

Executive Summary

Vision is an important navigation tool for any organization, in that it enables each member to reach the goal that is set out in the vision. According to the United Nations, there are various values that governments can use to shape vision for policies, including: enhancing the commitment of decision makers; building capacity for new knowledge in the public sector that have the involvement of different stake-holders¹. In the long term, it would be beneficial for the sustainable development within society and the good governance in government.

Vision points to the future; youth is a driver for any society to develop further. Therefore, youth engagement is imperative when a society talks about vision. Fully understanding the aspirations of its youth for the future, as well as creating an environment leading to a future with hope for them, is the responsibility of government.

In Hong Kong, social incidents and the continuing pandemic have severely affected the governance of the HKSAR Government in recent years, and society has experienced great difficulties. The relationship between the Government and the younger generation has also deteriorated to its lowest level.

Previous Youth I.D.E.A.S. research has shown that the percentage of local youth who do not trust the Government has consistently been at a noticeable level². Young people have a sense of belonging to Hong Kong but a significant number have no hope in its future. In the research interviews, some of the youth expressed a sense of helplessness when observing that some people focused on criticising the damage caused by young people during the social incidents while ignoring the difficulties that lay behind them.

¹ UNPD & CER. (2014). Looking Beyond the Horizon: Guidelines and Best Practices in Formulating National Visions.

² Youth I.D.E.A.S. Improving Operations of Advisory Bodies to Better Facilitate Youth Engagement (Sept 2020); To Stay or To Leave? A Critical Question for Good Governance (Jan 2021).

With the enactment of the National Security Law and the implementation of the principle of patriots administering Hong Kong, it is said that the city has transformed from chaos to stability. However, it is apparent that with many young people feeling disconnected from the Government, it can also be stated that people feel somewhat deflated.

Hong Kong has entered a new stage with the start of the sixth-term of the HKSAR Government. The new Chief Executive mentioned in his election manifesto that he would build a pragmatic administration, “one that is result-oriented and solution-driven; one that is highly effective in governance; and one that always strives to ensure the people of Hong Kong can feel a genuine sense of fulfilment”³. How the new administration assumes its role for better governance, unites society, leads Hong Kong forward, and rebuilds the confidence of the youth etc., are important issues that this sixth-term HKSAR Government should address.

Against this background, this study looks at what young people want for Hong Kong. It hopes to present some insights about what the newly-established administration could do for the youth in the coming years.

In conducting this study, data was collected between March and May 2022 via: an online survey of 1,054 young people (aged 15 to 34); parallel-case interviews with 15 similar individuals; and exclusive interviews with 4 academics and experts.

³ John Lee. 2022. Election Manifesto of Chief Executive Election 2022. STARTING A NEW CHAPTER FOR HONG KONG FOR HONG KONG TOGETHER. 29th April 2022.

Main Discussion

- 1. Vision serves as a navigation tool for society. Hong Kong has experienced severe challenges in recent years, that has left a lingering gloomy atmosphere. With the start of the sixth-term of the HKSAR Government, the new Chief Executive and his governing team should embrace the opportunity to create a new vision for the city to renew hope for its citizens.**

The academics and experts interviewed concluded that the government could improve social cohesion by clearly stating its goals. They referred to three major factors that determine the effectiveness of policy vision in practice: the government has a strategic plan, it can understand social conditions, and has the courage to take actions to realise its goals.

Of the 1,054 young people polled on the online survey, more than 25% considered that the utmost significance for government in creating policy vision is that it could bring hope to citizens (26.8%), or strive for the support of citizens (25.3%). Some of the 15 parallel-case interviews concluded that Hong Kong lacked a common vision at the moment, and the city was in an uncertain stage, which made it difficult to see the future. They urged the HKSAR Government to establish a vision and lead society out of the uncertainty.

The sixth-term of the HKSAR Government has just commenced. The new Chief Executive should embrace the opportunity, of Hong Kong entering a new stage, to demonstrate the courage of his governing team to shape a shared vision of society to bring new hope to its citizens.

