CHAPTER 6 POLITICAL GROUPS/ORGANIZATIONS

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I. Definition, Methodology and Background

Definition of the Sector

1 The definition of political groups/organizations applied in this study follows the elaborated International Classification of Non-profit Organizations (ICNPO) adopted by John Hopkins University, with slight modifications to suit the local environment. The elaborated ICNPO groups law, advocacy and politics into one sector. However, these subgroups possess quite distinct features in Hong Kong and thus are split into three separate groups in this study: "Law and Legal Services", "Civic and Advocacy Organizations" and "Politics".[1] Nonetheless, the description of political organizations used by ICNPO largely remains unchanged and is applied to this study.

2 The term political groups in this study refers to groups that mainly organize activities and provide services to support putting candidates into political office, for example, into the Legislative Council and/or the National People's Congress. According to the above classification, political groups include all political parties and other political organizations in Hong Kong that perform the functions stated above. It is noteworthy that councillors' offices and the activities organized by the offices will not be counted even if the councillors have political affiliation because they are public office holders. Also, independent politicians and their offices are not examined in this study as they are not a group.

3 There may be a general impression that a number of labour unions, trade unions and some civic or advocacy groups should also belong to the political sector. However, not all unions and civic groups support candidates into political office. The main task of most unions is to protect their members' rights and interests and civic groups mainly aim at advocating certain causes or do lobbying. For the sake of consistency within the classification system applied to this study, all labour and trade unions as well as civic or advocacy groups are not classified as political groups. Despite the fact that some unions did support their members in holding public offices, their participation in politics should be seen as a form of civic participation only. These unions are politically more active than others, but they are not political groups.

Population Size of the Sector and Methodology

4 Adopting the modified classification system, the number of groups in Hong Kong that should be regarded as political groups is very small. The current population size of the political sector in Hong Kong is estimated to be below ten.

5 Two major research methods were applied in this study to collect first hand information: (a) Survey/Questionnaire and (b) Interview/Focus group discussion. Since the estimated population size of the political sector is not big, no sampling

was required. All the political groups identified were surveyed and approached for interviews. Focus group discussions were not felt to be needed in view of the fact that all the groups were interviewed. However, all interviews were conducted before the questionnaires were sent out. Upon the return of the questionnaires from the political groups that were willing to take part in this study, it was discovered that there existed a discrepancy between the ways in which political groups were classified and how political groups classify themselves.

6 This report is based on interviews with known and identified political groups and literature review. However, not all of the known political groups were willing to take part. Two political groups did not want to be interviewed and indicated that they would not return their questionnaires. Lack of trust could be a cause for this. In total, only 55% of the classified political groups were interviewed.

Background

No political party before 1980s

7 Under the British colonial order, Hong Kong was ruled by an executive-led government. Access to policy-making positions in the legislature relied on the appointment by the British Government or the Governor. Hong Kong was once described as an "administrative state with no party".[2] This situation, combined with the "refugee mentality" possessed by Hong Kong people after World War II, ensured that political interest and participation were extremely low in Hong Kong.

8 Political parties such as the Kuomintang and the Communist Party have been present in Hong Kong since at least the 1930s, supporting a few candidates to the Urban Council elections. However, these two political parties are not local political groups. The Reform Club and the Civic Association, founded in 1949 and 1954 respectively, campaigned for constitutional reforms and put up candidates for the Urban Council elections; they could well be regarded as "quasi-political parties".[3] Despite the fact that public awareness increased and various social movements emerged in the 1970s, no real political party was formed before the 1980s in Hong Kong.

The emergence of political groups in the 1980s

9 The call for democratization in modern Hong Kong was first heard in the 1980s.[4] The year 1982 marked a turning point in the development of Hong Kong's political institutions and political groups. District Board elections were held and the two-year Sino-British negotiation (1982-1984) on Hong Kong's future began. It was the middle class in Hong Kong that first realized that it should take part in politics more actively to lobby for a democratic self-governed Hong Kong after the handover in 1997. Different political groups, such as Meeting Point, the New Hong Kong Society, the Hong Kong Affairs Society and the Hong Kong Forum, were formed.

10 The political participation of middle class "liberals" inevitably led to a reaction from "conservative" groups in Hong Kong, such as leaders of business and industry, who had long sought to depoliticize Hong Kong, thinking that

democratization would harm the economy. They, too, started to get involved in politics.[5] Political polarization occurred as "liberals" and "conservatives" became embroiled in a controversy over local political reform.

11 However these political groups, which usually lacked grassroots support, did not develop into political parties. To adopt Lo Shiu-hing's terminology, these groups were "pre-party factions", for they lacked "the continuing organization and social support which are the essence of [political parties]".[6] Regardless of the terms used to describe these groups, they played a vital role in Hong Kong's political development.

Emergence of more political groups after the Tiananmen Square incident

12 The 1989 Tiananmen Square incident marked another turning point in popular attitudes towards political participation. Against a background of rising aspirations for democracy and support for political parties as institutions,[7] the final version of the Basic Law provided that only 20of the 60 seats in the legislature would be directly elected in 1997 instead of half, as proposed by Omelco, the Office of Members of Executive and Legislative Councils. This led to the formation of three political parties in 1990 – the United Democrats of Hong Kong (UDHK), the Hong Kong Democratic Foundation, and the Liberal Democratic Federation. In the Legco election of 1991, "pro-democracy" forces won the majority of directly elected seats.[8]

13 With the encouragement of the Chinese authorities, "pro-China" forces, too, began to organize political parties in the early 1990s to counter the "pro-democracy" forces. The Democratic Alliance for the Betterment of Hong Kong (DAB) was formed in 1992. In 1993, the Liberal Party (LP) was formed by business people led by Allen Lee. The Hong Kong Progressive Alliance (HKPA) was formed in 1994.[9] While Hong Kong witnessed the emergence of several new political groups in the early 1990s, two old political groups, ie. Meeting Point and the UDHK, decided to merge in 1994 to form the Hong Kong Democratic Party (DP).

