Abstract

This chapter discusses how civil society sustains a decentralised social movement under an authoritarian regime by investigating the nature and dynamics of mobilisation networks in the anti-extradition movement of Hong Kong, a semi-autonomous city under the sovereignty of China. This chapter argues that, despite the state's attempts to disenfranchise the opposition movement by capturing visible leaders, the movement evolved to be "leader-full". As a term innovated by activists and reporters, "leader-full" interprets the movement as full of leaders, meaning that communications and key organising tasks were distributed between many from the bottom rather than a few from the top. Despite retaliation by authoritarian rulers – including brutal policing, mass arrests and the introduction of an anti-mask law by emergency powers – the citizens of Hong Kong sustained the movement, maintaining wide public support and international attention. Local communities and individuals formed different mobilisation networks to expand the scope and scale of the movement through cross-sectoral engagement and innovative movement tactics. While traditional social movement organisations and pro-democracy lawmakers in Hong Kong continue to play the role of mobilising resources, they are no longer positioned as leaders of the movement. By expressive protest actions and formation of movement networks via social media, the anti-extradition movement in 2019 became more resilient in face of the state repression.

A "Leader-full" Movement Under Authoritarianism: Mobilisation Networks in the Hong Kong Anti-extradition Movement

Yan-ho LAI

INTRODUCTION

This chapter discusses how civil society sustains a decentralised social movement under an authoritarian regime by investigating the nature and dynamics of mobilisation networks in the anti-extradition movement of Hong Kong, a semi-autonomous city under the sovereignty of China. This chapter argues that, despite the state's attempts to disenfranchise the opposition movement by capturing visible leaders, the movement evolved to be "leader-full". As a term innovated by activists and reporters, "leader-full" interprets the movement as full of leaders, meaning that communications and key organising tasks were distributed between many from the bottom rather than a few from the top (Quartz, 19th November 2019; MobLab Team, 19th December 2019).

As this chapter demonstrates, despite retaliation by authoritarian rulers – including brutal policing, mass arrests and the introduction of an anti-mask law by emergency powers – the citizens of Hong Kong sustained the movement, maintaining wide public support and international attention. Local communities and individuals formed different mobilisation networks to expand the scope and scale of the movement through cross-sectoral engagement and innovative movement tactics. Rallies were held weekly in summer 2019, and a variety of protests took place on weekdays. Protest sites expanded from the government headquarters and the Chamber of the Legislative Council to tourist shopping districts, the airport, metro stations, neighbourhood areas and even the mountains. While traditional social movement organisations and pro-democracy lawmakers in Hong Kong continue to play the role of mobilising resources, they are no longer positioned as leaders of the movement. By expressive protest actions and formation of movement networks via social media, the anti-extradition movement in 2019 became more resilient in face of the state repression.

Methodologically, this paper draws on participant observation and content analysis of news reports and commentaries published between 2019 and 2020. Since 2011, I have observed the development of social movements as well as organised protest actions as a former convenor of the Civil Human Rights Front, which is the major social movement coalition promoting democratisation and advancement of human rights protections in Hong Kong between 2002 and 2021. Between late 2019 and 2020, I was recruited by CHRF again to engage in mass rallies against the extradition bill; I was re-elected as a vice convenor on a voluntary basis during that time as well. Thus, I was able to witness firsthand how mobilisation networks have been formed and sustained.

This chapter is divided into six sections. The first section offers a theoretical and contextual overview of Hong Kong's anti-extradition movement. The second, third, and fourth sections explain the motivations and developments of each mobilisation network. The fifth section articulates the opportunities and constraints for collaboration among the three mobilisation networks. The last section concludes with a prospect of a leaderless but "leader-full" social movement in Hong Kong.

THEORETICAL AND CONTEXTUAL MOTIVATIONS

Hybrid and authoritarian regimes are often seen as capable of repressing mass mobilisation (Levitsky and Way 2010). It is puzzling how resistance can be sustained under such regimes (McAdam 1999; McAdam, Tarrow and Tilly 2001). Scholars argue that networked protest, meaning mobilisation through social media, has become a trend in anti-authoritarian movements in the previous decade (Castells 2012). Using the internet's social media applications on mobile devices to engage in protests is one of the key developments in decentralising social movements, such as the "Twitter Revolution" in Iran and later, the Arab Spring (Tufekci 2017). Mobilisation via the internet is beneficial to disseminating protest information, reducing the cost of communication, establishing alternative channels of political organisation in places where the opposition camp is under repression, building linkage to international community alongside facilitating tactical coordination among activists (El-Baradei 2011, Levisky and Way 2006, Little 2016, Weidmann and Rød 2019). However, skepticism towards mobilisation via social media has also emerged in the scholarship, arguing that social networks have led to "slacktivism". "Slacktivism" refers to the very limited commitment required of protestors in online participation, which cannot substantively impact the development of the movement (Morozov 2009; Gladwell 2010; Fuchs 2012). The study in this chapter suggests that, rather than engendering slacktivism, the anti-extradition movement in Hong Kong utilized social media platforms to form mobilisation networks, organize protest actions and make decisions in a democratic manner.

