Back to a New Normal: "Yellow Businesses" as a Means of Resistance

KWOK Wing Kei

Abstract: This paper explores the ways in which the political situation in Hong Kong in 2019-2020 was infused into business practices, and how the collectively experienced trauma associated with the protests of that time seeped into and was mitigated through these businesses. Businesses that publicly endorsed the protest movement are known as "yellow businesses". They effectively carved out a social space from the mainstream where protesters were able to care for one another, to communicate, or simply breathe. Resistance was enacted by occupying a social space even when it was not granted. Trying to thrive as a business may at times be incompatible with the expectations from other stakeholders. The "yellow businesses" had to juggle their responsibilities to a variety of stakeholders with the pragmatic challenges of running a business. By looking into the daily operation of two "yellow businesses", with special attention paid to the effects and mitigations of collective trauma, this paper explores the particular form of political resistance that emerged.

Introduction

In February, 2019, the Hong Kong government proposed an extradition law amendment that would allow fugitives from mainland China to be extradited from Hong Kong to be prosecuted in mainland China. Many understood the law as the de facto implementation of mainland China's laws in Hong Kong. Protests broke out from March onwards. On 9th June, 2019, an estimated two million citizens peacefully marched to show their discontent with the proposed amendment. It kick-started a series of protests in various forms, some more violent than others. Many took the moral call to join the street protests, and bore different emotional, physical, or legal consequences. The protests were dubbed the anti-extradition law amendment bill movement (anti-ELAB movement).

A story from a friend stayed with me. She was in the Polytechnic University of Hong Kong (PolyU) during its siege. She was shocked when one of the student protesters was studying for his IELTS exam. She asked if the exam could still carry on as scheduled and was teased immediately. "Of course the exam will carry on. The world outside the campus is still turning, you know." Social movements are usually categorised as something extraordinary, a disruption to the normal daily life (Choi 2020). For protesters deeply immersed in the protests, it could be experienced as such. My friend, who found it unbelievable that someone would study for the IELTS exams during a protest, was a good example. For her, it felt as though the entire city was at war, that all ordinary, scheduled events were cancelled. The messages circulating among supporters of the movement at the time seemed to call for people to leave their routine life and join the street protests. If protests were often in conflict with ordinary routine life, how did the active protesters find their way back to a "normal" life when the more spectacular street protests subsided towards the end of 2019?

Around October, 2019, the idea of a "yellow economic circle" emerged as a way to integrate political struggle with ordinary life. When street protests became rarer and eventually extinct due to the Covid-19 pandemic in early 2020, the "yellow economic circle" became the focus of the anti-ELAB movement. The previous mode of protesting was not to be found anymore. I was initially interested in the ways in which the former protesters constructed an ordinary life for themselves after the extraordinary life of street protesting was no longer an option. How did they find a place for themselves again? How did they live a "normal" life in a city marked by their memories of violence? The continued political struggle was not my main concern initially. I imagined that the protesters were eager to go back to a "normal" apolitical life. I chose "yellow businesses" as my research site simply because they were the nexuses of former protesters. I was not interested in the businesses themselves. However, soon after I began my fieldwork, it became clear that my informants had no interest in an apolitical life. "Normal" repulsed them. What was most important for them was holding on to their political beliefs. They not only experienced protesting as part of their everyday life; they experienced everyday life as part of protesting. I am interested in how the ordinary and the political intersected, how they were mutually constitutive in the post 2019 era.

Research background

On 28th September, 2014, 87 tear gas grenades were fired in Admiralty, kick-starting the Umbrella Movement that would last 79 days (Wai K.C. 2019). The movement had failed to achieve its original goal of universal suffrage in Hong Kong in 2017. Its perceived failure led social movements in Hong Kong into a state of depression. A sense of betrayal, hurt, and hopelessness hovered in the air (Hui 2015). The anti-ELAB movement sprouted from the legacy of the Umbrella Movement. Many principles of the protests were "corrections" of the "mistakes" from the Umbrella Movement. The "be water" strategy was evolved from the

immobility of the occupy movement; the emphasis on unity was to correct the fragmentation of the Umbrella movement towards the end; the protective gears employed by the protesters and willingness to face or employ violence was a correction from the emphasis on peacefulness in the Umbrella movement.

Street protests persisted from 9th June, 2019 to the end of the year. After November 2019, they became significantly rarer. While many protesters still held the view that the movement was not yet over, street protests had been scarce since the clash between protesters and the police in two local universities in November, 2019[1]. The restrictions of assembly since the Covid-19 outbreak in early 2020 made mass protests nearly impossible. Hence, the focus of the movement shifted to consuming in "yellow" businesses and supporting the arrested protesters by writing to them in prison or auditing in their trials. "Yellow" businesses referred to those that supported the anti-ELAB movement. Supporters of the movement were encouraged to consume in these businesses to contest the hegemony of big corporations and to support local businesses (Lau 2020).

[1] On 11th November, 2019, the protesters called for a city-wide strike. A group of protesters set up blockades at the Cross-Harbour Tunnel near Polytechnic University. The protesters took refuge in the Polytechnic University when the police came. The police later fired tear gas into the University campus, class was suspended. The protesters and the police each built their blockades around the school campus, thus beginning the siege of Polytechnic University. Multiple attempts were made by the protesters to escape the school campus. Many were arrested or injured in the process. The siege lasted until 28th November, when most protesters had evacuated from the campus or were arrested while attempting to do so. The police swept the school campus, then lifted the blockade around the university.

On the 11th November, 2019, same day as the siege in Polytechnic University started, another group of protesters tried to block the passage way to the Northern district by building blockades near the Chinese University of Hong Kong (CUHK). The police responded by shooting tear gas into the school campus. On the next day, many more protesters from outside of the university came into the protesters' aid. Vice-chancellor of CUHK, Rocky Tuan arrived at the scene in an attempt to de-escalate the situation. The negotiation failed and he was met with tear gas. Most police man-power concentrated on the conflicts in Polytechnic University, while the protesters stayed to guard the campus and the blockades. On the night of 15th November, 2019, most protesters left the campus due to internal conflicts, uncertainty on course of action, and a rumour that powerful bombs were placed at the entrances of the university.

These two were the longest lasting stand-offs since the movement started in June 2019, numerous protesters were arrested, injured, and traumatised. Street protests had been scarce since then.

The dichotomy of the political camps—the yellow camp and the blue camp—stemmed from the Umbrella Movement in 2014 (Liu 2015). During the Umbrella Movement, those in support wore yellow ribbons. "Yellow ribbons" later came to refer to people supporting or participating in pro-democratic movements in Hong Kong. "Blue ribbons" emerged as a response to the "yellow ribbons" in the Umbrella Movement. The colour blue came from the colour of the uniforms of Hong Kong police officers. "Blue ribbon" referred to the political camp that supported the actions of the police and the rule of the Hong Kong government. Political neutrality was not an option for most Hong Kongese, especially after 2019. As the political context had infiltrated everyday decisions such as choosing between means of transportation, television channels, and restaurants to visit, everyone had to take a stand (Wu 2020).

Although I posited this research as a study of the "after", neither political dissent nor oppression was on pause. The political climate was still largely dynamic. On 30th June 2020, the Hong Kong National Security Law[2] (NSL) was implemented. It dramatically changed the political paradigm in Hong Kong. Mass arrests citing violations of the NSL became commonplace. This contributed to an atmosphere of hopelessness and powerlessness among the resistance. It is against the backdrop of widespread depression and hopelessness that I conducted my research.

[2] The implementation of the National Security Law was decided by the National People's Congress on 28th May, 2020. The exact contents of the law were still yet to be confirmed. The Hong Kong government acted accordingly. On 10th June, the Hong Kong police began establishing a department for the impending NSL. However, there were disputes and confusions on the extent to which the Beijing government would be directly involved in the enforcement of the new law. On 30th June, the Standing Council of the National People's Congress passed the law, bypassing the Hong Kong legislative body. The NSL was effective starting 1st July, 2020. The full text of the law was only available on the same day. 10 were arrested for violating the NSL on the same day.

Research Questions

Hong Kong had experienced a political awakening since the Umbrella Movement in 2014. As protests turned increasingly radical and violent from 2014 to 2019, democracy seemed to slip even further away. With the implementation of the National Security Law, the modes of protesting familiar to Hong Kong people were no longer feasible. Not only was the future prospect worrying, but the window of freedom was also narrowing. Under these circumstances, the "yellow economic circle" rose as the new way to continue the political pursuit. While business is conventionally about earning profits, I was curious about the ways in which it intersected with the political demands of the protesters in Hong Kong.

The 2019 movement was constantly evolving. Despite being commonly referred to as the anti-ELAB movement, the aims of the movement grew into the five demands after the confrontation on 12th June: 1. Full withdrawal of the extradition bill; 2. Retract the classification of the protests as "riots"; 3. Amnesty for all arrested protesters; 4. An independent committee to investigate police brutality; 5. Immediate implementation of dual universal suffrage for the election of both the legislative council and the chief executive of Hong Kong. Even after the original goal of the movement, a full withdrawal of the extradition bill, was achieved on 4th September, the movement did not lose its momentum. The movement had already transformed into a more extensive protest against the authoritarian rule of the Hong Kong government. Since the term "anti-ELAB movement" was already widely used internationally and within Hong Kong, in this paper, I would use the term "anti-ELAB movement" to refer to all anti-authoritarian actions that sprouted from the initial demand to retract the extradition law amendment bill.

By investigating two "yellow businesses" who were still continuing the movement in their own ways, I wish to explore the ways in which resistance had persevered amidst the repercussions of participating in the protests and increasing political pressure. I have no intention of giving a verdict on the future of Hong Kong, or prescribing the politically correct way for "yellow ribbons" to live their lives post-2019. But instead, I attempt to investigate how they found the energy to wake up and face another day, to seek a meaningful life under continuously accumulating pressure.

Methodology

I conducted in-depth individual and group interviews with various informants and worked as a waiter at two "yellow" restaurants, which I called Ginchi and Jenny's. While there were different genres of "yellow" businesses, I chose restaurants because eateries were at the centre of the "yellow economic circle". Eating at restaurants was also an essential practice for many Hong Kong citizens. It would be a site where the political and the everyday meet.

Ginchi was a "yellow" business established in 2020. The political stance of the restaurant was noticeable to the public. One of the shop policies was to hire former protesters. It was a nexus of former protesters. It served as a safe space where they could express their political views without the presence of the political other.

Jenny's was another "yellow" restaurant in a different district. Unlike Ginchi, the name of the restaurant did not indicate its political stance. It was established in mid-2019, in the middle of the protests. It was later classified as a "yellow" business because the owner put up a "Lennon wall" at the shop front for the customers and other citizens to write down their political aspirations.

My informants in Ginchi were former protesters. All of them had participated in different protests in 2019. Most of them were referred to the shop by friends. Hence, they talked relatively freely of their experiences in 2019. Most of them were under 30, many were in their early twenties. The level of participation in the 2019 protests of the employees from Jenny's was less clear. They did not seem to discuss such sensitive matters with each other. Their ages ranged from 20s to 40s.

Due to the sensitivity of the subject, and the increasingly oppressive political climate, I relied on my personal network to make contact with the research sites. Instead of blindly introducing myself to different "yellow" restaurants, I wished to gain their trust within the limited time frame. I was referred to both restaurants by friends.

When I entered the field, I introduced myself as an undergraduate student majoring in anthropology in The Chinese University of Hong Kong and asked for permission to work as a volunteer waiter in the shop. However, it was insisted by the shop owners that I was paid the same salary as any other employees. Any audio or video recording devices were not used during my fieldwork to ease the minds of my informants. I wrote notes when I was on breaks and tried to memorise the conversations in as much detail as possible. For the sake of my informants' anonymity, certain details of their experience have been altered.

