

Digital Media and Social Justice
Dr. Ioana Jucan

Tsang Chun Leung
Student ID: 3034943

Social media contributions on Hong Kong extradition bill movement

Background

Since the proposed of the extradition bill from march, Hong Kong was organizing many protests till today to oppose the bill, expressed fear that the city's highly autonomy would be interrupted by the Mainland Chinese law, putting people from Hong Kong at risk of falling victim to the different legal system. The propose of the bill motivated people of Hong Kong to stand out to make real contributions, including protests, spreading bill messages, connect alliances and seeking the help of foreign authorities. On 9th June, a protest called “69 protest” was organized by the Civil Human Rights Front to oppose the propose of extradition law. The participators of this protest had reached 1 million 30 thousand people. However, this large participation still did not force the government to withdraw the bill and protestors were instead retreated by the repress of police force to drive away protestors on 12 June. Instead of repressing the opposing opinions, the overuse of police violation led to even a bigger and larger protest happened at the date of 16th June where participator number reached the highest record of Hong Kong civil participation history. With over 2 million people come out from their homes and make reach contribution to express the concern, the participation number is equal to one-third of the whole Hong Kong population. With this highly successful of this movement, the young generation is encouraged to keep stepping out for protect, march, assembly until nowadays.

The successful of letting people come out and make real effort formed with many factors, including the response of the government, the history and many more. But one of the most influential factors must be the good use of social media. It is no double that social media, a new tool to connect people virtually, have been an important element that helps raise the awareness of protecting human right. Therefore, the article will be focus on the what is the contribution of social media for the Hong Kong civil engagement (impact), how social media engaging the Anti-Extradition Law Amendment Bill Movement in Hong Kong (method), and at lastly round-up by discussing how much credit should we give to social media for constructing movement (result) and to examine whether this new form of social connect base

on the use of technology can help build up strong tie community to fight for the clear goal. Since countless protests and confrontations with police have happened over the past 6 months, it is hard to use too many spread cases of protests from these 6 months to analyze the social media influence. Thus, instead to using many protest as example to measure the effort, I prefer to mainly focus on the 69 protest and 616 protest to study the influence and treat the protest that happened after this two-main event as an outcome of the awake of civil engagement since it is these two main events that mainly reframe the people for their hope of fighting for freedom after the fall of the umbrella movement in 2014. Although some interesting civil organizing ways evolve over this time, which I will slightly mention in the discussion (result) part, this whole article will base on these two main events to measure the media impact in order to prevent over diverse analysis.

Impact of social media (The credit)

Unlike the protest started at the lunch counter at the Woolworth's in downtown Greensboro, North Carolina in the 60s, where black students stand up to fight for equal race treatment wholly base on the strong tie of student cooperation from friend connection and comment experience without using any form of social media to get to know the alliance. The whole movement is connected by a centralized authority to organize and executed by different small friendship groups in pursuit of strong ties and high efficiency of decision making, ending up performing a long movement for a decade. With the changing way of building connections by overusing social media to conduct human interaction, the relationship between each individual has formed a distance through the virtual world in which created the result of weak social face to face interaction. In fact, the way for people to make real-life impact nowadays is based on the use of social media. Intellectuals or event organizers might worry that the use of social media to make effort might lead to an unstable and weak connection and construction to keep pushing civil movement. However, 69 protest and 616 protest are a highly successful social movement in which the success factors can all relate to the implementation of social media. Therefore, the following paragraph will use the successful case of these two to prove that social media can indeed help build up a strong connection or is an important element to help push the movement forward and to show what contribution social media did for building social engagement.

