

Development of urban social movements in hong kong history essay



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New social movement was lively discussed recently in Hong Kong. The dynamics of social movement in Hong Kong seems to change into other stage. From the early 60s to recently, social movements in different periods have different demands and goals. This article is going to demonstrate the development of urban social movement in Hong Kong. In addition, several relevant theories will be used to understand the development of social movement. Finally, we will find out the structurally different from those in the past by using Castells' theory.

Definition of Urban Social Movement

Before illustrate the development of urban social movement in Hong Kong, it is important to first understanding the definition of urban social movement. Manuel Castells is a sociologist. He has an interpretation on urban social movement.

The city is a social product resulting from conflicting social interests and values. Because of the institutionalization of socially dominant interests, major innovations in the city's role, meaning, and structure tend to be the outcome of grassroots mobilization and demands. When these mobilization result in the transformation of the urban structure, we call them urban social movements. (Castells, 1983: 291)

".. a conscious collective practice originating in urban issues, able to produce qualitative changes in the urban system, local culture and political institutions in contradiction to the dominant social interests institutionalized as such at the societal level" (Castells 1983, p. 278)

In other words, urban social movement comes from the conflicting social interests and values. It has different demands and goals. When urban social movement emerged, that means people want to make some changes.

The Development of Urban Social Movement in Hong Kong

The development of urban social movement in Hong Kong can be divided into 3 stages by its different demands. The development of social movement in Hong Kong is shown in Fig. 1.[1]

Fig. 1 The development of urban social movement in Hong Kong

From Mid 60s to early 80s, the social movements mainly focus on the local social issue. The second stage, early 80s to mid 90s, concentrate on the political issue, while the post 1997, after hand over to present are focus on the civil right issue.

From mid 60s to early 80s

The student movement, urban protests and civil service unionism rise during mid 60s to early 80s. The ideological of social movement in this period is decolonization. People unsatisfied the ruling of colonial government. It involves political aspect and people's livelihood.

Table 1: Major events during mid 60s to early 80s

Year

Major Events

1966

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66 riots: Increase fee of the Star Ferry

1967

67 riots started in factory in San Po Kong

1973

Anti-corruption (Godber's Scandal)

1974

Against Inflation movement

1980

Campaign against the rise of bus fares

Table 1 shows the major events in this period, it illustrate the discontent of the ruling of colonial government, like the corruption of Godber, and the rise of bus fares. The issues in this period are mainly focus on the local social issues.

By the end of the 1970s, some organization of social movement was in formation.

A variety of interests and latent groups had been mobilized and became realized political claims and demands. Some importance pressure groups were growing such as the Hong Kong Professional Teachers' Union, the Society for community Organization and the Yaumatei Boat People Protests.

The Hong Kong Professional Teachers' Union held the event of the Gold

Jubilee Secondary School Incident. It opposed corruption in a secondary school and protests against government intervention in closing that school. And the Yaumatei Boat People Protests held actions for demanding resettlement in land temporary accommodation.

The goals of social movement in this period are express their grievances to government and fighting for improving the people's livelihood. The main participants are the students and urban protests. The Characteristics of the social movement in this period are limited resources of movement organization and the limited resources of mass mobilization.

Early 80s to mid 90s

The second stage, early 80s to mid 90s, university students had been active in expressing their opinions on democratic development in China. They demands for releasing a various political dissidents in China, and improved the democratic development in China.

Table 2: Major events during Early 80s to mid 90s

Year

Major Events

1984

Right of abode

1986

First Ko Shan Meeting

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1987

Fight for direct election in 1988

1989

Support of the Beijing student movement

1993

Second Ko Shan Meeting

During 1986 student movement in China, Hong Kong students continued support Mainland democracy movement, it gave contribute to China's democratization. For example, the HK Federation of students sent a delegation to Shanghai to support the students' protests. Participants in this period are university Students and some radical socialist groups.

From 21 May to 4 June 1989, number of participants over one million (one-sixth of HK population) support the student in Beijing. The social basis of support for Post Chinese Democracy Movement expanded significantly during June 4. Participants are from variety of backgrounds and ages. For example, student organizations, educational bodies, religious, community organizations, trade unions and youth groups and women's groups

However, the early 90s, the democratic movement in civil society declined, because it replaced by political parties. Due to the introduction of direct elections in 1991 and the formation of political parties (they are transformed

from political groups). For example, Meeting Point, Hong Kong Association for Democracy and People's Livelihood.

