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Political participation

_ A qualitative study of citizens in Hong Kong

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Abstract

“Political participation”

- A qualitative study of citizens in Hong Kong

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On July 1, 1997 China resumed its sovereignty over Hong Kong. Ever since long before the handover until today scholars ask whether and how the changes in Hong Kong's political status are affecting politics in Hong Kong. This paper is situated in this on-going academic debate. Its purpose is to *investigate whether system changes are affecting the participation of citizens in politics in Hong Kong.* It asks: *What, if anything, has the new political situation meant for the political participation in Hong Kong?*

Two perspectives have been used to answer the purpose, a structural approach and an actor-oriented approach. Five research questions have served as the starting point for my analysis and I have answered the general question on the basis of them.

- 1. Do the citizens in Hong Kong believe they have the ability to participate in politics, that the political system facilitates their participation in politics?*
- 2. Do the citizens in Hong Kong believe that China tries to repress Hong Kong's political rights?*
- 3. How do the citizens of Hong Kong participate in politics?*
- 4. How do the citizens of Hong Kong view their own political participation?*
- 5. Do the citizens of Hong Kong object to the political situation in Hong Kong?*

Empirical materials for this study have been collected in qualitative interviews with six citizens of Hong Kong, that is people who are Hong Kong Chinese. The conclusion is that the new political situation has not meant a lot for the political participation in Hong Kong. The answer of the general question from a structural approach is that the political system to a certain extent prevents the respondents from participating politically. On the basis of the actor-oriented approach the answer to the general question is that the new political situation has not meant anything for the political participation in Hong Kong.

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List of abbreviations

EC	Election Committee
Exco	Executive Council
JLG	Joint Liason Group
Legco	Legislative Council
NPC	National People's Congress
POS	Political Opportunity Structure
PRC	People's Republic of China
ROC	Republic of China
SAR	Special Administrative Region

1. INTRODUCTION

On July 1, 1997 China resumed sovereignty over Hong Kong. What happens in the territory today is closely monitored by the international community. Some people believe that Hong Kong will remain prosperous while others are concerned that the degree of freedom and liberty will be limited. It is obvious that China's interest is to pursue the success of "One Country, Two Systems" since Hong Kong is the eighth largest trading economy in the world. Nevertheless, the original institutional system (that supported Hong Kong's economic freedom) might present challenges to Beijing's control and thus could be in jeopardy under Chinese rule. There are still a lot of questions that remain unanswered. To what extent will Hong Kong enjoy a high degree of autonomy as promised in the Sino-British *Joint Declaration* signed 1984 and do Hong Kong people aspire for more democracy under Chinese rule? (Cheng, J 1999: 25f)

1.1 Problem

Now that Hong Kong is a Special Administrative Region (SAR) of China it is crucial to question how recent political system changes are shaping and influencing participation. This is important from a democratic perspective. According to Hong Kong's constitution the citizens have the right of autonomy and the region is supposed to be ruled by them.

The problem is that the citizens of Hong Kong have been described as politically apathetic and the political participation in the region has been described as low. Lau and Kuan found, in their large-scale territory-wide questionnaire survey, that Hong Kong Chinese showed limited increase in the level of political participation during the transitional period. They also argued that Hong Kong Chinese remained parochial, showing a lack of interest in political participation and a strong sense of incompetence. It was found that though the overall level of participation remains low, political activism has nonetheless increased since the early 1980's. Hong Kong Chinese are inclined to take collective actions but participation mobilized by political groups is still limited. Lau and Kuan described Hong Kong Chinese as "*attentive spectators*" in view of the coexistence of high cognitive participation and low behavioral participation. Thus the citizens pay attention to what happens in their political environment and are quite informed about events taking place in Hong Kong and elsewhere. As cognitive participants they compare favorably with citizens in advanced countries, thus the actual participation is low. (Lau, S, Kuan, H 1995) In some studies of the 1995 elections this scenario was verified again. Tsang also found that Hong Kong voters were in defiance of the

political system and China in particular. Anti-China sentiment is an obvious phenomenon in Hong Kong's participatory process. Voters had a strong sense of political cynicism, powerlessness and distrust of political parties as well as the Chinese, British and Hong Kong Governments. (Cheng, J 1999: 37f) Others claim that this gloomy description of political participation is incorrect. Lam, for example, maintain that previous research have had a too narrow definition of the concept political participation which resulted in an incomplete examination of political practices in Hong Kong. He states that political participation needs to be understood as activities that include both making demands on and showing support for a Government as well as lawful and unlawful activities. Lam criticize the previous definition which states political participation as acts of making demands on a Government, as lawful activities and as such activities vis-à-vis one Government. The common definition of political participation means that acts of demands upon the Government are seen as more genuine acts of political participation than acts of support according to Lam. When political participation is defined in such a way it does not consider acts of support as acts of political participation. Unlawful acts of political participation also need to be included in the definition according to Lam, otherwise it excludes acts such as riots and civil disobedience. Political participation also needs to be viewed broader than as activities directed towards the Government. Political participation can not be viewed as largely confined to the arena of Government. (Lam, W 2003) Nevertheless Lam does not carry out any research of the topic but offers an alternative understanding of political participation.

It is a problem if Hong Kong Chinese people are what have been described as "*attentive spectators*". If citizens do not exercise their rights as citizens it will be difficult for Hong Kong to realize and maintain its democratic rights. Thus the future of Hong Kong could be dependent on how the people participate.

1.2 Purpose and questions of issue

Ever since long before the handover until today scholars ask whether and how the recent changes in Hong Kong's political status are affecting politics in Hong Kong. There have been several studies conducted on the subject. This paper is situated in this on-going academic debate. Its purpose is to *investigate whether system changes are affecting the participation of citizens in politics in Hong Kong.*" It asks

-What, if anything, has the new political situation meant for the political participation in Hong Kong?

There are different research approaches that can be used as a basis to answer this question. I am going to use two perspectives to be able to answer my purpose, a structural approach and an actor-oriented approach. The general question, which is the purpose, is specified in the following way.

The questions on the basis of the structural perspective are:

- 1. Do the citizens in Hong Kong believe they have the ability to participate in politics, that the political system facilitates their participation in politics?*
- 2. Do the citizens in Hong Kong believe that China tries to repress Hong Kong's political rights?*

The questions on the basis of the actor-oriented approach are:

- 3. How do the citizens of Hong Kong participate in politics?*
- 4. How do the citizens of Hong Kong view their own political participation?*
- 5. Do the citizens of Hong Kong object to the political situation in Hong Kong?*

1.3 Definition of political participation

Political participation is a basic concept in political science and scholars define the concept in different ways. It may be defined as the actions of private citizens seeking to influence or support Government and politics. Milbrath and Goel uphold that this is a relatively broad definition since it also includes ceremonial and support activities. (Milbrath, L W, Goel, M L 1977: 2) However there are two ways to understand broadness when defining the concept political participation: (1) in terms of the kinds of tools or actions that are included, (2) in terms of the target of the actions. Seen from the first perspective this definition is broad but since the government is the sole target it can also be viewed as a narrow definition. There are other definitions of the concept political participation which I will discuss below. In the discussion on political participation scholars often try to explain human behavior as it relates to the political system but they also recognize that the political system and the political culture have a significant impact on individual political behavior. Still many scholars believe that at a basic level people follow the same behavioral laws irrespective of the culture they live in. (Cheng, J 1999: 1)

The definition of political participation is a subject of reconsideration. Scholars discuss how the concept should be defined and measured in a new way. We have expanded the definition as a consequence of our broadening of the definition of politics. The classical definition of political participation is the one that refers to:

“those voluntary activities by which members of a society share in the selection of rulers and, directly or indirectly, in the formation of public policy” (McClosky, H 1968: 252)

However politics today include more than relationships between citizens and their Government. Lam for example does not confine participation to Government and politics:

“Political participation refers to lawful or unlawful activities of support, making demands, debates, and other forms of expressions communicated verbally and/or through the media targeted at the PRC (People’s Republic of China), ROC (Republic of China) and Hong Kong Governments. Acts of political participation also include political activities that are targeted at private institutions, such as university administrations and business, and that they are designed to pose challenges to existing rules, norms and practices.” (Lam, W 2003: 491)

Thus, as previous noted, he states that political participation needs to be understood as activities that include both making demands on and showing support for a Government as well as lawful and unlawful activities. Political participation also needs to be viewed broader than as activities directed towards the Government. Political participation can not be viewed as largely confined to the arena of Government. Compared to Milbrath and Goel’s definition Lam’s definition of the concept is broader. That is because the actions that are included in this definition are more than making demands on the Government and since the target of the actions is not only the Government.

The voluntary activities included in the classical definition of political participation are voting, seeking information, discussing and proselytizing, attending meetings, contributing financially and communicating with representatives. The more active forms of participation include formal enrollment in a party, canvassing and registering voters, speech writing and speechmaking, working in campaigns and competing for public and party office. Excluded from this definition are involuntary activities such as paying taxes and serving in the armed forces. (McClosky, H 1968: 252f) Today there are newer versions of the classical definition of political participation. I will offer a broader and newer list of activities included in the definition of political participation below.

In a section entitled “*Thinking about Participation*” in a new book the following definition is offered:

“We cast a broad net in defining political participation and include under that rubric a variety of forms of activity in which there is the intent or consequence of influencing Government action — either directly, by affecting the formulation or implementation of public policy, or indirectly, by affecting the selection of public officials....Our understanding of participation thus encompasses activity at the local as well as the national level...”

(Burns, N, et al 2001: 20f) Today we can not confine political participation to Government and politics. Thus this is a narrow definition since the target of the actions is the Government. There are other targets than the Government that has to be included in the definition of political participation. As previously stated the classical definition of political participation is a subject of reconsideration. The thesis that traditional social and civic participation have declined has been discussed extensively. Robert Putnam is the most influential scholar of this statement through his best-seller *Bowling Alone* where he describes an erosion of traditional societal relations which is a threat to democratic political systems. (Stolle, D, Hooghe, M 2004:149) Criticism has emerged to counter the decline thesis, e g that the thesis fails to pay attention to the rise of new forms of participation and interaction. Critics argue that participation in politics and societal affairs is still strong but citizens today prefer to participate in non-hierarchical and informal networks instead of memberships of traditional political organizations. They uphold that we have missed recent developments in forms of participation which are more fluid, sporadic and less organized today. Membership in local parental groups, the tendency to consume politically, membership in advocacy networks, the regular signing and forwarding of e-mail petitions and the spontaneous organization of protests and allies are a few examples of newer forms of participation. (Ibid 2004: 159 ff) Thus globalization and individualization naturally changes the political landscape and these changes have to be considered in political science conceptualization of political participation.

