

**Impacts of Civic Media on the
New Forms and Spaces of Political Participation and
Networked Dynamics in the Inter-Mobilization Period**

- The Hong Kong Case 2015-2019 -

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Attestation of Authorship

I hereby declare that this submission is my own work and that, to the best of my knowledge and belief, it contains no material previously published or written by another person except that which appears in the citations and acknowledgements. Nor does it contain material, which to a substantial extent I have submitted for the qualification for any other degree of another university or other institution of higher learning.

Acknowledgement

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Abstract

This study argues that civic media plays an essential role in fostering online and offline political participation and ‘networked dynamics’ in the ‘inter-mobilization period’ among university students in Hong Kong. The term ‘civic media’ is borrowed from MIT as an analytical category. This concept denotes political information consumption through pro-democracy alternative media platforms and socio-political contacts such as civic/political organizations and student protest leaders on SNS. The first research objective is to review and identify inconsistencies regarding the object of study in the Network Society theory, the Four Stages of Social Movements theory, Swidler’s cultural sociological concepts of ‘Settled’ and ‘Unsettled’ periods, and the Civic Media approach. Second, to develop an analytical framework with testable variables that relates the impacts of civic media on new forms and spaces of political participation and ‘networked dynamics.’ Third, to conduct an empirical analysis with data collected through quantitative and qualitative methods; having a primary reliance on the quantitative approach. Concretely, to use an SEM analysis based on a questionnaire and a descriptive coding analysis based on in-depth interviews. Fourth, to test the impacts of civic media (composed by the alternative media consumption and socio-political contacts elements) on online political participation and offline political intention, and the relationship between online and offline forms and spaces of participation beyond moments of protest mobilization. Fifth, to develop and evolve academic contributions and practical implications in the media, communication and social movements fields and to stimulate scholarly interest in the role that civic media plays in influencing participation.

The originality of this study consists of testing and exploring the civic media framework in the period in between major protest events, the interrelation of the alternative media and socio-political contacts and, the relationship between online and offline forms and spaces of political participation. The originality also consists of initially coining two terms: ‘inter-mobilization period’ and ‘networked dynamics.’ The ‘inter-mobilization period’ is coined after reviewing the Four Stages of Social Movements (Christiansen, 2009) and Swidler’s (1986) Cultural theory. It refers to the stage in between major protest events. It is understood as a building-up stage of social activism and collective action, as well as media and political communication transformation - in this case, after the Umbrella Movement and before the Anti-ELAB movement. In this stage, political activism exists but has a lower dynamic level than peak moments of social mobilization when protesters occupy the urban space. The time frame of this study is the period for the broader analysis and goes from January 2015 to February 2019. ‘Networked dynamics’ is based on the Network Society theory (Castells, 1996). In this dissertation, it means the connection between the virtual and physical forms and spaces of participation and it consists of two elements, online participation and offline political intention. It is a non-static complementarity between the virtual and the physical forms and spaces of participation that changes depending on the time frame of a social movement.

As a partially-democratic system, Hong Kong has been experiencing social unrest and political dissatisfaction as well as decreasing press and media freedom and civil liberties, especially since the 2000s. There is a general disaffection with the mainstream press, and online alternative media readers have rapidly increased (Chan, Chen & Lee, 2018). Similarly, there has been a historical recurrence of pro-democracy

protest events such as the July 1 protest in 2003 and the Umbrella Movement in 2014 (Lee & Chan, 2011). This study focuses on the Hong Kong case because it helped complement and make more inclusive major media, communication and social movements theories. Although previous studies have explored the civic media effects on participation they have not looked at the effects of civic media on online political participation such as sharing political information or expressing political opinions online; as well as on the willingness to participate in political causes and social activism, as two related elements. They also have not explored and analyzed the relationship between alternative media and socio-political contacts and the relationship between online and offline participation in the period between major protests. Hence, the main research question (RQ) and sub-questions are:

- RQ1. What are the impacts of civic media on the new forms and spaces of political participation in the ‘inter-mobilization period’?
- RQ2. What is the connection between online and offline forms and spaces of participation in the ‘inter-mobilization period’?
- RQ3. Why/how does civic media affect new forms and spaces of political participation and ‘networked dynamics’ in the ‘inter-mobilization period’?

This study utilizes a mixed methods design - a combination of quantitative and qualitative data and analysis - with an explanatory orientation; having a primary reliance on the quantitative approach. The mixed methods approach can help explain the mechanisms among quantified variables. Moreover, it can neutralize or revoke certain methods’ disadvantages and it can reinforce a study (Creswell et. al., 2003, p.211). The first part, is based on a Structural Equation Modelling (SEM) analysis of a 506 respondent sample from a questionnaire addressed to Hong Kong students of three of the top publicly financed universities in Hong Kong: The Chinese University of Hong Kong, The Hong Kong University and the Hong Kong University of Science and Technology. This part examines the RQ1 and RQ2. The quantitative approach is a common method used to study the causality of the independent and dependent variables and to associate ideas in media, communication and social movement studies. It also helps to explain the procedure of testing and confirming the hypotheses and research questions, while assessing the relationship among variables. A total of six hypotheses (H1-H6) are drawn to examine the relationships between alternative media consumption, socio-political contacts, online political participation and offline political intention:

- H1. Alternative media consumption has a positive effect on online political participation
- H2. Alternative media consumption has a positive effect on offline political intention
- H3. Socio-political contacts have a positive effect on online political participation
- H4. Socio-political contacts have a positive effect on offline political intention
- H5. Alternative media consumption and socio-political contacts are interconnected
- H6. Online political participation has a positive effect on offline political intention

The second part, the qualitative analysis, is based on a descriptive coding method applied to ten in-depth interviews conducted with three chief-editors of

alternative media platforms (In-Media, Radical HK and Worker News), as well as with seven student protesters part of the ‘Umbrella generation.’ In order to give insights and help to interpret the results from the quantitative analysis, the qualitative analysis has explored the RQ3. Why/how does civic media affect new forms and spaces of political participation and ‘networked dynamics’ in the ‘inter-mobilization period’?

The SEM results follow theoretical predictions for direct causation, although the model produced unexpected results. First, there was a positive relationship between alternative media consumption and socio-political contacts into online political participation and offline political intention. However, socio-political contacts have a lower intensity effect on offline political intention. Second, it indicated the interconnection between alternative media consumption and socio-political contacts, reinforcing the definition of civic media in this study. Third, and unexpectedly, there was a disconnection between the online political participation and the offline willingness to participate in protests and political causes. Regarding the control variables, the feeling of the political situation is significant and positively associated with online political participation and offline political intention. Experience in social protests has a positive but low association with offline political intention. Income has a relevant effect on online political participation.

The patterns found in the interviews with alternative media editors and university student protesters from the Umbrella Movement generation are an abstraction of what was found in the interviews through the technique of descriptive coding. They reflect the characteristics of civic media and help to understand how civic media operates and how student protesters participate online and offline. The importance of the interrelation between alternative media consumption and socio-political contacts and their effects on participation is explained through two key patterns found in the qualitative analysis: ‘joint resistance’ and ‘potential influence on mainstream media news agenda’ (from the editors’ perspective). Both elements (alternative media consumption and socio-political contacts) are interrelated and reinforce each other while offering insights and usefulness for civic/political organizations and groups, protesters and mainstream media platforms. Alternative media and socio-political contacts can influence mainstream media news agendas by creating public discourse and social debates.

The higher influence of alternative media consumption, compared to the one from socio-political contacts, is explained through three key patterns found in the qualitative analysis: ‘specialization and time control’ and ‘sense of self-identity’ (from the editors’ perspective), and ‘trust in alternative media platforms’ (from the student protesters’ perspective). The strong sense of alternative media’s self-identity related to their proximity to activists and their social activism nature, as well as their advantage of being able to delve into and research the topics they chose to publish, reinforces the positive view on and trust from the youngest and one of the most politically active sector of civil society in Hong Kong.

On the other hand, the simultaneous interaction between cyberspace and urban space that lacks coordination during the ‘inter-mobilization period’ is explained through two crucial processes. First, the self-reflection of the pro-democracy movement, including the collective action and communication strategies transformation, and the reconstruction of the public sphere; reflected in the pattern ‘the self-reflectivity of dissent’ (from the student protesters’ perspective). Second, the fragmentation in the media and communication landscape and the diversification of the participation spaces during the ‘inter-mobilization period,’ reflected in the pattern ‘the decentralization of alternative spaces’ (from the student protesters’ perspective). The pro-democracy

movement's self-reflection involved a collective action and communication strategies transformation, and the reconstruction of the public sphere. There was also a process of decentralization, which involved the fragmentation of information and communication sources/platforms due to 1) the simultaneous tensions between the leaders from the movement and civil society; 2) the critique that alternative media received from the Umbrella Movement activists and protesters after the Umbrella Movement; and 3) the fact that individual protesters/activists started to use their own social media platforms and profiles, instead of directly collaborating or engaging with alternative media platforms, in this case, In-Media. These tendencies evolved into a new scenario and qualitative change after 2019 in both the media and the collective action situation.

This study has theoretical, methodological and empirical academic contributions to knowledge. Regarding the theoretical contributions, it complements and extends the Network Society theory, the Four Stages of Social Movements theory and the Swidler's cultural sociological concepts of 'settled' and 'unsettled' periods. Similarly, this study expands the analysis and conceptualization of the civic media term, while contributing to media, political communication and social movements studies. The methodological contributions are the mixed methods design, the case focus and the time frame. This dissertation empirically contributes to the social sciences field because it generated new data. It tested two theoretical linkages between a) the independent variables, alternative media and socio-political contacts and b) the dependent variables, online political participation and offline political intention. Furthermore, it has challenged existing assumptions regarding the emergence and collapse of social movements and the usage of civic media. This dissertation has practical implications for civil society and media practitioners on how to reinforce the interrelation between the alternative media platforms, civic organizations/groups, student protesters and mainstream media.

List of Acronyms and Abbreviations

SEM - Structural Equation Modelling

EFA - Exploratory Factor Analysis

CFA - Confirmatory Factor Analysis

M - Mean

SD - Standard Deviation

CFI - Comparative Fit Index

GFI - Goodness-of-Fit Index

TLI - Tucker-Lewis Index

AGFI - Adjusted Goodness-of-Fit Index

RMR - Root Mean squared Residual

RMSEA - Root Mean Squared Error of Approximations

PS - Probability Sampling

NPS - Non-Probability Sampling

SPSS - Statistical Package for the Social Sciences

AMOS - Analysis of Moment Structures

SAR - Special Administrative Region

CUHK - Chinese University of Hong Kong

HKUST - Hong Kong University of Science and Technology

HKU - The Hong Kong University

CENSTATD - Census and Statistics Department

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Chapter 1: Introduction

Since the 1970s there have been a wide variety of student opposition movements, and civil disobedience acts in East Asia, such as the Japan Today Riots, the South Korea Gwangju Uprising, or China's Tiananmen Square protests (Weiss & Aspinall, 2012). More recently, the Candlelight protest in Korea, the Sunflower movement in Taiwan, the Umbrella Movement or the Anti-extradition law movement in Hong Kong. Similarly, the level of "global activism" has been very high in the last decade (Bennett, 2003, p.19) and a wide variety of protests have been occurring around the world. One of the main grievances has been the failure of political representation and a widespread frustration with the government (Ortiz, Burke, Berrada & Cortes, 2014, p.5). Since the 2000s, the "technological revolution" introduced a new form of reality characterized by the interconnection of economic activities, communication technologies and various actors and states (Castells, 1996, p.1). New technologies are crucial to society because they can reshape our lifestyle, work, social relationships and they help with the mobilization, organization, and communication of social movements (Bennett, 2003, p.20; Bennet & Segerberg 2013, p.69; Kaufhold et al. 2010, p.527).

"Networked social movements" (Castells, 2015, p.220-243) are democratic social movements in the digital era with a central role of decentralized and information networks based on electronic technologies and similar characteristics in various contexts. They are reconstructing the public sphere in what Castells (2015, p.316) calls "the space of autonomy" based on the interaction between local places and Internet networks. These movements are simultaneously global and local, spontaneous, viral, leaderless, cohesive and self-reflexive (Castells, 2015, p.249-256). For example, the social movements occurring between 2012 and 2014 in Turkey, Chile, México or Hong Kong, and the ones occurring between 2018 and 2019 in Hong Kong, Iran, or Catalonia. In this context, the forms and spaces of political participation are changing worldwide, while "young people turn to digital media because it is a place where they can find efficacy" (Zuckerman, 2013). In social protests, there has been a high recurrence of digital and social media (Ortiz et al., 2014).

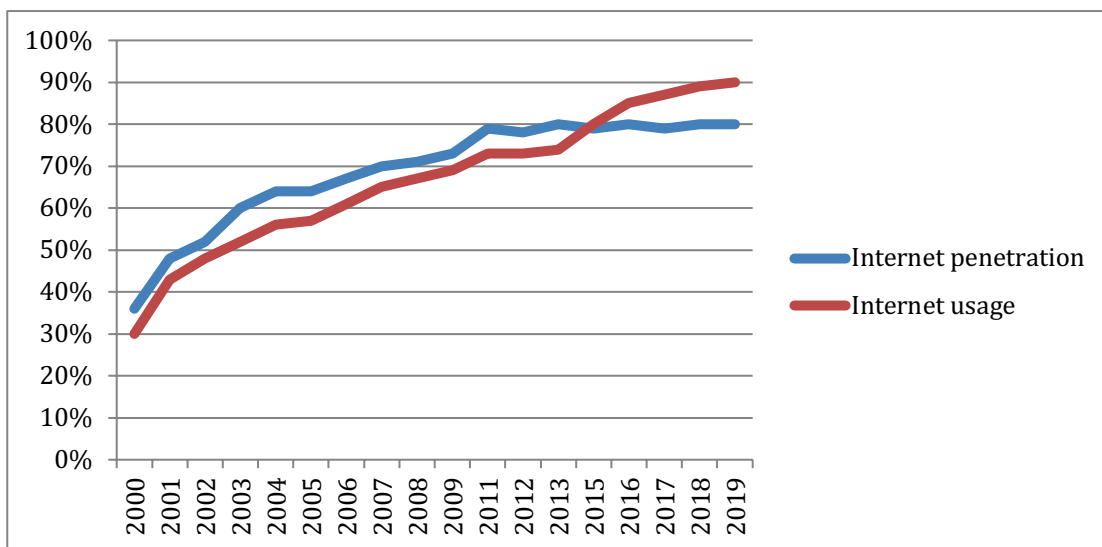
This dissertation's topic is the impacts of civic media on new forms and spaces of political participation and 'networked dynamics' in the 'inter-mobilization period' among university students in Hong Kong. The 'inter-mobilization period' term is coined after reviewing the Four Stages of Social Movements and Swidler's (1986) cultural sociological concepts of 'settled' and 'unsettled' periods. It refers to the stage in between major protest events. It is understood as a building-up stage of social activism and collective action and media and political communication transformation - in this case, after the Umbrella Movement and before the Anti-ELAB movement. In this stage, political activism exists but has a lower dynamic level than peak moments of social mobilization when protesters occupy the urban space. The time frame of this study, understood as the period for the broader analysis, goes from January 2015 to February 2019. 'Networked dynamics' is based on the Network Society theory (Castells, 1996). In this dissertation, it means the connection between the virtual and physical forms and spaces of participation and it consists of two elements, online participation and offline political intention. It is a non-static complementarity between the virtual and the physical forms and spaces of participation that changes depending on the time frame of a social movement.

This study focuses on the Hong Kong case because it helped complement and make more inclusive major media, communication and social movements theories. Following Castells (2015) this dissertation considers that informational and megacities are the new spatial and urban form in the informational society and the current global economy, being no longer strictly limited to national boundaries, making them relevant to study. The subsequent sections will introduce the political, historical and media background in Hong Kong; followed by the research questions, research objectives, contributions, dissertation structure, and the main concepts utilized.

1.1. Political and Historical Background in Hong Kong

In Hong Kong, the combination of communication technologies, protests and political dissatisfaction have various particularities. Hong Kong has a population of approximately 7.2 million people with low unemployment rates and high GDP per capita. Its residents enjoy one of the world’s highest rates of access to cellular phones, personal computers and the Internet, while, as it can be seen in figure 1.1, Internet penetration and usage has more than doubled since 2000 (Censtatd, 2019). Similarly, Hong Kong has high levels of Internet, broadband, social media, and mobile penetration (ITU, 2019). According to the Digital 21 Strategy (CEDB, 2013), a number of factors have contributed to this advancement, including the country’s early connection to the Internet, in 1991, and few financial barriers. The territory has been traditionally and strategically positioned to act as a gateway and a logistic, digital pivot with hard and soft infrastructure for Internet services such as broadband networks, e-commerce, business consultancy and data centers.

Figure 1. Internet Penetration and Usage 2000-2019



Source: Compiled by the author based on the database and Thematic Household Survey’s reports of CENSTATD (2020).

Note¹: Data for 100 inhabitants.

Note²: Data for Internet penetration in 2010 and 2014 is not available.

Note³: Internet penetration is measured by the indicator “Percentage of households with PCs at home connected to Internet among all households.”

Note⁴: Internet usage is measured by the indicator “Percentage of persons aged 10 and over who had used Internet service in the past twelve months among all persons aged 10 and over.”

In addition, Hong Kong used to be a British colony and it has always been a financial center, a strategic point of commerce and union between the East and the West (Wang, 1995). Under the British colonial system, from 1841 until 1997, the people in Hong Kong enjoyed Western-style political freedoms, such as freedom of speech, press, religion and assembly, yet Britain ruled without ever granting it democracy. At the same time, Hong Kong has been a capitalistic system with a free market economy allowing private ownership (Jones, 1990). In the Sino-British Joint Declaration, an agreement signed in 1984 between the UK and China¹, and implemented in 1985, the Chinese government announced that Hong Kong's social and economic systems and way of life would remain unchanged until 2047 (Chan, 2014). After the Joint Declaration, differences between Beijing and Hong Kong over the interpretation of sovereignty, affected their relationship and the drafting of some parts of the Basic Law, the Hong Kong's constitutional document (Wang, 1995). Since 1997, it has been under the "one country Two systems" principle being a Special Administrative Region (SAR) of the People's Republic of China (PRC). According to this principle, Hong Kong has been able to maintain a high degree of autonomy and executive, legislative, and independent judicial power, as well as its own financial affairs and foreign relations in comparison to Mainland China (Hammond & Soler-Aleman, 2020).

The political system in Hong Kong consists of two essential organs. The Legislative Council (LegCo) has the function to enact laws, control public expenditure, and monitor the work of the Government, being composed of 70 Members. The President of LegCo is elected by and among LegCo Members. The Chief Executive, an organ for assisting the Chief Executive in policy-making, has 1,200 members. This election committee is in charge of choosing the Chief Executive. Elections take place every 5 years. Hong Kong is a "partially democratic system" due to the lack of free elections, government accountability, and the reduction in freedom of expression (Potter et al. 1997, p.5). Also, due to the decrease of civil liberties such as associational and organizational rights and the growing political and economic pressure from Mainland China (Freedom House, 2019). In other words, it is a "hybrid regime" combining democratic and authoritarian elements, being situated in "the grey zone in-between liberal authoritarianism and electoral authoritarianism" (Fong, 2017, p.2-5).

For example, according to article 26 of the Basic Law (1997) "permanent residents of the Hong Kong SAR shall have the right to vote and the right to stand for election in accordance with law." This article sustains the development of democratic processes. However, Beijing can reject modifications to the political system reform and pro-democracy forces. Moreover, Hong Kong does not enjoy universal suffrage because half the territory's legislature is not directly elected, but chosen by professional and corporate groups that favor Beijing loyalists and interests (Chan, 2014). Concretely, around 200,000 pro-Beijing representatives of elite business and social sectors, elect 900 of the committee's members of the total 1,200-member election committee (FreedomHouse, 2019). This electoral basis has been increasing dissatisfaction among Hongkongers (Chan, 2014). Another important aspect is that there is freedom of assembly, demonstration and petition guaranteed by Article 27 of the Basic Law and Article 17 of the Hong Kong Bill of Rights. However, the number of protester's arrests has been increasing in recent years and the regulation of the public space as well. Moreover, the Universities Ordinance and Rules and Regulations guarantee the right of professors and students to express their demands and concerns. Nevertheless, there have been some incidents. For instance, most universities refused to handle statements or

¹ It was signed by Prime Ministers Zhao Zhiyang (PRC) and Margaret Thatcher (UK).

give public comments when HKU Professor Benny Tai among other activists was arrested after the Umbrella Movement (Hammond & Soler-Aleman, 2020).

The pro-democracy movement is the framework that helps to explain why many Hong Kong people claim collectively for their political demands (F. Lee & Chan, 2011). The memory of the British colonialism and the current Chinese government measures, have affected the wakening of civil society organizations, citizen's civic and political participation in conventional politics and protests (C. Lee 2019, p.2). Throughout Hong Kong's history, there have been various waves of pro-democracy movements. In the past 30 years there has been an extent of Hong Kong people's political activism and self-determination feelings, although it has traditionally been a "politically apathetic society" (F. Lee & Chan, 2011, p.207). Lee and Chan (2011, pp.11-12) use the term 'ritualistic protests' to describe that the events themselves and people's participation in them have become stable and repetitive. For example, the 1989 Tiananmen's square protests when an important number of Hong Kong's population came out to march in support of the cause and the annual July 1 demonstrations since 1997. The struggle for democracy began in the early 1980s but, after the handover in 1997, the reform movement did not revive until 2003, when 500,000 people went out into the streets to protest against the Basic Law's Article 23 mandate for national security legislation. This article called for bans "against secession, sedition and subversion" (Gunia, 2020).

As we can see in graph 1.2, according to official sources, the number of public meetings for social, political, educational or cultural purposes among others, has been increasing since 2006, while the number of processions has been mostly stable. The peak moments of public meetings are mostly related to announcements or executions of electoral reforms, the celebration of elections and key protest events. For instance, in 2005 an electoral reform was executed for the election of the Chief Executive in 2007 and the LegCo in 2008. This reform had the opposition of the pro-democracy camp and of thousands of protesters that went out into the streets to demand for universal suffrage. In September 2006, the Hong Kong Government announced that the Star Ferry Terminal and Queen's Pier would be demolished due to land reclamation and the construction of Central-Wan Chai bypass. They were considered to be a symbol of Hong Kong local culture and part of its historical and cultural heritage. This is why there was a general outrage among Hong Kong citizens and various protests were organized to raise objections against the Government's decision. The demolition was carried out between 2006 and 2008 (Pang, 2017). In 2009, there was the celebration of the anniversary of the Tiananmen's protests. In 2012 the ex-Chief Executive Leung Chun-Ying took office. In the same year, hundreds of people, especially students, opposed the controversial Moral and National Education (M&N) school curriculum because it promoted the so-called "China Model."

On September 28 in 2014 a 79-day occupation took place in various areas in the city, starting as a student protest and demanding electoral reforms. It was called Occupy Central, which in the next two and a half months became the Umbrella Movement. It was a civil disobedience and pro-democracy movement with high participation of students, demanding universal suffrage, free elections and full democracy (Yuen, S., 2015, p.49). The main motivation of the protests was that in August of 2014, the Chinese authorities said they would allow direct elections in 2017 for a new Chief Executive. But, voters would only be able to choose from a list of pre-approved candidates. The core demand of the Umbrella Movement was reformist, legalistic, and constitutionalist in nature (C. Lee 2019, p.1-28). Scholarism², The Hong Kong

² Scholarism is a secondary school student activist group, founded in 2011, that defends pro-democracy policies.

Federation of Students (HKFS)³ and Occupy Central with Peace and Love (OCPL) groups had an important organizing role. The OCPL was a civil disobedience campaign originated by Benny Tai, a law professor, Chan Kin-man, a sociology professor and Chu Yiu-ming, a church minister in 2013. Alex Chow and Lester Shum from the HKFS and Joshua Wong who founded Scholarism were key leaders during the student protests as well (Hammond & Soler-Aleman, 2020).

During the 79-day occupation, Hong Kong civilians occupied three major business areas, Central, Causeway Bay, and Mong Kok. The umbrella became a symbol of the movement because some of the protesters use it to protect themselves against pepper spray and tear gas thrown by police. The Umbrella Movement represented a preeminent social protest in terms of citizen's empowerment, youth participation and the utilization of digital networks to coordinate the event, a contribution and a reinforcement of the Hong Kong identity and the transformation of communication and protests strategies (Lee, P. et al., 2017, p.357; Yuen & Cheng, 2018, p.8). Activists and protestors mainly used Facebook and Telegram to communicate and to obtain information by following the accounts of student activists. They also obtained information and checked out the updates of the movement through alternative media platforms such as In-Media, which played a key role as a counter-public agent of civil activism (Leung & Lee, 2014). According to Tsui (2015) "the Internet offered the movement an alternative channel for public communication, it helped them evade censorship, and it was instrumental in assisting them with group formation, coordination, and mobilization (p.448)." Also, multiple platforms such as Facebook pages, websites or Twitter accounts were translated into English in order to reach the international community. The protests received high international media coverage (Rowen, 2014). Nevertheless, the movement did not achieve its ultimate goal, universal suffrage.

In 2016, the Legislative Council election was held. These elections were especially relevant because the voter turn out was 58 percent and there was a high participation of young people. This percentage was highly influenced by the Umbrella Movement's demands and the rejection of constitutional reform proposals in 2015 by the Hong Kong Government. Also, there was the emergence of new political localist groups⁴ and student leaders, such as Nathan Law, became political candidates. On the contrary, two years after, in the 2018 Legislative Council by-election there was a lower turnout rate of 43 percent compared to the one in 2016. In that period as reflected by a survey from the Centre for Communication and Public Opinion (2017) 40 percent of the respondents expressed dissatisfaction towards the HKSAR Government and 30 percent expressed distrust. The percentage is higher when it came to the youth, 67 percent of young people (aged 15 to 29) were very dissatisfied, 64 percent were very distrusting of the HKSAR Government, and nearly 40 percent (aged between 15 and 24) supported independence. National identity feelings and discontent are high among the youth partly because of the lack of job prospects and housing affordability (CCPOS, 2018).

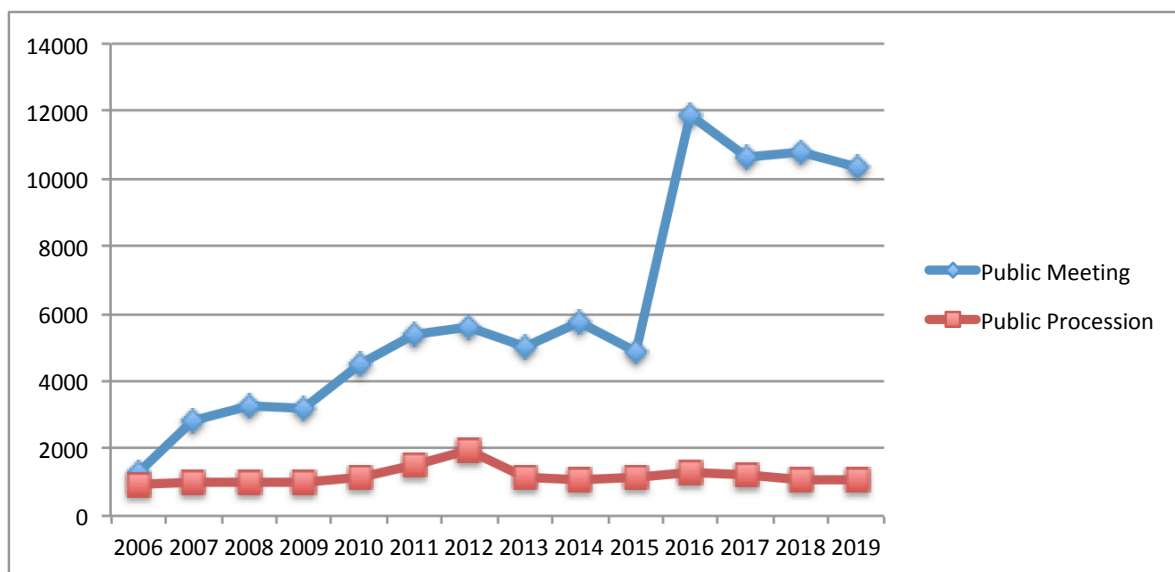
In 2019, millions of people mobilized to voice their concerns about the extradition law amendment proposed by the Chinese central government that it would allow the transfer of fugitives to jurisdictions with which Hong Kong has no extradition

³ HKFS is a student organization promoting student activism and the engagement into Hong Kong's civil society. It was founded in 1958 by four universities' student unions.

⁴ Localist groups emerged in the 80s and started to have a special incidence in the 2000s. They are part of the localism political movement, which focuses on self-determination and the preservation of Hong Kong's autonomy and local culture (Lam & Cooper, 2018).

deal, including Mainland China. It was then suspended. In the 2019 Hong Kong District Council Election, the pro-democracy camp won the majority of seats while 72.1 percent of the eligible voters cast their ballot. It became a historical record reflecting a wide support of the latest anti-government and pro-democracy protests (Chan H., 2019). However, in May 2020, Beijing’s Government announced a new Security Law implementation, which was approved in June 2020, arguing that the law was necessary to restore order after violent protests occurred in 2019 (Gunia, 2020). The National Security Law prohibits “acts of secession, subversion, terrorism or conspiring with foreign influences” (C. Lee K. 2020), having various points in common with the 2003 National Security legislation. Critics and protesters have been saying that the 2020 National Security Law allows China to pursue political opponents, legitimize abduction and make attending street gatherings even riskier (Davidson, 2019). Among Hongkongers there has been the fear that it will be used as a tool of political persecution (Pepper, 2020). Authorities have been using the new legislation to arrest protesters for various offenses (Gunia, 2020). Moreover, after June 30 2020, books written by pro-democracy leaders such as Joshua Wong disappeared from public libraries. Activists deleted social-media accounts. Demosistō, a pro-democracy political party created after the Umbrella Movement, dissolved, while various activists left the city. Additionally, authorities have done warrantless searches and obtained the jurisdiction to ask Internet providers to remove certain posts (Gunia, 2020). As of this writing, the discontent continues and the social and political conflict is far from being solved.

Figure 2. Number of Public Meetings and Processions 2006-2019



Source: Public Order Event Statistics, Hong Kong Police Force, 2020.

1.2. Independent and Alternative Media Background in Hong Kong

In Hong Kong, ongoing political confrontation and political opposition movements have been affecting independent and alternative media’s evolution. Before the 1990s, non-profit civil groups and organizations ran numerous independent publications. It is also important to highlight that there is no specific law addressed to regulate independent media in Hong Kong and running websites does not require any registration. However, the Control of Obscene and Indecent Articles Ordinance monitors print and online media. According to the ordinance, a judiciary body called

The Obscene Articles Tribunal will decide if an “article” submitted to the tribunal is “indecent” or “obscene” (Iam-Chong, 2009, pp.54-67). Similarly, Hong Kong’s “one country, two systems” and the Basic Law’s article 27 theoretically guarantee press and publication freedom.

However, according to the Reporters Without Borders’ World Press Freedom Index (2019), since the Handover in 1997, there has been a decrease in free journalistic expression and civil liberties such as associational and organizational rights. Also, self-censorship has been perceived, by journalists and citizens, as increasingly serious (F. Lee 2015a, pp.318-340). As asserted by the Hong Kong Journalists Association (HKJA) and the International Federation of Journalists (IFJ), these tendencies have been worsening in recent years. For instance, there was an unexplained disappearance in 2015 of four booksellers linked to an independent publisher of critical and sensitive books, among other incidents. F. Lee (2019, pp.176-177) argues that there were two waves of alternative media in Hong Kong. The first wave emerged in 2004 - with alternative Internet radio such as People’s Radio Hong Kong (PRHK) or DIYHK as well as commentary websites - mostly due to the 2003 social mobilization and overall political consciousness that the protest against the National Security Bill exemplified. During this period, In-Media Hong Kong was the earliest and most well-known platform. However, alternative media did not achieve a high level of social prominence and influence because they had a small audience and budget. Independent online media with a political consciousness did not emerge until 2003 when over 500,000 people joined the July 1st rally against the implementation of the National Security Bill. Since then, the number of citizens exchanging information and creating satirical and critical content against the Government through the Internet has multiplied. Such practices facilitated online mobilization (Iam-Chong, 2009, pp.54-67).

The second wave started around 2012 and 2013 with the appearance of news and commentaries websites such as House news, Passion times or VJMedia. There were four main reasons for this second emergence: 1) the continual worsening of the problem of self-censorship; 2) the further contraction of spaces for free expression in the mainstream media; 3) the popularization of social media as platforms for political communication; and 4) the continual growth of social protests in Hong Kong (F. Lee, 2019, pp.178-179). Regarding digital media usage, the first peak of digital media used for mobilization was during the 2012 Anti-M&N movement. Since then, the emergence of alternative media has been promoting media activism to address social unrest (Wang 2018: 3707). In 2014, the role of social and alternative media was especially relevant in terms of movement organization and citizen journalism⁵ (Lee F. 2019, pp.176-182). Another factor that has been influencing media and political communication dynamics is that Hong Kong has experienced a significant transformation of identity politics in recent years. The Umbrella Movement in 2014 strengthened the Hong Kong identity construct because it was an attempt, from the protesters’ perspective, “to defend the citizens from external and internal domination” (Ortmann, 2018, p.127).

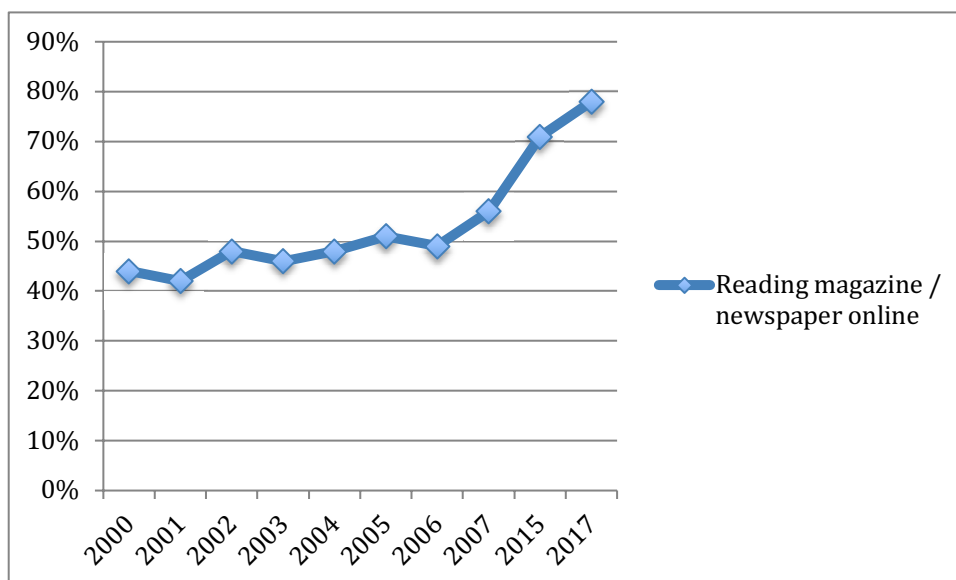
On the other hand, as it can be observed in graph 1.3., since 2000 there has been an increase of newspaper and magazine online readership and a turn towards online news consumption. “More than 80 percent of the population use online sources for news” (Chan et al. 2018, p.118). According to a survey from the Centre for Youth Studies (CYS) (2018), social media is the respondents’ major information source of public affair information. The youth generally relate to social media and the Internet as their

⁵ Citizen journalism is a term used to refer to ordinary citizens that have an active role in collecting and disseminating alternative news and information (Bowman & Willis, 2003). In many cases, they are activists themselves (Radsch, 2016).

primary sources of political information and public affairs. Also, more than 50 percent “like” or join any online group about politics or public affairs. Nevertheless, 24 percent of respondents have never participated in any political activity online. Also, young people who perceive social media as the most important source of information are more active in political participation, and are significantly more dissatisfied with the HKSAR Government. Similarly, the Centre for Communication and Public Opinion Survey at the Chinese University of Hong Kong (CUHK) conducted a survey on the credibility of media organizations in August 2019. The results showed an overall decline of paid newspapers and mainstream media credibility ratings, while online media saw the opposite.

The Internet, political events and social developments have facilitated the rise of digital media platforms and alternative media news sources, mostly pro-democracy alternative media platforms, such as In-Media, Initium Media, Stand News or Hong Kong 01 (Lee F. 2019, p.176). At the same time, because of a general dissatisfaction with the mainstream press, online alternative news brands readers such as Hong Kong Free Press and Stand News, have rapidly increased in readership and are used as a way to access independent news (Chan et al. 2018, p.118; F. Lee, 2019). It is important to consider that Hong Kong’s independent and alternative media faces structural limitations. For example, due to the lack of stable financial support, many independent media do not have their own full-time staff, nor are they able to finance various activities (Iam-Chong, 2019, p.66). Nonetheless, independent and alternative online media exist as a result of participative funding and their audience is growing (HKFP, 2019). The HKJA (2020) alerts that the National Security Law may have important impacts for journalism in Hong Kong. During the 2019 protests, there were negative interactions with journalists and different incidents regarding police force misconducts. For example, the HKJA accused the police of causing physical injuries to dozens of journalists.

Figure 3. Newspaper and Magazine Online Readership 2000-2017



Source: Compiled by the author based on the database and survey reports of CENSTATD (2019)

Note¹: Data for Internet penetration from 2008 to 2014, 2018 and 2019 is not available.

1.3. Research Questions, Objectives and Contributions

Scholarly interest has been focusing on the effects of social, alternative media, and user-generated news on online political participation and social protests participation and organization. Although previous studies have explored the civic media effects on participation they have not looked at the effects of civic media on online political participation such as sharing political information or expressing political opinions online; as well as on the willingness to participate in political causes and social activism, as two related elements. They also have not explored and analyzed the relationship between alternative media and socio-political contacts and the relationship between online and offline participation in the period between major protests. Thus, the main research question and sub-questions are:

- RQ1. What are the impacts of civic media on new forms and spaces of political participation in the ‘inter-mobilization period’?
- RQ2. What is the connection between online and offline forms and spaces of political participation in the ‘inter-mobilization period’?
- RQ3. Why/how does civic media affect new forms and spaces of political participation and ‘networked dynamics’ in the ‘inter-mobilization period’?