Social Movements in Hong Kong

Studies of social movements in Hong Kong mostly sprouted after the Umbrella Movement, as it was the "largest mass movement" since the sovereignty of Hong Kong was handed over to the Chinese government in 1997 (Mingpao 2014, as quoted by Cai 2016). In her book,

Pang (2020) applied Hannah Arendt's theories to analyze the ideologies at play in Hong Kong during and after the Umbrella Movement in 2014 with a macro approach.
She found that the movement could be seen as a means or as a process. As a means, the occupy movement was the tool to achieve the political goal of universal suffrage. In this aspect, it was a failed movement. As a process, the occupy movement created an alternative space. Before the movement, the sites of occupation were roads, they were not spaces for public activities. However, through reshaping the area, it became a space to be enjoyed by the public. In a city lacking public spaces, citizens could go to the occupied sites and dwell. The wills of occupants could be enacted through (not necessarily peaceful) negotiations with other individuals. In this sense, according to Pang, the movement achieved a temporary alternative society from the mainstream neoliberal one. Something was achieved, albeit not as tangible as universal suffrage.

Since the protests broke out in 2019, accounts had been published to record and make sense of the movement. Due to the time-consuming process involved in producing academic literature, many academic articles published thus far on the movement were brief, though they did offer insights into certain aspects of the movement (Y.P. Choi 2020; Ho and Hung 2020; Ling 2020; Palmer 2020; Pun 2020; Wu 2020; Zhang 2020). For instance, Y.P. Choi (2020) described the various ways in which the apolitical ordinary spaces became site of the protests: clashes between the police and protesters occurred in various local neighborhoods and shopping malls; everyday spaces were mobilized as sites to express the political concerns. Although social movements were generally considered as extraordinary among social scientists, in the case of the 2019 protests in Hong Kong, the ordinary and the extraordinary converged (277-278, 281), to such an extent that "everybody is turned into a witness of history, forced to make a moral judgement and take a stand" (281).

Wu (2020) discussed the ways in which public feelings toward the infrastructures in Hong Kong were transformed through the movement in 2019. Until July, Hong Kong protesters took pride in the public transport system and insisted on paying for their rides to and from protests (2020). However, there was a horrific incident in Prince Edward station on 31st August in 2019, where the police attacked civilians in the station, and the Mass Transit Railway (MTR) refused to offer the video recordings from surveillance cameras. Since then, citizens condemned the MTR for assisting the "terrorist" attack from the police. Wu (2020) predicted that even if citizens would eventually convert back to using the services provided by the MTR, "the popular feelings and thoughts about these infrastructure buildings and machines will never be the same."

Ho and Hung (2020) attempted to find out the reasons for the unprecedented level of violence by the young protesters in the anti-ELAB movement. They argued that the academic pressure and the hopelessness in their own futures constituted a "collective youth crisis" (8). Hence, the protesters were engaging in protests as "therapeutic activism". Through connecting with their fellow youths who also felt despair under the circumstances in Hong Kong, they saw "hope, trust, and fraternity" (11). Not unlike "occupy as progress" as suggested by Pang (2020), the acts of protesting were creating a space for the protesters, even if the larger political goal was still out of reach.

As most protests in the anti-ELAB movement involved illegal behaviours, black blocs and masks were widely used to disguise the identities of the protesters and evade legal consequences. Pang (2021) recently wrote on the role of masks which allowed the protesters to emerge as a collective and to impose violence with less hesitation. At the scenes of

protests, the protesters recognised their fellow protesters by the masks. By wearing masks, their individual identities were temporally erased. They became anonymous parts of the collective. It created "a moral distance between their 'authentic' selves and their social and political roles" (5). The masks protected the protesters from institutional violence, but it also allowed them to impose violence on others more freely.

The outpouring of literature on the 2019 protests did not allow the time for detailed ethnography; most authors relied on grand observations on the trends of the protests or personal experiences (Y.P. Choi 2020; Ling 2020; Palmer 2020; Pun 2020; Wu 2020; Zhang, 2020). Few researchers drew on interviews with protesters (Ho and Hung 2020). Aside from academic literature, there had been extensive literature produced for the local audience. Most focused on keeping a record of the history of the movement since 2019 (Lau 2020; H.P. Choi 2020; Chan et al. 2020; Records CUHK 2020; Leung 2020; To Freedom Editorial Committee 2020; Kengo 2020). The compulsion to write about the history of the movement in the most detailed way possible and getting it printed as soon as possible was due to the fear that the history would be distorted by the Beijing propaganda. This was the case for the Tiananmen massacre in 1989 where, after years of government official records claiming that it never happened, many Chinese people believed it to be an anti-government conspiracy. The act of translating memories into words and the urgency in which it was executed demonstrated the looming anxiety among the resistance. The intended readers of these books were the protesters or people who were already in support of the movement. Thus, they tended to promote the political agenda of the protesters and paint the movement in a good light (Lau 2020; H.P. Choi 2020; Chan et al. 2020; Records CUHK 2020; Leung 2020; To Freedom Editorial Committee 2020; Kengo, 2020).

Most of the literature concerning social movements in Hong Kong focused on the protests in progress. While the spectacular manifestations of dissent caught much attention from different scholars, little attention was paid to the lives of protesters when the society seemingly went back to "normal". Huang (2017) studied activists who persisted after the Umbrella movement in 2014 had failed. She investigated the ways in which the movement was kept alive even after the larger protest had failed to obtain its stated goal of 'true' universal suffrage in Hong Kong. The activists pursued their political goals by mundane acts of charity. Whether or not the acts translated into political progress was hard to determine. However, the charity itself was already meaningful for the activists. A sentiment of "Do what you can" was common (Huang 2017, 103-106). Under the depression of perceiving the Umbrella Movement as a failure, the activists were not hopeful that their acts would have immediate political results; instead, they appreciated the difference they made on the lives of individuals (155). They persisted without the hope of achieving their goals anytime soon.

The effects of the 2019 protests were more pervasive. As Y.P. Choi (2020) explained, the sites of protests in 2019 were scattered across shopping malls and local neighborhoods. Retaliation from the government was also considerably more extensive. The NSL was implemented on 30th June, 2020. Up to 28th October 2020, 10,144 people were arrested and 2,285 people were prosecuted for their involvement in protests since June 2019 (Stand News 2020a). In contrast, the numbers of arrests and prosecutions associated with the Umbrella Movement were much lower: 1003 were arrested and 225 were prosecuted (Lee W.N. 2019). The sense of hopelessness and depression as narrated by Huang (2017) only grew after her research was published. After 2019, this sentiment pervaded even the everyday life of common citizens. In this research, I seek to study how this sentiment shaped activism and the everyday life of concerned citizens.

Collective Trauma and Its Recovery

In the first chapter of "Cultural Trauma and Collective Identity", Alexander (2004a) offered a theory for cultural sociologists to analyse cultural trauma. He defined cultural trauma as socially mediated attributions. Collective trauma occurred when the patterned meanings of the collective was abruptly dislodged (ibid.). This dislodgement was not caused naturally by the event itself (ibid.). Because the identity of the collective was culturally constructed, the trauma to it must be formulated in the cultural realm (ibid.). Social crisis such as the failure of the government to provide basic protection to its people could cause social pain. But they do not necessarily become cultural crisis unless they were represented as threats to the collective identity (ibid.). In a later chapter, Alexander (2004b) used the example of the Holocaust to demonstrate its initial failure to create a collective trauma. In the early news covering the Jewish concentration camps, the survivors were weird-looking and alien-like (ibid.). Although the atrocity was obvious, the audience was not able to identify with the victims (ibid.). Alexander argued that "there is an interpretive grid through which 'facts' about trauma are mediated, emotionally, cognitively, and morally." Alexander (2004a) provided the four dimensions of such interpretive grid:

1. The nature of the pain: what exactly happened?
2. The nature of the victim: who were directly affected by this traumatic pain?
3. Relation of the trauma victim to the wider audience: how did the victims relate to the collective? The wider audience referred to people of the collective who were not directly affected by the initial event. The victims need to be presented as sharing the valued qualities of the collective so that the collective can identify with the direct victims, hence symbolically participating in the trauma.

4. Attribution of responsibility: who was responsible for causing this trauma?

These elements are culturally mediated. It was through creating a master narrative answering these four questions that values were attributed to the initial event (Alexander, 2004a). The event can thus be experienced by the collective. Within the larger collective, there were carrier groups who were socially situated so that they possessed the rights to make claims on behalf of the collective. The master narrative was articulated by the carrier group to the collective at large. When the collective was convinced, cultural trauma was formed.

Eyerman (2004) explored the trauma of slavery as collective memory among the African American community. He traced the discourse around slavery from the end of the Civil War to the Civil Rights movement. He argued that the source of cultural trauma was not slavery itself (ibid.). The cultural trauma originated from unfulfilled promised future. The former slaves were promised a nation where race and the caste system organising around it would be demolished. During the reconstruction era, African Americans were more concerned with the promises of the future than the tragedy of the past. After the reconstruction era, it was proven that oppression based on race still existed. Without the hope of entering society as equal citizens, black people in the United States were left to formulate their alternate collective memory and identity (ibid.). Eyerman (2004) asserted that slavery for the black people was a social condition and a lived experience. It was the origin of their distinct way of life, culture, community, and identity (ibid.). It was the reference point to which generations of black people posit their identity. This shared (but not necessarily direct) memory of slavery served as the basis of their identity in the wake of the crushing disappointment (ibid.). In the Civil Rights movement, this discourse of collective trauma was presented to the wider audience of the American public. It transformed from the collective trauma of the black people to the

national trauma of the United States (ibid.). Eyerman (2004) proposed that cultural trauma occurred when the memory and meaning of the event was established and accepted by the collective. It is a process that takes time. Therefore, there is necessarily a time lapse between the initial event and the formulation of cultural trauma.

Both Alexander (2004a; 2004b) and Eyerman (2004) agreed that the initial event itself can be traumatizing to the individual. However, for cultural trauma to occur, the event must be articulated and accepted by the collective as its shared experience, rather than that of its individual members. The collective gained cohesion through the articulation of cultural trauma. Although they were discussing "cultural trauma", the term was adopted to highlight the culturally constructed aspect of traumas experienced by collectives. Thus, I will proceed to discuss "collective trauma", as this is the term used by other scholars.

In studying the freeter movement in Japan, Carl Cassegard (2013) observed that social movements had created alternative space so that empowerment could occur, and trauma healed. Carl Cassegard (2013, 14) defined collective trauma as "damage sustained by discursive systems that hold collectives together" (2013). Following Eyerman's definition of cultural trauma, Cassegard categorized collective trauma as the loss of or damage to the collective identity (ibid.). However, he did not completely align with the constructivist position. Instead of forming a new discursive identity, collective trauma can be destructive to the collective identity, especially when it is unverbalized (ibid.). He argued that collective trauma is not something formulated in discourse; instead, it is something that happens to discourse (ibid, 2013:16). Collective trauma does not only happen when a new discourse endows meaning to the initial event, but it also happens when a new cohesive discourse is unable to be formulated. In the case of the New Left movement, the collective trauma

occurred when the activists could not defend themselves to the public when they were discredited and marginalized by the government spokesperson and the major newspapers. The victimized collective was unable to articulate their loss. The trauma of the New Left's failure did not only affect the people directly experiencing the event. Those who strongly identify with the cause, and those who were educated in a society marked by this trauma, were all victims of this collective trauma (Cassegard 2013:17-18). In place of mass protests, the freeter movement focused on creating alternative spaces for the freeters. These spaces allowed its participants to interact with others without feeling powerless. It shielded its participants from the oppressive powers of the mainstream. Alternative spaces were not characterized by any physical spaces; instead, it was the social milieu that allowed alternative discourses to be discussed freely. Empowerment was the subjective experience of deeming one's actions and opinions to have power and influence (Cassegard, 2013). Recovery was enacted by articulating the needs, desires, and sufferings of the victimized people again, not necessarily by a return to the old, but perhaps a new discourse and mode of solidarity (Cassegard, 2013).

Ginwright (2010) offered the idea of "radical healing" akin to the recovery that occurs in the "alternative space" observed by Cassegard. He studied activism among African American youth after the Civil Rights movement. For the marginalized African American youth, they faced gentrification, high rates of unemployment, and a paucity of decent paying jobs (ibid.). He proposed that oppression for the urban black youths had generated "social toxins". These toxins constrained the youths' capability to act, leading to apathy, fatalism and self-destructive behaviours. In response to this social and collective trauma, activism took the form of "radical healing" or "social detoxification". Healing involved reconciling with trauma from the past, recognizing the oppressions of the present, while imagining a better

tomorrow. Experiences resulting from oppression may seem like personal misfortune at times. However, creating spaces for the urban youth to articulate their pain enabled them to see it as the result of systemic oppression. These conversations resulted in a collective consciousness, supporting young people to act on building a better future. One example of these spaces was hip-hop culture, where black youth could conceptualize social organization by a new paradigm. Radical healing was "the process of building hope, optimism and vision to create justice in the midst of oppression" (2010, 85).

