

Department of Social Research		
Yiting Liu		
When the authoritarian China meets Internet : A critical analysis of Chinese newspaper discourse on online phenomenon "Internet anti-corruption"		
Sociology		
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<p>This thesis reviews the origin and development of "Internet anti-corruption", a new Chinese online phenomenon. I examine newspaper discourse covering this phenomenon, aiming to show it is discursively constructed in the press based on three typical cases occurring in 2012. The construction of legitimacy on this new phenomenon is the focus of the study.</p> <p>Drawing from the sociological and political perspective of power, this study uses discourse analysis theory combined with media discourse theory, focusing on media discourse, and targets to uncover the power positions and structures in the discourse. Empirically, the study is based on 125 articles. Methodologically, the study utilizes a critical approach of critical discourse analysis to explore the legitimacy strategies and structures of this Internet phenomenon within the Chinese social and political context. The legitimacy is examined with the help of Fairclough's discourse analysis and van Leeuwen's framework of legitimation in discourse. This thesis argues that the construction of legitimacy sustained the power relations in China and maintained the state dominance. Nevertheless, it is worth noticing that the social power is recognized in society by being identified as new form of public supervision.</p> <p>Related to the social and political context, online social power in the contemporary China is gaining recognition and acceptance by party state and society in general. However, the dominance of state power on the Internet actions is mainly maintained and reproduced from media discourse. The construction of legitimacy for Internet anti-corruption, in one way, endows relative legitimacy to the Internet users; in another way, it propagates the new presidency and reaffirms the state power. In the end, the legitimation of "Internet anti-corruption" in media is more likely an effort to legitimize the party-state power over the Internet which reflects its authoritarian nature. The main findings of the thesis concern the construction of public discourse on Chinese online incidents and contribute to the further understanding of public sphere and civil society development.</p> <p><i>Keywords: critical discourse analysis, power and discourse, networked authoritarian, Chinese online resistance, legitimation process, legitimacy construction, netizens, sociology</i></p>		

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Yiting Liu

University of Helsinki

Sociology

Department of Social

Research

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1. INTRODUCTION

In the People's Republic of China (PRC), the wide-ranging market reforms and the neoliberal policies since the late 1970s have been accompanied by a crisis of political corruption. According to the Corruption Perceptions Index compiled by Transparency International (2014), a Berlin-based non-governmental organization, China ranks 100th among 174 countries in total and belongs to the more corrupt nations in the world. Based on a domestic online opinion poll by People's Tribune magazine in 2009, political corruption is the top issue that concerns attendances (Gao & Ma, 2009). Moreover, the Pew Global Attitudes Survey, which is conducted by the Washington-based NGO Pew Research, reveals that over half of its Chinese participants consider political corruption as a great problem (Poushter, 2013). There are various explanations on high level of corruption by Chinese intellectuals; however, a general consensus exists focusing on the economic conditions, policies, culture and especially political system (Teets, Rosen & Gries, 2010). Although economy increased significantly and material well-being developed essentially, social complaints and grievances are escalating in recent years with the widening social inequality, injustice and especially the ceaseless corruptions.

Living under an authoritarian regime, the Chinese public often lack institutionalized, efficient and effective channels to express their grievances and appeals. Although rights of assemblies, processions and demonstrations are listed in the article 35 of the Constitution of the People's Republic of China (PRC), an administrative license is always required according to the Law of PRC on Assemblies, Processions and Demonstrations. A recommendation, which was initiated by 78 Chinese scholars,

journalists and lawyers on the platform of Human Rights in China (Human Rights in China, 2014), indicated that since the 1989 student movement, almost no application applying assemblies or demonstrations permitted by public security bureaus. When civil lawyers advocate the public disclosure of officials' assets in the street, they were detained later for illegal assembling. In the country where freedom of communication, speech, and collective action are greatly limited, no doubt Internet stands out as a space containing various voices and an area to challenge social structures. Lugg (2013) argues that the concept of weapons of weak from work of James Scott (1985) could be used to describe the daily online resistance in China in the form of spoof videos in social media. Göbel and Ong (2012, p.9) also contends that the restrictions of formal channels and the improved and low-cost access to Internet causing more social unrest in China. Social media and communication technology, which are combined and named as mass communication technology by sociologist Castells (2007,2009), creates a less risky and less controlled public avenue and provides channels for various social actors to express ideas.

Internet, the once deemed "entertainment superhighway" (Guo, 2007, p.36) in China, becomes a crucial area for opinion leaders, activists, and ordinary citizens to spread and share information especially through social media, on themes such as abuse of power, cover-ups or scandals. Yang (2009b) have systematically studied Chinese online activism in recent years and summarized different forms of it including online petitions, the hosting of campaign websites, large-scale online protests, and hacking of websites (p.33). One form of online activism which is termed as "Internet mass incident" (网络群体事件) and belongs to the large scale online protests especially get academic attention. Yang (2009a) has described this kind of online protest as occurrences having no clear organization, but is based on the speed and scale of

dissemination, and the spontaneity. Tong and Lei (2013) have defined Internet mass incidents as “Internet discussion critical of government (including government officials) behavior” (p.146) and quantified it with “more than one million click rate online” (p.146). In China, Internet mass incidents are primarily displayed in form of discourse and the issues of protests are often about abuse of power, corruption, environment, rights defense, popular nationalism and civil rights.

In this research, one type of mass online incidents which targets at the moral and economic corruption of officials called “Internet anti-corruption” (网络反腐) is studied. The thesis aims to review and discuss the phenomenon and to explore mainly how it is constructed in Chinese press discourse. The Internet anti-corruption is understood as a socially and materially constructed event rather than a social reality take for granted. This study has the epistemological understanding of the social event in aspect of social constructionism, which to say, the phenomenon called “Internet anti-corruption” is discursively constructed and being contingent.

In respects of the media construction of the Internet anti-corruption, the focus lies on the discursive construction of legitimacy, or the legitimation process, of this online phenomenon. To study the legitimation process of new online phenomenon in newspaper has its research value because the phenomenon itself contains social, legal and political ambiguity. Furthermore, being politically sensitive, the study on legitimacy may help us to better understand the subsequent policies toward the internet. By using the discourse analysis theory combined with media discourse theory, this thesis argues that the construction of legitimacy in Chinese media discourse is sustaining social relations, as well as reproducing the state dominance over the internet. This thesis concentrates on newspaper discourse of three typical cases in

2012. Different kinds of newspapers, mainly the official and commercial, are included in this analysis.

Methodologically, critical discourse analysis (CDA) is adopted because it combines the linguistic study with social elements, which especially provides its value for sociological research. Fairclough (1989) has discussed that “exploration of the determinants and effects of discourses at the institutional and societal level in particular can easily lead one into detailed sociological analysis”(p.137-138). This methodology is especially concerned about power relations and struggles which shape discourse and discourse positions. And dialectically, how discourse may sustain and reproduce power also concerns many critical discourse analysts.

Besides the fact that CDA is a practical research tool for this research, it has the point of being experimentally used in Chinese language as well. So far, very few studies have done media and political studies from linguistic or discourse perspective in China. Kuo (2002) comments that “there have been very few studies of Chinese media discourse, which many have dismissed as ‘purely propaganda’ and therefore not worthy of analysis” (p.287). Nonetheless, according to Kluver (as cited in Fang, 1996), Asian politics, especially Chinese political reality is greatly built through rhetoric and the legitimacy of the regime counts on discursive practices. Based on Kluver’s declaration, Fang (2001) comments that “as the mass media is a site for discursive practices...therefore vitally important for us to gain a greater understanding of Chinese media discourse and how it is used in the process of political socialization”(p.585). The aim of this research is to contribute to both the ongoing work in understanding Chinese media discourse and to the development of CDA by applying it to non-European language texts.

The previous studies on the power and resistance in Chinese Internet often ignore the aspects of discursive processes and there is limited research on discourse of Internet incidents. However, as Ellingson (1995) has discussed, based on the definition of discourse as a “relatively bounded set of arguments organized around a specific diagnosis of and solution to some social problem” (p.107), discourses can thus be understood as located in a field of debate in which struggle exists to “establish meaning, earn legitimacy, and mobilize consensus on belief and action” (p.107). With the appearance of the Internet as an entity, the legitimacy of it as a mechanism to fight against corruption becomes a topic worth studying. Considered as an area that reconstructs the social and political event under the dominance of party-state power, as well as the influence of commercialization, newspapers discourse is used for study.

The Research Questions:

1. Who are the social actors, what are the social events, and how are they represented in media discourses and what are their power relationships and positions?
2. How is the perceived legitimacy or illegitimacy of Internet anti-corruption constructed in news discourses, especially by the representation of social actors and social events?
3. How does the discourse of Internet anti-corruption sustain social relations and possibly reproduce the party state power?

2. THE ONLINE PHENOMENON OF “INTERNET ANTI-CORRUPTION” IN CHINA

This chapter reviews the previous literature on Internet anti-corruption, as well as the relationship of Internet, media and social resistance in the information society. First, an illustration of the origin and development process of the phenomenon “Internet anti-corruption” is presented. Next, I discuss the different understandings of the Internet anti-corruption and explain why Internet anti-corruption is better understood as an online resistance. Finally, I extend the discussion of Chinese social context with the emphasis of the relations between society, social resistance and state.

2.1 What is “Internet anti-corruption” in China

“Internet anti-corruption” is a phrase directly translated from Chinese. From the perspective of semantic relationships, there is no agent in this phrase. Therefore, the agent could be implied as government, state, law-enforcement agencies, netizens, online activists, or others. The target in this phrase is corruption-related, yet still unspecified. “Internet anti-corruption” emerged as a widely discussed phrase during a series of Chinese internet incidents happening in 2012. Even though the earliest Internet anti-corruption can be dated to the beginning of 2000, academic research on it was very rare until 2012.

According to the previous literature, the definitions of “Internet anti-corruption” are generally divided into two categories, each emphasizing different actors as the subject. The actors are generally categorized as either grassroots or official agents (Chen & Cui, 2013; Wang, Xu & Chen, 2013). Grassroots agents are generally represented as the broad netizens who use social media to expose and report corruptive behaviors of

civil servants, officers and government. Official agents highlight and strengthen the role of official agencies, which include state authority, anti-corruption agencies, and governmental agencies. In Chinese literature, scholars often tend to define “online anti-corruption” as the cooperation between official agencies and the broad netizens, with the role of authority particularly reinforced. However, some critics (Li & Yang, 2013) comment on this view as biased because “obviously in most cases, the events of Internet anti-corruption were not arranged by official agents...it could be problematic to analyze the essence and mechanism of the phenomenon if official actors and grassroots actors were treated equally as agents”(p. 207).

Dating back to very beginning of the Internet anti-corruption, Zou (2012, p.9) suggests that the making of website “China Citizen Supervision Network”(中国舆论监督网) by a citizen named Dexin Li representing the first time the Internet anti-corruption came to public. Afterwards, series of official anti-corruption websites built separately by Supreme People's Procuratorate, Central Commission for Discipline Inspection and Ministry of Supervision. However, the official websites which merely provide an online channel for citizens to report corruption-related clues and evidences couldn't overcome the institutional and systematic problems such as non-transparency, bureaucratic inefficiency and the power excessive centralization. Examples... to illustrate that grassroots actors as the agents of Internet anti-corruption are more logical and rational.

2.2 Public opinion supervision or a form of social resistance?

As the literature reviewed, the Internet anti-corruption has various reinforcements in regard to its actors and there is no single definition on this phenomenon since the whole process involves various agencies. However, presences of the Internet anti-

corruption were mostly initiated by grassroots actions and involvement of official actors was reactive to the public pressure. With the grassroots actors being initiators, two perspectives exist to perceive their identity, one identifying them as public opinion supervision(舆论监督) and the other one identifying them as online protest.

Chinese authorities tend to define Internet anti-corruption as a new form of public opinion supervision. For example, the Chinese Communist Party Building Dictionary adds the vocabulary entry of Internet anti-corruption in 2009 and has this definition: Internet anti-corruption is one new form of public opinion supervision. Internet has the feature of “many hands make the work lighter”, and has the technological pros of being convenience, low cost and low risk, which is easier to form the hotspots of public opinion. Thus it becomes powerful supplement to the administrative and judicial supervision (Li & Yang, 2013, p.207).

