

# “Do You Hear the People Sing” “Lift Your Umbrella”?

Understanding Hong Kong’s Pro-democratic Umbrella Movement through YouTube Music Videos

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**ABSTRACT:** Around the world, music serves as an important element of mobilisation for social movements. Singing songs is not only a peaceful protest technique but also helps to construct a protest identity locating and relating the social movement to its political and social environment. Most importantly, a social movement is to a significant extent remembered through its music, and this determines its future impact on local (contentious) politics. Against this backdrop, this article seeks to understand Hong Kong’s Umbrella Movement through four YouTube music videos, analysing the lyrics, music, and video imagery in order to carve out core elements and values of the Umbrella Movement. Especially given the importance of Hong Kong’s identity as a “global” city with a cosmopolitan culture and past, the peaceful nature of the movement and the rise of a xenophobic localism in the shape of sarcasm are emphasised.

**KEYWORDS:** Hong Kong, Umbrella Movement, music, songs, protest art, mobilisation of tradition.

In autumn 2014, the international media’s attention shifted to Hong Kong, where hundreds of thousands of young people occupied the streets demanding democratic reform. In particular, the power of the pictures that were spread by means of TV, Internet, and newspapers created a strong sense of the protests, which are usually referred to as the “Umbrella Movement” (UM). Among the most remarkable images were the innumerable young protesters waiving illuminated cell phones. In many instances, this was accompanied by the singing of protest songs.<sup>(1)</sup> Both the sound of the young people singing as well as the images televised from Admiralty district in the heart of Hong Kong conveyed the peaceful character of the occupation as well as creating a sense of the young people’s power given their sheer numbers and solidarity. No question, these pictures have helped form a favourable world opinion and global admiration for the UM. Beyond this external impact, the internal experience of being part of a huge and powerful social movement was also boosted by the crowds’ voluminous sound and impressive imagery. Since the power of imagery in Hong Kong’s protests is a topic discussed elsewhere at length,<sup>(2)</sup> this article focuses on the importance of the songs.

## Mobilising tradition through music

Existing social science research has pointed out that art in general and music in particular are of enormous importance for social movements in several respects:

Singing is not only a peaceful protest tactic but clearly one of the most widespread ones. Furthermore, songs provide popular singers with a chance to demonstrate their support for a protest movement, which secures public attention and helps strengthen social movements.

However, singing protest songs is not only a peaceful, risk-averse, and en-

tertaining protest technique, but also inherits the mobilising force of both physical and material support by mobilising demonstrators and resources.<sup>(3)</sup> This is because music serves protest movements by putting across their demands, framing their agenda, and make sense of it.<sup>(4)</sup> Why is that the case? On a very general basis, Jeremy Gilbert has argued:

Sound vibrations are registered by parts of the body which do not register changes in vibrations of light. Music has physical effects which can be identified, described and discussed but which are not the same thing as it having meanings, and any attempt to understand how music works in culture must, as many commentators over the years have acknowledged, be able to say something about those effects without trying to collapse them into meanings.<sup>(5)</sup>

This is not to say that music carries no meaning: while its social context as well as visual and linguistic codes of songs express meaning that can be

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1. Doug Meigs and Michele Fan, “The Umbrella Movement Playlist,” *Foreign Policy*, 9 October 2014, <http://foreignpolicy.com/2014/10/09/the-umbrella-movement-playlist> (accessed on 24 September 2015).
2. Daniel Paul Garrett, *Counter-hegemonic Resistance in China’s Hong Kong: Visualizing Protest in the City*, Singapore, Springer, 2015.
3. Marc W. Steinberg, “When Politics Goes Pop: On the Intersections of Popular and Political Culture and the Case of Serbian Student Protests,” *Social Movement Studies*, Vol. 3, No. 1, 2004, pp. 3–29.
4. Tia DeNora, *Music in Everyday Life*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2000, p. 27.
5. Jeremy Gilbert, “Signifying Nothing: ‘Culture,’ ‘Discourse’ and the Sociality of Affect,” *Culture Machine*, Vol. 6, 2004.

verbalised, the musical sound consisting of tone, rhythm, timbre, etc. carries an affective dimension derived from the irreducible materiality of the music itself.<sup>(6)</sup> In other words, a song does not necessarily have to be explicitly "about" a specific topic but may deliver social and political impact if people *feel* that it expresses their hardship. Songs are more than intellectually stimulating texts; they help to create *emotions* stimulating an *atmosphere* of community and solidarity that very often draws on the *power of utopia* and stimulates people to *dream*.<sup>(7)</sup>

Scientific studies have confirmed that music stimulates emotions: structural factors of the music itself as well as the performance, characteristics of the audience, and its motivation make music not only an *expression* but also a *cause* of emotions. Among structural factors are the tempo, mode, loudness, melody, and rhythm of music, which contribute to the induction of different emotions. The appraisal of music, empathy with the performers, proprioceptive feedback to rhythm, and memory induced by music are the major "pathways" that transform music into emotions.<sup>(8)</sup> To this paper, the role of *memory* in particular is of crucial importance (see below).

Referring to the emotional power of music, thinkers from ancient times to modernity such as Plato, Confucius, and Adorno have substantiated the political impact of these induced feelings for the political order. From their point of view, music has enormous *manipulative* force (which might be used for both the good and the immoral) essentially because of its emotional dimension, which withstands an easy, straightforward, and predictable rational analysis.<sup>(9)</sup>

In line with findings that not only structural elements of music are crucial, Cultural Studies have emphasised that the audience is a "user" who is engaged by "emotional responses" rather than a manipulated passive receiver.<sup>(10)</sup> People around the world actively "express who they are, to which group they belong (and) what their identity is" <sup>(11)</sup> by means of their music consumption, since "music seems to be a key to identity because it offers, so intensely, a sense of both self and others, of the subjective in the collective."<sup>(12)</sup>

This fact bears direct implications for protest music: since music is an essential part of forming and expressing identity, it contributes to group solidarity, cohesion, and collective identities that are essential to mobilising and maintaining support for protests.<sup>(13)</sup> In the words of Raymond Williams, protest music can be regarded as a "structure of feeling" that articulates and (re-)creates values and perceptions by a particular group of people challenging hegemony in the Gramscian sense at a given point in time.<sup>(14)</sup>

Tying in with the notion of "structures of feeling" and referring to social movements, Eyerman/Jamison have emphasised the importance of the "mobilisation of tradition": linking protests to previous political struggles, traditions, and rituals help social movements to explain themselves and their causes.<sup>(15)</sup> Protests try to make sense of themselves by placing the social movement in the history of contentious politics. In this sense, music is more than a cultural *representation* because as an *integral* and *inseparable part* of social movements, music exerts its own force toward social and political change. By means of *performing* protest, political values and political legacy are transferred into political action, which not only helps to sustain contentious politics, but also significantly shapes the character of the demonstrations and how they are perceived.

Most importantly, however, in the long run, cultural artefacts, including music, shape the legacy of social movements by bringing emotional experiences from memory back into awareness.<sup>(16)</sup>

It is the cultural effects that often live on; it is through songs, art, and literature – and as ritualized practices and evaluative criteria – that social movements retain their presence in the collective memory in the absence of the particular political platforms and struggles that first brought them into being.<sup>(17)</sup>

Hence, studying the UM through its music is an attempt to understand and reconstruct an important element of the protests and provides us with insight on its future impact for contentious politics, possibly even beyond the city in the Greater Chinese region.<sup>(18)</sup>

In sum, this paper engages with the UM's music not only because it was a major protest tactic but because as a "structure of feeling" it is regarded as an integral part of the movement that reaches beyond its verbalised demands. Most importantly, it is treated as a vital part of the UM's legacy that may (re-)shape Hong Kong's contentious politics in the future as a "memory container" serving as a potential source of a "mobilisation of tradition." At the same time, the UM's songs cannot be isolated from its context of emergence.