Some scholars agree that the classical definition is outdated and too narrow for our contemporary times. They point to the variety of forms of political participation. Norris for example states that

“...multiple forms of civic engagement may have emerged in modern societies to supplement traditional modes. Political participation appears to have evolved and diversified over the

years, in terms of agencies (collective organizations), repertoires (the actions commonly used for political expression), and targets (the political actors that participants seek to influence)." (Norris, P 2002: from the preface) Thus Norris upholds that a broader definition of the concept political participation is necessary since the political landscape has changed.

Sartoris and Schumpeter identify which human acts should be categorized as political participation. According to them the citizen's only task in the political process is to vote against their leaders. This is a view from an extreme, elitist model of democracy. These scholars are advocates of what William Riker called a "liberal" model of democracy, an idea which can be summarized in three statements:

- Citizens have meaningful preferences only when it comes to which candidates or parties that should have the political power,
- These preferences are expressed only indirect, through a representative system,
- These preferences are independent of the democratic process as such.

With this kind of definition there are not very many remaining tasks for the empirical research. (Gilljam, M, Hermansson, J 2003: 324ff) Thus this is a very narrow definition of the concept political participation compared to Lam's definition.

The concept politics include a: the art or science of Government, b: the art or science concerned with guiding or influencing Governmental policy, c: the art or science concerned with winning and holding control over a Government. It also involves the political actions, practices, or policies and the political affairs or business, especially competition between competing interest groups or individuals for power and leadership (as in a Government). Politics also refers to political life especially as a principal activity or profession and to political activities characterized by artful and often dishonest practices. It can also be the political opinions or sympathies of a person and/or the total complex of relations between people living in society. Finally politics are relations in a particular area of experience especially as seen or dealt with from a political point of view. (Britannica online, 2006) According to *Nationalencyklopedin* politics is the "art of the state", it is the process of conquering and practicing power in public contexts. Aristoteles describes politics as a society's common ambition to get a "good life", to solve conflicts between the common goods and deviant interests. In Swedish the concept has two meanings. The first one is *politics* which means the processes through which power is practiced and political decisions are made.

The other meaning is the actual political principals and real contents- in English *policy*. The two meanings of the concept have a close connection. (NE, 2006)

Participation is an ingredient of every large or small polity. Somebody must make political decisions and appoint, uphold or remove leaders whether the society is an oligarchy or democracy. Those who fail to participate, out of neglect or exclusion, are likely to enjoy less power than others. Participation appears to be a complex phenomenon which depends on many variables of different relative weights. This does not mean that no conceptual model can be employed to explain it. One can group the relevant independent variables into influences that are essentially internal (psychological and cognitive) and external (social and political). One may reason that “ *(a) individuals are embedded in a matrix of social forces (status, education, religion, etc.) that orients them toward or away from political participation; (b) in addition, characteristics differences in drives and capacities will cause individuals to vary in their readiness to respond to political stimuli; and (c) the degree to which these social and psychological predispositions find expression as political activity depends partly on the nature of the political environment itself- including the political structure and institutions, the party system, and the pattern of political values and beliefs.*” (McClosky, H 1968: 253ff) This is an example of a scholar that tries to explain human behavior as it relates to the political system and also recognize that the political system and the political culture have a significant impact on individual political behavior.

To define what human acts have to be categorized as political participation it is necessary not to include just conventional acts directed towards the political system but also unconventional acts such as for example consumer boycotts. Activities that should be included in an operational definition that takes its point of departure in a new definition of political participation are as follows:

- Voting
- Membership in political parties and groups and active involvement therein
- Personal contacting (politicians, civil servants, lawyers, associations, media and corporate actors, friends of officials)
- Seeking help from acquaintances in Government or from persons with influence on officials
- Organizing a group
- Filing a lawsuit

- Sending gifts to officials or hosting meals
- Campaign activity
- Cooperative activity
- Demonstrations and strikes
- Consumer boycotts
- Use of labeling schemes
- Economic support to parties and groups
- Civil disobedience or riots
- Wearing of buttons, t-shirts, etc that market a political cause
- Signing of petitions
- Writing of letters to political actors or newspapers
- Culture jamming
- Constructing a home page for a political cause
- Involvement with Internet political chat sites

This list of activities that should be included in an operational definition of political participation is partly taken from Peterson's et al book *Demokrati och medborgarskap* (Pettersson, O, et al 1998: 55). These activities are however developed for mature democracies in the western world. Because of this I have compared the activities with the activities that Lau and Kuan used in their research and then I have added the activities that they have used. The activities that I have added from Lau and Kuan are: personal contacting friends of officials, seeking help from acquaintances in Government or from persons with influence on officials, organizing a group, filing a lawsuit and send gifts to officials or host meals. As discussed above globalization and individualization naturally changes the political landscape which conveys that new activities of political participation come up. Campaign activity, cooperative activity, consumer boycotts, use of labeling schemes, culture jamming, constructing a home page for a political cause and involvement with Internet political chat sites are activities which are not included in Peterson's et al book. These activities are necessary to add to the activities that should be included in an operational definition of the concept political participation since we can not leave out recent developments in forms of participation which are more fluid, sporadic and less organized today.

I have in this section tried to show that political science conceptualization is undergoing change and discussed in a systematic way different definitions of political participation. In

this thesis, when I write about political participation, I will refer to the newer versions of the concept since politics today include more than relationships between citizens and their Government. Thus Lam's definition of political participation is satisfactory. He does not confine participation to Government and politics and that is necessary today. He also offers different kinds of actions that should be included in the definitions such as making demands on and showing support for a Government as well as lawful and unlawful activities. Also, when Lam discusses the concept he does it within a context of Hong Kong. Thus his definition of political participation is satisfactory for this thesis.

Teorell also discuss political participation in a satisfactory way. He uses three models of democracy to discuss political participation, the responsive model, the participant model and the deliberative model. He also discusses different resources which make it possible for people to participate. I will use his theory as an actor-oriented approach and I will deploy his discussion of political participation under the theory section (1.4.2).

1.4 Theoretical approach

There are different aspects that can be used as a basis for my thesis about political participation. I am going to use two perspectives to be able to answer my purpose. I am going to use a structural approach and an actor-oriented approach.

The structural approach is necessary to use since political institutions, routines, and conventions create structures over time which prevent or facilitate political participation. The actor-oriented approach on the other hand regards questions like what personal qualities and characteristics trigger the political participation. To find out what the new political situation means for the political participation in Hong Kong it is necessary to use two perspectives. If I only use the actor-oriented perspective I will leave out important questions like how the political system in Hong Kong shapes the political participation. On the other hand if I leave out the actor-oriented perspective I would assume that only structures matters and that people are passive victims of them.

I am going to use a Political Opportunity Structure (POS) as a structural approach and Teorell's theory as an actor-oriented approach.

1.4.1 Structural approach

Tocqueville is often accounted the father of POS-theory through his visions and work of France and America and through his thoughts of how states structure social movements. (McAdam, D, et al 1996: 46ff)

Peter Eisinger used the term political opportunity structure 1973 when he helped to account for variations in “*riot behavior*” in American cities. He found that “*the incidence of protest is. . . related to the nature of a city’s political opportunity structure*” which he defined as “*the degree to which groups are likely to be able to gain access to power and to manipulate the political system.*” (Ibid 1996: 23) Scholars within POS have traditionally tried to explain the emergence of a particular social movement on the basis of changes in the institutional structure or informal power relations of a given national political system. More recently scholars have tried to explain the cross-national differences in the structure, extent, and success of comparable movements on the basis of differences in the political characteristics of the nation states in which they are embedded. The researchers have, in both cases, the same underlying conviction that social movements and revolutions are shaped by the broader set of political constraints and opportunities unique to the national context in which they are embedded. (Ibid 1996: 3) Thus POS refers to the specific features of a political system. These features can explain the different actions, organizational forms and impacts of social movements in that specific country.

Herbert Kitschelt conducted research of the institutional setting of Anti-Nuclear movements in four countries where he found that the less innovative and more immobile a political regime, the greater the risk that this inflexibility itself will trigger demands that go beyond the immediate policy issue to ones threatening the legitimacy of the regime. Thus his comparisons showed that the general characteristics of domestic political opportunity can, to a significant degree, explain the mobilization strategies and impacts of social movements. He found that the political structures in each country set limits on policy innovation. (Kitchelt, H 1986)

The research about POS is thus concentrated on social movements and revolutions. However I argue that it is useful to use POS in my research as social movement is a form of political participation. Also because social movements consist of actors, who are shaped also individually, by the broader set of political constraints and opportunities which are unique to

the national context. By POS Sydney Tarrow refers to “*consistent – but not necessarily formal, permanent, or national – signals to social or political actors which either encourage or discourage them to use their internal resources to form social movements.*” His concept of political opportunity emphasizes not only formal structures like state institutions but also the conflict and alliance structures. These conflict and alliance structures provide resources and oppose constraints external to the group. (McAdam, D, et al 1996: 54ff)

Various scholars have tried to explain what they see as relevant dimensions of a given system’s structure of political opportunities. Brockett, Kriesi, Rucht and Tarrow have sought to identify those specific dimensions of political systems that impact the structuring of collective action. If one synthesizes across their four approaches the following list of dimensions of political opportunity emerge:

1. The relative openness or closure of the institutionalized political system
2. The stability or instability of that broad set of elite alignments that typically undergird a polity
3. The presence or absence of elite allies
4. The state’s capacity and propensity for repression (McAdam, D, et al 1996: 26ff, citing Brockett, Kriesi, Rucht and Tarrow)

The first dimension emphasizes the importance attributed to the formal legal and institutional structure of a given polity. The second and third dimensions are about the informal structure of power relations characteristic of a given system. Some scholars argue that the fourth dimension, state repression, is really more an expression of the general receptivity or vulnerability of the POS rather than an independent dimension of the same. McAdam is not convinced that that is the case. He upholds that there is considerable empirical evidence attesting to the significance of this factor shaping the level and nature of movement activity. He also maintains that viewing systems of repression as only expressive of other features of a polity or as mere tools of a specific political interest is to blind us to the unpredictable nature of repression and the complex social processes that structure its operation. (Ibid 1996: 26ff)

The first dimension is especially important when discussing whether or not the new political situation has meant anything for the political participation in Hong Kong. It regards the openness or closure of the institutionalized political system. This can to a great extent structure or influence citizen participation in Hong Kong. Is the political system open or

closed? Do the citizens have access to the party system for example? Do they have access to participating at all? This is an important, relevant aspect when it comes to political participation in Hong Kong. Dimension number four is also important when it comes to the discussion of whether or not the new political situation has meant anything for the political participation in Hong Kong. Has China increased the capacity and propensity for repression? Are they trying and are they able to repress Hong Kong's political rights? This dimension can also structure or influence citizen participation in Hong Kong.

