A Bridge Too Far: Online Critical Discourse Analysis into the Construction of Hong

Kong National Identity in Discussions on Infrastructure Projects

Erwin Nieuwenhuis (s1666037)

e.nieuwenhuis@umail.leidenuniv.nl

Universiteit Leiden

MA Thesis

Abstract: *This thesis analyses the construction of Hong Kong national identity in online discussions about the high speed rail connecting Hong Kong to Mainland China and the Hong Kong-Zhuhai sea bridge in localist Facebook groups. The paper argues that the Hong Kong identity constructed in these discussions is indeed nationalist, i.e. based on the belief that the members of the nation share a common origin, and is built on the following themes: anti-Mainland Chinese sentiment, anti-CCP thought, and the importance of money as identity constructing entity in Hong Kong society. As a result, the construction of Hong Kong national identity by Hong Kong localists relies heavily on Othering Mainland Chinese, while there are few references to Hong Kongese cultural characteristics. The contributions of this paper are that it argues for the possibility of a Hong Kong identity to be seen as national identity and how this national identity is constructed by localists.*

Both the Guangzhou-Shenzhen-Hong Kong Express Rail Link (Guangshengang XRL) and and the Hong Kong-Zhuhai-Macau Bridge (HZMB) were completed and opened in Autumn 2018. Both of these infrastructure projects connected Hong Kong to Mainland China. The Express Rail Link consists of two parts: the first part connects Guangzhou to Shenzhen, while the second part connects Shenzhen to Hong Kong. The second part was opened in 2018 and at that moment it was possible to take a high speed train all the way from Beijing to Hong Kong because the Express Rail Link was connected to the already existing Beijing-Guangzhou high speed railway.

The Hong Kong-Zhuhai-Macau Bridge connects Hong Kong to Macau and Zhuhai in Mainland China. The bridge is the longest sea bridge in the world, being 55 kilometers in length with a 6.7 kilometer long underwater tunnel built in order to facilitate access to important

shipping channels to ports in the pearl river delta.[1] The bridge was built in order to cut down on traveling times between Hong Kong and Macau and Mainland China to stimulate tourism from Mainland China to Hong Kong and Macau.[2]

The connection between Mainland China and Hong Kong these infrastructure projects created was not only physical, they also increased the symbolic connection between Mainland China and Hong Kong. Both infrastructure projects facilitate the movement of people, especially tourists, between Mainland China and Hong Kong which has the potential to increase economic interdependence, which can on its own, further stimulate other kinds of integration such as cultural integration. As such, the both the high-speed rail and the sea bridge can both be seen as projects that try to further integrate Hong Kong into Mainland China. The direct high-speed rail connection between Hong Kong and Beijing symbolises this integration particularly powerfully.

One way of increasing Hong Kong's integration is by strengthening the connections between China and Hong Kong. In the case of the infrastructure projects, this connection is also literal; Hong Kong is literally connected to Mainland China, which makes it easier to envision Hong Kong as a part of China. The connection also exists of the increasing social and economic interaction between Mainland Chinese and Hong Kongers that the infrastructure projects facilitate. This increasing interaction has the potential to decrease intra-group differences by decreasing the cultural division of labour. China is at a level of economic development much more comparable to Hong Kong than it was several decades ago, as such it is foreseeable that the Hong Kongese labour market offers opportunities to Mainland Chinese that were not always there for them.

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[1] CNN, ''The $20 Billion 'Umbilical Cord': China Unveils the World's Longest Sea-crossing Bridge,'' https://edition.cnn.com/2018/05/04/asia/hong-kong-zhuhai-macau-bridge/index.html, Accessed 29-04-2020.
[2] Ibid.

Although it seems like the sea bridge and the high-speed rail have been built primarily with the goal of stimulating economic development, there may also be political reasons for their construction. Decreasing intra-group differences can make anti-Chinese thinking less prominent in Hong Kong society through the decreasing salience of Hong Kong national identity. This can set the stage for harder, more direct integrationist policies that may otherwise elicit a strongly critical response from Hong Kong localists. These responses can be thorny and complicated political challenges for the Hong Kong and Chinese government, who would prefer to avoid these situations as much as possible to facilitate a smooth integration of Hong Kong.

Although these two governments pursue integration, it is extremely unpopular among many Hong Kongers. Events such as the 2003 Anti-Article 23 protests, the Umbrella movement, the 2019-2020 anti-extradition protests and the 2020 May protests were all directed at initiatives aiming to promote the integration of Hong Kong into Mainland China. These integration initiatives are all part of the strategy to facilitate the absorption of Hong Kong into Mainland China in 2047 when the ''one country, two systems'' system will expire. Although it is not sure how this absorption will look like and exactly what the consequences will be for Hong Kong and its people, but the topic causes a lot of anxiety among Hong Kongers who, among other things, fear their political freedoms may be taken away.[3]

Because of this political context, the Guangshengang XRL and the HZMB are not seen by everyone as infrastructure projects simply aimed at facilitating economic interaction between Hong Kong and Mainland China. Indeed, Hong Kong critics of these infrastructure projects see them as ways for the CCP to expand their influence over Hong Kong to the

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[3] Atlantic, ''The Date Hong Kong Protesters Can't Escape,''
https://www.theatlantic.com/international/archive/2019/11/hong-kongs-protesters-and-artists-count-down-2047/601768/, Accessed 30-05-2020.

detriment of the political liberties Hong Kongers enjoy.[4] Some critics explicitly connect the high speed rail and HZMB with the 2047 re-unification. They see the infrastructure projects as a part of a larger strategy of increasing the influence of all aspects of Mainland China in Hong Kong in order to facilitate the 2047 re-unification.[5]

These infrastructure projects did not create the anxieties over the increasing mainlandisation of Hong Kong however. In Hong Kong society there is a longer history of being critical of the PRC. During the Cold War era, ideological polarisation made many Hong Kongers, as subjects of a liberal capitalist colony, deeply critical of Mainland China's Maoism and the Cultural Revolution.[6] Anxieties about Mainlandisation and criticism of the PRC are therefore not new. The difference is, however, that they were traditionally often in terms of politics and economics, while cultural anti-Mainland thought is only a more recent phenomenon.

This is strongly connected to the increasing presence of localism in Hong Kong. To put it briefly, the localists are the group of people that believe Hong Kong society is culturally distinct from Chinese society.[7] They could be said to emphasise the ''local'' culture over the ''national'', which in most works means Mainland Chinese, but which, as this paper will point out, is a misnomer. Instead, I would like to argue that localists are in fact nationalists whose identification is the Hong Kong national identity, rather than the Chinese national identity. Because of this identification with Hong Kongeseness, localists are also one of the groups that is most concerned about Mainlandisation in all its forms.

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[4] BBC, ''Hong Kong Express Rail Link Launches amid Controversy,'' https://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-china-45612749, Accessed 29-04-2020.
[5] Hong Kong Free Press, ''Mainlandization: How the Communist Party Works To Control and Assimilate Hong Kong,'' https://hongkongfp.com/2017/10/15/mainlandization-communist-party-works-control-assimilate-hong-kong/, Accessed 30-04-2020.
[6] Chi Kit Chan, ''China as Other,'' *China Perspectives* 1 (2014): 26.
[7] Sebastian Veg, ''The Rise of "Localism" and Civic Identity in Post-handover Hong Kong: Questioning the Chinese Nation-state,'' *The China Quarterly* 230, (June 2017): 327.

In terms of politics, all localist political parties strive for democratic reforms and increased autonomy and the promotion of the Hong Kong identity. While these are the cornerstones of localism, there actually exists considerable diversity in terms of political thought among different localist parties and politicians. As the methodology section and analysis will demonstrate, populism, social democracy and liberalism are all represented on the localist spectrum. Furthermore, while many localist parties emphasise legal political struggle, others, such as Hong Kong Indigenous, are not afraid to use more violent tactics.

Ever since the 2014 Umbrella movement, localism has been a movement dominated by young people, especially students.[8] This is also reflected by the fact that many leaders of localist parties, such as Baggio Leung, Joshua Wong, Agnes Chow and Yau Wai-Ching, are currently all less than 30 years old. In the 2016 legislative council elections, localist parties were relatively successful, obtaining 19% of the votes which translated into eight seats in the legislative council.[9] As such, they are among the three big political blocks in Hong Kong (pro-Beijing, pro-democracy and localism) but of those three they are the smallest based on the results of the 2016 elections.[10]

Although many localists stress the cultural uniqueness of Hong Kong society, the issue of Hong Kong's cultural identity is also a difficult one. Surveys point out that not everyone in Hong Kong identifies with the Hong Kong identity, or at least not solely.[11] In addition to identification as Hong Konger, people also identify as Chinese or a mix of the two identities. This creates a complicated issue: while some localists warn for the increasing influence of

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[8] Che-po Chan, ''Post- Umbrella Movement: Localism and Radicalness of the Hong Kong Student Movement,'' *Contemporary Chinese Political Economy and Strategic Relations: An International Journal* 2, no. 2 (Aug/Sept 2016): 889-893.

[9] Malte Philipp Kaeding, ''The Rise of ''Localism'' in Hong Kong,'' *Journal of Democracy* 28, no. 1 (January 2017): 160.

[10] Ibid.

[11] HKU POP, ''HKU POP Final Farewell: Rift Widens between Chinese and Hongkong Identities, National Pride Plunges to One in Four,'' https://www.hkupop.hku.hk/english/release/release1594.html, Accessed 05-04-2020.

Chineseness into all aspects of life, including culture, many other people in Hong Kong feel at least partially Chinese themselves.

