Tsoi Yuen Resistance and Post-80s Generation: 
A new wave of domestic social movement

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CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

1.1 Permeable

On 16\textsuperscript{th} January 2010, about ten thousand people surrounded the Legislative Council (Legco), Hong Kong where the Financial Committee Meeting of the Hong Kong section of the Guangzhou-Shenzhen-Hong Kong Express Rail Link (XRL) was being held. In fact, it was the third time over ten thousand people encircled that colonial architecture for the same reason: to demonstrate their objection towards the project. When funding of this project was finally voted “yes” by the Council, angry and disappointed demonstrators blocked the car of Ms Eva Cheng, the Secretary for Transport and Housing Bureau (THB) and the chief official in charge of the project. They requested a conversation with Ms Cheng by stopping her car moving forward. No matter how hard the Hong Kong police tried, she was trapped in the car for two hours. At last, she had to return to the Legislative building. Not only her, more than ten legislative councilors who had voted “yes” to the project were also stuck in the building for six hours. Meanwhile, protestors expanded their frontline: some occupied and set up camps on nearby main roads to disrupt traffic, while others tried to crash into the building, bombarded the police and cried out slogans like, “Donald Tsang (the Hong Kong Chief Executive), step down!”, “Eva Cheung, step down!”, and “Sham on the government” etc.

Infrastructure seemingly brings no harm to development. Yet, why are there continuous protests to object the XRL? One of the main reasons is that the project will destroy a sixty year-old farming village known as Tsoi Yuen Tsuen (菜園村, literary means vegetable-garden, 村 means village). It is a ‘non-indigenous’ agricultural village established by Chinese immigrants who migrated to Hong Kong during the British colonial period a few decades ago. They were unwilling to move away and thus had
been fought for their homeland since 2008. The sincere intention of the villagers had motivated support from “Post-80s generation” (Post-80s), the pivotal group which actively involved in the Tsoi Yuen Resistance. They aroused a doubtful attitude towards the sumptuous XRL project, people started to question about the extremely high construction cost and the location of the railway station. Demolition of the Tsoi Yuen Village not only became a political issue, but also triggered discontentment towards the democratization of Hong Kong. After the approval of XRL construction fund on 16th January 2010, Tsoi Yuen village had no choice but to give way to the construction. In the end of February 2010, with support from professional and scholars, the villagers raised an alternative idea - resettlement of the village in a nearby territory. An unprecedented project started to take place and it will be the first eco-village in Hong Kong. Journalists, politicians, social workers, current affairs commentators described the Tsoi Yuen Resistance and the anti-XRL campaign as the most intense social movement after Hong Kong’s handover to the PRC. Even those ‘then-generation’ social activists are also astonished by the Post-80s. “Post-80s” becomes a popular term in the whole society, both government and non-government sections, academic scholars, especially those that belong to the social science and media fields are interested to ‘analyze’ the group and their formation.

1.2 Aims of the research

Demolition of Tsoi Yuen Village for city development is not an isolated case in Hong Kong and to China. On 28th September 2010, another non-indigenous village, Tse Tin village (紫田村, literally means “Purple field village”) was involuntary removed by the government, and many other similar villages are also under threat now. At the same time, violent demolitions in Mainland China have reached a severe situation.⁠¹ A Yihuang (a

town in Jiangxi province) official released an article titled, ‘No involuntary demolition, there will be no New China’, to respond to a self-immolation case of a family who burnt themselves in order to demonstrate their reluctance to move away in September 2010. Demolition has almost become a magical chant of development: PRC desires this for a greater China while Hong Kong employs this in order not to be marginalized.

This research does not have enough room to discuss China’s current situation. Rather, it focuses on discussing the Tsoi Yuen Resistance and the Post-80s movement, and how they have exposed tension between top-down urban development and public movements fighting for a more democratic process in choosing their way of living. Through the study of a village movement which turns into the most important social movement of a city in recent years as well as the rationale behind the Post-80s’ support, I hope to illustrate how this movement has awaken a different sense of living for the new generations in the midst of the high sounding urban development. It is an opportunity to examine Hong Kong’s colonial epoch in a different perspective: through studying the Tsoi Yuen Village, let them (subalterns) speak for themselves. Furthermore, the significance of this resistance taking place eleven years after the handover to the PRC is an important fact that I shall not miss in later discussion.

Although Tsoi Yuen Resistance is a local social movement, it contains many elements of globalized issues. Post-80s appreciate the traditional agricultural living lifestyle can be link to global ecological movement, which yearning for sustainable and less polluted world. When they proposed to reestablish the Tsoi Yuen Tsuen as an eco-village, they

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were learning experience from the globe. Moreover, they performed as citizen journalist and reported the movement in alternative media website; shared latest information through Facebook, Twitter, Blogs and iPhone; publicized the movement by remade Hollywood movie or Japanese comics; all these showed the influence of globalization. Thus the thesis aims at answering the following questions:

1. How Foucault’s theory of governmentality can be used to understand the British colonial Hong Kong’s administration and how it is responsible for the city planning of postcolonial Hong Kong
2. To write a subaltern history for Tsoi Yuen Tsuen, which is also part of the history of colonial Hong Kong
3. To examine the reason of Post-80s to participate in Tsoi Yuen Resistance, how global ideas and concepts have influenced them and how do they begin a new wave of resistance

1.3 Methodology and sources

Fieldwork in Hong Kong

The materials for this dissertation are gathered from primary and secondary sources of data. Primary data were collected through qualitative research methodology by fieldwork from in May to August 2010 when the village was still existed. The second visit was from mid-December 2010 to mid January 2011 after evacuation and demolishment had begun, leaving behind only thirty to forty remaining households.

Keith H. Basso (1996: 73) has generalised on how the ethnographer noticed local community members getting involved in their geographical landscape in at least three distinct ways. First, they simply observe the landscape and its appearance to decide what to do with it. Then, they engage in physical activities at the landscape and
modified portions of it. Third and most importantly, they may communicate, formulate descriptions and representations of the landscape during their social gatherings regarding how inhabitants interpret their natural surroundings. That was how I “being-in- the- world” of Tsoi Yuen Tsuen: its topography, how villagers adapted to the environment and they used landscape for daily communication.

Basically, the village welcomed everyone to join their campaigns and visited them. Yet, gaining trust from them and attending in regular village meeting were not easy because they worried that “spy” from the government or mainstream media would blackmail their resistance movement. I was first introduced by Inmedia’s editors to the villagers with an identity of the organization’s journalist. This allowed me to participate their confidential meeting weekly and wrote some articles about their situations.

Internship at inmediahk.net

I worked as a journalist through an internship program at inmediahk.net during June and July, 2010 in Hong Kong. In the end of 2008, the significance of the Tsoi Yuen Tsuen Resistance was downplayed by mainstream media. Inmediahk.net was the first media who paid attention on this issue and produced many reports. Therefore, Tsoi Yuen Tsuen had established a close and special relationship with this media. Besides, I had the opportunity to follow topic stories on other non-indigenous villages with similar situation as Tsoi Yuen Tsuen depended my understanding of the difficulties of Hong Kong villages was obtained; intensive reporting on petitions and social movements, interview with activists, common people and government officials provided me with  

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4 It was used for discussing the resistance’s strategy by the Choi Yuen Tsuen villagers and their support group.
5 It was established in 2004 by Hong Kong In-media and has become one of the most influential independent new media locally. All funding is from public donation in order to secure editorial independence. Therefore, some social issues which may not attract mainstream media as well as readers can still be published for instance, a series reports on Anti-XRL campaign and Tsoi Yuen Resistance are reported and has aroused public interest successfully.
rich ethnographic data related to the topics.

Focus interviews with villagers

Face-to-face in-depth interviews were conducted with about fifty villagers from twenty-seven families, varied age and gender. Open ended questions were asked as follow:

i) How and why did you move to the village?
ii) Can you describe livelihoods in this village?
iii) How do you feel after receiving the government notice on village removal?
iv) Why are you unwilling to move?
v) What do you associate “home” with?

Interviews were all conducted in Cantonese, lasting from 25 minutes to over an hour. Most of the cases, the older the interviewees (in term of ages or living years in the village), the more enriching stories they shared. Most of them were taped under their permissions, except for a few interviewees who refused to do so.

Interviews with the Post-80s generation

Post-80s mobilized themselves to go into the village and protect it from violent demolition after school or work. Some of them were even hurt during the conflicts between the site workers and the villager. They produced a lot of fine newsletters, artworks, articles, demonstration tools, photographs, videos, paintings and booklets to publicize the village’s tough situation. By sharing their views and experiences in the village through new technology they change roles from participants into information/news providers. Therefore, I pay much attention to analyze their production. Formal and informal interviews were conducted in Cantonese during two field trips while only the former were taped.
Participation observation

While interviews enabled me to see patterns in experiences and attitudes, direct observation of people’s action enabled me to study the actual functioning of the social structure. This is the core of the participation-observation method. (Powdermaker 1966: 171) In the fieldtrip in December 2010, I applied Powdermaker’s view on ‘direct observation action of people’, together with my sympathy towards the villagers, I attended meetings, demonstrations, and joined the Patrol group during my visits. I stood in the front line position to protect the village and simultaneously observed the confrontation and interaction between the contractors, government bureau officers, police, Police Tactical Unit (PTU, a special team responsible for serious crimes), constructions workers, villagers and patrols. I noticed that emotions of the villagers had altered a lot and short conversations were the main form of data collection, because our dialogues were always interrupted by ad hoc construction progress when all of us had to rush to the site of the incident to stop the workers.

My own experience and knowledge of Hong Kong has been incorporated into the research. Sherry B. Ortner (2006: 104) suggests that “anthropology increasingly operates in the midst of the contemporary world”. This time, I attempt to study my home society as if “it were distant and exotic” and study its “modern phenomena”. I am a Hong Kong citizen born in 1983 and grown up in an urban centre in Kowloon. To certain extent, I can share the feeling and thinking of the Post-80s.

Collection of textual materials

Since there is no academic reference or classic literature about Tsoi Yuen Tsuen, or are there any topics written on non-indigenous villages in Hong Kong, most of the secondary sources are searched from the newspapers, both mainstream and especially alternative media in this case. Visual products and texts on blogs as well as facebook are
examined, given that they act significant roles in the movement. Documents that have
been studied include Gazette, Annual Address Reports, New Territories Ordinance;
anual reports of Agriculture, policies to regulate the squatters settlements in 1960s, old
maps of Hong Kong are also studied.

1.4 Indigenous and non-indigenous in a local context

Homi Bhabha has written about the ambivalence of colonial discourse as a construction
of the indigenous by the colonizer in a form of contradictory belief that moved between
the recognition of difference and the disavowal of it (Bhabha 1983:202). The “other”
was produced in narrative. According to Hong Kong Law, “indigenous inhabitant”
means a person who was, in 1898, a resident of the Village; or who is descended
through the male line from an Indigenous Village that existed in 1898. The British
imposed this concept in order to lease the New Territories from the Qing Dynasty and
promised to respect their traditional customs. “Non-indigenous” therefore refers to the
rural farmer immigrants who have been settled in later period.

The earliest academic interest in Hong Kong society had arisen in around 1950 when
Raymond Firth was asked by the Colonial Office for his opinion on a survey of the New
Territories on the question of poverty. This began an interest in village society in the
New Territories around early 1960s, led to Maurice Freedman’s visit and his first book
on the south China lineage (Faure 2003: 60). He worked for three months in the New
Territories in 1963 and was confronted in the New Territories by the walled villages
(each village was surrounded by wall to prevent piracy, thus known as “walled villages”)
and localized lineage. He was surprised that a British Colony was the ideal place to
study traditional Chinese society and described the New Territories as an untouched
countryside (Freedman 1979: 415). According to him, at least eleven anthropologists –
British, American, and Swedish who chose the New Territories for their research field (Freedman 1979: 416). However, the main objectives of these anthropologists were studying traditional Chinese society from Hong Kong, the notably “residual China” (also overseas Chinese and Taiwan), due to the difficulty of applying visa to China.

Freedman wrote three essays on the social change in the New Territories in Hong Kong. Through his description, we get the picture of the New Territories in 1960s. Villagers in this territory kept practicing in a traditional Chinese way (Freedman 1979: 190). The largest and the richest villages were situated in the fertile rice plains and had built up both large numbers and great wealth. Villages were relatively self-contained communities, people were tied together in a complex web of obligations and they were closely dependent on one another that the actions of one could be held to have an intimate effect on the lives of others (Freedman 1979: 206). These were single patrilineages: groups of men (together with their unmarried sisters and their wives) who traced their descent through males to a common ancestor and formed corporate entities. Genealogy was used for this purpose while only male clan members would be recorded. Only male descendants can inherit processions and status from his clan. Therefore, a clan normally contained the same surname. In a village context, when female got married, she was ‘married out’ from her village and “married in” to her husband’s family (village), almost cut off the tied with her original family.

Chinese family was the basic unit of Chinese society that it provided the model for the society as a whole and it has potency over all other kinds of relationship. Kinship bound together people in Chinese society and exerted an important effect on political,

7 The three essays are: “Chinese Geomancy: Some Observations in Hong Kong”, “Shifts of Power in the Hong Kong New Territories” and “Emigration from the New Territories”.
economic and religious conduct at large. A clan had to take care and promote schooling to its kinsman and descendents. Lineages organization implied ancestor worship, a Confucian value of high order (Freedman 1979: 240-2). Rituals of mourning, marriage and filial piety were carried out according to kinship system. Firth observes the Chinese keep their clan and lineage interests, and also maintain their moral through rituals conducted in ancestral temples (Firth 1955: 45). Temples and ancestral halls were found in the villages. Ancestral hall was a spacious multi-functions venue for traditional activities, for instance, teaching villagers’ children, ancestorial worships, religious ritual ceremonies, celebrating traditional festivals, weddings, funeral, and longevity banquet for prestige person. Sometimes, it is used for discussion of important matters of the village. It is always in the best location of Fung Shui\(^8\) (Chinese geomancy) and easily accessible by all villagers.

The biggest villages have several thousand of members. They dominated the smaller communities in their immediate area (Freedman: 1979: 214). These elders were indispensable to an ordered life and were expected to be effective political leaders. Their authority stemmed from the requirements of a complex society, and was exercised for social, economic and religious purposes. Under the colonial rule, each village headman was known as Village Representative. They were recognized by the government and became channel between villagers and bureaus.

Freedman has already spotted out the appearance of “new comers” (Freedman 1979: 203) who we later known as “non-indigenous”. They planted vegetables instead of rice.

\(^8\) Freedman examines a study on Fung Shui that it covered all aspects of men’s dwellings on earth. It is in fact a complex of belief concerned with a central theme in Chinese metaphysics: man’s place in nature and the universe. It is the craft of adapting the abodes of men (buildings and graves) to the landscape. And the stars are taken into account. It is primarily concerned with sitting graves and houses, which improves their descendants by scholarship, accumulation of riches and by the religious pursuit of good fortune. Burial is the heart of geomancy. But not all graves and houses are geomantically placed (Freedman 1979: 192-200).
and modified landscapes in the New Territories. He also slightly touched the imbalance power relationship between the village and immigrants farmers. Detailed will be discussed on chapter two. Yet, a point to note that, Freedman never applies the terms of “indigenous” and “non-indigenous” villages in his essays. Instead, he uses “villages” for the former and “new comers” or “immigrant vegetable growers” for the latter. It was reasonable since “non-indigenous villages” were not yet formed to a level to be observed. They were probably treated as scattered farming households instead of a community. This was a “new” phenomenon and of course not much academic research could be found. This research would like to contribute the finding of Freedman and trace the development of this special community in Hong Kong. Marc Bloch (1954) proposes history serves a dual and reciprocal function – understanding the past by the present and understanding the present by the past. Therefore, when studying the Tsoi Yuen Tsuen Resistance took place in 2008, we also have to go back the British colonial history of Hong Kong and understand the historical context once more.

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CHAPTER TWO: COLONIAL LEGACY OF HONG KONG

2.1 Geographical and economic facts

Hong Kong has its official name as Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (HKSAR), and is one of two special administrative regions of the PRC since 30th June 1997, the other is Macau. Hong Kong is located at the south-eastern tip of Mainland China, bordering to Shenzhen Special Economic Zone (Shenzhen) which is the only land port entry, and Guangdong is the nearest PRC’s province. Hong Kong is divided into three main parts: Hong Kong Island, the Kowloon Peninsula and the New Territories (including Lantau Island and over two hundreds outlying islands). Victoria Harbour, one of the world’s most renowned deep-water harbour and maybe one of the most popular photo-taking skyscrapers scenes situated between Hong Kong Island and the Kowloon Peninsula. The total area is 1,104 square kilometres while developed land coverage is less than 25%, country parks and nature reserves occupy 40% of land. Over seven million residents mean that it is one of the most densely populated areas in the world, about 6,480 residents per square kilometre. The crowded situation is severe because the New Territories occupies about 90% of total land area of Hong Kong but only resided roughly 50% of population.10

Economically, it is the world’s eleventh largest trading economy,11 the third leading global financial centre, ranking behind London and New York12. In 2009, its Gross National Products (GNP) was approximately US$213.4 billion and GNP Per Capita was US$30,500.13 However, Hong Kong’s Gini coefficient in 2010 was 0.53, the highest among Asia and over the world.14

11 GovHK <info.hktdc.com/main/economic.htm#major_economic_indicators>
12 Global Financial Centres 7 <www.zyen.com/PDF/GFC%207.pdf>
13 Hong Kong Census and Statistics Department
Most of the Hong Kong residents were refugees from China. 95% of the population is Chinese descent. 88.7% of population is Cantonese speakers, 1.1% is Putonghua (official language of PRC) speakers, 5.8% is other Chinese dialect speakers and 3.1% is English speakers. Both English and Chinese are the official languages of Hong Kong. However, during the over one hundred and fifty years of colonial period, English was the only recognized official language in government sector. Chinese became official language in 1974 which is twenty-three year before the Handover to PRC.

2.2 The British Colonial Period: 1842-1997

Literature generally suggests that Hong Kong’s story began with the colonization of British Empire in mid nineteenth century, even though archaeological findings suggested that human activities could be traced back to 30,000 years ago. Ackbar Abbas comments “Hong Kong has no pre-colonial past”, which makes discussion of its culture inevitable to raise the question of its relation to colonialism (Abbas 1997: 2). In mid nineteenth century, Hong Kong was only an unknown island located at the tip of Guangdong province, two thousand kilometers from the capital Beijing of the Qing Dynasty (Welsh 1993). The British Foreign Secretary, Lord Palmerston, described Hong Kong as “a barren island, which will never be a mart of trade” in 1842 (Welsh 1993: 1). It seemed that the two empires did not really care about this island. Welsh concludes that like so much of the British Empire, Hong Kong was acquired almost by “accident” (Welsh 1993: 14). Hong Kong Island and Kowloon Peninsula were ceded to British Empire after Qing dynasty lost in First Opium War in 1842 and Second Opium War in 1860 respectively. In 1898, Britain signed the terms of the Convention for the
Extension of Hong Kong Territory in order to obtain a larger area for the colony. That was a ninety-nine year lease of the adjacent northern lands to the Kowloon Peninsula as well as about two hundreds of outlying islands which known as “New” “Territories”, this naming already reviewed the perspective of the British colonizer. A result was Hong Kong area was increased by eleven times (Yu 1994:111). The territory has remain unchanged to the present, the Hong Kong Island and Kowloon Peninsula are regarded as urban area while the New Territories as rural district; there was also no entry barrier between the colony and Canton as well as other provinces of Qing dynasty at that time. This immigration policy did not change even though Qing Empire was overthrown by Republic of China in 1911.

![Map of Hong Kong](https://www.centa.com/)

Figure 1. Map of Hong Kong (Source: CentaMap.com)

However, the two decades of civil wars took place between Kuomintang (the party established Republic of China) and Communist party since 1927. Hong Kong had become a refuge for the mainlanders, either to pursue a better life or escape from political instability. When the Communist Party had series of victories over
Kuomintang and finally established PRC in October 1949, a different set of refugees began to pour into the colony. Hong Kong was swelled by refugee and its population was rapidly increased from 1,857,000 in 1949 to an estimated 2,360,000 by March 1950.\textsuperscript{15} During the People’s Liberation Army (PLA) moved southward to Canton in October 1949, the British Labour government who was hostile to Communism determined to make Hong Kong “the Berlin of the Middle East”. Thirty thousand troops, with armour and air support were sent to protect the territory (Welsh 1993: 443).