In line with these considerations, I focus on musical factors such as melody, harmony, rhythm, tone, tempo, dynamics, form, timbre intensity, and duration but do not limit myself to them.<sup>(19)</sup> Since the researched songs have mostly been distributed as music videos by means of social media, I also analyse the imagery of how the songs are *performed* in the videos. Furthermore, I do not neglect the political meaning verbalised in the lyrics, but carry out a content analysis of them.

6. *Ibid.*

7. Lawrence Grossberg, *We Gotta Get Out of this Place: Popular Conservatism and Postmodern Culture*, New York, Routledge, 1992, p. 82; John Street, *Politics and Popular Culture*, Philadelphia, Temple University Press, 1997, p. 166.

8. Klaus R. Scherer and Marcel R. Zentner, "Emotional Effects of Music: Production Rules," in Patrik N. Juslin and John A. Sloboda (eds), *Music and Emotion: Theory and Research*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2001, pp. 361-392.

9. Reebee Garofalo, "Politics, Mediation, Social Context, and Public Use," in Patrik N. Juslin and John A. Sloboda (eds), *Handbook of Music and Emotion: Theory, Research, Applications*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2011, p. 727; Theodor W. Adorno, *Introduction to the Sociology of Music*, New York, Seabury, 1976.

10. Paul Willis, *Profane Culture*, London, Routledge, 1978; Simon Frith, *The Sociology of Rock*, London, Constable, 1978; Simon Frith, *Sound Effects. Youth, Leisure, and the Politics of Rock 'n' Roll*, New York, Pantheon, 1981; Lawrence Grossberg, *We Gotta Get Out of this Place: Popular Conservatism and Postmodern Culture*, op. cit.; Tia DeNora, "Emotion as Social Emergence: Perspectives from Music Sociology," in Patrik N. Juslin and John A. Sloboda (eds), *Handbook of Music and Emotion: Theory, Research, Applications*, op. cit., p. 169.

11. Wilfred Dolfsma, "The Consumption of Music and the Expression of VALUES: A Social Economic Explanation for the Advent of Pop Music," *American Journal of Economics and Sociology*, Vol. 58, No. 4, 1999, p. 1019.

12. Simon Frith, *Performing Rites: On the Value of Popular Music*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1996, p. 100.

13. Adam J. Lonsdale and Adrian C. North, "Musical Taste and Ingroup Favouritism," *Group Processes & Intergroup Relations*, Vol. 12, No. 3, 2009, pp. 319-327; Gerry Bloustien, "'Wigging People Out': Youth Music Practice and Mediated Communities," *Journal of Community and Applied Social Psychology*, Vol. 17, No. 6, 2007, pp. 446-462.

14. Raymond Williams, *Marxism and Literature*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1977.

15. Ron Eyerman and Andrew Jamison, *Music and Social Movements: Mobilizing Traditions in the Twentieth Century*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1998.

16. Klaus R. Scherer and Marcel R. Zentner, "Emotional Effects of Music: Production Rules," art. cit., p. 369; Tia DeNora, "Emotion as Social Emergence: Perspectives from Music Sociology," art. cit., p. 177.

17. Ron Eyerman and Andrew Jamison, *Music and Social Movements: Mobilizing Traditions in the Twentieth Century*, op. cit., p. 11.

18. Thomas B. Gold, *Occupy Central/Sunflower: Popular Resistance in Greater China*, Foreign Policy Research Institute E-Notes, Philadelphia, Foreign Policy Research Institute, 2014.

19. Matt Davies and Marianna I. Franklin, "What does (the Study of) World Politics Sound Like?," in Federica Caso and Caitlin Hamilton (eds), *Popular Culture and World Politics: Theories, Methods, Pedagogies*, Bristol, E-International Relations Publishing, 2015, p. 127.

Finally, since not only the music but also its consumption is of crucial importance, I offer a short contextualisation placing the analysed songs in the development of the UM and the history of Hong Kong's pop music (“Cantopop”), and include some illustrative quotations from interviews with UM protesters.

However, this paper is of limited scope and can neither claim representativeness nor fulfil all desirable contextualisation. Among the most obvious shortcomings are limited references to the musical and cultural traditions of Hong Kong that have shaped the city's identity, and neglect of the songs' production. Instead, I aim to provide some initial ideas focusing on the musical aspects and stimulation of emotions as well as the implications for a possible “mobilisation of tradition” for the future of Hong Kong's contentious politics.

## The emerging literature on the Umbrella Movement

Starting in late September 2014, hundreds of thousands of young Hongkongers occupied the streets of three districts – Admiralty, Mong Kok, and Causeway Bay – for 79 days. It is difficult to calculate how many citizens took part in the protest, but estimates put the number at 1.2 million in a city of 7.5 million inhabitants.<sup>(20)</sup>

Along the following lines, I aim to locate this paper in the still emerging body of social scientific literature on the UM, identifying three main paradigms:

Firstly, while media coverage of the UM focused on the occupiers' core demand, democratisation,<sup>(21)</sup> social scientific research has moved the prism from democracy to questions of identity. From this perspective, the UM's desire for genuine democratisation is part of a broader agenda to achieve a more self-determined Hong Kong, shielding the city from too much mainland influence.<sup>(22)</sup> This corresponds with the rise of a local Hong Kong identity that distinguishes itself from mainland China.<sup>(23)</sup> Recent opinion polls<sup>(24)</sup> show that this trend is especially relevant among the city's youth, making the city an essentially polarised one with implications for the pro-democracy movement.<sup>(25)</sup>

While pro-democratic protests prior to the UM were shaped by a generation of activists politicised in the wake of the 1989 Tiananmen demonstrations and the crackdown in Beijing,<sup>(26)</sup> the UM might be seen as a turning point for a new generation of young protesters.<sup>(27)</sup> While the internal structure of the UM, its tactics, and its protest culture were still shaped by the tradition of the “Tiananmen veterans”<sup>(28)</sup> who were at the core of a civil society network called Occupy Central with Love and Peace (OCLP) that initiated and prepared an occupation over two years leading to autumn 2014,<sup>(29)</sup> these well-established activists lost control over the actual demonstrations, which were carried out to a large extent by young people, many of whom were secondary school and university students.<sup>(30)</sup> Along with this generational divide, a shift of political opinion can be identified: While the older generation consisted of Chinese patriots hoping that democratisation of Hong Kong would spill over to the rest of the country, many young protesters hold a distinct “Hong Kong identity,” being exclusively concerned with the city's political development.

In this context, the social scientific literature differentiates between two kinds of localism: firstly, a *progressive localism* that aims at a postcolonial Hong Kong identity distinct from but not directed against the mainland, for example by trying to preserve old neighbourhoods or the city's piers.<sup>(31)</sup> At the heart of this localism is the desire to define Hong Kong in its own terms and in light of its own history.<sup>(32)</sup>

Secondly, more recently this progressive localism has been overshadowed by a *xenophobic localism* targeting both immigrants and tourists from the mainland, accusing them of raising the cost of daily necessities (such as milk powder) and property prices, behaving in an “uncivilised” fashion, and exploiting Hong Kong's social welfare system.<sup>(33)</sup>

Social science research points to growing class struggle in Hong Kong, a close alliance between the Chinese Communist Party and the city's capitalist elite,<sup>(34)</sup> the increase of Chinese risk capital invested in Hong Kong's

