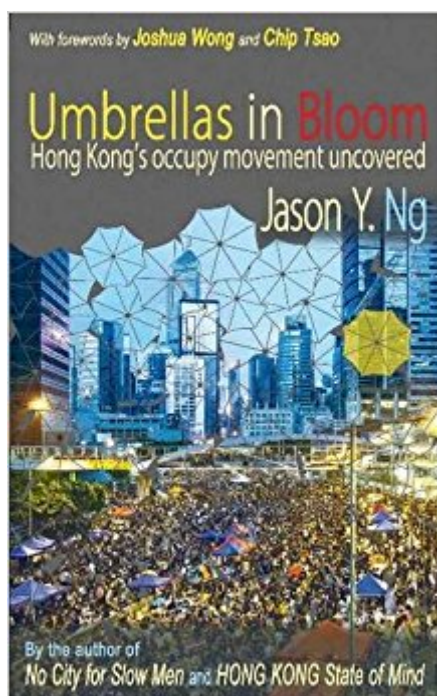


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# Umbrellas In Bloom: Hong Kong's Occupy Movement Uncovered



## Synopsis

The Umbrella Movement put Hong Kong on the world map and elevated this docile, money-minded Asian island to a model for pro-democracy campaigns across the globe. *Umbrellas in Bloom* is the first book available in English to chronicle this history-making event, written by a bestselling author and columnist based on his firsthand experience at the main protest sites. Jason Y. Ng takes a no-holds-barred, fly-on-the-wall approach to covering politics. His latest offering steps through the 79-day struggle, from the firing of the first shot of tear gas by riot police to the evacuation of the last protester from the downtown encampments. It is all you need to know about the occupy movement: who took part in it, why it happened, how it transpired, and what it did and did not achieve. Together with *HONG KONG State of Mind* (2010) and *No City for Slow Men* (2013), *Umbrellas in Bloom* forms Ng's "Hong Kong Trilogy" that traces the city's sociopolitical developments since its return to Chinese rule.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

The umbrella flowers blossomed and withered. Ng captures the lifecycle of the occupy movement with compassion and wit. (Benny Tai, co-founder of Occupy Central with Love and Peace) There is no greater tour guide to the Umbrella campgrounds than Ng – he offers a vivid and comprehensive account of the pro-democracy movement and a city in transition. *Umbrellas in Bloom* is a definitive compendium of on-the-ground reporting, timelines, maps, photographs, illustrations, a glossary, and a who's-who of Hong Kong's politics. (Tom Grundy, editor-in-chief Hong Kong Free Press) Ng's authoritative account of the occupy movement is compelling and full of

surprises. He combines a journalist's precision with a Hong Konger's passionate heart. (Zeb Eckert Bloomberg Television) Insightful, accessible, and a hugely enjoyable read, *Umbrellas in Bloom* is jam-packed with eureka moments. The movement in all its vibrancy jumps off every page. It is essential reading for anybody wanting to understand the existential crisis currently engulfing Hong Kong. (Matthew Torne, director of *Lessons in Dissent*) The Umbrella Movement was a seminal moment in Hong Kong's history. This skillful blending of personal narrative and analysis represents a vital contribution to understanding what happened and indeed what might happen next. (Stephen Vines, author of "Hong Kong: China's New Colony")

Jason Y. Ng is a lawyer, blogger and newspaper columnist who has lived in Europe, the US and Canada as well as his native Hong Kong.

I've read one of Jason's previous books (*No City for Slow Men*) and love his style. Having been at the final sight in Causeway Bay a day or so before it was cleared, this book brought that experience to life. Whilst it is a great account of the movement through the author's own experience, the book also gives an accessible and fascinating account of the political functioning of Hong Kong.

I love Jason Y. Ng's books. In both *Hong Kong State of Mind* and *No City for Slow Men*, he established himself as one of Hong Kong's most important essayists, the city's answer to Tom Paine, with his wry observations and emotive writing style. *Umbrellas in Bloom*, the third book in his trilogy, sees Ng take things to a level never before reached, producing what may be one of the most important books in Hong Kong's history. It is clichéd to say that Hong Kong is unique. Yet clichés tend to emerge from truth. Hong Kong's decolonization in 1997 provides us with the only example in history of a supremely successful, economically developed capitalist international finance centre, having its sovereignty transferred to the largest bastion of communism the world has ever known. That this happened so smoothly at the time was in large part due to Deng Xiaoping's "one-country, two-systems" formula embodied in the Basic Law, Hong Kong's mini-constitution which would see Hong Kong being part of China, as one country, but preserving a different legal system and having a high degree of autonomy in its governance. At the heart of the Basic Law and the "one-country, two-systems" principle, is the attempt to reconcile two fundamentally different economic and political systems. On the one hand, we have Hong Kong, built on the principles of

