

## **Weibo, WeChat, and the Transformative Events of Environmental Activism on China's Wild Public Screens**

KEVIN MICHAEL DELUCA<sup>1</sup>

ELIZABETH BRUNNER

YE SUN

University of Utah, USA

The emergence of China and the advent of social media are two events that rupture the world as it is and force a rethinking of activism and public spaces. Environmental protests in China, often performed on a mediascape dominated by social media, suggest new conditions of possibility for activism and a need to adopt new methods and tools for understanding the myriad practices of activists in China that exceed the strictures of governmental control and offer hope for different futures. This essay theorizes emerging practices of citizenship and inventive imaginings of public spaces by introducing *wild public screens*. To do so, we analyze how Chinese environmentalists deploy Weibo, WeChat, and other social media platforms.

*Keywords: environmental activism, wild public screens, China; social media*

Two men are walking. And talking. One is wearing a hard hat and both are wearing T-shirts and casual pants. They are working. Perhaps. The man in the hard hat appears to be taking pictures with a smartphone. Belying the mundaneness of this scene are an overturned car next to them, a litter of papers, other people milling about, and a building's balconies brimming with people. The car, whose four wheels touch the sky, is marked with the Chinese characters 公安 (*gong an*), meaning "public peace" or "public safety." They identify the car as a police car and the scene as China. This vehicle of public safety overturned by the public represents an event that has interrupted the world as it is, forcing China's industrial juggernaut to pause and articulating multiple forms of pollution as antagonisms that mark the limits of industrialism.

This image was one of hundreds obtained at a demonstration against an industrial waste pipeline under construction in Qidong. Hours of violent protest succeeded in halting the pipeline that very day.

---

Kevin Michael DeLuca: kevin.deluca@utah.edu

Elizabeth Brunner: betsyabrunner@gmail.com

Ye Sun: ye.sun@utah.edu

<sup>1</sup> The authors thank Dr. Thomas Poell, Dr. Jose van Dijck, and the anonymous reviewers for their advice. We also thank the Waterhouse Institute at Villanova University for research support. A version of this paper was presented at the "Social Media and the Transformation of Public Space" conference, University of Amsterdam, June 2014.

Copyright © 2016 (Kevin Michael DeLuca, Elizabeth Brunner, & Ye Sun). Licensed under the Creative Commons Attribution Non-commercial No Derivatives (by-nc-nd). Available at <http://ijoc.org>.

Citizens of Qidong were alarmed and enraged when information broke about a proposed wastewater pipeline that would pump 150,000 tons of industrial wastewater into the East China Sea. Fearing contamination of their water and fishing grounds, they shared information and indignation via tangled networks of online and off-line communication. On July 28, 2012, images of bloody faces, overturned police cars, and sign-wielding protesters from Qidong flooded Chinese social media, spreading evidence of the event across the country at a speed too fast for government censors. These striking images of violence and people prompted authorities, protesters, and neighboring provinces to participate in a cacophonous conversation on Weibo that resulted in the protection of their bodies, their fish, and the sea that sustains them and their homeland.

Bodies at risk and affective winds across social media characterize environmental activism in China. The emergence of China and the advent of social media are two events that rupture the world and force a rethinking of activism, citizenship, and public spaces. Exploring the proliferating environmental protests in China, often performed in a mediascape dominated by social media, suggests new conditions of possibility for activism and a need to develop new concepts for understanding innovative practices that exceed the strictures of governmental control and offer hope for different futures. This essay theorizes emerging practices of citizenship and inventive imaginings of public spaces that traverse both city squares and entangled social media platforms.

Discarding the archaic notions of the public sphere, fenced-in pre-approved “free” speech zones, and protected rights that guarantee only placid public spaces and consumerized citizens, we propose *wild public screens*, places full of risk and void of guaranteed protection. Chinese citizens organize and mobilize on social media by appropriating spaces designed for commercial interests. This research extends previous work on the notion of *public screens* (DeLuca & Peeples, 2002) by examining activism in the context of our contemporary surveilled society and pointing to wildness as a crucial component for success. Organizing via social media utilizes wildness—the wildness of language, the wildness of affective winds, and the wildness of networks whose connective capacities explode the limitations of previous technologies to mobilize wild, unsanctioned protests. These movements interweave affective images, chanting crowds, text messages, scientists, grassroots environmental non-government organizations (ENGOS), and beleaguered officials, offering a variegated terrain to chart.

We begin this mapping project by displacing the public sphere and its ossified attributes. This is necessary to explain the practices of activism people perform on myriad wild public screens, a concept that extends Herold and Marolt’s (2013) use of the carnivalesque and Voci’s (2012) turn to cinema by focusing on *panmediation* and the wild eruptions of impromptu dissent. With this first step, we turn away from discussions of social media as the harbinger of China’s public sphere—a Western, idealized concept that we, like Gu Xin (1993) and Herold and Marolt (2013), find problematic for both the West and China (Yang & Calhoun, 2007)—to open up new spaces for understanding social change in uncivil society. Calling society *uncivil* highlights the wildness, violence, and lack of rationality that characterize many of the protests across China.

Current literature on social movements elaborates the relationship between social media and activism by considering how affective appeals are bound up in social media networks (Gerbaudo, 2012);

how various “technological architectures” of social media influence user activity (Poell, 2014); and how activists engage multiple social media platforms simultaneously to convey, store, and appropriate information (Thorson et al., 2013). Our research seeks to extend this work by considering a new condition that deeply influences activism—global surveillance. Civil society has been violated by surveillance of everything and everyone, as the Snowden leaks revealed (Greenwald, 2014a). Thus, rather than focus on how platforms shape activism and vice versa, we focus on how surveillance shapes activism and how wildness has been operationalized in China. Since China has long been under surveillance, its citizens have extensive experience working for social change in that environment.

Heeding Deleuze’s advice to complicate the current communication literature that tends to see China only through the lens of democracy<sup>2</sup> versus totalitarianism (Hartnett, 2011, 2013), we advocate a new approach to China. In *Difference and Repetition*, Deleuze (1994) noted that “where to begin in philosophy has always—rightly—been regarded as a very delicate problem, for beginning means eliminating all presuppositions” (p. 129). Deleuze insisted on starting by abandoning what “everybody knows” through common sense, that is, “in a pre-philosophical and pre-conceptual manner” (Deleuze, 1994, pp. 129–130). For Deleuze, to start thinking requires “a radical critique” (1994, p. 132) of what everybody knows. As scholars of new media and social movements, we extend Deleuze’s radical critique to the presuppositions that ground the commonsense axiom of activism: that institutionalized democracy provides a public sphere wherein rational human beings use good reasons and civil discourse to make informed decisions. Only the destruction of such presuppositions opens spaces for thinking through encounters with the new, such as the events erupting across China. The new “calls forth forces in thought which are not the forces of recognition, today or tomorrow, but the powers of a completely other model, from an unrecognized and unrecognizable *terra incognita*” (Deleuze 1994, p. 136).

