

Research Assessment Exercise 2020

Impact Case Study

University: Lingnan University

Unit of Assessment (UoA): 25 - Political Science (incl. Public Policy & Administration & International Relations)

Title of case study: From Institutional Governance to Contentious Politics: Delivering Impact on Local Policy-making, Public Debates and International Understanding of Hong Kong

(1) Summary of the impact

Professor Li Pang-kwong's research on pre-1997 Hong Kong governance contributed significantly to understanding the challenges facing post-1997 Hong Kong. Professor Li's findings have assisted various government officials in Hong Kong and Beijing in formulating new policies for better governance. The findings have also assisted in creating awareness among policy-makers and the general public regarding post-1997 governance.

Dr. Samson Yuen has conducted research on the outcomes of the post-1997 governance by examining the changing nature of contentious politics. Focusing on mass protests from the Umbrella Movement to the current anti-extradition bill protests, his research has highlighted their claims, practices, networks from the Umbrella Movement to the anti-extradition bill, and examined their consequences. The results have revealed the sources and drivers of the contention and helped local and foreign public and policy makers understand the socio-economic and political changes in contemporary Hong Kong.

(2) Underpinning research

Professor Li's ground-breaking and best-selling book in Chinese, published by Oxford University Press in 2012 [R1], reports his exhaustive study of British declassified documents and employs system analysis to theorize the governing system of British Hong Kong, identifying the major units supporting the functioning of the government in pre-1997 Hong Kong. Professor Li illustrates that Britain's departure from Hong Kong in 1997 disrupted the governing system and consequently affected the performance of the post-1997 Hong Kong Government.

Professor Li's research challenges the commonly-held belief that the pre-1997 governing system would remain effective after 1997 as Hong Kong's status changed from a British colony to a Chinese special administrative region enjoying a high degree of autonomy. Three key points are cited in the research:

1. The change in status was very abrupt, which was likely to lead to a dislocation and disintegration of the governing system.
2. In pre-1997 Hong Kong, the core governing team comprised British officials sent to Hong Kong from London. This led to the absence of a system for the effective recruitment and development of local political leaders. The hope that the pre-1997 Administrative Officers who were promoted to senior political positions after 1997 would automatically become capable political leaders failed to take into account the fact that they lacked both the skills to do this and a system through which to develop these skills.
3. The pre-1997 system of governance also relied upon considerable high-level policy support from a policy consultation and research network in London. In 1997, the Hong Kong government was abruptly cut off from this support with serious implications for Hong Kong governance.

Over 6,000 copies of Professor Li's book [R1] have been sold since 2012. It is extremely rare in Hong Kong for such an academic book to achieve such high sales and the book is regarded as a best-seller by The Commercial Press.

Dr. Yuen's research focuses on the Umbrella Movement protests (2014) and their aftermath, including the anti-extradition bill protests (2019). The research employs survey, ethnographic, interview and participant observation approaches to examine the claims, practices and networks of informal voluntary associations, including community networks, concern groups, movement organizations, and online communities as well as their network building and process of protest mobilization. This approach offers a new lens to engage with grassroots and contentious political actors who are pivotal agents in propagating their claims, shaping public opinion, and reflecting value changes [R4, R5]. In addition, through a detailed contextual analysis of the beliefs and actions of high-risk activists and ordinary participants, this research demonstrates the sources of discontent over the post-handover governance system and the intricate relations between silence and voice in contentious politics. His work also reveals the steep learning curve of the state and non-state actor against a rising tide of leaderless, decentralized protests – these are often more nuanced than the media, state, or activists indicate. Finally, this research illuminates the threats to, but also the boundaries of, managing dissent in an open society, thereby illustrating the potential for political mediation [R4, R5].

For the anti-extradition bill protests in 2019, collaborating with several researchers in other local universities, Dr. Yuen conducted more than 25 onsite surveys and 10 focus groups throughout the protests, interviewing over 15,000 participants to illuminate the demographics, motivations and dispositions of the protesters. This remains the largest and most comprehensive survey done on the protests to date. The key findings were released through a special academic report – aimed at a range of stakeholders, such as Government, Consuls and NGOs – published in August 2019.

(3) References to the research

[R1] 李彭廣：《管治香港：英國解密檔案的啟示》，香港：牛津大學出版社，2012年。(Li, Pang-kwong. *Governing Hong Kong: Insights from the British Declassified Files*. Hong Kong: Oxford University Press, 2012.)

[R2] 李彭廣：〈香港的管治團隊：英治時期的運作與回歸後的更新〉，《港澳研究》第4期，2014年10月，頁36-43。(Li, Pang-kwong. "Hong Kong's Governing Team: Operations in the British Colonial Era and Its Transformations after 1997." *Hong Kong and Macao Journal* 4 (2014): 36-43.)

[R3] Li, Pang-kwong. *The Governing System of Pre-1997 Hong Kong: Archival Study of Selected Policies/Events*. Hong Kong: Central Policy Unit, 2015.

[R4] 鄭煒、袁瑋熙：《社運年代：香港抗爭政治的軌跡》，香港：香港中文大學出版社，2018年 (Cheng, Edmund and Samson Yuen eds. *An Epoch of Social Movements: Trajectory of Contentious Politics in Hong Kong*. Hong Kong: Chinese University Press, 2018.)

[R5] Yuen, Samson. "Contesting Middle-class Civility: Place-based Collective Identity in Hong Kong's Occupy Mongkok." *Social Movement Studies* 17 (2018): 393-407.

(4) Details of the impact

Professor Li's research has had a significant impact in two key domains: with policy stakeholders within the Governments of the PRC and Hong Kong, and in public debate and discussion in Hong Kong. In both of these areas, Professor Li has become established as a leading authority.