This is only one issue that Hong Kong localists face with trying to propagate the idea of a Hong Kong local, or as this thesis' literature review will argue, national, identity. Another problem related to this one, is the fact that it can be difficult to identify a unique Hong Kong culture, especially since many localists want to envision the Hong Kongese identity as being different from the Chinese one. Linguistically, for example, the Hong Kongers are closely related to China, since Cantonese, one of the official languages and most commonly used popular language, is a language that comes from Chinese and that has more speakers in Mainland China than Hong Kong. Similarly, Hong Kongese culture shares many elements such as traditional holidays and cuisine, with Han culture in other countries.

The construction and the completion of the high-speed rail and sea bridge connecting Hong Kong with Mainland China are also featured in the discourse on Hong Kong national identity. Because of the anxiety and insecurity about mainlandisation and the Hong Kong national identity that these infrastructure projects contribute to, they are heavily politicised by Hong Kong localists. In order to understand how Hong Kong national identity is constructed (by localists), a topic which deserves more academic attention, these infrastructure projects can be extremely important.

Therefore, this paper will examine the construction of Hong Kong national identity by connecting the topic of the Guangshengang XRL and HZMB with Hong Kong localism and anxieties about mainlandisation. This paper wants to understand how Hong Kong localists see the Hong Kong national identity and how it is constructed. Specifically, the question this paper tries to answer is: how do Hong Kong localists construct a national identity in their discussions on Facebook about the Guangshengang XRL and the HZMB? This is an important question to raise because Mainland Chinese-Hong Kong relations have become increasingly polarised

since the 1997 Handover and the topic of mainlandsation continues to mobilise Hong Kongers to go out and protest.

The paper will argue that Hong Kong national identity, at least in localist Facebook discussions on the high speed rail and sea bridge, is primarily constructed through Othering and fear mongering. Two of the most important themes in nationalist discussions on Facebook are anti-Mainlandisation and anti-CCP rhetoric. In these discourses the infrastructure projects are framed as a threat to the Hong Kong nation by increasing the presence of Mainland China and its politics in Hong Kong. This discourse is used in order to rally Hong Kongers around the nation and its national identity. Similarly, the infrastructure projects are seen as a threat to Hong Konger's welfare. In this discourse, localists reappropriate older discourses about the identity forming power of money in Hong Kong society and use them for their own nationalist purposes. Although Othering and anti-Mainland thought features heavily in Hong Kong localist discourse, while discussions of cultural characteristics or cultural uniqueness are almost completely absent, this paper does identify two characteristics of the Hong Kong national identity as depicted in online localists discourse: liberal political values and the ontological importance of money.

Although the topic of Hong Kong identity has featured in academic discussions, there are still a lot questions. Academically, the relevance of this paper is that it not only clarifies the distinction between so-called ''local'' and ''national'' identities by arguing that the Hong Kong identity is a national one. In connection to this point, the paper also offers an insight into how the Hong Kong national identity is constructed by Hong Kong localists and what discourse they use to do that. This is an important contribution, because much of the research on Hong Kongese identity focuses on the competition of identities in Hong Kong, while little research is done on how national identity is constructed.

One important qualification that must be made is that this thesis' research only looks at localist groups. This means that the results of this research likely only apply to a minority of the Hong Kong population. There is no guarantee that other sections of the Hong Kong population hold similar standpoints as the localists in regard to Hong Kong's national identity. Localists, however, have been an increasingly prominent feature of Hong Kong's public debate since the 2014 Umbrella movement and as such are important enough to merit academic attention.

This paper is structured as follows: first, a literature review on the formation of national identity in general and a history of anti-mainlandisation sentiments in Hong Kong. The literature review will discuss three different explanations of national identity: the civic, ethnic and economic explanation of nationalism. The part of literature review about Hong Kong will sketch an image of the history of anti-mainlandisation sentiments in Hong Kong and where possible connect it to Hong Kongese (proto-)nationalism. Secondly, this thesis will contain an overview of the methodology that this paper will use in order to answer the research question. This section discusses the particularities of performing critical discourse analysis on nationalism and will give a description of the different groups the paper will analyse. Thirdly, the analysis of the paper will analyse three different discours strands that are used to construct Hong Kong national identity: anti-Mainland thought, CCP criticism, and money as identity forming tool.

Literature Review

Definitions of nationalism

Before I will outline the academic debate on national identity and how national identity is formed in general and in Hong Kong in particular, it is important to first establish some key terms. For this purpose I will use Connor's definitions about nations and nationalisms. He

defines a nation as ''a group of people who believe they are ancestrally related''.[12] Consequently, he defines nationalism as ''identification with and loyalty'' to the nation.[13] Again, this nation that we are talking of here is not the nation state, but an ethnic group. It is of great importance to underscore that a nation then, is not a political unit but a cultural entity: the ethnic group. In fact, Conner states that one of the most severe problems of the literature on nationalism is that in these works, nationalism is often connected with state and politics, rather than ethnic group and culture.[14]

It is important to make this distinction because not all nations have their own state and not all states are inhabited by only a single nation, in fact the majority of states is inhabited by multiple nations. In Hong Kong's case, Connor's definition is useful because it allows us to acknowledge that Hong Kong nationalism exists, even if Hong Kong is not a sovereign state. This is because the core of (Hong Kong) nationalism is the nation, not the state.

Additionally, an extremely important aspect of the definition of nationalism is that the nation and national identities are always the strongest identity one can identify with. As Emerson put it: ''The nation is today the largest community which, when the chips are down, effectively commands men's loyalty, overriding the claims both of the lesser communities within it and those which cut across it or potentially enfold it within a still greater society, reaching ultimately to mankind as a whole''.[15] This means that an individual can only identify with one nation, because nations demand loyalty and other identities are subservient to national identities.

Civic nationalism versus ethnic nationalism

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[12] Walker Connor, *Ethnonationalism* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993), xi
[13] Ibid.
[14] Ibid, 91.
[15] Rupert Emerson, *From Empire to Nation: The Rise to Self-Assertion of Asian and African Peoples* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1960): 95-96.

The definition of nationalism this paper will be using is the ethnonationalist definition. This type of nationalism is diametrically opposed to the more inclusive civic nationalism. Civic nationalism is based on an understanding of the nation as liberal political unit and the expansion of citizenship and rights to all inhabitants of the state. In this sense it is different from ethnonationalism, because civic nationalism is about states and citizenship, instead of the more exclusive and intangible ''descent''. Kohn calls civic nationalism, Western nationalism because it originated in Western Europe, when middle classes wanted to create a ''liberal and rational civil society''[16]. Similarly, Hobsbawm talks about the ''revolutionary nation'' and how the most important criterion were not ethnicity, but common purpose versus elite interest[17].

Although authorities in the field of nationalism studies such as Kohn and Hobsbawm consider this to be nationalism, this paper, using Connor's definition, will not consider ''civic nationalism'' to be nationalism. The reason for this is that this category is not related to ethnicity but to statis politics. Civic nationalism is less about identity than it is about political rights and civil liberties and as such will not be considered nationalism in this thesis..

It is possible for political values themselves to part of a national identity however. In France and in the USA, both ''revolutionary nations'' incidentally, freedom is seen as a defining characteristic of the national identity. But because in this way political values are used to stimulate ethnic consciousness, it is still ethnic nationalism. This distinction is also important in the case of Hong Kong because there, nationalism and struggling for increased political rights can go together. but they are not necessarily the same. Hong Kong's Pro Democracy Camp (民主派), for example is interested in advancing democratic reforms in Hong Kong, but they are to be distinguished

[16] Hans Kohn, *Nationalism its Meaning and History* (Malabar: Robert E. Krieger Publishing Company, 1965), 29.
[17] Eric Hobsbawm, *Nations and Nationalism since 1780: Programme, Myth, Reality* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), 20.

from Localists, who in addition to democratic reforms, are also interested in preserving Hong Kong culture. Therefore, only the localists can be considered nationalists, while the democrats are simply democrats.

The construction of ethnic identity

Ethnic identity, the cornerstone of nationalism, can be made up out of a vast number of different characteristics such as: language, history, practices and many more. These characteristics do not need to reflect any verifiable facts. Anderson sees the nation as an imagined community, because members of the nation do not know all or even many of the other members in the nation. The ties between them, the sense of community, and their community's identity are all a deliberate creation, instead of the result of an organic formation.[18]

Similarly, Hobsbawm points out the invented nature of national identity and the components that make it up. He explains that, because nations and nation states are phenomena that are so radically different from other collectivities and polities, legitimising narratives had to be invented.[19] In order to legitimise the institutions and practices of the nation, it is important that individuals feel like they are members of the nation. As such, the nation is an emotional rather than a rational construct. To make individuals feel like they are members of the nation, the nation must have an identity that distinguishes it from other nations.

One of the most common ways a national identity is constructed is through Othering, which is the process of distinguishing between the Oher and the Self. The reason Othering is often used for the construction of national identities is that nations are exclusive identities,

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[18] Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (London: Verso, 1983), 6.
[19] Eric Hobsbawm, ''Introduction: the Invention of Tradition,'' in *The Invention of Tradition,* ed. Eric Hobsbawm and Terence Ranger (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983), 7.

which means that an individual can have only one national identity. As such, national identities are often competing with other national identities for dominance. Hall explains how constructing the identity of the Other, in terms creates the identity of the Self through *difference*, since an identity is not only constructed by its own characteristics, but also through the differences it has with other identities.[20] Thus, talking about other nations, in term actually creates the identity of a subject's own nation. In order to make membership of the nation attractive and to expand the nation, its cultural identity must be strong and positive. Therefore, Othering is often done by constructing an image of the Other as inferior in order to envision the Self as superior.

Economic explanation of national identity

In addition to cultural and political explanations of the formation of national identity, there exists also literature that connects nationalism with the economy and economics. In this field of literature, culture and identity are still important components of nationalism but economic processes are seen to be the impetus and the driving force for the creation of national identities. The author in this field that is most relevant in the discussion of Hong Kong nationalism is Hechter, who explains how differences in the cultural division of labour are the impetus for nationalist movements.