Communist Party fought for what could be regarded as China’s historic boundaries, with the major exceptions of Taiwan, Hong Kong and Macao and was willing to negotiate for the restoration of these places. In 1972 after the “United States acknowledges that all Chinese on either side of the Taiwan Strait maintain there is but one China and that Taiwan is a part of China”.\textsuperscript{16}, only five days later, the United Nations Committee on Decolonization was asked by the Chinese representative, Huang Hua, to remove Hong Kong from the list of colonial territories. Although Britain had an alternative view, it took no action and the Chinese case was accepted by default. Only a few days later, a joint Anglo-Chinese communiqué was issues establishing embassies in London and Beijing, and agreeing “principles of mutual respect for sovereignty and territorial integrity”. This was the culmination of twenty years’ negotiations, and taken in conjunction with Britain’s tacit acquiescence in the removal of Hong Kong from the list of colonies. From then on Hong Kong was not to be referred to as a colony, but as a territory, and the stage was set for the eventual, and inevitable, British abdication (Welsh 1993: 472-3).

\textsuperscript{15} Foreign Relations of the United States, 1947, vol. vii: Hong Kong is described as ‘the best refuge for politically dissident elements…a refuge for Chinese capital…the only point in South China where there is any freedom of publication’

\textsuperscript{16} Quoted e.g. K.Rafferty, City on the Rocks, p.382
After many rounds of negotiation between Britain and PRC, the Sino-British Joint Declaration, which formally known as the Joint Declaration of the Government of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland and the Government of the People’s Republic of China on the Question of Hong Kong – an agreement to transfer the sovereignty in 1997 was signed on 19 December 1984. In accordance with the Declaration, the underlying principle of ‘One Country, Two System’ and “Hong Kong People ruling Hong Kong”, the socialist system and policies shall not be practiced in and Hong Kong's previous capitalist system and life-style shall remain unchanged for 50 years. These basic policies are stipulated by the Basic Law, which is the constitutional document for the HKSAR. The HKSAR will have a high degree of autonomy as a special administrative region in all areas except defense and foreign affairs. PLA will station in Hong Kong but not interfering any local affairs. A point to be noted, Hong Kong people in fact were almost absent in the discussion of the process of decolonisation, they were passive in the whole issue. George Boyce even says that it was clear that the United Kingdom was anxious not to work too hard to secure democratic institutions in the city before its return (Boyce 1999: 264).

At 30th June 1997 midnight, with worldwide attention, a Handover ceremony was held that Hong Kong’s sovereignty was officially returned from the United Kingdom to the PRC. For many British commentators, this was the final, symbolic act of decolonization, leaving only a few “confetti” of colonial empire to survive into the new century (Shipway 2008: 1). From now on, the appointed Hong Kong (colonial) governor from Britain is replaced by Chief Executive of Hong Kong, who is elected by 800 election committee and they represent all population.
1967 Riot

In regard to Hong Kong’s unique political and geographical environment, it became battlefield of ideologies between supporters of Kuomintang and Communist party. Two parties’ influences were found in different urban districts and rural villages in Hong Kong. Kuomintang lost the civil war with Communist party, many of its supporters fled to Hong Kong in 1950. In 1956, on the National Day of the Republic of China (10th October), pro-KMT people found that their national flags outside their settlement were torn by colonial official of Municipal Health Bureau, they started the riots. They loots, set fire everywhere, raped and killed women, occupied streets and request public to obtain the national flags in order to pass through. At last the riots were settled on 14 November 1956 with the assistant of the British military. It led to 60 people died, 300 injured and more than 1000 people were arrested. Even since, the influence of KMT was uprooted by the colonial government.

Unluckily, another riot was sparked off in April 1967 (1967 Riot). This time, the riot was believed to be launched by the leftists (pro PRC), with the inspiration of Cultural Revolution occurred in 1966 in mainland China. An industrial dispute was turned into radical violence resistance toward the British government and lasted for eight months. This led to at least 52 people died, 802 injured and about 2000 people were arrested. About 8000 suspected bombs and 1167 bombs were found in the urban area during this period. This riot was a watershed of Hong Kong history. Colonial government concluded that improvement in public livelihood and reduce social injustice would bring stability, social welfare and labour laws were adjusted. Large-scale youth activities were held to divert excess energy of youth and prevent social discontents. “Hong Kong Festival” was held in December 1969 to contend with the National Day celebrations carried out by supporters of KMT and PRC (1st October) which generated the local identity of Hong Kong people unexpectedly. Ever since, majority of Hong
Kong population feared the communist China regime, together with the Tiananman Tragedy that shocked the world in 1989, over one million people migrated to overseas countries when 1997 was approaching. Having two passports (HKSAR and another country except PRC) is not uncommon in this city even until nowadays.

Abbas (1997) suggests much of the population was made up of refugees or expatriates who saw Hong Kong as a temporary stop, no matter how long they stayed. The sense of the temporary is very strong in this city. He also proposes most of the energy is directed toward the economic sphere such as stock market or an obsession with fashion or consumerism due to no outlet of political idealism. “Central”, the most prosperous commercial area on Hong Kong Island, has gradually symbolized the dominant value – capital and capitalism, economic prosperity and development. In fact, instead of charging the residents of political apathetic, I prefer to describe it as political powerlessness and weakness. The wars and riots in the mid-nineteenth century, the “being absent” on the determination of the city’s fate and useless of one million population demonstration against Tiananman Incident, all these seemed to tell the Hong Kong people of their political inability.

2.3 Colonial Legacy I: Functional constituency

Foucault regards ‘governmentality’ as a complex assemblage of “institutions, procedures, analyses and reflections” that allowed power to be exercised over populations through political-economic knowledge (Foucault 1979: 102). Government, in fact, is the “conduct of conduct”, it is a form of activity aiming to shape, guide or affect the conduct of some person or persons within social institutions, communities and political sovereignty (Foucault 1979: 2). By picking up three colonial legacies that most related to Tsoi Yuen Resistance, I will illustrate how the British regime consolidated its rule by direct and indirect governance, both from state level and society level.
Legislative council was established under British rule in 1843, only a year after the colonial period began. This institution assisted the sovereignty to exercise power over the territory and all the subjects who were inhabited. Both Official Members and Unofficial Members were either appointed or comprised by the government, which continued for more than a century. Hong Kong Governor was assigned by United Kingdom and most of them were diplomats, Chris Patten, who is a Conservative politician, is one of the few exceptions. Their main responsibility was maintaining a co-operative relationship with the PRC. Again Shipway observes no more than accurate on Hong Kong then legislative council structure and formation as well as the colonizer hidden agenda. This system vested law-making powers in a nominated Legislative Council composed of representatives of settler and commercial interests, and chaired by the governor, this meant that the last decision-making always belonged to the governor. In this way the governor was given considerable powers to resist a proposed policy. This particularism was to have profound consequences for the pattern of British decolonization, as individual colonies each entered the process of devolving power according to its own timetable and its own tailor-made constitutional arrangements (Shipway 2008: 31). Yet, the situation of Hong Kong is unique that arrangement of post-1997 era had to be discussed with the PRC.

In the 1950s, British Minister of State, Judith Hart expressed Hong Kong’s relationship with China made it in a different position from other British colonies and thus there would be no move towards democracy. (Welsh 1993: 465) Three decades later, a few months before the signing of the Sino-British Joint Declaration in 1984, the Hong Kong British government published a Consultation Paper on Hong Kong's political system, “the Green Paper”, on 18th July 1984. This document is considered the beginning of political reform of colonial Hong Kong. In 1985, the first ever election of the
Legislative Council was held. After the elections, within the 57 seats of Official and Unofficial Members, only 12 were elected from functional constituencies, two were elected among the members of the Urban Council and the Regional Council respectively (the then consultation bodies in environmental hygiene and recreational issues, also not elected by universal suffrage), 10 were elected by an electoral college constituency made up of members of all district boards. This was the first time that the colonizer introduced the Functional constituency election system to Hong Kong. Functional constituencies refer to the representatives elected from different functional groups such as business, industry, labour, finance, the teaching profession, legal, social services and medical. However, registrations of eligible electors (unit) of functional constituencies are not the same, some are by individual vote, some are by ‘corporate or body vote’ and some include both. Moreover, not every employee or working class person is eligible to be a corresponding voter, yet, a few number of individual such as employers may be eligible for more than one vote in the same functional group. The monopoly of political right by a few elites continues regardless the change of sovereignty.

The Basic Law Annex II (2008: 89) Procedures for voting on bills and motions in the Legislative Council. Unless otherwise provided for in this Law, the Legislative Council shall adopt the following procedures for voting on bills and motions:

(i) The passage of bills introduced by the government shall require at least a simple majority vote of the members of the Legislative Council present.

(ii) The passage of motions, bills or amendments to government bills introduced by individual members of the Legislative Council shall require a simple majority vote of each of the two groups of members present: members returned by functional constituencies and those returned by geographical constituencies through direct
elections and by the Election Committee.

The ironically situation is, even the majority of total councilors agree on certain bills or motions, the laws cannot be passed if any one of the constituencies does not gain majority vote. Government thus enjoys absolute advantages over the councilors. Amendment, objection and proposal of regulations introduced by it are much easier to be approved than those introduced by councilors.

The current term of the Legislative Council of the HKSAR was formed by the fourth election held in 2008. Its sixty seats are equally divided by geographical constituency and functional constituency. The former is known as direct elections, Hong Kong is divided in five geographical districts that number of representative of each district is determined by population. All citizen age over eighteen are de facto to take part in the election if they were properly registered. The latter, however, does not include all the working population of citizens but at the same time some people may be granted with more than one vote. Twenty-eight sectors or industries are chosen by the government to compose the Functional constituency. By reference with the Report on the 2008 Legislative Council Election, functional constituency registered electors were varied from 140 to 90,693, ten sectors had no individual voter, and fourteen seats of it were uncontested. Registered electors of geographical constituency was 3,372,007 while functional constituency was 229,861, which means that even though there were about fifteen times different between two constituencies, yet, they share same political right in the legislative council. As the elections are not voted by universal suffrage in an equal basis, this should not be regarded as democratic mechanism. The conflict was sharpened on the vote of XRL’s funding.

2.4 Colonial Legacy II: Imagined Distinction between Urban and Rural

If setting up the Legislative council demonstrates how the government ruled tangibly over its subject, its narration about the place/space produced intangible knowledge in order to justify the sovereignty. British government beared in mind all the time the different status quo between urban and rural area, the former was ceded while the latter was leased, which laid the seed for dissimilar attitude and blueprint toward them, and the legacy left until nowadays. Socio-economic development was imbalance between these two districts. Focal point has always been on the “urban Hong Kong”.

Hong Kong successful story has been always told in this way: it was a small fishing village with about three thousand inhabitants, developed into an entrepot because the geographical time zone advantage as well as the deep and wide Victoria Harbour. After World War II it became an industrial centre within two decades and finally developed into a globally renowned financial centre in late twentieth century. In this legend of economic successful, the New Territories was absent. The narration of linear progressive development of Hong Kong does not provide the full picture to both its residents and outsiders (tourists).

To many urban dwellers, they may visit the New Territories occasionally for picnicking, hiking or to hunt for novelty. If using Levi Strauss’s theory of binary opposition, ‘urban’ and ‘rural’ should be one of the examples that create hierarchy, the former enjoys privilege than the latter. However, in the context of Hong Kong, such binary opposition can be easily replaced by urban area versus New Territories. “New Territories” is a noun referring to Northern part of Hong Kong, yet it is always interchangeable with the concept of “rural area”, less developed zone and countryside. For convenience in the following discussing, I use “urban area” to stand for Hong Kong Island and Kowloon Peninsula unless specified. When review carefully on the popular narration especially
those refer to economic activities, we may discover that most of them are seldom associated with the New Territories.

Although the New Territories includes the largest population and contributes two-third of total area of Hong Kong, its socio-political, economic and cultural significant is hardly comparable with the urban area. Not until 1970s, the British colonial government had launched the massive development of new towns which might be considered as the first big scale planned development in the New Territories. However, the government made it very clear, the city centre was overcrowded, and she planned to diverse urban dwellers to further away from centre. However, the development does not necessary bring understanding between the urban and rural settlers. Most of these new comers spend their daily life within their modernized housing estates without outreaching the existing neighbour.

Urbanisation, in fact, was deruralisation in the sense that original communities and cultures are destroyed in most cases. In early 2010 Hong Kong government also has an investigation entitled “North East New Territories New Development Areas Planning and Engineering Study”. Both the British colonial and postcolonial HKSAR governments use similar terminology that is new “towns” or “development areas” to describe development in the New Territories, as if there were no existing “town” and development is needed. In this case, the ideologies between two governments are surprisingly alike.

During the Anglo-Sino negations on the future of Hong Kong in the 1980s, British parliament counselors suggested to keep the ceded parts Hong Kong Island and Kowloon Peninsula and return sovereignty of New Territories. Sir Sze-yuen Chung who was the Senior Unofficial Member of the Legislative Council and Executive Council during the colonial period said, “Our [Hong Kong] power plant, reservoirs and food
supply and so on are all located in the New Territories. Food supply even needs to import from China. If the New Territories was returned to China, how Hong Kong Island and Kowloon Peninsula could have water and electricity? [it] would be impossible to survive.” (Legco review 2010, my translation from Chinese). It seems that the New Territories has more natural resources and important utility plants than the urban area. It is the hinterland and dependency of urban area, why it does not gain equal social status and awareness as urban area? We heard too much about Hong Kong’s economic miracles on urban area, but why there is lack of document to credit the New Territories? The former colonizer had successfully created the imagination and stereotype between the New Territories and urban area as well as the rural harsh life and modernized comfortable urban life. As a result, when “original” rural inhabitants reject the plan of urbanisation, they are labelled as stubborn, peremptorily and obstructers of advanced city development, less support can be obtained from urban residents.

Similar with Foucault, Homi Bhabha also discusses on the function of production of knowledge by the colonizer, yet, he focuses the discussion on colonialism. Colonial discourse to him is an apparatus that “turns on the recognition and disavowal of racial/cultural/historical differences”. Colonizer creates a space for “subject peoples” through the production of knowledges and its objective is to construe the colonized as a population of degenerate types on the basis of racial origin, in order to justify conquest and to establish systems of administration and instruction (Bhabha 1986: 154).

Foucault’s idea about knowledge not only limits to colonial strategy, but any kind of governmentality. Majority of population agreed and also was glad that the colonizer brought modernity, prosperity and progress of democracy to them. Moreover, nowadays people usually compare social policies and all aspects between the colonial government and HKSAR, and most opinion is the former government ruled better. This situation has improved in past two years with the series movement of preservation of agricultural
villages in the New Territories. All of sudden, many unknown villages receive coverage in mass media and an increasing urban dwellers flock into them. Urban tenants particularly the middle-aged and young generations try to find out the New Territories on their own, meanwhile enrich the narration variety of it.

2.5 Colonial Legacy III: Indigenous villages versus non-indigenous villages

The New Territories situation was much different than the British cession of Hong Kong Island and Kowloon that the former had 423 established traditional Chinese villages with over a hundred thousand dwellers (estimated by Lockhart report) while the latter had only about five thousand dwellers (Zheng 2002: 3). The British colonizer did not know much about this territory; therefore, first of all it established many police stations. Not until mid April 1899, it formally occupied the territory. The following year on 23 July, the governor announced that, all land in New Territories belonged to the Crown, the original permanent owners suddenly lost their properties, but became tenants of the Crown. They could not change the registered land uses and least periods were set. In October 1900, Hetian tax (crop-field tax) was introduced (1902 Statistics showed there were 61 square mile farmlands in New Territories) and Yantian tax (salt-field tax) was introduced in May 1903 (Cheng 2002: 10). No doubt, these policies upset indigenous people. In the very beginning, there were several anti-colonial resistances from indigenous to the British army. That means the colonizer needed to employ different methods on these newly colonized people. Collaboration system was one of its choices which meant relying on an elaborate network of indigenous ‘collaborators’ in the guise of chiefs and other ‘big men’ (Shipway 2008: 25), that were village representatives.

Concepts of collaboration (and, by extension, of resistance) are central to the “peripheral” or “excentric” theory of imperialism, and have been deployed to help
explain every stage of colonial rule, from conquest to decolonization. Thus, modern colonialism developed from patterns of collaboration on which depended pre-colonial free trade imperialism and the still-preferred British system of informal empire. Formal colonial rule was established where collaborating rulers had ceased to become reliable, perhaps as a result of internal crisis, typically resulting from increased demands by the imperial powers, as in the case of the British occupation of Egypt in 1882, which in turn inspired “much of the subsequent rivalry impelling the partition of Africa (Robinson 1972)”. However, imperial reliance on collaboration, the indirect rule, soon transcended its origins in the diplomatic expedient of imperial protection. Rather, the designated function of collaborating rulers, landlords and other “big men” were as agents for imperial interests, for example maintaining local law and order (Shipway 2008: 24-25).

In essence, as in India, collaboration necessitated a political bargain, according to which revenue was collected without too many questions asked about who paid, while public order was taken for granted by the British without them taking too obtrusive a part in it (Seal 1973: 13)

Although the cultural referents might vary from empire to empire, the underlying reality was the “routinisation of hegemony” (Young 1988: 48). In Hong Kong, there are 586 indigenous villages currently. In most cases, the colonial regime was not only a neutral arbiter of rival interests, used its power of “state licensing” to support one part against the other in some conflicts, but also sometimes it even deliberately created social cleavages. It made use of the division between local clans in the New Territories. For instance, economic or material conflicts cut across ethnic, regional or even dialectal boundaries, conflicts between landowners and tenants as one between indigenous and Hakka groups. By these political means, government created power brokers who

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became mutually dependent like Heung Yee Kok (Rural Committee Council that mainly works for indigenous privileges). Conflicts could be pacified by negotiation and compensation of material resources, thereby preventing them from escalating to moral, anti-colonial platforms (Ngo 1999: 6). As a result, the indigenous villagers had become privilege classes and were distinguish out from the rest, and had authority over late comers.

When the British arrived, they acknowledged rights not only to building sites and cultivations, registering these rights in the land records, but also to a wider village territory within which the local people had certain privileges: burying their dead, grazing their cattle, and collecting fuel. Indigenous villagers stand by these rights; they resent intrusion and try to make trespassers pay for their boldness if they cannot or if it is not desirable that they be excluded. Surprisingly (not surprisingly), Freedman has already noticed “new comers” in the villages. The urban area of Hong Kong has engulfed parts of the countryside, new influx and the refugees have turned large areas of land into market gardens, changing the landscape with their crops and huts, and to some extent the newer agricultural pattern has been adopted by the long-established population. Village Representatives were sought out by men who have conceived some economic interest in his village, from the humble immigrant who would like to establish himself there on a plot of land to grow vegetables, to the land dealer who may need to rely both on the Village Representative’s detailed knowledge of the complex land tenure of the village. The prudent immigrants make their terms before they begin to build. Immigrant vegetable growers or poultry raisers may think they have the right to put up a shack, but they may find themselves the centre of a dispute from which they can extricate themselves only by paying a sum of money. Cultivable land was not always plentiful. The immigrant vegetable growers were normally only be allowed to grow at the edges of the villages, far away from the village centres such as hillsides, where the
indigenes widely used for many ancillary purposes, including forestry, herb-gathering, cattle-grazing and burials.. (Freedman: 1979: 190-221).

Furthermore, male indigenous descendant enjoys Ding Rights (丁權) that they are granted a free land lot and a right to build a small house, which is an enormous advantages in Hong Kong where land price is skyrocketing. The small houses are allowed to be “permanent housing”, three-storey’s with 700 square feet per floor. However, non-indigenous can only build “temporary housing” (also known as “squatters”) which are two-storey with 400 square feet per floor. If government has to make restitution for land of an indigenous village, it must assist in the resettlement and build new houses for them. They also have the right to vote for their ‘village representative’. Not only until 2000, judgement made by a Court case allowed non-indigenous to vote for their village representative.

Foucault’s view on government which is “not a question of imposing law on men, but of disposing things (Foucault 1979: 95)” explains the situation in Hong Kong. The three colonial legacies demonstrated how the former colonizer extended it governance into all aspect of everyday life. Through the invention of functional constituency, some political elites were granted more right than the others; the production of Hong Kong successful story, the society was fragmented into urban and rural parts and the latter became inferior (backward) to the former; even within rural area, different classes were formed that indigenous affected the life of non-indigenous. The colonizer manipulated various institutions to govern its colony and all these in fact should not be taken for granted.
CHAPTER THREE: TSOI YUEN TSUEN

Tsoi Yuen Tsuen is located at Shek Kong, surrounded by Pat Heung (八鄉, means eight villages) and Kam Tin (錦田, means beautiful fields), three larger and older built up areas in Yuen Long district, all are located in the Northwest of the New Territories. However, if we search the village by CentaMap, a local internet map supported by Lands Department of HKSAR Government, only two results will be found: in Tuen Mun and on Lantau Island. There are at least four villages with the same name in China. Therefore, Shek Kong Tsoi Yuen Tsuen is the best way to make it specific. Yet, the essay will only use “Tsoi Yuen Tsuen” for convenience. I roughly draw the boundary of it and it is located right next to the Shek Kong Barracks, the former British military campsite. Indigenous villages and the Barracks both played the important roles in shaping the landscapes of the village.