The successful usage of social media in Hong Kong's social movement can be attributed to the lessons in previous movement experience. Hong Kong is a former colony of the United Kingdom and now a Special Administrative Region of China. Due to the limited degree of individual freedoms guaranteed in the Basic Law and the absence of genuine elections that can change the incumbent by popular vote, Hong Kong has been regarded as a hybrid regime, and even as moving towards a state of authoritarianism (Allan 1998, Lau and Kuan 2002, Bush 2016, Fong 2016 & 2017, Wong, Ma and Lam 2018). In the absence of democratisation, non-institutional political participation has become a norm to express public demands and resist unpopular laws and policies. Mass mobilisation has become a major tool to contest policy between the state and Hong Kong society (Joseph Cheng ed. 2014; Cheng 2015; Yuen and Cheng 2018).

Civil society organisations, as one of the mobilizational forces, play the roles of self-defence and challenge the legitimacy of undemocratic government (Ma 2005, 2007 & 2008). However, it should be noted that the effectiveness of Hong Kong's social movement and civil society in defending rights and promoting democratisation depends on the tolerance of the state. The absence of sovereignty of Hong Kong *per se* means that bottom-up mobilisation can result in either failure due to power dependence on China or a "dynamic political stalemate", where the opposition movement can increase pressure on the authority to withdraw unpopular policies or legislation, rather than seizing governing power (Kuan 1991; Lau 2017).

The anti-extradition movement in 2019 was an outcome of the escalation of state repression and of the fragmentation of civil society after the Umbrella Movement, when

protestors occupied major hubs in Hong Kong to demand universal suffrage. The Umbrella Movement, known as the Occupy Movement in 2014, was an attempt by student activists, civil society and radical protestors to pressure the Chinese government to accept a "genuine universal suffrage" which allows the electorate to nominate candidates in the Chief Executive election. In that movement, networked mobilisation that decentralised leadership became more significant than traditional social movement organisations in sustaining the movement because of the weak leadership within conventional pro-democracy groups and the empowerment of individual protestors, who improvised tactics to respond to changing circumstances (Cai 2017; Ho 2019). However, the Umbrella Movement did not succeed in pressing Beijing to concede on political reform(Lee and Sing ed. 2019) . Such a result left many Hong Kong observers in doubt about the effectiveness and sustainability of a decentralised social movement.

After the Occupy Movement, civil society suffered from an internal split when the traditional forces of the democratic movement, such as pro-democracy parties and student unions, were blamed for the failure. This division paved the way for the rise of localist groups that promoted militant resistance and Hong Kong independence alongside the beginning of state retaliation (Cai 2017; Cora Chan 2017; Yuen and Cheng 2017). From 2016 to the first half of 2019, ten election candidates and six opposition camp lawmakers were disqualified (Ma 2017; Johannes Chan 2018; Kwong 2018). Hong Kong's government also banned a pro-independence political party and expelled foreign journalists, causing wide concerns for the deteriorating rights to freedom of association and of the press (Au and Ma 2020). At least seven leaders of the Umbrella Movement and prominent figures from localist activist groups were sentenced to prison, pressuring other activists into exile abroad (Sataline 2019). The Hong Kong government's application of legal measures – seeking court intervention to legitimise the violation of civil liberties and political freedoms – as well as its suppression of civil society, echoes a state of "authoritarian rule of law", in which the law and judicial system become 'weaponised' political instruments of the state (Ginsburg and Moustafa ed. 2008; Rajah 2012; Whiting 2017), a phenomenon already observed in mainland China.

The introduction of the Fugitive Offenders and Mutual Legal Assistance in Criminal Matters Legislation (Amendment) Bill in late February 2019 marked the beginning of the "perfect storm" in Hong Kong and China relations (Chen, 19th June 2019). The Hong Kong government claimed that the amendment was in response to a homicide case in which a Hong Kong citizen killed his girlfriend in Taiwan and then returned to his hometown (Siu 13th April 2019). However, the proposed bill suggests a mechanism to expand extradition not only to Taiwan, but also to Mainland China (Legislative Council, 2019). Critics are concerned that the bill will remove the "firewall" between the common law system of Hong Kong and the political-legal justice system of China, the latter of which has a poor record on human rights and judicial independence (Reuters, 6th June 2019). The bill also removes the power of the legislature to review requests for fugitive transfers (Al Jazeera, 11th June 2019). The bill was broadly seen as a state attempt to suppress political dissidents residing in Hong Kong and to limit freedom of expression of the city's citizens. Hence, Hong Kong civil society expended enormous effort in social mobilisation against the bill, paving the way for the outbreak of the anti-extradition movement.