20. Larry Ong, “Poll: A Sixth of Hong Kong's 7.2 Million People Joined Occupy Protests,” *Epoch Times*, 19 December 2014, [www.theepochtimes.com/n3/1153163-poll-a-sixth-of-hong-kongs-7-2-million-people-joined-occupy-protests](http://www.theepochtimes.com/n3/1153163-poll-a-sixth-of-hong-kongs-7-2-million-people-joined-occupy-protests) (accessed on 25 February 2016). For a more detailed introduction to the protests see, e.g., Steven Chung-fun Hung, “The Occupy Central Campaign in 2014 Hong Kong,” *Contemporary Chinese Political Economy and Strategic Relations*, Vol. 2, No. 2, 2016, pp. 699–734; Johannes Chan, “Hong Kong's Umbrella Movement,” *The Round Table*, Vol. 103, No. 6, 2014, pp. 571–580; Victoria Tin-Bor Hui, “The Protests and Beyond,” *Journal of Democracy*, Vol. 26, No. 2, 2015, pp. 111–121.
21. Stephen Ching-kiu Chan, “Delay No More: Struggles to Reimagine Hong Kong (For the Next 30 Years),” *Inter-Asia Cultural Studies*, Vol. 16, No. 3, 2015, pp. 327–347; Joshua Wong, “Scholarism on the March,” *New Left Review*, No. 92, 2015, pp. 43–52; Joseph Y. S. Cheng, “The Occupation Campaign in Hong Kong: A Participant's View,” *Contemporary Chinese Political Economy and Strategic Relations*, Vol. 2, No. 2, 2016, pp. 683–695.
22. Tim Rühlig, “Hong Kong's Umbrella Movement in Search of Self-determination,” *UI Paper 3*, Stockholm, Utrikespolitiska Institutet, 2015.
23. Justin P. Kwan, “The Rise of Civic Nationalism: Shifting Identities in Hong Kong and Taiwan,” *Contemporary Chinese Political Economy and Strategic Relations*, Vol. 2, No. 2, 2016, pp. 941–973; Brian Bridges, “Booing the National Anthem: Hong Kong's Identities through the Mirror of Sport,” *ibid.*, pp. 819–843.
24. Public Opinion Programme Hong Kong University, “You Would Identify Yourself as a Hongkonger/English/Chinese in Hong Kong/Hongkonger in China (Per Poll),” the University of Hong Kong, <https://www.hkupop.hku.hk/english/popexpress/ethnic/eidentity/poll/datatables.html> (accessed on 11 March 2016); Centre for Communication and Public Opinion Survey Chinese University of Hong Kong, “Tracking Research: The Identity and National Identification of Hong Kong People: Survey Results,” [www.com.cuhk.edu.hk/ccpos/en/research/identity\\_survey/%20Results\\_2014\\_ENG.pdf](http://www.com.cuhk.edu.hk/ccpos/en/research/identity_survey/%20Results_2014_ENG.pdf) (accessed on 11 March 2016); Hong Kong Transition Project, “Constitutional Reform: Confrontation Looms as Hong Kong Consults,” Hong Kong Transition Project, <http://hktp.org/list/constitutional-reform.pdf> (accessed on 7 December 2015).
25. Chi Kit Chan, “China as ‘Other’: Resistance to and Ambivalence Toward National Identity in Hong Kong,” *China Perspectives*, No. 2014/1, pp. 25–34.
26. Joseph Y. S. Cheng, “The Tiananmen Incident and the Pro-Democracy Movement in Hong Kong,” *China Perspectives*, No. 2009/2, pp. 91–100.
27. Sebastian Veg, “Legalistic and Utopian: Hong Kong's Umbrella Movement,” *New Left Review*, No. 92, 2015, pp. 54–73.
28. Johan Lagerkvist and Tim Rühlig, “The Mobilization of Memory and Tradition: Hong Kong's Umbrella Movement and Beijing's 1989 Tiananmen Movement,” *Contemporary Chinese Political Economy and Strategic Relations*, Vol. 2, No. 2, 2016, pp. 735–774.
29. On OCLP see: Karita Kan, “Occupy Central and Constitutional Reform in Hong Kong,” *China Perspectives*, No. 2013/3, pp. 73–78; Stephan Ortmann, “The Umbrella Movement and Hong Kong's Protracted Democratization Process,” *Asian Affairs: An American Review*, Vol. 46, No. 1, 2015, pp. 32–50.
30. Tom Phillips, “Hong Kong's Umbrella Movement Spawns New Generation of Protester – But Can They Ever Win?,” *The Telegraph*, 13 December 2014, [www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/asia/hongkong/11291772/Hong-Kongs-Umbrella-Movement-spawns-new-generation-of-protester-but-can-they-ever-win.html](http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/asia/hongkong/11291772/Hong-Kongs-Umbrella-Movement-spawns-new-generation-of-protester-but-can-they-ever-win.html) (accessed on 3 November 2015).
31. Yun-chung Chen and Mirana M. Szeto, “The Forgotten Road of Progressive Localism: New Preservation Movement in Hong Kong,” *Inter-Asia Cultural Studies*, Vol. 16, No. 3, 2015, pp. 436–453; Po-Keung Hui and Kin-Chi Lau, “Living in Truth' Versus Realpolitik: Limitations and Potentials of the Umbrella Movement,” *Inter-Asia Cultural Studies*, Vol. 16, No. 3, 2015, pp. 348–366; Eliza W. Y. Lee et al., *Public Policymaking in Hong Kong: Civic Engagement and State-society Relations in a Semi-democracy*, New York, Routledge, 2013; Francesca Da Rimini, “Reinscribing the City: Art, Occupation and Citizen Journalism in Hong Kong,” *Globalizations*, Vol. 10, No. 3, 2013, pp. 465–479.
32. Ashish Rajadhyaksha, “Hong Kong From the Outside: Four Keywords,” *Inter-Asia Cultural Studies*, Vol. 16, No. 3, 2015, pp. 488–494.
33. Yun-chung Chen and Mirana M. Szeto, “The Forgotten Road of Progressive Localism: New Preservation Movement in Hong Kong,” *art. cit.*
34. Po-Keung Hui and Kin-Chi Lau, “Living in Truth' Versus Realpolitik: Limitations and Potentials of the Umbrella Movement,” *art. cit.*; Iam-Chong Ip, “Politics of Belonging: A Study of the Campaign Against Mainland Visitors in Hong Kong,” *Inter-Asia Cultural Studies*, Vol. 16, No. 3, 2015, pp. 410–421; Arif Dirlik, “The Mouse That Roared: The Democratic Movement in Hong Kong,” *Contemporary Chinese Political Economy and Strategic Relations*, Vol. 2, No. 2, 2016, pp. 665–681; Stephan Ortmann, “The Umbrella Movement and Hong Kong's Protracted Democratization Process,” *art. cit.*

property market,<sup>(35)</sup> different value systems among Chinese immigrants making local residents fear for their political values,<sup>(36)</sup> and the very nature of the "one country, two systems" concept as reasons for this development.<sup>(37)</sup>

This paper contributes to this literature by uncovering different strands of the UM's identity politics embodied in the movement's music. The songs are both an example of a "mobilisation of Hong Kong's protest history/tradition" as well as manifestations of different kinds of localism.

The second focus in the social scientific literature addresses the mobilising force of pictures depicting the *peaceful means* deployed by the UM in reaction to police's use of tear gas and pepper spray.<sup>(38)</sup> The "Tiananmen veterans" of OCLP had trained occupiers in peaceful protest tactics prior to the demonstration and increased knowledge of civil disobedience in the city.<sup>(39)</sup> However, the failure of the UM to achieve its goals has given rise to voices (especially among the youth) to take the protests to a more forceful stage, not ruling out the deployment of violence in the future (see, e.g., the 2016 "fishball riots"). Hence, the movement's failure questions the pro-democratic movement's traditional commitment to non-violence.<sup>(40)</sup> This paper ties in with these insights by demonstrating how the UM's image as a peaceful protest is manifested in its musical legacy with all the ambivalence inherent in this fact.

