories. But how these movements navigated questions of democracy and organization that were also raised by “movements of the squares” in other places has so far not received comprehensive comparative attention, even though the experience of these two important East Asian occupation movements can help make sense of them.⁴

³ Simply put, the term “China factor” describes the influence of the PRC on the peripheral societies in economic, political, and cultural realms, see Ho 2019, pp. 40–70; Hsu 2017; Schubert 2015; Wu 2019.

⁴ More recently, there have been sustained protests in Hong Kong between 2019 and 2020 against a controversial bill that would allow extradition to the Chinese Mainland. The so-called “Anti-Extradition Law Amendment Bill Movement” (反對逃犯條例修訂草案運動 – Anti-ELAB Movement) embraced more decentralized and fluid forms of protest than the Umbrella Movement, see, for instance, Ku 2020; Lee 2020. Since my focus is on the 2014 occupations in Taiwan and Hong Kong, I will only rarely touch on the recent protests in this thesis.

Understanding how participants in the Sunflower and Umbrella Movement approached these questions seems especially pertinent considering that they operated in the periphery of the PRC that many believe presents the most sustained challenge to liberal democracy due to its advocacy of an alternative “China model” that combines accelerated economic development and authoritarianism (see Bell 2015; Zhao 2010). At a time when experts are debating the brewing of a “new cold war” between the United States and China (Bremmer 2020; Rachman 2020), Taiwan and Hong Kong may appear as chess pieces in a larger geopolitical struggle between “democracy” and “authoritarianism” – an especially tragic development considering that under colonialism the fate of the two societies was long determined by outsiders. Actors on all sides play into this discourse. Joshua Wong (黃之鋒), an influential activists from Hong Kong, for instance, describes the city-state as “the new Berlin in the new Cold War,” arguing that it was at the forefront of a struggle between the democratic world and authoritarian China (Euronews 2019). The Chinese government commonly blames outside (“Western”) intervention for stirring up protest movements that are clearly autonomous developments rooted in societal grievances. Liberal democratic governments meanwhile regularly voice support for human rights and democracy abroad, whilst often falling short of living up to these ideals in their own backyards.

It is clear that the occupation movements in Taiwan and Hong Kong were entangled in complex geopolitical and historical contexts. They were concerned with the achievement of (in Hong Kong) or protection and deepening (in Taiwan) of representative democracy. Whilst protesters mainly engaged their own governments, the movements were also struggles over political autonomy vis-à-vis the authoritarian PRC. However, situating the two movements firmly in the context of the global occupation wave makes clear that the geostrategic “democracy vs. authoritarianism” narrative does

not provide the full picture. *Indignation* (Hessel 2014) is a global phenomenon that manifests differently everywhere. The Tunisian Revolution – underpinned by outrage over oligarchy, state violence, and economic malaise – is often seen as the first popular uprising of a global wave that started in the Arab world (e.g. Gerbaudo 2017, p. 33). Occupiers in Spain and Italy drew inspiration from these popular protests. Whilst not facing similarly severe repression, participants were motivated by anger over dire political and economic circumstances in the wake of the 2008 financial crisis, as well as the perceived hollowing-out of democracy through austerity policies. Other protests such as Occupy Wall Street and its various offshoots similarly merged economic grievances with calls for “democracy” (Castells 2015; della Porta 2015; Gerbaudo 2017, pp. 29–59). Whereas protesters in authoritarian contexts took to the streets for democratic change under far greater risks to their life and liberty, their counterparts in formally democratic countries also called for political renewal at a time when dominant bureaucratic and economic logics had created conditions that Crouch (2004) characterizes as “post-democracy.”

In the most comprehensive comparative study on the series of post-2011 occupations, Gerbaudo (2017) shows that whilst the movements were characterized by an entrenched distrust towards traditional hierarchies and organizations, their discourse and actions demonstrated a desire for restoring popular sovereignty. He characterizes the emerging ideology as “citizenism:” Citizens (not workers as in Marxism or the “multitude” imagined by Hardt and Negri, 2005) are identified as the political subject that can implement a bottom-up renewal of democracy in a struggle against the oligarchic powers that be. The movements in Hong Kong and Taiwan shared this focus on the citizenry. Whilst the movements could draw upon the established regional templates of student protest (Ho 2019, pp. 14–15) – in the Chinese-speaking world students can traditionally voice dissent more freely and effectively

than other groups due to their special status – both occupations were citizen movements that involved people from all walks of life. Influenced by the various strands of Anarchism and Marxism, many social movements develop critiques of formal democracy (e.g. Graeber 2013; Sitrin and Azzellini 2014). But rather than fully embracing a more radical imagination, the Sunflower and Umbrella Movement put forward specific demands aimed at achieving or deepening representative democracy. They underscored the importance of representative democratic institutions as dynamic and fragile structures that cannot be taken for granted but are both the object and outcome of political struggles.

Although the two occupation movements aimed at achieving, protecting, or deepening formal representative politics, they also entailed experiments with innovative forms of democracy that have received little comprehensive academic attention so far.⁵ In both Taiwan and Hong Kong activists experimented with “deliberative democracy,” a notion of democracy that emphasizes the importance of open, transparent, and rational communication amongst informed citizens to the political process (e.g. Cohen 1989; Dryzek 2000). For instance, the Umbrella Movement was preceded by a sustained campaign that lasted for more than a year and included deliberative assemblies. During the occupation, there were less systematic and structured deliberations across the encampments. Similarly, in the case of the Sunflower Movement, there were experiments with deliberative democracy inside and outside the occupied legislature. But while the notion of deliberative democracy implies values such as equality, openness, and inclusivity (della Porta 2005), both the Sunflower and Umbrella Movement did not feature bottom-up decision-making structures

⁵ But see Yang 2020 on movement deliberations in the lead up to the occupation in Hong Kong.

that would have allowed ordinary occupiers to directly shape the strategic direction of their movement.

Whereas the recent occupation protests elsewhere were characterized by a strong emphasis on leaderless and horizontal organization – even though obscure hierarchies and leadership structures existed behind the scenes (Gerbaudo 2012, p. 19, 2017, p. 243) – the two East Asian occupations stand out from the global wave due to the important roles played by leadership circles and flagship leaders (Ho 2019, p. 7). There were deliberative experiments and occupiers self-organized their encampments in a horizontal fashion. Nonetheless, major strategic decisions in both movements were taken by a core leadership, made up in large part by students, that represented the movement in interactions with the state and the media. In short, the two occupation movements were shaped both by vertical leadership and horizontal democratic experimentation.

My thesis compares both movements to make sense of the contradictory fashion in which they staged democracy by asking the following question: How did participants in the Sunflower and Umbrella Movement conceive and practice “democracy”?

Related questions include: What were the possibilities and limitations of experiments with democracy in these social movements? How did activists reconcile demands for decision-making (as well as implementation) and democratic participation?

To explore these questions, I adopt a perspective that foregrounds the deliberative and performative dimensions of social reality. I draw on literatures on democracy in social movements, deliberative democracy, and performative politics that are rarely brought together to explore how democracy was acted out in these two East Asian occupation movements.

Whilst critics and authorities in both places considered the occupations unlawful and antidemocratic, from a more sober social movement studies perspective they appear as claim-articulating protest movements that constitute a rational feature of modern, (semi-)democratic societies – even though the intensity and scale of the protests was certainly extraordinary.⁶ But as Gold and Veg (2020a, p. 9) rightly point out, the “Umbrella and Sunflower [Movement] were not only claim-based, strategic movements but also participative performances.” My study makes the case that in addition to articulating claims for democracy vis-a-vis the state, the two movements constituted enactments of democracy in and of themselves. This displayed movement democracy, however, was not fully coherent and based on rational public talk – despite the invocation of deliberative democracy – but full of internal complexities, contradictions, and contestations.

If “social movements are dramas routinely concerned with challenging or sustaining interpretations of power relations” (Benford and Hunt 1992, p. 36), then both the Sunflower and Umbrella Movement were about the interpretation of democracy: Taiwan’s drama featured citizens defending liberal representative democracy, whilst their counterparts in Hong Kong were contesting the party-state’s illiberal re-definition of universal suffrage. The occupiers enacted democracy not just through nonviolent civil disobedience, but also through the creation of diverse spaces of participation and deliberation. This performance was both the subject and product of internal contestation between different groups of participants. But it mattered not just to participants, but also to their audiences such as the state authorities and the general public both locally and internationally. The success of both movements depended to a significant degree on their ability

⁶ Hence Ho suggests they represented a rare form of “intensive, transformative, and history making movement” labelled “eventful protests” (2019: 6) – using a term della Porta (2014c) developed in engaging with William Sewell’s (1996) work.

to produce a coherent, authentic, and convincing drama, which required perseverance, creativity, and flexibility.⁷ Even in these protests' aftermaths, if they qualified as legitimate performances of democracy or merely as illegitimate unrest was subject of contestation in the courtrooms.

The argument I develop throughout this thesis is that the encampments were shaped by the interplay of "strategic" and "prefigurative politics" (Breines 1980; Smucker 2014). Whilst the former approach focuses on the instrumental pursuit of distant structural change, the latter posits that the realization of movement visions should not be delayed to the future but enacted in the present through participatory practices.⁸ According to an often-cited slogan, the aim of prefiguration is "build[ing] the new society in the shell of the old" (Swain 2019, p. 48). Both approaches to social change were present in the Sunflower and Umbrella Movement, just as they had been in encampments elsewhere (e.g. Smucker 2014).⁹ On the one hand, the Sunflower and Umbrella Movement strategically engaged state and society in order to achieve concrete democratic reforms; a project that relied to a significant extent on the vertical leadership of pre-existing groups and civil society organizations for strategic decision-making, the articulation of demands, and negotiations with state representatives (e.g. Beckershoff 2017; Cai 2017; Ho 2019). On the other hand, both movements had a prefigurative thrust in the sense that they carved out spaces for participatory democratic experimentation, self-expression, and community (e.g. Chen and Szeto 2017; Chow 2019; Gold and Veg 2020b; Rowen 2015; Veg 2016). The occupations relied on the voluntarism of new groups of participants, especially young

⁷ On the performative dimensions of social movements see, for instance, Benford and Hunt 1992; Eyerman 2006; Juris 2014.

⁸ Breines 1980 clearly fleshed out these notions in her analysis of the US-American New Left Movement of the 1960s and 70s. See also Boggs 1977; Smucker 2014.

⁹ There are existing studies of the Umbrella Movement pointing to the prefigurative dimension, see Chen and Szeto 2017; Chow 2019; Lin and Liu 2016. I will discuss them below.

people, many of whom focused on the maintenance of the performative and seemingly utopian encampments without paying much attention to the political constraints and considerations that led the supposed leadership to pursue a relatively restrained strategy.¹⁰

I will demonstrate that the interplay of the two modalities resulted in different trajectories in Hong Kong and Taiwan based on structural conditions, strategic choices, and factional contestations. Although both protests emerged in a broadly similar fashion as seemingly spontaneous and decentralized mass responses to state power, their subsequent course diverted significantly. In Taiwan, the relatively quick consolidation of vertical leadership structures facilitated a substantial degree of structure, direction, and messaging discipline (see Beckershoff 2017, pp. 122–126; Ho 2019, pp. 109–116). The embrace of organization, instrumental calculation, and compromise based on past protest experience allowed for a peaceful retreat after 24 days. By contrast, Hong Kong's occupation zones were a relatively more unstructured and decentralized affair that lacked a similarly capable vertical decision-making mechanism due to internal divisions and widespread distaste for traditional representation (see Cai 2017, pp. 106–116; Chow 2019; Ho 2019, pp. 117–149). Occupiers resisted efforts by pre-existing groups to centralize authority and directed their energies towards sustaining their temporary experiment with participatory democratic street communities irrespective of societal pressures to strategically compromise. Since the occupiers in Hong Kong lacked a coordinating mechanism and a feasible exit plan (see Cai 2017; Chow 2019), the last remaining occupation zone was eventually cleared after 79 days. In short, the Sunflower Movement

¹⁰ Sebastian Veg (2015) fittingly describes the Umbrella Movement as both “legalistic” (it had concrete constitutional demands) and “utopian” (the encampments allowed for the expression of broader values and identities) – labels that point to the entanglement of strategy and prefiguration in the movement.

developed a more overtly strategic bent whilst the Umbrella Movement adopted a more unstructured, prefigurative approach.

Some conceptual clarification is required to appreciate my argument. Drawing on the experience of the US-American New Left Movement of the 1960-70s (Breines 1980; Maeckelbergh 2011b) as well as more recent discussions (Maeckelbergh 2011a; Rohgalf 2013; Smucker 2014; Swain 2019; Wilding et al. 2014; Yates 2020), I understand strategic politics and prefiguration as two modalities of political contestation that are at once co-constitutive and contradictory. At its core, prefiguration denotes “the embodiment, within the ongoing political practice of a movement, of those forms of social relations, decision-making, culture, and human experience that are the ultimate goal” (Boggs 1977, p. 4). It is an approach to social change that rejects conventional organizational forms, centralized leadership, and representation to instead embrace experimentation with participatory forms of democracy, local community building, and self-expression; It posits that “[t]he process, the means, the participation and the dialogue [are] as important as the goal” (Breines 1980, pp. 421–422). Strategic politics, by contrast, describes a more instrumental modality of political contestation that emphasizes the necessity of structure, organization, and centralization of power for affecting social change (ibid., pp. 420–22). Instead of rejoicing in the “micro-utopia” (Graeber 2009, p. 210) created by the direct and deliberative experiments in social movements, adherents of the strategic conception believe that an overemphasis on process undercuts decision-making efficiency required for successful action. Freedom is not perceived of as an “endless meeting,” to invoke the title of Francesca Polletta’s (2002) landmark study of participatory democracy, but a desired outcome that can only be achieved through effective vertical leadership.

Contrary to advocates of the prefigurative approach (Maeckelbergh 2011a; Swain 2019; Yates 2020), who challenge the binary distinction often drawn between strategy and prefiguration, I maintain that the recursion to the two ideal types is analytically useful to better understand the dynamics of the assemblies in Hong Kong and Taiwan. However, I do not mean to suggest that prefiguration is not “strategic” or an ineffective approach to social change per se. Activists choose participatory and deliberative forms of democracy not just for reasons of ideology or self-expression – as critics of prefigurative approaches suspect –, but due to their strategic advantages such as the cultivation of identity, commitment, solidarity, and leadership capacity (Polletta 2002). Much of the existing literature on prefiguration is written either from the perspective of proponents or opponents who either praise the approach as the “best strategy” (Swain 2019, p. 49) or dismiss it as apolitical (Smucker 2014, p. 81). My interest, by contrast, is mainly analytical in the sense that I tease out the distinctions between the two modalities to understand the different enactments of democracy in Taiwan and Hong Kong. The analysis will underline that strategy and prefiguration are co-constitutive: each concept only exists in demarcation from the other. Whilst in practice there can be hybrid configurations in which strategic and prefigurative elements are combined, there are irresolvable conceptual as well as practical tensions between them.¹¹ In gauging the advantages and limitations of the two modalities, it is essential to recognize that underpinning them are different (arguably incommensurable) conceptions of what social movements are about and what counts as “success.” Whereas the strategic approach holds on to a more conventional understanding of desired outcomes as achieving power or at least reforms in the existing political realm, the prefigurative approach reconceptualizes success by doing away with established temporal present/future distinctions to turn a participatory

¹¹ This was pointed out by Richard Gunn in a roundtable discussion, see Wilding et al. 2014.

democratic process into a goal in and of itself (Breines 1980, p. 424; Maeckelbergh 2011a, p. 4).

A comparison of the two movements within this framework reveals that the Umbrella Movement's prefigurative thrust did not align with its largely "legalistic" (Veg 2015) objectives. This becomes apparent when contrasting the outcomes of both uprisings. Taiwan's Sunflower Movement is widely considered a relatively successful movement as it accomplished a "dignified exit" (Ho 2015, p. 69) after gaining a significant concession: the shelving of the trade deal. The Umbrella Movement struggled to achieve a similar feat after a prolonged stalemate that culminated in state repression rather than the introduction of genuine universal suffrage. Many former participants thus regarded it as a "failure," expecting that a democratic breakthrough could have been achieved – even though it was clear from the outset to most observers that an increasingly more powerful and assertive Chinese central government was unlikely to yield to street pressure.

Comparing the experience of both movements, a case can be made that the Taiwanese movement was more successful due to the embrace of a decisively strategic approach. Viewed from a strategic perspective, the Umbrella Movement was held back by a prefigurative turn and its inability to develop the leadership coherence required to enact a timely and voluntary retreat.¹² According to Breines (1980, p. 422), the US-American New Left of the 1960-70s, which shaped the prefigurative approach, chose "to fail according to traditional political standards" in an effort to escape Michel's (1915/2016) "Iron Law of Oligarchy" that posits that even fervently democratic organizations turn into oligarchies over time. The Umbrella Movement,

¹² Ho's (2019) excellent comparative study of the two movements provides an example for what I would call a strategic reading. His analysis highlights the importance of the development of coherent and effective leadership to the successful conclusion of a "standoff," i.e. a voluntary exit following the achievement of concessions (2019, pp. 140-149).

however, did not consciously choose failure as conventionally conceived, but hoped to achieve “genuine universal suffrage” – presenting a vision for institutional change. There was a mismatch between the prefigurative form and the distinct legalistic goals: Whilst a decisively prefigurative approach may make sense if one wants to create insular, alternative spaces that allow people to “act[] as if one is already free” (Graeber 2009, p. 207), it seems like an ill-fitting approach for a movement that requires societal support for a transition to full electoral democracy. However, it is important that prefiguration was not deliberately embraced as the overall movement strategy in Hong Kong. While leadership organizations tried to shape the course of the movement, there was a pull towards what I would call “defiant prefiguration” – an indignant demonstration of democratic alternatives in the present as a response to state violence and irresponsiveness. The more restrained strategic approach to contestation employed by traditional pan-democratic organizations over previous decades had not brought the desired results. Thus, the occupation emerged spontaneously and transformed the streets into a prefigurative display of a more democratic city.

Apart from contributing to a better understanding of the contradictory enactment of democracy in the two empirical cases, my thesis extends the existing literature by applying the conceptual framework comparatively to two East Asian contexts. The conceptual discussion of prefigurative politics is deeply entangled with the experience of the US-American New Left (Breines 1980; Maeckelbergh 2011b) and can be traced back to earlier Marxist debates in Europe and Russia (Boggs 1977; Yates 2020).¹³ Recently, there has been an increased interest in the prefigurative dimensions of social movements that experimented with deliberative decision-making such as the Global Justice Movement (Maeckelbergh 2011a) and Occupy Wall Street

¹³ Moreover, the approach is linked to anarchist theory and practice, see Graeber 2013; van de Sande 2013, p. 230.

(Graeber 2013; Smucker 2014). The term “horizontalism,” rooted in the experience of neighbourhood assemblies in Argentina in the early 2000s (Sitrin 2011, 2012), has proliferated to describe prefigurative and deliberative practices in recent protest movements that are seen as distinct from the “vertical” politics of old (also Maeckelbergh 2012). Van de Sande made the case that Cairo’s Tahrir Square during the Egyptian Revolution of 2011 was transformed into a prefigurative space and that the recent “wave of protest movements gradually endorsed a more explicitly prefigurative strategy” (2013, pp. 189–190).

My thesis contributes to the literature by applying the concepts of strategy and prefiguration comparatively to the two East Asian social movements that were part of the same wave and – to varying degrees – entailed prefigurative elements despite not explicitly embracing the approach. Existing works that explicitly discuss the prefigurative dimension of the Umbrella Movement also consider the fraught formation of vertical leadership, but do not fully explore this tension-ridden dynamic as “strategic politics” (Chen and Szeto 2017; Cheng 2020; Chow 2019; Lin and Liu 2016).¹⁴ My analysis will not just demonstrate that the two concepts can be applied fruitfully to these contexts, but that the comparative approach can also shed new light on our understandings of prefiguration and democracy in social movements.

The comparison will underscore at least three related points. First, prefiguration is a performative practice that involves the enactment of democracy (see Jeffrey and Dyson 2020, p. 3). Not just do social movements not need to “formally” endorse it to have a prefigurative dimension, they

¹⁴ The rich ethnographic account by student leader Alex Chow (2019) stands out. In fact, my research initially focused more narrowly on deliberative democracy; it was Chow’s essay together with the analysis of the empirical material that made me realize how deeply entangled democratic deliberation is with the strategic and prefigurative modalities. I further discuss his essay in Chapter 4.

also do not necessarily need to articulate the radical visions often associated with the prefigurative modality in its original formulation. The Umbrella Movement was concerned with achieving liberal representative democracy – not exactly the revolutionary agenda pursued by prefigurative left-wing movements in Europe or the United States that distrust formal institutions and seek to overcome capitalism (e.g. the New Left or Occupy Wall Street). Anticapitalism was not a strong current within the movement, even though the horizontal organization on the square arguably prefigured an “alternative urban commons” based on a desire for a different “socioeconomic order” (Chow 2019, p. 36).

Second, strategy and prefiguration take many forms in practice. These ideal types are useful to understanding the different ways in which movements handle democratic contestation, but in reality they can be entangled in various ways. The analysis will demonstrate substantial variation in the prefigurative modality. In practice prefiguration was closely related to different deliberative practices. In Hong Kong, for instance, each of the three occupation zones developed its own distinct character. A close-up view reveals that within each zone there were different deliberative spaces, some of which were more catered towards strategic politics – organized by the movement leadership to serve important functions – and others that were more inherently prefigurative in nature. Taken together, the occupation zones did not form one rational and coherent “public sphere” (Habermas 1989), but a more pluralist and contradictory enactment of democracy that had both strategic and prefigurative elements.

Lastly, my analysis will further outline how strategy and prefiguration are co-constitutive. Leading groups in both cases were implicitly aware of these two pathways. They perceived a prefigurative free-for-all as risky, and tried to strategically shape the direction of the movement. Although there was

some recognition for the importance of a prefigurative enactment of democracy in Taiwan, it was widely acknowledged that a more structured approach was required. By contrast, in Hong Kong there was a clearer rejection of traditional strategy in favour of democratic and prefigurative experimentation.

Both structural and subjective factors affected the interplay of strategic and prefigurative politics in Taiwan and Hong Kong that will be more fully explored in the empirical chapters. There were broadly three structural factors that mattered. First, both occupation movements had a middle-class character. While people from all walks of life took part, the movements prominently involved students and young professionals, social groups that have been associated with prefigurative activism.¹⁵ Second, the spatial makeup of the occupation zones affected the two movement's different trajectories. Taiwan's protest was smaller in scale and entailed the occupation of a building that nested a core leadership, whereas Hong Kong's three occupation zones lacked an unambiguous centre (see Ho 2019, pp. 141–142). Third, the political environment had a defining influence. The state in liberal democratic Taiwan was relatively more responsive to pressure by a vibrant and organized civil society. Hong Kong's movement operated in more unfavourable terrain (see Ho 2019; Jones 2017b). Set in an only partially democratic city-state, it engaged a local government propped up by a strong authoritarian regime. There was a pull towards defiant prefiguration amidst a lack of state responsiveness.

Subjective factors also played their part in affecting the trajectory. First, local protest histories had a significant impact. In Taiwan, there was broad

¹⁵ Drawing on Habermas' (1981/1995) discussion of the "lifeworld" and Ronald Inglehart's (1977) work on "postmaterialism," Smucker (2014: 77; 81) essentially suggests that Occupy Wall Street's prefigurative focus on the "life of the group" (rather than strategic engagement with power structures) was grounded in the material circumstances of its members as inhabitants of advanced capitalist societies whose basic material needs are already satisfied.

agreement amongst veteran activists that structure and organization was inevitable for successful mobilization due to negative past experience with a protracted occupation protest. Their counterparts in Hong Kong lacked a similar experience. Instead there was an entrenched dissatisfaction with the moderate strategy of the traditional pro-democracy movement. There was an openness for experimentation and a yearning for democratic change. Second, factional tensions and the willingness of pre-existing organizations to cooperate in pursuing a strategic approach impacted the trajectory. There was significant internal contestation over the right course of action within both movements. But Taiwan's civil society organizations were better able to form united leadership mechanisms. The Umbrella Movement was never quite able to overcome factional struggle to develop a more coherent approach.¹⁶

Having laid out the broader argument my thesis develops, the subsequent sections of this chapter address the following: First, I will review the relevant literature. Second, I will discuss my methodology. Lastly, I will provide an overview over the different chapters.

Enacting Democracy in Taiwan and Hong Kong

The first body of works that offers answers to questions about the tension-ridden relationship between leadership and democracy in the two movements is the case-specific literature. Considering that the Sunflower and Umbrella Movement were two of the most disruptive, large-scale, and transformative protest movements in East Asia or even globally in recent years, it is not surprising that they have already received a great deal of academic attention. I can thus draw on some excellent scholarship that has

¹⁶ My analysis of the fraught development of movement leadership draws substantial inspiration from Ho's (2019) work. See below.

elucidated various important aspects of these movements.¹⁷ But while they have already been studied from various perspectives, the movements' enactment of democracy has not yet been comprehensively assessed from a comparative angle. Moreover, most existing studies either focus on the strategic politics of these movements – explaining their emergence, trajectory, and outcomes in a broadly positivist fashion – or on their cultural and expressive dimensions – focusing on movement art, discourse, or identity. My study aims to integrate these perspectives by focusing on the strategic and prefigurative dimensions of social movement democracy.

Ho's (2019) excellent monograph "Challenging Beijing's Mandate of Heaven" provides the most extensive and comprehensive comparison of both movements to date.¹⁸ Ho develops a largely chronological account that explains the emergence, trajectory, outcomes, and afterlives of both movements from a sociological perspective. He draws on a variety of concepts from the established analytical repertoire of social movement studies, particularly networks, threat, and political opportunity structure. Ho theorizes the term "standoff" to specify the type of movement-government interactions that unfolded during both occupations (p. 97). While Ho stresses that standoffs involve a great deal of contingency, he highlights the importance of leadership: A movement requires effective leadership to achieve a favourable outcome (p. 145). To capture the role played by participants who were not part of the leadership, Ho proposes the term "improvisation" defined as complementary "strategic responses without prior planning" (p. 153). Ho's comparison provides important insights that my study can build upon. He discusses many key aspects of these

¹⁷ Whilst I have attempted to review all English-language material relevant to this study, I cannot claim to cover everything that has been written on these movements.

¹⁸ Apart from the monograph, Ho has also published articles on the Sunflower Movement specifically, see Ho 2015, 2018, as well as extensively on social movements in Taiwan more generally, e.g. Ho 2005, 2010.

movements, including some that are touched upon but that merit closer examination. Although he covers improvisation and self-expression, the main focus of his study is clearly what I call the strategic politics of the two movements. Ho does not closely discuss the question of internal democracy, experiments with deliberative democracy, and the prefigurative dimension of the two movements.

Apart from Ho's monograph, there are only a small number of articles and edited volumes that provide a comparative perspective on the two movements. As in Ho's study, the geopolitical context features strongly and frames the comparison in most of these works. Malte Kaeding (2015) understands the occupations as assertions of separate local identities in response to Beijing's imposition of a hegemonic "Chinese" identity. Brian Christopher Jones' excellent edited book (2017b) collects contributions that deeply explore the challenge the two democratic movements posed to the PRC's authoritarianism from both a legal and normative perspective.¹⁹ Hou and Knierbein's (2017) edited volume entails contributions on the two cases that put them in the context of resistance in urban public spaces world-wide (Chen 2017a; Chen and Szeto 2017). Hsiao and Wan's (2018) comparative survey research shows that public opinion on the movements was split almost equally in both contexts. More recently, Gold and Veg's (2020b) superb edited volume emphasizes the cultural and expressive dimensions of the two movements. Topics covered include: movement leadership (Cheng), political identity (Lam), and protest music (Veg) in Hong Kong; movement perception (Ho et al.) as well as visibility and aurality (Hioe) in Taiwan. In their introduction, Gold and Veg explicitly state that the focus of their volume is more on the "dynamics and textures of the movements"

¹⁹ Brian C. Jones and Yen-Tu Su's contribution is particularly relevant to this study. They suggest the by engaging in "confrontational contestation" the Sunflower Movement put forward an understanding of democracy that competed with the government's vision of a "winner-take-all" democracy."

themselves rather than on their entanglement with the “China factor” – despite recognizing that it provides important context (2020: 9). I similarly focus mainly on a deep exploration of movement participants’ lived-experience rather than on the clearly relevant geostrategic context. However, I compare the two cases from a new angle by focusing on visions and practices of democracy in order to situate the East Asian encampments in the context of recent occupation movements’ experiments with democracy.

Beyond comparative accounts, there is a wealth of excellent research that focuses on specific aspects of each of the individual movements. Particularly the Umbrella Movement received a great deal of academic attention. Early analyses focused on presenting empirical accounts of the movement against the background of Hong Kong’s political, social, and economic development.²⁰ These works made valuable contributions by discussing important factors and implications, but did not closely explore the internal dynamics of the occupations. These dynamics receive more attention from subsequent studies that seek to explain the movement from a (largely sociological) social movement studies perspective. Key themes in this literature are spontaneity and decentralization.²¹ Ethnographic studies contribute to unpacking the Umbrella Movement by exploring the spatial dimension, emerging communities, and public learning (Hui 2017; Jacobs 2019). Other themes explored in the literature include: performative politics;²²

²⁰ E.g. Sebastian Veg 2015; Stephan Ortmann 2015, 2016; Victoria Hui 2015; Hui and Lau 2015.

²¹ Edmund Cheng (2016) provides an analysis that foregrounds the decentralized protest events in the years prior that led up to the Umbrella Movement. Another piece which Cheng co-authored with Wai-Yin Chan (2017) argues that prior contingent events led to the emergence of a decentralized occupation. Yongshun Cai’s (2017) monograph stresses that the decentralized protest structure paired with the authorities’ relative tolerance allowed for the occupation to be sustained for 79 days.

²² Agnes Ku’s excellent pieces on civil disobedience (2019b) and “generational change” (2019a) in the Umbrella Movement provide important reference points for my study due to our shared focus on performative politics. The same goes for her older works, e.g. Ku 2007, 2012.

the involvement of specific status groups;²³ the role of social media and media more generally (Agur and Frisch 2019; Lee 2015a; Lee and Chan 2018).²⁴ The question of internal democracy has only received limited scholarly attention.²⁵

Recently, two excellent edited volumes on the Umbrella Movement have compiled research mostly from a social movement studies perspective by scholars in Hong Kong who conducted primary research during the occupation.²⁶ “Take Back Our Future. An Eventful Sociology of the Umbrella Movement” edited by Ching Kwan Lee and Ming Sing (2019), compiles research on different facets of the movement. Contributions include analyses of the occupation in Mongkok district (Yuen 2019b), movement frames (Law 2019), the role of the media (Lee 2019b), trade unions (Chan 2019), the leadership involvement of political parties (Sing 2019a), and regime responses (Cheng 2019a).²⁷ “The Umbrella Movement. Civil Resistance and Contentious Space in Hong Kong,” edited by Ngok Ma and Edmund Cheng (2019), similarly focuses on key topics such as the spontaneity of occupation (Cheng 2019b), factors that mobilized participants (Sing 2019b), perceptions

²³ Scholars have assessed the participation of lawyers (Lee 2017), human rights scholars (Kong 2019), protestants (Chan 2015b), university students (Partaken 2019), and even young non-Cantonese speaking female filmmaking students (Walsh 2019).

²⁴ Francis Lee and Joseph Chan’s (2018) excellent study stands out due to its comprehensive analysis of the emergence, trajectory, and outcome of the movement from a perspective that focuses on the relationship between media and activism. They draw on Bennett and Segerberg’s (2013) “connective action” framework (see below) to discuss shifting movement leadership and decentralization through digital communication.

²⁵ Notable exceptions include: Shen Yang’s (2020) analysis of “enclave deliberations” in the lead-up to the Umbrella Movement. Chi Kwok and Ngai Keung Chan’s (2017) brief article sheds some light on how the Umbrella Movement leadership struggled to maintain or achieve legitimacy in the face of bottom-up challenges.

²⁶ A recent monograph by Andreas Fulda (2019) also features a discussion of the two occupation movements. Whilst the author provides a comprehensive macro analysis of the historical struggles over democracy in the PRC, Hong Kong, and Taiwan in the context of authoritarian “sharp power,” the discussion of the two occupation movements is relatively brief and not focused on their internal features as well as deliberations.

²⁷ Chow’s essay on prefigurative politics stands out as an especially important point of reference. See above.

of possible outcomes among participants (Lee and Tang 2019), state responses (Yuen 2019a), and public support (Wong 2019).²⁸ Taken together, the existing research on the Umbrella Movement provides a wealth of important insights and useful material for my study, but does not provide full answers to my questions about the contradictory relationship between leadership and democracy in the movement.

The existing body of works on the Sunflower Movement – which is smaller than that on the occupations in Hong Kong – does not comprehensively explore the enactment of democracy in the movement either. Several studies adopt a strategic angle by exploring movement emergence with a focus on the “China factor” (Hsu 2017; Wu 2019) or economic factors (Ho and Lin 2019; Wang 2017a). Other accounts assess the strategic trajectory of the movement based on varying degrees of participant observation and/or interviews (Beckershoff 2017; Chen 2017a; Cole 2015, 2017; Rowen 2015; Wright 2014).²⁹ Moreover, there are a number of studies that shed light on various internal movement dynamics and cover aspects including: policing (Martin 2015),³⁰ gender dimensions (Kuan 2015; Yang 2017), legal dimensions (Chang 2015; Chen 2015; Yeh 2015), digital participation (Chuang 2018; Hsiao and Yang 2018), and live-streaming practices (Lee 2015b).

²⁸ A contribution that is particularly relevant to my research is Sebastian Veg’s (2019) rich analysis of movement slogans and texts in which he convincingly argues that the movement constructed a “textual public space.” Cheuk-Hang Leung and Sampson Wong’s (2019) essay that makes sense of art production during the protest as an expression of civic spontaneity is also especially pertinent to my study. Both works point to the deliberative democratic dimension of the Umbrella occupation that will be further explored in my study.

²⁹ Ian Rowen (2015), for instance, provides a vivid ethnographic account that captures both the atmosphere and organizational structure of the occupied space. André Beckershoff (2017) develops an insightful Gramscian analysis that sheds light on the causes of the movement, its structures, and strategies.

³⁰ Jeffrey Martin (2015) argues that policing became the focal point of tensions between the ideals of liberal democracy (necessitating policing) and radical democracy (embodied by the protesters). While his insightful analysis sheds light on the performative struggles over policing, he does not closely explore movement-internal decision-making, debates, and contestations.

In sum, there is already a rich body of scholarly research on the two cases that my study can draw upon. However, the tension-ridden enactment of democracy in the two movements has not yet been comprehensively assessed in a comparative fashion. Existing studies have tended to either emphasize the strategic dimension of the movements – the macro picture – or its cultural and expressive aspects. My study aims to bring together both of these dimensions through a focus on the prefigurative and strategic modality in order to situate the assemblies in the context of democracy movements across the world.

Democracy in Social Movements

Since the existing case-specific literature does not provide full answers to the questions about leadership and democracy that drive my research, this section engages with the broader theoretical literature. I discuss the related concepts of horizontalism, deliberation, and performance to better understand the enactment of democracy in recent occupation movements.

Horizontalism

A key feature ascribed to occupation protests of the recent wave was that they experimented with horizontal organizational forms. Already the “Global Justice Movement” of the 1990s and 2000s that mobilized for a different globalization, which many view as an important predecessor of the recent protests, was characterized by a networked structure aided by online communication (Juris 2005). However, the recent occupation protests across the world developed a more decisively spontaneous and seemingly leaderless dynamic.

There are scholars who make the case that these new forms of horizontal activism in the age of digital communication increasingly make fixed organizational structures and traditional leadership superfluous. Manuel Castells (2015, pp. 10–11) argues that these “networked social movements” are mostly leaderless movements without a clear centre that construct a “space of autonomy,” a hybrid configuration of online and face-to-face deliberation in the encampments. Touching upon similar themes, Jeffrey Juris (2012) argues that in recent occupation movements there was a digital “logic of networking” at work alongside a “logic of aggregation” that involves the physical gathering of crowds of individuals in occupations. Marina Sitrin and Dario Azzellini (2014) see the recent protests as an expression of dissatisfaction with representative democracy in the wake of the 2008 financial crisis and as champions of new forms of horizontal democracy. Along broadly similar lines, post-Marxists Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri (2017) celebrate recent protests (including the Umbrella Movement) as expressions of the leaderless and democratic “multitude” that resists capitalist structures of domination. Providing a more grounded ethnographic account, anarchist scholar and activist David Graeber (2013) explores the prefigurative and assembly-based organizational form of Occupy Wall Street as a model for horizontal democracy. These authors identify clear organizational changes and provide important accounts of recent occupations based on varying degrees of participant observation. However, they do not pay sufficient attention to the tensions and contradictions inherent in horizontalism, such as the often experienced continuing presence of opaque informal leadership structures (Gerbaudo 2012, p. 24). Feminist scholar Jo Freeman (1972) famously discussed this phenomenon as the “The Tyranny of Structurelessness.”

There are other authors who similarly point to changing social movement dynamics whilst at the same time more closely attending to the limitations of

horizontal and networked activism. Lance Bennett and Alexandra Segerberg (2013) propose the term “connective action” to describe the new organizational form of protest based on loose networks of mobilized individuals relying on digital communication and personalized self-expression. They contrast it with more conventional “collective action” that involves centralized coordination and organizational hierarchies. Bennett and Segerberg point out that there is a hybrid form of “organizationally enabled” connective action that involves formal organizations in loose networks (ibid., pp. 46-49). In their account, digital networks do not make traditional social movement dynamics obsolete, but rather reconfigure contentious politics by bringing together the different logics in various – at times conflicting – ways. In “Tweets and the Streets” Gerbaudo (2012) argues that far from being entirely decentralized and leaderless, recent protest movements created popular assemblies as symbolical centres facilitated through new forms of “liquid organizing” and “choreographic leadership” by influential social media users. In his more recent monograph, Gerbaudo (2017) argues that whilst the recent movements were populist in character, their organizational structures were strongly influenced by neo-anarchism and libertarianism. This approach contributed to their successes. But it also elided unaccountable de-facto leadership structures and risked falling back into an individualist “cult of participation” that lost sight of strategic goals beyond the encampments (ibid., pp. 243-44). Gerbaudo argues that activists should develop “hybrid organisational structures that combine the spontaneous and participatory character of assemblies and horizontal democracy with the sustainability and scalability of more formalised and democratic organisational and leadership structures” (ibid., pp. 244-245). Overall, these analyses convincingly show that there is an ongoing reconfiguration of organizational forms rather than a clear replacement of hierarchies and leadership.

Deliberation

The experiments with horizontal organization in social movements have relevance for theoretical debates over deliberative democracy (della Porta 2005). The ideal of a deliberative democracy broadly posits that political decision-making processes should centre free, fair, and equal public deliberation to arrive at rational and legitimate outcomes (Benhabib 1996b, p. 69). In fact, influential activists in the Sunflower and Umbrella Movement directly referenced the concept that has become a dominant paradigm in the field of democratic theory since the “deliberative turn” in the 1990s (Dryzek 2000). This ideal had clear appeal in Taiwan and Hong Kong, where activists contested the closed-door decision-making on complex issues by governments that in their view did not adequately involve citizens and thus lacked political legitimacy.

One of the intellectual influences on leading activists in Hong Kong was Jürgen Habermas, whose wide-ranging scholarship has strongly affected the discourse on deliberative democracy. Simply put, Habermas’ (1989) understanding of deliberative politics rests on the idea of a “public sphere” as the realm of reason-based discourse among citizens free from state power. It is linked to Habermas’ influential notion of the “ideal speech situation,” understood as a situation in which ideal deliberative conditions allow participants to reach consensus free from coercion through the “forceless force of the better argument” (Habermas 1971, p. 131). Drawing inspiration from the normative theories of Habermas and John Rawls (1993), a vast number of authors have developed different conceptions of deliberative democracy that all share an emphasis on free and rational argumentation amongst citizens (e.g. Cohen 1989; Fishkin 1991; Pettit 2001).

Early critiques of deliberative democratic theory revealed that social movements as confrontational projects do not fit seamlessly into the abstract

deliberative models envisioned by liberal theorists. The often disruptive protest “repertoire” (Tilly 1986) of social movements sits uncomfortably with the liberal ideal of a rational deliberative process (see Medearis 2005). Whilst social movements are both a product of and a challenge to existing power relations, deliberative theorists imagine abstract circumstances under which power and conflict disappear (see Mouffe 1999). Lynn M. Sanders (1997, p. 370) argues that the rationalist deliberative model “excludes public talk that is impassioned, extreme, and the product of particular interests” (ibid.) – in other words, the forms of talk social movements are likely to engage in. Similarly concerned with broadening the notion of democratic discourse, Iris Marion Young (2001) constructs an imaginary dialogue between a deliberative democrat and an activist. While the fictional theorist is concerned that the activist’s strategic and disruptive approach is akin to partisan “interest group politics” that is neither rational nor oriented towards the common good, the activist argues that in the real world with its structural inequalities, existing deliberative bodies are often controlled by elites. A key takeaway from this dialogue is that “processes of engaged and responsible democratic communication include street demonstrations and sit-ins, musical works, and cartoons, as much as parliamentary speeches and letters to the editor” (ibid., p. 688).

In response to critiques, deliberative democrats have developed models that better account for pluralism and diverse forms of expression (Benhabib 1996a; Bohman 1996).³¹ Social movements and civil society groups more broadly can thus be understood as makers of communicative spaces beyond the state apparatus (Dryzek 2000, pp. 100–103; also della Porta 2005, p. 336). Moreover, following the recent “systemic turn” in deliberative democratic theory (Kuyper 2015), social movements can be conceived of as part of wider

³¹ For an overview over different generations of theoretical development, see Elstub 2010; Elstub et al. 2016.

deliberative systems (Cross 2019; Ercan et al. 2018). But activists are not just engaging with wider public spheres; they are also at the forefront of democratic development. Francesca Polletta's (2002) excellent monograph "Freedom is an Endless Meeting" shows that a broad range of US-American social movements of the 20th century championed participatory and deliberative decision-making processes that had distinct organizational advantages. Building on these historical insights, Polletta's work also explores enactments of democracy in more recent movements (2014) and the deliberative involvement of activists in governance processes in the "age of participation" (2016). Donatella della Porta (2005) shows that the deliberative experiences of social movements can shed new light on deliberative democratic theory. Her wide-ranging and influential work points to the important role social movements play in democratization and democratic deepening (e.g. della Porta 2014c, 2015, 2020). Della Porta coordinated a collaborative research project on "conceptions and practices of democracy within contemporary social movements in Europe" (2009a, p. 22) that inspired my research question. The various publications by authors involved in the collaborative study provide a nuanced exploration of the democratic enactments and visions underpinning the global justice movement that relied on innovative participatory and deliberative forms of decision-making (della Porta 2009a, 2009b; della Porta and Rucht 2013). Similarly concerned with deliberative experimentation in social movements, Seong-Jae Min (2015) discusses the experience of Occupy Wall Street based on participant observation. More recently, Nicole Doerr (2018) shows that political translation facilitates sustainable forms of deliberation that allow social movement democracies to survive amidst inequalities and cultural differences.

But even if one recognizes that deliberative democratic theory can (and must) accommodate activism, it may appear surprising that the ideal was put to

practice within social movements in East Asia. It has been pointed out that the discussions about deliberative democracy are embedded in the “Western” experience and enlightenment thought (Min 2009, 2014). Habermas first developed his theory of the public sphere to describe a very specific phenomenon embedded in bourgeois societies of 17th and 18th century Europe, leading to debates whether the concept can be applied to other cultural contexts such as China (Huang 1993; Rowe 1990). Empirical research has demonstrated, however, that the concept of deliberative democracy has indeed travelled to the Chinese-speaking world (Lo 2018), even prior to the two occupation movements. Although the PRC is not a liberal democracy, the party-state has experimented with controlled deliberations, for instance through village assemblies (Unger et al. 2014) or deliberative polling (Fishkin et al. 2010). Baogang He and Mark E. Warren (2011) point to the emergence of a new type of “authoritarian deliberation” in the PRC that is less inclusive and more controlled than the liberal ideal.

On the other side of the Strait in democratic Taiwan, there have been many experiments with more conventional applications of deliberative democracy since 2001, for instance through consensus conferences, deliberative polling, and world cafés (Chen and Lin 2006; Fan 2020; Huang and Hsieh 2013).³² While social movement organizations initially displayed reservations towards participating in these deliberative spaces, especially due to a lack of trust in sponsoring state authorities, their representatives gradually became more involved and some organizations even began holding their own deliberative conferences (Huang and Hsieh 2013). In Hong Kong, by contrast, similarly extensive experiments with deliberative democracy have not been

³² Mei-Fang Fan’s (2020) excellent recent monograph provides a comprehensive discussion of deliberative democracy in Taiwan from a deliberative systems perspective that focuses on the macro context. She recognizes that social movements such as the Sunflower Movement are part of broader deliberative structures, but does not provide a detailed exploration of deliberative spaces in the occupation and their entanglement with questions of strategy and prefiguration.

conducted, even though the state administration has relied on public consultation processes as well as the cooptation of local elites into administrative (deliberative) bodies since the time of British colonial rule (King 1975). Exploring the enactment of democracy by the Sunflower and Umbrella Movement will shed new light on the experience with deliberative democracy outside state-control in Taiwan and Hong Kong.”³³

In sum, social movements not just contest systems of exclusion, but also create spaces for deliberation as part of the wider public sphere. Learning about the experiments with horizontal deliberation in two East Asian social movements can contribute to our understanding of deliberative politics more generally.

Performance

Deliberative democratic theory has a tendency to let human bodies and their entanglement in power relations disappear from view (see Mouffe 1999, p. 750). It imagines circumstances under which rational collective decisions can be achieved through (bodiless) discourse free from the constraints actors face in the real world. But if we shift our attention away from the realm of deliberative democratic theory towards the lived experience of people in democratic (or supposedly “democratic”) regimes, we find that politics is not just a matter of speech acts, but also involves nonverbal, embodied forms of

³³ The different translation of deliberative democracy in the three contexts reflects different deliberative experiences. Within the Taiwanese context, deliberative democracy is usually translated as *Shen yi Minzhu* (審議民主), see Lo 2018, p. 12. *Minzhu* means democracy, whilst *Shen yi* refers to “deliberation” or “consideration,” see DeFrancis 2003. The latter implies a consideration of proposals or evidence. In Hong Kong, Benny Tai (2013c) – the founder of the Occupy Central campaign that introduced the concept to wider audiences (see chapter 1) – used the term *Minzhu Shantao* (民主商討). *Shantao* can be translated as to “deliberate over” or to “discuss,” see DeFrancis 2003. In the PRC, by contrast, the term *Xieshang Minzhu* (協商民主) is used. It could be translated as either “deliberative” or “consultative democracy.” The use of the term *Xieshang* points to an indigenous tradition of consultations within the Chinese Communist Party (CCP), see Lo 2018, pp. 12–13.

communication. Whereas deliberative democrats privilege speech and written texts, the experience of social movements points to the corporeal, embodied, and performative dimensions of the political (Benford and Hunt 1992; Butler 2015; Eyerman 2006; Juris 2014). The Sunflower and Umbrella Movement, which both put forward claims concerning democratic governance, provide us with the opportunity to bring together literatures on deliberative democracy, social movements, and performative politics to explore the process by which democracy was enacted in two East Asian movements.

While it has long been acknowledged that there is something inherently theatrical to politics, the performative aspects of the political have only received more systematic attention in recent decades (e.g. Giesen et al. 2006; Rai 2015; Strauss 2020; Strauss and O'Brien 2007).³⁴ States rely on performances to create legitimacy for their rule, for instance through rituals such as national day celebrations. Social movements, by contrast, represent performances staged from “below” that often creatively subvert state rituals (Esherick and Wasserstrom 1994). The field of social movement studies was initially dominated by positivist frameworks such as resource mobilization and political opportunity structures (Kitschelt 1986; McCarthy and Zald 1977). But it has broadened in recent decades with scholars questioning positivist biases by focusing on the role of allegedly “soft” cultural factors such as framing (Benford and Snow 2000), narratives (Polletta 2006), and emotions (Goodwin et al. 2001) – important concepts that can be integrated into a performative perspective. Charles Tilly and Sidney Tarrow, in their influential textbook “Contentious Politics,” define social movements “as a sustained campaign of claim making, using repeated performances that

³⁴ Scholars foregrounding the performative in their studies of politics can draw on wide range of landmark works in the fields of anthropology (e.g. Geertz 1980; Turner 1982), sociology (e.g. Collins 2014; Goffman 1959), and performance studies (e.g. Schechner 1988).

advertise the claim, based on organizations, networks, traditions, and solidarities that sustain these activities” (2015, p. 11). Pointing out that performance is “how social movements move,” Ron Eyerman provides a succinct definition of “social movement” as:

[A] form of acting in public, a political performance which involves representation in dramatic form, as movements engage emotions inside and outside their bounds attempting to communicate their message. Such performance is always public, as it requires an audience which is addressed and must be moved. (2006, p. 193)

This definition highlights the link between embodied performance (bodies that are moved) and emotions (minds that are moved) through activism (see also Juris 2014). Further, it underscores that the public enactment of messages necessitate an audience or even constructs it.

A range of authors have discussed the performative dimensions of activism (e.g. Alexander 2011; Benford and Hunt 1992; Eyerman 2006; Juris 2014). However, I am not applying one particular framework of performance, but rather eclectically bringing themes from the literature on performative politics and democracy in social movements together. While I am focusing on the performative, I do not mean to deny that there are real structural forces shaping collective action. Indeed, both protests were driven by a young generation that faced an uncertain future amidst dire economic prospects and the potential loss of political autonomy amidst further integration with China (Ho 2019, 40-70).

Structuralist frameworks from the field of social movement studies such as resource mobilization and political opportunity structures can be fruitfully applied to *explain* the emergence, trajectory, and outcome of these movements. However, I am less interested in explaining *why* these protests unfolded than in understanding *how* they conceived and practiced

democracy. I build upon Joseph W. Esherick and Jeffrey N. Wasserstrom's (1994) work on Beijing's Tiananmen protests of 1989 that showed that participants "act[ed] out democracy" through a "street theatre" of political participation that both contrasted with and subverted static state rituals. In his nuanced analysis of the Umbrella Movement's visual and textual production, Veg argues that rather than re-enacting the street theatre of the Tiananmen protests, the Umbrella Movement "emphasized a deliberative exchange, grounded in a well-established tradition of civil society and civil discourse" (2019, p. 169). My analysis confirms that in the Umbrella Movement just as in the Sunflower Movement, both situated in relatively liberal contexts with vibrant civil societies, acting out democracy entailed more than merely theatrical "shows" for outside audiences. I stress the performative dimensions of the two movements' wide range of deliberative spaces that combined both strategy and prefigurative politics. Rather than forming a coherent deliberative whole in opposition to the state, the occupations entailed internal tensions and contradictions that in many cases centred on understandings of democracy and strategy.

My analysis draws on the works of Judith Butler, the leading theorist of gender performativity. Following Butler (2015), the occupations in Taiwan and Hong Kong can be understood as assemblies of bodies that both verbally and non-verbally enacted claims that challenged the legitimacy of political decisions as well as dominant understandings of the political, and acted out alternative visions thereof. Expanding her previous work on the social construction of gender (1990/2006), Butler's book "Notes Toward a Performative Theory of Assembly" (2015) explores collective forms of performance against the background of recent assembly protests such as on Tahrir Square (Egypt), Gezi Park (Turkey), or Zuccotti Park (United States). According to Butler's main thesis, "acting in concert can be an embodied form of calling into question the inchoate and powerful dimensions of

reigning notions of the political” (ibid., p. 9). In her view, the recent assemblies point to tensions between democracy and popular sovereignty, which are not to be confused with one another. The collective mobilizations are part of the struggle over democracy:

We could despair of deciding the right form for democracy, and simply concede its polysemy. If democracies are composed of all those political forms that call themselves democratic, or that are regularly called democratic, then we adopt a certain nominalist approach to the matter. But if and when political orders deemed democratic are brought into crisis by an assembled or orchestrated collective that claims to be the popular will, to represent the people along with a prospect of a more real and substantive democracy, then an open battle ensues on the meaning of democracy, one that does not always take the form of a deliberation. (ibid., p. 2)

This quote fittingly describes the scenes that unfolded in Taiwan and Hong Kong as the normal political order was disrupted by protesters occupying streets and/or buildings. Butler’s suggestion that the struggle over “the meaning of democracy [...] does not always take the form of a deliberation,” could be interpreted to mean that instead of the rational deliberation envisioned by deliberative theorists, it takes the form of heated arguments and agonistic confrontation. This may indeed be the case; but her more profound argument is that assemblies as embodied expressions of collective agency enact claims even if no words are spoken. To put it differently, assemblies do not just carry meaning through written or spoken discourse, but also through “embodied actions” (ibid., p. 8). Further, the actions and words articulated by an assembly are related, but not necessarily the same, as “the political demand is at once enacted and made, exemplified and communicated” (ibid., p. 137). Hence, while this may not always have been explicitly verbalized at the time, Butler suggests that assemblies like the ones she mentions enact a “right to appear, a bodily demand for a more livable set

of lives” amidst precarity (ibid., pp. 24-25). In short: “The gathering signifies in excess of what is said, and that mode of signification is a concerted bodily enactment, a plural form of performativity” (ibid., p. 8).

In sum, participants in the Sunflower and Umbrella Movement not merely voiced grievances vis-à-vis the authorities, but also acted out democracy by assembling in public space. Democracy in the two movements was not just a matter of deliberation and decision-making. It also involved the embodied experience of creating and sustaining encampments that demonstrated political alternatives.

Methodological Framework

Any comparative case study needs to justify the rationale of juxtaposing the selected cases. There is no question that there are significant differences between Taiwan and Hong Kong that raise questions about the merits of the comparison. The most obvious one is that the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (HKSAR) is a small city-state under the sovereignty of the PRC, whereas the ROC is a de-facto independent state that covers a significantly larger population and territory (even though its status is precarious due to the efforts of the PRC to absorb Taiwan). At the time of the Umbrella Movement, Hong Kong still featured a relatively liberal political system, albeit not full democracy. Taiwan, by contrast, was (and continues to be) a vibrant representative democracy. Nonetheless, both cases share many commonalities, including a conservative political culture, high levels of socio-economic development, histories of colonialism, and a situatedness on the margins of China (Ho 2019; Kaeding 2014, pp. 123–124). Accordingly, both the Sunflower and Umbrella Movement have a lot in common, as already discussed in the previous sections.

However, my rationale for comparing the Sunflower and Umbrella Movement is unrelated to specific variables. My aim is not to isolate specific variables to build (allegedly) generalizable theory (e.g. using the most different or similar systems design, see Meckstroth 1975). Rather than trying to explain social reality within a positivist framework, I am interested in gaining a nuanced contextual understanding of the studied phenomenon by drawing inspiration from ethnographic approaches, particularly “thick description” (Geertz 1973/2017). The comparison makes sense from an interpretative area studies perspective due to the similarities and links between the two cases. Activists involved in the two movements did not only make comparisons themselves, but also built cross-strait networks and learned from one another (Ho 2019, pp. 91–93). As already discussed, existing research demonstrates that contrasting the two movements can generate new insights. By comparing the two movements from a new angle, this study deepens our understanding of both the expressive and strategic dimensions of these movements based on the experiences of participants. Moreover, it contributes to broader debates on social movement democracy by exploring the experience of two major East Asian cases.

My thesis is based on original material collected during fieldwork in Taiwan and Hong Kong. I spent about eight months in Taiwan and three months in Hong Kong divided across several stays between September 2017 and August 2018.³⁵ I relied on in-depth interviews as my main data collection method (see della Porta 2014a). The goal was to interview a broad range of movement participants to learn about these occupations from different angles. I contacted some well-known participants directly (e.g. student leaders or politicians), but also relied strongly on snowball sampling, asking

³⁵ I also conducted a brief follow-up visit to Hong Kong for two weeks in December 2019 to find out about the relations of the recent protests to the Umbrella Movement. However, I ultimately decided not to use the gathered material for this thesis and focus on the 2014 occupations.

participants to introduce me to other people. This sampling strategy is considered especially fitting for studies dealing with sensitive subjects and involving groups that are difficult to reach (Biernacki and Waldorf 1981; also Waters 2015). It thus seems well suited for the social movement context. However, snowball sampling does have limitations. It can be challenging to find initial contacts, ensure the eligibility of participants, and control the pacing of the referral (and thus data gathering) process due to the reliance on insiders (Biernacki and Waldorf 1981). Moreover, scholars have questioned whether the outcomes of research based on snowball sampling are generalizable to broader populations (ibid., p. 160; also Cohen and Arieli 2011, p. 428). The underlying concern is that a sample collected through the snowball approach lacks the representativeness quantitative scholarship reliant on random sampling can claim to achieve. However, it is important to note that qualitative sampling does not aim for representativity as understood in quantitative research (della Porta 2014a, pp. 241–242). Instead, key criteria guiding sampling are “feasibility with respect to access to the subjects involved” and “relevance with respect to the research project” (ibid., p. 242). Thus “[t]he goal of sampling is to secure a spread of individuals that represent all of the types or groups that are significant for the phenomenon or topic under investigation” (Miller 2000, p. 77, cited by della Porta 2014a, p. 242). I found that the involvement of insiders for the identification and recruitment of potential interviewees helped me to better understand and capture the diversity of the studied movements (see also Kirchherr and Charles 2018). Overall, snowball sampling proved well suited for a study involving activists, especially for recruiting participants who could be considered part of the “rank-and-file” of the movements, who did not enjoy the same degree of visibility as movement leaders. However, personal referrals also proved extremely effective for arranging meetings with public leadership figures (e.g. politicians), who regularly receive interview requests

and are thus used to the format, but might have been more hesitant to take the time to speak to a stranger without an introduction.