Public opinion supervision in China, similar to the concept of the “fourth estate” in the West (Feng, 2005, p.3), means that the mass opinions are mobilized to monitor government and other organs of state. The official meaning of public opinion supervision, as stated in the Regulations of Internal Supervision of the Chinese Communist Party (2003), indicates that public opinion supervision is the supervision by the masses and exercised through the media. However, according to the Study Guide of the Communist Party (Ren, 2004, p. 268), public opinion supervision has to be under the leadership of CCP, which the latter plays a paramount role. Being under the leadership of CCP makes public supervision be quite different from the “fourth estate” in democratic countries. Cheung (2007) comments on Chinese public opinion supervision and states that in China, “any supervision must ultimately take place within the realm of social stability under the CCP leadership” (p.8) because of their claims to

be true spokesmen of the public. He also uses “misnomer” (2007, p.8) to describe public opinion supervision because all the sources of supervision in China lie within the power of CCP. Hu (2008, p.143) regards the “public opinion supervision” as extension and complement of the governmental power, and warns that it should be differentiated from the freedom of media. Returning to my subject, to understand Internet anti-corruption as a new form of public opinion supervision may simplify this social phenomenon, thus may lead to the ignorance of conflicts reflected online in Chinese society, and discount some specific actors as well.

Considering the initiations, process and objectives of the typical cases of Internet anti-corruption, they are more like large-scale online protest of internet activism in China. According to Wang, Internet anti-corruption shares many characteristics with previous internet incidents in China. For example, the protest depends necessarily on the Internet network structures, where an individual had a single posting which got the chance of wide circulation with large numbers of Internet users participating simultaneously but with little or no coordination. Internet anti-corruption, differing from other online incidents in respect of its anti-corruption orientation, is still one kind of online contention which correlates with the social structure and power relations in China. As Yang (2009a) discussed, the level of openness of a political structure decides whether people resort to institutional or more radial forms of contention.

Internet anti-corruption is one of the choices ordinary people may resort to because it is convenient, less risky and fast. It mobilizes the collection action mainly through the mobilizations of emotions, which expressed through discourses. The variation and development of social networking devices build the medium where netizens could

express their complaints and dissatisfaction towards the government.

From above, the understanding of Internet anti-corruption is understood differently, with some perceiving it as public supervision, while others perceiving it as online protest. In my opinion, the Internet anti-corruption phenomenon may be better understood as the online activism. However, no doubt it is one phenomenon that is still ambiguous and lacks a clear definition. In the next section, wider social context of online phenomenon is illustrated.

2.3 Authoritarian China and information age

The emergence of online anti-corruption in China, same to the arise of other online activism, becomes possible with a premise of the extensive development and use of Internet, which greatly influence China in economic, political, social and cultural contours .By June 2014, according to the China Internet Network Information Center (CNNIC), the number of internet users had climbed to 632 million with the penetration rate of 46.9% of the Chinese population. The telecommunication and Internet industries also perform compellingly as well that revenue from the mobile telecommunications industry has an annualized rate of 10.7% in the five years through 2014 (IBISWorld, 2014).

Facing the changes that Internet has brought to China, some scholars have tried to use Castells' concept of network society into Chinese context. According to Castells (2000, p.469), a new social morphology of our societies is constituted by networks. He integrated China into the general framework of network society mainly in economic and business terms, by examining overseas Chinese business networks, the Chinese developmental state and the regional formation of the Pearl River Delta in

South (1996, p.409). With China included, Castells commented on the East Asia economy as “have adapted more rapidly than other areas of the world to the new technologies and to the new forms of global competition” (Castells, 1996, p.173). Qiu (2003) inductively analyzed the possibility of bringing the concept of network society formulated in the western context of late capitalism in to Chinese context. He pointed out that China shares similarities with late-capitalistic countries but still faces challenges to develop a network society. Later, using Castells network society framework as the conceptual basis, Qiu (2009) correlated and developed concepts with Chinese characteristics and applied them to the study of the network society of working population in urban China. Using statistical proof, he argued that the working class in urban areas is gradually forming a working-class network society.

Network society may have partially developed in China. However, it is inappropriate to consider this country as a network society, especially taking political control and digital divide into consideration. Even though it may be too early to perceive China as a network society, discussions revolving around Internet and politics within the framework of network society is inspiring still. In the book of *Communication power*, Castells (2009) illustrated in detail how network society brings change in political power by providing examples of popular movements and grassroots campaigns from around the world, to prove how insurgent communities have succeeded in reprogramming the public understanding of political issues through mass self-communication. Even being enthusiast and optimist towards the democratization potential of the Internet, Castells (2009) warned that the current power holders may still intentionally prevent the autonomous construction of the meaning and program the connection. Arguments that development of information technology does not guarantee democracy or genuine democracy are by no means new in social science,

and arguments were often about the domination and controlling of the powerful groups on the technology. For example, Jürgen Habermas (1989) criticized that information management and manipulation, which came with the rise of information age, leads to the decline of public sphere due to its impedance of rational debate.

MacKinnon (2010) integrated the concept of network society to Chinese context and developed a term called “networked authoritarianism”. According to MacKinnon (2010), Chinese authoritarian regime strategically and successfully embraces and adjusts to the changes and challenges brought by digital communication technologies. Rather than weakening the authoritarian control, according to MacKinnon (2010), information technology actually works as propaganda for the Chinese Communist Party to an extent. Censorship, content regulation, arrest and imprisonment of Internet activists are common methods of authoritarian government to control Internet. Besides, Chinese authority also uses public discourse, various kinds of regulations and laws to legitimize their control over the Internet.

This study focuses on the most common public discourse -newspapers discourse, to see how the internet phenomenon is constructed. In China, as Zhao (2003) comments, party-state power has the strongest incentive to influence the press discourse.

However, party-state control over newspapers has changed from total control to domination after the reformation in China in 1980th. The domination of mass media is legitimized with the most-used discourse “correct guidance of public opinion,” (正确舆论导向) which means to promote a politically correct “main melody” (主旋律) in the cacophony of media voices (Zhao, 2008, p.36). Modifying the old totalitarian control into the new system has resulted in an “expanded space under more refined control”(Zhou,2006,p.180).With the media under the regulation and control of the

Communist Party, mass media is thus not only a social actor, but also a political one.

3. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK: DISCOURSE

ANALYSIS THEORY AND MEDIA DISCOURSE

THEORY

This chapter introduces the theoretical framework which combines the discourse analysis theory and media discourse theory, with a focus on the concepts of power and legitimacy. Those two theories are not, and shall not be separated in this study but interrelated. In this chapter, there are two main parts. First, discourse analysis theory is introduced and illustrated generally in terms of its historical development and theoretical foundations. Critical discourse analysis, as the principle theoretical approach for this study, is especially illustrated with an emphasis on Fairclough's three dimensional conception of discourse (1992, 1995). Second, media discourse theory is presented and discussed with the consideration to the concept of power and legitimation.

3.1 Discourse analysis as theory: Social constructionism and Critical Discourse Analysis

Discourse analysis, according to Jorgensen and Phillip (2002), includes various theoretical and methodological implications. It is a general term with different approaches mainly including Laclau and Mouffe's discourse theory, Critical Discourse Analysis, Discursive Psychology and Foucauldian approach (Jorgensen & Phillip, 2002). Even though in each specific approach the theoretical models vary, philosophical premises "regarding the role of language in the social construction of the world" (Jorgensen & Phillip, 2002, p.4) can apply to all the approaches. Social

constructionism provides ontological and theoretical foundation for various discourse analysis approaches. Depart from the social constructionism, the structuralist, or post-structuralist paradigm is also widely shared among the discourse analysis approaches. In this part, I firstly illustrate on the social constructionism because this thesis is based on the social constructionist epistemology. Later, critical discourse analysis, as a specific approach in discourse analysis theory, is underlined, with the discussion on the post-structuralist paradigm as well.

3.11 Social constructionism

Social constructionism provides the foundation for all discourse analysis approaches mentioned. In Burr's (1995) introduction to social constructionism, discourse analysis weighs much in its content. She uses the discursive analytical term "products of discourse" (1995, p.3) to indicate that the reality is socially constructed. Jorgensen and Philip (2002) indicated that discourse analysis, no matter its specific approach, has a "general constructionist premises" (p.8). In the discussion of DA and its "strong social constructionist epistemology" (p.413) by Nikander (2008), she illustrated the latter as

The idea of language as much more than a mere mirror of the world and phenomena 'out-there', and the conviction that discourse is of central importance in constructing the ideas, social process and phenomena that make up our social world. (p.413)

Social constructionism, provides a very general theoretical foundation for discourse analysis and provides the epistemology for this research as well. The social construction theory is widely used in sociology and communication study. Social construction theory especially pays attention to the language and the construction of

society. In the discussion of reality and knowledge using social construction theory by Berger and Luckman (1966), they have argued the importance of language and especially dialectical perspectives in the institutionalization process. In this study, ontologically, the social phenomenon of the Internet anti-corruption is understood in accordance with the basic ideas in social constructionism.

3.12 Critical discourse analysis (CDA): A theoretical approach

CDA, which belongs to the discourse analysis in general, has the theoretical foundation from social constructionism as well. Often, CDA is taken as a research tool and used methodologically; however, CDA also provides theories and itself can be perceived as a paradigm for the study of the relations between discourse and society in various social domains as well (Jorgensen & Phillip, p.60). In this study, Fairclough's theoretical framework is adopted because central to Fairclough's approach, "discourse is an important form of social practice which both reproduces and changes knowledge, identities and social relations including power relations, and at the same time is also shaped by other social practices and structures" (Jorgensen & Philip, p. 65).

The understanding of discourse as dialectically interrelate with society is in accordance with the social constructionism that language is in a dialectical relationship with social dimensions in social construction (Becker & Luckman, 1966). Besides social constructionism, post-structuralist and critical linguistics are the other theoretical foundations for critical discourse analysis. To consider discourse analysis in discourse theory generally, there has been a shift from structuralist approach toward a poststructuralist one (Mills, 1997:76). Foucault and Michel Pêcheux, according to Nothling (2012), are the two figures who break the structuralist

study of discourse to the “inclusion of context within the text” (p. 30). As Luke (1997) has commented on the poststructuralist theory that it “examines how writing, texts, and discourses are constructive phenomena, shaping the identities and practices of human subjects” (p.50).

In CDA, there exist different approaches developed by various scholars who contribute to the growing popularity of it. The theoretical framework in this study is mainly adopted from Fairclough’s three-dimensional conception of discourse with three dimensions of text, discursive practice and social practice (1992, p.73). Based on it, he has developed an analytical framework for critical discourse analysis (Fairclough, 1995, p.59) tailored for communicative event.

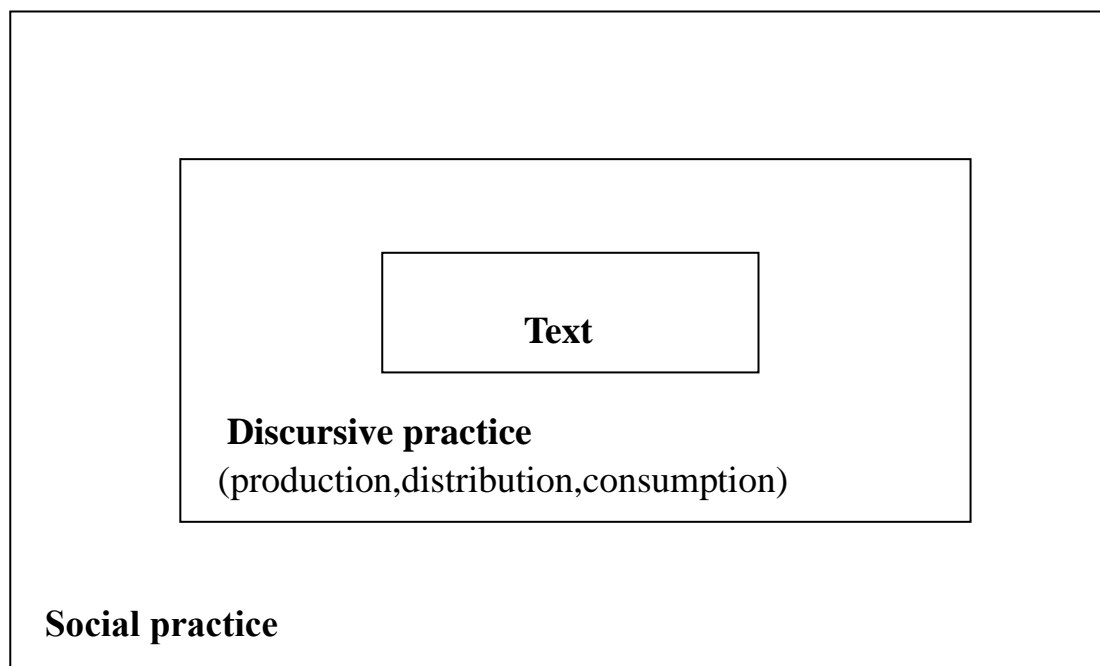


Figure 1: Representation of Fairclough’s theoretical diagram of critical discourse analysis (Fairclough, 1992:73)

In order to study the interrelationship between discourse and wide social structures, three dimensions including text, discursive practice and social practice need to be

studied. Discourse as text, which is the smallest block in the figure, aims at the linguistic features of discourse. In this level, questions such as “How is the text designed, why designed in this way, and how else could it have been designed?” (Fairclough, 1995, p.202) can be answered. The largest block, social practice, regards often the political and ideological elements in society that “are usually the dominant positions in the world/society at a given time” (Nothling, 2012, p.23). Discourse practice, in the middle, play the mediating role between the textual and social practice (Fairclough, 1995) and it is produced in the context of social practice. “Therefore a norm is constructed, constituted and maintained through discursive practice” (Nothling, 2012, p.23).