According to Kitschelt POS can facilitate or restrain the capacity of social movements to engage in protest activity in at least three different ways. Firstly, if movements can appeal to widely shared norms, collect adequate information about the nature of the dissatisfaction against which they protest and raise money to disseminate their ideas and information, the chances of broad mobilization increase. Secondly, institutional rules, such as those reinforcing patterns of interaction between Government and interest groups and electoral laws, govern the access of social movements to the public sphere and political decision making. These rules allow for, register, respond and shape the demands of social movements that are not accepted political actors. The rules also facilitate or restrain the institutionalization of new groups and claims. Thirdly, social movements face opportunities to mobilize protests that change over time with the appearance and disappearance of other social movements. Kitschelt's research also identifies a relationship between a regimes openness and movement mobilization. Closed regimes repress social movements, open and responsive ones assimilate them and moderately repressive ones allow for their broad articulation but do not accede readily to their demands. Different features of the policy making command if a regime is open or closed, for example if the executive branch is dominant over the legislature, if there is policy making access only for a select number of interest groups and what the party system looks like. (Kitschelt, H 1986: 61ff) Electoral laws govern the access of social movements to the public sphere and political decision making according to Kitschelt. This is an important aspect which can be applied to Hong Kong's political system. The electoral laws govern the access of people to political decision making. Thus the electoral laws in a country facilitate or complicate people's ability to be able to gain access to power and manipulate the political system. Kitschelt also discuss regimes openness which is what Brockett, Kriesi, Rucht and Tarrow do. He identifies a relationship between a regime's openness and movement mobilization which is comparable with Brockett, Kriesi, Rucht and Tarrow's first dimension. A regimes openness or closure can to a great extent structure or influence citizen participation in Hong Kong.

System-wide political properties and national policy styles play a key role in determining the dynamics of social movements. The nature of these properties and styles are important because representatives of entirely new demands often cannot participate effectively in highly differentiated policy arenas and instead must appeal to actors and institutions in politics such as parties, parliaments and courts whose authority and decision procedures partially transcend those of particular policy arenas. At least four factors determine the openness of political regimes to new demands on the input side. Firstly, the number of political parties, factions and groups that effectively articulate different demands in electoral politics influences openness. The larger the number of parties is, the more “centrifugal” a political system tends to be and therefore the more difficult it is to confine electoral interest articulation to the “cartel” of entrenched interests that is represented by established, bureaucratic parties. Secondly, the openness of a political regime increases with the capacity of legislature to develop and control policies independently of the executive. Thirdly, political openness is shaped by patterns of intermediation between interest groups and the executive branch. The more links between them; access for new interests to centers of political decision-making is facilitated. Finally, political openness not only requires opportunities for the articulation of new demands. New demands must also find their way into the processes of forming policy compromises and consensus. There must therefore be mechanisms that aggregate demands for this to occur. When there are no viable procedures to build effective policy coalitions the openness is constrained. (Kitchelt, H 1986: 61ff)

Through Eisingers, Tarrow and Kitchelt's work one is able to conclude that a country's political system facilitate or complicate peoples ability of policy innovation and it also facilitates or complicates peoples ability to be able to gain access to power and manipulate the political system.

1.4.2 Actor-oriented approach

Teorell uses three models of democracy to discuss political participation, the responsive model, the participant model and the deliberative model. According to the responsive model participation regards the question of influencing the people who make decisions. Followers of the participant model claim that participation is about being able to be a part of the decisions. The deliberative model defines participation as a way of making a decision. The three models also contain different arguments about why participation is desirable. Within the responsive model the desirable consequence is naturally responsiveness on a system level which can be

interpreted as the idea of protection of interests on an individual level. The participant model regards self-fulfillment and personal development as why participation is important. The deliberative model on the other hand advocates the legitimacy of the democratic system. (Gilljam, M, Hermansson, J 2003: 325ff)

The actor-oriented approach regards questions like what personal qualities and characteristics trigger the political participation. According to Teorell there are three different resources which make it possible for people to participate. Those are physical capital, human capital and social capital. The resources focus on the possibility and the impediments of political actions. Physical capital regards all material assets that a person possesses, for example income, capital and private properties. Time is another asset that can be seen as a physical capital. Access to equipment like telephone, radio, fax, computers, cell phones and Internet are also material assets that contribute to participation. Human capital is the skills and abilities that render actions possible. Education, knowledge and skills are the factors of explanation. (Gilljam, M, Hermansson, J 2003: 334f) Carpini and Keeter uphold that political knowledge is to democracy what money is to the economy- the citizenships hard currency (Carpini, D, Keeter M & S, 1996: 8). Verba, Schlozman and Brady develop the concept “citizenskills” and add linguistic skills and communication- and organizational knowledge (Verba, S et al 1995: 8) Social capital is defined as social networks, that is to say a social resource not an economic asset. Social capital is inherent in the relations between people. Teorell upholds, as noted above, that social capital is a resource which contributes to participation (Gilljam, M, Hermansson, J 2003: 334f). The basic idea is simple: access to social networks increases the probability of a person to be recruited to political participation (Verba, S et al 1995: chapter 5). Social networks structures the flow of information that people are surrounded by. Since large networks connect people, the access to such networks increases the possibility of being asked to participate politically. (Granovetter, M 1973: 1362-5, 1375)

The resources noted above are not the only resources that render participation possible. Incentive to participate is another important factor. Physical capital, human capital and social capital are necessary assets but people also need to be able to and to wish to participate. (Gilljam, M, Hermansson, J 2003: 335f) Olson upholds that rational people can not be expected to participate in activities where the purpose is peoples common good. The fact that people yet put interest into collective efforts must be explained by selective incentives, which are advantages (material) one gets through your own involvement. (Olson, M 1965: 51) There

are other suggested rewards than material ones as incentives to participate. The entertainment value of participation is a factor which commands participation. Thus people participate because they find pleasure in it independently of the result. People can also participate because they want to express their opinion or support. Social norms are another form of selective incentive. A feeling of duty towards other people and different standards can promote participation. (Gilljam, M, Hermansson, J 2003: 335f)

Brady, Verba and Schlozman also discuss different capacities that are essential to political activity. They argue that resources are a necessary condition for people becoming involved in politics. As Teorell they try to explain that different resources make it possible for people to participate. The resources they discuss are time, money and civic skills. According to Brady, Verba and Schlozman those skills are acquired in early life but are also developed in nonpolitical institutional settings of adult life such as the workplace, organizations and religious settings. They uphold that socioeconomic status is powerful in predicting participation and that the resources have powerful effects on overall political activity. Brady et al discuss time and money as resources for being able to participate in politics. It is similar to Teorell's discussion of physical capital. Time can be used for political actions in many different ways, for example writing letters to the editor column or attending a community meeting. Civic skills are communications and organizational capacities that are essential to political activity. Speaking and writing well and taking part in meetings for example are important skills when it comes to politics. Those who have these skills are more likely to be effective when they get involved in politics. (Brady, H E et al 1995) The civic skills can be compared to Teorell's human capital.

Physical capital, human capital, social capital and incentives to participate are individual resources and characteristics that influence how citizens participate in politics. They are all, more or less, relevant for my study of Hong Kong. When it comes to physical capital time is the resource which is most important to my study. Money and material assets is an important resource for investment in political participation primarily in the United States and not as much in Hong Kong. Since Brady et al discuss the resources on the basis of an American study one can understand that money is an important resource in the American system. In the United States it is common to donate money to candidates and parties to a great extent. Even though the system is different in Hong Kong money is still a resource which means something for political activity but it is not essential. You can for example participate in politics instead

of working if you have enough money. Time is the most important physical capital resource when it comes to my study though. Human capital is also relevant for my study since knowledge and skills trigger political participation. It is important for people to participate even though they do not have the best knowledge and skills of politics. If you are given the right to vote for example you ought to vote. If you do not have the basic knowledge about the elections then you can get the information about it (if the political structures allow you that is). Social capital is a resource which also contributes to participation and which is inherent in the relations between people according to Teorell. This resource is important to my study but it is not crucial. The last resource, incentives to participate, is the most important resource according to me. It does not matter how much physical capital, human capital and social capital you have if you are not able to or wish to participate. Thus this resource is to a great extent relevant to my study. Even though someone has the all the knowledge possible about politics there is a chance that he will not participate because he/she does not want to. Accordingly this fundamental resource influences how Hong Kong citizens participate in politics.

1.5 Method

1.5.1 Methodical procedure

Empirical materials for this study have been collected in qualitative interviews with citizens of Hong Kong, that is people who are Hong Kong Chinese. The reason for choosing a qualitative study is because I want to examine in-dept how citizens view their own political participation and their attitudes towards China, that is if the citizens believe that China influences Hong Kong. Qualitative analyses are often based on a small quantity of people or a small quantity of observations. The validity of the analysis and the generalization of the conclusions must be discussed from another point of view than if the random sample would be representative for the entire population. (Lantz, A 1993: 72)

Respondent interviews have been used in this study. Respondent interviews often regard understanding and mapping people's understandings in a certain area to develop conceptions and define categories. (Esaiasson, P, et al 2004: 279ff) It is the respondents themselves and their thoughts that are the object of the study (Ibid 2004: 254). Thus respondent interviews are well suited when one wants to say something about people's day to day experiences. (Ibid 2004: 279ff) Since I want to know how the citizens of Hong Kong regard their situation and

how they understand their own situation regarding political participation, respondent interviews are a suitable method for my thesis. The goal is to catch and chart different understandings regarding political participation. The reasons for using respondent interviews are because they give good opportunities to register answers that are unexpected. They also give opportunities to follow ups. I will be able to ask additional questions to get an increased understanding of how the respondents think and what they mean. That is impossible when you use for example questionnaires. (Ibid 2004: 279) Since respondent interviews are based on people's understandings or ideas of different concepts one can not say that these understandings are true or false. Instead it is about getting close to the respondents to be able to catch their thoughts and ideas. (Ibid 2004: 286)

There is a distinction between two types of respondent interviews, conversational interviews and surveys. The level of standardization is what differentiates them. When one use conversational interviews the sequence of the questions and the formulation often differs, thus it has a lower level of standardization. In a survey one use the same questions to all the respondents and in a conversational interview the interview is constructed more like a conversation. I have used a survey in this study since I prefer a high level of standardization. There are no exact differences between the two kinds of interviews though since they are both qualitative interviews. (Esaiasson, P, et al 2004: 253ff)