The anti-extradition movement demonstrated a "leaderless but leader-full" praxis that has kept the movement resilient. It is "leaderless" in that no single individual, political party or organisation claims to be or is recognised as the movement leader; rather, different actors serve as facilitators and assistants to the movement. It is "leader-full" because diverse forms of self-mobilisation occurred after the second march against the bill in late April. Unlike the Umbrella Movement when a centralised leadership that consisted of student activists, pro-democracy parties and university professors as advocates of civil disobedience, remained in the protests and bargained with the political authority, the anti-extradition movement dismissed any concentrated decision-making mechanism, and the well-known political figures as well as activist organisations did not attempt to take over the leadership of the movement (Lai and Sing 2020). The "leader-fullness" of the movement was demonstrated in the interaction between traditional, identity-driven and ad hoc mobilisation networks, each of which is analyzed separately below.

TRADITIONAL MOBILISATION NETWORK: PRO-DEMOCRACY COALITION AND POLITICAL PARTIES

The traditional mobilisation network includes social movement organisations, trade unions, opposition parties and professional associations that have been engaged in local democratic movements since before the handover of Hong Kong to China. Among the various actors, the Civil Human Rights Front (CHRF) has been the key player in organising mass demonstrations against the extradition bill amendment. Founded in 2002, this coalition consists of 48 member organisations, including opposition parties, trade unions, religious organisations, advocacy groups on human rights and grassroots groups. It is known as the organiser of the rally against a proposed national security law on 1st July 2003, which attracted half a million citizens. Since then, CHRF has organised an annual rally to express demands for democratisation and protection of civil liberties on 1st July, the anniversary of Hong Kong's transfer of sovereignty to China (Ma 2005 & 2009; Sing 2006; Lee and Chan 2012).

Despite this long-standing support for democratisation, supporters of Hong Kong's democracy underwent resistance fatigue after the Umbrella Movement. The number of participants at CHRF's July 1st rallies experienced a dramatic decline beginning in 2015. The recession in resistance activity continued during the first protest against the extradition bill amendment, which was organised by CHRF on 27 March 2019. CHRF claimed there were 12,000 in attendance at the rally, while the police reported only 5,200 (Chan, 31st March 2019). The next CHRF rally was set on 28 April 2019. A few days before the rally, nine activists from the Umbrella Movement were sentenced. Four of them, including Benny Tai and Kin-man Chan, who initiated "Occupy Central with Love and Peace" in 2013, were sent to jail. Their trials, confessions and sentencing concluded the Umbrella Movement with their moral appeal for a just and democratic society in Hong Kong (Chan ed. 2019), and their jailing became a catalyst that boosted the number of demonstrators in the second CHRF rally, when CHRF estimated that 130,000 citizens joined (Sum and Ng 28th April 2019).

The unexpected size of the rally boosted the morale of pro-democracy lawmakers to resist the bill in the Legislative Council by radical means. The pro-democracy lawmakers obstructed the pro-government lawmakers to hold a bills committee meeting to scrutinise the bill after the chairman of the select committee, who also belonged to the pro-democracy

camp, was removed by the secretariat of the Legislative Council. (New York Times, 11th May 2019). The commitment of the pro-democracy lawmakers in resisting the bill amendment in the legislature, to include confrontational means, was backed by pro-democracy supporters and radical protestors in street assemblies, consolidating the unity of the movement (The Apple Daily, 11th May 2019). As a result, the government decided to bypass the bills committee to bring the amendment for second reading at the council meeting. This decision sparked widespread criticism from the general public for damaging procedural justice and intensified the mobilisation for the third march, scheduled for 9 June.

The traditional social movement created a prologue to the first "million march." On 4 June 2019, at the 30th commemoration vigil of the Tiananmen Crackdown, the organiser of the event, the Hong Kong Alliance in Support of Patriotic Democratic Movements of China (hereafter the Alliance), and the speakers repeatedly urged more than 180,000 attendees to join the rally on 9 June (South China Morning Post, 5th June 2019). Two days later, a group of Hong Kong lawyers organised a silent march to demonstrate their opposition to the bill amendment. The organisers reported that 3,000 legal professionals attended, the highest figure of their previous four marches since 1999 (Lum and Sum 6th June 2019).