Veena Das (2007) offered an alternative mode of reinhabiting the world marked by trauma, not through articulation of discourses, by through everyday acts of knitting together a liveable life. She studied women who experienced the trauma of the Partition of India and Pakistan and the 1984 riot. The official narrative from the Indian government was centred around the pride of the masculine nation. Once the women were returned to their homes, social order was restored. The women were discussed like pawns between the two countries. However, for the abducted women, returning to India was not the end of the violence. The violence seeped into ongoing relationships, it created a field of force within which the women and their families lived (ibid.). Horror stories of the Partition were circulated and heard, yet no one knew of their authors, or the specific people who participated in them. The actual experiences of the women were not sayable. The violence in the Partition was so horrific that it tested the very definition of human life. It was outside the realm of perceivable human experience, unlike husbands beating or mistreating their wives, which can be scripted in everyday life. The memory of the violence was kept and sealed in place. Kinship was built on top of the torn social fabric left from the initial incidents. The violence experienced by these Indian women was articulated, not through deliberate acts of defiance, but through inhabiting the world, and inhabiting it again, as a gesture of mourning (ibid.). Das was less concerned

with the discursive recovery of collective identity, than the everyday task of knitting together a life again. She stated that "life was recovered not through some grand gestures in the realm of the transcendent but through a descent into the ordinary" (2007, 7).

Clara Han (2012) observed how the project of putting together a life was enacted by caring for one another. She studied how life was lived amidst memories and resemblance of past state violence after the democratic transition in Chile. Under the dictatorship of Augusto Pinochet, dissidents were tortured, disappeared, and exiled; neoliberal economic structure was adopted where the poor was neglected, and businesses were thriving at the expense of the labourers. After the democratic reform in 1990, the state owed the former protesters a "moral debt" and the poor a "social debt" and made efforts to repay them through various social programs (Han 2012). However, the democratic transition was not a break from the past. The neoliberal economic model was inherited from the authoritarian regime by the democratic government (ibid.). The democratic transition did not lead to the radical change in social and economic structure A the communist militants Hs once hoped. State violence as experienced under the Pinochet regime had perpetuated in the form of economic precarity and financial debt (ibid.). Han found that the self was enmeshed in complex matrixes of relations and responsibilities. One became "responsible", not in terms of an autonomous wilful self, but through being responsive to one another (Han 2012). Both Das' and Han's work showed how violence and oppression was woven into and mitigated through everyday relations. Acts of recovery were not reversing the harm but building lives and relations on top of the ruins of past violence.

The Sites

Ginchi

Ginchi was a small restaurant opened in 2020. I named it "Ginchi" for this paper. "Ginchi" in Cantonese means keeping on or holding on (堅持). It referred to the desire to hold on to the initial resolution and to keep the movement alive. These desires, as I observed and as iterated by the restaurant owners, formed the ideological goal of the restaurant. The restaurant was owned by Barnie and Danny. Danny worked in the kitchen almost every day. Barnie occasionally worked as a waiter or in the kitchen, only when needed. They were both passionate participants in the movement. Each of them had different roles when protests were frequent. They opened the restaurant as an answer to the question: " What more can I do?". They wanted to contribute to the cause, however they could, while they still could.

Much like many other restaurants in Hong Kong, the tables in Ginchi were cramped. When business was good, customers sat shoulder to shoulder. A staff of five to six worked in the restaurant every day. In the afternoon, the restaurant was closed for two hours so that the staff could eat, take a break, and prepare for the dinner session. The staff was a close-knit group that generally enjoyed each other's company. Danny, Ah Kai, Ah Him, and Evelyn were regulars in the kitchen. The wait staff were not as regular. Tammy, Candy, and Holiday were the ones that worked most frequently, while there were other members of staff that I only saw once during my fieldwork period.

Barnie was an avid supporter of the social movement in 2019. In the months leading to the district council election in November, 2019, he worked closely with a pro-democratic candidate on the campaign. However, he was soon disappointed when he discovered that the politician was not genuine in helping the cause. Moreover, there was not much a politician can do within the political system of Hong Kong anyway. Barnie felt that he needed an alternative way to effect change.

Before the movement, Danny was an employee at a facility mainly serving police officers. After seeing the news on 12th June, 2019[3], he was appalled by the violence of the police. He pointed to the fact that they bashed old people, women, and students who were defenseless. Danny subsequently quit his job and committed to the movement entirely (全職抗爭）. Much like Barnie, Danny felt the need to find a new way of dissent after the district council elections in November. It was partly due to the belief that not much change could be done from inside the current political system, and partly the realisation that street protests were not sustainable. He described that it would be like waiting to be arrested (等拉), if he continued street protesting indefinitely. Both seeking for a new form of dissent, they opened "Ginchi". Danny expressed that the goal for the restaurant was not to turn a profit. The "yellow" completely outweighed the "business". As told by Danny, "If we were not yellow, I would not be doing this. (如果唔係黃就唔搞啦)".

Jenny's

Jenny's was a restaurant. It was established in mid-2019. It was significantly bigger than Ginchi. Despite having twice the capacity of Ginchi, the number of waiters was the same as in Ginchi. One of the waiters, Ah See, complains numerous times on this arrangement. The restaurant was adorned with posters about the anti-ELAB movement. Outside the restaurant was a poster condemning the Hong Kong government's refusal to close the borders of Hong Kong in order to stop the spread of the pandemic. Inside the restaurant, at the entrance were stacks of red banners for the Chinese New Year available for taking. There were six stacks of

[3] On 12th June, 2019, a large band of protesters occupied the main roads surrounding the legislative council building, in an attempt to stall the legislative process on the amendment of the extradition law. The legislative council meeting was hence cancelled. In response to the protesters, the police fired 240 rounds of tear gas, about 19 rubber bullets, about 3 beanbag rounds, and about 30 rounds of sponge grenades. The street was cleared by the end of the day. It was one of the earliest protests of the movement.

about 300 to 500 red banners. The messages were all related to the movement. Out of the six, three were about the importance of perseverance; one was about their love for Hong Kong, quoting the gigantic banner held by protesters on 1st July, 2020: "We love Hong Kong so fucking much (我哋真係好撚鐘意香港)"; Two were wishing that the one would be safe and well under the difficult time. On the table next to the red banners were stacks of stickers with political messages. All were written in riddles. One design was the silhouette of the words "Liberate Hong Kong; Revolution of Our Times (光復香港, 時代革命)" with shapes like triangles and rectangles. One said "Tyranny must end. Dawn is coming (暴政必亡, 黎明將至)" in the same style. One was particularly confusing. There were two rows of four small pictures, presumably each stood for one Chinese word. I asked around and no one knew what it meant, except one of the waiters, Hyde. It turned out that it meant "One Country Two Systems, Exist in Name Only (一國兩制, 名存實亡). The stickers were written in riddles to avoid breaching the National Security Law. The stickers might seem confusing to those who were not familiar with the trends of the movement. These print products were given by a fellow "yellow shop" down the street. They were meant to be taken by the customers, who in turn would put them up at their doors, on their processions, or on the streets to spread the message.

For my first few days at Jenny's, the thing I heard the most was, "You don't have to work too hard here. The pay isn't so good anyway." This was interesting, because the hourly pay at Ginchi was only HKD$5 more than that at Jenny's. The work at Ginchi was arguably harder too, because it was usually busier than Jenny's. However, the morale at Ginchi was much higher. The employees significantly cared more about the restaurant. When I was new in

Ginchi, I was reminded not to waste the food or cost the restaurant business. Although staff members from either restaurant cited their salary as the reason for their job attitudes, I believe that the real reason lay somewhere else. As I will illustrate in the following sections, Jenny's failed to serve as an alternative space, as Ginchi did for its employees. The cohesion among the people at Ginchi was simply not to be found at Jenny's, hence the difference in morale.

What It Meant to Be "Yellow"

"Yellow" as Sheltering "Arms and Legs" - Ginchi

Both Barnie and Danny from Ginchi were proud to say that all of their staff were "arms and legs"[4]. Danny was very proud to say that their employees were paid with the highest wages among all the "yellow businesses" in the district. Many of the employees were arrested for the protests and are still on trial. The fact that they were on trial was a key indicator of their identity as "arms and legs". Although nearly all my informants believed that the term did not only refer to people carrying charges from the protests, they all pointed to this as a clear indicator before they expanded the definition of the term.

The employers believed that the purpose for the "yellow" business was to provide financial support to the "arms and legs" after they had been arrested. Danny noted that it was particularly hard for protesters to find employment after their arrests. There was only so much that politicians, or humanitarian foundations like "612 Humanitarian Relief Fund" [5] could do. While they could provide legal support, the "arms and legs" also needed to make a

[4] 手足, a common term referring to protesters, literally translated, the scope of the term depends on the interpretations of different persons.
[5] A fund with the objective to provide financial assistance for medical treatment, psychological counselling, legal advice and representation and related hardship to those who are injured, arrested or affected during Anti-ELAB protests (612 Humanitarian Relief Fund).

living while they were waiting for their appearance in court. That was where the "yellow" business came in.

The "yellow" business also provided social support for its employees. It was the restaurant policy that when any of the employees were in court, the restaurant would close for the day so that the whole staff could show their support. For Ah Kai, working at Ginchi gave him a new purpose. He lived alone. After quitting his job in August 2019, he was fully immersed in the protests. He noticed that after November, 2019, there was a fading out of the protests (抗爭淡忘、冷卻. Before the pandemic o utbreak, there were still protests in February or March, 2020, and Ah Kai still participated. When the street protests completely subsided, Ah Kai was at a loss. He was just drifting through day by day (得過且過). He said he was always waiting—waiting to go to court, waiting to die.

It was different after he started working at Ginchi. After taking up this job, he found something he wanted to do. He found that the boss (Danny) had a higher goal, and he would like to help him complete it. Instead of waiting for his doom, he wanted to better equip himself to achieve Danny's goal. Ah Kai was also happy to work with people with whom he could talk. By talking to Ah Him, another "arms and legs" employee, Ah Kai realised that they were actually at the same scene in one of the protests. In his own words, they "ran together". The companionship was precious for an otherwise isolated protester like Ah Kai. Working at a "yellow" business was not simply about putting food on the table, for Ah Kai, he found a new lease of life because of it.

Those at Ginchi were critical of "yellow" businesses that they did not think were genuinely "yellow". I was surprised when I first visited Ginchi that there were not a lot of political

propaganda on the walls. Many "yellow" businesses established since the end of 2019 were adorned with eye-catching wall-paintings of symbols from the movement or large "Lennon walls" where customers could leave their political aspirations. Other than the cards on the counter with the message "save 12[6]", there were not many indicators of the restaurant being "yellow". Barnie criticized the practices of publicity stunts among other "yellow" businesses. He pointed to the selling of "yellow souvenirs" or meal coupons and joining "yellow" organizations. He thought there were no practical values in these actions other than promoting businesses. Barnie explained that certain "yellow" restaurants sold meal coupons at a lowered price to "parents"[7]. The "parents" then distributed the meal coupons to the protesters under their care. However, often only a small fraction of the coupons was redeemed. Even when they were, the redeemer did not seem to be an "arms and legs" in need. Barnie was sceptical of the effects of the meal coupons. He suspected that the only ones who benefitted were the business owners. They earned money by selling meal coupons that were never redeemed and gained publicity for doing so. Ah Kai was disapproving of "yellow" businesses that profited over their public political stance and were not actually contributing to the cause. For example, once there was a "yellow" business that posted on social media that two of their employees were out protesting that day. This exposed the two employees to legal repercussions. The fact that the restaurant was still open for business that day also bothered Ah Kai. "There are people fighting outside and you are open for business (出面打緊仗，你就開鋪賺錢)." Ah Kai thought that if there were protests on the day, the restaurant should close to allow its employees to go to the protests. It was different for

[6] On the 23rd August, 2020, 12 Hong Kong citizens were arrested for crossing the national border illegally. They were captured by the Chinese police and detained in Shenzhen, China. Their well-beings are, to this day, unknown. Since their arrest, there had been calls to bring them back to Hong Kong.