Post 1997 to present

Table 3: Major events during Post 1997 to present

Year

Major Events

2003

Hong Kong 1 July marches

2006

Star ferry Protection Movement

2007

Queen's Pier Protection Movement

2010

Anti Guangzhou-Shenzhen-Hong Kong rail protest

For the post 1997 to present, it have a significant rise of New Social Movement, some scholar argue that it represented by the star ferry protection movement. Three main characteristic, Internet Mobilization, the emergence of local consciousness and People come for single issue.

For Internet Mobilization, People have mass mobilization through internet such as during the star ferry protection movement. People share the information from internet and SMS. And they have no command headquarters and there was no commander.

Second is the emergence of local consciousness. People start aware some symbols that may represented some meanings of the locality. The star ferry protection movement is a good example to illustrate this point. " Collective Memory" was first lively discussed after star ferry protection. People claimed the star ferry is representing the Hong Kong peoples' memory, it so called " collective memory". It is an emergence of local consciousness.

Third, people come for single issue. It means people only embrace a single issue. Therefore, government is facing a group of people who came out of nowhere

How far can the relevant theories/concepts of urban social movements be used in understanding that development in Hong Kong?

Four theories can be used to understand the mentioned development of Hong Kong. They are Classic Perspective on Collective action (CPC), Political Process Model (PPM), Resource Mobilization Theory (RMT) and Social Construction Perspective (SCP) respectively.

Classic Perspective on Collective action (CPC) can be used to understand the development of Hong Kong in 1960s. In this theory, people see movement as a function of discontent in a society. Actors are irrational. They put little attention on the goals and effects of collective behavior.

For example, there was the “ 66 riots” in 1966. People are discontented because of the increasing fee of the Star Ferry. Insurgents were irrational that they threw rocks and glass bottles, committed arson and rob, attacked the fire station and public facilities. In 1967, the “ 67 riots” started in a factory in San Po Kong. Insurgents were irrational again that they gave out bombs, put on demonstration, and fought with police. As actors in both riots were irrational, they both had grievances against the government. The two riots obtained the most important and obvious elements of the Classic Perspective on Collective action, however, there is no recent research found the use of rational skills in the riots which this theory contains, therefore the Classic Perspective on Collective action can understand the development of Hong Kong in 1960s to a large extent.

Political Process Model (PPM) can be used to understand the development of Hong Kong in 1973. Political Process Model involves insurgent consciousness, organizational strength and political opportunities. Political opportunity means that the political situation in a country sets the possibilities and limits for the developments of social movements.

In 1973, Godber was Kowloon’s Deputy District Commissioner. He committed corruption and escaped to England. It led to serious social discontent. Godber’s scandal created a political opportunity. Since insurgents were conscious, they formed groups and put on demonstration with the slogan “ Anti-corruption, catch Godber”. It shows that there were insurgent consciousness and organizational strength. As this event involves political opportunity, insurgent consciousness and organizational strength, the

Political Process Model can be used to understand the development of Hong Kong in 1973 to a large extent.

Resource Mobilization Theory (RMT) can be used to understand the development of Hong Kong in 1980-90s. Insurgents see participation as a behavioral reflection of rational political intention. Social movements are developed when individuals with grievances are able to mobilize sufficient resources to take action. There are rational leaders who are responsible for formulating political goals. Insurgents want to reform the existing social structure. Movement organizations are the 'backbone' of collective struggles. The components of Resource Mobilization Theory (RMT) are organization, social networks and resources. Resources can be knowledge, money, media, labor, solidarity, legitimacy, and internal and external support from power elite.