- 2. Understand the youths' imagination about the future of Hong Kong society, which has recently witnessed rapid changes. The predicament faced by youth; young peoples' aspirations for their prospects, and Hong Kong's future; and their expectations of the new administration, deserve attention by those who care about the future of the city.**

- 2.1 Less than 40% of respondents are optimistic about their prospects; a significant proportion is pessimistic about Hong Kong's development. In the parallel-case interviews, some express concerns about their**

prospects in Hong Kong.

The top three things that the surveyed young people most want to achieve in 10 years' time are: career success (46.4%), financial freedom (45.7%), and life stability (42.9%). Other possible dreams included being physically and mentally healthy (36.9%), establishing a family (28.7%), and improving residential conditions (19.3%).

Despite this, less than 40% (37.9%) were optimistic about their prospects; close to 45% (44.6%) uncertain. More than 45% (46.9%) were pessimistic about Hong Kong's future development; 18% (17.5%) optimistic, and the remaining 35% (35.7%) were uncertain.

Findings from the parallel-case interviews also noted that respondents were hesitant about their prospects in Hong Kong: (1) Hong Kong's economic development reached a bottleneck, with most of the gains held by the older generation, making it difficult for the younger generation to establish itself. There was a wide gap between effort and reward; the opportunities for the upward mobility of young people had shrunk; (2) The industrial diversity of the city is narrow, and young people needed to give up personal interests or expertise in order to get a place in the market.

Regarding the new Chief Executive's four policy tenets mentioned in his election manifesto, most respondents ranked "providing more housing and better living" as the most important (45.8%). When asked about what social issues that the new administration should address most urgently, close to two-thirds (66.5%) referred to the housing shortage. When asked about what they utmost hoped the new administration would do for the youth, the largest percentage expected it would tackle youth's housing problem (45.0%).

The findings above reflect that although the young people surveyed can imagine their own future, and are willing to work hard for it, they are hesitant about their prospects and they have a negative attitude regarding Hong Kong's future development. What they expect from the new administration is not "pie-in-the-sky" extravagance but to address the same problem that has affected them for a long time. The new

administration needs to address the difficulties that are preventing the youth from pursuing their dreams in life, and the development prospects of the city, so as to regain the confidence of young people.

2.2 Most respondents expect to see Hong Kong as a free, prosperous and stable, and livable city in 10 years' time. The core values that they most want to see in Hong Kong society are: "freedom", "democracy", "rule of law", "human rights" and "inclusion".

Almost 40% of respondents said that they most wanted Hong Kong to be a free city in 10 years' time (38.3%); followed by prosperous and stable (32.4%); and livable (25.2%). These were followed by: caring and harmonious (21.9%); opportunity everywhere (21.5%); cosmopolitan (21.3%); diverse culture (17.8%); sustainable (17.2%).

Regarding the core values that they most wanted to see in Hong Kong society, the largest percentage of respondents said it was "freedom" (59.7%); followed by "democracy" (41.0%), and "rule of law" (35.9%); other values included "human rights" (21.0%) and "inclusion" (18.5%).

Some interviewed youth cases said that in recent years some members of the society had tended to link the words and deeds of dissidents with the National Security Law, which intensified the atmosphere of anxiety in society. To avoid causing trouble for themselves, they dared not express their opinions. They would consider leaving the city if they feel freedom of speech is further eroded.

Some of the interviewed academics and experts pointed out that every city had its ups and downs; and therefore, young people should try to appreciate and discover Hong Kong from different angles, no matter what the city was experiencing.

The Hong Kong society that is felt by the younger generation and their pursuit of its future, is different from that of older generation. All sectors of society should have an open mind to understand the youths' aspirations for Hong Kong's future, and actively consider what aspects could be further developed. This could help maintain the hard-won achievements of Hong Kong society, and at the same time allow the

younger generation to partake in building the city and, in the longer-term, show them that there are some things that are worthwhile to stay for and work on.