Six Hong Kong Chinese citizens have been interviewed in this study. According to McCracken one ought to choose strangers, a small quantity and people who are not "subjective experts". To choose strangers is important since one have to maintain a scientific distance to the respondents. I do not know the people that I have interviewed so I have kept a scientific distance to the respondents. To interview a small quantity of people is also important since the basic data seldom gets better if one interview 30 people instead of 10. The advice is to use 15 people plus minus 10. I have also avoided the problem with "subjective experts" since the respondents are not working with politics or are experts in the field. Thus they have not answered on the basis of what they work with but on the basis of their own thoughts and ideas. (Ibid 2004: 286ff)

As noted above, I will not be able to generalize in a statistic way when I answer my questions since I can not comment about frequencies on a basis of interviews with 6 representatives of a population of 6, 8 million people. Instead I will have to generalize about abstract phenomenon

like different categories of thinking and possible interpretations of the world. Thus I will examine different incidences of how to view the world, not how many people who interpret the world in one way or the other. The argument is built on the premise of that there are a limited way of how to look at the phenomenon that I will examine. There are not two millions of ideas about political participation. (Ibid 2004: 185ff)

In the analysis of the interview material I will analyze the parts that are relevant for the areas that I intend to examine more thorough. The analysis will contain quotations to strengthen the credibility of the analysis since quotations shows the respondents own way of speaking. (Holme I M, Solvang, B K 1997: 92f)

I have started the interviews¹ with a couple of questions about personal information to try to establish contact and create a nice atmosphere (those questions are not included in the interview guide). Before I did the first interview I tried out the interview guide on a close friend just to practice and to get a feeling of what it is like. Naturally I had to operationalize my research questions. The first research question concluded with interview question number two. The second research question was operationalized through interview question number three. The third research question concluded with interview question number four. The fourth research question was operationalized through interview question number five. The last research question concluded with interview question number one.

My selection of the respondents has been a none-random selection. It is hard, or practically impossible, to establish a limit of selection of Hong Kong's population thus I had to use a none-random selection. I have used a mix of the "first-best selection" and the "snowball selection". The "first-best selection" means that one use respondents who are easy to get in touch with, for example people who passes on the street. The "snowball selection" means that the respondents who we find can help us to find new respondents who can find new respondents etc. (Esaiasson, P, et al 2004: 209ff) To get in touch with respondents I have asked my friends in Hong Kong if they know any Hong Kong Chinese who might be interested in being interviewed. In that way I got in touch with some people and I could also ask if they know someone else who might be interested. I have recorded the interviews and I written them down word for word as a basis for my analysis.

¹ See the interview guide in the enclosed appendix.

Previous research of participation generally shows gender differences. In Lau and Kuan's study for example they concluded that men are more active in watching news, reading newspapers and discuss politics than women. They also show more interest and are more informed about politics and they have also participated more in activities related to the June 4 event at Tiananmen Square than women. (Lau, S, Kuan, H 1995: 5) Hence in order to study my research questions fully I have decided to interview 3 women and 3 men. I have not chosen, in advance, to find out the respondents attitudes and knowledge about Hong Kong's politics or their political participation. If that had been the case I would have been able to control or steer the output. The respondents did not get any other information about the interview, for example about the purpose of the thesis, other than it is about political participation. Hence the respondents have not been affected of the purpose of the thesis when they have answered the questions in the interview.

1.5.2 Delimitations

I naturally need to make delimitations practically because of lack of time and research resources. If I had had enough resources I could have been able to pursue quantitative research from a random selection of Hong Kong's population. It would be interesting to generalize from Hong Kong's entire population of what, if anything, the new political situation has meant for the political participation in Hong Kong. Since I have got ten weeks, and no research resources, to carry out this thesis it is impossible for me to send questionnaires to, or interview, thousands of citizens of Hong Kong from a random selection and then analyze it. I could hand out questionnaires in the streets but from a generalization point of view that is the worst course of action. Instead of trying to defend a method almost impossible to defend I will use quantitative interviews which does not claim to generalize in a statistic way.

It is necessary for me to carry out interviews with people who speak English since I do not speak Chinese. The official languages in Hong Kong are English and Chinese. Most of the Hong Kong Chinese speak the Cantonese version of Chinese. (Landguiden, 2006)

Administration was mostly done in English when Hong Kong was a British crown colony and Chinese was not being granted official status until 1974. After the handover both Chinese and English became the official languages of the Hong Kong. (Wikipedia 5, 2006) There are a lot of Hong Kong Chinese who does not speak English or who speak it very poor. Since I am constrained to interview people who speak English fluently I will leave out the part of the

population that does not speak English. This means that there might be views that I can not discover. Do the Hong Kong Chinese who speak English differ in the way they participate politically from the ones who does not? This is impossible for me to answer but I am aware of the problem which arises when I have to make such delimitation. Interviews in Chinese with people who do not speak English might result in different answers and that is important to notice.

The people who I will interview will all be in their twenties or thirties. This is a delimitation which might result in particular answers. People who are older, who were old enough to participate in politics when Hong Kong was a British crown colony, presumably have different opinions about the political situation in Hong Kong and might participate different than the ones who I will interview. They have been influenced of the British rule to a greater extent than the people who I will interview. This might have led to opinions that are specific for older people. Yet I argue that it is the younger people who will determine the future of Hong Kong and for that reason I have chosen to make this delimitation.

1.6 Disposition

The thesis consists of the introduction chapter, two chapters of substance and an analysis chapter. I complete the thesis with a chapter of a concluding discussion.

The second chapter, named *Hong Kong*, is an account of Hong Kong's historical context and Hong Kong's political system. I argue that it is important to include this in the thesis to be able to understand the political situation in Hong Kong.

Chapter three consists of an account of the results based on the respondent's answers while chapter four contains an analysis where I answer the general question and the research questions. Chapter five consists of a concluding discussion.

2. HONG KONG

2.1 Hong Kong's historical context

In order to understand the current political situation in Hong Kong and its citizens, the occurrences that have shaped politics and participation in the region are important.

Since World War II Hong Kong has undergone a number of major transformations. Those changes partly are a result of Government initiative responding to economic, social and political pressure. Hong Kong's political destiny has however been dominated by the fact that it is not, and will never be, a sovereign state. Britain was the sovereign master for over 150 years, except during the Japanese occupation from 1941 until 1945. (Skidmore, M 1996: 25)

On January 26, 1841 Hong Kong was annexed by Britain and the Nanking-agreement was signed. Misunderstanding of the agreement later led to disputes and another war between Chinese and British troops evolved. Britain won once again and the Peking-agreement was signed 1860. Another agreement, in which the British territory was expanded, was signed 1898. The agreement meant that Britain was allowed to "lease" Hong Kong for 99 years. (Nordlöf-Lagerkranz, U 1997: 7ff) During the World War II Japan occupied Hong Kong. They surrendered in August 1945 and the British governor re-established his position on May 1, 1946. (Ibid 1997: 12f)

From the late 1960s to the early 1970s Hong Kong was pervaded by a parochial political culture with a sense of political powerlessness and low political interest. The Hong Kong Chinese longed for political stability after the civil war and the Japanese invasion. Hong Kong was like a lifeboat that offered political stability and those who lived there naturally did not want to rock the boat. (Cheng, J 1999: 75ff)

1982 there were negotiations in Beijing between Hong Kong and China about the future of the region. Deng Xiaoping proposed that Hong Kong and China would become "*One Country with Two Systems*". After two years an agreement was finally reached. The *Joint Declaration* was signed by the Chinese and British prime ministers in Peking on December 19, 1984. According to the agreement Britain undertook to handover Hong Kong to China on July 1, 1997. Hong Kong would then become a SAR of China. (Nordlöf-Lagerkranz, U 1997: 16ff)

When the agreement was reached China and Britain started the work of a new constitution- *The Basic Law* (Nordlöf-Lagerkranz, U 1997: 18f). *The Basic Law* laid the blueprint for introducing direct elections for 18 seats in the territory's 60-member Legislative Council (Legco). (Freedom House, 2006)

The political opportunity for democratization expanded noticeably in the beginning of 1980s as a result of the Sino-British negotiations over Hong Kong's future. China's potential threats to Hong Kong people's way of life, and also local democratic activists and timely mobilization, began to shape the political culture in favor of greater democracy. (Cheng, J 1999: 79)

The cooperation between China and Britain has not always been easy even though they have been able to reach a few agreements. After the massacre at Tianamen square 1989 the relationship was frosty but it got even worse when Chris Patten, the last British governor, came to Hong Kong 1992. He put a proposal, without discussing it with China, about a small democratization of the elections to the Legco that would be held in April 1995. The proposal was accepted by the Legco but China was reluctant to Patten's proposal. China has never accepted the Legco that was elected 1995 since they regarded that Patten's changes was against the *Joint Declaration*. (Nordlöf-Lagerkranz, U 1997: 19ff) After China took control of Hong Kong 1997 China retaliated by disbanding the partially elected Legco and installing, for 10 months, a provisional legislature that repealed or tightened several of the territory's civil liberty laws. (Freedom House, 2006)

A Beijing-organized committee chose Tung Chee-Hwa as the chief executive (the political leader of the Hong Kong SAR) after the handover. His popularity waned after the regions financial crisis in 1997-1998. Tung was nevertheless reelected to a 5-year term in 2002. He promised public consultations in 2004 or 2005 on changes to the electoral system. However, the standing committee of the National People's Congress (NPC) issues a ruling preserving the status quo in April 2004. This meant that a political reform could not occur without the committee's prior approval. Human Rights Watch said that the development was a "*serious setback for electoral reform*" and warned that "*if Beijing does not recognize reasonable limits to its powers under Article 158, (which allows the NPC to issue interpretations of *The Basic Law*)... the provision could become a vehicle for infringing civil and political rights safeguards in Hong Kong.*" Hundreds of people then took part in a peaceful march to protest

the ruling and to demand the right to elect the Chief Executive directly in July 2004. One year before there was another march protesting the Government's proposals for an anti-subversion law. The protests against the bill led to massive demonstrations on July 1, 2003 and the bill was shelved indefinitely and finally withdrawn. (Freedom House, 2006) A country's political system facilitate or complicate peoples ability of policy innovation and it also facilitates or complicates peoples ability to be able to gain access to power and manipulate the political system. Hong Kong's electoral system is a great example of how the political system complicates people's ability to gain access to power.

