"Big Brother, We Are Watching on You"

Weibo and the bottom-up surveillance in China

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Abstract

The development of the Internet in China has brought significant changes to the daily life of Chinese people. When new media are used as a tool for better communication, people also use this tool to claim their civil rights. In recent years, a growing number of Chinese corrupt officials are brought down by ordinary people with the help of a "Chinese twitter" – Weibo. Chinese people use Weibo to surveil the behavior of officials and thus it gradually shapes a "bottom-up surveillance" mechanism. This thesis aims to analyze how this mechanism works and why is it powerful. By adapting western theories of network society, public sphere, Panopticon and Catopticon, I argue that Weibo, as an "integrated information terminal", has optimized the Chinese online public sphere, which generates communicative power for ordinary people. I use a typical case "watch brother" to analyze the Weibo-based communication generally into four phases and then eventually forms a powerful bottom-up surveillance mechanism. Certainly there are still flaws within this mechanism, but it already shows the potential of internet regarding the social movement and civil rights reforming progress.

Key Words

Weibo, Bottom-up surveillance, Public sphere, Chinese internet, Power relationships

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1.   Introduction

1.1.   Background and Significance

In June of 2011, a 20-year-old Chinese girl called Guo Meimei was posting microblogs to show off her lavish lifestyle with luxury sports cars and designer bags on one of the most popular social network sites in China, Sina Weibo. Though showing off wealth is not uncommon in current society, Guo, who was identified as the "commercial general manager" of the "China Red Cross Chamber of Commerce", raised a prevalent skepticism in the Chinese online world. Chinese netizens cast a doubt on the reason where her wealth came, especially because of the huge difference of "Red Cross China" which is a charity organization advocating people to donate for poor people, and the young lady's extremely luxurious profile. Netizens were wondering what on earth the connection between Guo Meimei and the Red Cross China is and whether there is something subtle and cannot be told to public of the so-called charity organization. The netizens dug out Guo's suspected relationship with Wang Jun, a board number of the Zhonghong Bo'ai Asset Management Ltd. Corp., a for-profit company connected to Red Cross China. The curious public smelt a sense of corruption and urged the Red Cross China to publicize its financial details to the society. To quell the public anger and prove its reputation, Red Cross China had to invite accounting institutions to audit its financial matters and suspended all Red Cross project until the investigation is done. Though finally Red Cross China was proved innocent, its accountability is more or less damaged, and the public kept more attention to prevent the potential corruption. (CNN News, 2011)

Similarly, after the high-speed train crash accident on July.23 2011, netizens on Weibo expressed their doubt on the failed safety mechanisms. They called for a reason for the unqualified safety system, imagining that there might be also some corruption scandals during the hasty construction of the railways. Netizens used Weibo to publish photos that the government is burying the destroyed train, claiming that the government is manipulating the death toll and trying to hide the truth as well as the evidence of the accident. The netizens' demand for a transparency of governmental affairs and the surveillance of political corruptions has thus formed a force to supervise the righteous behavior of the authority, especially on the aspect of anti-corruption.

(Christian Science Monitor News, 2011)

Within current Chinese internet landscape, a great many of such cases are popping up with the growing popularity of Weibo use. Despite the corruption-preventing cases described above, other brought-down corrupt officials like the "Sugar Daddy" who bought "B-Cover Miniskirt" for his mistress (Beijing Shots News, 2012) and the recent "Watch Brother" who has numerous luxurious watches (Time News, 2012) all serve as successful examples of the use of Weibo for anti-corruption. Such a phenomenon that anonymous netizens use social media to bring down corrupt officials or to supervise the authority to keep it from corruption is quite new to the Chinese people as well as the world, and clearly, it is realized in current society due to the contribution of modern technologies. Focusing on the anti-corruption aspect, this mechanism has actually offered a brand-new approach for Chinese people to cast a "Bottom-up surveillance", or "sousveillance" (Mann, 2003), on the government.

Concerning the connection between surveillance and the use of new media, western scholars put much emphasis on the governmental surveillance and the privacy-breaking side, such as the leak of personal information from the social media website, (Barnes, 2006) and the governmental or organizational surveillance on personal activities through social websites like Facebook and Youtube. (Trottier and Lyon, 2012) Compared to such authority-organized top-down surveillance, the bottom-up surveillance in China has been carried out by netizens upon the officials or even the government mainly by social media with the lead of Weibo use. This social media trend is altering netizens' life in China, not only in a daily life domain, but also, which is more important, in their participation of political affairs, especially in focusing on those corrupted officials. In their own way netizens find corruption incidents, lock on them and urge the government to solve the issues and then finally improve the transparency of the government affairs. For further significance, though such anti-corruption bottom-up surveillance may be only a small branch of all political affairs which involve online component, or the "online activism" (Yang, 2009 P13) in China, this is probably the early remarkable step of the democratic reforming for China's political agenda in the future.

The fresh emergence of such bottom-up surveillance based on Weibo is thus logically worthy a concrete research, as a meaningful cultural related social media use case in today's internet culture especially for western scholars who hold curiosity on the complexity of the internet, political matters and civil society construction in China nowadays.

1.2. Previous Research Review

The research on the power of new media and technology concerning the political activities is a popular topic all over the world. Segerberg and Bennett (2011) have examined the effectiveness of Twitter during the political decision making process of 2009 United Nations Climate Summit in Copenhagen. They regard Twitter as an "organizing mechanisms" and recognize that traces of these media may reflect larger organizational schemes. Additionally, they explore three main points in their case of Twitter Revolution: (a) Twitter streams represent crosscutting networking mechanisms in protest ecology; (b) they embed and are embedded in various kinds of gatekeeping processes; and (c) they reflect the changing dynamics in the ecology over time. The research reveals an empirical analysis specifically on the use of Twitter as a key role of policy making.

Bekkers et al (2011) has investigated the change brought by new micro-to-mass media on the political agenda-setting process. Based on a 2007 case in Holland, the protest of Dutch secondary school students against the "1040-hour norm", Bekkers et al found certain web 2.0 based technologies like instant messages and YouTube were preferred by the students to gather and get mobilized in order to form groups to protest against the new policy. The collaborative action has altered the media agenda-setting process and eventually influenced the committee to halt the enforcement of this controversial project. Remarkably, their research emphasizes the rise of micro-media, noting its indispensability in such "Micro-mobilization".

From a much broader view, Harp et al (2012) lead a comparison of the online participation of political scenarios in geographically different regions United States, Latin America and China. Their research indicates that the Internet, particularly the SNS, constructs a Habermasian public sphere in all those areas and naturally connected to the discussion of political affairs. What varies is usually the cultural context, which casts a great influence on the use and effect of online

political affairs. The top challenge for using SNS for activism in China is considered the fear of government surveillance, while in US the issue turns to be a lack of time. As for Latin America, the research shows the lack of access to affordable internet is nevertheless the main character.

Researches on China's issue in this field are also abundant. One well-known and informative research lead by Yang (2009) examines the "online activism" in China, as previously mentioned. In his book "The Power of The Internet in China", Yang elaborates the current character of online activism in China, the relationship between netizens and the government, the authority's surveillance and censorship on the internet, and also investigates several cases of political activities such as fighting against Hepatitis B Virus Carrier discrimination, which is mainly based on Chinese online bulletin boards. With his analysis, Yang holds a quite positive attitude towards the development of online activism, social movement and even a "long revolution" (P209) of this country.

Sima (2011) also argues the internet technologies empower resource-poor activists in their self-representation, information brokering, network building, public mobilization and construction of discourse. Linking his case "environmental protection campaign" with the concept "public sphere", (Habermas, 1989 [1962]) Sima has interestingly denotes a "Green Public Sphere" set up by the internet technologies in China. The case also sees a successful participation and discussion of the audience, as well as the remarkable construction of such a non-government-organization, or NGO. Thanks to the internet.

Despite the mentioned cases above, which could already exhibit the power of internet in China on political activism, there are more cases such as Cheng's "The Boycott of Carrefour in China" (Cheng, 2009) and Yang's "The aborted Green Dam youth escort censor-ware" (Yang, 2011). Literatures have clearly proved that new communication technologies have been deployed by Chinese netizens as online activists for social movement on diverse dimensions. Admittedly, previous researches have indeed built a bridge linking western theories like "public sphere" (Habermas, 1989 [1962]) and "agenda setting" (McCombs, 2002) with the facts of the complicated cyberspace in China. However, when most of those cases are based on Chinese BBS,

a recent popularity of Weibo and its potential for online activism calls for new insights on its mechanism. The rapid development of the whole internet technology might always question the old theories, old analysis and old expectations, even this "old" may stand for only two or three years.

Online activism and online political participation literally suggest an inevitably broad notion, so a precisely narrowed down topic is essential to avoid an over-general research. After searching and reading the previous studies, the anti-corruption cases are in fact quite rare to find, while a growing number of facts (as stated in the beginning) show the power of Weibo as a useful bottom-up surveillance tool on corruption in China. This then enlightens a new perspective to push on previous studies to a new phase.

1.3. Research Problems, Methodology and Framework

The primary argument of this paper is around the bottom-up surveillance mechanism of Weibo in China. In details, questions could be generally separated as the following:

- What is Weibo?
- Why this mechanism is effective and powerful?
- How is this bottom-up surveillance organized and how it comes into effect?
- Does it have any disadvantages, or is it really effective?
- What is the significance of such a bottom-up surveillance for China?

This topic has undoubtedly destined that this research would be inter-discipline that involving sociology, politics and media. But as a media student, I will emphasize more on the media aspect, to study how the mechanism take place by examining how Weibo was being used during previous incidents. Meanwhile certain sociology and politics theories will be borrowed to better explain the essence of the mechanism. Of course a case will be used to prove the theoretical statement.

Following this methodology, I would divide the following paragraphs into 5 sections.
- Section 2 will discuss the theoretical basis of the power of bottom-up surveillance, as an

explanation of the power of this surveillance, where the power lies and what the key factor of this power is.