14 Governor Chris Patten's reform proposals in the 1992-94 period led to a more obvious political polarization. There was growing party identification among the electorate with either the "pro-China" or "pro-democracy" forces. The "pro-democracy" forces claimed to be "the moral mirror image of the Chinese government".[10] "Pro-China" forces were usually seen as more "conservative" and realized the need to deal with China in a more pragmatic way: at least communicating, if not cooperating with China. In the 1995 Legco election, the "pro-democracy" forces again won a victory against the "pro-China" forces.

15 It is apparent that the political groups formed in the 1990s were well-organized. They played an important role in raising public awareness and spurring the political activism of local Hong Kong people to a level that had never been seen before.

Development of political groups between 1997 and the present

16 The Tiananmen Square incident accelerated the birth of various political groups. Moreover, the China factor as well as the Sino-British dispute were major influence on political groups in Hong Kong until the handover in 1997. However, the influence of the China factor faded after the handover. The public perception that the "one country, two systems" principle was generally being observed meant that the slogans often used by "pro-democracy" forces lost popular appeal. While the "pro-democracy" forces seemed to lose support, the "pro-China" forces, especially the DAB, developed quickly into a political party with massive grassroots support. It has become a strong competitor to the "pro-democracy" camp in elections.

17 The number of political groups has remained constant as no formal political party has been formed since the handover. However, political groups have developed into more party-like organizations. Despite the fact that the number of political groups in Hong Kong is small, they have been guiding the debate on Hong Kong's political development. The "pro-democracy" camp has called for universal suffrage of the Chief Executive by 2007, while the "pro-China" forces claimed that Hong Kong has to observe the Basic Law with regard to the pace of democratization. Political polarization, in terms of the pace of democratization, still exists.[11]

II. Current Landscape of the Political Sector

Basic information

18 As mentioned above, the population size of the political sector in Hong Kong is very small compared to other sectors and it is a very young sector. All known political groups were formed either during or after the 1980s and most of the active political groups today were formed in the early 1990s.

19 The sizes of political groups in Hong Kong vary greatly. The DAB has almost 2,000 members, while the Association for Democracy and People's Livelihood (ADPL) has about 100 members.[12] Most political groups have 100 to 300 members, but some small political groups may have fewer than 30 members.

20 However, membership size does not necessarily reflect the amount of political support for political groups. Hong Kong people typically do not want to join political groups, but some of them are willing to show their support such as through donations, volunteer work and, of course, voting for the group during elections. Thus the political support demonstrated by Hong Kong people cannot be directly related to membership in political groups.

Role in Economy

Employment

21 In general, most political groups do not have a large pool of staff members, except for the DAB. Currently, the DAB has about 70 paid supporting staff, more than

any other political group in Hong Kong.[13] Other political groups employ 20 or fewer people.[14]

22 It is obvious that the political sector is not a major economic force as the Third Sector in Hong Kong has been dominated by welfare, education and social services. However, when voluntary contributions are considered, political groups do contribute significantly. Much of the political parties' networking is done by volunteers and the implied value of volunteers in terms of employment could be significant.

Expenditures

23 Since the size of employment in this sector is not large and most political groups face heavy financial pressures, their expenditures would be somewhat limited. However, political groups with elected representatives in LegCo or the District Councils have more resources at their disposal since legislators and district councillors receive funding from the Government.[15] Table 1 and 2 below show the monthly remuneration and yearly operating expenses reimbursement for LegCo and District Council members respectively:

Table 1 Monthly Remuneration and Yearly Operating Expenses Reimbursement for LegCo members for the period between 1/10/2002 and 30/9/2003

Items	**Amount (HK$)**
Remuneration	Per month
Members who do not serve on the ExCo	$56,870
Members who serve on the ExCo	2/3 of $56,870 i.e. $37,910
Operating Expenses Reimbursement	Per year
Accountable component for office operation	Not exceeding $1,397,470
Non-accountable component for entertainment and travelling	Not exceeding $157,640
(amount which may be used for employing staff)	($78,820)

Source: The Legislative Council Secretariat, 2002.

Table 2 Monthly Honorarium, Yearly Operating Expenses Reimbursement and Reimbursement for IT and other support on a term basis for current District Councillors

Items	**Amount (HK$)**
Honorarium	Per month
Members who serve on the LegCo	$11,820
Members who do not serve on the LegCo	$17,730

Operating Expenses Reimbursement	Per year Not exceeding $204,000
IT and other support	Per term Not exceeding $10,000

Source: Eastern District Council, 2002.

Contribution to Employment Growth

24 The number of staff hired by political groups greatly depends on the number of branch offices they have set up in Hong Kong. Over the years, some political groups have devoted considerable resources to extending or building their networks in Hong Kong. The more offices they set up, the larger the number of staff that is required to run the offices.[16] This has resulted in a small increase in employment opportunities in the political sector.