In September 2004 the Legco elections, where 30 of the 60 seats were directly elected, were held. Pro-Beijing Parties retained control of the legislature and the elections were marred by voter intimidation resulting in a vote that was decidedly not free. (Freedom House, 2006) Tung Chee-Hwa stepped down from his tenure as Chief Executive on March 10, 2005 as a result of an increasing criticism within Hong Kong and, almost certainly, because he had lost the confidence of the Central Government. The official explanation was that he stepped down due to "health reasons". (Wikipedia I, 2006) The election of a new Chief Executive was held on June 16, 2005 and Donald Tsang was acclaimed the winner. (Wikipedia 2, 2006) In December 2005 thousand of people demonstrated against Donald Tsang, Beijing's influence over Hong Kong and the refusal of general elections in Hong Kong. (DN, 2006)

When Hong Kong returned to the motherland a lot of people were indifferent. One aspect that can explain this is the political identity. It has been suggested that the Chinese identity is not politically based but culturally grounded in which selected Chinese traditions provide a basis for differentiation from western culture. Psychologists have confirmed that there is a substantial gap between Hong Kong and Chinese identifiers where the sense of superiority of Hong Kong people over mainlanders was particularly strong. Hong Kong people do not have a very strong respect for their country. In their opinion the country has done little to make them proud of their membership. The lack of sovereignty and British occupation has meant that the Hong Kong identity is quite fragile. (Cheng, J 1999: 111ff)

2.2 Hong Kong's political system

In this section I am going to describe Hong Kong's political structures since structures commands participation. The political structures in Hong Kong might facilitate or complicate

people's ability to gain access to power and manipulate the political system. In order to understand this it is important to describe the current political system in Hong Kong.

China handles the foreign policy and defense and has the last word in all important questions. Hong Kong shall, according to *The Basic Law* be governed locally. The Chief Executive, who replaced the British governor, is appointed for five years and is responsible for the region and leads the local Government, the Executive Council (Exco). (Landguiden, 2006). Members of the Exco are appointed by the Chief Executive from among the principal officials of the executive authorities, members of the Legislative Council and public figures. Members appointment or removal is decided by the Chief Executive. (Hong Kong SAR Government, 2006) Donald Tsang is the current Chief Executive. He was acclaimed the winner in June 2005, as the only candidate securing the required 100 nominations from members of the Election Committee (EC). (Wikipedia 2, 2006) The EC is an 800-member electoral college. The EC is renewed every five years when the body is used to select the new Chief Executive. To choose the members of the EC there are twenty-eight functional constituencies and they receive a set number of electoral votes allocated to them. The 800 members contain 664 nominated from the sectors of the economy, 40 from the religious organizations, and 96 ex officio members taken from the Government. The EC elections have been quite irregular. They were held in 1998 and 2000, but none (except for the 2002 by-election) have been held since. Since Donald Tsang became the new Chief Executive, an election would have to be held on the tenth of July at the latest since electoral law states that an election must be held within 120 days of the vacancy. When the Chief Executive is to be chosen each candidate must be validly and legally nominated to participate in the election. One of the requirements for eligibility is the nominations of at least 100 members of the EC. Since each elector can only nominate one candidate, 701 signatures will guarantee election unopposed. The college of electors casts the official ballots for the office, with an absolute majority of the votes required to be elected. (Wikipedia 3, 2006)

The Legco have 60 members of which 30 are directly elected from geographical constituencies (Legislative Council, 2006). Direct elections are also, apart from the Legco, held in the two municipal councils (the Urban Council and the Regional Council). It has been direct elections in Hong Kong since the early 1980's. (Lau, S, Kuan, H 1995: 2) The other half in the Legco is appointed by different groups in the society and the industry through so called functional constituencies. According to critics this is a system which guarantees a

strong influence from China friendly forces. (Landguiden, 2006) The term of office of a legislator is four years in length and *The Basic Law* states that the election of all the Legco members should be by universal suffrage. (Wikipedia 4, 2006) The president of the Legco is elected by the Legco and is from among its members (Legislative Council, 2006).

The functions and powers of the Legco are:

- To enact, amend or repeal laws in accordance with the provisions of *The Basic Law* and legal procedures;
- To examine and approve budgets introduced by the Government;
- To approve taxation and public expenditure;
- To receive and debate the policy addresses of the Chief Executive;
- To raise questions on the work of the Government;
- To debate any issue concerning public interests;
- To endorse the appointment and removal of the judges of the Court of Final Appeal and the Chief Judge of the High Court;
- To receive and handle complaints from Hong Kong residents (Hong Kong SAR Government, 2006)

The Exco advises the Chief Executive on all important policies and also advises upon all principal legislation before it is introduced into the Legco. The Exco also has the power to make subsidiary legislation under a number of ordinances passed by the Legco. (Ibid, 2006)

Hong Kong has a multi-party system but often no party has a chance of gaining power by controlling the Legco (Wikipedia 6, 2006). Some of the biggest parties are: Democratic Party, Democratic Alliance for the Betterment of Hong Kong (DAB), Liberal Party, The Frontier, Hong Kong Progressive Alliance, Association for Democracy and People's Livelihood (ADPL) (Sveriges generalkonsulat, 2006)

The legal system of the Hong Kong is based on the rule of law and the independence of the Judiciary. The constitutional framework for the legal system is provided by *The Basic Law*. Hong Kong's legal system is different from that of Mainland China and is based on the common law, supplemented by local legislation. (Hong Kong SAR Government, 2006)

3. EMPIRICAL ACCOUNT

In this chapter I will leave an account of the answers from the interviews. Six interviews were made and they lasted between 15-30 minutes. I will leave an account for each question. To make it as trustworthy as possible I will reproduce parts of quotations from the respondents. After that I will make a short summary of the answers. Generally, research that uses interviews uses quotations from the interviews as substantiation for summaries of the empirical material. However I have chosen to offer quotations from all the respondents in almost every question because my interviews were very short hence it was difficult to use fewer quotations as substantiation for summaries. The respondents are Hong Kong Chinese people who are citizens of Hong Kong. They will all represent their selves in the interviews and they will not base their answers on the basis of for example their jobs or a political party. I have chosen 6 people to try to *investigate whether system changes are affecting the participation of citizens in politics in Hong Kong*. Since the respondents are not representing any organization or authority I have chosen to let the respondents be anonymous. One person also wished to be anonymous when I asked whether or not I could use their names in the thesis. Also the respondent's identities are not relevant for the purpose of the thesis. Because of these reasons I chose to let them be anonymous. The six persons that I have interviewed are: male 26 years old salesman within the educational business, female 35 years old working with sales and marketing at a news agency, female 35 years old translator, male 37 years old corporate lawyer, male 39 years old graphic designer, female 30 years old corporate legal assistant. All of the respondents, except from one, apologized for not knowing a lot about politics before we started the interviews.

1. Can you tell me about your opinions of Hong Kong's political situation?

"I would not say that the Hong Kong Government is bad but it is not strong enough. At this point we still have the freedom which is something that the China citizens do not have. And I am quite ok with the situation."

"I think that Hong Kong is probably going through a transitional period when people are understanding political structures, what politics actually means to them, it is actually a new concept, everyone becoming political now, before the handover they did not have any views. They were not participating in the decision making process. I think that people are participating more now."

“Two years ago the economy went up and it became more stable and people are quite happy now. I think Hong Kong people do not have much interest in the politics or economy. Once the economy is back to stable people are happy with the environment and the politics.”

“The political parties in Hong Kong are not really mature and you can not compare them with the parties in the west for the simple fact, you can not overthrow the Government. You can not change the Government so this political parties so to speak in Hong Kong basically I can say is a representation of a certain sector of the population. Basically there are two camps, one is pro-Beijing whereas the other is pro-Western. And there is a third group which we call pro-business. These parties are for a certain set of the population.”

“I think most people in Hong Kong are politically insensitive because it is such a busy city and everybody focuses on their careers or their relationships or their social life. Not too many people are too keen on political issues. They leave it to the Government unless it is something very drastic.”

“Well, honestly I do not really know what is going on politically but, uhm, but I know there are some parties but honestly I do not really know (laugh).”

The first question I asked is on purpose quite broad and the answers were miscellaneous. Nevertheless I sensed that most of the respondents are satisfied or indifferent with what the political situation in Hong Kong looks like even though some of them say that people in Hong Kong are insensitive about politics. One of the respondents thought that people in Hong Kong is participating more now than before the handover. Some of the respondents talked about the economical situation in Hong Kong and meant that once the economy is good people becomes insensitive about politics. One respondent also said that people focuses mostly on other things in their lives than politics. Most of the respondents seemed to know what is going on politically in Hong Kong even though everybody, except from one, excused themselves for not knowing a lot about politics. They said that they read the newspapers and watch the news in order to get an understanding of what is going on politically.

- What were and are your thoughts of the handover 1997?

“I did not know at that time how the Hong Kong Government would handle the situation but now I am ok with the situation.”

“I was in school at the time, it was not the most important thing in my life at the time. I never felt that I had to leave or stay, I just did not care.”

“Once changed to the SAR Government we thought that they could not handle it very well but after some time it got better”

“I think what happens now compared to what happened before 1997, honestly, I do not feel much infringement of our state. Most of the things that I did before 1997 I do now. I do not feel that much of a difference before and after.”

“Because this has already been done I can not say whether it is a good thing or a bad thing. It has been ok, it has been peaceful so I believe it was not too bad.”

“We thought that China might have more control of Hong Kong and that might be a bad thing but after that I do not really think it is a bad thing to Hong Kong at all. I think it is just like before except for the wording for the Hong Kong SAR, except for milder things for my opinions.”

None of the respondents expressed any negative opinions about the handover 1997. All of them thought that it was ok, or they were indifferent about the fact that China took over Hong Kong. The respondents expressed that they had some concerns before the handover but now they are ok with the situation. Two of them also said that they did not notice much difference since the handover.

- Is there anything that you object or embrace regarding the political situation in Hong Kong?

“To be honest, no. I am ok with the situation right now.”

“More Hong Kong people participate in the politics. Donald Tsang is better than the last one but he is doing what China wants him to do.”

“I think Hong Kong can use less influence from Beijing but at the same time, I can see why Beijing wants to have certain control over Hong Kong. Yeah, I have not really paid too much

attention of what is going on recently but sometimes I do think Beijing has a little more influence of Hong Kong than it should.”

“I wish the voting system can be changed but I can not offer you the best alternative. Just because I think it is too narrow. Continuity, you can not rock the boat here. There will not be drastic changes. That is a positive side.”

“It can always be done in a better way but it has been alright, yeah. I think it will be better if people will have more saying about how the place should be run or on more specific issues like the environment, the education, the health system”

“The voting system is not good, the citizens do not vote for the Chief Executive and I do not think that is fair. Good, things, uhm... I can not think of any.”