2.3 Youth hope the new administration can take public opinion seriously. There are many deep-seated issues in the city that are awaiting a solution. If the new administration could effectively absorb public opinion and make good use of the public's collective wisdom, especially the innovative thinking of the younger generation, it is believed that it could help achieve its stated "result-oriented" approach.

Regarding its governance performance, among the top three things that the respondents most expect from the new administration, two are related to public opinion: actively responding to public opinion (54.4%), and accurately grasping public opinion (32.0%); thirdly, those who expect it to unite all sectors of society to resolve issues (17.2%).

When asked about what they are willing to do for Hong Kong's future, if given the opportunity, more than 20% (23.4%) of the young people surveyed indicated a willingness to use their creativity or professional knowledge. Some 10% (10.4%) were willing to join a community think-tank, while 18% would express opinions on policy (18.0%). Some interviewed cases shared stories of how they made a social impact by altering the inherent thoughts of the participants through arranging activities in community.

The new administration has 15 policy bureaux covering various aspects of public affairs of the city. There are still many deep-seated social problems in Hong Kong. If the new administration could effectively absorb public opinion and make good use of the public's collective wisdom, especially the innovative thinking of the younger generation, it is believed that it could help achieve its stated "result-oriented" approach.

3. Improve opportunities for youth participation. The young people surveyed have a positive attitude towards participating in the building of Hong Kong's future, but they feel that they are neither listened to

nor trusted. The Government and all sectors of society should cherish and support young people's enthusiasm and establish a partnership with them. Aspirational youth could then have a chance to be a positive force for good in building Hong Kong.

3.1 Sixty percent of the respondents believe that they have a stake in the building of Hong Kong's future. Respondents value the importance of hands-on participation, believing that this could foster a greater sense of commitment, and belonging, to the city.

More than 70% (74.3%) of the youth surveyed felt that they have a sense of belonging to Hong Kong, while 18% (18.3%) did not. Sixty percent (59.3%) agreed with the idea that they have a stake in the building of Hong Kong's future, while 28% (27.6%) disagreed.

If given the opportunity, most of the youth surveyed indicated willingness to do something good for Hong Kong's future. The top three most popular choices are: to do their best at all times (47.4%), take on voluntary work (33.8%), and casting their vote in elections (32.4%). There is also a noticeable proportion willing to take part in building the community (20.3%).

In the occasion that there is an opportunity to improve Hong Kong, the largest proportion of respondents would choose to participate in the areas of education/ talent development (32.4%) or medical/ public health (32.2%). Other possible options included housing and town planning (29.2%), mental health (22.4%), environmental protection and sustainable development (18.0%), innovation and technology development (17.7%), and culture and the arts (14.5%).

Some cases interviewed have experience of taking part in community building with proposals they initiated, which brought about positive results. They thought that it could nurture their motivation in building Hong Kong.

An academic interviewed pointed out that the younger generation grows up with the internet, in which users have developed a culture of discussing issues together and proposing joint solutions. The concept of

"co-creation" is already prevalent among the young generation.

Young people are willing to contribute to this city in different ways, and they are especially motivated to participate in community building. The Government and all sectors of society should cherish the aspirations of young people and open up more opportunities for them to participate. It is also worth giving more thought as to how to respond to their expectation in building the ideal community. This could include setting the scope of the areas to be developed, and expand the concepts of co-creation and co-ownership that could help effectively engage young people.

3.2 Young people have a commitment to building Hong Kong, but they do not think they are listened to or trusted.

There are governments overseas that attach great importance to developing mutual trust through partnerships with young people. This is achieved through the design of organisational structures within their system or via related measures. Examples of this are by regularly grasping the concerns of the new generation about the future of society through surveys, and promoting cooperation, between government, business and community residents, to put the projects initiated by young people into practice.