25 Moreover, there seems to be a seasonal employment pattern in the political sector. During election years, the employment base is usually larger and the amount of voluntary contributions increases significantly. However, the direct contribution to employment from the political sector in general is insignificant.

Indirect Impact on the Economy

26 However, in terms of their lobbying and political influence on government policies, the influence on the economy of political groups is obvious. They can influence government policy in many areas which may have implications for the economy.

27 This is especially true for those political groups that have representatives in political institutions such as Legco and District Councils, as they can have more direct involvement in influencing government policies.[17] In the legislature, they can initiate motion debates on different areas which may have impacts on the economy, such as those put forward by Fred Li Wah-ming, a member of the Democratic Party, and Tam Yiu-chung, a DAB member, on November 13 and October 9, 2002 respectively.[18] While Hong Kong professes to be a free market economy, the influence of the Government is limited, but political groups have some indirect roles in the decision making process on economic matters.

Role in Society

Hong Kong's political groups and political parties

28 Compared to their role in the economy, political groups in Hong Kong play a larger role in society. However, owing to the special political structure of Hong Kong, the functions that political groups perform are not comparable to their counterparts in other countries. Jermain Lam noted in 1994 that Hong Kong's political groups were still very much in the "early stage of development towards political parties" and as they become "more mature and well-structured", they

"will take up the functions performed by political parties as in other political systems".[19] Nonetheless, no matter how mature and well-structured political groups in Hong Kong have become, they are different from political parties in other countries. Political groups in Hong Kong currently only possess limited power due to the executive-led system of government. They cannot govern Hong Kong. It is, therefore, important to look at the roles and social impacts of political groups in the Hong Kong context.

Influence government policies

29 While political groups in Hong Kong do not have governing power, they do monitor the Government, acting as a watchdog, and influence government policies in a more direct way through their members in the Legislative Council or District Councils or government statutory and advisory bodies. This is a major role played by political groups in Hong Kong.

30 Political groups formulate, exchange and disseminate views as well as give advice on government policies with the aim to improve administrative performance.[20] The Frontier and the Social Democratic Forum published their opposition platform in February 2002 and the Democratic Party put forward its Shadow Policy Address 2002 in October 2002. However, within the unique political structure of Hong Kong, it is doubtful how much they can achieve in this regard.[21] As a result, political groups have tried other means to have their voices heard, such as through signature campaigns, demonstrations or hunger strikes. For instance, the DAB held several petitions and signature campaigns in 2001 to protest against public transport fare increases.

31 How successful a political group is in influencing government policies has thus become a major criterion for voters and the group itself to assess its performance.

Act as a link between the Government and the people – Interest aggregation

32 Political groups in Hong Kong also act as a link between the Government and the people. They aggregate different interests and take part in the policy-making process to help reflect people's interests. Political groups also handle complaints from the general public. In fact, the scholar Ivan Chi-keung Choy has described the handling of complaints as the major duty of the branch of political groups.[22] The elected members of political groups are often seen as middlemen to whom the public can take their complaints, which would then be forwarded to the Government. Very often, the public finds political groups an effective channel for exerting pressure on the Government, especially political groups with elected public officials.[23]

Generate intellectual and social capital

33 Political groups in Hong Kong also help generate intellectual and social capital. Most political groups in Hong Kong organize policy study groups that meet regularly, enabling their members to understand the groups' stances on issues and to exchange views.[24] Public seminars on specific issues have also been organized, though not regularly, by political groups to enrich the general public's knowledge

and raise their awareness of the topics concerned.[25] In this regard, political groups could also be regarded as educators. Some political groups also conduct regular surveys to better understand the situation of a specific area or gauge public opinions and the results have helped them make recommendations to the Government.[26]

34 In addition, some political groups launch training programmes for their staff and core members. For example, the DAB organized training courses for its members to develop political and community leadership skills. ADPL also organized training sessions in early 2002 for its staff and core members to refine their campaign organizational skills and to improve their understanding of the local political environment. However, such courses are not regularly organized as they require a commitment of considerable time and resources.

35 One special feature of the political sector in Hong Kong is that political groups also organize recreational activities, such as banquets and picnics, and provide social services for the public, such as free physical checkups for elderly. While such events may contribute to the strengthening of social bonds, they also have a political dimension.

III. Interaction among the Three Sectors

Interaction with the Government

36 The pattern of interaction among the three sectors is dynamic with each sector influencing the others at all times. The Administration is clearly the lobbying target as political groups try to influence government policies. Most political groups have members holding public office and thus have more direct contacts and access to the Government and senior officials. LegCo members will have almost daily public meetings with officials through the various panels and committees, and many will hold regular private meetings as well.

37 After the implementation of the Principal Officials Accountability System in July 2002, the pattern of interaction with the Government has shown signs of possible change with two party chairmen being appointed to the Executive Council with the aim of developing a governing coalition between the Chief Executive and parties he has chosen to work with.[27] As of early 2003, the party leaders were playing active roles in policy determination although their parties appeared to be still exploring how to behave in LegCo as part of the governing coalition.

38 At the same time, other political groups in LegCo, such as the Democratic Party and the Frontier, may find it more difficult in the future to oppose government policies or proposals as the legislators belonging to the two parties now represented in ExCo are likely to support their party leaders' decisions.[28] The other political groups may also face a significant challenge as the Principal Officials try to establish direct connections in the community.

Interaction with the Market

39 As far as the market is concerned, interactions between political groups and the market vary tremendously depending on the political groups. For groups that have more directly elected representatives, interactions are generally minimal. However, for political groups whose members mainly come from the business or professional fields and have good relationships with corporations, substantial interaction could be seen, especially in terms of financial contributions. However, because many companies have reservations about being associated with any particular political party, financial contributions are usually provided in a private capacity.