In total I conducted 61 interviews in Taiwan and 72 interviews in Hong Kong. I spoke to a range of individuals who played leadership roles within the movement-internal decision-making processes such as students leaders, representatives of NGOs, as well as politicians. But I also interviewed less deeply involved movement participants (some of who would refer to themselves as “ordinary participants”) and embedded observers such as academics or filmmakers (most of who participated in the movements, see Appendix A and B).³⁶ Almost all of the interviews were carried out in person, only a few interviews were conducted via telephone or video chat. The locations varied from offices, people’s homes, cafes, restaurants, libraries, parks, and university campuses to Hong Kong’s Legislative Council (LegCo). The language used in Hong Kong was English, as the vast majority of participants were fluent in English. I only conducted three of the Hong Kong interviews in Mandarin Chinese (my Cantonese skills are limited). In Taiwan, I conducted over half of the interviews in Chinese and the rest in English (with the exception of one in German), depending on the person I was speaking to. The interviews lasted between thirty minutes to over two hours. Notes were taken throughout all interviews, as well as audio recordings, and more than half of the interviews were transcribed. The interview style was open-ended with a loose set of questions that was adapted depending on the interviewee. Only few interviewees wanted to see the questions beforehand, in which case they were supplied. In practice, I handled the questions extremely flexibly, made changes to my interview style as I went along, and rarely exactly followed the questionnaire. Rather than aiming for a more standardized interview technique, the approach was

³⁶ I also spoke with three critical public commentators in Hong Kong who were not participants in the Umbrella Movement.

more oriented towards an ethnographic interview style. I met some of my interviewees several times for follow-ups. A handful of conversations involved several people – almost like a focus group – in cases where interviewees brought along other movement participants. While there are obvious differences between one-on-one conversations and those involving several people (e.g. respondents inspiring one another or cross-checking facts), I was eager to speak to as many people as possible to learn about different perspectives and did not find that this format made much difference for my purposes.

The interview material was later analysed with the aid of the qualitative coding software MAXQDA. While I tried to speak to as wide a range of movement participants as possible during fieldwork, the focus of my research subsequently sharpened. My analysis in this thesis mostly relies on conversations with deeply involved social movement activists such as student leaders, NGO personnel, as well as closely involved academics and politicians. Even though I do not quote from every interview in this thesis and rely more heavily on conversations with deeply involved participants, I found that every encounter was valuable and helped me gain a better understanding of the movements.³⁷ Passages cited directly from interviews conducted in Chinese were translated to English. Since not all my interviewees were fluent in English, direct citations from conversations in English were cleaned up where it was necessary to improve readability. In either case, I made every effort to preserve the intended meaning as closely as possible.

³⁷ For instance, I conducted about a dozen interviews with pan-democratic politicians in Hong Kong that provided useful insights into the broader history of the pro-democracy movement, the role of parties during the occupation, as well as the occupation's electoral aftermath. But not all of this material was directly relevant to the themes I ended up focusing on in this thesis. Similarly, my conversations with participants who were not involved in decision-making or leadership roles on the ground (sometimes called the "rank-and-file") helped me gain a better understanding of the movements during fieldwork, but do not as strongly inform the written analysis as the other material.

Apart from the interviews conducted during fieldwork for this thesis, I also draw on four interviews conducted during fieldwork in 2015 for my Master's dissertation on the Umbrella Movement (Kunz 2016). All four interviewees played leadership roles in the movement and I subsequently interviewed them again during fieldwork for this thesis. They consented to allow me to use the interviews from 2015 in this thesis and future publications.

In terms of research ethics, my fieldwork and research design were approved through the review process at SOAS. Participants were asked for their informed consent prior to the interviews. I opted for oral consent which I recorded on tape prior to each interview, instead of asking each participant to sign a detailed consent form, as I believed that some participants who preferred anonymity would have preferred not to sign a document. Participants were asked if I could use their real name or if they preferred anonymization. Many participants consented to the use of their actual names, especially participants with open leadership positions in the movement. Most of the ordinary participants, i.e. the people who were not quite as deeply involved in the movement, asked to remain anonymous during the recording of informed consent. Following the recent erosion of civil liberties in Hong Kong in the aftermath of the protests against an extradition law in 2019-20, I decided to expand the use of pseudonyms to all interviewees, even those based in Taiwan.

I considered exempting public figures who consented to being identified from pseudonymization. A significant proportion of my interviews was conducted with well-known student leaders, politicians, or formal representatives of major civil society organizations who have already widely shared their views and experiences, for instance through countless speeches, writings, interviews with journalists, and public social media posts. However, defining who counts as a "public figure" proved difficult. Should

NGO professionals or academics who have written and spoken about these movements qualify? The two occupation movements were highly public affairs that were closely documented. My thesis does not uncover any secrets about these movements, but merely provides a comparative analysis of their public enactment of democracy that should be covered by freedom of expression. Nonetheless, I ultimately decided that the universal use of pseudonyms is the appropriate and most coherent approach in light of the unfortunate recent erosion of the rule of law in Hong Kong.

Apart from interview material, my study also draws on other supplementary sources such as texts produced by activists, newspaper articles, video material, and the secondary literature on these movements. This material helped to complement and cross-check the interview information. This combination of methods and sources seems quite typical for social movement research (see della Porta 2014b). The texts produced by activists include statements on official websites of social movement organizations, reports, manifestos, and leaflets. There are also books and photo essays compiled by participants available that provided insights into various aspects of the movements. Video material included material available on the internet (e.g. Youtube.com) as well as documentaries about these movements. Documentaries were especially valuable due to the fact that I was not physically present during the occupations. The visual material helped me to get a sense of the atmosphere and recorded some key movement events. Weihua Chiang's (2018) award-winning documentary "The Edge of Night" stands out. It features candid interviews with key movement leaders in Taiwan that were conducted during the occupation and behind-the-scenes footage of deliberations between different factions.

Qualitative scholarship requires critical reflection on the role a researcher's subjectivity plays in the research process (Berger 2015; England 1994;

Roulston and Shelton 2015). From the vantage point of forms of quantitative scholarship steeped in positivist epistemologies that draw inspiration from the natural sciences, it is possible to mitigate or even eliminate bias to ensure academic rigor (see Roulston and Shelton 2015; also Galdas 2017). Qualitative researchers grounded in interpretivist understandings of social science, by contrast, question that it is possible to produce fully bias-free scholarship (ibid.). As Galdas suggests, “[t]hose carrying out qualitative research are an integral part of the process and final product, and separation from this is neither possible nor desirable” (2017, p. 2). A key strategy for maintaining quality and transparency in qualitative research is reflexivity. Moving beyond the positivist notion that fully detached (“objective”) research is possible, a reflexive approach entails constant consideration of how one’s position in the world (composed of factors such as age, education, class, race, gender, sexual orientation, and worldview) shapes the conduct of research and its findings (Berger 2015; also England 1994; Roulston and Shelton 2015). The empirical chapters of this thesis introduce interview participants, their experiences, and views. But to ensure the necessary degree of reflexivity, I will first briefly reflect on my own positionality and its effects. I am a political scientist by training. I was born and raised in Berlin, Germany. I am – amongst other things and in no particular order – male, cisgender, white, middle-class, and around 30 years of age. While I received a bachelor’s and master’s degree from German universities, I completed the bulk of my postgraduate studies in the United Kingdom at SOAS London.

My interest in Hong Kong’s political development (and East Asian politics more generally) dates back to before I first entered university. In 2005-06 I participated in a year-long high school exchange to Hong Kong. At the time I lived with a local host family, attended a regular high school, and studied Cantonese. As an undergraduate I spent a year in the PRC studying Mandarin Chinese at Nanjing University and interning in Beijing in 2010-11.

Subsequently, I wrote a master's dissertation on Hong Kong's civil disobedience campaign at SOAS. The idea for a comparative research project was first sparked at a Summer School of the SOAS Centre of Taiwan Studies in June 2014, whilst I was still working on my dissertation. I submitted the dissertation in mid-September 2014, less than two weeks before the campaign was transformed by the outbreak of the Umbrella occupations. Following this first period of study in London, a research training master's degree at Humboldt University of Berlin allowed me to prepare doctoral research, travel to Hong Kong for exploratory fieldwork, and write a (second) master's dissertation focused on the Umbrella Movement. Prior to commencing the PhD in 2016, I had thus both lived in Hong Kong and studied its political development. However, I had only travelled to Taiwan once for a brief stay in Taipei in 2010 and not developed a similar degree of familiarity.

The ways in which a researcher's positionality affects qualitative interviewing includes the question of access, the dynamics of interview conversations, and the subsequent interpretation of data (see Berger 2015, p. 220). In terms of access, it has to be noted that I did not myself participate in the studied movements as an "insider."³⁸ Neither am I from Hong Kong and Taiwan, nor was I present during the occupations. Thus I could not rely on the forms of access that a participant might have enjoyed.³⁹ However, I found that my position as a foreign researcher from SOAS London lent me the degree of professional credibility required for networking and arranging

³⁸ For a critical discussion that complicates the often-drawn insider/outsider distinction, see Adu-Ampong and Adams 2020.

³⁹ It is possible, however, that a participant researcher would have been affiliated with a specific movement faction, which could have inhibited access to rivaling groups (in addition to enabling access to others).

interviews with a wide range of participants, including those who could be considered “elites” such as politicians.⁴⁰

During the interviews, I found that most participants were welcoming and appreciative of my interest in their movements. Both occupations had an international dimension and developed media operations targeting international audiences. As mentioned above, many of the more deeply involved activists were used to speaking to local and international researchers as well as journalists. Moreover, most of them were familiar with the university system, being either (former) student activists, professionals who had received a university education, or even university teachers. It appeared they could relate to my situation as a PhD candidate working on a thesis. With regard to age, building connections was made easier by the fact that I myself belong to the so-called “millennial” generation. Similar to many of my interviewees (e.g. former student activists) I was in my twenties at the time of the 2014 occupations.⁴¹ Although I conducted almost all of the interviews in Hong Kong in English, I found that my basic Cantonese skills (the use of certain phrases) in addition to my pre-existing familiarity with the city contributed to establishing rapport. By comparison, I initially found carrying out interviews in Taiwan more challenging. Not just did I have to acquire cultural familiarity with a new context, but also learn how to effectively conduct interviews in Mandarin Chinese. Fortunately, my interviewees were patient and my interviewing skills developed with practice. Ultimately, I found that the interviews carried out in Taiwan and Hong Kong were of similar quality and that I had gathered more than enough material to work with.

⁴⁰ On the question of reflexivity when interviewing foreign elites, see Herod 1999.

⁴¹ The movements were spearheaded by a new generation of young people labelled the “post-80s” (八十後) in Hong Kong and “Seventh Graders” (七年級生) in Taiwan – a cohort known as “millennials” elsewhere, see Ho 2019, pp. 74–75.

As mentioned above, positionality also affects the interpretation of interviews and the outcomes of qualitative research more generally (see Berger 2015). A reflexive approach includes reflection on the worldview of the researcher and its influence. I am sympathetic towards the movements I study, something I seem to have in common with many if not most scholars in the field of social movement studies.⁴² My research has further consolidated my opinion that social movements, not just formal elections, are an integral part of democratic life and development. I share a normative commitment to democracy and deliberation with the democratic theorists discussed in this thesis. As the literature review has demonstrated, these are elusive ideals with contested meanings. To avoid imposing a particular conception on the two East Asian contexts, I do not apply one coherent theory to the studied cases (for instance by providing a Habermasian reading of the movements). Rather, I start by focusing on the experiences of movement participants to then explore how they speak to broader concepts and debates. I strive to adequately represent the voices of participants whilst also maintaining the necessary degree of critical distance to develop a nuanced analysis of these multifaceted and faction-ridden movements. This involves the strategy of triangulation (Ayoub et al. 2014). As mentioned above, I cross-check facts and interpretations drawing not just on the gathered interview material, but also on relevant documents, news reports, and visual material. Moreover, I rely on different theoretical concepts to make sense of data and compare my representations to interpretations of other scholars who have written on these movements.

⁴² There are even progressive scholars who advocate for more engaged forms of activist scholarship that is of practical use to the studied movements (e.g. Bevington and Dixon 2005; Gutierrez and Lipman 2016). Gillan and Pickerill critically discuss what they call the “ethics of reciprocity” and how it tends to “prelude research on ‘ugly movements’ whose politics offend the left and liberal leanings predominant among movement researchers” (2012, p. 133). Although co-developing practical knowledge was not the goal of my study, I do hope that it contributes to preserving the contested histories of the studied movements and situates them in the context of wider developments.

The archive I compiled for this thesis allows me to reconstruct how democracy was enacted through these movements by exploring the experience of participants. My aim is to provide an account that is as close to an ethnographic thick description as possible without participant observation. Of course, one of the limitations of my study is that I was not myself present during the occupations. However, I believe that the rich material that I collected does allow me to reconstruct a detailed account that is grounded in and fits the experience of movement participants.

This leads to another limitation of my study: my analysis largely depends on my interview material. I do not claim to present an objective account, as I do not believe true objectivity is attainable. Following an interpretative logic, I rather seek to provide an account that “fits” my data and is therefore grounded in the lifeworlds of participants in my study (see Charmaz 2014). A different collection of interviews would have provided different perspectives and insights into the movement. There were some people I hoped to speak to, for instance due to their particular role in the movement, that I was not able to interview for various reasons. Perhaps their perspectives could have added additional layers to this study. But overall, I collected a vast number of extremely insightful interviews from different perspectives, including with many of the most visible leadership figures, in addition to supplementary material for triangulation, which together allowed me to find nuanced answers to my research question. The fact that some time has passed since the two movements occurred and there is already so much secondary research available allowed me to cross-check my representations.

Thesis Structure

The structure of my thesis is as follows: Chapter 1 analyses how participants in the two movements enacted democracy through the performance of civil disobedience. I first briefly discuss protest histories in Taiwan and Hong Kong, to provide the historical background information necessary to understand what led up to the civil disobedience movements. I then assess to what extent both occupation movements adhered to the script of civil disobedience outlined by liberal theory. The Umbrella and Sunflower Movement underline the power of civil disobedience, as well as the limits of an overly restrictive definition. While the first chapter provides a broad overview over the trajectory of both movements, the subsequent chapters explore particular themes touched upon in further detail.

Chapter 2 analyzes the construction of vertical leadership for the pursuit of strategic politics in the two occupation movements. In both cases, deliberative decision-making structures were established that shaped the strategic direction of the movement without direct democratic involvement of all occupiers. Whereas veteran activists in Taiwan were relatively more successful in establishing efficient deliberative bodies, key stakeholders in Hong Kong lacked the unity and trust required to form a similarly coherent “united front.” In both cases the emerging leadership structures were challenged from within the movement by occupiers, many of whom questioned the perceived lack of internal democracy and favored a more radical approach, a development that culminated in controversial and unsuccessful sieges on the executive branches of government.

Chapter 3 explores the symbolical and spatial dimensions of challenges to movement leadership. I argue that in both cases these internal conflicts over movement democracy played out as contestations over both the actual and imagined spatial arrangements of the occupations. In the Taiwanese case

there was a division between the inside of the Legislature, the heart of the occupation that was sealed off due to police presence, and the outside as an area where the “masses” assembled to protect those inside. Many outside participants were dissatisfied with this structure as well as its implied hierarchy, seeking to connect inside and outside. Their attempt to transform the occupation was opposed by “insiders” from the leadership core in a performative standoff. In the case of Hong Kong, there was a controversy about the “main stage” both as the actual platform from which leaders spoke and as a symbol for the moderate movement leadership. The issue was not the real and imagined inside/outside distinction as in Taiwan, but the question of whether there should be an on stage/off stage division and centralized leadership. Dissatisfaction culminated in a movement to “destroy the main stage” in which protesters performatively challenged the established leadership.

Chapter 4 deals with public deliberations in social movements in Hong Kong. The “Occupy Central” campaign that preceded the Umbrella occupations involved explicit experiments with deliberative democracy. The concept was strategically employed to unite and strengthen the pro-democracy movement. When the contest over democratic reform took an unexpected prefigurative turn with the spontaneous emergence of horizontal occupations that differed starkly from Occupy Central’s original plan, the strategic deliberations were not revived. Nonetheless, the contested vertical leadership organized less structured and formal deliberations to engage participants. Moreover, the three occupation zones each organically developed their own unique characteristics and fostered alternative forms of deliberation that fit the nascent prefigurative street communities.

Chapter 5 turns to public deliberations in Taiwanese social movements. The Wild Strawberry Movement of 2008-09, which emerged to contest perceived

infringements on freedom of expression during a controversial visit by a PRC state representative, had a distinct prefigurative dimension. Participants made all decisions together in a nightly assembly on an occupied square. Veteran activists learned from the experience of deliberative indecision as well as their perceived shortcomings and opted for more closed-off vertical decision-making structures in the Sunflower Movement. Nonetheless, the movement leadership organized explicit experiments with deliberative democracy in the occupation zone. Whilst these did not directly affect decision-making, they served important functions such as mobilization, feedback, and civic education. Moreover, occupiers constructed a range of more unstructured and informal deliberative spaces that underline that deliberation can take many forms – not just detached, rational argument.

The conclusion discusses the arguments and findings of this thesis against the backdrop of recent developments in the region. The 2019-20 protests in the Special Administrative Region that contested a proposed Extradition Bill and the erosion of civil liberties in their aftermath show just what is at stake in the struggles over democracy in Hong Kong, Taiwan, and beyond. Free and fair elections continue to be something people across the world consider worth fighting for. But the movements this thesis deals with also underscored that democracy entails not just elections for representatives, but also other forms of participation and deliberation. Assemblies in public space – with all their internal tensions and contradictions – form enactments of democracy in and of themselves. It is to the ways in which the concept of civil disobedience, a contested idea in liberal democratic thought, was enacted in the Sunflower and Umbrella Movement that this thesis now turns to.

1 Enacting Civil Disobedience

To understand the ways in which activists in Taiwan and Hong Kong conceived and practiced democracy, as this thesis sets out to, it is necessary to first discuss the most notable component of the movements' protest repertoire: the occupation of public space. In both cases a number of factors and contingent developments drove protesters to seemingly spontaneously create occupation zones that enabled the collective expression (and negotiation) of demands. However, the protests were conceived of as more than merely "occupations:" Participants claimed to engage in civil disobedience, a form of protest that involves the public transgression of laws in the pursuit of justice that can be considered a normal and normatively defensible part of democratic political culture according to liberal democratic theory (Habermas 1985, p.99; Rawls 1971). This chapter argues that participants in the Sunflower and Umbrella Movement not just voiced claims for democracy vis-a-vis the state, but also enacted democracy through civil disobedience.⁴³ Participants drew on the script of civil disobedience to dramatize the issues they cared about, boost legitimacy, and attain public support.⁴⁴ They played the role of conscientious citizens publicly

⁴³ In their analysis of the Sunflower Movement, Jones and Su (2017, p. 17) suggest that "labelling the events merely a form of disobedience would be inadequate." They propose the term "democratic contestation" to highlight that the popular movement put forward a vision of democracy that contested the government's more restrictive definition. I prefer to use the term civil disobedience that was invoked by participants themselves. However, their discussion points to limitations of the liberal paradigm that will be further discussed in this chapter.

⁴⁴ Agnes Ku (2019b) recently published a piece that discusses civil disobedience as a performative practice in Hong Kong. It compares the staging of civil disobedience by the movement against the Public Order Ordinance in 2010 to the experience in the Umbrella Movement. In another piece on the performative expression of "generational change" through the movement, Ku (2019a) highlights the excessive scriptedness of the older generation's civil disobedience campaign. The "prescribed script" proved too restrictive and inflexible to accommodate developments on the ground during the actual occupation in

transgressing laws in a largely constrained manner to protect or pursue democracy. At a time of crisis, when ordinary channels of political participation were blocked or malfunctioning, this course of action was deemed justifiable and necessary to affect change.

When assessing any enactment of civil disobedience, the questions invariably arises to what extent it sticks to the script of civil disobedience and whether it counts as such. This involves “symbolic struggles” over the “label civil disobedience” that have political and legal ramifications (Celikates 2016, p. 43). According to John Rawls’ (1971, p. 364) often-cited definition civil disobedience is “a public, nonviolent, conscientious yet political act contrary to law usually done with the aim of bringing about a change in the law or policies of the government.” It is not based on private interests, but “invokes the commonly shared conception of justice that underlies the political order” (ibid., p. 365). Further, it is a “public act” comparable to “public speech” that is “an expression of profound and conscientious political conviction” which “takes place in the public forum” (ibid., p. 366). While the law is transgressed, “fidelity to the law is expressed by the public and nonviolent nature of the act” and “the willingness to accept the consequences of one’s conduct” (ibid.). Jürgen Habermas (1985, p. 100), drawing on Rawls, defines civil disobedience as “a morally justified protest which may not be founded only on private convictions or individual self-interests.” It is a pre-announced “public act” that “includes the premeditated transgression of individual legal norms without calling into question obedience to the rule of law as a whole.” The “readiness to accept the legal consequences” and adherence to nonviolence are required, as “the infraction by which civil disobedience is expressed has an exclusively symbolic character” (ibid., p. 104).

Hong Kong (ibid.). While I draw on Ku’s excellent work, my comparative discussion focuses on adherence to the liberal civil disobedience script.

Robin Celikates (2016), critically discussing these definitions, points out that five elements make up the “liberal paradigm” of civil disobedience. To count as civil disobedience (and therefore be normatively justified in a democratic society) the action must be: public, non-violent, conscientious, try to evoke the sense of justice of the majority, and stay within the bounds of fidelity to law (as opposed to revolutionary protest against the existing system) (ibid., p. 38). Drawing on examples of real world activism and critical theoretical accounts, Celikates questions these requirements and argues that the liberal paradigm presents an overly “sanitized” understanding of civil disobedience. Viewing “civil disobedience as a genuinely political and democratic practice of contestation” (ibid., p. 37), he proposes a minimalist definition to avoid the shortcomings of the liberal conception. Celikates defines civil disobedience:

as an intentionally unlawful and principled collective act of protest (in contrast to both legal protest and “ordinary” criminal offenses or “unmotivated” rioting), with which citizens—in the broad sense that goes beyond those recognized as citizens by a particular state—pursue the political aim of changing specific laws, policies or institutions. (ibid.)

Under this definition an act does not need to meet the five listed requirements to be considered democratic civil disobedience. While some might suspect it to be too unspecific, Celikates’ minimalist definition does allow the concept to travel more seamlessly across contexts. By contrast, Rawls (1971) explicitly states that his theory of civil disobedience only applies to forms of protest seeking to correct injustices in democratic contexts; that he is not concerned with resistance in societies under non-democratic government (p. 363). Hence, his conception might be applicable to Taiwan as a democratic state, but the resistance of activists in Hong Kong would not be covered by it.

In this chapter I will explore to what extent participants in the Umbrella and Sunflower Movement adhered to the liberal script in their performance of civil disobedience. After briefly comparing the protest history of both contexts, I will draw on the requirements for liberal civil disobedience identified above and examine the degree to which the two movements were public, non-violent, conscientious, and stayed within the bounds of fidelity to law.⁴⁵ My purpose is not to make a judgement on whether the actions qualified as civil disobedience and can therefore be considered as justified action under liberal democratic theory. Rather, I draw on the requirements identified in the literature to explore how civil disobedience was enacted and shed light on the tensions inherent to the liberal conception of democratic civil disobedience.

Social Movements in Taiwan and Hong Kong (1960s – 2014)

In the introduction to this thesis I highlighted that the Sunflower and Umbrella Movement have to be seen in the context of the recent wave of occupation movements around the world that asserted popular sovereignty and democracy (Gerbaudo 2017). But similar to the popular uprisings elsewhere, the two East Asian movements are also deeply rooted in local histories that require attention to fully comprehend why citizens embraced civil disobedience to assert democracy at this particular juncture.

Taiwan and Hong Kong are located at the periphery of the PRC, have been shaped by different colonialisms, and politics in both places is thus “marked by struggles over contested histories, identities, languages, and cultures, in which questions of political representation have become increasingly

⁴⁵ While I draw on the liberal requirements identified by Celikates, I decided to leave out the fourth criteria —that acts of civil disobedience have to try to evoke the sense of justice of the majority —, as this can be subsumed under the criteria of conscientiousness for the purpose of this discussion.

important” (Shih and Jones 2014, p. 1). While the Sunflower and Umbrella Movement both foregrounded local concerns about democracy, they also represented movements for political autonomy that contested the PRC leadership’s ambition to fully integrate both societies into authoritarian China (Ho 2019; Jones 2017b; Kaeding 2015; Wu 2019). In both contexts, civil disobedience became the form in which democratic resistance was enacted. The Chinese translation of civil disobedience used in Taiwan is *gongmin bufucong* (公民不服從), whereas in Hong Kong it is translated as *gongman kongming* (公民抗命). *Gongmin/gongman* means citizen. Whilst *bufucong* translates as refusing to obey, *kongming* translates as defying orders or disobeying (DeFrancis 2003). The latter word is composed of the characters 抗 for resisting and 命 that not just means order or command, but also life or fate (CC-CEDICT). While both *gongmin bufucong* and *gongmin kongming* refer to the same concept (civil disobedience) and native speakers consulted confirm it is just a matter of translation, at closer inspection there does appear to be a difference in connotation. Not complying is not the same as defying fate. The translation used in Taiwan sounds concrete and self-assured (“*we refuse to obey!*”), whereas the one used in Hong Kong has a more dramatic ring to it (“*we resist our fate!*”). These different connotations fit the different political circumstances at the time of the studied movements: Hong Kong’s activists faced a more adverse “hybrid regime” propped up by authoritarian China that does not leave the local populace much say in their city’s political development (Cheng 2016, 2019a); their struggle for democracy was also a struggle against the destined full integration with the Chinese Mainland (a process dubbed “Mainlandization,” Lo cited by Kaeding 2014, p. 124). By contrast, citizens in Taiwan under liberal democracy operated in a relatively more advantageous setting that they sought to defend by *refusing to obey*. They thereby attempted to avoid

following the path of Hong Kong under Chinese rule (sometimes called “Hongkongization,” Kaeding 2014).

Despite an gradual increase in political control in the years after the 1997 handover of sovereignty, Hong Kong at the dawn of the Umbrella Movement still featured a considerable degree of autonomy from the PRC under the “One Country, Two Systems” framework (OCTS) that was agreed upon in the Sino-British Joint Declaration of 1984. The Chinese government had pledged to keep Hong Kong’s separate political, judicial, and economic system intact for 50 years after the handover. Whereas protesters across the border in Mainland China faced direct repression by the one-party state – the most tragic example being the violent crackdown on the 1989 Tiananmen Square protests in Beijing (Calhoun 1997) – democrats in Hong Kong enjoyed a degree of protection due to the city-state’s special status.

Under British colonial rule universal suffrage had long been denied and the law been used to control the colonized population. But large scale riots of 1966 and 1967 that exposed the distance between the colonial administration and the people led to a “hegemonic restructuring” that entailed the development of a more robust rule of law “as a substitute for politics” (Jones 1999, p. 38). While the rule of law became one of Hong Kong’s “core values,” democratization was only gradually accelerated in the years prior to the handover. Although critics pointed to signs for the gradual erosion of Hong Kong’s autonomy under Chinese rule and even suggested that it has been experienced by many residents as “another round of colonialization” (Lee 2019a, p. 4), a separate legal system was largely maintained in the first two decades after 1997, in part due to efforts by civil society to defend existing rights and freedoms (Lee and Chan 2011; Ma 2005). At the same time, full liberal democracy continued to be denied. According to the Basic Law (1990), the city-state’s mini-constitution, the end goal of political reform is the

selection of both the Chief Executive as well as all members of the Legislative Council by universal suffrage. However, the Chinese central state repeatedly used its legal power to delay the promised introduction of full universal suffrage (Lam 2015, p. 101; Ortmann 2015, pp. 34–36). While the struggle over democracy in Hong Kong long seemed to be over the pace of introducing universal suffrage (Lee and Chan 2011, p. 14), a decision on political reform by the Standing Committee of the National People's Congress (NPCSC 2014) in August 2014 made clear that the issue was actually the scope of democracy. The Chinese government made clear that it would only allow for universal suffrage if a pre-screening mechanism for the Chief Executive elections was in place, a conservative framework that fell short of the expectations of democrats in Hong Kong for “genuine” universal suffrage and contributed to the emergence of the Umbrella Movement.

Whereas the struggle for democracy in Hong Kong is ongoing, as Hongkongers were denied full representative democracy by both the British colonial regime and the Chinese Communist Party that took over and adapted the colonial state apparatus, Taiwan transitioned to liberal representative democracy in the 1990s. This followed decades of martial law under the exiled Kuomintang (KMT) regime during which associational life was largely controlled and native opposition or protest faced varying degrees of suppression (Fell 2018; Ho 2010, pp. 3–4). The political opposition movement (called *dangwai* – 黨外; literally “outside the party”) gained steam in the 1970s both through electoral success in local elections and the circulation of new oppositional publications. This development was met with increased state violence, perhaps best exemplified by the so-called Kaoshiung Incident of 1979 that involved a crackdown on a demonstration on Human Rights Day in Kaoshiung and the political prosecution of opposition leaders (Fell 2018, pp. 27–28).

In the lead-up to the lifting of martial law in 1987, various social movement organizations were formed and state authority was challenged by disruptive “self-relief” activism by subaltern groups (Chuang 2013, pp. 6–12; Ho 2010, pp. 8–10). In the immediate post-martial law years, an emboldened opposition party and flourishing social movement activism increased the pressure for democratization. In March 1990 a large-scale sit-in emerged in front of the Chiang Kai-shek Memorial by students calling for political reforms. Following dialogue with President Lee Teng-hui (李登輝) and his promise to conduct a National Affairs Conference, the student protesters peacefully withdrew, an outcome that provided a stark contrast to the violent suppression of the student protests on Tiananmen Square just months earlier (Fell 2018; Wright 2001).

Social movements and their vibrant protest performances became a regular part of politics both in post-handover Hong Kong and post-transition Taiwan. Under Chinese sovereignty, the staging of protest events became a frequent occurrence in a city-state that featured a vibrant civil society, but lacked liberal representative democracy that could constructively channel opposition voices (Cheng 2016; Lee and Chan 2011). Prior to the Umbrella Movement, the mainstream of Hong Kong’s pro-democracy movement – perhaps reflecting the city-state’s conservative political culture (Ho 2019) – long favoured a non-confrontational, moderate approach that did not challenge the rule of law. On the one hand, the opposition parties (the so-called pan-democratic parties) used the limited elections the existing system offers to gain leverage and engaged in bargaining over political reform with the power-holders in Hong Kong and Beijing (e.g. Ming and Tang 2012). On the other hand, civil society groups raised claims by staging relatively orderly public rallies and demonstrations (e.g. Lee and Chan 2011).

Two annual protest events on symbolic dates formed cornerstones of Hong Kong's protest calendar: the June 4 candlelight vigil to commemorate the violent crackdown on Tiananmen Square in 1989 and the July 1 demonstration marking the day of the handover (ibid.). A particularly important moment of collective defiance was the large-scale demonstration on July 1, 2003 against a proposed national security bill that brought over 500,000 protesters to the streets. It led to the shelving of the bill as well as the reinvigoration of the pro-democracy movement (Ku 2007; Lee and Chan 2011). While a rally this size could have involved confrontations with the authorities, it unfolded in an orderly fashion and adhered to the principles of peacefulness, rationality, and nonviolence (*woleifei* – 和理非) that became the norm for moderate street protest in Hong Kong. These demonstrations were re-enacted year after year. In the process street protest became ritualized and normalized to such an extent that it hardly challenged the authorities (Cheng 2016, p. 390; Lee and Chan 2011).

Whereas social movements in post-handover Hong Kong were constrained by the non-democratic environment and had to resist state encroachment on civil liberties, their counterparts in Taiwan under liberal democracy operated in a more favourable political arena. Ming-sho Ho suggests that in the years following the transition, social movements became “institutionalized” in the sense that they turned into “a permanent, routine, and legitimate feature in a newly democratized society” (Ho 2010, p. 10). They thrived and could achieve changes in areas ranging from women's rights to labour rights, and environmental protection (ibid., pp. 10-11; Fell 2018, pp. 204–215). Following the first transfer of power from the KMT to the Democratic Progressive Party (DPP) – a party that had emerged out of the *Dangwai* Movement and taken up many of the issues activists cared about – with the election Chen Shui-bian (陳水扁) to president in 2000, a process of “procedural incorporation” unfolded: Not just were activists involved in policy-making processes, some

of them were even recruited to government agencies (Ho 2010, p. 13). Moreover, state-sponsored citizen conferences on contentious issues were organized that frequently involved experts from social movement organizations (ibid., p. 14; see also Huang and Hsieh 2013). According to Ho, these developments meant that under DPP rule “the conflict between social movements and the government was no longer staged in the street but rather internal to the decision-making institutions” (ibid., p. 15).⁴⁶ He suggests that despite some symbolic and legislative achievements, many activists experienced disenchantment during the eight years of DPP rule due to the lack of substantial structural changes (ibid., pp. 13-14; see also Fell 2018, pp. 2-3).

In the years leading up to the Umbrella and Sunflower Movement, state-society relations in both Taiwan and Hong Kong turned more and more conflictual. In Hong Kong, new forms of confrontational protest emerged that gradually superseded the ritualized protest script and challenged a Chinese leadership under Xi Jinping (習近平) that enhanced control over the city and its residents (Ku 2019a, pp. 114-117). Edmund Cheng (2016) observes both qualitative and quantitative changes in political activism. He suggests that prior to 2006 the concept “protest” largely referred to demonstrations (游行) and rallies (集會) (ibid., p. 388). Whilst protest was a common occurrence, it was carefully scripted to proceed “within legal boundaries to avoid clashes with police” (ibid., p. 390). Rather than allowing room for spontaneity or confrontation, this meant that demonstrators adhered to “pre-set routines and rituals that reduce[d] their participation to merely being part of a headcount” to boost the leverage of pan-democrats vis-à-vis the authorities (2016, p. 390).

⁴⁶ Whilst the years of DPP rule were relatively quiet in terms of street protest, a notable exception was the Red Shirt movement against corruption that sought the resignation of President Chen Shui-bian (Ho 2010; Fell 2018, 3).

In pre-Umbrella Movement Hong Kong this moderate protest script was increasingly subverted by new forms of “bottom-up activism” that responded to a “reconfiguration” of the ruling regime and challenged its legitimacy. Cheng identifies six key events that best exemplify this trend: the urban preservation movements concerning Star Ferry Pier (2006) and Queen’s Pier (2007), protests against an express railway to Guangzhou (2009–10), against the national education curriculum changes (2012), for the reissuing of television licenses (2013), and against a redevelopment plan for the North-East New Territories (2012–14). These protests had a decentralized and self-mobilized organizational form in common that relied strongly on social media. They entailed resilient performances that included occupations, the besieging of buildings, hunger strikes, concerts, and heritage tours that contrasted with the non-confrontational approach of the past and were met with more heavy-handed policing as well as prosecutions (*ibid.*, pp. 392–97). The protests also reflected the emergence of a new generation of activists, their organizations, and networks, who developed new discourses that focused on local issues, identity, and collective memory (Ku 2019a, pp. 115–117; Lee 2019a, pp. 14–17; Ma 2019a, pp. 33–41). At the same time, electoral politics also took a radical turn as divisions widened within the pan-democratic camp between so-called moderate parties, that viewed some degree of accommodation in negotiations with Beijing as inevitable, and new radical parties that embraced a more disruptive and uncompromising approach (Ku 2019a, pp. 114–115; Lee and Chan 2011; Ma 2019a, pp. 33–36).

One episode of contention that clearly foreshadowed the Umbrella Movement was the Anti-National Education Movement (反國民教育運動). The protest formed in opposition to a law by the government to introduce patriotic education to boost nationalism and identification with the Chinese party-state that was criticised as brainwashing (Chan 2013; Kan 2012; Wang 2017b). A civil society network of various organizations mobilized against it,

the most notable of which was “Scholarism” (學民思潮), a group of secondary school students. The group was led by Joshua Wong, a then 14-year-old who would later turn into one of the student leaders of the Umbrella Movement. At its height the Anti-National Education Movement involved a 10-day sit-in on a court adjacent to the Central Government Complex (so-called “Civic Square” – 公民廣場) in September 2012, as well as hunger strikes involving both students and parents. Ultimately, the government gave in to public pressure and withdrew the proposed curriculum (ibid.).

While the Anti-National Education Movement went beyond the ritualistic protest script, it is important to note that it was not explicitly conceived as a civil disobedience movement (Wong 2015). Protests in the years prior to the Umbrella Movement involved more confrontational means. But these actions were not necessarily interpreted as enactments of civil disobedience by the activists themselves or the audiences viewing them. According to Agnes Ku “illegal protests have not been uncommon” in the city, “but not many of them have developed into a civil disobedience movement per se” (Ku 2019b, p. 85).⁴⁷ The Umbrella Movement stands out as a large-scale occupation prepared by a discourse of civil disobedience that educated the public about this concept (Lee 2015a).

Just as in pre-2014 Hong Kong, so in Taiwan in the years prior to the Sunflower Movement state-society relations turned increasingly sour. The sweeping election victories of the KMT in both the legislative and the presidential elections in early 2008 transformed the stage on which social movements operated and reinvigorated confrontational activism. Whereas social movements had experienced some degree of incorporation into policy-

⁴⁷ Ku points to the notable case of the student-led campaign against the Public Order Ordinance in 2000 that was a “self-conscious campaign of civil disobedience with a theatrical quality” that she compares to the events of 2014 (2019b, p. 86).

making processes during the eight years of DPP rule, they now lost access to backstage decision-making and once again focused on protest (Fell 2017a, p. 3; Ho 2010, pp. 16–18). The new administration was not just formed by the party that had been the authoritarian adversary during decades of one-party rule, but also pursued policies that were opposed by most activists. The latter included “a highly developmentalist approach to land disputes,” the support of nuclear energy, and the decision to resume capital punishment (Fell 2017a, p. 3). Further, president Ma Ying-jeou’s (馬英九) developmentalist agenda involved the pursuit of closer relations with China. Whereas he promised economic benefits for ordinary citizens, critics pointed to harmful effects of China’s growing influence on Taiwan’s society and democracy (see Cole 2020; Ho 2019, pp. 69–70; Wu 2019, 220–221).

Taiwan’s first major student movement since the 1990s marked an occasion when the PRC’s influence was being felt by civil society: In 2008 the so-called “Wild Strawberry Movement” (野草莓運動) was formed to respond to perceived human rights infringements during protests against the controversial visit of a Chinese official (Hsiao 2017). The movement involved a sit-in close to the Chiang Kai-shek Memorial (國立中正紀念堂) where the students constructed a prefigurative assembly-style democracy (see chapter 4). While the encampment eventually faded away after over a month without achieving any concessions, it contributed to the emergence of network of student activists and activist clubs at universities across Taiwan that continued to play a role in a new wave of confrontational protest (Ho 2019, pp. 80–83). At the same time, a network of civil society organizations evolved that all focused on different issues (e.g. the environmental protection, human rights, or women’s rights), but nonetheless shared increasing opposition to the Ma administration (Hsu 2017).

The Sunflower movement did not emerge fully spontaneously out of nowhere, but was the final act of a wave of increasingly confrontational activism that prepared it (see Cole 2015, 2017; Fell 2017b; Ho 2019; Hsu 2017; Wu 2019). These protests focused on local issues — including urban renewal, land expropriation, and environmental protection — that were gradually connected with broader themes of democratic governance, PRC influence, and Taiwanese identity (see Cole 2017, pp. 21-27; also Hsu 2017; Wu 2019).⁴⁸ They were underpinned by the fear of a perceived rollback to more authoritarian forms of government under the KMT (Fell 2017, p. 7).

One of the most notable movements that paved the way for the Sunflower Movement was the so-called Anti-Media Monopoly Movement (反媒體壟斷運動) in 2012-13. It created opposition to the takeover of Taiwanese media outlets by local media corporations with significant financial investments in the PRC and the perceived pro-China bias of the media (Ebsworth 2017). One major influence on the Sunflower Movement was the public emergence of leadership figures such as the student activists Chen Wei-ting (陳為廷) and Lin Fei-fan (林飛帆), as well as legal scholar Huang Kuo-chang (黃國昌). Moreover, the movement explicitly elevated concerns about the “China factor” to the forefront of a civil society campaign (Wu 2019).

In an situation in which activists had lost trust in the DPP’s capacity to effectively champion the issues they cared about, and faced with an administration that did not respond to more moderate forms of contention, activists employed increasingly more confrontational protest performances that involved standoffs with the police (Cole 2017, p. 22). While occupation was not a new form of protest in Taiwan, it became a central part of the escalating protest script prior to the Sunflower Movement (Hsu 2017,

⁴⁸ Cole (2017), who provides a detailed and vivid discussion of these developments, observes that during this time „the spirit of the *dangwai*, which in many ways had dissipated following the institutionalization of the DPP, was slowly merging with the now decades-old tradition of *zili jiuji* [self-relief] activism“ (p. 22).

pp. 138–139). Some of the most intense social movement campaigns in the lead up to March 2014 focused on the issue of land expropriation that involved the forced displacement of citizens to make way for development programs pursued by the government, for instance in the case of the Huaguang community (華光社區) in Taipei and Dapu (大埔) borough in Miaoli county. Over the course of these campaigns to prevent the demolition of people's homes, activists – many of them students from the evolving student protest network – developed and sharpened their tactical knowledge, organizational skills as well as a protest repertoire that included “guerrilla”-style actions and occupations of public space (Chen 2017b; Cole 2015).

The increasingly confrontational tactics employed by activists at times when lawful protest and rational deliberation failed to secure concessions from a largely unresponsive administration, paved the way towards the occupation of the legislature in 2014. These occupations can be framed as civil disobedience. As Ming-sho Ho (2019, p. 66) suggests: “Immediately before the Sunflower Movement, discussions about civil disobedience (*gongmin bufucong*) became more prevalent among protesters who felt that they had nearly exhausted other peaceful means.” Along these lines one veteran activists who was strongly involved in the Dapu campaign characterized the protests tactics as “smart action” and pointed out that “*gongmin bufucong* is the upgrade of the previous nonviolent action” (Chun-chieh W., interview, 28.7.2018).

Prior to the Sunflower Movement, activists already began to direct their attention towards government buildings. On August 18, 2013, protesters surprised security forces by climbing over the fence of the Ministry of the Interior following a large scale rally against the Dapu land expropriations and staged an overnight occupation of its yard without entering the building (Chen 2017b, p. 106). The activists ended their protests after 20 hours and

withdrew voluntarily. But they vowed to stage further occupations in the future if required. The Taiwan Rural Front (台灣農村陣線), once of the civil society organizations behind the protest, framed the occupation a “successful civil disobedience action” (2013). The organization further convened a warning towards the government that hinted at things to come:

As the protest draws to a close now, it is, at the same time, only a beginning. [The protest] serves as a warning to all government agencies, which betrayed their responsibility to the people, that they should be ready for people’s occupation at all times. (Wang 2013)

In sum, the Sunflower and Umbrella Movement surprised even attentive observers – including the author – due to their impressive scale and momentum. But whilst they emerged in a seemingly spontaneous fashion, these movements were rooted in increasingly conflictual state-society relations and local protest histories that culminated in large-scale enactments of democratic civil disobedience.

Publicity

My study makes the case that the two occupation movements not merely articulated pro-democracy claims, but also formed enactments of democracy in and of themselves. Large numbers of citizens embraced civil disobedience as a democratic and participatory performance. But to what extent did their practices conform to the liberal paradigm of civil disobedience? A key requirement for liberal civil disobedience is that it is enacted in *public* (Celikates 2016). According to Rawls (1971, p. 366) it is an action that is “engaged in openly with fair notice” and that is “not covert or secretive.” Habermas (1985, p. 100) goes as far as to suggest that pre-announcing the actions in advance makes it possible for the police to control them, thereby emphasising the largely symbolic nature of the act.

In the case of Hong Kong, public preparations for a peaceful civil disobedience protest began over one year prior to the emergence of the Umbrella Movement. The plan was conceived by Benny Tai Yiu-ting (戴耀廷), a law professor at the University of Hong Kong. Tai published a widely noted article in the Hong Kong Economic Journal in January 2013 (Tai 2013b). In the piece titled “Civil Disobedience as the Most Lethal Weapon” (公民抗命的最大殺傷力武器) he argued that since past strategies employed by the pro-democracy movement had not generated sufficient pressure to convince the Chinese central government to allow democratic reform, nonviolent civil disobedience in the form of a large-scale occupation that could paralyze Hong Kong’s financial centre, Central district, represented the last resort for the cities’ democrats.

Tai proposed six principles for the movement: First, a sufficiently high number of around 10,000 participants was needed for the protest to be effective. Second, opinion leaders – for instance political leaders, former officials, religious leaders, and scholars – who had not previously violated the law or been considered “radical” needed to join the action to strengthen public appeal. Third, the action had to adhere to the principle of nonviolence. Echoing the liberal paradigm of civil disobedience, Tai argued that the date of the occupation should be pre-announced and that participants should sign a pledge of nonviolence. On the day of the action, the organizers should put up signs advising car drivers to avoid the affected area. The protesters would march to the centre of the targeted intersection only when the traffic lights for cars had turned red to ensure safety. Fourth, the occupation had to be sustained in order “to generate and accumulate sufficient political energy.” He envisioned it as a “carnival-style assembly” on the street. Fifth, participants must pledge their willingness to bear the responsibility for their transgression of the law in advance and voluntarily surrender to law enforcement afterwards. Sixth, in terms of timing the occupation should be

launched as the last resort. Seventh, the action should be “publicised in advance.” Tai noted that it needed not to actually be carried out to be effective, as he hoped even just letting the authorities know that 10,000 people were willing to enact the occupation could generate political pressure. Eighth, since the objective of the occupation was to achieve genuine universal suffrage, there had to be a willingness to suspend it and return to the negotiating table if the opportunity presented itself.

Benny Tai’s intervention prompted a heated public debate on civil disobedience. His plan appealed to members of the pan-democratic camp who were frustrated due to the repeated setbacks on the road to democracy (Lam 2014). One important reason for why Tai’s article stood out was his particular subject position: He was a member of Hong Kong’s upper middle-class as a law professor at Hong Kong University, the city’s leading university and had long been considered a moderate pan-democrat. As Lee and Chan suggest, “[t]he fact that a proposal of civil disobedience was initiated by a person such as Tai is probably one of the reasons behind the high levels of interest and attention the proposal aroused” (Lee and Chan 2018, chapter 3, para. 4).

Following the strong public response, Tai began to realize his ideas. To launch the campaign, he casted two moderate intellectuals as co-organizers: Kin-man Chan (陳健民), a sociology professor at Chinese University of Hong Kong, and Baptist Church reverend Yiu-ming Chu (朱耀明). While Tai was largely responsible for the theoretical framework underpinning the movement, the two co-organizers played key roles in strategizing, organizing the campaign, and connecting different groups (Daniel K., interview, 3.7.2015). The three officially founded the “Occupy Central with Love and Peace” campaign (讓愛與和平佔領中環, hereafter OCLP) in March 2013. The name was meant to emphasize the nonviolent nature of the movement

(Ethan D., interview, 22.6.2015). The three founders of the movement, who were widely referred to as the “Occupy Trio,” released a manifesto that outlined the campaign script (OCLP 2013). That all three men are devoted Christians was reflected in the language used that emphasized the role of public advocacy and deliberation. The manifesto made clear that the campaign depended on being staged openly to affect the general public, as “Civic awakening determine[d] the success of the movement.” Campaign organizers were compared to “preachers communicating enthusiastically with different communities to convey the universal values such as democracy, universal and equal suffrage, justice and righteousness.”

OCLP was not scripted as merely a civil disobedience campaign. It relied on a public and democratic process based on public assemblies (“D-Days”), a strategy underpinned by the concept of deliberative democracy. In previous years the pan-democratic camp had been split into a radical and a moderate faction, a trend that had accelerated after moderate democrats achieved a compromise deal in direct reform negotiations with the Chinese government in 2010 that merely achieved limited incremental democratic change that fell far short of expectations (Ma 2011). In this context, OCLP was designed to unite and strengthen the pro-democracy movement through a process involving four stages: First, there would be a time of public deliberation on Occupy Central and particular reform proposals through the deliberation days. It was planned that participating groups would supply specific reform proposals that would be rationally discussed to select several of them. Second, the selected reform proposals would be put to a vote in a civic referendum to gain public authorization. Third, there would be a period of negotiation with the local administration in Hong Kong and the central government. Lastly, civil disobedience would be employed if the authorities did not allow the introduction of genuine universal suffrage (OCLP 2014a).

In the initial stages, OCLP developed largely according to plan. Between June 2013 and May 2014 the organizers staged three rounds of deliberation days involving several thousand people. Subsequently they arranged a public referendum in which 792,808 people voted – an unexpectedly high number – and thereby selected one reform proposal (Chan 2015a; Yang 2020, p. 154).⁴⁹ While the organizers had hoped that the proposal could serve as the basis for negotiations with Beijing, the Chinese government demonstrated its unwillingness to deliberate with Hong Kong's democrats. The NPCSC handed down a decision on constitutional reform that was even more restrictive than OCLP organizers had expected on August 31, 2014 (Ethan D., interview, 22.6.2015).

While OCLP had so far proceeded largely according to its innovative campaign strategy, the so-called “August 31 decision” changed its trajectory. The OCLP leadership believed the lengthy deliberative process constituted the “strength” of their campaign, as it allowed the notion of “civil disobedience to be planted into the culture” (Daniel K., interview, 3.7.2015). However, student activists and radical pan-democrats had for some time expressed dissatisfaction that the Trio was delaying the occupation for months, believing that actual civil disobedience action itself – rather than the mere threat of it – could generate pressure in the reform negotiations (Alan W., interview, 8.6.2018). A clear expression of these strategic differences was when student activists conducted a “rehearsal” for the occupation – against the will of the Trio – following the traditional July 1 rally in 2014 (Chan 2015a, p. 4). The sit-in protest was cleared by the police and 511 protesters were arrested (Tsang and Lau 2014).

Following the “August 31 decision,” Benny Tai at last publicly announced that the “democracy grand banquet” (民主盛宴) – a clear codeword for the

⁴⁹ See chapter 4 for a more detailed discussion of the OCLP deliberations.

occupation – would be held on October 1, the national day of the PRC (Tai 2014). Edmund Cheng and Wai-yin Chan (2017) provide a detailed analysis of the contingent string of events that turned OCLP, a highly scripted campaign, into the more spontaneous and prefigurative Umbrella Movement:⁵⁰ On September 26, following a week-long class boycott, student activists made the abrupt decision to – without prior notice – performatively “re-claim” the cordoned-off “Civic Square” where the anti-national occupation sit-in in 2012 had taken place (*ibid.*, p. 227). Around 100 protesters made it over the barricades. The police responded heavy-handedly by encircling the protesters, arresting several of them (including some of the student leaders) and searching their homes. The students remaining on the square were cut off from food and lavatories. Mobilized by media images of the harsh police treatment of these youngsters, waves of sympathetic citizens aiming to “protect students” came to the scene in numbers too great for the police to disperse with pepper spray. It is estimated that around 50,000 protesters had turned out by midnight on 27 September (*ibid.*). Even though Benny Tai declared the abrupt start of Occupy Central in the early morning of 28 September, the OCLP Trio never managed to regain control over a movement that had taken a more decentralized and prefigurative turn (see chapter 2). Riot police tried in vain to clear the streets using batons, pepper spray, and tear gas (Cheng and Chan 2017, p. 228). Hard-line policing not only failed to disperse the resilient crowd, but backfired as media images of police violence against unarmed citizens who only relied on goggles, masks, and umbrellas for protection further increased turn-out (*ibid.*). Eventually, three occupation zones were formed across the city by decentralized protesters. OCLP had turned into the Umbrella Movement that would last for 79 days. While the Occupy Trio had meant to stage a pre-announced, highly organized, and controlled protest, the actual occupations erupted

⁵⁰ See also Chen and Szeto 2017, pp. 75–76; Ho 2019, pp. 127–130.

suddenly, in a decentralized fashion, and as the outcome of popular discontent.

Compared to the original imagination for OCLP, Taiwan's Sunflower Movement emerged without a similarly public pre-announcement and contentious public debate about civil disobedience. However, as discussed above, the occupation in March 2014 was not fully spontaneous either: it was not just the final act of a dramatic escalation of state-society tensions, but also the pinnacle of a movement against the CSSTA that started with the signing of the treaty in mid-2013 (Chia-hao L., interview, 3.5.2018). The trade deal had been negotiated in a secretive fashion between the governments of the ROC and the PRC. It was only shortly prior to June 21, when the agreement was signed, that the Taiwanese public learned about the wide scope of liberalizations in the service industry (Ho 2019, p. 100). Critics raised questions about the democratic legitimacy of the untransparent decision-making process that had led to this point (dubbed "black-box" – 黑箱), potentially harmful effects of opening up the service industry to abundant Chinese capital on local businesses and employees, as well as for Taiwan's democracy, national security, and political autonomy (Rowen 2015, p. 6; also Chen 2017a, pp. 135–136).

Following the signing of the controversial treaty the Democratic Front against Cross-Strait Service Trade Agreement (反黑箱服貿民主陣線 – DF)⁵¹ was formed, a coalition that comprised over 20 civil society organizations working on different issues such as the environment, labour rights, LGBTQ rights, women's rights, or land justice (Ho 2019, pp. 100–101; Hsu 2017, p. 150). Student activists also became involved in the movement and

⁵¹ The literal translation is "Anti-Black Box CSSTA Democratic Front." The use of the influential black-box metaphor in the name of the alliance highlights that the movement did not merely form in opposition to the specific content of the CSSTA, but that it was also underpinned by a rejection of an allegedly untransparent and unaccountable style of government.

established the Black Island Nation Youth Front (黑色島國青年陣線 – BIY) to coordinate their resistance. According to Ho, a “division of labor” emerged under which the professionals of the DF “were responsible for formulating the anti-CSSTA discourse” and “students took care of direct actions” (Ho 2019, p. 101). The young activists staged resistance at venues such as the Presidential Office as well as a major airport, and on July 31, 2013 even tried unsuccessfully to take their protest into the Legislative Yuan (ibid.).

Faced with societal opposition, the ruling party agreed to an item-by-item review of the CSSTA in parliament, but then sought to rush the process and eventually attempted to conclude it prematurely. On March 17 2014, committee chair Chang Ching-chung (張慶忠) of the KMT declared that the second reading was over and the bill would move to the general assembly. Even though some DPP legislators had physically prevented him from accessing the podium, Chang formally used a separate microphone to conclude the review within just 30 seconds. The announcement became known as the “30-second incident” that sparked the Sunflower Movement (Ho 2019, pp. 101–102). Amongst activists there was a sense that “Taiwan’s civil society had been ‘pushed to the edge of the cliff’ by the Ma administration”; that the improper passing of the CSSTA in the Legislative Yuan committee risked “irreversible damage” to Taiwan’s democracy and civil society (Hsu 2017, p. 145).

The plan to occupy the legislature to prevent the KMT from forcing the CSSTA through parliament was hastily and secretly devised by veteran activists following the 30-second incident (Yen et al. 2015, pp. 29–31). The idea was not publicly advertised and the authorities were not informed in advance, as liberal civil disobedience theory would have it. Quite the opposite: activists involved in the BIY and DF who came up with the plan, including people who would later emerge as leadership figures, acted

carefully to avoid surveillance that would have undermined their action due to past protest experience. The plan was transmitted mainly by word of mouth through a network of trusted activists (ibid.) The result was that different versions of the plan circulated and nobody could know exactly who else was involved (Hua-yi C., interview, 24.8.2018).

There was some coordination with members of the Alliance of Referendum for Taiwan (公投護台灣聯盟), a radical Taiwan independence group that had long set up protest camp in the vicinity of the legislature, but was not part of the DF. A “tacit agreement” (默契) was reached that the Alliance would focus on the front gate, while other groups of activists would storm from other directions (Wei-hsiang H., interview, 6.9.2018; see also Hua-yi C., interview, 24.8.2018). The assault on the building was launched at a time when a pre-announced public rally was held that was part of a campaign by the DF that was called “120 Hours of Action Defending Democracy” (Ho 2019, pp. 101–102).⁵² Activists abruptly staged an offensive on March 18 at around 9 p.m. Targeting the building from three different sides, they successfully diverted police attention and enabled several dozen people to make it over the fence at Qingdao East Road and push their way into the building (ibid.). Eventually the legislative chamber was occupied by as many as 200 people, whilst the crowd outside the legislature on Qingdao East and Jinan Road had increased to about 2000 supporters by twelve o'clock. Reminiscent of what would occur in Hong Kong later that year, indignant citizens were mobilized by media images and sought to protect the student occupation (ibid.).

The comparison of the emergence of the Sunflower and Umbrella Movement reveals that neither of them neatly fits the liberal requirement of being enacted in public with “fair notice” (Rawls 1971, p. 366). It lends credence to

⁵² My description of the occupation emergence is based on Ho’s analysis that also includes a map (2019, p. 102). See also Yen et al. 2015, pp. 31–40.

Celikates' (2016, p. 38) criticism that the enactment of "many well-established forms of civil disobedience," for instance the obstruction of deportations, "depends on *not* giving the authorities fair notice in advance." The experience of OCLP, which was imagined as a rather straightforward application of the liberal ideal, further points to the limits of a detailed scripting of civil disobedience a priori. Despite preparations and local protest histories, both occupation movements were shaped by spontaneity, circumstance, and contingency.

Non-violence

In both Hong Kong and Taiwan nonviolence formed a key principle enacted in the occupation movements. This was a feature that was strongly emphasized by sympathetic local as well as international observers and media, even though there was significant disagreement about its meaning and necessity amongst participants.