He starts his analysis of nationalism by explaining how groups, the basis of nations, are formed. According to him, group formation is the pooling of individual resources in situations of uncertainties.[21] Since the group has collective possessions there is a need to establish social controls and with it institutions. Furthermore, because the possessions are only to be shared

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[20] Stuart Hall, *Representation: Cultural Representations and Signifying Practices* (London: Sage Publications, 1997): 234-235.

[21] Michael Hechter, *Containing Nationalism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), 20.

among the members of that particular group, the group must establish boundaries and distinguish between members and non-members.[22]

This means that groups become exclusive and therefore get an identity, because Hechter states that identity formation can only take place once a group actually exists.[23] Identity will exist of markers which have the strongest ''implications'' for an individual's welfare.[24] As group starts to develop its own identity to identify members and non-members, the institutions, which are there to handle the management of the collective resources, become infused by the group's culture. When this happens, the group becomes a nation, promoting these institutions becomes nationalism.[25]

Hechter also discusses the process that determines the salience of social identities. It must be noted that an individual can have multiple identities; a person can identify as a man, a christian, an American and many other things at the same time. However, Emerson states that in crisis situations, national identity is the most salient identity.[26] Identities can therefore compete with each other over the salience they enjoy in an individual or a society. This is important in the case of Hong Kong, where there can be multiple competing identities such as: cosmopolitan, ethnic Chinese, or Hong Konger.

Hechter sees the relative salience of identities as the result of the cultural division of labour, because, as noted before, this has strong implications for a person's welfare. Through three different case studies, Hechter describes that a cultural division of labour can make individuals aware of cultural differences between different groups. Along which cultural lines labour is divided, will determine which identities become salient.[27] In the case of Hong Kong that would mean that, for localists, the Hong Kong identity should become more salient than

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[22] Ibid, 22-23.
[23] Hechter, *Containing Nationalism*, 97.
[24] Ibid, 98.
[25] Ibid, 22-23.
[26] Emerson, *From Nation to Empire*, 95-96.
[27] Hechter, *Containing Nationalism*, 101-107.

other identities, because in the PRC there is a cultural division of labour, where Hong Kongers perform highly skilled work relatively more often than Mainland Chinese.

Hong Kong nationalism

When it comes to the literature on Hong Kong nationalism, a number of works mistakenly differentiate between local and national identity, with local referring to Hong Kongese and national referring to the Chinese identity.[28][29][30][31] The China versus Hong Kong identity dichotomy is not one of local versus national, but one of national versus national. As pointed out above, the nation is a psychological construct. Therefore, as long as there are people who see the Hong Kongers as a nation, it is a nation. The Hong Kong nation does not need an independent state to earn the label of nation.

This means that the Hong Kong identity can be seen both as a national one and as a local one. While Hong Kong nationalists will see the Hong Kong national identity as being distinct from the Chinese identity, people who see the Hong Kong identity as local, would see the Hong Kong people as being part of the Chinese nation, albeit with some unique characteristics. The latter group can be considered Chinese Hong Kongers. This is similar to how Chinese from Beijing or Shanghai can feel both Pekingese or Shanghainese and Chinese at the same time. Chineseness, as national identity, excludes identification with other national identities, but other non-national identities such as gender, age or local identities can overlap with Chineseness. Therefore, Hong Kongeseness can be both a national and local identity.

This thesis, however, only looks at Hong Kongeseness as national identity, because this thesis is interested in the creation of Hong Kong national identity and the broader theme of

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[28] Anthony Fung, ''Postcolonial Hong Kong Identity: Hybridising the Local and the National,'' *Social Identities* 10, no. 3 (2004).
[29] Eric K.W. Ma, and Anthony Y.H. Fung, ''Negotiating Local and National Identifications: Hong Kong Identity Surveys 1996-2006,'' *Asian Journal of Communication* 17, no. 2 (2007).
[30] Chi Kit Chan, ''China as Other.''
[31] Matthews, Ma, and Lui, *Learning to Belong.*

Hong Kong integration into Mainland China, which only concerns Hong Kong nationalists because for them it will mean the assimilation with another nation and the decreasing chances of obtaining an autonomous state for their own nation.

Anti-Chineseness

For Hong Kongers who do not see Hong Kong as a nation, the identification with Chineseness is unproblematic. Hong Kong localists, on the other hand, not only refuse to identify as Chinese, they sometimes are extremely critical of any kind of Chinese influence in Hong Kong. Chan states that the identification between either Hong Kongeseness or Chineseness takes place along three dimensions: economics, politics and culture.[32] Localist anti-Chineseness is also concentrated on these differences. Broadly we can speak of two different kinds of anti-Chineseness: anti-CCP thought, which is critical of the Chinese political system and its authoritarian institutions, and anti-Mainland thought, which is hostile towards Mainland Chinese citizens and the cultural and economic influence they have on Hong Kong.

Chan suggests that the resistance to Chineseness started from a dislike of Mainland Chinese politics and spread to include cultural and economic aspects of Chineseness.[33] Hong Kong's anti-Chinese history can be traced back to the post-War colonial era. After the riots in 1967 the British colonial authorities instilled liberal democratic values and objectives into Hong Kong national consciousness, which together with the arrival of Mainland Chinese refugees fleeing from Maoist oppression created a deep rooted aversion to the CCP in Hong Kong society.[34]

Anti-CCP thought once again became relevant, after the Tiananmen massacre in 1989. The fact that the Chinese government seemed unwilling to conduct democratic reforms to go

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[32] Chan, ''China as Other,'' 29-30.
[33] Chan, ''China as Other,'' 31-32.
[34] Yew and Kwong, ''Hong Kong Identity,'' 1095.

along with its economic reforms, caused anxiety among localist and democrat Hong Kongers.[35] The psychological impact of the Tiananmen massacre on the minds of Hong Kongers was so big that it became part of Hong Kong's national identity. The massacre made localist Hong Kongers realise that their political values differed markedly from the ones dominant in Mainland China, and they used this to construct an identity of Hong Kongers as politically more developed, based on their support for liberal democratic values.[36]

After the 1997 handover, the integration of Hong Kong into the PRC started through re-interpretation of the Basic Law, which governs Hong Kong's semi-autonomous administrative status within the PRC, (Chinese) national education[37] and intervention in Hong Kong elections.[38] This process evoked strong resistance from localists who took to the streets several times, such as in 2003 in response to the National Bill, which had the aim to strengthen anti-dissent legislation, and the 2014 Umbrella Movement, which was aimed at the selection of candidates for the 2017 chief executive election.

Not only the political integration of Hong Kong into Mainland China started after 1997, but also the cultural and economic integration quickly picked up speed after 1997. This too was eventually met with fierce resistance from localists. `This is best characterised by the discourse and the events around the term locust` (蝗蟲). The most notable occurrence of the term in public discourse was in 2012, when a Hong Kong newspaper published an advertisement featuring an enormous locust sitting on a rock looking out over Hong Kong. The accompanying text proclaimed to Mainland Chinese that Hong Kongers would no longer accept the way Mainland Chinese tourists were behaving in Hong Kong.[39]

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[35] Ibid, 1096.
[36] Ibid, 1108.
[37] Ibid, 1101.
[38] Ngok Ma, ''The Rise of ''Anti-China'' Sentiments in Hong Kong and the 2012 Legislative Council Elections,'' *China Review* 15, no. 1 (Spring 2015): 52-53.
[39] Barry Sautman and Hairong Yan, *Localists and Locusts in Hong Kong: Creating a Yellow-Red Peril Discourse* (Baltimore: University of Maryland School of Law, 2015): 2-3.

The locust discourse views Mainland Chinese as an invading force buying up all products, both essential goods such as baby formula and consumption goods, and crowding out Hong Kongers in healthcare, education and the real estate market.[40]

By envisioning the Mainland Chinese as insects, the locust discourse frames Hong Kongers as more civilised and developed than Mainland Chinese. These feelings of superiority can be traced back to Hong Kong's colonial history. Sautman and Yan explain that through Hong Kong's connection to the West, a distinction was made between the Hong Kongers as civilised, and the Mainland Chinese as uncivilised barbarians, borrowing from colonialist vocabulary.[41] This differentiation is then supplemented with rural-urban differentiation to create an othering structure in which the Hong Kong identity is seen as developed and civilised and therefore superior to the Mainland Chinese identity.[42] Additionally, the discourse borrows heavily from anti-Chinese yellow peril discourses throughout the Anglo-saxon world, including Great Britain, to envision the Chinese as insects that pose a threat to the livelihoods of Hong Kongers.[43]

The discourse therefore envisions Mainland Chinese both as inferior and threatening at the same time. This reflects the fact that Hong Kongers feel superior based on its modern economic development history but that recently, because of a number of economic setbacks since the 1997 handover and China's rapid economic development since Deng's reform policies, economic relations between Mainland China and Hong Kong are changing rapidly, with Hong Kong losing its superior position quite rapidly.

This context is extremely important for understanding why the Guangshengang XRL and the HZMB, together with the increasing integration they facilitate, cause so much

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[40] Carl Jones, ''Lost in China? Mainlandisation and Resistance in post-1997 Hong Kong,'' *Taiwan in Comparative Perspective* 5 (July 2014): 22.
[41] Sautman and Yan, *Localists and Locusts*, 23.
[42] Sautman and Yan, *Localists and Locusts*, 23.
[43] Ibid, 38-40.

discontent among localist Hong Kongers. The values and social relations they threaten to undermine form an important aspect of the Hong Kongese national identity. Democratic reversal need not be accompanied with fervent popular criticism, as evidenced by 21st century Southeast Asia. In Hong Kong, however, in contrast to Southeast Asian countries such as Thailand and Cambodia, democratic reversal also undermines values that are an important part of the national identity. Similarly, economic integration, which is also promoted by the infrastructure projects, threatens to further change a cultural division of labour on which Hong Kong's supposed superiority, which is part of its national identity, is built. As such, these integration promoting infrastructure projects are not only a political/economic threat, but also an ontological one.