In 1984, there was the Right of abode event. Insurgents sat outside the government headquarter. They put on hunger strike, gathered and sang, shouted their slogans, and played street drama. Insurgents were rational compared to the past. Hong Kong Federation of Students, other religious organizations and political parties took part in the campaign. It thus formed a big social network. In 1987, an event called "Support 88 Direct Election" was held. People sat in Victoria Park. Actors were rational. Participants were students, professionals, workers and housewives. A big social network was formed. The Hong Kong Federation of Students was the organization. It provided resources for the movement. In 1989, people supported for the Beijing student movement. They formed Hong Kong Alliance in Support of Patriotic Democratic Movements of China which was the organization <https://assignbuster.com/development-of-urban-social-movements-in-hong-kong-history-essay/>

involved and was responsible for providing resources. Insurgents were rational that they only went on strikes and gave out music show. Since the above events obtain the elements of Resource Mobilization Theory, this theory can therefore be used to understand the development of Hong Kong in 1980s to a large extent.

Political Process Model (PPM) can be used to understand the development of Hong Kong in 2003. Hong Kong 1 July marches was held. The irresponsibility of Secretary for the Health, Welfare and Food Bureau during SARS, and the introduction of Article 23 provided spaces for political opportunities. Different political parties and citizen were the insurgents. Insurgent consciousness took place. They formed organizations to protest. As this event obtain political opportunities, insurgent consciousness and organizations which were the elements of Political Process Model, Political Process Model can then be used to understand the development of Hong Kong in 2007.

Social Construction Perspective (SCP) can be used to understand the development of Hong Kong in 2006 to 2007. People see movement as efforts to control the direction of social change by controlling a society's symbols and self-understandings. They emphasize the role of ideology in collective action. Social network and collective identity are the important elements in this theory.

There was Star ferry Protection Movement and Queen's Pier Protection Movement in 2006 and 2007 respectively. Insurgents sat and protested. They held hunger strike and demonstration. Participants included the middle-class, students, scholars, and professionals. It formed a social network. As

people had the same goal towards the government (wanted to protect the piers), collective identity is formed. Star ferry and Queen's Pier were symbols of Hong Kong. It represented the collective memory of Hong Kong people. As the events contained social network and collective identity,

Social Construction Perspective can be used to understand the development of Hong Kong in 2006 to 2007 to a large extent.

Resource Mobilization Theory (RMT) can be used in 2010. In the Anti Guangzhou-Shenzhen-Hong Kong rail protest, it also included resources such as knowledge, money and media. Organizations were different political parties. It involved people outside Choi Yuen Village which formed a social network. As the two events involve organizations, social network and resources, Resource Mobilization Theory can be used to understand the development of Hong Kong in 2010.

Since the past events of Hong Kong involved different elements of the four theories, the relevant theory is useful to understand the development of HK to a large extent.

Do you think that the recent social movements are structurally different from those in the past?

The development of social movement in Hong Kong is changing along the history and the urban context. To clearly understand the structural differences of social movement, Castells's 3 types of social movement will be adopted to divide the development of social movement in Hong Kong into 3

periods. The differences of the sources, goals, mobilization, participants, process of the 3 periods will be illustrated.

Collective Consumption- oriented Trade Unionism (1960s-early 1980s)

The residence place what capitalist concentration of production and management has triggered in the form of labor unions at the work place (Castells, 1984). Groups treat the city as its use value but not as the commodity. People is asking for more social wage including housing, education, health care, water, etc, quality of life, conservation of history. For the adversarial side, their goals are appropriation of land rent, infrastructure for profitable production. In a word, the participants consider the city as a spatial support for life while the other side considers the city as a commodity or a support of commodity production and circulation. Due to this specific goal and the context at that period, the sources, mobilization, participants and process differ from current situation.[2]

The social movements were mainly driven by community- based and work-related interests. The poor governance of the colonial government and harsh living condition were the main source of social movement. At the end of 1970s to the early 1980s, interests and latent groups had been mobilized and became recognized politics claims and demands, protest groups and pressure groups were formed to sustain mobilization (Chiu & Lui, 2000). The social movement organizations and the formation of ' social movement industry' replaced the student movements to mobilize collective action. The pressure groups became more important and took action to protect interests for different people and concern on specific issues like the influences of the

Society for Community Organization in Yaumatei Boat People Protests the Hong Kong Professional teachers' Union's effects on the Golden Jubilee Secondary School Incident. The urban protests and industrial actions were expressed in the form of aggressive behavior like throwing glass bottle and bomb to create scare in the 1966 and 1976 riots. Also, protest actions were common at the time. Due to the lack of bargaining power to the colonial state and resources of the movement organizations and participants, the main strategy of the collective action was rally support of the third party for the purpose of exerting pressure on the government.