40 Although interactions between political groups and the market are generally minimal, political groups do interact with the market. Businesses could be the targets of criticism or lobbying. Political groups sometimes advocate various policies that may be unfavourable to private corporations. For example, the Liberal Party held a demonstration with regard to negative equity in June 2000. The Frontier published a short article criticizing the monopoly of the poultry and pork markets in 2002.

41 Other than being the lobbying targets, some small businesses may lobby the Government via political groups. For those groups whose members represent functional constituencies, the members are essentially the lobbyists of the various business sectors. However, some larger business corporations do not necessarily lobby the Government through political groups in Hong Kong, a situation different from that in some other countries. Hong Kong's elite politics, which are still "centred upon the administrative apparatus",[29] provide a channel through which business leaders can influence government policy. In addition, as institutional constraints make it rather difficult (but not impossible) for political groups to affect government policies through the legislature, businesses find it more effective to lobby the Government directly.[30]

Interaction within the Third Sector

42 Unlike other groups in the Third Sector, political groups rarely collaborate with each other. The most prominent example of collaboration was when several political groups collaborated with individual legislators in October 2001 to make seven recommendations to the Government to increase employment opportunities and to alleviate people's hardship[31].

43 Although collaborative efforts among political groups are rare, it does not mean that they work independently at all times. Some political groups obviously have close connections with other community groups or pressure groups. Being the main political representatives of the people, most political groups maintain very good connections with local community organizations. The most prominent ones include trade unions, residents' organizations, advocacy organizations and churches. Some political groups collaborated with community groups in organizing community events for local residents. The ADPL, for example, has helped local residents set up various residents' associations or concern groups.

The associations or concern groups all operate independently from ADPL, but they enjoy a good relationship with ADPL.

44 Vigorous interactions between political groups and these large membership bodies usually occur during election periods when mass mobilization is required. Political groups with good connection with these groups would be able to mobilize massive support or recruit activists from these organizations to help with campaigning, which means these political groups could have more manpower and resources. During non-election periods, the district office branches of political groups maintain good ties with them to sustain their support. Recreational activities, banquets and picnics may be organized as ways to retain their connection with local groups and residents.

45 Some residents' organizations in Hong Kong prefer not to get involved in politics and thus have not developed any links with political groups. However, overlapping membership can still be easily seen. Members of political groups are also very often members of residents' organizations. Such an overlapping membership or dual membership actually helps with the process of interest articulation for all parties concerned.

IV. Funding

Donations and fund raising

46 Donations and elected representatives' contributions, in general, are the major sources of funding for political groups in Hong Kong. While membership fees do contribute to political groups' revenues, the amount is usually not significant.

47 It is obvious that the nature of the network that political groups maintain greatly affects fund raising. For those political groups that have no close connection with the business sector (usually the "pro-democracy" forces), they have to rely mainly on their elected representatives' contributions or they have to raise funds openly, for example, by raising funds on the streets or by selling raffle tickets. However, there are various restrictions on street fund raising for political groups in Hong Kong.[32] Even if political groups are granted a permit to raise funds on the streets, the amount of money raised in this way is usually not large when compared to some other means of raising funds, such as annual dinners. For these political groups, contributions from their elected representatives in Legco and the District Councils have become the main sources of funds.[33] This may help explain why political groups in Hong Kong are very much election-focused as they can get more financial resources if their members are elected and become public office holders. The abolition of the Urban Council and the Regional Council in 1999 no doubt reduced the funding base of these political groups.

48 Political groups that have a better relationship with the business sector or whose members mainly come from the professions can have access to funding relatively easily and do not have to rely so much on members' contributions. One political group interviewed stated that it has never sold raffle tickets or raised funds on the streets. Whatever means political groups in Hong Kong adopt to raise funds, some

political groups claimed that the amount of money they raised in recent years has decreased because of the economic downturn in Hong Kong.

Government funding

49 The Government has set up various funding schemes for which non-governmental organizations in Hong Kong can apply. While political groups are all eligible to send in their applications, most of them have refrained from doing so. One political group interviewed pointed out that there might be a conflict of interests if funds are granted to political groups since some members of the political groups sit on the fund-granting boards.[34] Political groups do not want to be seen as using their power to obtain favours, a fact that further limits their funding sources.

Lack of funding – a persistent problem

50 Lack of funding is still one of the major challenges facing political groups today in Hong Kong. With scarce financial resources, political groups maintain tight control over their expenses, which forces them to limit their work focus on only several specific areas or issues. This in turn hinders their general performance as political groups, and may be one of the reasons why people today may still regard political groups in Hong Kong as pressure groups.

Management Issues

Staff Recruitment and Training

Staff recruitment

51 There has been an improvement in staff recruitment in the political sector over the last decade. Political groups no longer encounter great difficulties when recruiting staff members. Hong Kong people used to be described as apolitical and their political participation was very low. People used to be unwilling to pursue a career in the political field as they saw only limited prospects. The consequence was that even those who were interested in public affairs might not pursue a career in politics. However, the situation has changed and political groups reported that they have more choices in recruiting staff members now as more people apply for jobs with political groups.