Methodology

Critical Discourse Analysis

In order to find out how these infrastructure projects are used by Hong Kong localists to produce nationalist statements, I will perform discourse analysis. Gee states that one possible definition of discourse analysis is ''the analysis of language as it is used to enact activities, perspectives, and identities''.[44] Language is not only used to describe and understand the world around us, it is also used to construct it and the phenomena, including politics and identity, in it.[45] Because language and communication can be studied and analysed, we can analyse the construction of a particular phenomenon by analysing how language is used in discussions about this phenomenon. This paper will analyse how language, or rather, linguistic statements, are used to construct national identity.

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[44] James Paul Gee, *An Introduction to Discourse Analysis: Theory and Method* (London: Routledge, 1999), 4.
[45] Ibid, 12-13.

How this is analysed exactly can be, methodologically, somewhat unclear, as there are no hard and fast rules what a discourse analysis should include. In fact, Schenkein states that discourse analysis can not be considered a theory or method but more as an ''analytical mindset''.[46] In the case of the construction of national identities, this paper will analyse strategies that are used to construct national identity through language. Wodak et al. state that there are five different discursive strategies that construct (national) identities: justification, construction, perpetuation, transformation, and destruction.[47] Therefore, the critical discourse analysis this paper employs will be based on identifying these strategies and explaining how these construct a Hong Kong national identity. Since context is important in critical discourse analysis[48], important part of the analysis will also be to analyse which ''intertextual'' and ''interdiscursive'' references are used to construct national identity.

In the case of Hong Kong the justification and construction strategies are most important. Because the Hong Kong national identity is still in competition with the Chinese identity over dominance, the justification strategy is important to argue for the importance of a Hong Kong national identity. This strategy serves to preserve a national identity which has become threatened or harmed by historical events.[49] In the case of Hong Kong this is related to the 1997 Handover and the increasing Mainlandisation, which have great implications for Hong Kong national identity. Among localists there is already an awareness of the importance of a Hong Kong identity which means that the construction strategy becomes relevant. The most important tool in this strategy is the promotion of national solidarity.

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[46] Jim Schenkein, *Studies in the Organisation of Conversational Interaction* (London: Academic Press, 1978), 6.

[47] Ruth Wodak et al., *The Discursive Construction of National Identity* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2009), 36-42.

[48] Wodak et al., *Discursive Construction,* 9.

[49] Ibid, 33.

Method

The paper will analyse comments from internet users because, as noted in the literature review above, nationalism is primarily a popular phenomenon, since it is about feelings of solidarity. Online popular media such as Facebook are especially suited for this purpose since they allow popular discourse to be encountered as it naturally occurs. Traditional media are less appropriate for this type of research because reader participation is highly limited. This means that these media are less representative of popular discourse than participatory media such as Facebook.

Publications by government elites or other politicians are also unsuited for this research because they can only try to construct or suggest feelings of national solidarity, but until those feelings are accepted and reproduced by the masses, there is no nation and nationalism to speak of. Looking directly at the source of nationalism, the people, circumvents this problem. Finally, it is unlikely that Hong Kong government elites will express localist sentiments because those are often highly critical of the current political system, and because localism is increasingly marginalised in the legislative council.

This thesis will use a mixed method approach to perform (online) discourse analysis. Boyd explains how quantitative analysis helps chart how groups communicate, but that qualitative methods are necessary to dive deeper into the meaning making process.[50] Combining them is therefore necessary to understand how discourse is created in (online) groups. First, I will quantitatively analyse the comments to understand which themes and statements are constantly recurring and therefore most representative. Then, I will qualitatively analyse those themes. All nationalist statements that will be found during the analysis will then be categorised based on their thematic content. By grouping them based on their content I can demonstrate that those statements are occurring more frequently and are therefore more
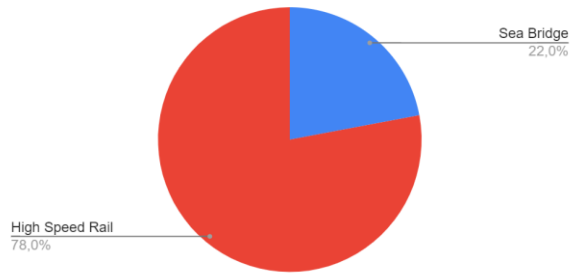
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[50] Boyd, ''Editorial 2.0,'' 4.
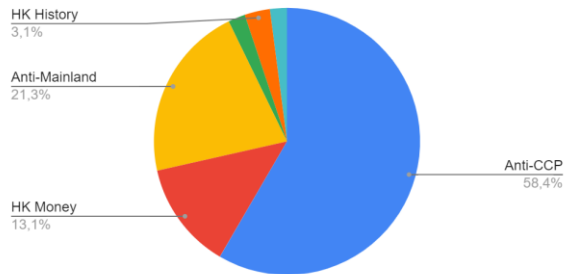
Percentage of Nationalist Comments- Total
Fig. 1
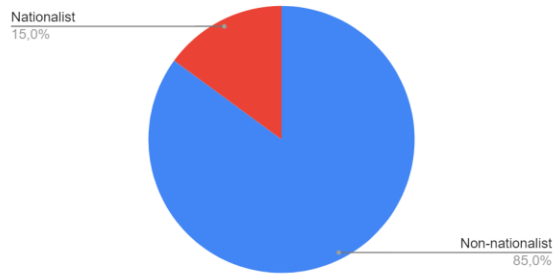
Division of Comments- Infrastructure
Fig. 2

Nationalist
15,0%

Non-nationalist
85,0%

Sea Bridge
22,0%

High Speed Rail
78,0%

Division Nationalist Comments per Category
Fig. 3

HK History
3,1%

Anti-Mainland
21,3%

Anti-CCP
58,4%

HK Money
13,1%

authoritative.

I have compiled 1946 comments posted between 2016 and 2018 on the infrastructure projects. I picked this time period because this time period features the construction, discussions in the legislative council, the completion, and the inauguration of the Guangshengang XRL and HZMB. Of the 1946 comments, I classified 291 comments, 15% of all comments (fig. 1), to be nationalistic. Comments are considered nationalistic if they refer to the uniqueness of Hong Kong, differentiate Hong Kong from other countries, most importantly Mainland China, or envision the Hong Kong people as collective entity.

Of the 1946 total comments, 1517 come from discussions on the high-speed railway, while the remaining 429 comments are in response to the sea bridge (fig. 2). Regularly recurring comments have been categorised based on their content. The different categories I detected are: anti-CCP, anti-Mainland China, Hong Kongers' money, independence, Hong Kong historical consciousness, and the promotion of localist politics. These categories will be

further divided into subcategories to see more clearly how the discourse around a particular category is constructed.

A single comment can contain statements that belong to multiple categories. In such a case, the comment will be counted among all the categories that appear in that statement. If a comment contains multiple statements that belong in the same category, the statements will be counted among all the subcategories that appear in that statement, e.g., an anti-Mainland comment can contain both ''locust'' discourse and ''*Zhina*'' discourse. Because I am dealing with an informal internet medium, I may also encounter visual statements. Again, I do not plan to analyse individual (visual) statements but if I discover that posted images display recurring themes, then those themes may be a subject of analysis as well.

The smallest categories, independence, Hong Kong historical consciousness and the promotion of localist politics, represent such a small percentage of the total amount of nationalist comments, around 7% in total, that they will not be analysed in detail in this thesis because I do not consider them to be representative enough (fig. 3).

The low frequency of comments demanding independence is particularly noteworthy because the main problem of the infrastructure projects seems to be the increasing integration of Hong Kong into the PRC, which comes at the cost of autonomy and seems to preclude an future of political independence for Hong Kong. Still, calls for independence make up only 2% of all the nationalist comments in this thesis' analysis. It should be noted that from of all the groups in this analysis, only Hong Kong Indigenous still officially calls for independence.[51] This could mean that calls for independence are not popular among localist politicians and netizens. Additional research should point out where the unpopularity of independence comes from, whether it is ideological or pragmatic.

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[51] See section on Facebook groups.

Facebook **Groups**

The sites from which I will extract discursive statements are the facebook pages of three political parties and one news outlet. The three political parties are among the most popular localist parties in Hong Kong and their ideological differences allow the analysis to paint a more nuanced image of the identity construction discourse among Hong Kong localists. Hong Kong Independent Media is one of the largest localist media outlets and the presence of one media outlet among the political parties also allows this paper to analyse the differences in identity construction between political parties and media. The reason these groups have been selected is that they are all interested in the promotion of a Hong Kong national identity.

The political parties are: Demosistō (香港眾志), - Youngspiration (青年新政) and Hong Kong Indigenous (本土民主前線). The media outlet is called Hong Kong Independent Media (香港獨立媒體網). Of these four, Hong Kong Independent Media is by far the biggest in terms of facebook likes (603.000), or 66% of the total of the four groups, then Demosisto (172.000), around 18% of the total, followed by Hong Kong Indigenous (108.000), around 11%, while Youngspiration is the smallest with 57.000 facebook likes, making up only 6% of the total amount of followers.[52]

When it comes to the amount of nationalist comments from each group, Hong Kong Independent Media's share in the total amount of comments was smaller than its share in total amount of followers. Demosisto, Youngspiration and Hong Kong Indigenous, on the other hand, all had more nationalist comments relative to their share of the total amount of followers (fig. 4). This suggests that nationalist sentiments are relatively stronger in the political parties than in Hong Kong Independent Media. Indeed, all political parties have a higher percentage

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[52] Facebook, Accessed 18-03-2020.

of nationalist comments in relation to their respective total amount of comments than Hong Kong Independent Media (fig. 5).