- Section 3 shall see an introduction of the cultural context of China, and further help the readers to understand the essence of Weibo as well as its history of evolution.

- Section 4 is then prepared for a detailed investigation on how this mechanism works. From a communication view, I will break down the mechanism into several elements and find the interior connections of them. I will also use a concrete case to examine it.

- Section 5 is a critical discussion on this bottom-up surveillance, in other words, to explore the drawbacks and disadvantages of such a mechanism.

- Section 6 concludes all the results, claiming the significance of them, and raise questions for future research.

2. Theoretical Basis

2.1. In a Network Society

In his article "Materials for an exploratory theory of the network society", Manuel Castells attempts to build a fundamental theory of a new trend of current social transformation: the network society. (Castells, 2000) Castells interprets the current society as a spreading and connected network based on a new technological paradigm, centered around micro-electronics-based, information/communication technologies and genetic engineering. In his point of view, it is especially the new set of information technologies which have greatly varied from the technologies associated with the industrial revolution or the previous information revolution (ibid P10) that distinguishes the current society from the ones in history. In this network society, economy, culture, politics and other fields see a clear trace of being connected globally due to the information technologies. Information technologies share information to a much wider sphere and "enhance and accelerate the production of knowledge in a self-expanding, virtuous circle, forming the main characteristics of this new technological paradigm" (ibid P10). Consequently all social matters are connected in a much more complex way: they are linked within a network and the historically strong hierarchy turns to be decentralized into numerous "nodes" (ibid P15)

Following this logic, Jan van Dijk claims that the network society evolves from the "mass society" (van Dijk, 2006 P20). While the mass society comes into being for physical vicinity and organizes vertically integrated bureaucracy, the network society has a more virtual and diverse links without the consideration of distances, and organizes as "infocracy" in a horizontally differentiated form. (ibid P33) The network society is particularly marked as an "open system", as van Dijk argues, that "complete determination is lost and replaced by chance and random events…this process of opening up closed systems is the secret of networks or networking as an organized principle". (ibid P30) The argument suggests a potential and possibility for organizations in current network society to be changed by not a one-way process, but by the aftermath of multiple efforts.

Back to Castells, he claims the information networks have brought impacts to social structures, especially the power relationships. (Castells, 2000 P19) As the network is dissolving centers, those

who once held an absolutely hierarchical power are now linked to other organizations. The power "cannot be exercised without processing instructions in the network", (ibid P19) therefore such powers have to be stopped from being a sovereign entity. One who has power should be engaged in the information network, open up himself to all the nodes connected and get adapted to this system to maintain this power, even with constant challenges to its authority.

Both Castells and van Dijk have suggested that in contemporary world, our societies are gradually connecting to the information networks with the developing and spreading information technologies. As a matter of fact, power relationship has switched into a new paradigm that it is no longer only dominated by sovereignty but a negotiation of multiple sides. Generally speaking, the information technologies have brought us a relatively open society, as networked, with possibility of changes on everything, including power relationships, by interactions among individuals and organizations. The open network model serves as a basic mindset to understand the contemporary world.

2.2. The Online Public Sphere

The advent of the Internet is undoubtedly a main component of what Castells and van Dijk refers to information technologies. People all over the world are now connected altogether by the Internet. They send emails, chat online, do online shopping, read global news and discuss what is happening in every corner of the world. Naturally, one important part of daily discussions is political discussion that people can state their own idea on specific political incidents, policies, activities, etc. Concerning this political communication, the use of internet is often associated with discourses about the "public sphere" (Habermas, 1989 [1962]). The concept initially refers to "a realm of our social life in which something approaching public opinion can be formed" (Habermas, 1964) Habermas notes that the public sphere mediates between the "private sphere" and the "sphere of public authority"; it shapes public opinions and therefore plays a quite crucial role for democratic practices. (Habermas, 1989 [1962] P30; Dean, 2003 P2) By observing some real public venues of daily lives in the eighteenth century such as English coffee houses and French Salons, Habermas indicates the public should involve three basic characters: Disregards of status, Domain of common concern and Inclusivity. (Habermas, 1989 [1962]) These three characters

marks public sphere a space where participants of debate are not excluded or discriminated for their personal backgrounds; They can freely express their opinions towards a certain public issues without being intervened by any others; And the public sphere should be inclusive that everyone can take part in the debates.

The internet, which reveals a powerful communication function regardless physical presence, has once been considered as an ideal embodiment of the public sphere by media scholars. The internet constructs such a space that users regardless his nationality, religious belief, social position and wealth can take part in the online discussions only if he is accessible to the internet. This fulfills both the "disregards of status" and "inclusivity" of the Habermasian public sphere. (Benkler, 2006 P176-178; Dahlberg, 2001) Meanwhile, the internet helps those organizations and social groups which do not have access to mass media to construct their identities in and cast voices towards the public. (Dahlgren, 2001 P52-53; Poster, 1995) It is considered that the internet revives, or at least extends the traditional public sphere to a broad accessibility and significance.

There are as well critiques on whether the internet can be regarded as an idealized Habermasian public sphere or not. Dean argues the character "everyone is included" on the internet make this public sphere problematic – "everyone is included: the ignorant, the ill-informed, the unauthorized - There is too much equality, too much inclusivity" (Dean, 2003). Such an over-equality or over-inclusivity might influence the efficiency of the public sphere for opinion shaping. By examining the practices of forums and blogs as public sphere, Poell also finds these two practical internet communication media generally do not fulfill the characters of Habermasian public sphere, because most of the threads, comments, blogs and discussions are by no means rational, critical, inclusive and even logical. (Poell, 2012)

Since some scholars have been skeptical when taking the online space as a Habermasian public sphere, the concept itself is logically challenged. (Friedland et al, 2004; Harp et al, 2012) As Friedland et al denotes, the ideal public sphere with Habermas' three criteria is probably unrealizable. As we are now in a network society era, every group and organization is connected to others, a totally independence which usually refers to media independence is not possible.

(Friedland et al, 2004) With this premise the debate on the internet would have to be more or less influenced by extrinsic forces such as the market, governments, etc. Also Habermas' original definition of "inclusivity" is somehow too vague: it could include the whole world but certainly generate some turbulence during the discussion and the shape of public opinion just as what Dean claims above. Therefore, we may take Castells' view of the idea of public sphere for its heuristic value: "It is the cultural/informational repository of the ideas and projects that feed public debate" (Castells, 2008). The discussions on the internet concerning political opinions do show such functions to convince us the internet could to some extent be regarded as a public sphere, despite there is some inevitable information redundancy like meaningless quarrels and abuses. (Poell, 2012) In fact, even Poell himself has admitted that the online space, though not an ideal public sphere, at least facilitates the ideal under particular conditions. (ibid.) Thus in a critical point of view, with the growing penetration of internet in our daily lives we can reasonably perceive the internet as a relatively effective public sphere, but never absolute and ideal.

Then the outcome of this public sphere is what Friedland et al describes as the "communicative power". (Friedland et al, 2004) Originally borrowed from Habermas, the "communicative power" is a concept that distinguishes the "administrative power" possessed by governmental institutions. Being usually a counter power from the public who are not actually governing the state, the communicative power interacts with the administrative power to back up the public opinion discussed in the public sphere. The aim of this communicative power is to promote cooperation and mutual understanding, thus quite important within the general democratic process and civil society (ibid.). Public opinions are backed up with communicative power, communicative power is backed up by a public sphere, and the public sphere comes into being with the help of communication technologies. In short, the communication technologies generate a (mediated) public sphere, which causes communicative power against the administrative power and influence decision making process.

2.3. Surveillance and Sousveillance

Now let us come back to the topic of surveillance. In such a network society and with this online public sphere context, the social surveillance mechanism is also experiencing a transition.

Traditionally, the society runs in a mode as what Foucault labeled "Panopticism". (Foucault, 1977) Foucault found the inspiration from Jeremy Bentham's architectural figure "Panopticon". A panopticon contains an annular building at the periphery and a tower at the center. The annular building is divided into numerous isolated cells for detaining criminals. In the tower at the center, the warden can observe all criminals in different cells while it is not possible for him to be noticed by criminals because of special optical and architectural techniques. The panopticon is very efficient in managing criminals since criminals are never able to know whether they are being surveiled or not: criminals have to assume that they are being watched from the tower and develop self-surveillance to behave properly. Foucault borrows this model and expands it to the principle of the whole society. With the idea of "there is a center tower watching on you" in their mind, ordinary people are discreet with their behaviors, they regulate themselves in order not to break the rules of the society.

Clearly, this Panopticism mechanism reflects an asymmetrical surveillance nature as well as an unbalanced power relationship. The warden in the center tower, standing for the government, controls the criminals, as ordinary people. The government has power to surveil the daily life of ordinary people while the ordinary people may not know they are being surveiled or not. By controlling information, those who have power can even violate the social rules without any public awareness and thus naturally enjoy the privilege over ordinary people. The one-side optical and architectural technique of panopticon is a vivid metaphor for manipulating information, and in general this surveillance reflects an obvious top-down directional, hierarchical inequality.

As mentioned, the Panopticism surveillance is highly dependent on controlling information. In previous mass society (van Dijk, 2006 P20) periods when information and communication technologies are not as developed as at present, Panopticism is a useful way of conceiving how the society works, especially as a materialized structure of power relationships. However, thanks to the information and communication technologies, the trend of transforming into network society and the shaping of online public sphere is gradually revolutionizing this invidious one way "Panopticism". On one hand, the network society embraces an open power relationships structure that no power is unconditional and eternal because it has to be influenced by multiple connected

forces; on the other hand, particularly, information and communication technologies erode the barrier of information, the most important causation of the conventional Panopticism. Admittedly, the original surveillance still exists that government has the power to surveil people and regulate them, but the development of technology also results to a broad sharing of the government information among ordinary people: they can discuss state affairs in the online public sphere created by internet, express their points of view or even share their pictures taken when they witness the surveillers are abusing power.