![Figure 2. Map of Tsoi Yuen Tsuen and its surrounding area (Source: CentaMap)](http://hk.centamap.com)

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19 CentaMap < http://hk.centamap.com>
3.1 Ethnographic Data of Surrounding Area

Yuen Long is the largest plain in the New Territories, with a total area of more than 10.5 square kilometers. North of the plain is Shenzhen Bay, the other three sides are surrounded mountains ranges. Kam Tin river connects with Yuen Long river here. Yuen Long-Shek Kong plain is fertile flat land and indigenous inhabitants have been living and farming on the plain for generations. There were varies scattered “Hui” (墟) literally means crowded area, down town and market. Most of the main village paves were located inside these Hui and only muddy small pave ways were built to connect them. Kam Tin also located at the same plain and the Yuen Long East. It has nine hundred years of history and is the oldest village in the North West New Territories. Yuen Long Hui was established in 1670 and gradually developed into the largest commercial and agricultural distribution center which still operates nowadays. In the early twentieth century, after the United Kingdom occupied the New Territories, Tai Po Road was constructed to link the East Kowloon. In 1911, opening of the Kowloon-Canton Railway greatly improved transportation within the colony as well as Mainland China. These infrastructures have become the main way to contact external world (Cheng 2002; Leung 2002; Shui 2006; Sima 1990). Cantonese occupied the most fertile land in the New Territories. Hakka people, the latter are now always found upstream, along foothills, and generally on poorer land. (Gloger 1986). Until a hundred years ago, the New Territories residents worked as farmers for generations and rarely went to downtown.

Until the thirties, the main ring roads were built along the Yuen Long Hui. In the early stage, the villagers relied on Yuen Long Castle Peak Road, as well as another main road connecting Kam Tin to Au Tau until 1913. In 1961, Kam Tin and Sheung Tsuen is joined by Kam Sheung Road, traffic was improved a lot. This provided a chance for the younger indigenous generation to explore the outside world, migrated to overseas or
worked as sailors. For those who still lived here, they were no longer farming, but rent farmlands to “new comers” and Chinese immigrants to earn income. In 1960s, rice farmers began to sell their lands, squatters were quickly built up near the field (Leung 2002; Sima 1990; Xia 2002; Shui 2006). The New Territories became the solution of high pressure of urban population, as well as to meet the land need for industry and commercial development. Yuen Long belongs to the second stage of new town development in the seventies.

![Figure 3. Transportation of Yuen Long district. (Source: Google map)](image)

3.2 Shek Kong Barracks

After the British regime conquered Hong Kong, plenty of barracks and military camps were built and Shek Kong Barracks was the biggest one. It is located at the foothills of Tai Mo Shan, which situates at centre of the New Territories. That was the highest mountain in Hong Kong with 957 metres height. At the early colonial period, its mountainsides, peak and mounds were all occupied by military facilities but most of them were abandoned nowadays already. Outposts on the mountain peak enabled British army to stand guard and monitor the Chinese army from invading the urban area from
the north. Therefore the nearby Shek Kong Barrack could defend the colony promptly. As a result, British authority began to build the barrack with airfield in 1938. The project was temporary suspended during the Second World War and Japanese invasion of Hong Kong. The construction was resumed in 1950 while the British Royal Air Force started to their station (Song 2003).

Plenty of job opportunities were created during the building of the Shek Kong Barracks and it bought new comers to settle nearby. Informants told that they had worked as coolie to deliver materials such as cement and stones, built the stone-made military campsite, and transported food. Although there is no official record about the establishment of Tsoi Yuen village, through interview with over fifty villagers, this village started to develop at the similar time with the military camp, and reminiscence of the villagers is inseparable with the campsite as well as the British militants. Some of these new peasants not only obtaining leased land lot from indigenous people, but also extending their farming lot to the military land area. Apart from visible buildings of the barrack, enormous natural surrounding also included to the military land. These areas became military training sites for the British army. However, the boundary was invisible. Informants told they had the British’s consent to cultivate in military land:

[Interview005, male, age 50] I know my land lot is special. It is not private land but military land. My family had farmed for over two hundreds thousands feet squares…There were some military beacons on my field lot. They even paid me to demolish them. British soldiers were very nice.

[Interview 015, female, age 62] We farmed more than ten hundreds thousands feet squares. We knew these were “Crown land”, British soldier’s land. British army wrote a consent document allowing us to cultivate here. They drove tanks and jeeps through here to the Tai Mo Shan barracks in the past. They never interfered
us (practicing farming activities). When we were opening barren lands, they discovered us. They had a translator with them and we had communication. He reported it to his supervisor and we were granted to farm here. They never collected rent from us.

Furthermore, villagers told these military soldiers were kind and helpful, although small trouble might occur sometimes and they knew how to handle:

[Interview 103a, female, age 55] There was a bar in the nearest town. I remember one night a drunk Gurhka soldier entered our home. We of course a little surprised but not really worried. We just led him out of our place. An Indian chief made us pizza. But sometimes they put their hands on our shoulders, we were embarrassed and ran away soon. So when we passed by the barrack, we always hanged out with a group of girls. In the past, there was no gate in front of the barrack. We walked into it and no one stopped us. We communicated with body language. The Gurhka bought big cocks from us and cooked curry chicken. Sometimes they helped us to push the heavy trolley with goods.

The barracks even became playground for children. Sometimes, children even stolen stuff from the campsite and just for fun:

[Interview 005, male, age 55] We played football and cycled in the barracks, stole their batteries insides light bulbs. We [he and his schoolmates who also lived in Tsoi Yuen village] played when no one was there. It used to without bared wired. At that time, we left school at noon. They [Gurhka] went to somewhere else, either had lunch or relaxed in cool area. We waited until they were gone and stole [batteries]. Those light bulbs were made by plastic so we could remove them
without screwdriver. We just stole the batteries and had fun at home.

Encountering with British (Gurhka) army had became collective memory for the Tsoi Yuen villagers. Interestingly, I never heard any villagers mentioned PLA during our condensations. Small children played inside the barracks, cycled at the airfield, touched tanks, watched the getting on and off of military aircrafts. They described these soldiers as very nice, seldom took advantages on them. Tsoi Yuen villagers got used to stay harmony with their neighbour even though it seemed to be a hierarchy status, colonizer and the colonized as well as different ethnics. After 1997, PLA’s air Force replaced British Air Force and stations to the barrack. They live in a closed environment, have training insides the campus and no connection with its neighbours. Open day is the only opportunity to glimpse their lives, visitors from all parts Hong Kong flock into it. Guards are found at the entrance.

When the 1997 was approaching, Gurhka militants started thinking their future. They are granted the resident rights in Hong Kong. They preferred Hong Kong to their homeland Nepal for a better living condition. Thus, they searched nearby settlements and asked for the possibility to rent a flat. Tsoi Yuen Tsuen was one of their choices. Regarding the government poultry policies and restrictions, many of them had returned licenses to government, hence former poultry farms made available to ample space. Some villagers transformed these spaces into simple living places and sub-leased to former soldiers in order to replace the lost of income from poultry. The conditions are obviously not very good, but the rents are low compare to urban area. There were about five to six families living in the village. They were facing worse situation than local Tsoi Yuen Tsuen villagers because they had no property ownership but only a tenant identity. Language barrier was another obstacle that they did not read Chinese official document and fair English that do not know their legal rights. However, this research
has not enough space to cover them. The good news is at least two families are relocated to public housing (normally cheap rent governmental house) with the help of Post-80s.

3.3 Formation of a new village

Most of the first generation settlers of Tsoi Yuen village are still alive, therefore not only we need to study its current situation, but also to look back the origin and development of the community, and how vary single unit of families turn into interrelated social network. First of all, the major characteristic of the village is multi-clan in nature, villagers arrived in various occasions and time. They are not descendants of indigenous villages. Four informants claimed they were the earliest settler and I will use W, X, Y, Z to represent them in the following:

[Interview 055, female, age 50, W] I have been living here for 50 years…My grandmother brought my father and me to live here and open up wasteland…Not many people lived here, only three huts: mine, X’s and Z’s. Then, Y and another household moved in…The land was really barren…I heard from her that she planned to get a land…someone introduced this place to her. It was such a barren land.

[Interview 107, male, age 29, Y] According to my mother, our family was the first household to settle here. My grandmother was an ‘outsider’ of Lin Fa Tei (a nearby indigenous village). People there were afraid that she might be taken advantages by the indigenous people in future…and a land lot was available for sell near the military camp, thus advised her to move out. But I do not know much detailed.
[Interview 085, male, age 58, Y] I was born here (the village). At that time, there were only four houses: mine, W’s, Y’s and Z’s. In the old days, my father fled to Hong Kong with his relatives… they brought him to Shek Kong to dem-shek-tsai (揼石仔, It was a low paid and highly manual demanding work in the past that requires labour to use hammer to break the stone into pieces for construction and paving roads)… he wandered around after work and found a space to build a hut. He was single and young, and he built a hut for himself… his colleague also did the same, they built huts near the working site and cluster together… the huts were built by stalks and woods… (they were) as if illegal workers stayed in illegal site… ha-ha… When the military camp was completed, he was unemployed. He had to find a job, tried to get a land for growing vegetables from the indigenous and was succeed.

[Interview 076, male, age 53, Z] My parents arrived Hong Kong around 1947. They lived and farmed in Wang Toi Shan (an indigenous village)… the Shek Kong military airport was built by hands… my parents worked at the camp too. They carried cements and sands, dem-shek-tsai as well as brought their farming product to the airport… some years later they moved to the land near the campsite. There were only a few families: mine, X’s and Y’s three families were amongst the earliest.

Although there seems to be minute contradiction, their narrations still provides a glimpse to the beginning of the village and the claim to this place. Most of them have family members worked in the barracks and settled there. The unfavorable position compared with the indigenous villagers was also noticed. In the following years, non-indigenous households were continued to grow especially in late sixties, the 1967 riots caused many jobless urban dwellers escaped to relatively peaceful rural area. Moreover,
becoming a farmer was one of the possible solutions to survive under a colonial society without welfare, at least they were able to grow food for themselves. When Tsoi Yuen villagers felt certain kind of living stability, they asked their relatives, families (children, siblings and wife) and friends from the same village from mainland China to move from mainland China to live with them. Dissimilar with formation of traditional village, the community was appeared accidentally, not by blood-tied relation.

Rough huts and farm houses made of wood, mud, sands and stalks on the lots were built by villagers. Charles Abrams regards “from the earliest days of civilization, man had been able to create a house with his own hands” (1964: 154). However, government seemed not appreciate these types of housing and labeled them as “squatters” and “temporary houses”: low in standard, poor in quality. Many families had their houses being blown off by strong typhoon in sixties, which caused them to build a firm house, for example use double layer of brick walls, whenever they were affordable. Number of squatters remained unchanged since Hong Kong government has changed the squatter policy. There were three periods of squatter registration: 1982, 1984 and 1985, only squatters existed and registered before these years are “legal”. Otherwise, unregistered squatters will be removed once being discovered.

3.4 Tsoi Yuen Tsuen as a Chinese Village

3.4.1 Made up of multi-linear Chinese clan

Tsoi Yuen Tsuen is a multi-linear village that composed by very few indigenous landlords, non-indigenous land owners, a lot of non-indigenous leased tenants. Two main groups of people with different dialects are found: Hakka and Chaozhou people. Hakka people (客家, 客 means guests; symbolically means the otherness, outsider, strangers; 家 means home or family), have the tradition of migration and are
descendants from Fukien, Guangxi and Guangdong province. Chaozhou is also a town in the coastal regions of Guangdong province. When Hakka and Chaozhou people fled to Hong Kong, they preserved their own culture and dialogues, interestingly they communicate in Cantonese with each others. In chapter one, we know that the British colonizer set up a criteria to distinguish who were ‘indigenous’ in Hong Kong. Take into consideration that ‘indigenous’ was a concept manipulated by the colonizer in Hong Kong context, why the legacy still influence our present lives in post colonial era?

Tsoi Yuen Tsuen is not a native village according to the British authority, it has no ancestral hall, tribal record of genealogy, no chief leader; but characteristic of Chinese agricultural village are found: they are ethnically Chinese, use Chinese kinship terms to indicate their neighbour. Before settling down at Tsoi Yuen Tsuen, most people worked as farmers in mainland China, the agrarian country or other rural area in Hong Kong. They brought along with their traditional agricultural skills and living standard to new homes.

3.4.2 Usage of Chinese kinship terms for a non blood-tied village

The Chinese kinship system with characteristics of emphasis of sex, generation stratification and lineal and collateral differentiation can be regarded as a conglomerate system. Tsoi Yuen villagers do not belong to the same ancestor, yet Chinese kinship terms are widely applied within the community. At the first level, kinship terms of course are used within family, secondly they can be found during conversation between neighbourhood, that was those relationship without blood-tied.

When young generation calls the male elder, these terms are added after his surnames: ‘Bo’ (伯, refers to elder brother of father) , ‘Shu’ (叔, refers to younger brother of father)
For example,\(^{20}\) ‘You bo’ (游伯), ‘Bo shu’ (波叔). If two persons belong to same family and have identical surnames, the older normally keeps his title with surname while the younger keeps his first name: such as a pair of father and son: ‘Yip bo’ (葉伯) ‘Li shu’ (禮叔), the former was the father and latter is the son. For the old woman, ‘Po’ (婆, refers to mother’s mother) is being used. In the most distinct feature in the Chinese kinship system: patriarchy system, male is always superior to female as the female will no longer regarded as the close member of the family when she gets married. For females, their close relatives changed after marriage. Therefore, her husband surname is used for the title as if ‘Gao po’ (高婆) unless she remains single in her life time. A married women, besides using husband’s surname, if she born any children, she can also be called as mother of her child’s name, such as ‘Ka-ho ma’ (家豪媽: 家豪, Ka-ho, the child’s name; 媽 means mother). Hence, this once again shows the inferior of female in a Chinese society, married women almost loses their identity, their names are almost never used.

When referent is not that old, younger-generation terms or general terms are implied, normally surname is not necessary, their first names are used instead of surname ‘Ge’ (哥, elder brother) and ‘Jei’ (姐, elder sister) like ‘Kwong ge’ (光哥) and ‘Shui ge’ (水哥); wife of Shui ge is known as ‘Shui sao’ (水嫂, wife of Shui ge; sao refers to the wife of elder brother). Besides, surname can be used as well for similar generation with politeness, ‘Li sheng’ (李先生, Mr. Li) and his wife ‘Li tai’ (李太太, Mrs. Li; ‘太太’ means wife); once again extra indication is inserted for same family member: ‘Da Zeng sheng’ (大曾生, literately means big Mr. Zeng) and ‘Sai Zeng sheng’ (細曾生, literately means small Mr. Zeng); they wives are know as ‘Da Zeng tai’ (大曾太, big Mrs. Zeng) and ‘Sai Zeng tai’ (細曾太, small Mrs. Zeng) respectively.

\(^{20}\) I underline the surname regardless in Chinese or English for convenience of reader, Chinese terms are written in the bracket. Same indication will be used under this section.
Similar generation and ages can simply call each other’s first names or nicknames. Elder generation says whatever they like, first name or insert ‘tsai’ (仔, little boy) after the first names for example, there are no strict rules. Claude Lévi-Strauss (1969) and David Schneider (2004) ideas’ on kinship and family are used as the framework and basic knowledge to understand the kinship system. Kinship terms indicate important of seniority and marital status to a Chinese village, thus create relatedness within the community. Another feature of the Chinese system is found, that is a lineal kinship system. A family may prepare a new house for the married son only. The research found that, many female villagers came to Tsoi Yuen Tsuen due to marriage.

Usage of traditional kinship terms on one hand creates the communal solidarity and a feeling of safety is associated with place are emphasized in the memories of the area. On the other hand, it shows respect to older generation. In a traditional village, respected and prestigious elder such as village-leader and chief usually act as resolved disputes agents for the clan members. Obviously, in the very beginning, Tsoi Yuen Tsuen did not have a legitimate class of respected to lead the whole village as a united community. However, a villager said that his mother was well-respected in the village even though she did not go to school. Neighbour consulted her opinions when they encountered troubles and faced difficulties. Her reputation was wide spread both within the village and to the indigenous. At the moment she passed away, her family was allowed by the indigenous to conduct funeral at the Shek Kong vegetable station, where used for vegetable transactions. Another villager said her father was also respected in the village. When the road project was carried out, he could persuade some villagers to cede some private lands to build the road for common good. Maybe a disputes-solving agent is required for a developing community. Tsoi Yuen Tsuen inhabitants understand well that demolish of their primitive and cramped housing equivalent to their lost of
social network that had formed itself in the village. Old neighbour relations will be broken and a new life had to be started in a new neighbourhood. (Mitchell 1998: 835)

3.5 Tsoi Yuen Tsuen as an agricultural village

3.5.1 Agricultural activities

Hong Kong has a sub-tropical climate. There are pleasant breezes, plenty of sunshine and comfortable temperatures throughout the year. The wettest month is August while the driest month is January, while the monthly average rainfall in vicinity is only 23.4 millimeters. Summer starts from May to September. It is hot and humid. Afternoon temperatures often exceed 31 degrees Celsius whereas at night, temperatures generally remain around 26 degrees Celsius. About 80 percent of the rain falls during summer and it is most likely to be affected by tropical cyclones. Heavy rain and strong winds may last for a few days and sometimes result in landslips and flooding especially in rural area. Mean annual rainfall in vicinity of Tai Mo Shan (the area where Tsoi Yuen Tsuen situates) is over 3000 millimeters. Winter takes place during November to February. It is cold and dry with average temperature between 14 to 20 degrees Celsius. Occasionally temperature drops below 10 degrees Celsius in urban areas while sub-zero temperatures and frost occur on high ground and in the New Territories. (Hong Kong Observatory).

Prior to the settlement of non-indigenous people, farmland was used for cultivating rice. There are two harvesting times of growing rice, but growing vegetables has three to four times of harvest annually. Therefore, the new arrivals planted vegetables to make profits. Various vegetables are grown for summer and winter season: ginger, lettuce, beans, spinach, hot pepper, papaya, aloe vera, cabbage; fruits included: banana, litchi, longan, artocarpus heterophyllus; bamboo forest is found also. Besides growing plants for profit-making, a lump sum of ornamental plants such as orchids, podocarpus, rose,
osmanthus and cactus are widely found at the dwellers’ gardens. Meanwhile, “Blue ginger” is grown by Chaozhou villagers only as it is their traditional ingredient. A Hakka villager said, “It (the field) must be them (Chaozhou villagers). We don’t eat this, only they cook food with it (blue ginger”).

Scott attempts to conceptualize the nature of practical knowledge and to contrast it with more formal, deductive, epistemic knowledge. He borrows the classical Greek term metis, which denotes the knowledge that can come only from practical experience (Scott 1998: 7), a means of comparing the forms of knowledge embedded in local experience with the more general, abstract knowledge deployed by the state and its technical agencies. It is variously called know-how, common sense, experience, a knack. He gives an example of the art of piloting, a “local and situated knowledge”. The pilot know the unique features of local wind and wave patterns, unmarked reefs, seasonal changes in micro currents, local traffic conditions. Such knowledge is particular, by definition; it can be acquired only by local practice and experience (Scott 1998: 311-7). Similar to the situation of Tsoi Yuen farmers, they obtained the season cycle of precipitation, wind, and market information according to their experiences, and then made decision on what, when and how to grow vegetables or raised poultry and livestock. Villagers could tell if a land suitable to grow vegetable by observing the nearby environment.

[Interview 087, male, age 79] I observed around and determined I could grow good vegetables here [Tsoi Yuen Tsuen]. [Asked: What is a good land look like?] I walked from Sheung Tsuen, there was a rubbish pond which produced dirty water on the ground, that was not a good land… That was a difficult moment. I woke up

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at 4a.m. and carried water from the rivers to feed forth to fifty chicken and pigs. I was very poor so I dug two wells by myself.

Ancient China had always been an agrarian country. So the Chinese almanac ("Tung-shing", 通勝), a book published before Lunar New Year, became an important reference for farmers. Besides marking the lunar calendar, it also includes all ‘should’ and ‘avoid’ things (like fung shui) to be done everyday. The right timing of annual farming cycle can also be found. Excluding reading it through the ‘superstition’ angle, it included the statistic on astronomy, geography and climate. Two villagers told how this wisdom still valid after thousands years:

[Interview 055, female, age 50] Hoeing the field was very harsh. It had to be hoe one step by one step. Then, harrowed and made the field flat again, dug out the field lines by lines and here we could sow into these lines. After the Mid Autumn, there are more dew, will grow Italian lettuce, broccoli, chrysanthemum… I take products to outside and sell, I can earn more.