The next step is to think. According to Deleuze (1994),

thought is primarily trespass and violence. . . . The contingency of an encounter with that which forces thought to raise up. . . . Something in the world forces us to think. This something is an object not of recognition but of a fundamental *encounter*. (p. 139)

At this moment in world history, encounters with the events of global surveillance, China, and social media force people to think. For post-humanist thinkers this event is a pivotal moment that opens space for the emergence of something new—“a reorientation of all thought and of what it means to think” (Deleuze, 1990, p. 130; see also all of Badiou’s work). Deleuze (1990) saw an event as a singularity, and “singularities are turning points and points of inflection . . . opposed to the ordinary” (p. 52).

Following Deleuze’s advice, this essay thinks from three fundamental encounters that shake foundational presuppositions about democracy, China, and social media. First, we sketch the Internet-enabled global surveillance society (GSS) that constitutes the political, economic, and cultural ground on which people now dwell after the withering of democracy. This sketch suggests the need to explore which

---

<sup>2</sup> We will capitalize *Democracy* when referring to the institutionalized state form. We will write “democracy” when referring to noninstitutionalized practices.

practices of citizenship and activism the GSS produces. Second, we present aspects of “Chinas” that undermine the totalitarian image of China that stunts Western thinking and practices regarding the nearly 1.4 billion people who manifest multiple Chinas. This encounter reveals Chinas that offer spaces of possibilities in the GSS. Finally, we engage these spaces via encounters with specific social media platforms and practices in Chinas—specifically, the uses of Weibo and Weixin (known as WeChat in English) by environmental activists—tracing the emerging forms of activism and citizenship. We advance *wild public screens* to account for the affect and forces that mobilize multitudes; the dense mesh of social media networks that create messy spaces of connection that foment participation; the creativity that shifts and slides through and around censors; and the forces erupting at illegal and violent gatherings. Whereas U.S. citizens only recently learned of the massive surveillance systems collecting data in warehouses like those in Bluffdale, Utah (Bamford, 2012), Chinese citizens have long known they are being surveilled. This turn to China, with its elaborate system of surveillance and censorship, thus serves as a paradigmatic example of how to deploy social media to create public spaces of activism in the context of the GSS. The combative dance between government and activists suggests that technology is neither elixir nor poison (Gerbaudo, 2012). Instead, social media platforms are contested public spaces, enabling government surveillance beyond the nightmarish fantasies of the Stasi while also offering activists powerful tools for diverse forms of creative resistance.

### **The Architecture of the Global Surveillance Society (GSS)**

Democracy may be the United States’ most versatile weapon: a violent export with disastrous consequences for places such as Iraq; a cudgel with which to hammer competitors such as China; and a shield used to justify and defend American exceptionalism. Yet, as Deleuze pointed out, Democracy itself needs to be questioned. The Democracy that people in the United States now inhabit is a disfigured totem of the democracy they once dreamed of. Recent research has found the United States to be more of a corporatocracy than a democracy in that “economic elites and organized groups representing business interests have substantial independent impacts on U.S. government policy, while mass-based interest groups and average citizens have little or no independent influence” (Gilens & Page, 2014, p. 565). Democracy in the U.S. is upheld procedurally, but in practice it is often sidestepped in favor of economic interests. Yet U.S. politicians and mass media alike use Democracy to feverishly foment fear of China as a totalitarian surveillance state, as evidenced by front-page headlines in *The New York Times* such as “Chinese Hackers Resume Attacks on U.S. Targets” (Sanger & Perloth, 2013). What passes for democracy in the United States is in tatters, battered by a corporatocracy served by and in service of the GSS. The numerous markers of this decline include growing economic inequality and legislative and legal decisions privileging corporations over citizens, such as *Citizens United v. Federal Election Commission* and *Sebelius v. Hobby Lobby*. This decline has led to an apathetic citizenry. The majority have abandoned even voting, the most basic practice of democratic citizenship. In 2014, voter turnout was a mere 36.4% (DelReal, 2014). Still, the rise of corporatocracy and the GSS has inspired practices of resistance to corporate greed, abuses of political power, and ubiquitous surveillance. Our argument will focus on the GSS emerging in the wake of democracy.

A substantive democratic process includes the rights to think, share one’s thoughts (free speech), and assemble in protest. These are enshrined in the First Amendment to the U.S. Constitution and

understood as the bedrock of democracy. The Fourth Amendment protection against unreasonable searches and seizures is equally vital. Although we acknowledge the role of consensus, dissensus is also fundamental to democracy (Rancière, 2010). Yet with the coincidence of 9/11 and intrusive Internet technologies, the State's control has domesticated and deformed citizenship and dissent, seriously eroding free speech and privacy. Today, U.S. citizens still have the right to protest, but their protests have been relegated to fenced pens or dispersed using certain zoning laws (DeLuca, Lawson, & Sun, 2012). Thus their constitutionally protected rights to protest are often rendered impotent in practice.

In addition to these affronts to constitutional rights, Americans face a world of constant surveillance. The assemblage of the rational democratic citizen subject that they nostalgically cling to was once enabled by a certain connection of things, including the waning of Christianity's hegemony, the emergence of science, a world devoid of powerful corporations, and the U.S. Constitution with its First and Fourth Amendments. This assemblage is now defunct. Conditions changed as the GSS's architecture of surveillance developed, transforming citizens into surveilled suspects. The GSS is characterized by the articulation of multiple elements of surveillance: new technologies, laws like the Patriot Act, zoning laws and restrictive protest zones, privatized public spaces, proliferating video cameras, surveillance corporations, social media self-surveillance, private data corporations, militarized police forces, drones, the National Security Agency (NSA), the sprawling Department of Homeland Security, and the hollowing out of the First and Fourth Amendments (for details, see [projects.washingtonpost.com/top-secret-america/](http://projects.washingtonpost.com/top-secret-america/)). These multiple forces create a norm of surveillance and articulate humans as surveilled suspects, rendering the democratic citizen subject dead.