Hong Kong's OCLP movement put the nonviolent character of its campaign front and centre, as indicated by its full name: "Occupy Central *with Love and Peace*." Tai (2013b) imagined a completely nonviolent occupation that had a largely symbolic rather than confrontational character. Whilst the proposed civil disobedience action has to be seen in the context of the gradual radicalisation of the pro-democracy movement, OCLP has been fittingly described as "self-restrained radicalization" (Lee and Chan 2018). Tai, who drew on the global canon of civil disobedience, was particularly influenced by Gene Sharp's thinking on non-violent resistance. Sharp's work, especially his book "From Dictatorship To Democracy" (2002), has been credited with inspiring activists from across the world (Stolberg 2011). One of Sharp's (2002) basic arguments is that nonviolence works in toppling authoritarian regimes: Whereas any attempt at violent confrontation risks meeting

incumbent regimes in the realm where they hold superior capabilities, the strategic use of nonviolence can erode the legitimacy and public support on which dictatorship depends. While Tai acknowledged that in Hong Kong the aim was not to topple an authoritarian system, but rather to realize universal suffrage as promised in Hong Kong's Basic Law, he drew on Sharp's work to highlight the strategic importance of nonviolence (Tai 2013c, pp. 92–97). In the context of Hong Kong violent resistance was neither feasible – as the state had superior capacities and violence was not conducive to establishing democratic regimes – nor desirable. A sustained campaign of nonviolent resistance was required to contribute to the civic awakening of Hong Kong people needed for achieving political change. This necessitated a clear demarcation from violent forms of protest (ibid.).

Once it became clear that Beijing was not going to allow genuine universal suffrage, OCLP developed a detailed protest script focused on ensuring nonviolence. On September 25 2014, the campaign published a “Manual of Disobedience” that outlined eight “Rules for Non-Violent protest” (OCLP 2014c). The first principle called on participants to “[i]nsist on the use of non-violen[t] means” and to when faced with law enforcement “and anti-Occupy Central demonstrators, never hurt anyone physically or mentally, or damage any properties.” In another document the organizers made it clear that they were prepared to distance themselves from individuals or groups using violence during the protest, regardless of whether they were pro-democracy supporters or not (OCLP 2014b). It was expected that the eventual clearing of the occupation by law enforcement would proceed in a relatively orderly and peaceful fashion, as long as participants did not resist (OCLP 2014c). Trained volunteers would be employed at the scene to support participants, including 160 medical personnel and an 80-person strong “emotion support team” (made up largely of social workers as well as some psychologists). Arrestees would be assisted by 160 social workers and 120 volunteers for

administrative support, as well as “a large number of lawyers [who] are prepared to offer legal support on a personal basis” (OCLP 2014c). Overall, the manual reflects the belief that it was possible to stage a largely symbolic and controlled occupation protest with only a minimal degree of confrontation with law enforcement.

As discussed in the previous section, the actual occupation emerged in a seemingly spontaneous fashion. It featured a more confrontational, yet still largely nonviolent enactment of civil disobedience. Ethan D., who was part of the OCLP leadership, stressed that at “the most dangerous moment [when the police used pepper spray and teargas to clear the area], most people in fact really didn’t fight back. They really upheld the idea of nonviolence” (interview, 22.6.2015). He pointed out that the people who had turned out “didn’t vandalize anything” and “didn’t set fire to the police cars” – likely drawing a comparison to scenes of mass vandalism that sometimes occurred elsewhere, but at the time had not transpired in Hong Kong since the riots of 1967. The largely nonviolent unfolding of the movement can be explained by the lengthy public discourse about civil disobedience stimulated by OCLP (Lee 2015a). However, the spontaneous enactment of civil disobedience was certainly more robust than what the Occupy Trio had imagined: Participants did not let themselves be arrested passively by the police, but rather resisted the police by dispersing amidst teargas only to promptly regroup (Cheng and Chan 2017, p. 228).

The crowds did not even obey commands by the OCLP and student leadership who called on people to retreat due to fears the authorities would start using rubber bullets (Derek F., interview, 24.6.2015). Instead, protesters spontaneously formed resilient occupations across the city that involved improvised barricades and lasted for many weeks (ibid.). Despite the transformation of the movement, nonviolence continued to be a key principle

throughout the occupations. According to Agnes Ku, “a peaceful, self-regulating culture was developing off ground, which not only held vandalism in check but also laid the basis for a movement community to build up around the norms of civility, mutuality, and solidarity” (Ku 2019b, p. 99). After initially trying to suppress the protest, the local government in coordination with Beijing quickly adopted a “waiting game” that turned the occupations into a prolonged 79-day stalemate on the streets of Hong Kong (Veg 2015, pp. 59–62).

There were three main occupation zones across Hong Kong, each of which developed its own unique characteristics.⁵³ The occupation zone in Admiralty, the district where the protests had first emerged, was the largest of the three encampments where leadership figures addressed the public each night from an elevated main stage. The encampment in Causeway Bay, a shopping district similarly located on Hong Kong Island, was far smaller and developed a relatively tightly knit community (Morgan C., interview, 6.6.2018; Hugo T. and Siu Wah Y., 13.6.2018).⁵⁴ Finally, the occupation in Mongkok, a working class district with an extremely high population density and vibrant shopping areas, was often characterized as more “grassroots,” indicating that the encampment was populated by members of the working class rather than seemingly dominated by middle-class young professionals and students as the Admiralty and Causeway Bay encampments (see Wing Tai W., interview, 7.6.2018; Jamie T., interview, 14.6.2018).

However, it is important to note that whilst the occupations were triggered by contingent developments following the storming of Civic Square by student groups, the encampments were composed of citizens from all walks of life rather than just by students. According to an on-site survey by Cheng

⁵³ There was also an encampment in Tsim Sha Tsui district, a popular shopping destination for tourists, that was small in scale and could only briefly be sustained between September 30 and October 3, see Ho 2019, p. 130; also Kong 2017, p. 247.

⁵⁴ The different encampments will be discussed in more detail in chapter 4.

and Chan (2017), conducted from October 20 to 26 in the three occupation sites and involving 1681 respondents, only 20.9% of those who started participating after September 28 (the day the teargas was employed) were students compared to 79.1% of participants who were non-students. 56.8% of respondents were under 29 years of age (people over 40 made up only 15.2% of the sample), underlining that young people were driving this movement. The respondents were well educated with 74.1% holding a degree, graduate degree, or diploma. Concerning their class background, a total of 67.1% identified as middle class and 28.7% as “grassroots.”⁵⁵

On-site research by Ma (2019b) conducted in November 2014 through in-depth interviews with “committed occupiers,” defined as participants who spent a minimum of four nights at one encampment or a total of over ten days at different encampments, similarly shows that students were not the main constituency of the occupation. Ma suggests that “[a]verage citizens with higher bibliographical availability – young and educated but mostly working adults – joined the occupation without really having planned to do so,” i.e. spontaneously without prior political affiliation or activist experience (ibid., pp. 94-95).

The Mongkok occupation with its perceived grassroots character stood out from the two other encampments on Hong Kong Island.⁵⁶ There was a stronger presence of people committed to “localism” (本土主義) who

⁵⁵ But it is important to note that around 39.4% belonged to the lower middle class, bringing participants from the lower middle class (ever threatened by downward mobility in Hong Kong’s laissez-faire economy) and the grassroots to a combined 68.1% compared to a combined 6% from the upper-middle class or upper class. This underlines that economic factors contributed to mobilization (see next section).

⁵⁶ However, Samson Yuen (2019b) shows based on survey data by the School of Journalism and Communication of Chinese University of Hong Kong that the actual composition was more complex than the “grassroots” image of the occupation suggests. His analysis indicates that in terms of demographics participants in Mongkok did not differ significantly from those in Admiralty, other than being predominantly male. Whilst people came from all walks of life, Yuen suggests that participants tended to not consent to central leadership and embraced more confrontational actions.

advocated Hong Kong's cultural autonomy or even demanded political independence from China, as well as favouring more confrontational tactics.⁵⁷ The occupation zone in Mongkok was widely seen as less safe than the other encampments, as participants were frequently involved in confrontations with the police, counter-protesters, and triads suspected to be hired by pro-government actors (e.g. Robin C., interview, 13.6.2018; Luke E., interview, 9.8.2018).⁵⁸ One vivid example occurred on the afternoon of October 3, when hundreds of masked men laid siege to the encampment shouting anti-movement slogans, trying to take apart protest infrastructure, and assaulting protesters. The police was accused of colluding with the suspected triads, as it was present throughout the confrontations (Yuen 2019b, p. 62; also Varese and Wong 2018). Due to the constant threat from the outside, the Mongkok encampment developed a "militant ethos" and a "tense atmosphere" that contrasted with the other occupation zones (Yuen 2019b, p. 63).

As the stalemate on the streets of Hong Kong dragged on for weeks, the question of how to enact civil disobedience became increasingly contested. Kin-man Chan reflects that "[s]tudents and other young protesters," who considered OCLP's "original plan as too passive and weak," favoured "civil disobedience with a more active, if not offensive, character, building barricades and blocking police deployment" (Chan 2015a, p. 4). Moreover, Chan points out that there were also increasingly vocal "radical protesters" who considered the Umbrella Movement a "resistance movement that should not be restricted by the idea of civil disobedience or its principle of non-violence" (ibid.). Chan's assessment is confirmed by student leader Alex Chow Yong-kang (周永康), who states that "[m]any protesters saw the occupy commons as too toothless and soft to extract any concessions from

⁵⁷ Localism is discussed in more detail in chapter 3.

⁵⁸ On the "thugs-for-hire" phenomenon, see Varese and Wong 2018.

the government” and “longed for militant action” (2019, p. 41). One incident that reflected the growing frustration and militarism was the storming of the Legislative Council on 19 November. Self-mobilized participants responded to false online claims that the passing of legislation to curb freedom of speech on the internet was imminent by taking disruptive action. Masked protesters, many believed to be young people, shattered the glass doors to the building before they were forcibly driven away by law enforcement who made several arrests (Cai 2019, pp. 215–216; also Lee et al. 2014b). While the student leaders were hesitant to distance themselves from this action, it was opposed by moderate occupiers and widely seen as tarnishing the legitimacy of the Umbrella Movement (Cai 2019, pp. 215–216).

On 30 November, the student leaders eventually launched an escalation aimed at surrounding the government headquarters to force concessions. To prepare the so-called “upgrade action” the Hong Kong Federation of Students (香港專上學生聯會 – HKFS) – the leading student organization – put out a Facebook post suggesting that “Peaceful resistance is a notion of action, not just a ‘sit-in’” (cited in Cai 2019, p. 222). In the evening protesters, many of them shouting the slogan “disobedience, not accepting one’s fate” (抗命不認命), tried to paralyze the building (ibid., p. 223). However, it quickly became apparent that the operation lacked solid preparation and coordination. Not only did the student leadership misjudge its mobilizing capabilities and the public response, but also the police reaction (ibid.). Although they “decided that their actions should be conducted peacefully so as to deter the police from using excessive force,” the police suppressed the escalation utilizing baton strikes and pepper spray, in the process sending 40 participants into detention and 60 to the hospital (ibid.). The escalation was widely perceived as a “complete failure” for which the student groups publicly apologized (Lucas F., interview, 15.6.2018; also Samuel F., 23.11.2017; Brandon F., 7.8.2018).

The Sunflower Movement similarly entailed a strong emphasis on nonviolence. While OCLP was still engaged in deliberations, a small group of activists in Taipei demonstrated the effectiveness of a more robust, confrontational form of civil disobedience based on the accumulated experience from previous protests. Wu describes the approach as “muscular but nonviolent” (Wu 2019, p. 227). The documentary “Sunflower Occupation” features footage from the first night of the occupation that appears to fit this description (Taipei Documentary Filmmakers' Union 2014). It shows how dozens of activists tried to push their way through an outnumbered group of police personal guarding an entrance. Getting inside the building required inflicting mild damage to its structure. The occupiers smashed a door and a window. However, it has been pointed out that “other property damage was kept to a minimum, with student leaders continually reminding the crowds not to vandalize” (Rowen 2015, p. 7).

Law enforcement responded with relative restraint, especially if compared to the heavy-handed policing months later in Hong Kong. While the occupiers had originally planned to stage a temporary sit-in, expecting to quickly be removed by the police, they soon became determined to maintain a more long-term occupation following their unexpected success in seizing the assembly hall (Ho 2019, pp. 107–108). They withstood several waves of police personal trying to push their way into the hall late at night. Occupiers blocked the way with their bodies and created ad-hoc barriers to the entrance doors by tying together chairs of legislators (Yen et al. 2015, p. 32, pp. 35-36). While the occupiers managed to defend control over the chamber and parts of the second floor, law enforcement retained control over large parts of the building. The occupation zone was thus cut into two parts with the police sandwiched in between the occupied “inside” of the legislature and the

streets “outside” where supporters set up encampments (Po-chun C., interview, 21.7.2018).⁵⁹

While the initial storming of the legislature was spearheaded by student activists, many of them veterans from preceding protests affiliated with the BIY, the action also involved non-students from the activist and NGO networks (e.g. Yu-wen L., interview, 23.5.2018; Pai-han W., interview, 21.8.2018). Similar to the occupations in Hong Kong, the outside encampment was not entirely composed of students either but involved people from across the social spectrum. According to an on-site survey by Chen and Huang (2015), however, students made up 56% of a sample of 989 participants – indicating substantially stronger student involvement compared to the occupations in Hong Kong. Accordingly, participants were mostly young people: 74.1% were under 29 years of age. But even though students were strongly involved, the Sunflower Movement was not conceived as a *pure* “student movement” (學運) akin to the Wild Lily or Wild Strawberry Movements that entailed picket lines to keep non-students out (Ho 2014). People from all walks of life were involved in the occupation.⁶⁰ Moreover, the NGOs that helped maintain the outside encampment represented a broad range of communities and issues (see Yu-wen L., interview, 23.5.2018).

The continuation of the occupation hinged on the relative tolerance of the authorities that was the result of favourable circumstances. Initially unbeknownst to the occupiers, a nascent elite split within the ruling party between president Ma Ying-jeou and Wang Jin-pyng (王金平), the speaker of the Legislative Yuan, played to their advantage. Law enforcement operations

⁵⁹ The spatial structure will be discussed in more detail in chapter 3

⁶⁰ This is well reflected in my diverse interview sample, see Appendix A and B. See also the interviews Brian Hioe conducted as part of the Daybreak online archive with a wide variety of Sunflower Movement participants, <https://daybreak.newbloommag.net/category/interviews/>, accessed 1.3.2021.

inside the legislature required Wang's authorization (Ho 2015, pp. 83–84). Soon after the emergence of the protest Wang appeared willing to tolerate the occupation, a move perceived by many as a bid to strengthen his hand against president Ma, whose authority was tarnished by the proceedings (ibid.). Nonetheless, occupiers continued to be concerned about the possibility of a violent clearing of the chamber, prepared for it, and tried to maintain a high turn-out outside the legislature to protect the chamber (see Yu-shan M., interview, 18.5.2018; Yu-wen L., interview, 23.5.2018).

The nonviolent character of the protests was celebrated by many international observers, who indicated that an occupation of parliament was unlikely to last long and remain peaceful in other countries (Rowen 2015, p. 8; Wright 2014). Although critics described the protesters as “rioters” (暴民) – a term youth activists sometimes jokingly appropriated (Hioe 2017d) –, they actually went to great lengths to maintain a nonviolent, orderly, and disciplined occupation. Occupiers collected and recycled waste, which was not just a matter of hygienic necessity, but also served the purpose of “presenting a favorable image” and “gaining social acceptance for their law-breaking behavior” (Ho 2019, p. 159). Jones and Su rightly suggest that “[t]he Sunflowers were keen to win over general public support by exercising self-restraint and moderation and by establishing themselves as vocal, but reasonable and pragmatic, dissidents” (2017, p. 23).

The Taiwanese occupation did not see the same degrees of militancy and internal division arise as Hong Kong's Umbrella Movement. However, the movement also experienced factional tensions. Some occupiers felt it was not sufficient to merely maintain a peaceful and festive occupation. They believed it necessary to raise the pressure on the authorities with more confrontational actions to obtain results (Hua-yi C., interview, 24.8.2018). Veteran student activists proposed various ways of escalating the movement,

including forcibly removing the police to take control of the whole Legislative Yuan, a plan that was strongly opposed by moderates within the leadership structures who feared that chaotic and violent scenes could result (Pai-han W., interview, 21.8.2018). On March 23, student activists eager to escalate eventually organized a charge on the executive branch of government. The plan had been to symbolically occupy the space in front of the building. But some participants broke into it, seemingly due to insufficient coordination and preparation.⁶¹ Similar to the attempt to surround the Government Headquarter in Hong Kong, the siege on the executive branch in Taiwan resulted in a tragic confrontation with state power. Riot police responded by forcefully clearing the protest, beating participants, and employing water cannons. During the confrontations throughout the night over 500 protesters were injured and 61 taken into custody (Ho 2019, p. 112). The violent policing inadvertently reinvigorated the movement, as images of the brutal treatment of unarmed protesters aroused public outrage and sympathy for the young protesters (ibid., p. 113).

In summary, nonviolence played a key role in both movements. These protests were not violent uprisings, but civil disobedience movements of unarmed citizens who appealed to the general public. Nonetheless, there were different understandings of nonviolence present in these movements. Whereas OCLP was conceived of as a largely symbolic and controlled affair, both the Umbrella and Sunflower Movement involved largely restrained yet physical confrontations with the authorities. While the movement mainstream sought to maintain nonviolence, both protests also involved factions that favoured some degree of escalation. In each case their efforts culminated in failed charges on the executive branches of government. All this reflects that the exact meaning and role of nonviolence in social movements is contested. Civil disobedience is not merely a symbolic action,

⁶¹ Leadership and factionalism will be discussed in chapter 2.

as imagined by liberal theorists, but also entails “real confrontation” (Celikates 2016, p. 42).

Conscientiousness

The third element of the liberal civil disobedience script identified by Celikates is that civil disobedience is a conscientious act (Celikates 2016, p. 38). It does not cover acts born out of narrow self-interest, but only those motivated by reasons of conscience. This arguably denotes a purity of purpose.

Prior to the unfolding of the Umbrella Movement, OCLP’s preparatory discourse emphasized that civil disobedience was a conscientious overstepping of laws meant to point to injustices in the existing system. The campaign was inspired by pioneers of civil disobedience such as Mahatma Gandhi and Martin Luther King Jr. The latter’s thinking in particular influenced the OCLP script that stressed the need for participants to surrender to the authorities after the occupation “to generate more sympathy” (Daniel K., interview, 3.7.2015). One major point of reference for OCLP was King’s letter from the Birmingham Jail (1963), in which he describes the basic purpose of such acts:

Nonviolent direct action seeks to create such a crisis and foster such a tension that a community which has constantly refused to negotiate is forced to confront the issue. It seeks so to dramatize the issue that it can no longer be ignored. (1963)

Further, King discussed the rationale of a nonviolent transgression of laws, making a distinction between “just” and “unjust laws.” Drawing inspiration from King, OCLP stressed that an election system that does not meet the standards for universal suffrage outlined in the International Covenant on

Civil and Political Rights was unjust. Conscientiously breaking some existing laws (e.g. the public order ordinance) would be justified in order to shed light on the existing injustice. It was hoped that a subsequent civic awakening would result in democratic electoral reform in accordance with international standards (OCLP 2014a, 2014b) .

The actual occupations in both Hong Kong and Taiwan were also framed as conscientious efforts by citizens concerned with democracy, even though opponents stressed that they were partisan projects driven by political considerations. While opposition parties were involved in both campaigns, they did not play the leading role in either movement. Instead, the occupations were spearheaded by a young generation of student activists, many of who not fully trusted the traditional opposition parties. In Taiwan, the DPP maintained a relatively low profile throughout the occupation. Although the opposition party supported the protest, for instance its lawmakers used their privileges to help occupiers more easily pass through the police cordon, it was not directly involved in the decision-making structure (Ho 2019, pp. 142–143; Rowen 2015, pp. 7–8). In Hong Kong, radical occupiers openly challenged the dominance of traditional pan-democratic parties in the movement. While pan-democratic parties were involved in a coordinating platform, a formal decision-making body was never built and the two leading student organizations remained the perceived leaders throughout the movement (see Chow 2019; Sing 2019a).⁶²

Both movements were driven by broadly four closely related concerns. First, the occupations had in common that they involved specific legal-constitutional demands (Veg 2015). The main objective of the Umbrella Movement was democratic reform: Participants demanded the withdrawal of Beijing's restrictive stipulations from August 31 2014 and the introduction of

⁶² The leadership structures will be discussed in detail in chapter 3.

genuine universal suffrage. There were also widespread calls for the resignation of Chief Executive Leung Chun-ying (梁振英). The Sunflower Movement called for the retraction of the CSSTA from parliament, for the establishment of an oversight bill for the monitoring of cross-strait treaties, for the oversight bill to come into effect prior to a re-review of the CSSTA, and for the arrangement of citizens' constitutional conferences (Ho 2015, pp. 69–70). Second, both movements were motivated by concerns about political autonomy linked to the "China factor" (Ho 2019; Jones 2017a; Wu 2019). While many Taiwanese were opposed to the CSSTA due to fears about the potential impact of economic integration with China on Taiwan's autonomy and democracy, many protesters in Hong Kong viewed democratic reform as a way of preserving their city's relative autonomy from the PRC under the OCTS framework, which was perceived to be gradually eroding. Third, both occupations served as spaces for the negotiation and assertion of cultural identities. Surveys show that in both contexts people increasingly identify as "Hong Kongers" or "Taiwanese" respectively rather than as "Chinese," to the dismay of a PRC government seeking to promote identification with the "motherland" along presumed ethnic lines (see Ho 2019, pp. 60–62). Especially in the aftermath of the occupations there was an upsurge of localism in Hong Kong and pro-independence sentiments in Taiwan.⁶³ Finally, both occupations had an economic dimension (Hui and Lau 2015; Lee 2019a; Wang 2017a). While demands for economic justice or redistribution did not feature prominently in the mainstream discourse of either movement, both protests were shaped by a young generation of people who – like those involved in recent occupation protests in other parts of the world – faced more dire economic prospects than their parents' generation (Ho 2019, pp. 74–79). There was an anti-free trade current within

⁶³ For a discussion of identity and civic nationalism, see Kaeding 2015, 2017; Veg 2017; Wu 2016; Wu 2019.

the Sunflower Movement, an issue area, however, that did not receive as much support as questions of democratic procedure and the China-factor (see Pai-han W., interview, 21.8.2018; see also Ho 2019, p. 7).

The issues that each of the two movements illuminated concerned the polity as a whole – or “the people” – rather than a narrow subset of the population.⁶⁴ Accordingly the large-scale mobilizations not just involved students, as mentioned above, but citizens from across the social spectrum. To underline its broad basis, the Sunflower Movement was sometimes framed as a “citizen movement” (公民運動).⁶⁵ Both occupations can be read as assertions of popular sovereignty (see Huang 2017). Citizens turned out to defend political autonomy at a time of perceived threat (see Ho 2015; also Jones 2017a). This was reflected in some of the widely used movement slogans. In the case of Taiwan, a popular slogan was “Our nation, let’s save it ourselves” (“自己國家自己救”), which was later adapted by protesters in Hong Kong (“Our Hong Kong, let’s save it ourselves” – “自己香港自己救”; Veg 2016, p. 679). In Taiwan the slogan arguably most characteristic of the movement was “defend democracy, retract the trade deal” (捍衛民主、退回服貿). Its equivalent in Hong Kong was “I want genuine universal suffrage” (“我要真普選”) – a slogan that graced a large banner temporarily put up on Lion’s Rock, the city’s most iconic peak. These slogans indicate that the occupations were conceived as movements of citizens who had turned out to either defend representative democracy or achieve it. They were not concerned with narrow partisan issues per se – even though both the trade

⁶⁴ It is important to note that whilst the movements claimed to represent the public interest, the occupations were controversial and public opinion split, in Hong Kong significantly more so than in Taiwan, see, for instance, Hsiao and Wan 2018.

⁶⁵ The label was used by some of the movement leaders, see Yen et al. 2015, 140; 142. Moreover, the archive of occupation artefacts collected and digitalized by scholars at Academia Sinica also uses the term “318 Citizen Movement” (318 公民運動, see <http://public.318.io/about>, accessed 26.3.2021). A detailed analysis of material compiled in the archive, however, revealed that “student movement” was by far the dominant label in the occupation’s own internal discourse, see Ho et al. 2020, p. 50.

deal and political reform had become polarized subjects of contestation between different political parties in the two respective contexts – but with more principal matters of political order.

While the two movements can be seen as citizen movements, they were often portrayed as student movements due to the prominent involvement of students and student organizations. As discussed in the introduction to this thesis, Gerbaudo (2017) argues that the “movements of the squares” combined anarchist and libertarian organizational styles – partly influenced by the experience of the global justice movement – with the ideology of “citizenism.” Both the Sunflower and Umbrella Movement, however, merged a “citizenist” focus on popular sovereignty with elements of traditional student protest. Participants could build upon a long lineage of student activism in the Chinese-speaking world that is rooted in China’s imperial past when Confucian scholars enjoyed a high status and were expected to “remonstrate against the emperors’ wrongdoings” (Ho 2019, pp. 14–15). In the 20th century university students re-interpreted this role as the pure conscience of the nation in protests such as the May 4 Movement of 1919 against the perceived national humiliation under the treaty of Versailles (ibid.). Hong Kong’s Umbrella Movement brought back memories of student protests in the PRC. In the Admiralty occupation zone, for instance, a statue dubbed “Umbrella Man” was put up that quickly turned into an iconic movement symbol that was reminiscent of the “Goddess of Democracy” set up by students on Tiananmen Square in 1989 (Bradsher 2014). In Taiwan, the widely adopted *Sunflower* label evoked a sense of continuity with past student movements that were named after plants, more specifically the *Wild Lily* Movement of 1990 and the *Wild Strawberry* Movement of 2008 (Ke-chung L., interview, 20.4.2018). Although neither the Sunflower nor the Umbrella Movement featured picket lines to separate allegedly pure students from non-students, both movements could use cultural scripts to their advantage

by “foregrounding the student role” and thus arousing public sympathy (as well as a certain degree of state toleration) in a way that would be hard to imagine for other social groups (Ho 2019, p. 15; see also Wright 2014, p. 138).

In sum, both movements were conceived of as conscientious performances rather than as motivated by partisan concerns or private interests. The prominent student involvement entailed claims to purity based on historical lineages of student protest. However, both the Sunflower and Umbrella Movement were movements of citizens from all walks of life who were concerned with democracy and popular sovereignty.

Fidelity to the law

The fourth aspect of the liberal conception is that civil disobedience only covers acts that remain within the parameters of fidelity to the law. Disruptive actions that question the rule of law and the existing order fall outside the scope of civil disobedience (Celikates 2016, p. 38).

OCLP went to great lengths to make clear that the prepared civil disobedience action was not conceived as a challenge to Hong Kong’s existing system and Chinese sovereignty. While the existing legal framework for political reform staked the odds against Hong Kong’s democrats, Tai’s public pronouncements projected optimism:

Many people consider that Occupy Central is too radical a move to strive for true democracy, that there is no chance Beijing would accept a demand presented in this manner. However, if civil disobedience were not planned, the chances of achieving true democracy would be even slimmer. Our actions are rational and peaceful. There is no attempt to challenge the sovereignty of the central government. We only want a fair and just election system for Hong Kong. Trust between Hong Kong people, the Hong Kong government and the central government can be rebuilt. (Tai 2013a)

Tai held on to the hope, however slim, that a limited and peaceful transgression of some laws by activists willing to accept responsibility for their actions could contribute to a civic awakening and put Hong Kong back on the democratic course prescribed in the Basic Law and Joint Declaration. But like other protest movements before it, OCLP faced a counter-discourse alleging the campaign damaged the rule of law in the city (Ku 2019b). Moreover, there were accusations from across the HKSAR-border that the organizers were colluding with foreign forces. OCLP, however, used its contacts on the Mainland to inform the central government that they were decidedly “not organizing a colour revolution,” but merely staging a “democratic movement” and that they “should not use violence” to suppress the movement (Daniel K., interview, 3.7.2015). A “Frequently Asked Questions” text published on the OCLP website explicitly clarified that the movement was not plotting a revolution, but rather aimed at improving the system:

The purpose of civil disobedience is not to overthrow the entire legal system but rather aim at changing it and making it just. So, generally speaking, participants of civil disobedience respect the existing legal system, as seen by their willingness to be held accountable for violating the law. (OCLP 2014b)

All this reflects that in the minds of its founders OCLP was clearly conceived within the boundaries of the liberal rule of law tradition. They went to great lengths to highlight their respect for the law and desire to improve rather than challenge it.

Although the occupation movements that eventually unfolded in Taiwan and Hong Kong entailed a more confrontational enactment of civil disobedience than OCLP had imagined, these occupations did not seek the overthrow of the existing order either. As pointed out in the previous section, both movements articulated very concrete legal-constitutional demands.

Participants were concerned with representative democracy. Rather than fundamentally challenging Chinese sovereignty and the OCTS framework, democrats in Hong Kong sought democratic reform on the basis of the Basic Law and Joint Declaration. Similarly not aiming at revolutionary change, activists in Taiwan sought to protect liberal representative democracy and deepen it. These objectives reflect that the movements were conceived of as operations within the boundaries of fidelity to the law.

But although the toppling of the entire existing legal and political system was not on the agenda of the movement leadership, there were minorities within both occupations calling for radical change. In Taiwan, for instance, the movement's left-wing sharply criticised the alleged reproduction of the existing political system in the occupation's internal organization and called for direct democracy (Jianmin Publication Group 2016). In Hong Kong, there were radical localists who considered the occupation the "Umbrella Revolution" (雨傘革命) rather than a movement. They criticised the moderate leadership of constraining the masses and advocated for a more confrontational approach (Passion Times 2016). Especially in the aftermath of the occupation, the localist movement gained traction and the issues of self-determination or even independence became central points of contention within Hong Kong's opposition camp (Kaeding 2017; Veg 2017).⁶⁶

The conclusion of both movements reflected that they did not fundamentally challenge the existing order. Although the enactment of civil disobedience in both contexts shared many similarities, their endings and outcomes were strikingly different. Well aware that the occupation could not be carried on indefinitely, the Sunflower leadership was able to implement a strategic retreat on April 10 following a promise by speaker Wang Jin-pyng to suspend the review of the trade pact until after a mechanism for legislative

⁶⁶ Factionalism within the two movement will be further discussed in chapter 2 and 3.

oversight had been established. Although the movement did not achieve all of its demands, the trade deal was effectively shelved and participants could withdraw with a sense of success following public celebrations (Shu-fen K., interview, 24.7.2018). The occupations in Hong Kong, by contrast, did not bring about any concessions and the last remaining encampment was violently cleared by law enforcement after 79 days. Instead of drawing upon the Police Force Ordinance to forcefully end the occupations, which had previously backfired when the police had first used violence at the onset of the protests, the government relied on civil proceedings to arrange the evictions. Private bus companies, widely believed to have been encouraged to apply by the state, were granted injunctions (Yang 2019, pp. 174–175).

The Mongkok encampment was cleared first starting on November 25. Many of the occupiers refused to leave voluntarily. Riot police required two days to violently clear the occupation resulting in many injuries and 159 arrests (Kong 2017, pp. 368–376; Mok and Sung 2014). Days later, on December 3, the Occupy Trio along with 65 supporters symbolically turned themselves in at a police station, but were not held in custody (Cheung and Sung 2014). On December 11, the eviction of the Admiralty encampment was staged. Contrary to the occupiers in Mongkok, the participants in Admiralty did not resist. A large group of protest leaders and supporters staged a sit-in and waited for a one-by-one removal by the police as the final act of civil disobedience. 247 protesters were arrested (Lee et al. 2014a; Yang 2019, p. 477). Four days later, on December 15, occupy Causeway Bay was cleared. Only 17 “peaceful protesters” refused to withdraw voluntarily and were arrested (Chan et al. 2014; see also BBC News 2014b).

While both civil disobedience movements were conceived as broadly within the boundaries of fidelity to the law, whether they counted as a defensible form of civil disobedience was contested. Instead of going into the debate

over the lawfulness or normative justifications of these protests (Chen 2016; Jones and Su 2017), I will briefly discuss the legal afterlife of the occupations. There were significant differences in how the protests were evaluated in the two legal systems. Whereas the Umbrella Movement resulted in a greater number of cases and convictions, the legal aftermath in Taiwan played out more favourably for the protesters as evidenced by two key cases. On April 1 2017, the Taipei District Court ruled that 22 people involved in the Legislative Yuan occupation, amongst them several student leaders such as Lin Fei-fan and Chen Wei-ting, were not guilty on charges such as incitement and police obstruction (Pan 2017). Remarkably, the three judges even evaluated the Taiwanese and international literature on civil disobedience. They identified seven requirements for civil disobedience, echoing the ones discussed in this chapter, which the Chief Judge outlined as follows:

Protest activities must be aimed at illegal or unjust actions of major proportion in government or public affairs; activities must be inspired by concern for the public's interest or have public affairs objectives; the protest activity must recognizably have direct bearing on the subject of the protest; the action should be performed in the public sphere and be non-violent in nature; actions should aid in achieving the stated objective; they should conform to the necessity principle, where there is no other legal and effective means toward the objective; and to the proportionality principle, where the resulting damage should be less than that resulting from the protest and its stated objectives. (ibid.)

The judges found that the defendants acted "in accordance with the seven major requirements for civil disobedience" (ibid.). The non-guilty verdict was later upheld on March 13, 2018 by the High Court which found that the occupation was covered by freedom of speech, that the review of the treaty in the legislature had been conducted improperly, and that the defendants did not "incite the crowd to commit acts of violence against the government."

Further, the ruling stressed that the fact that citizens could express opposition in political matters “demonstrates the freedom of expression that Taiwan’s society has fought to earn through very difficult circumstances” (Pan 2018). These rulings reflect that the values of liberal democracy are deeply engrained in Taiwan and that there was a movement towards recognizing liberal civil disobedience as a legitimate form of political expression.

By contrast, the storming of the Executive Yuan received more mixed reviews in the courts. While the new administration dropped charges against 126 students in May 2016, this left 21 cases pursued autonomously by prosecutors unaffected (Hsu and Gerber 2016). A trial by the Taipei District Court resulted in 10 guilty verdicts for incitement and 11 acquittals announced in April 2017 (Chen 2017c). However, in April 2020 the High Court overturned seven of the acquittals, handing down prison sentences of four months at most for incitement and upholding all previous convictions that had been appealed against (Pan 2020). Only on January 18, 2021 did the Supreme Court revoke the sentence and send the case back to the High Court for a retrial. The decision was founded on the argument that the accused engaged in civil disobedience as covered by the freedom of expression. The court ruled that whilst a “right of resistance” for the protection and restoration of democracy was not explicitly spelled out in the constitution, it should be acknowledged on the basis of its principles (Taipei Times 2021). Around seven years after the occupation, it remains to be seen how the retrial plays out.

Hong Kong’s civil disobedience movement had more severe legal repercussions than the Sunflower Movement. According to a statement in March 2016 by then Secretary for Security Lai Tung-kwok (2016) a total of 955 protesters were detained during the occupations and 48 afterwards. Lai

suggested that 216 people had been, were, or would be subjugated to judicial proceedings with 74 convictions as of January 2016.⁶⁷ The earliest high profile case involved three of the student leaders, Joshua Wong, Alex Chow, and Nathan Law (羅冠聰), who faced charges of unlawful assembly and incitement in connection with the storming of Civic Square on September 26, 2014. In August 2016, Wong and Law were sentenced to community service. Chow received a suspended three-week jail sentence (Siu 2016). However, a year later all three were sentenced to prison terms of between six to eight months following a successful appeal by the government, a conviction that meant a five-year bar from pursuing a seat in the legislature (Siu 2017). The Court of Final Appeal overturned their sentences in February 2018, but confirmed harsher sentencing guidelines for unlawful assembly; a pyrrhic victory for the student leaders who feared this meant pro-democracy activism would be further criminalized in the future (Siu 2018).

The other major trial involved nine leaders of the Umbrella Movement, including the Occupy Trio, two student leaders, as well as four pan-democratic politicians. The charges that they were confronted with were harsher than expected based on OCLP's predictions. They included conspiracy to cause public nuisance, inciting others to commit public nuisance, and inciting people to incite others to cause public nuisance. The OCLP leadership had "reasonable suspicion" that the case represented "political prosecution" due to the timing – they were asked to report to the police a day after the election of the new Chief Executive Carrie Lam (林鄭月娥) – and the careful selection of the people prosecuted together who happened to be representatives of different leading parties (Daniel K., interview, 7.11.2017). Further, the prosecution unexpectedly used an old

⁶⁷ Comprehensively tracking these cases is difficult, see also Kong 2017, pp. 588–596. According to a report by Amnesty International (2018) the government responded to their inquiry that "as of 31 August 2017, 225 people who were arrested during or after the Umbrella Movement either had had or were undergoing judicial proceedings."

common law offence that could result in a lengthy prison sentence, leading activists to suspect that the state was seeking to “cause a more serious punishment [...] to deter people from [getting] involved in this kind of civil disobedience action” in the future (ibid.). All nine defendants eventually received guilty sentences in April 2019. While the judge acknowledged the concept of civil disobedience, he pointed out that it was “not a defence to a criminal charge” (Lau 2019). Tai and Chan received the most severe sentences with 16 months imprisonment, whilst others received shorter prison terms, suspended sentences, or community service in the case of one of the student leaders (Lau and Sum 2019).

In sum, both protests were conceived of as civil disobedience within the boundaries of fidelity to the law. They did not aim at the revolutionary overthrow of the existing legal and political systems, but at protecting or achieving representative democracy. However, there were clear differences between the two movements in terms of their legal aftermath. Whereas courts in Taiwan broadly confirmed that the peaceful occupation of the legislature was a legitimate form of political expression, participants in the Umbrella Movement (especially hand-picked “leaders”) faced harsher prosecution and punishment.

Conclusion

This chapter showed that participants in the Sunflower and Umbrella Movement enacted democracy in remarkably similar ways by performing civil disobedience. After briefly discussing the regional histories of protest that culminated in these popular occupations, I set out to assess to what extent the movements stuck to the liberal script of civil disobedience. The discussion revealed that the occupation protest imagined by OCLP was meant to be staged in strict accordance with the liberal standards of publicity,

nonviolence, conscientiousness, and fidelity to the law. This reflects that the campaign was first conceived by a moderate law professor who was well versed in the discourse of democratic theory, but lacked experience in organizing mass protest. The actual occupation in Hong Kong, however, turned out very differently: Just as the Sunflower Movement before it, the Umbrella Movement did not adhere as closely to the liberal script as Benny Tai had imagined.

First, despite different levels of preparation, both occupations emerged in a spontaneous and organic fashion rather than being public in the strict sense of being pre-announced. Second, although both movements emphasized and largely maintained nonviolence, they did involve some degree of confrontation with the authorities during their emergence that may have been beyond what liberal theorists would tolerate. Both movements were affected by factionalism that involved questions over the meaning and necessity of nonviolence. In Hong Kong, for instance, many participants in the Mongkok occupation favoured a more militant approach. Further, each of the movements experienced escalations with charges on the executive branch of government that resulted in a violent crackdown by the authorities. Third, the two occupation protests were not created to pursue private interests, but were conceived as conscientious performances by citizens. Drawing on the particular cultural contexts, prominent student involvement was a key way in which conscientiousness and purity were enacted. Finally, both movements were understood as operating within the boundaries of the law. They did not seek to overthrow the existing system, but rather pursued legalistic reforms, even though there was some debate about whether targeting the executive branch of government for an escalation overstepped these boundaries. The comparison underscored that the meaning and scope of civil disobedience is a matter that is retrospectively contested in the court system. Courts in Taiwan were comparatively lenient and even affirmed civil

disobedience as a legitimate form of expression in democratic societies. Protesters in Hong Kong, by contrast, faced harsher prosecution and stricter sentences to deter similar movements, even though they engaged in broadly similar acts of civil disobedience.

All in all, the analysis echoes Celikates' (2016) critique of a rigid definition of civil disobedience. Particularly the case of OCLP's transformation into the Umbrella Movement underlines that while a strict understanding of the liberal standards may make sense in the context of political theory, real world applications of civil disobedience are a messier affair. The discussion confirms that the enactment of civil disobedience as a performance of democracy entails ambiguities, contingencies, and confrontations that are elided by an overly restrictive understanding of civil disobedience.

2 Deliberative Leadership Structures

Today's social movements consistently and decisively reject traditional, centralized forms of political organization. Charismatic or bureaucratic leaders, hierarchical party structures, vanguard organizations, and even electoral and representative structures are constantly criticised and undermined. The immune system of the movements have become so developed that every emergence of the leadership virus is immediately attacked by antibodies. (Hardt and Negri 2017, p. 6)

This chapter compares the contested development of strategic leadership and deliberative decision-making structures in the Sunflower and Umbrella Movement. Hardt and Negri would, as the statement cited above indicates, expect that the occupiers shunned hierarchies as well as traditional forms of representation and instead spearheaded new forms of democratic decision-making. Their celebration of “leaderless” movements echoes horizontalist readings of recent occupation protests that emphasize that the prefigurative, participatory, or consensus-oriented decision-making and living together on the squares foreshadowed a more genuine democracy beyond conventional representation (e.g. Graeber 2013; Maeckelbergh 2012; Sitrin and Azzellini 2014). Contrary to these recent experiences, however, both the Sunflower and Umbrella Movement largely relied on vertical forms of leadership for collective decisions on strategic direction. Ming-sho Ho (2019), who explicitly rejects Hardt and Negri’s celebration of the “multitude’s” leader-free organization as “naive populism” (p. 152), goes as far as to suggest that both cases “were emphatically not so-called leaderless movements, and the grassroots participants readily recognized some youthful faces as their figurehead leaders” (p. 7). But while the existence of leadership figures and even formalized representative structures certainly set the two cases apart

from the perceived trend towards horizontalism, I find it important to highlight and further explore the significant degree of unease with vertical hierarchies present in both movements that even resulted in serious internal conflicts.

Just as movements elsewhere, both the Sunflower and Umbrella Movement were affected by the interplay of strategic and prefigurative politics (Breines 1980; Smucker 2014). While there were forces trying to push the movements into a strategic direction – particularly pre-existing leadership groups – there was also a strong pull towards prefiguration as a sustained and defiant “acting out [of] democracy” (Esherick and Wasserstrom 1994). Relative state tolerance allowed the encampments to prevail for a surprisingly long time. Following early attempts at clearing the protests that had backfired, the authorities in both cases apparently adopted a wait-and-see approach of delaying a clearance until a later point when the movements would have exhausted both the energy of participants and public support. Decentralized and horizontal participation patterns meant that the seemingly prefigurative occupations could be prolonged by committed occupiers willing to stay on unless all objectives were met.⁶⁸ Faced with the risky prospect that a prefigurative free-for-all could result in a violent crackdown whilst full victory was out of reach, strategic politics was about achieving concessions and a voluntary withdrawal. This required coherent leadership that could represent the movement and facilitate decisions with a sufficient degree of perceived legitimacy.

This chapter focuses on the contested development of the forms of vertical leadership a strategic approach implied. My analysis largely confirms Ho’s assessment that both movements constructed contingent leadership

⁶⁸ Cai (2017) convincingly explains the lengthy occupation in Hong Kong as the result of decentralized participation involving subsets of highly committed occupiers paired with weak leadership (unable to achieve a “graceful exit”) and relative state toleration.

structures that with varying degrees of effectiveness affected their course and outcomes (2019, pp. 140–149). Compared to Ho, whose excellent comparative study I draw upon, I aim to more closely explore inner-movement contestations, deliberations, and decision-making. I will show that strategic politics is closely entangled with the formation of deliberative structures for decision-making on movement direction. Whereas the Sunflower Movement eventually developed relatively elaborate and formalized deliberative bodies that enabled a strategic withdrawal, the relatively more decentralized Umbrella Movement took a prefigurative turn and was unable to achieve a similar feat.

Prior to delving into the analysis, a quick discussion of “leadership” is required. I aim to push Ho’s suggestion that “movement leadership had to be constructed post-hoc during the standoffs” (p. 140) further by exploring from a broadly post-structuralist and ethnographic vantage point how the category “leadership” was constructed through deliberation and performance.⁶⁹ To understand the meaning of democracy in these movements, it is necessary to unpack and question terms that are often used in the internal discourse of these movement – as well as in the discourse about them – such as “leaders,” “rank-and-file,” and “ordinary citizens.” The terms imply different degrees of participation in strategic decision-making ranging from leaders to followers to mere spectators. However, my analysis will underline that these are not natural categories, but rather that they are entangled in complex social relations and cultural contexts. They are produced through contestations that often focus on questions of access to

⁶⁹ I draw on Michael DeCesare’s interpretivist understanding of leadership that posits that “we should treat as leader any individual who is perceived as one – be it by the public, the media, politicians, or other movement participants” (2013, p. 239). This definition has the distinct advantage that it recognizes that movement leaders are not necessarily affiliated with formal organizations and is sufficiently broad to encompass different forms of leadership. But whereas DeCesare focuses more on identifying individual leaders, I draw inspiration from Ho’s (2019) work in focusing more on leadership structures, especially their construction, contestation, and re-construction.

spaces of deliberative decision-making as well as public articulation. Whilst there was followership of people who accepted some form of representation in addition to broader audiences that expected it (e.g. the media or state representatives), there were also participants who either ignored or challenged leadership structures.⁷⁰ Whereas the next chapter will focus on the spatial and symbolic dimensions of these contestations, this chapter analyses the difficult construction of deliberative structures for strategic decision-making. Ho rightly points out that the initially more loose movement network in Taiwan allowed for the more efficient construction of relatively centralized leadership. In Hong Kong, by contrast, the relatively more rigid organizational frameworks made this process more difficult (Ho 2019, p. 143). My analysis shows that there was also variance in terms of porousness between the more flexible “leadership core” in Taiwan and the so-called “main stage” leadership in Hong Kong (named after the central stage in Admiralty).

Since the two movements followed a remarkably similar trajectory, the comparison will be structured around three broad movement stages: First, the early stage from the time of their emergence until the end of activist-set ultimatums. Second, the lengthy middle stage that culminated in climactic mass performances (a large-scale rally in Taiwan and the storming of the Government headquarter in Hong Kong). Lastly, the final stage leading up to the end of the occupations.⁷¹

⁷⁰ Of course, the leadership structures are reinforced by the legal system that places the responsibility for these movements on individuals, as discussed in the previous chapter, meaning that some participants de-facto shoulder greater responsibility and consequences. This was explicitly articulated by movement leaders in Taiwan in a standoff with outside challengers, see chapter 3.

⁷¹ Despite the chronological organization, I do not attempt to present a complete account of all major events and rather focus on analysing the deliberative leadership structures.

Early Stage

Establishing a Decision-Making Core (March 18 – March 21, Taiwan)

The comparison of the early stages reveals that in both cases leading groups and organizations struggled to retain control over the strategic trajectory of movements that had been transformed by spontaneous mass mobilization and occupation. Existing studies have carefully laid out that these occupations did not occur fully unexpectedly but were the result of an accumulation of local histories, protest experiences, and networks (Ho 2019; also Beckershoff 2017; Cole 2015; Lee 2019a; Ma 2019a; Wu 2019). Whilst Ho's (2019) leadership analysis stresses rupture, I find continuities with previous struggles more striking. Ho argues that during "[standoffs] [m]ovement agendas and leadership have to be constructed anew, rather than being inherited from the status quo ante" (p.145). He rightly points to the importance of leadership and shows that it was not something natural or stable, but rather that it was (re)constructed and contested. Clearly, the pursuit of strategic politics depended on the reconstruction and consolidation of vertical leadership structures. However, I find the extent to which preexisting actors continued to shape the strategic trajectory of these seemingly spontaneous mass movements surprising, especially considering the distrust towards representation in other occupy movements and the trend towards horizontal protest facilitated by digital communication (e.g. Castells 2015; Sitrin and Azzellini 2014). My analysis highlights that the pursuit of strategic politics depended on the flexible development of deliberative decision-making structures; the boundaries of these structures were contested, porous, and kept evolving.

In the Taiwanese case leadership continuity became apparent early on. The first contours of a vertical decision-making structure were quickly established following the storming of the legislature. Already in the early

hours of the occupation, even though members of the BIY and the DF – the two entities that had spearheaded the anti-CSSTA movement – were dispersed all over the place, the young activists who had entered the Legislative Yuan were on their own able to set up a provisional leadership structure inside the legislature (Wei 2016, p. 220; see also Ho 2019, pp. 108–110). They formed a “decision-making core” (決策核心) and a basic “division of labour” (分工). This was possible although many of them had only been informed about the occupation plan on the very same day, because of pre-existing networks, trust, and experience from years of activism (ibid.). Amongst the veteran participants there were many who had been involved in the Wild Strawberry Movement of 2008, an occupation protest that had relied on a horizontal and deliberative decision-making process involving all student participants in nightly general assemblies.⁷² The shortcomings and ultimate failure of this democratic experiment taught participants that a successful movement requires more effective organization and leadership (interviews: Ke-chung L., 20.4.2018; Chia-hao L., 3.5.2018; Chen-yuan W., 12.5.2018). Over protests in subsequent years – which even included occupations – a set of best practices was developed that participants in the occupied legislature could draw upon. Some of the key tasks allocated as part of the division of labour included communication with the media, writing press releases, and liaising with protesters outside the building. One particularly important role was “commander-in-chief” (總指揮), the person wielding the microphone to give directions. The activists put together a chain of command (指揮鏈), a list that laid out who would take over the microphone if the person holding it was arrested by the police (Wei-hsiang H., interview, 6.9.2018). The assigned roles were not fixed, people could swap places to rest. The whole structure was rather loose. The main priority at the time became defending the chamber and it was not yet foreseeable that

⁷² Chapter 5 further discusses the Wild Strawberry deliberations.

the protest would turn into a long-term occupation. But the arrangement developed during the first night influenced the later composition of the decision-making structure (ibid.).

Continuity with previous protests was clearly apparent in who became a public spokesperson in the occupied legislature. Lin Fei-fan and Chen Wei-ting, both in their mid-twenties at the time, were two experienced student activists high up on the chain of command list that was drawn up in the legislature. While neither of them had been the chairperson of the BIY, they already in the early stage quickly turned into the perceived main student leaders of the movement. In the documentary *Sunflower Occupation* (Taipei Documentary Filmmakers' Union 2014), Chen vividly recalled taking the microphone away from somebody unfamiliar from another group following another person's advice and thereby inadvertently turning into the spokesperson of the occupation. "I just got it. Ever since then we have been holding it. [...] I got the microphone without thinking, and then I became the commander-in-chief! There was no election or any process," Chen explained.

Even though they were not elected, it was not arbitrary that it was Chen and Lin who became the main student spokespersons of the movement. They had both been involved in many of the protests of previous years and already played leadership roles in the Anti-Media Monopoly Movement during which they developed a relatively high degree of public name recognition. The media, requiring simple and personalized narratives, played a key part in making them the main spokespersons. Po-chun C., who worked for the Democratic Front at the time, explained that journalists had a strong influence by providing certain people from within the legislature with a microphone and the opportunity to determine the external appearance of the whole movement (interview, 21.7.2018). He suggested that the movement produced several "stars" with the "right to speak" (發言權).

Whilst the Taiwanese media environment affected the evolving movement and contributed to elevating certain individuals, many veteran activists from the previous years of activism pragmatically believed that hierarchical structures and spokespersons were necessary ingredients to strategic movement success. Ke-chung L., for instance, an experienced activist who had been involved in the preceding campaigns, argued that the leadership figures of the Sunflower Occupation had, at least to some degree, been cultivated through the previous movements (interview, 20.4.2018). He said that there was a “consensus” amongst veteran activists that leaders were necessary to avoid the sort of indecision experienced during the Wild Strawberry Movement of 2008; that there was a need to have “power invested into certain individuals,” power in the sense of “the right to speak and right to represent.” This reflects a pragmatism that contrasts sharply with utopian embrace of leaderlessness and democratic deliberation of many other more decidedly prefigurative protest movements like Occupy Wall Street (Graeber 2013). Whereas some protest movements try to – seemingly in the name of egalitarianism and democracy – resist the media’s power to elevate certain speakers or even to develop representative claims at all, in Taiwan there was a more pragmatic recognition of the need to boost public support by effectively disseminating claims through traditional and online news media (see Pai-han W., interview, 21.8.2018). Hence, the movement developed a fairly professionalized media operation (see Beckershoff 2017, pp. 125–126; Chao 2014).

Although certain leadership figures who represented the movement on stage had more influence than other participants, their de-facto decision-making power was constrained by collective decision-making structures backstage (Hua-yi C., interview, 24.8.2018; Wei-hsiang H., interview, 6.9.2018). The so-called “Joint Conference” (聯席會議), which was first held on the second day of the occupation, evolved over time, and became the central decision-

making platform (Ho 2019, p. 111). It was based on the DF framework, bringing together various NGO representatives, student activists, and sympathetic scholars both from inside and outside the legislature. The nightly meetings were convened in the office of the NGO Taiwan Labour Front, that was conveniently located nearby the legislature (Yen et al. 2015, p. 43). The convener of the Joint Conference was Lai Zhong-xiang (賴中強), a lawyer and the leader of the DF, who was deeply familiar with the CSSTA issue and extremely influential behind the scenes (Chia-hao L., interview, 3.5.2018). The Joint Conference was a place where both things related to the maintenance of the occupation as well as strategic matters on movement direction were discussed (Yu-wen L., interview, 23.5.2018).

While the first days were very chaotic and not all major decisions were made in the Joint Conference, it would later on be reformed and play a more central role. “The leadership was basically built at the time that the [CSSTA] agreement was signed” (on 21 June, 2013) and “didn't change a lot” during occupation, said student leader Chia-hao L. (interview, 3.5.2018). According to him, “the major decisions” were made collectively in the Joint Conference by student and NGO representatives. Chia-hao L. pointed out that many of the NGOs were founded by former student activists who had been involved in the Wild Lily Movement and were now in their mid- to late thirties. Their NGOs focused on various different issues, so they could use their expertise to analyse the potential impact of the trade agreement from different perspectives, e.g. labour issues, women’s issues, or human rights issues. Decisions were usually made by consensus (Yu-wen L., interview, 23.5.2018; Shu-fen K., interview, 24.7.2018). Apart from NGO professionals and students, some scholars with ties to NGOs were also involved and shared their expertise (Chien-hung M., interview, 20.8.2018). This reflects that different generations of activists cooperated relatively closely in the Sunflower Movement, especially compared to their counterparts in Hong

Kong (Yan-ting L., interview, 20.8.2018). While there certainly were differences between the NGOs and some of the more radical student activists, there was a significant degree of trust and shared strategic preferences that enabled a close cooperation.

Opposition parties were not involved in the Joint Conference. According to Wei-hsiang H., a student leader deeply involved in the core leadership, participants' lack of trust in the DDP's ability to effectively oppose the CSSTA had been one of the factors leading to the emergence of the occupation (interview, 6.9.2018). Right from the start of the occupation the student protesters faced backstage pressure from sections of the DPP urging a retreat due to worries about the uncertain impact of the protest on the party's electoral prospects (*ibid.*). Both the occupiers and the DPP maintained some distance from one another. But although the DPP sought to avoid giving the impression that the students were being "used" (利用) by the opposition (see Ker 2015: 166), the party supported the occupation. It played a "subsidiary role" by, for instance, proving logistical support and mobilizing supporters (Ho 2019, 109; 142-143). Its legislators not just helped occupiers enter and exit the building, but some also tried to mediate and negotiate behind the scenes to help solve the political impasse, despite not being formally involved in the Joint Conference.⁷³

The players involved in the anti-CSSTA movement were relatively successful in maintaining some degree of control over the newly emerged mass occupation in the early stage, particularly on the inside of the legislature. But the encampment outside was far from entirely centrally managed. Occupiers self-organized resources, structures, and activities to sustain their occupation in a decentralized fashion. Ho fittingly describes this phenomenon as

⁷³ Former minority leader Ker Chien-ming (柯建銘) stresses that he played the role of a mediator who in the later stage of the stalemate helped broker the compromise deal with Legislative Yuan president Wang Jin-pyng that enabled the peaceful withdrawal of the students, see Ker 2015.

“improvisation,” understood as the spontaneous and creative contributions by “rank-and-file” participants that complement the work of a movement leadership (2019, pp. 150–175). Ho acknowledges that there were some tensions, but argues that by and large “improvisation and leadership are mutually complimentary rather than contradictory” (p. 175). Whilst my analysis foregrounds tensions between self-organization and strategic leadership (see next section), horizontal movement dynamics in Taiwan certainly did not as seriously undermine strategic leadership as in the Umbrella Movement.

This section demonstrated that even though the early days of the occupation were particularly messy and volatile, the Sunflower Movement was never quite as decentralized as the Umbrella Movement. Already in the early stage of the occupation forms of order and strategic leadership emerged both inside and outside the legislature.

Competition and Decentralized Occupation Emergence (September 26 – October 2, Hong Kong)

Whereas activists in Taiwan were able to quickly set up preliminary decision-making structures, their counterparts in Hong Kong from the start struggled to achieve a similar feat. There was not the same degree of leadership continuity: the Umbrella Movement emerged following an internal strife over the course of the pro-democracy campaign between leading student groups and OCLP. This was a different form of continuity: Long before the Umbrella Movement Hong Kong’s pro-democracy movement had already been affected by internal divisions. Even though OCLP with its elaborate deliberative mechanism was designed to unite the movement, it was never quite able to overcome distrust between so-called

“moderate” and “radical” groups.⁷⁴ The campaign was affected by a “rivalry” between the moderate OCLP leadership and the two leading student groups, HKFS and Scholarism (Lucas F., interview, 15.6.2018), that culminated in the occupations. The HKFS is an organization with a long tradition of student activism that is made up of elected student representatives from the official student unions of major universities in Hong Kong. Scholarism, on the other hand, was a political group of secondary school students led by convener Joshua Wong that emerged from the anti-National Education protests. Both groups collaborated closely. Just as large sections of the younger generation of pro-democracy activists they favoured a more uncompromising, confrontational form of activism than OCLP and moderate pan-democrats (see Ku 2019a; Sing 2019a).