The subsequent acts of resistance by civil society surprised both the local and international communities. CHRF announced that 1,030,000 citizens joined the mass demonstration on 9 June and called for an assembly during the second reading of the bill in the Legislative Council. Despite the unprecedented rally size, the government insisted on proceeding to the bill's second reading. Three days later, thousands of protestors assembled outside the Legislative Council Complex, attempting to occupy the area to block lawmakers from entering the building. However, riot police ended the assembly by dispersing it with tear gas. They also shot protestors with beanbag bullets and rubber rounds. At least five protestors were arrested and charged with inciting a riot. The Chief Executive of Hong Kong, Carrie Lam, and the Police Commissioner declared the assembly a riot, and the meetings of the legislature were suspended. Instead of a formal withdrawal of the bill, the Chief Executive announced on 15 June that she would suspend the passage of the bill. However, she applauded the police's use of force as legitimate. Her speech and refusal to withdraw the bill further stimulated public outrage. On 16 June, two million citizens protested against police violence and demanded a full withdrawal of the bill (The Guardian, 16 June 2019). The demonstration broke the city's record as more than a quarter of the population joined. In addition to the demand of withdrawing the bill, four other demands were raised by CHRF: investigate police brutality, retract the categorisation of protestors as rioters, release all arrested protestors, and demand that Carrie Lam step down. Later on, the last demand was transposed with implementing universal suffrage.

After the 16 June rally, with an increase in the use of excessive force and brutality by the police, CHRF – alongside other professional associations and networks, including the Hong Kong Journalists Association and the Hong Kong Professional Teacher's Union – continued to organise rallies to sustain the movement (see Table 1). All in all, traditional social movement forces remained as a significant party in the mobilisation of the anti-extradition movement in 2019.

TABLE 1 NEAR HERE

IDENTITY-DRIVEN MOBILISATION NETWORKS: SCHOOLMATES, MOTHERS AND ELDERLY

Apart from traditional mobilisation forces, citizens across a variety of social identities, -- diverse in family roles, education levels, employment, religion, and so on – emerged to be the basis of the wide social mobilisation against the extradition bill. Scholars suggest that emotional bonds between protestors can enhance collective identity formation (Hetherington 1998; Einwohner 1999; Hercus 1999; Adams 2003; De Volo 2006). Common experiences of suffering and achievements on the basis of shared identities of sex, gender, ethnicity, race and religion can certainly amplify the affective ties within the groups. However, it is also possible that political mobilisation driven by ethnic or national identities can be escalated to the rise of political extremism, violent confrontations and even civil wars (Marshall and Gurr 2003, Wimmer 2012). In the anti-extradition movement, the selection of identity, alongside the choice of mobilisational frame, became an important tactic to build solidarity as well as to reduce the potential of violent conflicts.

Selection of Identity

Online petition campaigns were seen as a traditional tactic to raise public awareness and apply pressure on authority to match the scope and scale of the petition. Highlighting the identities of movement supporters can attract a greater sense of belonging and express the diversity of societal support. In the case of Hong Kong, online petitions served to mobilise citizens and appeal to pro-government figures through emotional bonds on the grounds of shared educational or other social affiliation. On 22 May 2019, a group of alumni from the Chinese University of Hong Kong (including myself), began collecting signatures for a statement demanding the withdrawal of the extradition amendment bill. Online petitions were typically created in Google Forms and circulated on social media such as Facebook and WhatsApp. Soon after, high school alumni networks and other social groups began forming their own statements to seek online signatures from their members. Media reports documented more than 300 online petitions initiated by alumni, students or teachers from high school, with 46% of the signatures coming from secondary school students and recent graduates (The Stand News, 31st May 2019). More than 270,000 signatures were collected on the eve of the 9 June march (see Table 2). A joint petition of 185 schools, which consisted of 121,087 signatures, was also published on the front page of Ming Pao Daily on 4th June 2019, the 30th anniversary of the Tiananmen crackdown (Reuters, 4th June 2019).

TABLE 2 NEAR HERE

Online petitions became a powerful tool for creating common discourse and a mobilisation frame. School-based petitions were popular, since a school identity could connect petitioners and government figures as alumni of the same institution. Students urged alumni in government positions to act in accordance with their school's motto, and not to support the extradition bill (CitizenNews, 29th May 2019). The online petitions against the extradition bill created pressure on individual pro-government figures via their social ties and engendered an atmosphere conducive to mobilisation before the outbreak of mass rallies.