individual choice, freedom of speech, capitalism and judicial independence. On the other hand we have China's communist model, which is adopting its own version of rampant capitalism coupled with never-seen-before GDP growth rates, but it is a system where the state plays a major role and the overriding principles are the Confucian concepts of stability, loyalty, security and control of the many ahead of the individual. Whilst the Basic Law makes a valiant attempt to enable these Western and Chinese versions of capitalism to co-exist, coexistence is not enough. The Basic Law also had the task of addressing the point at which the Two Systems inevitably intersected. That point of unavoidable intersection comes in Article 45 of the Basic Law: the method of electing Hong Kong's Chief Executive. Article 45 tries to integrate the control that the Chinese system demands with the individual voting system Hong Kongers desire. It does this by allowing the Chief Executive to be elected by universal suffrage – one-person/one-vote. But the only candidates who can run for election are those pre-selected by a nominating committee. And by controlling the nominating committee Beijing retains ultimate control. Valiant though the effort is, therefore, what Article 45 seeks to do is reconcile what is, in the end, an irreconcilable contradiction. A clash on the issue was inevitable when it came to the implementation of Article 45 and that clash erupted onto the streets in September 2014 in the form of the Umbrella Movement. To see this clash as just a parochial political issue that only impacts Hong Kong, would be wrong. The coming together of East and West in Hong Kong, between these two diametrically opposed versions of capitalism, is a prelude to the same confrontation which will be played out on the global stage in the coming years as China achieves its superpower status. That is why Ng's book is so important. The ground level view Ng gives us of this historic protest, is what makes this read such an important record. You feel the generational frustration which led to this moment and yet Ng also totally destroys everything you thought you knew about Hong Kong youth. Lacking in creativity because of their rote-learning education system, we were once told. A spoiled generation, brought up by maids and unable to fend for themselves. Only interested in activities that enhance their portfolios, that was how they were portrayed. Ng shows us how the Umbrella Movement completely debunked this image. The chapters on Hong Kong 2.0, Harcourt Academy and the Waterblower's Society offer up some of the most interesting parts of the book. Here, Ng records how the Umbrella Movement showed us what Hong Kong could be if it was only allowed to be. Here are the stories of the individuals who took part and why. This generation of individuals outstrategized the police, won the moral argument, created a logo in the form of the yellow umbrella which went viral and captured the global news cycle in the space of 48 hours. Volunteerism, inclusiveness, inventiveness and a sense of community

(yes, a sense of community in Hong Kong, can you believe it!) were on full display in this protest because of these youngsters. Ng captures this moment with the stories of the individuals who played their part, because he himself was down at the site throughout, tutoring them and getting to know them. This very personal element of the book is what gives it its power. The other aspect worth mentioning is that this book is evidently the result of an impressive level of research which guides us through Hong Kong's needlessly complicated political system, giving the story of the Umbrella Movement the depth it truly deserves. Finally, like any impressive commentator, Ng does not shy away from opinion or looking to the future and putting the Umbrella Movement in that context. Sadly, he is being proved right about the increased radicalization which has since rent the city asunder and seen the rise of nativism. That said, the impact which the Umbrella Movement had on Ng's own thinking (and he is not alone in this), will leave readers with the sense that perhaps an optimistic outcome may still be a possibility. All in all, then, a great read, an important book and a complete must for the bookshelves of anyone interested in Hong Kong and China.

Two years ago the main thoroughfare in Hong Kong was taken over by student protestors and other residents who wanted change in Hong Kong's political system. Imagine Fifth Avenue in New York a pedestrian-only street littered with tents and squatters for more than two months. That's what Hong Kong looked like in the autumn of 2014. Nineteen years ago Britain gave Hong Kong back to China after ruling the territory since the 1840s. Before the Handover took place in 1997, the PRC and Britain signed an agreement called the Joint Declaration, which called for a Basic Law that would lay out the terms for Hong Kong's first 50 years as a Chinese Special Administrative Region. This system is commonly referred to "one country, two systems", and it was to last until 2047. Since the Handover, Hong Kong residents have felt like China has been whittling away the rights Hong Kong people were promised in the Basic Law. Two issues were at the heart of the Occupy Movement in 2014, also called the Umbrella Movement: democratic elections for legislators and the chief executive, or governor of Hong Kong. Jason Y Ng was at the center of the Occupy Movement, as he set up a free tutoring center on the street at night. He got to know many of the protestors and why they left school and their jobs to protest for democratic reforms. Ng's book is so compelling because he explains the issues at the heart of the movement and weaves that into his own experiences and that of the other protestors he gets to know. I felt like his assessment of the political climate was as objective as it could be given that he was a participant in the Umbrella Movement. He doesn't support independence from China and showed later in the book why the protest came apart after

two months. I highly recommend this book for anyone who is familiar with Hong Kong politics or is interested in learning more about it.

Amazing book with detailed coverage and analysis of the Umbrella Movement - more than any other I've read. An extremely important read for everyone, including Americans who are facing a similar crisis today.

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