Although both the student groups and OCLP felt that they needed to cooperate following Beijing’s August 31 decision on democratic reform, their collaboration was troubled from the start. According to Alex Chow, HKFS secretary general at the time, “the two groups did not have any well-functioning mechanism to communicate, make decisions, and plan strategies together, and they were rivals in any case” (2019, p. 43). The Occupy Trio wanted to wait with the symbolic occupation action until October 1, the National Day of the PRC. However, student activists changed the course of the movement by climbing into “Civic Square” at the end of the school strike on September 26, 2014. While the action can be perceived as the student groups’ attempt to claim the leadership of the campaign from the older generation, originally their aim was not to force an early launch of Occupy Central. Rather, the students expected arrests and believed that images of their sacrifice would boost turnout to the planned occupation on October 1 (Joey F., interview, 29.10.2017). However, no concrete plans had been made

⁷⁴ The OCLP deliberations will be discussed in chapter 4.

for the “transition of leadership” to OCLP following the ad-hoc action and the potential arrest of student activists (Lucas F., interview, 15.6.2018).

The developments that followed the student groups’ storming of Civic Square show that OCLP failed early on to regain control over a transformed movement that took a more spontaneous and disruptive turn than the moderate organizers deemed strategically appropriate. Following the arrest of several key student leaders, a group of former members of the HKFS, so called “old ghosts,” supported the student organizations and established a stage programme to spread information (Jamie T., interview, 14.6.2018). After a whole day of deliberation, the OCLP Trio decided to officially launch their civil disobedience movement early. The announcement on stage by Benny Tai in the early morning on September 28 immediately caused controversy, as many of the young people at the scene felt that OCLP was “hijacking” the student movement and withdrew their support (Joey F., interview, 29.10.2017; Autonomous 8a, interview, 28.11.2017). Ethan D. recalled that there was an immediate negative response on the evening as many “young protesters left immediately” (interview 22.6.2015). The strong crowd response shows that there was a mismatch between the leader on stage and the young crowd below, an audience that wanted to play a more active role in the ongoing confrontation than the OCLP script allowed. Even though the Trio had long been criticised for delaying the occupation for too long, many of the young people at the scene did not want their current movement to be rebranded as OCLP. With hindsight, Ethan D. reflected that to these young people OCLP’s “mode of resistance was too peaceful, too weak, and was really not representing their mood.” Particularly the notion of accepting arrest and legal responsibility was not widely accepted (ibid.).

Irrespective of the efforts by OCLP and the student organizations to guide the ensuing movement, the large scale occupations emerged without central

direction as a spontaneous mass response to the police's violent crowd control efforts between September 26-28 (Cheng and Chan 2017). The whole occupation was "not organized by the pan-democrats," but "rather a spontaneous reaction than a well-constructed mass organization," said Derek F., a politician from the radical wing of the pan-democratic camp (interview, 24.6.2015). Along similar lines, Daniel K., who was part of the OCLP leadership, suggested that even though the campaign had unfolded more or less according to plan up to that point, "[t]he teargas changed everything" (interview, 3.7.2015). He argued that "the whole thing suddenly changed from an organized and coordinated work into a decentralized, I would not say unorganized but decentralized, kind of form" (ibid.). Both OCLP and the student groups had lost command over a movement they had initiated. This is most clearly illustrated by the fact that in the early hours of the occupation the mobilized crowds resisted their calls for a retreat. OCLP called for a withdrawal following the use of teargas. Further, there soon emerged rumours that the police was using rubber bullets (Derek F., interview, 24.6.2015). This sparked fears amongst the leadership, especially pan-democrats who had witnessed the violent 1989 Tiananmen Square crackdown, that there could be bloodshed. To avoid tragedy, both OCLP and the student groups used their microphones to advise people to leave the scene and return home to safety (Ethan D., interview, 22.6.2015). However, this did not have the effect of ending the mobilization. Overnight participants organically formed three main occupation zones to pull apart the police force (Autonomous 8a, interview, 28.11.2017). The early call for a retreat made it difficult for the leadership to regain control over the direction of the movement once the occupations had emerged. Alex Chow, HKFS student leader, put it succinctly: "In the end no rubber bullet was fired, but the credibility of the purported leaders had been undermined" (2019, p. 44).

In the days that followed the unexpected emergence of the occupation, it became clear that the two student organizations rather than OCLP turned into the perceived leaders of the movement. Ethan D. reflected that even though OCLP had “prepared the movement for 1.5 years,” “once the occupation broke out we [were] immediately being marginalized because most of these people identified the students as the leaders, because it was triggered by the student strike” (interview, 22.6.2015). That the student groups were relatively more influential was clearly linked to the fact that they had inadvertently sparked the occupation by storming civic square. “The student organizations gained the people's trust through their direct actions and sacrifice,” explained one HKFS representative (Ralph K, interview, 18.10.2017). Further, it was linked to embedded cultural scripts and traditions of student activism. Contrary to the Occupy Trio or pan-democratic politicians of older generations, there was a perception that the student groups represented the “pure” voice of the younger generation. Given the popular sentiment, Ethan D. pointed out that OCLP “understood clearly” that the organization “shouldn’t be the core leader” and instead played the role of “a group assisting the students to handle the movement” (interview, 22.6.2015). They made their resources and volunteers available, including marshals, doctors, nurses, and legal professionals to “help the students to manage the whole occupation.”

Even the student organizations with their relatively high degree of popular backing had an extremely limited capability for managing the encampments. Cheng and Chan (2017) argue that the encampments largely emerged and developed according to the logic described by Castells and other scholars of “horizontal networked movements.” To them, “[o]nline mobilization of autonomous individuals resulted in a decentralized, non-hierarchical structure” (p. 232). And indeed, the day-to-day maintenance of the encampments did not rely on the centralized leadership of traditional social

movement organizations. Hong Kongers transformed streets in Admiralty, Causeway, and Mongkok into spaces for community and democratic participation.⁷⁵ The assembled citizens horizontally self-organized their affairs in an organic fashion. They formed critical infrastructure such as improvised barricades, medical stations, and supply stations (Chow 2019, pp. 36–39). In the process new local communities, networks, and informal leadership structures organically emerged that were not directly linked to any central leadership (Brandon F., interview, 7.8.2018). Not just did the occupiers not need support from centralized organizations, many of them did not want any leadership to interfere in their operations and regarded the movement to be “leaderless.” A popular slogan was “No leaders, only the mass” (沒有大會，只有群眾; see Cheng and Chan 2017, p. 232). Even in Admiralty, where a main stage was established on which representatives of the leadership would address the crowd and the media every night, student groups did not have direct control over the decentralized day-to-day operation of the encampment (Alan W., interview, 8.6.2018).

Whereas the ultimatum set by the occupiers in Taiwan had passed without a response, the situation in Hong Kong turned out differently. The student leadership had publicly threatened to escalate the situation by staging a siege of government buildings if Chief Executive Leung Chun-ying did not step down by October 2 (Branigan 2014). OCLP opposed an escalation. Referencing the example of Taiwan’s Executive Yuan Incident, Ethan D. pointed out that the OCLP leadership believed that paralysing the executive would not be tolerated by the authorities. They feared that Beijing might declare a “state of emergency” and “send troops” (interview, 27.11.2017).

⁷⁵ In a more recent piece Cheng (2020) describes the leadership structure of the movement as “networked yet polycentric” – a framing that fittingly captures that the movement was made up of different (internally differentiated) encampments as well as that there were both leaders affiliated with formal organizations and “informal leaders” who assumed leadership roles on the ground. See also chapter 4.

Ultimately, the students refrained from an early escalation due to fear that there could be bloodshed and the government's apparent willingness to engage in a dialogue with HKFS, a process that was facilitated by the pan-democrats and OCLP (Lucas F., interview, 15.6.2018). The government announced its willingness to meet with student representatives for talks in a dramatic late night press conference on the night the ultimatum was about to expire.

All in all, the comparison revealed that the early situation was extremely messy and volatile in both contexts. Nonetheless, there was a significant degree of leadership continuity in the Taiwanese case. Veteran activists were able to set up provisional decision-making structures remarkably quickly and could continue an established collaboration within the anti-CSSTA alliance. By contrast, the occupations in Hong Kong were in part the unanticipated outcome of a competition between more proactive student groups and the moderate OCLP. The encampments were formed in a decentralized fashion by protesters who ignored withdrawal instructions by organizers who feared a violent crackdown. While the student groups enjoyed a significantly higher degree of popular support amongst occupiers than OCLP, it already became apparent in the early stage that even they were not in control of the three decentralized occupation zones.

Middle Stage

Contesting and Constructing Deliberative Structures (March 21 – April 6, Taiwan)

The comparison of the middle stages shows that both movements experienced factional contestations over strategic direction that affected leadership composition. My analysis underlines the importance of effective

deliberative structures for different groups to resolve differences and cooperate. Although the Sunflower Movement was not as seriously affected by internal divisions as its counterpart in Hong Kong, it was not spared volatile internal conflicts as the stalemate dragged on. Tensions were intensified by communication difficulties between participants inside and outside of the legislative chamber who were segregated from one another by a restrictive police presence. Several outside groups developed a sense of exclusion and discontent with the decision-making core located inside the sealed-off building (Beckershoff 2017, p. 121; Jianmin Publication Group 2016, pp. 14–15). Unwilling to play the assigned role of mere “supporters” of the young participants inside, they plotted to erase the inside/outside distinction and organize radical action to increase the pressure on the state. The calls for escalation became louder once the government – seemingly determined to wait out the protest – let the ultimatum set by the student leadership for the afternoon of March 21 pass (Beckershoff 2017, p. 120). There was real concern that the movement could fade away after the weekend when people would return to school or work (Chia-hao L., interview, 3.5.2018).

The subsequent developments revealed that the struggle over the direction of the movement involved contestations over the boundaries of vertical leadership. Decision-making in the volatile context of a protest movement was not a matter of rational deliberation, but rather had clear agonistic dimensions (Mouffe 2009). The nascent deliberative structures, particularly the Joint Conference, were unable to resolve tensions between participants who preferred to preserve an orderly protest and those who favoured more radical escalation. There were veteran student activists who believed further disruptive action was necessary. The most notable student group in favour of raising the pressure was the so-called “College of Social Science” group (社科院主幹), named after the building where they assembled. They were a collection of veteran student activists who set up a base in the big auditorium

of the College of Social Science of National Taiwan University not far from the legislature. The group was part of the same networks as many of the veteran student activists inside the Legislative Yuan. Some of them had been amongst the first wave of occupiers inside the legislature, but had left on March 19 or 20 for various reasons such as in order to support the marshal system outside (Lin 2016, p. 3; also Ho 2019, p. 112). They repurposed the auditorium as a logistics base (後勤基地) and as a space to rest and discuss strategy (Ching-po W., interview, 4.5.2018; Kuan-lin L., interview, 5.5.2018).

While the student group proposed ways of escalating the movement due to fears it would lose its momentum, the leadership core inside the legislature and especially the NGOs in the Joint Conference were reluctant to take radical action that could transform the status quo of the occupation. Eventually, chaotic discussions culminated in a brief and badly coordinated charge on the Executive Yuan on March 23 that was met with an unexpected degree of police violence during which many participants were injured. At the time there was controversy and much confusion amongst occupiers how and by whom the failed action had been organized. While the student leadership inside the legislature had expressed support for the operation, it had publicly stressed that the escalation was organized by a separate group of students (Yen et al. 2015, p. 55). That the decision to charge had actually been made behind the scenes by student leaders from both inside and outside the legislature who agreed to frame it as an operation that was separate from the existing occupation was for some time unbeknownst to the public.

The process that culminated in the escalation shows the difficulty of making strategic decisions in the chaotic context of a large-scale movement. Rather than just unilaterally organizing it, the College of Social Science group tried for a few days to convince the students from the inside of the legislature as

well as the members of the Joint Conference to agree to radical action.⁷⁶ They put forward several different plans including charging the Executive Yuan, the Presidential Office, or “opening up the legislature” (打通議場). The latter was long the preferred proposal. The idea behind it was to forcibly remove the police stationed outside the legislature in order to get full control of and completely occupy the building. This step was meant to, firstly, make it possible for more people to conveniently enter and leave the building, making discussions within the movement easier. And secondly, to raise the pressure to force the government to respond (Ching-po W., interview, 4.5.2018).⁷⁷ Furthermore, opening-up the legislature would have allowed the College of Social Science group to play a more active role in the decision-making structure. Asked why she did not just try to become a part of the core group inside the legislature within the first days, Hua-yi C. recalled that she “found that it was very hard to get into the decision structure after three days” and that “because we were not inside at the very key point of time so after we got back we found ourselves nowhere in this kind of structure” (interview, 24.8.2018). She reflected:

People from the College of Social Sciences really felt a bit upset about the power structure inside, because everyone in the main chamber had got their own power to say something about the movement, and the media was all in the main chamber and all the decisions were made by them, but they never felt like going outside and discussing with others.

Clearly there was a significant degree of frustration about the peculiar spatial arrangement and the hierarchies it implied. In this context the struggle over the strategic direction was also a contest over leadership composition. This

⁷⁶ An investigative report by Lin Chuan-kai (2016), based on interviews with participants, sheds light on the opaque decision-making process that led to the dramatic escalation. My own interviews broadly confirm Lin’s nuanced reconstruction.

⁷⁷ Removing the police was actually attempted by people unconnected to the College of Social Science. The spatial structure and challenges to it will be explored in chapter 3.

was recognized by some of the student leaders inside. In an interview with Brian Hioe for the Daybreak online archive, Chen Wei-ting pointed out that the core leadership inside the legislature was opposed to the proposal of occupying the whole building:

While those who wanted to connect the inside and the outside of the Legislative Yuan felt this would radicalize the Legislative Yuan and that leadership power wouldn't be concentrated in the hands of a small amount of people, the leadership of the movement felt that if this took place, there would be a heavy price to pay. That if people could freely enter and exist, you might confront like what I discussed earlier, direct democratic discussion. Discussion is, of course, healthy, but that could lead to a paralysis of the movement.

Furthermore, after opening up the inside and the outside of the Legislative Yuan, it would be much more difficult to maintain the occupation. [...] We couldn't let it become an anarchistic situation [so that] people could freely destroy things in the Legislative Yuan. This could hurt the movement. (2017d)

The core leadership apparently wanted to maintain an orderly and disciplined occupation. Whilst there was a constant threat of an eventual clearance by the authorities (Yu-shan M., interview, 18.5.2018), the police presence also unintentionally protected the leadership inside from challenges by outside protesters (Ho 2019, p. 145). Chen Wei-ting's concern about the drawbacks of democratic deliberation was most likely related to the negative experiences of deliberative indecision during the Wild Strawberry Movement of 2008 – which embraced a more distinctly prefigurative approach – that had taught participants about the need for structure and representation (see chapter 5).

Indeed, there were some discussions within the College of Social Science about the possibility of organizing decision-making via deliberative democracy once the space had been opened up. But even within the group there were reservations due to past experience and there is no indication that organizing deliberative assemblies was part of the plan.⁷⁸ Many veteran activists within the college did not aim at introducing internal democracy per se, as they had also experienced what had happened in 2008, but rather wanted the student leaders to “include more people into the politburo,” as one member seemingly half-jokingly suggested (Ke-chung L., interview, 20.4.2018). In fact, the College of Social Science group itself featured a hierarchical division of labour: Veteran student activists formed a leadership core and recruited other participants to support their efforts (Chen-yuan W., interview, 12.5.2018). Contrary to the ideas about democratic assemblies developed by Hardt and Negri (Hardt and Negri 2017), different factions of veteran student activists in Taiwan pragmatically agreed on the need for an exclusive and vertical leadership style, even though there was some disagreement over the appropriate strategy.

Although generational differences were not as pronounced as in Hong Kong, in Taiwan too veteran student activists were more positively inclined towards a confrontational approach than the NGOs and teachers of the older generation of activists. The preparations for an escalation by the College of Social Science group entailed contestations over leadership composition. Members of the group presented their proposals several times in the Joint Conference, but the NGO representatives were largely against an escalation (Lin 2016). In the College of Social Sciences a sense emerged that the Joint Conference was dominated by NGO representatives and teachers who did not take their younger counterpart’s ideas seriously (Kuan-lin L., interview,

⁷⁸ The documentary “The Edge of Night” features footage of a discussion about the idea in the College of Social Sciences, see Chiang 2018.

5.5.2018). Opening up the legislature could have provided the group with an opportunity to remove the NGOs from the leadership thereby turning the movement into a proper “student movement” (Ke-chung L., interview, 20.4.2018; Wei-hsiang H., interview, 6.9.2018). Seemingly side-lining the NGOs, the student group organized meetings with key student leaders from inside the legislative chamber on March 21 and March 23 (Lin 2016, 11-15; 24-26). Footage from the meetings – featured in Chiang’s (2018) documentary – reveals that the atmosphere was extremely tense and that the two groups found it hard to agree on a course of action. Eventually, the decision to storm the Executive Yuan was made in brief and chaotic meetings inside the legislature in the afternoon on March 23 (Lin 2016, pp. 33–38; Ching-po W., interview, 4.5.2018). Participants settled on the plan to stage a flashmob-style sit-in on the court in front of the Executive Yuan. Occupying the building was not part of the plan. The action was meant to be presented as unconnected to the leadership inside the legislature, as a spontaneous response by the people (民眾自發響應; see Lin 2016, p. 34). Although the NGOs in the Joint Conference were merely informed about the decision to escalate, they later publicly expressed support for the students and condemned police brutality (Yu-wen L., interview, 23.5.2018; Po-chun C., interview, 21.7.2018).

Chia-hao L., a student leader from the core group nested in the legislative chamber, suggested that he preferred the plan of storming the Executive Yuan over opening up the legislature, as it did not challenge the leadership inside:

So the students of the *Shekeyuan* [College of Social Sciences] and us decided to storm the Executive Yuan and my point was, personally my point was to release the pressure. Give [them] a place that people can storm, not to bother me [laughs] or not to storm into the Legislative Yuan, because the action in my opinion was... I mean the action [plan] of storming into the Legislative

Yuan was useless. And maybe that would challenge my leadership and make the situation more turbulent. So we decided to storm the Executive Yuan. But we didn't expect that the people would storm into the building. That was unexpected. (interview, 3.5.2018)

Asked whether it was mainly students outside who favoured escalation, Chia-hao L. said that “even people inside wanted to take more radical action as well at that time.” While this seemed to be the only way forward, since the government did not respond to their demands, the students were unsure what exactly to do. “This was the most radical action we, the Taiwanese students, in the whole history ever took! How can we be more radical?,” Chia-hao L. questioned. In this situation, he explained, they consented to the proposal by the College of Social Sciences group who said they could organize it, but “agree[d] with each other that that can’t be public.” This shows that labels such as radical and moderate when applied to describe groups can be misleading. It indicates that the students inside were not necessarily more moderate than those from the College of Social Sciences, but rather had different considerations. They wanted to protect the chamber they had seized and were willing to agree to radical action if it did not jeopardize their effort.

The decision-making process reflects that the escalation was not just organized unilaterally by the radical wing of the movement, but the outcome of chaotic internal deliberations over the course of the movement at a time of perceived crisis. Kuan-lin L., who was deeply involved in the College of Social Science group, suggested that the “logic” of the operation was no different from other occupations organized by the student activist network in previous years, such as the occupation of the courtyard of the Ministry of the Interior or the Legislative Yuan occupation (interview, 5.5.2018). There was a “storm group” (衝組) that “created an opening” for the masses to pour in to stage a sit-in and occupy a space. The only difference to previous

occupations was the violent suppression by the police. “It was a difference in terms of outcome, not a difference in process, and also not a difference in motivation. Because the operation method was exactly alike,” he said. The violent suppression was unexpected, as student protesters had not been beaten by the police in recent years. Only older activists with memories from the martial law period remembered such forms of “state violence” (Hua-yi C., interview, 24.8.2018). The violently suppressed occupation protest eventually became known as the “323 Incident” (323 事件) placing it alongside other “incidents” from Taiwanese history such as the “Kaohsiung Incident” (高雄事件) and thereby evoking a sense that the ghosts of Taiwan’s authoritarian past had returned that night. Even though an attempted occupation of the executive branch of government is quite a radical act by any standard, the unexpected use of violence against student protesters paired with the historical memory it brought to the surface led to an unexpected boost of public support and sympathy. While the incident caused much trauma and injury, widely shared images of police violence against unarmed student protesters backfired in the court of public opinion and thus reinvigorated the movement (Ho 2019, pp. 112–113).

The incident resulted in the consolidation of leadership and decision-making structures that allowed for a more focused pursuit of strategic politics (ibid.; also Beckershoff 2017, p. 123). Individual members of the College of Social Science were singled out as masterminds behind the action by the media and faced criminal prosecution. The group abandoned its base and dissolved (Hua-yi C., interview, 24.8.2018).⁷⁹ The crisis had fostered the impression within the core leadership that the lack of a comprehensive deliberative mechanism for resolving problems and coordinating action posed a serious

⁷⁹ At the same time, the controversy over the chaotically planned radical action led to the dissolution of trust that had built up in the student activist network over previous years (e.g. Chen-yuan W., interview, 12.5.2018; Kuan-lin L., interview, 5.5.2018).

liability. André Beckershoff (2017, p. 122) correctly points out, based on interview data, that it had “proved problematic that no formal decision-making process was in place” for the “formation of a clear consensus.” Once this was recognized in the aftermath of the escalation, the existing leadership structures were reformed and systematized (ibid.). The resulting governance framework was composed of three main bodies:

First, a new group called “Nine Person Decision Making Group” (九人決策小組) was formed to enable timely decision-making on urgent matters. The group was made up of Lai Zhong-xiang, two other NGO leaders, Huang Kuo-chang, and five student representatives including Lin Fei-fan and Chen Wei-ting (Yen et al. 2015, pp. 73–74). The group only formally convened a couple of times and did not make any major decisions, as these continued to be made in the Joint Conference (Chia-hao L., interview, 3.5.2018; Wei-hsiang H., interview, 6.9.2018; Yen et al. 2015, pp. 74–75). Nonetheless, there was a general perception even amongst deeply involved participants that it was the small group that made consequential decisions on matters such as how to respond to the government or whether to withdraw or not (Shu-fen K., interview, 24.7.2018; Wei-hsiang H., interview, 6.9.2018). In my view the most likely explanation is that even though the group did not formally convene often, its members did closely coordinate and wield more influence within the occupation than others, giving rise to the perception that they pre-decided things. However, it seems unlikely that they could unilaterally make major decisions without the extensive consultations within the occupation’s extensive deliberative structures.

Second, the pre-existing Joint Conference was adapted by increasing the number of student participants. The number of total participants was increased to 30, amongst whom 10 were NGO members and 20 student representatives (Yen et al. 2015, p. 74). Most of the students were rotating

delegates from the various working groups that had emerged as part of the increasingly more elaborate division of labour. This meant that the representativeness of the meeting was increased and thus the perceived legitimacy of its decisions (see Shu-fen K., interview, 24.7.2018). Following the Executive Yuan Incident, the reformed Joint Conference became the main platform for determining movement strategy. Decisions were made via consensus rather than by majority vote (ibid.; also Yu-wen L., interview, 23.5.2018), likely to ensure decisions were seen as legitimate by all stakeholders.

The third decision-making body was the so-called “Work Council” (工作會議). The daily meeting brought together representatives of the different working groups inside the legislature to coordinate occupation maintenance (Beckershoff 2017, p. 123; also Chloe L., interview, 10.5.2018). There was a very elaborate and increasingly professionalized division of labour that included groups dealing with supplies, cleaning, pickets, medical treatment, and news releases (Lin 2016, p. 3).

Beckershoff rightly points out that this elaborate decision-making structure that emerged following the Executive Yuan Incident was “not an ad hoc arrangement,” but rather represented a “formalization” of organically developed occupation structures that reflected the activist networks that had formed prior to the protest (2017, p. 123). Continuity and the creative adaptation of deliberative structures allowed representatives from various groups to collaborate in shaping the strategic direction of the movement over the relatively more stable weeks that followed the violent crackdown on March 24. The structure that emerged during the movement was sometimes compared to a “government” (政府) (e.g. Chloe L., interview, 10.5.2018). Asked about this, Chien-hung M., a scholar who was both involved in the movement and conducted research about it, confirmed this:

Already in the first week there is this sketch of a government you know media, internal relations, mobilization, liaison, and core meetings, picket teams, everything... sanitation teams, and even doctors offering medical care and also psychological counselling. [...] So true: It's a quasi-government and also its an order [that emerged] out of purposeful organization and also out of anarchy. When you observe it from the centre, I mean from the chamber, from the leaders, the nine-member-core-group, *jiurenxiao*, you can see it's like a hierarchy, a pyramid of movement power that is quite complete. That's from the centre looking from inside to the outside. (interview, 20.8.2018)

This reflects that the occupation developed an extraordinary degree of organization.⁸⁰ In trying to creatively construct efficient structures to defend the chamber and achieve the movement's goals, the participants reproduced forms of power and governance that some other contemporary movements more committed to a prefigurative logic eschew. The representative structures they constructed due to pragmatic learning from recent experience stand in clear contrast to the leaderless movement democracy imagined by Hardt and Negri (2017). Their adoption reflects that the movement leadership understood the occupation protest as an effort to protect Taiwan's existing representative democracy rather than as a radical attempt to overthrow the existing political system, an endeavor that would likely have involved a more fundamental questioning of hierarchies and representation.

The Sunflower Movement's representative governance framework allowed broader sets of participants who all shared membership in an informal leadership core to deliberate and jointly maintain an extremely well-organized occupation. However, not all occupiers viewed the decisions made by the vertical leadership as binding and legitimate. Throughout the occupation "outsiders" criticized the perceived closedness and lack of

⁸⁰ Despite the hierarchal pyramid image, Chien-hung M. also stressed that he was impressed by the anarchic dimension of it all; how people did things not due to "central coordination" but through self-organized based on pre-existing trust, see also Ho 2018.

transparency of the purported leadership. A small group of activists who were especially critical of the alleged minority rule within the movement even set up a camp within the outside occupation for the practice of direct democracy. They produced a manifesto that critiqued the alleged “lack of political imagination of the movement leadership” and suggested that it had merely “duplicat[ed] the structure of the political system” (Jianmin Liberation Zone 2017). Their criticism shows that there were also more radical democratic visions present in this large scale movement. However, the group formed a relative minority within the occupation that was unable to alter the subsequent course of the movement.⁸¹

Instead of a more radical or disruptive democratic enactment, the climax of the middle stage of the occupation was a peaceful and orderly large scale rally on Ketagalan Boulevard. Although the organizers worried that radicals might attempt to use the mass mobilization to charge the nearby Presidential Palace (Yu-wen L., interview, 23.5.2018), the rally proceeded in a peaceful and orderly fashion. The organizers counted a record turnout of 350.000 participants at a minimum (Rowen 2015, p.14), thereby successfully demonstrating strong mobilizing capacity and public support.

The Taiwanese case demonstrates the difficulty of making collective decisions on strategic direction in the context of large-scale occupation protests. Both leadership composition and mechanisms evolved through internal contestation between different groups that eventually resulted in a consolidated and systematized deliberative governance framework. As the next section will show, the Umbrella Movement did not develop a similarly elaborate and efficient “government.”

⁸¹ The Liberation Zone will be discussed in more detail in chapter 3.

Divisions Despite Deliberations (October 3 – November 30, Hong Kong)

Compared to the Taiwanese case, the Umbrella Movement with its three occupation zones was considerably more unstructured and decentralized (Cai 2017; Cheng and Chan 2017). Although formal organizations had contributed to the emergence of the protest, they were unable to develop a comprehensive leadership framework for the spontaneously and horizontally formed urban communities. The maintenance of the encampments was handled organically by occupiers themselves without formalized involvement in a broader governance structure. While the establishment of seemingly prefigurative communities was an accomplishment in and of itself, especially in a relatively hostile political environment, the comparison will underscore that a decentralized occupation movement risks withering away aimlessly without organically developed mechanisms for making collective decisions. As HKFS student leader Alex Chow retrospectively reflected: “The inability to formulate mechanisms of decision making was the Achille’s heel of the occupations” (2019, p. 45).

To facilitate strategic planning, pre-existing organizations involved in the occupations formed a deliberative body called the “Five-Party Platform” (五方平台) that comprised the two student groups, OCLP, the pan-democratic political parties, and NGOs. Representatives of the groups met regularly in the Legislative Council, where they conducted lengthy and contentious discussions behind closed doors. Self-mobilized occupiers without organizational affiliation were not involved in these deliberations. Contrary to the more coherent representative framework that emerged in the Sunflower Movement, the Five-Party Platform never evolved into an effective decision-making body. There were lengthy discussions about transforming the platform into a formal “united front.” The idea was to come

up with a proper mechanism for jointly shaping the strategic direction of the movement and sharing the responsibility, something strongly supported by some of the NGOs and radical pan-democrats. However, the parties could not agree on the “literal decision making mechanism,” on how votes would be distributed and counted (Lucas F., interview, 15.6.2018; see also Sing 2019a, p. 158). In an ethnographic essay student leader Alex Chow reflected that “[n]ot every member of HKFS deemed it essential to create a mechanism to foster a formal decision-making process” due to a lack of trust in OCLP and the pan-democratic parties (2019, p. 45), indicating that the divisions between the more radical student activists and the moderates of the older generation continued to negatively affect collaboration. Brian W., an “old ghost” of the HKFS who was deeply involved in OCLP at the time, suggested that HKFS had “other thoughts about the leadership and the direction of the movement” (interview, 13.6.2018). Eventually the different parties “just abandoned the formation of the united front and the students kept the leadership” whilst the others played a “supportive role,” a division of labour that reflected the popular sentiment in the occupation zones.

While the main opposition party maintained a relatively low profile in Taiwan’s Sunflower Movement, the pan-democrats played a more influential and visible role in Hong Kong’s occupation. Pan-democratic parties had supported OCLP, contributed resources and marshals to the occupation, staged public forums, and were involved in the Five-Party Platform (Sing 2019a, p. 145). Nonetheless, the Umbrella Movement marked the side-lining of traditional political parties from the leadership of the broader pro-democracy movement due to an increasing disenchantment with moderate, ritualistic approaches to political contestation (ibid.; also Ku 2019a). The split between moderate and radical pan-democratic parties complicated attempts to build a formal united front due to questions over how to allocate votes (Lucas F., interview, 15.6.2018). While the student groups took a more

uncompromising approach – they were willing to prolong the occupation and increase disruptiveness to force concessions –, the heads of major pan-democratic parties wanted to find ways to end the occupation to stop the inconvenience to the public with a view towards the upcoming elections (Sing 2019a, p. 161).

Since the two student organizations were the most recognized leaders within the occupation zones – according to Cheng and Chan’s (2017, p. 226) survey only 7,6% of respondents supported the political parties as “ideal leadership” compared to 40.5% for the students – the pan-democratic parties had to work with the students if they wanted to influence the direction of the Umbrella Movement. Alfred N., a pan-democratic politician who was involved in the Five-Party Platform, explained that the students were “very much dominating things,” as they were the “recognized public face” of the movement which gave them some kind of “authority” (interview, 5.6.2018). Therefore he found that other parties like the political parties or civic groups played a “secondary” and at times even “passive” role. He observed that it was difficult to actively “push for something,” because the students could effectively downvote proposals and were both willing and able to pursue their own ideas even if other parties disagreed.

Over the course of the occupation HKFS turned into the most influential organization amongst the five parties due to the relatively high degree of support it enjoyed amongst occupiers and its recognition by the Hong Kong government as counterpart for negotiations. However, the student body’s established organizational practices negatively affected coordination with other leading groups in the Five-Party Platform. The positions of HKFS were not determined unilaterally by its secretariat, but rather decided through

internal deliberations.⁸² While several student leaders acted as public spokespersons, such as Secretary General Alex Chow and Deputy Secretary General Lester Shum (who thereby turned into “movement stars” akin to the student leaders in Taiwan), others did different work outside of the media spotlight, for instance engaging occupiers at HKFS booths (see chapter 5). But all members deliberated as equals in regular backstage meetings, even if some of them were more influential than others. The deliberations were a relatively open and lengthy process. During the occupation meetings under the HKFS structure were usually held daily, often with over 20 members (Alan W., interview, 8.6.2018). Decisions were made via consensus, a longstanding tradition that is not enshrined in the HKFS constitution, but was affirmed annually through a motion by the member unions (Lucas F., interview, 15.6.2018). Only one member could veto any proposal, making the deliberations long and difficult. Simon K., an HKFS representative at the time, recalled it usually felt like an “endless meeting” (interview, 14.11.2017). But whereas the title of Polletta’s (2002) book “Freedom is an Endless Meeting” points to the potentially liberating qualities of deliberations in social movements, the students in Hong Kong experienced the constraints of the consensus framework. “We actually don’t like having meetings, because sometimes we won’t have conclusions and we are just discussing, discussing, discussing, and discussing,” Simon K. said. Alan W., also an HKFS representative, suggested that the meetings would last at least six to eight hours (interview, 8.6.2018). It was “not easy to get consensus between the student unions,” he explained, not because of opposing personal views, but due to a lack of experience of running “such kind of plaza movement.” Two interviewees pointed to anxiety over making consequential decisions in an uncertain environment: “I think we were not that effective in decision-

⁸² This paragraph is largely based on interviews with Lucas F. (15.6.2018), Simon K. (14.11.2017), and Ralph K. (18.10.2017).

making. We were were afraid of a lot of things,” Joey F. acknowledged (interview, 29.10.2017; see also Ralph K, interview, 18.10.2017). This reflects that the participants were young university students, many of them in their first or second year, who had been elected to their universities’ student unions for merely a year-long term. They had less social movement experience than the Taiwanese student leaders who had engaged in a range of movements before the occupation (Ho 2019, p. 131).

HKFS’s deliberative indecision paired with the trust deficit and different strategic preferences between the students and the other parties (particularly the moderate pan-democrats and OCLP), made effective coordination in the Five-Party Platform difficult. Ethan D. explained that there were many times when they “seemingly [...] reached a consensus” that was overturned in the evening when the student representatives returned to the general meetings and subsequently “change[d] their idea” (interview, 27.11.2017). Ethan D. concluded that in “the end the Federation of Students became the de-facto leaders, decision makers.”

A key function of vertical leadership was negotiating with the state, a process in which HKFS played a decisive role. But once a stalemate was reached there was disagreement within the Five-Party Platform over whether the dialogue should continue (Lucas F., interview, 15.6.2018). After much back and forth – the talks were delayed following escalations of tensions – a televised public deliberation between several student leaders and government officials was staged on October 21 (Cai 2017; Ho 2019, pp. 132–135). The officials offered to submit a report to the Central Government and to create a platform that would consider public views on constitutional development post-2017 (SCMP 2014). Dissatisfied with the government’s unwillingness to offer more substantial concessions, HKFS eventually discontinued the negotiations even though other parties had hoped they

could continue (Ethan D., interview, 22.6.2015; also Lucas F., interview, 15.6.2018). This reflects that OCLP and moderate pan-democrats were more willing to negotiate and settle for a strategic compromise than the student organizations as well as the most fervent occupiers who were willing to hold out until all goals were achieved.

Since it became increasingly clear that the government was determined to wait out the protests, the five parties discussed ways of achieving a “graceful exit” (Cai 2017) before the occupations inevitably lost momentum and external public support. They discussed two proposals for involving participants into a democratic decision-making process on the strategic direction of their movement:

The first proposal was to conduct an electronic referendum for movement participants, an idea pitched by Benny Tai. The so-called “Square Referendum” would have involved technology developed by the Hong Kong University Public Opinion Programme, which had already facilitated a city-wide referendum for OCLP months earlier. Initially it was planned to directly ask protesters in the Admiralty occupation zone if the government’s offers should be accepted (Sung et al. 2014). Later on, the plan was amended to include one motion stating that the report by the government to Beijing should suggest repealing the August 31 decision on democratic reform and another one that said that the government-proposed platform on political reform should endorse introducing civil nomination and abolishing functional constituencies for the upcoming elections. The referendum was to be held in the evenings on October 26 and 27 in all three major occupation zones. A press release by OCLP stressed that “[t]he vote has nothing to do with whether we should retreat from the occupied areas,” but also concluded by stating that participants could “think about the next steps and future development of the Umbrella Movement depending on the S.A.R.

government's response" (OCLP 2014e). OCLP believed that this method for consolidating the views of movement participants could be used to make decisions on the direction on the movement in a democratic fashion. However, many occupiers were opposed to the mechanism as they did not trust the moderate OCLP and believed a referendum could eventually be used to organize a retreat (Ethan D., interview, 27.11.2017). Especially initially there were strong reservations within HKFS, particularly about the original plan to only focus on Admiralty and about technical issues such as the possibility of interference by outsiders. Some students felt the referendum was announced prematurely and that it was necessary to first discuss the idea with the occupiers (see Lucas F., interview, 15.6.2018). Even though changes had been made to the scheduled referendum, the student groups encountered strong resistance from occupiers and eventually it was decided to call off the referendum on the afternoon before it was supposed to commence (ibid.; also Ethan D., 27.11.2017; Brandon F., interview, 7.8.2018). Movement leaders, including Alex Chow, Benny Tai, and Joshua Wong, even bowed on stage and apologized for mishandling the matter (BBC News 2014a). Subsequently, the OCLP co-conveners Benny Tai and Kin-man Chan returned to their universities to teach and largely left the leadership to the student groups.

The second proposal for a retreat mechanism was staging a so-called "de facto referendum," an idea also first pitched by OCLP (Ethan D., interview, 27.11.2017; see also Richard F., interview, 6.6.2018). The original plan was that five pan-democratic legislators, one from each electoral district, would resign to trigger a byelection that would be declared to be a referendum on democratic reform. The occupiers would be asked to retreat and the movement carried on in a different fashion. Simon K., an HKFS representative involved in the platform, suggested that the proposal was controversial and deliberations dragged on for weeks (interview, 14.11.2017).

He recognized that resignations carried political risks. Public opinion was already beginning to turn against the occupation. Without popular support the pan-democrats could have lost their majority in the legislature, which would have enabled the government to push through legislation harmful to the movement. It was also difficult to work out which legislators of which parties should resign and what the formalities were. Therefore it was later suggested that just one legislator holding one of Hong Kong's five super district councillor seats resigned, which would have triggered an election that citizens from all over the city could have taken part in irrespective of their geographical location (ibid.).

Richard F., a pan-democratic politician involved in the deliberations, reflected that although all parties agreed that the plan was attractive initially, the student leaders later realized there was "strong resistance" from the occupiers, who were mostly "new faces" the pan-democrats were unacquainted with (interview, 6.6.2018). Subsequently the students made clear that they "couldn't promise to announce the withdrawal," but nonetheless kept on pushing for the resignation of a legislator with a view towards arranging a withdrawal later on. Student leader Joey F. pointed out that the problem was not HKFS's "willingness," but their "ability to actually end the occupation." Joey F. said: "Even if we called for a retreat, people won't leave," but acknowledged that pan-democrats felt otherwise at the time (interview, 29.10.2017).

The back and forth over the two proposals reflects that the underlying problems were not just differences, distrust, and competition amongst the five parties, but more fundamentally that the vertical leadership platform lacked the perceived legitimacy required to stir the course of a horizontal and decentralized occupation movement into a strategic direction (Chow 2019; Kwok and Chan 2017). Rather than just relying on vertical

("representative") leadership, the two innovative proposals could potentially have resolved this problem by directly involving participants in a direct democratic process. But this model of political participation through a referendum clashed with the one enacted by the most committed occupiers who self-organized the horizontal encampments, a form of participation that requires a higher degree of commitment than voting. Kwok and Chan rightly point out that the contestations raised important questions mass movements inevitably confront: "Who are the people? Whose voice should count?" (pp. 12-13). A referendum would have involved an enlarged "constituency" (ibid.), as supporters who did not spend much time in the encampments would have had the same vote as the most committed occupiers. But it became clear that the most fervent participants were unwilling to withdraw without any substantial achievement and viewed the proposals for referenda that could serve as an exit mechanism with great suspicion. In the end it became clear that participants simply voted with their feet by either staying on or leaving the occupation zones (see Miles Y., interview, 5.6.2018).

As time went on the authority of the purported leadership was further undermined by increasingly influential right-wing critics who contributed to a "culture of distrust" in the occupations (Law 2019; Lee and Chan 2018). Conflicts were fuelled by the rise of "localism" (本土主義) as a political orientation and faction within the opposition camp in recent years. Localist discourse stresses the perceived need of protecting Hong Kong's political and cultural autonomy that are viewed as threatened amidst fast-paced integration with China, but also increasingly encompasses "ideas of nation-building and self-determination" (Kaeding 2017, p.158). During the occupation, localist groups vehemently challenged the Five-Party Platform, which in their view represented the pan-democrats' moderate approach that had failed to deliver universal suffrage in over 20 years of self-constrained struggle (ibid.). Viewing the protests as a "spontaneous and leaderless

'Umbrella Revolution,'" localists accused the leaders of "hijacking the occupation and attempting to disband the crowd" (Law 2019, pp. 88–89), as part of a plot to advance their own electoral or careerist ambitions. Localists called for the "dismantling" of the main stage in Admiralty that symbolically represented both the movement leadership and the traditional pro-democracy movement more generally (Alfred N., interview, 5.6.2018). Undercutting efforts by moderate pan-democrats to adhere to strict nonviolence and peacefulness, localists advocated more confrontational forms of activism and accused the leadership of sabotaging the people's own initiatives (Oskar K., interview, 14.6.2018).

Just as in the Taiwanese case, tensions between moderate and radical groups eventually culminated in an attempt to storm the executive branch of government. Ho argues that the leadership in Hong Kong was initially more successful than their Taiwanese counterparts in "restraining radicalization for the purpose of negotiation," but that following the breakdown of the dialogue HKFS "eventually succumbed" to the "mounting pressure" to launch a poorly conceived escalation that "in hindsight amounted to a last-ditch gamble by a visibly exhausted movement" (2019, p. 136). What Ho calls "bottom-up militancy," which increased as the stalemate dragged on, certainly played a key role in forcing the student leaders' hands. I would add that the moderates in the Five-Party Platform played an important role in discouraging and postponing an escalation, just as in Taiwan the older generation in the Joint Conference had briefly delayed it. But since the five parties were unable to reach a consensus on the right course of action, the student groups ran out of other options. In fact, many of the elected HKFS representatives had serious doubts whether the proposed escalation could work (interviews: Joey F., interview, 29.10.2017; Simon K., 14.11.2017; Lucas F., 15.6.2018). "I didn't think it was a good idea, but neither could I think of anything else that should be done," said Joey F. (interview, 29.10.2017).

However, the clearance of the Mongkok occupation zone on 25 November increased the pressure to publicly announce a plan to “respond to the anger of the occupiers” (Lucas F., interview, 15.6.2018). On 30 November, HKFS and Scholarism jointly launched the action of surrounding the Chief Executive Office. Somewhat akin to the escalation in Taiwan, the action was planned in a haste, badly coordinated, and ended in failure amidst violent suppression by the police during which many participants were injured (Cai 2019, pp. 223–224).

The comparison of the middle stage of both movements underscores that strategic politics in the context of occupation movements requires leadership and decision-making mechanisms. In both cases there were attempts to adapt and formalize deliberative leadership structures to enable effective cooperation and resolve factional tensions. The Sunflower Movement eventually developed a remarkably elaborate representative structure following an ill-coordinated escalation. There was a large degree of continuity in the sense that student activists and NGO representatives continued to collaborate closely based on trust developed over years of activism. By contrast, the more decentralized Umbrella Movement was weakened by a lack of trust between different groups which were unable to develop formalized deliberative decision-making structures. Whereas the middle stage in Taiwan ended with a large-scale rally that posed a high note, in Hong Kong it culminated in an ill-fated escalation.

Final Stages

Peaceful Withdrawal (April 6 – 10, Taiwan)

In terms of outcome both movements diverged tremendously. Whereas the inability to develop functioning and legitimate decision-making structures

meant that the prefigurative occupations in Hong Kong dragged on until a violent clearance, the deliberative leadership structures in Taiwan contributed to making a well-timed strategic withdrawal possible. Following the climactic large-scale rally, the Sunflower Movement increasingly lost its momentum. Participants were exhausted, the number of supporters on the streets declined, and public support was waning, raising the risk of a crackdown and the urgency of developing an exit strategy. Eventually, the vertical leadership of the movement managed to utilize the elite split within the KMT to organize a retreat (Beckershoff 2017, pp. 127–128; Ho 2019, pp. 114–115). Legislative Speaker Wang Jin-pyng's April 6 promise to shelve the CSSTA until after a legislative oversight mechanism was established provided the occupiers with an opportunity for a graceful exit. But the leadership's decision to take it proved extremely controversial.

Student leader Wei-hsiang H. recalled that there was a widespread "misunderstanding" (誤解), as many people believed the withdrawal was decided upon by the nine person group or an even more selective group of leaders – although the matter was actually settled in the Joint Conference (interview, 6.9.2018). But even within the Joint Conference some people, even those who ultimately supported the withdrawal, had the impression that the decision had already been made prior to the discussion (Po-chun C., interview, 21.7.2018). There was a heated debate about the exit and not everybody felt sufficiently involved. Yu-wen L., for instance, recalled that "the feeling [was] not so good" when she and others first learned about the decision through the news, as another member from her NGO participated in that meeting in her stead (interview, 23.5.2018). Clearly, there were people within the leadership core who would have liked to be involved in the making of this consequential decision. Beyond the leadership circles there was also a strong backlash, as many people who had spent weeks occupying, but had not been consulted on the matter, did not want to leave following a

vague promise without achieving all the stated objectives of the movement. Given the situation, the leadership did not directly implement an exit, but spent two days preparing for it and convincing participants through group discussions (Po-chun C., interview, 21.7.2018).

One of the most notable expressions of discontent from within the legislature came in the form of a statement written by a group of people who had been guarding the entrance to the second floor for the past weeks. In a public statement released on 10 April 2014 they referred to themselves as the “Second Floor Slave Labour” (二樓奴工). The name implies that even though they performed important backstage work in the occupation, they felt subordinated and deprived of the right to participate in decision-making. The group released their statement on April 10:

The decision to withdraw was not made by all volunteers, much less was it by the ‘consensus’ of all participants. The second floor slave workers only were informed of the withdrawal plan on the morning of April 6, but the central decision-making body of the movement had already reached consensus on the matter, and we were shocked discover that the “consensus” to withdraw was in reality the decision first made by the central decision-making body, with them only finding volunteers on-site to agree as a form of “consensus” afterwards. [...] This is a form of lacking faith in the people, not giving power to the people, while pretending that the decision to withdraw was reached in an equal way. (Second Floor Slave Workers 2014)

Clearly, there were participants in the movement, even within the legislature, who questioned the legitimacy of a decision made in the representative body. They raised the question whether a consensus reached behind closed doors in a relatively small committee could genuinely represent the views of thousands of participants in a mass movement. This indicates that they would only accept a decision reached in a more participatory and horizontal

process involving “the people,” by which they likely meant all of the occupiers present at the scene. However, the critique was only released on the day of withdrawal and the group did not refuse to leave. Instead, they withdrew separately hours prior to the others. All internal controversy notwithstanding, the movement leadership eventually implemented a peaceful retreat following a celebratory assembly that projected an image of success (see Shu-fen K., interview, 24.7.2018).

A belated involuntary ending (December 1 – 15, Hong Kong)

Contrary to their counterparts in Taiwan, the Umbrella Movement’s Five Parties were unable to achieve any concessions and a well-ordered withdrawal. Hong Kong is a far more challenging political environment – it was from the outset hard to imagine the Chinese government giving in to pressure from below on matters of democratic reform – and the lack of functional collective decision-making structures in a decentralized movement made it difficult to achieve a strategic exit. While the surrounding of the Government Headquarter was meant to force the government’s hands, its apparent failure further undermined the authority of the student organizations. In its aftermath, many of the occupiers blamed HKFS for having delayed the action for too long and for the poor execution that resulted in the violent suppression. The student groups “lost the leadership after the action,” said Brian W. (interview, 13.6.2018). He explained that there “was no leadership” in December, as “people just followed the leader that they recognized.” He added that while people were still speaking on the main stage, “the speeches were no longer criticism of the government, but criticism of one another.” A brief hunger strike by members of Scholarism did not succeed in reinvigorating the movement (Miles Y., interview, 5.6.2018). According to Alex Chow, “HKFS spent the rest of the time visiting

and apologizing to the occupiers” (2019, p. 47). While Chow suggests that they were “able to persuade the defense group not to engage in militant confrontation but to end the movement in a civilly disobedient way,” he also recognized that “the feeling of anger, distrust, frustration, and discontent also reached a zenith” (pp. 47-48). Apparently the government’s strategy of waiting out the protest had worked. Some of the leaders involved in the Five-Party Platform and their follower staged a final symbolic sit-in on the day of the Admiralty clearing on December 11 during which 247 people were arrested (Lee et al. 2014a; Yang 2019, p. 477). But many of the remaining occupiers did not see much value in being arrested by the police and left earlier (Brandon F., interview, 7.8.2018; Luke E., interview; 9.8.2018). Ultimately, the last remaining occupation zone in Causeway Bay was cleared on December 15.

In sum, the elaborate deliberative leadership structures established in the Sunflower Movement made deciding upon and implementing a timely strategic retreat possible, even though the step was extremely controversial. By contrast, the Umbrella Movement – lacking a similar framework – was eventually cleared by the police after a lengthy occupation.

Conclusion

To better understand how participants in the Sunflower and Umbrella Movement understood and practiced democracy, this chapter set out to assess how leadership and decision-making were organized in the two movements. Hardt and Negri evoke the image of a swarm of bees to illustrate their conception of an emerging form of leaderless social movement: “a swarm, a multitude moving in coherent formation and carrying, implicitly, a threat” (2017, xxi). Kin-man Chan, OCLP co-organizer

and sociology professor, conjured a different image that captures the Umbrella Movement's lack of direction: a "pilotless plane" (cited by Ho 2019, p. 138). Ho further expanded upon this image by "add[ing] that the lack of coherent and effective leadership made for an erratic journey in which the flight eventually ended in a crash when the fuel was exhausted" (ibid.). The vivid description quite aptly captures a rather traditional conception of vertical leadership. It evokes the image of a passenger plane that requires a pilot as well as ideally a co-pilot (*leaders*) to transport a number of passive travellers (*the masses*) to a pre-determined destination (*desired outcome*) or at least some place suitable for an emergency landing (*compromise*). This image contrasts sharply with the horizontalist vision of a multitude of bees. While neither the plane nor swarm metaphor seems to fully capture the Umbrella Movement's leadership dynamics as outlined in this chapter, they do aptly describe two competing conceptions of leadership and organization present in the occupation. Evidently, it is difficult for pilots to hold on to their seats if there are bees in the cockpit.

Considering their shared concern with democracy and recent experiences with horizontalism in social movements elsewhere (e.g. Graeber 2013; Maeckelbergh 2012; Sitrin and Azzellini 2014), it seems puzzling that neither the Sunflower nor the Umbrella Movement experimented with participatory democracy to make collective decisions on matters of strategic direction. One could, for instance, imagine that they organized some form of general assembly – like in Taiwan's Wild Strawberry Movement or Occupy Wall Street – to make decisions in a seemingly democratic fashion. But despite being affected by digital technologies and decentralization, both movements featured different forms of vertical leadership and decision-making. My analysis suggests that one important reason why both the Sunflower and Umbrella Movement involved centralized leadership – rather than fully embracing horizontal leaderlessness – was that the occupations were merely

the continuation of broader movements that featured leaders. The Taiwanese occupation was an episode of the anti-CSSTA movement that brought together student activists and an NGO coalition. Since they could build on years of experience, established practices, and a significant degree of trust, these groups were relatively successful in navigating conflicts, developing deliberative decision-making structures, and retaining control over the transformed movement. By contrast, the Umbrella Movement was part of Hong Kong's broader pro-democracy movement that has long been troubled by factionalism. The OCLP campaign could not overcome these internal divisions and the occupation took a spontaneous and decentralized form. Despite some effort to coordinate, the different organizations involved in the newly formed leadership body were unable to formalize their cooperation and effectively make collective decisions on movement direction due to preexisting strategic differences and distrust.

The status of both occupations as continuations of existing movements concerned with formal representative democracy meant that neither of them fully embraced a more radical democratic imagination. Nonetheless, both movements involved spaces of representation in which members of a semi-formalized leadership engaged in lengthy deliberations. The boundaries of these spaces were contingent, subject to contestation, and kept being redrawn. These structures meant that behind the scenes strategic matters could be discussed and decided upon with varying degrees of effectiveness and perceived legitimacy. But whereas the sophisticated deliberative leadership that emerged in Taiwan contributed to a timely strategic withdrawal, the lack of a similarly elaborate framework in Hong Kong made it difficult to avoid a forced clearance after a lengthy occupation.

3 Stages and Contestations over Occupied Space

What I am referring to as 'the stage' is in a sense not really a stage but a symbol of central authority. [...] The students [HKFS and Scholarism], [...] the political parties, and Benny Tai's Occupy Trio, all of us represent the stage. So it means the central authority.

Alfred N., pan-democratic politician, interview, 5.6.2018

In both the Sunflower and the Umbrella Movement factional tensions found a visible expression in contestations over the spatial structure of the occupation zones. In Hong Kong the conflicts focused on the so-called “main stage” – *daaitoi* (大台) – a metal construction that was put up under a bridge on Harcourt Road in the Admiralty Occupation to elevate speakers and allow them to address the public. The stage was mainly used by members of the Five-Party Platform: student leaders, the Occupy Trio, NGO representatives, and pan-democratic politicians. It became the symbolical centre of the Admiralty Occupation. As the above cited words of Alfred N. make clear, the term *daaitoi* came to denote not just the physical construction; it also turned into a shorthand for the movement leadership. The stage “was considered a symbol of leadership and power” (Cai 2017, p. 109). It stood in for particular ideas about democracy, leadership, representation, and movement strategy during the occupation. Hence, the physical stage became a prime target for performative challenges by radical activists who called for its dismantling and envisioned a more confrontational form of democratic resistance.

The Chinese language lends itself to viewing stages and staging as defining features of politics. *Shangtai* (上台), literally to go on stage, also translates as “rise to power.” The verb is made up of the characters for “up” (上) and

“stage” (台). *Xiatai* (下台), to step down from the stage, also means “to fall out of power” or “leave office” (DeFrancis 2003). It entails the characters for “down” (下) and “stage” (台). Perhaps even more so than in English, where metaphors from the world of theatre have long been used to describe and analyse politics, this highlights the staged nature of all political interaction. In liberal democracies the political is often described as an “arena,” a space where players with different interests compete like athletes in a stadium. The Chinese translation of the “political arena” is literally the “political stage” (政治舞台; *ibid.*), again highlighting the performative dimension of the political. Politics appears as that which happens on a platform that is elevated above the ordinary world, widely visible, but not accessible to everybody. Most people are just spectators, unless they challenge the authority of those on stage either by climbing up themselves or by putting up their own stages as part of democratic movements.

While the term “main stage” did not carry the same connotation in Taiwan as in Hong Kong, the Sunflower Movement turned parliament – naturally a theatrical space – into the main platform from which the movement leadership addressed the public. Just as in Hong Kong, there were internal contestations over the real and imagined spatial arrangement of the occupation zone.⁸³ While the conflict in Hong Kong was over the hierarchies produced by a stage that implied vertical distinctions between leaders and spectators, the internal struggle in Taiwan was about the inside/outside distinction created by the police presence that sealed off the activists inside

⁸³ Henri Lefebvre (1991) famously discusses the social “production of space” that transcends its material and symbolic properties. Drawing on Lefebvre’s work, Edward W. Soja (1996) develops the idea of a “thirdspace” that is at once “real-and-imagined.” When I point to contestations over real and imagined occupation structures, I do not refer to Soja’s thirdspace, but merely to struggles over the material as well as symbolic dimensions of space. In future publications I plan to more closely explore how the empirical material presented in this chapter relates to the theoretical literature on space and the literature on the spatial dimensions of occupation movements elsewhere (e.g. Hammond 2013; Kaika and Karaliotas 2016).

parliament (seemingly the vanguard) from the rest of the occupation (people helping to protect the students “inside”). Similar to performative contestations over the main stage in Hong Kong, attempts to transform this arrangement fundamentally challenged the Sunflower Movement’s leadership structure and its relatively constrained enactment of civil disobedience as a performance of democracy.

This chapter explores how the spatial configurations of the occupations and contestations over them reflect upon democratic visions and practices in both movements.⁸⁴ While studies of social movements typically focus their attention on the claims movements make vis-à-vis state institutions, I am more concerned with assessing how intra-movement factionalism played out through performative contestations over occupied space. The first part of this chapter discusses the transformation of parliament during the occupation in Taiwan, as well as the emerging order outside the legislature, and the conflict over the inside/outside distinction. The second part explores the role of the main stage in Hong Kong’s Admiralty occupation and how it was challenged by radical activists. I will show that despite significant differences between both occupations, there were remarkable similarities in terms of how factionalism played out through performative challenges over the spatial arrangement of the occupation zones. In both cases, radicals were dissatisfied with the hierarchies, the particular form of order, and the perceived lack of internal democracy implied by spatial features of the occupation. They launched performative assaults that aimed at transforming the occupied

⁸⁴ The distinct spatial structures have already received attention in the case-specific literature. Beckershoff, for instance, rightly observes that the peculiar “spatial configuration [of the Sunflower Occupation] was by no means accidental” and just the outcome of contingent circumstance, but also influenced by previous mobilizations during which a division of labour between student groups and NGOs was formed (2017, pp. 114-115). Ho discusses the spatial makeup of the occupations as a contingent factor that affected the development of the two movements (2019, pp. 141-142, p. 145). He suggests that “[t]he Sunflower Movement clearly enjoyed advantages in spatial arrangements that were denied to the Umbrella Movement” (p. 141). My aim here is to more extensively compare the role of space and spatial contestation in these movements.

space and with it the power structures inscribed in it. These contestations reflect that neither occupation formed one coherent and unambiguous “public sphere” (Habermas 1989). Instead the experience of these movements points to the agonistic dimensions of democracy (Mouffe 2009): They produced multiple democratic imaginations and practices that were shaped by contingencies and contestation rather than by rational deliberation. The moderate idea of democratic civil disobedience as a peaceful and rational affair was challenged by radicals who preferred a more decentralized, physical, and confrontational challenge to state power.