Before we give credit to social media for giving good establishments to a community, we need to first prove that both 69 and 616 protest is a successful movement. Therefore, we need

to prove that these two are a high-risk activism movement. As McAdam concluded, high-risk activism is a “strong-tie” phenomenon. Giving a more detail definition, Gladwell (2010) has given a definition that when people have strong believe and willing to suffer personal consequence is the result of high-risk activism. It involves the “strong tie” relation between the movement. Using McAdam's reference would be the bonds of friendship, family connection. Therefore, it also involves a more personal connection to the event. He critics that “Facebook activism succeeds not by motivating people to make a real sacrifice but by motivating them to do the things that people do when they are not motivated enough to make a real sacrifice.

By looking at the 69 protest and 616 protest, it can be considered as high-risk activism although it did not force the government to cancel the law, it motivates people to stand out and encourage people to make personal suffer for the future protest. Until nowadays, the youth generation in Hong Kong still has a high passion for engaging civil movement. Gladwell also mentioned that high-risk activism is a hierarchies structure and centralize organization so that decision making can be more effective. These two events indeed performed as a hierarchies structure using the Civil Human Rights Front (CHRF) as the central leader group to inform the participant. But Civil Human Rights Front is also one of the biggest Joint platforms for political and democratic issues with many parties and alliances, for example, people power, Hong Kong First, Civic Party, Democratic Party and much more. The start-up and promotion of the authority are also using social media as a tool to engage people to take action. One of the examples is the organizer have started their regular TV program “民陣有嘢講” (CHRF have something to say) from 2005 to 2007 to keep making voices for Hong Kong political issues. Therefore, both protests were conducted by centralized and hierarchies structure.

Then, moving forward to look at the proof of whether it is a strong tie of connection within the protest. As the first-hand information of my interview with one of the protestors from Hong Kong called Sam Lo, he mentioned that the motivation of him to come out is based on the connection of friendship that he knew and he was joined with the friend from his college that shares the same value to join the protest. Before connecting the descriptive with social media, I need to briefly explore the history before the 69 protest and till the 616 protest. There is not much media information before the 69 protest. People mainly get their

information from the booth that setup in different universities and high schools that mainly set up by student unions and alliances from different parties. Many potential participators at that moment were the students and youth people because of the booth promotion of the protest. Sam Lo received the protest information by the booth and then his friend and he ask each other at the same time to join and went to the protest in the following few days. Before he got in touch with the protest information, he already has the value of fighting for democracy and has a basic understanding of what the extradition bill is and what are the backlash effects that can be generated by looking at social media and news discussion. Thus, people who joined the 69 protest have strong personal connections with each other as protestors were mainly students and they joined as a friend group to create a small alliance and with hundreds of personally connected groups, strong tie effect had created during the protest.

Now that the strong tie standard has been proved for the 69 protest. But since people get to know the protest information from the booths, how can it relate to the effort of social media? Although the promotion and encouragement of 69 protest did not fill up the social media page and internet, there is many helpful media information that help building up people's desire to involve in political issue and strengthen their value in which people did not even need to be motivated by the main authority CHRF and informed by the leader. People stand out as they want. This is all because of the help of the easily accessible informational platforms of media, social media, and internet forums.

In this stage, the focusing point is not about how one event has been organized and how they promote themselves and motivated people through media platforms because people already have the willingness to participate. Even CHRF only organized booths in the academy facilities without the push of social media, the protest is still successfully organized with 1.03 million people standing out. The strong tie has already built before the start of the protest.

Continuous with the brief history after the 69 protest. The 69protest at that moment is the second biggest civil movement after the umbrella movement and encourage people again to step out. With this continuous motivational movement, people become more spontaneous of participation and youth people incite people's attention by social media. For example, using sample infographic, list point poster, image with slogan or catchphrase to inform people how

serious negative outcomes would happen if the bill got to pass through the Legislative Council of Hong Kong. The result was the “612” or “612 riots” in which 40 thousand people occupied the Legislative Council building in Admiralty and was forcing the council to stop conducting the second reading of the bill. Indeed, the occupation stopped the reading process but at the same time polices were taking violence action, using tear gas, rubber bullet and bean bag round, to assault occupiers and accuse occupiers with riot crime. The depress and negative outcome led to a man jump off from a building to commit suicide 15 of June at the Admiralty Pacific Place. He was wearing a yellow raincoat, a symbol of umbrella movement and pro-democracy (yellow = pro-democracy, blue = pro-china, the shirt color of the police), while hanged out “no extradition” sign.