The first research objective is to review and identify inconsistencies regarding the object of study in the Network Society theory, the Four Stages of Social Movements theory, Swidler’s cultural sociological concepts of ‘settled’ and ‘unsettled’ periods, and the civic media approach. Second, to develop an analytical framework with testable variables that relates the impacts of civic media on new forms and spaces of political participation and ‘networked dynamics.’ Third, to conduct an empirical analysis with data collected through quantitative and qualitative methods; having a primary reliance on the quantitative approach. Concretely, to use an SEM analysis based on a questionnaire and a descriptive coding analysis based on in-depth interviews. Fourth, to test the impacts of civic media (composed by the alternative media consumption and socio-political contacts elements) on online political participation and offline political intention, and the relationship between online and offline forms and spaces of participation beyond moments of protest mobilization. Fifth, to develop and evolve academic contributions and practical implications in the media, communication and social movements field and to stimulate scholarly interest in the role that civic media plays in influencing participation. All this in the period between major protest events.

This study has theoretical, methodological and empirical academic contributions to knowledge. Regarding the theoretical contributions, it complements and extends the Network Society theory, the Four Stages of Social Movements theory and the Swidler’s cultural sociological concepts of ‘settled’ and ‘unsettled’ periods. Similarly, this study expands the analysis and conceptualization of the civic media term, while contributing to media, political communication and social movements studies. The methodological contributions are the mixed methods design, the case focus and the time frame. This dissertation empirically contributes to the social sciences field because it generated new data. It tested two theoretical linkages between a) the variables of alternative media and socio-political contacts and b) the online political participation and offline political intention. Furthermore, it has challenged existing assumptions regarding the emergence and collapse of social movements and the usage of civic media. This dissertation has practical implications for civil society and media practitioners on how to reinforce the interrelation between the alternative media platforms, civic organizations/groups, student protesters and mainstream media.

There is still a necessity for research to offer conclusive and consensual interpretations and results. New analyses are essential to confront the complexity of the phenomenon and face methodological and measurement difficulties. Although the analytical framework is created through the case of Hong Kong, it can be applied to other cases because it is developed based on general media, communication and social movements theories. This dissertation shows that the ‘inter-mobilization period’ is an equally vital moment to study as the mobilization one and that it is essential to pay more attention to the mechanisms between online and offline participation. It also contributes to understanding the complexities of civic media usage and the aspects of continuity and change in the media landscape and collective action.

1.4. Dissertation Structure

In order to answer the research questions and achieve the research objectives, this dissertation contains a total of eight chapters. Chapter two explores the literature review highlighting the discrepancies and agreements with three media and communication theories and social movement theories (the Network Society theory, the Four Stages of Social Movement theory and, Swidler’s cultural sociological concepts of ‘settled’ and ‘unsettled’ periods). Chapter three introduces the analytical framework based on the Civic Media approach. This approach leads to an exploration of the civic media concept and its potential, considering that it is an under-theorized and under-researched term; it clarifies the time frame and interrelates the three theories discussed with this study’s analytical framework. Chapter four describes the mixed methods approach, combining quantitative and qualitative methodologies. The data was extracted from a questionnaire addressed to Hong Kong undergraduate students and various in-depth interviews with Hong Kong student protesters and alternative media editors. Chapter five presents the findings reached from a Structural Equation Modelling (SEM) analysis from a sample of 506 respondents. It includes the explanation of the causal model, the operationalization of variables, the profile and answer’s percentages, the analysis procedure and SEM results. Chapter six presents the findings evolved from a descriptive coding analysis of ten in-depth interviews. Concretely, it presents the various patterns found in the alternative media editors and university students protesters interviews. Chapter seven compiles all parts together, summarizing the main findings from the quantitative and qualitative analyses and answering the main research questions. Chapter eight concludes the dissertation and explains the main academic contributions, practical implications, limitations and aspects for further research.

1.5. Main Concepts

This section clarifies the definition of the main concepts applied: civic media, new forms and spaces of political participation, networked dynamics and inter-mobilization period.

1.5.1. Civic Media

The term ‘civic media’ is borrowed from the Center for Future Civic Media at MIT⁶ as an analytical category. In this dissertation, it refers to political information consumption through pro-democracy alternative media platforms with a supportive position in social mobilization such as, In-Media, and through socio-political contacts on SNS⁷ such as pro-democracy organizations, student protest leaders, NGOs, and student unions. Alternative media platforms refer to non-conventional media challenging the hegemonic political, economic, and media power (Atton, 2002; Downing, 2001). They have a smaller budget and audience size compared to the mainstream and mass media (Meyers, 2008, pp.375-377). Socio-political contacts on SNS refer to ‘weak ties’ (Granovetter, 1973), connections with individuals or groups that are not close friends or family. These types of contacts play an important role in the transmission of information and the dynamics of social relationships.

1.5.2. New Forms and Spaces of Political Participation

‘New forms and spaces of political participation’ signify behaviours to influence the social and political scenario in the virtual and urban spaces. It involves acts of communication, including ‘online political participation⁸’ such as expressing political views online (Calenda & Mosca, 2007, p.89); and ‘offline political intention,’ understood as the willingness to participate in protests and political causes. For instance, using social network sites to share political information, writing letters or blogs with political content, signing petitions, or participating in political demonstrations (Barret & Zani, 2015, p.4).

1.5.3. Networked Dynamics

‘Networked dynamics’ is a term coined after reviewing the Network Society theory (Castells, 1996). This theory is applied to a concrete stage of a social movement - the mobilization period - and it claims that there is a complementary and synergic relationship between the online and offline spheres because the movements start in the network but need to step into the urban space to become visual and consolidated. In this dissertation, ‘networked dynamics’ refers to the connection and non-static complementarity between the virtual and physical forms and spaces of participation (online participation and offline willingness to participate in protests and political causes) that changes depending on the time frame of a social movement.

1.5.4. The Inter-mobilization Period

⁶ The Center for Future Civic Media at MIT was a research center based in the US. It developed and implemented technical and social tools that supported political action, civic engagement and the information needs of diverse communities. Nevertheless, the center closed down in August 2020. As stated by the ex director of the center Prof. Zuckerman in the website (<https://civic.mit.edu>), the Center closed because several staff members accepted positions at other universities, including himself. Zuckerman also highlighted the importance of continuing the center’s mission through other professors and researchers.

⁷ SNS refers in this definition to Facebook because it was one of the most used SNS in Hong Kong at the time of data collection in 2018. Moreover, this definition does not focus specifically on visual content, videos and images.

⁸ This study did not specify the exact applications, platforms, sites or online forums for online political participation.

The 'inter-mobilization period' is coined after reviewing the Four Stages of Social Movements (Christiansen, 2009) and Swidler's (1986) cultural sociological concepts of 'settled' and 'unsettled' periods. It refers to the stage in between major protest events. It is understood as a building-up stage of social activism and collective action, as well as media and political communication transformation - in this case, after the Umbrella Movement and before the Anti-ELAB movement, between January 2015 and February 2019. In this stage, political activism exists but has a lower dynamic level than peak moments of social mobilization when protesters occupy the urban space.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

Chapter two discusses the Four Stages of Social Movements theory, Swidler's Cultural Sociological Concepts of 'Settled' and 'Unsettled' Periods and the Network Society theory as they relate to media, information and communication networks, participation and, collective action transformation. Section 2.1. explains the Four Stages of Social Movements theory (emergence, coalescence, bureaucratization and decline) and its connection with the concept of 'protest cycle.' The Four Stages of Social Movements approach claims that the 'decline stage' occurs when a social movement comes to an end due to failure, collapse, success or repression. However, this dissertation considers that the 'decline stage' conception is insufficient to explain the mechanics and interconnection between different social protest events in Hong Kong, which can be generalized to other cases. In order to clarify this, it displays the concepts of 'protest event' and 'ritualistic protests' in Hong Kong. Section 2.2. introduces Swidler's (1986) cultural sociological concepts of 'settled' and 'unsettled' periods. This theory is interrelated to the Four Stages of Social Movements theory because it helped to understand why the Hong Kong case is not compatible with the social movements stages of emergence and collapse and the mobilization framework.

Section 2.3. explains the Network Society theory and the transformation of space and time in the current digital and information society, based on the concepts of 'space of flows' and 'space of places.' These two spatial logics are a core part of the transformation of global cities and communication systems. It also discusses the concept of 'timelessness' and simultaneity, which affects social rhythms and their lifecycle. Moreover, it explains the transformation of collective action, the main characteristics of the 'networked social movements' and how the Umbrella Movement fits into this category. Subsequently, by discussing what Castells (2015) calls the 'space of autonomy,' it introduces another term originally coined in this study, the 'networked dynamics,' which refers to the connection between the virtual and physical forms and spaces of participation in the 'inter-mobilization period.' This dissertation considers that there is a dynamic connection between the virtual and physical forms and spaces of participation during the mobilization and 'inter-mobilization periods' that the Network Society theory fails to explain.

2.1. The Four Stages of Social Movements Theory

The Four Stages of Social Movements theory originated with the work of Herbert Blumer (1951, p.203), one of the first academics who identified four stages in a social movement's lifecycle. According to this original work, various scholars expanded the approach that defined the recent four stages as: a) emergence, b) coalescence, c) bureaucratization and d) decline. This theory helps to understand and expand the knowledge about collective action transformation (Christiansen, 2009, p.5). Nevertheless, it fails to include the continuation and connection between different social protest events, considering the prevalence and perseverance of the pro-democracy movement in Hong Kong. The pro-democracy movement in Hong Kong is "a campaign through which the meaning of democracy is defined and contested in public discourses" (Lee & Chan, 2011, p.16). This can be in part explained because of the sovereignty, civil rights and political freedoms guaranteed by the Sino-British Joint Declaration and the Basic Law explained in chapter one. Another reason is the consternation in front of

the possible losses of Hong Kong autonomy and civil rights and the fact of becoming one more city of Mainland China (Hung & Ip, 2012, p.572). In line with McAdam and Snow (2009, p.1) this dissertation considers that it is necessary to understand the nature and dynamics of social movements connecting them to the historical and contemporary context and to specific cases.

2.1.1. Social Movements' Stages and 'Protest Cycles'

Almost all definitions agree that a social movement is a collectivity of individuals that include goals, the existence of an antagonist or identified opponents, a joint action, a certain size and a degree of formal organization (McAdam, 2001; Opp, 2009, pp.36-44; Tarrow, 1998, p.4; Tilly, 1999, pp.257-260; Snow & Oliver, 1995, p.571). Additionally, a social movement is an essential medium for ordinary people to make collective claims and participate in politics (Tilly, 1999, pp.257-260). It is formed by a group in the population with a set of opinions and beliefs that aim for social change (McCarthy & Zald, 1977, p.7). Diani (2000, p.387) points out that networks and organization are key aspects for social movements' formation and continuation.

In addition, there is a consensus in literature that social movements have a global and regular lifecycle - they emerge, grow, succeed or fail, dissolve and come to an end - while mobilization advances in waves (Della Porta & Diani, 2006, p.165). The concept of 'protest cycle' involves that collective action and mobilization follow a pattern of escalation and collapse, contributing to analyze and understand the evolution and forms of social movements, periods of intensified protest and the recurrent dynamics over time (Della Porta & Diani, 2006, pp.165-189). Tarrow (1994, pp.153-202), among other social scientists, defends the importance of social movements and protest cycles for two reasons. First, because they share common attributes such as sequences of intensified interactions between challengers to elites and authorities, based on people's common objectives and solidarity. Second, because how different phases of a protest cycle increase, reduce, or produce changes in opportunities, are crucial elements for social movement's theory.

The Four Stages of Social Movements theory also claims that social movements are based in cycles. Nevertheless, it provides a deeper and more detailed explanation of the processes of escalation and collapse (Christiansen, 2009, p.2). The first stage, the 'emergence' of a cycle, is an initial period with low or inexistent organization, spontaneous forms of action, while movements shape their direction and outcomes (Tarrow, 1994, p.204; Macionis, 2001, pp.620-646). It is characterized by individualized and extensive feelings of dissatisfaction that gather different people (Christiansen, 2009, p.6). The causes can be economical, environmental, social or political (Kriesi, 2014, p.279; Meyer, 2004, p.136; Tarrow, 2011, pp.31-46; Tilly & Wood, 2009: 101). According to Christiansen (2009, pp.2-6), in this early stage, the role of Social Movement Organizations (SMO)⁹ is crucial. SMOs and their members can act as agitators raising consciousness throughout different matters and helping to develop the sense of unrest among the general population. In Hong Kong, on September 28 in 2014, Benny Tai (a law professor at Hong Kong University), joined by Chan Kin-man (a professor of Sociology at the Chinese university of Hong Kong) and Chu Yiu-ming (a reverend and the Minister of a Baptist Church in Hong Kong), announced the

⁹ An SMO is understood as a formal group that functions as part of a broader social movement (Christiansen, 2009, pp.2-3).

peaceful Occupy Central Movement¹⁰ that evolved into the so-called Umbrella Movement. The origin of the Umbrella Movement as an act of civil disobedience was that at the end of August in 2014, the National People's Congress Standing Committee (NPCSC) proclaimed that universal suffrage would be implemented in Hong Kong by 2017. However, the Election Committee in 2017, including the composition, the number of members and the method of formation, prevailed the same as the Election Committee in 2012 (Chan, 2014, p.576). Other factors of discontent were related to economy and future expectations such as, the high property prices, and uncertain salary prospects (Hammond & Soler-Aleman, 2020).

The second stage, 'coalescence,' is the organizational and key phase that leads to increase the movement's power and influence, while the discontent becomes focalized and collective (Hopper, 1950, p.273). According to Christiansen (2009, pp.2-6) it is when people come together to act and find out whom or what is responsible for their discontent. Moreover, there is the appearance of leadership figures, campaigns, demonstrations, a more clearly defined sense of discontent, higher levels of organization, general strategy formulation and development of strategies for success. These factors make the movement to become a more prominent political influence. In the case of the Umbrella Movement activists and participants occupied the public space (squares and streets). There were three categories of political actors: the self-mobilized citizenry, the localists¹¹, and the student activists (C. Lee, 2019, p.13). Student organizations such as the Hong Kong Federation of Students (HKFS) and Scholarism played a key role. Furthermore, there was an active participation of the youth who made use of digital networks and the cyberspace to organize and "maintain the movement's momentum," while police fired tear gas provoking more people to take the streets in support of the protest (P. Lee et al., 2015, 357).

The third stage, 'bureaucratization,' is known as the formalization phase and the moment when official organizations and skilled staff start to implement the strategy and functions of coordination and planning. Any campaign, in order to emerge and become sustainable, needs the action of activists and groups to organize activities, supply resources, design strategies, and call for participation. In this stage, social movements gain a greater political power than in the previous one, a more regular access to political elites and a higher level of management and coalition-based strategies (Christiansen, 2009, p.5). Moreover, social movements have successfully raised awareness. Therefore, a coordinated strategy among SMOs is crucial. In many cases, employed staff will continue the movement since volunteer participants and activists oftentimes fail to continue to be committed and motivated. During the Umbrella Movement, various leading groups had protest experience and were historical groups such as the HKFS or Scholarism. However, they were not trained and nor paid staff to continue the movement.

The fourth stage, the 'decline,' signifies the end of a mass mobilization and it is known as the institutionalization phase, taking into consideration that as Tarrow (1994) asserts "although the origin of such cycles is frequently similar, their endings are divergent (p.201)." Therefore, the decline can happen for several reasons: a) repression, b) co-optation - both factors representing the defeat of the movement - c) success, d) establishment within the mainstream (Christiansen, 2009, p.6), and f) organizational failure (Macionis, 2001, pp.620-640; Miller, 1999, pp.305-308). Other authors use the

¹⁰ Central is located on the north of Hong Kong Island. It is the financial and business district of Hong Kong.

¹¹ Self-determination groups concentrated on the sustaining and defense of Hong Kong's autonomy and the local culture.

term ‘demobilization¹²,’ which contains five mechanisms related to the Four Stages of Social Movements theory and follows the process of mobilization (Tarrow, 1994, pp.190-203). Repression occurs when authorities use violent or coercive tactics to control or destroy a social movement (Christiansen, 2009, pp.4-6), using legitimate tactics from the Government side to isolate the movement from the public sphere (Miller, 1999, p.305). Co-optation arises when the movement’s opponents offer to leaders rewards such as a payment or a job to reduce the movement’s pressure (Christiansen, 2009, p.6). Success prevails when there is no necessity to protest anymore and the movement becomes part of society and conscious by the general public (Kitschelt, 1986, p.57; Kriesi, 2014, p.279; Tilly, 1999, p.153; Tilly & Wood, 2009, p.145). Establishment within the mainstream refers to the fact that the movement becomes integrated into the political and economic system (Christiansen, 2009, p.6).

Organizational or strategic failure is common for many organizations when there is an inability to keep focused and to maintain their joint efforts. As a consequence, there is a rupture of the organizational structure and collapse (Christiansen, 2009, p.4). Miller (1999, pp.303-325) argues that organizational failure occurs for two reasons: a) factionalism, which is the increasing partisanship, conflicts and disputes between internal groups regarding social movement’s functioning and goals; and, b) encapsulation, the increasing movement’s enclosure and their inability to grow because activists groups become inaccessible for new members and supporters. The next section will relate the ‘decline stage’ with the short-term failure and long-term influence of the Umbrella Movement in Hong Kong.

2.1.2. The ‘Decline Stage’ and the Umbrella Movement in Hong Kong

It is commonly agreed in the literature that the attempt of Umbrella Movement activists to influence the political agenda and change the electoral system by achieving universal suffrage failed (Tam, 2018, p.84; Tsui, 2015, p.447; Yuen & Cheng, 2018, p.8). There were various reasons for collapse. First, due to organizational failure and factionalism. There were tensions between protest leaders and political parties and their supporters and between Umbrella Movements organizers and activists themselves, which had different ideologies and judgements about the political reality (F. Lee & Chan, 2018; Sing, 2019). There was also a sense of mistrust among activists regarding organizational groups such as Student Unions. Lee F. and Chan (2018) argue that “digital media communications did not create the problem of internal divisions by themselves. They were tied to the organizational, spatial, and ideological divisions existing in the movement (p.147).”

Additionally, digital media have exacerbated the complications by reinforcing the disagreements, producing platforms for the articulation and transmission of opposing ideas and by originating a more fragmented and virtual communication space. Second, governmental and police repression. Many activists and protest’s leaders were arrested, including the imprisonment of notable leaders such as Joshua Wong and Alex Chow (S. Yuen, 2019). Moreover, the press, media and academic freedom has been limited by the HKSAR and the Chinese central government, and the “electoral competition has been undermined” (Sing, 2019, p.241). Third, due to Hong Kong’s partially-democratic nature explained in chapter one, the establishment within the mainstream is more complex than in consolidated democracies because there are no political opportunity structures favoring the impact of social movements (Kriesi, 2014, p.273) into structural socio-political changes such as an electoral reform.

¹² Repression, facilitation, exhaustion, radicalization and institutionalization (Tarrow, 1994, pp.190-203).

However, the decline and short-term failure of a social movement does not necessarily mean the end of it. This study considers that the decline stage conception cannot be applied to cases such as Hong Kong due to a) its partially-democratic nature, explained in chapter one, b) the historical recurrence of the pro-democracy social movement as it will be explained in section 2.1.3., and c) protest events such as the Umbrella Movement's long-term impacts. Regarding the latter, there are various transformative repercussions of the protests in 2014. First, they have raised awareness about the Hong Kong identity and changed the way of thinking of many citizens. The Umbrella Movement engendered new cultural models/patterns and narratives, shaping a political imaginary that included autonomy and independence for Hong Kong (C. Lee 2019, pp.2-21). Second, it intensified the emergence and growth of organizations (professional and grassroots) and new political actors and factions to defend Hong Kong's way of life and liberal civic values (C. Lee 2019, p.13). Moreover, the political identity of localism has been increasingly included and present as a political agenda principally among the youth. For example, new pro-democracy political parties such as Demosistō were created. Also, the Umbrella Movement affected the voting behavior in the elections of 2016 (Sing, 2019, p.160).

Third, according to F. Lee (2015d, p.407) the Umbrella Movement was a non-violent mobilization in essence that promulgated the concept of civil disobedience. These two elements played a fundamental educational role in society and had an effect on actions and campaigns of civil disobedience later on. Moreover, social media, alternative and digital media contributed to the understanding of civil disobedience for two main reasons: a) it was a platform where pro-movement discourses were broadly available and, b) it allowed people to highly interact and obtain conceptual knowledge. Fourth, "participation in the Umbrella Movement is related to the adoption of more radical attitudes" (F. Lee, 2018, p.228). All these factors pressured the local and central governments of Hong Kong and Beijing, which incentivized structural governmental repression and obstruction of dissent. At the same time, they engendered new demands that impassioned the next protest event (C. Lee, 2019, pp.2-21). The more recent Anti-ELAB movement demonstrates the aim of Hongkongers and especially the youth to keep defending their civil and democratic rights (Hammond & Soler-Aleman, 2020). The next section will present the concepts of 'protest events' and 'ritualistic protests' and the historical recurrence of the pro-democracy movement in Hong Kong in contrast with the Four Stages of Social Movements theory.

2.1.3. 'Protest Events' and 'Ritualistic Protests' in Hong Kong

This section discusses the discrepancies with the decline stage of the Four Stages of Social Movements theory, while displaying the concepts of 'protest event' and 'ritualistic protests' in Hong Kong. A social movement includes extra-institutional forms of action such as street protests. A protest is a "non routinized form of action" typical of social movements in which there is an important use of different channels to influence decision-makers (McAdam & Snow, 2009, p.1) and express resistance (Downing, 2001: 23). According to Lee and Chan (2011) "a protest, as an individual event, may indeed be just an outburst of discontent (p.5)." In addition, social protest has become a permanent element and frequent recurrences of modern life in Western societies (Tarrow, 1994, pp.1-16) and in East Asia (Weiss & Aspinall, 2018). The different forms of activities that are part of protests such as petitions, demonstrations, and consumer boycott, have become prevalent and increasingly common during recent decades (Norris, 2002, p. 221).

C. Lee (2019, pp.23-24) considers that a ‘protest event’ is an important theoretical category for understanding Hong Kong’s popular politics and mobilization history. The author defines it as concentrated and unpredictable moments of political and cultural creativity, originated in different sorts of political and historical conditions. In Hong Kong, there have been various critical, periodic and large protest events with massive participation of the civil society that have influenced the policies and relations of the British and Chinese Governments with Hong Kong. For example, the 1966-1967 riots, the June 4 mass protest in 1989, the July 1 rally in 2003, the National Education (M&N) movement during 2011 and 2012, the Umbrella Movement in 2014. According to C. Lee (2019, pp.13-24), these events can be understood as “turning points” in a context of democracy blockage, inducing change in some aspects of the political structure and the relations between the state and civil society, while the ‘One country two systems’ will continue to entail the root cause of eventual protests.

In the same line, the term of ‘ritualistic protests’ of Lee and Chan (2011, pp.3-12) contrasts the concept of protest cycle described in the previous sections. It refers to a type of collective action that has become stable and repetitive. According to Lee and Chan (2011, pp.3-14) there are two essential elements that explain the energetic pro-democracy protests movement in the last decade in Hong Kong. First, there has been a process of citizen’s “self-mobilization,” facilitated by the mass and news media, characterized by the rise and development of the wave of pro-democracy protests since July 1 2003, against the national security law. This critical event, unpredicted and historic in scale and significance, gave rise to various shifts and new political dynamics in Hong Kong in relation to the government, political parties, and the public opinion. It also changed three key actors’ perceptions: the Chinese government in relation to the political situation in Hong Kong; the local public regarding their capability to create political change through collective action; and the political elite concerning the necessity to respond to public opinion (F. Lee and Chan, 2011, p.9).

Second, there is a ritualistic characteristic of the protest action and the relationship between the question of democratization in Hong Kong. In 1991 the Legislative Council Election (LegCo) system based on direct election of a proportion of the seats, was introduced. Since then the question of further democratization in Hong Kong has been central and people have been expressing their dissatisfaction against political elites and claim for their democratic rights and demands. This has been occurring in a context of perceived failure of political representation and exasperation with local and central governments (Yuen, 2015; Rothman, 2014).

Similarly, the concept of ritualistic protests suggests a different temporality, from the one proposed by a protest cycle, between protests and rallies because the succession of pro-democracy protests, which started on July 1 2003, did not decline and die off. The pro-democracy movement dates back to the 90s with relevant incidence and recurrence in recent years, although Hong Kong has traditionally been an “apathetic society” (Lee & Chan, 2011). This idea is in line with Flesher’s (2015, p.142) notion of “movement continuity.” On the other hand, as explained in the previous section, although the Umbrella Movement failed in terms of achieving its ultimate goal (universal suffrage), it had various long-term effects carrying important socio-political changes and developments (Tam, 2018, p.93), which did not represent the end of the pro-democracy movement in Hong Kong.

Related to the idea of protest repetition, the Umbrella Movement as a critical protest event has been learning from previous protests led by young students, such as in the 2011-2012 protests against the Moral and National Education (M&N). According to Wang (2017, pp.128-129) the origin of this protest event dates back to 2010 when the

Hong Kong Chief Executive announced that Moral and National Education (M&N) should be taught as an independent subject in every primary and secondary school, to cultivate the moral character and national identity of Hong Kong students and introducing the so-called “China Model.” This model consisted of the praise of the Chinese Communist Party and the endorsement of Mandarin Chinese Language as the primary language. The Anti-M&N Alliance was mainly formed by Scholarism and the HKFS. Both groups were leading organizations during the Umbrella Movement. The Anti-M&N provided the resources and tactical preparation for the Umbrella Movement because it learnt from the 2012 protest tactics and leadership strategies, as well as from the collaboration between different organizations (Hammond & Soler-Aleman, 2020).

Contrary to the Four Stages of Social Movements theory (Christiansen, 2009), this study argues that the fourth stage of a social movement, the ‘decline stage’ (due to failure, collapse, success or repression), does not necessarily typify the culmination of the movement as it was explained in previous sections. It assumes that there is a continuum and connection among different protest events over time. What unites the different protest events is the enduring pro-democracy movement in Hong Kong. In other words, the pro-democracy movement in Hong Kong is a combination of a sequence of protests and events. Also, contrary to the concept of protest cycle and in line with Lee and Chan (2011) and C. Lee (2019), this dissertation argues that critical protest events are recurring, continuous and interrelated. They also imply collective action strategies and media transformations.

Most scholars in the social movements studies field have not been paying attention to what happens in the period in between major protest events. Persistent and repetitive protest events are seldom seen as processes connected to major social movements. It is in the decline stage where we can find elements of continuation to build new cultural and institutional forms of action. At the same time, when referring to partially democratic systems such as Hong Kong, it is important to uncover the theoretical instruments to explain the diverse complexities and peculiarities. All this considering that “the characteristics and development of a social movement will be dependent on how various mechanisms fit together into a chain of events” (Lee & Chan, 2011, p.7). The next section introduces Swidler’s (1986) cultural sociological concepts of ‘settled’ and ‘unsettled’ periods, which helped to coin the term ‘inter-mobilization periods.’

2.2. Swidler’s Cultural Sociological Concepts of ‘Settled’ and ‘Unsettled’ Periods

The Cultural theory focuses on how culture and society are constructed and transformed over time. It also focuses on how ideas and symbolic processes have an impact on social institutions and politics (Alexander, 2003; Alexander & Smith, 2003; Spillman, 1997; 2002). Swidler (1986, p.283), one of the most prominent cultural theorists, argues that people use the elements of their culture as “tool kits” to create their behavior and make decisions. Swidler (1986) also argues that “strategies of action are cultural products” and that it is necessary to understand “how cultural capacities created in one historical context, are reappropriated and altered in new circumstances (p.284).” This dissertation uses and applies Swidler’s (1986, pp.276-278) models of cultural influence: ‘settled periods’ and ‘unsettled periods’, which include habits, traditions, symbols, rituals, and skills that individuals, groups and societies use to construct strategies of action in certain phases of their life or historical periods. Strategies are the larger ways of trying to organize a life thanks to the use of culturally shaped skills and habits. These elements foster dispositions and motivations, ways of

organizing experience and regulating behavior, and practices of forming social bonds. Consequently, culture affects action and interacts with social structure in different ways in both periods.

In the case of Hong Kong, this idea is related to the question of local identity and democratization, which has been specially influencing the protest events in the 2000s. The matter of local Hong Kong identity and the struggle for democracy carries traditions, symbols and rituals that have been influencing behavior and protests over time. As mentioned in the previous section, Lee and Chan (2011, pp.11-12) use the term ‘ritualistic protests’ to describe that the events themselves and people’s participation in them have become stable and repetitive, and although the struggle for democracy started in the 80s it was not revived until 2003, when a major protest against the mandate for national security legislation occurred. Since then, protest events have become a continuum and in recent years, especially since the Umbrella Movement in 2014, the feelings of local identity and self-determination have been increasing. This study does not focus on the causality of culture and symbols, but on understanding the characteristics of these two models of cultural influence (‘settled periods’ and ‘unsettled periods’). They helped to define and understand the ‘inter-mobilization period,’ a term originally coined in this dissertation referring to the period in between major protest events that will be explained in section 2.2.2.

2.2.1. ‘Settled Periods’ and ‘Unsettled Periods’

In ‘settled cultural periods,’ culture provides the components and resources from which individuals and groups establish strategies and patterns of action, while values, traditions and common sense play a significant role. In this period of settled culture, “people naturally know how to act.” However, culture and social structure are disconnected and there is a low coherence and consistency with traditions. There are two explanations for this. First, to construct strategies of action in settled times means selecting certain cultural elements. Second, the influence of culture in settled times is especially strong in structuring those recurrent situations in which people act in concordance, such as in the case of voluntarist social movements (Swidler, 1986, pp.280-281). The short-term effects of this period are weak direct control over action, as well as the improvement and reinforcement of skills, habits, experience and strategies of action, which are “persistent ways of ordering action through time” (Swidler, 1986, p.282).

In ‘unsettled periods’ of cultural transformation new strategies of action are made possible based on ideology. Ideology refers to ideas governing action and to an important phase in the articulation of a comprehensive system of cultural meaning because they model patterns of action that do not come naturally (Swidler, 1986, pp.279-284). In this period, there is a high coherence and consistency with ideology, and competition with other cultural perspectives regarding methods of organizing action. Therefore, there is a “burst of ideological activism” (Swidler, 1986, p.282). There are three key elements to explain this period. First, political or religious ideologies govern and establish new tactics of individual and collective action, but structural opportunities for action (based on structural constraints and historical circumstances) determine which among competing ideologies survive in the long term. Second, ideology forms around beliefs and aspirations. Third, ideologies, often carried by social movements, emerge when new ways of organizing action are being developed. The short-term effects are a strong control over action and teaching new modes of action. It is a transitional moment from habits to new ideas, high occurrence of social, cultural and

political transformations, while beliefs and aspirations play a key role (Swidler, 1986, pp.273-282).

2.2.2. The ‘Mobilization Period’ and the ‘Inter-mobilization Period’

Swidler’s model of cultural periods support the definition, distinction and connection between the ‘mobilization period’ and the ‘inter-mobilization period.’ The ‘mobilization period’ in this dissertation is understood as an ‘unsettled time’, being an organizational period and the moment when collective action occurs. For instance, during protests and occupation campaigns (Bennet & Segerberg, 2013, p.47; Edwards & McCarthy, 2004, p.117; Tilly & Wood, 2009, p.3). Mobilization is regarded as one stage because it is the central process in the study of social movements. The majority of previous studies have been emphasizing the causes and peak moments of mass mobilizations, the processes of formation and organization (Diani & McAdam, 2003; McAdam et al., 2001; McAdam & Snow, 2009; Tarrow, 1998), as well as the outcomes of social movements and their impact on decision-making and the systems of values (Gamson & Wolfsfelt, 1993; Giugni, 1998; Meyer & Minkoff, 2004; Tilly, 1999). According to Tarrow (1994, pp.188-189), during the process of mobilization, challengers and authorities engage to interpret the contention, perceive opportunities and threats and frame resources, organizations, and institutions. The challengers engage in innovative collective action to attract supporters and oppose authorities. Moreover, in this stage, “information flows more rapidly, political attention is heightened, and interactions among groups of challengers and authorities increase in frequency and intensity” (Tarrow, 1994, p.202), while movement organizers reach peaks of conflict after gaining national attention and state response (Castells, 2015, p.272). According to Della Porta (2015, pp.207-209) in peak moments of social mobilization activists develop their conception of democracy having learnt from previous social movements, while reflecting on the mistakes that movements have made.

The ‘mobilization period’ is a very emotional moment for citizens and protesters, considering that they are “likely to engage in communication and political activities much more intensively than usual” because emotions highly affect collective actions by increasing the likeliness for people to act on their opinions, entail collective identity and solidarity, and help to overcome fear and anxiety (Lee & Chan, 2011, p.11). In the case of Hong Kong, at the peak of the movement in September 2014, 20 percent of Hong Kong residents, in a city of approximately 7 million people, participated in one way or another (C. Lee 2019, p.1). One of the main reasons was that the spread of images of police repression and online messages which created awareness, intensified emotions, and the willingness to join the movement (Lee & Leung, 2015). In this type of critical political period, Internet alternative media have greater influences on public opinion (Leung & Lee, 2014, p.355). Some of the key occurrences/events in this period were the tensions between protests’ student leaders and pro-democracy political parties and their supporters, as well as between Umbrella Movements organizers and activists themselves, which had different ideologies and judgements about the political reality. This fact affected the trajectory of the Umbrella Movement (F. Lee & Chan, 2018; Sing, 2019). The part that is specifically applied from Swidler’s Cultural theory is the conception of the unsettled period as a moment when ideologies govern and establish new styles and ways to organize action and structure social communities. In this period, people are putting into practice new and unfamiliar habits of action (Swidler, 1986).

During the ‘inter-mobilization period’ understood as a ‘settled period’, the transformations influenced by previous protests spread to the general public. In this stage political activism exists but has a lower dynamic level compared to peak moments

of social mobilization when protesters occupy the urban space, such as after the Umbrella Movement public square's occupations. It is the period in between major protest events, in this case after the Umbrella Movement's public squares occupations and the beginning of the Anti-ELAB movement in 2019, this time frame of this dissertation will be explained and justified in chapter three. Furthermore, it is understood as a building-up stage of social activism and communication strategies transformation.

In the case of Hong Kong, Leung and Lee (2014, p.355) use the term 'ordinary times' to refer to the periods when political activities and crises have a lower intensity, which does not mean that there is no social activism and social contestation coming from civil society. The terms 'post-Umbrella Movement' (F. Lee 2018) and 'post-Umbrella Movement developments' (C. Lee, 2019; Sing, 2019, p.159) have been used to refer to the period after the mass mobilization in 2014 and to describe the impacts that have been detailed in section 2.1.2. The authors emphasized the impacts of the Umbrella Movement in the political and social arena such as, how did the Umbrella Movement affect the voting behavior in the elections of 2016 and the feelings of self-determination. Also, how it has led to unprecedented polarization in Hong Kong, between state and civil society (C. Lee 2019, p.3). However, the concepts of 'ordinary times' (Leung & Lee, 2014), 'post-Umbrella Movement' (F. Lee, 2018) and 'post-Umbrella Movement developments' (C. Lee, 2019; Sing, 2019) were not conceptually and theoretically developed and neither considered as a key period for further research to understand the social movement's continuum and the communication strategies transformations.

The tensions between leaders and political parties that occurred during the organizational and mobilization period continued after the Umbrella Movement. For example, "there was a disagreement regarding what democracy is among activists, as well as from the Hong Kong and China perspectives" (Lee and Chan, 2011, p.16). Concretely, the student leaders of Scholarism had an aversion to possible agreements and cooperation between Beijing and the pro-democracy parties that could limit democratization. In 2015, Scholarism distrusted that the Democratic Party¹³ would have some political agreements with Beijing. This was viewed as a disloyalty to the Umbrella Movement. The frictions among pro-democracy parties and civil society organizations continued during the 2016 legislative election. A new political party named Demosistō was founded by various student leaders from the Umbrella Movement and confronted the positions and plans of the existing pro-democracy parties (Sing, 2019, p.160). Social and alternative media played a key informative role in this period, especially in facilitating political news.

The part that is applied from Swidler's Cultural theory is the conception of the 'settled period' as a moment of persistent ways of ordering action and improvement of new patterns of action. Also, a settled period provides the base for constructing strategies of action and creates continuities based on the values of a culture, era, or community, in this case, the idea of democratization in Hong Kong. However, this dissertation does not focus on the causality of culture but on understanding civic media's role as a critical element to foster new forms and spaces of political participation across protest events. Contrary to Swidler's cultural, sociological concepts of 'settled' and 'unsettled' periods, this dissertation considers the settled time and the inter-mobilization period as a transitional moment from habits to new ideas. Habits, in this dissertation, refer to the traditional ways of media and new technologies usage and

¹³ A center-left and liberal political party, being one of the largest pro-democracy parties in the Legislative Council of Hong Kong.

the new ways of protesting and understanding the spaces of participation. New ideas refer to the change of participation scenarios, collective action, and media and communication strategies. Furthermore, it considers that during the inter-mobilization period, beliefs and aspirations play an essential role.

Hence, this dissertation argues that the ‘inter-mobilization period’ as a ‘settled period’ needs to be analyzed separately from the mobilization one. The ‘inter-mobilization period’ has not received enough academic attention and has not been widely recognized as a critical period in the social sciences field. Moreover, little attention has been paid to understanding what happens after peak moments of social mobilizations, especially regarding civic media use. What the distinction of these two periods - mobilization and inter-mobilization - and mainly the focus on the inter-mobilization period reveals is a peculiar mechanism and dynamics of collective action and the nature of activism in Hong Kong, which provides new insights on the study of social movements, while highlighting the gaps in the literature. This study considers that the ‘inter-mobilization period’ carries significant long-term effects for politics and society and enables a wide-open arena for further research.

2.3. The Network Society Theory

According to Castells (2010) the Network Society theory, as part of the Information Age, is a new global social structure characterized by a multicultural and interdependent world. This theory has three essential claims: 1) the central role of the information and communication networks and electronic technologies; 2) the complementarity between the physical and virtual spaces during social mobilizations and; 3) the change of life cycles, considering that everything became flexible and simultaneous. Similarly, Castells (2010; 2015) highlights three main structural divisions between the elites and the rest of people: 1) the international and local domains; 2) power (coming from the institutions) and counter-power (coming from civil society); and 3) local places and online spaces.

Castells (2013, pp.10-16) argues that communication networks produce important effects in political systems and public consciousness, while the interaction between new information technology and processes of social change does have a crucial impact on space, time, social movements, participation and communication. Therefore, the Network Society theory helps to understand the transformations of space and time in addition to social movements in megacities such as Hong Kong, which are flexible urban architectures. It also helps to understand the connection of new technologies with participation. However, it fails to acknowledge the dynamics between the virtual and physical forms and spaces of political participation in the ‘inter-mobilization period,’ as well as the transformation and interrelation between media platforms and communication technologies and their impacts into participation.