[Interview 079, female, 62] I woke up at 6am. My field was a bit far from my home, had to walk 15 to 20 minutes…I took the harvested vegetables to weight at the vegetable station. One basket of vegetable is about thirty-something catties…HK$0.05 per catty (about HK$1.5 per 0.6 kilograms) … In winter, most of the vegetables were thrown into the sea, because (market supply is) too much, it is easier to grow vegetables in winter …I could harvest seventy-something baskets of vegetables…in summer, there are too many typhoons, it was difficult to cultivate, thus vegetables cost higher…take an example of cabbage, the growth stages are forty, fifty, sixty, seventy and eighty days, it also has summer and winter species…I also followed the instruction of moon calendar and Chinese almanac.
[Interview 077, male, age 53] We (my family) planted as much as ten dou chong di in the past. It needed a lot of man power. I grew for instance, cabbage, spinach and lettuce. (I) Sowing first, then transplanted vegetable shoots into soil beds. I had to dig out little soil and made a small hole, then transplanted into it. Certain distant had to be keep between each shoot. Growing lettuce required longer length. If it was spinach, we had to loosen the surrounding soil after transplanting.

The farming activities dominated the every day life of villagers. Their living schedule was mainly ran according to the workload in field.

[Interview 002] I had dinner at around 8pm, then plowed at the field in front of my door. I did not have a plow machine at first, I needed to plow until 11pm, picked out weeds and planted at around 5am or 6am, it’s very harsh… sold products at early morning, watered the plants, had lunch…if it is too hot, I had watering seven times a days. Before I set up the irrigation, I carried water from water tanks. It’s very hard to take water…now (September) we can plant Chinese cabbage, winter melon, spinach, lettuce… if you don’t know how to grow, you can ask others. (Asked: What should be grown in this moment?) Planted less melon and beans since their production costs were higher…

Although there was no specific division of labour between genders in the village, it was more often for male (father) to search job outside the village while female (grandmother, mother) normally stayed at home to take care young children and the field. Men also helped in the field after works. However, the experiences of harshness of cultivation and took care of children were mainly heard from female villagers. Traditional Chinese family value of “Men in charge of external business and women in charge of housework (男主外，女主内) was found in here.
[Interview 067, female, age 63] I feel free so that I can watch closely to my home. If you find a job outsides, it takes a longer (working and transport) time and return home very late...It (farming) is very hard. Need to work from the dawn until late in the evening. I was still washing vegetables in water tanks at 11pm when people were sleeping…deliver products at 3 to 4 am, get some rest at home, then watering vegetables at 7am. It’s too sunny in noon, so I will sleep awhile. It’s really a hard life. But the good thing is that I can always look after and take care of my children.

Sometimes, villagers grow vegetables for self consumption because they are cleaner than those buying in markets.

[Interview 072, female, 72] We do not grow plenty of vegetables, mainly raised pigs for a few decades. At first we had twenty pigs, finally increased to two to three hundred pigs…it was very hard…caught the pigs, vaccination. I raised pigs until sixty something years old until government did not allow us to raise (pigs)…We have a field outside our house to grow vegetables for our family. It is better than buying from the market, better taste and more delicious…vegetable obtain from market has pesticides…we do not use. We water the plants and vegetables in natural way so our vegetables are cleaner, less dirty.

Throughout the sharing from farmers, they know a lot in planting, different species with various growth environment and time. Their knowledge is accumulated by experience of their own (family history), neighbour, seeds sellers as well as everyday practices and testing, not by textbooks. In fact, traditional practice is employed even though their expertise knowledge is seldom recognized. Moreover, growing vegetables and raising poultry forms into a good example of sustainable development, a modern term nowadays. Many informants emphasized that they did not waste things in a village life.
At the moment of harvesting, villagers wake up in early morning, collect the mature agricultural product and transport them to the vegetable station. Products will then be delivered to Vegetable Marketing Organisation (VMO, a governmental organisation), wholesale buyers will decide how much they will pay for. Villagers do not know their product values instantly. Many old farmers complained that in the past, staff of the vegetable station always told them no one purchased their product, whole lot of vegetables were thrown into sea. So no money was paid to them. Therefore, farmers found their own way to improve their incomes. Some of them gathered together and hired a truck to transport their products to Luen Woo Hui (another market in Fanling, 20 minutes driving distance from the village). They sold products themselves in order to earn much more revenue through retailing.

Modernisation releases farmer’s manual pressures, small scale plough machines, irrigation, motors. When cultivators is getting old, they began to change business to plant fruit trees in order to save their manual power and time, furthermore, the profits are quite promising. Beginning in eighties, agricultural activities in Hong Kong has decreased in trend. Cheap vegetables are imported from China and high cost of fertilizers hit the Tsoi Yuen villagers seriously. Quite a number of them decrease in farming area and change to grow high value products. Some turn into small scale production and mainly grow products for their constant clients e.g. friends. An old villager takes a 30 minutes bus journey to a metro station every day and sells “illegally” (by law) next to a wet market.

Natural environment provides substantial raw materials for enriching residents’ daily necessity for instance fish, crabs, shrimps, firewood, wild fruits, well water; ample spaces became cost-free playground for children such as swimming in streams, running on mountains ranges, picking wild flowers for home decoration and climbing trees. The
hardship of cultivated life motivates villagers to treasure food and materials. Many informants emphasized that they did not waste things in village life. Meanwhile, living in Tsoi Yuen village allows its dwellers the ability to maintain a comfortable life at relatively low cost.

3.5.2 Poultry industry
Apart from cultivation, poultry activities were also well developed in Tsoi Yuen Tsuen in different nature, for self consumption or for sale. Number of livestock varied from a few to hundred or even ten thousand. Some households practiced farming and raised a few number of livestock together since the latter is able to bring extra revenue. Informants told that, their families had a small number of chickens or ducks mainly for self consumption, while raising pigs must aim for market sale. Their reasons was quite simple and understandable, “Pigs are too large in size. It is impossible to eat a whole pig by a single family.” There were some large scale farms houses, such as pigeon, pig, duck and chicken farms. A villager taught us to distinguish the kind of farm houses by its appearance, “Those (farm house) with lower walls were used for raising pigs, chicken’ farms were higher and pigeon’s houses were the highest. It is because pigs cannot fly but chicken and pigeon do.”

Many villagers told that farming alone was not enough to earn a satisfactory living for the whole family. Therefore, most of them also engage in raising poultry such as ducks, chicken and pigeon. Leftover of vegetables in the field after harvesting are cooked in order to feed livestock like pigs and cows, excreta from poultry can be used as manure. This traditional farming habit was able to minimize production cost. These quotations reveals details of how villagers live(d), their farming practices and their world within the farming world. Farming, livestock and poultry raising require different skills that
dealing with living animals needed technique to ensure good profit, such as prevent poultry from breaking eggs:

[Interview 098, male, age 73] I bought the chickens myself and got the (first few) pigs\textsuperscript{22} from Kadoorie…it was very easy to raise chickens and pigs, just feed them twice (a day), very easy, need not to wake up early in morning…used plumping to clean them everyday…only chicks had to pay more attention…when they grew up, you had to handle well with their mouths, for example made a small cut…otherwise, they pecked eggs…they were bad, pecked the eggs when I planned to sell them.

[Interview 010, female, age 73] I learnt how to raise pigeons form my husband. I love watching them flying around…before in the seventies, there were many people like eating them but very few pigeons farm, the demand was very high…I could make profits from it…after that, it was no longer easy to make living from it. I was facing competition with mainland pigeons, in mid seventies fodders (for pigeons) were extremely expensive…pigeon excrement can be sold for feeding fish and growing flowers, about HK$50 to HK$70 per catty. They are cleaner than chicken manure, less grass and feathers …pigeons were very noisy during sunrise, but they also regarded moonlight as sunlight, thus they were noisy in night at well…I checked their eggs under moon night in order to know if they were ready (to sell ) or else they would be broken when pigeons fought with each others.

Some tricks were employed to gain weight for the produce. Number of days of birth of the livestock and poultry were counted carefully to determine the next procedure:

\textsuperscript{22} Kadoorie Farm had a scheme for farmers obtaining small number of livestock with special marks on them free of charge. They were only used for breeding and not allowed for sale.
[Interview 065, male, age 50] In the past, we had to “blow” sorghum into duck’s stomach in order to make it heavier (to earn more). I held its feet and my mother blew (sorghum). Every practiced in this way. Then we sold it at Yuen Long Hui…We had about ten sows. A sow had to keep in a single area with new born piggy. Piggy had to be abstained from sow’s milk and kept separately after about a month. When they had seventy to eighty catties, they could be sold.

[Interview 120, male, age 56] I began raising poultry in 1973 and until 1993. I raised ducks prior than chickens. I had about 2000 chickens and 1000 to 1500 ducks. They ate once daily, took vaccination for them, relocated larger chicken into bigger cages and could be sold between 110 to 115 days… In 1995, government did not allow us to raise poultry and got back licenses. During (Chinese) festival, demand for chickens increased a lot. It was more comfortable than sun-burning in the field.

The agricultural village has been facing severe competition with cheap mainland farming product and increased in high production cost since in the mid-eighties. Moreover, tighter environment protection regulations also boost up production costs since poultry industry produced a lot of waste and smelly water and waste. Small scale farmers are lack of capital to install expensive system to handle the wastes. Decreased in cultivation as well as increased in using fertilizers also lowered the demand of manure. In 1997 and 2001, Hong Kong suffered from serious bird flu which could infect human beings. Millions of chickens and pigeons were slaughtered and sent to landfills, farms were stop from operation for months to prevent further infection. Ever since, the government does not encourage poultry industry, strict regulations were

23 Chicken is always used for ancestor worship during Chinese festivals.
applied to existing poultry farmers. It made most of the Tsoi Yuen villagers closed their poultry farms.

3.5.3 Family as a primary economic unit

Marshall Sahlins’ discussion on domestic mode of production (DMP) can be used to understand the economic unit of Tsoi Yuen Tsuen. The “domestic group” is usually a “family system”. Members of one family may regularly collaborate on an individual basis with kith and kin from other houses; certain projects are collectively undertaken by constituted groups such as lineages or village communities. Often the collective organisation of work merely disguises by its massiveness its essential social simplicity. A series of persons of small groups act side by side on parallel and duplicate task, or they labour together for the benefit of each participant in turn. Cooperation remains for the most part a technical fact, without independent social realisation on the level of economic control. It does not compromise the autonomy of the household or its economic purpose, the domestic management of the household or its economic purpose, the domestic management of labour-power or the prevalence of domestic objectives across the social activities of work (Sahlins 1972: 77-8).

By its composition, the household makes up a kind of petite economy. Division of labour by sex may be found, in the dominant form, the normal activities of any adult man, taken in conjunction with the normal activities of an adult woman (Sahlins 1972: 77-8). In the case of Tsoi Yuen Tsuen, most of the female villagers usually work in the fields although it was not compulsory. Male villagers more intended to search a job outside if possible. Children obligated to help the parents. Born in a farming family almost equivalent family’s member is the basic and primary labour force. Majority of the interviewees mentions their memory to help parents in farmland when they were young. A group of them told of their unwillingness to help while another opinion said
they did not question to their parents since they worked so hard as well. As their children, they had the duty to help. Yang (1945: 74) put forward this characteristic, “a farm family is a unit unto itself in production. The family members produce collectively and they produce for the family as a whole, not for any individual member.”

Sahlins raises three characteristics of DMP. It was true that between the domestic mode, atomized and small scale technology is used. The basic apparatus can usually be handled by individuals belong to nuclear and extended family. However, production is oriented to livelihood, non profit-making were not the case in Tsoi Yuen Tsuen. It is clear that most of them were aimed at making profits and cultivated substantially. Children were obligated to help in the farms but they tried to avoid from heavy workload, such as asking help from (young) neighbour.

[Interview 055, female] I assisted in farm work when I was six or seven years old. Watering, weeding, ploughing, harvesting...just did everything at the farm. If I did not help, my father would beat me, just could not say no. It was compulsory. I also fed chickens and pigs: picked leaves, chopped into pieces and boiled them to feed pigs...Whenever there were works in the field, I had to do. In fact (I) did not like that, so (I) always escaped (the field) and played with my friends... (my life) either did homework or worked at the field. I had to work at field after homework is completed. I was naughty. I had lunch after school at home, as you know, we had no toilet inside. So when I completed my lunch, I usually said I needed to go to toilet and went to play for few hours. Therefore, I was always beaten when I returned home. I sneaked out every time, and being beaten every time (laughing). When I was watering, I did it very quickly so that the underneath soil was still dry. You know, it had to be wet inside the soil. I would be beaten by him as always (laughing again). There was once time, I found few cents on the ground. I was so
happy. At that moment everyone was so poor and no one had money. My father asked me to plough the field. Then I asked three to four neighbour’s sons to do for me and would give them one cent in return. They were so excited and could buy some sweets.

[Interview 076, male] of course had to work at field. Cultivation… I knew how to plough with cows and plunge nose ring for them. must have helped before and after school…we cultivated ten dou chong (1 dou = 7200 square feet) at the peak period, my elder sister and younger brother also helped…I had leadership skills in the village, so I led the small (neighbourhood) children to help me. Ha-ha…

Anna-Maria Åsröm (2004) edited a book about Finns memories to their towns (although she focuses more on urban area) and leaves explicit study on remembrance. “When informants’ recollections of the village, it is manifested in that they often have chosen a certain epoch, which they remember clearly”. In my cases, Tsoi Yuen villagers usually select their youth age and harsh old times, while continuity and the gradual change seem indistinct.

[Interview 070, female] cultivation, feeding chicken and pigs, boiled vegetables to feed them…as long as I recognized hard life of my mother, I knew I was responsible to help…I must have to… our lives were too harsh…

[Interview 071, female] (I) grew vegetables, cultivated lands, harvested, picked out the weeds…started to help when I was very small… began to work (in field) when I just knew how to walk…(when I )grew bigger, at about ten I helped in watering and loosening the soil. My elder brother also helped…

These interviewees were either born in the village or moved to there with parents at very young ages. A villager said after beaten by mother, he was crying and working at
field. Although some expressed their unwilling to help, and found interesting means to escape or reduce the workloads, most of them emphasized assisting in farm was their duty and responsibility. Parents also admitted they needed manual power of small children and meanwhile proud of their helpfulness:

[Interview 067, female, age 63] I rented fields to a plants vegetation garden when children were grown up, so that they could assist her watering and harvesting after their works. They helped a lot: burning weeds, throwing rubbish, harvesting, picking up grasses…When everything on track, I increased leasing farmland gradually. And we are able to feed ourselves.

[Interview 065, male, age 51] I have seven siblings…it was too difficult for one man (his father) to earn a living for nine members of the family…at seven or eight, I chopped firewood into small pieces (as fuel) …tied ducks and waited buyers at the hui …it’s impossible not to assist… my mother alone could not feed all the chicken and ducks, we also had about ten sows…even I got a job nearby, I also helped after work. When I saw pigs cages outside my home, it meant it’s time to sell our pigs. We caught pigs into cages and had to be done by whole family. To be honest, I was afraid of catching pigs, they grunted very loud, likely to make me deaf. The second reason was the dirtiness, pigsty was full of pigs’ feces and urines…five to six pigs transported in a trolley were extremely heavy… even though I was afraid, still needed to help…

3.6 Nurture a Community

When research on the history of the community, I reference with the Finnish Academy financed project entitled “Town dwellers and their places”. Although it is a project about ‘relation between urban ways of life and the urban environment’, the
methodology and narration used in this project also helps to study the relation between daily life and environment, regardless urban or rural area, city and towns. In the introduction, it pointed out that ‘the urban (rural) environment is not seen merely as the geographical location of, or background for, human activities and daily life, but as a complex structure consisting of time-stratified meaningful experiences. The urban (rural) environment may be seen as a conglomeration of places whose meaning is derived from human experience and individual interpretations… in the relations of townspeople to places, and in their experiences, both the built environment and the elements of nature play a role. Contextually, the urban (rural) environment may also be thought to refer to the full network of social and economic relations, the local community and its material items, which make up life in towns (villages) and which provide it with meaning. (Åsröm 2004: 7)

Residents moved to the village in different time, not well-planned or even no basic infrastructure for the community in advance. Its current appearance and setting were formed by negotiation and daily life practices. Villagers had to depend totally on their own family. Tsoi Yuen dwellers were first settled at two sides of the main traffic road, Kam Tin Road for convenient transportation, then expanded the settlement inward. Late comers inhabited further away from the traffic road. Shek Kong Federation of Vegetable Marketing Co-operative Society (also known as Shek Kong Vegetable Station) was one of the twenty six co-operative societies and set up in 1950, the era that the British government planned to secure food production in Hong Kong. It collected vegetables from Shek Kong area, then transferred to VMO points for safety spot-check and wholesaling. That was also one of the reasons that residents from other parts in the New Territories got known to the place for selling and renting as well as provided jobs to nearby settlers such as collecting and weighing vegetables, and related documentation work. As a result, villagers described their billing address as ‘Shek Kong Vegetable
station’ or simply ‘vegetable station’. According to villagers, they used vegetable station to locate their address. The village was given a proper name when a mailbox was set up in the nineties. A female village recalled the naming process, “those people [indigenous] named it [Tsoi Yuen Tsuen]. We never called in this way in the past…They said here was under their control which was not true.” This naming process revealed again the inferior position of indigenous people.

3.6.1 The first collective project: a village road

Tsoi Yuen villagers moved to the village by circumstances, their existence were as if small cluster of single cell units, bonding between them was not that close. Government paid little attention to this small village, as it was only one of the hundreds non-indigenous villages, no public amenities were planned and constructed, its only contribution was the street lamps built in eighties or nineties. Basic facilities such as water pipes were constructed by villagers themselves, while muddy field paths connected through the village and farm lots.

Building cemented roads became one of the breakthrough of development of neighbourhood. In the seventies, some villagers raised out a planning of building cemented road: obtained free materials from Kadoorie Farm and construct the road by all villagers. Application was written by literate villagers while every household contributed manual power and responsible for road sections in front of their houses. Meanwhile, negotiation was obtained, some villagers sacrificed to give a few square feet of private land for the betterment of the road.

[Interview 067] There was no street lamps, no cemented road in the past, only small field paths, all were muddy road… some villagers applied concrete and
cement through Kadoorie\textsuperscript{24}. Then I constructed the part (of cemented road) in front of my house. Residents worked for their own parts, we worked separately, section by section, with many manual effort, we could have this small road…it was built in 1970s…no should be 1960s, my son was not yet born…should be in 1968 or 1969…everyone wanted a (well-constructed cemented) road... because we all plant in vegetable garden, we need to transport vegetable to the vegetable station which are very heavy…it is very difficult. So we discussed whether to construct a road, we all agree. Someone volunteered to go to Kadoorie, made the request and got sands, cement and concrete. It was expensive to hire workers (to build for us), we were all farmers… we all has many small children… so we worked during night time, after we finished our works in vegetable garden. It was better working time since less people walked around in night time, too many people walked in day time…someone arranged that different families worked for certain length…if we can’t complete in one night, then we worked again in the next night… it did not take long, only spent some nights…

It greatly improves their daily life: walking or cycling to and from home as well as transporting agricultural products out of the village became easy. Nevertheless, it became one of the most important daily experience of the villagers, they must pass through the mere road and met their neighbour so as to exchange information or simply greeting, hence providing chances to get known to those who live nearby, community network has been established and developed gradually.

\textsuperscript{24} Kadoorie Farm and Botanic Garden (KFBG) was established in 1956 to provide agricultural aid to farmers in need of support to help them lead independent lives.
3.6.2 Communicating with local landscape

As mentioned before, it is hard to describe oneself position in the village. Thus, villagers are able to communicate by local landscape. Tsoi Yuen dwellers pass through the only cemented road every day plenty of times. Map of the village is therefore imprinted in their minds. When referring to a location, they can simply mention somebody’s house. “If my mother call me and ask ‘where am I?’, I can simply tell her I am passing by which house. Then she can estimate how long will I get home and prepare dinner”.

Almost all artificial facilities are used as well: the military camp, end of the airport runway, water tanks, the bridge, the Christian farm, the shop or the vegetable station excreta. Natural landscape will not be missed, such as at the river, across the river or not yet see the river, play at back of the mountains. They know very well about the farmland boundaries, therefore, situate at someone’s field are also used.