Demosisto considers itself to be a ''pro-democracy youth activism group''.[53] Demosisto's localist character is expressed in its website's policy page. On it the group lists some clearly nationalist policies it would like to enact: defending local culture, autarky, promoting Hong Kong culture abroad and protecting the education system from foreign influences.[54] As such, the party can be seen to engaged in the promotion of a Hong Kong

Division of Comments- Groups

Fig. 4

Percentage of Nationalist Comments

Fig. 5

Percentage of Nationalist Comments
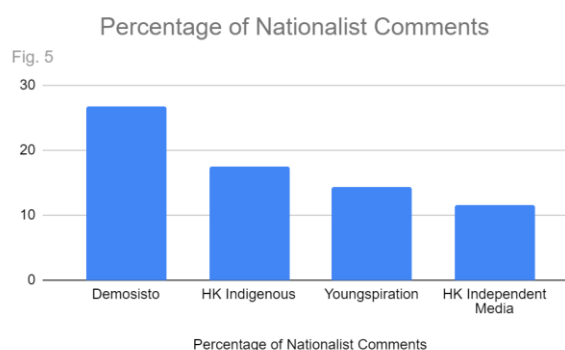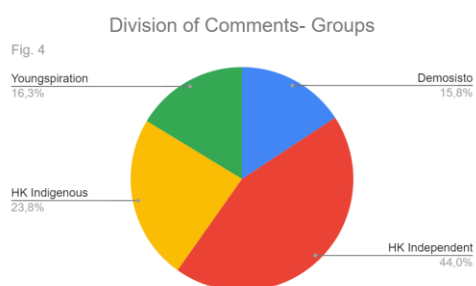
national identity. In terms of political orientation, the movement can be considered progressive/left wing, focusing on topics such as gender equality, animal welfare, decreasing income inequality, improved health insurance and making the housing market more accessible.[55] The party does not support Hong Kong independence ''under the current constitutional framework''.[56]

Youngspiration most recognisable claim to fame was the fact that in 2016 its two elected legislators, Baggio Leung and Yau Wai-ching, lost their seats in the legislature after their refusal to swear the oath of office. Ever since, the party has not been represented in the

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[53] Demosisto, ''About us'', https://www.demosisto.hk/about?lang=en, Accessed 17-03-2020.
[54] Demosisto, ''Policy,'' https://www.demosisto.hk/article/policy?lang=en, Accessed 17-03-2020.
[55] Ibid.
[56] SMCP, ''Activist Joshua Wong Says He Does Not Support Hong Kong Independence Under Current Constitutional Framework, Conveying Political Stance before District Council Elections,'' https://www.scmp.com/news/hong-kong/politics/article/3034710/newly-appointed-election-official-grills-hong-kong-activist, Accessed 18-03-2020

legislature anymore. While the party has been characterised as being radical[57] and right wing, on account of their anti-immigration standpoint[58], in other terms, such as lgbt emancipation[59], housing market reforms[60] and pension reforms[61], the party is more left wing. Importantly, the party does not support calls for independence.[62] The party does, however, have a clear nationalist agenda because they believe that Hong Kongers themselves will be more capable of administering Hong Kong than the CCP.[63] Because national identity is viewed by Youngspiration as an important factor for appropriate government, the promotion a Hong Kong national identity can be seen as an important goal for Youngspiration..

Hong Kong Indigenous can be considered the most radical and right-wing of these three political groups. The radical character is reflected in the ''about'' page on their facebook page, which is full of militaristic vocabulary such as unbeatable spirit (打不死的精神), fight (戰鬥) and resist (抗爭).[64] Their former leader Edward Leung, who is currently imprisoned for his participation in a violent demonstration in 2016, supported Hong Kong independence.[65]

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[57] Timeout Hong Kong, ''Localism: Why is Support for the Political Perspective Growing - and Who's behind it?'' https://web.archive.org/web/20160304190314/http://www.timeout.com.hk/big-smog/features/73236/localism-why-is-support-for-the-political-perspective-growing-and-whos-behind-it.html,

[58] Chinaworker, '' Hong Kong Elections Redraw Political Map'' https://chinaworker.info/en/2016/09/10/13233/, Accessed 17-03-2020.

[59] Yau Wai-ching, ''平等權力政策倡議 ,''https://www.facebook.com/YauWaiChing/videos/vb.225215537858370/256961918017065/?type=2&theater, Accessed 17-03-2020

[60] Yau Wai-ching, ''土地房屋政策倡議,'' https://www.facebook.com/YauWaiChing/videos/vb.225215537858370/251440028569254/?type=2&theater, Accessed 17-03-2020.

[61] Yau Wai-Ching, ''退休保障政策倡議,'' https://www.facebook.com/youngspiration/posts/1017262781698690, Accessed 17-03-2020.

[62] Varsity, 'The New Localists,''' http://varsity.com.cuhk.edu.hk/index.php/2016/11/political_localism_legco/2/?singlepage=1, Accessed 18-03-2020

[63] Youngspiration, ''About,'' https://www.facebook.com/pg/youngspiration/about/, Accessed 04-06-2020.

[64] HK Indigenous, ''Info,'' https://www.facebook.com/pg/hkindigenous/about/?ref=page_internal, Accessed 18-03-2020

[65] CNN, ''Hong Kong Independence Activist Edward Leung Jailed for Six Years,'' https://edition.cnn.com/2018/06/11/asia/edward-leung-hong-kong-jailed-intl/index.html, Accessed 18-03-2020.

Additionally, the party is known for its harsh anti-mainland and anti-immigration statements.[66]

The party's anti-Chineseness combined with their nativist label ''indigenous'' (本土) point

to the fact that the promotion of a Hong Kong national identity is

an important point for Hong Kong Indigenous. While the other parties have

prefered participation in formal politics and online activism, Hong Kong Indigenous, as the

only one of the three, has also established itself as more radical, advocating for independence

and using violent struggle as a means of politics. [67]

Hong Kong Independent Media's stated objective is promoting democratisation,

promoting the development of citizen journalism and the creation of a media that stands firmly

within civil society.[68] The moniker ''independent'' refers not to the media outlet's support for

Hong Kong independence but to the way the website is funded, because it is a non-profit

organisation without any ties to the government, businesses or political parties. While the

media outlet is less directly engaged in identity politics than the aforementioned three political

parties, it too is associated with the promotion of Hong Kong national identity. In a 2014

interview Hong Kong Independent Media's founder, Yincong Ye, noted their engagement with

the ''preserve Star ferry pier'' movement and the demonstrations against ''brainwashing

national citizens' education''.[69] Because these events are closely related to the construction of

Hong Kong national identity, it can be assumed that Hong Kong Independent Media's political

alignment is also somewhat nationalistic.

Finally, a few notes on the groups and their members should be made. While this paper

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[66] Foreign Policy, ''Meet the Man Who Wants to Make Hong Kong a City-State,'' https://foreignpolicy.com/2015/05/18/hong-kong-china-protests-democracy-nativism/, Accessed 18-03-2020.

[67] Foreign Policy, ''Meet the Man.''

[68] Hong Kong Independent Media, ''關於我們,'' https://www.inmediahk.net/about, Accessed 18-03-2020.

[69] The News Lens, ''走過風雨十年,「打不死」的《香港獨立媒體》,'' https://www.thenewslens.com/article/5735, Accessed 20-06-2020.

recognises the diversity of localist thought, it will decide to focus on the common sentiments expressed by localists online. While an analysis of the difference between national identity construction of different localist groups would be a valuable avenue for further research, it leaves the scope of this paper. Although localism can be diverse, (Facebook) membership of the different groups is not exclusive and it is possible that an individual follows multiple localist groups or media outlets on facebook. This means that it is less problematic that this paper will focus on more general localist production of national identity.

Furthermore, I do acknowledge that not all members and commenters on the chosen Facebook groups might be Hong Kongers, by birth or by culture. Since nations are primarily emotional constructs, it could be argued that as long as a person identifies with the Hong Kong nation they can be considered a Hong Konger. I do acknowledge that there is a difference between people who hold a Hong Kong passport and those who do not, but membership of the nation is not restricted to those who have no ties with the state the nation belongs to, only nationality is. Furthermore, because this paper adopts a mixed method approach with a quantitative aspect, only those nationalistic comments that return frequently will eventually be subjected to a qualitative analysis. It is therefore less likely that statements that go against the grain cloud the results of my analysis.

Analysis

Anti-Mainland discourse

Of the 291 Facebook comments that I classified as being nationalist, the second largest group, with 62 comments, consists of comments expressing an ''anti-mainland sentiments''. It should be noted that more than half of the anti-mainland comments (37) were found in the comment sections on Hong Kong Indigenous' Facebook page, a group that can be characterised as radical and anti-immigration. Hong Kong Indigenous is responsible for a disproportionate amount of

comments in relation to the size of its following. While Hong Kong Indigenous makes up only 18% of the total amount of followers of the four groups this paper analyses, around 51% of the comments in this category come from discussions on their Facebook page.

Comments in this category contain statements that express animosity towards Mainland Chinese people and culture. The majority of the anti-mainland comments are comments insulting the mainland Chinese through derogatory statements (19) and racist slurs (27), while anti-immigration sentiments (9) are relatively less common. The remaining 7 comments are harder to categorise but include statements critical of Mainland Chinese people's impact on the Hong Kong housing market.