Hence, surveillance is now accompanied with a new concept "sousveillance" (Mann, 2003). "Sousveillance" refers to the opposite meaning of surveillance that the "Surveillance Below". As Mann states, "Mobile, personal, and wearable computing devices allow people to take the personal computing revolution with them. Sousveilling individuals now can invert an organization's gaze and watch the watchers by collecting data on them" (ibid.) Mann emphasizes the literal meaning of the word, while Ganascia has further developed this idea in the aim of deriving Foucault's Panopticism according to the current network society. Ganascia names the new mechanism "Catopticon" (Ganascia, 2010). Ganascia's Catopticon generalizes Mann's "reflectionism" (Mann, 1998) with three criteria altered from Panopticon: total transparency of society; fundamental equality which gives everybody the ability to watch; total communication. (Ganascia, 2010) Ganascia's concept contributes to understand current inseparable coexistence of "surveillance" and "sousveillance". In the Catopticon, everyone, certainly including the once powerful surveillers, is watched by everyone else rather than being watched by a single or a few surveillers.

In a Panopticism society, the surveillers gain power from the state and authorities, so this power is more like the described "administrative power" and naturally shows a hierarchy. But now as it varies from "one to all" towards "all to all", the sousveillance is cast by anonymous communication technology users who are not entitled privilege and primacy over others, what empowers this mechanism may be better rationally linked to the "communicative power". That is to say, by using information technologies to share information and participating in certain political debates in the public sphere, anonymous individuals or groups have generated their communicative power. Specifically concerning the surveillance and sousveillance phase, this

communicative power coexists with the administrative power of surveillers and conducts the operation of the Catopticon system. Sousveillance helps eliminate "anti-social behaviors" like shoplifting, burglary, vandalism, etc. (ibid.), yet also realizes what surveillance does not: the regulation of surveillers themselves. Panopticism regulates ordinary people to obey social morals and ethics by hierarchical administrative power, whereas it is the communicative power backed up by communication technologies and the online public sphere that drives everyone to behave himself.

2.4.   Western Theories Meet Chinese Society

The theories of network society, public sphere and the Catopticism are initially western, so there is a necessity to examine whether they can adapt to the situations of China. Firstly, it is obvious the Chinese society also shares Castells' network society trend. On one hand, after the reforming and opening-up policy in 1978, China has been gradually opening up its economy with more and more international business cooperation. At present, the country has been granted the title of world factory and nobody can deny the ties between China and other countries. On the other hand, Chinese leader has initially seen the Internet primarily as a new economic sector which contributes to the modernization, the development of internet technologies has been supported with state policies and funding. (Yang, 2009 P54) Even Castells himself implicates China is linked in the global network. (Castells, 2000)

Secondly, new media technologies have indeed helped to found a public space for certain political debates in China which shapes a "weak public sphere". (Harp et al. 2012) The academic world seems developed a consensus of recognizing the internet in China as an unprecedented Chinese public sphere despite there are still obstacles mainly due to the censorship. (Esarey & Xiao, 2008 P753, 755; Yang, 2003; Harp et al., 2012; Lagerkvist, 2006) Concerning the censorship, political discussions are more tolerable on the internet compared to traditional mass media, (Yang, 2009 P44) and the censorship follows the logic that issues directly challenge the legitimacy of the party-state are minimally tolerated, whereas issues do not challenge state legitimacy may be tolerated. (ibid P55) In this sense, anti-corruption issues and the sousveillance rationally enjoy a certain degree tolerance of the censorship principle if it does not challenge the state legitimacy, but

only focuses on specific individuals, or local groups. In fact, the online discussion on corruption issues is aimed at the containment of corruption, which even coincides with the state agendas. (ibid P56) When merely talking about corruption control, we can consider that internet offers an ideal space for civil participation and thus forms the "weak public sphere" in China.

Thirdly, as for the Catopticism, there is already similar concept of Catopticism found in Chinese literatures. Yu argues the revolution of media technologies facilitates a new structure different from Foucault's Panopticism. The new structure is so called "shared-sight jail"[1] that more like a "surround and watch" structure which stands for a public gaze and control on individuals. (Yu, 2009) The concept "shared-sight jail" is borrowed by Lv to explain how it replaces the traditional mass media surveillance dynamics and how it generates the new journalism in China. (Lv, 2010) Noticed the transition toward the "shared-sight jail", Zhang argues a new mode of information management on a government position. She has given a theoretical frame for power institutions and government to handle public relationship as well as strategies to maintain a healthy interaction with netizens who are watching on them. (Zhang, 2010) The "shared-sight jail" idea may leave us an impression of all-to-one surveillance, which differs from the all-to-all Catopticon, but generally, they reflect the same logic: Both own the substance that communication technologies help share information among the public, and only one specific individual or group who violates the society rules will be thrown under the public spotlight. Thus, in this oriental context the Catopticism philosophy does not differ much but also fits well.

The internet-based sousveillance for corruption prevention and monitoring witnesses an increase in China. According to a state-owned news media Xinhua News, during the latest 8 years there have been 118 internet-based anti-corruption incidents in 25 provinces, while the data has been pushed to a peak in 2011: Merely during the year of 2011 there have been 50 such incidents. (Xinhua News, 2012) Interestingly, these kinds of anti-corruption incidents have accompanied the rapid development of Weibo in China: Weibo users have quadrupled in 2011, "Nearly half of China's 513 million netizens used Weibo sites (in 2011) compared to 63 million in 2010". (BBC

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[1] The original Chinese phrase for this is Gongjing Jianyu; since no direct English translation can be found yet, the Shared-sight Jail is translated temporarily by its literal meaning.

News, 2012) Combining the gradual increasing incidents described in the introduction and the discussion of both domestic and international media on the growing numbers of Weibo anti-corruption, it is reasonable for us to ask, why such a sousveillance climbs to a current climax with the emergence and prevalence of Weibo. We borrow western theories to find the fact that such a mechanism is originally dependent on the "communicative power", whereas the communicative power is supported by a communication-technologies-based public sphere. Hence, concerning the coincide of both a rapid growing Weibo usage and an increasing frequency of internet-based anti-corruption incidents, we can make a hypothesis: Compared to previous internet media i.e. BBS and blogs, Weibo optimizes the public sphere with good efficiency of sharing information and communication and thus generate a stronger communicative power to drive the sousveillance mechanism in order to control and prevent corruption. In the following parts, I will therefore investigate how Weibo functions as a communication tool to see the result.

3.   The Evolution of Weibo

3.1.   The Internet in China

Regarding the development of the Internet in China, Tai has mapped out four major stages: During 1986 to 1992, the internet has been mainly applied in scientific and laboratory use. Main functions were limited to emails. From 1992 to 1995, it entered the second phase that the government was proposing to build several basic information network infrastructures. During the period between 1995 and 1997, the government realized the development of internet will probably yield significant benefits to the nation's economy, and thus there began an acceleration of the construction of the internet basic infrastructures. Meanwhile, in order to keep the information flow safe, governors have made a variety of both technical mechanisms and policies to control the information communication of China's Internet. The last phase is from 1998 to now, that the internet in China has gradually developed into the current status. The 15 years from 1998 till now has witnessed the rapid development of the internet in China. (Tai, 2006 P122)

From 1997 on, in every half year, China Internet Network Information Center (CNNIC) would investigate and collect statistical data of the China internet use and development. As the latest report (July 2012) reveals, the number of people who use internet in China has been consistently growing; till June of 2012 the number has risen to 538 million, being 39.9% of the whole population. Only in the first half of 2012, the number of netizens has increased by 24.5 million. There are already 3.98 million registered domain names ended with .CN and the total quantity of websites reach to 2.5 million. (CNNIC, 2012-07) Comparatively, the first CNNIC internet report shows in the whole country there were only 620,000 internet users in 1997, while there were 4066 registered domain names ended with .CN and 1500 websites. (CNNIC, 1997)

The latest report also indicates that the growth of China internet users have stepped into a steady phase. For easily accessible groups and people in better developed areas, the internet has reached a high level. Among all groups, undergraduate students have formed the biggest group, as 28.6% of the whole netizens population. Also, 72.9% of internet users are urban population, far more than the 27.1% of internet users from rural areas. Compared to a stable composition of well-educated

user population (college, university diploma or better), the population of users with less-well-educated background (primary school, junior high school, etc) are growing. (CNNIC, 2012-07) Generally speaking, the internet penetration in those less developed areas, remote areas and less educated groups is relatively low. Thus, just as CNNIC has indicated, the next step for the government is to planning strategies to further foster the prevalence of the internet in China, especially in diminishing the economical and technical obstacles for people in less developed areas and less educated people. (ibid.)

On the other hand, while the traditional fixed internet has seemingly already finished its rapid growth in China, mobile internet nevertheless begins its booming. At present, the number of netizens who connect themselves to the internet via mobile devices has already increased to 388 million, as 72.2% of the total netizens population, while there are only 380 million internet users via personal computer. (ibid,) Mobile devices have already become the most popular approach for surfing the internet. To sum it up, during the latest 15 years, the internet has already prevailed to approximately 40% of the whole population in China. Netizens use internet to enrich their daily life by acquiring information, business affairs, communication and online entertainment. Since the internet has brought significant convenience, it is already an indispensable technology in this country.

3.2. Online forums, Blogs and a Growing Public Sphere

During the last 15 years, the development of techniques and the popularization of network have also lead some changes on the online public sphere in China. Before further studying how Weibo contributes to the public sphere, it is important for us to have a brief investigation of the previous status of the online public sphere. After searching some previous literatures, I found that the development of online public sphere in China could be concluded mainly into two periods: The online public forum period from 2000 and the forum & blog period from 2004.