52 It is not clear whether the root cause of such a change is the result of a change in attitude towards politics, with Hong Kong people having become politically more receptive and sensitive. However, the change in the number of people applying for jobs in the political sector may also be attributable to the poor economic environment in Hong Kong after the Asian financial crisis in 1998. With a high unemployment rate, people have become less selective and may apply for jobs in a field that they do not want to pursue their career in. This may lead to a wrong impression that more Hong Kong people are interested in working for political groups.

53 Regardless of the root cause of such a change, political groups can now be more selective in recruiting staff. However, they may still face problems in terms of

quality. Recruiting appropriate staff has become an issue, as applicants may not possess the skills, experience or vision that political groups are looking for. Funding is also a concern. A lack of sufficient funding could limit their ability to recruit professional staff.

Training

54 As most political groups have tight budgets, little formal or regular training is generally offered to their staff members. "Training" is "on-the-job" which reflects the need for political groups to recruit staff with skills or experience. Some political groups interviewed stated that more effort by the Government in terms of commitment to political reform would help strengthen the local political environment. This in turn would attract more talented people to join political groups.

Volunteers Retention

55 Constrained by limited financial resources and the small number of staff, political groups very often require assistance from volunteers in organizing events. This makes the volunteers' role in supporting the operation of political groups very important.

56 As with staff recruitment, political groups in Hong Kong seldom face problems when recruiting volunteers in the current economic climate. However, most political groups claimed that they do not have volunteers to help with daily administrative work. The central offices of most political groups do not have a very clear idea about the number of volunteers currently assisting them because it is usually the district offices that use most volunteers. Most volunteers are recruited to assist in election campaigns and other community functions. One political group pointed out that one of its district offices mobilized up to 100 volunteers when there was a big event.[35] Most political groups said that they could get enough manpower every time they needed help. The concern with volunteers is obviously not recruitment, but retention.

57 One unique feature of volunteerism in the political sector is that volunteers usually are better affiliated with individual figures, such as Legislative Councillors or District Councillors, than with their political groups. Moreover, Hong Kong people sometimes may lack passion in volunteering. How to retain existing volunteers and sustain their enthusiasm in volunteering then becomes a concern. Most political groups rely very much on their political stars to nurture and maintain good connections with their volunteers.

Setting Up Office Branches

58 For most political groups in Hong Kong, setting up office branches in different areas can help gain support for the groups. They are therefore all eager to set up as many office units as possible to have a wider community outreach. The more district offices a political group sets up, the more citizens it can serve. This then allows the group to have more intensive interaction with the public and cultivate better relations with local residents. The major task for these office branches is

handling complaints from the public and Ivan Chi-keung Choy believed that "constituency serving office" would be a better term for these office units as they are more service oriented.[36]

59 By setting up more constituency serving offices, more opportunities can be provided for the public to understand the groups. This may assist the groups in gaining electoral support and thus paving the way for successful election campaigns. This is particularly true for those political groups that need to gain massive grassroots support. After all, electoral consideration is still ranked high on political groups' agendas.

60 However, not all political groups can afford to devote the resources required to set up office units.[37] Those political groups with less funding can only set up a few branch offices or have no branch office at all. Sharing office units with other group members who are public office holders serving the same constituency is also a common phenomenon. This allows the groups to use their resources in a more flexible way to establish connections with local residents.

Public Awareness and the Media

Public Awareness

61 Hong Kong people have long displayed political apathy. Though the situation has been improving, political awareness and political participation is still generally low. In many of the longitudinal surveys carried out by the Hong Kong Transition Project, only 1% to 2% of respondents claimed that they had attended meetings or activities of political/pressure groups.[38] Ordinary Hong Kong people may still have a sense of political powerlessness and political inefficacy. Most of them simply do not think that political groups are useful in effectively influencing government policies. They lack trust in political leaders and are suspicious of their motives.[39] In the surveys carried out by the Hong Kong Transition Project, a very low percentage of respondents said that they would seek help or express concern to political/pressure groups.[40]

62 Even today many Hong Kong people still have reservations about politics. They may show a sense of political obligation, but political participation is still limited. Many people prefer becoming volunteers to becoming party members. In response to this situation, some political groups have developed the "Friends" scheme, such as the Friends of Liberal Party. As a friend of a political group, a person has more opportunities to know more about the group, and can take part in some of the events organized by the political group with no obligation or political affiliation. Recruiting friends was reportedly a useful way to get the general public involved in politics and to attract more capable people to the group.

The Media

63 Political groups in Hong Kong realize that how the general public perceives them and how aware the public is of them partly depends on the way they are depicted in the media. The media obviously plays an important role in transmitting

information from the political groups to the public. Not surprisingly, how and how much the media reports have become issues for political groups.

64 Hong Kong people have long enjoyed a free press and the mass media industry in the city is more developed compared to other parts of Asia. With the exception of Radio Television Hong Kong and the "pro-China" press, all other entities in the industry are self-financed and commercial in nature.[41] The keen competition makes the media focus heavily on readership and television ratings. Under such circumstances, the local mass media, and particularly the printed media, has resorted to what Professor Lau Siu-kai, now Head of the Central Policy Unit, has called "sensationalism, scandal mongering and news-fabrication" in the past few years.[42] There has always been a lack of serious political coverage, including political groups reporting in Hong Kong. Stephen Sze once described the shortcomings of Hong Kong newspapers in this way: "apolitical, entertainment-oriented and lack columns related to serious political reporting, analysis or commentaries".[43] These features of the local media have had a negative impact on public awareness of the political sector. The lack of reporting on political groups greatly affects how Hong Kong people perceive the local political environment and political groups.