The Main Stage in Taiwan

Just like in Hong Kong and other places around the world, activism in Taiwan often involves physical stages used for speeches, artistic performances, and public engagement during public gatherings or rallies. While NGO-managed stages played important roles in the outside encampment, during the Sunflower Movement it was the occupied legislature itself that was transformed into the equivalent of Hong Kong’s *daaitoi*. More specifically, it was the podium of the assembly hall that was turned into the main stage. Whereas occupiers in Admiralty transformed the streets into public space for a democratic assembly, Taiwanese activists occupied a key government building. The activists took over not just an extremely symbolical, but also a political space, the occupation of which effectively prevented the government from passing the trade deal through the legislative process (Beckershoff 2017, pp. 120–121). It was from the podium of the assembly hall that the spokespersons of the movement would give many of the speeches that would define the movement. But there were also other public activities such as discussions, press conferences, and musical performances. A committee organized a daily rundown of all

activities inside the chamber (see Yu-shan M., interview, 18.5.2018). Further, different stations were set up for the media team, art team, medical supplies, and general supplies that were donated by the public (Rowen 2015, pp. 12–13). Journalists both from traditional and non-traditional media crowded into the building providing extensive coverage. “There was media all along, so the inside of the main chamber of the legislature turned into a kind of stage for performances” (表演的舞台), reflected one activist who was involved in the work group (Chloe L., interview, 10.5.2018).

Parliaments are usually theatrical spaces for performances by legislators (see Henk Te Velde 2019; Rai 2013), even during ordinary times. But the disruption of normal parliamentary proceedings made the theatrical character of the space even more palpable than usual. The Sunflower Movement not just exchanged the actors and put on a different show; participants also transformed the theatre. Like set designers they redecorated the whole main chamber to express their democratic aspirations. Some changes were necessary for reasons of functionality. For instance, some doors were blocked by tied-up chairs that formed barricades and pipes were installed along the walls to improve air circulation. Other changes were more directly aimed at visually changing the main chamber: Banners with slogans, posters, post-its, sunflowers, and all kinds of artworks were put up all around the chamber.⁸⁵ Through movement art participants could express their demands in various ways. Lastly, there were the bodies of the occupiers themselves, as well as all the things they required to maintain their everyday lives in the occupied space, including items such as food and blankets. Taken together, these changes visualized the re-claiming of parliament in a bid to “defend democracy.”

⁸⁵ Many of the artworks in the chamber were preserved in Academia Sinica’s “318 Civil Movement Archive,” see <http://public.318.io/about>, accessed 4.4.2021.

The main audience watching this transformed parliamentary stage was the Taiwanese public. The constant broadcasting of everyday life within the occupation provided a stark contrast to the government's alleged closed-door "black box" governance; performing openness and transparency as key aspects of democratic politics (Lee 2015b). Apart from the news media, activists themselves live-streamed from within the occupation. Already on the first night of the occupation a livestream was set-up using an iPad supported by flip-flop shoes (ibid.). The constant "surveillance" (ibid.), however, put pressure on the participants staying in the chamber. While the second floor of the building was kept off-camera, allowing those based there to conduct themselves more freely, the main chamber on the first floor was closely monitored (Ho 2019, pp. 169–170). "You would constantly be filmed by the cameras, [...] whether you slept, whether you ate, or perhaps all sorts of everyday life situations, all were highly exposed on screen," recalled one activist (Hsin-yi C., interview, 29.8.2018). Due to the constant gaze of the cameras, it has been suggested that the assembly hall turned into a kind of "Panopticon" (Lee 2015b, p. 38). Jeremy Bentham's design idea for prisons and other buildings that potentially allowed for an effortless monitoring of all inhabitants, inspired Foucault to theorize about the ways in which individuals in modern surveillance societies disciplined themselves under the mere threat of being monitored (Foucault 1995). The continuous presence of cameras inside Taiwan's legislature did have a disciplining effect on the occupiers, particularly since many participants cared greatly about how their occupation appeared to outside audiences (see Ho 2019, p. 169; Lee 2015b). The first night of the occupation had been quite chaotic and minor damage been done to the building, including some graffiti that was sprayed inside the building. An anarchy symbol had been sprayed onto one of the walls of a floor leading to the main chamber. The "circle-A" was, however, soon crossed out by participants themselves and people subsequently refrained

from spraying graffiti inside the building, possibly because it did not sit well with the peaceful and orderly appearance many of them wanted to project (Yen et al. 2015, pp. 159–160). Already during the first night participants reminded each other of the need to “pay attention to the media image”(注意媒體形象, Yen et al. 2015, p. 158). Some activists had had alcoholic beverage in the main chamber early on. However, occupiers in the main chamber later abstained from drinking alcohol (Ho 2019, p. 169; Hsin-yi C., interview, 29.8.2018). On the third day of the occupation a list of “Common Regulations for the People's occupation of the Legislature” was put up in the legislature. It included principles such as “don't damage public property,” “adhere to nonviolent resistance”, and “all actions should follow the proclamations and announcements of the commander-in-chief” (Yen et al. 2015, p. 44). All this reflects that the occupiers made great efforts to stage an organized and disciplined democratic assembly to counteract claims by movement opponents that they were “rioters” (暴民; Lee 2015b, p. 38; Martin 2015, p. 236).

Over time the occupied main chamber turned into quite a regulated space (Ho 2019, p. 169; Rowen 2015, p. 12). Due to the continued police presence, occupiers could not move freely between inside and outside of the legislature. There was a security team that was responsible for the safety of participants in the chamber (Yu-shan M., interview, 18.5.2018). It managed the entry of people and goods, trying to make sure no dangerous items came in. Additionally, white-clothed volunteers checked the body temperature of visitors, presumably to prevent the spread of disease amongst the demos assembled in the relatively tight parliamentary space.⁸⁶ Due to the limited space, only a certain number of people were allowed to enter the building each day (Chloe L., interview, 10.5.2018). It was far easier for people to leave than to enter. Overcrowding would have negatively affected the already low

⁸⁶ See footage featured in Chiang's 2018 documentary.

air quality and made it hard to sleep in the assembly hall (Hsin-yi C., interview, 29.8.2018).

On the one hand, coming up with rules and procedures was an organizational necessity to safely maintain a long-term occupation in a relatively small space with restricted communication to the outside world. On the other hand, the strict management of space was part of a performative strategy of presenting an organized, rational, and peaceful occupation. Many within the leadership regarded maintaining public support as vital (Pai-han W., interview, 21.8.2018; also Shu-fen K., interview, 24.7.2018). If the occupation looked overly messy, chaotic, or even violent, as it was sometimes portrayed by opponents, this could have negatively affected public opinion and provided the state a strong justification for clearing the chamber. Aware of both the presence of an audience and the importance of perceptions, the protesters enacted a “rational and earnest performance of resistance” (理性及嚴肅抗爭展演; Yen et al. 2015, p. 158).

Stages outside the legislature

Just as the occupation within the legislature, the streets surrounding it were transformed through the decentralized improvisation of participants who created a sustained and vibrant encampment (Ho 2019, pp. 150–175). Although the legislature was the centre of the protest, not everybody was able to enter the building due to the police cordon. NGO-managed stages outside the besieged building were meant to contribute to maintaining the mass mobilization necessary for protecting the protesters inside the legislature. Student leader Chia-hao L. stressed the importance of stages:

You have to have a stage, you have to organize a rundown of everyday, you have to organize, to invite some professors to hold a discussion there, or give a speech there or to invite some bands to give some show or people will not

stay there. Or people wouldn't know what [they] should do there. (interview, 3.5.2018)

Chia-hao L.'s statement reflects that the leadership was concerned that the number of protesters outside could dwindle if they did not organize activities. Participants were engaged in what was often referred to as a "sit-in protest" (靜坐示威). But sitting somewhere over a long period of time could cause frustration or even boredom, particularly when the inside of the legislature, which not everybody could enter, appeared as the centre of the protest. Yu-wen L., a representative of a human rights NGO involved in the movement, recalled that some people would leave if they found that there was "nothing happening outside" (interview, 23.5.2018). She suggested that they let "everyone know that there was something happening here. So you can stay, you don't have to try to get inside the parliament [...] [we] tried not to make them feel bored" (Yu-wen L., interview, 23.5.2018).

There were two main stages in the surrounding encampment at Qingdao East Road and Jinan Road. In both cases stage management was the responsibility of NGOs of the coalition against the trade bill. It was mainly environmental NGOs which oversaw the stage at Qingdao East Road, whereas human rights NGOs and those focusing on "other issues" were assembled at Jinan Road (Yu-wen L., interview, 23.5.2018). Yu-wen L. was one of the NGO professionals managing the stage. She recalled that after staying inside the legislature for the first two nights, she was called outside by her colleague who suggested that there was an increasing number of citizens and students from the South of Taiwan who had travelled to the scene but were unable to "enter the building" and were "just gathering around the parliament." Yu-wen L. came outside to help organize a stage program on Jinan Road for these people. She further made sure that the various NGOs were well coordinated and that there was always somebody

in charge “24 hours,” in case anything unforeseen happened. Yu-wen L. recalled that the activities they organized were quite varied. She helped arrange speeches, discussions, as well as invited singers “to have some performance for the people who [were] gathering there.” She also arranged screenings of films or documentaries followed by discussions.

Even though the NGOs made quite an effort to put on a varied programme, the stage management was criticised by some activists. Amongst the sceptics was the Electronic Music Anti-Nuclear Front and Friends” (電音反核陣及其友人們), a group that fused electronic music and environmental activism. According to an essay by one of the members, the group discussed the inadequacies of the stage system on the second day of the occupation:

Although the stage served the purpose of assembling the masses, the role of delivering important information, the spatial design of the stage made it necessary for the people to assemble by sitting in front of the stage; it lacked sufficient space for movement, limiting the autonomy of the masses. So the relationship between the stage and the masses could be classified as a top-down, one-directional relationship. The masses had to act passively in accordance with the instructions from the stage. Moreover, the people taking turns to go on stage spoke incessantly. They did not create any dialogue with the masses, as well as no opportunities for the crowd to get to know one another. (Jianmin Publication Group 2016, p. 27)

The statement indicates that hierarchical order that a stage implied was called into question by some of the activists. Even though there was a recognition that some degree of organization was required to include the “masses” of new participants in the protest, the stage and the leadership structure behind it was viewed as a constraint on their democratic capacity to learn and self-organize.

Reflecting that the NGO leadership was aware of the criticisms, Yu-wen L. admitted that the stage management was initially “like a one direction [street]” (interview, 23.5.2018). She suggested this changed over the course of the 24-day-movement, as they responded to demands by participants to “go on the stage” by organizing group deliberations that allowed people to discuss and speak their mind. The issues explored during the program varied. She stressed that since some participants mainly viewed the trade deal from the “anti-China” angle, they found it “very important to encourage them to have more [...] discussions on different issues” such as human rights and environmental concerns. They would “discuss the content of the trade agreement,” for instance by inviting participants on stage “to share their opinion and experience” on how their profession would be affected by the trade deal. Further, she pointed out that “some scholars also moved their classroom to Jinan Road.”⁸⁷

Similarly to the inside occupation, the outside encampment gradually turned into a regulated space. Sustained efforts were made to maintain an orderly and disciplined protest. Activists cleaned up after themselves and restricted noisy activities like speeches, music, or film screenings to daytime (although some groups did not adhere to these requirements, Hui-chun Y., interview, 20.8.2018). But what most strongly represented the orderly character of the occupation were the marshal teams (糾察隊) and medical passageways (醫療通道). The marshals maintained picket lines meant to ensure the safety of all participants and to regulate traffic flow within the encampment. They made sure that a path for medical staff was kept open at all times, just in case there was an emergency (Shu-fen K., interview, 24.7.2018; Hua-yi C., interview, 24.8.2018). The members of the marshal teams were recruited ad hoc. Coordination problems amongst them and conflicts with other participants about movement restrictions were common (Ho 2019, p. 168). Many of the

⁸⁷ See chapter 5 on deliberations outside.

volunteer marshals were assembled by Citizen 1985 (公民 1985), a social movement group that was founded a year prior to the occupation (ibid). The group was originally convened by netizens who staged large scale protests to demand military reforms following the death of a young army conscript. Citizen-1985's events were known for being tightly organized and choreographed – and therefore also predictable – providing a contrast with the more spontaneous and disruptive actions of the Black Island Front and other youth activist groups (Cole 2017, pp. 24–26).

Not all participants in the Sunflower Movement were satisfied with the relatively high degree of orderliness and discipline within the encampment. Some participants envisioned a less structured and constrained form of democratic resistance. They criticised the so-called “1985-ization” (1985 化) of the occupation, suggesting that the movement was becoming overly bureaucratic and restrictive under the influence of Citizen-1985 and its style of activism (Hioe 2017a). The marshal teams and emergency passageways were particular points of contention. One critical analysis, for instance, suggested that the establishment of “medical passageways, marshal teams, and big stages [...] secretly normalized a form of order and authority, leading the movement to have a disciplined and controlled character” (Jianmin Publication Group 2016, p. 40). The use of the term “secretly” (暗地裡) suggests that this order was not a conscious choice that all participants consented to, but rather an order gradually enforced from above. Other activists compared the orderly occupation to a “music festival” (Ya-yao W., interview, 16.5.2018), a “garden party” or even “carnival” (see below). These terms imply that the order was so restrictive that it was more like a regular public event rather than a protest.

Wen-yang W., a film-maker who was involved in the occupation, criticised the “conservative” character of the movement (interview, 16.4.2018). He said

he was very unhappy with the “excessive management” by the marshal teams. In his view they wanted to create a “very neat and tidy movement,” one that was entirely “peaceful and rational” and “extremely orderly.” He pointed out that the occupation was not created by adhering to this set of principles and wondered why it had become necessary “to maintain an image for the media or the outside world.” After all, protests can be messy and unpredictable. Ke-chung L., a veteran activist associated with the College of Social Sciences group (see chapter 2), pointed out that a lot of the newcomers mobilized during the Sunflower Movement favoured an orderly approach:

They are more idealistic, they know they are doctors, they are lawyers, they are engineers, they have never paid attention to politics all their life but now they have awakened. And they want to see themselves taking part in history. And they want the street to be clean, they want the traffic to be smooth, they want people to follow rules, they want people to guard the doors of the Legislative Yuan, not to have too many people going in, not to have people going in and out. [...] So you got these kinds of volunteers, they are even more organized than we are. So we were in a constant struggle with them. Because I thought this movement is egalitarian, is progressive, we don't have to shave our head every day; it's just relaxed, you don't have to be so clean-cut. (interview 20.4.2018)

Most striking here is the use of the term “volunteer” to describe participants. The implication is that there is a difference between volunteers and activists. The former are more like followers who value order as well as professionalism, whereas the latter are more experienced in direct action and actively shape the direction of the movement, even if it means accepting a degree of messiness. The statement indicates that some participants envisioned a democratic movement to be more open and loosely organized.

The Inside/Outside Distinction

The most contentious feature of the occupation structure was the spatial distinction between the inside and outside of the Legislative Yuan that was created due to the police presence. Unlike the Wild Lily Movement of 1990, the Sunflower Movement did not feature a visible picket line that separated the allegedly “pure” student activists from ordinary citizens and thus allowed them to re-enact the role historically played by scholars in imperial China. Nonstudents were strongly involved in the leadership and the Sunflower Movement embraced aspects of “youth popular culture,” indicating “clear derivations” from the historical protest script of “Chinese intellectualism” (Ho 2019, pp. 14–15). However, instead of a visible line explicitly erected to distinguish students from members of the public, the Sunflower Movement featured a police cordon separating the protesters inside the legislature from the rest of the occupation. This represents an accidental innovation on the traditional script. While not all occupiers inside the assembly hall were in fact students, there was a general perception that most participants squeezed into the building were students and that this was a student-led movement. Ho suggests, “[t]he police cordon kept outside participants on the street, inadvertently elevating the status of the student leadership [inside]” (ibid., p. 141). He points out that Sunflower leader Huang Kuo-chang used the phrase “isolated island effect” (孤島效應) to describe how the spatial separation “made the inside occupiers appear vulnerable, thus encouraging supporters to extend their stay on the outside” (ibid.; see also Lin 2016, p. 18). Under this spatial framework, the young people on the inside appeared trapped in the assembly hall under challenging conditions and in need of help from people outside, arousing the “compassion” of the general public (Hua-yi C., interview, 24.8.2018).

Although the peculiar spatial order thus carried some benefits (Ho 2019, p. 141), it also impeded communication within the movement and created artificial hierarchies between the occupiers inside the chamber and their “supporters” outside that did not sit well with the democratic aspirations of some participants. Po-chun C., an NGO professional working for the Democratic Front, suggested that the space was “cut apart” in a fashion that created distinctions qualitatively different from previous movements (interview, 21.7.2018). He recalled that some people from the inside believed that those outside were not full participants in the movement:

I heard that some of them thought that we people from the outside had merely come to provide support. We were not participants in the movement (運動的參與者), we were just supporters of the movement (聲援者). I heard a few people from the legislative chamber felt this way. They thought they were the movement, because they may feel that they were the ones who burst into the legislature. They kicked open the gate, they occupied that place, so they felt the legislative chamber, that space was actually the main body of the movement, that the outside was just for support.

Po-chun C. went on to suggest that his observation was based on what he perceived during conversations and meetings after the Sunflower Movement had ended, even with some from the movement leadership, but that he suspected people might not openly express this if asked today. His statement indicates that the spatial arrangement fostered a perception among some insiders that they were the vanguard of the movement; that the occupiers inside were the protagonists, while those outside were merely the supporting cast.

Some participants imagined a different occupation and enactment of democracy. There were competing understandings of how the occupied space should be organized. The College of Social Science group proposed to remove the police and seize control of the whole legislature to improve

communication within the movement (Ke-chung L., interview, 20.4.2018; Hua-yi C., interview, 24.8.2018). But many within the movement leadership, particularly some of the NGOs of the Joint Conference and the students inside the occupied chamber, preferred not to challenge the accidental inside/outside distinction caused by the police presence (see chapter 2). There were concerns this could challenge the leadership structure and create chaos (Chia-hao L., interview 3.5.2018). Pai-han W., an academic deeply involved in the core leadership argued that the proposal of removing the police to connect the different occupation zones was not just “impossible” to pull off, but also risked causing “violent conflict” which in turn – if “provoked” by the demonstrators – could jeopardise societal support, which he deemed “most important” at the time. He felt the proposed operation had “low benefits but high costs” (interview, 21.8.2018). Certainly, the legislative chamber would not appear as an “isolated island” anymore if participants could move in and out freely, meaning that images of the occupation might not affect public sympathy (see Hua-yi C., interview, 24.8.2018).

The College of Social Sciences Group eventually agreed to change course and target the Executive Yuan instead of opening up the legislature. However, other radical groups outside had also schemed to transform the existing occupation and stuck with their plan. This included the Electronic Music Anti-Nuclear Front and Friends as well as a more loosely organized group of people from Taiwan’s independent music scene (獨立樂團; Jianmin Publication Group 2016, pp.31–32; Lin 2016, p.41). Members of the Electronic Front were highly critical of the hierarchical decision-making structure fostered by the spatial order, as a post-occupation essay on the group’s experience indicates:

The movement’s direction and actions were determined by a small group of core decision-makers. It seemed those on the outside of the assembly hall did not belong to the existing interpersonal network of the decision-making core,

thus did not have communication channels to obtain information, as well as were unable to transmit ideas into the inside of the assembly hall and participate in the planning of actions; they could only comply with orders issued from inside the chamber. This operating mechanism cut apart the energy of the inside and outside, making it impossible to integrate them. Since the people outside did not understand the purpose of directives from inside the chamber, they were not necessarily convinced to take concerted action; and if the people outside the chamber had the energy and ideas to initiate actions, then they likely just acted spontaneously, given that they did not discuss this with the inside, leading the command system inside the assembly hall to mistakenly think it was infiltration by saboteurs (破壞運動者). (Jianmin Publication Group 2016, p. 31)

In this analysis, the spatial arrangement weakened the movement. It allowed a core leadership to emerge inside the assembly hall that was relatively insulated from the people on the outside, making it difficult for them to self-organize actions and influence the direction of the movement.

Outside participants eventually lost patience and challenged the leadership as well as the established spatial order in a highly performative bid to transform the movement. On March 23, day six of the occupation, at around 1:30 p.m. – prior to the storming of the Executive Yuan later at night –, there was a widely noted Facebook post that called for people to come to the legislature for further action and asked for reposts by “everyone who absolutely doesn’t want to come to just stage a sit-in and garden party” (園遊會; Apple Daily 2014b). Three hours later, at 4:30 p.m., several dozen activists attempted to charge into the legislature through the side entrance on Qingdao East Road. The attackers shouted slogans such as “we didn’t come to participate in a garden party” and “remove the police.” There was a push and shove clash with the police which blocked them from entry. Marshals from inside also obstructed the way. Inside occupiers, including student

leaders Lin Fei-fan and Chen Wei-ting, quickly came out, blocking the way and appealing to everybody to “calm down” and “sit down.”⁸⁸ Ultimately the people charging were not able to remove the police and occupy the whole legislature. Ho points out that the peculiar spatial structure and its police cordon “defended the student leadership from the challenges of radical dissenters” (Ho 2019, pp. 141–142). It is quite remarkable that there was “dissent” within an oppositional movement that played out in such performative fashion as a contestation over the occupation’s spatial order. It underlines the point made by some activists that the activists nested inside the legislature with their elaborate division of labour turned into a kind of “government” mirroring the broader political and social system (Chloe L., interview, 10.5.2018; Chien-hung M., interview, 20.8.2018).

However, the storming of the legislature was understood as more than an expression of dissenting voices unsatisfied with the movement mainstream and leadership. It could be perceived as a coup d'etat aimed at overturning the leadership core inside the legislature (see Ke-chung L., interview, 20.4.2018). Hsin-yi C., who was head of the first-floor marshal team at the time, recalled that some challengers from the outside actually managed to enter the second floor of the legislature (interview, 29.8.2018). She said that the newcomers wanted to “replace” the people on the second floor and asked them to leave. They hoped to remake the decision-making structure, which she described as “reshuffling the cards” (重新洗牌). Hsin-yi C. said that the challengers wanted to control the movement and increase the pressure on the Kuomintang government. “We basically resisted strongly, because we all were already here.” She recalled wondering at the time who these people were and what the “logic” behind their actions was.

⁸⁸ Footage from the charge is included in a TV documentary, see FTV News 2014. See also Apple Daily 2014a; China Times 2014.

Once the situation outside was under control, Lin and Chen used a microphone to speak. Some close-up video footage of the episode is available, making it possible to reconstruct some of what was said. Footage from one TV documentary shows the visibly distressed student leaders, standing in a line with their comrades from the inside, using a microphone to try to appease the crowd:⁸⁹

Crowd: Let us in! Let us in!

Chen Wei-ting: In fact, you have other choices. For example, if you are willing to take the legal responsibility, actually there are more effective actions to take. For example, you can ask people to storm into the Presidential Office. Just like we stormed into parliament. [applause from supporters] I stormed into parliament; I take the legal responsibility. I am faced with four legal cases, I am going to court next month. So what responsibility have you taken on? [applause] [...]

Lin Fei-fan: I also face four legal cases, I still haven't graduated, I have stayed inside parliament for six days, during the first three days I never once left the assembly hall, I was shut inside all the time, no fresh air for three days. Everyone of us, if you have a good method, something carefully planned, or if there is someplace you'd like to storm into, and you are willing to bear the legal responsibility, we welcome it. (FTV News 2014)

At one point, Lin clearly teared up during his speech, indicating that this was not just a tense but also emotionally distressing situation for everyone involved. The encounter reveals divisions within the movement. The people charging in seem to have lost patience and were no longer content with the role as mere supporters on the outside. Instead of sitting in on the outside, they wanted to play a more proactive role. The people from the inside who came out, however, seem to have viewed this as a challenge to the movement leadership or even as a threat to the continuation of their occupation. Lin and

⁸⁹ A four-hour-long video livestream was also recorded online, see Weibolinke 2014. The livestream recorded what was said over microphone, but unfortunately only shows the legislature from afar.

Chen both emphasized the legal responsibility they had accepted by occupying parliament and questioned if their critics were willing to do the same. They stressed that storming into the legislature was not an effective course of action and pointed out that there were other places they could charge into. Chen even provided the specific example of the Presidential Office. This indicates that they preferred for the challengers to carry out their own separate operation elsewhere rather than transforming the status quo of the existing occupation.

Chia-hao L. reflected that a strong sense of frustration led to the incident. At the time people believed the movement would fail if they could not pressure the government to provide a positive response soon. There was concern that people would gradually leave the area, as many would return to work two days later, on Monday, giving the police the opportunity to clear the legislature. In this situation many believed that more radical action was required “to make the government compromise.” Chia-hao L. testified:

So the group of people believed that if we removed the police it would be a signal, a radical signal that we have really overwhelming control of the Legislative Yuan. That was their goal. And maybe some of them were not in our... were not satisfied with the leadership. Maybe some of them tried to storm in and replace us. [...] They are actually our friends. [laughs] People are friends. But some of them... most of them are rockers, people playing in bands [...] You know people are friends. They were just frustrated. They were just you know... angry at the time and took action. (interview, 3.5.2018)

That Chia-hao L. described the people who stormed the building as “friends” indicates that they were experienced activists rather than newcomers; that they were part of the activist networks developed over the years prior to the occupation. While I was not able to directly speak to any of the challengers, other sources confirm that many of them were members of Taiwan’s indie music scene who had become dissatisfied with the constrained sit-in (Chloe

L., interview, 10.5.2018; see also Jianmin Publication Group 2016, pp. 31–32). Taiwanese indie music can be quite political. The band “Fire EX”, for instance, released a song written during the occupation that became the quasi-anthem of the Sunflower Movement (“Island's Sunrise” 島嶼天光; Mack 2014). In the years prior to the Sunflower Movement, activists also utilized indie music during protests, for instance by organizing concerts to rally against land expropriations (Chun-chieh W., interview, 28.7.2018).

While the confrontation between different groups of protesters took place at the Qingdao East Road side entrance, there was a well-timed performance on top of the legislature. Three protesters had ascended the rooftop with the help of people inside (Jianmin Publication Group 2016, pp. 39–42). They turned the whole building into a stage from which they addressed the public. One of them read out the pre-written statement – the “real person manifesto” (真人宣言) – through a microphone to occasional applause from the crowd below.⁹⁰ The following is an excerpt from the manifesto:

This declaration does emphatically not include any substantive goals and practical actions. We hope that everyone can face themselves, seriously reflect on the core questions and values. We come here today not to manufacture fear, but rather to eliminate everybody's fear. We have come here today because we all fear: We fear an uncertain future, fear losing our cherished values. [...]

how do we confront our own fear? We invite you to, starting from now, honestly face yourself, to let yourself awaken in the people's consciousness. This is the only effective way of resisting the invisible fear. Using both hands to truly grasp one's own life, living out life according to one's own desires and not to the blueprints made up in the minds of the power holders. There is nobody who can control us, we can only control ourselves. [...]

⁹⁰The performance was recorded on video by one of the participants and later uploaded to Youtube.com, see mantrue 2014.

We come here today to bring a message: We want to take back the right to speak; to return it to you, to return it to everybody, as well as to those people who have not yet been born. [...]

Finally, we hope that at this most urgent juncture everyone releases their own strength, does what they themselves think is right. (Jianmin Publication Group 2016, pp. 164–165)

It is notable that the manifesto stressed its own lack of “substantive goals and practical actions,” echoing the prefigurative impetus of Occupy Wall Street (Graeber 2013; Smucker 2014). Social movements were envisioned as a democratic process of self-empowerment. Given that the manifesto was delivered by activists involved in discussions about possible radical actions, it might seem surprising that it does not entail direct criticism of the existing leadership and its moderate stance. But reading between the lines a critique of the existing power structures within the occupation can be ascertained. The whole declaration was an appeal to activists to think for themselves and take action based on their own rather than other people’s beliefs. It entailed a fundamental critique of representation common to radical activist practices, instead celebrating direct democratic participation. The manifesto called on the crowd to question any form of authority and “to take back the right to speak.” It is quite likely that the final line, which urged people to unleash their “own strength” and do “what they themselves think is right,” was an appeal for more radical action. At the same time, it is notable that they did not prescribe any particular course of action. It seems they did not want to lead the movement but rather stimulate self-organization in the hope for spontaneous action.

Following the attempt to open up the legislature and the failed storming of the Executive Yuan later that same day, “dissidents” within the movement largely gave up their attempts to fundamentally change the spatial structure

of the occupation. In the later stage of the stalemate, several groups instead set up an alternative space within the occupation together. The so-called *Jianmin* Liberation Zone (賤民解放區) was founded on April 1 in front of the National Taiwan University Alumni Office (Pan 2014; Yen et al. 2015, p. 100). It was essentially a base for activists who were dissatisfied with the mainstream of the occupation, mostly from the left-wing of the movement; a space for collaboration, strategic discussions, concerts, art performances and other activities (Jianmin Publication Group 2016, pp. 55–59; see also Mara L., interview, 1.8.2018). Prior to establishing this base, activists involved in the Electronic Front who stayed in the area had already stopped actively cooperating with the inside of the legislature. Over time, connections and familiarity with other groups deepened, including with the National Alliance for Workers of Closed Factories and people involved in the indie music scene, a process that culminated in the “formal” establishment of the *Jianmin* Liberation Zone (Jianmin Publication Group 2016, pp. 12–18).

Jianmin (賤民) can be translated as “underclass” or “base people” (DeFrancis 2003).⁹¹ The term was coined after a group of people from the Electronic Front went into the occupied legislature in late March. Their impression was that there was a strong status difference, leading them to mockingly compare themselves to “base people entering the capital” (賤民進京; Jianmin Publication Group 2016, p. 19). By implying that the occupied legislature was the imperial capital and the outside was for ordinary people, the use of the term *jianmin* signalled a critique of the hierarchies and power structures in the occupation. It reflects a degree of alienation from the broader movement.

⁹¹ While the name has been translated as “Untouchables’ Liberation Area” (Hioe 2017c) or “Pariah Liberation Area” (Ho 2019, p. 171), I prefer the approach of Jason Pan (2014) of the English-language newspaper Taipei Times who simply refers to it as “Jianmin Liberation Zone.” He rightly points out that the term is commonly translated as “dalit” (the depressed caste in the Indian caste system, formerly called “untouchables”), but was also used in the past to denote people of the lowest social stratum in East Asia.

The Liberation Zone was framed as a space for the disenfranchised. On the day the *Jianmin* Liberation Zone was founded, some of its founders released a manifesto. The following is an excerpt:

In this movement, although we have energetically participated and committed our efforts to the movement, we do not feel that we have the right of decision-making with this movement. Although it may appear that this movement is a collective one, in reality, many decisions within the movement have been made by a small minority regarding issues of leadership, discipline, and the management of the movement as a whole, duplicating the structure of the political system it claims to oppose. In the same way, the appeal to so-called reason or peace has become a means of control. This process of duplication reflects the lack of political imagination of the movement leadership [...]

We advocate that, in response to the movement being controlled by a small group of people, the people should themselves be the centre of the movement and every participant in the movement has the right to speak up and carry out their own forms of actions. It should not be that a small set of elites claim to “represent” or “lead” us using the same means as in mainstream politics. We also hope to see improvement in organization through dialogue, and that all participants in the movement should be those who make decisions from the movement, and in this way to arrive at consensus, to reflect the shared and collective voice of our movement. (Jianmin Liberation Zone 2017)

The manifesto reflects a great deal of frustration with the concentration of power and authority in a core leadership. The authors call into question the need for representation and leadership. They criticise the leadership structures as an unimaginative recreation of the very state institutions that were perceived as malfunctioning or even opposed in the first place. This indicates that their vision of democracy conflicted with that of the core

leadership. Whilst the leadership framed the movement as an effort to protect Taiwan's representative democracy, the authors of the manifesto articulated an unease with representation and "mainstream politics." The proposal that "the people" should "be the centre of the movement" suggests that the self-declared *jianmin* favoured a more horizontal organization of decision-making. While they did not spell out in any detail in the manifesto how this could be arranged in the context of a mass movement, they did point to the importance of making decisions via consensus. This indicates that the *Jianmin* Liberation Zone was established to create a space for the prefigurative experimentation with open and consensus-oriented forms of self-governance that contrasted with the closed-door decision-making of the core leadership outlined in the previous chapter.

Interim Conclusion

The Sunflower Movement transformed Taiwan's legislature into the main stage for a vibrant enactment of democracy that contrasted both with ordinary parliamentary proceedings and the backroom ("black box") politics the government was allegedly pursuing. While the initial days were quite chaotic as the movement involved large numbers of people collaborating in an ad-hoc fashion, participants staged a remarkably organized and disciplined occupation due to an awareness for the importance of image and perception. The main audience for this democratic spectacle was the Taiwanese public. The movement leadership tried to maintain a rational and peaceful protest to counter claims that occupiers were rioters and boost public support. For this purpose the accidental police cordon proved useful. According to Ho it "not only elevated [the] symbolic status [of the students inside the legislature] but also protected them from dissident radicals" (2019,

p. 145). Further, it served to boost public support by making occupiers appear trapped inside the building.

However, this spatial setup also contributed to creating divisions and hierarchies within the movement. Factionalism played out through performative challenges over the spatial order that underlined that there were different visions of democratic protest within the movement. The performative strategy of communicating the peacefulness and rationality of the whole occupation was challenged by radical occupiers who were not content with the existing hierarchies, wanted to more actively participate in shaping the movement's direction, and to pursue a more confrontational form of democratic resistance.

Eventually several groups of radical protesters set up their own space within the encampment, indicating a retreat from actively seeking to change the trajectory of the whole movement and a shift towards carving out a separate space for acting out their democratic visions.

Hong Kong's Main Stage

While outside protesters in the Sunflower Movement challenged the inside/outside segregation of the occupied legislature in a bid to decentralize the movement, radical occupiers in Hong Kong's Umbrella Movement tried to take down the main stage that symbolized the traditional leadership of the pro-democracy movement. Physical stages feature in protests across the world, but they play a particularly prominent role in Hong Kong. Perhaps the best example for the use of stages in the city is the annual July 1 rally, which can be considered the archetypical pro-democracy demonstration. The march is organized by the Civil Human Rights Front (民間人權陣線; CHRF), an NGO coalition that was involved in the Umbrella Movement leadership.

Traditionally stages mark the beginning and end point of the march (Taylor S., interview, 11.8.2018). They provide gathering points and allow movement leaders to address participants, the media, and society at large. Maintaining a stage with a “well planned programme” with designated speakers and speaking times has become the “usual practice for mainstream NGOs for organizing public gatherings” (ibid.).

Prior to the outbreak of the Umbrella Movement the mainstream model of protest that relies on stages with tightly managed performances already faced criticism. It became clear that a normalization of the annual protests had taken place that rendered the ritualized performance largely ineffective. Its ritualized character was questioned by radical activists who spearheaded more confrontational tactics that left more room for spontaneity and improvisation (Cheng 2016; Lee and Chan 2011). They did not want to march along a pre-determined (and police-approved) route to then watch a stage performance before heading home. Rather than playing extras on a film set, radical activists wanted to be active participants in an embodied confrontation with the state. The emergence of the Umbrella Movement represents the culmination of this trend. While there was an elevated stage next to Civic Square, what happened on it was not decisive. The occupation emerged as a spontaneous mass response to police violence (Cheng and Chan 2017). Participants even refused to follow the stage directions received from those who had first initiated the campaign by ignoring calls to retreat from HKFS and OCLP, who feared an imminent crackdown.

Despite the chaotic spontaneous emergence, the movement leadership continued to use stages throughout the occupation. The stage on Tim Mei Avenue next to Civic Square, which had been put up as part of the student strike, featured a large green background that read in white characters “masters of our own destiny” (命運自主; Veg 2017, p. 340). The slogan

reflects that “autonomy” (自主) was one of the key themes of movement discourse (ibid.). While maintaining this stage was viewed as important in the early days of the occupation to pass on information, it was soon largely replaced by a new *daaitoi* that was set up under the bridge on Harcourt Road (Jamie T., interview, 14.6.2018). The advantage of the new stage was that it was more centrally located in proximity to the Admiralty underground station and could thus “reach more people” (ibid.). The location under a bridge also meant that all technical equipment was protected from rainfall (Taylor S., interview, 11.8.2018). However, the “old stage” was not completely abandoned. It remained in place throughout the movement, was used by the student organizations for internal discussions and press conferences. Further, it also became a popular background for people to take photographs (Jamie T., interview, 14.6.2018; Taylor S., interview, 11.8.2018).

The Umbrella Movement had a larger scale than the Sunflower Movement, not just involving greater numbers of participants, but also covering more space. The proclaimed leadership of the movement was never able to fully command the three decentralized occupation zones that were managed by self-mobilized participants (Cai 2017; Cheng and Chan 2017). One student leader suggested that the only space that the leadership could control was the main stage in Admiralty (Alan W., interview, 8.6.2018). It served as the symbolical centre of the Umbrella Movement from where leadership figures addressed the occupiers, the government, and the public at large each night.

Apart from the platforms put up by the movement leadership, there were various other stages in the occupation zones that were created by unaffiliated occupiers themselves or by different organizations. Participants in Mongkok, for instance, established their own stage that was basically a tarp with an open mic (Robin C., interview, 13.6.2018; Scarlett W., interview, 8.8.2018).⁹²

⁹² The Mongkok stage deliberations will be discussed in chapter 4.

Nonetheless, it was the main stage in Admiralty which the gaze of the media was focused upon and that was criticised by radical activists who envisioned more disruptive forms of pro-democracy protest.

While radical participants claimed that the occupation was self-organized by the people and was not the Occupy movement envisioned by OCLP (Passion Times 2016), the main stage on Harcourt Road in Admiralty represented continuity with OCLP and the traditional pro-democracy movement. It was managed by a group of experienced emcees, most of who had been recruited by OCLP prior to the occupation due to their experience playing this role during the annual July 1 rally and other protests (Robin C., interview, 13.6.2018; Scarlett W., interview, 8.8.2018; Taylor S., interview, 11.8.2018). Even though the occupation did not unfold as planned, the emcees nonetheless took over the stage management which involved arranging a daily line-up, moderating, and announcing information.

Taylor S., a veteran activist involved in the CHRF who often volunteered to manage the stage during the annual July 1 demonstration, was one of the emcees responsible for the *daaitoi* (interview, 11.8.2018). Taylor S. pointed out that the construction was made up of components provided by OCLP and different organizations such as trade unions and the pan-democratic political parties (see also Jamie T., interview, 14.6.2018). Despite its symbolical status, the stage was a rather unpretentious metal construction.⁹³ It was just a small, elevated platform that was accessible through a ladder. The whole construction had a somewhat improvised look. Taylor S. recalled that “the stage [was] developing during the whole movement, even physically” (interview, 11.8.2018). While it was “very low-tech” in the early days, the audio system was later upgraded to include a “good amplifier” and even a

⁹³ Images are widely available online, as the stage was the centre of much attention, e.g. VOA 2014, 2015. For future publications I aim to find visual material that I can reproduce with permission of the copyright holders.

power generator to support the equipment. Instead of relying on just one ladder, a second one was added to allow for better visibility of guest speakers. Taylor S. recalled that since the stage relied on expensive equipment, metal fences were later put up to protect it.

The use of barriers reflects that the leadership in Hong Kong could not benefit from a spatial arrangement of the kind its counterpart in Taiwan used to its advantage (Ho 2019, pp. 141–142). Whereas the leadership core in Taiwan enjoyed a degree of protection due to their relative insulation within the legislature, the main stage in Hong Kong was located on a street out in the open and more exposed (*ibid.*). Protecting the stage was one of the main tasks of a marshal team that had been recruited prior to the occupation by OCLP. The need for an effective marshal system had been one of the key takeaways from OCLP's study tours to Taiwan during the preparatory stage of the campaign that entailed exchanges with Taiwanese activists (Samuel F., interview, 23.11.2017; Brian W., interview, 13.6.2018). According to the original OCLP script, marshals were meant to play an active role in controlling the protest to ensure restraint and nonviolence. But when the protest eventually unfolded in an unexpected fashion, their efforts to police the encampment faced strong opposition from self-mobilized occupiers who formed their own barricades and refused to comply with requests to strategically give up parts of the occupation to signal a willingness to negotiate (interviews: Samuel F., 26.6.2015; Brandon F., 7.8.2018; Luke E., 9.8.2018). This underscores the clear limits of the movement leadership's control over an encampment that was run by occupiers in a direct and decentralized fashion (Leung and Wong 2019). Although the marshals could not control the occupation the way OCLP had envisioned it, they continued to assist the movement leadership in the Admiralty occupation. The picket team guarded the main stage and contributed to maintaining order by

responding to incidents involving pro-government supporters, drug addicts, drunk people, and theft (Liam Y., interview, 14.6.2018).

Even though participants in Hong Kong did not seize and temporarily remake the main parliamentary stage like their counterparts in Taiwan, their occupations nonetheless transformed streets and urban landscapes into public space for the prefigurative enactment of democracy through communal living, public debate, the creation of art, and textual production (see Chow 2019; Hui 2017; Leung and Wong 2019; Veg 2016). The transformed urban space provided a stark contrast to the rest of the city and its ordinary political routines. Daniel Matthews (2017a) provides an insightful analysis of the “spatial reordering” through the encampments. While occupiers in Hong Kong were not squeezed into a cordoned off legislature that was compared to an “isolated island,” they too created and sustained “an insular normative world that *lived out* an alternative form of community in the heart of the city” (ibid., p. 36). The area surrounding the main stage was renamed “Umbrella Plaza” (雨傘廣場), signalling that activists had carved out a new public square on the occupied highways. The creative spatial transformation was particularly remarkable given that public space is rare in Hong Kong, a city that is structured in such way as to facilitate commercial activities and consumption rather than “leisure, debate, or political expression in public” (ibid., p. 37).

Occupiers in Admiralty largely maintained a form of decentralized order that emphasized peacefulness and rationality, just as most participants in the Taiwanese occupation had, due to concern for the public image of their movement. Hui Yew-Foong’s ethnographic analysis highlights that the occupation created “communal spaces that presented images of an utopian Hong Kong” (2017, p. 148). Whilst opponents of the occupation claimed it

represented chaos and a breakdown of order, Hui points out that the occupiers demonstrated their capacity for democratic self-governance:

[T]he spatial make-over of the occupied area, imbued with the occupiers' concern with hygiene, sustainability and general well-being, reflects a community capable of order and 'governing' itself and therefore need of 'micro-governance' from the Chinese central government. (p. 152)

The area was remade through artworks, banners, the establishment of tent villages, medical, supply, and even recycling stations, and workshops. Through the construction and use of self-study areas student participants displayed "that they did not detract from but rather affirmed their prescribed social role as students," thereby "add[ing] to the moral force of the movement" (ibid., p. 152).

The occupations created a space that allowed participants to explore different ways of living and acting together as part of a seemingly utopian and self-governing community. However, as days turned into weeks and the government continued to refuse to give in, exhaustion built up and divisions within the movement began to intensify. Radicals criticised the proclaimed movement leadership and pushed for an escalation (Cai 2019; Ho 2019, p. 135). In this context the main stage in Admiralty as the symbol of "central authority" became a central target of criticism (Alfred N., interview, 5.6.2018). According to Cai the *daaitoi*:

[W]as primarily criticised for representing authority instead of democracy. Speakers on the stage were selected or perceived as controlled by certain groups, particularly by the students and pan-democratic parties. Other participants felt that they were denied the chance to give free speeches on that stage. Thus, some of them assumed that the people who controlled the stage in Admiralty monopolized the discourse. (2017, p. 109)

Radical occupiers accused the leadership of blocking their access to the main stage and preventing them from advocating for and initiating more disruptive actions. One critic of the stage, for instance, was quoted by the SCMP as saying “We have not been allowed to express our views freely on stage [...] If we say something the emcees do not like, they then add their comments later to 'correct' our speech” (cited by Cai 2017, p. 109). Alex Chow, former HKFS secretary-general, reflected in a recent academic analysis that the leadership of the movement was criticised:

[A]s an authoritarian group whose ‘mainstage’ (the platform from which people made speeches to the crowd in Admiralty) controlled everything and obstructed any direct action to bring about real changes. (2019, p. 44)

Whereas radicals in Taiwan questioned the inside/outside segregation produced by a police cordon that shielded and symbolically elevated the movement leadership (Ho 2019, p. 145), their counterparts in Hong Kong challenged the hierarchies and exclusions implied by a stage that vertically elevated representatives above the crowd. “You don’t represent me” (你不代表我) became an influential slogan during the occupation in Hong Kong. Whilst the main stage came to symbolize the movement leadership and thus a centralization of power, radicals who challenged it “promoted a decentralised movement structure” (Chan 2015a, p. 5).

In effect, intra-movement factionalism did in both cases play out through contestations over the real and imagined spatial structures of the occupations. Challengers could claim that attempts by vertical leadership to shape the movement’s strategic trajectory violated the democratic principles that had motivated participants to turn to the streets in the first place. They believed that key spatial features – an allegedly isolated leadership core cordoned off within the legislature in Taiwan and a purportedly closed off main stage elevated above ordinary participants in Hong Kong – reflected that both

movements in their internal organization reproduced untransparent governance structures that they claimed to oppose.

In the case of Hong Kong, struggles over the main stage were fuelled by the rise of localism as an increasingly influential ideology within the opposition camp. While protests leading up to the Umbrella Movement such as on heritage protection and against national education already signalled a growing focus on local concerns and autonomy, the Umbrella Movement marked the rise of localist groups that seriously challenged traditional pro-democracy activism. As Malte Kaeding points out:

Two decades of pandemocrats' failed efforts to achieve universal suffrage [...] have led nascent localist groups to start calling for a new strategy that focuses purely on Hong Kong's own development. With this position, the localists are waging a two-front campaign, attacking not only the pro-establishment camp but also pandemocrats for their commitment to the idea that Hong Kong should remain part of China. (2017, p. 158)

This "two-front campaign" played out during the Umbrella Movement when localists advocated for more confrontational tactics vis-a-vis the state and also vehemently criticised the movement leadership. While localist groups were particularly involved in the Mong Kong occupation zone that developed a more militant culture (Yuen 2019b), they were also active in Admiralty where they challenged the main stage as a symbol not just for the movement leadership, but also for the traditional course of the pro-democracy movement (Alfred N., interview, 5.6.2018).

Compared to Hong Kong, intra-movement infighting was much less severe in the Sunflower Movement. As Ho points out, "[w]hile Hong Kong's movement network was fractured by an ever-widening ideological cleavage, Taiwan's was relatively free of sectarian infighting" (Ho 2019, p. 91). Whereas there was a deep schism in Hong Kong between the pan-democrats,

student organizations, and NGOs, on the one side, and their localist challengers, on the other, the question of relations to China did not create similar divisions in Taiwan. The spatial contestations discussed above were largely about internal organization and tactics, not about deeper questions of independence and identity. In fact, many within the Sunflower leadership shared pro-independence viewpoints, even though this was only openly articulated towards the end of the occupation due to social stigma (Indie DaDee 2017).⁹⁴ While the Legislative Yuan occupation was not explicitly about Taiwan independence, it was the result of years of protest during which the “China factor” framing became increasingly influential (Wu 2019; also Chien-hung M., interview, 20.8.2018; Yan-ting L., interview, 20.8.2018). A key concern of the movement was protecting Taiwan’s democracy and autonomy. Due to the relatively higher degree of cohesion, the Taiwanese core leadership was spared the kind of fundamental challenge their counterparts in Hong Kong experienced.

Owen C. emerged as a vocal public critic of the traditional pan-democratic movement and its *daaitoi* in the aftermath of the Umbrella Movement. Following his involvement in the occupation, Owen C. was involved in Hong Kong Indigenous (本土民主前線). The leading localist group played a key role in the so-called “Fishball Revolution” (魚蛋革命), violent clashes over the clearing of unlicensed street hawkers by the police on Chinese New Year in 2016 (see Lim 2017). Owen C. argued that during the Umbrella Movement the main stage tried to exclude localists from the movement:

I think the stage was another sort of tyranny, because they didn’t accept the people [...] they would prevent the different protesters from doing the

⁹⁴ Ho (2019, p. 171) observes that in Taiwan the movement leadership shared pro-independence views whilst their challengers (particularly the self-styled *jianmin*) came from the left of the political spectrum. In Hong Kong, by contrast, the main stage of traditionally more left-wing activists was challenged from the right by radical localists. Ho suggests that in this regard “the Sunflower Movement was the mirror image of the Umbrella Movement” (ibid.).

protest. Like some teenagers like us wanted to upgrade the action, but they would prevent us [from doing so]. And they didn't want to talk with us, they just labelled us: 'you are a ghost'. [...] Do you know what it means? [...] 'You are a CCP-agent infiltrating our group.' So they will label us. When we talk about localism, they will label us a racist, a fascist, we are intolerant. So we don't have any opportunity to communicate with them. They block the way. (interview, 25.10.2017)

Labelling the stage as “another sort of tyranny” strongly implies that the movement did not live up to the democratic standards it purportedly set for itself, instead reproducing the authoritarian structures of the broader political culture it was embedded in. The statement further illustrates that there was a growing distrust as the stalemate ensued. “Ghost” (鬼) was a term used by some moderates to accuse radicals of being undercover agents set on weakening the movement. Their stated concern was that government infiltration could stir violent action to “mess up the movement” (Liam Y., interview, 14.6.2018), whereas radicals felt that the moderates were trying to control the people and thereby holding the movement back.

Oscar K. was another influential localist who attacked the stage for being exclusionary and insufficiently democratic. During the final stretches of the Umbrella Movement, perceiving that the HKFS and Scholarism had abandoned the occupation, Oscar K. got involved in the “Student Front” (學生前線), a student group dedicated to continuing resistance and contesting “main stage hegemony” (大台霸權; Apple Daily 2014c). In the aftermath of the occupation, he became affiliated with Civic Passion (熱血公民), a leading localist party that was amongst the fiercest critics of the Umbrella Movement leadership. Oscar K. strongly criticised the *daaitoi*:

In Admiralty they have the stage for all those pan-democratic party politicians, for them to stand up and then make some announcement or speech to the people. And the stage is not open to the public, but what we

think is the movement or the revolution is not held by those politicians but by the people and for the people, so the stage should be open! But they don't think so. They controlled the stage and then every day, every night they held some meetings. But for me I think it's a party, not a meeting. Because sometimes they will sing some songs on the stage and then let the people think it's... what I think is a battlefield for me. But some of them think it's just something like a party... So I think it's not a.... a revolution shouldn't be like that! (interview, 14.6.2018)

Particularly interesting here is the use of the term “revolution.” Localists did not consider the occupation a movement, but called it the “Umbrella Revolution”(雨傘革命) instead. The term indicates that the uprising was conceived as a more fundamental challenge to the existing order than the constrained and peaceful civil disobedience protest envisioned by the movement leadership. This different understanding of the situation went hand in hand with a different spatial imagination. Instead of as a performance of democracy on the streets of Hong Kong – or even a prefigurative democratic “utopia” – localists viewed the occupation as a “battlefield.” It was considered a serious matter, so festive acts such as singing, dancing, or group deliberations were deemed inappropriate (see *Passion Times* 2016: 233f).

The movement to “dismantle the main stage”

Just as in the Taiwanese case, factionalism within the movement culminated in public expressions of “dissidence” within the oppositional movement. This development reflects that the occupations did not form one coherent public sphere for rational discourse, but involved a variety of subgroups and factions that competed in shaping the movement through discursive and performative means. In the process the *daaitoi* as a “focal point through

which political discourse was formulated” was challenged to ensure that it “did not impose a master-narrative on the participants” (Hui 2017, p. 151).

Radical occupiers not just verbally criticised the main stage for alleged authoritarian tendencies, but even launched embodied, performative assaults. One major offensive followed a chaotic attempt to escalate the movement. In the early morning of November 19, in a turn that foreshadowed the temporary occupation of the Legislative Council in July 2019 during the Anti-Extradition Law movement (BBC News 2019a), radical protesters stormed parliament. A group of mostly young people, many masked and equipped with helmets and goggles, employed metal fences and bricks to force entry into a side door to the building. The police responded with pepper spray and eventually managed to gain the upper hand. Six people were arrested and three policemen injured during the incident (Lee et al. 2014b). The South China Morning Post cited one participant whose statement indicates that the assault was a response to the inaction of the leadership:

[A] protester, who said she had been staying in the protest zone in Admiralty since the class boycott in September, said the ‘main stage’ people, who organised the Occupy Central sit-in, were doing nothing and just waiting for the government to come clear them out. [...] Not all ‘pushing-forward’ actions were bad, she insisted. (ibid.)

The *daaitoi* did not endorse the action. It was organized by radicals within the movement who put up a call for action on the internet. There were rumours that a national security law would be introduced on the next day, necessitating a swift response. This was considered “fake news” by the movement leadership (and was indeed false; Liam Y., interview, 14.6.2018).

Taylor S. recalled that when participants requested “help from the stage,” the emcees simply “let the people make their own choice,” reminding them to “take care of themselves” (interview, 11.8.2018). Liam Y., a leader of the

marshal team, however, recalls that he used a microphone to inform people this was a “lie,” that there was no law about to be introduced and that people should not break into the building as it would violate the law (interview, 14.6.2018). After the incident, key representatives of the main stage distanced themselves from the action. OCLP put out a statement “strongly condemn[ing]” the action and appealing to “participants of the Umbrella Movement to remember our original intention, to persist in non-violent resistance” (Chan 2014). The student leaders also criticised the assault. Lester Shum from HKFS, for instance, was cited as stating: “It’s not something we like to see... We call on occupiers to stick firm to peaceful and non-violent principles and be a responsible participant of the umbrella movement” (ibid.).

The event exposed the deep rifts within the movement that culminated in a performative challenge to the stage. Following the failed action there was a call by disgruntled netizens to “dismantle the main stage” (*caak daaitoi* – 拆大台) and “end one-stage-dictatorship” (結束一黨專政), a phrase that indicates a critique of vertical leadership structures in a democratic movement (Oriental Daily 2014).⁹⁵ At 8 p.m. on November 21, dozens of radical protesters responded to the call by surrounding the main stage, shouting at it, and demanding that everyone should have the right to speak (ibid.). Some of the radicals wore face masks and some held placards that featured the slogan “you do not represent us” (Sung and Chan 2014). They faced off with activists defending the stage, some of who in turn carried placards that read “support having a main stage” (支持有大台). While both sides shouted at each other, the confrontation did not turn violent (Oriental Daily 2014).

The main stage had prepared for the challenge. The leadership expressed that critical netizens were welcome to speak on the stage. However, the focus

⁹⁵ The latter slogan was a play on the chant “end one-party dictatorship” (結束一黨專政) widely used by pan-democrats at occasions such as the annual June 4 candlelight vigil. The new slogan thus clearly alleged hypocrisy.

of the challengers had shifted from calling for the end of the *daaitoi* itself, to demanding the dismissal of the marshals guarding it. Some challengers carried placards that read “Don’t dismantle the main stage, but you absolutely must dismiss the marshals” (不拆大台 但絕對要解散糾察) (ibid.). As discussed above, there had long been tensions between the marshals and sections of the occupiers. The marshals were accused of preventing escalation, assaulting protesters, and even working with the police to detain fellow occupiers (Passion Times 2016; also Chow 2019, p. 44). Marshal leader Liam Y. confirmed that he tried to prevent people from joining the assault on the legislature. But he strongly refuted claims that the marshals had colluded with the police (interview, 14.6.2018).

Alfred N. was one of the pan-democratic politicians present at the time. He recalled publicly defending the marshals, arguing with the challengers, and being booed by them. In his analysis the critics were members of small splinter groups that pursued their own objectives:

They tried to remove the stage, because they didn't like the stage. Because the stage sometimes tried to stop them from announcing wrong messages to take radical actions not agreed upon by the Five Parties. You know outside the Five Parties there were also groups that wanted to do their own things. And the stage was something that they viewed as in their way, stopping them from doing their own thing. Because [with a main stage] you had a central authority. So those that wanted to do their own thing they didn't want to follow anyone: They didn't want to follow the students, they didn't want to follow the political parties. They had their own agenda and they wanted to do their own thing. So there were groups like that that hated the stage and they wanted to dismantle the stage and get rid of the marshals. (interview, 5.6.2018)

This sounds almost as if the challengers were not part of the same movement. The statement underlines the symbolism of confronting the stage and the

marshals as representatives of the “central authority.” Apparently both sides viewed the platform as essential to the existing order within the occupation. Neither the leadership represented on the stage nor the marshals were elected by anybody; any legitimacy they possessed was derived from the consent of movement participants (see also Kwok and Chan 2017), which as the performative challenge visually revealed showed strong signs of erosion in late November.

Following the assault on the main stage several student leaders invited the critics to further discuss the matter at a different location. They moved to the old stage next to Civic Square to face questions. From 11 p.m. onwards about 30 speakers took turns voicing their concerns, speaking for about three minutes each. The main topics were speaking time slots for the general public at the main stage, whether the metal barriers surrounding it should be moved, and the necessity of marshals (Apple Daily 2014d). Former HKFS secretary-general Alex Chow suggested in an essay that although participants discussed until “the middle of the night,” “no concrete resolution was proposed [...] and many issues remained unresolved” (2019, p. 45). Mark L., HKFS “old ghost” and CHRF member, who was also present at the time, reflected that it was “like an exhortation of the leaders” who had to spend the night listening to critics and seeking “to persuade them” (interview, 9.11.2017). He reflected that the night was “a turning point” that led to “the escalation afterwards,” the storming of the government complex on November 30. Mark L. suggested that “HKFS wanted to appease or to convince [...] radical occupiers and therefore they had the escalation.” This indicates that the performative assault on the main stage, followed by the discussion with HKFS, indeed influenced the overall direction of the movement, even though the stage was not actually dismantled.