The third paradigm of the social scientific literature highlights the emergence of a new digital counter-public sphere with social media at its core. This challenges the trust in traditional media and creates its own imagery of the protests (for example through video footage from mobile phone cameras uploaded to YouTube).<sup>(41)</sup> This is of political relevance because a correlation has been verified between the use of social media and affiliation with the UM<sup>(42)</sup> and protest actions carried out.<sup>(43)</sup> Furthermore, the fact that social media have been an important means of politicising the young protesters<sup>(44)</sup> has given rise to a more loosely network-based form of "connective action"<sup>(45)</sup> that depends less on leadership and opens up space for pluralism and creativity.<sup>(46)</sup> While not systematically addressing this paradigm, this paper contributes a case study to this strand of literature by investigating music videos stored on YouTube and spread on Facebook.

## The sound of the Umbrella Movement

The empirical analysis underlying this article is limited to the investigation of four music videos, namely the Cantonese version of the song *Do You Hear the People Sing?* (anonymous),<sup>(47)</sup> *Under the Vast Sky* (Beyond),<sup>(48)</sup> the movement's unofficial "anthem" entitled *Lift Your Umbrella* (Denise Ho among others),<sup>(49)</sup> and *Gau wu (Shopping) Every Day* (anonymous).<sup>(50)</sup> I came to select these four music videos as a result of field research in June/July 2015, reconfirming my selection with more interviews exactly one year later. I carried out 25 semi-structured, in-depth, tape-recorded interviews with a duration between 50 minutes and 2.5 hours. In accordance with the occupiers' age distribution, most of my interviewees were young, but I spoke to protesters of all generations. I approached my interviewees (a) by way of different groups and organisations that supported the protest, (b) by contacting people on Facebook who had been active at least digitally during the occupation, and (c) by talking to students on university campuses. In order to avoid a narrow and biased perspective, I ensured that my interviewees had demonstrated at different protest sites (Admiralty, Mong Kok, Causeway Bay) and took different perspectives on the most contentiously discussed issues such as growing anti-mainland Chinese xenophobia.

Initially, I did not ask my interviewees for music because it was not the focus of my research. However, it became a striking feature that many interviewees introduced me to music videos. I therefore systematically added some questions on the role of music and contacted interviewees that I had previously spoken with, asking questions about the UM's music.

The selection of the four music videos analysed here strictly mirrors the songs my interviewees (both radicals and moderates) listened to during the occupation and in the immediate aftermath. While the first three songs were referred to by *all* interviewees, "Shopping Every Day" was mentioned by all Mong Kok protesters. In order to reconfirm my selection and avoid bias, I interviewed another ten protesters in June/July 2016 (following the same selection methods as previously introduced) and asked an expert on music who had taught an introductory class during the time of the UM which songs were named as the most important ones back then.<sup>(51)</sup> With the exception of *Gau wu Every Day*, which was referred to a little less often, all interviewees referred to the same songs in 2016. Finally, to understand whether the perspectives on the selected songs were widely shared, I asked my interviewees to distribute a questionnaire (ten open questions on the role of music gen-

35. Ngok Ma, "The Rise of 'Anti-China' Sentiments in Hong Kong and the 2012 Legislative Council Elections," *China Review*, Vol. 15, No. 1, 2015, pp. 39-66.
36. Stan Hok-Wui Wong et al., "Migrants and Democratization: The Political Economy of Chinese Immigrants in Hong Kong," *Contemporary Chinese Political Economy and Strategic Relations*, Vol. 2, No. 2, 2016, pp. 909-940.
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48. Beyond, "Haikuo tiangkong" (Under the vast sky), YouTube, 14 September 2011, [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qu\\_F5ptJRic](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qu_F5ptJRic) (accessed on 23 October 2015).
49. Denise Ho, "Yiqi jusan shei hai wei fasheng" (Lift Your Umbrella), YouTube, 4 October 2014, [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=C\\_23GEIzFo](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=C_23GEIzFo) (accessed on 10 August 2015).
50. "Riri qu jiuwu" (*Gau wu* [shopping] everyday), YouTube, 23 December 2014, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=T2UW7VawmGI> (accessed on 10 August 2015).
51. Author's interview with professor of music at a Hong Kong university, 30 June 2016, Hong Kong.

erally and the four selected songs, n=22) among their fellow-protesters, whom I had not met for an interview. Although I firmly believe that I have covered a wide spectrum of perspectives from the movement, I cannot claim representativeness of either the selected music videos<sup>(52)</sup> or the meanings attributed to the music videos by my interviewees.

Generally, the investigation of the UM songs reveals four characteristics:

The first characteristic ties in with the “mobilisation of tradition” and closely binds it to the most recent rise of local identity and localism. The music catches this local spirit, points out core values, and ties in with the city’s musical past. In line with the protesters’ core demands, democracy and (human) rights are at the heart of the songs’ lyrics. Consequently, these (universal) values are closely attached to what Hong Kong stands for. Hong Kong’s identity as a “melting pot” of different cultures, ranging from Europe to China and East as well as South-East Asia to create a new, hybrid and unique “Hong Kong culture” that has shaped the city’s musical past,<sup>(53)</sup> is reflected in the UM’s protest songs. This also ties in with Hong Kong youths’ as well as teachers’ support for a continued “cosmopolitan music education” in the city’s schools<sup>(54)</sup> as well as the history of Cantopop, which includes a rich body of cover versions of international music:<sup>(55)</sup>

Its melodies are composed outside Hong Kong, being mainly imported from Japan, Korea, Taiwan or the Euroamerican countries. The lyrics are rewritten locally, and the arrangement may also be re-worked, although sometimes the record company uses the original one. The use of cover versions has been a common practice in Hong Kong since the 1970s.<sup>(56)</sup>

Strikingly, out of the four music videos analysed in this paper, two are cover versions.

At the same time, Cantopop’s usage of the Cantonese language has also been described as an act of resistance against both the colonial English language as well as the Chinese motherland’s Putonghua.<sup>(57)</sup> In line with this tradition, the dominant language of the UM’s protest songs is Cantonese; however, English versions of two of the four analysed songs exist as well (though they were much less popular among the occupiers), reflecting the international character of Hong Kong.

The UM’s commitment to the city’s local identity is also reflected in an explicit “mobilisation of tradition” by including traditional Cantopop songs in the movement’s repertoire (e.g., *Under the Vast Sky* and songs by My Little Airport such as *I Love the Country but Not the Party*).<sup>(58)</sup> Furthermore, songs referred to the city’s history, mentioning the “Hong Kong Spirit” and “Lion Rock,” which used to be the symbol of migrants that had fled the mainland and worked hard to make their living in Hong Kong to start a new life.<sup>(59)</sup>

Secondly, the UM was shaped by Hong Kong’s youth, which remained in an ambivalent relationship with previous generations. Consequently, the UM songs represent a “mobilisation of tradition,” picking up songs played in previous protests, as well as generating their own soundtracks.

Thirdly, Hong Kong’s protest music lays open the UM’s political culture that was shaped by humour, hidden references, and sarcasm. This form of political communication ties in with Hong Kong and mainland communicative cultures.<sup>(60)</sup> For example, drawing on situational comedy, UM protesters in Mong Kok met their shouting critics by singing *Happy Birthday to You* and succeeded in annoying them in a funny and peaceful manner. At the same time, the example of *Gau wu Every Day* represents xenophobic jokes

that remind us that the usage of a certain artistic style has to be separated from its actual content.

Fourthly, singing protest songs was not only a way to carry out peaceful protests; the songs themselves carry a message of peace and helped to engrave the UM’s commitment to non-violence into its protest culture. At the same time, the practice of singing is itself a “mobilisation of tradition,” because singing represents an important aspect of the annual commemoration of the Tiananmen crackdown at Hong Kong’s Victoria Park. Already in 1989, the student movement in Beijing inspired many songwriters in Hong Kong to compose music dedicated to the protests in China’s capital.<sup>(61)</sup>

With the recent generational change as well as the (perceived) failure of the UM, singing songs has become a symbol of weakness and failure in the eyes of many protesters. These young activists considering more forceful protests openly reject singing and the promotion of non-violence embedded in the songs.