Online forums, or BBS, could be regarded as the most initial public sphere in China. According to Jin, online forums function as "a centralized virtual platform where users can discuss various topics interactively, contribute user-generated contents, and share information and materials,

topics are either organized by threads or listed in a chronological order." (Jin, 2008 P48) Early use of BBS distributed generally in universities and colleges that it was a communication approach of the students who have a good command of computer techniques. The first BBS was established in TsingHua University, in 1995. Since there were far less online resources available then today, using BBS to chat with friends in the same campus, sending files and sharing news have become the most important activities online. BBS, the earliest way to share information, was also considered as the predecessor of current websites like news portal, search engines which are more professional and functional. After 2000, however, when a growing number of people can afford the access of broadband internet, public forums have started to prevail. The most popular public forums could be categorized into two types: The first type is subsidiary under popular portal websites, for instance Sina, Netease and Sohu. These portal sites provide news and search services and have a huge concentration of users, therefore commonly their subsidiary forums have a quite high popularity. Another type is independent public forums, like Xici and Tianya. Established in the early stage of online forums, they also succeeded to accumulate a large user group.

Interestingly, Jin points out that most Chinese netizens view online forums for solving problems or for entertainment and leisure, rather than participating in political debate. This seemingly does not fit what we mean the public sphere. Nevertheless, viewing online forum threads without the purpose of participation in political and social debate does not equal to an indifference and a taboo to discuss political and social issues. By contrary, online forums have indeed provided a space for such discussions, just as Jin states that "once some social events arouse users' concerns, interests and conscience, a mighty and influential force will be aggregated from these online forms." (ibid P60) The discussions about Sun Zhigang's case[2] in 2003, the government's controversial behavior on SARS dissemination control in 2003, and the relatively recent case of "South China Tiger Scandal"[3] in 2008 are all originated from public forums. Online forums, especially public forums in China usually have tremendous users, which generate a giant basis to create an all-inclusive public sphere. From a technical perspective, varying from applications like instant messengers which are more likely for private use, and online chat rooms without capability to store messages,

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[2] See http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/en/doc/2003-06/10/content_168514.htm
[3] See http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/china/2008-06/29/content_6803353.htm

online forums have a large audience and save threads so that a certain discussion could continue longer. Hence online public forums rose in around year 2000 have become the earliest online public sphere in China.

Compared to online forums, blogs have as well altered the construction of public sphere. In China the development of blogs is slightly behind than in western societies yet quite rapid. BlogChina as the first blog site was founded in 2002 with merely 10,000 users. It was till 2004 has the concept "blog" started to spread among netizens. When it was 2005, however, the main component of bloggers is switched from elite class to ordinary netizens. "Did you blog today?" has once become a catching phrase then. In 2005, there were already 36,820,000 blogs and 16,000,000 bloggers in China. Compared to the initial stage with only several blog sites, the growth is undoubtedly amazing. In fact, not only professional blog sites have been popular, but those portal websites like Sina, Microsoft MSN and Yahoo have also offered blog service in China. Similar to online forums, their own traffics have contributed to transform netizens into bloggers. Some websites have even invited celebrities from all sorts of industries, resulting in the further popularity of blogs in China. (Guo, 2009 P17-P19)

As an early application of Web 2.0 techniques, blog allows user to build a homepage-like site to express ideas without a requirement of complicated programming skills, meanwhile with multimedia resources like pictures and videos embedded one's blog content is further enriched. However, concerning constructing the public sphere, it is more rational to say that the emergence of blogs is only a complement of online forums rather than thoroughly replacement. As argued, a key trait of online forums is "all-inclusivity" that everyone can participate in the discussion and debate, which leads forums a character of grassroot. For blogs, though technical barrier is melting, the visibility of blogs is always associated with the blogger's personal fame, his writing skills as well as his knowledge in professional field. (Jin, 2008 P70) Generally speaking, if one is famous in a specific field, such as a famous writer, a well-known scholar, his blog certainly enjoys a higher click rate than the blog of ordinary people. To some extent, this is substantially representing the offline hierarchy in online space: people read blogs of celebrities, not ordinary netizens. Moreover, due to market reasons, most blog sites intend to place celebrity blogs in the list of

suggestion on the homepage as "hot topic" in order to gain more traffic. (ibid.) As a result, blogs have actually weakened the all-inclusivity which is more common for online forums. Just as the CNNIC reports indicate, "In the latest two years, traditional blog users group have stopped to expand and even begin to shrink. Blogging is increasingly revealing some characteristics of traditional media. Still in public attention, celebrity blogs have become a main channel for opinion leaders to convey messages." (CNNIC, 2012-07 P32)

Certainly we can perceive conversely: when blogs have indeed weakened the all-inclusivity, they have nevertheless increased the profoundness of insights and opinions in political and social issue debates. If in online forums the discussions are more or less as what Poell claims "not rational" or even aggressive and abusive, for celebrities who have blogs in China and are highly focused, they have to make logical and professional speech to maintain their reputation and image. In fact, their opinions serve as a reference for shaping the public opinion in the public sphere, whereas for ordinary netizens, even they have improper languages in their own blogs, those languages are far from entering the public debate due to the hierarchy of blogs in China. The grassroot character of online forums and the professionalism in China have gradually reshaped the Chinese online public sphere from an online-forum-oriented which started in 2000 towards a combination of both online forums and blogs after 2004.

3.3. Weibo: An Integrated Information Terminal

In the late half of 2000s, the development of web2.0 technology has further granted social media characteristics to internet applications which are based on user generated contents and popular in a worldwide spectrum, for instance Facebook, Twitter and Youtube. In china, due to the existence of the Great Fire Wall (GFW), netizens are not able to view those sites directly. (Sullivan, 2012) Correspondingly, there are several clone versions of them: Renren, Weibo and Youku. They originated from their foreign counterparts in the beginning, for example, Renren is similar to Facebook as a social network sites; Youku imitates Youtube for uploading and sharing videos. However, the limitation of the GFW and Chinese netizens' own cultural context have lead those clone version gradually develop into different forms from their western ancestors. Among them, the most special and obvious is the development of Weibo in China.

The notion Weibo is short for Chinese "Weixing Boke", or "Microblogging". The earliest Weibo service was built up in 2007 by websites such as "Taotao", "Jiwai" and "Fanfou", which are "poorly disguised Twitter clones". (Ramzy, 2011) In 2009, the Chinese governors have realized that it is important to control the information flow since they witnessed how rumors were spreading through those Weibo services during the Urumuqi ethnic riots and also noticed the "Twitter Revolution" in Iran, so they stopped all popular Weibo service like Fanfou in the name of regulation; Meanwhile, foreign microblog service like Twitter has been blocked. After that, one of the biggest Chinese internet media Sina.com guaranteed that it will obey the state's censorship policy in order to start Weibo service, and thus become "the first microblog platform to be authorized after the clampdown" (ibid,) Following Sina.com, other portal sites like Tencent, Netease and Sohu also joined in the Weibo market in China. According to a investigation of DCCI, among all Weibo users, 87.67% of them use Sina Weibo, leading the second, Tencent Weibo with 84.69% and the Third, Netease, with 56.12%. (DCCI, 2012) The Weibo services have been monopolized by a few large internet corporations.

In most western news and literatures, Weibo has always been interpreted as "Chinese Twitter" to make it easier to understand. Indeed, enlightened by Twitter, the interface of Weibo is very similar to Twitter.[4] For instance, it has a same personal profile page, with displayed number of Fans (followers), Following and Weibo (Tweet). It also divides users with "regular users" and "verified users"; Topic marked with "##" and a trend list at side area, etc. Nevertheless with three years' independent developing Chinese Weibo microblogging has evolved its own traits. Firstly and basically, though twitter and Weibo both have a limitation of the message length with 140 characters, a language difference enables 140 Chinese characters to contain more significance than 140 alphabets in English. (Dugan, 2011) The 140 Roman alphabets limitation urges users to conclude their ideas in very terse words, usually within a sentence, to express, while 140 Chinese characters even allows users to finish a paragraph and thus massively increase the significance of a single post. Secondly, in order to cater the Chinese netizens' habits, Weibo allows users to directly embed multimedia like pictures and videos in one post, (Sullivan, 2012) so that everything

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[4] The three Weibo service of Sina, Netease and Tencent are almost technically same, so it is feasible to analyze them together and mark with the same notion: Weibo.

could be shown on one's page without an extra click on the links. The change also makes one post less visually monotone, whereas these embedded multimedia further complete the content of the text in the purpose of a more effective and more informative content sharing. Thirdly, the comment mechanism of Weibo makes it possible for users to reply directly beneath a source post. These comments are public; they could be seen by the post owner as well as other users who expand the comment list. When users regardless of strange people or acquaintances have read those comments, they can continue to reply and therefore form a discussion. At the same time, one could repost others' Weibo with his own comment as the new content, also within 140 Chinese characters, to expand the meaning of a post and spread it to his followers. Moreover, the open source character brings Weibo more possibility to overcome the obstacles and convey more information. For example, an app called "Long Microblog" has taken advantage of the embedded pictures to help those who want to write a long article in a single Weibo post. By transferring article into pictures, Long Weibo has broken the limitation of the fixed 140-characters limitation, allowing the initial bloggers, especially the celebrities who blog to influence the public with their skillful writing.

In fact, since more and more Chinese netizens have joined in the world of Weibo, the Weibo itself could be even regarded as a concrete miniature of the network society: the Whole Weibo platform is like a network that every Weibo profile is perceived as a "node". (van Dijk, 2006 P24) It can be an ordinary people (regular users), a celebrity (verified personal users) or a company, an institution or even a government organization (verified group users). Users could achieve Weibo directly from information sources, by which a relationship among nodes is represented. There is no limitation on which objects to connect, an information source could be one's real friend offline, but also his favorite sports star. Similarly, it can also be a Weibo profile managed by traditional mass media, while all of this could be realized by a single click on the "follow" button.