65 Some political groups argued that the media either reports just superficially any news that they put out or does not report the news at all.[44] They believe that the local media prefers to report the activities of radical groups, which offer better photo-opportunities, and these groups therefore gain more media exposure. They say actions that are moderate or constructive do not usually appeal to the local media. At times, they say, the media may even distort the information that they put out. However, the groups feel they have no effective ways to correct these distortions, as they also need the media to do this. The general public is not very well informed of what the groups are doing partly because the public cannot grasp the whole picture via the media. The media focuses not on important issues, but on what it thinks readers or viewers would find interesting. This is a situation also found in other countries.[45]

66 However, there is an exception. During election periods, there is always extensive and balanced media coverage for political groups. Television channels organize talk shows, discussions as well as forums and candidates are invited to take part in the debates. The printed media, too, faithfully report these stories. The public would therefore understand more about the candidates and their affiliated political groups. However, this is only a temporary situation and when elections are over, the media returns to its "normal" behaviour.

67 Political groups, therefore, may have to rely more on traditional methods, such as newsletters and banners, to inform the public of what they have been doing. All political groups in Hong Kong now have their own websites and make full use of them to help disseminate information.[46] Since not everyone in Hong Kong has access to the internet, some political groups still find it useful to regularly mail newsletters to their members.

Ethics

Honesty and Integrity

68 Individuals running their own businesses and at the same time holding public offices and/or party positions could prompt questions about potential conflict of interest. Legco members have to follow the guidelines on registration of interests and register "any pecuniary interests or material benefit" which they "receive which might reasonably be thought by others to influence their actions, speeches or votes in the LegCo, or actions taken in their capacities" as LegCo members.[47] Failure to comply with the rules could damage a member's image, if not worse, and if he or she holds a party position, the political group might well be discredited as well.

69 While individual members have to comply with the rules, political groups are also aware of the potential conflict, especially when they raise or allocate funds from bodies on which they may be serving. Political groups are usually careful about not being seen as misusing their funds or obtaining funds in their capacities as members of political groups, which could harm their integrity.

Accountability

70 Owing to the tradition of having an executive-led government in Hong Kong, political groups in LegCo do not share much power with the executive branch.[48] Very often, the role played by most political groups in LegCo is to criticize the Government and to give advice. Further, it could be argued that political groups do not need to worry about the results of government policies as the executive is responsible for implementation and needs to be accountable for the results. Nonetheless, it may be unfair to blame the political groups for not contributing more as the institutional arrangements leave little room for them to manoeuvre.

71 Elected representatives from political groups claimed that they represent the interests of their constituents and are answerable to them, but that they cannot achieve much in the legislature. This may have forced political groups to organize various activities for the community and the main task for district offices has become complaint-handling as political groups see these activities as concrete contributions or achievements. It is claimed that if the executive is not yet ready to share its power with the legislature, the environment that political groups in the legislature face will remain unchanged.

Government Policies

Public Fund-raising Restrictions

72 Lack of resources, both financial and human resources, is a general concern for political groups in Hong Kong. As political groups do not heavily rely on government funds for their operations, they need to secure private donations. However, there are a number of restrictions on fund-raising in public for political groups. Some political groups interviewed said that relaxing restrictions when they apply for permits to raise funds publicly may help as this would allow them to

have more flexibility in arranging their fund-raising events. This is particularly true for those political groups that have to raise funds publicly.

Legal Status of Political Groups in Hong Kong

73 Some political groups asserted that it might be helpful for the Government to create an environment that is conducive to voluntary private donations. One group pointed out that granting local political groups tax-exempt status and allowing contributions to be tax deductible would increase the incentives for voluntary private donations. Currently, no political group in Hong Kong has charitable status; in fact, most are registered as a "Company Limited" under the "Companies Ordinance". This means that they are required to pay tax on the donations they receive and their donors' contributions are not tax deductible.

Legitimate Status of Political Groups in the Political Set-up

74 Some political groups interviewed noted that political groups in Hong Kong do not have a formal status in the political set-up. They suggested that giving political groups a formal status may help their development. This could be done by enacting a "Political Party Ordinance". However, enacting such an ordinance in Hong Kong will require in-depth research and a thorough and open public consultation, in which all stakeholders can express their views.

Public Awareness and Political Participation

75 Though the political awareness of Hong Kong people has been raised, more efforts are needed, particularly in the field of civic education. Some political groups said that Hong Kong people, especially the younger generation, need to be taught to be more politically aware and to learn that expressing their views can make a difference. Education is one of the major instruments for changing people's behaviour and mentality.[49] However, this should not be seen as an urge to politicize every aspect of life in Hong Kong, but just to assure Hong Kong people that they should also take up some political responsibilities. Only when public awareness can be further raised would there be a more promising future for political groups in Hong Kong and a more dynamic political development in Hong Kong.

76 One political group mentioned that the Government could also try to enact a law to prohibit discrimination on the grounds of political conviction in order to erase some of the reservations about politics and help increase political participation.

77 Other than the Government's efforts, two political groups clearly stated that political groups themselves should try to articulate their ideologies in more explicit ways and better position themselves. The "catch all" tactics often adopted by political groups during election periods may help them gain more votes as their election platforms are "universally" acceptable. However, such tactics do not help the future development of political groups in Hong Kong. The lack of a clear ideology with which the public can identify is likely to harm the political sector in the long run. One political group further commented that political groups also

have to chart out a long-term vision to help Hong Kong position itself on the international stage.