Framing of Identity

The choice of identity for mobilisation depends on significance of the network ties and the framing of mobilisational discourse. When police dispersed the protest crowd with tear gas canisters and rubber rounds outside the Legislative Council Complex on 12 June 2019, two video clips about Carrie Lam, the Chief Executive of Hong Kong, were publicly broadcasted. While one video clip recorded Lam's official condemnation of the protestors, whom she characterised as rioting, another clip showed an interview with Lam where she claimed to care about the young people in Hong Kong just as a mother would love her own children (Radio Television Hong Kong, 12th June 2019). Her analogy caused widespread criticism and inspired the formation of a group of women who dubbed themselves "mothers of Hong Kong". The petition they circulated denounced the above-mentioned suppression of protest and condemned Lam's analogy as an insult to them, who are mothers as well. The petition garnered 30,000 signatures (The Standard, 13th June 2019), and its sponsors called for a vigil assembly, titled "Solidarity Vigil of Mothers in Opposition to Chinese Extradition" on 14 June 2019. Banners featuring slogans such as 'save our kids' and 'don't shoot our kids' were waved during the vigil, references to earlier protestors who suffered from police brutality, with organisers estimating attendance at around 6,000 people (Tong and Grudy 15th June 2019). Solidarity and the development of emotional bonds between the mother's group and protestors on the frontline, depicted as the 'children of Hong Kong', strengthened the movement. By using a similar analogy to Carrie Lam, the Hong Kong mothers' campaign generated a moral and emotional contrast to the Chief Executive, who was portrayed as an abusive parent to the children who would be the future of Hong Kong.

Mobilisation tactics that leveraged the social identity of the elderly were also deployed to raise the public's empathy and solidarity with the anti-extradition movement. A group called 'Grey Hair Community' emerged in July. Consisting of retired protestant ministers, veteran activists and senior celebrities, the group organised a rally, inviting elders to join in support of young protestors. It was estimated that 9,000 citizens, mostly elderly people, joined the demonstration with signs such as "young people, Dad has come out" and "kids, you are not alone" (AFP, 17th June 2019). The Grey Hair Community was important to the movement, as it broke the myth that older generations are always more conservative and materialistic, or that they would necessarily oppose the protests. The mobilisation of the elderly enriched the discourse, crossed the generational boundary, and widened the support base of the anti-extradition resistance.

During the anti-extradition movement, violence between police and protestors escalated, as found in many scenes of clashes. Protestors were reported using a variety of aggressive force including vigilantism against mobsters and pro-government civilians and vandalism of metro station facilities alongside pro-government stores and restaurants (Ho 2020). Nevertheless, public opinion in support of the protestors did not abate, and the landslide victory of pro-democracy candidates in the District Council elections of November 2019 indicated a strong consensus of unity for the protestors. A week after the polling day, the Grey Hair Community emphasised in another public meeting that they "stand with Hong Kong's younger generation as one" (Global News, 30th November 2019). These acts of support imply that, despite the escalation of violence in the movement, movement solidarity sustained through identity-driven mobilisation.

AD HOC MOBILISATION NETWORKS: ANONYMOUS INDIVIDUALS

One of the mottos in the anti-extradition movement was "be water." Quoted from the famous actor, Bruce Lee, the motto refers to a strategy of being fluid in protest sites to avoid being arrested (Hale, 7th August 2019). Ad hoc mobilisation in the anti-extradition movement embodied this motto. These mobilisation networks were formed among protestors who were anonymous, invisible to media attention, and self-mobilised. Participants did not necessarily have any affiliation with existing social movement organisations or visible groups that call for protest actions. Rather, they were mobilised via social media platforms, such as Telegram and LIHKG. This echoes Castell's networked social movement, when internet users become active participants, centralising communicational routines, shaping a new autonomy of the "netizens", reclaiming power and shaking the political scene for social change (2012). In short, the anonymity of the social media platforms attracts participants who have higher costs of visible engagement, encourages brainstorming and deliberation of protest tactics, and boosts efficiency by task-based division of labour.

Since May 2019, a group of netizens connected to each other via LIHKG, an online platform similar to Reddit, started campaigning against the extradition amendment bill by circulating self-printed propaganda materials in commercial and residential areas (The Stand News 21st May 2019). The anonymous and non-partisan character of this type of campaigning attracted media and public attention. Although such individual self-mobilisation was found during the Umbrella Movement, this time protestors had more advanced technology. The use of LIHKG and the encryption quality allowed by communication applications like Telegram helped protestors to engage in mobilisation without disclosing their identities. In the anti-extradition movement, different social media platforms performed different roles in self-mobilisation. LIHKG users brainstormed and deliberated strategies in the online forum. According to a media interview with Ventus Lau, an individual protest organiser, when ideas emerged in a general Telegram group, such as one group named "Universal Sea", which meant the group is open to everyone for free information and opinion exchange, he then created a new Telegram group to recruit protestors, discussed details of the arrangement, divided members into working groups and assigned tasks among themselves. Since no one knew each other and used pseudonyms in Telegram, cooperation was built on their commitment and performance, rather than their prior experience or seniority in the social movement industry of Hong Kong. Telegram, Instagram and Facebook were used as platforms for propaganda and further recruitment (CitizenNews 15th August 2019). If there were disagreements in tactics and strategies, Telegram users could conduct instant polls in the Telegram groups or channels to generate majority opinion and made decisions using real-time voting (BBC News 30th June 2019).