Changes to the main stage

Although the main stage was not taken down by the performative attack – it survived until the end of the occupation – it did undergo changes that show that the movement leadership tried to appease its critics. A key measure was that specific time slots were introduced during which anyone could get up on the stage and speak for five minutes. “[E]ven those who wanted to advocate for knocking down the main stage could come up and speak to the crowd,” reflected HKFS student leader Joey F. and pointed out that the stage management tried to be “adaptive.” (interview, 29.10.2017). Even Oscar K. as one of the most vocal critics acknowledged that the Five-Party Platform gradually “opened the main stage” (interview, 14.6.2018). He said that initially “they agreed to remove the barricade” and “let the public speak there.” However, Oscar K. claimed that all speakers had to register with their Hong Kong identity card, which he felt was a “ridiculous” requirement. Viewing the occupation as a “battlefield,” he believed it was necessary to “protect everyone's identity.” He said the condition was dropped following discussions with the stage management so that people who wanted to address the crowd at last merely had to “line up there.” People were then free to “speak whatever they wanted.”

Taylor S., one of the emcees, strongly refuted that an identity card registration was ever required to speak on the main stage and pointed out that this was a false “rumour” that had the effect of “making more and more people disagree with *daaitoi*” (interview, 11.8.2018). The emcee said that although the “marshals, some NGO [representatives], and student leaders tried to clarify,” it was “never enough” and the damage was done. Taylor S. also stressed that the stage was never actually closed to ordinary participants:

I always invited people to come. It was subject to whether you showed the willingness to speak out and also if you wanted to come to speak. That's it.

It's fine! And of course, some legislative councillors or the public figures like the political leaders or student leaders they would say 'let the people speak, I don't need more time' [...] So I think the *caak daaitoi* [dismantle the main stage] issue made those public figures want to stay back or let the platform be more public [...] but in my view it was always open. (interview, 11.8.2018)

Taylor S. did, however, confirm that the stage underwent some visual changes in response to the criticism. These changes were made in a "very low profile" way. The management lowered the stage to let it appear closer to the people and removed some of the fences that had been put up to protect the equipment. Further, Taylor S. suggested that ordinary participants contributed to the visual changes. They "made handcraft" that they would "hang on the *daaitoi*." These people would take away their craft when they "disagreed with the *daaitoi* operation," making it possible to see whether "people agreed or disagreed" with the leadership. Taylor S. recalled that people started removing their things at the time of the rumours about the stage management. This indicates that the material and visual composition of the occupied space reflected the power relations within the movement. They changed along with the intensification of factionalism in the later stages of the occupation.

Incident Two: After the storming of the Government Headquarter

The contestation over the leadership structures and the course of the movement found expression in the changing stage management and appearance. Clearly, the stage as a symbol for order within the movement was not a static institution but constantly evolved along with the rest of the occupation. However, the changes were not sufficient to appease all protesters. The dramatic student-led storming of the government headquarters on November 30, widely believed to have been badly

organized and executed as it faded away amidst police violence, provoked yet another “dismantle the main stage” incident on December 1. Once again, the main stage was surrounded by a disgruntled crowd, this time demanding an apology from the student leaders.

Oscar K., the above-mentioned *daaitoi* critic, was amongst the people confronting the stage. He recalled that the situation culminated in one protester mounting the metal construct to voice his anger about the movement leadership. During our interview, Oscar K. showed me a brief video of the incident that was at the time available online and explained that the protester gave a speech in which he asked the audience to take “real action” (presumably more disruptive protest), “not just shout slogans” (interview, 14.6.2018). To prove his point that speech alone would not suffice to achieve change, the protester then refused to leave the stage and threatened to stay all night unless he was forcibly removed. He compared his position to that of Hong Kong’s Chief Executive: “If you think I am C.Y. Leung, so what would you like me to do? If you just sit down there and say slogans, say ‘get down the stage,’ then I won’t leave!” The act ended with the speaker being pulled off the stage by an audience member. Subsequently he was allowed back onto the stage where he announced that the person had done the right thing by taking “real action” (ibid.). The whole episode can be read as roleplay. One core demand of the movement was that the Chief Executive should step down to take responsibility for police violence and the political impasse. It was expressed in the popular slogan “Leung Chun-ying step down” (梁振英下台) that in Chinese literally called on him to step off the *stage*. By performatively occupying the *daaitoi* – in a sense playing the role of a power holder refusing to respond to slogans and rational argumentation – the dissatisfied protester made the case that peaceful discourse alone would not suffice to achieve the movements’ demands.

Occupiers from the self-organized barricades groups were among the disgruntled crowd confronting the *daaitoi*. Brandon F., a member of one of these groups, witnessed the incident and echoed the critique that the student groups had failed to provide adequate leadership during the escalation (interview, 7.8.2018). He expressed anger over the injuries he and his teammates endured on the frontline whilst the student leaders were nowhere to be found. Brandon F. recalled that whilst some speakers were giving critical speeches on the stage, he and some others took away parts of the barricades that had been erected to protect it. "It was merely symbolic," he recalled, stressing that they did not engage in violent confrontations with other occupiers. Asked what the fence stood for symbolically, Brandon F. responded:

First of all, I think it stood for simple nonviolence, it stood for a paradigm of resistance which we thought was outdated, which we thought was no longer applicable and no longer useful in this situation. It was against the hypocrisy of so many people. We think that they are more interested in keeping their jobs, keeping their... and sometimes purposefully sabotaging these newcomers because they are trying to keep their influence. (ibid.)

Brandon F.'s statement underscores that the physical stage, just as the people who appeared on it most frequently, symbolized Hong Kong's traditional pro-democracy movement with its guiding principles of nonviolence, peacefulness, and rationality (合理非). The performative challenges to the *daaitoi* during the Umbrella Movement were an expression of the emergence of new groups of protesters who favoured a break with tradition and more radical confrontational forms of protest deemed necessary to achieve democracy.

Pan-democratic politician Alfred N. explained the historical context of the *daaitoi* standoffs. He argued that while factionalism began prior to the

occupation, “it peaked in the Umbrella Movement” because the “symbol” for the pro-democracy movement’s “central authority” was clearly visible in the form of the main stage. Alfred N. further suggested:

I think in these past ten years there are some groups that came out not just to destroy the stage in Admiralty, but to destroy the whole central authority of the pan-democrats, to discredit the whole pan-democrats, because by discrediting the pan-democrats then they can rise up. If we are destroyed, if we do not have that unity or we are discredited and then in the election... then we will lose. And so I think they are successful to a certain extent. You know Hong Kong is being split into pan-democrats, localist groups [...] I think this is pretty much what happened over the past ten years, but it intensified during the Umbrella Movement. And things got worse after the Umbrella Movement. (interview, 5.6.2018)

Alfred N.’s statement reflects that the performative challenge was the expression of the divisions within the opposition camp that increased with the rise of localist insurgents who have a different vision for Hong Kong. He acknowledged that the challengers have been relatively successful. The developments after the Umbrella Movement support this assessment. Even though the physical main stage in Admiralty survived until the final day of the occupation, the hegemony of the organizations it symbolized further eroded in the aftermath of 2014. HKFS, which was blamed by critics for being responsible for the perceived “failure” of the Umbrella Movement, faced a series of localist-organized student disaffiliation referenda in 2015 during which four university student unions withdrew from the federation (Joey F., interview, 29.10.2017; Samuel F., interview, 23.11.2017). Other developments reflecting the growing influence of localism included the emergence of the above-mentioned “Fishball Revolution” and electoral results in the Legislative Council elections in 2016 (see Kaeding 2017). More recently, localist voices were increasingly influential in the movement against the

extradition bill in 2019-20. The more thoroughly decentralized movement relied on digital communication and did not feature a main stage as well as clear vertical leadership structures (see Ku 2020; Lee 2020).⁹⁶ The peaceful and nonviolent protest script was supplemented with increasingly violent protest tactics. Whilst the physical main stage was thus not dismantled during the occupation in 2014, the performative confrontations over it point to broader decentralization, radicalization, and learning processes within the opposition camp that continued in its aftermath.⁹⁷

Conclusion

This chapter set out to assess what spatial arrangements and contestations reflected upon democratic visions and practices in the Sunflower and Umbrella Movement. Whilst both movements featured occupations of public space to assert “legalistic” (Veg 2015) claims concerning representative democracy, the occupations took different forms in each case. In Taiwan activists occupied parliament as the main stage of representative democracy and refashioned it into a vibrant theatre of democracy from which they expressed their demands. By contrast, occupiers in Hong Kong did not seize an existing government building, but instead set-up three large-scale street occupations in different districts to assert their demand for universal suffrage. Whilst the overall situation was considerably more volatile in Hong Kong due to more conflictual state-society relations, both occupations developed

⁹⁶ Hence a popular catchphrase was “no main stage” (無大台 – *mou daaitoi*).

⁹⁷ It is important to point out that there was a clear recognition within the anti-ELAB movement of 2019-20 that factional division as experienced over previous years could undermine the movement and had to be avoided. According to Lee an “ethics of solidarity” developed that was expressed in popular movement slogans such as “no splitting and no severing of ties” (不分化, 不割席) and “brothers climbing mountains, each offering one’s efforts” (兄弟爬山, 各自努力), see Lee 2020, pp. 18–19. These slogans seem to suggest that different forms of moderate and radical protest can coexist and complement one another in the absence of a main stage.

forms of order, discipline, and artistic expression that performatively demonstrated that these were not violent uprisings, but peaceful and rational movements that articulated legitimate democratic claims.

Both campaigns created spaces for oppositional discourse and performance. But my analysis suggests that neither of them formed a coherent “public sphere” (Habermas 1989) or “subaltern counterpublic” (Fraser 1990). The experience of these movements underlines that even though a democratic politics may aspire to rational discourse, in practice it entails agonistic confrontations (Mouffe 1999, 2009). Both movements have in common that they were shaped by factionalism that reflected that there were different visions of democracy and democratic protest present in them. In the Taiwanese case, dissatisfied occupiers challenged the segregation of a vanguard inside the occupied legislature from supporters outside it, an arrangement that protected a leadership core and its more moderate approach. In Hong Kong the contestation was not over inside/outside distinctions, but about vertical hierarchies produced by a main stage that symbolized the proclaimed leadership’s claim to represent the movement. In both cases these intra-movement contestations were driven by radical participants who favoured a more decentralized internal organization and more confrontational forms of democratic resistance. While the spatial and leadership structures were in both cases able to withstand the challenges, both the Sunflower and Umbrella Movement experienced badly coordinated escalations subsequent to these intra-movement contestations over space.

In the case of Hong Kong, intra-movement infighting was underpinned by deeper and more longstanding divisions in the opposition camp. The performative challenge carried a greater symbolic significance, as the main stage came to represent the traditional leadership of the pro-democracy movement and its constrained protest script. Although the physical stage

survived the Umbrella Movement, the dissolution of the metaphorical main stage continued in the aftermath of the occupation with the advent of decentralized and increasingly militant protest.

4 Deliberations in Occupy Central and the Umbrella Movement

This chapter compares experiments with public deliberation in the OCLP campaign and the Umbrella Movement. While it was the advocacy for civil disobedience that sparked controversy in Hong Kong, another key aspect of OCLP was the systematic introduction of deliberative democracy to the pro-democracy movement. Just as the eventual occupations differed significantly from the original plan, so too did the public deliberations in the Umbrella Movement diverge a great deal from the structured OCLP deliberations that had taken place earlier.

My analysis will demonstrate that there were a variety of deliberative spaces in Hong Kong that did different kinds of work. Bringing together the notions of strategic and prefigurative politics with discussions on deliberative democracy, concepts I engaged with in my literature review, and drawing upon my fieldwork data, I propose an original framework that distinguishes between two ideal types of “deliberation in movement” (della Porta 2005): Strategic and prefigurative deliberation. The following chart sums up some key features that will be further discussed below:

Strategic deliberation	Prefigurative deliberation
targeted	expressive
some vertical hierarchies	horizontalism
structured	unstructured
future-oriented	questions present/future distinction

realist	utopian
reform-oriented	transformative
civic education	Self-government
fits into the “Public Sphere” (Habermas 1989)	represents a “Subaltern Counterpublic” (Fraser 1990)
examples: OCLP’s “deliberation days;” Taiwan’s DStreet ⁹⁸	Wild Strawberry Movement; Occupy Wall Street

On the one hand, what I call “strategic deliberation” describes communicative spaces that are typically – though not always – organized by vertical movement leadership to serve particular functions geared towards achieving a movement’s objectives.⁹⁹ Here, deliberation is a means towards an end. Even if not organized by vertical leaders, these communicative practices fit well with a movement’s broader trajectory towards future goal attainment. There is a broad range of possible functions of deliberation. These can include facilitating education, empowerment, mobilization, identity formation, and claims-making. Moreover, strategic deliberations as an enactment of democracy in social movements can also performatively communicate the openness, rationality, and transparency of a movement. Strategic deliberation can describe the explicit application of models of deliberative democracy in the context of social movements, such as in the

⁹⁸ See chapter 5.

⁹⁹ Whilst I have not yet come across the term “prefigurative deliberation,” I am not the first person to refer to “strategic deliberation,” e.g. Golman et al. 2020; Larson and Sandholm 2004. In my binary framework the term clearly refers to a particular form of deliberative space in social movements. Whereas theorists of deliberative democracy typically view deliberation as a higher form of public discourse that goes beyond strategic calculation, my usage of the term highlights that in practice deliberative spaces are embedded in power structures that cannot be transcended (Mouffe 1999) and can thus have strategic dimensions even if they facilitate seemingly detached and rational speech. I thus echo the activist critiques of deliberative democratic theory, see Sanders 1997; Young 2001.

case of OCLP in Hong Kong. This can involve a great deal of innovation and creativity as these models were not designed for the social movement context (and indeed its makers might question whether deliberative democracy is possible within activist spaces). Calling these deliberative spaces “strategic” is not meant to convey that they do not allow for “genuine” deliberation due to the movement context. Rather it is meant to capture that deliberations are a means towards an end that the movement aims for, even though there might be a strong commitment to the deliberative ideals and the effects of the process can be similar to those in other contexts; After all, any real world application of a theoretical ideal will require flexibility and adaptation. Strategic deliberation entails a pragmatic translation of deliberative ideals to the social movement context. These forums encourage and cultivate the kind of speech that would be deemed worthy of admission to Habermas’ liberal public sphere, which is indeed the ideal that is underpinning these spaces; not a more radical conception of democracy. Strategic deliberation embraces a relatively moderate approach to social change through rational problem-solving. It complements and deepens existing liberal representative political systems, rather than aiming to challenge or go beyond them.

By prefigurative deliberation, on the other hand, I describe alternative horizontal spaces that facilitate communicative processes as an end in and of itself. Prefigurative deliberation does not primarily serve future goal attainment. Rather it can be seen as an experimental enactment of democracy that follows the prefigurative logic of troubling present/future distinctions itself (Breines 1980; Maeckelbergh 2011a; van de Sande 2015). Self-expression is emphasized over – and at times at the expense of – strategy.¹⁰⁰ Prefigurative deliberation is a seemingly leaderless practice. Traditional

¹⁰⁰ Of course, advocates of prefiguration question a clear delineation of boundaries between prefigurative and strategic politics, see Maeckelbergh 2011a; Swain 2019; Yates 2020. As outlined in my literature review, I am not suggesting that prefiguration is not “strategic” per se, but that self-expression is stressed first and foremost, see Smucker 2014.

representation in social movements and in the political realm more generally is largely rejected. It is arguably the more radically experimental of the two approaches to deliberation in the sense that it fundamentally questions existing social relations, systems, and authorities. This form of deliberation tends to allow for more informal communication. It can be more loosely structured and open, as well as open-ended. Prefigurative deliberation very often – although not necessarily – involves decision-making. Rather than aiming at reforms, problem solving, and civic education for active participation in the liberal “public sphere,” prefigurative deliberation tends to be more insular. It creates transient spaces where people “act[] as if one is already free” (Graeber 2009, p. 207). These forms of deliberation have a more distinctly utopian dimension.

This chapter and the next will demonstrate that the outlined framework can be used to organize and better understand the empirical material. Just as strategic and prefigurative politics more generally, the two identified forms of social movement deliberation are ideal types and thus do not find pure expression in reality. Although there was great variance in deliberative formations, I find that all the analyzed spaces broadly fit into one of the two categories. When classifying empirical cases, particular attention was paid to who organized the deliberations, for whom, and for what purpose. This reveals the extent to which deliberations formed a means to an end within a broader strategy pursued by vertical movement leadership or carved out alternative, leaderless spaces within the movement for horizontal and prefigurative self-expression.

This chapter will show that there was a broad range of different forms of deliberation in Hong Kong that each entailed distinct characteristics. The chapter is organized as follows: First, I will analyse OCLP’s D-Days as an example of strategic deliberation in the context of a social movement

campaign. Second, I will discuss forms of strategic deliberation in the Umbrella Movement. Since the actual occupation took a prefigurative turn, the OCLP D-Days were not revived. However the occupations nonetheless involved different kinds of informal deliberation that fit the broader movement strategy. Third, I will show that the Umbrella Movement opened up a wide variety of prefigurative spaces of deliberation. The analysis will be broadly structured around the three main occupation zones. Finally, I will discuss some of the critiques of prefigurative deliberations that were articulated by radicals within the occupations who spearheaded a more confrontational approach as an alternative to deliberation and prefiguration.

Strategic Deliberations: Occupy Central With Love and Peace

OCLP not just advocated the idea of civil disobedience in the period leading up to the unexpected Umbrella Movement, but also translated the theory of deliberative democracy to practice in the context of an innovative social movement campaign.¹⁰¹ The campaign script was influenced by theorists of deliberative democracy such as Jürgen Habermas (1992/1998), as well as by authors focusing on the empirical application of the concept such as Bruce Ackerman and James Fishkin (2004). OCLP organized several D-Days followed up by a civil referendum on constitutional reform proposals to unite and strengthen the pro-democracy movement prior to negotiations with the government and a possible occupation. The application of deliberative democracy clearly had a strategic dimension: It was a method for mobilizing supporters, building unity, raising public awareness, and strengthening the movement in the reform negotiations. But Daniel K., who

¹⁰¹ OCLP's vision and preparations for civil disobedience were discussed in chapter 1. The following section focuses on the deliberation stage of the campaign. I analysed the deliberations in greater detail in my MA thesis at Humboldt University of Berlin, see Kunz 2016. While I draw upon my previous work, the analysis here is revised based on the theoretical framework outlined above.

was part of the OCLP leadership, suggested that it was conceived of as part of a long-term plan. The campaign was viewed as an “experiment [with] deliberation in Hong Kong” that was meant to contribute to a long-term cultural change (interview, 3.7.2015). The organizers had realized that there was a “lack of deliberative culture in the society of Hong Kong,” that people had to learn to listen to one another, be empathetic, and to compromise. Therefore, the deliberative process was not just conceived to raise awareness for the political reform issue and build consensus on a way forward but was moreover meant to introduce habits and attitudes of deliberation to broader audiences. Daniel K. explained that the reason the campaign introduced deliberative democracy to the pro-democracy movement was the realization that:

Even if we can successfully get the representative government, the representative democracy, but we do not have this deliberative spirit, then the system still will not work well. So we have to build or to cultivate this kind of deliberative spirit, at the same time as we fight for the representative government [...] So when we at the end we can get it, we have already developed a very sound base to support, to sustain it. (interview, 3.7.2015)

OCLP thus clearly regarded the development of deliberative capacity as an essential component of a sustainable long-term strategy for democratic change. Daniel K.’s statement also indicates that the organizers believed that the struggle for democracy should reflect its ends. Contrary to proponents of prefigurative politics, however, the OCLP campaign did not fully reject vertical representation to instead embrace a horizontal democratic process. It had clear leaderships structures with the so-called Occupy Trio at the top. While some of the radical pan-democratic groups called for the establishment of a more inclusive leadership, the campaign structure was not reformed (Chow 2019, p. 43). Nonetheless, the deliberation days involved wider groups of people into a collective decisions-making and authorization

process. This made it qualitatively different from the previous approach of the pro-democracy movement that has long mostly relied on political parties with strong leadership figures (see Blair T., interview, 16.10.2017).

The deliberation stage of OCLP lasted broadly from the founding of the campaign in March 2013 until the civil referendum in June 2014. The campaign staged three deliberation days that involved supporters from the pan-democratic camp and members of the public without prior political affiliations (so-called “ordinary citizens”) in debates on the key principles of the movement and democratization prior to an unofficial civic referendum on political reform. The process was meant to increase the bargaining power vis-à-vis the Chinese central government in the political reform negotiations. Staging an occupation protest was meant as a last resort to pressure the authorities. The organizers hoped that this step could be avoided (see chapter 1).

To translate the lofty normative theory of deliberative democracy to practice in the context of their campaign, the Occupy Trio drew on the works of Fishkin and Ackerman (2004), borrowing the ideas of deliberation days and deliberative polling. Apart from campaign supporters, ordinary citizens were invited through randomized polling. The first so-called “D-Day” was staged on 9 June 2013 at the University of Hong Kong. Although the campaign used random telephone sampling with the help of the Public Opinion Program of Hong Kong University to invite ordinary citizens to attend the event, only 95 out of roughly 700 total participants were part of the random sample (Lam 2014, p. 460). The clear majority was made up of supporters of the movement who had signaled their commitment to the campaign by signing a pledge. Most of these participants were mobilized through student groups, NGOs, and political groups that were part of the traditional pro-democracy networks (Yang 2020, p. 148).

D-Day 1 served as an "agenda setting day" during which the basic principles of the campaign were agreed upon (Daniel K., interview, 3.7.2015). Prior to the event, participants could access reference material on the OCLP website to prepare for the deliberations. The D-Day itself followed a "very careful procedural design" to make sure the deliberations were structured rather than just allowing people to have "a free flow discussion" (Ethan D., interview, 22.6.2015). Following an "open session" involving all participants, there was a "breakout session" during which participants were randomly assigned to small group deliberations, and finally a closing session during which the results were reported upon (Chan 2015a, p. 2). A group of specially trained facilitators – over 200 were trained throughout the campaign – moderated the deliberations. Their task was to ensure that all participants could be involved equally in the deliberative process irrespective of differences in education or their ability to express themselves (Daniel K., interview, 3.7.2015).

D-Day 2 was not organized as one large event, but rather consisted of more than 30 deliberative meetings over a four-month period between October 2013 and January 2014. The topic of the deliberations was "basic principles in designing the Chief Executive election" (Daniel K., interview, 3.7.2015). Each meeting brought together members of different status groups including "university students, social workers, women, labourers, church members, and the chronically ill" (Chan 2015a, p. 2), to a large extent relying on pre-existing organizational networks. Ethan D. explained that after D-Day 1 they realized that holding one big meeting in a university setting could be "too alienating, too formal" for some grassroots participants, so they instead organized different meetings for various communities (interview, 22.6.2015).

The final D-Day brought together over 2500 people who met at five different venues across Hong Kong on May 6, 2014 (Daniel K., interview, 3.7.2015).

The deliberations focused on the comparative merits of 15 electoral reform proposals that had been selected by a panel of international legal scholars from amongst the proposals touted by different groups in Hong Kong's political reform debate. The chosen proposals not just guaranteed a right to vote, but also the right to stand for elections without unreasonable restrictions. They thereby ensured a genuine choice among different candidates for voters and ruled out the possibility of a "pre-screening" of candidates for the Chief Executive elections that would have been in line with Beijing's preferences. D-Day 3 started off with a presentation by a constitutional expert, followed by facilitated group deliberations, and culminated in a vote to select three of the reviewed proposals (Yang 2020, pp. 152–153).

While OCLP's deliberation process was designed to bridge the gap between the rivalling factions of the pro-democracy movements, D-Day 3 revealed that the campaign had been unable to achieve this aim. There were accusations that radical pan-democratic groups had mobilized their supporters to vote for their preferred proposals in great numbers irrespective of the deliberative process (see Ethan D., interview, 22.6.2015). Ultimately, all three proposals that were selected to move forward to the scheduled unofficial referendum featured "civil nomination," meaning they stipulated that candidates for the Chief Executive elections could be nominated directly by the general public if a certain number of registered voters endorsed them (Chan 2015a, p. 3). So-called "moderate" proposals that did not entail civil nomination did not make it to the next round. These proposals outlined purportedly acceptable ways of indirectly selecting candidates via a "broadly representative" nominating committee in line with the Basic Law that accommodated Beijing's requirements to a certain extent (see Cheung and Chong 2014; also: OCLP 2014d).

The OCLP leadership did not view civil nomination as a necessary element for a nominating mechanism that satisfied “international standards.” They had hoped to present the public with a wider choice of different proposals (Ethan D., interview, 22.6.2015). Following accusations that their campaign had been “hijacked” by radicals, they added an additional motion to the unofficial referendum to motivate those people to turn out whose preferred proposals had not been selected. The question raised by the motion was whether the legislature should veto any reform proposal that “fails to provide voters genuine choice” (Chan 2015a, p. 3). Ethan D. suggested that the measures taken were only to a “certain extent” successful in uniting the rivalling factions. He stressed that there continued to be “a lot of conflict underlying the surface” and that only Beijing’s hardline approach contributed to uniting the opposition (interview, 22.6.2015).

On June 12, the Chinese government released a controversial Whitepaper that was seen as jeopardizing Hong Kong’s relative autonomy under the “One Country, Two Systems” framework. Later that month, the unofficial electronic civil referendum arranged by Hong Kong University’s Public Opinion Programme held on June 20-22 was subject to a sophisticated cyber-attack. Public anger over the attempt to stifle the civil democratic process was widely believed to have unexpectedly boosted turn-out to around 800.000 votes. The selected proposal featured three tracks for the nomination of Chief Executive candidates including civil nomination, the nomination by political parties, and nomination by the nominating committee” (Chan, 2015: 3). Asked if he believed the campaign had been successful, Daniel K. modestly reflected that it had been “to a certain extent” successful although they had found it to be a “very difficult process.” He pointed out that in the end, they achieved their goal of selecting one proposal through the “deliberative process” (interview, 3.7.2015). While it had been OCLP’s game plan that the deliberative authorization process would provide the

movement with a proposal that could be championed in reform negotiations with Beijing, the Chinese government showed no willingness to deliberate with Hong Kong's democrats. On August 31, Beijing laid out its restrictive framework for political reform based on the pre-existing election committee, thereby setting off contingent developments that turned OCLP into the Umbrella Movement (see chapter 1).

OCLP demonstrated that it is possible to strategically implement deliberative democracy under the "constraints of a social movement" (Daniel K., interview, 3.7.2015). The campaign was tightly scripted and choreographed, but nonetheless opened a space for supporters of the pro-democracy movement to deliberate important matters and influence the direction of their campaign. The structured fashion in which the deliberative process was conducted, as well as the centralized leadership, sets the case of OCLP apart from more loose and open-ended deliberative experiments such as in Taiwan's Wild Strawberry Movement or Occupy Wall Street, which had a more distinctly prefigurative character. Whether the experiment "counts" as an implementation of deliberative democracy could be disputed. Due to the self-selection of participants that meant that the deliberations largely involved like-minded individuals – rather than also involving supporters of the so-called "pro-Beijing camp" – it has been suggested that the D-Days were a form of "enclave deliberation" that boosted mobilization in a social movement (Yang 2020), implying that it was not a proper application of deliberative democracy. Clearly, applying the deliberative ideal as faithfully as possible was not the point of the campaign. Deliberative democracy was used as part of a campaign strategy. Apart from the obvious mobilizing effects (*ibid.*), the deliberations served as a democratic performance meant to enhance perceived legitimacy through the display of open and rational deliberation. Moreover, it facilitated civic education and cultivated deliberative habits.

Overall, the OCLP experience highlights both the potentials and limitations of strategic deliberation. It was a highly innovative campaign that demonstrated that deliberative democracy can be fruitfully applied to the context of a social movement. Compared to a more prefigurative approach, the strategic implementation limited the influence of participants, as the deliberation format and agenda were pre-determined by the OCLP leadership. Nonetheless, the deliberations formed a departure from the traditionally more centralized decision-making-style within the pan-democratic camp by involving more people into the political process. While OCLP contributed to reviving the pro-democracy movement, the deliberative process was nonetheless unable to fully bridge the gaps between the different factions.

Strategic Deliberations in the Umbrella Movement

Although OCLP had planned to follow up the highly structured deliberative process with a tightly choreographed protest, a set of contingent developments transformed the campaign into the seemingly spontaneous and decentralized Umbrella Movement (see chapter 1). Considering that the movement had been preceded and to some degree even prepared by a lengthy deliberative process, one might expect that the D-Days would be revived during the occupations. But this was not the case. OCLP never regained control over the decentralized Umbrella Movement and did not attempt to facilitate strategic deliberative experiments similar to the structured street deliberations that the Sunflower Movement leadership organized during the occupation in Taiwan (see next chapter). Brian W., an activist who was deeply involved in OCLP, recalled that during a study trip to Taiwan prior to the occupation, they had learned about the “daily deliberation [...] session for the participants” held in Taipei and considered

staging something similar during Occupy Central (interview, 13.6.2018). However, similar deliberations were ultimately not implemented during the Umbrella Movement as OCLP was side-lined from the leadership by the two student groups.

Daniel K. confirmed that OCLP did not organize any formal practice of deliberative democracy. He reflected that OCLP had “organized deliberation in a very formal and structured way” in the months prior to the occupation. But the experience of the Umbrella Movement showed that:

We can have deliberation in an informal way. It is just a conversation. We can have deliberation through conversations. And so, during the occupation period we had our facilitators. They just walked around the occupied areas... not to say we organized another deliberation day. They just went there and had conversations with the people, the occupiers and just had very casual conversations. That is deliberation too! [...] At some point in time we may need a lot of informal deliberation. The spirit is still deliberative, but it does not mean 500 people come together... a small group of 12 with a facilitator there. It is not like this. (interview, 3.7.2015)

This reflects that the OCLP leadership considered the occupation a learning experience that broadened their conception of deliberative democracy. Although a very structured implementation was deemed necessary during the preparatory stage, during the occupation itself the organization adopted a more low-key and unstructured approach. Daniel K. recollected that these facilitators did not approach people with a question catalogue, but rather initiated unstructured conversation (“very casual talk”). They would later write reports and thereby “collect ideas.” While Daniel K. did not specify how many facilitators were doing their rounds, and who they were, it can be inferred that many of them were the same volunteers who had been specifically trained for the deliberation days prior to the occupation. This

indicates that OCLP really tried to learn about people's experience and opinions, to collect feedback and gauge the mood on the ground.

Further reflecting on the different forms of deliberation, Daniel K. suggested that "formal" or "structured" and the "less structured" forms of deliberation were just "different parts of the same car." "You need both, it just depends on whether it is put in the proper place," he suggested. Daniel K. admitted that OCLP "may not have a very clear theoretical framework at this point for when to use what," but argued that it was at least clear that "formal and informal" were two forms that the movement had at its disposal. It is likely that when Daniel K. spoke of unstructured deliberation, he did not just have the OCLP-facilitated casual conversations in mind, but also the countless other discussions across the occupation zones.

The student organizations – as the relatively widely recognized leaders of the movement (see chapter 2) – arguably had more authority to organize structured strategic deliberations than the marginalized OCLP. While HKFS organized some spaces for discussion, it did not revive the D-Days either. The fact that HKFS as the leading student organization relied on centralized decision-making and did not make sustained attempts to implement structured forms of deliberative democracy could be considered surprising, as the organization had already built up its own deliberative structures prior to the occupation. In the time leading up to the student strike there was a "consensus to make the movement more bottom-up" within HKFS (Simon K., interview, 14.11.2017). In previous years, only a relative minority of students had been involved in politics. But in the lead up to the Umbrella Movement, there was an increased political awareness amongst students. This provided the unions with an opportunity to "consolidate their support within the campus before the movement" (ibid.). To this end, each of the student unions made efforts to "recruit volunteers to support their work." Political reforms

concerns groups were established on campuses across Hong Kong (ibid.; also Samuel F., interview, 12.6.2018). These groups varied in size. The concerns group at Chinese University of Hong Kong (CUHK), a university with a strong tradition of student activism, had between 60-80 members. While the students found the “OCLP model [...] too rigid” and “too top-down,” they organized “a lot of deliberation with students” on campus to prepare the movement (Simon K., interview, 14.11.2017).

Apart from the member unions, HKFS itself also recruited around 100 volunteers to prepare the student strike (ibid.). Prior to the class boycott, the political reform concerns groups turned into student strike committees. These committees had no statute, they were “consultative” and “action-oriented,” helping to organize students and providing grassroots feedback to the HKFS core group (Samuel F., interview, 12.6.2018). The large-scale event required a lot of support, so the various groups focused on different issues such as security or the program during the class boycott (Simon K., interview, 14.11.2017).

Even though HKFS had spent much time and effort organizing students to make the campaign more bottom-up in the time leading up to the class boycott, these structures dissolved during the occupation. Decision-making was once again more centralized within the HKFS framework. The elected student representatives had limited capacities and spent most of their time coordinating amongst each other, with other parties in the Five-Party Platform, facing the press, the government, and grassroots occupiers. They lost touch with their fellow students on campus, which contributed to grievances as many students did not feel sufficiently informed and involved (see interviews: Joey F., 29.10.2017; Simon K., 14.11.2017; Lucas F., 15.6.2018).

Although HKFS discontinued the strike committee system and did not organize structured deliberative experiments akin to the D-Days, the student

representatives did stage some deliberations within the occupation zones. For instance, several student leaders spent a night deliberating with challengers to the leadership in the later stage of the movement, an effort that resulted in the opening up of specific open-mic time slots at the main stage (see chapter 3). The HKFS Facebook page also includes several posts with photos that show student representatives involved in discussions with occupiers.¹⁰² While some of the representatives were involved in dealing with the media, others spent most of their time directly in the three occupation zones supporting, liaising with, and collecting feedback from participants (e.g. Simon K., interview, 14.11.2017; Wing Tai W., interview, 7.6.2018).

For the above-mentioned purposes HKFS set up spaces of strategic deliberation – so-called “HKFS *Ceoi Seoi* stages” (學聯吹水台) – in the occupation zones in early October. The name of these spaces pointed to a particular form of informal deliberation: “*Ceoi Seoi* (吹水, literally ‘blowing water’) [...] means to shoot the breeze, that is, casual chatting without topical limits or boundaries” (Hui 2017, p. 16). Hui explains that “[i]n the political discursive landscape of Hong Kong, *Ceoi Seoi* has come to represent the opening up of spaces for different political voices to be aired” (ibid.). The labelling of the stations implies that they were not announcement stages, but places open for all people to come and deliberate (Jamie T., interview, 14.6.2018). The use of this term implied openness on part of HKFS to the participants and their suggestions. Essentially, the *Ceoi Seoi* stages were just clearly labelled booths with a table and some equipment – hence Alex Chow uses the translation “chitchat booth” – that were stationed with three to four rotating students each night (2019, p. 39). The purpose of the stations was to “communicate with participants,” “keep people well informed,” and gather feedback (ibid.). According to Chow, they were places that people were invited to “to brainstorm strategies and tactics” (ibid., pp. 39f). “Students and

¹⁰² <https://www.facebook.com/hkfs1958>, accessed 22.3.2020.

grassroots organizers of the chitchat group would visit villagers at night and engage them in discussions that would last from half an hour to several hours” (ibid., p. 40). Jamie T., a former HKFS member who was affiliated with the CHRF, reflected that this mechanism provided a channel for occupiers to affect HKFS’s decision-making:

If [the HKFS representatives] had any decision to make before that they would try to consult the participants. So I think in this respect even though they were not formally included in the decision-making process, the general public and also the participants did have trust towards the students, because they were as a friend living, working in the occupied area. (interview, 14.6.2018)

Jamie T. pointed out that political groups, unions, or NGOs similarly set up their own booths in the encampment and suggested that this was a “strategic move” that served to collect “information from the occupied area” as well as to counter populist messages challenging the student leadership. Jamie T. suggested that some of these booths organized nightly forums to talk about different social issues.

Wing Tai W., another HKFS “old ghost” and trade unionist, recalled that he helped the student organization by making his rounds in Mongkok talking to protesters, many of whom were distrustful of the alleged “leaders:”

We had to try to talk to them and tell them that we are not ordering you around, telling you where to go, whether to retreat or not... we will listen to your opinion. What do you think about the whole Umbrella Movement? (interview, 7.6.2018)

Allen E. pointed out that these unstructured deliberations served two purposes: First, they were meant to “reduce conflicts” by building up trust between HKFS and the “normal people.” Second, they were an attempt to try to prevent conflicts with the police from escalating by advising occupiers not

to fight back against provocations. He pointed out that many of the people in the Mongkok occupation zones were “mainly grassroots people” (i.e. working class) who were “not so highly educated,” so they would all use foul language in these informal chats and smoke cigarettes together.¹⁰³ All these testimonies indicate that the strategic spaces of deliberation set up during the Umbrella Movement were relatively informal and low-key compared to the explicit experiments with deliberative democracy in the OCLP deliberation days or during the Sunflower occupation (see next chapter).

Apart from these informal strategic deliberations arranged by the movement leadership, there was also a range of public street lectures, the most prominent of which was a series of lectures called “Mobile Democracy Classroom” (流動民主教室). It developed out of a series of teach-in lectures that were held next to LegCo and arranged by a group of self-organized university teachers as part of a strategy to support the student strike that preceded the occupation. Once the occupation emerged volunteers continued to organize teach-ins in all three occupation zones. These deliberative spaces can be understood as examples of decentralized “improvisation” that complemented the strategy pursued by vertical leadership in its “standoff” with the authorities (Ho 2019, pp. 150–175). The classroom-setting implied hierarchies of expertise between lecturers and audience (Hui 2017, p. 157). According to a Facebook page set up to promote the classroom, the activities spread out over the course of 75 days and involved over 100 teachers, including professors, NGO professionals, artists, community organizers and other professionals.¹⁰⁴ The teaching activities included a variety of formats such as lectures, forums, discussions, and movie screenings. While activities

¹⁰³ This points to the class dimension of *Ceoi Seoi* as a more informal discursive practice than rational deliberation worthy of access to Habermas’ public sphere, see Hui 2017, pp. 156–157.

¹⁰⁴ <https://www.facebook.com/civileducationhk/>, accessed 2.10.2020.

could take place all day, they were mostly concentrated in the evening, especially in the later stage of the occupation. In terms of topics the activities covered an extremely wide ground, touching on issues such as the history of Hong Kong's pro-democracy movement, political reform under the Basic Law framework, resistance from a psychological perspective, political art, citizen resistance in Korea, the resistance of Taiwan's Presbyterian church to authoritarianism, Indonesia's Democracy Movement, the political participation of new immigrants, ethnic minorities, feminism, sexual orientation, and disabled persons' rights.¹⁰⁵ All this reflects that there was a broad range of deliberative forums dealing with issues broadly related to the question of democracy, even though there was no structured deliberative decision-making process in place during the occupation. These street classrooms not just served the purpose of mobilizing participants, but also provided civic education and demonstrated that this was a peaceful and rational movement of well-informed citizens.

Within the Mongkok occupation zone there was also a more fixed and regular nightly "democracy classroom." Cameron F., an academic who had already engaged in social justice activism prior to the occupation, was involved in running the deliberative space. During the Umbrella Movement, Cameron F. realized that many of the occupiers knew "very little about the background" of the movement and that "people need[ed] some civic education" rather than the apolitical "formal education" they had received in school. Cameron F. felt that this need for education was especially pressing in Mongkok: Whereas "people in Admiralty are more elite" and could "absorb the message" relatively easily, Cameron F. found that many participants in Mongkok were "lower class" and "middle aged," a demographic that was rich in "life experience" and "enthusiasm," but lacked

¹⁰⁵ After the Umbrella Movement some volunteers continued the project, see <https://sites.google.com/site/uumdc2015/uu>, accessed 2.10.2020.

knowledge about “why people are coming” out and “what happens in society” (ibid.).

The nightly Mongkok classroom provided civic education, as well as a forum for people to get to know one another and build trust. Cameron F. acted as an “emcee” or “facilitator.” While some younger people took part in the discussions, it was “much more uncles and aunties.” Cameron F. recalled that they would encourage people to speak their mind and to listen to each other, and also try to “translate their talking to some main points.” The classroom was held every day and scheduled to go from 7 p.m. to 10 p.m., but it usually ended at midnight or even later. Cameron F. estimated that usually over 100 participants came over the course of each night. Especially in the later stage of the occupation different “guest speakers” were invited to “offer lectures talking about civil society, public housing policy or political ethics” to help the audience “build up their knowledge bit by bit” (ibid.).

Cameron F. had not been involved in OCLP’s strategic deliberations prior to the occupation. But similar to the OCLP organizers, Cameron F. also felt the urban classroom meant putting Jürgen Habermas’ theoretical ideas to practice. Just as the D-Days before it, the setting allowed for more than just the teaching of specific knowledge about democracy: It also introduced skills and attitudes of deliberation to broader audiences. Cameron F. reflected that the classroom allowed for the “testing [of] [...] Habermas’ idea of the public sphere.” Cameron F. suggested that “[j]ust like when you are doing some experiment, you find that wow it works, the Habermas model it works, even in lower class.” Asked which indicators could be relied upon to gauge the experiment a success, Cameron F. said that before the forum it was almost as if the “uncles” and “aunties” were “living on different planets;” they were enthusiastic to tell their stories but would not listen to each other. This meant that “all people are talking but there is no communication.” But the forum

facilitated the attitudes and abilities required to listen to and engage with one another, creating discussion and at times even consensus. Cameron F. stressed that the participants enjoyed the discussions “very much” and even asked for the continuation of the forum after the occupation, something that was actually arranged for more than a year with a slightly different format (ibid.).

In sum, OCLP’s tightly choreographed strategic deliberations were not revived during the Umbrella Movement. Even the student organizations with their relatively high degree of authority did not organize structured forms of strategic deliberation akin to DStreet in Taiwan’s Sunflower Movement (see chapter 5). Neither did they experiment with directly involving more people in the decision-making process, for instance through open general assemblies, even though HKFS had tried to make their campaign more bottom-up prior to the occupation. Instead, they organized strategic deliberative spaces such as the HKFS *Ceoi Seoi* stages to collect feedback from participants in an informal fashion that was less structured than the OCLP D-Days. Moreover, there were all sorts of classroom settings that were not centrally organized and created spaces for civic education and the training of deliberation.

Prefigurative Deliberation in Hong Kong

While OCLP’s D-Street format was not revived, the Umbrella Movement facilitated a broad range of prefigurative deliberations all across the occupation zones. Alex Chow, HKFS student leader, interprets the whole movement as an exercise in prefiguration in an ethnographic account of the movement that points to the self-organization of an “alternative urban community” in the occupation zones:

The Umbrella Movement was a popular struggle to demand constitutional and electoral reforms. But like other occupy movements in recent years, it was also an instance of prefigurative politics. If the slogan “I want genuine universal suffrage” articulated the former, “No general assembly, only the masses” expressed the protesters’ experimentation with the latter. (2019, p. 34)

The slogan “No general assembly, only the masses” was adopted by critics of the main stage. It captured a prevailing sentiment that the occupations were formed and developed by ordinary people and thus did not require centralized leadership. While Chow himself was closely involved in efforts by formal organizations to collectively shape the movement’s direction from above – which he describes as a fraught process that conflicted with the structures formed on the ground – he highlights the prefigurative dimensions of the temporary social experiment on the streets of Hong Kong.

Focusing on the Admiralty occupation, Chow argues that it was a “laboratory” for prefigurative experimentation and the production of an “alternative urban commons.” He suggests that participants “practiced a ‘do it together’ culture that emphasized prefigurative participatory democracy” and “a collective sense of community resistance” (ibid., pp. 35f). Whilst acknowledging that the Umbrella Movement did not express an explicit critique of capitalism – even though economic grievances boosted participation – he argues that the “occupiers built an alternative urban commons that embraced equality, sharing, and solidarity in everyday life, envisioning a utopian socioeconomic order different from the existing one in Hong Kong” (ibid., p. 35). Chow describes the infrastructures that were developed or transformed as part of this urban experiment to meet the needs of the occupiers – including food, security, hygiene, medical well-being, rest, recreation, transportation, as well as self-expression – and some of the related

groups, practices, and activities that evolved in Admiralty (ibid., pp. 36-40). He highlights the deliberative dimensions of the encampments:

Unlike many one-off rallies where participants just came and went without engagement with each other, deliberations were crucial parts of everyday life in the occupied zones. Apart from the countless internal meetings held by self-organized groups to review their everyday operation, many platforms were built to share personal stories and to discuss strategies and postoccupy goals. Countless people prefigured an alternative civic life that allowed for attentive listening, expressions of emotion, and rational contemplations of the movement. (ibid., p. 39)

Democracy was performed not just through the gathering of bodies in public space and their acting out of everyday life on the streets, but also through private and public talk amongst occupiers. Participants on the streets discussed the day-to-day maintenance of their occupations, formed communities, and discussed strategic matters such as the barricade structures and plans for disruptive action (see also Hui 2017).¹⁰⁶

It is quite striking that a leading figure of the Umbrella Movement such as Alex Chow retrospectively discusses the occupation as an enactment of prefiguration. In contrast to the Sunflower Movement, which achieved a moderate concession and a voluntary withdrawal, the Umbrella Movement did not achieve any of its stated objectives despite a lengthy occupation and was thus often considered a “failure.” However, the notion of prefiguration troubles the success/failure distinction (e.g. van de Sande 2013). From this

¹⁰⁶ It is important to note that apart from face-to-face communication, another important dimension of the occupation was textual production both online and offline. Veg (2016) shows that there was an elaborate and diverse “textual public space” formed through writings produced in various forms, e.g. banners, posters, stickers, and artworks. Similarly providing a nuanced exploration of the occupations’ deliberative dimensions, Leung and Wong (2019) argue that the widespread spontaneous and collective art production was a crucial way in which participants not just aesthetically reconfigured the occupied spaces, but also learned about and experienced democratic citizenship through a process of public deliberation.

vantage point, the experimental democratic process holds value as an enactment of future imagination in the present, irrespective of institutionally defined outcomes. The use of the notion of prefiguration also points to the different temporal imaginations present in Hong Kong's pro-democracy movement. While traditional pan-democrats have at times accepted compromise on the pace of democratization, many younger activists criticised their timid approach and pushed more ambitious plans for electoral reform (see below). Their relative lack of patience and strong determination ultimately resulted in the occupations as an enactment of democracy in the present.

Apart from Chow's discussion, other accounts of the Umbrella Movement also point to its prefigurative dimensions. Yun-Chung Chen and Mirana M. Szeto (2015, p. 80) explicitly suggest that the notion of prefigurative politics can serve "to re-evaluate the movement," which based on conventional standards appears rather unsuccessful. They suggest that this allows for taking a long-term perspective as "only such a utopian, prefigurative cultural logic can keep a community hopeful and driven in the long run" (ibid.). Along similar lines, Zhongxuan Lin and Shih-Diing Liu argue that the Umbrella Movement marked "the emergence of 'occupation as prefiguration' as a political form in Hong Kong" (Lin and Liu 2016, p. 775). Similarly to Chow, they recognize that the movement was not explicitly prefigurative and discuss the troubled formation of vertical leadership, but they nonetheless consider the self-organization by occupiers as prefigurative in nature. Other authors do not use the term "prefiguration" but nonetheless acknowledge the utopian dimensions of the movement by focusing on the lived experience in the occupation zones rather than on hard "outcomes" (see Hui 2017; Matthews 2017b; Veg 2016). Hui, for instance, discusses the formation of urban communities in the encampments that were part of a broader collective that "presented images of a utopian Hong Kong as well as

a critique of contemporary Hong Kong's political plight" (2017, p. 148). All these descriptions indicate that the Umbrella Movement marked the development of a new form of prefigurative activism in Hong Kong that entails the performative and deliberative enactment of a democratic future in the present. The following sections seek to further unpack this by more closely discussing the differences between the three occupation zones and the prefigurative deliberations in them.

Admiralty's Utopia

The Admiralty occupation zone blocked off several of Hong Kong Island's main traffic roads and was set up in the vicinity of a range of commercial buildings, shopping malls, and administrative buildings such as the Legislative Council and the Government Headquarter. The area had a special status due to the presence of the main stage as the symbolical centre of the movement from where the leadership addressed the public. The encampment not just stood out due to the visibility of the "leaders," but also due to the large scale of the area that was reclaimed by protesters who formed vibrant communities along with extensive occupation infrastructure and artworks. Apart from the physical stage, some of the most iconic and perhaps most photographed occupation landmarks were located in the area such as the "Umbrella Man" (a statue holding an umbrella reminiscent of the "Goddess of Democracy" erected by occupiers in Beijing in 1989) or the "Lennon Wall" of post-it notes (reminiscent of the "Democracy Wall Movement" of 1978).

Admiralty was experienced as an "utopia" by many participants. There was a general sense that whereas Hong Kongers as urban people are often considered to be more self-centred in normal times, during the occupation strangers helped and stood up for each other, getting to know one another in

the process (interviews: Aimee F., 9.11.2017; Francis T., 17.11.2017; Luke E., 9.8.2018). The utopian dimensions of this prefigurative space did not go unnoticed by outside observers. One foreign journalist characterized the Admiralty encampment as a "high-functioning utopian collective blocked off by a handful of elaborate barricades." He depicted the scene as follows:

Step into the protest zone via jerry-rigged stairs crossing over the highway divider, and the overwhelming feeling is one of entering an art fair, or a music festival – protesters sit on the pavement cross-legged, strumming guitars and checking their smartphones. During the day, tourists amble through the crowd, snapping photos with SLR cameras; at night, hundreds, sometimes thousands of supporters gather to hear speeches and performances. (Kaiman 2014)

While many people only visited the occupy areas at night time due to other commitments, others turned into long-term occupiers and built small communities (Aimee F., interview, 9.11.2017; Miles Y., interview, 5.6.2018). These communities formed spaces for deliberation within the occupation zones. Examples for communities that were formed in Admiralty included the different barricade groups, the resource stations, first aid stations, "tent villages," and the camps of political groups such as HKFS or Scholarism.

There were four main barricade groups that maintained makeshift barricades – made up of metal barriers and other components often found at construction sites – that were set up at strategic points on the margins of the street encampment (Brandon F., interview, 7.8.2018; Luke E., interview; 9.8.2018). These so-called "defence lines" were meant to protect the occupation from the police and make it harder to clear it. Whereas moderate pan-democrats were willing to strategically give up parts of the encampment and questioned the need for these structures, the barricade groups self-managed the defence lines and were opposed to yielding any territory unless the government gave in (ibid.).

Brandon F., who was deeply involved in one of the barricade groups, contributed to the organic development of a security structure in the encampment. Our conversation revealed that in the view of many self-mobilized occupiers, the prefigurative experiment in Admiralty was fragile and only possible due to collective efforts to defend its boundaries (interview, 7.8.2018). He recalled that he and others spent the first two weeks of the occupation “identifying people with a similar thinking,” building “networks” and “relationships.” They used walkie talkies to facilitate communication. He suggested it took them three to four weeks to establish an infrastructure within the occupation zone that included the four main barricades, 26 resource stations (as well as a distribution network for the resources), and first aid stations. The resource stations had to quickly distribute donated materials across the large-scale occupation zone. This task required a distribution network and a great deal of communication to be able to provide things “to people in the right places” and to ensure “people can have easy access.”

Brandon F. contrasted the resulting occupation structure to that in Mongkok which was “very organic” with “very tight small streets.” By contrast, the Admiralty encampment was “one vulnerable big area.” They were “creating a community, a city within the city, in the streets.” He suggested it was an “ecosystem” that evolved “completely organically.” Through trial and error they developed a “proper system” to protect the occupation zone and its inhabitants, including “scouting teams operating at all times” to monitor police movement and identify “suspicious looking people,” “simple coding words” for different situations and protocols for handling them. Brandon F. made clear that this self-organized system was different from the OCLP marshals, who mainly focused on protecting the equipment of the main stage and with whom they had a “working relationship” (interview, 7.8.2018). Brandon F. said that at his barricade there were around 30 people stationed

who were “constantly in rotation.” He suggested that many of the people at the barricade were “misfits,” “tattooed guys” who wanted to “play a more physical role” and a “a lot of problem kids with dyed hair.” He said they “found a sense of duty” and “everyone serving these barricades felt a sense of honour [...] to defend [their] city.”

Luke E. was one of the ordinary citizens who became deeply involved in the northern barricade group. Previously he had only occasionally participated in protests. It was his deep dissatisfaction with how under China’s control the city had “changed into a very different Hong Kong” that drove him to turn up to support the students in September 2014 starting from the day before the teargas was fired (interview, 9.8.2018). The barricade team that Luke E. became a part of was named “Orange Village” (橙村). The name was inspired by the nickname given to the informal leader around whom the group had formed, who was called “Orange hat” after an orange bandana he used to wear. The group encompassed up to 40 people from all walks of life, the large majority of whom had no prior background in activism or politics (Hugo T. and Siu Wah Y., 13.6.2018; Luke E., interview, 9.8.2018). Their camp was located close to the old stage at Civic Square. Orange Village was one of the tent villages that emerged in the Admiralty occupation zone in early October (Chow 2019, p. 37).

According to Luke E. the occupation was an “utopia” (烏托邦, interview, 9.8.2018). He explained that the people involved in it were of great temperament and moral character. They were not motivated by money, but by conviction and wanted to help one another. They were unselfish, turning the occupation into a “very beautiful place.” By contrast, he said Hong Kong people's normal lives usually revolved just around “getting on and off work,” all the while being “very cold and detached, for instance sitting side by side while eating, unlikely to chat with one another, just very indifferent (冷淡).”

Luke E. suggested that Orange Village had close relations with the other villages nearby: The neighbours would see each other every day, greet each other and chat. On days without any major incidents, people would “stay in that place all day with nothing to do” and “just chat with other people nonstop, talk politics, talk about life [...] just chat, make friends.” He further suggested that they were close with Scholarism, as the student organization’s camp was right next to theirs. By contrast, they were less close with HKFS, as the publicly known student leaders were usually busy attending meetings and they did not get to see them as often. However, he did recall that in the middle and late stages of the occupation HKFS would consult the four barricade groups to seek help and advice, since they had learned that the occupiers would not necessarily listen to them. He reflected that the people staying in the occupied zone were mostly “ordinary citizens” (普通的市民) who “each had their own opinion” and “decided to just do whatever they wanted to do.” The barricade groups were close to the people in their vicinity, so HKFS would seek them out and ask them to distribute news to other people.

While Luke E. did not use the term in our interview (perhaps because it was conducted in Mandarin Chinese), the informal neighbourly conversations in the village communities can be described as *Ceoi Soi* (the Cantonese term for chitchat that HKFS used to label its booths, see above). In his ethnographically grounded discussion of this particular form of deliberation, Hui Yew-Foong suggests:

In the more intimate space of the ‘villages’, *Ceoi Soi* allows different opinions and concerns, political or otherwise, to be shared, articulated and formulated. It takes on the tone of being only half-serious, could be ludic and amount to no consolidated position whatsoever. Yet, out of these often aimless multilogues could also emerge informed and cogent political

analyses and positions. The potential of *Coei Soei* is embedded in social relationships that are at once intimate and open [...].

I argue that this discursive art called *Coei Soei*, couched in the cultural intimacy (Herzfeld, 2005) of Hong Kong people, opens up a space where new ways of talking about the political are made possible. In a sense, this is akin to the discursive arenas of the coffee houses, salons and societies described by Habermas (1989), but without pre-determining that communication has to be rational. (2017, 156f)

Interesting here is that the village communities allowed for – or rather were built upon – a particular deliberative practice that was relatively more informal, humorous, and unstructured than rational deliberation. This resonates with the argument that dominant conceptions of deliberative democratic theory excludes forms of communication that are not detached and rational, for instance impassionate activist discourse (Sanders 1997; Young 2001). Hui's discussion also suggests that *Coei Soei* leaves more room for humour, incoherence, and contradiction than rational discourse. These differences are not surprising, considering that Habermas' originally conceived the formation of the public sphere as a phenomenon linked to the ascent of the bourgeoisie in Europe in the 18th and 19th century. The encampments in Hong Kong created different deliberative spaces that prefigured an alternative community on the streets based on shared cultural heritage and belonging.

Decisions in Orange Village were made through prefigurative deliberation. Whereas other barricade groups had a leadership culture that was somewhat akin to that of a "company" – members followed the orders of one boss (老板) – Luke E. recalled that their village lacked clear hierarchies (see also Brandon F., interview, 7.8.2018). Although the whole village was named after one person, Luke E. emphasized that the group made all major decisions collectively (interview, 9.8.2018). Up to 40 group members would sit down in

a circle on the street to deliberate. People would smoke, drink and chat. If deemed necessary, they would make decisions by majority vote with people raising their hands. Asked whether decision-making was democratic, Luke E. responded they didn't think about whether it was democratic or not. "It was just mutual respect amongst friends."¹⁰⁷ He further explained: "In fact it was very simple: everyone was friends, everyone was equal, we just discussed together in this manner, actually it wasn't that complicated."

The deliberations mostly involved a core of group members. Sometimes outsiders gave suggestions, but since the discussions concerned the barricades, they "could not let too many different people provide too many different suggestions, otherwise it would have been too chaotic" (ibid.). Other occupiers recalled that it could be difficult for outsiders to become a member of the cordoned off village due to security concerns (see Hugo T. and Siu Wah Y., interview, 13.6.2018).

Orange Village is just one prominent example for a great number of different small communities that emerged in the Admiralty occupation and were sustained through horizontal collaboration and deliberation. According to weekly counts by protesters the number of tents set up remained above 2000 between late October to late November (Harcourt Village Voice, 2014: 24-5, cited by Hui 2017, p. 153). While some of the village communities were set up by people who were already familiar with each other prior to the occupation – for instance university students – many were strangers who became acquainted with one another through their involvement in the movement and the subsequent community building (ibid.). These structures emerged organically without much thought about democratic theory and prefiguration. But the encampment had a prefigurative dimension in the

¹⁰⁷ Luke E. did not mention if these villagers knew each other prior to the occupation. But it is likely that most of them did not and developed friendships through the movement, as the village community emerged organically around "Orange Hat" as a charismatic figure (see also Hugo T. and Siu Wah Y., interview, 13.6.2018)

sense that occupiers were acting out a democratic utopia on the streets of Admiralty in the present instead of waiting for democratic reform in the future.