The multimedia characteristics, functions of reposting and commenting, an app-openness and also the culture background all contribute to Weibo's remediation of previous media: It is twitter, but can be more informative and detailed than Twitter's simple contents; It encourage online interactions and "resembles a more sophisticated, second-generation Bulletin Board System";

(Sullivan, 2012) It also has social network sites attributes when one and his offline social network all have Weibo accounts and follow each other; It is as well a mass media, since one can still enjoy professional journalism services provided by the profile of traditional media. A comprehensive information service and a free following system permit everyone to adjust his own network and relationship with other nodes, depends on his own interest. One even does not need to open new pages but can still know everything he is interested in. Therefore I argue that, as an adaption of microblog in contemporary China, the substance of Weibo is not merely a text message for recording daily status (which is more like what a Tweet does), rather, it has evolved into an integrated information terminal or a vital information highway for Chinese netizens.

Figure 1: a brief introduction of Sina Weibo's functions (Source: Weibo.com)

3.4. Towards An Optimized Public Sphere

When Weibo is considered as a newly popular integrated information terminal which concentrates a great many netizens and opinion leaders as well as all kinds of information, it is certainly important for the construction of the online public sphere in China. Online forums, once the main part of the online public sphere, emphasizes more on anonymity and thus "grassroot", (Jin, 2008 P35) so the core of discussion in forums is the contents of threads, rather than users' own social

influence. In other words, online forums focus more on topic, but not users. Comparatively, since in recent year there is an increasing tendency of the hierarchy in China's blog sphere, blog gradually became a primary channel for celebrities to broadcast themselves. Their blogs have provided professional, eloquent support for ordinary netizens' public debates. Due to the celebrities' own reputation, market factors from the blog websites, celebrity blogs usually reach more readers. Such results suggest that users have taken the place of contents to be the center. The anonymity and "grassroot-ness" of online forums can bring online forums an inclusivity, but it may have less profound and rational contents. The blogs, one the other hand, see more professional insights from celebrities, but its growing hierarchy is indeed undermining its inclusivity. Thus, it is clear why the previous online public sphere in China is a combination of online forums and blogs: ordinary netizens discuss issues anonymously, while celebrities could "join" the discussion by expressing their opinions in their personal blogs. They together build up the previous online public sphere.

The current popularity has united these scattered platforms. First, Weibo as micro blog still has basic attributes of blogs. Its "follow" mechanism has in fact remained the center on user or person. Viewing Weibo is actually viewing "What does a person say?" Therefore it allows well-known people who used to blog still retain his wide influence on Weibo platform: they can upgrade their accounts into verified users to enhance their identity, letting his Weibo profile represent his attitude. Meanwhile, with the help of multiple tools such as Long Weibo and multimedia, original bloggers are capable of writing long articles, publishing videos or uploading pictures so that they can make a fully informative argument. The transition from contents-centered to user-centered has otherwise held the inclusivity of this platform: it doesn't need all published information should be around a certain topic (Which is often seen in online forums as well as their sub-forums, such as Tianya with sub-forums "Career", "Campus", etc.). Instead, one's Weibo could be about everything but just what he wants to say, ranging from something just happened in one's daily life, to certainly the discussion of public issues. When the requirement of writing skills and writing time of traditional blogs forces more ordinary people to quit from this service, the 140-character limitation has nevertheless overcome such obstacles that users can use simple texts to share their status and ideas to their followed friends, rather than preparing a complete article. Consequently,

this is pushing Weibo to be the substitute of blogs for ordinary netizens. Despite the technical contribution to lower the communication barrier, we can also find that, different from the distribution of online forum users who can be either in the forums under large companies or in the forums of independent forums, the distribution of Weibo users is mainly concentrated in a few platforms such as Sina Weibo, Tencent Weibo or Netease Weibo since there are only a few large internet corporates which have Weibo service. If we regard Sina Weibo as a conventional online forum, it could be a huge forum with more than 300 million users. (BBC News, 2012) Such a monopoly phenomenon is turning Weibo into a giant public sphere that everyone could say something, every word could be exponentially reposted and every one could participate a debate. In other words, when previous public sphere is constructed by the aggregation of countless online forums, both large and small and even sub-forums, what Weibo contributes is not an aggregation but the Weibo platform itself. People do not need to switch back and forth to different forums for information, but go altogether on Weibo to achieve what they want. Meanwhile, the advantages of blogs are succeeded: celebrities are still influential and they can bring their insights directly in the same platform. As an integrated information terminal, Weibo also integrates the previous media and thus remodels the online public sphere in China: Weibo as primary, while online forums and blogs as supportive.

4. A bottom-up Surveillance Mechanism

In last section I argued Weibo as both an integrated information terminal and an optimized public sphere. Then, we shall ask, how does it help to organize the so-called bottom-up surveillance mechanism, in the aim of fighting corruption? According to Transparency International, corruption is defined as "the abuse of entrusted power by political leaders or a bureaucracy for personal gain or specific group interest" (cited in Gronlund, 2010 P7). Dictionaries describe corruption as "guilty of dishonest practices; Lacking integrity"[5] or "impairment of integrity, virtue or moral principles."[6] Specifically Concerning political corruption, Huntington defines corruption as "behavior of public officials which deviates from accepted norms in order to serve private ends." (Huntington, 1968 P59) Those definitions have indicated that, corruption usually refers to that those who have power (and often political, granted by the authority) use it to gain improper private interests. Such a kind of power can also be perceived as the "administrative power" mentioned before, so when it is abused, if ordinary people who do not have power want to combat this abuse, they have to generate a "communicative power" as a counter power which is also mentioned above. As a media tool, how Weibo helps to organize such a mechanism basically depends on how it facilitates the communication in an anti-corruption incident and generate a communicative power. In this sense, I will first use a typical case to analyze a general progress of communication in an anti-corruption incident to find the result.

4.1. Case: Bringing Down the "Watch Brother"

On August 26 2012, a tanker fully loading highly flammable methanol had collided with a long-distance bus with 37 passengers on a highway in Shaanxi Province, China. Both vehicles had burst into fire and 36 passengers were killed. Shortly, news media and government officials arrived, and the pictures of this deadly accident began to circulate through internet in China. When most netizens were expressing their condolence to the 36 victims and their relatives, at 16:35 of the same day, one Sina Weibo user "JadeCong" reposted the photo from Xinhua News and claimed: "At the scene of the accident, the official has a stable emotion with a smile overspread his face." From then on, Chinese netizens have transferred their attention from the accident itself

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[5] See Dictionary.com http://dictionary.reference.com/browse/corrupt
[6] See Merriam-Webster online, http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/corruption

to the official who was smiling at the scene. His improper smiley face shows a strong contrast to the 36-victim-accident behind him. With more than 6000 times reposting, JadeCong's Weibo has irritated the netizens to launch the "Human-Flesh Search Engine" to dig out the background and identity of this official. At 19:53, one netizens "Baixingdayutian" publicized the personal information of this smiling official on Weibo. He is Yang Dacai, Chief of the Shaanxi Provincial Work Safety Administration. For his smiley face, netizens have initially dubbed him "Smiling Chief". About 4 hours later, the official Weibo profile of "BoHai BBS" has published five photos of Yang. On each of them, Yang was wearing five different watches in five different public occasions. On the next day, Sun Duofei, CEO of one luxuries company have posted a weibo, pointing that those five watches have a total value at approximately 500000 CNY (80253 US Dollars) This weibo was reposted 14531 times and replied 5350 times. People started to argue that by Yang's income level, it is incredible to have so many luxurious watches. They started to suspect he bought the watches with illegal income. Yang's five luxurious watches have also changed his monicker from "Smiling Chief" to "Watch Brother".

When Yang was informed of a strong suspicion from the internet, he chose to reply rather than evade. In the evening of August 29, Yang Dacai logged in Sina Weibo and answer directly the questions of netizens. "I'm not smiling," he said, "My facial expression was a little relaxed. What I did was just to make my colleagues feel more comfortable. I bought all 5 watches with all my savings during these 10 years. The most expensive one is worth 35000 CNY (5617USD). For internet users, it is reasonable and normal way to monitor officials in such a way." After this response, suspicion has decreased. Some netizens appreciated Yang's reaction, saying that he expresses positive attitude, explains reasonably and knows how to deal with public relation very well.

The watch brother has nevertheless underestimated the power of Weibo, nor the aftermath of his deceit. The incident has not subsided: When Yang just finished his response on Sina Weibo, one netizen publicized four additional pictures with the title of "Mr. Yang's sixth watch". On August 30, a well-know watch appraiser "HuaZong" has continued to upload photos of Yang's another five different watches in other occasions, and meanwhile, he identified each of the watches with a

price higher than 200000 CNY (32101 USD). Yang has effectively made a good image with positive and modest attitude before, but unfortunately, with the exposure of these new clues, such a "good" image has nevertheless become the evidence of his deceptive behaviors. In turn, Yang did not answer any of the questions, but perhaps because of feeling guilty, pretended to be dumb to all of the accusation. On the same day, the Shaanxi Provincial Discipline Committee told state news media that it would launch an investigation of the watch brother and publicize the result of the inquiry. After that, netizens kept on uploading more clues, saying that Watch Brother's accessories like glasses, belts and bracelets are all costly. Finally on Sept. 21st, Yang Dacai was relieved of his position and accused of serious discipline violations.[7]

Figure 2: Yang Dacai's smiley face at the accident sence (Source: JadeCong's Weibo)

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[7] The reports are available at: http://leaders.people.com.cn/n/2012/0921/c58278-19069811.html (Chinese) http://world.time.com/2012/10/10/bringing-down-watch-brother-chinas-online-corruption-busters-tread-a-fine-line/ (English) and
http://blogs.wsj.com/chinarealtime/2012/08/30/about-time-a-bold-move-from-an-embattled-chinese-official/ (English)

Figure 3: "Watch Brother" and his luxurious watches (Source: People.com)

4.2. Typical Process

This case provides us with rich materials to study how the bottom-up surveillance mechanism works with the help of Weibo. As a typical internet-based combating corruption case, we can generally find that it has four phases: 1) Exposing phase; 2) Spreading phase; 3) Responding phase 4) Subsiding phase. In the following paragraphs, I will analyze in detail how every phase happens and what is the role Weibo plays within them.