Mervi Ilmonen says “An area is not only a physical structure but also a symbolic construction”. Theories of the segregation of housing districts have recently also taken into account cultural perspectives, according to which images and their accumulation, as well as ways of living, patterns of consumption and everyday practices influence the formation of the environment (1997:13,15) The identity of an area is formed by its physical character, history, social structure, culture, language and dialects. The symbols, images and expectations connected to the area are, in turn, born on the basis of these (Riikonen 1997: 179) The images of the characters of different areas are shaped both by outsiders and by those living in the area.

Nearly every household in the village raises one to four dogs for security reasons.

According to informants, keeping dog is a common practice in rural area, ‘It is very effective to threaten thieves away. When a dog is barking, the rest of the dogs will bark too! Neighbours will then come out and check out what happen’
3.6.3 Grocery as the Information exchange centre

Doubtlessly, dissimilar with urban landscape, there are no street numbers or ‘building name’ to indicate locations inside the village. Some residents gave names to their houses and put a well-decorated sign in front of their doors, such as sign with their family names followed by ‘yuen’ (園) which means garden, the same wording of Tsoi Yuen Tsuen (菜園村): ‘Yip yuen’ (葉園, 園 means garden) and ‘Cao yuen’ (曹園).

For houses without names, name of the resident recipients are used after vegetable station. Due to the complicated village paths and relief, postal service does not cover the whole village. Postman merely delivers mails to the few houses near the village entrance, the rest are sent to a grocery located at the entrance point of the village. Post box at the vegetable station also has similar function and a special post box particular for Nepalese residents in recent years as well. This seems to be a kind of mutual understanding for the community as well as public service providers. Gradually, residents establish a habit to visit the grocery when they return to the village. This “service” is free of charge.

That area is quite remote that no convenient chain-store or supermarket can be found nearby, unless villagers take a ride to further away town markets which costs them money. Therefore, the stores became the only place for buying products. Rice, oils and beer were found there. It was because villagers were unwilling to carry these weighty products for a bus journey from downtown. Dwellers always visit the store first: to check mails, chat with the owners, buy snacks or necessities. In the past, there were two small neighbourhood groceries, both were located at the entrance place. In present, only one remains which is named as ‘Sun Yuen Store’ (新園士多, New garden store). It is a typical old style of grocery where the owner runs the business in the front while living at the back of the house. The current owner is an old woman who has operated the store for a few decades. A table and some chairs are placed in the centre of the shop, villagers
are welcomed to walk in and chat with others, purchase is not required. Moreover, she treats her guests with tea and cakes sometimes. Sometimes she joins the conversation, if she is busy, she will let the guests talk among themselves. She is so confident that neighbours will not steal goods from her. Meanwhile, neighbours are really not embarrassed for not purchasing in the friendly environment. They comment that, ‘the shop owner always notices our return earlier than our family members’. Tsoi Yuen Tsuen has no ancestral hall in order to provide an information exchange venue alike indigenous villages, but the store performs a similar function, contributing to the development of the community network. Nevertheless, the store also acts as security guard. Before the Tsoi Yuen Resistance, it was a relatively closed village, people know each other and secure the village since owner can identify strangers and pay attention to them.

Similar marks on the minds and memories of the Tsoi Yuen Tsuen residents are found in the interview. Routines life, spaces and the neighbour who meet on the road have composed the picturesque of the village. Their communications are described by the means of mentioning various activities on the road, in the stores or at the fields. Social life is narrated as an ongoing process through which people widen their spheres. (Åsröm 2004: 28) The little simple store is remembered as representing the gathering and only non-agriculture shopping place in the village. This provides an intimate familiarity with the environments and the dwellers.
CHAPTER FOUR: TSOI YUEN RESISTANCE

Scott, on his study on totalitarian states, introduces the ideas of “commercial logic” and “bureaucratic logic”, a system to maximize the return of a single commodity over the long haul. He disagrees with those states always driven by utopian plans but had disregard for the values, desires, and objections of their subjects. “Nature” is read as “natural resources” through their thinking (Scott 1998: 4-18). It is not suggested that HKSAR was a totalitarian government, however the large-scale planning on XRL is exactly what Scott discredits.

4.1 The Express Rail Link Project

In brief, XRL runs from the terminus in West Kowloon, heading north to Shenzhen/Hong Kong Boundary, where it connects with the Mainland Section. It is approximately twenty-six kilometers and its estimated construction cost was HK$66.9 billion in 2009, which will be the most expensive railway per kilometre over the world. There will be no intermediate stations between West Kowloon and Futian Station in Shenzhen, while a Stabling Sidings (SSS) and Emergency Rescue Station (ERS) will be situated in Shek Kong, leading to the need for the removal of Tsoi Yuen Tsuen.

![Figure 4: Route for XRL. Shaded area indicted Mainland area (Source: MTR)](image)

With reference to the government schedule, the proposal to construct XRL was first
raised in 2000. Finally the preliminary design began in April 2008 and Gazetted under the Railways Ordinance in November of the same year. It was estimated that the journey time between Hong Kong and Futian, Shenzhen North and Guangzhou South would be fourteen, twenty-three and forty-eight minutes respectively. The HKSAR Government fully funded the project and the Mass Transit Railway Corporation (MTR) was entrusted with the design and construction of the project. Funding approval of the project was granted by the Financial Committee Meeting of the Legislative Council on 18th December 2009.

From the XRL official website, MTR claims that it will connect Hong Kong with the 16,000-kilometres PRC National High Speed Rail Network, assuming to be the largest high-speed rail network in the world. It is estimated that a population of 60 million will reside within a four-hour journey zone from the West Kowloon Terminus. With enhanced connectivity between Hong Kong and the Mainland, economic development and cultural exchange between the two places will be improved. Although the following is a rather long quotation, it helps us to understand the reason and ideology of the project development. The following “social and economic” benefits will be obtained:

- Facilitate the social and economic integration of Hong Kong with cities in the Pearl River Delta as well as other major cities in the Mainland, and thus will enhance Hong Kong's position as a regional hub.
- Reduce travel time between Hong Kong and Mainland cities. For example, the railway journey time between Guangzhou and Hong Kong will be cut from 100 minutes to 48 minutes. More Mainland cities and regions will be included in the daily commutable area of Hong Kong. The concept of a one-hour living circle within the Pearl River Delta area may materialize. Cultural and academic exchanges will also be promoted.
● Create approximately 11,000 employment opportunities

● Save approximately 42 million hours of travelling time annually, bringing up to HK$87 billion in economic benefits in 50 years, based on the time savings of passengers alone.

● More environmentally friendly than aircrafts in terms of energy conservation and reduction in gas emissions. It will enhance the sustainable development of Hong Kong.

The official narration reviews the legitimacy of science and technology. It is obvious that the most important objective is integration with Mainland, but only abstract ideas are mentioned, such as “save 42 million hours of travelling time”, “regional hub”, “one-hour living circle”. The proposal never explains why a Hong-konger has to ‘integrate’ with China, or who feels Hong Kong is not close enough with China at least in term of transport network. Borrowing Scott’s wording, the authority is “uncritical, unskeptical, and thus unscientifically optimistic about the possibilities for the comprehensive planning of human settlement and production (Scott 1998: 4)”.

Compared to the seven million populations, how many percentages of residents have to travel that frequent into mainland cities? I do not intend to comment the project, but let Tsoi Yuen Villagers and Post-80s speak for themselves. Instead, I prefer to list out the connection between Hong Kong and Mainland through land transport in and after colonial period.

During the colonial period, there were three vehicular boundary control points namely Lok Ma Chau, Man Kam To and Sha Tau Kok as well as Kowloon Canton Railway with its terminal at Lo Wo. Immigration officers were delegated to monitor visitors’ entry to and from the Mainland China. Ten years after the Handover, two new border points were built: Lok Ma Chau Spur Line (railway) and HK-Shenzhen (SZ) Western Corridor.
At present, besides the controversial XRL project, HK- Zhuhai- Macao Bridge and Liantang/Heung Yuen Wai Boundary Control Point are also under construction (Figure 3); the former is 29.6 kilometres without clear construction cost estimated at present and it will be completed in 2015 or 2016 while the latter is 10 kilometres long, costs HK$9.6 billion and will be built in 2018. HK-SZ western railway express is still under preliminary planning that will connect the airports of the two cities. Whenever the HKSAR announces a new infrastructure planning, its argument in fact repeats again and again: to establish land transport links in order to ‘enhance the economic and sustainable development’, 25 ‘for long-term economic growth and further regional co-operation’ and claims as ‘strategic importance in terms of regional integration and co-operation’. 26

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Figure 6: Liantang/Heung Yuen Wai Boundary Control Point Plan (Source: Hong Kong Government)

Shaded spots refer to existing border control points in Hong Kong while the dotted lines and the non-shaded spot refer to newly developed LT-HYW control point.

Figure 7. HK- Zhuhai- Macao Bridge Plan (Source: Hong Kong Government)

I wonder if the British regime would allow so many border connections with another regime. The fact is four land control points were established in over 150 years of
colonial history. 14 years after 1997, the city has six newly completed/ under process/ at plan control points. Transferring the ruling authority is one of the most obvious reasons for this significant change after the Handover, as Hong Kong has become one of the cities of PRC. Hong Kong’s government and citizens always seem to worry about being marginalized by the other Mainland cities. They are afraid of losing advantages on the economic development and desire to share economic benefits from the greater China. It seems that both before and after colonial era, the Hong Kong story remains similar: chasing the story of capitalist success is the main path and historical trend of this territory.

4.2 Evacuation of Tsoi Yuen Tsuen
The XRL project has total land resumption area of twenty seven hectares all over Hong Kong while Tsoi Yuen Tsuen contributes three to four hectares of area. In November 2008, Tsoi Yuen villagers received a warning note that they must vacate the village by November 2010. It was the earliest moment that they heard of XRL and that their homes were involved in it. No meeting, discussion and negotiation were conducted between them and the government beforehand. Villagers knew nothing about the plan until it was gazetted; Land Department officials visited the village, took pictures and marked reference numbers on their properties suddenly without getting their consents. The project affects approximately 150 households with a population of 450 and at least three million square feet agricultural land. The government merely provided options for their moves, but not a chance to refuse the proposal. Financial compensation would be given out for owners of farmlands, agricultural produce and temporary buildings. Under this system, tenants or even sub-tenants would suffer the most, their reimbursement will be the least. A minority of villagers did not object against the removal but this research
mainly focuses on those who participated in the resistance. Through the interviews, informants expressed how they were astonished and had nightmares. The sudden disturbing of their life plans made them very discontented.

[Interview 055, female, age 50] I really miss it (my home) so much! I don’t know clearly about the progress…very worried, could not sleep for several months, cried all the times…I thought I could have stayed here for my lifetime…

[Interview 024, female, age 64] It happened in a very sudden way! I am helpless and anxious…there are so many places nearby, why me but not the others?

[Interview 122, male, age 59] I was unhappy, I thought I could have lived here forever, stayed here forever…don’t want to give it (his home) to itr (government).

[Interview 098, male, age 98] I am angry. It (government) sets the deadline for us to leave, if we don’t leave, It will ask someone to demolish my home…if I am so irritated, I scout at people (government officials and demolished workers).

These were only part of the feelings shared by the villagers. Shocked, upset, helpless and crying were their first responses. It is particularly difficult for elderly people to adapt to a new environment and neighbourhood. Most of them planned to stay in the village for the rest of their life time. One told her neighbour that she would not leave the village, she must die here. It is sad that at least two ninety-year-old residents passed away naturally during the resistance which could be ‘good’ to them in the sense that they stayed at their home till the last moment. One suffered from stroke after hearing the news and relies on wheelchair now. A fifty-year-old villager also said that he was always worried about his over eighty-year-old father who had heart disease and under high pressures after he knew about the re-location.
4.3 Why villagers not willing to move away?

4.3.1 Attach to the land and home

Walter Benjamin’s idea on “aura” illustrates out how adults’ feeling of completeness is created by reminiscences. When adults become aware of having lost something, they would ascribe to the memory of this lost subject, a shimmer that it hardly had at the time when it was not yet lost. At the same time, they can always relate the irretrievably lost object to the approaching present and future (Åsröm 2004: 45; Benjamin: 1990). This is exactly a villager expression, “I do not feel my home is special until I know I am going to lose it forever. When I notice that I must move out, at this moment I discover that I am really missing my place.” Land and home are particularly important to the first and second generation villagers. They first arrived this area in 1950s when the area was largely wilderness. This area is full of their reminiscences with their beloved ones and that makes them feel at home.

[Interview 070, female, age 51] My parents were buried nearby, and also my dogs. I don’t know what will happen. The old people are unwilling to move into high rise buildings. Why there is no single indigenous inhabitants house are reclaimed throughout 26 kilometres of affected area? I am so missing the memory between my mother and my siblings, so many remembrances that cannot be brought away…my fish, my dogs, how I was sitting outside the door and chatting with neighbours. There would not be me if there were no Tsoi Yuen Tsuen. The Shek Kong vegetable station, the electricity pole 205A, the Hong Mo Tam (village and mountain), I cannot separate with the village. My mother alone brought us to settle here, my father was dead beforehand. There was once a time, when a thief tried to steal our old clothes. When the policeman came, he said we were really penniless, he even gave us some money for buying food. Although the time was hard, we
were living happily and comfortably… flooding happened a lot in the past. In 1998, the flooded water was at a level close to my chest, I was so frightened. The situation was improved after the completion of river channel work a few years ago. Therefore I spent large sum of money to renovate the kitchen two years ago. And now the XRL project is announced. Many of us revamped our houses a few years ago…we thought our day would be better...

A villager told me that he was reluctant to leave the place where they opened up the virgin land, searched or bought material to build their own homes, developed a farming system and spent the past few decades doing hard work.

[Interview 114, male, age 87] I was sleepless in the first few days (of receiving the news). My fifty years of life effort and saving. And at that time I didn’t know how much the government will compensate me. About five or six years ago, someone offered five million dollars for my living area. When I told that to my wife, she scoured at me, “Why sell the house? Don’t we live well and comfortably here? If we “sheung lau (上樓, literally means the movement of going upper floor. But usually it is used for rehousing into high-rising building. It can also be understand the conceptual between rural area and urban area. A village is understood as horizontal world while urban residential building is vertical )”, we will have no income and savings but we have to pay the management fees and other expenses…my wife says that the village is convenient to take public transports, and we have income everyday (they have farming area surrounding their houses and his eighty- year old wife still harvests produce and sell them to market the same day). If we “sheung lau”, we can’t sell vegetables and will have no income.

According to the villagers, their lives were very harsh. They suffered from poverty, frequent flooding, houses were blown off by typhoon; meanwhile, they tried their best
to establish better habitats: designed and/or constructed their home by themselves and family members, planted flowers on the gates or in the gardens, grew fruit trees when a baby was born, prepared new houses for children. But the XRL disrupted their life plan, so they were very emotional. Last but not least, kinship is an element that links with utterances of all villagers. Almost every interviewee associated their places with remembrances of their spouses, parents and families, and most of the time, the deceased one.

[Interview 067, woman, age 64] My husband was seriously ill when we were building this house. He insisted in spending the money on the house instead of medical treatment for himself and he passed away after the house was completed… I paid so much effort to raise my children and sustain the family. After going through these harsh years, my children are grown up, working outside and got married, I thought I would have a happy elder life. Tell you the truth, I do not reconcile to this (project). My sons are not capable to buy houses outside the village, they are so expensive. If they do that, they will have to bear debts for their whole life.

[Interview 055, female, age 51] My deceased father and grandmother left that (houses) to me. Now, (the removal) it is as if I have nothing left… I am not like my young daughters, they are so young and easy to adapt new life. But I am different, I grew up here and have been here for so many years. I am struggling a lot, can’t tell if I will finally get depressed. I have never experienced this before.

On one hand, the elder villagers thought the lost of Tsoi Yuen Tsuen means lost of a place to remember their beloved ones forever. On the other hands, the younger generation fought for the home for their parents or grandparents. A thirty–year-old villager said, “I am against the XRL project for my grandmother. I heard researches
stating that high percentage of old people would die very soon when they move to a new living environment.”

4.3.2 Obstacles of maintaining current living standard

Leaving the village doubtlessly leads to negative effect for the aged residents. They expressed their hesitation to move into high residential building. An old female villager explained in this way, “Of course it is not good. I cannot adapt to live there. I know nobody and will have no one to chat with. In the buildings, everyone closes their doors. My children told me that they did not know their neighbour after living for seven years in a building. Here I can meet neighbours anywhere. This is much spacious than (small urban) apartment. During festivals, over twenty of my children and grandchildren can visit me here without overcrowdeding.” Many of the villagers expressed similar view as this old lady. They got used to country lives and were nervous about living in block buildings.

Meanwhile, a lot of technical and basic problems have to be solved if they move away. Living in an agricultural village means fresh and clean air, quiet environment and close neighbour relationships. Villagers consume the vegetables and fruits grown by themselves, burn firewood and use well water as well as cheap land rent… all of these result in a low cost of living. Former abandoned farm houses were converted into residential area, either for married sons’ homes or rent to make profits. (Government claims these converted houses are not pre-approved, illegal and no compensation will be paid for them. However, isn’t it a “normal practice” to construct houses on your own land lots?) In some large-size families, three to four generations live together in separate independent houses. Thus, it is another hindrance that not only the neighbourhood network will be broken, but also their family-tiers. On the other hands, for younger
generations who have been moving out, they often return and visit grandparents and parents during holidays or weekends. The current spacious environment allows gatherings for more than twenty or thirty family members, who is again hard to find in new homes. An agricultural place also became interesting playground to those city-born grandchildren. Most of all, it is difficult to find a similar residential area as well as farming land as present. The government compensation is not enough to get the same size land lot in other places.

Hong Kong is a city without a pension system and obtaining social welfare is discredited as being “lazy” people. For the old farmers, they have already established farming and irrigation system, fruit plantation and selling network that enable them to maintain their daily lives without adding an extra burden on their children. They also insist in not applying for social welfare, not to rely on the government, in order to live with dignity. Moreover, the nature of farming is different from that in the past. Since children of old farmers are grown up and be able to feed themselves, economic burden is much released than the old days. Farming nowadays is not only an economic activity, but also a leisure “killing time” activities for those old farmers, to take care of their garden, as if doing sports and trimming pot. Once these old farmers moved away, their physical strength can no longer cultivate a new barren land. If they live in modern buildings, they will lose their jobs, income, routine lifestyles, familiar people living nearby, and their lives will be occupied with nothing.

Furthermore, Hong Kong public housing and most of private residential buildings do not allow keeping dogs. All the interviewed families I came across have one to four dogs, with majority of large dogs such as wolfhound to watch the door while some also raise cats for rat-prevention or simply as a company to the families. There should be more than thirty dogs and cats in the village. In case of dwellers moving into urban
buildings, they either have to take risk of raising dogs secretly, or ask if any friends can keep for them, or they will be forced to abandoned them.

[Interview 070, female, age 51] I have a variegated carp\textsuperscript{27} living in a four-feet length fish tank which is difficult to relocate… I have two dogs now, one of them with a lame leg. I have heard about the Association for Prevention of Cruelty to Animals, pets there have hard lives, and they will accept euthanasia when no new owner is found… I buried my deceased pets in the banana forests nearby.\textsuperscript{28} I once had seven cats and two dogs. But cats are always weaker. One was killed by a neighbouring dog, one left my home and never returned…

Although there are several non-governmental organisations which will take care of abandoned pets, the pets will be taken to euthanasia if no new host found. As told by this villager, she did not believe in these organisations and would like to keep her dogs.

4.3.3 Injustice

Tsoi Yuen Tsuen dwellers feel that they are betrayed by the government and indigenous people. They found that indigenes next to them knew about the XRL project much earlier than themselves. Government officials held meetings with chief of indigenes and listened to their opinion towards the project several years ago. The original plan was removing the indigenous villages but they objected the plan, therefore the government modified the location of SSS and ERS to Tsoi Yuen Tsuen. Yet, it never consulted the villagers but merely announced it through the government gazette. They do not have objection right but can only choose to resist. Moreover, as expressed by a villager, she was upset that no indigenous landlord informed them the news.

\textsuperscript{27} This kind of fish has a symbolic meaning of bringing fortune and good luck in Chinese culture.

\textsuperscript{28} It is not a normal practice (illegal) as Hong Kong Regulations have a lot restriction on handling corpse.
Interview 071, female, age 41] During the previous Village Representative election, I even assisted election publicity for the current Village Head. He is so bad. I helped him before, why did not he help us?

Villagers also accused and questioned the reason that not any indigenous houses were affected in the resumption, “You (me) see, why the project site is irregular in shape? It is because once involved indigenes’ houses or graves, the planning will bypass”. Through talking with affected villagers, they keep asking why the government officials has different attitudes towards them (non-indigenes) when compared with the indigenous inhabitants. In fact, some indigenes people did give up their land and received huge compensation, yet most of these were regarded as wasteland to them, such as abandon farmland or leased land. I did not have the data whether their living houses, ancestor houses and ancestral halls remained untouched. However, the more important is Tsoi Yuen villagers used “indigenous” to indicate the “otherness” who enjoyed privileged rights until nowadays.