As found in Table 3 below, many Telegram groups and channels were created by protestors and served different roles in sustaining the movement, from strategic planning and deliberation, protest organisation, information exchange, resource mobilisation, propaganda circulation, as well as occupational and professional support for international advocacy. Many of the groups have more than 10,000 members; some even have more than 100,000 subscribers. Participants in Telegram became a significant pool for mobilisation of various protest actions such as forming human chains, occupying the airport, chanting protest songs

in shopping malls and the defence of two university campuses from police's siege (Lai and Sing 2020). Hence, an ecology of decentralised mobilisation was formed among individual protestors.

TABLE 3 NEAR HERE

DYNAMICS OF MOBILISATION NETWORKS: OPPORTUNITIES AND CONSTRAINTS

Seeing the emergence of ad hoc mobilisation, traditional social movement organisations and pro-democracy parties realised the need to reposition themselves. Rather than directing the movement agenda and centralising leadership, CHRF became a facilitator of this leaderless movement. CHRF collaborated with a group of lawyers to form a *pro bono* Legal Assistance Hotline after the arrest of protestors commenced on 9 June (https://bit.ly/346aVOp). When friends or relatives of arrestees called the hotline, the staff would pass the details of the arrest to pro bono lawyers, then lawyers would visit the police station to accompany the detained arrestees in giving testimony and would get bail for them.

Activists and pro-democracy lawmakers also re-oriented their positions from being leaders to facilitators for movement participants, such as conducting on-site mediation between protestors and riot police and monitoring protest-policing. Lawmakers serving as mediators and monitors could diversify the risks of protestors being arrested, yet they also attracted hostility from police officers. Some lawmakers were arrested for obstructing a police officer in the execution of his duty (Lam, Wong and Wong 30th August 2019). Police officers even took a lawmaker's goggles and sprayed his eyes to stop his monitoring (Cheng 2nd January 2020).

Crowdfunding was another way pro-democracy activists supported the movement. Some former lawmakers set up the "612 Humanitarian Relief Fund" with a retired academic, a Catholic Cardinal and an artist to assist in the financial and humanitarian needs of the arrested protestors, as well as their families (The Stand News, 15th June 2019). Although protestors were initially skeptical of the moderate stance and tactics of the pro-democracy camp taken in the 2014 Umbrella Movement, their skepticism gradually changed as a result of these actions, earning the traditional pro-democracy camp earning greater credibility and popularity. For instance, CHRF re-entered the list of "Top 10 Political Groups" since 2006 and became the most popularly supported political group, according to a survey result conducted by Hong Kong Public Opinion Research Institute (17th September 2019, https://bit.ly/37t4A1B).

As the movement progressed, however, the state began to constrain the complementary relations of the three mobilisation networks. To restrict mass mobilisation by traditional networks, from 18 August 2019 the police commissioner stopped issuing "letters of no objections", which served as a permit, to CHRF's assemblies and rallies, thus preventing CHRF from organising any lawful protests. Although more people turned to small-scale nonviolent actions across neighborhood districts as a response, the size of any single public protest diminished. Moreover, the escalation of police use of force and the radicalisation of protest strategies by anonymous individuals also discouraged the identity-driven mobilisation network from organising public assemblies again, since its goals were to demonstrate

solidarity rather than accommodate protest violence. Without the presence of traditional and identity-driven mobilisation networks in direct actions, most of the subsequent protests resulted in violent clashes between riot police and militant protestors.

Other constraints on the mobilisation networks came in 2020, namely the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic and the implementation of a new national security law in Hong Kong. To reduce the chance of community outbreak of the pandemic, the government enacted social distancing regulations to limit the size of public events, giving a cause for the Police commissioner to suspend lawful assemblies and fine protestors on the basis of public health (Hui 1st April 2020). Four months later, the Standing Committee of the National People's Congress of China promulgated and imposed a national law on Hong Kong. The new law criminalises protestors accused of secession, terrorism, subversion and colluding with foreign forces, imposes tough sentences and allows the charged persons to be tried in the Chinese mainland. Progressive political parties and organisations such as Demosisto, formed by Joshua Wong, disbanded entirely (BBC News 30th June 2020). Prominent movement figures like Nathan Law fled Hong Kong for safety reasons (BBC News 13th July 2020). Several protestors and a media tycoon were charged of "inciting secession and terrorist activities" or "colluding with foreign forces" under the new security law and are facing court trials now (Nikkei Asian Review 10th August 2020). These events further discouraged mass mobilization, as the political, legal and social costs of participating in protests increased sharply.