The group of racial slurs can further be subdivided into three groups: statements containing the word *Zhina* (支那) or variations thereof, which account for the majority of the racial slurs with 17 comments, comments using the word ''locust'' (蝗蟲), which appeared seven times, and the word livestock (畜牲), which was the least occurring racial slur, only being expressed three times.

By utilising derogatory labels to describe another group of people, the group utilising those labels can make a distinction between the two groups. In the case of the Hong Kong national identity, this means that Othering the Mainland Chinese can serve as a way to construct Hong Kong national identity. The racial slurs and xenophobia found in the comments on posts in localist Facebook pages engage in othering because they denigrate and dehumanise Mainland Chinese, thereby constructing the Hong Kong identity as superior.

It should be noted that *Zhina* itself is, denotatively, not a derogatory term. Its connotative significance, however, is seen by some Mainland Chinese as derogatory because

of its association with Japanese imperialism and militarism during the 20th century.[70] The term itself derives from the name of the Qin, the dynasty which is seen as the first to establish a unified China. Fogel describes how in the modern era the term was used both by some Chinese themselves and by many Japanese.[71] During the modern era when nationalism was introduced in Japan and China and when Japanese militarism caused Japanese political influence to expand across East Asia, the term was viewed in a much more negative light.[72]

The group that found most offense with the term *Zhina* were Chinese nationalists who felt that the term was used intentionally to marginalise Chinese nationalism and the use of their prefered toponym: *Zhonghua Minguo* (中華民國).[73] The character *zhong*, central, is problematic for any nation state that considers itself to be equal to other nation states, especially for one that went to a lengthy and arduous process of reformation in order to be accepted as equal by the rest of the international community. As such, Japanese nationalists disliked the term *Zhonghua Minguo* and instead prefered the, at least at the time, more neutral *Shina,* the Japanese pronunciation of *Zhina*, which helped Japan construct its national identity as equal member of the international community by refusing to accept China's claims of centrality.[74] The fact that the Japanese did not use the term *Zhonghua Minguo* to denote the new Chinese state was seen as cultural imperialism and was, in fact, deemed so offensive that the Chinese government demanded that the word *Shina* would cease to be used by the Japanese government after the Second World War.[75]

The history of the term *Zhina* as tool against Chinese nationalism is interesting in the case of Hong Kong nationalism. The increasing influence of Mainland Chinese politics,

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[70] SMCP, ''The C-word: Why Hong Kong Localists Have Offended all Chinese,'' https://www.scmp.com/week-asia/opinion/article/2040978/c-word-why-hong-kong-localists-have-offended-all-chinese. Accessed 23-04-2020.
[71] Joshua A. Fogel, *Between China and Japan* (Leiden: Brill, 2015): 25 and 28.
[72] Ibid, 29.
[73] Fogel, *Between China*, 30.
[74] Ibid, 35.
[75] Ibid, 42-43.

economics and culture into Hong Kong, which is extremely unpopular among Hong Kong localists, as the analysed Facebook comments demonstrate, is closely connected to Chinese nationalism and its desire to restore ''national unity''[76], the reunification of the other Han-Chinese dominated areas historically associated with China: Hong Kong, Taiwan and Macau. The term *Zhina* can serve as a tool of resistance against Chinese nationalism's integrationist aims because it draws from a discourse that is critical of the claims of Chinese nationalism, especially those relating to China's centrality. Although it should not be taken for granted that *Zhina*'s history as Japanese tool of resistance against Chinese nationalism, is known among all Hong Kong localists, it is likely to suppose that they do understand how the term can be used against China's claim to centrality through the term *Zhongguo* (中国), since Cantonese and Mandarin share an almost similar script.

Additionally, the usage of the term also has a history in Hong Kong localist politics. During the oath-taking ceremony in 2016 Yau Wai-ching, a prospective legislation member representing Youngspiration, used the term instead of the English word ''China''. This led to her removal from the legislature. As such the term also functions as a symbol of resistance against the increasing influence of the PRC in Hong Kong.

As for the construction of national identity through the term *Zhina,* the way Hong Kong localists can do that is a similar to how the Japanese constructed a national identity through using the term *Shina*. In the case of Hong Kong, the use of *Zhina* as alternative to China's current official toponym, *Zhonghua renmin gongheguo* (中华人民共和国), has even more symbolic power than it had in the Japanese case. *Zhonghua* (中华) not only refers to China's centrality, but *hua* (华) also refers to the Han Chinese, who the Hong Kongers are part of. The name *Zhonghua*

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renmin gongheguo refers therefore to the ''national unity'' which is to be achieved by integrating Hong Kong more completely into the PRC.

Refusing to use the term *Zhonghua* and instead using the term *Zhina* in online discussions on the high-speed railway and sea bridge, is a way to undermine the integrationist aims of these infrastructures by de-emphasising the ethnic aspect of the PRC. By refusing to identify with the category of Han Chineseness, Hong Kong localists envision the Hong Kong nation as different from the Mainland Chinese. This is a way to justify the existence of a Hong Kong national identity, which is an important part of national identity construction.

Where the `Zhina` discourse helps justifying a Hong Kong national identity, the locust (蝗蟲) discourse helps construct its characteristics by differentiating Hong Kongers from Mainland Chinese. The term locust has been used by Hong Kong localists since 2010, when it was first used on an online tech forum where localism was often discussed.[77] The most notable occurrence of the term in public discourse was in 2012, when a Hong Kong newspaper published an advertisement featuring an enormous locust sitting on a rock looking out over Hong Kong. The accompanying text proclaimed to Mainland Chinese that Hong Kongers would no longer accept the way Mainland Chinese tourists were behaving in Hong Kong.[78] The locust discourse views the Mainland Chinese as an invading force buying up all products, both essential goods such as baby formula and consumption goods, and crowding out Hong Kongers in healthcare, education and the real estate market.[79] Additionally, Mainlanders are being accused of behaving themselves rudely

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[77] Barry Sautman and Hairong Yan, *Localists and Locusts in Hong Kong: Creating a Yellow-Red Peril Discourse* (Baltimore: University of Maryland School of Law, 2015): 3.
[78] Ibid, 2-3.
[79] Carl Jones, ''Lost in China? Mainlandisation and Resistance in post-1997 Hong Kong,'' *Taiwan in Comparative Perspective* 5 (July 2014): 22.

and unhygienically in Hong Kong, with one common accusation being open defecation.[80] The locust discourse, therefore, includes both a feeling of superiority over the mainland Chinese by dehumanising them, and feelings of anxiety due to the sparse nature of resources.

The infrastructure projects could exacerbate the problems Mainland Chinese are seen to be responsible for by increasing the amount of Chinese tourists in Hong Kong. Reaching Hong Kong from Mainland China has been made more convenient for Mainland Chinese of all social backgrounds to visit Hong Kong. If an increase in the amount of visitors is indeed a consequence of the construction of these infrastructure projects, then it is to be expected that the prices of many commodities will rise because of the increasing demand. For many Hong Kongers, especially those of lower socio-economic background, this could mean that their access to important goods and services is made more difficult.

The use of the locust discourse in discussions on these infrastructure projects frames the Chinese not only as Others, but also as a group that is dangerous for Hong Kong society by ''stealing'' the property of the Hong Kongers and leaving the locals empty-handed. The Hong Kong economy and its goods and services are thereby ''nationalised'', they are imagined to be the rightful property of the Hong Kongers. Similarly, the locust discourse also criticises consumption patterns of Mainland Chinese. While the Hong Kong consumers are seen to ''consume'' and ''need'', Mainland Chinese consumers are seen to '''horde'' and ''steal''.

That Mainland Chinese are seen to be both inferior and dangerousness at the same time, can reflect the fact that Hong Kong's relative economic status vis-à-vis Mainland China has decreased. Mainland China's economy and the purchasing power of its consumers has grown tremendously, while, real wages and social mobility in Hong Kong have both decreased since the beginning of this millenium, making Hong Kong society is among the world's most unequal

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[80] Ibid.

and limiting the access its members have towards a number of goods and services.[81] Jones, in fact, ascribes the current anti-Mainland feelings in Hong Kong to the fact that Hong Kongese economy is no longer the stronger of the two.[82]

The increasing economic interaction that the infrastructure can further upset this relationship. Using the locust discourse is a way to ignore this changing social reality, by dehumanising Mainland Chinese, and instead, reinforce the notion that Hong Kongers are culturally and economically superior to Mainland Chinese, thereby reproducing it as an important aspect of Hong Kong's national identity.

Anti   **CCP**

The most frequently used category of nationalist comments on localist Facebook comment sections is the one containing statements criticising the CCP or Chinese politics in general. 170 comments of the 291 nationalist statements belong to this category. The largest contributor to this number is the media outlet Hong Kong Independent Media, where 62 of the 170 comments were found. Being the Facebook page with the most amount of followers by far, having between 3.5 (Demosisto) and 10.5 (Youngspiration) times as many followers as the other groups in this analysis, it is not surprising that Hong Kong Independent Media's users contribute the most in absolute terms to this category. What is more surprising, is that Demosisto contributes the most to this category in relative terms. In discussions on that Facebook page, anti-CCP comments appeared 47 times, making up around 28% of the total amount of anti-CCP comments, which is more than their share of the total amount of comments, which is only 15%.

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[81] Sautman and Yan, *Localists and Locusts,* 13-14.
[82] Jones, ''Lost in China,'' 22-23.

Of the 170 anti-CCP comments, the largest group of comments, consisting of 48 comments, talks about possible military threats Hong Kong faces from the PRC. Only nine of the comments in this subcategory talk about a general Chinese military threat, while the remaining 39 specifically talk about the Guangzhou-Hong Kong high-speed train and its potential to serve as troop transport for the People's Liberation Army. Four of these comments refer to the situation in Tibet and Xinjiang, areas with notable minority nationalism movements, a large presence of security personnel and political repression.