The illustration of critical discourse analysis as a theory provides a very brief understanding of the theoretical basis of this study. Furthermore, because this thesis has a focus on mass communication discourse, I will present the media and discourse theory below and bring the two concepts of power and legitimacy into the discussion.

3.2 Media and discourse

This part tries to include media discourse into the theoretical discussion. Media is one of the main domains that produce, distribute and consume discursive acts. Mass media, being a discursive site and a focal position in contemporary social system (Fairclough, 1995, p.3), is one of the main social domains that discourse analysis focuses on.

Fairclough (1995) highlights media discourse as to “influence knowledge, beliefs, values, social relations and social identities” (p.2); on the other hand, media discourse is also affected by the social structures. For example, he has argued that media discourse has been restructuring people’s expectation about the boundaries of public and private, or the front and back behavioral concepts which were posed by Goffman

(cite by Fairclough, 1969). One the other hand, media discourse is influenced, if not directly, by the change of patterns of ownership of media in Great Britain (1995, p.43).

3.21 Power and legitimation in media discourse

Two key concepts in this theoretical part are power and legitimation. They are not separated but interrelated in respect of power influencing or even deciding whether a social practice is legitimized.

Power is one of the most adopted terms in critical discourse analysis. There is a necessity to clarify its definition since power is often understood differently. In the discipline of sociology, power is perceived differently, for example, by Max Weber, Karl Marx or Michel Foucault. Although the theories on power vary, Castells (2009, p.13) argues that theories about power generally share a multi-faceted and similar analytical elements including violence, discipline discourse, the institutionalization of power relations and the legitimation process by which values and rules are accepted. In critical discourse analysis, the concept of power inherits a Marxism tradition (Jorgensen & Philip, 2008) as well as a Foucauldian comprehension (Wodak & Meyer, 2009, p.10). Wodak and Meyer (2009) have distinguished three approaches to power and commented that power is conceived as “systematic and constitutive element/characteristic of society” (p. 9) in CDA.

Media discourse and power have been studied often. For Castells (2007, p.238), he emphasizes that media plays the core role in creating and deciding power and argued that communication and information have been the fundamental sources of power historically. In order to challenge the existing power relationships, according to Castells (2009, p.18), sufficient production of alternative discourse is necessary to

overwhelm the disciplinary discursive capacity of the state. Among the critical discourse analysts, Van Dijk (1989) explains that power can be exercised through discourse primarily by the “control of discourse and the production of discourse”(p.21). To Fairclough(1989,2001), he has distinguished two kinds of power/discourse relations which are “power in” and “power behind” discourses. Fairclough(2001) uses the concept of “hidden power”(p.41) to describe power in mass media; that’s to say, how social groups are represented, whose perspective is adopted, and other linguistic elements such as the causality and normalization could all contribute the power reproduction in media. Briefly speaking, media is one area that power relationships are divided between political and social actors, and the struggles are manifested in discourse.

3.22 Legitimation

Legitimation is another concept which is reinforced in this study. Fairclough (2012) comments on legitimation as having a “very broad and undefined sense” (p.109) and summarizes it as justification based on some previous critical discourse researches. In sociology, legitimation is widely understood as a social process. According to Berger, Norman, Fisek and Ridgeway (1998), legitimation, as a crucial social process, affects establishment, perseverance, and transformation of social organizational form and social practice. Walker, Rogers and Zelditch (2002) consider legitimation as a fundamental social process because “it mediates structure and action” (p.323). The concept of legitimation should be differentiated from legitimacy since the former one is a process and the latter one is a property. As Walker, Thomas and Zelditch (1986) indicates, legitimacy is diffused thus it can be made relevant with any social objects or actions. According to Suchman(1995), legitimacy is “a generalized perception or assumption that actions of an entity are desirable, proper or appropriate within

socially constructed system of norms, values, beliefs and definitions”(p.574).

Legitimation is often about power. Giddens (1984) regards legitimation as one of the three structural aspects of social systems and an important mechanism for the structure reproduction. To him, legitimation is the primary element of normative sanctions and regulations, and of the formation of legal institutions. In this respect, legitimation is about acceptance and appropriateness in society, which is often related to values, rules and norms. ”The legitimation process by which values and rules are accepted by the subjects of reference”, according to Castells (2009, p.13), is one main element of the “construction of power” (2009, p.13) in society.

Legitimation process is, generally speaking, manifested through language and its constructed shared meaning. Berger and Luckman (1966) comments that “the edifice of legitimation is built upon language and uses language as its principal instrumentality” (p.82). Van Dijk (2003) claims the legitimation process is achieved mainly from language. Van Leeuwen (2008) strengthens the importance of language as “vehicles” (p.105) for the attempts at legitimating or de-legitimizing the social practices. According to Berger and Luckman (as cited by Van Leeuwen, 1966), legitimation is about language because “the fundamental legitimating explanations are built into the vocabulary” (p.112). Likewise, Fairclough (2003) stresses that the studying of texts is a significant resource for researching legitimation because “people are constantly concerned in social life, and in what they say or write, with claiming or questioning the legitimacy of actions which are taken, procedures which exist in organizations, and so forth”(p.88).

Media, as an important discursive area, is getting academic attention on its role in the

legitimation process in recent years. There are a number of works that focus on media as an important legitimating area (Vaara, 2013; Tong, 2014; Bansal & Clelland, 2004). According to Vaara (2013), the pivotal role of media in contemporary society has been extensively discussed by critical sociologists and philosophers. Bourdieu (as cited in Vaara, 1998) argues that the media often banalize issues and reproduce what the audiences already knew or want to see or hear, which have a legitimating function in society at large. However, as Vaara (2013) points out, scholars stressing the main role of media in legitimation with the analyses hardly pay attention to the discursive legitimation.

Media in China has its significant roles of sustaining and legitimating authoritarian rule and dominant ideology, as well as inserting social control (Hung & Dingle, 2014; Stockmann & Gallagher, 2011). Stockmann and Gallagher (2011) make the analogy of Chinese media to a “bridge” (p.442) which connects Chinese citizens with the state and is more important than other key institutions of social control such as previous work units and residential committees. Even though commercial liberalization in Chinese media institutions has reduced government influence and leads to an increase of investigative reporting, Chinese media still has to “represent their discursive and social practices as being compatible with the formal and information regulations governing the media field” (Sæther, 2008, p.13). When discussing politically sensitive social phenomena, party press leads the forming of hegemonic understanding, just as Laclau and Mouffe (2001) have described of the common character of party press in socialist countries. The discourse in Chinese mass media, as Kluver (1996) claimed, does not attempt so much to persuade the public as to educate them on what constitutes acceptable beliefs and behaviors from the people.

4. METHODOLOGY

This chapter revolves around the methodology of the thesis and presents details about the thesis design, methods of data generation and analysis tools used in this research.

The first section about data selection details what newspapers were chosen for this research, and it is followed by a thorough description and justification of the selected cases. Finally, the method of analysis, critical discourse analysis, is presented.

4.1 The source of data: newspapers

Discussions concerning the Internet anti-corruption are held in various Chinese fora, such as TV, Internet, documents and publications. This thesis pays specific attention to how discussions play out in traditional mass media-newspapers, since newspapers play a crucial role in the processing, dissemination, and communication of information. Newspapers not only initiate opinions on the phenomena, but also materialize, reproduce and reinforce opinion on same (Breit, 2011). Among a variety of media forms, newspapers play a vital role in Chinese public communication and it is widely used as the main resource of information, thus it is essential to influence public opinions (Hassid, 2012). According to research by Stockmann (2011, p.449) and based on samples from four Chinese cities, 90.7% of respondents indicated reading newspapers as their primary information channel.

There are different types of newspapers in China mainly distinguished by varying level of state control and by the administrative division (Stockmann, 2012). Through different levels of state control, newspapers could be divided mainly to official, semi-official and commercial newspapers. In the beginning of the 1990s, the Chinese government started to loose media licensing policy, resulting in the emergence of

various media outlets, such as the “evening” newspaper which is a semiofficial and “metropolis” newspaper which is commercial (Stockmann, 2012). Administrative division of newspapers means that Chinese presses have organizational levels such as national, provincial and municipal. Among all the newspapers in China, the official newspaper at the national level - “People’s Daily”, which belongs to the Xinhua media agency (新华社), are deciding the discourses of news from the standpoint of the state authority. That's to say, other official news, semi-official news and even the commercial news, have to follow the tones set by People's Daily, especially on sensitive topics.

In this thesis, I chose those newspapers which target mass audiences and belong to the core newspapers in shaping public opinion in China. Press reports were gathered from five leading Chinese newspapers representing different press categories. These include “daily” newspapers (official newspapers), “evening” newspapers (semiofficial papers), and “metropolis” newspapers (commercial papers) in different areas of China. People’s Daily, the official media outlet at the national level, “stands out as the most authoritative general medium in China” (Christiansen, 2000, p.1) and play the essential role of setting tones of official discourse. Guangzhou Daily is the provincial official newspaper available to the general public. It has the second highest circulation, just after People’s daily. Southern Metropolitan News, based in Guangdong province, is the most prominent commercial press in China. Yangtze Night newspaper, located in Nanjing, is the largest semi-official newspaper by circulation. Information Times, one of the most widely circulated, yet least politically controlled newspaper, was also adopted for this research. The table below displays the names, types, and circulation of the chosen newspapers.

Name of Press	Types of Press	Circulation
<i>People's Daily</i>	Official Newspaper (Belong to Central Communist Party Agency)	2.8 Million
<i>Guangzhou Daily</i>	Provincial Official Newspapers (Belong to Local Communist Party Agency)	1.6 Million
<i>Yangtze Night</i>	Semiofficial newspaper (Largest circulated night Newspaper in Shanghai Area)	1.8 Million
<i>Southern Metro</i>	Commercialized newspaper (Largest circulated Metro Newspaper)	1.52 Million
<i>Information Times</i>	The most independent newspaper	1.2 Million

Table 1: The Newspapers chosen for the research

4.2 Data selection: Cases

The empirical focus of this thesis lies on the newspapers construction of the online social phenomenon "Internet anti-corruption" and the language is in Chinese. While there have been some news coverages on the Internet anti-corruption before 2009, an intensive discussion by the media came out between 2012 and 2013 due to a series of significant cases. This analysis is based on an exploratory cross-case examination of significant Internet anti-corruption cases appearing in the period from 2012 to 2013. Table 2 below provides a systematic look on the selected cases. In order to get all the news related, I used the Chinese electronic database (www.apabi.com), which includes all the newspapers for this research. I searched for texts including variations of the words "Internet," and "Corruption" in connection with the officials' names from each case (e.g. "Yang Dacai," "Lei Zheng Fu," "Liu Tienan".) This instruction provided an initial corpus of 476 articles.