4.2.1. Exposing Phase

The exposing phase is the beginning phase of a certain incident. It refers to that, when people find some social phenomena which do not follow public moral or basic life logic, they upload them on the internet to let others know. The uploaded information could be either an exposure of offline clues, for example the scanned invoices in the 2011 state-owned business Sinopec's luxurious wine scandal;[8] or information from internet or mass media, for example the initial "smiling photo"

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[8] See http://www.decanter.com/news/wine-news/525292/chinese-executive-in-lafite-scandal-disciplined

in the watch brother case. These clues uploaded or reposted by netizens have then become the cause of an anti-corruption battle, and trigger a further clues exposure.

With the context of China, the exposing phase is often associated with a collaborative action mechanism called "Human-Flesh search engine" (short for HFS), which means "tens of thousands of users are mobilized with one single goal that to dig out the facts and expose them to the glare of publicity". (Jin, 2008 P73) HFS is like a collective intelligence of Chinese netizens. With their own knowledge and background, they collect information from both online and offline resources to provide more useful clues about the targeted person. Bits of information will be provided by different individuals until a full picture gradually emerges. (Cheung, 2009) Thus as Wang et al. suggests, it will be more appropriate to perceive and translate HFS as "People-powered search" (Wang et al., 2010) As an approach of exposure, the HFS is empowered by Chinese netizens who abominate corruption and have a sensitivity on power abuse, so very often, when governmental officials or persons who are related to powers have some ethically misbehavior or immoderate lifestyle and get caught by netizens, the mobilization of such a "human flesh search engine" will be launched. By group information collecting, the personal information as well as previous record of a person will be exposed, and netizens continue to search traces of corruption in order to bring the target down.

In the exposing phase, what Weibo offers is a channel to publicize clues and to raise suspicion. As mentioned in the case, a normal picture has been viewed by countless netizens, and when one of them, JadeCong, found Yang Dacai's strange smile, he reposted this picture on his Weibo with some satiric sentences to criticize Yang's indifferent attitude towards the tragedy and the dead. Similarly, in the following human flesh search process, netizens have published all their clues and information on Weibo to show Yang's issue and also provide a basis for a further inquiry.

Moreover, Weibo as an information terminal has an advantage not only of publicizing and representing but also of the potential as a clue providing source. For example, in the Guo Meimei incident cited in the introduction, when Guo Meimei were posting pictures of her luxurious bags and sports cars on her real-name-verified Weibo account to show off, she might never imagined

that those pictures have served as good resources for human search engine and later brought her and Red Cross China into the corruption controversy.

4.2.2. Spreading Phase

The spreading phase is the most important phase in the whole process. The clues and suspicions in exposing phase are amplified in this phase, by which the internet can generate communicative power against the abused administrative power. In the mechanism of bottom-up surveillance on corruption issues, the spreading phase could be further broken down into three levels since Weibo is obviously a web2.0 technology which leads to what Castells describes as "self mass-communication" dynamics. (Castells, 2008)

At the first level, the clues exposed on Weibo start to circulate around netizens within the Weibo platform. Since Weibo is compatible for both ordinary users or "grassroot" users, and celebrities, the information forwarded by an ordinary user mainly flows towards his follower network, which is usually in a relatively small scale, that it tends to shape a communication mechanism of "computer-mediated interpersonal communication" (Chesebro, 1985) or "social networking interpersonal communication" (Drussell, 2012), whereas the celebrities who have verified Weibo account could concentrate a large scale of followers due to his personal fame to let the information reach to a broader audience and therefore such a mechanism is more like traditional how mass media broadcast information. In the watch brother case, we can see both the grassroot user "JadeCong" had his weibo forwarded more than 6000 times and a real-name verified CEO Sun Duofei has more than 14000 times. By both large scale "traditional mass media" way and small scale "mediated interpersonal" way, the information have prevailed first in Weibo platform itself.

The second level sees Weibo's influence on other online media such as online forums and blogs. Information is reposted from weibo to those online media which could also function as public sphere, so that more netizens who do not use Weibo can get informed and participate in the discussions in those scattered platforms. Then, these platforms give feedback to Weibo with useful argument and opinions after discussions in order to provide new evident clues for suspicion and accusation. For instance, the BoHai bbs mentioned in the case is actually a regional online forum

in the north part of China and its audience group is then relatively small compared to Sina Weibo which has a state-scale influence, but BoHai bbs has used its official Weibo account to publish important findings filtered from its own platform that "watch brother has many watches" to trigger a further discussion in Sina Weibo, the optimized public sphere.

My perception of the third level focuses on the influence of Weibo and other online media to traditional mass media. This also indicates Weibo's potential for media agenda setting, that Weibo, as a social platform, "allows individuals an opportunity to help drive – and at times lead – public discourse on socially relevant and politically important issues." (Sayre et al., 2010) Shortly after Yang's issue spreading on the internet, traditional mass media like news paper "Legal Daily", "Qianjiang Evening News" and "XInmin Evening News", state television station CCTV have both cited popular suspicions and discussions on Weibo, edited them as news or critiques.[9] At this level, online information has further disseminated towards offline audiences via mass media. From a public sphere view, such influence is originally generated by online public sphere mainly based on Weibo, and then cast an effect on the traditional public sphere. (Castells, 2008)

In all three levels, it is notable and interesting to find that incidents often spread in the form of "internet memes". Internet meme refers to "cultural units (catch phrases, images, fashions, expressions etc.) that spread rapidly via internet technologies, constructing, framing, and revealing cultural realities." (Davis, 2011) In China, dubbing, jokes, verse and songs in the purpose of subverting and satirize the society and politic as contention is as old as its civilization, yet it "has never enjoyed such a renaissance as in Chinese cyberspace today" (Yang, 2009 P77) Cultural and social phenomena are condensed into very short internet catching phrases and they usually reveal the attitude of the netizens, as well as the whole people. In previous years, a well known example is the mysterious animal "Grass-mud horse", which not only expresses netizens' refusal attitude towards the internet censorship policies but also contains a strong sense of black humor.[10] In the watch brother case, we again witness the internet meme characteristic. Yang Dacai is first dubbed as "Smiling Chief", then "Watch Brother". Each of these monikers minimized everything else and reserves his most notorious identity, while they also reflect Chinese netizens' satire to his improper

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[9] See people.com news http://media.people.com.cn/n/2012/0925/c40606-19097504.html
[10] See http://chinadigitaltimes.net/space/Grass-mud_horse for more details.

behavior and corrupt lifestyle. When Chinese internet culture is dominated by entertainment, (Leibold, 2011; Sullivan, 2012) anti-corruption issues are naturally transcoded into short, entertaining and black-humored format, the incident is thus spreading along with the diffusion of the catching phrases. Moreover, since the 140-character limitation of Weibo has gradually developed a user preference of reading short but informative messages, (Gao, 2012) the catching phrases which cater to such preference is logically accelerating the dissemination of information.

4.2.3. Responding Phase

When one incident has accumulate a certain attention, persons or institutions involved in the incidents come to explain and make response, so that the incident is brought to the responding phase. In this phase, the accused "corrupt" official should explain all the clues and suspicions spreading on the internet. To explain, there are two main channels. One is to deploy traditional mass media, which is always considered as a propaganda channel, (Leibold, 2011; Liu, 2007) that the official crystallizes the source of his doubtful assets and reasons or context of his misbehavior by accepting interviews; The second channel is what we see in the watch brother case that official explains all matters via internet. Analyzing both two channels, we may find that the first responding approach is indirect because the suspicion originated and developed in the internet should first flow by the mass media and then let the official use mass media to make responses. However in the second approach, officials can use Weibo as a platform to answer all the questions, which are also raised from Weibo, to make it more direct. Besides it also reveals a stronger interactivity: what the watch brother used is a Sina Weibo's specific module called "micro interview", netizens raise questions directly in real time, and the official answers. Compared to the first approach, using weibo to face discontented netizens shows directly at least an official's courage, tolerance and sincerity. That is why when Yang has finished answering the early questions, some of netizens has begun to support him and appreciated his attitude. Certainly Yang's method is not common among all Chinese officials, while most of them would rather choose to avoid interviews and to keep silent to the internet. (WSJ News, 2012) Even after Yang finished his responding to the netizens, more exposed evidences have made him impossible to make reasonable explanations and finally he has to choose avoiding and silence, as other officials. At this moment, the Shaanxi Provincial Discipline Committee who is at a higher level than Yang

came and respond for Yang, claiming that they have launched an investigation in Yang's case.

4.2.4. Subsiding Phase

Subsiding phase is the last phase with few elements of media use. After netizens' questions are explained by the involved person or institution, if the explanations are indeed convincing and valid, and netizens are not able to exposure new clues to prove the official is corrupt, the incident will therefore stop to grow, people will then focus on this incident less and less, and finally it fades away from the public horizon. Similarly, when an official falls into silence when facing the evidences, independent discipline organizations starts to investigate and prove that the official is guilty, the accusation from netizens are then proved effective, an incident also goes to an end. The subsiding phase concentrates more on the result of the official, but the ending is the same: subsiding.