Our focus on the United States is not due to provincialism but rather to the country's oft-touted role as the symbolic home of democracy and its unrivaled position as the world's foremost surveillance superpower. Aided and abetted by dozens of countries and global Internet corporations, the United States is the architect of the world's GSS. As NSA whistleblower Edward Snowden revealed,

The U.S. government, in conspiracy with client states, chiefest among them the Five Eyes—the United Kingdom, Canada, Australia, and New Zealand—have [sic] inflicted upon the world a system of secret, pervasive surveillance from which there is no refuge. . . . I realized that they were building a system whose goal was the elimination of all privacy, globally. (Quoted in Greenwald, 2014b, pp. 23, 47)

Through programs such as Boundless Informant and PRISM, the NSA has basically achieved its goal to "collect it all." As Greenwald (2014b) reported, "Overall, in just thirty days the unit had collected data on more than 97 billion emails and 124 billion phone calls from around the world" (p. 92). STORMBREW, OAKSTAR, and BLARNEY allow the NSA to tap into fiber-optic cables while also using PRISM to collect data directly from Facebook, Google, Apple, Microsoft, Skype, YouTube, and others (Greenwald, 2014b, p. 108). The NSA has reportedly installed spyware on the majority of the world's computers (Menn, 2015) and stolen the encryption keys for SIM cards that the world's largest SIM card maker produced and sold to 450 wireless network providers (Scahill & Begley, 2015). We have witnessed the emergence of surveillance as the dominant practice of concrete and Internet places globally, radically altering the possibilities of types of subjects, cultures, and societies. Still, the GSS is only one possible

version of the Internet: Snowden's revelations are a counterstrike enabling alternative visions of Internet spaces in which "the Internet is a means of self-actualization. It allows them to explore who they are and who they want to be, but that works only if we're able to be private and anonymous" (quoted in Greenwald, 2014b, p. 46).

### **Encountering the Events of "Chinas"**

Rather than imprison China within the confines of communism in the U.S. imaginary, we will follow the threads of activism that open up new ways of considering Chinas outside of totalitarianism. Environmental movements, (E)NGOs, and blossoming environmental awareness are transforming China's political system. MacKinnon (2011) called this emerging system "networked authoritarianism," Yang and Calhoun (2007) termed it "the green public sphere," and Teets (2013) described it as "consultative authoritarianism." Examples of these changes include a 2015 law that allows NGOs to bring lawsuits against polluters at reduced cost (Agence France-Presse, 2015), as well as protests in Xiamen, Qidong, Hangzhou, and elsewhere, in which protesters have often prevailed. As Zhang and Barr (2013) pointed out, many assume that "authoritarian states are able to act uniformly to ensure control over civil society . . . this is not necessarily true" (p. 11). Recently, a number of scholars have challenged the totalitarian image of China (Perry & Goldman, 2007; Poell, de Kloet, & Zeng, 2014; Shirk, 2011; Sima, 2011; Yang, 2009; Zhang & Barr, 2013). Yang (2009) and Sima (2011) focused on the coevolutionary development of the Internet and civil society in China, arguing that it has led to a "green public sphere." Poell et al. (2014) looked to Latour's actor network theory to theorize social media as an actant, thereby gaining "insight into how new publics are articulated and how symbolic configurations unfold" (p. 14).

Studies of how complex censorship apparatuses function developed this research, exploring ways the state attempts to control the Internet with firewalls, human censors, and banned words (Bamman, O'Connor, & Smith, 2012) while still allowing critiques of government policies and officials. King, Pan, and Roberts (2013) found numerous examples of inflammatory rhetoric directed against the Communist Party that went uncensored. As Shirk (2011) pointed out, this space for critique can benefit the government by offering insight into what is provoking pockets of unrest. This body of literature maps a complex dance between citizens, censors, social media, and government officials. Environmental advocates occupy a terrain that is fraught with government censorship and unpredictability but also holds spaces for dissent and conversation. When censored, netizens resort to homonyms, images, and voice messages to circumvent censors and elide authority (Link & Qiang, 2013; Mina, 2012). Our analysis explores how those invested in disseminating information or organizing illegal protests meet the censors with untamed creativity that spreads like fire across wild public screens.

To engage the event of Chinas is to trespass against the commonsense cliché of China that "everybody knows," heeding Deleuze by eliminating the presuppositions of a destitute U.S. imaginary "imprisoned within its own assumptions, unable to see the world other than in terms of itself" (Jacques, 2012, p. 12). As Jacques (2012) observed, "We are so used to the world being Western . . . that we have little idea what it would be like if it was not" (p. 8). Thinking anew is imperative. When we consider China to be an event, we are suggesting that Chinas are being composed by multiple forces, things, and networks: people, bicycles, cars, protests, Gucci handbags, factories, Friends of Nature, Weibo, Apple, and

so on. To think of China as forces and events is to think of multiple Chinas always in flux, and of flowing networks and knots. From this orientation we trace activist Chinas, producing a surprising cartography of wild public screens, unruly demos, cascading affects, and cacophonous social media networks.

Headlines such as “Well-Oiled Security Apparatus in China Stifles Calls for Change” (Jacobs & Ansfield, 2011) depict an oppressed China where political conversations occur only in hushed voices behind closed doors. In China, however, political discussions proliferate in crowded public parks, at open-air restaurants that spring up each night, and on the Internet. The government’s censorship tactics do not unilaterally oppress the Chinese people. Rather, the public nature of the censorship creates a level of transparency between the government and the people. Rules are often ignored, bent, and circumvented. Unlike in the United States, where spying via the NSA took place for years without the public’s knowledge, government surveillance in China is a known factor in the game but not one that stops people from talking, especially on Weibo and Weixin. As the United States touts its oligarchic, sclerotic Democracy, Chinese citizens are creating democratic activisms, most notably on the wild public screens of their smartphones. Far from a model of totalitarian oppression, China is a place of innovative experiments in activism. Via their 180,000 plus annual protests, most of which are environmental (Orlik, 2011), Chinese are enacting improvised democracies. Nancy (2010) defined democracy as not a property of the State, a form of government, but the very opposite of the State: “democracy is not a regime but an uprising against the regime. . . . The democratic *kratein*, the power of the people, is first of all the power to foil the *arche* and then to take responsibility, all together and each individually, for the infinite opening that is thereby brought to light” (p. 31). Chinese citizens manifest their democratic power of the people not just in many practices on Chinese social media but also on the streets, in their millions.