A continuous unreasonable act of government and the sacrifice of people evoke the furious of the citizen. More and more people have started to join different kinds of pro-democracy Facebook groups and Facebook groups of the parties. Since different media company provide different source and interpretation of the protest, different media have represented different political stand, people have also started to follow many media organization with the broadcast base on Facebook, YouTube, and Instagram live, such as RTHK, ViuTV, Stand News, Apple Daily, Passion Times, 100Most and more. These media report the news not only on TV but also on different media applications which usually report a case with one designed photo combining clear and sometimes strong catchphrase and event photo. Then provide a detail description in the caption session of the post in social media. Compare to many mainstream media, such as TVB, Ta Kung Pao, Oriental Daily, Ming Po and more, their report mediums are usually only on TV and newspapers while at the same time many of these media are pro-china as they have deep business beneficial relationships with mainland cooperation. It is undeniable that some people choose their media source base on their already built up political stand, but many young people at that moment tend to interpret different media sources first, giving the situation a whole and diver understanding, then choose their political stand. In this case, social media is a big help as it is much easier to access young communities. Sam Lo, my interviewee, also commented that media who are well-known on using social media to broadcast are more on-trend with the technological advantage in which earn more trust in people as they follow more on young people mindset as a media provider. Using social media is an act of knowing the habitation of media accessory within an informative city. Thus, this act proves that media companies are more updated in which people trusted them more. Sam Lo watched both pro-china and pro-

democracy media. But he cannot deny also that those media using Facebook or Instagram are more easy to get in touch with which most of these media companies are pro-democracy and once again help strength his pro-democracy political stand after the 69 protest.



-Mainstream media cooperations political stand with color representation- Made by internet user “EDU_STRIKE92”

Besides the high efficiency of news spreading on social media, messages, and posts that encourage people to participate also fully occupied in social media. Both 612riot and the suicide news encourage many active civil students or small group alliances to opened post about the simply descriptive of these cases and also more actively express their feeling by text posts on Instagram stories, Facebook twists. People again making small points form infographic and angry catchphrase to catch people’s attention. This situation indeed helps people who are not motivated enough to make move as Gladwell described. “Facebook does the things that people do when they are not motivated enough to make a real sacrifice.” But this also serves as a network connection tool to connect alliance as many people including Sam Lo also are mostly ready to make personal suffering, media helps him to find people who have the same value to come out and the post of expression from the users also help strengthen his belief on what his want to do.

Therefore, social media did have contributed to forming networks, connecting alliances, helping to express personal value, strengthen one’s value, and motivating people. The outcome would not be as Gladwell expected as a weak tie “low-risk activism” and it is not a strong personal connection weakening their motivation and dedication to the cause. As to see the result of the 616 protest, 1/3 of populations came out to participate, many people share

strong and clear goals on what they are fighting for which is to cancel extradition law, investigate police brutality, and retreat the proclamation that protests were riots. (5 demands at that moment have not been concluded yet) The protest was organized again by CHRF as a central command. However, CHRF did not need to do any promotion and just provide basic information of the protest and people were automatically coming out as the strong tie have been already been shaped by social media. Sam Lo also created his own WhatsApp group with their friends right before the 616 protest and ready to stand out with his friends to the march. All in all, the use of social media indeed help push civil engagement moving forward, the protest has also ended up as high-risk activism as it is centralized and protestors have strong ties with each other and fighting with clear goals. Although the government did not take immediate action by the protest influence, the protest should be considered as a successful move as students and workers have been kept motivated with this high participant rate and help to hold civil engagement for more than 5 months till now. We must remember that Hong Kong now is confronting with a 70 years-formed communist china regime, specific action or clear goal of informed civil or law activism and movement cannot be compared with the situation of Hong Kong and to measure the 616 protest as a fail action.