2.3.1. The Transformation of Space and Time

The two foundations of the Network Society theory are the transformation of space and time. These two transformations, which represent the breakdown of communication channels and social rhythms, can be explained due to their simultaneous connection between flows and places. The ‘space of flows’ and the ‘space of places’ are two structural dimensions and spatial logics that help to explain and contextualize the multiple interrelated changes that communication channels and global cities are exposed to. The ‘space of flows’ includes the dynamic interactions of human action with new

communication technologies. In this form, space is related to time and it works through flows of capital, information and technology. It is the dominant space of power, ruling elites and their interests in society, being conceived and implemented by social actors (Castells, 1996, pp.147-445). It has three combined layers of material support: technological systems such as telecommunications, computer procession or broadcasting; the coordinating network of nodes and communication hubs; and the spatial organization of the dominant elites. At the same time, the 'space of flows' is built on an electronic network that associates specific places with explicit social, cultural, physical, and functional characteristics, known as the 'space of places' (Castells, 2010, pp.444). The 'space of places' is the historically and culturally rooted spatial organization that citizens around the world experience because they live in concrete places and perceive their space as place-based (Castells, 2010, pp.408-446).

The transformation of space occurs, according to Castells (2010, pp. 429-436), because the interaction between new information technology and current processes of social change does affect cities and space. Informational and mega cities such as Beijing, Tokyo, London or Hong Kong are the new spatial and urban form in the informational society and the current global economy, characterized by the structural domination of the space of flows. These mega cities concentrate productive and managerial functions around the world having the control of the media, politics, and the symbolic capacity to create and diffuse messages (Castells 2010, p.434). This idea is related to 'the global city' concept of Saskia Sassen (2001, p.85) who claims that global cities, including their local societies, are control centers connected to the global economy, being no longer tied to national boundaries. At the same time, mega cities are globally connected through networks but locally disconnected from local and marginal populations. In other words, wealth is concentrated in the economic urban elites and social inequalities are growing and people experience different realities depending on the area or place they live and its socio-political structure. For example, the contrasts experienced in developed and non-development countries in terms of death, illness or unemployment rates. Therefore, places and localities (represented by the civil society) aim at regaining control over the social interests embedded in the space of flows (Castells, 2010, pp.453-497).

The transformation of time appears in two different forms: simultaneity and 'timelessness.' 'Timelessness' or 'timeless time' refers to the predominant temporality in the network society induced by flows of information technologies, which systematically disrupt the sequential order of events and social experiences such as, the working life or the blurring of the life cycle. In other words, new communication technologies provide a sense of immediacy that breaks time barriers and provides greater flexibility such as global instant information and live reporting (Castells, 2010, pp.442-494). The 'space of flows' characterized by the interactions of human action with new technologies and the dominance of power elites, dissolves time by disordering the sequence of events and making them simultaneous (Castells, 2010, p.446).

This dissertation concurs with the argument that civil society living in specific places aims at regaining control over the dominant space of power implanted in the space of flows; considering that although the media and the Internet have no power itself and cannot be a source of causation for participation. Users can take control of technology such as the Internet, and merge with doers because "information technologies are processes to be developed" by individuals and groups (Castells, 2010, p.5). This study also agrees with the idea of the space of flows providing high degrees of flexibility and immediacy that can benefit the evolution of social events and political participation. In addition, cities are a new strategic terrain to explore the connection of

new spatial and urban forms of participation among individuals and groups. Various authors have claimed that metropolitan cities are leading the way with regards to the world of tomorrow, illuminating a new urban existence as a consequence of capitalism but also of a metropolitan conscience because it is more rooted among their populations (Huang Ching-yi, 2004; Jameson, 1992; Soler-Alemany, 2020), including the use of both the space of flows (online) and the space of places (offline, in the urban space). The next section will introduce how the transformations of space and time have influenced social movements.

2.3.2. The Transformation of Social Movements

The previous section helped to understand the spatial logics and dimensions in the digital era and information age. This section introduces the concept of ‘networked social movements’ and its relation with the Umbrella Movement. ‘Networked social movements’ are the urban and democratic social movements in the network society, with a central role of decentralized and information networks based on electronic technologies. The role of the Internet and wireless communication has changed contemporary social movements communication channels and strategies as well as the spaces of participation, free communication and social movements organization (Castells, 2015, p.256). According to Castells (2015, pp.221-316), there are various characteristics of social networked movements. First, they are global and local. They start being local but they connect globally because the application and innovations of new technologies produce instantaneous communication across established frontiers. For that reason, social movements concurrently engage in local, national, transnational, and global space (Mittleman, 2000, p.169).

Second, they are spontaneous, non-programmatic in origin and viral in the way they are extended. The most common cause is the unforeseen indignation regarding a specific event or actions from politicians (F. Lee & Chan, 2018, p.8). Third, these movements are leaderless and decentralized. They do not trust and nor have leaders. Having a decentralized structure amplifies the probabilities of movement participation, while reducing its susceptibility to repression because there are less people to repress. “Although there can be influential activists in the movement, they are accepted by the participants only if they do not make major decisions by themselves” (F. Lee & Chan, 2018). Fourth, the networked social movements are self-reflexive. They continually question themselves about who they are, their goals and their long-term aspirations, at the individual and group level. Fifth, they are non-violent in origin, but they confront repression. It is important to highlight that, as Castells (2015) asserts, the life and death of movements depend on how they handle the issue of violence because in most of the cases, when they become violent they lose legitimacy and social acceptance, while governments activate stricter mechanisms of protest deterrence.

Castells (2015, p.243) considers the Umbrella Movement “an autonomous, networked social movement claiming the right to representative democracy and challenging Beijing’s control.” Following the argument of F. Lee and Chan, 2018 (pp.5-9), some of the characteristics that are similar to the ones of networked social movements are as follows. First, the Umbrella Movement displayed a significant degree of self-reflection. Protesters persistently debated among themselves online and in occupied areas. Second, the protests evolved into a mixture of improvisational, dispersed, decentralized, and individualized actions. For example, frontline actions such as confronting the police were not coordinated and organized by the movement leaders. The coordination was carried between the activists. This change allowed more people to participate freely but it created frictions between centralized leadership and

decentralized actions (F. Lee & Chan, 2018). Occupy Central with Love and Peace led by Prof. Benny Tai, Chu Yiu-ming and Chan Kin-man; the HKFS, and Scholarism were seen as the leaders of the movement by the government and the media, but not by all protesters. Third, social media helped to spread the message and to gather participants against the dominant public and state institutions. Alternative media platforms played a vital role by challenging the mainstream media and encouraging citizen journalism, creating collective identity and support for the Occupy movement (P. Lee et al. 2015, pp. 357-370).

F. Lee and Chan (2018, pp.6-10) argue the Umbrella Movement contrasts from the networked social movements conceptual typology because it was not spontaneous in its emergence. The authors claim that the occurrence of a large-scale civil disobedience campaign was pre-announced, with a centrally organized collective action. It was a planned and programmatic movement with concrete policy goals confronting decentralization. An example of the intellectual planning is that in 2013, Benny Tai published “The most lethal weapon of civil disobedience” article in the Hong Kong Economic Journal¹⁴. It was a critique to the government advocating for a democratic reform and occupy Central, which evolved to the Umbrella Movement (F. Lee, 2019). Moreover, the Umbrella Movement was not non-programmatic. Its organizers talked about how the action could lead to cultural changes but they had a specific objective: an electoral reform to reach universal suffrage. Also, “the fact that the movement had concrete and immediate policy goals meant that the movement could not live on ‘timeless time.’ Instead, the issue had to be resolved in time for the 2017 election” (F. Lee and Chan, 2018, pp.9-10).

In line with Lee and Chan (2018) this study agrees that the movement was planned and could not live in timeless time because it had a time limit to reach its goals. Similarly, in line with Castells (2010; 2015), this dissertation considers the Umbrella Movement as a networked social movement, being urban, connected and democratic. Also, networked social movements will bring political change and will continue to rise worldwide. Social crises and conflicts are present around the globe because the political institutions are ineffective and illegitimate in the minds of their citizens (Castells, 2015, p.312). However, the Network Society theory fails to acknowledge various processes and dynamics of communication, specifically how the virtual and physical spaces of participation are connected after peak moments of mobilization and between major protest events. The next section provides an explanation of the discrepancies with the Network Society theory through the concept of ‘networked dynamics,’ originally coined in this study, which is inspired in the conceptions of the ‘networked social movements’ and the ‘space of autonomy.’

2.3.3. ‘The Space of Autonomy’ and ‘Networked Dynamics’

‘Networked social movements’ are recreating the public sphere, established around the interaction between local urban places and Internet networks (Castells 2015, pp.249-316). Communication plays a key role in the formation and practice of social movements. According to the Network Society theory social movements start and form on the Internet by for example making calls for participation and debating the strategies online. But they need to step into the urban space to become visual, recognized and consolidated. In other words, they become a movement related to society at large, by occupying the urban space, and by stating their claims in the public space. This simultaneous connection, which is the form and process of current social movements, is

¹⁴ It is a mainstream daily newspaper written in Chinese Language and published in Hong Kong.

what Castells (2010) calls the 'space of autonomy.' The 'space of autonomy,' the hybrid space that connects networks on the Internet with the occupations occurring in the urban space - being a dimension of free communication beyond the control of governments and monopolizing corporations - emerges in moments of conflicts and peak moments of social movements (Castells, 2010). These two dimensions have a constant interaction, establishing, technologically and culturally, communities of transformative practice.

Autonomy refers to the capacity of a social actor to define its action around projects in accordance to its specific values and interests, while being independent from social institutions and structures (Castells, 2015, p.259). The autonomy of communication is the essence of networked social movements because it allows them to be formed and relate to society as a whole, being a starting point and the source of empowerment (Castells, 2015, p.11). In the same line, Taylor-Smith and Smith (2018, p.1853) establish the concept of a "participation space" in order to study online and offline contexts that support grassroots democracy and help to understand modern participation as well as to describe the context in where people work together to influence those in power and improve their communities. On the other hand, networked social movements never leave the Internet, they always live on the Internet because that is where they can survive when repression becomes harsh. This connected space allows the movements to become both local and global (Castells, 2015, pp.223-226).

In addition, occupied spaces have played a crucial role in the contemporary history of social change for two main reasons, considering that people can only challenge domination by connecting with each other by sharing outrage and by feeling togetherness: 1) they create community based on togetherness as a source of empowerment. ICTs and communication networks can alter power connections, form civil society and create public consciousness (Castells, 2015, pp.4-41); 2) they have a symbolic power because by occupying and keeping the urban space, citizens reclaim their own city and construct a free community in a symbolic place. Social movements create a space of deliberation that becomes a political and symbolic public space (Castells, 2015, p.257). In relation to this idea, Tarrow (2013, p.209) argues that regardless of the electronic communication advantages such as immediacy, there is a lack of "interpersonal trust," referring to face-to-face interactions with fellow citizens. This interpersonal trust can just come from intense and continuous interaction, such as the one that occurs during protests, occupations, or boycotts. In the case of the Umbrella Movement, occupation of the urban space was the most important form of action undertaken by the movement, and with vibrant online communication activities, a hybrid space of autonomy was created.

Hence, according to the Network Society theory the space of autonomy reinforces the freedom of communication, participation and sense of togetherness, which is fundamental to incentivize participation. As stated before, social movements start and form on the Internet. Nevertheless, they need to step into the urban space to become recognized and consolidated. This argument assumes that the online and offline spaces are highly connected and self-reinforcing during the mobilization stage of a social movement. The space of autonomy emerges in particular temporalities or in moments of conflicts and peaks of social movements. However, the Network Society theory fails to explain the connection between physical and virtual spaces of participation in the inter-mobilization period, considering that Hong Kong is a highly informational and globally connected city, but it follows particular patterns that need further academic attention.

Therefore, this dissertation argues that there is a non-static dichotomy between the virtual and the physical forms and spaces of participation that varies depending on

the time frame and phase of a social movement that has not been contemplated by the Network Society theory. It is what this study calls the ‘networked dynamics,’ a term originally coined in this dissertation influenced by the concepts of ‘networked social movements’ and ‘space of autonomy.’ ‘Networked dynamics’ refer to the connection and non-static complementarity between the virtual and physical forms and spaces of participation that changes depending on the time frame of a social movement. This dynamic complementarity, which is under-researched, has a great explanatory potential to understand the impact of media on different forms of political participation and collective action. It also helps to understand social movements as a continuum. The next section will introduce the analytical framework of this dissertation, highlighting the interconnection between the Network Society theory, the Four Stages of Social Movements theory and Swidler’s Cultural theory. It will also explain the interconnection between civic media and space - characterized by the new forms and spaces of participation and the connection between the online and offline spheres - in a different temporality, the ‘inter-mobilization period.’

Chapter 3: Analytical Framework

This chapter presents the analytical framework to explain the civic media consumption impact into new forms and spaces of political participation and ‘networked dynamics’ in the ‘inter-mobilization period.’ The ‘inter-mobilization period’ is a building-up stage of social activism and transformation of collective action, media and political communication strategies - in this case, after the Umbrella Movement in January 2015 and before the Anti-ELAB Movement in February 2019. This term, coined after reviewing the Four Stages of Social Movement theory and the Swidler’s cultural sociological concepts of ‘settled’ and ‘unsettled’ periods, as it was discussed in chapter two, supports the period and time frame of this dissertation. The analytical framework consists of three components, as seen in figure 4: civic media consumption, new forms and spaces of political participation and ‘networked dynamics.’ The Network Society theory, the Four Stages of Social Movements theory, Swidler’s Cultural theory, and the Civic Media approach are used to model the analytical framework.

The term ‘civic media’ is borrowed from the Center for Future Civic Media at MIT as an analytical category. In this dissertation, it refers to political information consumption through pro-democracy alternative media platforms with a supportive position in social mobilization such as, In-Media, and through socio-political contacts on SNS such as pro-democracy organizations, student protest leaders, NGOs, and student unions. Alternative media platforms refer to non-conventional media challenging the hegemonic political, economic, and media power (Atton, 2002; Downing, 2001; Lee F. 2019). They have a smaller budget and audience size compared to the mainstream and mass media (Meyers, 2008: 375-377). Socio-political contacts on SNS refer to ‘weak ties’ (Granovetter, 1973), connections with individuals or groups that are not close friends or family. These types of contacts play an important role in the transmission of information and the dynamics of social relationships.

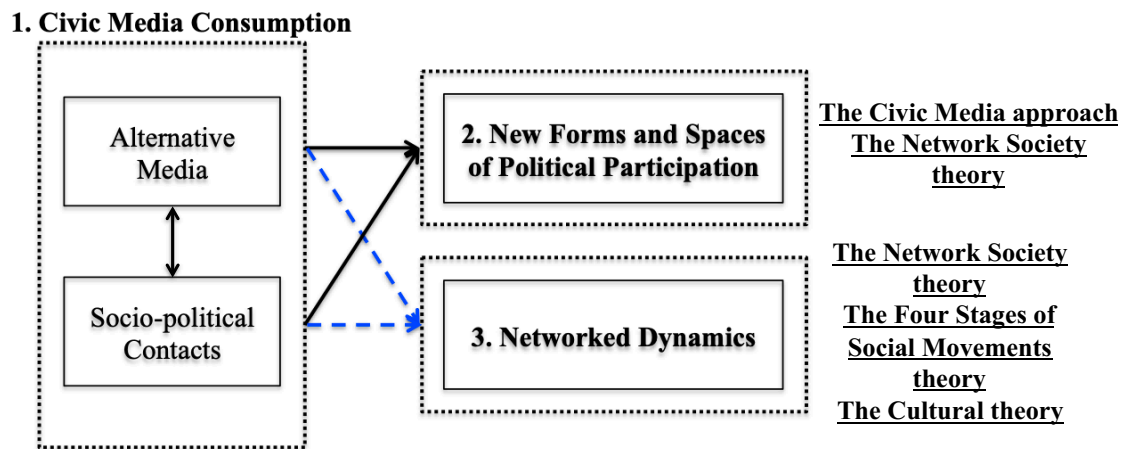
‘New forms and spaces of political participation’ signify behaviours to influence the social and political scenario in the virtual and urban spaces. It involves acts of communication, including ‘online political participation’ such as expressing political views online (Calenda & Mosca, 2007, p.89); and ‘offline political intention’, understood as the willingness to participate in protests and political causes. For instance, using social network sites to share political information, writing letters or blogs with political content, signing petitions, or participating in political demonstrations (Barret & Zani 2015, p.4).

‘Networked dynamics’ is a term coined after reviewing the Network Society theory (Castells, 1996). This theory is applied to a concrete stage of a social movement - the mobilization period - and it claims that there is a complementary and synergic relationship between the online and offline spheres because the movements start in the network but need to step into the urban space to become visual and consolidated. In this dissertation, ‘networked dynamics’ refer to the connection and non-static complementarity between the virtual and physical forms and spaces of participation (online participation and offline willingness to participate in protests and political causes) that changes depending on the time frame of a social movement.

The analytical framework is divided in two parts. The first part is the impacts of civic media consumption on new forms and spaces of political participation. It is based on the Civic Media approach and the Network Society theory, which helped to

formulate the research question of: “What are the impacts of civic media on new forms and spaces of political participation?” The civic media approach provides the theoretical background to conceptualize the civic media term utilized in this dissertation and understand its potential into participation. The Network Society theory is used to explain the significance of media and communication technologies as tools and platforms that contribute to new forms and spaces of participation, referring to online and offline participation. Therefore, this framework assumes that civic media acts as a motivator for participation. The second part of the analytical framework is the impacts of civic media on ‘networked dynamics,’ based on the Network Society theory, the Four Stages of Social Movements theory and Swidler’s Cultural theory. These approaches helped to establish and ground the discourse surrounding the research question of “what is the connection between online and offline forms and spaces of political participation in the ‘inter-mobilization period’?” The Network Society theory provides the arguments for the connection between the virtual and physical spaces of participation. The Four Stages of Social Movements theory and Swidler’s cultural sociological concepts of ‘settled’ and ‘unsettled’ periods provide the arguments for the time frame of this dissertation, considering that the Hong Kong case is not compatible with the classic social movements stages and mobilization framework, as it was explained in chapter two. Therefore, the second part of the framework assumes that the online and offline spheres are also connected in the ‘inter-mobilization period.’

Figure 4. Analytical Framework



The Network Society theory connects both parts of the analytical framework because it covers the transformation of space and time in the digital age. The transformation of space in this dissertation is applied to the new forms and spaces of participation and their interrelation. The transformation of time idea is applied to the connection between the mobilization and inter-mobilization periods. According to the Network Society theory, the transformations of space and time, influenced by the use of the Internet and new technologies, have affected social movements participation and social activism. Moreover, it argues that the virtual and physical spaces are complimentary during mobilization stages and that new technologies have brought a new temporality characterized by high flexibility and simultaneously, which also affects the protest cycle mechanisms. Everything becomes ‘timelessness.’ This term refers to the predominant temporality in the network society induced by flows of information technologies, which systematically disrupt the sequential order of such as the working

life or the life cycle (Castells, 2010, p.446). In the same line, Bennett (2003, pp.30-31) asserts that in order to determine political time and space, it is essential to consider that new communication technologies enable global problems to occur in new temporal and spatial modes of expression.

To better understand the focus of this dissertation regarding the assumption that civic media can foster participation, it is important to take into consideration various positions in the literature on the potential of the Internet and new technologies. The Internet and new technologies can support political participation in two ways: providing a platform for information retrieval, debate, and engagement; and complementing offline participation by furthering the flow of information and communication between people associated with socio-political networks (Calenda & Mosca 2007, p.89). There are three main perspectives: the optimists, pessimists and realists (Lutz et al, 2014, p.6). The optimists claim that the Internet can strengthen democracy and political engagement (Rheingold, 1993; Turkle, 1995). Pessimist warned that Internet use would displace time previously dedicated to political and civic engagement (Putnam, 2000). Realists expect the Internet to have little effect on participatory practices (Lutz et al, 2014, p.6). This dissertation has an optimistic perspective arguing that, although the Internet, new technologies and communication networks have no power themselves, their use can strengthen political engagement and participation, which may in turn, benefit the social and political systems. This is based on the argument of Anduiza et al. (2009, p. 872) who claim that those platforms provide opportunities for new practices of political participation and that their use produces changes in attitudes favorable to political participation.

Divergently, various authors state that the power of the Internet and new technologies is overestimated (Portes, 1998). Stroud (2011, pp.7-9) uses the term “partisan selective exposure” to refer to the use of news that mirrors one’s political views, without being exposed to information and news that conflict with one’s own political convictions. This partisanship can influence media choices, foster citizen’s participation in politics, increase political culture or influence attitudes and beliefs. Similarly, selective exposure makes citizens not have any reason to change their beliefs. In other words, “opposed political ideologies can live in completely different news environments” (Stroud, 2011, p.7). This conception is related to Sunstein’s (2001) concept of “echo-chamber” when the Internet makes it easier to seek out like-minded people. This phenomenon can form and lead to more extreme attitudes and intolerance, while those who are politically active or interested in politics are already reading alternative media or exposed to political sources (Krueger, 2006). For example, in Hong Kong, democracy supporters are more likely to be the audience of pro-democracy Internet alternative media (Leung & Lee 2014, p.353). In these cases, “political activism becomes self-reinforcing” (Tang, 2019, p.191).

However, the Internet, new technologies and online media can mobilize politically inactive citizens as well. Civic media would not just be an echo-chamber or partisan platform because people who share the orientation and perspective with specific alternative media platforms are not the only ones exposed to their content (Leung & Lee, 2014). Similarly, the Internet, new technologies and online media use reduces the costs of participation and increases information accessibility, which has positive effects on engagement (Boulianne 2009, p.205). They also play an essential role in the formation of large-scale protests (Lee & Chan, 2018, p.19). Other authors assume that political participation, through individualized access to information and electronic social interaction, is becoming more flexible while moving away from involvement in conventional activities organized by political parties (Mesch and

Coleman, 2007, p.46). According to Bennett (2012, p.743) “Individuals, mainly young citizens, are relating differently to organized politics, and many organizations are finding they must engage people differently.” These tendencies can have positive effects in democratic systems and also, in partially-democratic regimes such as Hong Kong, helping to reinforce the civil society’s role and new forms and spaces of political participation. The following sections will explain the time frame of this dissertation, the two parts of the analytical framework and how all the aforementioned theories are applied and interrelated.

3.1. Time Frame

The period of data collection goes from May 2016 until June 2019, as it will be explained in chapter four. However, the time frame of this dissertation, understood as the period of time for the broader analysis - in this case, the ‘inter-mobilization period’ - goes from January 2015 until February 2019. The time frame determination was based on: a) theoretical and conceptual arguments and, b) key specific events, highlighting the qualitative change that occurred in Hong Kong, in relation to media, communication and collective action transformation as well as the worsening of the socio-political crisis, when the Anti-ELAB Movement originated in 2019. Contrary to the Four Stages of Social Movements theory, this study argues that the fourth stage of a social movement, the ‘decline stage,’ does not necessarily typify the culmination of the movement. It also claims that there is a connection between protest events and the continuation of the pro-democracy social movement in Hong Kong that challenge the classic understanding of social movements stages.

Furthermore, this dissertation applies the models of cultural influence ‘settled periods’ and ‘unsettled periods’ (Swidler, 1986) to define and understand the ‘inter-mobilization period.’ It highlights the ritualistic character of protest events in Hong Kong, being repetitive over time (F. Lee & Chan, 2011). This study considers the ‘inter-mobilization period’ as a ‘settled period’ because it is a moment of adoption of new patterns of action. Moreover, the Network Society theory asserts that new technologies originated the transformation of time and social movements and the blurring of life cycles because everything became simultaneous and timelessness, meaning that there are no time barriers. Therefore, this dissertation considers that ‘protest cycles’ have been experiencing crucial transformations in the digital era, while the new temporality that communication technologies brought has been affecting the sequences of protests. Based on these arguments, this study defined the ‘inter-mobilization period’ as the period in between major protest events, in this case, the Umbrella Movement and the Anti-ELAB Movement.

Regarding the key moments that helped to define the time frame, it is important to mention that the Umbrella Movement occupations lasted 79 days from September 28, until December 15, 2014. This is why the ‘inter-mobilization period’ is considered to start from January 2015 when there are no central occupations of the squares and streets. Subsequently, in February 2015 thousands of pro-democracy protesters went out to the streets for the first time after the Umbrella Movement mass mobilizations, which shows that regardless of the lower intensity level of social mobilization, there is still social activism and the pro-democracy movement is not deceased. As stated above, in this stage, political activism exists, but has a lower dynamic level compared to peak moments of social mobilization when protesters occupy the urban space. This is reflected in figure 2 presented in chapter one regarding the total number of public meetings and processions between 2016 and 2019. It also shows that the peaks of public

meetings are in relation to announcements or executions of controversial electoral reforms, the celebration of elections and key protest events such as the 2016 and 2018 Legislative Council Elections. Nonetheless, this does not necessarily mean there are occupations or far-reaching protest events. On the other hand, the mobilization period of the Anti-ELAB protests started in March 2019 and intensified in April of 2019 against the extradition bill¹⁵ announced by the Hong Kong SAR in February 2019 that would enable extraditions to Mainland China. The social and political conflict is far from being solved. Therefore, the ‘inter-mobilization period’, which started in January 2015, is considered to end in February 2019.

This study’s time frame is particularly important to consider because since the Anti-ELAB protests started in 2019, there has been a qualitative change in the media, communication and collective action landscape. At the same time, the severe social and political crisis and the uncertain future that Hong Kong is facing, makes it especially relevant to look at what happened in between the Umbrella Movement and the Anti-ELAB Movement. An important aspect to highlight is the fact that civic media during 2015 and 2019 was relatively centralized and after 2019 it became decentralized. This process of decentralization, involved the fragmentation of information and communication sources/platforms due to 1) the simultaneous tensions between the leaders from the movement and civil society; 2) the critique that alternative media received from the Umbrella Movement activists and protesters after the Umbrella Movement; and 3) the fact that individual protesters/activists started to use their own social media platforms and profiles, instead of directly collaborating or engaging with alternative media platforms, in this case, In-Media.

These tendencies evolved into a new scenario and qualitative change after 2019 in both the media and the collective action situation. This tendency of decentralization in the protests and in the media landscape has been progressive as reflected in the interviews that will be explained in chapters six and seven. Also, the threats to net, press and media freedom and the utilization of the public space increased after the Umbrella Movement. At the same time, there is a continual aggravation of the problem of self-censorship, the further contraction of spaces for free expression in the mainstream media, the popularization of social media as platforms for political communication, the continual growth of social protests in Hong Kong and an increasing repression from security forces and government to journalists (F. Lee, 2019).

3.2. Civic Media Consumption and New Forms and Spaces of Political Participation: The Civic Media Approach and the Network Society Theory

This section explains the connection between the civic media and new forms and spaces of political participation based on the Civic Media approach and the Network Society theory. It is divided in two parts: first, the conceptualization of the civic media term and its application in the analytical framework; second, the connection with the Network Society theory assuming that civic media can contribute to online and offline political participation. This dissertation borrows and applies the concept of civic media as an analytical category in order to extend its explanatory potential. It is a broad, under-theorized and under-researched term. The original definition of civic media refers to the use of participatory media technologies for civic participation, political engagement or social change (Gordon & Mihailidis, 2016; Jenkins, 2006; Zuckerman, 2017). The approach is highly influenced by Robert Putnam’s book *Bowling alone* and

¹⁵ Officially known as “The Fugitive Offenders and Mutual Legal Assistance in Criminal Matters Legislation (Amendment) Bill 2019.”

the social capital theory, which considers social networks as valuable resources for civic and political engagement (Barret and Zani, 2015; Bourdieu, 1985; Coleman, 1988; Granovetter, 1973; Lin, 2001; OECD, 2013; Putnam, 2002). Putnam (2002) claims that social networks among individuals established within organizations affect civic orientation, specifically to produce trust and reciprocity, which subsequently leads to higher participation in politics and public affairs.

Based on those principles, various authors have defined the term of civic media focusing on its effects to create civic engagement and strengthen social movement's identity. According to Gordon and Mihailidis (2016) civic media is "the mediated practices of designing, building, implementing or using digital tools to intervene in or participate in civic life (pp.2-3)." Civic media tries to achieve "the common good" through actions, practices, mechanics and motivations benefiting civic communities and society at large. Jenkins (2006) argues that civic media is "any use of any medium which fosters or enhances civic engagement." However, it goes beyond news gathering and reporting (Jenkins, 2006), and it should not be confused with social media, which refers to Web 2.0 platforms and applications such as blogs or social network sites (Obar & Wildman 2015, p.745).

Furthermore, civic media are not just objects or texts. Their power lies in the fact that they represent "communities of practice", understood as a group of people formed around the use or production of media technologies (Gordon & Mihailidis, 2016, p.3). Other authors emphasized that civic media is the use of participatory media technologies for social change and social movements, which has become a routine and common practice as part of social movements by mainly calling for participation in the streets because it enables the possibility of calling a significant number of people (Zuckerman, 2016, pp.50-51). Costanza-Chock (2014, p.47) demonstrates that participatory and transformative media made by citizens, helps strengthen movement identity and success, as well as transform broader consciousness. Therefore, the civic media interconnection with civic/political engagement and social change is about the process and potential and not just about the outcomes. It is about the mechanics of acting in the world with the communication tools and conditions available (Gordon & Mihailidis, 2016).

In this study, as mentioned before, civic media consumption is defined as the political information consumption through pro-democracy alternative media platforms with a supportive position in social mobilization such as Stand News or In-Media, and through socio-political contacts on SNS such as student unions, pro-democracy organizations, NGOs or Umbrella Movement leaders. This definition is related to Putnam's (2002) analysis, which found that civic community involvement indicators such as, newspaper readership and being part of different associations reflected by, for example, voter turnout and political behavior can improve the efficiency of society by facilitating coordinated actions and social organization.

In Hong Kong, previous research found that during the Umbrella Movement, there was a positive impact of alternative media platforms and social media networks on participation (F. Lee 2015a, 2017; Lee & Chan, 2011), considering that alternative and social media play a crucial role in social mobilization facilitating political activism (Tang, 2019, p.196). Direct connections with political actors on social media and media literacy have been proved to be leading indicators of engagement and protest participation and support (Lee F. et al. 2016, pp.465-67). The calls for actions from alternative media platforms were found on Facebook pages and groups created for specific protests (Tang, 2019, p.190). They played a key role in the organization and mobilization of protesters and activists. They also served as key platforms to obtain

first-hand information since many activists and citizens became collaborators. Moreover, alternative online media use was positively related to the support of more radical attitudes (F. Lee 2019, p.228), while the Internet gave an alternative channel for public communication helping the protesters evade governmental control (Tsui, 2015, p.448). Similarly, socio-political contacts on SNS played an important role in calling for participation. Activists and protesters mainly used Facebook and Telegram platforms to communicate, while the use of social media for political news increased support for the Occupy Movement and reduced satisfaction with the Hong Kong Government (Lee, P. et al., 2015, p.370).

The main difference with the original definition of civic media and previous studies is the interrelation of the alternative media and socio-political contacts on SNS elements. Also, the emphasis on its potential on new forms and spaces of participation, considering that participation is related to behavior by denoting a higher degree of attachment and commitment to political affairs than civic and political engagement. As Dahlgren (2009, p.81) asserted it is “more than simply a feeling one has, it involves many forms of activity that often implies acts of communication.” The alternative media consumption and socio-political contacts elements were included as part of the independent variable because this interconnection increases the explanatory potential and the practical implications. The combination of both direct and indirect alternative media consumption helps to know more about “how social media and mobilization agents can either work together or become contradictory to each other” (Tang 2019, p.196). Similarly, based on the argument of Chan (2017), “alternative media and social media are important purveyors of information that can engender psychological antecedents of participation, which may, in turn, motivate individuals toward actual participation (p.675).”

Regarding the first element of the definition, alternative media are non-institutionalized platforms and any activity conducted out of the conventional or mainstream media framework (Atton, 2002; Downing, 2001). They challenge dominant political, economic, and media power (Lee F. 2019, p.176) and function as an attitude intensifier to facilitate social movement participation (Shen et al. 2020, pp.9-10). According to Meyers (2008, pp.375-377) there are four general trajectories for classifying a media outlet as alternative. First, alternative media operate on smaller budgets and they have a smaller size of the audience. Second, alternative media represent disenfranchised sectors of society and are employed by groups that tend to be excluded from mainstream political discourse due to race or political standpoints. Third, alternative media platforms or individual practitioners define their vision and practices through the negation of the ones embraced by mainstream media. Also, alternative media journalists seek alternative sources of information that are infrequently focused by mainstream media. Fourth, alternative media challenge the notion of journalism through a focus on the journalistic values, norms and practices. In the case of Hong Kong, Yung and Leung (2014, p.99) assume that alternative online media provides alternative information, serves as an alternative public sphere, a platform for social activists and civil society organizations, and it acts as an initiator of public discourse and an agent of civil society activism. Also, they are “more likely to appeal to the most politically sophisticated and critical citizens” (Leung & Lee 2014, p.354).

Regarding the second element of the definition, socio-political contacts on SNS. According to Granovetter (1973) there are two types of social ties, strong and weak. The strong ties are the ones among members of a group, particularly friendship or parental relationships such as family or friends. “Weak ties” are bonds that connect individuals of different groups or individuals who know each other but are not

necessarily close friends (Granovetter, 1973). The information regarding a mobilization or convincing other people to support it is possible by expanding the information through weak ties. These types of contacts play an important role in the transmission of information and the dynamics of social relationships because they provide us with information that we do not normally have access to in our close networks of friends and family (Rodríguez, 2004). Similarly, F. Lee et. al., (2011) argue that the Internet as a main way of interaction, has a great potential in the use of mediated communication in broadening people's social experiences and involvement which will further strengthen social ties. Therefore, this dissertation focuses on weak ties such as student leaders or civic/political organizations on SNS.

The Network Society theory helps to establish the connection between civic media and new forms and spaces of political participation because it argues that the Internet, new technologies and social networks are decisive tools that go beyond instrumentality. Although media and the Internet have no power themselves and cannot be a source of causation, users can take control of technology such as the Internet, and merge with doers because "Information technologies are processes to be developed" by individuals and groups (Castells, 2010, p.5). Also, the Network Society theory claims that the Internet and new technologies play an essential role in fostering participation, creating a sense of togetherness and free space of communication. The civil society living in places and localities aim at regaining control of the urban space and over the social interests embedded in the space of flows (the online space), which is the dominant space of power, ruling elites and their interests in society (Castells, 1996, pp. 453-458).

This is why occupied spaces have played a crucial role in the contemporary history of social change. They create a sense of community based on togetherness as a source of empowerment, considering that ICTs and communication networks can modify power connections, shape civil society and create public consciousness (Castells, 2015, pp.4-41). Accordingly, based on the Civic Media conceptualization and the Network Society theory this study suggests that civic media plays an essential role in acting as a motivator towards new forms and spaces of political participation. Civic media has important advantages to create public discourses and therefore empower civil society. One of the main reasons is that it is a source of non-hegemonic information that can help to confront political pressure, while creating a sense of community and togetherness.

3.3. Civic Media Consumption and 'Networked Dynamics' in the 'Inter-mobilization Period': The Four Stages of Social Movements Theory, Swidler's Cultural Theory and The Network Society Theory

This section explains how the Network Society theory, the Four Stages of Social Movement theory and Swidler's Cultural Sociological Concepts of 'Settled' and 'Unsettled' Periods are applied to the analytical framework of this dissertation, assuming that the online and offline spheres are connected in the 'inter-mobilization period.' Concretely, the Network Society theory provides the theoretical background regarding the connection between the virtual and physical spaces of participation during social mobilizations. The Four Stages of Social Movements and the Cultural theories, which are interrelated, provide the arguments regarding social movement's phases and the importance of studying the phenomena in a different stage.

The Network Society theory claims that social movements start and form on the Internet by for example making calls for participation and debating the strategies online.

But they need to step into the urban space to become visual, recognized and consolidated. This connection between the cyber space and the urban space, the form of current social movements, is what Castells (2010) calls the 'space of autonomy.' In the 'space autonomy' online and offline participation are connected and interrelated in the mobilization stage, as explained in chapter two. However, the concept of 'space of autonomy' does not include the connection between the online and offline forms and spaces of participation and the civic media impacts during the 'inter-mobilization period.' Therefore, this dissertation originally coined the term 'networked dynamics,' which refers to the connection and non-static complementarity between the virtual and physical forms and spaces of participation (online participation and offline willingness to participate in protests and political causes) that changes depending on the time frame of a social movement. Another important aspect of the Network Society theory is the transformation of time in two forms: simultaneity and 'timelessness' (Castells, 2010, p.491). Castells (2010) assumes that space organizes time and that the network society brings a new temporality "characterized by the breaking down of the biological and social rhythms (pp.442-492)." New communication technologies provide a sense of immediacy that breaks time barriers and provides greater flexibility, such as global instant information and live reporting (Castells, 2010, pp.490-492). The concept of 'timeless time' helps to understand the breakdown of life and protest cycles, and the continuation of social movements in a different stage, the 'inter-mobilization period.'

The Four Stages of Social Movements theory claims that social movements experience a process of emergence and collapse, being related to the classic concept of 'protest cycles,' as it was explained in chapter two. This theory limits the explanation of cases such as Hong Kong where the pro-democracy movement is a continuum and there is repetitive occurrence between protest events across time, meaning that the decline stage of a social movement does not necessarily mean the end of it. Swidler (1986) argues that strategies of action are cultural products, highlighting the role of rituals and 'settled periods,' which helped to define the 'inter-mobilization period,' as it was explained in chapter two. However, this dissertation does not focus on the causality of culture but on understanding the role of civic media as a key element to foster new forms and spaces of political participation across protest events. Swidler's Cultural theory is related to the Network Society theory because according to Castells (2015, p.257) occupied spaces create a free community of deliberation that becomes a political and symbolic public space. This symbolism is embedded in the virtual and physical dimensions of participation, based on individual values (Castells, 2015, p.257).

Hence, the temporal space frame - characterized by the continual oscillation between the mobilization and inter-mobilization periods - and the ebb and flow of intensity and participation over time can be a determining factor for the relationship between online and offline political participation. Also, the "space of autonomy," the hybrid space that connects networks on the Internet with the occupations occurring in the urban space emerges in moments of conflicts and peak moments of social movements. However, this study assumes that in the 'inter-mobilization period,' this dimension is divided into two dynamic realities (online and offline) that experience a direct impact from civic media. The next chapter will introduce the methodology of this dissertation, including the mixed methods approach utilized and the quantitative and qualitative methodologies in detail.