CONCLUSION

Hong Kong's 2019 Anti-Extradition Movement can be seen as a collective effort by Hong Kong society to resist authoritarianism and to uphold the promises of the Basic Law that serves as Hong Kong's mini constitution. As argued above, in this movement Hong Kong people developed or transformed three distinctive types of mobilization networks – traditional mobilisation networks, identity-based networks, and ad hoc networks – to preserve Hong Kong's judicial autonomy and stave off the impacts of creeping authoritarianism. The findings of this study go beyond the case of Hong Kong to illuminate how a leaderless but "leaderfull" movement can emerge and operate in the face of an increasingly repressive and adaptive state. It also sheds light on the interactions between traditional social movement organisations and a new, technologically savvy generation of autonomous yet connected citizen activists. Hong Kong's experience offers at least three lessons for scholars of other movements and societies.

Firstly, the movement persisted as long as it did because the development of multiple mobilisational networks expanded the scope and scale of protest actions. Traditional mobilisation networks, historically the central organisers of mass protests, shifted to being movement facilitators and resource-providers for individual protestors. The identity-driven mobilisation network is evidence of how people without formal ties to social movement organisations can nonetheless find ways to engage in protest actions on the basis of their sectoral identifications. And ad hoc mobilisation networks played a unique role in recruiting, deliberating and implementing innovative and expressive tactics for both non-violent and militant protestors, mobilising them through anonymous social media platforms. More broadly, the diverse protest strategies and tactics of these three different mobilisational

networks are testaments to their creativity and vibrancy and were instrumental in keeping the movement resilient in face of state repression. Collectively, the movement's decentralised mobilization worked to dismantle traditional movement hierarchy, which in turn strengthened the resilience of the ongoing protest movement. This intentional decentralisation became a strategy that ultimately sustained protest actions and rallies on an almost daily basis, for weeks at a time.

Second, in mobilizing mass participation, individual actors and networks became more important and proved more resilient to state pressure than traditional civil society organisations. Anonymous individuals utilised the Internet and social media platforms to mobilise protest actions when police blocked traditional social movement forces from organizing public assemblies. The use of social media networks in mobilisation was particularly crucial in decentralising the leadership of the movement, with decision-making and coordination of resources open for anyone to engage in on an equal basis, ultimately empowering "leaders" in different positions across the movement. In contrast to the literature on "slacktivism", in Hong Kong's anti-extradition movement this internet-based mobilisation maximized the participation of new participants and dispersed leadership across different social groups.

Lastly, Hong Kong's anti-extradition movement also reveals that a weakened capacity for mobilisation may not compromise movement solidarity. Although the escalation of conflicts between militant protestors and riot police drove away moderate protestors, support for protestors remained high within the general population. As a public opinion survey revealed at the end of 2019, the movement still enjoyed support from 59% of the respondents; 47% of the respondents agreed that the Hong Kong government deserved most of the blame for the social unrest, while only 14% blamed the protestors (Pomfret and Jim, 31st December 2019). The result indicated that the unity of movement support is sustained by strong opposition to the government, despite the incapacities of further mobilisation.

The anti-extradition movement in Hong Kong is a direct confrontation against the Chinese authoritarian governance. From the very beginning, the movement was to resist a bill that allows Hong Kong citizens to be extradited to the Chinese justice system. The movement, ironically, was seemingly terminated by the implementation of a national security law by the National People's Congress of China. The experiences of the Tiananmen crackdown in 1989, the suppression of a rights-defense movement in 2003 and the mass arrests of Chinese lawyers in 2015 had offered blunt lessons of how China represses dissent for regime survival. Now that China has decided to impose its national security regime in Hong Kong, it is foreseeable that civic space and civil liberties in Hong Kong will be further diminished, and mobilisation networks will be difficult to sustain. However, given the resilience of individual protestors in living out their political agency in the movement, the fate of Hong Kong's protests under Chinese authoritarianism might be different from those in the mainland. Further observation and investigation are needed to study whether and how the anti-extradition movement in Hong Kong, as a relentless struggle against autocratic rule by China, continues under the national security law, in order to understand the prospect of a "leader-full" social movement under authoritarian governance.