Unreasonable (or terribly low) compensation toward agricultural products is another crucial element leading to the discontentment. The government even does not use the term “compensation” but “subsidies” to indicate the financial claims, implying that it is not her duty to indemnify the lost of villagers. This system of indemnify agricultural products is not open to the public and the officials refused to explain the basis of prices.

Interview 015, male, age 62] It is not reasonable. She (government) acts as if grabbing our properties, even worse than thieves. Few years ago, someone asked us to sell our bamboo, they offered over HK$100 for one bamboo stick. But now, the government only offers HK$13.6 for those meeting the certain height and width. This was military land, the British General let us farm here. Nowadays, the SAR government is really bad, it reclaims the land with that little reimbursement.
If she does not resume the land, we can make annual income through cultivation. But now we will have none. We are very unsatisfied for she behaves like a robber. Aloe vera with one foot length only worths HK$1… if we move out, we cannot keep our dogs… the old days were difficult, I am an unskilled person, but I raised up my children by my hands (through farming).

4.4 Sparkle the Resistance

James Scott has studied peasantry and their revolts in Southeast Asia countries for decades and raises out an idea of “everyday forms of resistance” to analyze peasant politics. In Sedaka, peasants’ resistances are no riots, no demonstrations, no arson, no organized social banditry, no open violence and therefore make no headlines. This is a form of nearly permanent, continuous, daily strategies of subordinate rural classes under difficult conditions and he calls it “primitive resistance” (Scott 1985: 29, 273). It is doubtless contexts between the Malaysian village Sedaka and Hong Kong Tsoi Yuen Tsuen are different, such as the research period and socio-economical factors. Majority of population worked as full-time farmers in Sedaka while diversity of occupation can be found among Tsoi Yuen villagers. More importantly, there are internet and citizen journalists in twenty-first century, ‘headlines’ are no longer monopolised by authority and mainstream media. It is true that Tsoi Yuen Resistance is different from that of the Sedaka, such as open confrontation to the state and assisted by well educated Post-80s. However, it can still consider as “everyday forms of resistance” when the open confrontation has become part of their everyday life and has continued for more than two years, and they do belong to the “weakened”. Scott provides an approach to studying the conflict of meaning and value of this subordinate group and its relation to dominate the elite value (Scott 1985: 38-40). Tsoi Yeun resistance has already shocked the dominate value in Hong Kong society throughout these two years.
The removal had become a topic of daily conversation for weeks, worried villagers exchanged their feelings with neighbours who met on the only main road. These miserable and unfair feelings soon nurtured and mobilized the formation of Tsoi Yuen Tsuen Concern Group (Concern group). Primary goal of the resistance movement was: keeping their homes and no vacating village (i.e. “No Move No Demolish”). It was commonly seen that demonstrations were held by aged villagers, generally over sixty-years old whereas some were eighty or even older. A seventy-four–year-old man recorded why he joined the group:

[Interview 098, male, age 73] I resented when I saw the government removal post. I will have nothing but the post only warns us the deadline of leaving. Otherwise, it will pull down our house. Its wordings are so agitated. At the moment, members of Concern group arrived and invited me to join. I told her, “I am so old now, I go wherever you go”. This make me get closer to residents nearby.

The interview echoed with Scott’s opinion on rootedness. This rootedness of the experience gives it its power and its meaning. When the experience is widely shared, the symbols that embody class relations can come to have an extraordinary evocative power. An individual’s grievance has become collective grievances and takes on the character of a class-based myth tied to local experience (Scott 1985:44). As a result, Tsoi Yuen Resistance has sparkled in December 2008 and it is still going on. I divide it into three stages and dissimilar strategies as well as focuses are found: from demanding “No Move No Demolish” to announcing reestablishment of the village, and the last stage was post official-vacating period. Post-80s and alternative media (Hong Kong Inmedia) has been involved in January 2009. The former has become the main force of Tsoi Yuen Tsuen Support Group (Support group). They assisted villagers in all kinds of technical support such as reading the official documents (especially those written in English),
joined their demonstration and organized public events. The latter carried out a series of in-depth reports for public understanding.

4.4.1 Stage One: No Move! No Demolish!

The first stage was dated from December 2008 to January 2010, a period to raise publicity and demand no removal. The first campaign was held on 21st December 2008 by the Concern group alone. Demonstration began at eleven o’clock in the morning, about 50 people drove slowly with roughly thirteen trucks and private cars from the vegetable station to the nearest Kam Sheung Road railway station. It was because in the late eighties farming was no longer able to make a living for the whole family, many young male villagers became truck drivers for extra income. Protesting with trucks became one of the characteristics of the village. Over one hundred villagers participated in this first “complaints assembly”,

From January to October 2009, Concern group showed up in over a hundred presentations, consultations and press conferences, basically any governmental events related to the XRL projects. They used various means to express their demands on “No Vacate! No demolish!”, to have a re-consultation, and to relocate the XRL SSS and ERS. They held demonstrations and distributed leaflets to tell their stories to the public; sought assistance from village representatives, district councilors, legislative councilors and media. These means were always in peaceful and calm ways. Guided tours in the village were also conducted weekly in order to obtain concerns from the society, especially the urban dwellers.

The Concern group made objection banners hanging everywhere in the village: on walls of inhabited or abandoned houses, on the trees and railings, which made the village appear to be turned into a battlefield. I translate some examples into English and the
original texts can be found in appendix, bracket-words refer to my cultural and local understanding.

- “No Move No Demolish of Tsoi Yuen Tsuen”
- “Home shall last for thousand-years and generations, money is fleeting”
- “Hold fists up in the sky, make oath to protect Tsoi Yuen Tsuen”
- “Land resumption drives away peasants”
- “Land resumption breaks homes, opposite to policy to care for the elder”
- “Government demolishes dining room, mothers are frightened every night”
- “Tsang Yam-kuen (current Chief Executive of HKSAR) you have to listen, have to realize what people want. Shek Kong farmland is not grass (symbolic means low-value thing), Shek Kong farmland is jewelry. I have to reserve my roots, don’t uproot (my home) Tsoi Yuen Tsuen can’t be demolished. Natural rivers can’t vanish.”

Tsoi Yuen Tusen’s landscapes such as rivers and farmland are used in these slogans. They tell the stand of the villagers: strongly unwilling to move; ‘fist’ and ‘oath’ also symbolize their determination. They express wishes that the government would listen to what the people say, indicating the gap between the authority and commoners. Dissimilar views between homeland and riches are mentioned. Moreover, characteristics of the resisters: peasants, mothers and the old are highlighted, elders and women (especially mothers) actively participated in the Concern group. The Chairperson of the group is a female while vice-chairperson is male. It may be because the aged and female are more emotionally attached to their home place. The main reason for them to confront is to protect their beloved homes and families. When asking why these aged female are so brave, they answered humbly, “Not at all. Men (husbands) and children
are busily working outside. We are always free at home.” The elderly are either working in farm or retired, thus they are also relatively easier to attend petitions and activities during office hours.

“Land”, “home” and “Tsoi Yuen Tsuen” appear frequently in catchphrases. As the village has become their rootedness, financial compensation cannot replace the lost of homeland. “Song of Tsoi Yuen” with adapted lyrics further reflects inner feeling of villagers. They do not object the XRL project, but desire for amendment of the route in order to keep their homes.

“Song of Tsoi Yuen”

Family is the most important thing in the world,
In our life time we plant the relationship, land and love
Working in fields in the morning, create plentiful harvest by my own hands;
Chatting in the evening and every word is so warm
Simple happiness (life), is this possible to continue for the rest of our lives?
Your (government) fortune-making road (XRL), can it simply pass by without entering my home?
Rural area are developing, Hei!
It can be coexisted (with urbanisation and modernisation)
You just need to pass by, need not getting into my house,
This happy land can remain unchanged.

29 The song is called ‘Light of Friendship’. It was the theme song of a blockbuster Cantonese film ‘Prison on Fire’ acted by Hong Kong local actor Chow Yun-Fat in 1987. The song has become Cantonese canon ever since.
Villagers had expressed many times that they wanted their homes instead of any compensation, but it seemed that government did not really identify with them. After months of resistance, it increased the farmland reimbursement from HK$220 to HK$526 per square foot of land; special gratia for temporary houses were doubled, for example, recompensed of a 400 square feet squatter who had lived there for more than ten years was raised from HK$120,000 to HK$430,000. The authorities thought this would solve the problem but they were wrong. It is ‘true’ in certain extent that in this highly capitalist city, people normally believe that all the tangible and the intangible have their ‘prices’. When someone is unwilling to move, he is only greedy and desired for more compensation. In fact, most of the Tsoi Yuen villagers were tenants, increased in land reimbursement mainly benefited to indigenous landlords. Under the new proposal, villagers were still unable to obtain even a same size apartment in rural areas. More importantly, it did not meet the real concern of villagers, who were reluctant to move from their roots. Resistance went on and gradually gained support from the public and different organisations such as pan-democratic councilors, scholars, cultural workers, environmentalists, heritage protectors, victims of other reconstruction projects; groups were set up to against the XRL, for instance ‘Stop XRL Alliance’ and ‘Post-80s Anti XRL Youth’. The Professional Commons (a Non-government organisation made up of professionals in various industries) even proposed an alternative XRL route which helped to preserve the village and save construction costs.

Finally, the critical moment arrived: Legislative council had to vote for the budget of the XRL project on 18th December 2009. Few thousands of demonstrators as well as the villagers surrounded the Council: sitting and waiting outside and hoping to pressure on the councilors. Pan-democratic councilors manipulated a “fillbustering” strategy which was asking a number of questions to keep on debating and postpone the vote, some of these were raised out by the public. Surprisingly, they succeeded. Villagers felt like they
won a little battle and enjoy the Christmas holiday and New Year Holiday. Debate had to be continued at 8th, 15th and 16th in January 2010. This was the longest meeting, four days of conference and over twenty-five hours on questioning a single issue. Larger scale of ‘Surrounding the Legislative councils’ were held and once again more than ten thousand petitioners.

At the last meeting on 16th January, the Legislative Council had to vote finally. The government-proposed budget plan required majority of the present councilors, and the funding was approved at 31 votes to 21. All 31 votes belonged to pro-government (or someone would say pro-PRC) lawmakers while 21 belonged to pan-democratic. 22 out of 31 votes came from functional constituencies and 12 of them were uncontested during election. Due to success of delaying the meeting for two times, it seemed that people had higher expectation for the result. The great contrast brought the Tsoi Yuen villagers as well as protestors into deep grievance. Many were weeping and did not know how to response. Disappointment then led to some Post-80s ‘trapping’ the government officials and pro-government councilors as mentioned in the introduction. Their responses were described as “irresponsible” by Chief Executive Donald Tsang Yam-kuen. 31

4.4.2 Reconstruct ecological village

The Legislative council’s decision marked the critical moment of the resistance. Villagers had frequent meetings with officials and they were told that there was one more possibility instead of confronting the evacuation at the last moment. The officials suggested that they could reestablish a village under the Agricultural Land

30 News clips from Sing Dao, Mingpao, South China Morning Post. Accessed 17.1.2010
31 South China Morning Post. Accessed 23.1.2010
Rehabilitation Scheme,\(^{32}\) which had been implemented since 1988 to encourage utilisation of fallow agricultural land for productive farming. In general, an applicant needed to be verified as a genuine farmer and, at the same time, a feasible farming plan providing information such as the location of the replacement agricultural site should be submitted.\(^{33}\) Heung Yee Kuk was assigned to find a suitable land lot for them. At the end of February 2010, Concern group announced about 90 household would reestablish a first ecological village collectively.

Tsoi Yuen Resistance moved on to the second stage. Inhabitants made concession meanwhile obtaining an official promise of “Build (new home) First, then Demolish (existing houses)” in order to prevent further hard feeling and extra workloads for the elderly. On one hand, idea of ecological village is introduced by Post-80s and environmental specialists, including the use of solar energy, sewage treatment tanks, cultivation without pesticides and chemical fertilizers. Architects as well as students from architecture department voluntarily designed the new houses for villagers. On the

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\(^{33}\) [http://www.info.gov.hk/gia/general/201002/22/P201002220287.htm](http://www.info.gov.hk/gia/general/201002/22/P201002220287.htm)

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other hand, they are exhausted from the application procedures. They sacrificed their homeland and aimed at redeveloping a new living place with the same neighbourhood. However, this did not result in a quicker and smoother resettlement process. All of a sudden, villagers were worried and confused about having to prove their identities as agricultural workers.

The main difficulty was how to provide evidence that the villagers used to be or currently are farmers. For example, ‘a genuine farmer’ should be able to provide receipts in previous ten years relating to agricultural activities such as buying seeds, farming tools and records of sale. Complaints were always heard from the old farmers especially literacy rate was not that high in the past. ‘What is the purpose to keep these receipts for so many years? If I had known the government would demolish my home and I needed to prove myself as a farmer, of course I would have keep the receipts. Now I really can’t find any’, “Currently my basic customers are my friends. You will not make receipts from your friends, right? I am lucky that one of my friends own a company, therefore I ask him to give me ‘official bill of payment’. I am lucky, this was accepted (Female, age 51)”, “the official came and asked if I was a farmer. I asked if they knew how to grow rice in return. They were snickering too. They never cultivate but were sent to verify whether I was a farmer! (Male, age 73)”

Furthermore, the scheme sets a strict requirement that all family members of applicant, regardless of ages must work as farmers in future. That means be it an eight-year-old girl or eighty-year-old woman would have to work in the farms; and the rest have to quit their current jobs. This requisition is totally disconnected from reality: it is impossible to sustain the whole family by farming alone nowadays in Hong Kong. In chapter three, we know that local agricultural marketing is severely hit by cheap mainland vegetables in late eighties. To most of the villagers, cultivation has been converted into a
supplementary income source. As a result, further negotiations and confrontation were carried out again. The main goal was to fight for the ‘farmer’ identity so that they would be qualified for the ALRS, hence capable of constructing residential buildings on their new land lot. Without the licenses, they were loath to buy a new land. Verification of ‘genuine farmers’ had already spent six months, about 60 licenses were granted finally in September 2010. Removal deadline at November was approaching but the land had not completed the transaction and doubtlessly villagers were incapable to move out on time.

4.4.3 Post-removal period

Government proclaimed that the first resumption would take place on 4 November, yet only empty houses would be reclaimed. They would act ‘in humanized way’ and ‘flexible’ to villagers. Concern group and Support group then established a Patrol team inviting public to participate and protect the villagers from being vacated. Over three hundred officials from Lands department, Agriculture and Fisheries Department, police force and firemen arrived and tried to reclaim the empty houses. At the same time, they notified the villagers that an additional two weeks were granted for them to arrange the relocation. But, Concern group emphasized they were unable to do so and they were not moving out before the new settlement had been built. They called the government to keep her promise, allowing them to move after the new village was completed. Their new slogan was ‘without (new) houses, (we) will not move!’

On 19th November more than 600 government staff came. Another 600 people joined the patrol to protest the village, among them were councilors and teachers with their students. Technically, nothing really happened. Officials stated to the media in the
afternoon that the vacation was cancelled to avoid any violent incidents. Patrol group and villagers could only wait passively. A small team of Concern group members went to Murray Building (the office of THB) on Hong Kong Island for petition, they urged for conversation with Eva Cheng. They asked for six months grace period and did not want to be expelled by officials bi-weekly. Once again, they failed to achieve that.

Cardboard used for petition with following texts

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“Your (demolition workers) work supports your own families!
Your work, however, is destroying others’ families!
Why terminate our livelihood! And stop our way (new village)!
Other’s families are also ‘family’, Can you be heartless!”
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The Chinese word “家 (Jie)” contains meaning of family and home, including both the intangible relationship as well as the physical space of living. Jie and its idea became the constant reference throughout the conflicts. It appeared a lot in slogans, Songs of Tsoi Yuen as well as this petition cardboard and reminded us Freedman’s theory on Chinese family relationship and kinship predominated on all other kinds of relationship in traditional Chinese value. Jie should not be broken up. If jie was demolished by government, it is government’s legitimacy to build a new jie. This is the belief of villagers and support group which imparted them the right to resist. Jie became a powerful signifier to arouse empathy from demolished workers and the public.

Moreover, these wording expressed the understanding from villagers to demolition workers. They wanted to discuss and solve the problem with high-rank government officials. Hopelessly, none of them cooperated. Ever since, villagers lived in a tense condition, they were sleepless and always afraid of their houses being demolished suddenly. At initial stage, MTR sent construction workers and bulldozer to clear the village. Temporary offices built by containers, equipped with air conditions were set up
in the village for senior managerial staff. These senior staff brought along detailed Tsoi Yuen Tsuen’s maps, walked around in the village all the time, pointed this and that locations with their fingers to plan for their demolition progress. Appearance of any of these workers immediately increased pressure of Patrols group as well as villagers. Their lives schedule was changed. Patrol teams and the villagers are separated into small groups to track the demolition staff, watch out for the bulldozers and stop them from demolishing any house. If they heard the moving engine of bulldozers, they would be very nervous and highly alerted, then reached the site as fast as they can. When a bulldozer starts demolishing a house, they stand or sit in front of the machine, using their fragile bodies to confront the metallic machine. By doing so, the workers took pictures and reported to senior officials. Both of them waited until office hour passed by.

Meanwhile, Patrol group made use of every opportunity to explain difficulty faced by Tsoi Yuen villagers. Some workers changed their impression to villagers, no longer regarded them as trouble makers and the greedy.

Villagers were unable to move away before new village was completed. Although they bought the land lots nearby, they could not start building houses. Some of the indigenous villagers there unwelcomed their new neighbours. Moreover, on the matter of the price for “right of way” created another hindrance with the indigenes. In the New Territories, a new move-in resident is obliged to pay for the “right of way” in order to use the road legitimately. Without obtaining this right, vehicles cannot be used the road to enter the new village and cannot build new houses. However, the conditions and fee set by the land owners kept changing from time to time which was not easy to reach an agreement, for instance, asked for ceded the valuable land area or the fee was increased rapidly from HK$500,000 to HK$5,000,000. As a result, villagers had to stay in the harsh environment. They believed that the only way to get a new village built was by increasing pressure on government. A 51 years old female villager quit her newly found
job in order to spend more time to guard the village. Housewives had to arrange their
schedules for buying food from the nearest town. They had to ensure there were enough
forces in the village before they left. Once, a female villager was washing hair when she
heard that a demolition was taking place, she wrapped her hair and ran out immediately.
Same as the beginning of the resistance, elderly and female participated most actively in
the protest because they had time to guard the village.

Post-80s and others also came to the villages whenever available: taking leaves, after
work, day-off for university students. Villagers served them meals to express their
gratitude, and also because practically there was no restaurants nearby since the grocery
shop only sold snacks but not hot meals. Furthermore, they were willing to let the public
use their washroom and kitchen. Most of the time, meals were served to the Support
group during the lunch hour when both the workers and the patrol teams had lunch at
the same time. Yet, they had to eat fast in case workers start working earlier. In fact,
working hours are always changed to prevent villagers from intervening. MTR misled
its workers by saying that these Post-80s were paid to protect the village so that they
would not empathized with the villagers, which was definitely a lie,

This deadlock lasted for about two months. In January 2011, more Nepalese workers
were hired because Hong Kong workers were no longer willing to work in here. It was a
notorious working environment in Hong Kong construction industry. Some of them
identified with the village and so were unwilling to carry out the order of work. Thus,
Nepalese were in and this made the Patrol’s guarding more difficult since they might not
understand Cantonese or English. As a result, stories of Tsoi Yuen Tsuen could not be
narrated. Moreover, MTR adopted a new strategy by hiring hundreds of security guards
to the village. When they wanted to carry out deconstruction or construction work, they would send security guards to surround the particular area in order to block the Patrols from stopping their works. Barbed wires were installed everywhere in the villages, the main road in Tsoi Yuen was blocked, non-stop piling was carried out near villager’s house (only a few metres away), villagers were suffering from visible and invisible violence every day.

I joined the patrol team for three weeks from December 2010 to January 2011, which turned out to be an uncomfortable scene. When I revisited the village, it was hard to recognize the same place as a green vegetable garden was converted into a huge yellow (sandy) construction site. Fields, trees and empty houses were demolished by bulldozers every day. Tsoi Yuen Tsuen once again was turned into a barren land. How did villagers feel when they were watching their beloved homes being destroyed in such way? Now everywhere seems like wastelands and nearby air is polluted. Their ways home for decades is involuntary changed, even cycling becomes dangerous now.