Another large subcategory consists of comments critical of the juxtaposed controls (一地兩檢) which will allow Mainland customs officers to perform customs and document controls in Hong Kong territory. This means that Mainland jurisdiction is extended to Hong Kong territory, which according to critics is in violation of the Basic Law's "One country two systems" principle.[83] This comments in this category have appeared 29 times in discussions on Facebook.

The last large group of comments is the one containing comments discussing the increasing influence of the Chinese political system on Hong Kong politics and the influence of the CCP on the Hong Kongese government. Together, this group is featured in 28 comments, 15 criticising the influence the CCP has on the Hong Kongese government and 13 talking about the Chinese political system. The last coherent category is comments criticising PRC president Xi Jinping but this category consists of only five comments and is therefore of lesser importance. The remainder of the a comments in the broader anti-CCP category, 40 in total,

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[83] SMCP, Why Hong Kong's high-speed rail link sparks doubts about 'one country, two systems'," https://www.scmp.com/comment/letters/article/2163225/why-hong-kongs-high-speed-rail-link-sparks-doubts-about-one-country, Accessed 28-05-2020.

consists of comments referring to the CCP more generally, including a number of comments (10) that are general insults to the CCP.

Anti-CCP discourse constructs national identity through the mobilisation of individuals for culturally distinct institutions and the promotions of these institutions' culturally distinct political values. As shown in the literature review above, Hechter sees national identity formation as a process of creating culturally appropriate institutions. Although it may sometimes be hard to distinguish between Hong Kongese and Chinese ethnic culture because of shared cultural characteristics, the political culture of the two ethnic groups differs greatly, as shown in a survey demonstrating that the degrees to which Hong Kongers identified with ''political China'' and ''cultural China'', differed greatly.[84] This means that it is possible that the Hong Kongers, especially the localists, have difficulty accepting (aspects of) the Chinese political system because they are not in accordance with local cultural values. Indeed, Yew and Kwong argue that, politically, the Hong Kong national identity differs from the Chinese one in terms of a ''sense of entitlement in politics'' and animosity towards the CCP.[85]

A large part of the anti-CCP comments reveals anxiety over the state of Hong Kong's institutions. Twenty-eight of the comments explicitly mention the looming threat of the increasing influence of the Chinese political system and the subversion of Hong Kong government by the CCP. The 48 comments warning for increased military presence refer to the erosion of the character of Hong Kong institutions less directly, but the implication of these comments is that the Chinese army comes together with the Chinese political system. The threat of the two infrastructure projects to Hong Kong's institutions features therefore clearly in localist discourse.

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[84] Chi Kit Chan, ''China as Other,'' 30-31.
[85] Chiew Ping Yew, and Kin-Ming Kwong, ''Hong Kong Identity on the Rise,'' *Asian Survey* 54, no. 6 (November/December 2014): 1095.

The literature review above discussed Hechter's work on the relation between culturally specific institutions and nationalism. He states that nationalism is in fact the promotion of these culturally specific institutions.[86] Using Hechter's characterisation of nationalism, the anti-CCP discourse that can be found in localist Facebook discussions can be considered nationalistic because the native institutions are envisioned as being threatened by a foreign political actor who is seen as wanting to alter the nation's institutions.

This foreign political actor, the CCP, is seen to be brought into Hong Kong by the high-speed rail and sea bridge in a few different ways. Firstly, localist comments reveal that the influence of the CCP is seen to be brought into the policy making process surrounding the infrastructure projects. Additionally, a military threat is seen to be substantiated by the high-speed rail, which is seen as having the purpose of serving as troop carrier. The worries about the imagined military invasion are that the army would come to install PRC law in Hong Kong or to quell political uprisings like it did in 1989 during the Tiananmen massacre. Finally, the CCP's laws are thought to be brought into Hong Kong by the introduction of juxtaposed controls. All of instances are examples of ways in which infrastructure projects are seen to help undermine Hong Kong's political institutions and their culturally distinct political values.

By invoking the discourse of a foreign threat, anti-CCP discourse constructs an image of Hong Kong politics as separate and different from Mainland Chinese politics. This is done by contrasting, albeit it only by implication, the dominant political norms and values of the PRC with those of Hong Kong. This narrative promotes Hong Kong political values and uses them to construct the Hong Kong national identity because they are something that sets the Hong Kong nation apart from the Chinese.

Additionally, Kim and Ng have found that uncertainties can push individuals to increasingly identify with a single identity, rather than with multiple identities

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[86] Hechter, *Containing Nationalism*, 22-23.

simultaneously.[87] The threat narrative therefore also works to construct the relations between Hong Kongers and Mainland Chinese as polarised. The polarisation combined with the othering, not only constructs Hong Kong political values as identity markers, it also promotes them as being salient at the same time.

It should be pointed out that just criticising the government alone is not enough for a statement to be classified as nationalist. Many of the comments found in the comment sections of the four Facebook groups were critical of the Hong Kong government but those comments did not incorporate any references to the Hong Kong nation as a collectivity with shared values or a cultural or political Other, and can therefore not be considered nationalistic. Rather, those comments will simply be considered as being critical of the Hong Kong government. Comments that refer to the CCP in any way, can be considered nationalistic, because by referring to the presence of the CCP, these comments introduce an Other against whom Hong Kong's political values can be projected, thereby constructing Hong Kong national identity.

Hong Kong Money

The smallest category of nationalistic comments, which was still featured enough to merit analysis in this paper, uses economic discourse to produce nationalism. In total there are 38 comments that belong to this category. Only four of them talk about the Hong Kong economy, while the rest of them (34) discusses the economic means and welfare of the Hong Kong people. 40% of the comments in this category came from Hong Kong Independent Media, which, again, is no surprise since this is the group with the largest amount of followers so it is to be expected that they make up a larger share of the total amount of comments in each category.

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[87] Jungsik Kim, and Sik Hung Ng, ''Perceptions of Social Changes and Social Identity: Study Focusing on Hong Kong Society after Reunification,'' *Asian Journal of Social Psychology* 11 (2008): 238.

What is more interesting is that, Youngspiration is overrepresented in this category, with around 21% of the comments coming from discussions on their Facebook page. This is remarkable because Youngspiration followers make up only 6% of amount of followers of all the groups in this analysis combined. One possible reason for Youngspiration's overrepresentation in this category could be their progressive stance on socio-economic topics as noted in the methodology section.

The main sentiment that is being communicated in comments talking about Hong Konger's money, is how it is being stolen or plundered in order to be wasted on the two infrastructure projects. The construction process of the high-speed rail was characterised by budget revisions which were received critically by Hong Kongers. The original cost of the high-speed rail was estimated at 39.8 billion Hong Kong dollars but the eventual price tag was 84.4 billion Hong Kong dollars.[88] Likewise, the sea bridge also experienced a budget revision which raised the price of the structure by about a third, so that the final cost would be 48 billion yuan.[89] Because the two infrastructure projects can be seen to be part of an integrationist strategy, Hong Kong localists do not support them, but as Hong Kong taxpayers, they were forced to help finance them, which created a lot of resentment.

Although these comments can be seen as simply being critical of government expenditures, they can be categorised as nationalistic because they refer to the Hong Kongers as a collective. This is done by either referring to them as taxpayers, emphasising

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[88] SMCP, ''After 8 Years in The Making, The Guangzhou-Shenzhen-Hong Kong Express Rail Link Will Open. Here Are The Issues on Its Bumpy Ride,'' https://www.scmp.com/news/hong-kong/hong-kong-economy/article/2164872/after-8-years-making-guangzhou-shenzhen-hong-kong, Accessed 26-05-2020.

[89] SMCP, ''World's Longest Sea Crossing Is Finally Finished, But Hong Kong-Zhuhai-Macau Bridge Has Come at A High Cost,'' https://www.scmp.com/news/hong-kong/transport/article/2169199/decade-deaths-and-delays-worlds-longest-sea-crossing, Accessed 26-05-2020.

their shared responsibilities as citizens of the same state, or more strongly, by calling them Hong Kongers and thereby stressing their shared origins. At the same time, the term Hong Konger (香港人) can also be an exclusionary term. While the term Hong Kongers itself is not overtly nationalist, it can be seen as a more ethnically charged variant, with Hong Kong resident (香港市民) being more inclusive.

As for the construction of national identity based on money, it should be noted that money has played a role in the construction of Hong Kong identities since before these recent infrastructure projects were built. In the past, however, it has been used to construct a completely different identity than the one for which it is used now. Matthews, Ma and Lui explain the ontological power of money in Hong Kong society by pointing out that Hong Kong has been facing a situation of ontological insecurity ever since the 1950s when China became a communist republic.[90] While Mainland China was closed off to the outside world and problematic to identify with for many Hong Kongers because of its Maoist ideology, Great Britain deemphasised its cultural links with Hong Kong for fear of increasing immigration from Hong Kong to Britain.[91] Because of this, Hong Kong had nowhere to turn to for a sense of cultural belonging. In those uncertain times, money offered a sense of stability and security, especially to the many mainland Chinese refugees in Hong Kong, who were being more and more integrated in Hong Kong society.[92]

As the Hong Kong economy was rapidly developing and internationalising, money made it possible for Hong Kongers to identify with the world economy as cosmopolitan citizens, instead of identifying with any particular state.[93] This identification with a globalised

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[90] Matthews, Ma, and Lui, *Learning to Belong*, 9.
[91] Ibid.
[92] Ibid, 17.
[93] Ibid, 15.

consumer culture was however a selective identification. While there were many cultural sources Hong Kongers could identify with, such as elements from Southeast Asian cultures which were and still are well represented in Hong Kong, cultural influences from developed and Western countries were eventually most influential in Hong Kong society.[94]

Xu identified a so-called ''Hong Kong dream'' discourse that closely ties into this cosmopolitanism. She identifies the Hong Kong dream as being composed of three different aspects: the ability to experience change in Hong Kong, the internationalised environment, and Hong Kong as highly developed city.[95] All these aspects of the Hong Kong dream are made possible by the presence of money and capital. Money, therefore, became central to one of Hong Kong's cultural characteristics, even if those characteristics deemphasizes the importance of the local identity over the importance of the global identity.

