

# *Information Authoritarianism vs. Information Anarchy: A Comparison of Information Ecosystems in Mainland China and Hong Kong during the Early Stage of the COVID-19 Pandemic*

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## *Abstract*

Mainland China and Hong Kong are two jurisdictions that, on the one hand, have sharply distinctive information ecosystems despite being one country and, on the other hand, are closely connected with each other in terms of the COVID-19 outbreak and related anti-pandemic measures. This note, through a comparative lens, outlines and compares how the information ecosystem of Mainland China and Hong Kong functioned during the early stage of the outbreak, that is, from 31 December 2019 to 29 February 2020. By tracing and examining the timeline of events and news articles published during the early stage of the outbreak through Wisers Information Database, it demonstrates and conceptualizes the information governance in Mainland China as “information authoritarianism” and that in Hong Kong as “information anarchy.” However, despite different patterns of information governance rooted in the different sociopolitical settings, both information ecosystems suffered from false pandemic information.

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