At this moment, we can come back to Scott’s theory of everyday form of resistance again. When villagers and Post-80s worked hard with the ‘genuine farmers’ identity, fought for the rehabilitation farming licenses, planned for the new housing, negotiated with indigenous for new village, continued to stay in the village in the post-removal period, all these no longer attracted headlines from mainstream media, unless sometimes villagers were violently-treated by demolishing workers or caught by police. Facebook and Hong Kong Inmedia turned out to be their main platforms to circulating and report the latest news. Villagers seldom go on strike now. They confront the demolition by continually staying in their homes, daily life has to go on. I heard a
mother complain her son not doing housework and his reason was busy on guarding the village. The mother finally asked her son to complete housework before guarding. This became a funny story in a bitter moment. Having a sense of humor is important to maintain the strong will to resist.

4.5 Transformation of the villagers

After going through these two years of resistance, Tsoi Yuen dwellers are closer than ever. Members of the Concern group have regular meetings at least once a week, sometimes three times a week, at the vegetable station since the resistance began. The meetings are normally held at eight o’clock in the evening till mid-night. Prior the beginning of each meeting, they chat and talk, always bringing candies, snack, desserts, also the fruits that just harvested and share with each other. They harvest produce and prepare them for Concern Group and Support Group too, for example: papaya, bananas, lychee, longyan; Chinese dessert “sweet soup” or herbal tea. Since then, Post-80s, who did not grown up in the village, are frequently asked if the produce is from their fields and how to cook them.

Many villagers used to be politically apathetic and never participated in any demonstrations. During daily communication with Tsoi Yuen inhabitants, the following expressions were heard from them:

“In the past, I always thought those social activists were trouble makers and stupid when reading the (mainstream) newspapers. I don’t know why they tried to protect the Queen’s pier from demolition (in 2004). Now when I am facing unfairness, they come to help us regardless of any rewards. I am really touched. I did not believe there would be selfless people in Hong Kong but I believed in whatever the government and
newspapers reported in the past. Now I know not all of them are creditable. We love our homes and that’s why we are unwilling to move. But they described us as insatiable for compensation. When you are misunderstood by others, you are really heartbroken.” (Female, age 51)

“I was frequently badly treated by others when I was growing up. Therefore I never believed there were good people in the world. After the resistance took place, I am happy to know there are still a lot of good people in the world.” (Female, age 50)

The ‘activists’ and ‘good people’ from the villagers’ mouth probably included Post-80s. Villagers always show gratitude toward them, saying that without their support and encouragement, they are unable to stand until this moment. They always say to an exceptionally thin Post-80s male, “When I see you are getting thinner in these days, I feel upset. You work so hard to help us. Thanks a lot.” They have done many things for the first time: go to petition, go to legislative council, first time of being caught by police, first time being charged and attend trial in court, every “first time” experience led to today’s thousand people supporting Tsoi Yuen Tsuen.

Democracy is employed during the planning of new village: name of the village (‘Tsoi Yuen Sun (New) Tsuen’ [菜園新村] is selected instead of ‘Sun Tsoi Yuen Tsuen’ [新菜園村]), length of the village-road, can cars drive on it, how many car park spaces are needed, even the location of each house. When making decision, Support group assist them to arrive at a consensus first by negotiation, and then by vote. The establishment of the new village is far different than the past. They develop their homes collectively with existing neighbourhood and new meaning of Tsoi Yuen community is derived.
CHAPTER FIVE: POST-80S GENERATION

It is easier to understand the reason of Tsoi Yuen villagers to defend their homes from removal. But why do Post-80s participate in it? Terrence McDonald believes domestic social movements arise in response to the rise of the civil rights movement (McDonald 1996: 5). After Post-80s “rediscovery” the injustice of Tsoi Yuen’s story, they decided to participate in the resistance. In this chapter, I use practice theory to analysis how to understand Post-80s actions. Practice theory suggests “the production of social subjects through practices in the world, and of the production of the world itself through practices”; since the world is “made (by power)”, through the actions of ordinary people, it is possible to be unmade and remade (Ortner 2006:16). During the Tsoi Yuen Resistance, villagers and the Post-80s have already produced their meaning of place, home, living styles and development of Hong Kong. Agricultural life does not necessary mean backward and harsh manure boring task while modernized urban life is not necessary spectacular. Post-80s redefined and gave agricultural life a new meaning as a sustainable way of life under globalization.

5.1 Who are they?

“Post-80s” (八十後, ba shì hòu) is a term first originated in mainland China referring to a group of youth born after 1980, an era of economic reforms and rapid development. This generation has grown up in a relatively prosperous society, together with the one-child policy, they are described as inconsiderate, self-centered and unable to endure suffering. In short, this is a relatively negative label to this group of youth.

However, Post-80s has a different meaning under the Hong Kong context. The Tsoi Yuen Tsuen Resistance has also given a new meaning to it. A group of youth protesters
named themselves Post-80s during the resistance. They established a group called the “Post-80s Anti XRL Youth” and developed into one of the major forces in the social movement. Their way of resistance and campaigns are different from “usual” demonstrations. They created a slogan called, “Protect Homeland, Confront Happily”. During the “Surrounding the Legislative Council” campaign, they were able to mobilize thousands of people. Some of them even made the councilors and officials unable to leave the building. They had physical conflict with anti-riot police and occupied the streets. The Government and mainstream media were astonished; they labeled the Post-80s as irrational, violent and radical. Promptly after the incident, there were media interviews with “youth models” claiming that there are well behaved “Post-80s”. Very soon, the term has become fashionable and is overused by the media as a means to attract audiences. Terms like post-90s, post-00s (2000) also emerged. The Government sent out young officials, and let them (the hierarchical Post-80s) advice those “disturbing Post-80s”. Sociologists, social scientists, cultural critics, journalists, the government and the public were interested in this generation and the phenomenon it creates. It seems that various hierarchies intended to compete to represent the group. Images never stabilize, like Baudrillard’s free play of signifiers with no referent (Ortner 2006: 83). In this research, I read Post-80s as a signifier, a cultural phenomenon rather than a restricted definition of age. Therefore, I do not limit the subject to people born after 1980s.

5.2 Why do they participate?

I begin this section with the winning speech of the globally renowned Japanese novelist, Haruki Murakami. In his speech, ‘Always on the side of the egg’ in 2009, he dedicated his empathy towards the Palestinians in one of the most prestigious occasion in Israel.
The quotation was widely used especially by the Post-80s when supporting Tsoi Yuen Tsuen.

“… Between a high, solid wall and an egg that breaks against it, I will always stand on the side of the egg…

Each of us is, more or less, an egg. Each of us is a unique, irreplaceable soul enclosed in a fragile shell. This is true of me, and it is true of each of you. And each of us, to a greater or lesser degree, is confronting a high, solid wall. The wall has a name: It is The System. The System is supposed to protect us, but sometimes it takes on a life of its own, and then it begins to kill us and cause us to kill others - coldly, efficiently, systematically.” 34

There are a lot of complicated reasons to act against the XRL project and support Tsoi Yuen Tusen. However, if we go back to the basic, there is a simplest humanized answer:

“Between a high, solid wall and an egg that breaks against it, I will always stand on the side of the egg”. It is because the Post-80s has regarded Tsoi Yuen villagers as the “egg”, the government as the “wall”, that’s why they always stand for the villagers.

[Female, age 27] “I participated in the 29th November demonstration. On that day, I was watching quietly on the side. I don’t usually involve at the very first, I need to understand the full picture. I was invited by my friends. I visited the village in February or March (2010). I have a part time job in a publishing house. Before the visit, I have slightly heard about the village in news, HK Inmedia and the mainstream media. It seemed to me that the mainstream media closed the file very soon. The government did not listen to what the villagers said. I was angry with both the government and the mainstream media. I participated in petitions, demonstrations, distributing leaflets. I started to realize that not many people really could understand the serious impact behind the XRL to Hong Kong. I

played the drum during the Ascetic walk for the Five Districts campaigns. My boyfriend also came with me. We had the consensus to join together. He was in hunger strike. The City is so big, but our homes are so small. The whole city is mainly covered by cements cold and hard. And all of a sudden, I discovered that there are still farmers in Hong Kong, large-family value is still existing! I feel so different here, when I am in the village, I can always see the sky always and it is so silent here. The urban world is full of noise, vehicles everywhere and too crowded. Nowadays, people depend too much on the society. I never went to any petition before. But the Tsoi Yuen village has such a strong power and character that it impresses me. This village has existed for so many years. Most of the time I came to the village alone, it is so quiet.”

[Female, age 33] I started to know this village in early 2009. I noticed that the government would carry out resumption. I live in Tai Po (a nearby district), as my ‘neighbour’ was having trouble, I came to understand more and offered help if necessary. Very soon, I acted as a member of the Support group and got familiar with the villagers. They gave me a feeling that they cherished the place so much when they knew it would disappear soon. Therefore, I conducted a photography workshop for them, taught them how to use a camera, how to shoot the scene, so that they could take pictures of what they treasured most. A female villager took pictures of her orchid garden. During the Anti-XRL campaign, their pictures were exhibited in Time Square (one of the busiest shopping malls on Hong Kong Island).

I am here for two reasons: community situation here is very different from the urban area. Therefore it should be preserved. The second reason is that the village is so similar to a Chinese village. A healthy society should include people who are
less competitive, living area is created by its own means. A society should provide various choices. I acted as the planning role for events such as, ‘Thousand people support Tsoi Yuen Tusen’ and the cerebration of the Yuanxiao Festival.35

When understanding more behind this city’s mode of development, Post-80s began to ask: who are always being sacrificed for city development and urbanisation? Is it unavoidable that development has to take place at a price of sacrificing the people living in the original area? The two female interviewees told the differences between rural and urban area, expressed they are tired of the latter and are yearning for the rural. They demanded alternative living styles and value, wanted to make a different society. An significant point is that most of the Post-80s are the first time to participate in so-called social movement. They knew the situation of Tsoi Yuen Tsuen through their friends network, probably Facebook sharing. A degree-student was brought to the village by her boyfriend. Another told his tutor asked whether the class was interested to visit the village, and therefore he was in.

5.3 What have the Post-80s done?

When reviewing what they did, it was too much to list out all. By beginning with their slogans allow us into their world. Post-80s’ slogan, “Guarding homeland, confront happily” may seem contradictory. How can “confrontation” connects with “happiness”? Yet, through analyzing their publications and artworks, I saw they did what they proposed. I translated the declarations of Post-80s in their “battles” at Legco as the Post-80s are good at expressing themselves through words and articles, their work were

35 A traditional Chinese festival held at 15th January (Lunar Calendar). It has over 2000 years of history and is the first full moon according to Chinese Lunar New Year. It is also known as Chinese valentine day.
posted on Hong Kong Inmedia as well as its official blogger called, “Raging Iron” (鐵怒沿線, Tie nu yan xian). “鐵” means “iron” and “路 (lu)” means “road”. Together they mean railway. “沿線” refers to along the line or lane in this context. “怒” means angry, which is a homonym to “路” in Cantonese. The Post-80s used this pun to give double meaning of the title: it is about the railway project and they are angry with it.

5.3.1 First strike: 1218 (18th December 2009) Take leave to surround Legco

Before the first meeting for the XRL funding, the Post-80s launched a campaign on “writing for apply leave”, so as to encourage the public to take a half-day off in order to surround the Legco in the afternoon. In reading their statement, they showed a great distrust in the functional constituency councilors and desired to fight for justice in Hong Kong. The internet was widely used in publicity.

“In the afternoon 18 December (2009), the functional constituency members as well as the pro-government councilors will once again, by violating public opinion, plan to be the hand-raising machine (vote ‘yes’ to the funding) and approve the HK$ 66.9 billion of the XRL. The ‘Stop XRL Alliance’ and the ‘Post-80s Anti XRL Youth’ launched the “1218 apply leave for surrounding Legco” movement. Let’s call to gather outside the Legco during the meeting, in order to avoid those councilors betraying Hong Kong. It will be held on Friday, a working day, so we have to take a pause on our work and join the event…But if we only see ourselves as isolated individual, it is not easy to breakthrough our routine. As pioneers, we need to go one step further…so that to mobilize as much as we can in these few days … We hope everyone who joining this campaign can use words (such as leave application letter), video or other methods to share your ideas. You may join the “event” on Facebook and post your sharing. For friends without Facebook, you can share your works through email or reply at Hong Kong Inmedia…For justice, for Hong Kong, let’s take a half-day off to surround the Legco at 1218!”

The Post-80s described functional constituencies as “violating public opinion” and

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36 “1218 Qingjia baowei lifa hui (1218 請假包圍立法會)www.inmediahk.net/taxonomy/term/505511/0
“hand-raising machines”, they will “betray” Hong Kong people and that is why the Hong-kongers should pause from their busy working lives and join the protest event. The Post-80s believe themselves were fighting for justice. Applying leave itself is a serious matter in work or study culture in Hong Kong, a society with long working hour and very few paid leaves. It is not a usual practice here to take a leave for social justice but not personal matters. Yet, this time, the Post-80s not only modified the meaning of applying vacation, but also transformed the formalistic dull texts into playful ‘weapon of confrontation’. They invited everyone to join the ‘creative writing’ instead of monopolized the narration space. Five letters of leave application are selected from over twenty since they were all targeted to “young employees” or “students”.

Letter One:

“Dear teacher, why do we study the teaching of sages and the virtuous? Teacher, today I know one thing, a thing that we who study the books of virtuous must do. Teacher, the high-speed rail costs enormous, but only benefits the rich, it also drives away the old and the weak of Tsoi Yuen Tusen…If this sum of money is used in other social welfare, e.g, in education and medical service, it would be much better used…When facing the unjust high-speed rail, we should stand up and object…this is how we students will be able to maintain the moral standard raised by past people. Therefore, I want to take a leave on 18 December to go to the Legco in order to express my concern to the society and my nation.” (rocky310, HK Inmedia reader)

Letter two:

“To registration and examination session of Chinese University of Hong Kong, I want to apply for a re-examination. I have two examinations on 18 December: Private International Law as well as Government and Public Administration. Since I will go to surround the Legco, I probably cannot attend the examinations. May I ask for a retake? I must go to the meeting. It is because if the funding is approved, it costs more than HK$ 60 billion. The more important reason for me is: this railway will lead to a crazy living style. I know examinations are important too, so I want to retake. I will study outside the Legco. (A year four degree student)”
Letter Three:

“To my dear boss, I know it is not necessary to write a leave letter. In such a systematic world, all we need to do is to fill in a form, only for job application and resignation that we need a letter. But I still want to write this letter to show my solemn attitude. I want to apply a half-day leave on 18 December. I have to go to the Legco. It seems that most of the time I only focus on shopping and entertainment. But this time, I want to pay a little more effort to let this government understand that we love Hong Kong…Meaning of this half day-off is to tell the Hong Kong society that we, the Hong-Kongers of this generation, will face issues concerning Hong Kong seriously, we will not escape anymore. Yet, I hope, on that day, all Legislative councilors can listen to our breath and will change their minds; even though they will be bored during the meeting, talk to the functional constituency members as if talking to mirrors, even we feel how alone we are, I will not be afraid…By your young employee”. (a local young writer)

Letter Four:

“Dear tutor/professor, In the reading of Feuerbach, Marx concludes with this: “The philosophers have only interpreted the world in different ways, but the problem is to change the world.”…I believe you will agree understanding and action are dialectic…On 18 December, Legco will vote for HK$ 69.9 billion funding for the High Speed Rail. This issue has revealed the bitterness and oppression in the post colonial situation…As a degree student, somehow kind of considered intellectual when entering university and hope to practice in some form…Witnessing the distortion of this Hong Kong society, I feel my weakness…Of course, participation in social movement is my own choice, I should not ask for postpone the thesis’s deadline…However, in this circumstance, how can I concentrate on writing essay? … I believe my choice is also a kind of genuine learning process. Will you join me (to go to Legco)?... Then I can ask you about the thesis during the protest.” (hinhope, HK Inmedia reader)

Letter Five:

“To my unknown boss or employer, … maybe you used to be passionate, you have no reason not to understand the positive way of freedom, that is to fight in order to achieve the ideal. This is always attractive and excited…If you offer something to a place, no matter it succeeds or fails, it has already constructed new layers of the city as if the blocking way stones. That identity and belonging cannot be valued by
money, also not passports of other countries, it was marvelous.” (male 30)

The five letters showed that the authors had made up their minds to join the 1218 campaign and applied the day-off under various circumstances such as examination, thesis’s deadline, lessons and work. The reasons are similar but not totally the same: protect the old and weak Tsoi Yuen Tsuen villagers, object the unjust XRL project, disagree on the way of spending public fund. “Students” manipulated what they learn from classes (such as be virtuous, Marx’s philosophy on question) as rationale.

Belonging and identity of Hong Kong, “the bitterness and oppression in the post colonial situation”, “will not escape from the society’s problems” are found. One expressed his feeling of “weakness” in current situation and thus needed to join social movement. The sense of political powerlessness in fact has been deep inside Hong Kong residents since the moment that we had to return to China, and especially when the communist regime broke its promise again and again that we are not able to have referendum of Chief Executive up till now. It is true as Foucault (1991) proposes that power relationship is everywhere to modify human’s behavior. However, Post-80s seems to know how power is operated in everyday life that they are not dare to “play” within it. By writing the application, a bureaucratic process, the hierarchical relations and powerlessness situation have been inverted. The letters supposed to be written by inferior to superior, for instance, students write to teachers and employees write to employers while the latter have the authority to approve or not. Through the letters, we can observe that the writers did not ask for approval but to declare their determination to

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Before 1997, many Hong Kong people were frightened of the Communist regime. Therefore, many elites and wealthy class migrated oversea and they still keep two passports nowadays: passports of HKSAR and other country.

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have day-off, meanwhile manipulated the letters to promote their ideologies.

5.3.2 Second strike: 8 January 2010, All people overloading Legco

Proposal of funding was delayed to early 2010. During Christmas holidays, Hollywood blockbuster Avatar broke the box office record in Hong Kong. The story was about resistance of Planet Pandora against the mine company (aggressor). Hong Kong public easily associated this movie with Tsoi Yuen Tsuen. An anonymous person reserved a cinema and invited the villagers to watch the film free of charge. A female villager recorded that, “a rich person was touched by us as well as the movie. I was weeping in the show. Why is it so similar to our situation?” An elderly woman became the icon of the movement. She said “People called me ‘Avatar’ but I don’t know what that means.”

Figure 8: Poster created by Post-80s.(Source: Inmedia) The elders were protesting outside the Legco. Movie lines from Avatar were inserted into the photo of the protesting villagers. Avatar/Tsoi Yuen Tsuen Gao-popo “They’ve (RDA Corporation, a mine company) sent us (Pandora) a message that they can take whatever they want. But we will send them a message back, that this, THIS IS OUR LAND!!!”

A university lecturer wrote, “Introducing ‘Avatar’ to friends is able to push forward the anti-high-speed rail movement as well as explain its philosophy” on his Facebook’s

38. 1 Yue 8 ri quanmin Big bao lifa hui (1 月 8 日全民 BIG 爆立法會) www.inmediahk.net/node/1005473
status. Very soon, the Post-80s distributed leaflets and explained to audiences at cinemas which screened Avatar, in order to links compassion of audience to the villagers. In the leaflet, it writes: 39

“Back to the earth, back to Hong Kong, back to reality. Here is also a land and green lifestyle waiting for your guardian. Most important is to maintain linkage between human and land.

If we are upset when the god-tree of Pandora fell down, how can we tolerate our land being destroyed?

The XRL lengths 26 kilometres, its underground tunnel will be built by giant drilling machine and blasting, which will pass through Mai Po Nature Reserve, Shing Mun Valley Park, Lai King Hill till West Kowloon; this rail will pass through almost half of Hong Kong! At that moment, the most fertile, green plain will be destroyed, underground water will be polluted, dig-out sediments can approximately fill up six towers of International Financial Centre II (the tallest building in Hong Kong with 88 floors) and 60% of these sediments will be sent to a mainland city, Taishan, which brings negative effect to other’s environment. This enormous construction will lead to gigantic negative impact on environment. Environment and ecosystem are intervened, it cannot be recovered again once it is deteriorated. Now that the global climate problem is getting serious, who will suffer at the end? It is our next generation!

 Victims are like Na’vi, living not only depending on a roof (symbolized a house), but also association and relationship between people.

When the mining company insisted on cutting the god tree, the manager Parker left a comment, “that was only a tree” (Avatar). Our government performs in similar way, it insists on destroying Shek Kong Tsoi Yuen Tsuen for constructing the rail. Villagers fled to Hong Kong at early fifties and started cultivation, every brick and tile are their achievement, and they have developed deep sense of feelings with the territory. Villagers are unwilling to leave their homes which they have worked hard for few decades. However, the government believes the problem can be solve by resettling them in public housing estates and paying them money, disregards their demands, separating the villagers with the land forcefully! It is impossible to rehabilitate the deep feeling between land and neighbourhood after the demolition.