4.3. Weibo-based Anti-corruption and the Bottom-up Surveillance

By analyzing the case and separating it into four phases, I would use a flow chart to conclude a general mode of Weibo-based anti-corruption.
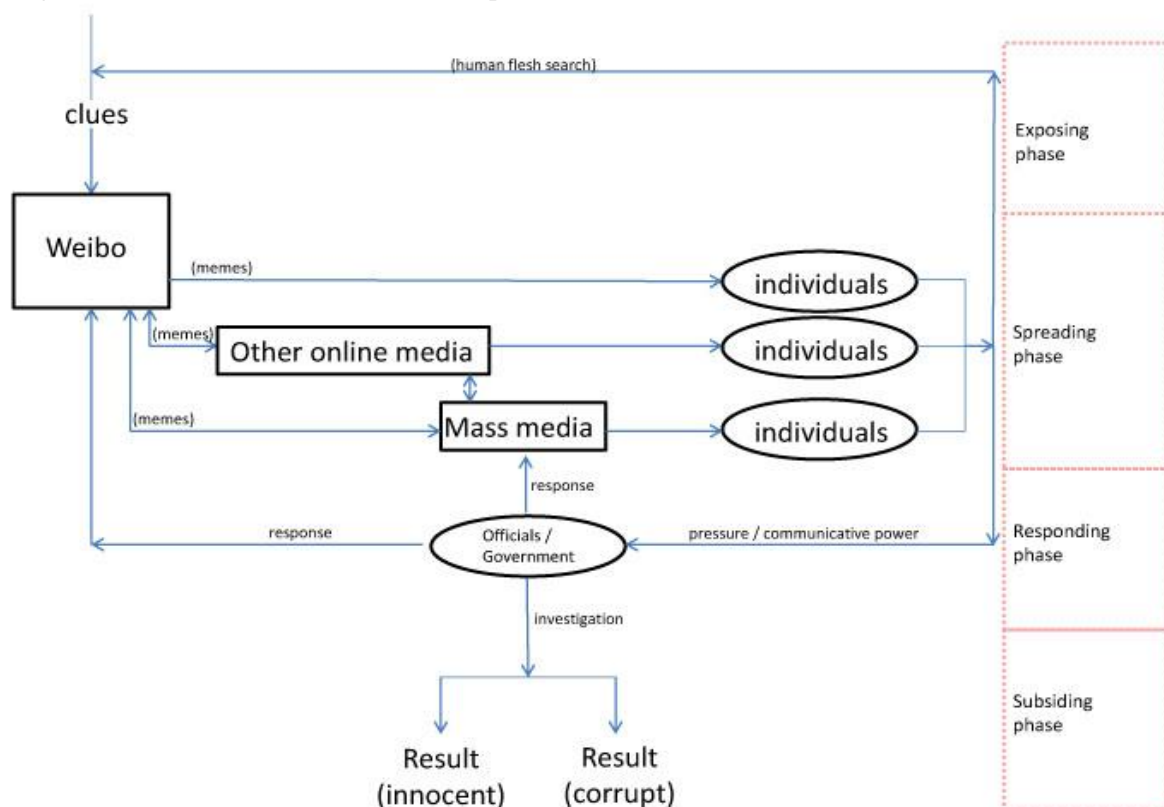

Figure 4: a general flow of Weibo-based anti-corruption incident

From the flow chart, it is clear to find that not all phases are processing in a strict chronological sequence. That is to say, some phases could happen simultaneously and repeatedly: When clues start to prevail in the spreading phase, there could certainly be some new clues discovered by netizens and get further exposed. Likewise, when in responding phase, the official's unconvincing explanations may not push the incident to the end but rather trigger a new round of human flesh search and exposing again. It is until the clues are evident enough to prove one is guilty and the upper institution have involved by investigating the officials and then publicized the result will an incident come to an end, otherwise it will always circulate in the previous phases.

No doubt in the entire process it is Weibo that plays as the hinge to connect all phases together. As an information terminal, it provides a platform for netizens to share and spread information. By sharing information, more people are able to enjoy the right to know the truth about the power; As an optimized public sphere, it does not only engage allow both ordinary users and celebrities (opinion leaders), but even enable the direct communication between the questioning side and responding side: when the watch brother is answering the questions from netizens on Weibo, it could be as well perceived as a part of public debate. Essentially, Weibo has gathered grassroot netizens distributed in countless large and small online forums, also opinion leaders from blogs and the involved official altogether, accelerating their information sharing and communication so that netizens could use clues to rapidly accumulate power – the communicative power – to generate pressure on the corrupt. When such power reaches a challenging level, the official or the government is urged to make an explanation, by either words, or an objective inquiry.

If the internet is the basis of current network society, Weibo in China is even a more concrete embodiment of it: users are reflected as accounts from real life to the cyberspace. They are each connected and can talk as they want, which reflects their social relationships. They follow stars, celebrities and other public figures that reflect their hobbies and interests. From a Catopticon aspect, once someone has done something immoral either online or offline and raises wrath in public, he may be exposed by netizens and be thrown under the spotlight of the "share-sight jail". The surveillance from anonymous users, or the bottom-up surveillance, is powerful and requires everyone especially the officials to remain uncorrupted. In this sense, the traditional vertical

Panopticon discipline logic is replaced by a less hierarchical, less centered networked Catopticon logic.

5. Critical Analysis: the Drawbacks

In last section we have examined the weibo-based mechanism of bottom-up sousveillance and its power concerning anti-corruption. The watch brother case has brought us a practical impression on how Weibo leads to such a storm of bringing down corrupt officials. However, it is yet too optimistic to hold a totally utopian view of such an anti-corruption mechanism. Every coin has two sides; this bottom-up mechanism also has its incompleteness and drawbacks.

5.1. Randomness

To begin with, the whole process, especially the early phases, reveals an obvious randomness. It is twofold. First, the exposure of clues is often accompanied with randomness. Let us take the watch brother case again: the very beginning of this incident is a photo of Yang's smiling face. This photo has resulted in the later discussions, suspicions and the final relieving of Yang. However the photo presents a strong sense of coincidence: there just happened an accident, the journalist just came and he just unconsciously captured the very precise moment when Yang is smiling. What if the photo was taken several seconds later and the official was not smiling? On the other hand, Yang's smile was first criticized and satirized by a grassroot Weibo user JadeCong, so what if he has not focused on the photo very much and did not notice this smile? The result might be then totally different.

The second randomness is mainly in the spreading phases. While the internet has brought everyone the right to say, it does not equal to everyone's words are equally influential. The incident could have also gone like this: even JadeCong has noticed Yang's smile and posted it on Weibo, since he is an ordinary user, he may raise nobody's attention so that his Weibo is not possible to be reposted for thousands times to trigger the further progress. The cyberspace is like an information sea, while such a piece of message could be a stone that either raises a huge wave or rapidly sink into the deep.

This is the randomness of the mechanism: the chance to "find" and the chance to "spread". Such characters determine that the bottom-up surveillance is always like a coincidental dynamics and

not so reliable to be deployed as a regular anti-corruption mechanism. In this logic, Yang's eventual relieving and punishment is, if not so serious, resulted from his bad luck.

5.2. Censorship

The second limitation concerns the ever controversial censorship in Chinese cyberspace, including Weibo. From the history of Weibo we are able to find that the very early Weibo services are all regulated or stopped, and thus the current Weibo services are "government-regulated commercial spaces" (Jiang, 2010) and have "multiple layers of self-censorship" (Mackinnon, 2008; Weber and Lu, 2007) As cited in previous section, The information control regulation follows the principle that "issues directly challenge the legitimacy of the party-state are minimally tolerated, whereas issues do not challenge state legitimacy may be tolerated." (Yang, 2009 P55) To ensure that all issues stirring massive resonance will not threaten the regime of China's central government, Weibo "employs thousands of human censors and uses sophisticated software to monitor frequently updated lists of 'sensitive words'" (Jin, 2008; Sullivan, 2012) China Digital Times's Weibo sensitive words data base[11] has provided some examples of those banned sensitive words in which we may find most of them are concerning political contentions ("Ningbo Protests", "collectively petition officials", etc.).[12] Once a user attempts to publish a message with sensitive words, the system will notify that "there are sensitive words in your message!   Please edit your Weibo and republish." Even one has successfully published one message by using homonymic gimmick, the system (probably human operators) will set your post as "hidden" and remind you the content is improper.

However, the sensitive words list also includes keywords of rumors about leaders ("Prime Minister Wen", "Li Keqiang + PS", etc.).[13] Even in the watch brother case, while Yang Dacai's name is not in the list, Li Jinzhu, who is a province-level official (higher than Yang's department-level) and is believed by some netizens that "covering up Yang's corruption", is

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[11] See the bilingual page
http://chinadigitaltimes.net/chinese/%E6%96%B0%E6%B5%AA%E5%BE%AE%E5%8D%9A%E6%90%9C%E7%B4%A2%E6%95%8F%E6%84%9F%E8%AF%8D%E5%88%97%E8%A1%A8/ where there is an updating sensitive words list of Weibo.
[12] See https://chinadigitaltimes.net/2012/10/sensitive-words-ningbo-protests-and-more/
[13] See http://chinadigitaltimes.net/2012/12/sensitive-words-photoshop-strikes-again/

marked as a sensitive word several days after Yang's incident.[14] By doing this, Weibo has seemingly granted Li an immunity to the netizens' human flesh search, discussions or suspicions without proving him either involved in the corruption or not. Since mentioning is even a taboo, it is by no means possible to set off the process of this anti-corruption mechanism. Thus, banning the names as well as keywords of high-level officials suggests the bottom-up surveillance has a certain limitation: it can only be carried out on those whose power is not strong enough to thoroughly cut off the information flow, though there is no totally clear boundary and regulation about "which is the person you can talk about" and "which is not". In this sense, if Weibo has indeed improved the all-inclusivity because of a wide prevalence and increased rational discussions with opinion leaders' professional analysis, the existing censorship feature is yet still constraining the spectrum of discussible issues and thus the border of this public sphere.