The survey showed that 67% (66.6%) of respondents thought the administration did not trust young people; 51% (51.3%) thought the public did not trust young people; and 64% (63.6%) did not trust the administration. When asked about what they utmost hoped that the new administration would do for the youth, a considerable percentage expected it would listen to the voices of young people (35.3%), mend relations (27.5%), and build mutual trust (21.0%).

An academic interviewed did not rule out the possibility that some young people were worried that they might carelessly breach the National Security Law which would, as a result, affect their willingness to participate in public affairs. It cannot also be ruled out that the Government still has a perception that some young people are radical. The new administration should promote opportunities for young people

to contribute on non-controversial development projects, so that the two sides could reconnect.

The HKSAR Government has raised youth affairs to the level of Policy Bureaux with the establishment of the Home and Youth Affairs Bureau. The Home and Youth Affairs Bureau should take the initiative to practise related projects to meet its stated role.

Recommendations

Based upon the findings and discussion above, and taking the new political and social landscape of the city into consideration, this study proposes the following recommendations to create a promising future for Hong Kong society so the younger generation could continuously make good use of their enthusiasm and energy.

- 1. The Home and Youth Affairs Bureau should take the lead in rebuilding mutual trust between the Government and young people, restoring confidence of young people in their personal-development prospects, and building a belief among them that Hong Kong could become better in future.**

Young people are at an important stage in their own development and, more than any other group, need to embrace a positive vision for the future. This study, however, shows that youth are not optimistic about their prospects, or the future development of Hong Kong. There are youth cases that cannot see opportunities for upward social mobility, and lack trust in the Government. They hope that the new administration could put more effort into helping the younger generation.

This study recommends that the Home and Youth Affairs Bureau should take the lead, in partnership with different organisations, to help rebuild mutual trust between the Government and young people; build the confidence of young people in their personal-development prospects; and build a belief among them that Hong Kong can be better.

In addition, the study recommends that the Bureau should collect opinions and analyse data on a regular basis to ascertain the concerns and goals of the youth regarding Hong Kong's future development. This is so that when policymakers and the community formulate measures, they are able to absorb young people's aspirations and provide them with a sense of empowerment by highlighting that they also have a role in building a future society.

2. Different sectors of the society should promote youth-led community building projects to empower the younger generation by actualising their ideal community blueprint.

With reference to overseas, some governments promote cooperation between officials, businesses and community residents to put projects, aimed at improving the livelihood of the community, proposed by young people into practice. This study highlights that young people believe that they have a stake in the building of Hong Kong's future, and hope to participate in building their community. It also observes that young people pay attention to the value of co-creation and co-ownership as part of the participation process. They have, though, a perception that society does not trust them.

This study recommends that different sectors of society should promote youth-led community building projects with co-creation and action-based elements. This would help empower the younger generation to actualise their ideal community blueprint by allowing them to come up with solutions to improve the livelihood of the community. This could also help the younger generation share the value of co-creation and enable them to demonstrate their enthusiasm in serving Hong Kong.

In the longer term, the recommendation above could help by bringing two positive effects: (1) by discovering and experiencing more unique features of the community, it could strengthen the younger generation's sense of belonging to Hong Kong society; (2) by increasing interactions, it could act as a pathway to improve inter-generational understanding.

3. **The Government should invite youth to take part in the formulation and evaluation of KPIs so they could provide input, based on their strengths, to set the goals and help the Government's KPIs to be more practicable.**

This study shows that according to young people, there are still many pressing social issues to be addressed, and they are willing to use their creativity or professional knowledge to propose solutions to solve these issues. Examples of positive outcomes are witnessed from youth cases interviews, reflecting that young people have experience in setting and implementing performance evaluations.

Young people are innovative. The new administration has attached great importance to KPIs (Key Performance Indicators). This study recommends that the Government should invite youth to take part in the formulation and evaluation of KPIs so that young people could help to set the goals together. In the long term, it could open up a new channel for the social participation of young people, as well as make the Government's KPIs more practicable. Longer term, this could also help the administration's performance to be recognised by the youth.