Hong Kong's economy has suffered from instability in the post-handover era, however, and this situation of financial insecurity has led to a wave of ''post-materialism'' in Hong Kong society. Issues like environmental and cultural protection, which were sometimes in opposition to the neo-liberal growth first imperative became more important and were instrumental for promoting local identity.[96] This can be explained by Hechter's theory that ''group formation'' and the subsequent identity construction usually takes places in situations of uncertainty and insecurity.[97]

The faltering economy and the deteriorating socio-economic situation for many Hong Kongers also exposed the weak fundamentals of the Hong Kong dream. More recently, the infrastructure projects have contributed to this uncertainty in two ways: first, it threatens the socio-economic prospects of many Hong Kongers by increasing the amount of Mainland

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[94] Gordon Mathews, and Tai-lok Lui, *Consuming Hong Kong* (Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 2001), 300.
[95] Cora Lingling Xu, ''When the Hong Kong Dream Meets the Anti-Mainlandisation Discourse: Mainland Chinese Students in Hong Kong,'' *Journal of Current Chinese Affairs* 44, no.3 (2015): 21-24.
[96] Yew and Kwong, ''Hong Kong Identity,'' 1098-1099.
[97] Hechter, *Containing Nationalism*, 20-21.

Chinese in Hong Kong, which has the potential to increase prices and the amount of competition Hong Kongers face on the labour market. Secondly, it threatens the Hong Kong national identity through the integration it promotes.

Suddenly, Hong Kong's cosmopolitan identity seemed less suited to address the ontological insecurity that lies at the core of the Hong Kong society. The strong economic well being and weak connection to overarching states the Hong Kong dream relies on, could no longer be taken for granted. The Hong Kong dream discourse and the cosmopolitan identity it promotes had become outdated and formed an obstacle for localists who wanted to create a Hong Kong national identity based on Hong Kongese characteristics. For this purpose, money's ontological power has been reappropriated and applied to a new context.

Talking about how ''hard working Hong Kongers'' are being robbed by the government in order to finance these infrastructure projects is a way to resist the cosmopolitan Hong Kong dream discourse and replace it with a national identity discourse. The emphasis on the Hong Kongeseness of money goes against the Hong Kong dream discourse and its cosmopolitanism by focusing on the national instead of global, and it serves to underscore the contrasts between the Hong Kong nation and integrationist Chinese nationalism which is promoted through the infrastructure projects these comments are about. At the same time, by using terms such as wasted, these comments resist these infrastructure projects by implying that they are useless for the Hong Kongers. This justifies the existence of a national identity and sets the stage for its consequent construction.

Hechter points out that in essence nation forming, just like any group formation, is a process of pooling individual resources.[98] In this context the money that is being pooled is the ''hard earned money of the Hong Kongers'' that is being used for infrastructure projects. This money is not literally being pooled, at least not by the commenters on Facebook, but

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[98] Hechter, *Containing Nationalism*, 19-20.

figuratively by envisioning it as collective resource. This not only constructs the Hong Kong nation as a group, it also differentiates it from the Chinese nation through Othering by drawing a boundary between the members and the non-members of the collective.

What makes this discourse so powerful is that the identity markers it constructs through Othering have the potential to be among the most salient identity markers of the Hong Kong identity because of their implications for an individual's welfare. In this scenario, money is made even more salient as identity marker because it is connected with the high-speed rail and sea bridge infrastructure projects which themselves have strong implications for Hong Konger's welfare through the aforementioned economic changes they can present.

Conclusion

Like all nationalisms in the world Hong Kong nationalism is the product of a process of invention and creation. Where other nationalisms succeeded in creating an identity made up out of cultural characteristics that differentiate it from the identity of other nations, Hong Kong nationalists have struggled to construct an identity that draws from a repertoire of characteristics that are imagined to be unique to Hong Kong. As a result, national identity construction in Hong Kong by localists is primarily based on othering vis-à-vis everything Mainland Chinese. This is however done by making appeals to specific Hong Kong values; Hong Kong society is seen to be a developed, sophisticated, liberal democracy loving group of people, while the Mainland Chinese are envisioned as backwards, plundering, subhuman horde whose political leaders aim to destroy the Hong Kong political system and its democratic values.

By framing the identity construction in localist discussions as nationalist, this paper introduces a new way to conceptualise a possible Hong Kong identity. Although this paper's findings are an important first step into increasing our understanding of how localists construct

national identity, they are only one step. Since the completion of the two infrastructure projects this paper analysed, there have been a number of events, such as the 2019 demonstrations and the outbreak of the coronavirus, that heightened the tensions between the PRC and large parts of Hong Kong society, including Hong Kong localists. It would be interesting to see if the discourse on national identity has changed in discussions on these events. Additionally, more research is needed in order to get a more complete overview of Hong Kong national identity. Especially more research into the role of culture in the construction of Hong Kong national identity is needed, because it was conspicuously absent in the localist discussions this paper analysed.

Because of the absence of cultural characteristics as elements of the Hong Kong national identity, its construction relies heavily on Othering. One of the problems of basing one's identity predominantly on Othering, is that as the relations between the Other and the Self change, so should the identity of the Self. If not, the Self identity becomes increasingly unrealistic, which can lead to ontological insecurity that risks undermine the identity in question. To a certain extent this is already happening in Hong Kong; while Mainland Chinese have been envisioned as backward because of China's low level of economic development, recently the tables have turned against the Hong Kongers whose relative economic standing vis-à-vis the Mainland Chinese has changed dramatically since the 1990's because of the PRC's rapid economic development and Hong Kong's socio-economic stagnation/decline. How are Hong Kongers supposed to identify with an identity that is becoming increasingly unrealistic?

While it is not uncommon for national identities to be criticised, such as the myth of equality in the United States[99] or the importance of tolerance in Dutch politics and society[100], it is not common for this to happen. Both the United States and the Netherlands have a well established national identity as the result of a long history of nationalism, being two prime examples of Hobsbawm's ''Revolutionary Nations''. This means that it is easier for members of these societies to question their national identities without ontological insecurity being a great risk. Additionally, both nations are sovereign and have an independent state, which means that their national identities have limited implications for individual's welfare, because the amount of cultural division of labour is limited.

Hong Kongese nationalism is different in these regards: not only is the national identity not well established and accepted by a relatively small percentage of the population[101], the Hong Kong national identity also has great implications for individuals' welfare since there is a cultural division of labour and Hong Kong enjoys different political rights. Because of this, it will be difficult for Hong Kong nationalists to criticise and transform the existing national identity discourse in the face of an increasingly problematic national identity. The result may be that it will be increasingly difficult for individuals to identify with the Hong Kong national identity.

Another problem that makes this difficult is the fact that Hong Kong nationalism is extremely hostile towards Chineseness. A large number of Hong Kongers that identify as Chinese are therefore unlikely to identify with the Hong Kong national identity, not to mention the many Mainland Chinese who immigrate to Hong Kong. While Mainland Chinese have been incorporated in Hong Kong society in the past despite anti-Chineseness, which has been a

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[99] Michael B. Katz, Mark J. Stern, and Jamie J. Fader, ''The New African American Inequality,'' *The Journal of American History* 92, no. 1 (Juni 2005): 76-77.
[100] Trouw, ''Geert Wilders Past Goed in de Traditie van Tolerantie in Nederland,'' https://www.trouw.nl/nieuws/geert-wilders-past-goed-in-de-traditie-van-tolerantie-in-nederland~bf6ae86d/?referer=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.google.com%2F, Accessed 02-05-2020.
[101] HKU POP, ''HKU POP Final Farewell.''

feature in Hong Kong national identity discourse since the 1960s , criticism of Chineseness was largely restricted to the domains of politics and economic development. Now, however, the criticism is becoming increasingly ethnicised, making it that much harder for Chinese Hong Kongers to become part of the Hong Kong nation.

These two problems may be difficult but important obstacles to overcome for localist politicians and citizens. A nation demands strong loyalty from its followers and it has the potential to be the strongest collective around which individuals can be rallied. As such, it can be extremely useful for localists to appropriate nationalism in order to use it as a tool to gather support in their struggle to defend Hong Kong against Mainlandisation. If a national identity becomes too unappealing however, this may be highly difficult. Therefore, in order for the Hong Kong national identity to be an attractive alternative to the Chinese national identity and to garner support throughout Hong Kong society, it is important that the Hong Kong national identity incorporates more characteristics of local culture, instead of existing solely as mirror's image of China.

Constructing a national identity, however, is an extremely difficult process, especially in situations of peripheral nationalism, when cultural distinctions can be limited. This however raises an interesting question: If the quest for a Hong Kong national identity is such a difficult process and the result is a national identity that is highly polarising, even within localist circles, as evidenced by the fact that a large percentage of the Anti-Mainland comments in this analysis came from smaller localist groups, is nationalism really the right tool for Hong Kong localists?

Even if we do not know the answer to this question, asking it underscores the importance of nations for the way we view the world once again. Even if there are some factors that would suggest that nationalism is potentially not the best suited tool to resist Mainlandisation, people keep being drawn to it like a moth to a flame. Despite years of globalisation, regionalisation and increasing interconnectedness, nationalism is far from dead.

Once the pandora's box of nationalism had been opened, a world where the influence of nationalism is not visible anywhere in the world, is a utopia, or a dystopia depending on who you ask.

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