Because this research aims to see representations of social event "Internet anti-corruption" and the legitimation process of it, the data analysis is designed as follows: First, I screened out the purely factual reports, short notices, and texts regarding issues

other than the Internet anti-corruption itself, thereby number of materials in this sample decreases. Second, an intertextual analysis is conducted in regard of the representations of Internet anti-corruption. Third, I focused on the texts including effects of legitimation/de-legitimation of the Internet anti-corruption, based on the question of “what kinds of issues are typically brought up in matters of construction of legitimacy?” After exploring the general issues in matters of legitimacy of the Internet anti-corruption, the focus went further in order to answer the questions: “what are legitimated and de-legitimated in the media discourse on the Internet anti-corruption, and how are they constructed?” Reading carefully through the newspaper articles selected, I recognized distinct patterns and similarities in the texts. Coding process comes later. The coding in this research ranged from sentence, paragraph to entire text. By following the guiding questions, categorization of a number of first order codes relating to the legitimation of Internet anti-corruption was brought up, such as moral norms, law and regulation, and different actors.

In the process, set of topoi (plural: topos) are identified. Topos, one concept used in Wodak’s critical discourse analysis, is “the specific issues, developed within the premises of a broader argument, for justifying the transition from the arguments to the conclusion.”(Wodak, 2010, p.46) And as Fairclough and Fairclough (2012) have strengthened, legitimation is related with argumentation and only with it. Topoi in this thesis are related with the argumentation on whether Internet anti-corruption, as a controversial phenomenon, could be justified. They are specific categories which are summarized to justify the conclusion of the legitimation and de-legitimation.

The targets of the legitimation are the focus of topoi where I concentrated. And those topoi can be categorized as the events (the understanding of the specific actions and

circumstance), actors and system (deeper questions related with the political and social system), which are the main targets of struggles in legitimation. The overview of the analytic process is presented in the appendix one. After all, an initial corpus of 125 articles was collected. The table 2 below presented the details of the cases selected.

Cases	Yang Dacai	Liu Tienan	Lei Zhengfu
Occupation of Officers	Director of Provincial administration of work safety	Former director of National Development and Reform Commission Director of Chinese National Energy Administration	Chongqing Beibei District Party Secretary
Press media coverage period	26.08.2012-13.11.2013	11.05.2013-20.12.2013	22.11.2012-10.11.2013
Summary	Smiling photo taken in a tragic bus accident by journalist and the photo started to get circulated in the Internet. Internet users searched for his identity and one netizen posted his personal information in Weibo (Chinese microblog). Later, one Weibo user published five photos of Yang. On each of the photo, Yang was wearing different luxurious watches. The attention of him by netizens on Weibo increased dramatically due to more and more Luxurious watches published online by different internet users. Netizens were suspicious of his purchasing ability for those expensive watches. Four days later, the official agent informed state news media that they	In the morning of December 6 th , 2012, Civil Journalist Luo Changping published the full allegations of Liu Tienan himself on micro-blog when the respected financial magazine he works for was reluctant to print the name and allegations of Liu Tienan due to the official position of Liu in Beijing. Immediately after his reports, the speaker from Chinese National Energy Administration declared that Luo's allegation was a "rumor" and the newspaper stopped any further reporting due to the possibility of spreading rumors and breaking the law. Luo's account in micro-blog was also deleted before he could release any other further	On November 20 at 4 pm, a series of hotel room sex screenshot titled "secretary who accepts sex bribes", were published on a personal website called "Civil Supervision" maintained by Chinese activist Zhu Ruifeng. Soon, Civil Journalist Xu Jiguang shared these screen-shots to a micro blog which attracted enormous attention of the netizens and media. One day later, Chongqing Commission for Discipline Inspection of the Central Committee mentioned that they have noticed the records. On November 23th, the discipline committee started the investigation. At the same day Journalist Xu Jiguang was invited

	would launch an investigation of the officer.	information. On May 11, 2013, Liu Tienan and his wife were reported to be arrested by the Central commission for Discipline Inspection of the Communist Party of China.	by Chongqing Discipline Committee to Chongqing, but returned to Beijing due to anonymous threats.
Cyberspace	Micro-blog	Micro-blog	Activist website Micro-blog
Actors online	Netizens	Civil journalist Luo Changping Netizens	Anti-corruption Activist: Zhu Ruifeng Civil Journalist: Xu Jiguang Netizens
Actions online	1.Spontaneous responses 2.Launched by individuals 3.Single posting 4.Human flesh searching 5.Large numbers of Internet users participating simultaneously	Reports on the corruptive behavior of Liu Tienan on Weibo Netizens follow and share	Publishing of the sex screenshot by Activist Zhu Ruifeng in website Follow, share and comment by Netizens

Actions offline	Shaanxi Provincial Discipline Committee involved, launching the investigation towards Yang Dacai	Declaration of Luo's reports as rumor by national energy administration's spoke man. No media coverage allowed on this case Around half an year later, Liu Tienan's news of arrest appears to public	Local government and local discipline committee announced on the inspection of Lei and proved that he is the man in the video. Later, he is proved by discipline committee to have economic and moral corruption.
Number of Newspaper Articles	45	30	50

Table 2: Contexts of the cases selected

4.3 Methods: Critical Discourse Analysis

This study employed critical discourse analysis (CDA) as the main method. In theoretical chapter, critical discourse analysis has been used as a theoretical base for this study, however, it is also used as the methodology. Differing from other discourse analysis as method, CDA does not necessarily utilize expansive linguistic categories (Wodak and Mayer, 2009). Often, CDA researchers can choose to focus on few linguistic features, such as attribute, verbal mode, and clauses, to study one aspect of social phenomenon. And varying from many linguistic methods, CDA further concentrates on social theory application and focuses on the macro-features.

CDA, compared to its beginning period decades ago, has been methodologically extended to other academic fields from linguistic study, such as communication, sociology, political science, management and organizational study. The goal of CDA is often to reveal the discourse that influence the public in daily life, not surprisingly, in critical ways. Being critical is one of the most prominent characteristic of CDA. Wodak (2000) has explained “critical” carefully that,

“critical does not mean detecting only the negative sides of social interaction and processes and painting a black and white picture of society. Quite to the contrary: Critical means distinguishing complexity and denying easy, dichotomous explanations. It makes contradiction transparent” (p.186).

CDA is not a single tool but is consisted of a set of interdisciplinary tools and approaches with shifting methodological strategies (Wodak & Weiss, 2003). These different approaches include the socio-cognitive approach by van Dijk, the dialectical-relational approach by Norman Fairclough, and the social actor approach developed by van Leeuwen for explaining the role of action to establish social structure.

Nonetheless, CDA still can be generalized as a methodology who specializes in examining the domination from the discourse and providing interpretations and comprehensions of the socio-political concerns, such as discrimination, bias, power and control.

This study has mainly adopted Fairclough's dialectical-relational approach. What is more, Van Leeuwen's framework to study the legitimation construction is adopted and adapted as well.

Fairclough's model focuses on the role of language in relation to society and it looks beyond the texts, to explore the institutional and socio-cultural contexts. According to Fairclough, language is considered a form of social practice, which is productive of social reality. By addressing how the debate is discursively structured and how different social actors and events are constructed within their bounds, I focus to make sense of the power relations, thus help understand the related policy initiatives better.

This research firstly examines the representations of the social events in the media discourse on "Internet anti-corruption." Questions such as: who are the principal actors, how are they represented, what are their relationships, and who is missing, are brought up. By "representation", it has its importance to be studied in discourse since "ways of representing the world enter as premises into reasoning about what we should do" (Fairclough and Fairclough, 2012, p.86-87). When studying the representations of actions, whether actions are represented in ways that specify or conversely elide the agency of actors can reveal the possible social and political significance of textual choice (Fairclough, 2003).

Copious research methods contribute to the development of the analysis of representation. The common methods of analyzing representations are through vocabulary, grammar, cohesion and the textual structure (Fairclough, 2003). By focusing on metaphors and certain semantic fields, the representation of the social actors, events and actions is achieved. Fairclough (2003) advises the attention on the forms of activity, persons, social relations, objects and means in discourse if we want to systematically study the representations of social events. In summary, Fairclough (2003) has proposed that by focusing on the elements which are given the greatest prominence or salience, the inclusion or exclusion of agency in the abstraction in social event, the classification and the imposed “division” in the discourse, and whether there are disparate representations of the similar event in different texts, we can thus have a brief understanding of the representation.

The detailed understanding of the representation of Internet anti-corruption prepares for the better insight on legitimation construction. Fairclough (2003) and Van Leeuwen (2008) both suggested the framework of analyzing construction of legitimacy focuses on authorization, moral evaluation, rationalization and mythopoesis. I concentrate on the (de)legitimation process of the online actions by various social groupings in the media discourse. How are they legitimated or de-legitimized? Under what conditions are they legitimated in the media discourse? The argumentation serves a legitimating or de-legitimizing purpose. Van Leeuwen’s categories of (de)legitimation and Wodak’s inventory of topoi were used for analysis.

In the end, it is necessary to point out some limitations of CDA. One of the main criticisms towards CDA argues that CDA scholars often are highly subjective and possibly ideologically influenced during their conduction of the research. However, a

separation between ideology and methodological concerns is somehow difficult because of CDA's critical nature. Just as Fairclough (2003) argued, the departure is not easy because the critical eyes make the presence of ideology essential. Another criticism focuses on the heavy dependence of interdisciplinary approach in CDA research. Carvalho (2008) counters this criticism by pointing out the necessity because CDA research inspects social and political problems at the same time viewing them as having an effect on discourse. What is more, the interdisciplinary research also allows CDA to be utilized in any venues where language is used (Carvalho, 2008).

5. ANALYSIS: REPRESENTATION AND THE LEGITIMATION PROCESS OF THE INTERNET ANTI- CORRUPTION

In this section, analysis begins with an examination of the representation of “Internet anti-corruption” based on the three selected cases, with the objective being to answer questions such as who are the participants, how are they represented and what are the strategies used. Next, the analysis goes further to study the legitimation process of Internet anti-corruptions in the media discourse with the goal of distinguishing who and how some actors/actions are provided with legitimacy, while others not.

5.1 Representation of the Internet anti-corruption

This section mainly delves into the media discourse and focuses on the representation of actors and actions in the social event of Internet anti-corruption by adopting and adapting the analysis framework of representation developed by Fairclough (2003) and Van Leeuwen (2008). In critical discourse analysis, representation is one important research area and examined mainly on the micro linguistic level, with the clause being the grammatical unit where the examination on representation focus. The study of representation of social event, illustrated by Fairclough (2003), include the study of elements such as “forms of activity, persons, social relations, institutional forms, objects and means”(p.135). Internet anti-corruption, as one social event, has various forms of activity, participants, social relations, institutional forms, objects and means. To Van Leeuwen (2008), study on the representation of events focus on the social actions and social actors. Both researchers focus on the process and agencies in the discourse.

Social actors are identified and their representations are illustrated separately in this section. Before adopting the framework to study the representation of social agents in media discourse, it is necessary to identify who are incorporated into it. After examining the texts of the selected cases, three categories of social actors are summarized including the political actors, non-political actors and the culprits. The category of political actor is mainly made up by Chinese Communist Party, Chinese leaders, formal anti-corruption institutions and local governments. Non-political actors incorporate mass netizens, activists and other specifically related individuals. Culprits, just as the name implies, are officials involved in those scandals, as well as the potential culprits who are unidentified and generalized as corrupted officers.

Identification of social actors makes the further research to a more detailed analysis on representation possible. In critical discourse analysis, both Fairclough (2003) and Van Leeuwen (1996, 2008) have contributed to systematic and thorough frameworks for analyzing representation of social actors. After initial examination of the comprehensive approach that is adopted and adapted, it makes sense to explore the social actors portrayed in the Chinese paper more or less explicitly to see the patterns of especially inclusion/exclusion and activated/passivated. In the discourse of Internet anti-corruption, the pairs of exclusion/inclusion, and activated/passivated are outstanding.

5.11 Exclusion/inclusion

Exclusion is an important feature of critical discourse analysis. Both Fairclough (2003,) and Van Leeuwen (2008) have summarized two types of exclusion of social actors based on whether their traces are left in the representations, which are suppression and back grounding. According to Van Leeuwen, suppression of

exclusion is realized through “passive agent deletion” (p.29), “nonfinite clauses which function as a grammatical participant” (p.30) and “nominalization” (p.30); Back grounding is that social actors are included elsewhere in the text (Leeuwen, 2008, p.31)

Through the patterns of inclusion and exclusion, it is clear that the most frequently included social actors are Chinese Communist Party, formal anti-corruption institutions, and the mass netizens, while the most suppressed social actors are the particular journalists and activists who have posted their tip-off letters and evidence online. For example, in the case of Liu Tienan (刘铁男), journalist Luo Changping (罗昌平), who is an activist in China as well, only get back-grounded in those newspapers. He is mainly mentioned in name only, without any detailed information of the process he has went through, such as the motivation, reason or difficulty.