[7] A protest role, typically middle-aged or above, financially well-off supporters of the movement. They usually provide financial support to the protesters but seldom participate in the street protests in person.

Ginchi, Ah Kai remarked. When any of its employees were on trial, the restaurant would close for the day to support them.

Ah Kai thought that "yellow" business should mean that the money earned from the customers should go to the political cause, either by donating to the 612 foundation, or by hiring "arms and legs". Ginchi was an example of this. The salary for its employees was higher than the usual rates, and almost all of the employees were "arms and legs". The "yellow" businesses that only hired a few "arms and legs" with low wages were not genuinely "yellow" in Ah Kai's eyes.

Doubts as to Whether Jenny's Was "Yellow"?

Ah See was an employee at Jenny's, and a personal friend of mine. When I first proposed conducting my fieldwork at the restaurant as a volunteer waiter, he was adamant that he did not want me to help or benefit the restaurant in any way. It was only after I expressed that of course I would be happy to get paid that he agreed to introduce me. In a previous conversation with him and other friends, he denied that the restaurant was "yellow" at all. Another friend searched on Jenny's and found it listed as a "yellow" restaurant on a website. Ah See responded, "Fine, if the list says it's 'yellow' then it's 'yellow'". He then added that there were not enough indicators for him to consider it "yellow".

Ah See did not think the restaurant was "yellow", mainly because of his conversations with the owner, Jenny. He did not see any indications that she intended for the restaurant to contribute to the movement in the ways he thought it should. He imagined that "yellow" businesses should donate part of their proceeds to the cause, like the 612 Humanitarian Relief Fund. He thought of one of the other restaurants in the area as truly "yellow". He witnessed

the owner of that restaurant rushing out of the restaurant to yell at the police as they opened fire in the area. He was impressed by the guts and the passion of that owner, not afraid to put the restaurant and his own safety on the line. Being a mild-tempered person, it was unlikely that Jenny would ever do anything of the same sort.

"Coming Out" as "Yellow"

Jenny's was opened in mid-2019, right at the peak of the anti-ELAB movement. When the restaurant first opened, there were not a lot of street protests in the area. Most of them were concentrated in the busiest areas of Hong Kong. Business carried on as usual. Even when the protests spread to the area, citizens would line up and get their food despite conflicts breaking out on the next street. The mundane everyday life and the conflicts occurred side by side.

Although the owner, Jenny, was keeping an eye on the movement, she did not act on her political concerns. Jenny was reluctant to mix business with politics. She was afraid that coming out as a "yellow" restaurant would complicate the way the business was run. Besides, when the restaurant first opened, the idea of "yellow" restaurants had not yet taken shape. Being the new restaurant that it was, it could not afford to join the strikes either. It was not identified as a "yellow" restaurant at the time, neither was it the intention of the owners for it to be positioned as "yellow".

It was only with the death of Chow Tsz Lok (Alex)[8] on 8th November that Jenny was immensely shocked that the society has turned to this. She could not recognise this city she

[8] Chow Tsz Lok was a student of the Hong Kong University of the Science and Technology. On 4th November, 2019, there was a clash of the police and protesters in Tseung Kwan O. Chow was wandering in a car park in Sheung Tak, Tseung Kwan O. He fell from the third floor of the car park to the second floor, allegedly running from several police officers. Some suspected that he was in fact unconscious at the time and was thrown by the police. The fall resulted in multiple injuries, including severe brain damage. He later died in the hospital on

called her home. She felt compelled to act. She decided to put up photos of him and flowers in front of the restaurant. It was to provide a way for the grieving citizens of Hong Kong to vent. She was aware that this would transform the restaurant from an apolitical restaurant to a "yellow" restaurant, yet she could no longer stay silent.

There were expectations for "yellow" businesses to run. Shortly after the restaurant came out as "yellow", the protesters called for a city-wide strike. Jenny's did not close the restaurant on that day. Instead, more than 50% of the proceeds would go to the 612 Foundation. It was a gesture to support the movement, while trying not to lose business as a new restaurant.

Hyde was a waiter who had worked at Jenny's since the day it opened. He lived within walking distance of the restaurant. On the day of the strike, he was one of the few who could still go to work. A lot of the other employees were unable to get to the restaurant due to the city-wide blockades.

Hyde himself went to build blockades in the morning before going to work.[9] There were not a lot of workers at the restaurant. That was a particularly quiet day. Not only had the other "yellow" restaurants closed in solidarity, but various other restaurants avoided opening for business for the fear of being caught in the middle of the conflicts between the police and the protesters.

8th November due to cardiac arrest. Aside from unconfirmed cases, the death of Chow was the first death caused by the confrontations between the police and the protesters.

[9] He used the term "morning jog". It was a euphemism for building blockades before rush hours in the morning, so that the commuters could not go to work. Usually, the only people on the streets before the morning rush hours would be morning joggers, hence the euphemism.

While Hyde was at the restaurant, clashes between the police and the protests developed around the blockades nearby. One "arms and legs" happened to pass by. Noticing the "Lennon wall" outside the restaurant, they started yelling at the restaurant. The "arms and legs" was angry that the restaurant, while appearing to be "yellow", did not participate in the strike. However, there was a sign at the door saying that most of the proceeds for the day would go to the 612 foundations. Hyde was angered by this behaviour, thinking that both the restaurant and he had done their parts in the protests. It was irritating, especially because he helped build the blockades in the morning, yet he could not disclose his involvement in it. He could only stand and take the heat from this "arms and legs", who was unaware of efforts paid by restaurant and himself.

There Was Only so Much We Can Do

Jenny's was opened amid the protests. When the strikes occurred, the restaurant was still at its early stage. Like any other starting business, its primary goal was to break even. It could not take the risk of joining the strikes. Since early 2020, restrictions on dining-in had impacted the business. It was especially tough when restaurants could only do take-out orders after 6 p.m. In May to June 2020, the number of waiters had been cut in half. Although the restaurant was aware of the supposed duty to help struggling "arms and legs", the restaurant simply did not have the resources to do so. Both Jenny and Hyde posited that if the restaurant were better-off financially, or had a more solid foundation, more could be done to help those in need.

In fact, in early 2021, the restaurant was in such bad shape that it had to call for help (告急) from the "yellow circle". Because of the fluctuating pandemic control measures, once dining-

in was outlawed, the business would plummet. There were months where the restaurant only had revenue of several thousand HKD a day. It was barely enough to cover the salaries. After calling for help, business picked up. The effects lasted for two to three months, after which the hype had faded, and business went back to normal. Thankfully, the restrictions on eating in restaurants had been relaxed. The viability of the restaurant was no longer in jeopardy. The unpredictability of dining restrictions had made running a restaurant particularly difficult. There was no knowing when would the restrictions be lifted. Calling for help was a desperate measure to save the restaurant.

Personally, Jenny was a supporter of the pan-democratic camp. In the binary of blue versus yellow, she would be classified as "yellow". However, she was the supporter of the political parties that encouraged lawful assemblies instead of violent protests. Because of her preference for peaceful assemblies, it was unlikely for her to meet the targets of help for "yellow" businesses. As mentioned above, the protesters who participated in the illegal forms of resistance were careful not to leak the details of their involvements. It was not easy for Jenny to reach out.

Once, Jenny's husband found online that a young "arms and legs" was looking for a temporary job. Jenny decided to help out and offered her a job as a waiter at the restaurant. However, Jenny had to fire her within the same day. The young protester was introduced by a "parent"[10] . The "parent" accompanied her to her first day of work, during which she simply stood without doing much work. Usually, the waiters were a little irritated by Jenny when she helped at the restaurant, because she was not a very good cashier or waiter. Jenny occasionally made mistakes or ignored customers because she was too focused on her phone.

[10] See footnote 7.

That was why it was amusing that even Jenny could not stand the incompetence of the young "arms and legs". After two hours of standing there like a lucky cat ornament (the original words of Ah See), the young "arms and legs" was laid off.

Hyde illustrated several schemes in which Jenny's had participated. All of them were organised by the "yellow economic circle" in the area. Most of them were to disburse cards with messages for the other supporters of the movement and to promote different "yellow' restaurants in the process. One of the schemes was meal ticket program. The scheme was meant for the "yellow" restaurants to provide free meals to those in need without shouldering the financial burden entirely. The restaurants participating in the program would sell meal tickets at a discounted price. For example, a meal ticket for a lunch set would be sold at 80% of the original cost. Supporters of the movement who were financially well-off could buy the tickets and gift them to the "arms and legs" who were struggling financially. Buyers of the tickets could choose to gift the tickets to the "arms and legs" personally or leave them in a collection box at the restaurant. The tickets from the box would then be distributed through the network of the "yellow economic circle", to the "arms and legs" in need. Holders of the tickets could redeem a meal at different restaurants.

As Hyde observed, most of those who paid for the meal tickets were middle-aged. They would buy the meal tickets in bulk, perhaps ten in a roll, and leave them at the collection box. However, Hyde only witnessed two people redeeming the tickets. Presumably, a large portion of the meal tickets were left unused. Although the scheme was not quite successful in helping the former protesters in need, Ah See judged that the restaurant should be at least marginally "yellow" for its efforts.

People from Jenny's were aware that they were not able to contribute to the movement in the ways and to the extent that outsiders would imagine the restaurant should. Although they realised that this was due to the difficulties of the restaurant as it tried to keep itself afloat, the lack of personal networks was also an important factor. When I was referred to Ginchi, my friend described it as "hardcore" yellow. This recognition was based on the fact that most of the team were facing charges for protesting in the anti-ELAB movement. Nearly all of employees from Ginchi were recruited through the personal networks of the owners. Being a supporter of peaceful assemblies, it was unlikely that Jenny could do the same. Most of the crew of Jenny's were recruited online, or through the network of the online-recruited employees.

Jenny's Within the "Yellow Economic Circle"

Jenny was not a person who liked to follow the pack (埋堆). At the time the restaurant came out, the "yellow economic circle" was largely led by a famous "yellow" restaurant in the area. Most of the other "yellow" restaurants would simply follow the lead of the restaurant, without much to say.

Jenny's usually avoided getting too close with the other shops in the "yellow economic circle". The restaurant declared its political stance at a peculiar time. By November, 2019, the idea of "yellow economic circle" had already emerged. Some supporters of the "yellow economic circle" could interpret coming out as "yellow" at such a time as taking advantage of the movement to drum up business, as evidenced by the "arms and legs" who yelled at the restaurant on the day of the strike. The restaurant did not occupy the moral high ground within the "yellow economic circle". Jenny was very much aware of this. She felt the need to be careful about what the restaurant posted on social media. She was anxious of attacks from

both her fellow "arms and legs" and saboteurs of the "yellow economic circle". The anonymity of internet users worried her. She was trying to have a footing within the "yellow economic circle" (站得住腳), while simultaneously not attracting so much attention to the restaurant that it would become the target of attacks.

She was aware of the disputes within the "yellow economic circle". She commented that a lot of them were fundamentally rooted in financial disputes, rather than ideological conflicts. She had recently been involved in a financial conflict with another "yellow" restaurant, the details of which she was reluctant to disclose. Although she was quite upset by the actions of the other "yellow" restaurant, she preferred to let it go or settle it in private, rather than exposing the other restaurant online. She would rather save the trouble of making herself and the restaurant a spectacle. However, she posited that if the other restaurant was not a fellow "yellow" restaurant, she would definitely turn against them (反枱). The common political ground had actually made the matter more complicated.

Have You No Shame?

Within the yellow camp, there was an attribution of shame among different agents. In hearing about the meal tickets scheme at Jenny's, Ah See kept joking and asking why Hyde didn't give him some of the tickets. At the time of the meal tickets scheme, Ah See had already been prosecuted for protesting in the anti-ELAB movement. Although he was not financially desperate, he could qualify as the intended receiver of the tickets. However, Hyde joked that Ah See had no shame. Ah See echoed that joke, self-teasing that he indeed had no shame. If he could get his hands on the tickets, the people at Jenny's would see him every day, having lunch for free. Hyde then remarked that a lot of people were not like Ah See, as people do

have a sense of shame. Most of them would feel like they were simply doing their part for Hong Kong. Not many of them would feel entitled to this sort of charity, unless they were down to the end of the rope.