V. Conclusion

78 The number of political groups is small in Hong Kong and comprises only a small part of the Third Sector. However, they are influential as there is an electoral process which produces members of the legislature and most members of the 18 District Councils. Although the Hong Kong Government is not an elected one, elected representatives and their affiliated political groups play an important role in the local political system. They are capable of affecting government policies via their positions, though they cannot govern. This is different from their counterparts in Western democracies. As the Basic Law provides for an increasing number of elected seats in LegCo, with the aim of eventual universal suffrage, the role of political groups is bound to become more important.

79 Even as political groups gain importance, their social impact cannot be ignored. Their mobilization potential should not be overlooked, especially during election campaigns. It is also a sector in Hong Kong society that can appeal to volunteers and the intangible values inherent in volunteering cannot always be quantified. Even a small political group can make a contribution to society and also help the political sector in gaining its share in the Third Sector.

VI. Acknowledgements

80 The following individuals and organizations are gratefully acknowledged for supplying information needed to complete this study:

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1 Center for Civil Society Studies. *Handbook on Nonprofit Institutions in the System of National Accounts (Draft Submitted for Editing March 2002)* http://www.jhu.edu/~gnisp/docs/Chapter3.pdf, p.6.

2 For details, please see Peter Harris, *Hong Kong: A Study in Bureaucratic Politics.* Hong Kong: Heinemann Asia, 1978.

3 Jermain T. M. Lam & Jane C. Y. Lee. The Dynamic Political Actors in Hong Kong's Transition. Hong Kong: Writers' and Publishers' Cooperative, 1993, p. 64.

4 In the mid-1980s, the Chinese Government did not see political parties as useful for Hong Kong, but the final version of the Basic Law does not prohibit the existence and operation of political parties in Hong Kong.

[5] Almost 60 industrialists grouped together and urged the selection of the future Chief Executive by an electoral college. For details, see Lo Shiu-hing, The Politics of Democratization in Hong Kong. London: Macmillan Press, 1997, p. 147.

[6] Ibid., 138.

[7] The results of these surveys are detailed in Kuan Hsin-chi and Lau Siu-kai, Political Attitudes in a Changing Context, Hong Kong: Hong Kong Institute of Asia-Pacific Studies, Chinese University of Hong Kong, 1997, p. 7.

[8] UDHK supported 14 candidates in direct election and 12 were able to secure seats. Meeting Point put up three candidates and all of them eventually won.

[9] Other than the support given by the Chinese authorities, the attitudes of Hong Kong people also encouraged the birth and growth of "pro-China" forces in the 1990s. Hong Kong people are pragmatic and they value stability and prosperity more than democracy and even accept stability and prosperity as substitutes for democracy. For a useful discussion, please see Joseph Yeung, "Political Participation in Hong Kong: Trends in the Mid-1990s." in Warren I. Cohen and Li Zhao eds., Hong Kong Under Chinese Rule: The Economic and Political Implications of Reversion. New York: Cambridge University Press, 1997.

[10] Ngok Ma. "The Decline of the Democratic Party in Hong Kong: The Second Legislative Election in the HKSAR". Asian Survey, XLI no. 4 (2001): 564-583.

[11] Owing to the economic downturn, Hong Kong people are more aware of economic issues and their own economic and social well-being, and focus not so much on political issues. Most political groups also put solving economic, social and even environmental problems up on their agendas.

[12] Both numbers were collected during interviews in October 2002.

[13] Revealed by a party representative during an interview in October 2002.

[14] However, staff employed by elected representatives may also have to handle "party" work and "party" staff very often may have to support Legislative Councillors or District Councillors as well. In other words, the job tasks may be shared among all the staff.

[15] Elected representatives are usually required to contribute part of their remuneration to the political groups to which they belong.

[16] Most political groups interviewed employed more staff than they did when the groups were first established.

[17] Out of the 60 Legco members (2000-2004), 21 of them have no political affiliation. Hong Kong Legislative Council website. http://www.legco.gov.hk

[18] Li's motion debate was on calling for a reduction in electricity charges and Tam's motion debate was on solving the problem of unemployment. Both of them were passed.

[19] Jermain T. M. Lam, Politics and Government: An Introduction. Hong Kong: Writers' & Publishers' Cooperative, 1994: p. 157.

[20] Such impacts are, generated mainly by members already in political institutions (usually core members). Ordinary members usually contribute less.

[21] Within the Hong Kong Government, the non-elected executive branch holds most of the powers over bill initiation and policy making. After 1997, all private members' bills need the Chief Executive's written approval to be introduced in the legislature, unless the bill is not related to public expenses, public policy, or government structure. In addition, while all government bills need only a simple majority to pass, all amendments, motions and bills proposed by individual legislators have to be approved by more than half of the members of both the functional constituencies and the geographic constituencies. Even though a motion initiated by Legislative Councillors is passed, the motion has no legislative effect. As a result, it is quite difficult, but not impossible, for political groups to influence government policies through institutionalized processes.

[22] Ivan Chi-keung Choy. "Political Parties and Political Participation in Hong Kong" in Joseph Y. S. Cheng ed., Political Participation in Hong Kong: Theoretical Issues and Historical Legacy, 1999. Hong Kong: City University of Hong Kong Press, pp. 121-147.

[23] In 2000, DAB offices handled 31,746 cases in total. See DAB's Ninth Working Report available at http://www.dab.org.hk.

[24] For instance, LP published five "Policy's Responses" and more than 40 commentaries between January and November 2002 while DP published about 40 policy papers, commentaries and articles in total during the same period of time.