There is some noticeable difference between the official and commercial newspapers on the representations of social actors as well. When the journalists and activists are basically absent in official discourse, commercial press outlets Southern Metropolis News and Information Times were generally more open to represent them. For example, Information Times interviewed the journalist Zhu Ruifeng (朱瑞峰) who has exposed the scandalous tape of Lei Zhengfu (雷政富) and the retaliation he has undergone during the process of investigating and reporting. In official newspapers, the exclusion of Zhu is conducted through the type of back grounding. He was not included in the social event of the Internet anti-corruption; however, he was only fragmentally quoted for a sentence which he called his own way of posting sex tape of officials as “highly efficient”, but “ridiculous”. His criticism on dereliction of duty of formal anti-corruption institution and structural problems of anti-corruption system

was absent.

5.12 Agents/ patients: activated/passivated

After the brief exploration on the inclusion and exclusion of social actors, how the roles that social actors play in the representations is another essential part in critical discourse analysis. As Van Leeuwen illustrated, “who is represented as ‘agent’ (‘actor’), who as ‘patient’ (‘goal’) with respect to a given action?”(2008, p.32) is an important question, and a “significant part in the work of many critical linguists” (p.32) because social relations can thus be rearranged in representations. In this case, how active roles and passive roles are endowed in representation can indicate how social relations are presented in discourse.

When social actors are represented as the active, dynamic force in an activity, as Van Leeuwen claimed (2008, p.33), they can be termed as the “agent”. And if they are represented the one who is being affected or beneficiary (Fairclough, 2003, p.145), that’s when passivation occurs. A pattern could be identified It could be clearly seen that among the political actors, formal anti-corruptive institution as well as president Xi have the most activated and prominent roles in Internet anti-corruption. They act upon the corruption issues in China.

(1)“网络反腐”需要权威部门的及时介入...反腐取得成效的关键，则在于权威部门及时介入调查处理 (2012.12.27，信息时报，来源于新华社)

“Internet anti-corruption” is in need of the timely involvement of the authority... The key to successful anti-corruption lies on the fast investigations and solutions of authority agencies. (27.12.2012, Information times, originated from Xinhua news agency)

(2)近来有关部门查处反腐案件提速，让许多党员群众感受到新一届**中央领导集体**的反腐决心(2012.12.05，人民日报)

Regarding Lei's cases, the People's Daily reports "Recently, the relative agency speed up their investigations on corruptions, which make many communist party members and the masses feel the anti-corruption determination of the new leaders of the party. (05.12.2012, People's Daily).

The activists and individuals who have reported corruption online were assimilated as some people and they are activated mostly in the action of public scrutiny (网络监督) which accelerate the action of formal anti-corruption agency.

(3)不难发现，**一些群众**通过网络举报贪腐案引发社会关注，推动了纪检部门调查处理，已成为当前反腐斗争的一个新特点((2012.12.05，人民日报)

It is not difficult to find that some people have increased society's concern by reporting corruption through Internet, which accelerated the investigation and solutions of discipline inspection agencies. This has become the new characteristic of the current anti-corruption fight.

The discussion about actually informs us that construction of legitimacy on one social phenomenon shall be studied considering various actors and actions involved, rather than simply grasped as a whole. The very brief pictures of the identification and representation of Internet anti-corruption could help to facilitate the further understanding of legitimation process of this online phenomenon.

5.2 Legitimation process of the Internet anti-corruption

This section targets on the study of discursive construction of legitimacy of “Internet anti-corruption”. Van Leeuwen’s framework (2008) for construction of legitimacy is primarily used, especially the three resources of legitimacy including authority, morality, and rationalization. At the same time, tool of topoi is summarized to investigate the legitimation process.

After analyzing and summarizing the first-order codes and keeping the prominence of the representations, I conclude that event, actor and system are the three categories used as the main areas for the legitimacy construction, from the topoi summarized among the first-order codes. Those categories can be conceived as different manifestations of legitimation struggles, each entailing specific meanings and effects of the social construction of Internet anti-corruption in the press discourse. It is noteworthy that those categories are not totally separated but overlap with each other. Table 3 shows the topoi of the categories for legitimacy construction and their topoi.

Categories of legitimacy construction	Topoi /themes
Event	Authorization evaluation Moral evaluation and rational evaluation
Actor	Political actors Non-political actors
System	Anti-corruption and Supervision Practice Information technology system

Table 2: categories of legitimacy construction and its topoi

5.21 Legitimation Construction: Events

The first category is the event. An event, different from the actor, emphasizes the process in critical discourse analysis. According to Fairclough (2003, p.97), social events take into account of the forms of activity, persons, social relations, means, times, places and language. When it comes to the Internet anti-corruption, diverse social actors are represented and performed as actors with different actions, such as uncovering, reporting, forming public opinions, sharing and investigating. News coverage often has a normative evaluation of the reported event. The agents, who created the texts, are engaged in finding the explanations of legitimate (or de-legitimate) actions. In the media discussion around Internet anti-corruption, authorization and morality assessments are two prominent topoi for the construction of legitimacy.

Authorization assessment

Authorization assessment, according to Van Leeuwen (2008), means legitimation is constructed through referring to the “authority of tradition, custom, law, and/or person in whom institutional authority of some kind is vested” (p.105). Authorization assessment plays important role in the legitimation construction of Internet anti-corruption, with mainly impersonal, expert and personal authorities involved. Laws, Communist Party regulations, and rules that belong to impersonal authorization are employed to legitimate the grassroots action of the general mass, with the premise being that it is defined as public opinion supervision, thus being incorporated into the general supervision right discourse in China. Legitimation usually occurs through a reference to the “public supervision right” in the constitutional law. It is worth mentioning that only *Information Times* adopted the civil rights discourse to legitimate the grassroots action, viewing it as an awakening of the civil conscious of

the public. In the personal authorization, Internet anti-corruption is legitimized by political discourse from the new president Xi Jinping (习近平) and Secretary of the Central Commission for Discipline Inspection Wang Qishan (王岐山) on the right of masses to supervise and criticize government. Xi Jinping's determination to combat political corruption in China, particularly, gives credibility and legitimacy of Internet anti-corruption. Internet anti-corruption is justified and rationalized by the Chinese president Xi Jinping due to his new presidency campaign of anti-corruption. So, the Internet anti-corruption is represented as happening concurrently with the coming of the new leadership, and as a "determination" of the new political leader.

Certainly, in the event of the Internet anti-corruption, legitimation struggles exist. Law discourse, including a few general provisions of privacy law and cyber defamation law, are pointed out to de-legitimize the event in which netizens reporting corruptions online. Argumentation such as violation of personal privacy, irresponsible rumors and other criminal behaviors are frequently used to de-legitimize the Internet anti-corruption. The political discourse of "harmonious society" is also used to de-legitimize online collective behaviors with potential of turning into an unexpected mess and violent behaviors.

Moral assessment and rationalization assessment

Moral assessment, which differs from authorization assessment, revolves around the values and morality of the process of social practice. Leeuwen (2009) argued that moral evaluation are often hinted at through an adjective, rather than being described explicitly or as debatable. In the media coverage of the event "Internet anti-corruption," the moral evaluation's strengthened and contributed to through the argumentation of de-legitimizing the online collection actions and using adjectives

such as “entertainment-like”(娱乐化的,)“vulgar” (低俗的,) and “immodest”(不道德的.) Four-character idioms are often endorsed to represent the online collective behaviors, such as “fierce flood and savage beasts” (洪水猛兽,) thus evaluating the actions as uncontrollable and questionable. Naturally, in the discourse, the authority of formal anti-corruption agencies is then highlighted as the foremost agency for handling the corruptions. What is noticeable is the difference between the official newspaper and commercial press. In the commercial press, even in the case of the identity moral judgment, the Internet anti-corruption is argued as an instance of no alternative choice and therefore rationally acceptable.

Additionally, there is a blurring of morality in the dichotomy of “public” and “private” in the discourses. This dilemma is raised especially in the official media, and calls for further laws and regulations are highlighted. In the commercial press, the attention shifts from the regulation of the netizens to the transparency requirements for government and local officials. *Information Times* raises the idea of “assets declaration” for officials, which no other press does.

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Topic	Legitimation		De-legitimation		Proposition from Discourse
Authorization Assessment	Allegation	Examples	Allegation	Examples	
<p>Internet anti-corruption is supported by the CCP leaderships.</p>	<p>Internet anti-corruption is a new form of public opinion surveillance protected by the Constitution. It is a supplement for the internal supervision of the CCP and state organs.</p>	<p>“Recent years, ‘watch brother’, ‘house brother’ are exposed online; Internet supervision has very effective results. Using different forms to join the anti-corruption fight is one basic right of citizens. Our country’s constitution prescribes the rules that citizens have the right to criticize and suggest any organ of state or state personnel.”(27/12/2012, <i>Information Times</i>, 网络反腐, 揪出贪官串串)</p> <p>“In the Third Plenary Session of the 18th CPC Central Commission for Discipline Inspection, Comrade Xi Jinping emphasized the need to reinforce the check and supervision, and let whole party and people to supervise. Because of this, we can see that the acceptance of Internet anti-corruption is obviously increasing, and becoming the part of the institutional anti-corruption” (3/9/2013, <i>People’s Daily</i>, 掌握制度反腐的戒尺).</p>	<p>Internet anti-corruption can lead to rumors and it is a violation of privacy law and has the possibility of defamation.</p> <p>It is noticeable that <i>Information times</i> focused on the rumor in the opposite way to question the application of regulation of rumors exclusively to the mass, rather than to the official agencies. (30/08/2013 <i>Information Time</i>, 也要对“官谣”烧一把火)</p>	<p>“Grassroots Internet anti-corruption is hard to distinguish its authenticity, which has the possibility to harm innocent people. The lasting way of fighting against corruption should be based on institutional construction” (3/12/2012, <i>People’s Daily</i>, 须将网络反腐纳入法治化、制度化轨道).</p> <p>“The flooding of online reporting will make the relevant departments hard to judge and weigh the public’s right to know and the right of individual privacy. In regards to public interests, the limiting level of officers’ privacy needs clearer legal definitions” (3/12/2012, <i>People’s Daily</i>, 须将网络反腐纳入法治化、制度化轨道).</p>	<p>a. Standardization and institutionalization of the Internet anti-corruption are needed.</p> <p>b. The Internet anti-corruption is only the supplementary tool for the formal anti-corruptive agencies and the latter one plays the dominant role. However, the systemic reform is required for the formal anti-corruptive agencies.</p>

<p>Moral Assessment and rational assessment</p>	<p>Immorality of Internet anti-corruption is legitimized by its rationality of creating pressure on the government.</p>	<p>“We don’t want the morally unreasonable and inelegant videos polluted the internet, but if it were not that shocking, how can it push the fast reaction of Chongqing government” (26/11/2012, <i>Yangtze Night</i>, “雷政富不雅视频案”不要演成连续剧).</p> <p>“The masses’ condemnation of corruptions in China is full of emotions and sometimes too emotional. Perhaps the emotions should be replaced by more rational institutional construction. However, the main body of anti-corruption, the central and local government, should see the passion of public anti-corruption and more supervision space should be given. Otherwise, the immoral anti-corruption will be insisting” (03/05/2013, <i>Southern Metro</i>, 赵红霞式反腐：公众无奈之举)</p>	<p>The seriousness of anti-corruption becomes entertainment-like, vulgarious and immodest.</p>	<p>“Netizens have various education levels, and therefore the blind leading the blind is inevitable in some cases. Those sexual videos satisfy a prurient hearts, and reduce the anti-corruption career to vulgarity.” (04/03/2013, <i>Information Times</i>, 网络反腐不能止于“晒艳照亮房产”).</p> <p>“Online reporting leads to the rushinglly siege, which are often not verifiable, explainable, undistinguishable, and therefore mistakes are not inevitable; On the Internet, “inelegant videos” are surrounded by onlookers, which makes the serious anti-corruption fights become entertainment-like and vulgarious; Illegal hacking and secret filming will deteriorate interpersonal relations and social atmosphere and anyone may become the victims.” (01/03/2013, <i>Guangzhou Daily</i>, 反腐败还要靠主渠道, this article was originated posted in the bi-monthly political theory periodical Qiushi).</p>	
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Table 3: Legitimation and de-legitimation of Internet anti-corruption by events.