Chapter 4: Methodology

Media, communication and social movement studies include complex dynamics to analyze for scholars and researchers. The dynamic relationship between media and participation addressed in this dissertation require considering various factors, which are difficult to quantify. In order to deal with these difficulties, this study utilizes a mixed methods design - a combination of quantitative and qualitative data - that can capture the causality between civic media and new forms and spaces of political participation as well as, the insights of the phenomena. It has primary reliance on quantitative analysis. In line with Creswell et al. (2003, p.217) the purpose of the analysis is first to test variables with a large sample and subsequently, to explore more deeply during the qualitative phase (Creswell et al, 2003, p.217). The ongoing events and changing socio-political contexts require an integrated perspective of the case. This is why the combination of quantitative and qualitative methods can answer different aspects of the research questions proposed in this study and lead to a more holistic understanding of the studied phenomenon (Ayoub et al 2014, p.71). The following sections contain the explanation of the dissertation design and the quantitative and qualitative methods utilized.

4.1. Mixed Methods Design

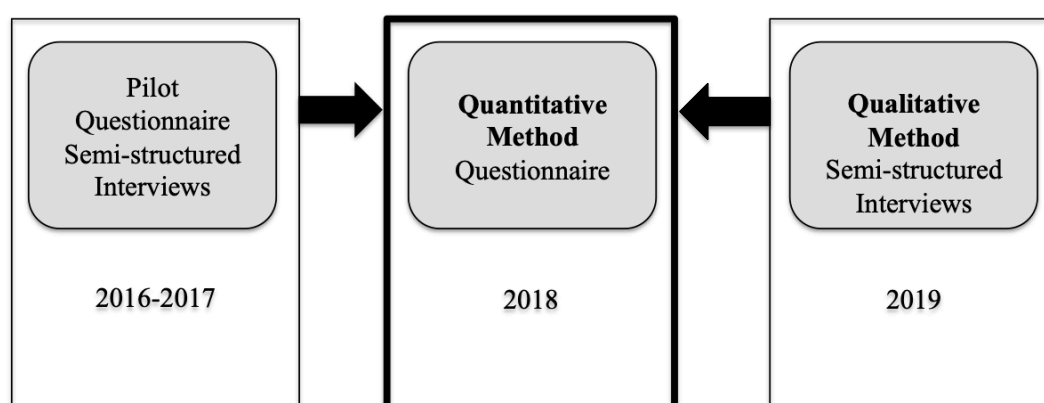
This dissertation utilizes the mixed methods analysis or triangulation approach with an explanatory sequential research orientation by combining quantitative and qualitative methods, data and analysis (Creswell & Clark 2011, pp.68-104; Onwuegbuzie & Teddlie, 2003, p.352; Sandelowski, 2003, p.322; Tashakkori & Teddlie, 1998, pp.17-18). The mixed methods approach is utilized during the interpretation stages of the research process to analyze a social, economic or political phenomenon (Creswell & Clark 2011, pp.66-68). In an explanatory sequential design the researcher follows various key stages. The quantitative results are used to plan the qualitative phase. In order to have additional insights of the case and to assist in explaining and interpreting the findings of a predominantly quantitative study, it utilizes qualitative data and results, integrating the two methods during the interpretation phase of the study (Creswell et al, 2003, pp.223-227). In other words, the qualitative methods are used to help explain quantitative findings.

This dissertation decided to use this approach because among a total of six major mixed methods, the explanatory sequential research design has two main strengths. It is the most straightforward one (Creswell et al, 2003, pp.223-227), and it can help explain the mechanisms among quantified variables (Ayoub et al 2014, p.69). Also, according to Creswell et al. (2003, p.211) mixing and using different kinds of methods, can neutralize or revoke certain methods' disadvantages and it can reinforce a study. For example, the quantitative method allows for reaching a higher number of sample sizes, proving a specific fact and it is anonymous in nature. However, with this method it is not possible to deepen in a socio-political reality, to revise the answers and neither to capture social change because individuals and groups are highly dynamic. Moreover, reaching pure randomization and avoiding biases is very difficult, especially when doing a social science study. The qualitative approach, which is based on observations, can help to reduce these disadvantages.

As it can be seen in figure 5, the data was collected through two methods: a quantitative method with a questionnaire addressed to Hong Kong under-graduate students and a qualitative method conducting various semi-structured interviews to

alternative media platforms' editors and student protesters. A pilot questionnaire (conducted in 2017) and some semi-structured interviews (conducted between 2016 and 2019) helped to build the final questionnaire in 2018. It should be highlighted that although the interviews from 2016 to 2017 were used to construct the final questionnaire conducted in 2018; they were also used in the interpretation of the quantitative results and to draw some of the final conclusions. This is why the semi-structured interviews done in 2019 together with the ones conducted between 2016 and 2017, helped to interpret the results of the quantitative analysis and the mechanisms and reasons of the variables.

Figure 5. Mixed Methods Approach



Source: Elaborated by the author based on Creswell et al. (2003, p.214).

4.2. Quantitative Method

The quantitative approach is a common method used to study the causality of the independent and dependent variables and associate ideas in media, communication and social movement studies (Balnaves & Caputi, 2006, p.229). It also helps explain the procedure of testing and confirming the hypotheses and research questions while assessing the relationship among variables (Creswell et al., 2003, p.220). Concretely, this dissertation utilizes a Multivariate Statistical Analysis because it allows concurrently analyzing variables (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2007, p.2). The following sections contain the details regarding 1) the data collection procedure and the online questionnaire, including the pilot and final questionnaires; 2) the selection criteria and justification of the sample (Hong Kong local under-graduate students); and 3) the data analysis details and multivariate statistical analysis, which include the following steps of the analysis: Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA), Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA), Validity and Reliability tests, and the Structural Equation Modelling (SEM) analysis.

4.2.1. Data Collection - Online Questionnaire

Surveys allow collecting data from people regarding their socio-economic background, motivations, beliefs, and behavior (Balnaves & Caputi, 2001, pp.75-76). Moreover, it is “a systematic method for gathering information” from a sample of individuals from a certain society, allowing to establish different labels and patterns that can indicate the attributes of the larger population (Groves et al., 2004, p.2). This study uses the online questionnaire for data collection. It is commonly known that the Internet and online questionnaire reduces the costs, time and accessibility of data collection,

making the analysis of vast populations possible (Balnaves & Caputi, 2006, p.103). Similarly, the online questionnaire is one of the most used methods in the social science field in order to understand how societies function and to test individuals and groups behaviours; especially in the cases when the object of study cannot be observed directly (Balnaves & Caputi, 2006, p.103; Groves et al., 2004, p.3).

4.2.1.1. Data Collection Procedure

Regarding the data collection procedure, a pilot questionnaire (see appendix 1) addressed to 60 Hong Kong students from the Department of Journalism at the Chinese University of Hong Kong (CUHK) in March 2017 was conducted to test the validity and reliability of the variables and to help design the final online questionnaire (see appendix 2). Two Professors were contacted in advance in order to allow the researcher of this dissertation to distribute the pilot questionnaire in hard copies after two of their classes. The researcher did not personally know either professors. However, they were introduced through two colleagues (two other PhD students) and kindly acceded to help. Answering the whole survey took 9 minutes on average and it had 76 percent completion rate. The students voluntarily responded to the questions. Once finished, the pilot questionnaire was submitted directly to the researcher in the classroom.

The final online questionnaire started in January 2018 and was finalized in March 2018, collecting a total of 545 respondents. The final number of validated answers was 506. It was developed for Hong Kong undergraduate students of three top publicly financed universities in Hong Kong, from a total of eight: The Chinese University of Hong Kong (CUHK), The University of Hong Kong (HKU) and the Hong Kong University of Science and Technology (HKUST). Regarding the survey procedure the questions were also validated after various discussions with colleagues and professors. Concerning the sample size for the analysis, although “the more respondent’s data you have, the better” (Foster et al. 2006, pp.73-74), Comrey and Lee (1992) claim that having 500 cases is appropriate. In addition, Tabachnick and Fidell (2007: 607) argue that having at least 300 cases for factor analysis is sufficient.

The survey contained eleven multiple-choice questions, including all four latent variables, six control variables and fourteen indicators or observable variables of the analysis. It took nine minutes on average to answer all of them. It should be mentioned that there was not any economic incentive offered to interviewees to answer the questions. Survey Monkey Inc.¹⁶, one of the most popular online survey tools, was used. The author of this dissertation designed the questionnaire, including number of questions, type, order and timing. Survey Monkey Inc. acted as a platform to collect, gather and store the answers, facilitating the link from which the respondents could access the questions of the survey. The interviewees were selected at university entrances and canteens (during weekdays from February to March 2018) and were asked face-to-face to answer the online questionnaire on a tablet. The students were approached by the researcher of this study and two student helpers who were assisting the investigator with the distribution of the questionnaire. The researcher provided the student helpers with clear indications and instructions. Those instructions were written in a document previously submitted online to them. In that document four key points were included: 1) the survey and dissertation topic explanation; 2) specification of the tasks including: that the answers were expected to be collected via tablet or phone, the area they had in charge, the necessity to fill in a brief form regarding the goals reached

¹⁶ Survey Monkey is an American company that allows users to create online surveys.

per day and the total number of respondents to gather per day; 3) the profile of respondents: Hong Kong local under-graduate students from different majors (in different faculties and schools) and an equal number of answers from men and women. Non-local students such as Mainland China students were also allowed; 4) place of data collection: canteen or school entrances from different faculties and schools.

The company's privacy policy and this study assured the anonymity of the respondents. First, the name was not asked in the survey and neither included in the system. Second, the system provided a secure personal account for the user where the questionnaire can be designed and data is collected and stored. Third, the researcher made an introductory statement in the survey clarifying that the data would just be used for research purposes. Before starting the survey all interviewees read the introductory part. Fourth, the researcher did ask questions regarding the socio-economic background of the respondents, but it did not ask any personal questions that could lead to their identification. The details of the questions are provided in section 5.2.

4.2.2. Sample Selection and Justification: Hong Kong Undergraduate Students

This study focuses on Hong Kong undergraduate and local students from three top universities (HKU, HKUST and CUHK). The main contextual reason is that the youth, local and educated, coming from different social classes and backgrounds, were the leading participants in the Umbrella Movement (C. Lee & Sing, 2019, p.11). For example, on September 26 2014, the HKFS and Scholarism's student leaders went to the frontlines in Civic Square where there were confrontations with the police and arrests. These hostilities engaged a large number of citizens on the streets. Student protesters and crowds pressured the Occupy Central with Love and Peace leaders to announce a civil disobedience action campaign on September 27 (C. Lee, 2019, pp.18-19).

Hong Kong university undergraduate students, in this study, refer to those who at the time of the survey were coursing their university bachelor's freshman, sophomore, junior or senior year, being between 18 and 24 years old. The age is an important reason for selection based on the idea that samples using percentages of different subgroups such as age, gender or race groups, among others, are frequent (Groves et al, 2004, p. 382). Also, according to the Census and Statistics Department of Hong Kong and the United Nations (UN) the youth label is considered to be between 15 and 24 years old. This is why Hong Kong undergraduate students are an important sector of the youth label, which represents 9 percent of Hong Kong's population from a total of approximately 7 million people (Censtatd, 2020). According to the UN (2020) as a category, the youth is more open to change than other fixed age-groups because it is understood as "a period of transition from the dependence of childhood to adulthood's independence," which varies in different individuals and regions around the world. However, "age is the easiest way to define this group, particularly in relation to education and employment, because 'youth' is often referred to a person between the ages of leaving compulsory education, and finding their first job" (UN, 2020). At the time of data collection in 2018, the respondents were between 14 and 20 years old when the Umbrella Movement protests were occurring in 2014. Moreover, they were between 12 and 18 years old during the 2011-2012 protests against the Moral and National Education (M&N), which highly influenced the Umbrella Movement (C. Lee, 2019, p.8).

This age group in this study is relevant for various reasons. First, because of the historical protest events they were part of as a generation, in this case the Umbrella Movement. This is related to the fact that in any of those dates they were not too young

not to be influenced by political ideas. Generally, it is during the teenage age when you may start becoming interested in politics or aware of it. In fact, a high number of high school and university students were at the heart and participated in the frontline during the Umbrella Movement in 2014 (C. Lee & Sing, 2019, p.11). Moreover, some of the most well-known activists such as Agnes Chow or Joshua Wong were teenagers when they got involved in activism. Second, because at the time of both protests (2011-2012 and 2014) they were not workers yet so there is a continuity in the self definition as students between both protests and until the date of data collection in 2018. Third, they reflect the future, aims and dynamics of the Hong Kong society. As Loader (2007, p.17) points out young people are the most prominent example of digital era trends and are the first to experience conditions arising from global production, communication and consumption. At an international level, according to Wike and Castillo (2018), in 14 different countries, although young people voted less they are more likely to participate in posting comments online about social or political issues, mainly motivated by freedom of speech topics. In Hong Kong, according to the Centre for Communication and Public Opinion (2019) the youth using social media as the major source of public affairs information are significantly more dissatisfied with the performance of the HKSAR Government and significantly trust the HKSAR Government less; while according to the Centre for Quality of Life (2019), the youth feel powerless in politics and they feel their voices are not being heard. Fourth, young people are especially responsive to the need of democratic reform, conscious of their Hong Kong local identity and differences with Mainland China (Wang, 2017).

The second focus is on Hong Kong local students, excluding the ones originally from Mainland China and other countries such as international exchange students for various reasons. First, because the pro-democracy movement in Hong Kong is highly related to an intensifying feeling of the identification as a Hong Konger in a context of increasing localism as a political agenda and political identity. This rise has been the major transformative impact of the Umbrella Movement especially among the youth. Second, this dissertation focuses on part of the local 'Generation Hong Kong (HK)' because according to Bland (2017: 5) the 'Generation HK' is composed of young people that have grown up in post-handover Hong Kong. They see themselves as Hong Kongers and face political, economic and social uncertainty, while they are "caught between two worlds, struggling to define themselves, their city and their future." In this generation Bland (2017) includes, among others, teenage activists who became politicians and leaders from the Umbrella Movement that are seeking identity under an increasing influence and control from Mainland China. All these reasons matter for this study because they influence participation identifying the Hong Kong locals as a key group.

The HKU, HKUST and CUHK universities were chosen because they are UGC-funded universities. According to the Quacquarelli Symonds (QS) World University rankings in 2020, they are three of the top publicly financed universities in Hong Kong and ranked top 100 in the world. Additionally, they are among the best in their areas of study. The HKU for Social sciences and medicine, the CUHK for arts and humanities and the HKUST for engineering and technology. Moreover, they have different levels of internationalization (Times Higher Education, 2020). Also, the CUHK and HKU's Students Unions were part of the Hong Kong Federation of Students (HKFS) (Lo, 2015:118), one of the organizational institutions of the Umbrella Movement. Principally the CUHK had students who were more politically active, for instance, Tommy Cheung Sau-Ying, the president of the CUHK Student Unions at that moment, was a former member of Scholarism, another student group leading the demonstrations in 2014.

University students were at the front of a five-day class boycott. High-school students, supporters of the Occupy Central with Love and Peace campaign, and other activists and citizens also participated in the boycott. Once it ended, around 13,000 students started to move their protest from the Chinese University campus to a locale close to the government headquarters (C. Lee, 2019, pp.18-19). HKUST is a less politically active university. All these reasons contributed to collecting a wider spectrum of the sample.

4.2.3. Data Analysis – Multivariate Statistics

Multivariate statistics are used for analyzing complicated data sets when there are many independent variables and/or dependent variables correlated with each other to differing degrees. These techniques are becoming increasingly prevalent to explain the contemporary world. They are also commonly used in the social and political sciences because they offer understanding of the relationships among variables that cannot be measured with univariate methods (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2007, pp.1-5). Therefore, it is the appropriate method to be applied in this dissertation's empirical analysis. In order to test the model, the following steps were followed: Exploratory and Confirmatory Factor Analyses (EFA and CFA), reliability and validity tests and the SEM causal model.

4.2.3.1. Exploratory and Confirmatory Factor Analysis

Factor Analysis (FA) is a statistical technique applied to a set of 'observed variables' in order to find out which ones are correlated with one another, forming coherent subsets that are independent of one another. These variables are integrated into factors. Factors are also known as 'latent variables' or unobserved variables, which cannot be measured directly such as perceptions. 'Observed variables,' also known as indicators, can be measured directly such as the frequency of an action. Hence, FA is used when the researcher wants to understand a central structure with an existing theory as well as, to develop and assess hypotheses (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2007, pp.26-607). There are two major types of FA: Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA) and Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA). EFA is associated with theory development and CFA is associated with theory testing (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2007: 609-610).

Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA) is a statistical approach that determines the correlation among the non-nominal/categorical variables in a dataset, providing a factor structure (a grouping of variables based on strong correlations). Its main purpose is to reduce a large number of questionnaire items (or variables) to a few components (Foster et al., 2006, pp.83-608). This approach provides a tool for consolidating variables, generating hypotheses about underlying processes, and identifying the hypothetical constructs in a set of data, while preparing the variables to be used for the Structural Equation Modelling (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2007, p.609). To implement factor analysis the data should meet fundamental requirements: a) they should be measured on an interval scale using Likert type of response; b) they should have respondent's variation in their scores on the variables; c) the scores on the variables should have linear correlations with each other; d) the scores on the variables should be normally distributed; and e) there should be a minimum of three variables for each factor in order to be able to have correlations and measure the factor (Foster et al. 2006, pp.72-74; Kline, 1994). The fitness of an EFA is evaluated by the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO)¹⁷ measure of sampling adequacy and Barlett's test of sphericity¹⁸ to show the

¹⁷ It ranges from 0 to 1. KMO should be 0.50 and above to be acceptable.

¹⁸ It should be 0.01/0.05 or less.

appropriateness of the data set for factor analysis (Foster et al., 2006; Tabachnick & Fidell, 2007).

Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) is the next step after EFA, being a more sophisticated technique including multiple regression analyses. It is used in the advanced stages of the research procedure to test a theory about latent means such as the existence of specific factors, having strong similarities to Structural Equation Modelling (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2007, p.609). One of the main goals is to confirm the hypothetical constructs in a data set, verifying the factor structure of the dataset identified in the EFA. In other words, it tests if the observed or directly measurable variables explain the latent variables, the ones that cannot be measured directly (Foster et al. 2006, p.83). The second goal is to test the assumed relations, based on the theory, between a group of latent variables and their observed variables. Section 4.2.4.4. describes in detail the measurement of CFA.

4.2.3.2. Reliability and Validity Tests

Reliability and validity tests are also crucial steps required to prepare the data for SEM. They evaluate the measuring instrument. According to Blunch (2013, p.31), “the reliability of an instrument is its ability to give identical results in repeated measurements under identical conditions.” In other words, the reliability of a measuring instrument is its consistency and capacity of reproducibility. The Cronbach’s alpha coefficient was used to assess reliability, which measures the internal consistency between items in a scale (Goforth, 2015). This dissertation computed Cronbach’s alpha in SPSS. Similarly, the Construct Validity (CV), which includes convergent validity and discriminant validity tests, was accessed during the Confirmatory Factor Analysis. It tests that all variables correlate with each other within the factor, meaning that the observed variables explain well the latent variable to which they correspond. The following measures are necessary for establishing validity: Composite reliability (CR)¹⁹, Average Variance Extracted (AVE)²⁰, Maximum Shared Variance (MSV)²¹ and, Average Shared Variance (ASV) (Hair et al. 2019; Tabachnick & Fidell, 2007: 728).

4.2.3.3. Structural Equation Modelling (SEM)

Structural Equation Modelling (SEM) is a collection of statistical techniques (confirmatory and multivariate) that allow a set of relationships between one or more independent variables (IVs) and one or more dependent variables (DVs) to be examined simultaneously; and it evaluates whether the model provides a reasonable fit to the data and the contribution of each of the IVs to the DVs (Hair et al., 2019, p.603; Tabachnick & Fidell, 2007, p.26). It is used extensively in the social sciences and other fields where a number of complex relationships must be examined efficiently, for example assumptions regarding human behavior (Foster et al. 2006, pp.103-104). One of the main advantages is that it facilitates to address “a multi-variate research problem with a single analysis” (Hair et al., 2019, p.604). Another advantage is that the technique is the most flexible statistical approach using the General Linear Model (GLM) (Foster et al, 2006, p.13).

It is also referred to as causal modelling, causal analysis or path analysis. Similar to factor analysis, some of the variables are latent and others are directly observed and

¹⁹ Each construct should be higher than 0.7

²⁰ It should be higher than 0.5

²¹ The MSV should be less than the AVE.

comparable to multiple regression, the goal is to study the relationship among many variables. Path diagrams are fundamental to SEM because they allow the researcher to diagram the hypothesized model as a set of relationships (Tabachnick and Fidell, 2006, p. 677). Large sample sizes, equal or higher to 200 observations ($N \geq 200$) should be used. Most sources recommend 15 cases per predictor, but the number of observations is dependent on the total of existent variables (Foster et al. 2006: 105). Another important element is that the causal relationships between latent variables are based on previous theories and assumptions that help to formulate the path model. In this dissertation, SEM is used to model the assumption that X (the independent variable is civic media) causes Y (the dependent variable is news forms and spaces of participation and networked dynamics).

4.2.3.4. Model Fit Indices

Model fit indices evaluate the Goodness-of-fit (GOF) of the CFA and SEM model. The GOF “indicates how well the user-specified model mathematically reproduces the observed covariance matrix among the indicator items” (Hair et al. 2019, p.635). The main indices are: Chi-square (X^2), P-value, Comparative Fit Index (CFI)²², Tucker Lewis Index (TLI); Goodness-of-Fit index (GFI), Adjusted Goodness of Fit Index (AGFI), Root Mean Squared Residual (RMR) and Root Mean Square Error of Approximation (RMSEA) (Foster et al., 2006, pp.109-110; Hair et al. 2019, pp.635-639). Table 4.1. summarizes the model fit indices, including their definition, for this dissertation with higher number of 250 respondent sample ($N > 250$), having between 12 and 30 variables (Hair et al., 2019, p.642).

Table 1. Model Fit Indices

Measure	Definition	Threshold
X^2	The fundamental measure of statistical differences between the observed and estimated covariance matrices.	Significant p-values expected For models with more than 400 cases the chi square is almost always statistically significant
P-CLOSE	The probability of obtaining test results as the ones observed in the study.	>0.05
CFI	It is an incremental fit index that is an improved version of the normed fit index (NFI).	Above .92
TLI	It is a comparison of the normed chi-square values for the null and specified model.	Above .92
GFI	It is an statistic sensitive to sample size	Above .92

²² The primary measurement when two or more models are compared to see which one provides the best fit to the data (Foster et al., 2006, pp.109-110).

AGFI	It tests differing degrees of freedom available	>0.80
RMSEA	It is a measure that attempts to correct for tendency of the X ² GOF test statistic to reject models with large samples or a large number of observed variables.	<0.07 with CFI of 0.92 or higher
SRMR	It is an absolute measure of fit useful for comparing fit across models.	<0.08 or less (with CFI above .92)

Source: Elaborated by the author based on Hair et al. (2019, p.642) and Foster et al. (2006, p.109).

4.3. Qualitative Method

This dissertation uses the qualitative method and interviews' data to see if actors behave as the theory predicts (Van Evera, 1997, p.29) and to contrast and reinforce the examination of the quantitative results (Ayoud et al, 2014, p.87). The qualitative method and analysis has an “interpretative paradigm” meaning that it focuses on subjective experiences and how individuals perceive and give meaning to those experiences (Starman, 2013, p.30). There are various advantages and strengths of using a qualitative method analysis, considering that the quantitative methodology does not include the observation of human behavior in day-to-day situations. First, it includes the participants' point of view, the researcher's observations, and an explanation and interpretation of the social problem, from the individuals or groups' perspective (Creswell, 2007, p.37).

Second, it enables direct access and examines diverse social realities (Silverman, 2015, p.113). Third, it is useful to approach an individual's attitudes and values, which most of the time cannot be detected in a questionnaire (Byrne, 2004, p.182). Fourth, it is a flexible process. Fifth, the qualitative analysis “can offer practitioners new resources with which to assess their own practice” (Bloor, 2004). The following sections contain the details regarding 1) data collection and the usage of in-depth semi-structured interviews with open-ended questions, as well as the data collection procedure; 2) the participants selection criteria and justification of the interviews to alternative media editors and university student's protesters; 3) the type of questions and established themes and; 4) the data analysis procedure based on a descriptive coding.

4.3.1. Data Collection – In-depth Semi-structured Interviews

In-depth interviews are a technique extensively used in social sciences to collect data regarding the “micro-dynamics” of individuals, groups or events (Blee & Taylor, 2002, p.95). This refers to the fact that the researcher can capture the insider's perspective and provide details, while testing assumptions (Leech, 2002, p.665). Similarly, by asking the interviewees to talk about certain themes it allows the researcher to gather their reflections, being a fundamental tool for generating empirical knowledge (Della Porta, 2010). This dissertation utilizes in-depth semi-structured interviews, which requires the researcher to direct the respondent to the topic that matters for the study (Della Porta, 2014). When conducting these types of interviews, the researcher complies with a pre-established procedure (Rapley, 2004). It is important

to have a plan for how the answers will be coded in order to assure that the responses cover all required aspects (Leech, 2002, p.668); but, with flexibility to enable interviewees to respond extensively (Robins, 2015, p.126). At the same time, researchers require some rapport with interviewees and a clear understanding of the project (Silverman, 2015, p.110).

4.3.1.1. Sampling

In qualitative research, the sampling procedure does not follow the criteria of representativity of quantitative research, but it follows different standards in relation to the theoretical model and the feasibility to access the interviewees. The choice of interviewees has two categories: informers (experts in an area or privileged witnesses of an event) and participants (people that belong to the population to be analyzed) (Della Porta, 2014, pp.240-241). This dissertation chose the category of participants because the individuals and groups interviewed are significant for the study. The number of interviews can vary depending on the availability of resources and time and there are not an established number of interviews in qualitative methods. This aspect is different from the quantitative analysis in which the higher the number the better. The criterion most often used is that of “saturation of knowledge” (Weiss, 1994, p.21).

According to this approach, the researcher stops conducting interviews when encountering diminishing returns, obtaining information that is superfluous or inessential, and when the new information and data obtained with the interviews does not provide new information and knowledge to the researcher in order to “justify the time and cost of the interview” (Weiss, 1994, p.21). In line with this approach, this dissertation decided to conduct a total of ten interviews. It utilized a purposive sampling having the goal to access a specific population to obtain effective data. As mentioned before, the participants were chosen because they were significant for the study and because the qualitative analysis needs to serve to interpret the quantitative analysis. Similarly, the participant’s selection gives two perspectives (the alternative media editors and the student protesters) that are fundamental to understanding the relationship between civic media and participation.

4.3.1.2. Data Collection Procedure

In this study, ten semi-structured in-depth interviews were conducted in Hong Kong face-to-face with: a) three Chief Editors from alternative media platforms: In-Media in January 2017 and Radical HK and Worker News in June 2019; and, b) seven university student protesters, who are part of the Umbrella Movement generation, between 2016 and 2019. In all cases, the dates of data collection coincide with various academic activities performed by the researcher such as attending international conferences, seminars or research schools programs, as well as major protest events that the researcher wanted to observe for the purpose of this dissertation. The place of the interviews was chosen based on the participant’s preference and convenience. The length of the interviews was around an hour for each. All interviews were conducted in English. The first step was gaining rapport with the interviewees by adopting an “ethnographic style of interviewing” (Allen, 2017). In other words, the researcher explored the world of the respondent by acting natural and appearing to be less knowledgeable than the interviewee regarding the particular topic, while maintaining the utmost professionalism. Moreover, the researcher explained the project before starting. A verbal consent and agreement was established after the researcher informed

the interviewees that their answers would be only used for research purposes, their answers would be confidential and their names would not be revealed.

As shown in Table 2, an interview with one In-Media editor was conducted face-to-face on January 23, 2017 in the alternative media’s platform office. During that month in Hong Kong no major incidents, events or protests were registered. However, 2017 was a year influenced by the results of the 2016 Legco Elections held in September 2016, which had a high turn out rate of almost 60 percent of the population and the emergence of new, political groups formed by Umbrella Movement young activists. The researcher contacted the In-Media editor after participating in a Winter School²³ hosted by the School of Journalism and Communication at the Chinese University of Hong Kong between January 16 and 21, 2017. There was an arranged group visit to the platform office, where the editor explained the profile and goals of In-Media to a small group of 10 participants. After this first contact and once the program finished, the researcher settled an individual interview with the editor. The interviewee did not want to be recorded and thus, the researcher took notes of the interview.

On June 27, 2019, two semi-structured interviews with the Chief-editors of Worker News and Radical HK were conducted face-to-face, during the first phase of the Anti-ELAB Movement. It was one day before the celebration of the G20 Osaka summit, and various groups and activists in Hong Kong such as the pro-democracy organization Civil Human Rights Front (CHRF) were organizing meetings and protests in order to raise global awareness regarding the political situation in Hong Kong. One of the interviews was conducted in the alternative media’s office and the other one in a cafeteria in Kowloon area²⁴. An Umbrella Movement activist who was part of the CUHK Student Union introduced both interviewees. The researcher met the intermediary at the Winter School mentioned above in 2017. Both interviews were recorded and transcribed.

Table 2. Overall View of Interviews - Alternative Media Editors

Interviewee	Type of media	Date	Place
A. Editor In-Media	Alternative media	January, 2017	Media office
B. Chief-editor Worker News	Alternative media	June, 2019	Media office
C. Chief-editor Radical HK	Alternative media	June, 2019	Cafeteria, Kowloon

As shown in Table 3, seven university students who were part of the Umbrella Movement generation from the CUHK, HKU and HKUST were interviewed, between 2016 and 2018. Six interviews with university student activists were conducted face-to-face and one interview was conducted online. Two of them, apart from being student activists, were organizers. Also, in all cases they participated in the Umbrella Movement, while two of them also participated in the Anti-ELAB Movement. Concretely, two members from the CUHK student union were interviewed in May 2016

²³ “Media activism and postcolonial futures” winter school was organized by the Centre for Chinese Media and Comparative Communication Research (C-Center), the Social Science Research Council (SSRC) and the International Institute for Asian Studies (IIAS).

²⁴ Kowloon is located on the north of Hong Kong Island, in front of Victoria Harbour. It is the most densely populated area in Hong Kong.

in a bar located in Kowloon. Two student activists from the Umbrella Movement were interviewed on June 2017 in a cafeteria located in Central²⁵ and Tai Po Tsai.²⁶ Another student activist from the Umbrella Movement was interviewed on September 2018 online. Regarding the respondents from 2016, the researcher went to Hong Kong to attend an international conference in 2016 and met two students who kindly accepted to answer some questions. For the respondents from 2017 and 2018, the same contact that the researcher met at the Winter School mentioned above in 2017, was interviewed and additionally they introduced another interviewee. In June 2019, two face-to-face interviews with student activists from the Anti-ELAB movement in Hong Kong were conducted during the Legco protests that occurred in June 2019. The researcher went to the frontline of the protests and randomly chose two of the participants. After a self-introduction and the explanation of the study project, the researcher asked them questions until the police came and the researcher had to leave the area to avoid any personal risk. In all cases, the interviewees did not want to be recorded and thus, the researcher took notes of the interviews.

Table 3. Overall View of Interviews - University Student's Protesters

Interviewee	Profile	Date	Place
A. Student protester (UM)	University student protester and organizer from the CUHK Student Union	May, 2016	Bar, Kowloon
B. Student protester (UM)	University student protester and organizer from the CUHK Student Union	May, 2016	Bar, Kowloon
C. Student protester (UM)	University student protester from CUHK	June, 2017	Cafeteria, Central
D. Student protester (UM)	University student protester from HKUST	June, 2017	Cafeteria, Tai Po Tsai
E. Student protester (UM)	University student protester from HKU	September, 2018	Online
F. Student protester (UM and Anti-ELAB)	University student protester from CUHK	June, 2019	LegCo protest, Central
G. Student protester (UM and Anti-ELAB)	University student protester from CUHK	June, 2019	LegCo protest, Central

Note¹: UM is the abbreviation of Umbrella Movement.

Note²: Anti-ELAB is the abbreviation of Anti-Extradition Law Movement.

Note³: LegCo is the abbreviation of Legislative Council of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region.

4.3.2. Participants Selection and Justification: Alternative Media Editors and University Students Protesters

There are various reasons to interview alternative media editors and university student's protesters. First, the nature and dynamics of the phenomenon studied requires a number of different types of data. Second, the independent variable includes the elements of alternative media and socio-political contacts. The interviews inform about the role and perceptions of alternative media and student protesters' behaviour regarding civic media consumption and participation. Moreover, the interviews show on

²⁵ Central is located on the north of Hong Kong Island. It is the financial and business district of Hong Kong.

²⁶ Tai Po Tsai is an area and a Village close to the Hong Kong University of Science and Technology.

one hand the “doers” of civic media perspective and on the other hand, the “consumers” of civic media perspective, considering that this relationship can be reversed. The consumers can also become doers. The following sections will explain the profile of these two groups of interviewees and the reasons of selection in each case.

4.3.2.1. Alternative Media Editors

Three alternative media platforms were selected for various reasons. First, the alternative media consumption is one of the elements in the civic media concept. Second, they offer the opportunity to capture the “real story behind the computer screens” of alternative media platforms, including the organizing, the networks, the technology, the infrastructure and the staff (Atton, 2002, p.79). Third, they have similarities and divergences among them and they cover three key dimensions in the media landscape in Hong Kong: a) the social protests coverage, b) the press and media freedom issue and, c) the alternative media identity. Regarding their similarities²⁷, they all have in common being relatively progressive media with strong aims, with the commitment of being independent from the hegemonic power coming from the government, corporations and mainstream media. They are originally focused on grassroots movements, defining themselves as an activist and community media, with a small team of volunteer reporters and activists. They have a leftist orientation and aim to show an alternative perspective of reality and contribute to social change. They collaborate and have built an essential network within various NGOs and activists.

Regarding the differences, In-Media is part of the first wave of alternative media in Hong Kong, which emerged in 2004 (F. Lee, 2019). Workers News and Radical HK are part of the second wave of alternative media in Hong Kong, after 2012 (F. Lee, 2019). Since then there has been increasing self-censorship among journalists, decreasing spaces of free expression in the mainstream media, the rise of social media as platforms for political communication and the increasing of social protests in Hong Kong (F. Lee, 2019, pp.178-179). It is acknowledged by the author that the three alternative media platforms analyzed represent a small portion of the overall alternative media landscape and community in Hong Kong and worldwide. However, their profile, background and characteristics make them enlightening in order to explore alternative media’s role and relationship with civil society in contemporary Hong Kong, in the short-term and long-term. They are informative interviews that help to understand the socio-political and media and communication insights. The following sections will explain the profile and characteristics of each media and the reasons for being selected.

4.3.2.1.1. Hong Kong In-Media

Hong Kong In-Media is a Hong Kong-based alternative media, founded in the second half of 2004. It is one of the oldest and the most influential politically left independent and citizen online media organizations in Hong Kong, specializing in urban issues, grassroots movements, advocacy news reporting, current affairs commentaries and citizen reportage. It started as a blog for activists. The co-founders aimed to create a public platform free from political intervention and commercial influence to promote democracy and freedom of speech in Hong Kong (Iam-Chong, 2019, p.58). Based on

²⁷ This information has been extracted from both in-depth interviews and the manifesto and profile written on their official websites.

their website²⁸ and the interview conducted in this study, its main goals are: a) financial and political independence; b) media activism; c) to raise the voices of marginalized groups by the mainstream media and increase the discussion among civil society; d) to promote democracy and social movements by raising awareness among the public and facilitating democratic deliberation, and; e) create resources for civil society development.

Hong Kong In-Media has been playing a unique role as a comprehensive online archival center and reference for progressive social movements in Hong Kong. It brought together intellectual resources from different social groups: media workers, activists, university students, citizen journalists, grassroots citizenry, researchers, educators and policy advocates. Besides full-time staff and citizen journalists, Hong Kong In-Media also relies on freelancers for news reporting (Iam-Chong, 2019, p.58). In 2017, they had 50 to 60 members. The organization has also collaborated with leading NGOs and foundations in other countries. They have overseas collaborations with for example, civil Media Taiwan. Moreover, it has been engaging in various education and training programs to promote citizen journalism, as well as raise the awareness of political participation among citizens, especially the youth (Iam-Chong, 2019, p.58). Regarding their readers profile, in 2017 they had a 10-20 percent readership from Taiwan, and the rest mostly from Hong Kong. Most of them are young people (from 20 to 40 years old) and an equal number of males and females. Most of the articles are written in Cantonese. Regarding their financing methods, they mainly rely on donations and contributors. They also rely on volunteers. During the Umbrella Movement, HK In-Media received considerable support from Hong Kong citizens, especially from young people. Concerning their digital profile/presence, they have an official website, Facebook, Twitter, Telegram and Instagram account as well as a YouTube channel.

4.3.2.1.2. Worker News

Worker News was founded in 2013. They mainly focus on the working-class and grassroots movements. Their main goals - stated by the chief editor during the interview and also stated on their website²⁹ - are a) to engage, inform and empower the working-class community in Hong Kong by helping them know more about their rights and working conditions as well as; b) encourage student organizations and other sectors to participate in strikes. They interview activists, focus on reporting life stories and follow up on specific protests, and marginalized issues such as the cleaning workers strikes, Hong Kong migrant workers strikes and labour movements. They define themselves as an activist and community media, with a small team (1 to 5) of volunteer reporters and activists. They have a leftist view and aim to show an alternative perspective of reality. They collaborate and have built an important network within various NGOs in Hong Kong. The profile of readers is young (from 20 to 40 years old), with a similar number of male and female, mostly from Hong Kong, Taiwan and in a lower scale, from Mainland China³⁰. Most articles are written in Cantonese, although 5

²⁸ The researcher asked for the information in the interview that could be collected on their Website (<https://www.inmediahk.net>) in order to “double-check the veracity and accuracy of the respondent” (Leech, 2002, p.666).

²⁹ Available at <http://wknews.org>.

³⁰ Despite the Chinese Government’s tight economic/political control and censorship, many Chinese netizens use VPN services that allow them to pass over the Great Firewall. While they are connected to a VPN, they can all have information and data traffic going through it.

percent are written in English. Regarding their financing methods, they pay for their own membership fee while relying on donations from the public and small project funds. However, they do not want to depend on crowdfunding as a source of income since they believe it would restrict their independence due to demands and expectations from possible donors. Concerning their digital profile/presence, they have an official website, Facebook and Twitter account as well as a YouTube channel. They are most active on their official website and Facebook account.