-Brief history made by me-

Social media can instead build up high-risk activism base on my previous analysis. But to be more clearly define the situation, but 69 protest and 616 protest is the outcome of both online and offline as James and Manilov (2010) analyzed in the article of “Movement Building and Deep Change: Call to Mobilize Strong and Weak Ties”. The whole engagement for protest in that period in Hong Kong is beyond the time of where membership is only defined by signing an online petition or building lists and donations. CHRF is a form that already comes as a network. At the same time media help establishing a network of people. Together with both that against the large authority. Text messaging, personal post, individual media broadcasting help to create more community, deeper ties, and stronger alliances. Therefore, it is more fit into James and Manilov opinion that text messaging and geolocation are breaking new ground in online to offline efforts. A new tool that allows organizations to do small groups more effectively. Or in my opinion base on these 2 protests case, a new tool that strengthens the relationship with movements and participators to make small group operations more effective.

After the 616 protest and continuous with following events in the future, People also making protest strategies and discuss movement on the local forum (Lihkg) instead of following alliance or central event organizer’s decision, making more self-organized and small protest forum. Also, Telegram has been widely used for joining alliances as Telegram cannot easily be tracked by police or government. These organized groups were totally formed through social media and yet effectively help strengthen the tie and yet small group to make effective decisions. Therefore, social media have big credit on push thing forward and we should treat it as the successful merge of building both online and offline effort.

Method in detail

Moving to the next stage, after the prove that 69 protest and 616 protest are high-risk activism and sure that social media have big credit on pushing civil activism, we need to discuss the method of social media promotion in detail. The establishment process of the 2 protests can be described as “participatory civics”. This term mentioned by Zuckerman (2014) giving a new way to descript civil participation. It is not limited to the traditional way of engagement such as “informed citizen” model which require people to vote and take action on reading election regulation or “monitorial citizen” which engages in civics by monitoring governments and powerful actor with third parties or independent agencies. He suggested we

should not expect young people to get involved with traditional politics and it would be missing the picture. Therefore, there is a necessity to research for the new “participatory civil” by studying the method that use in social media in Hong Kong to dig deep into how the form has appeared and how it shapes.

Zuckerman mentioned that the shifting engagement in civics is not that people are not interested in civic participation. They are simply not interested in feeling ineffectual or helpless. This fit into the situation in 2014 of Hong Kong, when Benny Tai suggested to occupy the Central of Hong Kong to force the government to achieve real democracy. Every youth generation had prepared to stand out. However, after 40 days of occupation, the government was using tear gas to stop the movement and did not take action to achieve real democracy at all. During these 5 years till the propose of extradition law, people seldom stand out at all, only a few actively engage civil activists and political administrators kept fighting for it since the people feel ineffectual and helpless. It is understandable to have a feeling of hopeless as 1 million population continuous occupied for 40 days and still could not change a single aspect of government mind. Therefore, before 69 protest, people seldom took action not because they were not sensitive to political issues anymore but because of the individual helpless and disappointment to the government that stops the move. Zuckerman also uses the research from Pew to indicated that millennials like to boycott or sign online or paper petition in making changes. They resist to be labeled with “political” but “activists” as they think politics as something more professionalized in which out of their control. This fit into the movement on both umbrella movement, 69 and 616 protest. They sign online petitions to ask for the help of the United States to for example stop providing police equipment or execute Hong Kong Human Rights and Democracy Act. People who are not motivated enough to take action in Hong Kong as “港豬” (Kong Pig). The term describes people who know the situation and choose to ignore or step out since fighting for democracy has no direct relationship on affecting their human right immediately or source of income. Indeed, after the 69 protest, many participators and also Sam Lo admitted that they were Kong Pig before.