5.22 Legitimation Construction: Actor

Actor is another category that contributes to the construction of the legitimation of Internet anti-corruption. The topoi in this category include political actors and non-political actors. The focuses are on the identifications of those actors and how those identifications contribute to the argumentation of the legitimation construction.

Political actors

The legitimation of “Internet anti-corruption” in media discourse emphasized the official agencies as the most essential means taken to uncover corruption, prohibit future corruption and make the political transparency possible. The official discourse were trying to build positive organizational identities and subsequently to increase or restore the reputations of the formal anti-corruption agencies. They are identified as “fast reactive,” (反应迅速的,) “responsible,” (富有责任的,) and “reformative” (与时俱进的.) Their role is strengthened, so that they are represented as the determining and core actors in all the cases, thus justifying the argumentation that no Internet anti-corruption can be successful without the intervention and investigation from formal agencies.

The formal agencies are identified in relation to the netizens, with the formal one being authoritative and having the final say. The mass netizens can “only provide the clue” (只能提供线索), while the “real” (真正的) investigation can solely performed by formal agencies. I argue that this comparison between mass netizens and formal anti-corruption agencies sustains and reproduces the normative power of formal actors and also draws the bottom line for the behaviors of mass Internet users through the media discourse. The strengthening of the prominence and positive pictures of formal

agencies not only legitimate the dominating role of regulated and institutionalized formal anti-corruption agencies in Internet anti-corruption, but also further legitimate the CCP's domination.

There is a clear power structure in the discourse in regards of political actors and non-political actors. The grassroots Internet anti-corruption is legitimized mainly due to its accordance with the CPC, Chinese political leaders and formal anti-corruption agencies. In itself, grassroots Internet anti-corruption is not represented as a resistance, but as a supplementing power to the actions of formal anti-corruption agencies.

There are some differences in the commercial newspapers from official newspapers, which are worthy of attention. First, even though all commercial newspapers have been forwarded the main articles on the discussions of Internet anti-corruption from the Xinhua Agency (新华社), some still rationalize the Internet anti-corruption by criticizing the irresponsibility and inability of the local government and formal anti-corruption agency. The commercial newspaper, such as *Information Times*, questions the supervision ability of formal anti-corruptive agencies and criticizes them as performing weakly and inefficiently. The "fast reaction" of the formal anti-corruptive agencies which is praised in official newspapers, on the contrary, is represented as a passive reaction which is forced by Internet pressure.

Non-political actors

Essential targets of the legitimacy construction in the topoi of non-political actors involve mainly the general mass Internet users and individuals, namely journalists and activists. As I said before in the section analyzing the event, the Internet anti-corruption is represented as mass supervision, and it is thus legitimized. In this part,

the focus is on how the netizens are identified. The netizens are often characterized as having negative identity traits. For instance, in all three of the cases, netizens are often identified such as “novelty seeking,” (猎奇的,) “irrational,” (不理智的,) and “emotional,” (情绪化的.) Those negative group identifications thus de-legitimize the “Internet anti-corruption,” and lead to calls for the regulations and controlling from the government towards online mass behaviors.

The journalists and activists are the more sensitive actors in Chinese context. They are often, as we have found, excluded from the agency and replaced by the generalized indicator of “some person.” In the official discourses, they are even identified as the unidentified individuals who pursue “personal benefits,” “financial interests” and “their own political interests.” In the case of Lei Zhengfu, the sex tape was claimed by *People’s Daily* as result of financial dispute and threatening from businessmen to officer Lei. Therefore, *People’s Daily* criticized that online anti-corruption could be “used as struggles”. However, this sex tape was recorded five years ago and this time it was released by journalist who have reported Lei to anti-corruption agency but got no response. It is totally a different story but the official newspapers still labeled it as an example of political struggles. By doing so, I argue that the official newspapers de-legitimize the online reporting because it is assumed to be utilized by the some generalized people who has ulterior motives(别有用心的人).

The de-legitimation of non-official Internet actors is most common in official press. However, in the commercial press, re-legitimation exists. Re-legitimation was evident in the efforts to authorize the online netizens’ voice through quotations of online discussions and interviews. The typical argumentation is built on a criticism of the “non-transparency of the government.” Besides, attention was also drawn to the

positive evaluation of the netizens' identity traits and their actions. However, this positive illustration is periphery and the majority follows the tone that was set by the central party paper *People's Daily*.

Topoi	Legitimation		De-legitimation		Proposition from Discourse
<p>Political actors</p>	<p>Allegation</p> <p>1. The new anti-corruption campaigns initiated by new presidency and new party leaders' determination for anti-corruption provides legitimacy for the Internet anti-corruption.</p> <p>2. Internet anti-corruption comes into being because of the inefficiency, slowness, and ineffectiveness of formal anti-corruption agencies.</p>	<p>Examples</p> <p>“The fast reaction towards the Internet reporting is the new atmosphere after the 18th national congress.” (09/08/2013, <i>Information Times</i>, 原发改委副主任刘铁男被“双开”)</p> <p>“Definitely, the appearance of ‘watch brother’, Lei Zheng Fu and other Internet anti-corruption cases happened not only because of the improvement of civil technology, but because they hit the period of new anti-corruption campaign.” (26/11/2012, <i>People's Daily</i>, 反腐要速度更要力度)</p> <p>“Netizens are really busy...The public opinion crazes on the officer corruption cases exposed by netizens are really too numerous to enumerate. Does the disciplinary inspection agency not have to be reflexive and think about the future change? Can the agency only be the “peacemaker” and “wipe the bottom” after cases being exposed? Internet Information is extending in all directions (information age discourse) and netizens’ also have their increasing civil consciousness. Those can’t be the fig leaf on the irresponsibility of supervision agency.” (07/09/2012, <i>Information times</i>, 杨局长一个“微笑”引发的蝴蝶效应)</p>	<p>Allegation</p> <p>By comparing the formal anti-corruptive agencies and the masses, only the formal anti-corruption agencies can effectively prevent and control corruption.</p>	<p>Examples</p> <p>“Levels of disciplinary inspection agency are constantly strengthening the various channels of reporting. Central committee, ministry of supervision, and state bureau of corruption prevention build the official website of reporting. They are the real main actors, main channels and main areas of anti-corruption”(01/03/2013, <i>Guangzhou Daily</i>, 反腐败还要靠主渠道)</p> <p>“Lei Zhengfu was investigated and later deprived of occupation 63 hours after his video exposed online. It shows that the formal agencies significantly increase the acceptance of masses reporting in China and follow the cases quickly.” (01/12/2012, <i>Guangzhou Daily</i>, 反腐“63小时”之后).</p> <p>Compared with the hundreds of thousands cases which are prosecuted by traditional anti-corruption, Internet anti-corruption is so limited based on individuals. Some online reporter has said that online reporting is like “hitting the jackpot”. If you have no hot gossip, it will like a stone sinking into the sea. (15/12/2012, <i>Guangzhou Daily</i>, 网络反腐不能止于“猎奇”和“泄恨”)</p>	<p>a. To connect the Internet anti-corruption with the institutionalized anti-corruption</p> <p>b. Netizens need more rational guide.</p> <p>c. The actions of masses reporting are not enough to fight corruptions. Only by depending on the various level’s party organizations to investigate seriously, the corruptive officers can be dealt with</p>

<p>Non-political actors</p>	<p>1. The actor of Internet anti-corruption is the people and their actions mainly revolve Internet reporting and thus form public opinion. They supervise the government and boost the actions from the formal agency.</p> <p>2. Masses are the main forces of anti-corruption.</p>	<p>“Some ‘masses’ reporting corruption cases through Internet causes the attention from the society, boosts the investigation and solution of the disciplinary agencies- this becomes the new characteristics of current anti-corruption fight. It reflects that party and government follow the need of the public opinion, let people supervise government, and then the government will not dare to lax. Internet anti-corruption is an important channel for citizens to participant in the anti-corruption, and there is a positive interaction between government and netizens.” (03/09/2013, <i>Guangzhou Daily</i>; 紧握制度反腐的戒尺).</p> <p>“Masses are the main forces of anti-corruption and their functions cannot be ignored” (28/04/2013, <i>Southern metro</i>, 腐败的理性思考)</p>	<p>1. General and Unidentified actors pursue personal interests and political struggles through Internet in the name of the Internet anti-corruption.</p> <p>2. Mass netizens tend to seek novelty and be irrational, entertainment-like and vulgarious.</p>	<p>“During the flaming Internet anti-corruption, not all the reporters act based on the justice, some reported because their personal interests didn’t get satisfied or because of the beneficial conflicts” (15/12/2012, <i>Guangzhou Daily</i>; 网络反腐不能止于“猎奇”和“泄恨”)</p> <p>“Internet anti-corruption has its natural quality of “dragons and fish jumbled together”, which leads to the mixed results. Some criminals get the chance to blackmail and even use the Internet as a tool for political struggle. Some so called human right defending website reports for money and have very bad influence.” (23/10/2013, <i>People’s Daily</i>, 网络反腐，官网争夺“主阵地”)</p> <p>The eye-catching vocabularies such as luxury watches, mistresses, and mansions quickly attract attention of netizens and public opinions...it makes those anti-corruption cases entertainment-like (28/12/2012, <i>Guangzhou Daily</i>, “表哥”“房叔”们的倒掉：2012年反腐事件盘点).</p>	
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Table 3: Legitimation and de-legitimation of Internet anti-corruption by actors.

5.23 Legitimation Construction: System

Not only the social events and actors targeted to construct the legitimacy of the online phenomenon, but also the discourse of the technological and political system more broadly has an important role. The discourse of Information Society is made prominent, with the discussion focusing on how information technology contributing to anti-corruption in China. Internet, as a tool, is rationalized and legitimized in general for its application of anti-corruption goal, however, with the conditions and limitations illustrated elaborately. What is more, the political system focusing on anti-corruption and supervision practices also contributes to the legitimacy construction in the discourse. In the case studies, two topoi were elucidated, which are anti-corruption and supervision practice.

Anti-corruption and supervision practice

Discussions of Internet anti-corruption revolve around the anti-corruption and supervision practice at the systematic level. A general argument legitimating the Internet anti-corruption rests on the discourse that it is a supplement to the formal anti-corruption practice and promote the improvement of it. Meanwhile, the discourse highlights the well-functioning of socialist politics that people having the right to supervise the government. On systematic level, benefits that online supervision of mass can bring to the current anti-corruption practice and supervision institutions are the main arguments to legitimate the online phenomenon. However, in regard to the present institutional and structural weakness of anti-corruption, media discourse only slightly mentions the need for institutional reforms in China. Neither rational discussion nor suggestion were elaborated, even though the voices of criticism online often question the Chinese anti-corruption systems. On the other hand, regarding the

discourse of anti-corruption and supervision practice, the argumentation that the unrestricted and unchecked characteristics of Internet anti-corruption may damage the seriousness of formal anti-corruption practice de-legitimize this online phenomenon. What is more, the doubt that public pressure from Internet anti-corruption may disturb judicial process is also de-legitimize this online phenomenon.

However, it should not be ignored that there is further examination about the political institutions in the commercial press outlets in their discussions of the Internet anti-corruption. Consider, for instance, *Yangtze Night News*, which recommended the “institutional assets declaration” (公开官员财产制度) for officials, consonant with the demand of online activists, and criticized the current anti-corruption system as insufficient. Similarly, *Southern metro* proposed the critiques on the blowout of Internet anti-corruption as a result of the problematic institutionalized anti-corruption system. However, the criticizing tones are very limited in its level.

Information technology and system

Not only does the political system get used as a topos for the (de)legitimation of the “Internet anti-corruption,” but also the information technology achieves its importance in the process. In the newspaper discourse, the concepts *Information Age* (信息时代) is frequently used, as well as *information and communication technologies* (ICTs). In previous studies on the relationship between Chinese Internet and the state, the focus often lies on how the authoritarian control of the Internet is legitimated. However, much less attention paid to see how the functions and status of the Internet in Chinese politics are recognized through public discourse.