Two of the respondents brought up the voting system and said that the voting system is not fair. They expressed discontent of the fact that there are no general elections for the Chief Executive position. Some of the respondents also brought up influence from China as a negative aspect regarding the political participation in Hong Kong. One respondent brought up the rigidity of the system and said that it is a good thing that you know how things will turn out. Even though some of the respondents offered negative views of the political situation in Hong Kong they overall seemed ok with the situation. No one of them expressed radical views or was totally dissatisfied with the situation. No one neither offered expositions of what they object or embrace regarding the political situation in Hong Kong.

2. Do you feel that you are free to participate in politics (that the political system allows you to participate)?

“I think I have a freedom to vote since I am registered. I vote for the Democratic Party. But if you ask me if it is easy for people like me to participate, to attend I think it is not actually easy.”

“Yes and no. To a certain extent yes I can vote for my district counselor or legislators but at the same time I can not vote for the Chief Executive. At the time when Tung Che-Hwa was the executive people strongly objected to that but they did not really have any other choice because they were not given the choice. I am not a very, I do have my views but I think

actually maybe in this aspect I am typical a Hong Kong person because no one ever, I do not know anyone who feel strongly that they can actually make a change to the system, so yeah.”

“For me, no because I do not participate that much. You know, for us we have right to vote for the district council but we do not have the right to vote for the Chief Executive. For me, for my opinion, we have the right but we do not have the mature mind or mature sense to do that so that is why it is good for us to learn more or to participate more before we really have the right to vote. But I think it is quite free we can talk about anything we like and express what we do. In that sense we are free even though we are now governed by China.”

“Oh, yes.”

“Uhm, to a certain extent I think we are but you have to be very proactive to do that.”

“Not really, say for the voting system you can not really vote for the Chief Executive in Hong Kong and also one thing, I do not think the Government let us know more about the political situation in Hong Kong and I think that creates a problem. The political system does not give us enough information.”

Two respondents brought up the voting system again. They meant that the political system does not allow them to participate since one is not allowed to vote for the Chief Executive. One respondent said that is not easy to participate in politics and referred to the large number of political parties. One respondent answered yes without reservations and another said that the people are free in the sense that they can express their views and thoughts. There was also a respondent expressing a view that the political system ought to give the citizens in Hong Kong more information about the political situation in Hong Kong otherwise it is hard to participate. He/she wondered how one can participate if you do not know how or where to participate and for what cause?

- Have you ever engaged in any political activity and felt that the political system has opposed that?

None of the respondents have engaged in any political activity and felt that the political system has opposed that. Four of the respondents answered no without any further expositions. The other respondent's quotations:

"I participated in a demonstration for freedom three years ago and that was ok. It is quite open and free here."

"No. I have been out and protested a couple of times, I have, but again, I am just one of the half million people and it is not like my one vote will not make a difference because I am not even participating in the selection process to select the Chief Executive. We can only voice our disagreement and discontent."

3. What are your thoughts/opinions about China political wise?

"In China it is quite corrupt and the people in China does not know what is going on. I am not scared of increased influence from China, not now. Hong Kong is too different from China. This is an international city and China is too smart not to influence too much. They realize that if they take things away that will affect the economy."

"I do not know, I mean I do not really understand the communist system."

"I think compared to five or ten years before it is much more open and the image is healthier and friendly than before."

"China, I think they are trying really hard to modernize to catch up. I think it is heading towards the right direction- very positive."

"Uhm, well I mean I have always been a bit skeptical about the Chinese Government but they seem to be leaving us alone to a certain degree so, you know, we are still pretty free in terms of expressing our opinions so we are all right I think."

"Honestly I do not really like the policies of most of the things in China. I think it is actually influencing Hong Kong when it comes to The Basic Law. China has already put their influence on that. I think they...I do not know exactly what they do but I do know they have

some influence over that. I am sure that they are going to have more control over Hong Kong in the future.”

Even though some respondents are skeptical about China and the communist system they did not express any major misgivings. One respondent said that China is heading towards the right direction and another one expressed a similar view saying that China is much more “open”, “friendly” and “healthier” than before. Two of the respondents said that they believe that China to a great extent leaves Hong Kong alone while one respondent expressed opposite thoughts and said that China will have more power over Hong Kong in the future. One respondent believed it is because of the economy, that Hong Kong is an important economic source and that China does not want to run the risk of losing that.

- Do you believe that China tries to smother Hong Kong’s political rights?

“Slowly I think they are but China is too smart to not do it quick because of the economy.”

“I think yes and no. They do want to make people passive but at the same time they want to have enough control, just like they have in China, so they want to take a balance I think.”

“I think for me they use another way to do that. They let more immigrants from mainland China go to Hong Kong. I think they want to make Hong Kong a part of China, not just a special region. That is why I think this is a way for the Government to merge. They also make use of the economy. It is easier to make business in China now. Hong Kong people are very easy in politics. Let them just gain money and have a good economy. They care about the money, not so much about the politics.”

“Yes, to a certain extent. When you are trying to anti govern too much, they will act, I am sure. Even behind the scene. And China, at this stage, they are really pro-business I mean if you do not particularly involve in politics they let you getting on with your life, your business, your world, unless you do not protest against the Government.”

“I think they try to, uhm, not overtly but they want other countries to leave us alone. They do not want the US or the European government to have too much interference about how they should run us. I do not think that our political rights will decrease but on the other hand I feel

that they are not encouraging us to have... our political freedom. They are not cutting back but we are not encouraged to be freer.”

“Yes definitely. Say for the law and the legal system they have already had influence of that and also, what else could I say, yeah.”

Most of the respondents believe that China tries to repress Hong Kong’s political rights. The economic motives were brought up again. Some of the respondents believe that China slowly smothers Hong Kong’s political rights. They said that if China would do something too drastic a lot of companies would move which would create a bad situation economic wise. One respondent maintained that people in Hong Kong does not care about the politics, they are only interested in the economics.

4. Are you or have you been engaged in any of the following activities?

Four of the six respondents answered yes to the question if they voted in the legislative council elections and only one of the six respondents has voted, or are voting, in the municipal council elections. Five respondents have taken part in demonstrations but it is nothing that they do regularly. For some of them it was just a one-time occurrence on the annual July 1 pro-democracy demonstration. One respondent protested against the June 4 Tiananmen Square Massacre but he/she did not even remember the name of it. He/she just said *“the June 4 incident, uhm, that was in...I can not remember, 15 years ago, what happened, you know what happened in China during June 4.”* One respondent use consumer boycotts. Three of the respondents answered yes to the question of labeling schemes. Three of the respondents give economic support to parties and groups. One respondent wears a buttons, t-shirts, etc. that market a political cause. One respondent said that he has not done that but *“in the future if there is a cause I will.”* Four respondents are signing petitions. One of them added: *“Yes, for freedom in Hong Kong. But I do not care about those. I just sign.”* Only one respondent answered yes to the question if they have, or are, writing letters to political actors or newspapers. He said: *“Not yet but if there is a need I will.”* and *“I have written to a newspaper but it was not published.”* When I asked the questions about constructing a home page for a political cause and involvement with Internet political chat sites two of the respondents laughed (all of them answered no). On all the other questions all the respondent answered no.

5. Do you feel that you have the time and political knowledge to being able to participate politically?

“No. Let’s put it like this, 1. I am not interested 2. I have no time because of work 3. I have no knowledge.”

“Knowledge probably not a lot, just from reading the papers or talking to people, so no strong knowledge or opinion. Even if I have the free time it is not on the top of my priorities that I want to spend time.”

“Time wise, if I feel that there is a need I will find time for it. You always have got the time for things that you find important. Knowledge wise I believe I have the basic knowledge and if I need more information I think I can manage to find it. If you want to find information and knowledge there are ways to do that.”

“No, well sometimes like for some issues maybe yes but generally I guess no. I rather do something that I like rather than participating in politics.”

Four of the respondents thought that they did not have the time or the knowledge to participate politically. One respondent exclaimed *“God, no!”* when I asked and another one just said *“Yes, I think so.”* Some of the respondents talked about lack of interest and that they made other priorities. One respondent reasoned that he would find time and seek knowledge if there was a certain issue he would like to fight for.

- Do you feel that you are able to and wish to participate in politics?

“I think I would be able to say what I want to say but I just did not do it. Actually I am quite satisfied with the situation right now but if things get worse I will participate.”

“No. I think if I was in school I probably would have just because when you are a student you are, I just feel that you have a stronger view on certain things because you are in touch with books and that kind of things. But as a working person in Hong Kong you just feel that you want to make a better job or find a better job or make more money. We just have different priorities I think.”

“No. My father was a secretary in the union. He participated quite a lot, a professional for politics and that affected me quite a lot. It quite affected my life. It affected the family life.”

“Yes, given the right opportunity, yes.”

“I believe so. In a later stage in my life, if I have more time and if this is what I want to do I will try to be more involved in it. It is not that I do not want to participate in politics but I feel that my job is important.”

“No.”

The quotations show that three of the respondents do feel that they are able to and wish to participate in politics while three of them do not. The respondents expressed wishes to participate in politics but lack of time forces them to make priorities which prevent them from participating in politics.

-Do you feel comfortable in participating in politics? If you do not participate politically, do you believe you would feel comfortable in doing so? If not, why?

None of the respondents stated that they feel uncomfortable in participating in politics. Some of the quotations:

“I never feel uncomfortable when I go out to march on July 1 that one time. I did not feel that I would be threatened in any way. I think Hong Kong is still quite free in that sense.”

“If I do participate I think I will not feel uncomfortable. I would feel comfortable if I would participate.”

There were no expressions that stated that one would be uncomfortable when participating in politics.

- Are you satisfied with how you participate/not participate in politics? If not, what would you like to change?

“Yes. I would not say that this is the best situation in Hong Kong but I do not know where to start to change or, because I do not have the knowledge so I will leave it for people who know more about political things. I do not need to participate more, not at this point because I am

actually satisfied, happy with the situation right now. I would definitely participate more if things get worse because people can not just stay at home. People need to gather to fight for freedom and that sort of stuff.”

“Participate... No, I would not want to participate more or less. I have not felt any need to go out and do things to make changes.”

“I am not sure, maybe when some situations come or something happens which will affect our life or our religion I am not sure... at that moment I will participate more. But now it is ok.”

“When the right moment comes yes, definitely I will participate. There must be a very strong issue at stake, there must be something that push you over the edge. Right now I am just pretty much happy and content with where I am because my political rights because I feel that my political rights has not been infringed. Of course when the time change and when my rights are being reduced of course I will act, I think that is quite natural.”

“I would like to participate more if I had more time, my work takes up most of my time.”