-“Kong Pig” image in protest field.- Image from Lihkg forum internet user

WE THE PEOPLE ASK THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT TO CALL ON CONGRESS TO ACT ON AN ISSUE:

Revoke the U.S. Citizenship and Visas of the Hong Kong and China Officials who are in Support of the Extradition Bill.

Created by M.W. on June 11, 2019

The Hong Kong government has proposed the Extradition Bill, which will allow them to surrender Hong Kong citizens to the People's Republic of China. If passed, Hong Kong people and the 60,000 American Expatriates who are residing in Hong Kong will be exposed to the risk of facing criminal proceedings in China, where there has been decade long concerns over the true implementation of the rule of law and human rights.

Under the U.S. Immigration and Nationality Act, foreign government officials and their

Sign This Petition

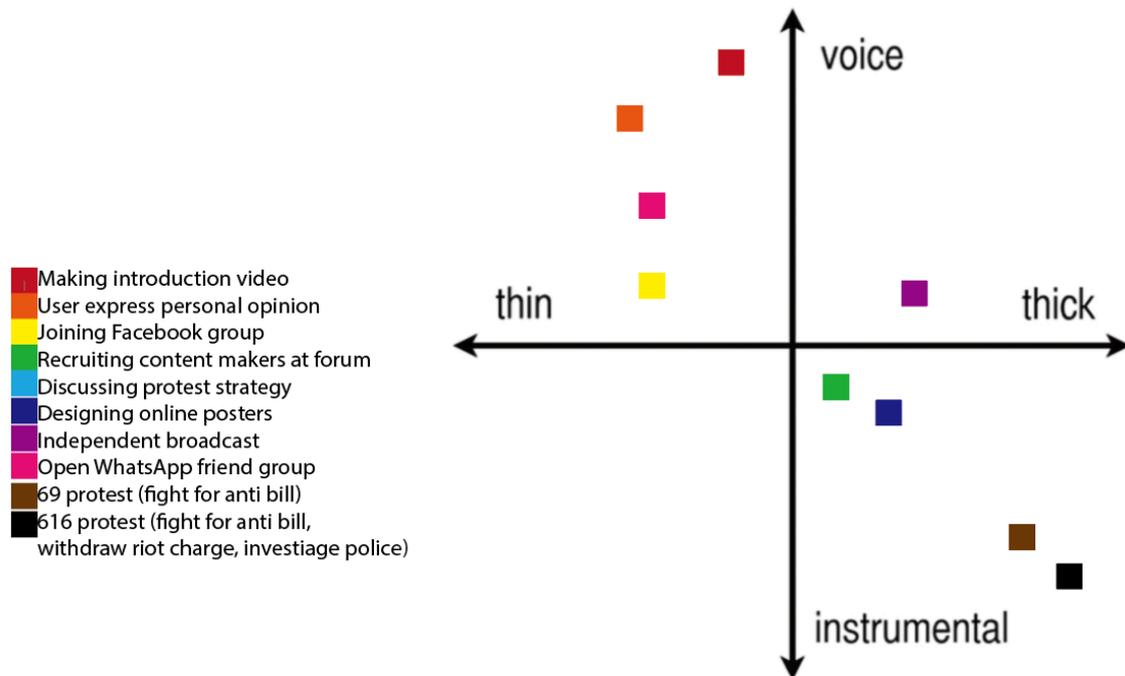
Needs 0 signatures by July 11, 2019 to get a response from the White House



-Petition on US petition website-

<https://petitions.whitehouse.gov/petition/revoke-us-citizenship-and-visas-hong-kong-and-china-officials-who-are-support-extradition-bill>

To analysis the method in detail, we must see apply two perspectives: 1. To treat social media as a source for people to get information. (thin to thick) 2. To see social media as a tool to build connections. (voice to instrumental) Here, Zuckerman brought forward with the graphic of “participatory civic”. I think the graphic axes help to use as a tool to analyze social media relationships with Hong Kong protests. In this graphic, X-axis represents a continuous process of thin to thick. Thin means the small effect on online activities that help contribute to the movement. The more action place at the thick come to more afford people spend on real-life efforts that might out of the online space and come to make real-life action or means that the online efforts become larger and more systematically and more organized. Y-axis represents a continuous process of Voice to Instrumental. Voice means the personal opinion or oppression that express from the oppressor. With the process go, people who discover the same value or same oppressive opinion will form a group to take action. Reaching the stage of instrumental where each of the holders come with a common ground of what they are fighting for or how the action takes place. With action more tends to instrumental, the less internal conflict will happen in which strong tie takes place.