I will now present the four aforementioned music videos in greater detail.

(1) One of the most popular songs of the UM is *Do You Hear the People Sing?* from the musical *Les Misérables*, which is inspired although not completely congruent with Victor Hugo’s novel of the same name. In the musical, student revolutionaries sing the song on a barricade in early nineteenth-century Paris. The lyrics fit perfectly into the UM’s narrative demanding that the rulers hear “angry men” calling for freedom.

In early 2014, an unknown activist wrote Cantonese lyrics to the same melody, which picked up the overall theme of the song but adapted it to Hong Kong’s situation. Prior to the UM, the Cantonese version was performed at least once in a flash mob on 1 July, resulting in the song being censored in mainland China.<sup>(62)</sup>

In essence, the Cantonese version reminds everybody of their duty to speak out because Hong Kong citizens’ fundamental rights are portrayed as the rights of all human beings:

52. As a matter of course, some interviewees also included other songs in their list of protest music. However, all interviewees (except of one) mentioned the songs analysed in this paper. Even more importantly, no other songs were referred to by more than two of my interviewees. For example, the song “Island Rise” that had also been played during Taiwan’s “Sunflower Movement” several months before was mentioned only sometimes in the interviews.
53. Wai-Chung Ho, “Between Globalisation and Localisation: A Study of Hong Kong Popular Music,” *Popular Music*, Vol. 22, No. 2, 2003, pp. 143-157.
54. Wai-Chung Ho and Wing-Wah Law, “Sociopolitical Culture and School Music Education in Hong Kong,” *British Journal of Music Education*, Vol. 26, No. 1, 2009, pp. 71-84.
55. Wai-Chung Ho, “Between Globalisation and Localisation: A Study of Hong Kong Popular Music,” *art. cit.*, p. 149.
56. Yiu-Wai Chu and Eve Leung, “Remapping Hong Kong Popular Music: Covers, Localisation and the Waning Hybridity of Cantopop,” *Popular Music*, Vol. 32, No. 1, 2013, p. 68.
57. Wai-Chung Ho, “Between Globalisation and Localisation: A Study of Hong Kong Popular Music,” *art. cit.*, p. 146.
58. Doug Meigs and Michele Fan, “The Umbrella Movement Playlist,” *art. cit.*
59. Jonathan Wong, “Music of the Umbrella Revolution,” *Hong Kong Stories*, 27 November 2014, <http://hkstories.jmsc.hku.hk/2014/11/27/music-of-the-umbrella-revolution> (accessed on 24 September 2015).
60. Daniel Paul Garrett, *Counter-hegemonic Resistance in China’s Hong Kong: Visualizing Protest in the City*, *op. cit.*; Astrid Nordin and Lisa Richaud, “Subverting Official Language and Discourse in China? Type River Crab for Harmony,” *China Information*, Vol. 28, No. 1, 2014, pp. 47-67.
61. Wai-Chung Ho, “The Political Meaning of Hong Kong Popular Music: A Review of Sociopolitical Relations Between Hong Kong and the People’s Republic of China since the 1980s,” *Popular Music*, Vol. 19, No. 3, 2000, pp. 341-353.
62. Cassie Ryan, “WATCH: ‘Do You Hear the People Sing’ Flash Mob in Hong Kong Democracy Protest,” *Vision Times*, 2 July 2014, [www.visiontimes.com/2014/07/02/watch-do-you-hear-the-people-sing-flash-mob-in-hong-kong-democracy-protest.html](http://www.visiontimes.com/2014/07/02/watch-do-you-hear-the-people-sing-flash-mob-in-hong-kong-democracy-protest.html) (accessed on 23 October 2015); Anne Henochowicz, “Minitrue: Delete These Two Cantonese Music Videos,” *China Digital Times*, 2 July 2014, <https://chinadigitaltimes.net/2014/07/minitrue-delete-two-cantonese-music-videos> (accessed on 23 October 2015).

Since we are humans, we have the responsibility and the freedom to decide our future

May I ask who hasn't spoken out?

We should all carry the responsibility to defend our city

We have inborn rights and our own mind to make decisions.

The song's lyrics demonstrate that Hong Kong's youth aim at universal values by picking out a song that originates from a French historical background. Interestingly, some of my interviewees told me that they were aware of the fact that the song is popular in European protest movements as well. The following is a typical quotation from a 21-year old female protestor:

I think that *Do You Hear the People Sing?* represents the rise of civil society internationally and that we, the people, all over the world want to get our rights back.

Another 20-year old protestor gave a different account, saying:

I am quite aware that the song is popular internationally. But I think the Cantonese version is kind of different, so it does not provide me with a strong sense of transnationality.

Both the lyrics as well as the Cantonese language highlight that Hong Kong's local identity is seen as crucial but perceived as "global" or "cosmopolitan."

The melody is "symmetrical," being made up of one motif (ending on the dominant) that is repeated afterwards in the reverse order (concluding on the tonic). This makes the song, which is also taught in many Hong Kong schools,<sup>(63)</sup> simple, catchy, and easy to remember. At the same time, the marching tempo is suitable for serious occasions such as ceremonial processions.

*Do You Hear the People Sing?* was popularised in the UM by means of a YouTube video. The video shows a young anonymous girl performing the song. This is due to the fact that well-known artists were not willing to sing the Cantonese version of *Do You Hear the People sing?* Instead of trying to hide the failure to secure the support of a professional singer by performing it with semi-professionals, the video and song performance exposes artists' fear of Chinese repression.<sup>(64)</sup> While one might question whether it is ethically justifiable to drag a young girl into this situation, there is no doubt that the imagery of the video is felicitous and aptly depicts the spirit of the song.

The video presents the young child in front of a dark background wearing a light grey dress with a spotlight on her. Her childishness is highlighted by the teddy bear she holds in her arms. The girl's short-winded singing is striking. This overall setting seems to carry three messages: firstly, it highlights that the UM's fight for freedom is for the city's *future*, embodied by a child. Secondly, the girl's *innocence* emphasises that she deserves the opportunity for self-realisation and to express her hopes without being met by repression. Thirdly, presented in a light dress with a spotlight on her before a dark background, this young girl symbolises Hong Kong's *hope*.

Since the girl is the only human in the whole video, the imagery focuses on her as an individual. Her young age, smallness, short-winded singing, and childish facial features create the impression of weakness and loneliness. This reflects that the UM's ideals are endangered. The girl's dreams are vi-

sually linked to Hong Kong before the last refrain: in contrast to the musical's original tune, the Cantonese version pauses, and only the sound of wind can be heard. The video clip shows pictures of Hong Kong's traffic, buildings, and weather without any people. It demonstrates not only which city the song is talking about but also that vitality would leave the city if people go silent. In other words, the video depicts a silenced, functioning, but bloodless Hong Kong. These images are further connected to the girl's singing by fading in some of them as she performs the final refrain, in which the young girl seems to bring back Hong Kong's voice and break the silence. Musically, the heightened expectations created by means of the break are fulfilled by adding further instruments, mainly strings, to the orchestra.

Finally, the imagery directly picks up the lyrics' theme: several times the girl puts her hand or index finger over her mouth, symbolising that the rulers want her to shut up. Furthermore, the teddy bear in her arms wears a shirt saying "keep quiet." By clenching a fist, the girl demonstrates that she knows that she has to fight for her dream. But at the same time she has not lost her hope: as the first refrain starts, she looks up and smiles, full of hope, and at the end of the video she jumps around childishly, plays and dances. This seems to emphasise the vitality and energy of her dreams.