Causeway Bay's Forgotten Occupation

Causeway Bay district is a vibrant shopping hub on Hong Kong Island. The street encampment was set up in an urban environment characterized by shopping malls, department stores, restaurants, and office buildings. Amongst the three occupation zones Causeway Bay was the smallest, least populous one that made the fewest headlines. Occupiers sometimes joked that it was an occupation zone that was largely ignored or forgotten, as most attention was paid to Admiralty and Mongkok. Brandon F., who was deeply involved in one of the barricades in Admiralty, characterized Occupy Causeway Bay as follows: "An exhibition centre, very quiet, main support for a lot of cultural stuff. It was the forgotten occupation area, no one cared about it" (interview, 7.8.2018).

Jamie T., an experienced activist involved in the CHRF, said that Causeway Bay was the "most peaceful" of the three areas and that they all had "different atmospheres" (interview, 14.6.2018). Whilst people would think that Admiralty was "a little more middle class," Mongkok "belonged to the grassroots." Jamie T. laughingly added that as "for the Causeway Bay [occupation zone] no one remembers it." However, Jamie T. also suggested that "people in Causeway Bay were much more friendly" and were "trying to communicate with each other closely," possibly because they felt they were "being isolated or being forgotten." This indicates that Causeway Bay, as a smaller and relatively more isolated occupation zone, developed into a more connected community.

Morgan C., a veteran LGBTQ rights activist, was one of the people strongly involved in the Causeway Bay occupation as an informal marshal at night (interview, 6.6.2018). Morgan C. said the small encampment was the “peripheral” and “cultural” occupation zone, using the term “Cultured Youth” (文青) to describe its participants (a term that “seems to be the close equivalent of ‘hipster,’” see Hioe 2019). While Morgan C. recalled that this was “not a term they used back then,” they created a lot of “stuff” nowadays associated with it, for instance “they had drawings to display, had group discussions, and some installations” (interview, 6.6.2018).

In the early days of the occupation Morgan C. and other veteran activists identified people in the area who had a “past record of working together” to “help to facilitate the discussion.” Initially they arranged seminars or talks on “different topics, not only on the direct elections or universal suffrage but also on other movements.” While they invited some speakers and would then “sit around and have some discussion,” this was all “not very official.” Morgan C. further pointed out that their encampment did not feature a central stage like in Admiralty or Mongkok with a “loudspeaker system,” so they did not have to decide “who can use that facility.” There was no “need to have that central stage at the Causeway Bay area,” in part because people “mostly focused on Mongkok and Admiralty area, meaning their small community was “not getting that much attention.” As a result the occupation was more loose, “more carefree, not as intense and more diverse” than the other areas. Morgan C. stressed that they were not “divided by the section of land” like in Admiralty where some areas were claimed by one group and “other areas by other groups.” Geographically they were one “very long street area.” This allowed people to have “different things happening along the road” and not “interfere with each other.”

Morgan C. recalled that there was a “central booth” that was “something like the secretariat of the area.” However, there were no “top-down decision-making” structures. People in Causeway Bay coordinated and “if there were any discrepancies then they tried to resolve” them. There were around 10-20 people who were familiar with one another from previous social movements and “helped to facilitate.” For instance, when “some people would like to have a talk at the end of the street,” then they would coordinate to make sure that if others wanted to “have another talk at the other side,” there would be no clashes. Morgan C. further clarified that they did not experience any major disagreements within the occupation zone, just smaller ones. This indicates that this small community was overall rather united as compared to the other two occupations.

Hugo T., a Hong Konger of mixed heritage, moved to the allegedly “forgotten” occupation zone in the later stages of the movement (interview, 13.6.2018). He had experienced the cordoning off of some areas by some of the village communities in Admiralty as exclusionary and felt more welcome in Causeway Bay. Hugo T. recalled that the rather small encampment was located in an extremely accessible area where many people worked. He said ordinary people who wanted to support the movement, but couldn’t take part openly (for instance due to fearing repercussions at work), would support them by donating things like food, so that there was always more than what the occupiers could eat. Further, he pointed out that during daytime due to its location and accessibility the occupation zone would be a prime target for opponents of the movement who wanted to verbally confront the protesters. He said that occupiers had to get used to constantly being shouted at from the boundaries of the protest zone.

All occupation zones endured frequent contacts with opponents of the protests that could range from arguments to verbal abuse or even physical

confrontations. The protests divided the city. And these divisions could become visual in everyday life through ribbons that people wore to show their allegiance. Yellow ribbons (yellow being the colour of the protests) were worn to show support for democracy. Blue ribbons were sometimes worn by opponents of the protests from the so-called “pro-China” camp, who were therefore simply called “blue ribbons.” Protesters suspected that many if not most of the people who made the effort to come to the occupation zone in order to engage in arguments or shout at them were not driven by genuine beliefs, but being paid by pro-government forces hoping to undermine the occupation. Francis T., a mid-aged occupier who was mostly based on Hong Kong Island, suggested:

They are paid. They are actors. I believe that most of them, 90% of them are actors. [...] sometimes they even read the wrong names. It is funny. They don't read their scripts. In order to be an actor you have to read and memorize your script [laughs]. (interview, 17.11.2017)

To what extent people were really being paid to oppose the protest is impossible to establish. But this quote reveals the performative dimension of these verbal confrontations. Groups of protesters typically responded to the emotional display by emphatically clapping, shouting things like “yes, well said” or singing the song “Happy Birthday” to drown out their voice (Hugo T. and Siu Wah Y., 13.6.2018). Hugo reflected that this was a kind of coping strategy: “The thing is, you couldn’t take it too seriously otherwise your blood starts to boil.” All this indicates that calm and rational dialogue between inhabitants of the prefigurative occupation zones and protest opponents from outside was difficult. The situation was far removed from the textbook ideal of an deliberative culture that OCLP had hoped to help cultivate prior to the occupation. The occupation zones instead formed rather insulated spaces for prefigurative, democratic community life.

Mongkok – A Different Stage

Mongkok is a district on the Kowloon side of Hong Kong known for having one of the highest population densities in the world. The occupation of a main traffic road was set in a lively area in the vicinity not just of shopping malls and offices, but also of residential neighbourhoods, as well as other spaces buzzing with urban social life such as restaurants, bars, parks, and street markets. Whilst gentrification has transformed the area, Mongkok is traditionally a working-class (“grassroots”) district and has acquired a reputation as a hotbed of organized crime. The Mongkok occupation provided a stark contrast to the prefigurative encampment in Admiralty. The latter was often perceived as having a more festive atmosphere and as being dominated by members of the middle class such as young professionals and students. Mongkok, by contrast, was seen as characterized by “grassroots” occupiers, localists advocating militant resistance, and the threat of violence at the hands of the police, local triads, and anti-occupy demonstrators (Scarlett W., interview, 8.8.2018; Luke E., interview, 9.8.2018). Luke E., the member of Orange Village, put it as follows:

Mongkok was a very complicated place, with lower class people, gangsters, with aunties and uncles, with the localists who advocated violent ways of protest. Actually, if you were somebody who was very comfortable in Admiralty, or middle class, or elite, or a youngster, you found it a little bit scary to come to Mongkok. (interview, 9.8.2018)

While Occupy Mongkok developed a more tense atmosphere than the other two encampments, communities also formed organically in the area and a particular deliberative culture developed. Many of the occupiers based in Mongkok did not recognize the leadership of the Five-Party Platform that regularly spoke from the main stage in Admiralty. Nonetheless, Mongkok

developed its own main stage that contrasted starkly from its counterpart on Hong Kong island.

Robin C., an NGO representative and veteran of Hong Kong's LGBTQ movement, was one of the people who helped set up the stage in Mongkok (interview, 13.6.2018). Just like the emcees who ended up managing the stage in Admiralty (see chapter 3), Robin C. was originally recruited by OCLP due to his longstanding experience in playing the emcee role during the annual marches. When the confrontations with the police first unfolded, he was in Admiralty, but on the first morning of the occupation he decided to stay in Mongkok, feeling that there were fewer people in that area. He had many friends in the district who knew about his emcee experience, so they asked him for support. They said that they didn't want guests to speak for too long at a time, as "they wanted to let people talk, because democracy means to hear the voice of the people" (ibid.).

When Robin C. arrived in Mongkok a large booth had already been set up at the crossroad of Nathan Road and Argyle Street, two main streets in the district, a very central location in the occupation zone. The booth was turned into the main stage of the Mongkok occupation. Robin C. was not aware of who had put the booth there, saying he was just among the people using it to establish a main stage. The physical construction that formed the Mongkok *daaitoi* differed visually from main stage in Admiralty (see chapter 3). Whereas there was an actual stage in Admiralty, in Mongkok there was just a large tent. One interviewee contrasted the aesthetics of the stage constructions:

In Admiralty they had something like a ladder, and then they were speaking to the people from above, because it was so big you know, but in Mongkok it was not lifted, it was just one tent, so even aesthetically you could see the difference. (Auntonomous 8a, interview, 28.11.2017)

The aesthetics of the stage reflect the egalitarian sentiment shared by many of the occupiers in Mongkok. As previously mentioned, distrust towards authority and representation was expressed through widespread slogans such as “you don’t represent me.” Hence it was fitting that speakers at this *daaitoi* were not elevated from the floor on a stage construction, but stood amongst other occupiers under a tent.

But the differences were not confined to visual aspects. The way the stage was run also differed markedly from the *daaitoi* in Admiralty. Instead of designing a proper rundown and inviting guest speakers from the movement leadership, the stage in Mongkok was essentially an “open mic” with emcees facilitating discussion amongst the occupiers (Robin C., interview, 13.6.2018; also autonomous 8a, interview, 28.11.2017). Robin C. recalled that since there were over a hundred people who wanted to speak out every day, the emcees proposed a rule system that was discussed and agreed upon by majority vote (and could be changed anytime through the same mechanism). He suggested the rules that were established included the following: the stage was to be opened every day from 12 noon to 10 p.m. (trying to minimize inconvenience to people in the neighbourhood); the maximum speaking time per contribution was two minutes; first time speakers were prioritized over people who had contributed before; anybody was allowed to speak regardless of their affiliation; speakers should not be disturbed. At the rare occasion that the student leaders came to speak at the Mongkok *daaitoi*, even they had to comply with the same rule system, including the two-minute speaking time, and were treated like any other participants (Scarlett W., interview, 8.8.2018).

The *daaitoi* in Mongkok was very different from that in Admiralty. Robin C. said both stages had a “very different style” due to the differences between the two occupations (interview, 13.6.2018). According to him, the Mongkok

daaitoi emerged more organically, simply because “some citizens stayed together and naturally they had a stage,” whereas in Admiralty the stage tried to “engage the people to come to Admiralty to support the movement.”

Robin C. summarized the differences:

In Admiralty the emcee designed the rundown. What was the time to start the show? What was the time to end the show? Who were the guests? What was the topic? It was all decided by the emcee. But this *daaitoi* [in Mongkok] had no agenda, no rundown.

This reflects that whereas the Admiralty *daaitoi* was managed in a more top-down fashion by the movement leadership, which was criticised by radical occupiers, the Mongkok stage had a more bottom-up and open approach. Robin C. shared the reasons for the greater degree of openness:

The *daaitoi* of Mongkok did not have the responsibility for the whole Umbrella Movement. We could talk about anything. The media was not interested in what the people said. We could talk about anything, because we were not famous people, we were just citizens. [...] The *daaitoi* of Admiralty couldn't use the Mongkok system [...] They had a great deal of responsibility for the whole Umbrella Movement, but we in Mongkok did not. We were just a small potato, so we could do anything.

Robin C.'s statement makes clear that Mongkok's perceived status as a less important occupation zone had distinct advantages. It was the absence of the same degree of pressure and scrutiny from the media and the general public that allowed for a greater degree of openness and an open-mic culture to develop. Robin C. pointed out that there were many other booths of various civil society and political organizations in the area, so the main stage did not dominate the discourse in the occupation zone like its counterpart in Admiralty allegedly did. Even critics of the main stage in Admiralty felt that the stage in Mongkok was more acceptable. Oskar K., who had been amongst

those who symbolically challenged the Admiralty *daaitoi* (see chapter 3), questioned whether the set-up even constituted a proper main stage:

If you just think about the geographic location it was kind of the 'main stage.'
But it didn't have any power. No power, because no one could control it. It
was open for the public. [...] It was just kind of a landmark, but it did not
really have any power. (interview, 14.6.2018)

Despite its openness and perceived lack of “power,” the stage in Mongkok was not spared challenges by right wing groups. Mongkok was known as a hub for localist groups seeking greater autonomy or even independence from China. The group Civic Passion in particular had a strong presence in the area. Members of the group argued that the occupation zone was a “battlefield” rather than a utopian playground. They asked people to refrain from playful and recreational activities such as singing. There was even an incident when they sought to prevent people from playing table tennis on the street (Scarlett W., interview, 8.8.2018). According to Robin C., Civic Passion repeatedly tried to seize control of the *daaitoi* in Mongkok, but was unable to do so due to the open voting system that had been put in place, as they were simply overruled by majority vote (interview, 13.6.2018).

In sum, the three occupation zones organically developed their own particular characteristics, communities, and deliberative spaces. The turn towards prefigurative deliberation as part of everyday life in the occupation zones reflects the significant degree of distrust towards the organized “leadership” assembled on the main stage. The Five-Party Platform could not and did not enforce structure onto the decentralized encampments. Instead of relying on the people on the *daaitoi* in Admiralty to voice their demands, the occupiers built their own communities and deliberative spaces that allowed them to articulate their views and enact a democratic alternative to the existing semi-authoritarian system.

Brave Resistance and anti-deliberation sentiments

The Umbrella Movement marked the development of a prefigurative approach to political contestation in Hong Kong that focused on the performative and deliberative enactment of democracy in the present rather than merely pushing for democratic change in the future. However, as Chow points out, it also signified the rise of a rivalling approach “to social change in Hong Kong” that focused on militant forms of resistance to create “pressure on the power elite,” an approach that became even more influential in the years after the Umbrella Movement (2019, p. 41). Especially in the later stages of the occupation the utopian atmosphere gradually gave way to exhaustion and hefty infighting over the right way forward. Adherents to a more confrontational style of activism, who gained momentum in the later stages of the occupation (see chapter 3), eschewed the prefigurative and utopian acting out of democratic alternatives through public deliberations and performances. While many participants experienced the occupation zones as utopian spaces for deliberation, self-expression, and communal living, radical occupiers held on to a different imagination of urban resistance. They not just criticised the movement leadership and challenged the main stage, but also questioned the perceived theatricality of the peaceful protests, viewing the encampments as “battle zones” instead of democratic utopias. Chow suggests:

Many protesters saw the occupy commons as too toothless and soft to extract any concessions from the government. To those who longed for militant action, the sharing and singing in the occupied zone was a self-indulgent, feel-good distraction from the real political battle facing the movement. (2019, p. 41)

This indicates that there was a significant segment of the occupiers who were dissatisfied with the deliberative culture that emerged in the occupation

zones. “Actually discussion is useless, it just wastes peoples’ time,” said Oskar K., the above-mentioned *daaitoi* critic (interview, 14.6.2018). Considering the strong anti-deliberation sentiments of many radicals, it would have been difficult for OCLP or the student leaders to organize structured deliberative decision-making mechanisms. Daniel K. indicated that even within OCLP there was a recognition that “people did not like the word ‘deliberation.’” He said:

Some of them, especially some of the occupiers, they considered deliberation as too idealistic or too structured or things like that. So we avoided the use of the term deliberation. We used... we just ‘have a conversation.’ (interview, 3.7.2015)¹⁰⁸

Simon K., an HKFS representative at the time who spent a lot of time connecting with occupiers on the ground, confirmed that the atmosphere was not conducive to holding formal deliberations (interview, 14.11.2017). He said that “many people in the Umbrella Movement [...] agreed that the situation was too tense” and even attacked “these left-wing people for always wanting to do deliberations.” He summarized the critique as follows:

[Deliberation] is kind of useless if you are facing an issue of life or death. If you are on the frontline holding the barricade you shouldn't spend time discussing whether we should hold the barricade or we should leave the road to an ambulance. (ibid.)

Simon K. concluded that deliberations were not a feasible approach at the time. It would not have “worked because the situation was too tense and it would have required time.” Further, the “already existing ideological positions or cleavages” would have complicated matters. Retrospectively some of the student leaders suggested that ideally they could have developed participatory mechanisms for involving occupiers in decision-

¹⁰⁸ Our conversation was in English, so it is not clear which Cantonese word he would have used.

making – what Chow calls “collaborative leadership” (2019, p. 49) – rather than relying on the other parties in the Five-Party Platform (interviews: Ralph K, 18.10.2017; Joey F., 29.10.2017; Alan W., 8.6.2018). But clearly this would have been a difficult undertaking due to the tensions within the occupations.

Samuel F., an activist who was deeply involved in the CHRF at the time, further elaborated on the opposition to deliberations from right wing groups (interview, 26.6.2015). He pointed out that they coined the derogatory term “left plastics” (左膠)¹⁰⁹ to bash moderate, peaceful protesters who pushed activities like deliberations (the label is somewhat akin to derogatory terms such as “snowflake” or “social justice warrior” that have emerged in English in recent years to mock progressives). Samuel F. reflected that even in the aftermath of the movement they still blamed “left wing members for using too much time for discussions or debate or deliberations and then prescribing actions.” Indeed, groups like Civic Passion blamed “left plastics” as responsible for the failure of the Umbrella Movement (Passion Times 2016).

One expression of the anti-deliberation sentiment of some protesters was a widely-noted poster put up across the occupation sites that proclaimed “Don’t trust left plastics, guard against withdrawing” (勿信左膠 提防散水; *ibid.*, pp. 233f). It defined “left plastics” as a special activist type in Hong Kong. They were people who “attempt[ed] to monopolize social movement leadership authority” and thereby tried to gain political capital. These people held on to a cheerful type of activism that relied on activities such as singing (mocked as “karaoke”), group photos, and “small group discussions” (小阻討論), “in order to scatter the masses’ serious resistance” (嚴肅抗爭). The ultimate goal of left plastics was to “disintegrate the assembly,” thereby

¹⁰⁹ The term is inspired by the Cantonese swearword 戇鳩 (literally “stupid prick”).

“helping the rulers overcome their difficulties.” The poster called on participants to remember that this was civil disobedience and not a “party” (記住我地係公民抗命．唔係開 Party!!!). It explicitly stated that small group discussions should not be held (唔要小阻討論), which was visualized through a circle with a crossed out mouth. Other things that were strongly opposed (underlined by similar illustrations using the general prohibition sign), included karaoke, group photos, and leaders (illustrated with a crossed out person shouting into a loudhailer).

To summarize, while the Umbrella Movement popularized a prefigurative approach to political contestation, militant activists held on to a more confrontational vision of urban resistance. They opposed both strategic and prefigurative forms of deliberation as either a waste of time or even a deliberate effort to undermine the movement. These critics propagated physical action as an alternative to discursive self-expression.

Conclusion

The differences in terms of trajectory between the Umbrella Movement and its Taiwanese counterpart are reflected in their distinct approaches towards deliberation. The Sunflower Movement started out as a quickly conceived action by a relatively small group of activists that then turned into a large-scale occupation that was relatively more centralized and entailed explicit experiments with deliberative democracy. In Hong Kong, by contrast, the occupation was preceded by a lengthy period of strategic deliberation. But although the occupation was pre-announced by OCLP, the encampments that eventually emerged organically took their own shape and differed starkly from the original plan for a symbolic short-term protest.

The lengthy street occupations arguably could have provided an opportunity for a structured experiment with strategic deliberation akin to those on the streets of Taipei, especially considering that deliberative democracy had already been introduced to the pro-democracy camp in the months prior to the movement. However, the fractured leadership refrained from more formal deliberations due to its relative lack of authority over the three decentralized occupations and the anti-deliberation sentiments of radical segments of the movement. The more structured deliberation days were not revived on Hong Kong's streets. Instead, there were less formal forms of strategic deliberation, such as the HKFS *Ceoi Seoi* Stages, through which the student organization tried to connect with the people and rebuild trust. Moreover, the occupiers self-organized spaces of prefigurative deliberation in the various occupation zones. These temporary spaces allowed participants to form new communities, regain a sense of political agency, freely and creatively voice their views, and self-organize their encampments.

If occupation movements allow for the prefigurative acting out of democratic alternatives in the present, then it is not necessary to judge them solely by their immediate political outcomes, which in many cases disappoint the hopes and expectations of participants. Hong Kong's pro-democracy movement took a prefigurative turn, at least temporarily, with the Umbrella occupations. The vibrant, decentralized, and participatory encampments set the Umbrella Movement apart from the gradualist and ritualistic approach of previous decades. Each of the three encampments developed its own particular culture that facilitated different constellations of self-organization and prefigurative deliberation based on local context. While the temporary urban communities that emerged in the process did not comprehensively coordinate on strategy and speak with one voice – despite the presence of a main stage – , it was the pluralism of different viewpoints, articulations, and enactments that was the defining feature of the broader movement.

The occupations were the expression of a loss of patience of significant sections of the Hong Kong population, particularly young people, both with Beijing's obstructions to democratic reform and moderate pan-democrats' timid approach. The main theme of the protest was "we want universal suffrage," but it might as well have been "democracy now." Just as in occupation movements elsewhere, participants in the Umbrella Movement enacted democracy in the present irrespective of the semi-authoritarian political environment in which they operated that made achieving immediate democratic change a long shot. The temporary encampments provided them with the experience of prefiguring an alternative community and organization of political life. While participants in the movement may not have explicitly used the term prefiguration at the time to describe their experience, they nonetheless "act[ed] as if one is already free" (Graeber 2009, p. 207).

The occupiers assumed the role of active citizens of a temporary democratic collective – taking space, gathering, debating, and self-organizing their affairs – even though the existing system disenfranchises them. Participants from all walks of life indignantly ignored the threat of legal consequences and possible retaliation by the state. Clearly, they were motivated by a deep desire to reclaim political agency and act collectively that outweighed all other concerns. The enactment of a democratic future provided a much needed sense of empowerment and hope. Nathan Law, HKFS student representative, described the entanglement of hope with the assembly in an interview with Vice News on the day Occupy Admiralty was cleared:

We have always maintained, we are not here because there is hope, we are here, therefore there is hope. The truth is, we all feel that the future is pretty hopeless, but we can't give up on having hope. (Vice News 2015)

5 Deliberations in the Wild Strawberry and Sunflower Movement

This chapter seeks to make sense of various forms of street deliberation that emerged in the Sunflower Movement. These experiments have so far received little systematic scholarly attention, possibly because they did not directly involve decision-making on movement direction. As chapter two demonstrated, major strategic decisions were largely made by a core leadership in relatively closed-off deliberative spaces. This contrasted with the approach in the Wild Strawberry Movement of 2008, in which all student participants jointly made decisions in a nightly general assembly. Compared to the direct decision-making power of these deliberations, the bustling deliberative landscape that was created on the streets outside the legislature in the more large-scale Sunflower Movement may – lacking similar powers – seem relatively inconsequential. Observers could gain the impression public deliberations were mainly staged to provide participants sitting-in outside the legislature with something to do to alleviate boredom and maintain sufficient turn-out. After all, the spatial structure of the occupation fostered the perception that the large numbers of participants outside the legislature were confined to playing the role of “supporters” who protected the students holding out in the occupied main chamber behind a police cordon (see Pochun C., interview, 21.7.2018).

Whilst the deliberations certainly contributed to engaging outside participants and boosting turn-out, my analysis in this chapter will demonstrate that these practices cannot be reduced to being merely mobilizational tools. The deliberations mattered even though they did not directly affect decision-making. Drawing on the framework outlined in the

previous chapter, which distinguishes between the ideal types of strategic and prefigurative deliberation, my analysis will show that the Sunflower Movement opened up a variety of deliberative spaces that did different kinds of work.

The most important example for what I call strategic deliberations in the Sunflower Movement was “DStreet Citizen Deliberation” (DStreet 街頭公民審議), a series of deliberations organized by the Sunflower Movement leadership. Similar to OCLP’s D-Days in Hong Kong (see chapter 4), DStreet was a strategic translation of deliberative democracy to practice in the context of a social movement. But whereas the OCLP deliberations were conducted indoors with careful preparation prior to the eventual occupation, DStreet was conceived during the occupation as an explicit application of the deliberative methodology to the streets.

Just as the OCLP D-Days, DStreet facilitated communication as part of a broader strategy for achieving the movement’s stated objectives. Deliberation was not an end in and of itself, but a method designed to strengthen the movement in its standoff with the government. Apart from the mobilizing effect touched on above, the strategic deliberations had broadly three other main functions:¹¹⁰ First, they served as civic education. Participants not only acquired knowledge on the trade deal and Taiwanese democracy, but also developed a new deliberative skillset by learning how to express their views in public and to engage in civic dialogue, all the while getting to know one another in the process. Second, deliberations provided feedback to the leadership. Finally, they were an effective performance that boosted the perceived legitimacy of the movement. Open and transparent deliberations on the trade deal contrasted starkly with the alleged black-box fashion in

¹¹⁰ I identify these functions based on an analysis of the interviews and other material. See below.

which the trade deal was concluded and pushed through the legislature. They embodied the spirit of rational public debate that is widely seen as an important aspect of liberal representative democracy.

To better understand the strategic deliberations in the Sunflower Movement, I will compare them to the deliberative process in the Wild Strawberry Movement of 2008-09. The nightly assembly of the movement broadly fits the prefigurative type. The sit-in protest on Liberty Square carved out an ostensibly leaderless space for self-expression and empowerment. However, the movement emphasized the importance of the horizontal democratic process to such an extent that it lacked the organizational discipline and efficiency required to effectively articulate and achieve objectives.

The remainder of this chapter is structured as follows: First, I will discuss the experience of the Wild Strawberry Movement, as it influenced the approach to deliberation in subsequent movements. Second, I will explore strategic deliberations in the Sunflower Movement, focusing on DStreet and a series of teach-ins. Finally, I will assess spaces of prefigurative deliberation within the occupation that allowed for subversion and relatively unfiltered self-expression that – at least to a certain extent – contradicted the movement leadership and its strategy.

Taiwan's "Wild Strawberry Movement"

The Wild Strawberry Movement of 2008 was a key reference point for many veteran activists of the Sunflower Movement. It emerged in response to alleged violations of freedom of expression during the Taipei visit of Chen Yunlin (陳雲林), a high-ranking official from the PRC, that was part of the Ma Ying-jeou administration's efforts to pursue closer relations with China. During the controversial visit, the police stifled protest, for instance by

preventing participants from displaying the ROC flag. The internet was used to coordinate opposition that evolved into a long-term sit-in in Taipei (Hsiao 2017). Student protesters set up camp at the gates to the iconic Liberty Square (自由廣場) in front of the Chiang Kai-shek Memorial Hall (國立中正紀念堂).¹¹¹ The participants' core demand was the revision of the Assembly and Parade Law to protect human rights. The movement lasted for around 60 days from 6 November 2008 to 4 January 2009.

The Wild Strawberry Movement was Taiwan's first major student movement since the Wild Lily Movement of 1990, which contributed to Taiwan's democratization. Both the location and the name of the protest marked continuity with the Wild Lily Movement (Ke-chung L., interview, 20.4.2018). While student activists did not occupy the square directly in front of the memorial hall, as their predecessors did in 1990, they built camp in front of the gate to the square and once again named their movement after a plant (*ibid.*). By naming their movement in this way the students also rejected the term "Strawberry generation" that implied that Taiwan's young people "'bruise[d] easily' (like a strawberry), because they have enjoyed a period of unprecedented wealth and were spoiled and sheltered as a result" (Murphy 2018, p. 110).

As the Wild Lily Movement before it, the Wild Strawberry Movement was clearly conceived as a student movement that built upon the traditional protest template that Ho labels "Chinese intellectualism" (2014, 2019, pp. 14–15). The elitism was expressed through the creation of picket lines to separate the students from

¹¹¹ While most of the activities were in Taipei where the main sit-in was located, there were protests across Taiwan as well as vibrant online deliberations on messaging boards – meaning that not all participants had to take part in the nightly assembly on Liberty Square, even though this was where important movement decisions were taken. For an analysis of digital communication in the movement, see Hsiao 2017.

ordinary citizens (just as in 1990). While the need to keep citizens out was contested, many students believed it necessary to demonstrate the purity and apolitical character of their protest (Ke-chung L., interview, 20.4.2018), as well as “to guard against agents provocateurs” (Ho 2014). Non-students contributed with donations, but they were not involved in the deliberative decision-making process (ibid.).

The student activists engaged in what I describe as prefigurative deliberation. They experimented with a seemingly leaderless form of internal organization that emphasized the importance of an open-ended democratic process. Behind the picket line, decisions were made in an open and deliberative fashion by all student participants assembled each night (Wen-yang W., 16.4.2018; Shu-fen K., interview, 24.7.2018). There was a consensus to maintain equality amongst participants and not to allow “prolific leaders” to emerge, as not to repeat a pattern from the Wild Lily Movement that had “produced many of the politicians of the day” (Ke-chung L., interview, 20.4.2018). The unstructured deliberative process on the square was reminiscent of horizontal movements elsewhere, although movements such as Occupy Wall Street did not restrict participation in decision-making to a particular status group (Graeber 2013). The Wild Strawberries practiced an elitist version of horizontalism by constructing an ostensibly egalitarian student democracy on the occupied square.

The documentary “The Right Thing” by Wei-hua Chiang (2011) provides rich footage of the movement that helps to get a sense of the visual dimension of the protest. The students constructed a small encampment with over ten pavilions in front of the gate to Liberty

Square. These provided them with a roof over their heads during deliberations. Footage from the inside of one of these tents shows that the ground was covered with puzzle mats to prevent people from feeling cold when sitting on concrete floor. During one of the nightly assemblies there was a diverse group of several dozen students sitting inside the tent. Presumably most participants were enrolled at universities in Taipei.¹¹² There was a projector in use as well as a microphone that a moderator used to facilitate the discussion. Student participants took turns stating their opinions and they voted on motions by raising their hands.

Chiang's documentary entails footage from several different nightly assemblies. The topics deliberated upon included the name of the movement, its demands, whether to let ordinary citizens participate or not, as well as how to continue the protest after the end of the sit-in. One example of a deliberation about an issue that is preserved in some detail in the film, is the question of representation. Even though the sit-in was still ongoing and in its early stages, the students already deliberated on whether individuals should be allowed to claim they represented the movement once the protest had ended. There was a motion introduced by somebody who proposed that "upon leaving the square nobody shall claim that he represents the Wild Strawberry Movement." The ensuing debate turned to other matters such as how to define the end of a movement. Some argued it would end once the sit-in was over. Others suggested the sit-in was not the decisive feature as there were movement participants who

¹¹² Whilst I do not have conclusive data on the make-up of the assembled student body, my interviewees who participated in the movement were part of Taipei's student activist network. But as pointed out above, there were activities in other cities as well as online broadcasts, so students from across Taiwan could get involved even without traveling to Taipei.

did not take part in it. Another participant argued it was not the best timing to discuss this matter, as it would ultimately resolve itself. Yet a different activist voiced his concern that in the end it would be the most patient participants who would be able to decide when the movement would end: “who sits longer gets to say if it’s over or not. So whoever dies out here, whoever hangs on longer, this ‘title’ will be theirs.” In the end the above-mentioned motion was put to a vote and passed with a majority of hands raised in favour. It was thus decided that once the occupation was over no former participant should claim to speak for the whole movement.

The whole episode underlines an uneasiness with representation. On the one hand, student activists assumed the role of a vanguard speaking for society at large in line with the elitist protest script. On the other hand, the students did not want to elevate certain individuals to leadership positions amongst themselves, choosing instead to engage in an open-ended and messy democratic process within the boundaries of their student occupation.

Under the Wild Strawberry Movement’s horizontal decision-making process, power and authority were not vested in a core leadership, but in the nightly assembly. While this allowed for a great degree of equality and openness amongst student participants – at least in theory, as there could be informal leadership structures (Ke-chung L., interview, 20.4.2018; Freeman 1972) –, it meant concessions with regards to the ability to effectively make and implement decisions (interviews: Ke-chung L., 20.4.2018; Chia-hao L., 3.5.2018; Chen-yuan W., 12.5.2018; Shu-fen K., 24.7.2018). Ke-chung L., a deeply involved student activist at the time, recalled in our interview that the deliberations were initially perceived as a “democratic utopia.” But

many participants soon felt “caught in a decision-making loop where [they were] always questioning everything” and “nothing [was] moving forward” (interview, 20.4.2018). Especially those activists who took responsibility of routine work required to maintain the protest such as setting up infrastructure, recycling and organizing food, exhausted over time. These people pushed for ending the movement but could not gain majority support in the nightly assembly which allowed any student to participate. They would be outnumbered by people who voted to continue the protest, even though they did not stick around during daytime to execute decisions and maintain the occupation (Ke-chung L., interview, 20.4.2018; also Chen-yuan W., 12.5.2018; Shu-fen K., 24.7.2018). The result for many of the core participants was a feeling of being “stuck on the square” in a loop of deliberative indecision (Ke-chung L., interview, 20.4.2018).

Ultimately, the students did declare their withdrawal from the square after around 60 days, but not before exhaustion had become intolerable and the number of participants dwindled significantly (Chiang 2011). The prefigurative approach meant that seemingly utopian experimentation with a democratic process was emphasized, even when it came at the expense of the organizational discipline required to effectively articulate and accomplish objectives. Although the occupation opened up a space for the enactment of democracy, thereby serving as a training ground for a new generation of student activists, the Wild Strawberry Movement was widely perceived as unsuccessful as the government did not give in to its demands (interviews: Ke-chung L., 20.4.2018; Chia-hao L., 3.5.2018; Chen-yuan W., 12.5.2018).

Re-evaluating Prefigurative Deliberation

Although the movement did not achieve its aims, it was the first major student protest since the Wild Lily Movement and the prelude to a series of protests over the following years that culminated in the Sunflower Movement. There was an active learning-process: Veteran activists involved in these campaigns tried to avoid the pitfalls of deliberative indecision by establishing a clearer division of labour and chain of command. The occupation in front of Liberty Square was a key reference point for the leadership of the Sunflower Movement. It taught activists about the problems and tensions inherent in prefigurative deliberation. Many influential Sunflower participants were veterans of the Wild Strawberry Movement who had experienced getting “stuck” on the square first-hand.

Yu-wen L., a human rights NGO representative, stressed that the memory of the Wild Strawberry Movement kept the Joint Conference from involving all participants directly in the decision-making process (interview, 23.5.2018). She pointed out that some members worried that “if the decision-making was open to all of the participants [...] this could repeat again the mistakes of the Wild Strawberry Movement.” She suggested that back then the decisions kept changing along with the composition of the assembly, even though there were constant deliberations on the square. Yu-wen L. further suggested that there were concerns that radical occupiers could use open deliberations to push the movement into a more confrontational direction. “Those kinds of people were also among the participants. So if we opened-up the decision-making to the whole gathering [...] how could we deal with these very radical or even violent suggestions?” Apart from concerns about how

democratizing leadership structures could have negatively affected the movement's decision-making capacities, the statement indicates that the Sunflower leadership preferred a centralization of authority in order to keep the occupation peaceful and orderly.

Student leader Chia-hao L., who himself had been a participant in the Wild Strawberry Movement, expressed somewhat similar reasons for the Sunflower Movement leadership's choice not to involve all participants in a horizontal decision-making process:

The problem was that there were so many people there [in the Sunflower occupation]. Thousands of people were there, so the problem was how to hold a discussion or to gather the opinions of the people, of the crowd... or should we start the process of gathering their issues? Because that would be so complicated. But most of the time we decided not to do that because we knew that if we started the discussion or we started the deliberation that would be a disaster. [...]

Because we had the experience. When the Wild Strawberry Movement occurred the leaders, the first people who called on the students to gather, decided to start the deliberation. [...] So people who just came there for two hours had the same rights to discuss, to decide [as long-term occupiers]. [...] Some people maybe tended to be more radical and to push the movement to make a more radical decision. But after that they left! They didn't take the responsibility. That's the point.

If in a country we have the boundary of democracy, you cannot leave after you make a decision. After you vote on each issue or candidate you have to stay and you have nowhere to go. You have to stay and bear the responsibility or the outcome with others. But in a movement you can leave anytime, right? So that's the disaster I

mentioned. So it is just because of this experience that we intentionally did not start the deliberation. [...] That's the reason why we decided to control the power to an extent. (interview, 3.5.2018)

Compared to the Sunflower Movement, the Wild Strawberry Movement entailed relatively clear demarcations: only students were fully admitted to the assembled demos. Yet, Chia-hao L.'s statement indicates that even in this relatively more small-scale and exclusive setting a deliberative decision-making process proved problematic due to the shifting composition of the assembly. He points to the problem of responsibility, indicating that participants in a decision-making process should be required to see them through to implementation. Since this cannot be guaranteed in the context of an occupation movement, open deliberations are not viewed as an appropriate decision-making mechanism.

That even many members of the College of Social Sciences Group, a faction that pushed for more radical action, were not in favour of involving all participants in a deliberative decision-making process, underlines that the Wild Strawberry Movement had created quite an entrenched scepticism of horizontalism. Many of the people who initially gathered in the College of Social Sciences were Wild Strawberry veterans. Watson Chiang's (2018) latest documentary on the Sunflower Movement captured some debate about possible uses for deliberative democracy. While one activist proposed the idea of initiating deliberations after taking control of the whole building, another activist opposed the idea; ultimately the proposal does not seem to have been adopted. Ke-chung L. suggested that the College of Social Sciences group, which he became a part of, did not call for Wild Strawberry movement-style deliberations, but rather for an expansion of the leadership:

[W]e are pragmatics, we don't expect it to be totally democratic, you can say we are sort of in the middle. [...] Let's include more people into the politburo, make it a little more democratic. But not too much. [...] And when I say 'we,' I am referring to me and other colleagues or comrades having formerly worked with [student leaders] Chen Wei-ting and Lin Fei-fan and others. Like them we also have a deep fear of the tyranny of the masses. Because we have been through the Wild Strawberries. We know we can't just let things all loose. But we also know we can't vest powers into so few. (interview, 20.4.2018)

There is a clear recognition here that organization and hierarchical leadership are required for a successful mobilization. Whilst the College of Social Sciences Group seems to have been in favour of altering the composition of the leadership, opening up decision-making to everybody assembled in the occupation zone was not endorsed. Ke-chung L. also compared the performative dimension of both movements:

The Sunflower Movement was the most successful movement of the last 20 years or so. The Wild Strawberry Movement was a failure, a total failure. We didn't achieve anything. In terms of accomplishments, the Wild Strawberries accomplished nothing. But the Sunflowers of course they also accomplished nothing, but at least it's a good show. It's not a... The Wild Strawberry Movement was like some kind of a postmodern theatre. Like nobody knows what they are doing. You got this post-industrial music, pum, pum, pum [...] you have no idea what's going on... But the Sunflower Movement was the conventional blockbuster movie, Avengers movie: you've got the Iron Man, you've got the Hulk, and the bad guys. And you know it's a simple storyline. You know where to look. You know

what to expect and you get it. That's your popcorn, five-dollar movie. (ibid.)

Ke-chung L.'s somewhat surprising assessment that the Sunflower Movement "also accomplished nothing" was likely due to the eventual withdrawal having been based on a vague promise by Wang Jin-pyng to postpone the CSSTA review, rather than more substantial concessions. But the more interesting point he makes for the sake of this chapter concerns the performative differences between both movements. Comparing the Wild Strawberry Movement to "postmodern theatre" reflects that the open-ended and unstructured deliberative process could be perceived as unpredictable and irritating by participants and audiences alike. Open horizontal democracy can be messy and chaotic. By contrast, comparing the Sunflower Movement to a "conventional blockbuster movie" reflects that it had greater mass appeal, was more tightly choreographed, and professionalized. As Ke-chung L. makes clear, it also entailed a more straight-forward narrative with distinct heroes and villains. In a sense the Sunflower Movement constructed sharper friend/enemy distinctions (Schmitt 1932/2015), making it easier to comprehend what the occupation was about and thus boosting mobilizing potential.¹¹³ The student occupiers in 2008-09 tried not to appear too explicitly critical of the KMT and of the influence of the PRC, focusing their discourse on human rights violations, in order to not be seen as partisan DPP supporters by the public. By contrast, the Sunflower Movement leadership criticised the KMT, emphasized Taiwanese identity, and pointed to the perceived threat growing PRC influence posed to Taiwan's democracy (see Ho 2019, pp.40-70; Kaeding 2015; Wu 2019).

¹¹³ I want to thank Dr. Rahul Rao for pointing this out.

Overall, the Wild Strawberry Movement entailed a loose organizational structure that was quite different from that of the Sunflower Movement outlined in previous chapters. It was the conscious learning from experience with the perceived shortcomings of what I call prefigurative deliberation that contributed to the adoption of vertical leadership in subsequent movements and with strategic forms of deliberation in the Sunflower Movement.

Strategic Deliberations in the Sunflower Movement

The Sunflower Movement had a far larger scale than the Wild Strawberry Movement. Involving all participants in a deliberative decision-making process was not just avoided because of past experience, but also due to the practical challenge of how to organize discussions with thousands of participants (Chia-hao L., interview, 3.5.2018; Yu-shan M., interview, 18.5.2018). While the movement entailed vertical leadership structures, this does not mean that there was no need or room for public deliberations. In fact, there were vibrant discussions all around the occupation zone. In this section I will discuss two notable examples of strategic deliberation that served important purposes, before moving on to prefigurative deliberations in the next section.

Democracy Classroom

Just as the Umbrella Movement, the Taiwanese movement entailed improvised teach-ins that complemented the core leadership's efforts to maintain a peaceful mass occupation. The so-called "Street Democracy Classroom" (街頭民主教室) was one of the earliest structured spaces for public deliberation. It brought the debate about the CSSTA to the streets

through a series of teach-in lectures by academics. The street classroom was initiated on March 19 with a statement by over twenty university teachers that condemned the "historical damage" to Taiwan's democracy done by the KMT government's handling of the trade agreement, announced the action, and appealed to other teachers, students, and citizens to join in (Democracy Classroom 2014). The announcement specified that they would hold lectures outside the legislature to advance democratic education and support the people holding out inside the legislature to protect democracy. There was a detailed schedule set up with around forty lectures held on March 20, 21, 23 and 25 on Qingdao East Road and Jinan Road.¹¹⁴ Most of the lectures assessed the trade deal from various scholarly angles; for instance there were lectures titled: "The influence of the trade agreement on the freedom of speech," "The trade deal and land justice," "The trade deal and Identity Politics," as well as "The Trade Deal and income distribution." Other lectures had a more theoretical focus, indicated by titles such as "What is the use of Civil Society?," "The Contradiction of Cultural Identity and Democracy," and "Democracy and the Right to Resist." Further, two lectures specifically linked the trade deal controversy to Hong Kong's situation, one of them asking the question "Could Taiwan Hongkong-ize?," raising the possibility of Taiwan losing its sovereignty under a One Country, Two Systems arrangement. Many of the lectures were broadcast online, demonstrating openness and transparency.¹¹⁵

¹¹⁴ This is based on the Facebook page and a website set-up for the classroom, see https://www.facebook.com/events/369122339894005/?active_tab=discussion, accessed 2.4.2021; <https://sites.google.com/site/twdem21/318movement/classroom4democracy>, accessed 2.4.2021. There may have been even more events on other days. Taiwan Democracy Watch (台灣守護民主平台), an NGO formed by academics and social workers at the time of the Wild Strawberry Movement, was involved in the organization of the activities.

¹¹⁵ For instance eight hours of talk on March 20 that are available on Youtube.com, see Indie DaDee 2014a. There was even a webpage set up to collect transcriptions of the talks as well as some links to videos, see <https://docs.google.com/document/d/1Esi-GjLXFwF0CDsykyddGaWBTnM22zeVY4ciZ0gyf9M/pub>, accessed 2.4.2021.

The democracy classroom broadly fits the category of strategic deliberation. Compared to a street experiment like DStreet that explicitly focused on applying deliberative democracy, the teach-ins constructed a more vertical deliberative space. The street deliberations maintained a lecture format followed by a Q&A. A classroom setting implies hierarchical teacher-student relationships based on disparities of expertise. It implies that the teacher does most of the talking to impart knowledge on an audience (see Hui 2017, p. 157). However, the Q&A format also allows for discussion and the challenging of a teacher's authority from the floor. The urban setting likely facilitated vigorous debate: The streets surrounding the legislature provided a very different communicative space than a university lecture room as well as a new audience, as not just students but also ordinary citizens could join the imaginary classroom (Dan L., interview, 8.5.2018).

The lectures had a clear performative dimension: The active involvement of university teachers demonstrated that the occupation was not a violent disturbance of order, but rather a peaceful and rational operation that sought to create open and fact-oriented debate about a critical issue that had not been sufficiently discussed by the Taiwanese public. The teach-ins helped cultivate a "favorable image" and "preempt[ed] criticism that students and teachers had forfeited their duties" (Ho 2019, p. 159). While the teach-ins did not systematically teach participants attitudes and methods of deliberation in the same participatory fashion as DStreet, the extensive programme shows that a great wealth of topics relevant to the CSSTA and civil society more generally was addressed. The lectures thus were a means of civic education that enhanced participants' specific knowledge, turning them into critical and well-informed citizens in the process.

DStreet Deliberations

DStreet, a series of public forums organized by activists involved in the movement leadership, was the most sophisticated deliberative experiment during the occupation that superseded the teach-ins. Just as OCLP's D-Days before it, DStreet involved the strategic application of deliberative democracy to a social movement. But whereas OCLP's D-Days had been prepared well in advance and were set indoors, DStreet was improvised without much time for preparation in the context of a street occupation. Nonetheless, DStreet was remarkably innovative and well-organized. Compared to the prefigurative approach with its focus on an horizontal and open-ended process, DStreet – just as OCLP's strategic deliberations – was more structured and outcome-oriented. While DStreet did not facilitate formal decision-making, its organizers created a space for the communicative involvement of participants that served important functions and fit the movement leadership's broader strategy. Since parliamentary democracy was perceived to be malfunctioning, deliberative democracy as the peaceful and rational involvement of citizens into the political process became part of the democratic vision enacted and promoted by the Sunflower Movement.

Chien-hung M., a scholar who both participated closely in and wrote about the movement, was involved in the planning of the DStreet deliberations (interview, 20.8.2018). He recalled that he took part in a "sublevel meeting" of the Joint Conference "in a teahouse near the *Lifayuan* [legislature]" where they discussed the idea. He said that 24 days was a "long time for a protest event," that there were "ups and downs" (presumably in the numbers of participants and the overall energy), which led them to "ponder about how to keep the momentum and take on new gimmicks." He said that "one evening we discussed intensively about the tactics, then we talked about the

possibility of doing the deliberation on the street.” Chien-hung M. coined the name of the activity: “DStreet.”

A press release that announced the deliberations suggested that direct citizen deliberations on the trade deal were required at a time at which Taiwan’s representative democracy was malfunctioning (DStreet 2014d). It stated that the process in which the treaty had been signed and reviewed lacked substantive democratic participation. Affected citizens and industries had not received the information required to fully understand the effects of the trade deal and were deprived of the opportunity to adequately discuss its influence on Taiwan’s society. The occupation of the legislature was not just about taking back the right of citizens to participate in decision-making, but also about creating a space for citizen debate and societal dialogue. The press release indicates that DStreet was meant to make up for the perceived failure of Taiwan’s representative democracy to ensure both a thorough democratic review of and debate on the CSSTA.

DStreet was at least partly a response to demands from within the movement for more direct democratic participation. Yu-wen L., who was involved in the Joint Conference and the stage management on Jinan Road, pointed out:

After a few days you will find that there were many participants who wanted to go on the stage. They wanted to speak, they wanted to voice their opinion. But there were various different participants, so it was impossible for everyone to take the microphone and for everyone to say everything they wanted to say, because sometimes it was really not relevant to the whole movement. So we started to try to use some deliberation [...] We tried to make the process become more democratic. Because if we had kept doing the one-way speech, I think the participants would have kept complaining they wanted to speak: ‘why can the professor or the NGO represent all the people here?’ [...] So I think it’s a way to show the variety and differences amongst

participants and also make sure their opinions could be reflected on the stage. (interview, 23.5.2018)

This reflects that deliberative experimentation was part of the learning process of a movement leadership that tried to adapt its approach based on feedback and contestations from occupiers. That the deliberations were at least in part a response to demands to speak can also be inferred from another press release, which appears to have been put out after the first session. It said in the title that DStreet “flipped over the right to speak” (街頭民主審議 翻轉發言權; DStreet 2014e). In the press release a participant is cited who suggested that even people walking around in the sit-in zone like bystanders in an exhibition would sit down to listen to the deliberations, all because they “shifted the right to speak from on the stage to off the stage!” (“把發言權，從台上轉向台下！”). The release highlighted that the deliberations would enable participants to form their own independent judgements, that the deliberative method severely restricted the facilitators ability to provide suggestive questions, putting the participants front and centre, and providing everybody with the right to speak.

The CSSTA issue lends itself to being the subject of an experiment with deliberative democracy, as it is a complex, controversial topic with various dimensions that are hard for laypeople to thoroughly understand. The DStreet deliberations appear remarkably well-planned, considering that they were put together without much time for preparation in the volatile context of an occupation protest.¹¹⁶ They took place over a span of 10 days, starting on March 26, with around three hours of tightly scheduled activities every

¹¹⁶ Unless otherwise specified the following description of DStreet’s methodology is based on material compiled on a website on which the organizers put up a wealth of information concerning the deliberations, including rundowns for each day, notes from all the deliberative sessions, photos of posters made by participants and group discussions, as well as even some video recordings. See <https://sites.google.com/site/twdstreet/home>, accessed 2.4.2021. The detail in which this material was preserved is noteworthy and underscores that activists sought to demonstrate openness and transparency.

day. A specific topic served as the subject of discussion each day, for instance “The CSSTA and youth employment,” “The CSSTA and national security,” “The CSSTA and democracy,” “The CSSTA and the financial industry,” “The CSSTA and the medical industry,” and “The CSSTA and social services.” The activists thus assessed the trade deal from a variety of different angles. This reflects that the CSSTA is a complex issue and its potential effects on Taiwanese society manifold.

The setting allowed for a participatory in-depth assessment of the various issues. Most of the activities took place in the morning between 9:00 a.m. and 12:00 noon, mostly on Qingdao East Road (but some sessions on Jinan Road as well). Participants were recruited from amongst the supporters present in the occupation zone.¹¹⁷ There was a very detailed and tightly organized agenda for each day. To provide information on the topic there was first an introductory presentation by a specialist, usually an academic. Then people were split up into small groups of 10 to 15 participants for deliberations. Each small group was led by a host (主持人) who had received prior training by the organizers and was supported by a deputy host (副主持人). These facilitators had detailed guidelines: They were there to guide participants to sit in a circle, hand out materials, and present tasks to the group. They also led the deliberations, ensuring that everyone understood the rules for each task, including speaking times as well as politeness, and confirmed that everyone understood what was said without questioning participants’ opinions.

¹¹⁷ Over the course of ten days over 4000 people took part in the deliberative process, see Shih 2014. I could not find any statistics on the demographic composition of the deliberative sessions. But DStreet was explicitly conceived as a deliberative process for citizens, as implied by the name “DStreet *Citizen* Deliberation” (街頭公民審議) as well as another label sometimes used to describe the activities: “*Citizens* Deliberate the Trade Deal” (公民審服貿). My impression based on images posted on the official DStreet Facebook page is that the activities mainly involved young people – just as the overall outside occupation (see chapter 1) –, but that non-student participants over 30 were also involved, see <https://www.facebook.com/twdstreet>, last accessed 2.4.2021.

The agenda for the group work was filled with tightly scheduled activities. First, there was an introductory round during which facilitators introduced themselves, as well as the topic of the day, and asked the participants to introduce themselves.

Second, individual participants were typically asked to answer the key question of the day's session (e.g. "What's the relationship between the CSSTA and democracy?") by writing one to three arguments on post-it notes (one for each point). They would then stick these points on particular sections of a pre-arranged paper, which typically featured a drawing (such as the statue of liberty during the discussion on democracy), used to collect the views from the group. Participants would briefly read out their arguments and stick the post-its on the poster. Facilitators were advised to make sure all others understood the points made, but there was no time for debate.

Third, there would be a round of activities that differed from day to day but involved group discussion. Initially, the facilitators typically distributed a brief one to two-page document to serve as basis for discussions and gave participants time to read it (e.g. a text briefly introducing the democracy issue followed by an excerpt of the impact assessment report on the trade deal, DStreet 2014a). The review of the materials was followed by different deliberative activities. On several days participants were subdivided into even smaller groups in which they would once again discuss questions and record answers on post-it notes. Representatives of each sub-group would then present the post-its to the larger group and respond to questions by the audience.

Fourth, participants individually were asked to use one sentence to describe the issue of the day on a post-it (responding to the opening question once more, e.g. describing the relationship between democracy and CSSTA). They were once again asked to read out their points and stick the post-its on the

paper whilst the others were listening. Following this, representatives were elected who would later present what they had learnt to others.

Finally, there was a big assembly with all participants in which the various group representatives presented the results of their deliberations. There is a video of one such sessions available in which group members held up the posters they had made as a basis for the presentation (g0v.tw 2014). A whiteboard also seems to have been used to collect the results of the deliberation. Photos of the resulting mindmaps are available on the DStreet website.¹¹⁸

The tenth and final event on April 5 was termed the “People’s Assembly” (人民議會). It consisted of three separate assemblies at Qingdao East Road (9:00 a.m. – 12:30 p.m.), inside the occupied legislature (2:30-5:30 p.m.) and Jinan Road (7:30-10:30 p.m.). It was a concluding session that brought together the various aspects discussed during the previous days by focusing on drafts for Cross-Strait Agreement Supervision Regulations (兩岸協議監督條例). The information material that formed the basis for the discussion were excerpts from drafts proposed by the government (行政院版) and by the opposition movement (the so-called “people’s edition” – 民間版, see DStreet 2014b). The deliberation program was largely in line with the structure of the previous days, starting with presentations by experts, followed by small group deliberations, and lastly a big assembly during which the results of the group discussions were collected on whiteboards.

Based on the deliberations the organizers later compiled and published a manifesto titled “People’s Assembly Opinion Book”(人民議會意見書; DStreet 2014c). The document entailed six major propositions: First, it called for an expansion of citizen participation (公民參與要擴大), suggesting that the cross-strait agreements supervisory legislation should clearly outline

¹¹⁸ E.g. https://sites.google.com/site/twdstreet/0329_qingdao, accessed 2.4.2021.

mechanisms for the meaningful involvement of citizens, including through public hearings, public deliberations, and referenda. The document explicitly demanded the adoption of “forms of deliberative democracy to supply more direct, more meticulous, and more equal participation opportunities” that would allow “people from all walks of life” to articulate “collective opinions through dialogue and communication.” Second, it requested openness and transparency in the handling of all information concerning the trade deal as a requirement for genuine citizen participation. Third, the text suggested that values such as national security, liberal democracy, human rights, and the rights of vulnerable groups should not be sacrificed in the name of economic development. Fourth, it called for a thorough impact assessment of the CSSTA. Fifth, the legislature should hold the powers for a substantive review of the trade deal and institutional reforms should ensure that legislators listen to the will of the people.¹¹⁹ Finally, cross-strait negotiations should be based on reciprocity and not compromise sovereignty.

That the street deliberations were an important part of the movement’s democratic vision and practice is further reflected in the fact that its outcome, the above-mentioned “People’s Assembly Opinion Book,” played a symbolic role in the final ceremony staged by the movement leadership prior to the organized withdrawal on April 10. A notable highlight of the jubilant ceremony in the legislature was when a student in the centre who was surrounded by other participants read from the document.¹²⁰ Following his speech, several students unveiled parts of a white banner that had been put up at the back of the legislature below the portrait of Sun Yat-Sen (孫中山), revealing the term “People’s Assembly,” before returning the gavel to the

¹¹⁹ As mentioned before, one of the demands the Sunflower Movement leadership adopted was a call for the holding of citizen constitutional conferences. Chia Ming Chen suggests that “[p]rotest leaders managed to transform the Sunflower Movement into a popular constitution-making movement” (2015, p. 223). In the aftermath of the occupation, activist groups intensified their advocacy for constitutional reform, see Hawang 2016, pp. 125–129.

¹²⁰ Video footage of the ceremony is available online, e.g. Independent Media 2014.

main lectern. Shu-fen K., an NGO representative closely involved in the leadership, suggested that term was used to highlight that parliament belonged to the people and to express the wish of the occupiers that after their retreat the building would not once again turn into a space just for parliamentarians (interview, 24.7.2018). Yu-shan M., a student participant involved in the ceremony, stressed that the occupiers wanted to convey a warning that they would be back if necessary (interview, 18.5.2018).

DStreet as Strategic Deliberation

Just as OCLP's deliberation days in Hong Kong, DStreet broadly fit the category of strategic deliberations. This is due to the fact that it was set up by the leadership as part of a broader movement strategy, its structuredness, as well as its focus on civic education and future reforms. The deliberative space was constructed to involve citizens into constructive discussions on the trade deal and related issues concerning the broader polity. It engendered communication of the kind that the Habermasian Public Sphere is built upon, rather than the more messy and impassionate talk typically associated with oppositional activism (see Sanders 1997; Young 2001). This contrasts with what I call prefigurative deliberation that is relatively more insular, horizontal, and often involves a fundamental questioning of vertical leadership and representation.