“Yes, I think sometimes I feel that I should participate more as a citizen but first I do not have enough knowledge and information and second I do not know how to start and also I do not really have the interest to do that. I feel that I should do it. And of course I have no influence.”

As the quotations shows some of the respondents are satisfied with the political situation in Hong Kong and do not feel that there is a need to participate politically. Two of them would like to participate more but they said that they have no time or knowledge to participate. Some of the respondents also talked about the future and said that *if* and *when* things get worse they would participate more. One respondent said he leave the politics to people who has more knowledge about it than he has.

6. Is there anything that you would like to ask or add before we finish this interview?

When the respondents got the last question, if they wanted to ask or add anything, the respondents had some different reflections. Two of them did not add anything except from asking about my opinions of Hong Kong’s political situation. Some thoughts were:

“I would say that 15 percent is very sensitive about politics in Hong Kong. The reason, I think, is because people are ok with the Government and the situation. If they would not be satisfied they would do things. But right now people are happy about the situation. I am happy about the situation.”

“When the economy is bad in Hong Kong people tend to be more anti-Government. Who really cares about politics when the economy is good? Since Donald Tsang took over the economy got better and people forgot about politics. Donald Tsang seems to have a bit of luck.”

“I do not feel comfortable with the political environment in Hong Kong. I believe Hong Kong has a lot of smart people but unfortunately not those in the political world.”

“I can not be bothered to participate in politics. I can not change things, I can not change the political system.”

The thoughts about Hong Kong’s economy and its influence on politics had already been touched upon. Some respondents repeated the thoughts about political insensitiveness when the economy is prosperous. They maintained that there is no need to complain when things are going well economically. The feeling of hopelessness and not being able to influence things had been expressed before whereas the thoughts about lack of smart people in the political world had not come up before.

4. ANALYSIS

I will answer the research questions on the basis of the answers from the interviews. The research questions will then serve as the starting point for my analysis and I will answer the general question on the basis of them. I will also relate my results with those from others who have studied participation in Hong Kong.

The answer to the first research question “*Do the citizens in Hong Kong believe they have the ability to participate in politics, that the political system facilitates their participation in politics?*” is yes. Even though the respondents talked about the voting system as a restraining factor they were overall satisfied with the situation. No one felt that they had engaged in any political activity and felt that the political system opposed that. Some of the respondents talked about that it is open and free and they can say and do whatever they feel like. Even though they do not regard themselves as active when it comes to politics they believe that the political system does not oppose political activity. No one of the respondents was indignant when we talked about the political system and they did not express any fear of participating politically. One respondent's answer to the question “*Have you ever engaged in any political activity and felt that the political system has opposed that?*” is interesting to discuss. The respondent never felt that the political system has opposed him/her when he/she went out protesting but he added that it will make no difference to participate and to voice disagreement and discontent because he/she is just one among millions of people. Another respondent showed the same dejected expression during the interview. The political system allows people in Hong Kong to participate but they do not care about participating anyway because they believe that one voice will make no difference.

The answer to the second research question “*Do the citizens in Hong Kong believe that China tries to repress Hong Kong's political rights?*” is yes. When the respondents talked about China they did not express any major misgivings. Only one respondent said that he/she thought that China will have more power over Hong Kong in the future, some of the others said that China leaves Hong Kong alone to a great extent. When I later asked if they believe that China tries to smother Hong Kong's political rights most of them thought so. I find this incongruous. It is interesting that no one brought up that China tries to smother Hong Kong's political rights when I asked the broader question about China. Maybe it is because most of the respondents seem satisfied with the political situation in Hong Kong right now. Even so

the answer to the research question will be yes since most of the respondents said that they believe that China tries to smother Hong Kong's political rights.

There is an understanding amongst the respondents worth highlighting when writing about this issue. Two of the respondents talked a lot about Hong Kong's economy and how important it is for China to let the economy prosper. The respondents pointed out that China's Government is smart enough not to influence and rule Hong Kong too much and too fast. "Slowly" and "not overtly" were words that imply this. Hong Kong's economy was something that was brought up several times during the interviews. There was a view that the economy influences whether people are interested in politics or not that was expressed a couple of times during the interviews. When people have jobs and the economy is prosperous people do not care about politics. When things seem alright there is no need to "rock the boat" so people do not care about participating. Lam and Lee's study also pointed out that the low level of political activism among Hong Kong citizens was explained by their satisfaction with the economic situation and administrative performance of the Government. They found that the citizens were predominantly status quo oriented, had a strong sense of "don't rock the boat mentality" and a strong preference for social stability. (Lam, J T M, Lee, J C Y 1992) This is an interesting view which I will discuss more in the concluding discussion chapter.

The third research question was "How do the citizens of Hong Kong participate in politics?" On the basis of my interviews the citizens of Hong Kong participate poorly. Five respondents had taken part in demonstrations but it is nothing that they do regularly. As noted above, for some of them it was just a one-time occurrence on the annual July 1 pro-democracy demonstration. The respondent who had only protested against the Tiananmen Square Massacre and did not remember the name of it also stated that she did not have the time, knowledge, interest or wish to participate in politics. Did he/she really have the wish to participate in the demonstration against the massacre or was it just an act which was derived from social norms and pressure? Maybe it was a feeling of duty towards other people which promoted this one time participation in a demonstration. Otherwise, would you not remember the name of the terrible massacre on June 4? Except from demonstrations the respondents voted, but just one of six voted in the municipal council elections and four of six in the legislative elections. Interestingly enough two of the respondents laughed when I asked them if they had constructed a homepage for a political cause or if they had been involved with Internet political chat sites. I interpreted that as if they thought that those actions are very rare

and that it would be strange for them to be involved in such activities. When I was asking about signing of petitions one respondent said that he/she signs but that he/she does not care about those things, “*I just sign*” he/she said. It gave me a feeling of carelessness. The respondent does not sign petitions because of a political cause that he/she thinks is important, he/she just signs them. My overall impression of how the respondents participate is that they are quite careless or possesses an attitude of indifference. No one of the respondent were truly engaged in any political activity, no one had a passion for fighting for a political cause whether it is through writing to newspapers or by use of labeling schemes. It seemed like they engaged in a few political activities just because they know you should (e.g. vote) or because of a mere accident (e.g. signing a petition in the street). In Lau and Kuan’s study the most significant mode of political participation was voting. In my study the most common way of participating politically has been by demonstrating, voting and signing petitions. Lau and Kuan stated that there was no clearly structured pattern of participation in the territory. According to them Hong Kong differs from other advanced societies which generally display a more neat and coherent pattern of participation. My study does not show any structured pattern of participation either.

The answer to the fourth research question “*How do the citizens of Hong Kong view their own political participation?*” is that the respondents feel comfortable with how they participate in politics. None of the respondents said that they feel uncomfortable when participating in politics. Some of the respondents would like to participate more while others felt no need to participate to a greater extent. Lack of time and knowledge seem to be the cause for not participating more in politics. Lau and Kuan stated that whether Hong Kong Chinese is participating politically or not is not determined by their sense of political competence. They concluded that the cause for not participating more in politics was because of the perceived futility among the Hong Kong Chinese. As stated above only one person felt that he had the time and knowledge to participate in politics. He/she also stated that he/she is able to and wish to participate in politics. That is fundamental for participating in politics. He/she votes, demonstrates, gives economic support to parties or groups, wears buttons that market a political cause and signs petitions. Still he/she does not participate in politics to a great extent even though he/she is the one who participate the most compared to the other respondents. Interestingly enough there was only one who reasoned that he would find time for political participation and seek information if there was a certain issue he wanted to fight for that came up. Half of the respondents believe that they are able to and wish to participate in politics.

Lack of time was again the factor that prevents them from being able to participate. Some respondents said that when and if things get worse they would participate more. That is interesting. Right now there does not seem to be anything that triggers their interest to participate in politics. The respondents seem to view their own participation as low but at the same time they seem alright with that since they believe that there is nothing to fight against *yet*. The respondents also seemed to believe that one ought to have a lot of knowledge to participate in politics. One of them said that he leaves the politics to the politicians because they have more knowledge about it. That is a quite elitist view. The question of who should participate in politics and who should govern is old. Should the smartest people with most knowledge govern or should the ordinary person that represents you and me govern? The important question when it comes to who should participate and govern in Hong Kong is that people should be aware of that politics *should* be open for anyone.

The answer to the last research question “*Do the citizens of Hong Kong object to the political situation in Hong Kong?*” is no. The respondents expressed that they are focused on other things than politics and they seemed satisfied or indifferent about the political situation in Hong Kong. The respondents talked a lot about the economical situation in Hong Kong. Since the economy is stable at the moment the respondents meant that people are insensitive about politics just because of that. No one of the respondents expressed negative thoughts about the handover. Most of them were satisfied with the fact that Hong Kong now is a SAR of China. The only thing that some of the respondents object regarding the political situation in Hong Kong is the voting system. Only a few respondents brought up influence from China when we talked about the political situation in Hong Kong.

The purpose of this thesis is to *investigate whether system changes are affecting the participation of citizens in politics in Hong Kong.*” It asks:

-What, if anything, has the new political situation meant for the political participation in Hong Kong?

On the basis of my interviews and research questions the new political situation has not meant a lot for the political participation in Hong Kong. Nevertheless the answer is dependent on which approach I use, the structural approach or the actor-oriented approach.

The political institutions, routines and conventions in Hong Kong which create structures over time have prevented the political participation to a certain extent according to my respondents. Thus when I answer the general question from a structural approach the answer is that the political system to a certain extent prevents the respondents from participating politically. Some of the respondents said that they believe that the voting system is unfair. However it is interesting to note that some of the respondents that brought up the electoral system do not vote in the municipal council election. One respondent did not vote for the municipal council or the legislative council and she brought up the fact that they are not allowed to vote for the Chief Executive. The voting system is a good example of how the political system complicates people's ability to gain access to power. Some of the respondents were concerned about this but at the same time no one had felt that the system directly had opposed, or opposes, any form of political activity. One can say, on the basis of Sydney Tarrow's concept of POS, that the electoral system in Hong Kong sends out formal or national signals to actors which discourage them to use their internal resources to participate politically. At the same time, the respondents have never felt that the system has opposed any form of political participation. One can argue that this is the informal signals Hong Kong's political system sends to the actors. The informal signals are those signals which are not institutionalized by legal means, e.g. different norms. Some of the respondents brought up that one feels quite free in Hong Kong and that you can do and say whatever you want in the region. Nevertheless the respondents also felt that China tries to repress Hong Kong's political rights. Thus the new political situation has meant, according to my respondents, that the political rights in Hong Kong are being repressed slowly. Most of the respondents feel that they are still free to participate but they also brought up that they will participate more in the future *if* and *when* things get worse. Accordingly the respondents express a view that the political institutions, or the structures, slightly prevent them or will prevent them from participating in politics in the future.