### **Weibo and the Creation of New Worlds**

As Democracy fades, democracies and activisms emerge. People become decentered knots of social media, forming improvised networks across millions of wild public screens that transform the tenor of conversations and activisms across the globe. This change is contested by the governments, corporations, and new technologies that form the GSS, which seeks to impose oppressions beyond Orwell’s dark imagination. China is an especially important example because it is both a leading Internet nation and a leading surveilled society. Rather than imagine how the present and future are and will be like the past, the key task is to think what is emerging and possible in the transformative conditions of now. Chinese activists, having spent years deploying social media weapons in a surveillance society, provided models for citizens around the world. They meet surveillance measures the government takes to curtail conversations with a type of wildness that leaves censors scrambling. When words are censored, they use images; when images are censored, they deploy walkie-talkie functions; when a certain phrase is censored, they replace it with one of the Chinese language’s multitudinous phononyms. Networks of activated citizens overwhelm the army of censors, making spaces for successful activist efforts and offering hope through incessant creativity.

As the world’s largest Internet nation, Chinese Internet users represent a significant and growing share of the online universe. Chinese Internet users grew from 22.5 million in 2000 to over 640 million in 2014 (more than double the 280 million Internet users in the United States). Of these, 350 million use

Sina Weibo, a microblogging service akin to Twitter (Magistad, 2012) that tripled in size between 2009 and 2012 (Phneah, 2012). The world has become panmediated at an extraordinary rate, with the United Nations reporting that nearly 90% of the world's population has access to a mobile phone, and that mobile broadband subscriptions have increased from 278 million in 2007 to 3 *billion* in 2014 (Internet Society, 2014). In the context of the panmediated world, China is the most socially engaged country (GlobalWebIndex, 2012).

China offers vibrant examples of wild public screens and proliferating democratic activist practices. Its citizens are enacting democracy without guarantees of institutional protections that preserve the illusion of free speech. The public screens of iPhones and Androids are absorbing the attention of China's middle classes, which use them to desperately protect their environments. Outside the hallowed halls of ossified public spheres and official rationality, Chinese citizens deploy the images, glances, speeds, affect, dissent, and panmediation of smartphones as weapons in asymmetrical ecological and social struggles.

Corporate commercial public screens are difficult spaces for imagining and enacting different worlds, yet unruly spaces for thinking differently do become possible via certain technologies and Internet platforms. Wild public screens twist and transform dominant cultural, technological, and commercial imperatives. "Wild" suggests not something entirely other, but an unruly and dangerous supplement (Derrida, 1998). Twitter or Weibo, combined with smartphones, has proven especially wild, from the Arab Spring to Occupy Wall Street to environmental protests across China. Citizens, merged with smartphones and social media platforms, become decentered knots of world-making able to transform the existing order of the world. They show how democracy lives in practices, not institutional protections.

In the new spaces of possibility created by social media, NGOs and large corporations alike have turned to social media to engage with the hundreds of millions of citizens surfing the Internet. Even as corporations use social media to interact with their customers, promote sales, and take advantage of the networks consumers have created among themselves, they are creating new spaces where protest can occur. Ma Tianjie, Greenpeace's East Asia Program Director, has found that

to give [companies] enough pressure to clean up their supply chain, the social platform—whether it's Facebook and Twitter or whether it's Weibo or WeChat in China—are very important because that's where they themselves are also trying to engage their consumers . . . on these platforms. (Ma, personal communication, 2014)

People have hijacked platforms for environmental advocacy.

Although the Chinese government often favors secrecy and surveillance over transparency, social media provide Chinese people with improvised forms of transparency, enabling networks of citizens to share information and organize outrage. Today "we are witnessing how these new electronic meeting places on the internet have influenced the verdicts of court judges, Party officials and the news agenda in traditional media types" (quoted in Fons, 2005, para. 1). Organizing via social media—beyond effective government control and blocked from ritualized and domesticating forms of participation—Chinese citizens



foment protests by any means necessary. The wildness of the public screens in China stems from the danger users court when they operationalize social media screens for political purposes, often risking imprisonment or worse. In practice, censors in China simply cannot keep pace with the “dense cluster of Chinese netizens” able to quickly and widely spread controversial information that flits past censors and rapidly

become[s] public knowledge—a state of affairs that has huge political implications. When a 火 *huo* (the Chinese word for *fire*, which is used to signify a high-trending topic or event) phenomenon occurs, the Internet plays the role of a massive distribution platform that denies the government its agenda-setting power. (Qiang, 2011, p. 53)

This fire, uncontained by fiber-optic cables and satellites, rages into the streets across China and forces action. Thus democratic practices proliferate in a nondemocratic country via the potential of panmediation that ruptures the striated spaces of Western Democratic rituals. Public screens are networked flows of information that, in China, have allowed for wild forms of protest outside fenced-in protest zones.

Despite their many similarities, Twitter and Weibo also have some important differences. For example, whereas Twitter is largely uncontested in the West, Weibo has a number of competitors, including Tencent’s Weixin as well as Sohu’s ChinaRen.com and BaiShehui.com. Weibo thus has to work diligently to keep its clientele. Additionally, compared to Twitter, Weibo is “better” because it gives users more options to share information. Unlike Twitter, Weibo permits users to post in-line pictures rather than just links. Weibo also features threaded comments that resemble a more Facebook-like feed and offer easy access to trending topics. Private chatting is another built-in function that does not appear on Twitter. These differences are important because they alter *how* users interact with one another and disseminate information. Though most of the activity on Weibo is for entertainment purposes, the embedded functionality of the site dramatically affects how social activism occurs online in China, in part because images and trending topics are easier to access.

Like Twitter, Weibo allows a mere 140 characters per post. But non-Chinese speakers often do not realize that in Chinese, 140 characters is more of a blog than a microblog, since a single character can represent an entire English word. For instance, the simple post “I am going to class” consists of 19 characters (including spaces) in English, while the same phrase in Chinese, “我在去上课,” contains only five characters. Hence, language differences alter the possibilities of Weibo and Twitter. Jack Dorsey, Twitter’s creator, said in 2007 (long before Twitter’s use in protests) that the platform was “not really meant to carry a lot of weight,” but rather to connect people through small talk because the posts are literally small (Dorsey, 2007, para. 9). In China, the posts are not so small.

Weibo, unlike Twitter, has been tied to protest since its launch in 2009. In just two years, Weibo became “China’s most potent incubator for subversive Internet memes, much to the consternation of bungling local officials” (Epstein, 2011, para. 4). By 2012, Kaiser Kuo, director of Corporate Communications at the Baidu Web services company, considered Weibo to be “driving, in many ways, the entire national dialogue” (quoted in Magistad, 2012, para. 6). Examples of political change instigated by

social media in China abound, from protests against polluting plants to boycotts of ivory. Environmentalists like Ma Jun have taken advantage of the new channels forged by Weibo to reach citizens. Aiming to clean up waterways, Ma asked people to take pictures of pipelines dumping toxins and upload them to his website. He then used this evidence to take companies to task.