5.3. Indirectness

The weibo-based anti-corruption mechanism starts with the exposure of clues. However, we may find such clues are generally associated with exterior elements: luxury bags, fancy watches and other costly possessions which are probably beyond one official's legal income. This is the third drawback: it is somehow superficial, rather than substantial. In other words, the mechanism originally aims to generate a warning effect to the officials that "if you are corrupt, we will dig you out and let everyone know", but since netizens need basic exterior clues to run the process, it actually suggests officials "corruption is ok but only with more attention to prevent expensive assets being discovered by netizens". By paying more attention to hide own illegal possessions, at least in a superficial level, one official could still live in a corrupt lifestyle, but just in a lower profile. As a matter of fact, the watch brother's case has indeed brought many officials an influence which makes them "stop wearing watches", "pay attention to the brand of cigarettes they smoke in public occasions", "wear inexpensive clothes" and "beware of their own public words and speech".[15] The actual outcome is then probably a warning for corrupt officials to "stop showing off wealth" rather than "stop accepting bribes".

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[14] See http://chinadigitaltimes.net/2012/09/sensitive-words-watch-brother-and-watch-uncle/
[15] See QQ.com News http://news.qq.com/a/20121211/000818_all.htm

5.4. The Emotional Netizens

Last but not least, specific characters of Chinese netizens and Chinese internet culture also affect the efficiency of this bottom-up surveillance mechanism. In Jin Liwen's study, Chinese netizens exhibits some features resemble to an online version of Gustave Le Bon's unruly "popular mind":

> The masses live by, and are ruled by, subconscious and emotional thought process. The crowd has never thirsted for the truth. It turns aside from evidence that is not to its taste, preferring to glorify and to follow error, if the way of error appears attractive enough, and seduces them. Whoever can supply the crowd with attractive emotional illusions may easily become their master; and whoever attempts to destroy such firmly entrenched illusions of the crowd is almost sure to be rejected (Le Bon, 1895; Leibold, 2011; Jin, 2008 P98).

In current Chinese society, a weakening government credibility and a striking gap between rich and poor lead Chinese netizens extraordinarily sensitive to public issues about rich and power. The netizens tend to gloat at the scandals of government and are eager to hear new corruption issues outbreak on officials. Consequently, once someone has learned how netizens are willing to hear, he could take advantage of them for his private, in most cases unjust purposes.

If corruption is an abuse of the administrative power granted by the state, the abuse of communicative power can also cause certain problems. The use of human flesh search engine is often accompanied with ethic and moral issues. Though it does facilitate the expose of corruption, the human flesh search engine is a double-edge sword since it causes "reputation damage and privacy violation" and even "private revenge". (Cheung, 2009) For combating corruption, we could imagine: What if netizens expose all the personal information of one "corrupt" official who is eventually proved innocent? When netizens are following their emotional thought process and enjoying the feeling of hunting an individual, they will never think about the negative influence on the family of the target, and finally such an internet mob is likely to develop into a "cyber violence" (ibid.)

Another affect is the distraction of rumors. The internet has enables people to speak with

anonymity, so when it provides safety for complaining corrupt officials, it also decreases the risk of spreading rumors. On one hand, rumors fitting the netizens' taste will spread fast in the whole online landscape and thus lead the anti-corruption process to a wrong, irrational direction, resulting in a distraction of communicative power. On the other hand, as argued, rumors could even serve for conspiracy and become a political battle vehicle, in which the netizens' enthusiasm and sense of justice play the main driving part.

5.5. Summary

The bottom-up surveillance mechanism faces numerous drawbacks. To be honest, the communicative power generated by Weibo is still indirect to the administrative power which entitles power to officials. What effort the communicative power can do is in fact urging state-powered discipline institutions with the real, direct power to recall the corrupt official's power and to discover the truth. As for the drawbacks of the human flesh search engine and the rumors, the government should try to regulate them with legislation, not only for a higher efficiency of anti-corruption, but further protect individual privacy and preventing them from an unconscious, irrational cyber violence.

6. Conclusion

Since the development of new communication technologies brought our society to a network structure, our life have been gradually but substantially changed. When Twitter has shaped the typical concept of micro blog service in western world, Weibo constructs its counterpart in China with more cultural background related. Functions of Weibo assist it to become an integrated information terminal which also aggregates an all-inclusivity of conventional Chinese BBS and rational opinions from blogs, mainly used by celebrities. Correspondingly, Weibo helps to optimize the public sphere in China to a new height. In this optimized public sphere both grassroot users and social elites could argue and discuss public issues in the same platform, then generate a communicative power to cause influence to the government. As I have analyzed in the previous sections, such communicative power is quite useful concerning bringing down corrupt officials. The internet-based anti-corruption is not totally new, yet it did witness a rapid growth with the prevalence of Weibo. Undoubtedly, Chinese netizens are using Weibo to shape a bottom-up surveillance mechanism on officials and the government. Following the Catopticon logic, everyone could be the focus of such anonymous, ubiquitous and powerful sousveillance, including those officials who once enjoyed a strongly hierarchical power in a Panopticon society.

By studying a typical case, I also described in detail the four phases of a certain Weibo-based online anti-corruption activity. With the help of Weibo, tiny pieces of clues get finally amplified and contribute to a storm bringing the target down. Though admittedly, the mechanism is still far from a mature, reliable and comprehensive paradigm, it at least reveals the ever unprecedented power of countless Chinese netizens who hate corruptions and want do something beneficial for the society.

Weibo and its bottom-up surveillance mechanism are also positive to the civil society reforming in contemporary China. Yang, who is confident about the future says "change has been under way in China for years, but in forms more subtle than most people outside the country understand". (Yang, 2011) When Leibold claims most Chinese netizens show no difference to their western counterparts that they also indulge in the cyberspace for entertainment rather than politics, he

doubts what on earth Yang's "subtle change" is. (Leibold, 2011) To answer this question, I would argue the "subtle change" could be perceived as every tiny progress of the whole Chinese information society. When we see the evolution from conventional BBS and blogs, to the current Weibo, it is the subtle change. To be more exact, when we see new technologies are applied to better control the corruption and the frequency of anti-corruption cases is growing, it may not only reflects the power of new media, but even represents that more people are involving themselves in the contention towards unrighteous official behaviors as well as an arousal of civil rights consciousness.

Tying back to the theories, I make my argument based on Mann's notion "sousveillance" and Ganascia's "Catopticon", but as a matter fact, the case of China has provided some new insights to those initial concepts. First for the original sousveillance, Mann's sousveillance emphasizes specifically on the general use of portable visual recording devices, as he denotes:

> The proliferation of environmental intelligence, in the form of cameras and microphones observing public spaces, challenges the traditional ability of an individual being able to identify and watch the watchers. The collection of data I public places, with the camera as the dominant form of data input device, is coupled with the integration of surveillance with statistical monitoring and security applications. (Mann, 2003 P335)

In Mann's opinion, it is the wearable computing devices that empower individuals to cast the sousveillance since they can collect data of the "watchers". (ibid,.) But from my case, the "wearable computing devices" which "record the watchers anonymously" did not play a quite important part in the whole process. The very first clue of watch brother's improper behavior is his photo of smiling, taken by not someone who always uses hidden camera to focus him but just a mundane journalism picture. Sousveillance in this sense has surpassed its literal meaning of visual recording and developed towards a practical guiding mindset and individual consciousness, which stand for keep an eye on every piece of watcher's information, regardless the source of it. The information could be achieved either by anonymous daily recording of what Mann argues the "wearable cameras" or certainly from traditional media sources like newspaper and magazines.

The difference is sousveillance is an attitude for ordinary people to see their leaders in a critical aspect. When Mann argues the key for sousveillance is the development of portable recording devices, my case reveals that it is the communication that really empowers, rather than simply taking pictures. Even one has taken pictures of bad behaviors of the government, if there is nowhere to share the information and allows a public exposure and discussion, government would never think it is some affair which requires urgent resolution and they would just keep indifferent.

Secondly, Ganascia's original "Catopticon" is also somehow too optimistic. Catopticon is recognized as "total transparency of society", "fundamental equality" and "total communication" (Ganascia, 2010), but we would find that such features are still too difficult to totally realize. Since the essence of Catopticon is using information technologies to record and share information to generate power, the information technologies themselves are real and physical parts, which should be limited by the state, the government and even local customs. China's case obviously shows that, the government's censorship will confine the transparency of society and the fundamental equality because there are certain political taboos to talk on the internet. The total communication is also not realized since the proliferation of internet is still not 100% yet; even it is, not everyone will go to the same public sphere (i.e. Sina Weibo or Tencent Weibo) to communicate and share information, so what is exactly a "total communication"? Ganascia analyzes that the Catopticon is unique in the world because everyone could reach everyone else through the help of internet. Correspondingly, the Panopticon may be numerous since "each of them is under the arbitrary authority of its centre." They coexist with each other and depict the contemporary world. (ibid, p10) The result is that even there is only one Catopticon on this planet, the general Catopticon landscape differs in regions under the restriction of states, or the multiple "Panopticons". It still shows a hierarchy: when Chinese government prohibits the online discussion of certain officials and public affairs, ordinary people are never capable of simply using Catopticon to subvert the state authorities. Panopticon enjoys a certain higher level than Catopticon. From a network society view, as van Dijk notes, networks, the basis of Catopticon, are "not necessarily more flat, democratic, open, free, accessible, physically unconditional or less socially coherent than other modes of organization and communication." (van Dijk, 2006 P37) In one sentence, the unique Catopticon coexists with the multiple Panopticons, but is generally

shaped nationally and geographically different by those Panopticons which provide physical infrastructures and make regulations.

Certainly my thesis is not flawless. To describe the mechanism, I used an empirical method, so it may be more or less subjective to make each judgment. The future research could lies on quantitive and statistical analysis on how anti-corruption cases are organized in the whole Chinese internet history and could especially focus on the comparison between Weibo-based anti-corruption based and previous online-media-based cases to figure out a more objective picture. Moreover, since I mainly emphasize on the communication aspect, there is still some space for analysis from other aspects of sociology and politics. Last but not least, the drawbacks of this mechanism still require a further design of solutions, in order to ensure its effectiveness and legitimacy.

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