In the Internet anti-corruption events, the de-legitimation reasoning usually refers to a

negative scenario that information and communication technologies (ICTs) could entail in society, with the emphasis being on online violence, personal information abusing and pornography. Lack of discipline and management on the Internet is one of the main discourses that de-legitimize online masses actions. More regulations and governance are therefore called for. The Internet is rhetorically described as “not an area without the control of law,” (不是法外之地,) and thus, netizens have to watch out for their actions and be responsible for what they say and do. Other characterizations of ICTs include spontaneity, simultaneity, and the wideness of its spread; and they have all been adopted as justifications for the state controlling the Internet, namely because of their potential to harm the stability of societies. In those discussions, the institutionalized, formal online agencies, especially the official anti-corruption websites, are legitimated as the accurate and proper actors for dealing with anti-corruption.

In official discourse of the cases, negative aspects of technology information and its potential dangers are discussed, and the controlling discourse on the virtual society prevails. It warns that the Internet is not a virtual society isolating from reality but part of it. Suggestion for more control on the Internet is put forward in the official discourse, which may explain the subsequent appearance of a new policy regarding rumors during 2013. The potential threat to the stability of safety of the country is the main argument for stronger control of online actions.

Of course, during the discussions of ICTs as the system, a positive picture is also considered, which indicates that ICTs are generally accepted and recruited by the Chinese authority. In the official discourse, the “information age” is mentioned several times. The qualities of information technology – for instance, it is providing a

bigger space for public discussion and faster communication, reaching a wide audience and having low cost – are naturally recognized as easily creating public opinions. These legitimize the grassroots Internet anti-corruption as a phenomenon that comes with the development of technology. The Internet is believed to provide an arena where different voices can be heard and thus control the abuse of power by the local government.

All in all, in the discussions of information technology, regulation and governance on the online phenomenon are particularly stressed. Expectations of the Internet as a tool for fighting against corruption are directed to the development and fulfillment of the official and regulated channels.

Topic	Legitimation		De-legitimation		General Proposition from the Discourse
<p>Anti-corruption and supervision system</p>	<p>Allegation</p> <p>Problems of anti-corruption and supervision system exist. Internet anti-corruption is a supplement for the formal anti-corruption practice and promotes the improvement of it.</p>	<p>Examples</p> <p>“Internet anti-corruption easily leads to the pressures of wider public opinions due to its transparency, and then forces the relevant agencies to investigate. The traditional anti-corruption system is often relatively non-transparent and whether to investigate case is frequently decided by the leaders. Also, the traditional anti-corruption channels have multilayers and multi-links, thus having low efficiency; Whistleblowers are easily disturbed and sometimes avoided” (15/12/2012, <i>Guangzhou Daily</i>, 网络反腐不能止于“猎奇”和“泄恨”)</p> <p>“The blowout of numbers of Internet anti-corruption in China is a reflection of the pressure of conflict and the limited channel for public expression. The limited channel for public expression may indicate that the power structures and supervision system is problematic and functionless. It may also refract the over restraint on the public opinion” (28/04/2013, <i>Southern Metro</i>, 网络反腐的理性思考)</p>	<p>Allegation</p> <p>The unrestricted and unchecked characteristics of Internet anti-corruption may damage the normative and systematic functions of anti-corruption practices.</p>	<p>Examples</p> <p>“Internet anti-corruption often starts with vulgar contents, and with entanglement of interests, even spiteful attacks. In some level, it decreases the seriousness of the anti-corruption system.” (28/12/2012, <i>Guangzhou Daily</i>, “表哥”“房叔”们 表哥”“房叔”们的倒掉：2012 年反腐事件盘点)</p>	<p>General Proposition from the Discourse</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. A general consensus regarding the need for system reform, such as providing more channels for the public expression exist. 2. The control and regulation of information technology are required.

<p>Information technology system</p>	<p>1. Internet anti-corruption comes into being due to the positive characteristics of information technology.</p> <p>2. China enters into the information age in which online anti-corruption is inevitable.</p>	<p>“The bigger space, faster communication, wide publicity, low cost and a lot of followers in internet easily make the wide development of the public opinion”(03/12/2012, <i>People's Daily</i>, 须将网络反腐纳入法治化制度化轨道)</p> <p>“The capacity that Internet shows to promote legal, transparent, honorable and high efficient administration should not be underestimated”(26/12/2012, <i>People's Daily</i>, 翻阅 2012: 那些拨动心弦的法治记忆).</p> <p>“China enters into the Information Age and Networked Age in the 21th century, every individuals has the ability to community. The transparency and publicity of the information age is the catalyzer of the anti-corruption”(25/04/2013, <i>People's Daily</i>, 新论: 网络反腐回到正轨上来).</p>	<p>Internet anti-corruption may boost rumors in information age.</p>	<p>“In the hyper growing age of Internet, Internet anti-corruption may leads to the problems of rumors. The rumors through Internet are very difficult to manage. Some expert has summarized three reasons: 1. very easy to post; 2. fast spread; 3. very difficult to get rid of”(12/09/2013, <i>People's Daily</i>, 新媒观察: 珍视被网络放大的话语权).</p>	
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Table 4: Legitimation and de-legitimation of Internet anti-corruption by systems.

6. DISCUSSION: ANALYSIS AND EXPLANATION

After the detailed presentation of the topoi in the legitimation process, this section discusses further the main media strategies for the construction of legitimacy, and highlights the power structures in the discourse. The discussion part also illustrates how the representation of events and the legitimization process can sustain the power relations and maintain the power of the state on the Internet.

6.1 The legitimating strategies of “Internet anti-corruption” in the press discourse in China

This part summarizes the previous analysis section and discusses, in an overall manner, the legitimating strategies of social phenomenon “Internet anti-corruption” in the newspaper discourse. Two main fields of media strategies, focusing on the representation of actors and the use of various discourses, are pointed out and discussed. I argue that they contribute to the sustenance of power relations and to the social power reproduced in the discourse.

6.11 Absence of the activist, mass netizens as supervision and political agents as dominant: Subject positions

One of the most striking strategies used in the press discourse to legitimate “Internet anti-corruption” is by representing the political agents as the foremost amongst all actors, dismissing mass netizens as Internet supervision and minimizing the discussions on related activists. The legitimation strategy of depicting political agents as the most important in the online event, according to my point of view, is an attempt to ensure the party’s supremacy and dominant role of authority in the Internet. The political actors, such as the new president Xi, the Communist Party in general and the

formal anti-corruption agencies, are represented as the vital and activated actors. The original Internet political scandal thus becomes a proof of the determination of the new Chinese president to fight against corruption. In the discourse, the Communist Party is deliberately celebrated as the generalized actor who has the willingness to “listen to the people’s voice” and “instantly update to new technology,” which on the other way provides legitimacy for the rule of the Communist Party. Formal anti-corruption agencies are infused with positive characteristics, such as “quickly reacting”, “responsible” and “eager to listen to online opinions.” In the construction of “Internet anti-corruption,” the political and official actors replaced the grass-root actors and assumed the most prominent roles in the discourse. Internet scandals of high profile government officials, ironically, provide credibility and legitimacy to authority, especially formal anti-corruption agency, as well as CPC through newspaper discourse.

Given the widespread propaganda-style discourse that depict political actors as vital, the newspaper discourse represents the grassroots actors conservatively. Even though the collective actions of the masses are legitimated insofar as they are especially represented as “supervising the government,” they are largely de-legitimated with the key rhetorical arguments being that they are irrational, are possible to be used by “others,” inadequately educated, could violate the law and harm social stability. Thus masses’ online supervision through institutionalized channel (formal anti-corruption channel) is called on in the official newspapers.

With respect to the activists who were initiators in most of “Internet anti-corruption”, they are mostly absent in official press and only slightly mentioned in commercialized press, which may be explained by their sensitive social roles in Chinese social and

political context. Bluntly, social actors such as civil journalists, civil lawyers and other online activists have an embarrassing status especially in their relation to the authority. They publicly criticize social problems, question one-party rule and bring up the idea of democracy, thus frequently being perceived by the authority as challenging the Communist Party rule. In this particular phenomenon, the exclusion of activists in media representation is in accordance with the media's position in power structure in China which I will elaborate more.

It can be seen from the above analysis that the legitimation construction of the Internet anti-corruption has distinguished legitimation process regarding different actors and their relative actions. On the masses' action, media discourse constructs it as legitimate by incorporating it into the official "public supervision" discourse. Thus, this strategy of legitimation helps to release the social conflicts between ordinary citizens and the authorities, that is to say, in regard to anti-corruption, they are in the same vein. The corruptive officials are the "others" whom neither communist party nor ordinary citizens could tolerate. By doing so, online anti-corruption, which is related with social grievances of netizens towards this country's political system, is limited into the public supervision. I argue that the interpretation, recognition and incorporation of masses into the institutionalized "public supervision" system potentially regulate and control the masses' behavior on the one hand, and legitimate masses' action in the form of supervision on the other hand.

The masses' supervising right is reinforced and recognized in media discourse; however, there are more various grassroots agents engaging in the event of the Internet anti-corruption whom get no coverage in the media discussions, especially the event initiating activists and blog celebrities who have shared information on

social media that greatly extended visibility and influence. Often, they are generalized as unspecified netizens. With the widespread use of mass communication tools in China, more government critics, and social, judicial and consume activists resort to Internet to expand their political and social influence, mainly through microblogs, blogs, we-chat and personal website. By criticizing societies and politics in China, those activists often confront and challenge the bottom line of the Communist Party. Thus, it is common to see Internet censorship towards them. In media representation of Internet anti-corruption, the simplification of it as masses' supervision and disregard of roles of activists and even the warning toward micro blog celebrity, again, could relate with the social and political context in China and especially power relations in Chinese society. From the discussion above, clearly, there is power position presented in the legitimation construction of Internet anti-corruption.

6.12 Different discourses in legitimation process

The frequent use of “risky technology,” “social stability” and “rule of law” within the discourse belongs to the other strategies that were used to de-legitimize the online grassroots actions, and further legitimated and rationalized the greater control and constraints of the Internet as virtual space.

In the discourse, “Internet” is reinforced as a double-edged sword and the emphasis is placed on its possibility of becoming a chaotic place, where regulation, management and supervision are desperately needed. Automatically, when the emphasis lies on the potential risk of information technology, the official agencies are predominantly constructed as the authorized, capable and trustworthy actors to “purify” the Internet and assure the authenticity of information within it. In recent years, the Internet, as a

new information technology, demonstrated the capacity of spreading information quickly and widely. These characteristics of the Internet, which can be achieved by varying social and political actors, vigorously challenged authoritarian control in China. Therefore, with these Internet capabilities, in some way contrary to the continuing dominance of the party-state, the Communist Party repeatedly claims its need to “seize the online initiative,” (争夺网络主动权) often with the justification of the existence of risky information technology. The political and official actors are thus legitimated as the dominant actors online due to their ability to maintain social order online.

Another discourse, which is called the discourse of “societal stability,” (社会稳定) or “harmonious society,” (和谐社会) also appears frequently in the media discourse to legitimate the authoritarian rule on the Internet. This discourse was first put forward by the party state and it is widely articulated and promoted in China. Based on “Confucian values,” the discourse of “harmonious society” presented an ideal picture of the Chinese socialist state. However, Hui and Chan (2011) criticized the discourse of “harmonious society” as a hegemonic project to mitigate the growing social unrest. And Choukroune (2006) argued that the idea of harmonious society is more like disciplinary discourse which inserts the discipline into the whole society. In the discourse, the drive to form a harmonious society reinforced the need for social order and stability under the CPC, based on the idea that harmony would not be achieved without an orderly and stable state. The idea may alleviate the tension between the rich and poor, as well as decrease the growing public outrage over corruption. It is a justification for the governance and regulation for the stricter constraints on virtual space. Back to the Internet anti-corruption, by using the “harmonious society” discourse, the stability and harmony online are strengthened, thus justifying the de-

legitimation of the action of the grassroots, and further legitimating regulation, management and control by the formal agencies. This is also in accordance with what Zhang (2010) has claimed that maintaining stability in China is the political justification for restraining the civil activity or dissenting voice that might be a threat to government power.