Although DStreet did not directly affect strategic decision-making, the deliberations mattered nonetheless. Chien-hung M., who was involved in the original planning of the deliberative space, described DStreet's effects as follows:

[I]t was a kind of education by ourselves. It was self-empowerment and getting more political consciousness, information... That was the first

purpose. The second one was to get to know more people. Because those people participating in DStreet they were the rank-and-file. So we didn't know each other. So when you gathered all those rank-and-file into these discussion groups there was a self-empowerment effect, and you got to know each other, and got to focus on some central issues that we should deal with, we should discuss for the non-activists. But for the activists or for the leaders they got to know the rank-and-file, got to know what they think about the event, the situation. So that served the very important function of gathering information from the participants, from the ordinary participants. (interview, 20.8.2018)

This statement underlines that DStreet was not implemented as a prefigurative experiment with horizontal democracy, but rather that deliberations were considered a means towards an end by the movement leadership. Quite striking here are the distinctions Chien-hung M. draws between different types of participants, echoing broader movement discourse about vertical leadership and degrees of participation (see chapter 2). DStreet was a space organized by the leadership to involve the “rank-and-file” in a communicative process. It was not designed as an assembly for leaderless decision-making akin to the deliberations in the Wild Strawberry Movement – which could have contributed to at least outwardly dissolving these vertical distinctions (although in practice opaque hierarchies often continue to exist, see Freeman 1972). Drawing on Chien-hung M.'s observations as well as other material, four main functions of DStreet can be identified:

First, DStreet had the effect of mobilizing participants. I presume this is what Chien-hung M. meant when he suggested that DStreet was originally organized to “keep the momentum” of the movement. Organizers were worried that over time the numbers of participants could dwindle, thereby

leaving the occupied legislature vulnerable to police clearing. The NGOs managing the stages organized a program to show people that “something was happening here” and that they did “not have to try to get inside the parliament,” thereby attempting to keep them from feeling bored while sitting in outside. The deliberations were a more sophisticated method than the one-directional program the NGOs managing the stages initially organized for this purpose (Yu-wen L., interview, 23.5.2018). They provided participants outside the legislature with something meaningful and interactive to do, helping to maintain sufficient turn-out. A consistent theme running through my interviews is that everybody was looking for a role to play in the movement; for a way to contribute. The brief executive yuan occupation was one way in which people tried to play a more active role. The deliberations offered another, less risky channel for the active involvement of participants.

Second, the deliberations were a form of civic education (Chien-hung M., interview, 20.8.2018; also Yu-wen L., interview, 23.5.2018). According to Chien-hung M. their purpose was to educate, facilitate “self-empowerment,” and raise “political consciousness.” On the one hand, the educational value lay in the *content* that was discussed: The CSSTA was a highly complex issue with many facets that were hard even for informed participants to fully comprehend. The deliberative activities allowed people to learn more about the various aspects of the trade deal and to connect it to the broader issue of Taiwan’s political future. On the other hand, the educational effects concerned the *process* of deliberation: DStreet – similar to OCLP’s D-Days – introduced the playbook of deliberative democracy to its participants. It taught them how to express their views in a structured public setting, to engage in dialogue, and to listen to others. Some interviewees indicated that cultivating the right skills and attitudes required for deliberative democracy was an even more important outcome than the acquisition of specific

knowledge on the CSSTA (Yu-hsiung M., interview, 7.4.2018; Jason C., interview, 3.5.2018; Chloe L., interview, 10.5.2018). Many participants were exposed to this specific approach for the first time. DStreet was viewed as a space for the practice of a specific method of deliberation that seemed especially relevant considering that education in Taiwan traditionally focuses on top-down knowledge transfer (see Chloe L., interview, 10.5.2018). In the aftermath of the Sunflower Movement the concept gained further popularity and there were a range of experiments with it.¹²¹

Third, the deliberations provided feedback to the movement leadership. While they did not have direct decision-making power, they opened up a space for the leadership to engage with ordinary participants and build familiarity (Chien-hung M., interview, 20.8.2018). Prior to the deliberations there had been demands by participants to speak on the stage (Yu-wen L., interview, 23.5.2018); in a sense calls to democratize the movement. While this was never attempted, the creation of a deliberative space allowed the leadership to gauge the mood on the ground. Yu-wen L. said that they tried to “hear the voice from the participants” and that sometimes when she took part in the Joint Conference she would “try to bring [in] some of the opinions” (interview, 23.5.2018).

The final function of DStreet was performative: The open deliberations signalled to the general public that this was a democratic and legitimate movement. As Beckershoff rightly points out, “[t]he legitimacy of blocking the formal democratic process on the inside of the parliament depended on demonstrating that a new grass-roots democratic culture could be put into

¹²¹ In the years after the end of the occupation there were many more deliberative activities, particularly after the change of government. There was another round of street deliberations on Nuclear Energy organized by the same group of people soon after the Sunflower Movement, the results of which are also preserved on the DStreet website, see <https://sites.google.com/site/twdstreet/11-gong-min-shen-he-si-04-27-kai-dao>, accessed 2.4.2021. Another issue that was subject to deliberations was constitutional reform, see Hawang 2016.

place on the outside” (2017, p.121). The performance of in-depth deliberations on the various dimensions of the trade deal contrasted starkly with the perception of the government’s handling of the trade deal in a “black-box” fashion. The involvement of university teachers who gave lectures on the trade deal certainly helped, considering the status of scholars in Taiwan and elsewhere. Open, transparent, and rational debates of citizens on the streets of Taipei contrasted both with executive closed-door decision-making and the image of occupation protests as violent, emotional affairs; thereby boosting the movement’s perceived legitimacy. The deliberations signalled that this was a movement of active, well-informed, and rational citizens engaged in defending liberal democracy along with its public sphere against executive overreach and authoritarian interests. But the deliberations’ target audience was not merely external to the movement. The leadership core had been criticised for reproducing in its own internal organization opaque forms of “black box” governance that the movement ostensibly opposed (see chapter 2). In this context the deliberations signalled to fellow occupiers that all participants could make their voice heard and actively participate – if not in strategic decision-making then at least in public deliberations on key issues. The deliberative process thus boosted the legitimacy of the leadership structures.

Enacting the Playbook of Deliberative Democracy

DStreet’s practice not just echoed political visions articulated in the realm of deliberative democratic theory; it drew creatively from the established playbook of applied deliberative democracy and showed that the concept can be implemented in social movements. Hsin-hung C., an academic who has worked on deliberative democracy, compared the DStreet deliberations to a brief “consensus conference” (interview, 27.7.2018). He said that while it

was usual to have several days of deep discussion, DStreet condensed this process to three to four-hour deliberations on each specific issue. Consensus conferences involve lay citizens in conversations with experts to come up with suggestions on the relevant issue (Participedia 2020). Elements that may have been adopted from the consensus conference model include the expert presentations, the use of background material, and the creation of a document presenting the results of the deliberative process.

Hsin-hung C. pointed out that there had been experiments with consensus conferences in Taiwan between 2005-2009, before first “world cafés” and then “participatory budgeting” became more popular alternatives (interview, 27.7.2018; see also Huang and Hsieh 2013). Moreover, DStreet also drew inspiration from the “world café” method (Po-chun C., interview, 21.7.2018). This approach involves small groups of participants moving around tables staffed with facilitators to discuss specific pre-arranged questions, preserving the results on posters, and finally sharing them in a larger assembly (The World Cafe 2015). While the participants in DStreet’s small groups stayed at one place and did not move from table to table, they did focus on a set of questions aided by facilitators with posters on which results were later shared. The organizers thus creatively put together their own deliberation approach drawing on Taiwan’s own and international experience.¹²²

Using the criteria for deliberative democracy commonly outlined in the theoretical literature, e.g. inclusiveness, transparency, equality, rational argument, consensus-orientation, and preference-transformation (della Porta 2005), it is possible to explore whether DStreet meets these standards. With regards to inclusivity, for instance, one can observe that even though anybody was invited to participate, opponents of the protest were unlikely to

¹²² Unfortunately, I did not confirm with the organizers what their main inspirations were, but I will try to do so for subsequent publications.

take part. Participants were self-selected and thus there was a certain degree of bias (Hsin-hung C., interview, 27.7.2018). Organizers aspired to ensure a high degree of transparency: everything took place on open streets and the deliberations were chronicled in detail on the DStreet website.¹²³ However, exploring in detail if it meets the various standards outlined in the literature is not required for the purpose of this thesis. Questioning if DStreet “counts” as a genuine example of applied deliberative democracy risks reifying the notion that activism and deliberative democracy do not go together. In fact, any real-world implementation will have to allow for creative adaptations and compromise based on local context, whether that is an occupation, a municipality, or any other context.

Instead of comparing DStreet to theoretical models developed elsewhere, it is much more interesting to put it in the context of Taiwan’s own experience with “deliberation in movement” (della Porta 2005). Compared to the messy prefigurative deliberations in the Wild Strawberry Movement, DStreet was a more structured application of deliberative democracy as part of a broader movement strategy. While the participants in the Wild Strawberry Movement were students behind a picket line, DStreet meant to involve students as well as citizens in a well-organized deliberative process. There was a clear plan for each day and the various sessions built up to the final deliberation. The facilitators received detailed instructions that emphasized time-management. The deliberations were not open-ended, but the topics and the various steps of the programme were pre-determined by the organizers.

Perhaps the most striking difference between the two approaches to deliberation was the roles that they played in the respective movement. Deliberations were the main decision-making mechanism in the Wild

¹²³ <https://sites.google.com/site/twdstreet/>, accessed 2.4.2021.

Strawberry Movement, a key component of the whole movement and its public display of democracy. By contrast, DStreet was just one deliberative space amongst others during the Sunflower Occupation. Despite the framing about providing the right to speak to ordinary participants, DStreet was not designed to affect decision-making in the movement like the assemblies in the Wild Strawberry Movement. Hence, some interviewees downplayed DStreet's importance. Ke-chung L., for instance, as a veteran from the Wild Strawberry movement, suggested:

Anything happening outside of the Legislative Yuan had no impact. It's just that...they were just kept busy. They thought they were discussing something meaningful. Maybe they were, but that had little to no influence over the decision-making within the Legislative Yuan (interview, 20.4.2018).

Other interviewees similarly pointed to the lack of concrete influence, but nonetheless stressed the value of the exercise. Po-chun C., for instance, who was involved in the Joint Conference, reflected that the deliberations had a limited scale as not all occupiers participated and that to his knowledge the results of the deliberations did not actually affect the direction of the whole movement (interview, 21.7.2018). However, he stressed that the communicative process was nonetheless a good thing:

At least it allowed the friends who came to participate to just have this kind of experience, and then also let them to just have this sense of participation (參與感), have a sense of participating in the movement. Otherwise, many people felt that in this movement just continuously sitting over there was very dull.

This almost sounds as if the activities provided a "sense of participation" as an alternative to genuine participation in decision-making. However, Po-chun C. also wondered whether perhaps the deliberations could have been more influential if everyone participating had already been better trained in

it and if the media had paid more attention to it. He felt that after the movement some reflection on democracy was in order and people should become more familiar with this “technology.”

Along similar lines as Po-chun C., Shu-fen K., also a professional involved in the Democratic Front, said that the deliberations provided people who had nothing to do at the time with something do (interview, 24.7.2018). She confirmed that the deliberations did not have concrete influence on decision-making. Whilst she did not participate in the process herself, she believed that the quality of the deliberations could not have been ideal, as under the conditions of the social movement it was not easy to control the time, the people who could come, as well as the space where the discussions took place. Hence, she believed it was a kind of learning experience through practice (體驗) that did not aim at bringing about any concrete results. This assessment was echoed by Jason C., an NGO professional who sometimes assisted the DStreet operations (interview, 3.5.2018). He stated that the deliberations were “not easy” and “most of the time it’s still just practice.” Comparing the operations to the Wild Strawberry Movement, in which he had been a participant, he said they were nonetheless more “refined”. Both these testimonies underline that cultivating deliberative skills and attitudes was more important than either affecting decisions or discursively learning about the CSSTA.

Other interviewees more strongly emphasized that DStreet was a positive experience. Chien-hung M., who had been involved in the planning process, seemed quite satisfied with the way things went:

[DStreet] was very productive. Before we did it, we didn't realize... we didn't imagine what would happen. And when we convened all those groups, we could see they were so attentive and so focused under the very

hot sunlight. At noon it was very hot, so not easy. So we could see those people were very committed. (interview, 20.8.2018)

Yu-hsiung M., a recent graduate at the time who took time off from military service to take part in the protest, recalled that he was quite impressed by the deliberations he participated in (interview, 7.4.2018). He said that compared to other protest movements he had been a part of, the “Sunflower Movement focused more on public discussion,” as it was quite a long-lasting occupation. He said that “people didn't just sit there doing nothing,” but rather they “discussed some issues like why we protest against the *Fumao* [CSSTA] or why people should care about the China-factor.” Yu-hsiung M. believed that one reason deliberations were necessary was that “people didn't have enough time to understand what the *Fumao* [CSSTA] is,” reflecting that such a complex issue required some debate. Another reason was that people had different reasons for participating in the protest, for instance some being specifically against the CSSTA and others mainly opposed to the growing influence of the PRC. This made it necessary for people with different perspectives to talk things through. Asked about the quality of deliberations, Yu-hsiung M. stressed that it was a good experience. He felt that normally people in Taiwan were not used to discussing political issues in a public space. Hence, he believed it was a good start for people to begin thinking about Taiwan's future. In his view people just shared their opinions without attacking other people, providing their evidence, listening to others, and discussing. He enjoyed the process and atmosphere and highlighted that the process fostered deliberative capacities:

[E]ven though people don't have the decision making power, but I think it still nurtures people's ability to discuss serious issues and also I think in the future they will have this memory and discuss issues in this way in the future. (ibid.)

This testimony underlines that education about the process of deliberation was even more important than the cultivation of specific attitudes towards the CSSTA. Chloe L., a core activist inside who got involved in experiments with deliberative democracy after the Sunflower Movement, made similar remarks:

I think [DStreet] was very important, even though it did not directly affect the whole Sunflower Movement, but I think this attempt was really important. That is to say this attempt... The masses that came to the scene, they were not only able to sit quietly (靜坐), they were not only able to follow along chanting slogans, but rather we could participate in a discussion. Furthermore, the things we discussed could be put in order, and this discussion was meaningful, because our education in Taiwan is more about imparting us with some knowledge, it doesn't really encourage us to express our own ideas, listen respectfully to others' opinions, and then exchange views in a discussion. There is a relative lack of this in Taiwan's education, so I think that this kind of scene had the function of re-educating society, no matter whether you are young or old, all who came could express their views on a number of topics, listen to the opinions of others, and then these opinions could be collected and organized. (interview, 10.5.2018)

The specific activities that each DStreet session consisted of had much resemblance to what students are regularly asked to do during “group work” in a classroom setting in the United Kingdom or Germany (at least in the humanities and social sciences). Chloe L.’s statement indicates that Taiwan’s educational culture does not emphasize interactive communication and learning. This raises the prospect of projects like DStreet facilitating cultural change by training new audiences to discuss according to the playbook of deliberative democracy.

In sum, both the Democracy Classroom and DStreet created spaces for strategic deliberations in the Sunflower Movement. Even though the

discussions did not directly influence decision-making akin to the prefigurative deliberations in the Wild Strawberry Movement, the deliberations mattered nonetheless. DStreet in particular served the functions of mobilization, civic education, feedback, and providing a legitimacy-boosting performance. The perhaps most important outcome was not the transmission of specific knowledge about the CSSTA, but the cultivation of general habits and skills of deliberation.

Prefigurative Deliberations

Whilst the smaller and relatively more centralized Sunflower Movement did not develop a distinctly prefigurative trajectory similar to the Umbrella Movement, it also featured prefigurative deliberations that were largely detached from the movement leadership. In this section I will discuss two public forums that opened up deliberative spaces that allowed for the subversion and critique of the movement mainstream. They established experimental spaces for the enactment of different ways of relating to one another that were unconstrained by the strategic imperatives of accommodating the demands and expectations of the media, the state, and society more broadly.¹²⁴

Liberation Forum

The first notable example for a relatively autonomous space of prefigurative deliberation was the “Liberation Forum next to the Public Toilet” (公廁旁解

¹²⁴ André Beckershoff’s 2014 conference paper entails a section comparing the two deliberative forums that my analysis now turns to. The rich analysis did not make it into his excellent article on the Sunflower Movement (2017), but he kindly allowed me to cite from the earlier draft.

放論壇) that later evolved into the *Jianmin* Liberation Zone (see chapter 3).¹²⁵ The forum was first held on the tenth day of the occupation in front of the National Taiwan University Alumni Hall on Jinan Road (Jianmin Publication Group 2016, p. 42). The discussions took place right next to a mobile public lavatory which inspired the comical name that contrasted with the loftier image of a street classroom embraced by the strategic deliberations discussed above. The forum was not organized by the movement leadership, but by left-wing critics of the existing structures who imagined a different occupation and society. It explicitly involved people from all walks of life into the deliberations, especially disadvantaged people (as the later adopted *jianmin* or “underclass” label implies). The main organizer behind the forum was the National Alliance for Workers of Closed Factories (全國關廠工人連線), an alliance of labour rights groups that was one of the main advocates for anti-free trade positions in the Sunflower Occupation.¹²⁶ The operation was also supported by members of other left-wing groups such as the Electronic Music Anti-Nuclear Front (電音反核陳線), the Huaguang Self-Help Organization (華光社區自求會), and Doctors' Working Conditions Reform Group (醫師勞動條件改革小組; *ibid.*, p. 42).

The forum facilitated a different enactment of democracy than DStreet. Its stated aim was to foster dialogue and empower participants to overcome the hierarchies within the movement.¹²⁷ While DStreet was based on the playbook of deliberative democracy, the Liberation Forum styled itself as a

¹²⁵ The following discussion of the Liberation Forum largely builds on the extensive material compiled in a book on the *Jianmin* Liberation Zone written by participants, see Jianmin Publication Group 2016.

¹²⁶ This perspective on the trade deal was not strongly emphasized by the movement leadership. This is perhaps best exemplified by an incident on March 19, when a banner that read “Oppose CSSTA, Oppose Free Trade” (反服貿反自由貿易) that the group had supplied was not put up in the assembly hall, allegedly because sections of the core leadership blocked it, see Jianmin Publication Group 2016, p. 15; also Beckershoff 2014, p. 19.

¹²⁷ Loosely translated the forum called for turning over the division between “on stage and off stage” (翻轉 [...] 台上台下), Jianmin Publication Group 2016, p. 42.

practice of direct democracy (直接民主; *ibid.*, p. 173). The use of the term implies that the debates were a form of self-rule by all participants and thus linked to decision-making somewhat akin to the Wild Strawberry deliberations.¹²⁸ However, the liberation forum was mostly designed as a leaderless space for critical debate on various issues related to the movement rather than as a decision-making body. The approach to deliberation was more unstructured, bottom-up, and open-ended than DStreet. This is reflected in the “forum design” (論壇設計) according to which the topics of each day were decided upon by participants rather than the organizers (*ibid.*, p. 44). Participants could propose topics and majority voting would later decide which to focus on. The role of the host (主持人) was to assist and facilitate discussion. While the host was allowed to express their opinions, participants were permitted to interrupt at any time to prevent an abuse of authority. It was expected that participants would want to conclude a session by discussing more concrete actions. However, the plan was not to turn the whole forum into one collective, but rather to let participants form networks amongst each other (*ibid.*, p. 45).

There were eight sessions held between March 27 and April 5. The debates would start at 7 p.m. and last for around six to seven hours. The numbers ranged from 40 to 50 in the beginning to 400 to 500 in the later stage (*ibid.*, p. 51). The forum questioned many of the established structures, practices and even the goals of the movement. The topics covered included: the need for first-aid passageways; the principles of peace, rationality and nonviolence; the decision-making structures; how to continue the movement; why to resist the CSSTA; and the “China-factor” (*ibid.*, p. 17).

¹²⁸ However, the forum was clearly less elitist, as the deliberations did not exclude non-students. To the contrary, the self-styled *jianmin* embraced a grassroots image and aimed to involve everyone equally.

An essay by one of the organizers indicates that the debates could be heated at times. For example, the debate on the first night focused on the need for first-aid passageways, because forum participants occupied parts of one such road, leading a volunteer to ask them to make space. Soon medical professionals with different opinions also got involved and an intense dispute ensued (ibid., p. 44). After a few nights, the forum received some media interest (ibid., p. 51), likely due to the controversial debates. A journalist cited one of the initiators of the forum as criticising that compared to the Wild Lily and Wild Strawberry Movement, the Sunflower Movement was not sufficiently democratic, pointing to the inside/outside division and the role played by a minority of people involved in the decision-making small group (Chen 2014). The uncomfortable questions raised by the forum created concern amongst some occupiers. This is indicated by a statement put out by the National Alliance for Workers of Closed Factories to address a “misunderstanding” that the forum was meant to rally “oppositional forces,” “split the movement,” and “prepare a challenge to the decision-making mechanism” (Jianmin Publication Group 2016, p. 174). The statement clarified that the objective was to create a space for communication amongst different participants, to let them „personally experience direct democracy through practice” (直接民主的體驗), not to stage an “elite power grab” (菁英式的奪權).

The Liberation Forum showcases the diversity and contradictions that existed within the Sunflower occupation (see Beckershoff 2014). It represented a prefigurative space of deliberation that allowed for uncompromising self-expression; for the voicing of left-wing criticisms of the movement mainstream and leadership. Compared to DStreet’s more strategic approach, the prefigurative deliberations in the Liberation Forum focused on process rather than outcomes. It was envisioned as a horizontal space free of

hierarchies and traditional representation that allowed for the questioning of the existing system and the presaging of a different society.

“Big Intestine Flower” Deliberations

A second important example for prefigurative deliberation in the Sunflower Movement was the so-called “Big Intestine Flower Forum” (大腸花論壇). The name had a satirical bent (Beckershoff 2014, p. 21): “Big Intestine Flower” (大腸花) is written almost the same way as “Sunflower” (太陽花). The forum satirically subverted the label that the media had given the occupation along with the “uptight and clean image” associated with it (Ho 2019, p. 159). It opened up a space for a “less savory, blunter form of the Sunflower Movement, which many felt was too choreographed, polished and polite towards a biased media and callous government apparatchiks” (Laskai 2014). The forum was only held in the evenings on the final three days of the movement when the withdrawal decision – which was widely criticised as untransparent and undemocratic – had already been made by the core leadership. In this context the space allowed for the emotional, comical, and even vulgar expression of dissatisfaction not just with the government but also with aspects of the occupation and its proclaimed leadership. The three lengthy sessions were live-streamed and reached an extremely large audience, indicating that there was a wide demand for a relatively unfiltered articulation of criticism and dissatisfaction.¹²⁹

The forum’s host was Indie DaDee (音地大帝), a well-known figure in the Taiwanese indie music and netizen scene. During the sessions he set at a desk surrounded by a lively audience. He invited people to express their views using an open microphone. Brian Hioe observed: “Anyone was

¹²⁹ According to Ho the forum’s live online broadcasts at times attracted over 100,000 spectators (2019, p. 159).

allowed to participate in these and to speak their mind, leading to discussions sometimes touching on issues not directly related to the central demands of the movement” (2017b). Recordings from the events show that people from all walks of life, not just young activists, queued up to voice their opinions.¹³⁰ Their contributions were received with frequent cheers, interjections, as well as laughter by a clearly very engaged audience. Almost every speaker used swearwords.¹³¹ Some smoked and drank alcohol – beer cans were prominently displayed on the table –, providing a stark contrast with the disciplined and rational appearance the majority of occupiers had tried to cultivate in the previous days to maintain public support. Another break with conventions was that the forum established a space for the articulation of pro-independence standpoints (Beckershoff 2014). Even though many participants supported Taiwanese independence and the movement was explicitly concerned with China’s influence, pro-independence views were rarely voiced openly by the movement mainstream due to fears of being stigmatized by the media. This was expressed by DaDee himself in an interview with Brian Hioe for the Daybreak Archive Project (Indie DaDee 2017). He further suggested that the forum was organized as an “event to relieve stress.” It allowed people to collectively voice out previously repressed emotions and sentiments.¹³²

Both the Liberation Forum and the Big Intestine Flower Forum opened up alternative spaces of prefigurative deliberation within the occupation zone.

¹³⁰ The livestream video footage of the sessions is recorded on Youtube.com, e.g. Indie DaDee 2014b, 2014c.

¹³¹ Interestingly, title of one of the forum’s Youtube.com uploads refers to participants as “*ganmin* telling stories” (幹民開講), see Indie DaDee 2014c. *Gan* is the Chinese equivalent to the f-word, a term most of the speakers in the forum shouted passionately to loud cheers from the audience, seemingly to let off steam and create a sense of community. The word creation *ganmin* (“f * * * people”) seemingly satirizes the image of citizens (*gongmin* 公民) engaged in rational deliberation that DStreet projected.

¹³² Ho points out that the fact that “frustrated participants” could express their views arguably contributed to making an organized exit possible (2019, p. 159).

Contrary to the more structured, outcome-oriented, educational, and civic-minded spaces of strategic deliberation that closely aligned with the broader strategy of the movement leadership, the two forums stood in tensions with and to some extent contradicted it. They subverted the norms, tropes, and social practices established during the first weeks of the occupation during which the focus had been on cultivating an organized, tidy, and rational impression. Beckershoff (2014) rightly points out that the two forums provided space for the articulation of anti-free-trade and pro-independence positions that were marginalized within the movement discourse. He suggests that the satirical and carnivalistic style of these forums allowed these initially repressed themes to resurface (*ibid.*, p. 21-24). This account resonates with critics of deliberative democracy who point out that the standards of deliberative democracy exclude marginalized voices and alternative forms of expression (Sanders 1997; Young 2001). In the context of an occupation movement that strongly aspired to civil discourse, the two alternative spaces embraced a messier, more emotional, and even conflictual approach to democratic deliberation. Moreover, both spaces allowed participants to prefigure different ways of engaging one another and of acting collectively that were less constrained by social norms, strategic considerations, and concerns about the media gaze. They facilitated the articulation of views in a fashion that did not conform to the lofty standards outlined by deliberative democratic theory with its focus on structure and rationality.

Conclusion

To better understand the different forms of street deliberation in the Sunflower Movement, I first assessed the deliberative experience of the Wild Strawberry Movement and its influence on the Legislative Yuan occupation. I

showed that the discursive, assembly-style democracy that emerged in 2008 on Liberty Square can be read as an example for the potentials and limitations of prefigurative deliberations. The space was open to all student participants who deliberated openly and open-endedly, eschewing internal hierarchies and clear representational structures in favour of collective decision-making amongst equals in the nightly assembly. This allowed participants to experience a seemingly utopian process designed to meet the high standards for equality and participation set by a student movement that aspired to be democratic in its internal organization. The overemphasis on process, however, came at the expense of the structure needed for effectively articulating and achieving outcomes. The occupation eventually faded away after a period of deliberative indecision. The lesson many Wild Strawberry veterans who later played influential roles in the Sunflower Movement took away from Liberty Square was that an unstructured and open-ended deliberation process hinders effective decision-making; that a successful mobilization requires organizational discipline and clearly delineated leadership.

Although the Sunflower Movement entailed vertical decision-making structures, it nonetheless featured open discussions all across the occupation zone. I demonstrated that these deliberations mattered even though they did not directly affect the decision-making of the vertical leadership. Spaces of strategic deliberation such as the Democracy Classroom and DStreet fulfilled important functions such as mobilization, civic education, and feedback, in addition to serving as an effective performance that boosted the perceived legitimacy of the occupation by projecting an open, peaceful, and rational image. The educational effects of DStreet, as an explicit street experiment with deliberative democracy, were not confined to conveying a particular content – i.e. better informing participants about the various aspects of the CSSTA issue – but more importantly introduced the skills and attitudes of

deliberation to its participants. It was thus designed to teach participants how to enact the role of active and responsible citizens who engage in rational discourse in the public sphere.

Prefigurative spaces of deliberation such as the Liberation Forum and the Big Intestine Flower Forum, by contrast, contradicted and to some extent even contested the broader strategy of the movement leadership. They embraced a less polished, structured, and civic-minded approach to deliberation that focused on the process of relatively unfiltered self-expression and contentious debate. These were subversive spaces within the occupation that enabled the articulation of a critique of existing movement structures, as well as of criticisms of the government that were largely unconstrained by established social expectations or the media gaze. This enabled the uninhibited expression of positions that the movement framing produced by the leadership did not strongly emphasize such as economic critiques and demands for independence.

However, these prefigurative spaces not just enabled the discussion of different content. There were also striking differences in the way that the content was packaged. DStreet encouraged and taught a method of deliberation that aspired to elevate often diffuse, emotional, and contradictory political discussions amongst participants to the level of rational, constructive, and well-informed discourse amongst active citizens worthy of admission to Habermas' ideal public sphere. It thus perfectly matched the leadership's framing of the movement as a reasonable, civil society-led resistance to "black box" – i.e. untransparent and certainly not rational – government. By contrast, the two forums allowed for the articulation of critique in a manner that did not neatly conform to the standards of restraint and rationality set by deliberative democratic theory (Sanders 1997; Young 2001). They allowed for or even channelled

impassionate, emotional, confrontational criticisms that defied these standards, underlining the need for broadening the notion of deliberation to push back against the liberal ideal's "conservative or antidemocratic connotations" (Sanders 1997, p. 1). Whereas localist critics of the movement leadership in Hong Kong engaged in "anti-deliberation" discourse (see chapter 4), dissatisfied participants in Taiwan's occupation embraced satire and constructed their own alternative deliberative spaces. Perhaps the strength of the Sunflower Movement lay in its ability to bring together and withstand the tensions between different modes of communicative opposition to "black box" governance.

Conclusion

“We’ll be back” – this prescient slogan was seen across the campsites in Hong Kong prior to the forced clearance of the Umbrella Movement. Similar to occupation movements elsewhere, the encampments discussed in this thesis were fragile and transient spaces that for some time provided hope and room for democratic experimentation before they had to be voluntarily or forcibly abandoned. The Sunflower Movement reinvigorated Taiwanese democracy. So far there has not been another protest movement that matched its scale. In post-Umbrella Hong Kong, by contrast, protesters indeed returned to the streets in great numbers in 2019-20 to contest a controversial extradition bill that would have allowed extraditions to the PRC. Instead of once again creating sustained occupations, the Anti-ELAB Movement took a more thoroughly decentralized form – an approach that was dubbed the “be water” strategy after a Bruce Lee quote.¹³³ Rather than featuring a main stage, the movement relied on horizontal coordination through the internet and involved an even broader protest repertoire including marches, flash mobs, strikes, and boycotts.

The Anti-ELAB Movement was met with increasingly violent policing. Although the protests initially focused on preventing the introduction of the extradition bill, the demands of participants soon expanded to include democratic reform – in a sense picking up where the Umbrella Movement left off. After largely ignoring the voice of large sections of the population for over half a year, the government reluctantly suspended the bill on September 4, 2019. No other concessions were made. While it may have worked at an earlier stage, the measure came too late and was insufficient to alleviate the discontent. Sections of the movement responded to state violence and

¹³³ For a more detailed analysis of the movement, see Ku 2020; Lee 2020.

irresponsiveness with increasingly disruptive forms of protest including vandalism that would have been hard to imagine back in 2014, when nonviolent civil disobedience was still the dominant paradigm.

The most recent developments in the once relatively autonomous city-state underline just what was at stake in the contestations over democracy in Hong Kong and Taiwan. Following the introduction of a national security law on June 30, 2020 the protests gradually came to a halt. Hong Kong's promised autonomy from the PRC was effectively curtailed far before the formal 2047 expiry date of the "One Country, Two Systems" framework promulgated in the Sino-British Joint Declaration. The law infringes on the principle of judicial independence by introducing a "Committee for Safeguarding National Security," directly accountable to the central government, whose verdicts cannot be subject to judicial review (HKFP 2020). Whilst the law is not formulated in such way as to apply retroactively, it is clearly designed to deter democratic opposition and free expression. What exactly constitutes violations of national security is deliberately left vague, but transgressions carry a maximum sentence of life imprisonment.

The government has used the new law for a crackdown on the pan-democratic camp. In late February 2021, 47 key opposition leaders were charged and subsequently went through unusually lengthy bail hearings in March (BBC News 2021c). They face political prosecution for allegedly subverting national security by organizing unofficial primaries amongst opposition candidates. The primaries were meant to boost the pan-democratic camp's chances for success in the 2020 Legislative Council elections. Although the organization of civil primaries can be considered an ordinary and hardly radical undertaking by liberal standards, the organizers were accused of "attempt[ing] to overthrow the government" by the state authorities (ibid.).

The scheduled elections never took place; the administration postponed them under the pretence that the Covid-19 pandemic made this unprecedented step necessary. Amongst the activists accused of subversion are some who were prominently involved in the Umbrella Movement, including Occupy Central co-founder Benny Tai who was the architect of the unofficial primary. Clearly, the authorities were concerned that there could be a repeat of what had occurred in the 2019 district council elections at the height of the anti-ELAB protests when the opposition camp made massive electoral gains amidst unprecedented voter turnout (BBC News 2019b) – demonstrating the continued democratic aspirations of large segments of the population. Presumably to avoid a repeat of a similar landslide, Beijing in March 2021 introduced a major revamp of Hong Kong’s already limited election system that is meant to prevent allegedly “unpatriotic” candidates from assuming elected office (BBC News 2021b). In mid-April, the government outlined final details of the reform that illegalizes advocacy for election boycotts or the casting of blank ballots (Wang 2021). The NGO alliance CHRF disbanded in mid-August citing political repression under the national security law that had made its continued operation impossible (Davidson 2021). Meanwhile, just prior to the submission of this thesis in October 2021, it seems likely that not even a single candidate from Hong Kong’s Democratic Party will be running in the upcoming Legislative Council elections amidst fears of political prosecution (Kang-chung 2021). These developments signify the dramatic dismantling of Hong Kong’s democratic opposition in the new authoritarian era.

Hong Kong’s path contrasts starkly with recent developments in Taiwan. The Sunflower Movement shifted Taiwan’s geopolitical trajectory away from gradual integration with the PRC – a course that almost seemed inevitable under Ma Ying-jeou’s presidency prior to the popular occupation of the legislature. The occupation movement has been credited with contributing to

the electoral victories of the DPP in 2016 that resulted in Taiwan's third peaceful transfer of power – a demonstration of the maturity of Taiwanese democracy. Just as in post-2014 Hong Kong, new civic groups were formed in the aftermath of the occupation and many participants shifted their focus to electoral politics, engaging both in relatively new and established political parties. Strongly contrasting with the squeezing of space for free expression in Hong Kong, in post-2014 Taiwan there has been an expansion of experiments with deliberative democracy facilitated both by state actors and civic groups. Meanwhile, the erosion of Hong Kong's autonomy further undermined the slim likelihood that a "One Country, Two Systems" arrangement will ever find broad consent within Taiwan. For many Taiwanese, the crackdown on civil liberties and partial democracy in Hong Kong brings back dark memories from the martial law period that ended over 30 years ago and poses a reminder of how far their nation has come since then. In January 2020, whilst the protests in Hong Kong were still ongoing, the Taiwanese people re-elected president Tsai Ing-wen by substantial margins over KMT candidate Han Kuo-yu, who was widely considered Beijing's preferred candidate. In light of these developments, the CCP leadership – apparently recognizing that chances for a so-called "peaceful reunification" are slim – has continued an increasingly confrontational approach that involves air and naval manoeuvres in the Taiwan Strait and diplomatic efforts to further isolate its neighbour on the international stage.

In retrospect, the occupation movements discussed in this thesis can be seen as turning points for the two polities: Whilst Taiwan changed course following the occupation of parliament, the erosion of Hong Kong's relative autonomy further accelerated in the aftermath of the Umbrella Movement. At least on the surface, Hong Kong's occupation movement thus seems less successful than its Taiwanese counterpart. But for most observers it was clear

from the onset that the cards had been stacked against Hong Kong's democrats. Already during the preparations for Occupy Central it was difficult to imagine even for the organizers that the central government would allow genuine democratic reform. Under these circumstances, organizing sustained occupations that allowed great numbers of participants to build communities, experiment with democracy, and convey their determination to strive for democracy to local and international audiences was a surprising accomplishment in and of itself. The movement did indeed prefigure a more democratic Hong Kong that was far different from the present it was embedded in or the authoritarian future that is currently unfolding. It provided temporary spaces for people to dream, hope, and learn – creating lasting memories in the process and laying the groundwork for future contestations.

Moving away from questions of success and failure, this thesis set out to explore how participants in the Sunflower and Umbrella Movement conceived and practiced democracy based on a wide range of original interview material. While the two movements unfolded within a geostrategic context as contestations over political autonomy in the periphery of the PRC, I emphasized their situatedness within a broader wave of anti-authoritarian occupation movements world-wide. The two movements raised universal questions about democracy that transcend (arguably self-fulfilling) narratives about the brewing of a new cold war between “Western” democracy and “Chinese” authoritarianism. Similar to popular occupations elsewhere, including in Europe and North America, the two East Asian protests were movements of indignant citizens concerned with democracy. I highlighted the embeddedness of the two movements in local contexts and their innovation upon traditions of student protests. But although each of the two protests was spearheaded by student activists, they were not “pure” student

movements but entailed people from all walks of life similar to the popular occupations elsewhere.

I made the case that the two East Asian movements not just voiced claims for democracy vis-à-vis the government authorities, but also formed enactments of democracy in and of themselves. Contrary to horizontalist readings of the recent occupation wave (Hardt and Negri 2017; Sitrin and Azzellini 2014), I demonstrated that the Umbrella and Sunflower Movement combined vertical leadership and horizontal participation without ever fully being able to resolve the tensions between the two. The two movements were shaped by the interplay of strategic and prefigurative politics: They entailed forms of vertical leadership that engaged state and society in order to achieve legalistic democratic reforms. But they also carved out spaces for democratic experimentation and self-expression. The interactions of the two modalities resulted in different movement trajectories based on contextual factors and contingent developments. Whereas the Sunflower Movement settled upon a more strategic approach that eventually enabled a voluntary withdrawal, the Umbrella Movement took a prefigurative turn and lacked the deliberative leadership and decision-making mechanisms required to achieve a similar feat. Having run out of patience due to the repeated setbacks on the path towards full representative democracy, many participants equated strategic withdrawal with defeat and focused their efforts on sustaining the decentralized occupations. There was a mismatch between the legalistic objective of the movement – institutional change through the introduction of universal suffrage – and its increasingly prefigurative form that implies the enactment of more radical democratic visions. While the Umbrella Movement did not explicitly choose a prefigurative approach and failure as conventionally defined similar to the US New Left of the 1960s (Breines 1980), the movement effectively embraced a defiant form of prefiguration that

created a democratic space set against the background of an unresponsive, semi-authoritarian environment.

The first chapter laid the groundwork for this study by briefly discussing the histories of protest that led up to the occupations before comparing the ways in which they enacted civil disobedience as a strategic performance of democracy. Echoing previous studies (e.g. Cole 2015; Ho 2019; Lee and Sing 2019; Ma and Cheng 2019), the comparison underlined that the occupations did not manifest fully spontaneously, but were the result of increasingly conflictual state-society relations in both contexts during which activists developed networks, practices, and experiences that culminated in the use of civil disobedience viewed as the last resort for defending or achieving representative democracy. In both cases, the actions of a vanguard of young protesters resulted in contingent circumstances that engendered spontaneous mass participation and the formation of resilient occupations. I assessed how closely the two movements conformed to the liberal script of civil disobedience according to which actions need to be public, non-violent, conscientious, and operating within the bounds of fidelity to law to count as normatively justified forms of civil disobedience. The analysis demonstrated that the enactments of civil disobedience in both cases went beyond the relatively narrow parameters outlined by both liberal democratic theorists and the moderate OCLP leadership, pointing to the need for a broader understanding of democratic civil disobedience.

In the second chapter I compared the contested formation of strategic leadership and deliberative decision-making structures in the two occupation movements. I contrasted Hardt and Negri's (2017) vision of horizontalist movements free from the constraints of traditional organization – captured by the image of a swarm of bees – with the forms of vertical leadership developed in the two East Asian movements as part of the pursuit of

strategic politics. The comparison across three stages showed that the organizational forms developed in the two movements neither fully fit the horizontal nor an entirely vertical model of leadership. I underlined that leadership composition and vertical decision-making structures were not static but contested and constantly evolving. Whereas the Sunflower Movement developed an elaborate deliberative structure that enabled a strategic withdrawal with some degree of legitimacy, the pre-existing organizations involved in the Umbrella Movement were unable to develop a similarly coherent structure due to the high degree of decentralization, strategic differences, and a general lack of trust. All efforts to create effective decision-making mechanisms for the pursuit of a strategic approach failed and the movement developed a distinctly prefigurative thrust.

Factional conflicts over leadership and movement-internal democracy were further explored in chapter three. I showed that the occupations did not form coherent (oppositional) public spheres, but entailed multiple democratic imaginations, fractures, and contestations. Intra-movement tensions played out through performative struggles over the real and imagined spatial structures of the occupation zones. The conflict in Taiwan focused on the inside/outside distinction enforced by a police cordon that separated a vanguard of activists inside the legislature from the rest of the occupation outside. The Sunflower Movement did not entail a picket line akin to previous student movements that clearly distinguish students from ordinary citizens; But nonetheless the young core leadership inside was symbolically distinguished from the “supporters” outside due to the peculiar spatial arrangement. The more serious factional conflicts in Hong Kong, by contrast, focused not on inside/outside boundaries but on the vertical hierarchies implied by the physical main stage in Admiralty district. The metal construct elevated the bodies of leaders above spectators and seemingly amplified their voices at the expense of others. The term *daaitoi* even came to denote the

traditional pan-democratic leadership along with its moderate, strategic course that had so far failed to bring about genuine universal suffrage. Localists called for the demolition of the stage and repeatedly performatively challenged it in order to pursue a more radical approach to democratic struggle. In both cases, different democratic imaginations were thus ascribed to occupied space and performatively contested – highlighting the agonistic dimensions of the political (Mouffe 2009).

Chapter 4 explored forms of public deliberation in Hong Kong's Occupy Central and Umbrella Movement. I demonstrated that the opening of deliberative spaces formed a key facet of these movements' vision and enactment of democracy. Drawing on the notions of prefigurative and strategic politics as well as my empirical material, I proposed an original framework for understanding "deliberation in movement" (della Porta 2005) that distinguishes between the ideal types of strategic and prefigurative deliberation. The former covers targeted communicative spaces that are typically – though not necessarily – established by vertical movement leadership to fulfil particular functions geared towards achieving a movement's objectives. The latter, by contrast, describes horizontal communicative spaces that are largely unconstrained by the strategic considerations of the leadership and thus allow for experimental self-expression as an end in and of itself. I showed that Hong Kong's OCLP campaign experimented with strategic deliberations based on the ideal of deliberative democracy in the context of a campaign designed to unite and strengthen the pro-democracy movement. Once the movement was transformed through the spontaneous occupations it took a more prefigurative turn. Although the OCLP deliberation days were not revived on the occupied streets, there were nonetheless less structured and formal forms of strategic deliberation such as chat boxes organized by the student leadership and street classrooms. Moreover, the three occupation zones –

each with its own particular features – formed spaces for prefigurative deliberation. I discussed examples such as the newly formed village communities and the open-microphone stage in Mongkok that contrasted with OCLP's strategic approach in that they engendered more casual, incoherent, and passionate talk that may not meet the high standards for detached rationality imagined by deliberative theorists.

The framework that I developed in chapter four was also applied in the final empirical chapter to aid the analysis of public deliberations in the Wild Strawberry and Sunflower Movement. I showed that the prefigurative deliberations on Liberty Square in 2008 formed an important reference point for veteran activists who were involved in subsequent movements. The experience taught the Sunflower Movement leadership about the potential pitfalls of deliberative indecision. During the occupation in 2014, strategic decision-making was thus more centralised in a core leadership. Nonetheless, there were deliberations across the occupation that played a variety of important roles. The leadership organized street deliberations that were somewhat akin to OCLP's strategic deliberation days. This series of forums served important functions such as mobilization, civic education, and feedback, in addition to projecting the image of an open and rational assembly that contrasted with the ruling party's alleged "black box"-governance. Moreover, there were prefigurative deliberations across the occupation zone such as the Liberation Forum and the Big Intestine Flower Forum. These deliberations to some extent contradicted or even contested the movement leadership's strategy, forming subversive spaces within the occupation that allowed for relatively unfettered communication that was less constrained by standards of coherence and rationality. The communicative spaces developed in the two occupation movements point to variance in deliberative constellations and highlight the necessity of

expanding conceptions of deliberative democracy based on the experience of social movements.

Taken together, my empirical analysis underscores that democracy entails more than just the particular institutional form of representative democracy that is most often associated with the term. But contrary to some accounts of the recent occupation protests world-wide (Hardt and Negri 2017; Sitrin and Azzellini 2014), I do not find that the experience of the two East Asian Movements points to the emergence of horizontal models of democracy that can supplant conventional representation. I broadly concur with Ho, who in his analysis pointed out that the experience of improvisation in these movements does not verify idealized notions of “leaderless movement” (2019, p. 215). My assessment also suggests a degree of scepticism. However, I did find that there are shifts in leadership unfolding that point to tensions between different vision of democracy and organization present in social movements. I echo Gerbaudo (2017), who – similarly sceptical about celebrations of horizontalism – found that the “movements of the squares” combined an ideology of “citizenism” that focused on engagement with democratic institutions with new forms of neo-anarchist-inspired (horizontal) organization. However, I did find that there was a significant degree of variance and contestation within these movements that played out through performance and deliberation. Horizontal and vertical structures, visions, and practices coexisted within the two movements. On the one hand, the Sunflower and Umbrella Movement showed that representative democracy continues to be a form of governance many people find worth fighting for. On the other hand, the two East Asian movements also highlighted that there is more to democracy than free and fair elections. The occupations formed spaces for an embodied, participatory, and deliberative enactment of democracy. But the movement space did not form an unambiguous and uniform democratic performance; it entailed internal tensions, contradictions,

and contestations. If the rituals of authoritarianism strive for social control and certainty, democratic struggles create room for critique and experimentation.¹³⁴

Future research could more closely compare the role of national identity in the two movements' enactment of democracy. I touched on this topic in my thesis, but did not closely explore it. Especially in the aftermath of the two movements, there was a more overt nationalist shift. In Taiwan, the question of independence was not strongly emphasized by the movement leadership – largely to avoid appearing partisan – even though many of the student leaders support Taiwan independence and participants became increasingly vocal about the issue as the occupation dragged on. In Hong Kong, the pan-democrats long emphasized the city-state's belonging to China – eager to counter allegations that demanding democratization was “separatist.” But during the movement and especially in its aftermath, localists gained ground who advocated for self-determination or even independence from China. How these changes played out during the movements as part of their democratic enactments and in their aftermath in discourse about the occupations warrants further attention.

The role of digital communication technology in the two movements also deserves closer comparative attention. Whereas many studies of the recent occupation movements (including some on the Sunflower and Umbrella Movement, e.g. Lee and Chan 2018) focused on new technologies that facilitated horizontal forms of organization (e.g. Bennett and Segerberg 2013; Castells 2015), I showed that vertical leadership, embodied performances, and verbal communication continued to matter in terms of how democracy was enacted in these two movements. Nonetheless, the role that digital media played in their democratic enactments merits further comparative

¹³⁴ On the subversion of authoritarian state rituals during the Tiananmen protests in 1989, see Esherick and Wasserstrom 1994.

consideration, especially in light of recent protests in Hong Kong that strongly relied on digital tools and seemed to resemble the image of digitally mediated horizontal democracy more closely. Such research could also provide clues on how pro-democracy protest will develop in the coming years at a time of world-wide authoritarian resurgence.

“Democracy is never a gift from heaven. It must be earned by many with strong will [...] We will remain strong and fight for what we want.” Jimmy Sham Tsz-kit (岑子杰), an experienced LGBTQ rights activist who was the convener of the CHRF during the 2019-20 protests, was cited as saying these words prior to entering a police station to await trial under the national security law along with 46 others in March 2021 (BBC News 2021a). His statement is not just a reflection of the bravery and determination of those currently faced with political prosecution in Hong Kong, but also rings true with what social movement activists have long known about the nature of social change: it is not something granted voluntarily from above, but the result of sustained struggle and pressure from below. This thesis has documented the forms that pro-democracy activism took at turning points in the recent history of Hong Kong and Taiwan when great numbers of people in both polities for a time dared to imagine, hope for, and enact democratic change. What forms future contestations over democracy will take remains to be seen. But whilst power structures lay claim to their naturalness as if sanctioned by heavenly mandate, history shows time and again that people voice questions and refuse to confine their dreams to the closet.

Appendix

Appendix A: Interviewees Taiwan Sunflower Movement

N.	Pseudonym	Interview Date	Role / Affiliation
1.	Ko-wei Y.	30.3.2018	Environmental NGO; core leadership
2.	Cora K. and Yu-chang C.	31.3.2018	Student participant (outside occupation)
3.	Wen-liang C.	2.4.2018	Academic
4.	Ling-pei W.	2.4.2018	Academic
5.	Yu-hsiung M.	7.4.2018	Student participant (outside occupation)
6.	Bi-ming L.	12.4.2018	Participant (outside occupation)
7.	Chih-ting K.	14.4.2018	Participant (outside occupation)
8.	Robert S.	14.4.2018	Photographer
9.	Wen-yang W.	16.4.2018	Filmmaker
10.	Ke-chung L.	20.4.2018	College of Social Sciences Group; later politician (DPP)
11.	Ling-wan L.	21.4.2018	Participant (outside occupation)
12.	Samuel E.	21.4.2018	NGO (outside Taiwan)
13.	Wei-fang C.	26.4.2018	Participant (outside occupation); journalist
14.	Cheng L.	28.4.2018	Participant (outside occupation)

15.	Jason C.	3.5.2018	NGO; outside occupation
16.	Chia-hao L.	3.5.2018	Student participant; core leadership; later politician (DPP)
17.	Joyce K.	4.5.2018	Academic; Taiwan Foundation for Democracy
18.	Ching-po W.	4.5.2018	College of Social Sciences Group
19.	Kuan-lin L.	5.5.2018	College of Social Sciences Group
20.	Sandra C.	7.5.2018	Participant (inside occupation)
21.	Dan L.	8.5.2018	Student participant (outside occupation)
22.	Kuang-ming S.	8.5.2018	Participant (outside occupation)
23.	Ya-ping K.	9.5.2018	Student participant; core leadership
24.	Chloe L.	10.5.2018	Student participant; core leadership
25.	Shuo-bin W.	10.5.2018	Student participant; core leadership
26.	Matthew C. and Chih-jen M.	11.5.2018	Academic
27.	Chen-yuan W. and Theo D.	12.5.2018	Chen-yuan W.: College of Social Sciences Group; later politician (DPP) Theo D.: Outside participant
28.	Kevin L.	13.5.2018	Participant (outside occupation)
29.	Ya-yao W.	16.5.2018	Participant (outside occupation)
30.	I-chien W.	18.5.2018	Filmmaker
31.	Yu-shan M.	18.5.2018	Student participant; core leadership

32.	Alex W.	19.5.2018	Student participant; College of Social Sciences Group
33.	Shu-hua W.	20.5.2018	Outside occupation; later politician (Social Democratic Party)
34.	Yu-wen L.	23.5.2018	NGO (human rights)
35.	Che-wei S.	24.5.2018	Academic
36.	Chia-hui K. and Cheng-han W.	29.6.2018	Academic
37.	Diane W.	2.7.2018	Veteran human rights activist; academic; politician
38.	Conor T.	15.7.2018	Outside participant
39.	Po-chun C.	21.7.2018	Democratic Front; core leadership
40.	Shu-fen K.	24.7.2018	Democratic Front; core leadership
41.	Tsung-han W.	25.7.2018	Photographer
42.	Hsin-hung C.	27.7.2018	Academic
43.	Chun-chieh W.	28.7.2018	Veteran activist; participant (outside occupation)
44.	Mei-ling L.	29.7.2018	Student participant (outside); later politician (NPP)
45.	Wan-ting H.	30.7.2018	Participant (outside); later NGO
46.	Hsiu-ming C.	30.7.2018	Participant (outside)
47.	Kuan-ting Y.	1.8.2018	Core leadership; later politician (NPP)
48.	Mara L.	1.8.2018	Jianmin Liberation Zone

49.	Chun-hung W.	1.8.2018	Jianmin Liberation Zone
50.	Yu-hsuan W.	15.8.2018	Academic
51.	Chien-hung M.	20.8.2018	Academic
52.	Yan-ting L.	20.8.2018	Academic
53.	Hui-chun Y.	20.8.2018	Participant (outside); NGO
54.	Pai-han W.	21.8.2018	Academic; core leadership; politician (NPP)
55.	Ssu-ying H.	23.8.2018	Participant (outside); NGO
56.	Yi-chun W.	24.8.2018	Academic
57.	Hua-yi C.	24.8.2018	Student participant
58.	Chih-wei C.	28.8.2018	Politician (DPP); legislator
59.	Yueh-cheng T.	29.8.2018	Participant; DPP affiliation
60.	Hsin-yi C.	29.8.2018	Student participant; core leadership
61.	Wei-hsiang H.	6.9.2018	Student participant; core leadership; later politician (DPP)

Appendix B: Interviewees Hong Kong Umbrella Movement

No.	Pseudonym	Interview Date	Role / Affiliation
1.	Jocelyn W.	12.10.2017	Politician (Democratic Party)
2.	Ian K.	14.10.2017	Politician (Civic Party); movement critic
3.	Blair T.	16.10.2017; 10.6.2018	OCLP legal team
4.	Ernest F.	17.10.2017	Politician (League of Social Democrats)
5.	Ralph C.	18.10.2017	Student leadership (HKFS)
6.	Victor L.	23.10.2017	Participant; later politician (Youngspiration)
7.	Yee Tak W.	24.10.2017	Christian NGO
8.	Owen C.	25.10.2017	Participant; later politician (Hong Kong Indigenous)
9.	Remy O.	26.10.2017	Participant (young professional)
10.	Siu Ling W.	27.10.2017	Participant (young professional)
11.	Aster M.	27.10.2017	Participant (young professional)
12.	Joey F.	29.10.2017	Student leadership (HKFS)
13.	Geoffrey K.	30.10.2017	Politician (DAB); not a participant
14.	Ellis W.	31.10.2017	Participant (young professional)
15.	Tony C.	1.11.2017	Politician (Civic Party)

16.	Lina S.	1.11.2017	Participant (young professional)
17.	Kai Man S.	2.11.2017	Politician (Civic Passion)
18.	Paul K.	2.11.2017	Politician (Democratic Party)
19.	Lola C.	3.11.2017	Participant
20.	Lea F. and Yanis D.	3.11.2017	Lea F.: Participant Umbrella Movement Yanis D.: OCLP supporter
21.	Conor W.	6.11.2017	Politician (Democratic Party)
22.	Daniel K.	3.7.2015; 7.11.2017;	OCLP leadership
23.	Henry S.	8.11.2017	Politician (Democratic Party)
24.	Aimee F.	9.11.2017	Participant (young professional)
25.	Mark L.	9.11.2017	Academic; CHRF
26.	Roger C.	10.11.2017	Politician (Labour Party)
27.	Carson H.	13.11.2017	Politician
28.	Simon K.	14.11.2017; 7.6.2018	Student leadership (HKFS)
29.	Joseph C.	14.11.2017	Trade Union representative
30.	Ho Yi C.	14.11.2017	Student participant
31.	Nicole L.	15.11.2017	Participant (young professional)
32.	Alice S.	15.11.2017	Student participant

33.	Oswyn F.	16.11.2017	Participant
34.	Sau Mei C. & Ken W.	17.11.2017	Participant
35.	Francis T.	17.11.2017	Participant (mainly Admiralty)
36.	Benedict C.	21.11.2017	Participant (young professional)
37.	Zachary A.	21.11.2017	Participant
38.	Samuel F.	26.6.2015; 23.11.2017; 12.6.2018	CHRF
39.	Andrew C.	23.11.2017	Participant (young professional)
40.	Cameron F.	24.11.2017	Participant (mainly Mongkok)
41.	William G.	25.11.2017	Hong Kong Bar Association (non-partisan)
42.	James C.	27.11.2017	Politician (People Power)
43.	Ethan D.	22.6.2015; 27.11.2017	OCLP leadership
44.	Autonomous 8a (affiliates)	28.11.2017	Autonomous 8a is a Social Movement Resources Centre loosely embedded in the HKFS structure; interview with three activists affiliated with it and one guest
45.	Miles N.	5.6.2018	Student leadership (Scholarism)
46.	Alfred N.	5.6.2018	Politician (Labour Party)
47.	Jack E.	6.6.2018	Academic
48.	Morgan C.	6.6.2018	NGO representative (LGBTQ Rights)

49.	Richard F.	6.6.2018	Politician (Democratic Party)
50.	John T.	7.6.2018	Academic
51.	Jonathan F.	7.6.2018	Veteran pro-democracy activist; politician (Democratic Party)
52.	Wing Tai W.	7.6.2018	Trade Union representative
53.	Alan W.	8.6.2018	Student leadership (HKFS)
54.	Dominic E.	8.6.2018	Academic
55.	Derek F.	24.6.2015; 11.6.2018	Politician (League of Social Democrats)
56.	Adam C.	11.6.2018	Student leadership (Scholarism)
57.	Elaine F.	12.6.2018	Academic
58.	Brian W.	13.6.2018	OCLP leadership; CHRF
59.	Robin C.	13.6.2018	NGO (LGBTQ rights); emcee (Mongkok)
60.	Hugo T. and Siu Wah Y.	13.6.2018	Participants (mainly Admiralty, Hugo T. also in Causeway Bay)
61.	Oscar K.	14.6.2018	Participant; later politician (Civic Passion)
62.	Liam Y.	14.6.2018	Marshal team; labour union
63.	Jamie T.	14.6.2018	CHRF
64.	Lucas F.	15.6.2018	Student leadership (HKFS)
66.	Louis C.	7.8.2018	Photographer

67.	Brandon F.	7.8.2018	Admiralty occupation; barricade group
68.	Scarlett W.	8.8.2018	Emcee (Mongkok)
69.	Luke E.	9.8.2018	Barricade group
70.	Julian K.	10.8.2018	Politician (Democratic Party)
71.	Oliver L.	10.8.2018	Participant
72.	Taylor S.	11.8.2018	Emcee (Admiralty)

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