All in all, *Do You Hear the People Sing?* is a complex and well-worked acoustical and visual representation of the UM: combining a Western song with re-writing and translating the lyrics into Cantonese symbolises Hong Kong's local identity as a "cosmopolitan" melting-pot. The marching tempo as well as the music video emphasise the need to fight: it is all about saving the essence of Hong Kong, namely the people's fundamental right to speak out. The only remaining hope is the commitment of Hong Kong's youth, who innocently fight for its dream and future. The fact that only a young girl is singing the song draws viewers' attention to the Chinese government pressure that made well-known artists afraid to perform it.

(2) *Under the Vast Sky's* importance to the UM is an example of the "mobilisation of tradition," having been released by the Hong Kong band Beyond in 1993. Given its remarkable history, the song was never forgotten and is an evergreen in Hong Kong's pro-democracy protest history.<sup>(65)</sup> Written in what has been termed Hong Kong's "golden era,"<sup>(66)</sup> *Under the Vast Sky* was Beyond's last hit before its lead singer, Wong Ka-kui, died after falling off a stage during a concert in Japan. Ever since then, the song has gained a tragic aura that distinguishes it from other political songs in Hong Kong. My interviews show that protesters were aware of the song's history and some even hoped it would help bridge generational differences within the UM. A 20-year old male protestor told me:

*Under the Vast Sky* is spiritually composed and its lyrics successfully recall the traumatic personal stories and memories of Hong Kong. When I hear the song I think of the long-term inequality and stifling of social mobility. (...) The elderly have sympathetic feelings engen-

63. Author's interview with professor of music at a Hong Kong university, 30 June 2016, Hong Kong.

64. Mark Hogan, "How Pop Music Fuels Hong Kong's Protest Movement," *Wondering Sound*, 15 October 2014, [www.wonderingsound.com/hong-kong-protests-pop-music-umbrella-john-lennon-rihanna-les-miserables](http://www.wonderingsound.com/hong-kong-protests-pop-music-umbrella-john-lennon-rihanna-les-miserables) (accessed on 24 September 2015); Nury Vittachi, "Hong Kong's Pop Culture of Protest," *The New York Times*, 14 October 2014, [www.nytimes.com/2014/10/15/opinion/hong-kongs-pop-culture-of-protest.html?smid=fb-share&\\_r=0](http://www.nytimes.com/2014/10/15/opinion/hong-kongs-pop-culture-of-protest.html?smid=fb-share&_r=0) (accessed on 28 September 2015).

65. Jasmine Coleman, "Hong Kong Protests: The Symbols and Songs Explained," *BBC*, 4 October 2014, [www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-china-29473974](http://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-china-29473974) (accessed on 24 September 2015).

66. Mike Chow, "How Was the Beyond's Song Chosen for the 2014 Hong Kong Umbrella Revolution Protests?," *Quora*, 4 October 2014, <https://www.quora.com/How-was-the-Beyonds-song-%E6%B5%B7%E9%97%8A%E5%A4%A9%E7%A9%BA-chosen-for-the-2014-Hong-Kong-Umbrella-Revolution-protests> (accessed on 24 September 2015).

dered by the song, and this certainly leaps over different generations despite its longevity. Under the vast sky represents way more than the tags like “production from the 1990s,” and is a cross-generational collective memory of a glorious and prestigious time for Hong Kong’s popular music.

Another moderate female protestor (21 years old) added:

This song really bridges generational differences: I sang it last year during the Occupy movement and I found that all of us, regardless of age, were familiar with the same song. This really raised our spirits.

The fact that *Under the Vast Sky* was played and sung in many different protests in Hong Kong reflects its focus on the individual’s commitment to political dreams instead of being narrowed down to one specific issue: the song tells the story of being outside in rain and snow, metaphorically making it difficult to find the way. It mentions the mockery the narrator has faced over the years and that makes him think about his situation:

All these years confronted by jeers and mockery  
Never have I abandoned the dream in my heart  
A sudden hesitation and the fear of getting lost  
Slowly cool down the love in my heart.

But the refrain sung often throughout the song highlights the need to stay committed to one’s dream of freedom:

Forgive me for being wild and yearning for freedom  
Yet fearing someday I might fall down... oh no.

Musically, the rock-pop ballad has a simple structure that makes it easy to sing. The band induces emotions by starting without a bass and with only very basic accompaniment that intensifies over the course of the song, providing more volume and bass. Furthermore, the intense emotions are not only the result of the passionate voice of the lead singer, which sometimes turns into shrieking, but also the over-modulation of the electric guitar. The music style and performance therefore contribute to the emphasis on the struggle to stay faithful to one’s desire and commitment to freedom. This emphasis on honesty and sincerity was also felt by many protesters I interviewed, including a 20 year-old female who told me that from her perspective it was also directed against protesters who were not really committed to Hong Kong and the UM (“left plastics”).

In contrast to the lyrics, the video shows no rain, snow, or mist, which are only metaphors for the universal struggle for freedom. In fact, the song is very popular on the mainland as well, though it most likely carries very different meanings for mainland and Hong Kong audiences.

While the lyrics emphasise holding onto dreams of freedom, the video’s imagery combines images of groups – i.e., the four band members as well as with their fans – and focuses on the lead singer. This combination of collective and individual depictions might reflect the wish for a collective solidarity and maintenance of dreams of freedom.

The video, although well-known in the UM, was less important to the popularisation of the song because it was already a famous protest song. Apart from the official music video analysed here, many others can be found on

YouTube, as individual Internet users uploaded the song and added different images to it. However, it is beyond the scope of this paper to analyse them.

*Under the Vast Sky*’s importance for the UM is further highlighted by the emergence in 2014 of a remake by Zoe Liu (lyrics and video) and SETA (vocals) entitled *A Brighter Future*.<sup>67</sup> The English lyrics of the 2014 version highlights how the UM tied in with the city’s cosmopolitan identity. Unlike *Do You Hear the People Sing?*, this was not an international song rewritten in Cantonese but rather the “internationalisation” of a Cantonese protest standard.

While the music remains unchanged, the 2014 version has a new music video and new lyrics though picking up the main theme of the 1993 song. It describes the Umbrella protesters outside day and night withstanding pepper spray and tear gas, hoping for change in order to fulfil the will of the people sustaining their basic rights. In light of the masses occupying Hong Kong’s streets, it does not address its audience individually but speaks of the UM as a collective and clarifies that the crowd has no intention of abandoning its ideals. The refrain calls on the occupiers to stay committed and expresses optimism that one day the protests will achieve success. However, in order to protect its rights, Hong Kong has reached a defining moment in time, and the UM needs to take this opportunity.

In accordance with the lyrics, most of the photographs displayed in the video show the masses on the streets, highlighting the multitude of young people that occupied Admiralty and their solidarity with each other. Furthermore, many photos depict police violence while the protest camp is shown as civilised and orderly.

All in all, the importance of *Under the Vast Sky* is a classic example of the “mobilisation of tradition” with the potential to bridge generational cleavages. At the same time, it carries a peaceful message: the need for strong commitment to the cause is highlighted, but the English version contrasts the pictures of brutal pro-China security forces with the peaceful behaviour of the UM as an idealistic fight against a seemingly all-powerful enemy. Picking up the motive of idealism and sticking with one’s desire, the English version refers directly to the UM and appears to be less individualised and more addressed to the overall crowd of protesters.

(3) Whereas *Under the Vast Sky* is an example of the “mobilisation of tradition,” *Lift Your Umbrella* is the most well-known original soundtrack of the UM. While no famous singer wanted to perform *Do You Hear the People Sing?* for fear of China’s repression, shortly after the UM started, protesters received the hoped-for support from famous local singers. Lo Hiu-pan, a young activist, wrote lyrics for a song and sent it to the supportive singer Denise Ho.<sup>68</sup> She asked Lin Xi, who has written more than 2,000 pop songs, including the Beijing Olympic theme song *Beijing Welcomes You* (2008), to revise the lyrics into a Cantonese song that was then performed by famous local celebrities, including Denise Ho herself as well as Anthony Wong Yiu Ming and Deanie Ip.