Citizen Movements (late 1980s- mid 1990)

People are more concern about the territorially based self- management. People are appealing for the local autonomy, neighborhood decentralization, citizen participation. The participants' side aimed at centralism, bureaucratization and authoritarianism. The other side saw the city as a self-government entity while the other side treats the city as subject of the central state at the service of world-wide empire[3].

For the Hong Kong context, the Sino- British negotiations over Hong Kong's future and the subsequent agreement between the two governments on returning the colony to China on 1 July 1997 were the main issues at that time. The struggle for democracy, both for deepening political reform before 1997 and for democratizing the political structure after the handover, became the major concern of the activists in the 1980s and 1990s.

From the late 1970s, some labor organizations and trade union leaders began to participate more visibly in community protest movements. Labour <https://assignbuster.com/development-of-urban-social-movements-in-hong-kong-history-essay/>

and other community groups formed temporary alliances to put more effective pressure on the government.

Moreover, activists thought that the democracy of Hong Kong was closed to the democracy of China so a pro-China democracy political culture existed in Hong Kong. However, only a handful of university students and radical socialist groups were the major players joining the Pro- Chinese Democracy Movement (PCDM) in Hong Kong. It was related to the limited information about the Chinese democracy movement being publicly available in Hong Kong. Most of the Hong Kong citizens were unaware of the pro- democracy movement in China. Until the June 4 incident in China, there were over one million Hong Kong people, one-sixth of the Hong Kong population to participate in the actions of the PCDM in mid- 1989. The form of social movement is more radical than before, protest, rally and demonstration were the main form.

Community Movement (1997- Now))

The identity, cultural autonomy and communication are the major concern of people. They demand a better neighborhood life, ethnic or autonomous cultures, and historical traditions. The goals of the adversarial side are dominant culture, standardization of meaning and the urban isolation. The positive side treats the city as a communication network and source of cultural innovation while the opposite side treats the city as the despatialization of programmed one-way information flows.[4]

With a drastic downturn of confidence in Hong Kong's economy since late

1997, people's attention has shifted to livelihood issues, especially the <https://assignbuster.com/development-of-urban-social-movements-in-hong-kong-history-essay/>

unemployment issues and abatement in property prices issues. The constituency development and the conservation of historical site are also the stimulator of various social movements in recent years.

Many of the protest actions and popular mobilization were organized by the political parties of different orientations (Chiu & Lui, 2000). The more active role in social movement to protect the citizen's interest and to achieve a better Hong Kong seems to be the ensuring of electoral support for the political parties.

The participants and organizers of the protest actions were more diversify, from lower class to the middle class, from the poor to the rich. Some of them were dissatisfied with the government's imposition of the new mother-tongue language education program and some suffered from the stock market and the plunge in property prices triggered by the financial crisis. Also, a new group of people called ' the post- 80s' has more and more participation and influence in the social movement in these years.

The mobilization power of those ' the post- 80s' is very strong and speedy. Those are the people familiar with the internet so internet became the main source to gather different people to join the social movement or to concern some issues. The participants were first known each other through internet and then to organize social movement. They may not being affected directly but care of the future development of Hong Kong.

The three types of social movement can be used to understand the structurally differences of the social movement in Hong Kong to some

extent, the time division is blur actually since the change and development
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of the society is smooth and never changed suddenly. Also the types of social movement are even more complex in reality. Since the current social movements in Hong Kong are more complicated and with various goals, the characteristics of 3 types of social movement can be found in current situation. Besides, the social context since 1990 onward is very different from that of before due to the popularization of internet. There are great difference among the process and mobilization of social movement.

Conclusion

The social movement has been changed all the time to address the varied context of the society. The Castells' 3 types of social movement are one of the methods to classify the social movement in Hong Kong in a relatively systematic way. In reality, it is hard to divide the development of social movement due to the complexity of it. The concern from different community or groups can be very different so the characteristics differ from those of others.