

MASTER'S THESIS

Organizing an "Unorganized" Movement: Support and Logistics in the Anti-ELAB Movement of Hong Kong

WONG, Hon Tung

Date of Award:
2021

[Link to publication](#)

General rights

Copyright and intellectual property rights for the publications made accessible in HKBU Scholars are retained by the authors and/or other copyright owners. In addition to the restrictions prescribed by the Copyright Ordinance of Hong Kong, all users and readers must also observe the following terms of use:

- Users may download and print one copy of any publication from HKBU Scholars for the purpose of private study or research
- Users cannot further distribute the material or use it for any profit-making activity or commercial gain
- To share publications in HKBU Scholars with others, users are welcome to freely distribute the permanent URL assigned to the publication

Abstract

The Anti-Extradition Law Amendment Bill Movement (Anti-ELAB Movement) in Hong Kong is widely characterized as leaderless and horizontal, rejecting recognized leaders and formal organizations. However, it paradoxically shows high organizational capacity in the sense of sophisticated coordination and management of abundant resources. Following the changing theoretical focus from "organizations" to "organizing" in the literature, this research explores alternative organizing mechanisms that, in place of formal organizations, provide structured coordination in the Anti-ELAB Movement. Instead of the frontline combatants, I study the protesters with supportive and logistical roles.

Based on 24 in-depth interviews and first-hand observation, I offer an alternative account of the high organizational capacity of this movement against the claim of foreign intervention. The analysis consists of two parts. The first part of analysis discusses the formation of informal networks through “connective work” and the transformation of these networks into more organized entities through “partial

organizing”. I found that the protesters actively integrate themselves in dense informal ties, and part of the ties is structured by a generational role identity, namely "quasi-parenthood." In response to the challenges in high-risk activism, some ties gradually evolve beyond pure informal networks to partially organized entities by incorporating bureaucratic elements. Unlike horizontalism in foreign contexts, the protesters can tolerate certain power inequality in their organizing due to their priority of "task-orientedness" over prefiguration. The second part of analysis focuses on spatial and temporal dimensions of organizing. I suggest that the protesters develop a “guerrilla spatial strategy” that, different from occupy movements, shows city-wide mobility but also taps into sub-local resources. The organizing of protesters evolve into more sophisticated forms over time with a series of informal and circumstantial learning processes during the current movement and from the experiences of previous movements.

My analysis emphasizes the influences of high-risk context and avoids technological reductionism by examining both online and offline realms. All in all, it provides an integrated and context-sensitive framework to understand the organizing dynamics of comparable movements.

Keywords: leaderless movement, informal ties, partial organizing, space, social
movement learning

Table of Contents

DECLARATION.....	i
Abstract.....	ii-iv
Acknowledgements	v-vi
List of Tables and Graphs	viii
Chapter One Introduction.....	1
Chapter Two Literature Review	16
Chapter Three Informal Ties: Emergence, Challenge, and Content	41
Chapter Four Partial Organizing.....	77
Chapter Five Guerrilla Spatiality.....	101
Chapter Six Learning and Organizing	122
Chapter Seven Conclusion	147
References.....	159
CURRICULUM VITAE	178

List of Tables and Graphs

Table 1 Selected Background of Informants	12-13
Table 2 Types of Intermediary Condition of Connective Work	48
Graph 1 Structure of Sentry System of a Lennon Wall Team.....	113