Within 48 hours after receiving the initial lyrics from Lo, Ho and her colleagues managed to finish the song, including revising the lyrics, composing the music, recording it, and putting together the video.<sup>69</sup> The Cantonese title was usually translated as *Raise Your Umbrella* or *Lift Your Umbrella*, but

67. “A Brighter Future,” YouTube, 7 October 2014, [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XUMa\\_rOOTeQ](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XUMa_rOOTeQ) (accessed on 26 October 2015).

68. Gloria Chan, “Raise the Umbrella: Occupy Anthem May Become Hong Kong’s Song of the Year,” *South China Morning Post*, 29 December 2014, [www.scmp.com/lifestyle/arts-culture/article/1670491/umbrella-movement-anthem-may-become-hong-kongs-song-year?page=all](http://www.scmp.com/lifestyle/arts-culture/article/1670491/umbrella-movement-anthem-may-become-hong-kongs-song-year?page=all) (accessed on 23 October 2015).

69. Jonathan Wong, “Music of the Umbrella Revolution,” *art. cit.*

a local band later translated the song and published an English version entitled *Umbrellas in the Night*.<sup>(70)</sup>

The lyrics of the Cantonese original and English version are similar, since the latter aimed to be a translation and not an adaptation. The song picks up the topic of fear and solidarity:

We asked ourselves, not unafraid  
What is to come if we stay our way?

But at the same time they feel that they have to stand up in solidarity as a collective for their rights and future, with police violence (i.e., the use of tear gas and pepper spray) being a tipping point for supporting the UM.<sup>(71)</sup> Finally, the refrain focuses on the symbolic importance of umbrellas depicting solidarity, a means of mutual protection, and a flower blossoming in Hong Kong's rain. In particular, the metaphor of the flower ties in with a well-established international "language" of peaceful social movements (e.g., *Where Have All the Flowers Gone?*):

With our umbrellas  
We stand as one  
Wrapped in a voiceless fear but we stand as one  
With our umbrellas, new dreams begun  
Reaching for every right that belongs to us (...)  
Don't you see the blossoms of the night  
Blooming in the rain.

In terms of its melody, the whole song is calm, carrying a musical message of peaceful protest. Accordingly, the song maintains a major key, starts out with whistling and avoids an emphasis on rhythm while shifting the listeners' focus to its cheerful melody. The usual emphasis on the first beat of a bar is mostly circumvented by a syncopated arrangement of the melody, which makes it seem more "fluent" and takes out any rhythmical "sharpness." The bass is not syncopal but provides a periodic beat. The song is accompanied by a guitar rather than an electrical guitar, which makes the sound more "natural" and less aggressive. The harmonious polyphonic chorus creates a sense of community. In order to underline the peaceful character of the song, its pace is slow. Visually, this slowness is reflected in the depiction of scenes from Admiralty in slow motion. Hence, its peaceful intention is celebrated by means of its calmness, focus on a transparent and simple melody, and slow pace.

The music video of the Cantonese song displays footage recorded during the first days of the UM, while the English version uses photographs with very similar content. The imagery mainly draws attention to the peaceful young people protesting in contrast to the police using violence and tear gas. The young people are shown sleeping and working with transparent wrap covering their faces to protect themselves. This is accompanied by many different scenes of solidarity among the protesters. At the end of the video, many young people lift their umbrellas, which in the final sequence are turned upwards like flowers. These pictures emerge as a sign of hope.

This contrasts with police violence. Heavily-armed security forces are shown firing tear gas. The suffering young people are depicted in clouds of tear gas; cartridge cases are filmed as evidence of the brutal approach of the police.

This perception is shared by my interviewees. One 18-year-old protestor told me, for example: "I think these peaceful sentiments capture the Umbrella Movement so well!" Another interviewee (female, 21 years old) added:

I think the melody is very gentle and soothing, which is different from a lot of protest songs. This captures how rational and peaceful the protestors were in the movement. (...) *Lift Your Umbrella* reminds me of our perseverance and unity against the unreasonable violence of the police.

This peaceful message does not need to be referred to positively, as the following quotation from a 24-year old male protestor demonstrates:

Of course, the song is peace-loving. But today it does not give me the same feeling because we know the movement was no doubt a failure. I think it captured the movement well, but at the same time it reminds us of how the movement failed.

All in all, *Lift Your Umbrella* addresses the issue of fear and responds to it by emphasising the young people's solidarity. The strength of the Chinese government is embodied by the massive police force. Openly stating that the mismatch of power is worrisome, the song nevertheless is written in an optimistic tone, encouraging the protesters to stay on. At the core of it lies an advertisement for and celebration of *peaceful* protests.

(4) The Cantonese song *Gau Wu (Shopping) Every Day* distinguishes itself from those previously analysed in several regards: firstly, it is an adaptation not of a protest song but of a disco hit by Hong Kong celebrity Andy Lau. Second, "shopping" in Mong Kok has to be seen in the context of the long Chinese and Hongkongese tradition of political satire and word play. However, even though the song is supposed to be funny it carries strong xenophobic anti-mainland prejudices. It was not written as a song encouraging the demonstrators but to strengthen perceptions of aggressive localism. Two incidents led to the genesis of this song:

Firstly, the Mandarin term *gou wu* 购物 – "shopping" – was the naïve and spurious answer a mainland participant of an *anti-UM* rally gave to the question of a Cable TV journalist asking what she was doing in Hong Kong. At first glance, it seems a trivial answer, but it became famous because the UM had accused counter-demonstrators of being unaware of and uncommitted to the political situation in Hong Kong. They argued that many of these protesters were brought over from the mainland and were unaware of what they were protesting against. This reproach went along with allegations that many of counter-protesters from the mainland were paid.

Secondly, on 24 November 2014, after the clearance of the occupation site in Mong Kok, Hong Kong's Chief Executive C. Y. Leung called on protesters not to reoccupy but to go "shopping" again and support small businesses in the district. Tying in with the previous incident, shopping became a catch-phrase among young Mong Kok activists for not caring about politics and the city of Hong Kong but rather bowing down to commerce and/or the PRC rulers.

As a response to this, demonstrators started to gather in Mong Kok (but without re-occupying it) "to shop" as they cynically said, shouting "*gau wu*," a Cantonese transliteration of the Mandarin *gou wu*. In contrast to the oc-

70. "Umbrellas in the Night," YouTube, 26 October 2014, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RV3TWWxsXM0> (accessed on 26 October 2015).

71. Gary Tang, "Mobilization by Images: TV Screen and Mediated Instant Grievances in the Umbrella Movement," *art. cit.*

cupation of the streets, “shopping” is not illegal and the police could not stop them.<sup>(72)</sup>

Linguistically, the Cantonese *gau wu* 鳩鳴 is not merely a reference to the Mandarin term for “shopping,” *gou wu*; the first character, *gau*, is a vulgar word in colloquial Cantonese for “penis” or “fuck,” which makes shouting “*gau wu*” much more than a mere imitation of Putonghua.<sup>(73)</sup> Inspired by all that, protestors adapted a 1994 disco hit by Hong Kong celebrity Andy Lau<sup>(74)</sup> to make xenophobic jokes about mainland people and C. Y. Leung.

*Gau wu Every Day* is performed by radical activists who do not speak to the “mainstream masses” of Admiralty. This is reflected in the song’s lyrics, music, and video imagery.

The lyrics<sup>(75)</sup> refer to four topics: firstly, a clear rejection of any outside interference and a commitment to personal freedom and self-determination is evident.

Secondly, the lyrics highlight the performers’ connection to their home district of Mong Kok. This is not only reflected in references to famous restaurants in the neighbourhood (*Daimanki* and *Itacho*) but is also directed against mainland tourists coming to Mong Kok, who are termed “locusts”:

(I) drag my luggage every day, just like the locust tourists

Furthermore, the song distinguishes Mong Kok from the protests in Admiralty.