“Rule of law” is the discourse as the last strategy for de-legitimizing the Internet anti-corruption and reinforce the regulation on and the well-behavior of the ordinary people. “Rule of law” often appears in newspapers in China nowadays. Peerenboom (2002) comments that rule of law, as one hallmark of modernity, became hot issues after the Cultural Revolution and “it is virtually impossible to open any Chinese newspaper without seeing reference to rule of law” (p.1). Some scholars have commented that the “rule of law” in China focuses not on how to impose the restrains on government, but on how to confine the conduct of the people (Zhang, 2010; Zhao, 2006). As Zhao (2006) has argued, it is instrumental of this discourse in maintaining social stability, keeping social control and building social order. The idea of stability manifests itself in the supreme control of the CPC, which is not the popular control over the government, but the government control over society. Zhang (2010) argued that even though rule of law highlights the prominence of legal system in China, the legislation as the core of rule of law is far from enough. In media discourse of Internet anti-corruption, “rule of law” is often pointed out to justify the power of state agencies for uncovering corruptions. On the contrary, it is frequently quoted to warn the mass netizens and call for the self-control of themselves, as well as de-legitimate the mass behaviors in respect of the lack of legislation.

6.2 Power, discourse and newspapers

As we have seen from the previous analysis, there are various legitimation strategies used by the media to deliberately highlight the legitimacy of the formal and official agencies, warn the audience for potential risks of information technology, persuade the audience for self-management and call for the management, institutionalization and legislation on the ordinary people's usage of Internet as an anti-corruption tool. Illustrated in the theoretical section, language, being fundamental in this research, plays the integral role of production and reproduction of social orders and social powers. In this part, what I want to undertake is to bring power and discourse into the discussion and I argue the representation and legitimation in discourse, particularly, help to sustain the social relations and reproduce the orders and powers. Newspapers, as a social institution, are discussed in regard to their positions in Chinese social structure, which helps to understand the power and discourse in it. In the end, general newspaper discourse on Chinese social resistance is mentioned and extended. I also comment upon those discourses, including the ones of Internet anti-corruption, belonging to the societal process in China.

6.21 Discourse to sustain social relations and reproduce state power

This part targets to answer the question, "how does the discourse on internet anti-corruption sustain the social relations and reproduce the state power and social order." As Parker (1992) suggests, "discourse analysis should involve the examination of different categories of objects, and what the members of those categories stand to gain or lose from the employment of the discourse, who would want to promote and who would want to dissolve the discourses" (p.18). In the previous analysis, we have seen how different actors are locked into various positions by the linguistic practices.

Phillips and Hardy (1997) illustrated in their study on the discourse of British refugee system that “the existence of a particular concept, the meaning attached to a particular object and the right of a particular subject position, all have political consequences in terms of who is allowed to speak from what position and the procedure and practice that are involved” (p.170). This understanding can also be applied to Chinese context. The grammatical form of the phrase “Internet anti-corruption” is a “nominalization” which is expressed as a noun, as if it were an entity, and the subjects are left unspecified. Thus the construction of it, such as how the events are interpreted and worded, or who are included and excluded, can be understood related with power. In this case, I have recognized three significant points in my examination.

The first one focused on the representations of the less powerful groups and how discourse sustains the power relations between them and the party-state. As we have found above, the Internet activists are limited and often excluded in the discourse. Even though they have been mentioned in the commercial newspapers, the structural and institutional obstacles they have encountered in their experiences have never been mentioned. At the root, there is the explanation, that by representing their difficulties as related to deeper social and institutional problems, the legitimacy of the rule of Communist Party may be challenged and the actions of other activists in China, especially the related activists’ actions called “New Citizen’s Movement,”(新公民运动) would be justified. The other less powerful group – the mass netizens – though they were provided with relative legitimacy, are mainly described as the group to be dominated with the rhetoric of identifying them as “irrational,” “manipulable,” and “emotional.” This description again put them into a position to be managed and controlled in the Internet by the party-state power.

The second point focused on the relationships that newspapers build with their audiences. In discourse analysis, the persuasive discourse type is believed to aim at influencing the future behaviors of the audience. Consider, for instances, the discourse of “rule of law” and the explicitly persuasive discourse suggesting that audiences search for legal and institutional options when they are facing the corruptions, without mentioning the institutional and systematic restrictions in China. Moreover, by describing the possibility of negative results of netizens’ actions in the future – mainly through different possible scenarios and warning of “instability and messy society” and “manipulation by someone having ulterior motives” – the discourses, from my point of view, insert the state control into its audiences, who are often the less powerful groups, and the power relations are thus sustained.

Thirdly, besides the sustaining of power relations, as previously indicated, the discourse also plays another important role, namely to bolster the state power on the Internet. The discourse legitimates especially state power in the Internet for anti-corruption and draws the bottom line to citizens’ behaviors as well. By reinforcing the dominating power positions of formal agencies in the Internet anti-corruption, and representing the activated role of the political actors, especially the central government and Communist Party in the discourses, the discourses reproduce the state power in the Internet as an activated, vital and rule-making role. On the other hand, by describing the grassroots Internet anti-corruption as potentially violent and focusing on the likelihood of rumors on the Internet, the discourse provides an argument for the future action tightening the control of the Internet. It is worth noting that during the period of the intensive happening and reporting on the Internet anti-corruption in 2012-2013, the Chinese government simultaneously started a crackdown on cyber-activism, as well as repressing the online and offline “New Citizen’s movement,”

which concurrently promoted the idea of “urging officials to declare their assets to combat corruption” after the national attention on the corruption problems in China. It manifested by the strong endorsement of China’s legal authorities on the validity of prosecuting individuals for online rumor mongering and defamation. There exists persistent and exhaustive policy for circumscribing the online expression and digital actions in China, which controls more than merely violent online activities. Using the case of Internet anti-corruption, the newspaper discourses are proved to play the role of producing and reproducing the power of the authorized institutions on the Internet.

6.22 Newspapers in the authoritarian networked China

The legitimation process of Internet anti-corruption justifies the current social and political system in general and reproduces the state power on the Internet. Power can be inserted not only in coercive form, but also discursively. Much of this claim requires, of course, the further illustration and discussion of the role of newspapers in China.

In the contemporary China, press media is dominated by the political power, even though it is increasingly influenced by commercialization in recent decades.

Newspapers not only play the role of a media institution, but also a political institution (Zhao,2000).The institutional roles of press media and its position in social and power structures are shaping and deciding the discourse. Belonging to the propaganda agencies of the party-state, contents of the official newspapers in China are especially shaped by the party-state power. The media constitute a space where power relationships are divided between competing political and social actors and the power struggles are manifested in the discourse. The elaboration of messages and the image

often serve the interests of the power-players.

Similar to what Van Dijk(1989) has described of media discourse that “the power groups take the initiative in the public discourses, set ‘tone’ of the text and decide the participant in their discourses”(p.22),the contents in Chinese news are often managed and packaged to persuade readers, which serve the Party’s own ends. Of course, commercialization in this country makes commercial newspapers solely dependent on market; thus unsurprisingly they have wider coverage of the cases, for instance highlighting the activists involved and questioning the accountability and transparency of the formal agencies, chiefly the government and the anti-corruption agency. However, problem explorations and examination are greatly limited to a superficial level: they do not contribute to the significant potential to alter the institutional arrangement. The deeper structural and institutional problems, such as the political power structures or the formal anti-corruption systems, which have hindered effective anti-corruption for years, are left unmentioned. Nevertheless, it is still encouraging that masses online are being recognized as supervision of the government, which also legitimates the relative power of the Internet on the local government. What is more, corruption, one of the main concerns of Chinese citizens, is at least articulated as a big social problem.

7. CONCLUSION

In the thesis, I have reviewed the Chinese online phenomenon “Internet anti-corruption” and examined the discursive construction on it with an emphasis on the legitimation process. By mainly using Fairclough’s critical discourse analysis and adopting the notions of “legitimacy” and Van Leeuwen’s framework for it, the study looks into the representations of the online phenomenon and summarizes three main categories of participants in the discourse: political actors, non-political actors, culprits. The press strategically legitimizes the mass action by representing it as a new form of mass supervision which is exercised through Internet. By doing so, this phenomenon has integrated into the official discourse of public opinion supervision. It is worth noticing that the authorities, which mainly the political representatives, are depicted as prominent, activated, and vital in playing a major role in the phenomenon. The activists and related actors involved in those cases were mostly absent from the official discourse and only slightly mentioned in the commercial ones. Considering critical discourse analysis theory, newspaper discourse, in these cases, is argued as a social practice to sustain the power relations in the contemporary China and further reproduce the party-state power on the Internet. By focusing on the discursive construction of legitimacy, this thesis shows how actors and their actions are differentiated and distinguished in the process.

By examining how a publicly participated event being legitimated, this study has its values in understanding the internet and civil society in China. In recent years, a series of online incidents in China were perceived as, arguably, proof that Internet power is challenging authoritarian control and forming a public sphere. The optimists believe that information technology will lead to civil society and eventually make a

democracy possible. However, only arguing whether the Internet will lead to a civil society and democracy may oversimplify a complex and changeable process. Since the Internet is a rapidly changing technology, the goal of the study is not to predict if the Internet will lead to a civil society, but is mostly about how the meanings are attached to the online phenomenon. So although you cannot predict if the Internet lead to a civil society, you can find and attach meanings to the online phenomenon, and that holds value. From the analysis of the interpretation of this phenomenon in traditional mass media, we could see how official scandals turn out to boost the legitimacy of the Chinese Communist Party.

This thesis explored a distinct angle see how the reproduction of state power on the Internet could be likely achieved through newspaper discourse. This thesis contributes to the acknowledgment of how newspaper media discursively constructs the legitimation of new social phenomenon and sustains social relations. When many previous researches focus on studying the mechanism of online resistance in social networking, this study calls attention to how online phenomenon are perceived and constructed in Chinese press media. The study on new Internet phenomenon in the temporary China shall not be examined separately as something solely online but considered interrelated with other social areas. Through the construction of legitimacy in media discourse, struggles and negotiations exist between the authoritarian regime and grassroots actors, which again reinforced that new Internet practice in China are often dynamic process. There is a lack of research on the dynamic process of how Chinese party-state strategically and actively deal with challenges from the Internet, thus this study gains its importance.

How does the result of this study contribute to a more rational understanding of civil

society and Internet in China? It is important to recognize the dynamic relationship between communication technology and civil society. Oversimplifying their relationship as linear is unwise since there are various actors engaging in the process and the process is not instant. Based on researches of previous online events, Yang (2003, p.454) has summarized three areas of civil society that is fostered by Internet in China including public sphere, social organizations and popular protest. Yang (2003) argued Internet has “fostered public debate and problem articulation,” “facilitated the activities of existing organizations while creating new associational form,” and “introduced new forms and dynamics into popular protest” (p.454). Meanwhile, he suggests for more researches on the articulation of social problems offline in order to better understand the online phenomenon. Echoing with his suggestion, this study has contributed to a deeper comprehension of how anti-corruption related Internet protest is constructed offline. By doing so, this study presents how state power can insert control in the process through media discourse and simultaneously provides some level of legitimacy to the masses.

Though this thesis has criticized the newspapers discourse and asks for a dynamic understanding of civil society and technology in China, there is nonetheless a development of civil society thanks to Internet which we shall not overlook. Consider, for example, years back in China, the challenging voices hardly get any chance to be heard. So it is a significant step forward that masses actions could be legitimized as public supervision and thus be provided with relative power to constrain local government. Internet also helps online resistance to facilitate the articulation of social problems and potentially play a supervisory role in Chinese politics. However, still, a freer media and less controlled environment for NGOs may still be in need in China based on experience of civil society development in many other countries.

Coming back to the series of online incidents, realistically, the emergence of intensive online collective incidents could be perceived as a reflection on Chinese institutional deficiencies. Internet in this context, provides a new medium for grassroots expressions of political reforms. As Yang (2008) described, the Internet answers the “immediate social need” due to the lack of a just society. In other words, if there is an effective and well-functioning anti-corruption system, as well as a transparent and accountable government, there can hardly be such prosperity of the Internet playing as the role of anti-corruption and cause wide resonant in society. In the case of “Internet anti-corruption”, communication technology is transforming more or less the public and private spheres and there is no doubt that the Internet is relatively free from state power and with the qualities of being more intensive, faster, less controllable, and transmitting wider, thus providing challenges to authority. In the media discourse, admitting the power of the Internet, as well as calling for the institutionalization of the Internet as an anti-corruption tool, also reflects on the adjustment of the state to this new phenomenon. This shows the image of a regime as a changing and adaptive system (Yang, 2009). It is worthwhile for further research to study how values and legitimacy are being constantly redefined on the media, and how different agents use the Internet for different goals and their associated historical and political context.

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