4.3.2.1.3. Radical HK

Radical HK News was established in 2015. They focus on various working-class and grassroots movements, the “land justice cause”³¹ and the hearing challenged community/sign language community in Hong Kong. For example, they provide simultaneous sign language translation in some events and focus on showing the situation of different groups based on life stories from fishermen, farmers or restaurant workers, among others. They have four primary purposes - stated by the chief editor during the interview and also stated on their website³² a) to record the issues of the working class, b) make marginal issues visual, c) create a database based on their investigations and the reporting from NGOs, and d) help to organize the movements related to the working class in Hong Kong.

They define themselves as activist and community media, with a small team (1 to 5) of volunteer reporters and activists. They collaborate and have built an important network within various NGOs in Hong Kong. The profile of readers is young (from 20 to 40 years old), with a similar number of male and female, mostly from Hong Kong, Malaysia and in a lower scale, from Mainland China and Taiwan. Regarding their financing methods, the platform relies on donations from the public when they need some specific materials such as cameras or computers. They also rely on crowdfunding when necessary. Concerning their digital profile/presence, they have an official website, Facebook, Twitter, Telegram and Instagram account as well as a YouTube channel. They are most active on their YouTube channel, Facebook account and the official website.

4.3.2.2. University Student Protesters

The participants of the interviews were all local undergraduate students from the CUHK, HKU and HKUST part of the Umbrella generation. These characteristics and profile follow the same selection and justification reasons as the sample for the quantitative analysis explained in section 4.2.2. The difference in this section is that the participants were activists and protesters during the Umbrella Movement and in two cases, also took part in the Anti-ELAB Movement. Similarly, there are four main interrelated reasons to select university student protesters for the interviews regarding their local, regional and international characteristics and role. First, student protesters have a specific potential to be one of the most highly mobilized groups in society because they are part of organizations and student associations. This reinforces their social and political engagement (Weiss & Aspinall, 2012, pp.12-13). For that reason, university student’s protesters continue to be an influence that brings about and

³¹ This cause is based on the preservation of the natural environment, the right of accommodation for everyone, the eradication of real estate control, the defense of indigenous villagers and developers and the democratic land planning, among other objectives.

³² Available at <https://radicalhk.com>.

encourages protest culture around the world (Gaffre et al, 2014). Second, they have been showing a major presence in the protests occurring since the 70s in East Asia. Nonetheless, these movements have received less academic attention than the ones occurring in Europe or the US (Weiss & Aspinall, 2012).

Third, more locally, Hong Kong students were the precursors of the pro-democracy movement in the 1970s, and after 1989 an important number of Hong Kongers advocated more actively for democratization. Despite this fact, Hong Kong students have been struggling to influence the political development of the state due to Hong Kong's colonial history and its complex relationship with China, as well as the decline in their collective identity as an independent strategic group in the 70s. Collective and territorial identity problems caused the division of the student movement. Some students were having more nationalistic feelings sympathizing with Mainland China, while others started to have interest in local governance (Ortmann, 2012, pp.85-97). However, after 1997, pro-democracy student leaders adopted an increasingly contentious stand against the Hong Kong government; while since the 2003 protests against Article 23 and the Umbrella Movement in 2014 the student movement has taken a major importance (Lee & Chan, 2011; Lui et al., 2019).

Fourth, the uniqueness of the participants is of genuine interest for the researcher in order to gain an understanding of university student protesters' civic media consumption, online participation and the willingness to participate in protests and activism. It also helps to explore how being part of the Umbrella Movement generation can affect their civic media consumption habits and political behaviors, as well as why civic media can foster participation. Similarly, they can provide more insights regarding their protest experiences and future visions, which can help the researcher to obtain a deeper comprehension of the research topic. As Aberbach & Rockman (2002) assert "respondents are selected on the basis of what they might know to help the investigator fill in pieces of a puzzle (p.673)." Therefore, Hong Kong university student protesters are an essential group to analyze because they have been at the frontline (as participants and organizers) of major protest events in recent years in Hong Kong. Also, they are of a great interest in media and social movement studies in contemporary East Asia in order to extend the knowledge and interest in the media and social movement fields.

4.3.3. Type of Questions and Established Themes

This dissertation utilizes semi-structured interviews with open-ended questions. In the qualitative method, the process of question construction is more flexible than the quantitative one but, it requires having a list of areas and themes to cover and it entails a meticulous preparation based on the theory and relevant studies on the field (Della Porta, 2014, pp.235-236). These themes were transformed into questions. Afterwards, the interviews' grid was tested with pilot interviews with two Hong Kong exchange students in Japan. This helped the researcher to paraphrase some difficult and sensitive questions, as well as to organize and amplify the scheme. Various types of questions were included during the interviews: a) socio-biographical questions, including basic information of the respondents such as age; b) example questions asking for concrete specifications of a topic or fact; c) prompts, which helped to redirect the interviewees talk, including the moments when the information that is giving is not relevant for the study (Leech, 2002, pp.665-666). Regarding the order of the inquiries, simple questions such as age or background were asked at the beginning of the interview, difficult questions were asked in the middle and the routine ones at the end (Della Porta, 2014, p.235).

The established themes/topics and questions of the interviews are divided into two groups of interviewees: alternative media editors and university student protesters. These are the established themes/topics for the alternative media editors interviews that were conducted in 2017 and 2019: 1) self-perception and mission; 2) present and future of alternative media role in Hong Kong; 3) press and media freedom and self-censorship issues; 4) discourse creation and political engagement and participation; 5) readers and readership; 6) relationship and collaboration with activists and civic groups regionally and internationally; 7) impacts on mainstream media news agenda; and 8) working and financing methods.

These are the themes/topics covered in the interviews to university students protesters that were conducted from 2016 to 2019: 1) social and alternative media usage; 2) contacts on SNS; 3) online participation; 4) past, present and future protests and political causes participation; 5) communication tactics during and after the Umbrella Movement; 6) perception about the political situation; and 7) perception about the future of Hong Kong. The interview guide, including all questions and established themes that were asked to the interviewees, is attached in the appendix 4.

4.3.4. Data Analysis – Case Study Approach and Descriptive Coding

The data analysis process started by transcribing the interviews in the two cases that the interviews could be recorded (WK News and Radical HK), and by organizing the notes collected in the cases the interviews could not be recorded (in all the rest of cases). Subsequently, the transcribed interviews and notes were coded and categorized (Tonkiss, 1998). Data needs to be organised and coded to allow the key issues, both derived from the literature and emerging from the dataset, to be extracted. An initial coding frame helped to capture these issues (Crowe et al. 2011). Having a previous plan with established themes in the questions for how the answers would be coded, helped to cover all aspects and facilitated the coding procedure (Leech, 2002, p.668). The analysis and results of the interviews' data are presented in chapter six in a descriptive and deliberative way, identifying the main themes and patterns found.

This dissertation uses a case study analysis approach, as a type of observational evaluation to explore few number of individual cases in detail to see whether actors behave as the theory predicts (Van Evera, 1997, p.29), to contrast and reinforce the interpretation of the quantitative results, and to understand how and why civic media can affect participation. This approach is useful to obtain an in-depth appreciation and exploration of complex issues, events or phenomenon of interest, as well as individuals and groups in real-life context (Crowe et al., 2011). Case study findings can have implications both for theory development and theory testing (Crowe et al., 2011). Another advantage is to create “conceptual validity,” which refers to the establishment and evaluation of the indicators that better display the theoretical concepts in each study. Furthermore, a case study analysis helps to conduct detailed examination of contextual factors, considering that measuring variables in social sciences is very complex and it is highly intricate to do so in quantitative research (Starman, 2013, p.36). Therefore, when reporting findings, it is necessary to provide the reader with contextual information to understand the processes that were followed and how the conclusions were reached (Crowe et al. 2011). The following section will explain the coding process.

4.3.4.1. Coding Process

The coding process entails to organize the qualitative data in a structured and logical order. According to Saldaña (2009, p.3) a code in qualitative research is “a word or short phrase that symbolically assigns a summative, salient, essence-capturing and/or evocative attribute for a portion of language-based or visual data.” Therefore, coding is a technique that enables the researcher to group coded data with similar characteristics into categories (Saldaña, 2009, pp.9-13). The interviews’ data in this study was organized on the basis of the following criteria: thematic fields, chronological order and context (Della Porta, 2014, p.250). This dissertation followed three steps for coding: a first cycle and a second cycle of coding and a post-coding, based on Saldaña’s argument, (2009, p.8) which claims that “coding is a cyclical act.” The first cycle can range in magnitude from a word to a sentence, and to a page of text. This step requires a first reading and observation (McCracken, 1988). During the first cycle of coding, the analysis process was based on a descriptive coding approach to explore the data’s essential topics (Saldaña, 2009, p.70). A descriptive code it refers to a key word summarizing the main topic of a phrase or paragraph (Saldaña, 2009, p.70).

In the second cycle process, the aim is to “develop a sense of categorical, thematic conceptual, and or theoretical organization from the first coding” (Saldaña, 2009, p.150). This step requires a second reading selecting those observations and interpreting them while considering previous studies and the analytical framework and quantitative results of this dissertation analysis (McCracken, 1988). In the second cycle of coding it adopted a pattern coding. Pattern coding is a way of grouping those summaries into a smaller number of sets, themes or constructs in order to develop major themes from the data, find causes and explanations in the data and examine patterns of human relationships (Miles & Huberman, 1994, p.69). The post-coding filters, highlights, and focuses on the most important characteristics of the qualitative data in order to create categories, themes, and concepts and/or build theory (Saldaña, 2009, pp.3-9). It also requires the connection of observations with each other (McCracken, 1988).

In order to explain these three steps in more detail, the coding process for the interviews in this dissertation, developed in an excel file, followed five steps: 1) it first copied the text divided in paragraphs; 2) from the raw data it extracted the preliminary codes during the first coding cycle, identifying concepts from the raw data and converting paragraphs into phrases; 3) during the second cycle of coding, it reduced the phrases into key words or shorter phrase; 4) during the post-coding it reviewed and polished the key words and converted the shorter phrases and in key words as well; 5) subsequently, it converted the coded data into categories by linking the codes to create units or categories; 6) finally, it converted categories into patterns (identifying repeated units from categories). It is important to highlight that the patterns were extracted by finding common characteristics; grouping ideas and keeping in mind the quantitative results and research questions.

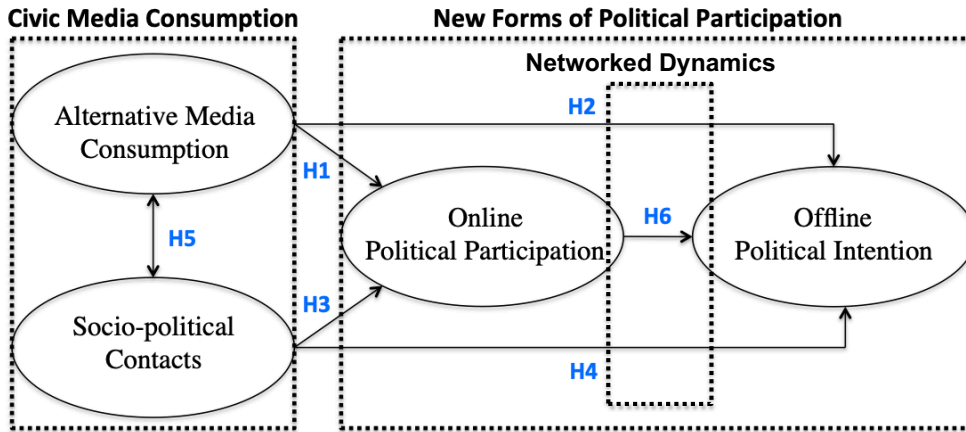
Chapter 5. Quantitative Analysis and Main Findings

This chapter presents the core part of the empirical analysis. The objective of the analysis is to investigate the research questions of ‘what are the impacts of civic media on the new forms and spaces of political participation in the ‘inter-mobilization period’? And ‘what is the connection between online and offline forms and spaces of participation in the ‘inter-mobilization period’?’ It tests the impacts of civic media consumption on new forms and spaces of political participation - online political participation and offline political intention - as well as, the relationship between the online and offline political intention. It is what this dissertation calls the ‘networked dynamics.’ It focuses on Hong Kong undergraduate students. This chapter contains five sections. Section 5.1. describes the causal model and main hypotheses. Section 5.2. explains the operationalization of variables. Section 5.3. presents the respondents’ profile and answer’s percentages. Section 5.4. details the analysis procedures and steps for the preparation of SEM data analysis (Exploratory Factor Analysis, Confirmatory Factor Analysis, Reliability and Validity tests). Section 5.5. presents the main findings of the SEM causal model.

5.1. Causal Model

The proposed causal model is based on the analytical framework explained in chapter three. It includes four latent or unobserved variables, and it tests a total of six hypotheses, as can be seen in figure 6. Concretely, it tests the relationship between the independent variable, civic media, and dependent variables, which are online political participation and offline political intention. This model assumes that both alternative media and socio-political contacts are part of the civic media variable. It also assumes that these two elements have an impact on online political participation and offline political intention, referred as new forms and spaces of political participation. This is based on Chan’s argument (2017, p.675) which claims that alternative media and social media are crucial purveyors of information that can generate psychological antecedents of participation and successively motivate individuals concerning actual participation. In the context of social protests, several studies have considered the level of social networks and media literacy as the leading indicators of engagement and protest participation (F. Lee et al. 2017, pp.465-467; R. Lee et al., 2012). Similarly, the model assumes that the online political participation and offline political intention are interrelated. This connection is referred to as ‘networked dynamics,’ based on the Network Society theory (Castells, 1996; 2000).

Figure 6. Causal Model with Independent and Dependent Variables



5.1.1. Hypotheses

A total of six hypotheses are drawn to examine the relationships between alternative media consumption, socio-political contacts, online political participation and offline political intention, as shown in figure 6.

- **Hypothesis 1 (H1): Alternative media consumption has a positive effect on online political participation**

Firstly, the model tests the causal relationship between alternative media consumption and online political participation. Various studies have proved that obtaining political information from alternative media induces online participation (Shen et al. 2020, p.10; Lee & Chan 2015, pp. 882-86). In the case of Hong Kong, Lee and Chan (2015, pp.882-86) found that alternative media contributes to online political communication activities such as protest campaigns. Also, alternative media's main achievement is to generate critical and public discourse and engage the public in digital activism (Wang 2018, p.3711; Yung & Leung, 2014).

- **Hypothesis 2 (H2): Alternative media consumption has a positive effect on offline political intention**

Secondly, it displays the causal relationship between alternative media into the offline political intention. In the context of social protests, several studies have considered the level of media literacy as a leading indicator of engagement and protest participation (Lee & Chan, 2016; Putnam, 1993). Various studies pointed out that alternative media has a role to play in influencing and intensifying protest intention (Chan 2017, p.674; Shen et al. 2020, p.10), while persistent exposure to online alternative media can influence political attitude and promote political activism (Tang 2019, p.189). In the case of Hong Kong, Yung and Leung (2014, p.99) proved that alternative media acts as a motivator that drives social action and participation. Lee and Chan (2015, pp.882-86) found that alternative media contributes to protest participation and leadership formation.

- **Hypothesis 3 (H3): Socio-political contacts have a positive effect on online political participation**

Thirdly, the model tests the causal relationship between socio-political contacts into online political participation. Previous studies established that online mobilization is facilitated by the connections of individuals in social networks (Bennett & Segerberg, 2013). Moreover, social networks and social ties can influence a change in political attitude (Putnam, 1993, p.99). Christakis and Fowler (2007) evidenced how some attitudes and habits are contagious among social networks and social ties because when people who surround you behave in a certain way, your perception about that behavior changes. Yang and DeHart (2016, p.9-10) found that the “online social capital” (the number of connections in the Internet and SNS) are strong predictors of online political participation. Other authors found a positive relationship between the political use of social media on online political participation (Gil de Zuñiga et al. 2009, p.564; Lee & Chan 2015, pp.882-86; Valenzuela et al. 2012, pp.174-75).

- **Hypothesis 4 (H4): Socio-political contacts have a positive effect on offline political intention**

Fourthly, it displays the causal relationship between socio-political contacts into the offline political intention. Putnam (199, p.167) in his institutional analysis, found that social ties inculcate cooperation and a sense of shared responsibility for collective attempts, which subsequently leads to higher participation in politics. Furthermore, social media and connections in the network have been a leading factor for political engagement and social activism (Tang, 2019, p.196). Other authors showed the positive relationship between social media's political use on protests behavior (Yang and DeHart, 2016, p.2). In the context of social protests, several studies have considered the level of social networks as the leading indicators of engagement and protest participation (Lee & Chan, 2016). Lee F. et al. (2017, pp.465-467) demonstrated that direct connections with political actors on social media affected the support for and participation in social movements.

- **Hypothesis 5 (H5): Alternative media consumption and socio-political contacts are interconnected**

Fifthly, it tests the interconnection between alternative media consumption and socio-political contacts. The combination of both direct and indirect alternative media consumption helps to know more about “how social media and mobilization agents can either work together or become contradictory to each other” (Tang, 2019, p.196). As Leung and Lee (2014) assert “people can access alternative media content by subscribing to activists’ SNS accounts, and they can also encounter alternative media content via their online friends who are alternative media users (p.342)” Alternative media platforms and SNS can have a mutually beneficial relationship reinforcing each other (Yung and Leung, 2014, p.99), considering that mainstream and alternative media are subject to social media for their content distribution (F. Lee 2019, p.100). Similarly, the calls for radical actions from alternative media were found on Facebook pages and groups created for specific protests (Tang, 2019, p.190).

- **Hypothesis 6 (H6): Online political participation has a positive effect on offline political intention**

Finally, this study tests the connection between online political participation and offline political intention. Castells (2015, p.2) claims that in the Network Society the mobilization starts on the Internet by, for example, making calls for participation and debating the strategies online. However, it becomes a movement in the urban space by becoming visual, recognized and consolidated. This connection between the online space and the urban space in the form of current social movements is, what Castells (2010) calls the “space of autonomy.” Other studies found that online and offline participation are connected and interrelated during peak moments of mobilization (Bennett & Segerberg, 2013; Lee and Chan, 2011, p.884; F. Lee et al., 2017, p.465).

5.2. Operationalization of Variables

A questionnaire was constructed to collect information from the samples (see appendix 2). The variables used in the questionnaire were nominal, ordinal and interval/scale variables (Balnaves & Caputi, 2001, p.78-80). Regarding the operationalization of variables, the main factors in this survey included alternative media consumption, socio-political contacts, online political participation and offline political intention.

The research measured ‘**alternative media consumption**’³³ by asking them the average of the frequency of use, expressed through a five-point scale (0= never and 5=everyday) with questions such as a) how often do you find news about politics on alternative media platforms; b) how often do you receive political information through alternative media platforms (Lee F. et al. 2016, p.462) and c) how often do you read alternative media such as In-Media, Stand News, among others (Lee & Chan 2011, p.884).

‘**Socio-political contacts**’ were measured by asking them about their average number of social media contacts, expressed through a four-point scale with questions such as how many of the following types of contacts do you follow in your social media accounts? a) pro-democracy political organizations; b) leaders from the Umbrella Movement; c) student unions; and, d) NGOs (F. Lee et al. 2016, p.461).

The research measured ‘**online political participation**’ by asking them their average online participation, expressed through a five-point scale (0=never 5=everyday) with questions such as how often do you a) share political information through social media (F. Lee et al. 2016, p.462), b) express your opinion about political issues online (Calenda & Mosca 2007, p.95), c) participate in online activities such as political forums or discussions, including commenting on any social media posts (Barret & Zani 2015, p.522); and, d) bring political and social topics into discussion with others online.

‘**Offline political intention**’ (Hansard Society, 2017, p.50) was measured by asking them their average desire for involvement, expressed through a five-point scale (0=not at all and 5=to a great extent) with questions such as a) to what extent, would you like to be involved in political activism; b) how much do you agree with the statement “I would participate in a social protest if I felt strongly about an issue? also, c) how much do you agree with the statement, “I would participate in a political cause if I could create a better society? (Barret & Zani, 2015, p.525).

³³ The respondents were informed about the operational definition of alternative media.

Regarding the control variables, ‘gender’ was measured by asking the respondents the categories of male or female. ‘Place of origin’ was measured by asking if they were born in Hong Kong, Mainland China or other places³⁴. ‘Income’ was measured by asking the monthly income, including any family or guarantor economic support and part-time job salary, in case they had one. ‘Watch TV’ was measured by asking “How often do you Watch TV?” expressed through a five-point scale (1=never; 5=everyday). ‘Feeling of political situation’ was measured by asking “How do you feel with the current political situation?” expressed through a five-point scale (1=Not angry at all; 5=Very angry). ‘Past experience in social protests’ was measured by asking “How many times did you attend a demonstration or protest in the past five years (2014-2018)?” expressed through a four-point scale (1=Never; 4=More than 4 times). The latent, observed and control variables are listed in table 4 with their correspondent code, maximum, minimum values, mean and standard deviation.

Table 4. Latent, Observed and Control Variables

Variables			Code	M¹	SD²	Min	Max
Latent	1.	Alternative Media Consumption	AM				
Observed	1.1.	Find news about politics on alternative media platforms	FNP	2.05	1.280	1	5
	1.2.	Read alternative media	RAM	2.11	1.278	1	5
	1.3.	Receive political information through alternative media platforms	RN	2.15	1.157	1	5
Latent	2.	Socio-political Contacts	SPC				
Observed	2.1.	Contacts with pro-democracy organizations	CPO	1.83	.845	1	4
	2.2.	Contacts with leaders from the Umbrella Movement	CPA	1.87	.840	1	4
	2.3.	Contacts with NGOs	CNGO	2.01	.834	1	4
	2.4.	Contacts with student unions	CSU	2.16	.799	1	4

³⁴ The respondents who chose the option “others” were not included in the sample because the study is focused on Hong Kong local students, not foreign or international students. Students originally from Mainland China were included because “place of origin” is a control variable in the SEM model.

Latent	3.	Online Political Participation	ONPP				
Observed	3.1.	Express political opinion online	EPOO	1.40	.848	1	5
	3.2.	Participate in online forums and discussions	PO	1.49	.934	1	5
	3.3.	Share political information online	SPI	1.54	.872	1	5
	3.4.	Bring socio-political topics into discussion online	VPW	1.55	.958	1	5
Latent	4	Offline Political Intention	OFPI				
Observed	4.1.	Participate in a political cause for a better society	PPCB	3.78	1.037	1	5
	4.2.	Participate in a social protest if I felt strong about an issue	PPCI	3.60	.991	1	5
	4.3.	Willing to be involved in political activism	WTOI	3.52	.989	1	5
Control Variables	5	Control Variables	CV				
	5.1.	Gender (0=Male 1=Female)	G	0.48	0.500	0=52.4 percent 1=47.6 percent	
	5.2.	Place of Origin (0=Hong Kong 1=Mainland China)	I	0.23	0.421	0=77 percent 1=22.9 percent	
		Income³	I	2.99	.960	0=76.7 percent 1= 18 percent 2= 2 percent 3= 3.4 percent	
	5.3.	Watch TV	WTV	2.04	1.193	1	5
	5.4.	Feeling political situation	FPS	3.76	.876	1	5
	5.5.	Experience in social protests	PPE	1.76	0.897	1	4

Note 1 M=Mean

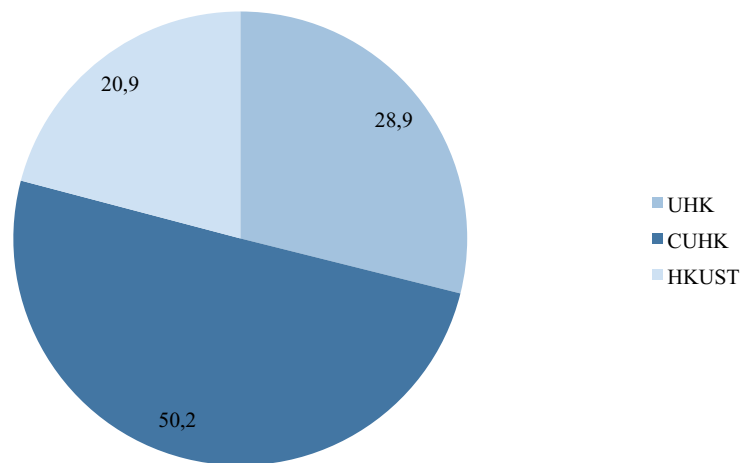
Note 2 SD=Standard Deviation

Note 3 0=Less than \$HK 10,000; 1= \$HK 10,000 to \$HK 15,000; 2= \$HK 15,000 to \$HK 20,000;
3= More than \$HK 20,0000

5.3. Respondents' Profile and Answers' Percentages

Regarding the socio-demographic background, there was a similar number of males and females (52.4 percent male; 47.6 percent female) and 43.7 percent of the respondents spend 3 hours online a day. 77 percent were originally from Hong Kong and 23 percent were originally from China. 77 percent received an income³⁵ of less than \$HK 10,000 monthly (140,000 ¥)³⁶. Moreover, there was a difference between the numbers of respondents gathered from each university as it can be seen in figure 7.

Figure 7. Percentage of Answers from each University



Note¹: UHK=The University of Hong Kong; CUHK=The Chinese University of Hong Kong;
HUST= The Hong Kong University of Science and Technology

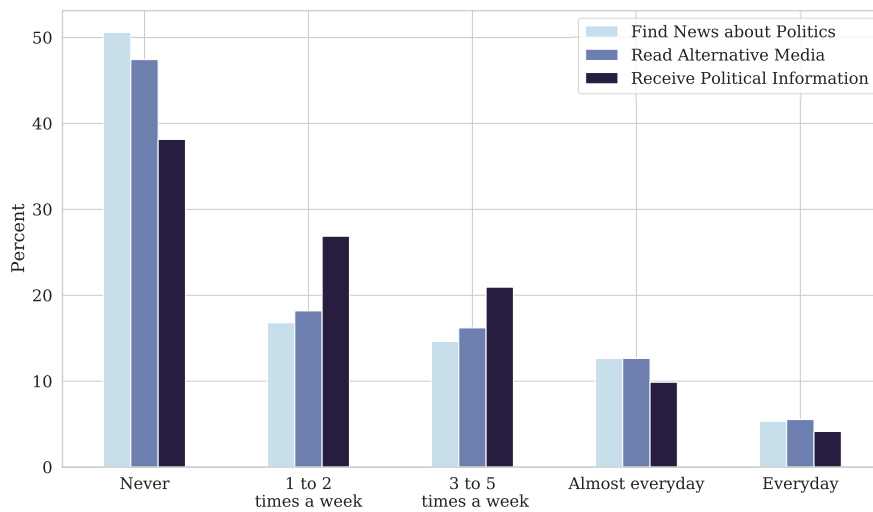
³⁵ Including any family or guarantor economic support and part-time job salary, if they had one.

³⁶ The exchange rate for 1 UNIT of HKD = X UNITS of JPY was 14.089895 as of 31 Dec 2018 (Hong Kong Monetary Authority, 2018; Bank of Japan, 2018).

Table 5. Alternative Media Consumption Percentages

Scale	Percentage		
	Find News about Politics	Read Alternative Media	Receive Political Information
Never	50.6	47.4	38.1
1 to 2 times a week	16.8	18.2	26.9
3 to 5 times a week	14.6	16.2	20.9
Almost everyday	12.6	12.6	9.9
Everyday	5.3	5.5	4.2

Figure 8. Alternative Media Consumption Percentages

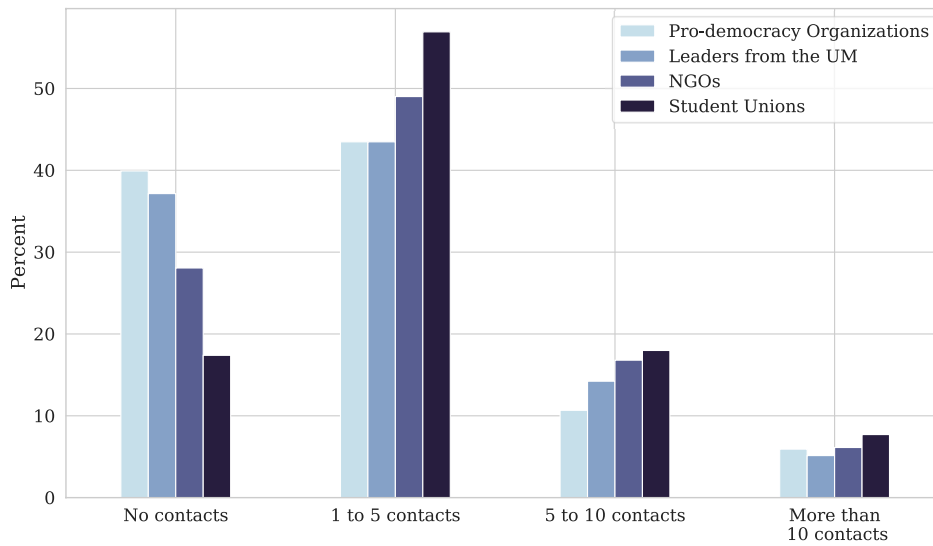


There is a high percentage of university students who never find news about politics through alternative media, read alternative media, nor receive political information through alternative media platforms. At the same time, 27 percent receive political information through alternative media platforms 1 to 2 times a week, 18 percent read alternative media 1 to 2 times a week, and 17 percent find news about politics through alternative media. It is also important to highlight that around 5 percent of university students find, read and receive alternative media information and news everyday. These percentages reflect the fact that alternative media platforms have a small readership and small size of audiences, which is part of their nature. However, they have loyal readers who are highly engaged (Meyers, 2008).

Table 6. Socio-political Contacts Percentages

Scale	Percentage			
	Pro-democracy Organizations	Leaders from the UM	NGOs	Student Unions
No contacts	39.9	37.2	28.1	17.4
1 to 5 contacts	43.5	43.5	49.0	56.9
5 to 10 contacts	10.7	14.2	16.8	18.0
More than 10	5.9	5.1	6.1	7.7

Figure 9. Socio-political Contacts Percentages

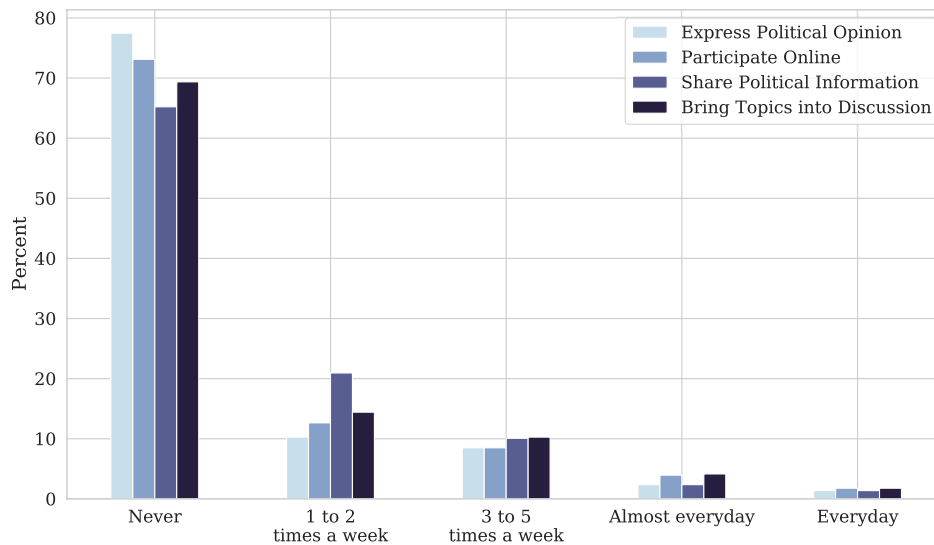


Most of the respondents are connected with one to five socio-political contacts of all types (pro-democracy organizations, leaders from the Umbrella Movement, NGOs and student unions). This can reflect the fact that social media is the respondents' major information source of public affair information (Chan et al., 2018; CYS, 2018). Also, that there is a relevant contact with civic groups among university students. Nevertheless, there is a relevant percentage that has none of those contacts, while between 5 to 8 percent of respondents have more than 10 contacts of all types.

Table 7. Online Political Participation Percentages

Scale	Percentage			
	Express Political Opinion	Participate Online	Share Political Information	Bring Topics into Discussion
Never	77.5	73.1	65.2	69.4
1 to 2 times a week	10.3	12.6	20.9	14.4
3 to 5 times a week	8.5	8.5	10.1	10.3
Almost everyday	2.4	4.0	2.4	4.2
Everyday	1.4	1.8	1.4	1.8

Figure 10. Online Political Participation Percentages

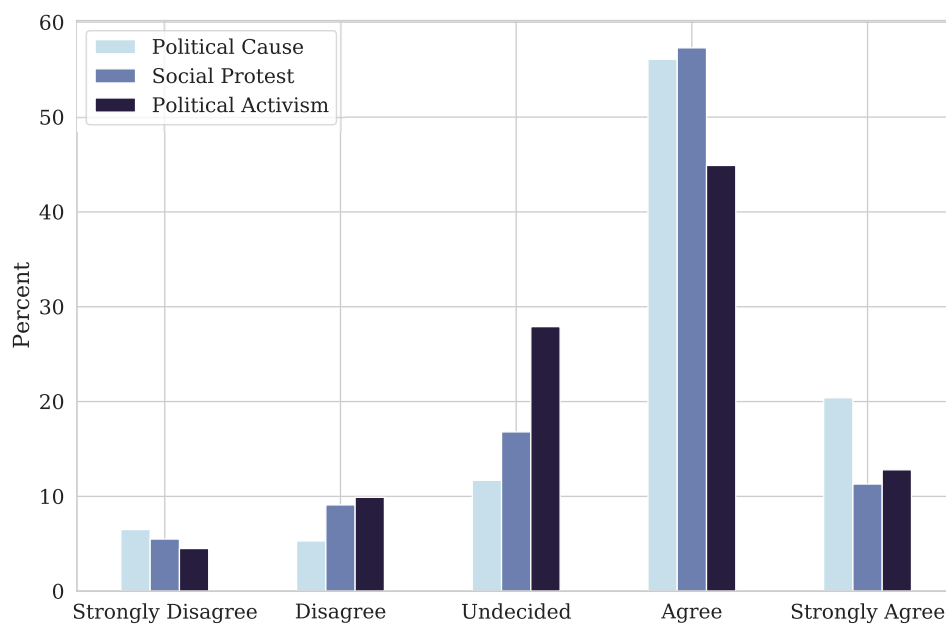


A high percentage of university students do not participate online, including expressing political opinions online, participating in political forums, sharing political information, nor bringing topics into discussion online. It is also relevant to highlight that 1 to 2 percent participate online everyday in all those forms. This fact can reflect the general feeling of powerlessness, frustration and exhaustion among the youth after the Umbrella Movement (Weiss & Aspinall, 2012; C. Lee, & Sing, 2019).

Table 8. Offline Political Intention Percentages

Scale	Percentage		
	Political Cause	Social Protest	Political Activism
Strongly disagree	6.5	5.5	4.5
Disagree	5.3	9.1	9.9
Undecided	11.7	16.8	27.9
Agree	56.1	57.3	44.9
Strongly agree	20.4	11.3	12.8

Figure 11. Offline Political Intention Percentages



More than half of the respondents would participate in a political cause if they could create a better society, and they would participate in a social protest if they felt strong about an issue. 45 percent would be willing to be involved in political activism. It is also relevant to highlight that between 5 and 6 percent would not participate in a political cause, social protest or political activism at all, while between 11 to 20 percent would do it to a great extent. These percentages can reflect the general feeling of anger and dissatisfaction with the social and political situation and the fact that young people still see in the offline sphere as the place where they can aim for social and political change.

Table 9. TV Consumption Percentages

	Percentage
Scale	Watch TV
Never	45.1
1-2 times a week	24.9
3-5 times a week	16.2
Almost everyday	8.7
Everyday	5.1

Table 10. Feeling of Political Situation Percentages

	Percentage
Scale	Feeling Political Situation
Not angry at all	0.6
Not angry	9.5
Undecided	20.9
Angry	51.0
Very angry	18.0

Table 11. Past Protest Experience Percentages

	Percentage
Scale	Past Protest Experience
Never	50
Once	29.2
2 to 4	15.6
More than 4 times	5.1

Regarding the control variables, as reflected in the tables 9, 10 and 11, the majority of university students never watch TV, they are angry with the political situation and never participated in a social protest, while 29 percent did just once.

5.4. Analysis's Procedure

In order to test the model based on the data from the cross-section survey described in the previous section, the following steps were followed: Exploratory and Confirmatory Factor Analysis (EFA and CFA), reliability test, validity test and the SEM causal model. The EFA and reliability test were analyzed with the Statistical software SPSS. The validity test, CFA and the SEM causal analysis were analyzed with the statistical software SPSS AMOS. The Average Variance Extract (AVE) and the Composite Reliability (CR) formulas for the validity test were calculated in Excel. First, Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA) explains 57.49 percent of the total variances in the data set. According to the results of the EFA, 4 factors are extracted as it was expected: "online political participation," "offline political intention," "socio-political contacts" and "alternative media consumption." The Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure (KMO) (0.889) and the Bartlett's Test of Sphericity measure (4082.370) for sampling adequacy

are all sufficient. The communalities for all variables are >0.3. Therefore, the EFA results indicate that all variables are adequate as it can be seen in the following table.

Table 12. EFA Rotated Factor Matrix

Latent variable	Observed variable	Factor				Cronbach's alphas
		1	2	3	4	
Online Political Participation						
	Express political opinion online	.776				.832
	Participate in online forums and discussions	.679				
	Share political information online	.620				
	Bring socio-political topics into discussion online	.623				
Offline Political Intention						
	Participate in a political cause for a better society		.862			.848
	Participate in a social protest if I felt strong about an issue		.847			
	Willing to be involved in political activism		.561			
Socio-political contacts						

	Contacts with pro-democracy organizations			.847		.850
	Contacts with leaders from the Umbrella Movement			.772		
	Contacts with NGOs			.629		
	Contacts with student unions			.479		
Alternative Media Consumption						
	Find news about politics on alternative media platforms				.621	.754
	Read alternative media				.651	
	Read Newspaper				.509	
	Receive political information through alternative media platforms				.582	

Note¹: Extraction Method: Principal Axis Factoring

Note²: Rotation method: Varimax with Kaiser Normalization

Second, Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) - using Maximum Likelihood - test the model fit and the factors of validity and reliability. The CFA modification indices were used to improve the model fit. Similarly, although the indicator “read newspaper” was grouped in the EFA as part of the alternative media variable, the author of this study decided not to include it in the CFA and SEM analysis. This decision is based on this study’s theoretical framework and variable’s definition (Foster et al., 2006; Groves et al., 2004; Blunch, 2013). The CFA model fit (CMIN/DF=2.992; CFI=.957; TLI=.945; GFI=.940; AGFI=.913; RMSEA=.063; PCLOSE=.010; SRMR=.0495) indicate that the overall goodness of fit of the model is sufficient. Third, the reliability of the variables is sufficient since the Cronbach’s alphas of all factors is >0.7 as it can be seen on table 12. Fourth, as seen in table 13, the Average Variance

Extracted (AVE) and the Composite Reliability (CR) show that the results are acceptable. The AVE for all factors is >0.5 , and the CR for all factors is ≥ 0.7 . As seen in table 14, the MSV and the ASV for each construct are less than the AVE. Therefore, each indicator is having required internal consistency reliability between the indicators and the latent variables (Hair et al., 2019).