Social media connect protesters with a highly networked audience to mobilize. Since more than 600 million people are online and rage is arguably the emotion that travels fastest across social media, citizens' outrage over waste incinerators and chemical plants moves quickly (English, 2013). Rage, which possesses "a ripple effect that could spark irate posts up to three degrees of separation from the original message" (English, 2013, para. 2), is what spreads awareness of the domestic social issues that are the leading cause of angry posts (Fan, Zhao, Chen, & Xu, 2014).

In the face of Chinese censorship technology (largely produced by Western companies for surveillance purposes), Weibo's format necessitates a form of creativity that relies heavily on two tactics—the use of images and phonograms. Censors can scan posts for certain words and automatically delete them, but scanning images is difficult. Phonograms in highly intertextual online conversations also function as a method of circumventing censors. Again, this tactic is peculiar to Chinese because it plays off the language's dependence on tonality and context for meaning.

Memes, another important form of wild Internet protest, combine textual and image-based tactics for fast, broad dissemination of information. For example, in the face of censorship, netizens used the nickname Master Kang (a brand of noodles) to discuss the arrest of China's security czar, Zhou Yongkang, for corruption. Some shortened this to *fangbianmian*—instant noodles—and images of instant noodle cups popped up on social media platforms to stand in for the censored name. According to Mina's "law of meme-o-dynamics. . . . In a censored environment, the greater the censorship, the more important the meme" ("PDF12 An Xiao Mina," 2012, 6:11–6:15). By the time Internet censors become aware of a particular meme and delete it from cyberspace, it has already spawned iterations. In response to this creativity, China's government launched a campaign to ban wordplay, alleging that it was creating "cultural and linguistic confusion" (Branigan, 2014, para. 3). In China, "memes wielded for activist ends reflect how a global generation steeped in the idiosyncrasies of Internet culture can bring that culture to bear on serious social issues," thereby wilding the medium (Mina, 2012, para. 23). The creativity and intertextuality of these memes and methods testify to the persistence and dedication of Chinese netizens fighting censors in an environment of global surveillance.

Chinese citizens, armed with data from social media among other sources and increasingly alarmed at the environmental costs of China's economic development, have taken to the streets in growing numbers to protest (Thibault, 2012). Social media amplify and accelerate their actions: "Weibo is making it ever harder for the government to ignore those voices" (Magistad, 2012, para. 25). People are beginning to realize that the greatest threat to further economic growth is environmental degradation in the form of dangerous air quality, polluted water, desertification, and deforestation. Environmental demonstrations have not been in vain; protesters succeeded in Qidong (Thibault, 2012), Xiamen (Cody, 2007), Hangzhou (Barboza, 2014), and elsewhere. Despite millions of dollars invested in censorship,

proliferating protests are not silenced. Rather, they elide and elude the barriers erected to stop them, offering productive examples of resistance.

### **Weixin/WeChat: Intimate Circles, International Networks**

Social media giant Tencent launched Weixin in 2011. To compete with the well-established Weibo, Weixin leveraged its existing ties to the 700 million registered users already playing games and chatting via QQ, another online platform. In three years, Weixin skyrocketed from zero to more than 400 million registered users. Its simple platform allows users to connect in a less, or at least less visibly, networked way. When users open the app, they can access their list of contacts to text, send voice messages, or organize group chats. Users can also browse the "Moments" feed, which features the usual posts, links, and pictures of importance and inanity. As Weixin became more popular, it morphed into a gangly network of tendrils and tangles that "comes packed with more tools than a Swiss army knife" while still giving users the option of privacy (Horwitz, 2014, para. 1). Today users can "tag" people in pictures and posts, read news, start groups, organize protests, or pay for meals. With its convenient and versatile features, Weixin has spread widely.

The main difference between Weixin and Weibo is that social circles on Weixin are more private and exclusive. One cannot simply "follow" any individual's account as on Weibo but must request permission to be in someone's circle. One's feed on Weixin is only visible to friends who have joined the circle, not friends of friends or other users. The higher threshold for entry means a tighter community within each user's network. According to Ma Tianjie of Greenpeace, "the sense of community on WeChat is stronger than [on] Weibo" (Ma, personal communication, 2014).

Taking advantage of this sense of community, the International Fund for Animal Welfare (IFAW), partnering with Sogo Search, ran a successful Weixin campaign on "Saying No to Ivory Products." An interactive animated message featuring a "conversation" between a baby elephant and its mother circulated internationally. It ended with explicit advocacy: "Boycott ivory products, and share this weixin with your friends. Every time this message is shared, love is relayed." The link to this message can be reposted on one's Moments or shared in private Weixin chats. Upon reposting the message, the user sees how many online pledges have been made, so even though the message is shared only within an individual user's circle, the pledge number allows that user to envision the extended community and see him- or herself as a meaningful player in this cause. Thus users have a visible index of the power of the networks on Weixin even though they cannot "see" how the message travels beyond a user's personal network. By mid-December 2014, Social Talent Circle had ranked IFAW's campaign the best trending topic, and more than 350,000 users had made the pledge online ("拯救大象罗拉, 搜狗在行动," 2014). The success of this campaign shows that Weixin, despite its more private, enclaved appearance, is an efficacious space where the power of networks can surge and erupt and direct the course of a public event. (By the end of 2014, #SayNoToIvoryProducts had 69,000 posts and more than 38 million visits on Weibo.)

Weixin dramatically defied skeptics' predictions that its smaller circles would inhibit rather than aid people's organization and mobilization in Jiangmen in 2013. One morning in mid-July in this city of 4.5

million people near Hong Kong, links between Weixin users were used to mount a raucous resistance to the \$6 billion uranium processing plant being built near their city (Jacobs, 2013). People had begun talking about it within Weixin networks. For many Chinese citizens, the Fukushima nuclear disaster of 2011 had damaged the image of nuclear power, and local officials' assurances did not erase fears. Residents were terrified the plant would jeopardize the safety of the land for current and future generations. Unable to trust their administrators, people turned to one another and undertook the only method left to them: against the warnings of local officials, they organized a protest using Weixin's walkie-talkie feature to send short recorded messages that were nearly impossible to censor (Jacobs, 2013). Though they easily traversed this terrain of overlapping networks, users were hard to track there and thus enjoyed a form of anonymity not possible on Weibo. By the time people assembled in the streets, the demonstration had force over multiple platforms.