On the basis of the actor-oriented approach the answer to the general question is that the new political situation has not meant anything for the political participation in Hong Kong. The respondents that I interviewed participate poorly. Thus the new political situation has not encouraged the respondents to participate more or less. They expressed a feeling of indifference when I asked the questions on the basis of the actor-oriented approach. They are satisfied with how they participate and some of the respondents also expressed a feeling of hopelessness when it came to politics. They believed that their voices make no difference.

Lau and Kuan's study also offer results on internal efficacy² which agrees with my result. They stated that the Hong Kong Chinese's sense of internal efficacy is low and that there is a sentiment of political powerlessness among them. The respondent's views of political participation can be derived from the different models of democracy that Teorell discuss. The respondents seem to understand political participation mostly as an act of being able to be a part of the decisions or as a way of making decisions, thus from the view of the participant and deliberative model of democracy. The desirable consequences of these models are self-fulfillment, personal development and legitimacy of the democratic system. According to the responsive model participation regards the question of influencing the people who make decisions and its desirable consequence is responsiveness on a system level which can be interpreted as the idea of protection of interests on an individual level. If they would have this understanding of political participation maybe they would have had a different attitude. They do not seem to understand political participation as being able to influencing people who make decisions. They seem to regard political participation mostly as direct decision-making. This is not a healthy understanding since it is important to understand that one voice, in for example a demonstration, actually can make a difference. People on the grass-root level can influence people who make decisions if they do it together. If everybody would reason like some of the respondents it would be easy for the authorities to do as they would like. One of the respondents said that he/she has no influence and another one said that he can not change things. A third one said that it makes no difference whether he/she joins a demonstration or not because one voice does not matter. These attitudes obviously express a feeling of hopelessness and a low internal efficacy.

Even though the respondents believe that China slowly is trying to repress Hong Kong's political rights they do not act to prevent this. However they talked about the future and some of them said that they will participate more *when* and *if* things get worse. The respondents also feel comfortable with how they participate in politics. Most of them would not like to participate more or less. The reason why they do not participate more is because of lack of time, knowledge and interest. As discussed above Lau and Kuan stated that whether Hong Kong Chinese is participating politically or not is not determined by their sense of political competence. They concluded that the cause for not participating more in politics was because

² Internal efficacy is "the self-perceived capacity to understand politics, to express demands, and effect positive political change. It expresses the attitudes of the individual toward his or her own competence as subject and citizen. In short, it is about self-confidence." (Lau, S, Kuan, H 1995: 7)

of the perceived futility among the Hong Kong Chinese. The statement about perceived futility is also to a certain extent verified in my study since it shows that the internal efficacy among the respondents is low.

Time, knowledge and interest are some of the qualities and characteristics that make it possible to participate. According to some of the respondents they lack physical capital and human capital to participate in politics. Incentives to participate are also something that some of the respondents did not believe they had. Three of them believed that they are not able to or wish to participate in politics. Maybe they believe that they do not feel that they get any advantages through political participation and therefore participate poorly. The respondents participate poorly and the only selective incentive for participating seems to be the social norms. The respondents know that it is a democratic right to vote so that seems to be the reason to why they are doing it. A feeling of duty make the respondents participate. They do not vote, demonstrate or sign petitions because they find pleasure in it or because of the entertainment factor or because they want to express their opinion or support. The quotation *“Yes, for freedom in Hong Kong. But I do not care about those. I just sign.”* really shows that the act is done because of a feeling of duty. Most of the respondents also seemed satisfied with the political situation in Hong Kong. They did not object to the political situation.

Accordingly, on the basis of my interviews and research questions the new political situation has not meant a lot for the political participation in Hong Kong. On the basis of the structural approach the new political situation has meant that the political system to a certain extent prevents the respondents from participating politically (because of the electoral system). On the basis of the actor-oriented approach the new political situation (up until today) has not meant anything for the political participation in Hong Kong. However some of the respondents talked about the future and said that they will participate more *when* and *if* things get worse. It remains to discover if the political situation in the future will mean anything for the political participation in Hong Kong.

As noted above most of the respondents seemed to know what is going on politically in Hong Kong despite the fact that everybody, except from one, excused themselves for not knowing a lot about politics. Most of the respondents said that they read the newspapers and watch the news in order to get an understanding of what is going on politically. When comparing this with Lau and Kuan's research there are some similarities. They describe Hong Kong Chinese

as “*attentive spectators*” who are aware of politics but do not participate in politics. Also in my thesis the respondents have a good understanding about the political environment and are quite informed about the situation but at the same time they participate poorly. I have not tried to generalize in a statistic way when I have answered my questions since I can not comment about frequencies on a basis of interviews with 6 representatives yet this is a modest way of trying to broaden my results towards generalization. Of course I can not state that Hong Kong Chinese people are “*attentive spectators*” on a basis of two studies but it is still interesting to note the similarities.

Previous research of participation generally shows gender differences. However my study did not show any differences in the answers between the women and the men.

5. CONCLUDING DISCUSSION

In the concluding discussion I will discuss conceivable causes to why the new political situation in Hong Kong has not meant a lot for the political participation in Hong Kong. I will also discuss my own thoughts about political participation.

The purpose of the thesis was to *investigate whether system changes are affecting the participation of citizens in politics in Hong Kong*. I have used the answers of the research questions as a basis to be able to fulfill the purpose of the thesis. The result is that the system changes are slightly affecting the participation of citizens in Hong Kong. The political system does to a certain extent prevent the respondents from participating politically because of the voting system which complicates people's ability to gain access to power. It is important for the citizens of Hong Kong to demand general elections for the Chief Executive. However it is crucial that the citizens vote in the existing general elections. As noted above, some respondents brought up that the electoral system is not fair while they do not even vote in the existing elections. Accordingly on the basis of the structural approach the new political situation has meant that the political system to a certain extent prevents the respondents from participating politically, thus the political system in Hong Kong slightly shapes the political participation. On the basis of the actor-oriented approach the new political situation (up until today) has not meant anything for the political participation in Hong Kong. It is important to once again point out that the 6 respondents who I interviewed are not representing Hong Kong's population.

Through the interviews I got the understanding that a conceivable cause to why the new political situation in Hong Kong has not meant a lot for the political participation is because the economy in the region today is stable. Some of the respondents talked a lot about the economy and that they were satisfied with the economic and political situation. They linked the political and economic situation together and seemed to have an understanding that as long as the Government leaves them alone to do their business and make money it is alright that the electoral system is not fair or democratic. At least they will be able to put food on the table. Maybe the result of this thesis would have been different if it was performed during the financial crisis 1997. Today though, Hong Kong people do not seem to aspire for more democracy under Chinese rule.

As I have noted before there was also a view of one of the respondents that he/she does not have the knowledge and/or skills to be able to participate in politics. He/she leaves that to the politicians. It is a positive thing that he/she put faith to the politicians, that he/she believes that they have the knowledge and skills it takes to participate in politics. What is negative is that he/she does not believe in him/herself. Another respondent had a similar view. He/she said that they (the citizens of Hong Kong) do not have the right to vote for the Chief Executive but he/she thought that is a good thing because they do not have the mature minds or mature senses to do that. He/she thought that they have to learn more, or to participate more, before they can have the right to vote.

Some of the respondents in this thesis also expressed a view that their voices will make no difference. This is a view of powerlessness which will not help reverse the development in Hong Kong. People who participate in politics can be a powerful source to changes. The Tulip revolution in Kyrgyzstan 2005 and the Orange revolution in Ukraine 2004-2005 for example serve as recent examples of that. Even though the political situation in Hong Kong is different from the political situations in Kyrgyzstan and Ukraine before the revolutions, the future of Hong Kong could also be dependent on how the people participate. If citizens in Hong Kong do not exercise their rights as citizens and participate politically it might be difficult for them to realize and maintain their democratic rights. What happens in the territory is extremely important to monitor and political participation is of decisive importance for the future. Some of the respondents said that *if* and *when* China decreases Hong Kong's political rights they will act, at that time they will start to participate. At the same time they said that China is currently repressing Hong Kong's political rights but still they do only participate poorly in politics. Hong Kong's future is dependent on how China acts but also inevitable on how the citizens of Hong Kong act. One day might come when the citizens of Hong Kong realize that their political rights have been taken away. I would say that it will be too late to start to worry about that at that stage.

I was surprised that no one of the 6 respondents had strong opinions about the political situation. They all seemed to have indifferent attitudes towards this matter. I was expecting to meet somebody who was extremely dissatisfied and who would have strong opinions about the politics in Hong Kong. However I am confident that there are a lot of people among Hong Kong's 6, 8 million citizens who fight passionately for their political and democratic rights. The respondents who I interviewed were just not those people.

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Appendix

Interview questions

1. Can you tell me about your opinions of Hong Kong's political situation?

- What were and are your thoughts of the handover 1997?

- Is there anything that you object or embrace regarding the political situation in Hong Kong?

2. Do you feel that you are free to participate in politics (that the political system allows you to participate)?

- Have you ever engaged in any political activity and felt that the political system has opposed that?

3. What are your thoughts/opinions about China political wise?

- Do you believe that China tries to smother Hong Kong's political rights?

4. Are you or have you been engaged in any of the following activities?

- Voting in the legislative council elections?

- Voting in the municipal council elections?

- Membership in political parties and groups and active involvement therein

- Personal contacting (politicians, civil servants, lawyers, associations, media and corporate actors, friends of officials)

- Seek help from acquaintances in Government or from persons with influence on officials

- Organizing a group

- Filing a lawsuit

- Send gifts to officials or host meals

- Campaign activity

- Cooperative activity

- Demonstrations and strikes

- Consumer boycotts

- Use of labeling schemes

- Economic support to parties and groups

- Civil disobedience or riots

- Wearing of buttons, t-shirts, etc. that market a political cause
- Signing of petitions
- Writing of letters to political actors or newspapers
- Culture jamming
- Constructing a home page for a political cause
- Involvement with Internet political chat sites
- Are you or have you been engaged in any other activity/ies that you consider political?

5. Do you feel that you have the time and political knowledge to being able to participate politically?

- Do you feel that you are able to and wish to participate in politics?
- Do you feel comfortable in participating in politics? If you do not participate politically, do you believe you would feel comfortable in doing so? If not, why?
- Are you satisfied with how you participate/not participate in politics? If not, what would you like to change?

6. Is there anything that you would like to ask or add before we finish this interview?