Table 13. AVE and CR

Observed variables		Latent variables	AVE	CR
Find news about politics on alternative media platforms	<---	Alternative media	0.5201	0.9182
Read alternative media	<---	Alternative media		
Receive political information through alternative media platforms	<---	Alternative media		
Contacts with pro-democracy organizations	<---	Socio-Political Contacts	0.7705	0.9756
Contacts with leaders from the Umbrella Movement	<---	Socio-Political Contacts		
Contacts with NGOs	<---	Socio-Political Contacts		
Contacts with student unions	<---	Socio-Political Contacts		
Express political opinion online	<---	Online Political Participation	0,7064	0,9476
Participate in online forums and discussions	<---	Online Political Participation		
Share political information online	<---	Online Political Participation		
Bring socio-political topics into discussion online	<---	Online Political Participation		
Participate in a political cause for a better society	<---	Offline Political Intention	0.6974	0.9201

Participate in a social protest if I felt strong about an issue	<---	Offline Political Intention		
Willing to be involved in political activism	<---	Offline Political Intention		

Table 14. MSV and ASV

Construct			MSV	ASV
Alternative Media Consumption	<-->	Online Political Participation	0.430	0.400
	<-->	Offline Political Intention		
	<-->	Socio-political Contacts		
Socio-political Contacts	<-->	Online Political Participation	0.536	0.264
	<-->	Offline Political Intention		
Online Political Participation	<-->	Offline Political Intention	0.334	0.334

5.5. SEM Results

An SEM model was constructed to test the hypothesis defined in section 5.1. Based on the modification indices some variables errors were co-varied. The SEM model fit indices (CMIN/DF=3.008; CFI=.948; TLI=.925; GFI=.935; AGFI=.882; RMSEA=.063; SRMR=.0434; PCLOSE=.003) reflect that the overall goodness of model fit was sufficient. The SEM results, as can be seen in figure 12, follow theoretical predictions. However, the model produced unexpected results, showing non-significance between the online and offline forms of participation. The results are also reflected in table 14.

Firstly, alternative media consumption is strongly and positively associated with online political participation and offline political intention. This is consistent and in contrast with studies that have addressed a similar causation in the context of protests (Lee & Chan 2011, p.884; Lee F. et al. 2016, p.465) and other authors who showed the relation between the political use of social media and participation (Gil de Zuñiga et al. 2009, p.525; Valenzuela et al. 2012, pp.164-171). Also, alternative media readers are more likely to vote and participate in protests and rallies as well as, to support radical social movement's goals and tactics (Lee, 2019, p.228).

Secondly, socio-political contacts have a positive but lower intensity effect, than alternative media consumption, on online political participation and much lower

intensity on offline political intention. The evidence suggests that social bonds with organizations and political actors play a smaller role during the inter-mobilization period. This aspect is in line with the argument from Tang (2019, p.194) who claims that during the Umbrella Movement, participation leaders relied more on social media platforms, such as Facebook or alternative media platforms, such as Passion Times and In-Media to seek information on developments in the protest areas and to join the movement. They did not rely on response to the appeal of major organizations such as Occupy Central with Love and Peace.

Thirdly, the model shows the expected interconnection between alternative media consumption and socio-political contacts. This contributes to the definition of civic media and to understand that both factors are not contradictory and reinforce each other. This assumption is in line with the argument that alternative media and different Facebook pages and groups played an active and simultaneous role in urging radical actions in various protests (Tang, 2019, p.190).

Fourthly, as an unexpected result, there is no significance between online political participation and offline political intention. In 2018, four years after the Umbrella Movement and one year before the Anti-ELAB movement, the results of this study showed that there is a disconnection between the online and offline forms and spaces of participation highlighting a dichotomy between these two spaces.

Figure 12. Structural Equation Model

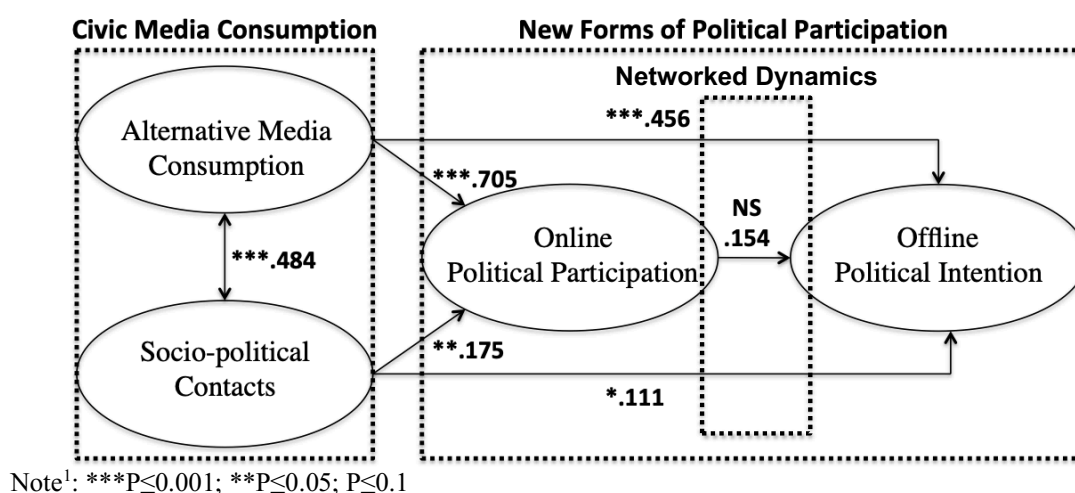


Table 15. SEM Factor's Standardized Estimates and Significance of Main Variables and Hypotheses

Hypothesis	Parameter		Est.	Sig.	Results	
H1	Online Political Participation	<---	Alternative Media	.705	***	Supported
H2	Offline Political Intention	<---	Alternative Media	.456	***	Supported
H3	Socio-political Contacts	<---	Alternative Media	.484	***	Supported

H4	Online Political Participation	<---	Socio-political Contacts	.175	**	Supported
H5	Offline Political Intention	<---	Socio-political Contacts	.111	*	Supported
H6	Offline Political Intention	<---	Online Political Participation	.154	NS	Not Supported

Note¹: ***P≤0.001; **P≤0.05; P≤0.1; NS=Not Significant

5.5.1. Control Variables

The primary purpose of this framework is to investigate the effects of civic media on participation. However, this study used six control variables in the model with the assumption that they may affect the dependent variables, including gender, place of origin, income, TV consumption, the feeling of the political situation, and experience in social protests. As reflected in table 16, the political situation's feeling is highly significant and positively associated with offline political intention and with online political participation, with a lower intensity. Experience in social protests has a low but positive association with offline political intention. Income is also significant with online political participation. Gender, place of origin (Hong Kong or Mainland China), and TV consumption are non-significant. As for the income control variable, previous studies proved that the higher income and social class, the more political engagement and participation among youth, both online and offline (Beeghley, 1986; Krauss, 2015). In Hong Kong, some aspects can explain why income is only significant with online political participation. Students from top universities might not want to risk their professional career by exposing themselves to police arrest during the protests, especially after the Umbrella Movement and in recent years (Bland, 2017). Another factor is family pressure. Also, the higher income and economic stability, the more possibilities to leave the country. Accordingly, they might not see the solution of improving their future in protesting (Bland, 2017).

Table 16. Structural Equation Model Factor's Standardized Estimates and Significance of Control Variables

Parameter		Est.	Sig.
Online Political Participation	<--- Gender	.034	NS
Offline Political Intention	<--- Gender	.039	NS
Online Political Participation	<--- Origin	.023	NS

Offline Political Intention	<---	Origin	.016	NS
Online Political Participation	<---	Income	.123	**
Offline Political Intention	<---	Income	.021	NS
Online Political Participation	<---	TV Consumption	.017	NS
Offline Political Intention	<---	TV Consumption	.065	NS
Online Political Participation	<---	Feeling Political Situation	.108	*
Offline Political Intention	<---	Feeling Political Situation	.276	***
Online Political Participation	<---	Past Experience in Social Protests	.037	NS
Offline Political Intention	<---	Past Experience in Social Protests	.123	*

Note¹: ***P≤0.001; **P≤0.05; P≤0.1; NS=Not Significant

5.6. Summary of the Quantitative Analysis's Key Findings

To sum up, this chapter has examined the research questions of ‘what are the impacts of civic media on new forms and spaces of political participation in the ‘inter-mobilization period?’ And ‘what is the connection between online and offline forms and spaces of political participation in the ‘inter-mobilization period?’ The main findings indicated that:

- **Alternative media consumption** - including finding political news on alternative media platforms, receiving political information through alternative media platforms and reading alternative media - has a positive effect on **online political participation** during the ‘inter-mobilization period,’ including sharing political information online, expressing opinions about political issues online, participating in political forums or discussions online and bringing political and social topics into discussions with others online.
- **Alternative media consumption** has a positive effect on **offline political intention** during the ‘inter-mobilization period,’ including the willingness to be involved in political activism, the willingness to participate in a political protest

feeling strong about an issue and the willingness to participate in a political cause to create a better society.

- **Alternative media consumption** and **socio-political contacts**, as part of the independent variable (civic media), are interrelated.
- **Socio-political contacts** - including having contacts on SNS from pro-democracy political organizations, leaders from the Umbrella Movement, Student unions, and NGOs, have a lower effect than alternative media consumption on **online political participation**.
- **Socio-political contacts** have a lower effect on **political intention** as well, which is understood as the willingness to participate in political causes and protests offline.
- The **online political participation** and the **offline political intention** have a non-significant relationship, meaning that they are not connected in the 'inter-mobilization period.'
- The **control variables**: the feeling of the political situation is highly significant and positively associated with offline political intention. It is also significant in a lower intensity with online political participation. Past experience in social protests have a positive but low association with offline political intention. Income has a relevant effect on online political participation but it is non-significant with offline political intention. Gender, place of origin and TV consumption are non-significant.

Chapter 6: Qualitative Analysis and Main Findings: Perspectives from Editors and Undergraduate University Students

This chapter presents the qualitative analysis' main findings, aiming to investigate the research question of 'why/how does civic media affect new forms and spaces of political participation and 'networked dynamics' in the 'inter-mobilization period'?' The section is divided into two parts. First, the patterns found in the interviews conducted with editors from three alternative media platforms (In-Media, Worker News and Radical HK). Second, the patterns found in the interviews conducted with university student protesters, who are all part of the Umbrella Movement generation. These patterns are an abstraction of what was found in the interviews through the method of descriptive coding. They reflect civic media's characteristics and help understand how civic media operates and how students participate online and offline. Moreover, on the one hand, they show the "doers" of civic media perspective and, on the other hand, the "consumers" of civic media perspective.

6.1. Alternative Media Editors' Patterns

Based on three in-depth interviews with In-Media, Worker News and Radical HK editors, this analysis found four interrelated patterns that reveal the nature and potential role of alternative media in Hong Kong: 1) sense of self-identity, 2) joint resistance, 3) potential influence on mainstream media news agenda and, 4) specialization and time control. These patterns reflect various aspects that are part of the first and second waves of alternative media in Hong Kong in 2004 and 2012-2013: the economic and financial struggles and low readership, the self-censorship problem, the contraction of spaces of free expression, the growth of social protests in Hong Kong and the popularization of social media (Chan, 2016, p.675; F. Lee, 2019, pp.176-177). It is essential to highlight that In-Media is part of the first wave, while Worker News and Radical HK are part of the second wave of alternative media in Hong Kong. Also, having a small readership is part of alternative media's nature, which is by definition, non-mainstream; and their significance in the political arena and civil society lies in its alternative nature (Atton, 2003; Yung & Leung, 2014, p.99).

1) Sense of Self-identity

Alternative media platforms have a strong sense of self-identity (Soler-Alemany, 2020) based on the notion of "resistance identity" because the actors that are being dominated by the system produce it (Castells, 2010, p.90). This pattern is also related to the local Hong Kong identity and citizenship construction that has been rising in the last decades (Ngok, 2018, p.34). The interviews reveal how protests, social movement participation, and the platforms' empowering mission have influenced their identity construction, considering that "alternative media journalists value their normative responsibilities more" (Harlow, 2017, pp.117-135).

Interviewee C (Radical HK) asserts:

"To empower is the most important mission for us. That's why we regard ourselves as activists; we are not just reporting, we are not just

journalists we are empowering them (the protesters). One of the differences is, for example, in the protests, we will not wear the sign of the press, just arrest me. We are activists” (Radical HK, June 27, 2019).

Interviewee A (In-Media) points out their active participation in protests since 2004, the year of their foundation, until 2014 when the Umbrella Movement occurred:

“We have participated in many grassroots protests in Hong Kong, for example, the anti-WTO demonstrations in 2005. We were involved in the reporting of the movement. We also have participated in the preservation of the Central Star Ferry Pier and Queen’s Pier (in 2006 and 2007), being involved in the organization in the Anti-Star Ferr/Queen’s Pier Demolition Movement. We actively participated in the Umbrella Movement in 2014 by spreading the messages together with the student organizations and networks of organizations. That was our golden era. I think that our participation in those movements defined who we are” (In-Media, January 2017).

Alternative media platforms have an anti-system ideology aiming to keep their independence from economic and governmental pressures and, from professional social movements’ organizers and public opinion in general.

Interviewee B (Worker News) expresses the following view:

“I always think that ordinary people should do social movements instead of participation done by paid professionals and organizers or activists. If the social movement is specialized and professionalized, ordinary people only have limited space to participate and have limited power to decide what is happening. So, we collect our money to do that and to rely on our own money instead of public donation. With this kind of financing, we do not need to do a lot of things to appeal to public eyes” (Worker News, June 27, 2019).

In the case of In-Media, they want to meet their readers’ expectations.

As Interviewee A (In-Media) asserts:

“In-Media played a vital role to organize during the Umbrella Movement. It spread the message. Every minute, a picture was posted faster than the mainstream because we were part of the movement. It was our Golden era. We let more people know about the clash of the social movement just by using Facebook articles. The Umbrella Movement people were sick of old politics. In 2014, In-Media readership increased, but people expected us to be like traditional media, be fast, and cover different types of news. They also expect us to be more activists. We did our best (In-Media, January 2017).

Another element is their commitment to activism, which is intrinsic to their sense of identity and carries an emotional discourse. Interviewee C (Radical HK) highlights that: “We believe that our reports are much better than some of the traditional media

because at least we are doing something that starts in our own heart” (Radical HK, June 27, 2019). Similarly, existing definitions include the inherent characteristics of being non-mainstream, economically independent, and being an activist and system-challenging media source, offering news and narratives from the activism perspective (Atton, 2002: 75; Meyers, 2008). However, one of the elements that various definitions and analysis fail to mention is that alternative media editors often assert an internal debate. They face the internal line between journalism and physical participation with activism and involvement. For instance, they assert that some members might be more comfortable keeping some physical distance from social movements.

According to interviewee B (Worker News):

“One of the characteristics of alternative media like us is that we regard ourselves as activists instead of just journalists. Maybe some of us will become half organizers because sometimes we will think that kind of work is more important instead of writing articles. But, this kind of attitude is also debatable, both internally and externally. Some of our members may not be that active involving in the actual struggle. Some others will think that is not the role of journalists to be so close with the people” (Worker News, June 27, 2019).

Furthermore, the alternative media actions are related to democratization processes and the socio-political situation (Iam-Chong, 2009; C. Lee, 2003, p.172) and their will to influence the political agenda and policies. Regardless of their limitations, they cannot be separated from their will to influence the political agenda and decision-making. In a partially-democratic system with nonpolitical structures implementing electoral reforms or significant political changes as well as the decreasing press and media freedom (F. Lee, 2019); alternative media’s role and sense of identity become especially relevant. In this type of political regime and a liberal economic system like Hong Kong, many sectors do not have political representation, and they are not conscious about violations of their fundamental rights. Raising the voices of marginalized groups is also one of the main objectives of alternative media.

Interviewee C (Radical HK) asserts that they have the aim to influence the political agenda by supporting the protesters in their struggles:

“In Hong Kong, you have your press freedom, but you cannot help the groups because we do not have the supporting democratic system. Even our society is not really a democracy. In this kind of society, if you just do some reporting, this is nonsense. We are an activist media; we really want to change some policy. We want to organize those groups (working-class groups). Our report is empowering them, helping the organizers.” (Radical HK, June 27, 2019).

According to Interviewee B (Worker News), they want to offer their support by following up on protesters’ struggles and help them to be aware of their situation:

“We do many interviews with workers and protesters from different sectors. There are two aims. First, it is for the workers in those sectors to identify their problems and then get inspired by what their co-workers said

and think about what should they do to improve the situation. Second, for the workers in different sectors to understand each other because, in a lot of cases, people think they are well paid so they should not complain too much. We try to engage people and put much emphasis to follow up with the worker's struggle in Hong Kong" (Worker News, June 27, 2019).

Hence, alternative media platforms have a strong sense of self-identity related to their proximity to activists, social movement's participation, emotional commitment, and small readership nature, as well as their will to influence political agendas. This is based on the Hong Kong idea of democratization and social movement participation (Lam & Cooper, 2018). Alternative media self-identity is also characterized by internal debates on keeping their journalist side apart from their activism and physical participation. The anti-system factor is equally essential for their distinctiveness and existence since adopted to avoid three critical pressure sectors (economic, governmental and social movements' professional organizers) (Soler-Aleman, 2020).

2) Joint Resistance

Alternative media creates an online and offline joint resistance with activists and civic/political groups and organizations such as NGOs (Soler-Aleman, 2020). Alternative media forms an "alternative public realm" (Downing, 1988), influencing civil society organization. People who share similar political views express their ideas to particular matters or news issues online in alternative media sites, supporting collective action and recruiting new participants (Leung & Lee, 2014, pp.343-344). Other studies proved that there is an "Internet space resistance" in the context of protests and social movements (Castells, 2015; Lee & Chan, 2015). This argument is related to the Network Society theory and the 'space of autonomy' concept (Castells, 2015), which connects networks on the Internet with the occupations occurring in the urban space. The 'space of autonomy' is a dimension of free communication beyond governments' control and monopolizing corporations. In this dimension, alternative media and civic organizations collaborate and reinforce each other to influence those in power and improve their communities. However, alternative media constructs a persistent and joint resistance that goes beyond the mobilization peaks of social movements, and it is nurtured with the connection to and collaboration with activists and civic/political groups and organizations such as NGOs. This form of resistance follows the proximity between media and civil society.

As pointed out by Interviewee B (Worker News):

"Of course, the capital can still buy a lot of internet space because they (mainstream media) have the way to do the sponsor and to hire a huge number of journalists, but it is also an opened up space for different people to train up their skills and own style instead of everybody have to follow the so-called academic, professional training for journalists. Many of that kind of value (that the capital reproduces) may not be very progressive. It is quite conservative and distant from the people. Since 2014 there is a huge capital input and influence to the Internet media (from Mainland China) and online media, the space for independent media is shrinking. But for us and for other independent journalists, it means that our role is getting more

important. Because there are more commercial voices, and that is why independent media should persist” (Worker News, June 27, 2019).

Moreover, it is well known that social ties are essential for reinforcing civic engagement (Putnam, 2005). It is also a key aspect among media practitioners. Yung and Leung (2014) assert that alternative media is a platform for various civil society and civic and activists organizations. They use alternative media as a platform to publicize information and their stand on different issues and their actions. It also serves as a platform for exchanging information and networking or advertising the events activists organize while recruiting participants (Yung & Leung, 2014, pp.94-95). In the case of Radical HK and Worker News, many NGOs covering issues regarding the working class in Hong Kong will not trust conventional media, but they trust alternative media platforms. Also, the work of alternative media and the NGOs is self-reinforcing. Alternative media does not just offer an opinion, but information since most cases follow a specialized study of the news, based on life stories and civic groups data facilitation, as asserted by the interviewees.

Interviewee C (Radical HK) highlights that:

“The NGOs do the research, but we record the whole press conference and save the report on our website, we create a database. And then we also share it with the NGOs and collaborate with them. We usually focus on marginal issues, for example, related to the worker's labour rights or the fishermen sector” (Radical HK, June 27, 2019).

Interviewee B (Worker News) explains how they spread their news and reports and how they do networking with civic groups and organizations, without focusing on reaching a significant readership but on reaching their goals as a platform for activists:

“Of course, we want a larger audience, but we do not make really big efforts to achieve it. We mainly have, besides Facebook posting, three ways to spread. First, it is through the activists NGOs network which we hope that the co-workers NGOs can spread the news to the people they are working for. For example, if there is a group, which is organizing workers, they could spread our reports. After several years of reporting we also build up relations with some of these organizations, but more or less it depends on how the public and NGOs' organizers want to keep the contact with us or have their way of organizing. The second part is we will join the forums or the Facebook groups of different communities like there are groups of drivers groups, of construction workers or sales. We join those groups and then we post those articles. Or there are also some other groups in terms of area. For example, there is a group for HK people in HK Island, and if there is something relevant for that area, we also post that. This kind of spreading information is quite effective because we directly contribute to the target. The third way is also another kind of direct contact. But we do it really rarely that is to print our staff and show it in the community in which that report is written. In the case of cleaning workers, we did some street exhibitions” (Worker News, June 27, 2019).

Although they are mostly focused on local issues and connections with civic organizations and activists, they have regional and global ambitions. For example, In-Media (at the time of the interview) had global connections to independent media outlets elsewhere such as Global Voices in the Netherlands, Malaysiakini in Malaysia, and Civilmedia in Taiwan.

As Interviewee A (In-Media) asserts:

“We do not have much collaboration with other platforms such as Malaysiakini. But, we write something about Hong Kong and post it on their websites (from foundations, NGOs, civil society groups or associations). For example, CCFD France Catholic Foundation: agricultural movements or, the Labour Union in Japan. But there is a language barrier...” (In-Media, January 2017).

To reinforce and discern from the alternative media editor’s perspective, some student protesters pointed out the importance of news outlets' role and leader’s opinions.

According to interviewee E:

“The social and alternative media did not encourage participation alone. I think the various news outlets and leader’s opinions on the news created a discourse that was encouraging to participate. Also, alternative media kept me updated. It also encouraged awareness. Everybody was talking about it and it encouraged discussion and participation” (Student activist from HKU, September 2018).

Hence, having strong networking with civic organizations and activists is essential for creating and maintaining the online and offline joint resistance. Alternative media are platforms for information-dissemination, information-exchange and networking and event-advertising (Yung & Leung, 2014, pp.94-95). The collaboration, self-reinforcing dynamics and trust ties between alternative media platforms and civic/political groups and organizations and activists are what makes the network and joint resistance stable and cohesive. It also creates proximity among alternative media platforms and civil society. Moreover, although they are mainly focused on local issues and networking with activists and civic organizations, they also have regional and global ambitions (Soler-Aleman, 2020).

3) Potential Influence on Mainstream Media News Agenda

Based on the interviewees’ testimonies, various elements of the alternative media platforms' potential influence on mainstream media were found, considering that this pattern has a descriptive focus. F. Lee (2019, p.181) claims that alternative media platforms can influence the mainstream media news agenda. Yung and Leung (2014) argue that alternative media plays a vital role as an initiator of public discourse and that “controversial issues that lead to social actions will catch the attention of mainstream media (pp.96-99).” This potential influence can be explained because, as Downing (2001) asserts, alternative media are usually the “first ones to articulate and diffuse the issues, analyses and challenges of social movements (p.30).” Furthermore, according to

Kidd (1999) “alternative media provides the first in-depth coverage and analysis with first-hand information from activists organized around these issues (p. 114).”

The three interviewees claimed that influencing mainstream media news agenda happens rarely and just in particular cases, but they provide some examples. For example, Interviewee B (Worker News) points out that after they covered, investigated and reported on the cleaning worker strike from the Man Shun Hong Kong and Kowloon Cleaning Company’s workers, during December and January in 2017, the mainstream media also started to cover it. The protests originated because the workers were denied severance payments after being coerced into signing voluntary resignation agreements by the company, putting them in a vulnerable situation. There are various articles related to the topic that can be found in mainstream and independent media platforms in 2017 such as, the Apple Daily, the South China Morning Post or the Hong Kong Free Press, while other alternative media platforms such as the Stand News or HK01 also had articles published regarding this topic.

However, interviewee A insisted: “We were the first ones to cover it, and we heard from a lot of mainstream journalists that they were following our website.” Another example, is the sand mining and land reclamation problem in Hong Kong, affecting the Runway of the Hong Kong airport and the artificial island in East Lantau; concretely, the so-called Lantau Tomorrow Vision plan³⁷. In 2017, Radical HK denounced the amount of money invested in it as well as the environmental impacts of the project. Although no specific media outlets were mentioned during the interview, Interviewee C (Radical HK) claimed that after they covered it, various mainstream media outlets also followed up on the case, pointing out: “Some of our readers are journalists from other media outlets. They look at our stories.”

Interviewee A (In-Media) did not mention any particular case but asserted that:

“We exchange information with other mainstream media and journalists. At the end, behind mainstream media there are people, individuals we can talk with. We look at their websites and content and we sometimes provide them with information. They check our platform” (In-Media, January 2017).

On the other hand, there is a paradoxical relationship between the potential influences on mainstream media and keeping the alternative media essence. Alternative media platforms have their way to make an impact, and they avoid writing the same kind of stories as other media platforms to maintain their authenticity. According to interviewees B (Worker News) and C (Radical HK), they do not have the ambition to become mainstream or influence mainstream media by focusing on reaching more readers. They insist on the quality of their stories as part of their strength and potential influence on reaching many readers and mainstream media. They want to keep their alternative nature by concentrating on the content and different life stories and protests from, for example, the working class and pro-democracy movements. Interviewee B (Worker News) insisted on “we are not making some topics hot. Instead, we are finding special perspectives on a hot topic.” Interviewee C (Radical HK) pointed out: “We cannot get the mass because we are not big enough. This is the cause and effect. If we do mainstream, we will be more focused on demand.” Similarly, the three interviewees

³⁷ This plan includes building 1,700 hectares of artificial islands in Kau Yi Chau and Hei Ling Chau's waters between Lantau and Hong Kong Island. It will also include near-shore reclamation and a cross-sea transport network linking the islands to Lantau, Tuen Mun and Hong Kong Island (Zhao, 2019).

mentioned a trend among other alternative media platforms to cover hot topics to reach a higher audience, which they disapprove of.

Interviewee C (Radical HK) gave an example regarding a well-known alternative media platform to highlight their essence:

“HK01³⁸ is a big media; they have 700 reporters. They started focusing on marginal issues, and some other media discovered that they had to report marginal topics to build up their brand. Not because they really care about those people (...) The likes and forums that the platforms have are not the most important. The most important thing is the story; your content is the key. I believe that if we do better our content, it will reach many people naturally” (Radical HK, June 27, 2019).

Therefore, alternative media platforms have the potential to influence mainstream media because they have first-hand and detailed information about the social protests, as well as direct contact with activists. They also have a strong commitment to their mission, focusing on the stories and the content related to their uniqueness (Soler-Alemany, 2020). These aspects contribute to creating public debate that can reach the attention of mainstream media (F. Lee, 2019; Yung & Leung, 2014).

4) Specialization and Time Control

Alternative media is a type of specialized media that can control the development of their news, videos, content and reports (Soler-Alemany, 2020). Generally, mainstream media journalists have to strictly follow their companies timing and agenda-setting regarding current news and updates. In many cases, they do not have time to dive deep into specific topics. In other words, journalists' approaches are influenced by media agendas, both in public and in policy (Coleman et al., 2009; Weaver, McCombs & Spellman, 1975). In turn, these agendas depend on the role played by the media concerning the information they produce (Oller, 2014, p.61). The specialization and time control pattern is supported by Yung and Leung's (2014) assertion: “alternative media keeps the momentum for public attention and concern for issues which are quickly forgotten and usually die down in mainstream media (p.96).” The alternative media principles and characteristics give them the advantage to dive deep into different topics, being free from the pressure of timing, deadlines and strict news agendas.

According to Interviewee C (Radical HK):

“Our most important mission is first to record the marginal issues. You can see that most of the protests or most action usually there are many media but, maybe just one or two media will focus on marginal topics and even if they do, they will be on screen every few minutes or seconds. Our record is vital for them, for the workers, for the people who are into action. Not only for the readers. They will grow up when they attend this kind of protests and action. We have to say that even not many people or media

³⁸ HK01 (in Chinese 香港 01) is a Hong Kong-based online news portal established in 2015.

focus on that kind of issues, the record is still vital” (Radical HK, June 27, 2019).

Also, most mainstream and mass media report on different current topics of interests for a wide variety of readers (except from sports and social press, among others). They have different news sections in their online websites and SNS covering a variety of topics such as society, economy, world news, culture, and entertainment, among others. However, alternative media platforms are focused on specific topics and for specific readers. For example, Worker News official website contains six sections specializing in the working class, such as working life or the work industry. Radical News contains nine sections related to workers and marginalized collectives, including a project from the Land Justice League³⁹ and one section regarding sign language policies.

According to Interviewee B (Worker News):

“One of the most important differences is that (mainstream) media is like an encyclopedia. It contains everything, local news, international news, entertainment... But now, there are more and more media, which is specialized, in specific issues like literature, culture... This kind of change is very beneficial for both the media and the public because the public can have the chance to access higher-quality information. The other benefit is that we do not need to appeal to all kinds of audience” (Worker News, June 27, 2019).

At the same time, being specialized media allows them to keep their originality. As Interviewee B (Worker News) points out:

“Many online media are getting more and more similar to each other because they like to copy from the same source or each other. I think it’s a really bad practice in online media. For example, a person wrote an article in a blog or Facebook wall, and then various platforms copied. Actually, these media have the same articles on their platforms, asking permission to copy among them. I do not think it is a good way to maintain media like this because the audience has no choice. We are reading the same thing. Again, you are becoming an encyclopedia” (Worker News, June 27, 2019).

The three interviewees recognize the urgency of certain topics regarding the present and future of Hong Kong, but they also call attention to other forgotten realities. For instance, once major pro-democracy protests such as the Umbrella Movement or the Anti-ELAB Movement occurred in the city, distinct struggles and situations from social groups became more secondary and unnoticed.

According to Interviewee C (Radical HK):

“The biggest problem is now (at the time of the interview) the extradition law. And after that, it’s about the future of Hong Kong and the relationship with China. These are the biggest topics and marginal issues

³⁹ It is a Hong Kong activist group that co-opts other social groups who are interested in the “land justice” cause.

such as labour struggles and the NGOs' work, will be more marginalized by the public. Whether there is a big matter will be fewer people focusing on marginalized topics. The readers will be even less focused on these kinds of problems. It will get more marginal" (Radical HK, June 27, 2019).

Therefore, alternative media are focused on particular topics for specific readers, while any media or political agendas do not determine them. They have the time to control the development of their news, videos, content and reports, which contributes to their independence. Alternative media specialization and time control allows them to dive deep and research the topics they chose to publish based on their principles and commitment with civil society. This aspect contrasts with the emotional discourse intrinsic in their sense of self-identity, reinforcing their role as informative media. They contribute to the visualization of marginalized groups and resist the self-censorship problem that many journalists face due mainly to their media's political lines and agenda-setting systems. They can also decide the news's usefulness based on their mission, not on the readership (Soler-Aleman, 2020).

6.2. University Student Protesters' Patterns

Based on seven in-depth-interviews, conducted between May 2016 and June 2019, with student protesters who were all part of the Umbrella Movement generation from the CUHK, HKU and HKUST, this analysis found three interrelated patterns: 1) trust in alternative media platforms, 2) the self-reflectivity of dissent and, 3) the decentralization of alternative spaces. In order to contextualize the period of data collection for the interviews, various issues need to be highlighted. In 2016 the Legislative Council election was held. It had a high voter turnout rate of 60 percent, especially among the youth. In this election, there was the emergence of the newly founded localist parties led by Umbrella Movement student leaders, who were elected to the Legislative Council. These new political parties were in favour of the Hong Kong self-determination and independence.

In 2017 various surveys reflected high levels of dissatisfaction and distrust towards the Hong Kong Government among the youth and increased self-determination feelings (CCPO, 2017). In 2018 the Legislative Council election was held with a lower voter turn out rate of 40 percent. The pro-Beijing camp took control of the Legislative Council after winning the elections. Also, well-known localist activists such as Leung-Tin-kei and Yau-wai-Ching were arrested, and the Hong Kong National party⁴⁰ was banned. 2019 was a year characterized by multitudinous protests against the Chinese central government's extradition law amendment, as explained in chapter one. Similarly, in the 2019 Hong Kong District Council election the pro-democracy camp won most seats, making it a historical record.

1) Trust in Alternative Media Platforms

The interviewees have a favourable view, trust and credibility on alternative media platforms. Student protesters feel close to alternative media platforms because they value their commitment to civil society and their activist nature and performance. They also value the fact that alternative media platforms offer first-hand information and create a space where politically active young people can engage and feel united with

⁴⁰ It was a localist national party, founded in 2016 that defended Hong Kong's Independence.

like-minded people by reading or contributing their articles, by sharing them, by taking part in the protests those platforms talk about. This is based on the argument that alternative media have generated an alternative political space engaging critically minded and democratic-oriented citizens (Kwong, 2015).

According to interviewee A:

“Mainstream media is conservative; they cannot find or moderate the space. So, social and alternative media become the only platform to engage to each other. Mainstream media reaches the general public, but social and alternative media reaches the youth” (Student activist from CUHK, May 2016).

Interviewee C values how social and alternative media helped to clarify official discourses and police misconducts, showing the protester’s perspective:

“(In 2014) there were images on TV about students fighting against the gangsters in Mongkok and Admiralty. The gangsters harassed the students. But the Chinese Government or someone close to the Chinese Government organized political rumors. They didn’t want the police to do this job⁴¹, they asked the gangsters to create an image of violence and danger. So, this would influence people’s negative opinion. It was a battle for the public opinion. The alternative and social media role was to show the perspective of the Umbrella Movement supporters because they can have people to deliver information, coordinate actions and show where to attack; to clarify the rumors from Government and pro-Government people; and to show a report mistreatment of police misconduct. These aspects made me feel close to them, I trusted their reports” (Student activist from CUHK, June 2017).

As asserted by interviewee D alternative media commitment and involvement with the movement is very important for them:

“They (alternative media) give us deep information. Many of the writers and contributors are activists themselves. It gives me the confidence to listen to someone that steps on the ground...” (Student protester from HKUST, June 2017).

Interviewee E highlights the role of pro-democracy alternative media to be informed during the protests:

“(During the Umbrella Movement) Facebook, In-Media and Stand News were my news feed. I was checking updates constantly. I also checked the traditional newspaper pages and the opinion of the Umbrella Movement leaders, mainly from Joshua Wong and Agnes Chow. I also read Apple Daily because it is a pro-democratic newspaper” (Student activist from HKU, September 2018).

⁴¹ The interviewee refers to coercion and stopping the students from protesting.

To reinforce as well as discern from the student protester's idea, one of the alternative media editors pointed out that the main reason the student protesters trusted their platform was their close interaction with the protests and activists during the movement and the fact that they were also fully dedicated to the protests reporting while being at the front lines of the movement.

Interviewee A (In-Media) asserts:

“During the Umbrella Movement, our Golden age, we gained a high number of readers that rose from 100k to 400k on-site, mainly because we were doing a very early protests' reporting, 24 hours a day. We were faster than most of other media. For example, during the class boycott (on 28 September) we asked students and readers to submit photos and articles and talk about their thought and experience” (In-Media, January 2017).

Similarly, alternative media platforms represent a symbol of press and media freedom and democracy, considering that there is general support for and consciousness of it in Hong Kong (T. Lui, et al. 2019). First, alternative media has created a discourse consistent with democratisation principles (Iam-Chong, 2012), and they represent the liberal side of media (Kwong, 2015). Second, in recent years there has been an overall decline of paid conventional newspapers and mainstream media credibility ratings, while online and alternative media saw the opposite (CCPO, 2019). Similarly, because of general dissatisfaction with the mainstream press, online alternative newsreaders have rapidly increased in readership and are used as a way to access independent news (Chan et al. 2018, p.118; F. Lee, 2019). All of this, considering that reading articles on alternative media platforms such as In-Media, motivated the readers to participate in social and political activism (Yung & Leung, 2014, p.97).

Interviewee F states:

“I feel media freedom is threatened. Live videos show the truth, but many mainstream media platforms keep adjusting the message. I believe in the role of alternative media platforms for democracy such as Stand News that is why I pay some money, and I became a member of some of them. But, I also read Apple Daily⁴² because it is the only online mainstream pro-democracy newspaper” (Student activist from CUHK, June 2019).

Therefore, the interviewees trust alternative media platforms for two main reasons. First, they feel a sense of proximity with them due to their commitment to civil society, their activist nature, and creating a politically active space to take part in. Second, alternative media platforms are symbols of press and media freedom and democracy because of their discourse based on democratic principles. All this reinforces their credibility among student protesters.

⁴² Apple Daily is a pro-democracy paid newspaper founded in 1995. It has both print and online versions. It is also one of the most read newspapers in Hong Kong (Reuters, 2019), noted for being critical of the Chinese government.

2) The Self-Reflectivity of Dissent

According to interviewees, after the Umbrella Movement, there was a sense of self-reflection and pause regarding the pro-democracy movement's direction, including the new protests strategies and the new technologies and media usage. The 'self-reflectivity of dissent' pattern is related to the 'networked social movements' (Castells, 2015) because it is one of their main characteristics. These movements continually question themselves about who they are, their goals and their long-term aspirations at the individual and group level. For example, during the Umbrella Movement, protesters debated among them, online and in occupied areas (F. Lee, 2015b). The sense of self-reflection is also related to the general feeling of frustration and powerlessness, combined with future aspirations, and with the aims for democratization and the self-determination feelings that have been increasing in the latest years among Hong Kong youth (C. Lee & Sing, 2019; T. Lui et al. 2019; Tsui, 2015).