On the other hand, Hyde and Ah See were aware that some would call the meal tickets "indulgence". Buyers of the tickets could ease the guilt they felt for not putting themselves on the line by paying for the meals for others. Although neither of my informants agreed with this interpretation, it spoke to the moral values embedded in the exchanges of the meal tickets. More on this will be discussed in the "Private interests and the traumatized collective" section.

The Act of Articulation

Political Mutism

One day during my fieldwork in Ginchi, thirty minutes before the staff break, a group of middle-aged women came in and chatted loudly while they enjoyed their food. One of them was particularly loud and proud of the fact that she was at the 9th June march. Ironically, she could not remember whether it was in 2019 or 2018. She got into an argument with her friends. Since it was near the staff break, the staff were not so busy. We stood amused while the argument dragged on. In the end, one of the women asked Barnie whether the 9th June was 2019 or 2018. He was sly in answering that there was a 9th June in both 2018 and 2019, but the march only happened in 2019. Not long after, the group left, leaving the comment: "We can only talk about this sort of thing so freely here. If it's outside, we can't talk like this." This was amusing, because joining the peaceful march on 9th June was usually not taboo. It was a peaceful, legal march. From the fact that the woman kept repeating that it was

her first time protesting and forgetting the year of the march, she did not seem to be very involved in the movement at large. Yet she was not wrong in pointing out that certain experiences could only be shared with "one of our own"(自己人).

Danny commented that, under the NSL, no one knew what another person was thinking (大家唔知大家諗乜). Keeping one's mouth shut was an important tactic to protect oneself. Disclosing that one was at a certain protest, or involved in producing or supplying materials for the protests, could lead to one's arrest or disappearance. No one could speak freely. It was hard to identify if someone was "one of our own".

Working with the people at Ginchi, I learnt about the meaningful work done here. However, the average customer, or a concerned "yellow ribbon" in general would have no idea in what ways Ginchi was "yellow". The only information available to them was that the shop displayed a minimal amount of political print products that qualified it as "yellow". The restaurant did not even participate in the promotion activities among the yellow shops in the area. It did not have a strong social media presence either. To any bystander, Ginchi might seem not so "yellow" after all. However, it was not possible for the shop to disclose its efforts in the movement. Not only would this endanger the employees, but the shop could also become a target for attack from the opposing camp or harassment from law enforcement agents.[11] While Danny knew the owners of some of the yellow shops nearby, he did not pry on exactly how the other owners contributed to the movement. He only had a vague impression that they were also fighting for a good cause. While the people at Ginchi felt that the Hong Kong society had abandoned the movement, it was possible that this perspective

[11] There had been cases of famous "yellow" businesses being violently attacked (Stand News 2020b; Stand News 2020c) or harassed by law enforcement agents or other citizens (Apple Daily 2020; Tsang 2020).

was facilitated by the collective silence. When the NSL was implemented in July, 2020, many "yellow" businesses removed the political displays in the shop (Stand News 2020d; Lee H.Y. 2020; Chan C.T. 2020; Wu S.Y. 2020). When each actor was hesitant to display their political efforts, it would appear like no one was trying to advance the movement.

Within the Four Walls of Ginchi

Danny was extremely careful not to leak details of his involvement in the protests. During the period of my fieldwork, he never joined the conversations about experiences in the protests. During individual interviews, he took long pauses before describing the events as if he was not at any of the scenes. The practice of staying silent about one's involvement in the protests was common among the staff of Ginchi. Nonetheless, little details seeped out once in a while: injuries from police batons, tips on what to do when arrested. The conversation usually did not stay on the topic for very long.

Ah Kai is a talkative person. Once, during the dinner session, business was slow and the staff was quiet. He whined constantly that he was going to be bored to death. He could not tolerate even ten minutes of silence. He always tried to keep the conversations light. When Ah Kai learned that the judge assigned to his case was a "blue" one[12], he was silent and lifeless for the day. Although he did not explicitly share his anxiety, the other staff members noticed his change in demeanour. One day, Ah Kai joked constantly about being the thirteenth Hong Kong youth to be disappeared[13]. He brought it up to remind his friends that he could disappear any day. He asked repeatedly if they would save him. He expressed his anxiety and

[12] By the time this project was conducted, many protesters had already been in court. Many of them had already received their verdicts. From observing the behaviours of the judges in these cases, many in the rebellion had categorised some of the judges as "blue" or "red". The colours referred to political affiliations. A "blue" or "red" judge was one that would be unlikely to rule in favour of the accused protesters.
[13] See footnote 6.

concerns for his own safety through banter. Within the four walls of Ginchi, there was more wiggle room for one to share their experiences, after all, everyone there was certified as "one of our own". Despite that, there were issues that were just too heavy to mention in everyday settings.

Ah Him was the polar opposite: the few times we had extended conversations on the protests, they were initiated by him. He was eager to share details of his arrest. It was a peaceful protest, he was in the front line. The protesters had been talking to the officers. They made a deal that if the people in the back stop pointing their lasers at the police, the police would leave. Subsequently, the uniformed police officers left. Much to Ah Him's surprise, then came the riot police. They were a lot more frantic than the uniformed officers. Before Ah Him could respond, he was pinned down and unable to leave. He even showed us the press video of his capture. If the silence from Danny and Ah Kai were to protect themselves, Ah Him could speak freely because his arrest was rather public. Not much harm could be done even if his words were leaked. While he discussed the incident for which he was arrested extensively, he barely touched on the times he went protesting and was not caught. This was the same for Ah Kai, his legal case came up occasionally, but he would never bring up the times he was not caught. When I pulled him from the shop for an individual interview, Ah Kai spoke more freely about his experience, with the constant reassurance of anonymity.

The Act of Standing Witness

The Rejection of "Normal"

Most of my informants condemned the return to "normal". They interpreted that living a "normal" life meant forgetting or giving up on the movement. Looking at the present

condition of Hong Kong, Barnie thought that Hong Kong people had settled[14] because of the pandemic and the NSL. He found it unacceptable to settle or to give in (妥協). Ah Kai echoed this by commenting that many Hong Kong citizens had gone back to a "normal" life, especially those that had never been arrested.

This detestation for a normal life stemmed from the nostalgia for the mode of protesting in 2019. Barnie noticed that the number of protesters showing up at the recent protests had significantly decreased. The overall atmosphere had also changed. Many protesters were more hesitant to take their dissent to the streets. Barnie felt helpless[15] over this phenomenon. He lamented that there was no going back to the large-scale protests like the first few ones in June. This sentiment was shared by Ah Kai. Although the sites of protest were not close to where he lived, he would sometimes go out specially to reminisce (等登出去懷念). When he occasionally passed by the site of protests, he actually yearned for the days when there were many people fighting with him side-by-side (咁多人齊上齊落). He yearned for the days when many Hong Kong people stood up and fought for a better future. Much to my surprise, he was not troubled by his memories of the protests.

Ah Kai did not want a "normal" life for himself either. He interpreted a "normal" life as one segregated from political pursuits. He felt that this "normal" life was inaccessible to him because of the charges he was carrying. However, he would not want it even if he could get it. Ah Kai felt that, right now, there was not much for him to do, because he was all alone in

[14] His original word was:" 慣", which means "used to" or "accustomed to" in English, while these phrases required an object, he did not have any specific object in mind, that was why I translated it as "settled", as in settled to the overall situation, in a general sense.

[15] His original word was "無力感", the feeling that there was nothing to be done. Another possible translation is "powerless".

this pursuit of political progress. Nevertheless, once the opportunity presented itself (有一個契機), he would definitely be at the frontline of change (企到最前面).

Survival as Activism

Both Jenny and Hyde thought that the first order of business for the yellow businesses were to make profits. Of course, helping people was important, that was more of a responsibility (義務) for the "yellow" businesses. However, their existence was already the proof of the will of Hong Kong people.

Hyde found the expectations from the yellow camp quite unrealistic. In order to survive, a business must first make profits. At the end of the day, it was still about business, it was the "yellow economic circle", not the "yellow volunteer circle". Hyde highlighted the sustainability of the "yellow economic circle". He pointed out that other ways of voicing dissent had been snuffed out. Since the implementation of the NSL, many acts of resistance were outlawed. However, people will always have the right to choose their daily spending habits. The meaning of the "yellow economic circle" was not about its direct effects on the rule of the Hong Kong government. It was about proving their will. It was about acting on what was still under their control. He hoped that by surviving as "yellow businesses", Hong Kong citizens could realise that there was still something for them to do, that all hope was not lost.

He commented that protesting on the street was not directly impacting the rule of the Hong Kong government either. He experienced first-hand that the force of the protesters was no match for that of the police. The police had riot gears and all sorts of crowd control equipment. Even tear gas felt light compared to the other various weapons. On the other

hand, the most powerful weapon of the protesters were just Molotov cocktails. Most protesters could not do much more than run and hide when the police were attacking. Not unlike surviving as "yellow businesses", street protesting was about standing witness, showing the presence of dissenting voices.

Jenny echoed that the very existence of the "yellow economic circle" was an expression of resistance. The most important thing for yellow businesses were to turn a profit and expand their business. She thought of expansion as the means for survival. Being a business-minded person, she was aware that if a business does not expand into several locations, they could easily go out of business once the landlord decided to raise the rent. She was also worried about the expansion of Chinese-owned fast-food chains. She noticed that certain Chinese-owned chains were expanding rapidly in Hong Kong. However, consumers could not tell that they were Chinese-owned. They did not have traits of the mainland (大陸味). Jenny felt quite strongly about the need for locally owned businesses, especially "yellow businesses" to take back the market share. Unlike Hyde, or even Danny and Barnie, her fellow "yellow business" owners from Ginchi, Jenny spoke mostly in business terms.

Futures

Interrupted Futures

Hyde was planning on working as a flight attendant after graduation. He even interviewed at Cathay Pacific[16] and got an offer to start his training right away. However, by that time, Cathay Pacific already knelt to the pressure from the Chinese government.[17] Hence, he

[16] A major airline in Hong Kong.
[17] On 26th July, 2019, a pilot from Cathay Pacific made an announcement on the plane as it landed in Hong Kong International Airport showing empathy to the protesters at the airport and asked the passengers not to be

decided not to take the offer and ended up working at Jenny's. He described it as the gutsiest (有骨氣) thing he did in his life. He evaluated that even if he did not decline the offer, he would probably get laid off in the covid-19 pandemic. Since working as a flight attendant did not seem to be an option for Hyde, he decided to work as a waiter at Jenny's full-time after graduating from school. He was referred to this job by his friend. Not long after my fieldwork at Jenny's, they both quit their jobs at the shop for personal health issues. He was hoping to get a desk job. He was unemployed at that moment.

Ah See was introduced to work at Jenny's as a part-time waiter by Hyde. He was facing criminal charges for rioting at the time. As I accompanied Ah See to his court hearing, I was surprised by his nonchalant attitude to his own case. We were supposed to have breakfast together before going to the court. Ah See was late to breakfast, yet he chose to have breakfast as planned. Expectedly, he was late for his court hearing. His lawyer was calling him when we were still on our way to the courthouse. Ah See commented that it was no big deal, he was late all the time. Because a lot of protesters were arrested on the same day, they were appearing in court together. Ah See was chatting with the other defendants while he was in the courtroom, without even trying to seem serious about his case. He even felt proud of himself for showing up at all. One of the other defendants remembered the court hearing date wrongly and was absent. Compared to that defendant, Ah See was quite responsible already.

Ah See seemed quite easy with his criminal charges, perhaps because it was not too pressing. That court hearing was to decide when he would go to trial, which would not start for another two years. In the meantime, Ah See's day-to-day life was not significantly affected by the

afraid of the protesters. He was no longer employed at Cathay Pacific in less than a month. It is suspected that this was due to pressure from the Civil Aviation Administration of China (Stand News, 2019).

charges. However, with the impending trial, Ah See had to readjust his career plans. He previously hoped to be a stock dealer after his graduation. But that was before the anti-ELAB movement and the pandemic. With the potential criminal record, his original career plan was probably inaccessible to him. Shortly after Hyde and his friend quit their jobs, permanent workers were recruited. Ah See was laid off as his help was no longer needed at Jenny's. Like Hyde, he was looking for a desk job.

