

Nadja Alexander

## Inside-out decision making – a model for engaging people in public issue conflicts

‘I’m not interested in how people move, but what moves them.’  
(Pina Bausch, German choreographer and dancer)

### I. A Story from Hong Kong

At the time of writing this article, newspapers around the world carried headlines about Hong Kong’s so-called ‘umbrella revolution’ – a protest about political reform in the Special Administrative Territory.[2] Five years earlier in 2010 newspaper headlines highlighted a different protest. In this instance the Hong Kong government proposed a fast rail link between Hong Kong and mainland China. The proposed route required the uprooting of Choi Yuen Tsuen and surrounding urban villages. The government was accused of having carried out a sham consultation at the rail link’s early plan–ning stage. While some accepted the government’s financial land acquisition package, holdout urban villagers felt that the proposed change to their way of life was adding insult to injury: as an economically weaker group who had benefited relatively little from Hong Kong’s infrastructure develop–ment, they were now being asked to also pay the price for it. In addition, villagers claimed that the project was likely to damage the ecology, the villagers’ lives and social activities and break their relatively peaceful lifestyle – a rare thing in a modern city like Hong Kong. The symbolic dimensions of the conflict centred on arguments about the disturbance of ancestors and spirits by building a rail link through cemeteries and sacred hills, which would result in bad feng shui. Some commentators have doubted the authenticity of the cultural values put forward in this debate, suggesting, for example, that symbolic claims are a negotiating ploy to increase the land acquisition package offered by the government. Others have argued that the Choi Yuen Tsuen demolition has become highly politicised and embroiled in a much larger ongoing conflict concerning governance and political discontent. Young activists, mostly non-Choi-Yuen-Tsuen villagers, protested in the thousands against what is dubbed the world’s most expensive railway in terms of outlay per kilometre, and they led a blockade of the Legislative Council.

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... den gesamten Beitrag und weitere finden Sie in der Publikation „[Mediation und BürgerInnenbeteiligungen](#)“ (Fertz, Salicites, Storr), die am 9.9.2015 im Verlag Österreich erschienen und im [Webshop](#) zum Preis von € 35,00 erhältlich ist.