Policy and government

1. He delivered a presentation on Hong Kong governance to a selected group of PRC's top decision-makers in Beijing.
2. In February 2017, also in Beijing, he gave a talk titled 「香港管治問題：系統的嬗變和重構」 (The Governing Issue of Hong Kong: System Transformation and Rebuilt) to the Hong Kong Basic Law Committee of the Standing Committee of the PRC National People's Congress.
3. He gave a talk to the Central Policy Unit of the Hong Kong Government in June 2013.
4. In December 2013, Professor Li was invited to deliver a lecture on to the National Association of Hong Kong and Macao Studies (of which he is a member), a prominent think tank established by the Hong Kong and Macao Affairs Office of the Hong Kong State Council.

Professor Li has also provided policy advice to senior decision-makers in the Hong Kong Government in his capacity of Associate Member (March 2013 - June 2017) and Part-time Member (January 2002 - December 2004) of the Central Policy Unit.

Public debate and discussion

Professor Li frequently comments in leading mass media and acts as a host in current affairs programmes on the TV and radio. In recognition of Prof. Li's "meritorious public service, particularly his valuable contribution in education and the research work on constitutional and political affairs", he was awarded the Bronze Bauhinia Star (BBS) in 2013 [S1].

In addition, Prof. Li remains active in conducting opinion surveys under the ambit of the Public Governance Programme. The findings of these surveys have been widely reported in the leading mass media. Among others, the following surveys deserve special mention: (1) surveys on the reform of Chief Executive Election commissioned by TVB in 2014–15; (2) six opinion surveys on the reform of Chief Executive Election commissioned by the Concern Group for the Public Opinion on HK's Political Reform in 2014–15; (3) A survey on the Mongkok Incident commissioned by the Future at Hong Kong in 2016; and (4) six surveys and a 2-round survey on 2017 Chief Executive Election commissioned by NOW TV in 2016–17.

The findings from Dr. Yuen's research have impacted on government, policy and NGO stakeholders, both in Hong Kong and overseas. Within Hong Kong, a summary of his findings related to the Umbrella Movement protests was included in the Hong Kong SAR Government's *Report on the Recent Community and Political Situation in Hong Kong* submitted to the PRC National People's Congress in 2015 [S2]. The survey results from the anti-extradition bill protests have been included in a fact-finding report commissioned by the Independent Police Complaints Council, Hong Kong's primary police watchdog, which aims to provide an objective assessment of the protests. Consuls from Australia noted that Dr. Yuen's research enabled them to understand "protestor sentiment and the underlying causes of the protest movement." [S5]. A board member of Amnesty International, Johnson Yeung, said that Dr. Yuen's research "provided a critical lens for human rights advocates in understanding the cause, processes, and dynamics in social movement and collective actions --- an essential subject for policymakers and international human rights bodies to plan for their advocacy goals and campaigns" [S6].

The key findings were also featured in the *Policy Bulletin* published by The Hong Kong Council of Social Service, which is widely read among social workers and policymakers [S3], and in *ChinaFile*, an online magazine published by the Center on US-China Relations at Asia Society, which is popular among China watchers and diplomats around the world.

Dr Yuen's research on the anti-extradition protests [S4] was reported regularly in the local media, including the SCMP, Mingpao, and other printed and online newspapers. Given that the protests quickly spiralled into Hong Kong's biggest political crisis with enormous implications for the international community, Dr. Yuen was also invited by numerous international newspapers and

newswire, including the *New York Times*, *CNN*, *Financial Times* and *Bloomberg*, to talk about his research and explain the micro-dynamics of the protests. He also appeared in numerous TV interviews with renowned outlets such as the *BBC*, *CBS*, *PBS Newshour*, and *Channel News Asia*. From June to September 2019, Dr. Yuen appeared 27 times in the local media and 67 times in the international media. The reach of this reporting was broad: one article written by Dr. Yuen on *The Conversation* had 123,737 readers according to the site's statistics and was shared 935 times on Facebook and 107 times on Twitter. According to the CBS producers, the 60 minutes program in which Dr. Yuen featured reached as many as 12 million viewers.

The social impact was also noteworthy. Dr. Yuen's edited volume on Hong Kong's social movement [R4] became a local bestseller. It was ranked the first in sales in 2018 in Hong Kong Readers, a renowned bookstore specializing in social science books [S7]. It was reviewed in leading journals (e.g. *The China Journal*, *China Information*, and *China Review*) and media platforms, and was reprinted in summer 2019, one year after its first publication. Between February and July 2018, Dr. Yuen, together with his co-editor Dr. Cheng and several public intellectuals, participated in numerous events, talks and reading groups in relation to the edited volume, including the Taipei International Book Fair and Hong Kong Book Fair as well as cafes, bookshops, and libraries in the two cities. Each event attracted several dozens to hundreds of attendees.

(5) Sources to corroborate the impact

[S1] HKSARG. The 2013 Honours List.

[S2] Report on the Recent Community and Political Situation in Hong Kong. Appendix II. The Hong Kong SAR Government, October 2015.

[S3] Yuen, Samson. "Youth participation in Hong Kong's Occupy Movement: How to formulate post-Occupy youth policy?", Policy Bulletin, The Hong Kong Council of Social Service, 18 March 2015, p.15-21.

[S4] Francis L. F. Lee, Gary Tang, Samson Yuen, and Edmund W. Cheng, "Onsite Survey Findings in Hong Kong's Anti-Extradition Bill Protests", *Centre for Communication and Public Opinion Survey, The Chinese University of Hong Kong*, August 2019.

[S5] Testimony from Australia consulate

[S6] Testimony from local NGO practitioner

[S7] Hong Kong Readers' 2018 book sales ranking