No Future

Danny had a message that he desperately wanted people to hear. Since the enactment of the NSL, slogans like "liberate Hong Kong, revolution of our times," (光復香港，時代革命 or "Hong Kong Independence" (香港獨立) could not be spoken freely. People of the resistance could not identify one another easily; everyone went into hiding. He felt a strong sense of doom, that if something was not done about this, Hong Kong was on its deathbed. He assessed that 80% to 90% of the movement was a failure. He described the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) as an all-encompassing political machine that was almost impossible to defeat. However, the only way he would see the movement as a win was if the CCP collapsed. Danny set an incredibly high goal for the movement, and deemed it as nearly impossible. Nevertheless, his message was not only of desperation. Precisely because of the impossibility of this goal, Hong Kong people must keep fighting, with every fibre of their beings, with every step in life. Here he proposed a paradox, that precisely because there was nearly no hope, that Hong Kong people must keep fighting.

Ah Kai was a teenager who was facing trial for vandalising public properties and rioting. His verdict would be out in four months. If found guilty, he would face up to ten years behind bars. When asked about his future plans, he already asked his friends to take care of his cats

once he was gone. He would spend more time with his friends and family while he was still free. Anything beyond that, he had no plans. Once, when discussing with a friend of a friend who was facing similar charges, Ah Kai commented that they should flee the city. He could accept up to a year in prison, but if it was anything more than that, he would flee. However, interviewing him about a month after, Ah Kai was adamant that he chose to stay. He wanted to stand as a witness to the city's deterioration. Many people had already fled the city, but he did not wish to do the same. He would not know if he was still a Hong Kongese if he went away. His individual identity was tied to the city. If the reason for him to stand up in the first place was to stop Hong Kong from becoming like China, who would be there to see to it, if everyone fled? He had to stand witness, to let others know that there were still people fighting for Hong Kong, who loved Hong Kong. He wanted to do more, even if he did not know what more there was to do.

Conclusions

The Awakening

Many of my informants referred to the 2019 protests as an awakening (覺醒), both for the Hong Kong collective and for them personally. However, not unlike the term "arms and legs", they struggled to provide a definition of the term "awakening". Hyde commented that before the 2019 protest, every Hong Kong citizen was either a "Kong pig"[18] or a "blue ribbon". Although he did pay attention to the Umbrella Movement preceding the 2019 protests, he still considered himself to be a "Kong pig" retrospectively. During the anti-ELAB movement, he was "awakened". To be "awakened" was not only a matter of

[18] People who are not interested in politics, who concerns only of their private life.

participation or concern in politics, it was the radical overturn of the one's perception of Hong Kong as a city.

Before the anti-ELAB movement, most Hong Kong people, with different political stances, took pride in the city's modernity. Many built their cosmopolitan identity upon the city's advanced infrastructure (Wu 2020). This is reflected in the early stage of the anti-ELAB movement. On 1st July, even when the protesters forced the suspension of a Legislative Council (LegCo) meeting by breaking into the LegCo building, they intentionally followed the conventional moral codes for Hong Kong citizens. They left change for the soft drinks taken from the refrigerator, and constantly reminded each other not to steal. After their retreat, bags of trash were left by the side of the road, along with shattered glass and teargas shells. Even when adopting radical measures to pressure the government into changing its decisions, these citizens still tried to conserve the social order of Hong Kong.

"Awakening", then, referred to the moment when one's relationship with the city mutated. Most of my informants described a moment when they could not believe what they were seeing in Hong Kong. This moment was different for each individual. For Danny, what he saw on 12th June was already enough for him to quit his job and uproot his previous way of life. Ah Kai referred to the incident on 21st July[19]. Hyde took the 31st August[20]. Jenny was

[19] On the night of 21st July, a large band of people in white gathered in Yuen Long railway station. Allegedly, they were responding to the rumour that anti-ELAB protesters would go into Yuen Long and sabotage their homes. Hence, they gathered in white to strike the protesters as they come into Yuen Long. The mob in white attacked civilians in the railway station. There were no indicators that the beaten passengers were involved in the protests. Despite pouring calls to the police hotline, the police arrived 39 minutes after the incident began. This incident marked the relationship between the protesters and the police with hostility and deep distrust.

[20] There were protests in Kowloon. In an attempt to capture fleeing protesters, police officers entered the Prince Edward Station and attacked who appeared to be civilians. The attacked was neither in black clothing that characterised the protesters, nor holding weapons of any kind. The station was soon closed by the police, neither reporters nor medics were allowed entry. There were rumours among the protesters that the police killed someone that day. The rumour was rooted in the uncertainty of what happened during the window of time when the police took control of the station. Until this day, there was no proof that there were casualties.

shocked by the death of Chow Tsz Lok on 8th November. Although they referred to different incidents as the cause of their awakening, these were all moments when they felt like the Hong Kong as they knew was at stake. When they recapped the incidents, they focused on the victims of violence. They referred to the beatings of defenceless women, elderly and students (Danny); normal citizens just going home from work (Hyde, Ah Kai); and the death of a once promising university student (Jenny). Upon reading the news, they identified strongly with these suffering bodies. They felt that something was morally wrong about the violence inflicted upon them. Questions like "How did Hong Kong turn into this?" or "Something like this was actually happening in HONG KONG?" were often used to describe their disbelief. Hong Kong stopped being the cosmopolitan city upon which their identities were built. In its stead emerged the "awakened" collective based on the collective trauma of 2019.

The defining feature of collective trauma is that people who did not directly experience the initial event also experienced the trauma through identification with the suffering bodies (Alexander 2004; Cassegard 2013; Eyerman 2004). The "awakening" mentioned by my informants was the moment when that collectively suffered trauma reached the point in the individuals' moral world where their preexisting cosmopolitan self-image was obliterated. Once one awakened, "Hong Kong people" was no longer an identity based on belonging to a cosmopolitan city. Instead, a new meaning was given to the term. "Hong Kong people" now referred to those who experienced the trauma of 2019 together. This collective was awakened through the 2019 protests, and one awakened into this new collective at different points of the protests.

Collective trauma occurs when there is a tear in the collective identity and social cohesion (Alexander 2004a; Cassegard 2013; Eyerman 2004). Events in 2019 left indelible marks on the identity of Hong Kong people. Simultaneously, a new collective identity emerged revolving the trauma of 2019. The collective trauma was formulated in the cultural realm. However, unlike the constructivist approach, there was not a time delay (Eyerman 2004) or carrier groups (Alexander 2004a) to interpret and transform the initial incident into the trauma of the collective. The cultural grid through which the initial trauma was interpreted predated the incident itself. I will proceed by taking the death of Chow Tsz Lok as an example. He was a 22 years-old university student about to graduate from the Hong Kong University of Science and Technology (HKUST), one of the three most prestigious universities in the city. In Hong Kong, all students are encouraged to study hard, to behave, so that one day they can study at a university. Chow had his whole life ahead of him. The university diploma he was about to receive was supposed to open doors for him. He should have been able to live a middle-class, comfortable life, as was the ideal course of life for many Hong Kong citizens. There was something morally wrong about his untimely death and the social and political institutions that allowed it to happen. All of these did not need to be articulated explicitly after his death. Citizens only needed to see that he was 22, and a student at HKUST to connect the dots, to realize that the cosmopolitan, middle-class way of life was long gone. Jenny sprang into action, along with many other dismayed citizens, soon after the news. The incident was interpreted through an existing cultural grid almost instantaneously, without the need for convincing or even verbalization. The individual was only left with the gnawing question: "how did Hong Kong turn into this?".

It is worth noting that nearly all of my informants were not very active in social movements until the anti-ELAB movement. Many of them were passive observers in the Umbrella

Movement. Other scholars had observed other Hong Kong citizens who experienced collective trauma before 2019 and engaged in "therapeutic activism" in previous social movements (Ho and Hung 2020; Pang 2020). While Pang (2020) argued that the Umbrella Movement was the appearance of Hong Kong people as a *demos*, it was in the anti-ELAB movement that this *demos* was not only "a group of Hong Kong people" but expanded on an unprecedented scale. The "awakening" is a relationship between the individual and the collective, not everyone within the same collective experienced it at the exact same time or the exact same way. The collective was neither unitary nor stationary. What was unique about 2019 was not only the size of the resistance, but also the transformation of social space such that nowhere was apolitical anymore. Through interviews with young protesters, Ho and Hung (2020) found that a restrictive education system and grim career prospects constituted a collective trauma for the younger generations and motivated their participation in social movements. Nonetheless, all my informants pointed to violent events in the anti-ELAB movement as the reason for their radical engagement in the protests. I have to leave it for future scholars to investigate how oppressive structures as collective trauma and spectacular violence as collective trauma interacted with each other.

The United Collective as the Motivation to Act

A series of news articles reflecting on the increasingly narrow window of freedom for the resistance continuously shaped and reshaped the collective. Once one "awakened" into the traumatised collective, one continued to be traumatised by various events that followed. In studying social actions post-Umbrella Movement, Huang (2017) observed that the concerned citizens had to manage their emotion, to be discontent with the status quo enough to act but not too upset and disheartened that one would simply give up (ibid.). About 4 years after her research, this discontent had grown into rage. The boundary her informants drew to avoid

taking personal responsibility for their political disappointment was not found in my research. How were my informants not overwhelmed by the apparently bleak future?

Hyde remarked that he felt hopeless[21] about Hong Kong before the anti-ELAB movement. Even after witnessing the police brutality and state oppression since 2019, he was still more hopeful now than he was before 2019. Many of my other informants echoed that their hope in Hong Kong was renewed through the anti-ELAB movement. I don't think many would disagree that it is clearer now than ever that the Beijing government is extremely unlikely to lessen its control on Hong Kong. Since 2019, its grip on the city only tightened. What motivated these protesters was not the rational evaluation of the outcome of their efforts. In other words, knowing that their investments and sacrifices were unlikely to effect political change did not discourage them to act. What fuelled them was the collective of "Hong Kong people". They felt hopeful, not because they saw concrete hope, but because they were one with their fellow "Hong Kongers" in this fight. They found strength in this collective and were willing to keep contributing to the cause.

One thing that surprised me during my field research was that my informants were actually fond of their memories of 2019, instead of being haunted by them. They looked back to the days when Hong Kong people were united as one. In the protests, the protesters wore masks and black apparels to erase their individual identities, and to emerge as anonymous parts of the collective (Pang, 2021). In one of the protests, Ah Kai ran from the police with people he just met on the spot. He entrusted his safety on these fellow "arms and legs", without knowing the first thing about them, or any expectation that they would ever meet again.

[21] His original word was "灰" ,which literally means "grey". It can be loosely translated to unmotivated and pessimistic.

When protesters took off their masks, this unity and togetherness was gone. They each returned to their lives with their private interests. Even with the "yellow businesses", they were "businesses" after all. Profits needed to be made. Personal survival needed to be secured. Once, I asked Danny if Ginchi was in touch with other "yellow businesses" in the area. He answered with the proverb: "People in the same business are like enemies (同行如敵國)". His answer made me feel stupid for asking that question. Of course, the shop would not have a close relationship with the other restaurants. What cooperation could there be? They were competitors. When the collective dissolved into individual citizens, my informants were at a loss. They held deep nostalgia for the days of street protests, when people risked their futures, potentially their lives for one another; when you could rely on strangers to have your back; when you were willing to self-sacrifice so that your "arms and legs" could have a chance to escape.

Private Interests and the Traumatized Collective

The owners of "Ginchi" were adamant that the political cause would come before business interests. Having conducted fieldwork in Ginchi first, I was surprised when both Jenny and Hyde unapologetically stated that making profits was the most important matter for "yellow businesses". The statements from Ginchi and Jenny's seemed to contradict each other. People from Ginchi tended to cast judgements on businesses like Jenny's, those that profited from the movement, rather than helping it. Conversely, people from Jenny's decried the feasibility of Ginchi's business model.

At the first glance, it seemed like the two restaurants were in opposition with each other. However, I argue that they were actually operating on the same discursive field. Within the traumatised "Hong Kong people" collective, different agents had different modes of involvement, political views, and affordances. This heterogeneity was translated into different moral positions within the yellow camp. By looking at the dynamic of moral capital within the collective, one would see that the views from both restaurants echoed rather than contradicted each other.