By 9 a.m. on July 14, hundreds of people had already gathered to protest the project by "strolling" the streets of Jiangmen. As crowds congregated, people shared images of protesters over mobile devices, and the community's outrage spread like wildfire beyond the city's alleyways and avenues. Images uploaded to Weixin captured people carrying signs on the streets and moved from one screen to many screens, from one account to group accounts. Traveling widely and wildly, the information wound up in the pockets of neighboring Hong Kong residents who openly supported the movement and put even further pressure on the government to back down.

Using signs and bodies, residents declared their desire to protect their country and hometown from potential pollution and disaster. In many ways the protesters' platform was impervious to official edicts, and it engaged people throughout the area. Valuing the local environment over economic growth informed a slogan repeated on cardboard signs and Weixin's Moments feeds alike: "We want life, not GDP!" (要生命, 不要GDP).

Mere hours after people lined the streets, Jiangmen's Communist Party Chief Liu Hai announced the decision to stop building the China National Nuclear Corporation uranium processing plant. Those wary of the government's commitment asked for it to be in writing and read aloud, a demand that Jiangmen officials met via a series of text messages to area residents. The wild network of networks functioned to empower Chinese citizens to make demands their leaders could not ignore.

### **"Huo" and Social Media: Networks on Fire**

Although Weixin and Weibo view each other as competitors, the two platforms are often used in conjunction. People have Weibo and Weixin accounts, post stories from Weibo blogs on Weixin feeds, and keep separate but overlapping sets of contacts on the two platforms. ENGOs use Weixin to organize local events and provide residents with environmental information, often posting the same set of information on both platforms. On Weixin, individual users connect to the official accounts of ENGOs by subscribing to them. In a private "chat" window with the organization's account, the subscriber receives notifications when new information is posted and can repost it to his or her own Weixin networks. Weixin offers a different way to connect, communicate, organize, and disseminate information.

This crisscrossing of platforms is important for ENGOs, as stories they share on one platform can move easily between networks via users. International, national, and grassroots ENGOs in China see social media as integral to their efforts. Feng Yongfeng, founder of China's Nature University, an ENGO promoting environmental education and stewardship, declared in a presentation at Xiamen University that NGOs in China that do not use social media are simply unable to be good NGOs. Platforms like Weixin and Weibo are essential to (E)NGOs ("厦门绿拾字," 2014), primarily because their use can help expand NGOs' most basic function—releasing news and information outside the constraints of state-controlled media. Furthermore, Feng found Weixin and Weibo vital to learning about new policies or problems quickly, speed being critical in mobilizing people to unite and react to plans for new garbage incinerators, wastewater pipelines, or PX plants.

The wild and tangled nature of social media networks offers spaces for resistance to ENGOs as well. For example, they can leverage the "tagging" function to target businesses directly and pressure them to change their practices. By using, say, #victoriasecret or #nike, users can engage businesses in a dialogue they cannot ignore. Ma Tianjie taps into social media platforms essential to Greenpeace's work (Ma, personal communication, 2014). In its Detox campaign to force clothing corporations to rid their manufacturing chains of toxins polluting waterways around the world, Greenpeace has leveraged social media platforms globally, launched issues onto millions of public screens, and investigated corporations like Nike, Victoria's Secret, and LiNing, compelling them to sign pledges to clean up their supply chains.

Social media are likewise crucial in getting local governments to heed China's national standards, a task that is largely led by the people and supplemented by ENGOs. China's people power is a formidable force in protests that local leaders dare not ignore. By organizing and disseminating information among citizens who trust Weibo, QQ blogs, and Weixin news over *People's Daily* or CCTV, social media have emerged as the best means of harnessing this power. Now that young people are wary of government discourses, social media platforms have come to replace state-sanctioned newspapers as the leading source of information on almost all subjects. This was why people we talked to in Dalian, jaded by officials who lied to them about an oil spill on their coast in 2010, turned to Weibo and online forums to learn about the supposed seepage at a nearby PX plant after typhoon Meihua damaged protective barriers in 2011. News of the alleged leak was completely absent from mass media, but it spread quickly via social media networks, and people responded by calling for protests. Many citizens-turned-activists learned of this call through Baidu's *tieba* (an online communication platform run by Baidu), which offered information on joining the 2011 demonstrations; others heard via Weibo or QQ. The networked campaign motivated over 10,000 people to gather on the public square and demand the plant be relocated, rising up en masse and using large numbers of bodies to overwhelm police, censors, and surveillance systems.

Similarly, high school students using Weibo to spread information about plans to build a wastewater pipeline sparked the Qidong protest at the opening of this article. Images moved from Weibo to street corners to smartphones. Censors could neither predict nor keep up with the wild, erratic spread of information. Again, a crowd of more than 10,000 people marched to the capital, ransacked offices, and not only confronted their mayor but stripped him of his shirt and pinned him against a wall. Images of the mobilized masses ceaselessly circulated online for the country to see. Entwining embodied protests and

social media activism into panmediated networks, Chinese citizens present inspiring models for citizens making do around the world under the GSS.

When the government turns to social media to see what topics are trending, environmental issues are prominent. Social media platforms are key to China's environmental movement in terms of spreading awareness, mobilizing citizens, aiding NGOs, and garnering internal government attention and international press. China is a scene of operationalization of the wildness of social media: It spreads like wildfire, ducks censors, mobilizes affect, and hijacks capitalist networks to thwart the surveillance society. Social media are a constitutive catalyst because of their ubiquity, ability to create spaces for innovative citizen practices, and capacity to connect diverse networks. Moreover, social media are in a constant state of change, so as one platform fades (as some experts allege Weibo is doing), new platforms emerge and take on new functions. On social media conversations proliferate promiscuously, people participate outside the constraints of official media discourses, and activism intensifies collective awareness of environmental issues. In wonder, IFAW's Asia Regional Director Grace Ge Gabriel remarked, "In the last two years, the explosion of social media and interest in animal issues and the way social media can instantly, just overnight, change the situation—yeah, it's very, very encouraging" (personal communication, 2013).

The practices of Chinese citizens in the age of the GSS can show activists worldwide how to play these protean platforms to elide, elude, and defy ubiquitous surveillance systems. In the United States, where zoning laws effectively censor protests and activist groups are surveilled by the FBI, activists can look beyond the conventional strategies these methods stifle. Rather than organize over Facebook—a key component of the GSS—activists can spread word of events via FireChat, Shots, or Snapchat, platforms that offer users greater privacy and capitalize on ephemerality. Awareness of the GSS should motivate activists everywhere contesting corporate and governmental domination to take surveillance and the dark side of the Internet seriously (Deibert, 2013), and to deploy Tor and other means of encryption in addition to the creativity and joy of play. As the example of Chinese activism demonstrates, in the GSS tools and tactics of evasion and insurgency, creativity, and networking become imperatives for making changes and imagining alternative worlds. Movements will ultimately be shaped by the circumstances at hand, but Chinese netizens' call to creativity has the potential to inspire activists across oceans.