Student protesters were frustrated because the movement did not achieve its goal; they were also tired of the confrontations with different groups and people, the online quarrels, and similar arguments from both sides (pro-democracy and pro-Chinese Government) in online chats, forums and casual discussions. In that moment of frustration and future aspirations, the ideas of the necessity to radicalize the movement started to circulate among protesters and civil society. F. Lee (2018, p.219) and Wang (2018, p.3708) found that online alternative media use and participation in the Umbrella Movement in 2014 were related positively to radicalization and the desire for Hong Kong independence, which incentivized a significant fragmentation between the pro-Beijing and the pro-democracy camps.

Interviewee C points out the continuous failure of the pro-democracy movement, the fragmentation and divisions in society, and how the idea of radicalizing the movement started to circulate:

“There is a bottle-neck, the democracy movement has repeatedly failed. There are moderate and radical democrats. Leftists and localists. The perception of the protesters was split, considering people either gangsters or heroes. The feeling is that what we have done in the past did not work. I feel exhausted. But, some people think in order to deliver the universal suffrage we need to be more radical... After the Umbrella Movement the radicalization went faster” (Student activist from CUHK, June 2017).

According to interviewee F, in 2019 they felt more threatened than in 2014:

“It is now or never. During the Umbrella Movement we wanted a better Hong Kong but we thought that keeping Hong Kong stable was ok. There were leaders organizers. Now (during the Anti-ELAB Movement) we feel the threat is bigger. There are no leaders. We feel the Hong Kong situation is similar to the Taiwan one but, Taiwan have more freedom than Hong Kong. So, we have no choice but to fight harder. I am not afraid to do what is necessary” (Student activist from CUHK, June 2019).

According to interviewee G, in 2019 they felt powerlessness and fear for the future. This fear incentivized them to take an action:

“I am here today because I want to do something. I think we need to remind people the dangerous moment we are living and the dark future is waiting for us. But many times we actually do not know what to do. What it is in our hands... I guess you heard or saw the slogan and meme on social media saying if we burn, you burn with us. We have no choice, we are disappearing” (Student activist from CUHK, June 2019).

Regarding the new technologies and media usage, student protesters highlighted that during the Umbrella Movement social and alternative media had a key role to communicate and be informed about the movement, and that young people were highly motivated to politically participate in any form. The Umbrella Movement was the starting point of a new use of social and alternative media. Facebook was the most common and powerful social media in 2014 in Hong Kong (C. Lee & Sing, 2019). Most of the users used it to know about the earliest news and to be in touch with family and friends. But, the ones who were more politically active or politically interested also used it to be in touch with other activists and civil society organizations. Similarly, Facebook started to become a platform to share political information with much more intensity than before.

According to interviewee C:

“(During the Umbrella Movement) there were thousands of people openly discussing about politics simultaneously at the same time on the Internet, in the restaurants, at home... Like something happened in science fiction movie, very different from normal life. Everyone was very nice to each other, caring for each other. Traditionally we think Hong Kong people are politically indifferent and selfish, but we saw another face of Hong Kong people. The Umbrella Movement has awakened a new generation of young people that started to use Facebook as a political tool, and many young people also read and collaborated with alternative media” (Student activist from CUHK, June 2017).

After the Umbrella Movement, some students also expressed their frustration, exhaustion and their apathy with the situation and social media in general.

Interviewee D states:

“Since always disagreement arises when posting information on social networks, I tried less to post stuff there. I also blocked some platforms that had opposite opinions as mine (...) I just can see one-sided comments which are from the pro-democracy side on Facebook and I could only listen to those who have the same political stand with me. I feel very bored about this topic and I feel I don't care anymore...” (Student activist from HKUST, June 2017).

Interviewee C claims that they did not want to participate online and prefer anonymous forums:

“(During the Umbrella Movement) I liked to voice up my opinion and organize events with Facebook and make my own Facebook page and do instant news reports, but (after the Umbrella Movement) I was not that willing to share my political opinion on Facebook because you may be criticized or your friends will be annoyed. So, I like anonymous forums now” (Student activist from CUHK, June 2017).

The interviewees expressed that young people turned to online forums because they face fewer threats online than offline and they value the fact that they can be anonymous. In fact, during the protests in 2019, young protesters have made full use of encrypted messaging platform Telegram and Reddit-like site LIHKG⁴³ to brainstorm protest tactics. They used them as new protest strategies and communication tools. In LIHKG they could find information before taking actions because it uses a democratic approach to decision-making based on the popularity of ideas (Purbick, 2019). Protesters made their moves after deliberation and online voting, and evaluated the effectiveness of strategies after every protest (Arranz & Lam, 2019). One of the characteristics of this change of strategies is that unlike Occupy, there was an absence of clear leadership in the Anti-ELAB movement against the now-withdrawn extradition bill.

According to interviewee F:

“I like to exchange ideas with others in an online community. It is a way to express opinions and hopes. I feel I have the responsibility to do this as a Hong Kong citizen. But, I am also afraid to be detected. We do not know what is waiting for us. I feel that I need to protect my personal data and identity online. Did you hear about LIHKG? We can vote the ideas we feel more attached with anonymously and then act” (Student activist from CUHK, June 2019).

Therefore, interviewees showed a sense of self-reflection after the Umbrella, which evolved into a new direction of the pro-democracy movement and new media usage and new technologies. This process is related to the next pattern.

3) The Decentralization of Alternative Spaces

According to interviewees, there was a progressive fragmentation of media and communication sources/platforms and a diversification of participation spaces during and after the Umbrella Movement. The pattern ‘the decentralization of alternative spaces’ refers to these two tendencies, and it is also related to the notion of ‘Networked social movements’ because they have a central role of decentralized and information networks based on electronic technologies. Also, the Internet and wireless communication role has changed contemporary social movements communication channels and strategies as well as the spaces of participation, free communication, and social movements organization (Castells, 2015).

The criticism of alternative media platforms partly caused the media and communication landscape fragmentation. This is connected to the tensions between the

⁴³ In 2016 the Hong Kong Golden Forum, an Internet community about software and computer hardware, evolved into LIHKG; a Hong Kong-based website of forums.

different actors, such as student protest leaders and pro-democracy organizations that played a vital role during the Umbrella Movement, which will be further discussed in chapter seven. During the Umbrella Movement and especially at the end, there were frictions between a centralized leadership (pro-democracy organizations and activists) and decentralized actions carried out by diverse protesters (F. Lee & Chan, 2018). The general organizational fragmentation among activists, groups and institutions, and any figure that represented centralization was put into question. Student activists had a sense of mistrust of, for example, student unions or political organizations while feeling powerlessness in politics (Sing, 2019).

According to interviewee A, there was a competition between pro-democracy organization platforms such as HKFS and Scholarism and protest leaders and the idea that a major protest such as the Umbrella Movement would not occur again:

“We achieved the awareness of people. But, (Joshua) Wong wanted the fame! The HKFS⁴⁴ organized the boycott of students, not Scholarism⁴⁵! People are getting bored about this topic; they feel there is nothing they can do. No one would join a new Umbrella Movement” (Student activist from CUHK, May 2016).

As asserted by interviewee B, there was fragmentation at the front lines regarding the protest strategies and moderate positions, while many people stopped believing in the movement. Society was also divided between the pro-democracy and pro-Beijing camps:

“There was a serious division and there were many differences in the movements’ strategies. Many student leaders localists tried to discredit the leaders because they were too moderate. These types of situations happen in all social movements. Society became very divided and also the agnostics increased. There were two parallel universes. But some people such as the pro-Beijing read just few sources and they had a biased perspective (Student activist from CUHK, May 2016)

Regarding alternative media usage, during main social movements such as the Umbrella Movement, alternative media platforms played a key role as informative and organizational platforms, being, in many cases, part of the movement. They also played a vital role by challenging the mainstream media and encouraging citizen journalism, creating collective identity and support for the Occupy movement (Lee P. et al. 2015, pp.357-370). Activists needed a platform to be informed about the movement, to be able to publish their content as citizen journalists and to debate the situation freely. To try to meet the needs of activists, alternative media platforms such as In-Media gave detailed discussions on social activism, offering first-hand reports of social activism and police misconduct or power abuse with the activists, as well as denouncing the reduction of

⁴⁴ The Hong Kong Federation of Students (HKFS) is a student organization that has been playing an active role in various student protests since the 70s. It was founded in 1958 by the student unions of the Chinese University, Lingnan University, Hong Kong Shue Yan University and Hong Kong University of Science and Technology.

⁴⁵ Scholarism was a pro-democracy student activist group in favor of Hong Kong’s autonomy and self-determination. It was founded in 2011 by Joshua Wong and dissolved in 2016.

spaces for participation, activists' freedom of association, freedom of speech and freedom of expression (Yung and Leung, 2014, p.97).

Nonetheless, activists started to be more demanding and critical, especially after the Umbrella Movement's failure. More individuals started to post and rely on forums for information exchange and retrieval. They also started to create their public and individualized profiles on social networks such as Facebook. As pointed out by the interviewees, they stopped contributing to their reports to the alternative media platforms. In fact, "In-Media's mobilizing role has been diminished by the use of Facebook, in recent years" (Yung and Leung, 2014, p.99). After the Umbrella Movement, alternative media platforms such as In-Media lost its identity and mission from the student protesters' perspective. They were perceived as traditional news media, less involved in social protests. That is why it started to be criticized and became less engaging to activists. Various student protesters pointed out the criticism and limitations that alternative media platforms face.

According to interviewee C:

"After the Umbrella Movement many of the staff from In-Media left and the new team did have a different style and orientation that did not like to many readers. Also, activists moved to Facebook and there was a fragmentation of the leftist struggle. They did not contribute with their articles. The main limitations of platforms such as In-Media are that it has less than 10 percent of readership. It is difficult to attract the young generation since the majority of articles are long and too academic. There is also a language barrier in order to catch an international audience. They need to focus on the Facebook trend of publishing news through it. Readers are also interested in reading the comments and in many cases they do not have that option" (Student activist from CUHK, June 2017).

According to interviewee D, In-Media did not engage protesters and activists online because they lost contributors and had managing and content problems:

"They (In-Media) have likes on the platform but not in their posts. They do not work in a business format, they have a poor management compared with other platforms. They have less contributors now, mainly because they use their own platforms such as Facebook to publish articles. In an environment of many social media platforms, to get the attention of the readers is a real challenge" (Student activist from CUHK, June 2017).

In the same line, Interviewee E asserts:

"I felt that In-Media was struggling at the end of the Umbrella Movement, I guess now too. I heard from friends that they got a bit lost and did not know how to handle the media competition, that they lost their essence" (Student activist from HKU, September 2018).

According to interviewee A, the main problem was that they did not create public debates, and there was fragmentation in the net:

“There was a high fragmentation of Facebook pages, Facebook fighters and keyboard fighters got united. The problem in alternative media platforms such as In-Media is that everyone can be a writer and they don’t create discussion with the liberals” (Student activist from CUHK, May 2016).

To reinforce the previous points and differentiate from the student’s protesters perspective, In-Media editor interviewee asserted that this feeling of criticism was mainly due to the change of their staff, which was not close to the social movement anymore. Many of them were not activists. Moreover, In-Media to be more economically sustainable and to differentiate themselves from other platforms moved into other media formats, such as video. In-Media’s main contributors were several hundreds during the Umbrella Movement. However, after the Umbrella Movement, activists/civil groups have shifted to their own website and Facebook pages.

As Interviewee A (In-Media) asserted:

“During the Umbrella Movement activists became more demanding. They expected a lot about our role and performance. More individuals and leaders made use of SNS such as Facebook to share political information (...) Now (2016) people rely on Facebook, not In-Media. The use of Facebook from activists, leads to success. Social media gives a sense of new hope. Also, after the Umbrella Movement the competition between online media and media increased. Apple Daily went online reaching more online readers. Now mainstream is faster and instantaneous so, In-Media is not influential. We are trying to find a new role in the movements. But there are fewer activists involved and more competition among online media. People rely too much on Facebook. You just can see all what you want you to see, nothing else. We are open to reach new readers and post articles in different groups. For every district start discussions, not just on our own Facebook page. There is difficulty to reach our readers this is why we opened a Telegram chat. We are not able to compete with the mainstream media. Our image has changed, there is less participation from activists. More activists are moving to Facebook and we do not have many active contributors” (In-Media, January 2017).

This pattern reflects the fragmentation in the media and communication landscape and the diversification of the participation spaces after the Umbrella Movement. As interviewees pointed out, this was a consequence of the tensions in society and among the Umbrella Movement leaders and organizations, the negative change that platforms such as In-Media experienced because they lost their essence, content and stopped creating public debates.

6.3. Summary of the Qualitative Analysis's Key Findings

To sum up, this chapter has explored the research question of 'Why/how does civic media affect new forms and spaces of political participation and 'networked dynamics' in the 'inter-mobilization period'?' The patterns found in the interviews with the alternative media editors and the university students' protesters are as follows:

6.3.1. Alternative Media Editors' Patterns:

- **Sense of self-identity:** alternative media platforms have a strong sense of self-identity related to their mission, proximity to activists, their social activism and small readership nature, as well as their will to influence political agendas.
- **Joint resistance:** Alternative media creates an online and offline joint resistance with civic/political groups and organizations such as NGOs, activists and protesters. Different civil society groups and activist organizations share and publicize information and opinions on alternative media platforms and do networking, while alternative media cover, publish and follow up their stories. This creates proximity and prevails among alternative media platforms and civil society.
- **Potential influence on mainstream media news agenda:** alternative media platforms have the potential to influence mainstream media (F. Lee, 2019) because they have first-hand and detailed information about the social protests. They are also able to follow up on the struggles over time, while being in touch with activists. These aspects contribute to creating public debate that can reach the attention of mainstream media.
- **Specialization and time control:** Alternative media are focused on particular topics for specific readers, while any media or political agendas do not determine them. They have the time to control the development of their news, videos, content and reports, which contributes to their independence. This provides them with the advantage to delve into and research the topics they chose to publish based on their principles and commitment with civil society, and socio-political causes.

6.3.2. University Student Protesters' Patterns:

- **Trust in alternative media platforms:** there is a general positive view on and trust in alternative media platforms. Student protesters value their commitment with civil society, their activist nature and performance, as well as the fact that they create a space to gather for politically active students. Alternative media platforms represent a symbol of press and media freedom and liberal democracy. In most of the cases, these elements motivated the interviewees to be more politically active, while supporting the platforms economically.
- **The self-reflectivity of dissent:** after the Umbrella Movement, the student activists and protesters experienced a sense of self-reflection and pause regarding the direction of the pro-democracy movement, the new technologies and media usage and collective action strategies. Also, the general feeling of

frustration and powerlessness, combined with future aspirations, marked a period of lower intensity of social activism and online political participation. At the same time, the ideas of the necessity to radicalize the movement started to circulate.

- **The decentralization of alternative spaces:** activists started a process of decentralization that involved fragmentation in the media and communication landscape and a change and diversification in the spaces for participation. The fragmentation of information and communication sources/platforms was due to 1) the simultaneous tensions between the leaders from the movement and civil society; 2) the critique that alternative media received from the Umbrella Movement activists and protesters after the Umbrella Movement; and 3) the fact that individual protesters/activists started to use their own social media platforms and profiles, instead of directly collaborating or engaging with alternative media platforms, in this case, In-Media.

Chapter 7: Discussion

This chapter summarizes, connects and discusses the key findings of the quantitative and qualitative analyses, and it answers the research questions. This dissertation formulated the central question of ‘what are the impacts of civic media on new forms and spaces of political participation in the ‘inter-mobilization period’?.’ In order to examine if civic media can foster participation in the ‘inter-mobilization period’ (from January 2015 until February 2019), this study constructed an analytical framework. It combined the Civic Media approach, the Network Society theory, the Four Stages of Social Movements theory and the Swidler’s Cultural Sociological Concepts of ‘Settled’ and ‘Unsettled Periods,’ which were explained in chapters two and three. This study considers that alternative media consumption and socio-political contacts are interrelated, being part of the civic media concept. It assumes that civic media have an impact on online political participation and offline political intention as new forms and spaces of political participation. It also assumes that the virtual and physical spheres are connected in the period between major protest events. Based on this framework, a mixed methods analysis approach was developed, which consisted of two parts: a quantitative method analysis and a qualitative method analysis, having a primary reliance on the quantitative approach. The following sections present the summary of the key findings from both parts of the analysis, followed by the answers to the research questions.

7.1. Summary of the Quantitative Analysis’s Key Findings

The first part of the analysis presented in chapter five has examined the RQ1. ‘What are the impacts of civic media on new forms and spaces of political participation in the ‘inter-mobilization period’?’ And RQ2. ‘What is the connection between online and offline forms and spaces of political participation in the ‘inter-mobilization period’?’ This part was based on the analysis of a 506 sample obtained with a questionnaire collected between January and March 2018. It was addressed to Hong Kong University students from three top publicly financed universities in Hong Kong (HKU, CUHK, HKUST). The main findings are summarized in the following table:

Table 17. Summary of the Quantitative Findings

<p>Finding 1. Alternative media consumption impact on online political participation</p>	<p>Alternative media consumption - including finding political news on alternative media platforms, receiving political information through alternative media platforms and reading alternative media - has a positive effect on online political participation during the ‘inter-mobilization period,’ including sharing political information online, expressing opinions about political issues online, participating in political forums or discussions online and bringing political and social topics into discussions with others online.</p>
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Finding 2. Alternative media consumption impact on offline political intention	Alternative media consumption has a positive effect on offline political intention during the ‘inter-mobilization period,’ including the willingness to be involved in political activism, the willingness to participate in a political protest feeling strong about an issue and the willingness to participate in a political cause to create a better society.
Finding 3. Alternative media consumption and socio-political contacts interrelation	Alternative media consumption and socio-political contacts, as part of the independent variable (civic media), are interrelated.
Finding 4. Socio-political contacts impact on online political participation	Socio-political contacts - including having contacts on SNS from pro-democracy political organizations, leaders from the Umbrella Movement, Student unions, and NGOs, have a lower effect than alternative media consumption on online political participation.
Finding 5. Socio-political contacts impact on offline political intention	Socio-political contacts have a lower effect on offline political intention as well, which is understood as the willingness to participate in political causes and protests offline.
Finding 6. Online political participation and offline political intention disconnection	The online political participation and the offline political intention have a non-significant relationship, meaning that they are not connected in the ‘inter-mobilization period.’
Control variables	The feeling of the political situation is highly significant and positively associated with offline political intention. It is also significant in a lower intensity with online political participation. Experience in social protests has a positive but low association with offline political intention. Income has a relevant effect on online political participation, but it is non-significant with offline political intention. Gender, place of origin and TV consumption have a non-significant effect.

7.2. Summary of the Qualitative Analysis’s Key Findings

In order to give insights and help to interpret the results from the first part of the analysis, the qualitative analysis presented in chapter six has explored the research question of ‘why/how does civic media affect new forms and spaces of political participation and ‘networked dynamics’ in the ‘inter-mobilization period?’ Ten

interviews were conducted from May 2016 to June 2019 with three editors from alternative media platforms in Hong Kong; and with seven university students who were part of the Umbrella Movement generation. The following subsections will summarize the patterns found in the interviews with the alternative media editors and the university student protesters that can help to explain the civic media impacts on new forms and spaces of political participation and ‘networked dynamics.’ The main findings are summarized in the following tables:

Table 18. Alternative Media Editors' Patterns

Pattern 1. Sense of self-identity	Alternative media platforms have a strong sense of self-identity related to their mission, proximity to activists, their social activism and small readership nature, as well as their will to influence political agendas.
Pattern 2. Joint resistance	Alternative media creates an online and offline joint resistance with civic/political groups and organizations such as NGOs, activists and protesters. Different civil society groups and activist organizations share and publicize information and opinions on alternative media platforms and do networking, while alternative media cover, publish and follow up their stories. This creates proximity and prevails among alternative media platforms and civil society.
Pattern 3. Potential influence on mainstream media news agenda	Alternative media platforms have the potential to influence mainstream media (F. Lee, 2019) because they have first-hand and detailed information about the social protests. They are also able to follow up on the struggles over time, while being in touch with activists. These aspects contribute to creating public debate that can reach the attention of mainstream media.
Pattern 4. Specialization and time control	Alternative media are focused on particular topics for specific readers, while any media or political agendas do not influence them. They have the time to control the development of their news, videos, content and reports, which contributes to their independence. This provides them with the advantage to delve into and research the topics they chose to publish based on their principles and commitment with civil society, and socio-political causes.

Table 19. University Student Protesters' Patterns

<p>Pattern 1. Trust in alternative media platforms</p>	<p>There is a general positive view on and trust in alternative media platforms. Student protesters value their commitment with civil society, their activist nature and performance, as well as the fact that they create a space to gather for politically active students. Alternative media platforms represent a symbol of press and media freedom and liberal democracy. In most of the cases, these elements motivated the interviewees to be more politically active, while supporting the platforms economically.</p>
<p>Pattern 2. The self-reflectivity of dissent</p>	<p>After the Umbrella Movement, the student activists and protesters experienced a sense of self-reflection and pause regarding the direction of the pro-democracy movement, the new technologies and media usage and collective action strategies. Also, the general feeling of frustration and powerlessness, combined with future aspirations, marked a period of lower intensity of social activism and online political participation. At the same time, the ideas of the necessity to radicalize the movement started to circulate.</p>
<p>Pattern 3. The decentralization of alternative spaces</p>	<p>Activists started a process of decentralization that involved fragmentation in the media and communication landscape and a change and diversification in the spaces for participation. The fragmentation of information and communication sources/platforms was due to 1) the simultaneous tensions between the leaders from the movement and civil society; 2) the critique that alternative media received from the Umbrella Movement activists and protesters after the Umbrella Movement; and 3) the fact that individual protesters/activists started to use their own social media platforms and profiles, instead of directly collaborating or engaging with alternative media platforms, in this case, In-Media.</p>

7.3. Answer to the Research Questions

In this section, the first and second research questions (RQ1. ‘what are the impacts of civic media on new forms and spaces of political participation in the ‘inter-mobilization period?’’ and RQ2. ‘what is the connection between online and offline forms and spaces of political participation in the ‘inter-mobilization period?’’) are answered with the discussion of the quantitative analysis results. The third research question (RQ3. ‘why/how does civic media affect new forms and spaces of political participation and ‘networked dynamics’ in the ‘inter-mobilization period?’’) is answered with the qualitative analysis results to help interpret the quantitative findings.

There is a discrepancy between the quantitative and qualitative analyses concerning the sample and the timeline. The sample for the quantitative analysis is based on Hong Kong undergraduate students. The data collection was conducted in 2018. The sample for the qualitative analysis is based on student protesters and alternative media editors. The data collection was conducted between 2016 and 2019. The reason for that was to give more insights and context to the data and results from the quantitative analysis. Combining the three different samples helps to interpret the interrelation of alternative media and socio-political contacts, the higher influence of alternative media and the disconnection between online and offline participation. The author acknowledges that the answers of the student protesters are more enthusiastic than the ones from the Hong Kong undergraduate students. The author also acknowledges that they represent a small percentage of highly engaged university students from the quantitative analysis’ questionnaire. These aspects might affect the results.

Nevertheless, this brings us back to the justification of the different samples explained in chapter four. Regarding the reasoning of the quantitative sample, this study focuses on Hong Kong undergraduate and local students from three top universities because the youth, local and educated, coming from different social backgrounds, were leading participants in the Umbrella Movement and part of the Umbrella generation (C. Lee & Sing, 2019, p. 11). Also, because they were highly digitalized and more likely to participate in politics (Loader, 2007; Wike & Castillo, 2018). Regarding the justification of the qualitative sampling, the nature and dynamics of the phenomenon studied require several different data types. The interviews inform about the role and perceptions of alternative media editors and student protesters about civic media consumption and participation behaviours. Moreover, the interviews show, on the one hand, the “doers” perspective and, on the other hand, the “consumers” of civic media perspective.

The difference in the timeline is that it helps contextualize and interpret the results over time, focusing on the ‘inter-mobilization period,’ which is between the Umbrella Movement and the Anti-ELAB Movement (2015-2019). In this period, social and political instability marked student protesters’ political engagement and media usage and the perceptions and opinions about online and offline participation. All these reasons help understand the differences between methods and how the qualitative analysis helps interpret the quantitative analysis results. In the following sections, to clarify and explain the civic media impacts on participation and the disconnection between the online and offline forms and spaces of participation, the RQ1 and RQ2 answers (based on the quantitative analysis) are combined with RQ3 (based on the qualitative analysis).

7.3.1. ‘What are the Impacts of Civic Media on New Forms and Spaces of Political Participation in the ‘Inter-Mobilization Period’?’

The answer to the first research question according to the results of the quantitative SEM analysis, in short, is that civic media (the interrelation of alternative media and socio-political contacts) plays a key role in fostering online political participation and offline political intention, the willingness to participate in protests and political causes offline during the ‘inter-mobilization period.’ In addition, alternative media consumption has a higher potential and influence than socio-political contacts such as pro-democracy organizations, student protest leaders, or civic organizations. The answers’ percentages of the questionnaire presented in section 5.3., reflect that there is a considerable number of university students who have socio-political contacts in their SNS compared to their alternative media consumption that is lower. Also, most university students have low online political participation but a higher level of willingness to participate offline. The respondents’ answers also show that the majority of university students are angry at the political situation, but have never been to a demonstration. Regardless of the expressed frustration, they had future political aspirations. At the same time, there was a small group of students that were frequently reading alternative media, have a relevant number of socio-political contacts in their SNS and that frequently participated online. They have also participated in political protests more than once, which is related to the study of F. Lee (2019, p.228) who found that alternative online media use was positively related to the support of more radical attitudes.

There are two aspects to consider to contextualize the data and understand the low alternative media readership, the low online political participation, and the high willingness to participate in political causes and activism offline before going to the qualitative interpretation. 1) The socio-political context at the time of data collection in 2018 characterized with a lower voter turn out rate in the Legislative elections, high levels of frustration and dissatisfaction, and, 2) the respondents’ profile, top university students. At the time of data collection the 2018 Legislative Council by-election was held. It had a lower voter turnout rate of 43 percent, especially among the youth, compared to the one in 2016, which had almost a 60 percent turnout rate, which is an indicator of political engagement (Barret & Zani, 2015; Putnam, 1993). In the same year, the pro-Beijing camp took control of the Legislative Council after winning the elections. Also, well-known localist activists such as Leung-Tin-kei and Yau-wai-Ching were arrested and the Hong Kong National party⁴⁶ was banned.

According to the public order event statistics, the number of public meetings in 2018 remained lower than in previous years, as shown in figure 2, presented in chapter one. In the same year, a high number of Hong Kong youth expressed frustration, dissatisfaction and distrust towards the Hong Kong Government and supported independence (CCPO, 2018). Furthermore, the situation of the media, especially after the Umbrella Movement in 2014, has been critical due to the continual worsening of self-censorship and the further contraction of spaces for free expression and media freedom (F. Lee 2019). This context can explain the low online political participation of respondents, and the willingness to participate in political causes and activism offline.

Also, the ‘inter-mobilization period’, discussed in chapter two, is a stage of lower intensity of political activism with a general feeling of frustration and anger. It is

⁴⁶ It was a localist national party, founded in 2016 that defended Hong Kong’s Independence.

also a transitional moment when students have future political aspirations, considering that people's desire for involvement exceeds their influence perception over decision-making in their region or country; being a signal of potential engagement and protest participation (Hansard Society, 2017, p.50). This idea is related to the cultural model approach from Swidler (1986, pp. 278-279) who claims that ideology forms around beliefs and aspirations during what the author calls 'unsettled periods' of cultural transformations. In this dissertation 'unsettled periods' refer to the mobilization stage of a social movement. However, the findings suggest that beliefs and aspirations also play a crucial role in the 'inter-mobilization period.'

Regarding the respondents' profile, they were all university students from 18 to 24 years old at the time of data collection in 2018, coming from three top publicly financed universities (HKU, CUHK, HKUST). In Hong Kong, students who enter top universities have the pressure to study hard and find a good job, considering that 20 percent of students can enroll into one of the eight publicly funded universities, as reported by governmental sources (CENSTATD, 2018). This fact exposes students to high stress because only those who have graduated from one of these top universities, or can afford to study abroad, will not struggle to find a well-paying job or have a problem affording accommodation. In most cases they do not want to risk their professional future by damaging their reputation by expressing political opinions online, or having criminal records due to protest participation, especially considering the difficult economic prospects the youth face in Hong Kong (Bland, 2017, p. 40). These aspects can explain the low online political participation. Concerning civic media consumption, having a low readership is one of the alternative media's characteristics as part of their essence. It is not surprising that among university student's respondents in this dissertation, the number of alternative media consumption was not as high as the number of socio-political contacts on SNS.

All these aspects described and explained above do not diminish civic media's potential on fostering participation as reflected in the SEM analysis results. In 2018 social media was the major information source of public information affairs among the youth, since they trust social and alternative media more than mainstream media (Chan et al. 2018; CYS, 2018). This is partly because both elements had important effects on movements' participation and online organization (Bennett, 2012; F. Lee 2015a; Tang, 2019). The Network Society theory claims that the Internet and new technologies play an essential role in acting as a motivator towards new forms and spaces of political participation, creating a sense of togetherness and free space of communication. Accordingly, occupied spaces have played a crucial role in the contemporary history of social change. They create a sense of community based on togetherness as a source of empowerment, considering that ICTs and communication networks can modify power connections, shape civil society and create public consciousness (Castells, 2015, pp.4-41).

The qualitative analysis helps to explain the importance of the interrelation between alternative media consumption and socio-political contacts and the higher influence of alternative media from the student protesters and alternative media editors' perspectives.

a) The interrelation between alternative media consumption and socio-political contacts

The importance of the interrelation between alternative media consumption and socio-political contacts is due to the collaboration and reinforcement of these two

elements in the network. Alternative media platforms offer insights and usefulness for civic/political organizations and protesters. They can retrieve information, publicize their cause and do networking. Their collaboration can also influence mainstream media news agendas by creating public discourse and social debates. This interrelation can be explained through two key patterns found in the qualitative analysis (from the editors' perspective): 'joint resistance' and 'potential influence on mainstream media news agenda.'

Based on the interviews' findings, alternative media creates an online and offline **'joint resistance'** with civic/political organizations and student protesters (Soler-Alemany, 2020). The relationship between civic media and new forms and spaces of political participation can be reinforced in the network with the collaborations between alternative media platforms, and civic organizations such as NGOs, pro-democracy organizations and activists/protesters because this interrelation reinforces their potential. Civic/political organizations and student protesters utilize alternative media platforms to publicize information, their opposition and actions on different matters. Alternative media also serve as a platform for exchanging information and networking for them or to advertise the events they organized, recruiting participants (Yung & Leung, 2014, pp.94-95). For example, as the interviewees asserted many of the NGOs and pro-democracy organizations in Hong Kong will not trust conventional media, but they trust alternative media platforms by exchanging and providing them with life stories and data facilitation.

This argument is related to the Network Society theory and the 'space of autonomy' concept (Castells, 2015), which connects networks on the Internet with the occupations occurring in the urban space. In this dimension of free and accessible communication beyond the control of governments and monopolizing corporations, alternative media and civic/political organizations and student protesters collaborate and reinforce each other. They influence those in power and improve their communities. Moreover, alternative media constructs a persistent and joint resistance beyond the mobilization peaks of social movements. Therefore, the collaboration, self-reinforcing dynamics and trust ties between alternative media platforms and civic/political organizations and protesters are what makes the network and joint resistance stable and cohesive. It also generates proximity among alternative media platforms and civil society (Soler-Alemany, 2020).

Another explanatory pattern is the alternative media **'potential influence on mainstream media news agenda'** (F. Lee 2019: 181). As Downing (2001) asserts alternative media are usually the "first ones to articulate and diffuse the issues, analyses and challenges of social movements (p.30)." Moreover, "alternative media provides the first in-depth coverage and analysis with first-hand information from activists organized around these issues" (Kidd, 1999: p.114). They have their way to make an impact, and they avoid publishing the same kind of stories as other media platforms in order to maintain their authenticity. According to interviewees they do not have the goal to become mainstream or to have an influence on mainstream media by focusing on reaching more readers. They want to maintain their alternative nature by concentrating on content and different life stories and protests, such as the working class and pro-democracy movements. They insist on the quality of their stories as part of their strength. Nonetheless, alternative media platforms have the potential to create social debate and therefore, catch the attention of mainstream media and society at large (F. Lee 2019). A critical minority can initiate certain public discourses in civil society. If they are successfully noticed and publicized by the mainstream media, those discourses can gradually re-shape public mentality so that there is pressure on the government

regarding their policy orientation and decision-making (Yung & Leung, 2014, p.96). Therefore, alternative media have a role to play on policy formulation and reorientation mainly because they can create public discourses, have first-hand and detailed information about the social protests and civil society. They are also in touch with civic/political organizations and student protesters (Soler-Aleman, 2020).

b) The higher influence of alternative media consumption

The higher influence of alternative media consumption is because there is a positive view on and trusts from the youngest and one of the most politically active sectors of civil society in Hong Kong. It is also reinforced due to alternative media's proximity to activists and their social activism nature. Student protesters also value the fact that alternative media represent a symbol of press and media freedom. This section explain the higher influence of alternative media, compared to the one from socio-political contacts through three key patterns found in the qualitative analysis: 'sense of self-identity' and 'specialization and time control' (from the editors' perspective), and 'trust in alternative media platforms' (from the student protesters' perspective).

The pattern '**sense of self-identity**' refers to the fact that alternative media platforms have a strong sense of distinctiveness and belonging to a group - in this case, regarding political and social activists - and their strength comes from clearly defining their goals, missions and profile as activist media (Soler-Aleman, 2020). This is based on the notion of "resistance identity" because the actors that are being dominated by the system produce it (Castells, 2010, p.90), meaning that they are part of the groups they defend or want to give voice to. It is also based on the local Hong Kong identity and citizenship construction that has been rising in the last decades (Ngok, 2018, p.34) because they mainly focus on Hong Kong local issues that concern an active and politically involved civil society. The interviews reveal how protests, social movement participation and the empowering mission of the platforms have influenced their self-identity construction, considering that "alternative media journalists value their normative responsibilities more" (Harlow, 2017, pp.117-135).

In addition, they have an anti-system ideology not just aiming to keep their independence from economic and governmental pressures but also from professional social movement organizers. Another element is their commitment, which is intrinsic to their sense of identity and it carries an emotional discourse. As asserted by Interviewee C (Radical HK, June 27, 2019): "We believe that our reports are much better than some of the traditional media because at least we are doing something that starts in our own heart." Therefore, the sense of self-identity and their participation in social protests as well as their distinctiveness makes them engaging to young activists and to loyal readers, considering that most of their readers are between 20 to 40 years old (Soler-Aleman, 2020).

The pattern '**specialization and time control**' refers to the fact that alternative media is a specialized media having the time to control the development of their news, videos, content and reports, contrary to mainstream media. Generally, mainstream media journalists have to strictly follow their companies timing and agenda-setting regarding current news and updates. In many cases, they do not have time to dive deep into specific topics. Similarly, journalist's approaches are influenced by media agendas and companies timing both in public and in policy (Coleman et al., 2009; Weaver, McCombs & Spellman, 1975). One of the main reasons is that they are able to follow up on the struggles over time (Soler-Aleman, 2020). Following the argument of Yung and Leung (2014) "alternative media keeps the momentum for public attention and

concern for issues which are quickly forgotten and usually die down in mainstream media (p.96).”

Another important point is that alternative media specialization and time control provides them with the advantage to delve into and research the topics they chose to publish based on their principles and commitment with civil society. These topics are not necessarily major protest events or reported during peak moments of mobilization. Also, most mainstream and mass media report on different current topics of interests for a wide variety of readers (except from sports and social press, among others). They have different news sections in their online websites and SNS covering a variety of topics. However, alternative media platforms are focused on specific topics and for specific readers. Therefore, they contribute to the visualization of marginalized groups and resist the self-censorship problem that many journalists face due to the political lines of their media and agenda-setting systems. They can also decide the usefulness of the news based on their mission, not on the readership. This specialization and time control can partly explain why they have higher influence than socio-political contacts because their reports boost interest among readers (Soler-Aleman, 2020).

From the student protesters perspective, there is a general positive view and **‘trust in alternative media platforms.’** Student protesters value their commitment with civil society, their activist nature and performance, as well as the fact that they create a space where politically active young people can feel united with like-minded people by reading or contributing their articles, by sharing them, by taking part in the protests those platforms talk about. They represent a symbol of press and media freedom and liberal democracy. In most of the cases, these elements motivated the interviewees to support the platforms economically. During the Umbrella Movement, reading articles on alternative media platforms such as In-Media motivated young students to participate in social and political activism (Yung & Leung, 2014, p.97), considering that alternative media provides access to alternative views, arguments and voices (Harcup, 2013, p.78).

On the other hand, Tarrow (2013, p.209) argues that in contemporary societies regardless of the electronic communication advantages such as immediacy, there is a lack of “interpersonal trust,” referring to face-to-face interactions with fellow citizens. This interpersonal trust can just come from intense and continuous interaction, such as the one that occurs during protests, occupations, or boycotts. The findings from the interviews point out that in the case of Hong Kong, this interpersonal trust can also come from alternative media platforms. Therefore, the trust in alternative media platforms that the student protesters expressed, especially during the Umbrella Movement, was based on what those platforms represent to them: commitment with civil society, their pro-democracy activist nature, trusted social ties and a symbol of press and media freedom, and their engaging space creation. These aspects can partly explain their higher influence on participation.

Nevertheless, Hong Kong’s independent and alternative media face structural limitations. For example, due to the lack of stable financial support, many independent media do not have their own full-time staff, nor are they able to finance various activities (Iam-Chong, 2019, p. 66). Despite this, independent and alternative online media exist as a result of participative funding and a growing audience (HKFP, 2019). Many Hong Kong people are willing to pay for online and alternative media news. 21 percent of the population pays for online news (Chan et al., 2017). Although in recent years there has been an increase of “free” online content, Hong Kong ranks comparatively high for paid online content. The main reason is because access to prominent brands such as BBC, CNN, and Hong Kong Economic Times, require

subscriptions, and many alternative media platforms ask for membership and/or donations from the readers (Chan et al., 2017). According to the interviewees, the fact that student protesters felt close to alternative media platforms and they represent a symbol of press and media freedom and democracy motivated them to support the platforms economically by giving donations, subscribing to their platforms or becoming members. All this considering that alternative media are valuable to social movements and activists (Owens & Palmer, 2003).