"Bui Jeui (揹罪)" was the term used to describe facing charges because of participating in the anti-ELAB movement. It can be directly translated as "carrying/shouldering the charges". It has an implication of being the scapegoat for someone else's crime. The use of this word indicated the moral meaning of being prosecuted for participating in the anti-ELAB movement. Facing charges was not only an individual act, one was facing the legal consequences on behalf of the collective. People who were lucky enough not to get caught, or those who did not take the risk for Hong Kong, were indebted to the ones who shouldered the consequences for them. Thus, within this collective bonded together by trauma, sufferings became a moral capital. When my informants tried to define "arms and legs", the obvious answer was people who were carrying charges because of the movement. The traumatised collective had a permeable border, but at the centre of it was the suffering bodies. Both shops were tacitly aware of this organisation of moral capital and their respective positions within the "yellow economic circle". Ginchi possessed a lot more moral capital than Jenny's because many of their employees were facing trial. This fact was repeated to me several times during interviews to iterate that the shop was definitely "yellow".

When my friend referred Ginchi to me, he praised it as "hardcore yellow", while Jenny's was judged to be "marginally yellow" at best. People from Ginchi could cast judgements on other businesses and schemes in the "yellow economic circle", knowing that others in the "yellow economic circle" were in their moral debt. People from Jenny's were aware that they occupied a morally precarious position, hence repeatedly emphasized that they would do more, if more resources were available to them.

The conversation between Hyde and Ah See demonstrated the dynamic of suffering and moral claim within the yellow camp. The meal tickets were playfully, or sometimes critically, named "indulgence". The middle-class citizens who did not risk their safety were thought to be in debt to the suffering protesters. Through buying meals for the protesters, they were able to alleviate their guilt. When one did not sacrifice "enough" for the movement, they were supposed to feel guilty about it. On the other end of the meal tickets, the receivers were supposed to be desperate and out of options. In the hypothetical case of Ah See receiving meal tickets, both Hyde and Ah See agreed that it would be shameless of him to do so, even though that it was obvious that his sacrifice largely outweighed any benefit he would get from the free meals. Hyde and Ah See speculated that many protesters in need did not feel entitled to the aid unless they were absolutely out of options. The bar for possessing legitimate claim to aid from the yellow camp was extremely high. It was easy for one to feel shameful for not sacrificing enough, yet hard to feel entitled to charity. This gap eventually resulted in the failure of the meal ticket programmes.

Running a business would sometimes conflict with being "yellow". Within the yellow camp, suffering acted as the basis for moral capital. Meanwhile, to run a business successfully meant attempting to gain the most profit. The more the business was struggling, or harassed

by the opposing camp, the more support it was likely to get from the yellow camp. Sheltering employees who were carrying charges for the collective also gains one moral capital. In the case of Jenny's, although the owner personally supported the movement, and attempted to contribute, the lack of a related social network and perhaps bad luck led to the failure to extend help to the "arms and legs" in need. The shop did not make significant business sacrifices to support the movement. Together with the fact that the shop called for help from the yellow camp, it was in a particularly morally precarious position.

There was a term circulating among the yellow camp: "human blood mantou". The term originated from a story by Lu Xun, where an ignorant father bought a mantou soaked in the blood of a martyr who was beheaded for joining the revolution. The mantou was meant as medicine for his child, who was suffering from fatal lung disease. Obviously the mantou did not work, for it was only a bun in blood. At the end, the tomb of the child lay next to the tomb of the martyr. The story was meant as a scathing indictment on the ignorance of common Chinese people of the time and the futility of sacrifices. The symbol of "human blood mantou" was appropriated in the anti-ELAB movement to refer to people who took advantage of the movement to profit themselves. It was a harsh accusation. The imagery of "human blood mantau" suggested making money through the movement was like eating the flesh of the sacrificing protesters. Although this accusation was not easily made, its circulation served as a warning to the business owners to be careful with their positions within the yellow camp. In the "yellow economic circle", business owners had to walk a fine line between losing money and eating "human blood mantou". Personal thriving seemed incompatible with a collective bonded together by trauma.

The Work with Time

My informants attributed the disappearance of this collective to the forgetfulness of Hong Kong people and their fear of the NSL. The significance of the NSL resided in the fact that no one knew exactly what it covered. The terms of the law regarding "secession" and "subversion" were ambiguous and could include a wide range of behaviour and speech (Amnesty International 2020; Hong Kong Bar Association 2020). Citizens only knew about the specific behaviours and speech that breached the NSL through precedent. People participating in a primary election, waving flags with slogans like "Liberate Hong Kong, Democracy of Our Times" were arrested and prosecuted for subversion of state power. Only after their arrests did citizens know that "Liberate Hong Kong, Revolution of Our Times" implied the independence of Hong Kong and primary elections were subverting state power. Nobody knew who would be arrested next and what behaviours and speech would be outlawed then. Any matter related to the anti-ELAB movement, or any political dissent were fogged in dangerous air. The statements "One Country Two Systems, Exist in Name only" and "Tyranny must end. Dawn is coming" were not proven to be in breach of the NSL. However, when the dissidents wanted to spread these messages, they chose to do it in riddles. This was done over the fear that the phrases would soon be interpreted as endangering national security. The middle-aged women felt unsafe talking about their participation in the march on June 9th, not because they knew for certain that they could be arrested, but because any involvement in the 2019 protests were dangerous topics.

The avoidance of discussing 2019 served to sever the present from the past. Under the NSL, any matters concerning the anti-ELAB movement, or the democratisation of the city could not be openly discussed. Neither the past nor the future had a place in public. Paired with the ever-changing Covid restrictions, what was left was the near present. For ordinary citizens, it was to purchase enough masks to last the next few months. For the those on trial, it was the

few months or perhaps a year that was still under their control. For restaurants, it was to find various ways to deal with new government policies, the durations of which were unpredictable. The city was suspended in contemporality, unable to articulate how it got here, or where it was going. One simply did not know what would happen beyond that small window of time.

"Yellow businesses" was an attempt to connect memories of the past with aspirations for the future, so that time could flow again. Ah Kai recalled that after the protests subsided, before working at Ginchi, he was "waiting to die". There was nothing in his future, nothing to indicate the passage of time. Time served in prison is commonly thought as time wasted or lost. Ah Kai was not in prison, not yet. Nonetheless, he was unable to fight for his future or reconcile with his past. He was trapped in a loop. Time seemed to pass by him and he was unable to move with it. He was suspended in between being a free citizen and a convicted prisoner, unable to reach either side. Ginchi effectively carved out a space from the mainstream, so that one's memories of the past, anxieties of the present, and aspirations for the future could once again be exchanged. The pressure to stay silent was diluted. Through this articulation, the traumatized individual could once again anchor himself in the present, through understanding why he got here and where he was going.

Violence has a way of "(seeping) into the ongoing relationships and becomes a kind of atmosphere that cannot be expelled to an 'outside'" (Das 2007: 62). The trauma originated in 2019 continued to manifest itself in the form of various news of exiles, arrests and convictions of movement leaders or participants. It was the fear that the restaurant would be a target of attacks or pranks. It was the omnipresence of state control. It was the hostile atmosphere and the understanding that the state simply did not want you to exist. Resistance

was enacted through existing nonetheless, to carve out a space that was inhabitable even though you were not granted one.

Inwardly, the role of "yellow businesses" was to create an alternative space to facilitate "radical healing". Outwardly, it was to stand as a monument of the traumatised collective that emerged in 2019. Since the end of street protests, the pro-government camp's objective was to break from this old era and start anew. In 2020 May, two former Chief Executives of Hong Kong founded the Hong Kong Coalition with the aim to "ensure the prosperity of Hong Kong". The full meaning of its Chinese name was not translated in English. Directly translated, its name was "Hong Kong Start Again Coalition (香港再出發大聯盟)". The sentiment to start again on a clean slate was echoed in a recent advertisement by the Hong Kong government. In this advertisement, video clips of pro-democratic councillors expressing dissent, protesters vandalising public properties and assaulting police officers were shown. It ended with the question "Do you want to see such chaos again?", and finally the slogan "Please support optimising the electoral system". The promise was that through "optimising" the electoral system, protests like those preceding and during 2019 would never occur again. This was a campaign to bring Hong Kong to what it was before 2019. If my informants from Ginchi are to be believed, the pro-government camp had already succeeded. My informants were disappointed by their observation that Hong Kong people had gone back to their former ways of only caring about their private interests. The "normal" that my informants rejected and despised was not the everyday per se. It was the return to the "before". They resented the pretence that 2019 was nothing more than a glitch. Instead, they stood as monuments of the protests, to inhabit the world in a gesture of turning back. They stood present as the continuation of 2019, to negate the break from the past. They did so by taking care of one another, making sure that each was well, or at least surviving. The project

of the "Hong Kong people" collective in the era of reprisal was surviving. "(T)he making of self was located ……in the context of making the everyday inhabitable" (Das 2007, 216).

References

612 Humanitarian Relief Fund. “Home Page.” Accessed March 28, 2021.

Ahmed, Sara. 2014. *The Cultural Politics of Emotion*. 2nd ed. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press.

Alexander, Jeffrey C. 2004a. “Toward a Theory of Cultural Trauma.” In *Cultural Trauma and Collective Identity*, edited by Jeffrey C. Alexander, Ron Eyerman, Bernhard Giesen, Neil J. Smelser and Piotr Sztompka, 1-30. Berkeley: University of California Press.

Alexander, Jeffrey C. 2004b. “On the Social Construction of Moral Universals: The "Holocaust" from War Crime to Trauma Drama.” In *Cultural Trauma and Collective Identity*, edited by Jeffrey C. Alexander, Ron Eyerman, Bernhard Giesen, Neil J. Smelser and Piotr Sztompka, 196-263. Berkeley: University of California Press.

Amnesty International. 2020. “Hong Kong’s national security law: 10 things you need to know.” Accessed May 10, 2021. https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2020/07/hong-kong-national-security-law-10-things-you-need-to-know/.

Apple Daily. 2019. “‘Evil Extradition Law’ Messing with Others’ Livelihood May Not be the Worst Thing in the World, Business with Conscience ‘Operate with Deficit’ for the Youngsters. 【引渡惡法】阻人搵食未必罪大惡極 良心小店為年青人「蝕住做」.” Accessed January 13, 2021. https://hk.appledaily.com/local/20190617/5CKZMEWNEKILDQPS4QQ7OGJCFU/.

Apple Daily. 2020. “‘Wuhan Virus Gathering Restrictions’ Yellow Shops Targeted, Relentlessly Inspected. Aberdeen Café: Did Nothing Wrong No Need to Be Scared. A Yellow Rejected Interview: Clearly Targeting Yellow Shops, Want to Lay Low 【武漢肺炎禁聚令】黃店被針對多次巡查 香港仔冰室：行得正企得正唔驚 有黃店拒絕採訪：明顯針對 想低調.” Accessed January 5, 2021. https://hk.appledaily.com/ETW/20200405/CW5N5P3HU7BRU7ACMJJAQCDICM/.

BBC Chinese News. 2019. "Hong Kong Extradition Law: Corporation Report Shows 'Anti-ELAB' Protests Affected Sales." Accessed January 13, 2021. https://www.bbc.com/zhongwen/trad/chinese-news-49045962.

Cai, Yongshun. 2016. *The Occupy Movement in Hong Kong: Sustaining Decentralized Protest*. Basingstoke: Taylor & Francis Ltd.

Cassegard, Carl. 2013. *Youth Movements, Trauma and Alternative Space in Contemporary Japan*. Leiden: Global Oriental.

Chan, Alexandra. 2019. "'Buy Yellow, Eat Yellow': The Economic Arm of Hong Kong's Pro-Democracy Protests." Accessed January 13, 2021. https://thediplomat.com/2019/12/buy-yellow-eat-yellow-the-economic-arm-of-hong-kongs-pro-democracy-protests/.

Chan, H., E. Cheung, K. Cheung, R. Cheung, H. Liu, N. Liu, J. Pang, F. Sit, L.K. Sum, and Elaine Yu. 2020. *Aftershock: Essays from Hong Kong*. Hong Kong: Small Tune Press.