### References

- Agence France-Presse. (2015, January 7). China encourages environmental groups to sue polluters. *The Guardian*. Retrieved from <http://www.theguardian.com/environment/2015/jan/07/china-encourages-environmental-groups-to-sue-polluters>
- Bamford, J. (2012, March 15). The NSA is building the country's biggest spy center (watch what you say). *Wired*. Retrieved from [http://www.wired.com/2012/03/ff\\_nsadatacenter/all/](http://www.wired.com/2012/03/ff_nsadatacenter/all/)
- Bamman, D., O'Connor, B., & Smith, N. (2012). Censorship and deletion practices in Chinese social media. *First Monday*, 17(3). Retrieved from <http://doi.org/10.5210/fm.v17i3.3943>

- Barboza, D. (2014, May 11). Protest of planned incinerator turns violent in Chinese city. *The New York Times*. Retrieved from <http://www.nytimes.com/2014/05/12/world/asia/protest-against-planned-incinerator-turns-violent-in-china.html>
- Bloomberg. (2015, January 6). China to boost support for NGOs that sue environment polluters. *Bloomberg News*. Retrieved from <http://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2015-01-07/china-to-boost-support-for-ngos-that-sue-environment-polluters>
- Branigan, T. (2014, November 28). China bans wordplay in attempt at pun control. *The Guardian*. Retrieved from <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2014/nov/28/china-media-watchdog-bans-wordplay-puns>
- Cody, E. (2007, June 28). Text messages giving voice to Chinese. *The Washington Post*. Retrieved from <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2007/06/27/AR2007062702962.html>
- Deibert, R. (2013). *Black code: Surveillance, privacy, and the dark side of the Internet*. Toronto, Canada: Signal.
- Deleuze, G. (1990). *The logic of sense* (C. V. Boundas, Ed., M. Lester & C. Stivale, Trans.). New York, NY: Columbia University Press.
- Deleuze, G. (1994). *Difference and repetition*. New York, NY: Columbia University Press.
- DelReal, J. A. (2014, November 10). Voter turnout in 2014 was the lowest since WWII. *The Washington Post*. Retrieved from <http://www.washingtonpost.com/blogs/post-politics/wp/2014/11/10/voter-turnout-in-2014-was-the-lowest-since-wwii/>
- DeLuca, K. M., Lawson, S., & Sun, Y. (2012). Occupy Wall Street on the public screens of social media: The many framings of the birth of a protest movement. *Communication, Culture & Critique*, 5(4), 483–509. doi:10.1111/j.1753-9137.2012.01141.x
- DeLuca, K. M., & Peeples, J. (2002). From public sphere to public screen: Democracy, activism, and the “violence” of Seattle. *Critical Studies in Media Communication*, 19(2), 125–151. doi:10.1080/07393180216559
- Derrida, J. (1998). *Of grammatology* (G. C. Spivak, Trans.). Baltimore, MD: The Johns Hopkins University Press.
- Dorsey, J. (2007, October 15). Jack Dorsey and Eric Enge talk about Twitter. *Stonetemple.com*. Retrieved from <http://www.stonetemple.com/articles/interview-jack-dorsey.shtml>

- English, N. (2013, September 24). Anger is the Internet's most powerful emotion. *USA Today*. Retrieved from <http://www.usatoday.com/story/news/nation/2013/09/24/anger-internet-most-powerful-emotion/2863869/>
- Epstein, G. (2011, March 3). Sina Weibo. *Forbes*. Retrieved from <http://www.forbes.com/global/2011/0314/features-charles-chao-twitter-fanfou-china-sina-weibo.html>
- Fan, R., Zhao, J., Chen, Y., & Xu, K. (2014). Anger is more influential than joy: Sentiment correlation in Weibo. *PLoS ONE*, 9(10), e110184. doi:10.1371/journal.pone.0110184
- Fons, T. (2005, September 24). Internet: Government winning propaganda battle. *China Herald*. Retrieved from <http://www.chinaherald.net/2006/09/internet-government-winning-propadanda.html>
- Gerbaudo, P. (2012). *Tweets and the streets: Social media and contemporary activism*. London, UK: Pluto Press.
- Gilens, M., & Page, B. I. (2014). Testing theories of American politics: Elites, interest groups, and average citizens. *Perspectives on Politics*, 12(03), 564–581.
- GlobalWebIndex. (2012, October). *Social engagement benchmark*. Retrieved from <http://www.slideshare.net/globalwebindex/social-engagement-benchmark-global-webindex-october-2012>
- Greenwald, G. (2014a). What "democracy" really means in U.S. and *New York Times* jargon. *Firstlook.org*. Retrieved from <https://firstlook.org/theintercept/2014/10/17/democracy-really-means-u-s-jargon-subservience-u-s/>
- Greenwald, G. (2014b). *No place to hide: Edward Snowden, the NSA, and the U.S. surveillance state*. New York, NY: Metropolitan Books.
- Hartnett, S. J. (2011). Google and the "twisted cyber spy" affair: US–Chinese communication in an age of globalization. *Quarterly Journal of Speech*, 97(4), 411–434. doi:10.1080/00335630.2011.608705
- Hartnett, S. J. (2013). To "dance with lost souls": Liu Xiaobo, Charter 08, and the contested rhetorics of democracy and human rights in China. *Rhetoric & Public Affairs*, 16(2), 223–274.
- Herold, D. K., & Marolt, P. (Eds.). (2013). *Online society in China: Creating, celebrating, and instrumentalising the online carnival*. New York, NY: Routledge.
- Horwitz, J. (2014, March 21). Tencent just unleashed a secret weapon for WeChat that will terrify China's Android app stores. *Tech in Asia*. Retrieved from <https://www.techinasia.com/tencent-just-unleashed-a-secret-weapon-for-wechat-that-will-scare-the-daylights-out-chinas-adjective-app-stores/>