Thirdly, the song’s lyrics are directed against all supporters of the pro-Beijing camp. This includes the police as well as Leticia Lee of the Federation of Parent Teacher Associations in Hong Kong:

There’re police dogs on the way, they’re only paper tigers  
Every day, I refuse to go to the police station  
Having chicken hot pot alone, I’m not used to this  
Bumping into Leticia Lee, I throw up before I eat

Fourth and finally, the lyrics make reference to consumerism; although not explicitly criticising it, the context, including the song’s title, suggest that it is denounced.

In terms of the music, the song is a typical disco dancing hit from the 1990s with a strong bass, a synthesiser, and a focus on rhythm rather than melody, including some elements of rap. The electric guitar provides the song with a rock-like sound. Bass and rhythm dominate, and the simple melody contributes little to the character of the song.

Most striking in the song’s rhythm is its chopped staccato style, which prevents the song from “flowing” smoothly. Contrary to *Lift Your Umbrella*, in this song it is not the melody but the bass that is syncopal and similar to a habanera rhythm. This unusual rhythm as well as its dominance in the piece gives the whole song an individual character. This also corresponds to the small band line-up: the more musicians and instruments involved in the playing, the more scattered the tones become, as is most clearly perceivable in choppy, staccato-like pizzicato passages. One might therefore conclude from the music that it is a rather individualised piece that may musically represent the idea that each individual can make a difference. This corresponds also to the song’s imagery, which focuses on a small group of people performing a choppy dance while the masses stand around the group to watch.

One might argue that these musical characteristics are implicit and that my description is an over-interpretation, since activists might not have cho-

sen the song with such thoughts in mind. However, I argue that if this has not happened intentionally, it is a characteristic choice of radical protesters in Mong Kok, which has clearly been the most unique and radical protest site, rejecting the option to “go mainstream.”

In line with the lyrics, the video’s imagery includes racist, anti-mainland symbols. Most of the video was recorded in Mong Kok itself on one of its main shopping thoroughfares, South Sai Yeung Choi Street, which is often visited by PRC tourists.

Overall, the topic of mainlanders coming to Hong Kong is crucial to the imagery. This not only ties in with pro-Beijing protesters from the mainland but also addresses the influx of mainland tourists more generally. One example is the emergence of suitcases all over the video. In one scene, the music video producers’ rejection of mainland tourists is embodied by the lead singer kicking over one of these suitcases.

Furthermore, the video’s imagery focuses on core xenophobic accusations against mainland tourists, namely the perception that they are obsessed with materialism rather than fundamental rights and values. Hence, commercial advertisements in Mong Kok are highlighted throughout the video, mainly focusing on the impressive luminous signage.

Another xenophobic accusation against mainlanders is that they are impolite. In the video, mainlanders carry suitcases around without caring about others walking in the streets and not apologising when they roll over others’ feet with their suitcase wheels.

Finally, one scene of the music video directly refers to the incident of a mainland anti-UM protester telling Cable TV that she came to Hong Kong for shopping. The whole scene is restaged with the interviewee answering the questions naïvely. She is insecure and surprised when she is dragged away by plainclothes security personnel.

Hence, by means of sarcasm and humour, xenophobic sentiments are utilised to reject any influence from the mainland. While many of my interviewees referred to it as very funny, one should be aware that xenophobia is behind many of the accusations, because mainland residents are negatively stereotyped on the basis of their nationality. It appears that such bigoted perspectives find support among the city’s youth in the form of “jokes.” A 20-year old male protestor told me, for example:

Certainly, the song itself is funny and the ideas behind it are really creative. Cantonese assonances to Mandarin pronunciations were frequently and sarcastically employed, which accurately reflected the rebellious mindsets of Hong Kong people resisting the numerically and behaviourally disordered mainland tourists.

Another 18-year old protestor added:

It’s so funny! To me, the song shows how creative the Hong Kong people are. Humour is desperately needed to make things bright...

72. Yannie Chan, “Clockenflap Protests and CY Leung Urges People to Shop in Mong Kok,” *HK Magazine*, 2 December 2014, <http://hk-magazine.com/city-living/news/clockenflap-protests-and-cy-leung-urges-people-shop-mong-kok> (accessed on 23 October 2015).

73. Victor Mair, “New Cantonese Word,” *Language Log*, 8 December 2014, <http://languagelog.ldc.upenn.edu/nll/?p=16291> (accessed on 23 October 2015).

74. Liu Dehua (Andy Lau), “Duzi qu tou huan” (Off alone to find fun), YouTube, 25 août 2006, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=56lFKH3TFQM> (accessed on 26 October 2015).

75. I am very thankful to Fung Lok Hang (Joyce) for translating *Gau wu Every Day*.

All in all, the song and its video are an example of the rising xenophobia in Hong Kong presented in the shape of satire. At the same time, its individualistic style encourages people to take action, not waiting for the masses to agree and follow but to push for a much more radical approach.

## Conclusion

This paper aims to understand the UM by analysing four of its most popular YouTube music videos, selected as a result of in-depth interviews with protesters in Hong Kong in 2015 and 2016. I do so because I consider music as not only expressing but also stimulating emotions that contribute to a "structure of feeling" toward contentious politics. Furthermore, music serves as a "container" to preserve the legacy of the UM. Since memory is one of several crucial "pathways" to translate music into emotions, a future "mobilisation of tradition" by means of reference to the UM songs might influence future protests in Hong Kong.

In my empirical analysis I find four main characteristics: firstly, the songs of the UM clearly depict the rise of a local identity drawing on a "mobilisation of tradition" and in line with the history of Cantopop. This includes a combination of Cantonese as symbol of the local with an international musical tradition (cover versions). This presents Hong Kong as a cosmopolitan city where local and international traditions merge into a melting-pot and create a new and unique identity. Secondly, alongside this approach, a xenophobic anti-mainland version of localism is engraved into *Gau wu Every Day* in the form of sarcasm, word play and humour.

Thirdly, the non-violent character of the UM is echoed by the UM's music, again tying in with the tradition of the "Tiananmen veterans." However, fourthly, the UM not only drew on a "mobilisation of tradition" but also created its own soundtracks.

In order to assess the possible impacts of these findings for the future, one needs to take into consideration the social contexts of both the music's emergence as well as the songs' reception. In essence, it is a mutually influential process of the songs shaping the image of the movement and the image of the UM influencing emotional attachment to the songs. Therefore,

this paper has to be seen in the wider context of social scientific analysis of the UM, to which it aims to contribute in three regards: firstly, with regard to the ongoing generational change among pro-democratic activists and the rise of two kinds of localism, the first three songs that were mainly played in Admiralty depict the UM as being in line with the traditional protest culture and were less anti-Chinese. This might be both the result of the power of the "mobilisation of tradition" with established cultural rituals shaping the contentious politics of the UM and a consequence of preparations prior to the occupation carried out by the "Tiananmen veterans" of OCLP. The fact that this is engraved into the three songs may have two implications: if future social movements aim to "mobilise the tradition" of the UM, they will almost automatically bring in a less aggressive version of localism. If, however, future social movements want to distinguish themselves from the UM, which they portray as a failure, the songs' underlying message may even be a means of discarding this legacy and strengthening xenophobia.

Secondly, with regards to the means of protest, most of the UM songs carry a peaceful message. Since I assume that the UM will be to a significant extent remembered through its music, this musical portrayal as a peace-loving protest could further discredit the UM among protesters who believe that more forceful means are needed. At the same time – if the UM is referred to positively – it could help to re-establish the idea of non-violence that has been questioned more recently.

Thirdly, this paper implicitly offers another example of the increasing influence of social media, since the analysed videos that shape the legacy of the UM were popularised by means of YouTube and Facebook.

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