Chan, Ching Ting 陳倩婷. 2020. "Shau Kei Wan Yellow Shop Political Display Was Reported and Needed to be Taken Down. Involving words like 'Liberate Hong Kong, Self-rule' 筲箕灣黃店文宣遭報警要清拆 涉「光復香港、自治」字眼." Accessed January 5, 2021. https://www.hk01.com/社會新聞/493044/國安法-筲箕灣黃店文宣遭報警要清拆-涉-光復香港-自治-字眼.

Chan, Kin-man. 2016. "New atmosphere after Umbrella – walk away from the ruins of powerlessness 陳健民：傘後新氣象──走出無力感的廢墟." Accessed December 23, 2020. https://theinitium.com/article/20160928-opinion-chankinman-unmbrellamovement/.

Choi, Hiu-Fung 蔡曉峰. 2020. *Be Water. Keep On* 如水・堅持. Hong Kong: Gutsy Creation 有種創作.

Choi, Susanne YP. 2020. "When Protests and Daily Life Converge: The Spaces and People of Hong Kong's Anti-Extradition Movement." *Critique of Anthropology* 40 (2): 277-82.

Chui Y. C. 趙婉晴 and Chan, Long-Sing 陳朗昇. 2020. "'Lung Mun Controversy 1' Accused of Messy Financial Records, Embezzled Ten Million, Cheung Revealed Financial Records of the Past Six Months Claiming Deficit 【龍門爭議 1】被質疑帳目不清、私吞千萬 張俊傑出示半年帳目稱倒蝕." Accessed January 13, 2021. https://www.thestandnews.com/politics/龍門爭議-1-被質疑帳目不清-私吞千萬-張俊傑出示半年帳目稱倒蝕/.

CUHK Records. 2020. *Beneath the Skies* 天空下. Hong Kong: CUHK Records.

Das, Veena. 2007. *Life and Words: Violence and the Descent into the Ordinary*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

Eyerman, Ron. 2004. "Cultural Trauma: Slavery and the Formation of African American Identity." In *Cultural Trauma and Collective Identity*, edited by Jeffrey C. Alexander, Ron Eyerman, Bernhard Giesen, Neil J. Smelser and Piotr Sztompka, 60-111. Berkeley: University of California Press.

Ginwright, Shawn A. 2010. "Peace out to Revolution! Activism among African American Youth." *Young* 18 (1): 77-96.

Han, Clara. 2012. *Life in Debt: Times of Care and Violence in Neoliberal Chile*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

Ho, Wing Chung and Hung, Choi Man. 2020. "Youth Political Agency in Hong Kong's 2019 Antiauthoritarian Protests." *HAU Journal of Ethnographic Theory* 10, (2): 303-307.

Hong Kong Bar Association. 2020. "Proposed National Security Law Questions and Answers 擬議的國安法問答篇." Accessed May 10, 2021. https://www.hkba.org/sites/default/files/20200619%20-%20Proposed%20National%20Security%20Law%20Q%26A%20%28C%29_0.pdf.

Huang, Xiuwei. 2017. "Arguing the Political, Enacting the Moral: Ordinary Citizen's Struggle for Social Change in Contemporary Hong Kong." M. Phil. thesis, Department of Anthropology, The Chinese University of Hong Kong.

Hui, Po-keung. 2015. "Umbrella Movement Trauma and Affective Politics 傘運創傷與情感政治." Accessed December 23, 2020. https://www.inmediahk.net/node/1037766.

Kengo 健吾. 2020. *Dare Not Forget 2019/20* 未敢忘記 2019/20. Hong Kong: Kengo Workroom.

Liaison Office of the Central People's Government in the Hong Kong S.A.R.. 2020. "Hong Kong LOCPG Spokesperson: so-called 'Central interfering with Hong Kong Internal Affairs' is the Deliberate Misinterpretation of the Basic Law 香港中联办发言人：所谓"中央干预香港内部事务"是对基本法的故意曲解." Accessed May 9, 2021. http://www.locpg.gov.cn/jsdt/2020-04/17/c_1210563621.htm.

Lau, Ryan 柳俊江. 2020. Dark Night of Yuen Long: My Memory, and the Memories of Many 元朗黑夜：我的記憶和眾人的記憶. Hong Kong: Lauyeah Production Limited.

Lau, Sau-man 劉修彣. 2020. "The Ideal and Struggles of Yellow Economic Circle: Beyond Red and Blue, They Need to Reclaim Economic Autonomy 黃色經濟圈的理想和掙扎：紅藍之外，他們要重掌經濟自主." Accessed December 23, 2020. https://theinitium.com/article/20200506-hongkong-yellow-economic-circle-firstofmay/.

Lee, Hoi-Yan 李海欣. 2020. "When Words Disappeared – After National Security Law, Hong Kong "Yellow Shop" Lennon Walls Fade away 當文字消失了- 國安法後，香港「黃店」連儂牆退潮." Accessed January 5, 2021. https://theinitium.com/article/20200707-hongkong-yellow-economic-circle-lennon-walls-go/.

Lee, Wai-gwan 李慧筠. 2020. "Walking into Restaurants that Don't Serve Mandarin: Dialogue, Pain and Struggle of Identity 走進不招待普通話的餐廳：對話，痛苦與身份的掙扎." Accessed December 23, 2020. https://theinitium.com/article/20200321-hongkong-restaurants-no-mandarin-dialogue-anger/.

Lee ,Wai-Na 李慧娜. 2019. "Fifth Anniversary of Umbrella Movement, over 1,000 Arrested, 127 Convicted. Five Years Later, Movement is over but People are still Here." Accessed December 22, 2020. https://www.hk01.com/社會新聞/379959/傘運 5 周年-逾 1 千人被捕-127 人被定罪-事隔 5 年曲終人未盡散.

Leung, Jeun 良臻. 2020. *A Journey Through the Brick Wall* 逆權老師. Hong Kong: Hillway Press.

Li, Jeff. 2021. "Future Uncertain for Pro-Democracy Campaigners." Accessed May 9, 2021. https://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-china-56560829.

Ling, Minhua. 2020. "Living Between Incongruous Worlds in Hong Kong." *HAU Journal of Ethnographic Theory* 10 (2): 308-312.

Liu, Yiqi. 2015. "Yellow or Blue Ribbons: Analysing Discourses in Conflict in the Televised Government-Student Meeting during the Occupy Movement in Hong Kong." *Chinese Journal of Communication* 8 (4): 456-467.

Mingpao. 2019. "'Extradition Law' Business at Yellow Shops Increases Instead of Dropping, Want to Prove that Hong Kong People Can Support the Economy of Hong Kong. 【逃犯條例】黃店生意不跌反升 想證明港人能撐起香港經濟." Accessed January 13, 2021. https://news.mingpao.com/ins/港聞/article/20191010/s00001/1570708060403/【逃犯條例】黃店生意不跌反升-想證明港人能撐起香港經濟.

Mingpao. 2021. "Covid-19 Battle Timeline 新冠病毒疫戰大事記". Accessed March 20, 2021. https://creative.mingpao.com/htm/timeline/covid19/index2.html.

Ng, Cheuk-On 吳倬安. 2019. "'10.20 March' Before the Start 'Yellow Shop' Lung Mun Café Had a Long Line, Chung King Mansion Handing out Water【10.20 遊行】起步前「黃店」龍門冰室排長龍 重慶大廈派水." Accessed January 13, 2021. https://www.hk01.com/政情/388231/10-20 遊行-起步前-黃店-龍門冰室排長龍-重慶大廈派水.

Palmer, David A. 2020. "Black Bloc Against Red China: Tears and Revenge in the Trenches of the New Cold War." *HAU Journal of Ethnographic Theory* 10 (2): 325-332.

Pang, Laikwan. 2020. *The Appearing Demos: Hong Kong During and After the Umbrella Movement*. USA: University of Michigan Press.

Pang, Laikwan. 2021. "Mask as Identity? The Political Subject in the 2019 Hong Kong's Social Unrest." *Cultural Studies* (2021), 1-20.

Pun, Ngai. 2020. "Reflecting on Hong Kong Protests in 2019-2020." *HAU Journal of Ethnographic Theory* 10 (2): 333-338.

Stand News. 2019. "Pilot Who Make the Airplane Announcement 'Hongkongese Add Oil, Take Care' was confirmed by Cathay Pacific That Had Left His Post 機艙廣播「香港人加油，萬事小心」機長 國泰證實已離職." Accessed April 1, 2021.

Stand News. 2020a. "Anti-Elab Movement up to 10144 Arrested, 105 More in Half a Month 反送中被捕者增至 10144 人 較半月前增 105 人　22% 被檢." Accessed December 22, 2020. https://www.thestandnews.com/politics/反送中被捕者增至-10144-人-較半月前增-105-人-22-被檢控/.

Stand News. 2020b. "Two Yellow Shops in Wan Chai and Yuen Long Attacked by Masked Men. Staff Injured. Water Gate Chicken Rice: Never Bow to Evil Forces. 灣仔元朗兩黃店遭口罩男破壞 店員遇襲受傷 水門雞飯絕不向惡勢力低頭. Accessed January 5, 2021. https://www.thestandnews.com/politics/灣仔元朗兩-黃店-遭口罩男破壞-店員遇襲受傷-水門雞飯-絕不向惡勢力低頭/.

Stand News. 2020c. "Attack on Lung Mun Café Chef: 24 Years Old Man Arrested for Assault 17. Awaiting Trial in Jail. 龍門冰室廚師遇襲案 24 歲男被控「傷人 17」還押候訊." Accessed January 5, 2021. https://www.thestandnews.com/politics/龍門冰室廚師遇襲案-24-歲男被控-傷人 17-還押候訊/.

Stand News. 2020d. "Apparently Reported by Citizens, Police Warned Shau Kei Wan Yellow Shop that Political Display May Breach National Security Law, 'Yat-Wun-Yat-Dip' Urgently Clean Up 稱接市民報案 警到筲箕灣黃店指文宣或違國安法「壹碗壹碟」緊急清理." Accessed January 5, 2021. https://www.thestandnews.com/politics/稱接市民報案-警到筲箕灣黃店指文宣或違國安法-壹碗壹碟-緊急清理/.

To Freedom Editorial Committee 致自由編委會. 2020. *To Freedom: Chronicle of Hong Kong Resistance* 致自由：香港抗爭一年記實. Hong Kong: Times C.C..

Tsang, Gong-Sum 曾港深. 2020. "Prince Edward Yellow Shop Aobana: Worried that Table Restrictions are Paving the Way for Article 23 – Receiving Harassment Phone Calls Every Day – Bail on Reservations 太子黃店青花亭：憂限桌令為廿三條鋪路-日日收騷擾電話-訂座甩底." Accessed January 5, 2021. https://www.hkcnews.com/article/28514/黃色經濟圈-限桌令-青花亭-28545/太子黃店青花亭：憂限桌令為廿三條鋪路-日日收騷擾電話-訂座甩底.

Wai, King-Chun 韋景全. 2019. "Fifth Anniversary of Umbrella Movement – 87 Tear Gas Grenades Did Not Stop Occupy Central, Making the Police Introduce Water Cannons." Accessed December 23, 2020. https://www.hk01.com/社會新聞/380104/傘運 5 周年-87 枚催淚彈未能阻止佔中-致使警引入水炮車.

Wu, Ka-Ming. 2020. "Infrastructure and Its Discontent: Structures of Feeling in the Age of Hong Kong-China Dis/connection." *HAU Journal of Ethnographic Theory* 10 (2): 319-324.

Wu, Shung-Yau 胡尚佑. 2020. "Yellow Shop Posted New Propaganda: 'Where there is National Security Law, There is No Resistance, We Are Like a Family. 黃店貼新文宣：「哪裏有國安法，那裏就沒有反抗，我們真像一家人」." Accessed January 5, 2021. https://www.hkcnews.com/article/31607/黃色經濟圈-港版國安法-青花亭-31622/黃店貼新文宣：「哪裏有國安法，那裏就沒有反抗，我們真像一家人」.

Zhang, Jun. 2020. "Is Mainland China the Source of all Hong Kong's Problems?" *HAU Journal of Ethnographic Theory* 10 (2): 313-318.