-The “participatory civic” graphic of Hong Kong protest activities made by me-

To start with the former, many protestors do not know much about the extradition bill when it got proposed. As in comparison with many protests at its beginning stage. Quoting by Keane mentioned in Zuckerman reading, citizens must choose issues to engage with based on their knowledge, interest, and ability to have an impact in this “post-representative democracy”. As not all citizens have the complete or professional mindset of an issue also with this statement, it is sure that build-up to understand and interpretation is a way to motivate people and help people to decide their political stand or personal value. People take action because they understand the issue. Base on this statement, social media become an important part of shaping value by providing sources.

Apply to the case of Hong Kong, media cooperations, YouTubers, forum users, and Instagram users start to make videos, small posts, infographics to make many simple explanations of the extradition bill. On YouTube, there are many video format called “x mins to understand the bill” were created by the individual content maker. Facebook and Instagram appeared many posters and infographics to let people understand the consequence once the law passes in point-form lists. 69 protest has many people to stand out because people know the backlash of the bill and they can feel the direct conflict of interest through reading or

watching this source. It fits into Zuckerman's point, where people choose what they know and understand an issue to make civil action. Social Media is the medium to build up interest. The interest that built up can be very limited and constrained so that people can base on one issue they are interested to focus. "participatory civics" allow people to support an individual entrepreneur in the developing world, rather than an organization focused broadly on eliminating poverty. (Zuckerman, 2014) To fit in the Hong Kong social media, the media inputs focus on the extradition bill issues more than fighting for the real-democracy or confronting the whole communist authority. The more focus on a topic to fight for, the easier to make people feel less helpless as people in Hong Kong are very realistic. They need small specific issues for them to handle and to be motivated because it gives them a sense of hope. After 69 protest, people have motivated enough. Zuckerman discussed the early decade when bloggers appeared, a new form of journalism that incorporates aspects of old and new models. This new form can be clearly found out in Hong Kong after 69 protest. The forum was recruiting people for poster design. The independent and spontaneous designers are being called as "文宣" (literature promoter) in Hong Kong. They help in making content news and posters to encourage people to come out. YouTuber, Facebook, and Instagram users started to make posts to ask people out with catchphrase. This is a new form of media information spreading as everyone in Hong Kong especially the protestors think that they have the power to criticize different aspects of government. Therefore, they treat themselves as part of the media authorities to help spread part of the message. Sam Lo is studying advertising design in Hong Kong Poly University. Now with the protest going on, he also becomes a volunteer reporter and went to different fields to record. Therefore, Media created a form that everyone is the media source and everyone has the right to speak out the way they see a thing. The new form gives an event a more diversity way to comprehend. In the end, Continuous media actions were being built up and lead to 2 million people join for 616 protest.



- "x mins introduction of extradition law" captured in YouTube page



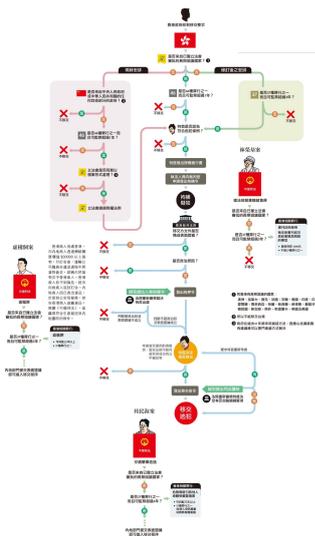
-Lennon wall made by “文宣” (literature promoter)- from SCMP news.