39 http://www.inmediahk.net/node/1005473
Tsui Yuen Tsuen is only one of the cases of recent demolishment. The government keeps on repeating the single dimension of development, over and over again breaking up local community networks. We cannot tolerate anymore!

Stop the high speed rail, because we have to let the government know, “Our Hong Kong is not simply a territory!”

Don’t let the greed and selfishness destroy the future of Hong Kong!

8 January overloading the Legco”

This declaration is more serious than the day-off application letter campaign. They identified with the film so much that the scripts and characters are adopted in their publicities. Besides focused on environment affect on Tsui Yuen Tsuen, they also foresaw the irreversible negative impact that would cause to the whole Hong Kong, as well as the neighbour mainland city, Taishan. They cried out the slogan, “This is our land” as what the Na’vi did in the film. Besides posters, the film trailer was remade to “Tsui Yuen Tsuen” version. They also mocked the government and MTR as the evil company found in the film, criticized the single dimension development ideology of Hong Kong such as infrastructure, financial industry but not ecological way of living, worship of capitals, existing community “should be” sacrificed in the name of “development”, new should replace the old. Yet, they proclaimed that this kind of thinking will destroy the society’s future. Moreover, they are not only associate the project in local context, but also environment of nearby cities as well as the pollution that will bring negative impact on the earth.

5.3.3 Third strike: Ten thousand people war with Legco, Anti XRL Resistance Carnival

The vote of funding had to be postponed once again by one week, the Post-80s and the
Stop XRL Alliance saw it as their second victory over the government. The Government was anxious, this time it gave pressure on the Legco that they had to have ten hours meeting each day on the coming Friday and Saturday, in order to make sure that the funding would be passed at the weekend. The Post-80s did not get nervous. Rather, they took it as good news, because they did not need to ask the public to apply for a day off this time (many Hong Kong people have a day off on Saturday). A new wave of publication and campaigns were launched. Six Post-80s took a 120 hour- hunger strike outside the Legco. I select some paragraphs from their declarations:

“"When the authority is heartless, the government is unjust and the council has improper manner, when the city is again and again being unrooted, the legislative system continues to be sickly operated, how can we allow such ridiculous phenomenon to happen again and again? At this moment, we choose to stop eating to declare our stand.

When an animal is ill, it will start the starving mechanism so as to regenerate the body. This contains a positive meaning. When the society is sick, we hope to demonstrate our determination of anti-XRL, to call everyone back to the basic humanity value, wake up the government to treasure the man-land relationship, in order to transform the society, to take the fresh nutrition, and regain the health. Drink purified water for our souls, let us see the end of the ridiculous…

What’s wrong with this? The city development is ridiculous. Why under many critics on “favouring the rich”, the government still stubbornly set the rail terminal at West Kowloon (an area located in city centre with many luxurious housing that commoner is unaffordable) ? Why its response as if eggs hitting the wall when the Tsoi Yuen Villagers raise out their position on protecting the homeland? We do not want this kind of ridiculous city development. Hong Kong has plenty of shopping
malls already, it needs Tsoi Yuen Tsuen, but not West Kowloon. Isn’t the
government promoting the concept of sustainable living? Tsoi Yuen Tsuen is the
best experimental site for this idea. Abundant old communities are broken by
demolition, we do not accept this ridiculous story happen again in Tsoi Yuen Tsuen.

“Ridiculous” was the theme of the declaration. Post-80s observed many absurdities in
the sick society, so they utilized their physical body as weapons of confrontation.
What’s more, they desired to cure the sickness of this society by doing so. This time,
they not only accused the ridiculous situation, but also declared it must be terminated.
Besides the hunger strike, “Strange bureaucracy: Four-day-three-night funny high speed
cultural camp” was carried out events such as cultural tours, reading poems, watching
social movement movie, selling local organic food and product, concerts. That why it
called as “resistance carnival”. Once again, they twisted the routine way of resistance
and expanded the struggling forms. Through cultural and artistic events, they hoped to
attract more public especially students and youth to know the facts. They declared “war”
on the government which everyone know there would not be a real fire. This “angry and
even violent talk” has analyzed by Scott (1985) as a means of resistance, the different is
Post-80s did speak it out openly.

5.3.4. Interlude: creative, artistic and happy confrontation
I: Kuxing

Kuxing (苦行, literately means ‘Bitter walk’, also known as ascetic in some religious
practices) were carried out several times and many places during the movement: three-
night-two- day surround the Legco began on 16 December 2009, five days-four-night
before the second meeting; about twenty Post-80s paraded 15 hours daily, in total five
days all over Hong Kong; three days at six Hong Kong’s universities campuses. This
may be the most touching and popularity-gaining movement created by the Post-80s.

Participants carried rice with both hands, lined up and walked for long distance slowly. Some even walked with bare feet to feel the texture of ground surface. Korean drum was used for counting the beats, once time on the drum, three times on drum sides and repeated. For every twenty-sixth step, there would be no drum beat. Participants kneeled down for roughly twenty seconds; sometimes they might ‘kissed’ on the ground. When the drum beats were heard again, they stood up and repeated for the next cycle. The movement was mechanic, tedious but also artistic.

Twenty six steps symbolized the 26 kilometres length of XRL, holding rice showed their treasure of agricultural production as well as food producing Tsoi Yuen villagers. Kneeling down and kissing the land demonstrated participants’ love toward land, they could feel it with that intimate contact. When they passed through the crowded area, inside the metro stations as well as the fast-paced commercial centres, the contrasts were exceptionally large.

An informant explained when she was creating the postures, she aimed at exercises could stretch the whole body comfortably and enable to do for long hours. A Post-80s expressed his feeling on this campaign, “We did it for nothing special, we aimed at deploying the most silent posture, forcing ourselves to declare the most serious collective statement to the world (Age 30, male).”41 He also told he was satisfied and peaceful at that moment, felt his life was connected with others.

Kneeling down is a special form of action in Chinese culture. In the past, the younger kneel to the elder (son to father), the inferior kneel to superior (commoner to officials

41 This was found at Inmedia <www.inmediahk.net/node/1005384>
and emperor) descendant to his ancestors in front of their graves and tablets. It contains meaning of disgrace and punish or respect and honour in different contexts. Now when it appeared again in twenty first century by the Post-80s, the impact was very shock. They did not force by hierarchical class but performed according to their own wills. A four minutes video was published on YouTube to memorize the kuxing campaign and at the same time continued to promote publicity for the resistance. The title was called “Do not let your (kuxing participants) future children, kneel down to somebody again!”

Doing some good (fight) for the next generation (both in term of environment and human society) is a very strong faith throughout the Post-80s. Most of the time they play with traditional Chinese signifiers and modify signified meaning.

Figure 9 & Figure 10. The Bitter walk (Source: Benson Tsang Facebook)

II: Creative artwork as weapons

Poster used for Surrounding Legco (8.1.2010). Post-80s took it during the traffic lights turns in crowded area. They were raising the large banner with slogan, “HK$ 66.9 billion is thrown into sea (accusing the great wastage of XRL project)”. Extra texts were

42 Bie rang nimen jianglai de haizi, zai xiang bieren xia gui (別讓你們將來的孩子，再向別人下跪) <www.youtube.com/watch?v=CJ2Xg1XGG58>
inserted in the picture to encourage public participation. Collaboration with English is commonly found which reveals the colonial legacy. The English word “big” has similar pronunciation of the Chinese character “逼” which has the meaning of crowded and force simultaneously, both literate and symbolic meaning were taken into account. This creative production can be easily understood and identified with Hong-Kongers.

Figure 11. Poster to promote surrounding Legco (Source: Inmedia)

Post-80s used their bodies as publicity. They wore green cloths and each contained one Chinese character, when combining together messages were given out: Anti XRL, stop funding, protect homeland, protect government fund. This maneuver was flexible and easy to carry out anywhere. Photographs were taken at varies areas in Hong Kong, such at metro stations and crowded area. One picture was taken during the Government House (residence of former British Governor and present Chief Executive of Hong Kong) Open day, security was unable to prevent them from doing so as their actions were efficient and hard to notice in advance.

Figure 12. Promotion of Anti XRL (Source: Post-80s)
III. Adoption of popular culture

Post-80s are grown up in an information-explosive era. Popular culture has great influence on them. Secondary creations in comics, television drama, even government propaganda are widely found. I select the following set of comic. It is a conversation between an old man with a young boy which reflects one kind of narration toward them: Post-80s are setting wars with elder generations. In the society, critics and comment toward them can be heard like this: they are too young, irrational, and too ideal, they will realize the reality in future. Sometimes, Post-80s also faced questioning and pressure from parents and relatives, especially when they were caught and charged by police. In my opinion, this comic expressed the motto of Post-80s. This was used to encourage the public to protect the village on 19 November 2010, the end of grace period of vacating. I translated the dialogues into English.

Figure 12. Secondary creation of Japanese comics (Source: Facebook <http://www.facebook.com/album.php?aid=90401&id=1452707635&fbid=166294>)

O= Old man; Y=Youth

(Left) O: Under the three evil forces of Lands Department, MTR Corporation and Police, we are as powerless as ants. Why do you still go to village (Tsoi Yuen Tsuen)? You aren’t afraid of being carried away by the police force?

Y: Have you ever seen the current situation of Tsoi Yuen Tsuen?

Y: The village is like the scene of domestic violence now!
O: (Frightened)
Y: How should it be explained? The whole family and the whole village are suffered from this! The energetic village is broken into pieces now!!
Y: The government threatens tomorrow (Friday) will have a large-scale resumption.
What is the difference between government and gangsters?
(Right, continue)
Y: Value of social movement cannot be measured by success or any consequences resulted.
Y: Social movement is a kind of education, is a kind of pursuit, it demonstrates the identity and value of Hong Kong people. Social movement itself already contains a value.
Y: Even though Tsoi Yuen Tsuen is destroyed, it is not yet over.

There is an argument that Post-80s symbolized a new value which contradicts with the hegemonic ideology such as consumerism, development-oriented society of Hong Kong. So everyone can be a Post-80s. A point to note is that, at first, this group consciously called themselves Post-80s, they named themselves organically. They pursue social justice, sustainable development, strong sense of Hong Kong locality, creative, energetic and artistic, well educated. They are the proponents and advocators. Most of them do not believe in any political party and unsatisfied with the ritual-like demonstration practices, which cannot really bring changes to the society. Rather, they believe in people and that social changes is possible. They are absolutely serious and understand what they are doing; they no longer trust the mainstream media. They are familiar with internet and information technology skills. Social networks in the internet become their communication channels. Meanwhile, they took pictures and recorded what was happening by digital cameras, video-recorders or mobile phones and uploaded them immediately through wireless network, shared with their followers and friends immediately. That is how they distributed news and incidents in a short, low-cost and efficient way. During the post vacating period, if there were large number of demolition workers appeared suddenly in the village, they posted the messages on Facebook and asked supporters to join in emergency. This was one of their ways to seek help and assistance. They do not count cost and result. Even though they know the result is not promising, they still conduct their actions. So a critic described them as “absolutely serious” in the movements and campaigns.
5.4 Post-80s: We can make a difference

Post-80s were not totally discourage by the approval of XRL funding totally. They set up Tsoi Yuen Tsuen Life museum was established in March 2010 with the help of villagers. This time, the youth occupied a vacant squatter house located at the entrance of the village, rehabilitated a field next to it and started cultivation. The city-youth learnt everything from the beginning, with the help of T.V., who is member of sustainable farming industry organisation, and of course advice from villagers. This is an open area for farming, gathering and drinking beer, chatting and ‘killing time’. The Grocery’s owner keeps the gate keys for them so that they may come whenever they want to.

[Female, 33] After the Anti-XRL campaign, I hope that something can be continued after the movement to extend the cohesion for long time, unnecessarily very crowded and big events. After discussion with my friends, we established ‘Post-80s agricultural group’. At first we did not think of farming, we only want something relate to life, and able to connect different networks and conduct various workshops. Since we have a tutor T.V. who knows ecological way of farming very well, and it seems not bad to do something to feed ourselves as well as make profit. Therefore, we established the Life Museum in March. Villagers knew that they are moving away, so gave us many (agricultural) tools. In April we had the farming workshop. We began with farming. Then we learnt baking bread without eggs. Now about ten of us farmed on the field. Villagers told us many farming produce would be disposed if they could not sell them or eat them before they became rotten. So we thought of food processing and produce for example jam.

It is easy to get acquainted with them as many activities took place. They are very passionate. Living in city and rural area are different. I used to teach workshops, spent two days to prepare and spent two days for lessons. And the rest two days I
felt it was waste of time and feel uncomfortable. Now I work in field three days a week. After the manual labour work, I treasure and really need the rest time and enjoy it very much now. My life is more interesting than before. Working in field is dissimilar to teaching. When I give out a lesson, I don’t know how much student will learn. But now I know. I irrigate in the morning, pick out the weeds. Every matter is so real and tangible, I feel I do exist in the world. If I work as fulltime employee, boss will ask me to complete only what he wants. But here, we have similar goals and we achieve it in our own means. We earned about one thousand dollar for recently harvesting. But in September, it was too hot, all our seedlings got burnt.

[Male: 22] I come more often (for farming) since July. It is summer holiday and I have nothing to do, I can try something new here. We cultivate one ‘dou chong’, and borrow another ‘dou chong’ from a villager. I do irrigation, sowing, harvesting and weeding. Farming seems quite good. I have manual work exercises, have vegetable to eat. My parents and friends laugh at me that I even lost my transportation fee. Some villagers always come in, sometimes for chatting and sometimes helping us. We are friends now. Previously we seem outsiders and only gave support to them in a single event. But now we have daily communication, they will talk to us when they come across any trouble things.

During the interview, different villagers passed by and had short chatting with them.

Once, the grocery owner came (it is true that she still kept her shop opened but did not stay inside). An interviewee suggested her to sell ‘dark beer’ for the coming event.

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43 A traditional Chinese agricultural measurement for field. The youth learnt the word after participating in farming.
because they prefer that more. The owner replied promptly, “No problem. It’s no big deal, just tell me what do you like”. Villager and the Post-80s have already transcended the relationship of help or being helped. Tsoi Yuen Tusen no longer only composed by indigenous and non-indigenous villagers, it also becomes a community which opens to non-residents, that is the “outsiders”.

After the interview, I voluntarily assisted them to remove the seedlings into a covered area as it may rain on the next day. I was careless that stepped on some of their produce. There looked similar to weeds nearby and I do not have their sense to distinguish them. The Life Museum was relocated after the vacation, resistance and farming are operated side by side. Meanwhile, at least two members become full time farmers in Ma Shi Po, another non-indigenous village also endangered by development plan. The once declined industry seems having an opportunity to revive. These Post-80s seem to pick up the metis life raised out by Scott, which has been disappeared quickly in highly modernized society with division of labour.

Through Kuxing, Post-80s did not take it as an action of shame, the inferior kneeling down to the authority and political elite. Rather, they read it as an extending exercises as well as performing arts. They were demonstration with the series of action in front of other, but at the same they enjoyed that moment on their own, their own meaning toward that routine movement as well as relationship of the land. But after the movement, another Post-80s edited the video by applying once again the traditional view of kneeling down, and turned it into an accusation on the state, asking the ordinary subjects in the society reflect on current circumstances. Thinking of Post-80s change quickly and modify all the time. It seems that all objects and action are signifiers to them that meaning and signified never stop alteration. Their quick response may be the result of revolution of technology. They “like”, “share” and “comment” immediately
when come across with any news or articles on internet social network, meanwhile their friends will be noticed almost at the same second. This is a generation grow up in the free internet world and adapt the instant response culture. They not only unmade the existing social structures and norms, but also manipulated all kinds of objects (signifiers) and gave in the meanings and signified they wanted.

Scott (1990) proposes dominated people understand very well what is going on, and even have explicit traditions- “hidden transcripts”- of critique and resistance. This may be valid in certain extent that government still get used to the blacken method on Tsoi Yuen villagers and Post-80s. Yet, in Tsoi Yuen movement, we can conclude the government did not know “what is going on”. Police force desired to contact the person in charge of Post-80s in order to make clear to situation, but the fact is no single person dominates the whole group. The then generation, those who received knowledge inside the local society, maybe sometimes wait for months to get new books or movie from overseas, the way to knowing the world has become totally different. They have not kept the pace with Post-80s and lead to insecurity. Even since, multiple numbers of policemen, PTU and double even triple layers of railings are sent out whenever there is petition and demonstration especially those hold by Post-80s. Post-80s has changed the culture of resistance in Hong Kong in the twentieth century. Their form of happy resistance will also provide insights to the petitioners at least in other Chinese society such as Taiwan and Macau.
CHAPTER SIX: CONCLUSION: TSOI YUEN TSUEN AS AN ANALOGY OF HONG KONG

In this essay, I have illustrated a brief history of the colonial Hong Kong and the development of the New Territories as a background for my discussion into the Tsoi Yuen Village resistance which gathered much support from the Post-80s generation. While the handover of sovereignty of Hong Kong from British rule back to China, Hong Kong has a complex position in this globalized world. Hong Kong is a special administrative region left with a capitalist and comparative democratic system of governance while there are still unjust legacies and practices exist in our policy and socio-political institutions. The Tsoi Yuen Resistance and the Post-80s best demonstrate how some of the unjust practices are infiltrated into our development ideology and process and how people are eager to change through understanding, research, and actions.

The resistance was going on when I left the field and the situation became worse. From February to April 2011, four villagers, including two aged over seventy, and two patrol members, were sued by the police. A breakthrough was seen when a mysterious person purchased the ‘right of the road’ for the Tsoi Yuen Sun Tsuen (New Tsoi Yuen Village) in February 2011 and transferred the right to use the road to the Tsoi Yuen villagers. On 17th February, the THB, Heung Yee Kuk and Concern groups had their first meeting discussing timetable for village resettlement over the last three months. The Bureau sent a proposal on temporary resettlement for Tsoi Yuen villagers at their new land lot and temporary houses are constructed. After two and a half years of resistance, it successfully set a precedent case for resettlement of a non-indigenous village in Hong Kong, and also the first democratic village in this city as well as in Taiwan and China.
Throughout its colonial history, the population in Hong Kong seemed to be separated into different oppositional groups such as dominated verse subordinated, urban dwellers verse rural villagers, indigenous people verse non-indigenous people. History of the place mainly has one version created by the British colonizer, i.e. a fishing village turned into an international financial centre. Capitalism, consumerism and development have become the hegemonic value and beliefs in this place. Tsoi Yuen Resistance together with the Post-80s make the bustle and hustle city take a pause, to trace back how the society’s structures were shaped by the former regime and to stop taking them from granted. The “rediscovery” of Tsoi Yuen Tsuen by connecting two groups leads to a domestic social movement. The world “made” by the previous sovereignty is now remade and it is unmade by the actions of ordinary people who weak seen to be weak and the subordinate in the past. As a result, local knowledge has been enriched and empowered, not only confined in the urban and commercial districts, but also takes into account of the rural and agricultural area. The Central value, which has been dominated for few decades, seems to be challenged by Tsoi Yuen value at the first time. The city and its subjects are moving away from colonial legacies. They started to realize their rights and obligations as citizens and demand for a more democratic and just process in envisioning and constructing a place they desire.

By revealing subaltern’s history, we can understand the past of Hong Kong in a different perspective. Mainstream narration of Hong Kong history began with the British invasion and the construction of the barracks. The establishment of Tsoi Yuen Tsuen came along of the construction of the former British military barracks, which was situated next to it. The two places have developed under the British rule and generations are settled down. They can be served as an analogy of Hong Kong. Individual experience in fact is interconnected with a place’s history. After the Handover in 1997,
the sovereignty of Hong Kong has been shifted to the PRC. Instead of the British army, the PLA is now stationed in the barracks, while the Tsoi Yuen villagers are establishing their new village through a democratic process. Although Hong Kong is not yet a democratic city, the village’s experience has proved the possibility of democratization of the society.

The Post-80s pivotal group of the Tsoi Yuen Resistance are grown-ups in the twentieth-first century with advanced technological knowledge and skills. Their lives seem closely related with the internet world. Contemporary alternative global cultures and ideas such as alternative media, citizen-journalists, ecological lifestyle, democracy and civil society are attracted to them. Meanwhile, they have a sense of belonging to Hong Kong - their homelands; they try to practice global ideas in a local context. They have demonstrated new and creative styles in response to social issues. Their serious involvement in the resistance has made them become an icon of defending against social unfairness. I heard from a young man that he was asked to block the road from the construction vehicle by an old woman, who was facing injustice. This movement marks the turn of Hong Kong resistance history, and lead it closer to a civil society.
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