[25] For example, DAB held 22 public seminars, while Liberal Party held two public seminars between January and November 2002.

[26] For example, ADPL conducted three surveys and Democratic Party conducted 31 surveys between January and November 2002.

[27] James Tien, Chairman of Liberal Party and Tsang Yok-sing, Chairman of DAB were appointed to Exco in July 2002.

[28] However, there is no guarantee that the two Chairmen can always secure the votes of their members. For a useful discussion, please see Christine Loh and Richard Cullen, Accountability without Democracy: The Principal Officials Accountability System. Hong Kong: Civic Exchange, 2002.

[29] Lau Siu-kai, "Political Order and Democratisation in Hong Kong: The Separation of Elite and Mass Politics" Towards a New Millennium: Building on Hong Kong's Strengths, edited by Wang Gungwu and Wong Siu-lun, Hong Kong: Centre of Asian Studies, University of Hong Kong, 1999.

[30] Seven property developers formed a group called Electricity Consumer Concern and wrote to the Government to lobby for fairer regulation of electricity providers. "Developers Step Up Campaign Over Electricity Charges". South China Morning Post. November 12, 2002.

[31] However, the "coalition" did not last long as James Tien, Chair of the Liberal Party, stepped down as the convenor in August 2002. For details of the seven recommendations, please see http://www.frontier.org.hk/main_c/main.htm.

[32] Any political group in Hong Kong that wants to raise funds publicly has to send in an application at least four weeks beforehand and if the fund-raising activity is to be held in a public place, the political group has to submit a location plan indicating the exact location. Previous fund-raising history has to be included in the application form. The Home Affairs Department will examine the application and decide whether to give the applicant a permit or not. Political groups in Hong Kong can only have four days to raise funds every six months.

[33] Members who hold public offices are usually required to contribute their salaries/subsidies to their affiliated political groups, especially for those who are not full-time politicians. See footnote 15. However, the percentages that members have to contribute are not revealed by political groups.

[34] This issue will be further discussed in the "Ethics" section of this interim report. However, ADPL applied for funds from Social Welfare Department to organize assistance programmes for blue collar workers and it became a training body under the Employees' Retraining Board, in which ADPL also obtained funding from the Government to organize retraining courses.

[35] Revealed by a HKPA representative during an interview in October 2002.

[36] Other services that are conducive to electoral support are also provided by the constituency serving offices. For details, please see Ivan Chi-keung Choy. "Political Parties and Political Participation in Hong Kong" in Joseph Y. S. Cheng ed., Political Participation in Hong Kong: Theoretical Issues and Historical Legacy, 1999. Hong Kong: City University of Hong Kong Press, pp. 121-147.

[37] Currently, DAB has 16 district offices all over Hong Kong while the Citizens Party has only one office.

[38] For details of the surveys, please see Hong Kong Transition Project. The First Five Years: Floundering Government, Foundering Democracy? May, 2002 or visit http://www.hkbu.edu.hk/~hktp.

[39] Lau Siu-kai. Democratization, Poverty of Political Leaders and Political Inefficacy in Hong Kong. Hong Kong: Hong Kong Institute of Asia-Pacific Studies, The Chinese University of Hong Kong, 1998: pp. 11-12.

[40] Hong Kong Transition Project. The First Five Years: Floundering Government, Foundering Democracy? May, 2002 or visit http://www.hkbu.edu.hk/~hktp.

[41] Although Radio Television Hong Kong is financed by the Government, it possesses editorial freedom and has played a watchdog role.

[42] Lau Siu-kai, "Attitudes towards Political and Social Authorities" in Lau Siu-kai, Lee Ming-kwan, Wan Po-san & Wong Siu-lun eds., Indicators of Social Development: Hong Kong 1999, 2001. Hong Kong: Hong Kong Institute of Asia Pacific Studies, The Chinese University of Hong Kong, pp. 55-91.

[43] Stephen Ma Hung Sze, "Media, Subculture and Political Participation: Characteristics of Political Populism in Hong Kong" in Joseph Y. S. Cheng ed., Political Participation: Theoretical Issues and Historical Legacy, 1999. Hong Kong: City University of Hong Kong Press, pp. 175-206.

[44] Revealed by representatives of DAB and HKPA during interviews in October 2002.

[45] Chen Li-sa, Party Politics (in Chinese), Tai Wan: Qian Wei Publishers, 1995: pp. 39-40.

[46] DAB revamped its website in 2001 and the Hong Kong Progressive Alliance (HKPA) is in the process of revamping its website. The new HKPA website will be launched by the end of 2002. Revealed by HKPA representatives during an interview in October 2002.

[47] Legislative Council. Guidelines on Registration of Interests. May 2002.

[48] It is known that the working relationship between the legislature and the executive has not been very good. One of the purposes of introducing the Principal Officials Accountability System was to

"strengthen liaison and communication with the Legislative Council". Tung Chee-hwa, Chief Executive, on the Principal Officials Accountability System. April 17, 2002.

[49] Scholar Kuan Hsin-chi and Central Policy Unit Head Lau Siu-kai studied traditional orientations and political participation in Taiwan, the Mainland and Hong Kong in the 1990s. They concluded that education is one of the modernization forces that can mediate the negative impact of traditional political orientations on participation. For more information, please see Kuan Hsin-chi and Lau Siu-kai, "Traditional Orientations and Political Participation in Three Chinese Societies", *Journal of Contemporary China* (May 2002) 11 (31): 297-318.