<https://www.scmp.com/comment/letters/article/3019265/how-hong-kong-can-look-lennon-walls-drive-innovation-and-policy>



-poster recruitment post in Lihkg forum. “Title: is there more posters/leaflet about 616 protest?”- capture in Lihkg forum webpage.

<https://lihkg.com/thread/1220767/page/1>



-infographic that illustrate the concerns of extradition bill- From Ming Pao news. Made by Facebook user and comic drawer @chiutatcomics

<https://news.mingpao.com/pns/%E5%89%AF%E5%88%8A/article/20190414/s00005/1555179633867/%E9%80%9A%E8%AD%98%E5%B0%8E%E8%B3%9E-%E3%80%8A%E9%80%83%E7%8A%AF%E6%A2%9D%E4%BE%8B%E3%80%8B%E5%B8%B6%E4%BE%86%E7%9A%84%E9%9A%B1%E6%82%A3>

On the other hand, the latter part of the perspective is to see social media as a tool to build connections and network. As I mentioned before, the build-up of different parties represented Facebook groups giving the chance for potential protestors to join the alliance. The forum has been used as a ground for decision making. People who have the same value join the same group of Telegram. Sam Lo form a WhatsApp group to keep the regular protest comrade. Social media users actively open posts or share news in their portfolio and story to express their view of the bill and express their value. After the 69 protest, internet users have hope and build up the confidence to be “literature promoter” as they believe if news sources are from daily events of people, it is also possible to spread the news by people and not only mainstream media authorities. They become journalists and bloggers at the same time. So, friends who tend to be less active or shy to express can contact the user to join as a group in order to build a strong tie. Therefore, as Zuckerman noted, a public sphere nowadays built of passion-possible solution. There is one point he mentioned that protestor may not even be able to agree on what issues are worth considering. This point cannot be applied at the first stage of the 69 protest and 616 protest. Instead, social media give people a channel or way to share value in order to recruit members that have basic common ground. Therefore, the group that joined these protests had already had common ground on what the issues are, what is their goal and how to do it. Differentiation did appear after the 616 protest. Some people prefer using peaceful ways to confront the situation and some prefer using violence and boycott, for example, destroy Chinese relatable company. However, it is very smart for them to make a term or a rule of “不割席” (no separate since they have come to a common ground and realize that they are all fighting for the same value and goal. The differentiation only laid on the aspect of how to fight. Therefore, coming with the result that even part of the protestor disagrees with the protest method, they still would not stop the other to take action in their own way in case internal conflicts happen. This is the reason why the protest can continuous till now. With the rule, the frame and passion within protestors’ minds can hardly be taken off. The term “不割席” also appeared in the forum after the 616 protest. Therefore, again, social media help to provide space for people to build up common ground. With less internal conflict, come to a stronger relationship between the people to fight for the same value.

Conclusion

After studying the Hong Kong protest relationship with social media through analyzing its impact and method in detail, it is proved that social media have a big contribution to the

Hong Kong anti extradition bill movement. First to prove that the protests have come out as and hieratical centralized “high-risk activism” and prove that strong tie has existed within the group of participators. With this conclusion, it is sure that social media help to push the movement to move forward. Then, I study the methods that use in social media in detail along with the “Participatory Civics” graphic. The whole proving process goes along with the brief history of the early stage of 69 protest to 616 protest. In conclusion, the moving build-up by social media influence and use social media as a tool to connect the network. The result comes out after 616 protest is the hope for the fight in Hong Kong people’s minds and smart way to deal with internal conflict and also how to keep continuous on the movement. In my perspective, Hong Kong people are smart at using the technology advantage to confront to whole china regime and they are very brave about what they are doing. Let hope for one day they can fight for what they want or commit common ground with China to build up a better living situation between two continents.

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First hand resource:

Sam Lo interview mp3 record