- Internet Society. (2014). *Global Internet Report*. Retrieved from [http://www.internetsociety.org/sites/default/files/Global\\_Internet\\_Report\\_2014.pdf](http://www.internetsociety.org/sites/default/files/Global_Internet_Report_2014.pdf)
- Jacobs, A. (2013, July 12). Rare protest in China against uranium plant draws hundreds. *The New York Times*. Retrieved from <http://www.nytimes.com/2013/07/13/world/asia/rare-china-protest-against-uranium-plant-draws-hundreds.html>
- Jacobs, A., & Ansfield, J. (2011, February 28). Well-oiled security apparatus in China stifles calls for change. *The New York Times*. Retrieved from <http://www.nytimes.com/2011/03/01/world/asia/01china.html?pagewanted=all>
- Jacques, M. (2012). *When China rules the world: The end of the Western world and the birth of a new global order*. New York, NY: Penguin Books.
- King, G., Pan, J., & Roberts, M. E. (2013). How censorship in China allows government criticism but silences collective expression. *American Political Science Review*, 107(02), 326–343. Retrieved from <http://doi.org/10.1017/S0003055413000014>
- Link, P., & Qiang, X. (2013). From “fart people” to citizens. *Journal of Democracy*, 24(1), 79–85. doi:10.1353/jod.2013.0014
- Mackinnon, R. (2011). China’s “networked authoritarianism.” *Journal of Democracy*, 22(2), 32–46. doi:10.1353/jod.2011.0033
- Magistad, M. K. (2012, August 9). How Weibo is changing China. *Yale Global*. Retrieved from <http://yaleglobal.yale.edu/content/how-weibo-changing-china>
- Menn, J. (2015, February 17). Russian researchers expose breakthrough in U.S. spying program. *Reuters*. Retrieved from <http://www.reuters.com/article/2015/02/17/us-usa-cyberspying-idUSKBN0LK1QV20150217>
- Mina, A. X. (2012, July 12). A tale of two memes: The powerful connection between Trayvon Martin and Chen Guangcheng. *The Atlantic*. Retrieved from <http://www.theatlantic.com/technology/archive/2012/07/a-tale-of-two-memes-the-powerful-connection-between-trayvon-martin-and-chen-guangcheng/259604/>
- Nancy, J.-L. (2010). *The truth of democracy* (P. A. Brault & M. Naas, Trans.). New York, NY: Fordham University Press.
- Orlik, T. (2011, September 26). Unrest grows as economy booms. *The Wall Street Journal*. Retrieved from <http://www.wsj.com/articles/SB10001424053111903703604576587070600504108>

- PDF12 An Xiao Mina: Internet street art and social change in China. (2012). *YouTube*. Retrieved from [http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3PDHyUEIqrA&feature=youtube\\_gdata\\_player](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3PDHyUEIqrA&feature=youtube_gdata_player)
- Perry, E. J., & Goldman, M. (Eds.). (2007). *Grassroots political reform in contemporary China*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Phneah, E. (2012, May 16). Sina Weibo hits 300 million users but costs rise. *ZDNet*. Retrieved from <http://www.zdnet.com/sina-weibo-hits-300-million-users-but-costs-rise-2062304817/>
- Poell, T. (2014). Social media and the transformation of activist communication: exploring the social media ecology of the 2010 Toronto G20 protests. *Information, Communication & Society*, 17(6), 716–731. doi:10.1080/1369118X.2013.812674
- Poell, T., de Kloet, J., & Zeng, G. (2014). Will the real Weibo please stand up? Chinese online contention and actor-network theory. *Chinese Journal of Communication*, 7(1), 1–18. doi:10.1080/17544750.2013.816753
- Qiang, X. (2011). The battle for the Chinese Internet. *Journal of Democracy*, 22(2), 47–61.
- Rancière, J. (2010). *Dissensus: On politics and aesthetics*. New York, NY: Continuum.
- Sanger, D. E., & Perlroth, N. (2013, May 9). Hackers from China resume attacks on U.S. targets. *The New York Times*. Retrieved from <http://www.nytimes.com/2013/05/20/world/asia/chinese-hackers-resume-attacks-on-us-targets.html?pagewanted=all>
- Scahill, J., & Begley, J. (2015, February 19). The great SIM heist: How spies stole the keys to the encryption castle. *The Intercept*. Retrieved from <http://firstlook.org/theintercept/2015/02/19/great-sim-heist/>
- Shirk, S. L. (Ed.). (2011). *Changing media, changing China*. New York, NY: Oxford University Press.
- Sima, Y. (2011). Grassroots environmental activism and the Internet: Constructing a green public sphere in China. *Asian Studies Review*, 35(4), 477–497. doi:10.1080/10357823.2011.628007
- Teets, J. C. (2013). Let many civil societies bloom: The rise of consultative authoritarianism in China. *The China Quarterly*, 213, 19–38. doi:Done
- Thibault, H. (2012, August 21). Environmental activism gains a foothold in China. *The Guardian*. Retrieved from <http://www.guardian.co.uk/environment/2012/aug/21/environment-activists-china-pollution-protest>

- Thorson, K., Driscoll, K., Ekdale, B., Edgerly, S., Thompson, L. G., Schrock, A., . . . Wells, C. (2013). YouTube, Twitter and the Occupy movement: Connecting content and circulation practices. *Information, Communication & Society, 16*(3), 421–451. doi:10.1080/1369118X.2012.756051
- Voci, P. (2012). *China on video: Smaller-screen realities*. London, UK: Routledge.
- Xin, G. (1993). Review article: A civil society and public sphere in post-Mao China?: An overview of Western publications. *China Information, 8*(3), 38–52. doi:10.1177/0920203X9300800304
- Yang, G. (2009). *The power of the Internet in China: Citizen activism online*. New York, NY: Columbia University Press.
- Yang, G., & Calhoun, C. (2007). Media, civil society, and the rise of a green public sphere in China. *China Information, 21*(2), 211–236. doi:10.1177/0920203X07079644
- Zhang, J. Y., & Barr, M. (2013). *Green politics in China: Environmental governance and state-society relations*. London, UK: Pluto Press.
- 厦门绿拾字 [Xiamen Greencross]. (2014, December 19). 冯永锋：不会利用新媒体的NGO，不是好NGO [Feng Yongfeng: NGOs that do not use new media are not good NGOs]. *Weixin*. Retrieved from [http://mp.weixin.qq.com/s?\\_\\_biz=MzA3MjQ5OTIyOQ==&mid=201758081&idx=1&sn=565f50da9f99ba434b2220cca0cc8fde&scene=1&from=singlemessage&isappinstalled=0#rd](http://mp.weixin.qq.com/s?__biz=MzA3MjQ5OTIyOQ==&mid=201758081&idx=1&sn=565f50da9f99ba434b2220cca0cc8fde&scene=1&from=singlemessage&isappinstalled=0#rd)
- “拯救大象罗拉，搜狗在行动’荣登移动社交风云榜！” [“Save the Elephants Rolla, Sogou in action’ mobile search topped Billboard”] (2014, December 21). *Vzone*. Retrieved from <http://www.vzone.la/contents/157933.html> (expired 8/25/15)