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Table 1. Public Assemblies and Processions organised by Traditional Mobilisation network

	Public Assemblies and Processions (Organisers)	**Number of Participants (estimated by organisers)**	**Number of Participants (estimated by Hong Kong Police Force)**
27th March	1st Anti-extradition Protest (CHRF)	12,000	5,200
28th April	2nd Anti-extradition Protest (CHRF)	130,000	22,800
4th June	Vigil for the 30th Anniversary of Tiananmen Crackdown (The Hong Kong Alliance in Support of Patriotic Democratic Movements of China)	180,000	37,000
6th June	Silent March of Lawyers (Lawmaker Dennis Kwok and Election Committee Members from the Legal sector)	2,500 – 3,000	880
9th June	3rd Anti-extradition Protest (CHRF)	1,030,000	240,000
12th June	Assembly outside the Legislative Council Complex (CHRF)	No figures counted	10,000
16th June	4th Anti-extradition Protest (CHRF)	2,000,001	338,000
26th June	G20 Vigil for International Solidarity (CHRF)	No figures counted	
1st July	Annual July 1 Rally, a.k.a. 5th Anti-extradition March (CHRF)	550,000	190,000
14th July	Silent March of Journalists: stop police violence for press freedom (Hong Kong Journalists Association)	1,500	1,100
21st July	6th Anti-extradition Protest (CHRF)	430,000	138,000
7th August	Silent March of Lawyers (Lawmaker Dennis Kwok and Election Committee Members from the Legal sector)	More than 3,000	No figure provided by police
17th August	March of Teachers (Professional Teachers' Union)	20,000	8,300
18th August	7th Anti-extradition Protest (CHRF)	1,700,000	No figure provided by police
8th December	Human Rights Day Rally/8th Anti-extradition Protest (CHRF)	800,000	183,000
1st January 2020	9th Anti-extradition Protest (CHRF)	1,030,001	60,000

Source: research based on newspaper reports.

Table 2. Identities and Figures of Anti-extradition Petition Campaign before 9 June Rally

Identity	**30/5**	**31/5**	**1/6**	**2/6**	**3/6**	**4/6**	**5/6**	**6/6**	**7/6**	**8/6**
Secondary Schools	126,056	150,597	157,723	163,419	167,889	169,571	170,062	173,668	174,286	174,514
Tertiary Education Institutions	26,418	27,576	32,685	33,664	40,182	40,294	41,434	41,316	44,455	44,600
Primary Schools	556	755	829	862	866	921	931	955	955	955
Profession/Occupation	191	246	1,083	6,328	7,236	21,450	21,581	21,826	23,078	23,358
Community and Family	0	0	5741	6098	7,791	7,829	8,924	10,870	14,284	14,307
Religion and Denomination	1953	2,142	2,142	2918	4,808	4,855	5,852	6,664	6,677	8,324
Overseas Students/ Expatriates	790	960	1,824	2,021	2,062	2,087	3,464	4,057	4,116	4,278
Total	**155,970**	**182,282**	**202,071**	**215,356**	**230,880**	**247,054**	**252,295**	**259,403**	**267,898**	**270,384**

Source: "Compilation of Anti-extradition Petitions" CitizenNews. Available at: https://www.hkcnews.com/FOO-petitions/#/ [Accessed on 21st November 2019].

Table 3. Different Types of Telegram Groups and Channels in the Anti-extradition Protest

Category	**Functions and Roles**	**Examples (IDs or Names of Telegram Channel / Group)**	**Groups/ Channels**	**Number of Members / Subscribers (by 18 Nov 2019)**
Strategic Planning and Deliberation	A public deliberation platform for anyone who wants to discuss movement strategies and direction	parade69	Group	64,059
Protest Event Organisation	Deliberate action plans and recruitment of members to join sub-groups to divide duties and tasks	HKWay	Group	22,881
Information Exchange	Provide instant updates about protest sites, exit plans, details of protest events, and courtesy reminders on the rights and wellbeing of protestors	reminder612	Channel	182,228
Resource Mobilisation	Share information to provide logistical and transport support among protestors	bignewsmaterial	Channel	102,486
Propaganda Circulation	Share propaganda materials for promotion of the protest in domestic and international platforms	hkstandstrong_promo	Channel	153,276
International Advocacy	Provide information and propaganda materials for international lobbying and advertising the protest overseas	StirFryChannel	Channel	34,313
Solidarity with Arrested Protestors	Provide information of arrested people in protests and details of court trial	youarenotalonehk	Channel	129,493
Self-defence and Vigilantism	Locate the presence of thugs to alert citizens (only males can join)	“Civil Warriors” (no ID provided)	Group	13,901

Source: Data found in Telegram (as at 21st November 2019)