Therefore, the findings point to an understanding that it is essential to focus on the alternative media role and its collaboration with socio-political contacts in the network and the perception of politically engaged students better to understand the impacts of civic media on participation. The socio-political context, the time frame and period, and the respondents' profile are also essential factors to understand the civic media effects on participation. From the interviewee's perspective, civic media affects new forms and spaces of political participation for various reasons. Alternative media platforms and socio-political contacts collaborate in the net, while SNS serve as dissemination platforms. There is also a potential influence on mainstream media by creating public debate, discourses, engagement, and net participation. The role of civic media is reinforced because of their activist nature, resistance identity and distinctiveness. This element also helps to maintain loyal readers. Their originality, time dedication to marginalized issues and topics that frequently diminished in popularity among mainstream media can increase alternative media's influence and create interest among readers. Student protesters value their commitment, activist nature and their capacity for deliberative space creation. They also value that alternative media represent a symbol of liberal democracy and press and media freedom. Furthermore, alternative media facilitates interaction with fellow citizens and protesters/activists in the network.

7.3.2. 'What is the Connection Between Online and Offline Forms and Spaces of Political Participation in the 'Inter-Mobilization Period'?'

The answer to the second research question is that the relationship between the online and offline participation - what this dissertation calls 'networked dynamics' - was non-statistically significant. This means that they are not complementary in the 'inter-mobilization period.' It was an unexpected result, which makes it an interesting find because it adds new perspective to what this dissertation's analytical framework predicted. Castells (2015) claims that during peak moments of mobilization and street and squares occupations there is a high connection between the online and offline forms and spaces of participation, having a synergic relationship. However, according to this dissertation's findings, once peak moments of mobilization and urban occupations finish and the social and political activism have a lower intensity level, there is a disconnection.

There is an aspect to consider in terms of contextualization: the respondents of the questionnaire (Hong Kong undergraduate students) are part of the Umbrella Movement generation, which includes teenage activists who became politicians and leaders from the Umbrella Movement that see themselves as Hongkongers and face political, economic and social uncertainty and frustration. They were between 14 and 20 years old when the protests occurred. They are also part of the "Generation Hong Kong" (Bland, 2017), composed of young people who had grown up after 1997 when Hong Kong became part of China again. This generation includes young activists seeking to maintain their identity under increasing influence and control from Mainland China.

They are “caught between two worlds, struggling to define themselves, their city and their future” (Bland, 2017, p.5).

The qualitative analysis, although it is based on a different sample than the quantitative analysis, explained at the beginning of the section, helps to explain the disconnection of online and offline forms and spaces of political participation. It also helps to interpret why in the case of alternative media, the estimates are so high, and in the case of socio-political contacts, the estimates are lower. Despite that, there is a disconnection between online and offline participation. The explanation is through two critical patterns found in the interviews with alternative media editors and with university student protesters from the Umbrella Movement generation: a) the self-reflection process and b) the decentralization process that occurred during the ‘inter-mobilization period,’ which evolved into a new scenario after 2019.

a) The self-reflection process

The self-reflection process involves student protesters rethinking how they communicate and how they participate online and offline. This process started after the Umbrella Movement. The simultaneous interaction between cyberspace and urban space that lacks coordination during the ‘inter-mobilization period’ can represent a crucial moment of self-reflection for the pro-democracy movement and a reconstruction of a shared space for participation for social protests and political communication, as reflected in the pattern ‘**the self-reflectivity of dissent**’ (from the student protesters perspective). This pattern is based on F. Lee and Chan (2018, pp.5-9), who postulated that some of the Umbrella Movement characteristics similar to the ones of ‘networked social movements’ are that the Umbrella Movement displayed a significant degree of self-reflexivity. Protesters persistently debated among themselves online and in occupied areas.

Student protesters highlighted that social and alternative media had a pivotal role in communicating and informing about the movement during the Umbrella Movement and that young people were highly motivated to participate in any form politically. The Umbrella Movement was the starting point of a new use of social and alternative media. Facebook was the most common and powerful social media in 2014 in Hong Kong and started to become a platform to share political information with much more intensity than before. Most users used it to know about the earliest news and to communicate with family and friends. Nevertheless, those who were more politically active or politically interested also interacted with other activists and civil society organizations (C. Lee & Sing, 2019).

According to interviewees, after the Umbrella Movement, there was a pause regarding the direction of the pro-democracy movement, including the new technologies and media usage (C. Lee & Sing, 2019). There was a general feeling of frustration and powerlessness, combined with future aspirations. The future aspirations were concerned with democratization and self-determination feelings and the aim for a better future (Lui et al., 2019; Tsui, 2015). Besides, the importance of being anonymous in the network started to spread. Student protesters were frustrated because the movement did not achieve its goal. They were also tired of the confrontations with different groups and people, the online quarrels, and similar arguments from both sides (pro-democracy and pro-Chinese Government) in online chats, forums and casual discussions. As asserted by interviewees, in that moment of frustration and future aspirations, the ideas of the necessity to radicalize the movement started to circulate. Other studies found that online alternative media use and participation in the Umbrella Movement in 2014 were related

positively to radicalization and the desire for Hong Kong independence (F. Lee 2018, p. 219; Wang (2018, p. 3708), which incentivized a significant fragmentation between the pro-Beijing and the pro-democracy camps. This context marked a period of lower intensity of social activism and online political participation.

Similarly, during the protests in 2019, young protesters have made full use of encrypted and anonymous messaging platforms Telegram and Reddit-like site LIHKG⁴⁷ to brainstorm protest tactics. They used them as new protest strategies and communication tools. In LIHKG, they could find information before taking actions because it uses a democratic approach to decision-making based on the popularity of ideas (Purbick, 2019). Protesters made their moves after deliberation and online voting and evaluated the effectiveness of strategies after every protest (Arranz & Lam, 2019). One of the characteristics of this change of communication strategies is that unlike Occupy, clear leadership was absent in the Anti-ELAB movement against the now-withdrawn extradition bill. Therefore, the interviewees indicate a sense of self-reflection after the Umbrella Movement, characterized by a new direction of the pro-democracy movement, which involved changing communication strategies and new media usage. This process is related to the following pattern.

b) The decentralization process

During the ‘inter-mobilization period’, there was a decentralization process, which can be explained through one key pattern found in the qualitative analysis: **“the decentralization of alternative spaces”** (from the student protesters perspective). In this study, decentralization refers to the fragmentation of information and communication sources/platforms and the diversification of spaces of participation. This fragmentation was due to 1) the simultaneous tensions between the leaders from the movement and civil society; 2) the critique that alternative media received from the Umbrella Movement activists and protesters after the Umbrella Movement; and 3) the fact that individual protesters/activists started to use their own social media platforms and profiles, instead of directly collaborating or engaging with alternative media platforms, in this case, In-Media.

This pattern is based on F. Lee and Chan (2018, pp.5-9), who postulated that the Umbrella Movement protests evolved into a mixture of improvisational, dispersed, decentralized, and individualized actions. There were tensions between a centralized leadership (pro-democracy organizations and activists) and decentralized actions carried by diverse protesters. For example, frontline actions such as confronting the police were not coordinated and organized by the movement leaders but were coordinated between the activists. Moreover, Occupy Central with Love and Peace led by Prof. Benny Tai, Chu Yiu-ming and Chan Kin-man; the HKFS and Scholarism were seen as the leaders of the movement by the government and the media, but not by all protesters. These tensions created an internal movement’s division between the moderates and the radicals, while frustration and hopelessness increased.

During the Umbrella Movement, alternative media platforms played a key role as informative and organizational platforms, in many cases being part of the movement. Student activists needed a platform to be informed about the movement and publish their content as citizen journalists and freely debate about the situation. To try to meet the needs of activists, alternative media platforms such as In-Media gave detailed discussions on social activism, offering first-hand reports of social activism and police

⁴⁷ In 2016 the Hong Kong Golden Forum, an Internet community about software and computer hardware, evolved into LIHKG, a Hong Kong-based forum website.

misconducts or power abuse with the activists, as well as denouncing the reduction of spaces for participation, activist's freedom of association, freedom of speech and freedom of expression (Yung & Leung, 2014, p.97).

After the failure of the Umbrella Movement, student activists started to be more demanding and critical. Some alternative media platforms, such as In-Media, were perceived as traditional news media and less involved in the social movement. That is why it started to be criticized and became less engaging to activists. According to interviewees, the main criticism to In-Media was regarding their loose identity and mission, the publication of long, arduous and uninteresting articles, the decrease of their activist activity and the decrease of first-hand information diffusion. Moreover, they did not create discussion, they started to be distant from the movement, so they lost collaborators. Platforms such as Radical HK and Worker News did not face this scepticism from activists. This aspect can partly be explained because they emerged during the second wave of alternative media after 2012 and did not have a central role during the Umbrella Movement. They are also more focused on the working-class protests and less on the pro-democracy movement in Hong Kong.

Similarly, there was a process of individualization. Individual protesters/activists started to use their social media platforms and profiles instead of directly collaborating or engaging with alternative media platforms, in this case, In-Media. More individuals started to post on SNS and rely on forums for information exchange and retrieval. They also started to create their public and individualized profile on social networks such as Facebook, considering that "In-Media's mobilizing role has been diminished by the use of Facebook in recent years" (Yung & Leung, 2014, p.99). F. Lee and Chan (2018) argue "digital media communications did not create the problem of internal divisions by themselves. They were tied to the organizational, spatial, and ideological divisions existing in the movement (p.147)." However, digital media have exacerbated the complications by reinforcing the disagreements, producing platforms for articulating and transmitting opposing ideas, and originating a more fragmented and virtual communication space.

During the Anti-ELAB Movement in 2019, a leaderless movement, there was a diversified geographic distribution in the protests. Protesters were demonstrating in multiple areas of the city at the same time, rather than concentrated in one particular public space, in addition to their use of various forums and encrypted messaging and platforms to organize the protest simultaneously (Purbrick, 2019). "Be water, my friend" - the famous saying of the late martial arts star Bruce Lee became the slogan of young protesters. Learning from the Occupy movement of 2014, they "traded prolonged mass sit-ins for spontaneous road blockades and circling of buildings" (Lam, Naomi & Xinqi, 2019). All this is related to the increasing reduction of free communication spaces and restrictions in the public space to protest due to increasing legal/political and police repression. Accordingly, Hong Kong's youth protest behaviour changed in a moment of historical urgency and increasing distress, being exposed to high levels of stress and pressure that endures a constant change of strategies while trying to keep togetherness and flexibility.

Therefore, the period between 2015 and 2019 was a moment of pause and change in the pro-democracy social movement's strategies and civic media usage, while students wanted to keep their future political aspirations visible. After 2019, the pro-democracy movement evolved into a new scenario with a collective action and communication strategies transformation and the reconstruction of a shared space for participation. In addition, the results indicate that students seeking social and political change prioritize the occupation of the urban space. They do not rely on the same intensity on the virtual

space, which is mainly used for movements and protest organization and calls for action, and it is perceived as a place of public exposure.

Being part of the Generation Hong Kong and the Umbrella Movement generation also influences students' online participation and their future aspirations to participate offline in political causes, activism and protests. Additionally, the possible "passive online participation" from university students might not be connected to real action (Lutz & Hoffmann, 2016). Moreover, having a diverse number of contacts in SNS does not mean there is a real engagement, mostly because people in Hong Kong are more likely to be persuaded to participate in politics and protests by family and close friends while keeping their distance from major political organizations and political leaders (Tang, 2019, p.192). The next chapter, the conclusion, will explain the contributions and implications of all findings, the limitations and points for further research.

Chapter 8: Conclusion

This chapter presents the academic contributions and practical implications of the findings, the limitations and future research prospects. This dissertation argues that civic media, composed by the elements of alternative media consumption and socio-political contacts, plays a crucial role in fostering online political participation and offline political intention (the willingness to participate in political causes and protests offline) in the ‘inter-mobilization period’ in Hong Kong. The time frame of this study, understood as the period for the broader analysis, goes from January 2015 to February 2019. It is the period in between two major protest events, the Umbrella Movement and the Anti-ELAB Movement.

The main research question (RQ1) is ‘what are the impacts of civic media on new forms and spaces of political participation and ‘networked dynamics’ in the ‘inter-mobilization period’? And the subsidiary ones are: RQ2. ‘What is the connection between online and offline forms and spaces of political participation in the ‘inter-mobilization period’?’ and RQ3. ‘How/why does civic media affect new forms and spaces of political participation and ‘networked dynamics’?’ The quantitative analysis based on a questionnaire with Hong Kong undergraduate students, shows that civic media, with alternative media consumption and socio-political contacts being interrelated, can foster online and offline political intention (separately) in the period in between major protest events among university students in Hong Kong. However, alternative media have a higher influence compared to socio-political contacts. The quantitative findings also demonstrated that the virtual and physical forms and spaces of participation are disconnected in the ‘inter-mobilization period.’

The patterns found in the interviews with alternative media editors and university student protesters from the Umbrella Movement generation are an abstraction of what was found in the interviews. They reflect the characteristics of civic media and help to understand how civic media operates and how student protesters participate online and offline. The importance of the interrelation between alternative media consumption and socio-political contacts and their effects on participation is explained because both elements (alternative media consumption and socio-political contacts) are interrelated and reinforce each other while offering insights and usefulness for civic/political organizations and groups, protesters and mainstream media platforms. Alternative media and socio-political contacts can influence mainstream media news agendas by creating public discourse and social debates. The higher influence of alternative media consumption, compared to the one from socio-political contacts, is explained because the strong sense of alternative media’s self-identity related to their proximity to activists and their social activism nature, as well as their advantage of being able to delve into and research the topics they chose to publish, reinforces the positive view on and trust from the youngest and one of the most politically active sector of civil society in Hong Kong. Alternative media also represent a symbol of press and media freedom and liberal democracy.

On the other hand, the disconnection between cyberspace and urban space during the ‘inter-mobilization period’ is explained through two crucial processes. First, the self-reflection of the pro-democracy movement, including the collective action and communication strategies transformation, and the reconstruction of the public sphere. Second, the fragmentation in the media and communication landscape and the diversification of the participation spaces during the ‘inter-mobilization period. The pro-

democracy movement's self-reflection involved a collective action and communication strategies transformation, and the reconstruction of the public sphere. There was also a process of decentralization, which involved the fragmentation of information and communication sources/platforms due to 1) the simultaneous tensions between the leaders from the movement and civil society; 2) the critique that alternative media received from the Umbrella Movement activists and protesters after the Umbrella Movement; and 3) the fact that individual protesters/activists started to use their own social media platforms and profiles, instead of directly collaborating or engaging with alternative media platforms, in this case, In-Media.

These tendencies evolved into a new scenario and qualitative change after 2019 in both the media and the collective action situation. During the 'inter-mobilization period,' as a transitional moment, decentralization and self-reflection can be an advantage of survival for civic media in the long-term. It is an opportunity to rethink and reinforce the collaborations between alternative media platforms, mainstream media and civic/political organizations, activists and the SNS utilization. The following sections explain the academic contributions, practical implications, limitations and points for further research in sequential order.

8.1. Academic Contributions

This dissertation complements and extends the Network Society theory, the Four Stages of Social Movements theory, and Swidler's cultural sociological concepts of 'settled' and 'unsettled' periods. It also expands the Civic media approach while contributing to media, political communication, and social movements studies. The academic contributions to knowledge are divided into three categories: theoretical, methodological and empirical.

8.1.1. Theoretical Contributions

This research has four theoretical contributions, taking into consideration that despite the sustained visibility of student protests and activism and their use of media and new technologies, not much theoretical research has explored the role of civic media on new forms and spaces of political participation and 'networked dynamics' in the 'inter-mobilization period.' Moreover, most of the previous studies have been focusing on the mobilization period. Although the analytical framework is created through the case of Hong Kong, it can be applied to other cases because it is developed based on general media, communication and social movements theories.

First, the 'decline stage' from the Four Stages of Social Movements theory occurs when a social movement comes to an end due to failure, collapse, success or repression. However, this dissertation argues that the decline stage of a social movement does not necessarily typify the end or collapse of a major social movement, and it does not explain the mechanics and interconnection between different social protest events. In Hong Kong there has been persistence and continuity of the pro-democracy movement and an essential connection between different protest events (C. Lee, 2019; F. Lee & Chan, 2011). Therefore, it is essential to understand how social movements, as agents of social transformation, reproduce again and how media communication evolves. The decline stage carries essential long-term effects for politics and society, being characterized by a particular social and unresolved political situation as well as political communication media prominence. The various processes and mechanisms that transform over time can enrich social movement theories.

Second, related to the previous point, this study broadens Swidler's (1986) cultural model of 'settled and unsettled periods' because it helped to coin the term 'inter-mobilization period.' It is related to the term 'settled period'. According to Swidler (1986) in 'settled periods,' there is a low consistency with traditions, and it is a moment of improvement and reinforcement of skills. It also provides the base for constructing strategies of action and creates continuities based on the values of a culture, era, or community, in this case, the idea of democratization in Hong Kong. However, this dissertation does not focus on the causality of culture, but on understanding the role of civic media as a critical element to foster new forms and spaces of political participation across protest events. Also, this dissertation considers the 'inter-mobilization period' as a transitional moment from habits to new ideas and a moment when beliefs and aspirations play an essential role as well, not just during the 'unsettled times' or mobilization periods as the theory claims. Therefore, this study argues that the 'inter-mobilization period' is an equally vital moment to investigate as the mobilization one.

Third, by coining the term 'networked dynamics,' this research complements the Social Network Society theory. According to this approach, during the mobilization period, the virtual and physical spheres are highly connected, being synergic and complementary. Social movements start the organization of the protests and call for participation on the Internet, but they need to step into the urban space to become visual and consolidated. New technologies and communication networks are tools for the civil society that can contribute to online and offline participation and help them reclaim their urban space. This dissertation has analyzed the civic media impacts on new forms and spaces of political participation once major protest events have ended, emphasizing the connection between the online and offline spheres. In addition, this study found that both spheres are disconnected in the 'inter-mobilization period.' This finding demonstrates that the dynamics between these two forms and spaces of participation - what this dissertation calls the 'networked dynamics' - vary depending on the time frame of a social movement. In this case, the pro-democracy movement in Hong Kong.

Fourth, this research contributes to broadening the analysis and conceptualization of civic media by adding two interrelated elements (alternative media consumption and socio-political contacts) in its definition and focusing on its impacts into participation. Based on the Civic Media approach, the use of participatory media technologies fosters civic participation, political engagement and social change (Gordon & Mihailidis, 2016; Jenkins, 2006; Zuckerman, 2016). Also, online spaces are central to institutional and political transformations (Gordon & Mihailidis, 2016, p.3). Previous studies did look at the causality between alternative media and socio-political contacts into online and offline participation, as independent elements and in the contexts of protests. Those studies found that alternative media and social networks have become an important source to foster critical attitudes toward the hegemonic system and to promote support for participation and oppositional actions (Chan & F. Lee, 2009; Chan, 2017; F. Lee 2015a, p.321). However, this study's originality, which has borrowed the civic media concept as an analytical category, has been to focus on the impact of alternative media consumption and socio-political contacts, being interrelated, into online political participation and offline political intention in the period in between major protest events. At the same time, contrary to the original approach, it is more centered on political participation rather than civic engagement and community creation.

8.1.2. Methodological Contributions

The methodological contributions are regarding the mixed methods design, the combination of the different samples, the case study focus and the time frame. This study utilized a mixed methods design - a combination of quantitative and qualitative data and analysis - with an explanatory orientation; having a primary reliance on the quantitative approach. The first part, the quantitative analysis, was based on a Structural Equation Modelling (SEM) analysis of a 506 respondent sample from a questionnaire addressed to Hong Kong students from three of the top publicly financed universities in Hong Kong: The Chinese University of Hong Kong, The Hong Kong University and the Hong Kong University of Science and Technology. The second part, the qualitative analysis, helped to gain insights based on a descriptive coding method applied to 10 in-depth interviews conducted with chief-editors of alternative media platforms (In-Media, Radical HK and Worker News), as well as with student protesters who were part of the Umbrella Movement.

First, the mixed methods design utilized in this study contributes to the field of media, communication and social movement studies, considering the growing importance of mixed methods in the social science field (Robins, 2015, p.127). Quantitatively testing and having a holistic understanding of social and political phenomena is one of the most challenging aspects of Sociology and Political Science. However, this dissertation showed that a mixed methods approach can help resolve major methodological problems by revealing the insights into a phenomenon from different perspectives while contrasting and interpreting quantitative findings with the qualitative approach. The quantitative method and analysis offer a generalization of empirical findings regarding social mobilization (Andretta & Della Porta, 2014, p.308) and the role of media. The qualitative method and analysis allow the researcher to collect a large amount of information but also to contextualize the results (Andretta & Della Porta, 2014, p.309). Also, a micro-level focus on media, communication and social movement analysis is needed because general surveys have severe limitations when applied to analyzing social movements and political activists and the role of media and new technologies over time. Therefore, combining both methods and analyses, contributed to reducing methodological and measurement difficulties.

Second, related to the previous point, combining the different samples from the quantitative and the qualitative analyses provided direct information from three groups (undergraduate university students, student protesters and alternative media platforms editors). The contribution is not about the sample size but the fact that studies focus on one specific population instead of combining different samples. Also, in the case of alternative media editors, there is reduced first-hand information. This dissertation provides essential information about alternative media's role and functioning because the sample provided information from the "doers" (editors) of civic media perspective and the "consumers" (student protesters) of civic media perspective. This diversification has methodological contributions, and it helps broaden the comprehension of the studied topic and field.

Third, Hong Kong, as a case study, offers a methodological contribution because the findings can have implications both for theory development and theory testing (Crowe et al., 2011). As explained in the previous section, focusing on Hong Kong's case helped to readjust traditional concepts and review established media, communication and social movement theories. At the same time, there is a lack of research regarding "partially-democratic regimes" in East Asia (Potter et al. 1997) and "territorial autonomies" (Chen, 2019; B. Fong, 2019) such as Hong Kong. The Hong Kong case offers a first approximation from a city-state to a country-level case, China.

The Chinese Government and society have been watching the situation and development of the region. In the near future, China might also experience the political and social problems Hong Kong has had. For example, the younger generation's dissatisfaction and complaints caused by the economic situation, or their anxiety concerning their future. China is already facing developed countries' problems, such as having an ageing society and the diversity of people's demands. Also, the fact that Hong Kong is a partially-democratic system and a territorial autonomy experiencing a period of decreasing democratic rights is an important point of discussion. It is also an essential case in the International Relations field due to the China-US conflict framework. Following Castells (2015), this dissertation considers that informational and city-states are the new spatial and urban form in the informational society and the current global economy, being no longer strictly limited to national boundaries, making them relevant cases to study. Furthermore, a case study analysis helps conduct a detailed examination of contextual factors (Starman, 2013, p.36).

Fourth, the time frame of this study is also part of the methodological contribution because it provides a resource and tool of analysis in order to study complex and ongoing social and political topics. Related to the first point of this section, in the field of social sciences, another problematic aspect of confronting is the continuing nature of most of the social and political phenomena. In most cases, unpredictable exogenous factors can alter the findings in a specific moment. This is why certain topics have less academic attention. However, framing the theory can help to encourage further research on periods that are less explored.

8.1.3. Empirical Contributions

There are three main empirical contributions. First, this study has brought empirical evidence regarding the impacts of civic media on participation in a new stage, the inter-mobilization period, highlighting the disconnection of the physical and virtual spaces of participation. Concretely, it generated new data through two processes of data collection: an online questionnaire addressed to Hong Kong undergraduate university students, and in-depth interviews to students protesters and alternative media editors. Second, it tested two theoretical linkages that have yet to be deeply explored in the 'inter-mobilization period': a) the connection between the variables of alternative media and socio-political contacts and, b) the online political participation and offline political intention. Third, it challenged existing assumptions by testing the analytical framework developed in chapter three and the hypothesis presented in chapter five. The main assumptions and findings from previous studies were that alternative media and social media contacts have a positive impact on online and offline participation during the mobilization period. This dissertation tests similar hypothesis but in a different stage, the 'inter-mobilization period.' It also tests the under-researched interrelation of two variables: alternative media and socio-political contacts, and online political participation and offline political intention.

8.2. Practical Implications

This dissertation has practical implications for civil society and media practitioners. Before moving ahead, it is essential to mention that although the Basic Law in Hong Kong theoretically guarantees fundamental democratic rights, the continual decrease of the press and media freedom and civil liberties should be a topic of regional and international concern. Remarkably, the approval of the National

Security Law in 2020⁴⁸ represented a critical threat and a step back to the process of democratization, while the “one country, two systems” will theoretically remain until 2047. Critics and protesters have been saying that the 2020 National Security Law allows China to pursue political opponents, legitimize abduction and make attending street gatherings even riskier (Davidson, 2019). Among Hongkongers, there has been the fear that it will be used as a tool of political persecution (Leigh, Lung, & Marlow, 2020; Pepper, 2020). Moreover, after June 30 2020, books written by pro-democracy leaders such as Joshua Wong disappeared from public libraries. Activists deleted social-media accounts. Demosistō, a pro-democracy political party created after the Umbrella Movement, dissolved while various activists left Hong Kong. Additionally, authorities have done warrantless searches and obtained the jurisdiction to ask Internet providers to remove specific posts (Gunia, 2020).

As of this writing, the discontent continues, and the social and political conflict is far from being solved. It remains unclear how and to what degree the Hong Kong and Chinese Governments will address the evolution of civic media and spaces of participation. Unless there are significant and fundamental changes favouring democratization in society’s political and social structure, it is not easy to be optimistic about the future of the press, net, and media freedom in Hong Kong. As mentioned in chapter one, there is an increasing problem of self-censorship, repression of journalists, and a decrease in accessible communication and participation spaces. It is also difficult to be optimistic about the future of the pro-democracy social movement and the use of the spaces and forms of participation in Hong Kong. T. Lui, Chiu and Yep (2019, p.19) assert, “Hong Kong and Beijing are expected to work out a new relationship in the coming years. This is not only a challenge to Hong Kong. It will also be a challenge to Beijing.”

However, these factors and context do not diminish the importance of the implications of this dissertation that can be applied in Hong Kong and can be helpful for other cases. Regardless of this situation, civic media keeps having a role in opening up media spaces and helping in political democratization processes (C. Lee, 2003, p.164). Civic media are at the centre of numerous discords favouring democratic functioning (Lewis, 1995, p.140). Based on Leung and Lee’s (2014, p.345) argument, alternative media are the platforms where critical and oppositional viewpoints can be expressed, and the role and functioning of the mainstream media monitored and objected to. Also, together with civic organizations, activists and mainstream media, civic media keep having a role to play and impact the public (Tang, 2019, p.194). This study asserts that it is crucial to know the potential of civic media on participation and reinforce its role. Civic Media and online spaces are crucial because they hold an essential potential for civic life. They are central to institutional and political transformations as well (Smith, 2009).

8.2.1. Civil Society and Media Practitioners Implications

This dissertation has implications for civil society and media practitioners, particularly, on how to reinforce the interrelation between the alternative media platforms, civic/political organizations such as NGOs, activists and mainstream media. First, it is essential to keep building networks of proximity among alternative media platforms civic/political organizations and student protesters and activists. By, for

⁴⁸ The National Security Law, implemented in 2020, prohibits “acts of secession, subversion, terrorism or conspiring with foreign influences” (C. K. Lee, 2020). It has various points in common with the 2003 National Security legislation.

example, offering them a platform of information retrieval, networking, announcing and following and exploring particular stories over time. The alternative media must continue to reinforce the potential of the Internet and SNS usage and their symbiotic relationship in distributing information and facilitating debate (Ling, 2003, p.299). In other words, they should further enhance their competence in monitoring the government and other power holders providing platforms for social discussion and deliberation (F. Lee 2019, p.179-181).

Second, part of the impact of civic media resides in their capability to influence the mainstream media to respond and affect the public agenda (F. Lee 2019, p.181). They should remain to persuade what people discuss online, which can “succeed in turning an issue into a hot topic on the Internet” (F. Lee 2019, pp.179). This is possible by keep providing information that can be obtained by stepping on the ground and getting close to the protesters, providing forums and discussions on the platforms, and keep building connections with the civil society (Yung & Lee, 2014). This role should go beyond peak moments of mobilization. They should diversify the attention to various protests campaigns, not just the ones that have previously caught the attention of mass media, such as the Umbrella Movement or the Anti-ELAB Movement, but also on minor protests and marginal issues while maintaining the originality.

Third, it is crucial to establish regional and international networks by building connections with other platforms such as Taiwan and Malaysia. Alternative media in Hong Kong is generally written in Cantonese, and it mainly focuses on issues happening in the area, while most readers are from Hong Kong. This localized focus is crucial and part of their essence. It is also a consequence of having a small budget and finding contributors who can write reports in English. However, building networks regionally and globally can help to reach the international attention and can help into their continuation.

8.3. Limitations

This dissertation has various limitations. First, there is a higher number of respondents from the CUHK compared to the HKU and HKUST. CUHK has traditionally been a politically active university, and students were probably more willing to answer the questionnaire. Therefore, the sample cannot represent the whole spectrum of university students in Hong Kong. However, why the three universities were chosen was justified in chapter four based on various criteria: they are UGC-funded universities, they are the top publicly financed universities in Hong Kong and highly ranked internationally, they are among the best in their areas of study (social sciences and medicine, arts and humanities, and engineering and technology), and the CUHK and HKU had politically active students during the Umbrella Movement.

Second, the sample selection is based on particular research purposes. It is challenging to allow generalization to the population selected, and the survey errors are more difficult to control (Henry, 1990, pp.24-25). The author acknowledges that the randomness of the data collection can be questioned. However, the author of this dissertation has explained the sampling procedure in detail in chapter four. Also, although this study does not technically use an Internet survey because the respondents' answers could be controlled, more discussion about the errors in Internet survey and non-probability sampling is provided. Please refer to appendixes 5 and 6 for further arguments.

Third, the statistical power of the sample⁴⁹ is 15.3% (R-squared value) with a 5% of confidence level assumption (Groves et al., 2004, pp. 39-65). This value is low for pure sciences and marketing studies (Hair et al., 2013). However, although R2 values between .13 to .25 indicate a medium/moderate effect size, it is acceptable in the social sciences field (Cohen, 1988; 1992; Falk & Miller, 1992).⁵⁰ Moreover, the sample gives a first approximation of the object of study (civic media and participation). The statistical power of the sample is calculated based on the total student enrollment of UGC funded universities in Hong Kong from the academic year 2011/12 to 2019/20 by gender in the 2017/2018 Course.⁵¹

Fourth, it is acknowledged by the author that there is a discrepancy between the quantitative and qualitative analyses. Both analyses do not represent the same time frame, and they are based on different samples. The data collection for the quantitative analysis was conducted in 2018 with Hong Kong undergraduate students. The data collection for the qualitative analysis was conducted between 2016 and 2019 with student protesters and alternative media platforms editors. The author acknowledges that the answers of the student protesters are more enthusiastic than the ones from the Hong Kong undergraduate students. The author also acknowledges that they represent a small percentage of highly engaged university students from the quantitative analysis' questionnaire. However, as explained in chapter seven, the reason for that was to give more insights and context to the data and results from the quantitative analysis, helping to contextualize and interpret the results over time, focusing on the 'inter-mobilization period,' which is between the Umbrella Movement and the Anti-ELAB Movement (2015-2019). Combining the three different samples helps to interpret the interrelation of alternative media and socio-political contacts, the higher influence of alternative media and the disconnection between online and offline participation. Also, the justification of the sample was explained in chapter four in detail.

Fifth, it is acknowledged by the author that the model needs to be normally distributed. Due to time constraints, the model was not rerun, and the data were not transformed. Nevertheless, this aspect has been considered for future research and publications.

Sixth, this study employs a cross-sectional survey in a static moment, 2018, limiting the scope of the topic. Therefore, this dissertation has clearly defined the time frame of the dissertation in chapter three and encourages further research with panel data in the following section.

Seventh, there is a lack of media content analysis. For example, the civic media concept refers to political information consumption through alternative media and socio-political contacts. However, it just asked if they consume alternative media news and if they had socio-political contacts. It did not ask specifically about the contents, and it did not provide a content analysis either. For that reason, content analysis is encouraged for further research in the next section as well.

⁴⁹ The statistical power of the sample was calculated with the online software SPH Analytics available at: <https://www.sphanalytics.com/statistical-power-calculator-using-percentage-values/>

⁵⁰ Cohen (1992) argues that the R-square value .12 or below is low, between .13 to .25 is medium, and .26 or above values indicate high effect size.

⁵¹ The total student enrollment of UGC funded universities in Hong Kong from 2011/12 to 2019/20, by gender in the 2017/2018 Course, is 100,207 students (Male: 46,752; Female: 53,455). The data is available at: <https://cdcf.ugc.edu.hk/cdcf/searchUniv.action?lang=EN>.

8.4. Further Research

After having explained the academic contributions, practical implications, and limitations of this study, it is necessary to continue to research the civic media framework with an extended sample to minimize bias and have a more complete and broad analysis. Researchers can address the question of causality with panel data to follow up on social movements and the utilization of civic media over time. Panel data can be used to observe and explore civic media usage through the years and better analyze the change of behaviours and attitudes, providing more information about the samples (Hsiao, 2007; Blossfeld et al., 2009). Researchers can also examine the content of civic media platforms to delve into the potential influence on mainstream media news agenda. New analyses are essential to confront the complexity of the phenomenon and face methodological and measurement difficulties.

From a comparative perspective, this study's analytical framework can be applied in other cases happening globally. Although the framework is created through the case of Hong Kong, it can be applied to other cases because it is developed based on general media, communication and social movements theories. Therefore, Hong Kong can be compared to other "territorial autonomies" (Chen, 2019, p.33; B. Fong, 2019), such as Catalonia in Spain. This aspect can contribute to the emerging field of Hong Kong Studies. Other factors conducive to participation affecting behaviour in the 'inter-mobilization period,' such as the feeling of political situation and experience in social protests, two of the control variables tested in this dissertation's model, can be contemplated for further research as well. In the causal model presented in chapter five, 'the feeling of the political situation' control variable was highly significant and positively associated with offline political intention and, in lower intensity, with online political participation. The link between online and offline political participation can also be a topic for further research in the period between major protest events.

To conclude, this dissertation has achieved its purpose after having extended the knowledge in media, communication and social movement studies and extracted the practical implications while suggesting various points for further research. This study shows that the 'inter-mobilization period' is an equally vital moment to investigate as the mobilization one and that it is essential to pay more attention to the mechanisms between online and offline participation. It also contributes to understanding the complexities of civic media usage and the aspects of continuity and change in the media landscape. Without understanding civic media's role and the connection between the online and offline spheres in the 'inter-mobilization period,' it will be challenging to face the complexities and transformations of political communication and contemporary political participation among student protesters and activists.

In societies such as Hong Kong, where anger and frustration with the government and threats to press, media freedom and civil liberties are increasing, civic media have an increasingly important function. Civic media and new forms and spaces of participation will be crucial to access non-hegemonic voices and perspectives in the future. They will also be essential to express dissatisfaction and find new ways of political participation in the long term. During the 'inter-mobilization period,' as a transitional moment, decentralization and self-reflection can be an advantage of survival for civic media in the long-term. These processes represent an opportunity to rethink civic media utilization and reinforce the collaborations between alternative media platforms, mainstream media and civic/political organizations, activists and the SNS utilization. Hence, research on civic media and new forms and spaces of participation in the period between major protests events shall not cease.

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Appendix 1. Pilot Questionnaire

Pilot Questionnaire: Hong Kong Undergraduate University Students

This is a questionnaire for an individual PhD research at the Graduate School of Asia-Pacific Studies, Waseda University, Japan. Please note that your answers will be kept confidential and only used for research purposes.

This questionnaire aims to understand better how and why the use of social and alternative media can affect youth political participation and interest in a context of social and political change in Hong Kong.

Please fill out the following questions. If there are any items you feel uncomfortable with, please skip them. Note that answering the whole questionnaire, divided into four different parts, will take you 15 minutes or less. Thank you for your cooperation!

Marta Soler

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A. Socio-demographic Questions

1. **In which year were you born? Please specify:**
2. **Where were you born? Please specify city and area:**
3. **Gender:**
 - Male
 - Female
 - I don't know/want to disclose
4. **Which language do you mainly use in your daily life?**
 - Mandarin Chinese
 - Cantonese
 - English
 - Tagalog
 - Others (please specify):
5. **Level of studies:**
 - Undergraduate (please specify your major):
 - Graduate (please specify your graduate program):
6. **Where do you currently live?**
 - Student dormitory
 - Rent apartment
 - Family property
 - Own property
 - Others (please specify):

B. Civic Media Usage Questions

7. **Which of the following social media do you use the most frequently in your daily life? You can choose more than one option.**

- Facebook
- WhatsApp
- Twitter
- WeChat
- Line
- Weibo
- Instagram
- Youtube
- Others (please specify):

8. **Which are the most interesting things these platforms can offer you? You can choose more than one option.**

- News about politics
- News about culture and society
- News about economy
- Social relations
- Gathering events
- Games
- Others (please specify):

9. **How much time do you spend online in your daily life?**

- Less than one hour
- 1-3
- 4-6
- 7-9
- More than 9 hours

10. **Which types of contacts do you have on social media? You can choose more than one option.**

- Family
- Friends
- Acquaintances
- Co-workers
- Political actors
- Civil society organizations (NGOs, etc.)
- Political organizations
- Others:

11. **How did you become aware of the Occupy Central movement in 2014? You can choose more than one answer.**

- Friends
- Family
- Teachers or professors
- Mainstream media (TV, newspapers and radio)
- Social media
- Others (please specify):

C. Political Participation Questions

12. Do you usually participate in online activities such as forums, discussions, etc.? (including commenting on Facebook posts or pages).

- No
- Yes

If your answer is yes, why would you participate in on-line activities such as forums, discussions, etc.?

13. Do you share political information through social media?

- No
- Yes (please specify through which on-line platforms):

14. Do you receive political information through social media?

- No
- Yes (please specify through which on-line platforms):

15. Did you participate in the Umbrella Movement?

- No
- Yes, physically, for example, participating in occupy activities
- Yes, but only on-line, for example, participating in forums or discussions or posting information about it
- Yes, both, physically and on-line
- Yes, others (please specify):

If your answer is yes, do you think the Umbrella Movement in 2014 changed the way you use social media now?

- No
- Yes (please explain the reason):

16. Which roles do you think social media (Facebook, Telegram, etc.) played during the Umbrella Movement? Please rank from 1 to 3 various options according to your opinion – 1, meaning the most important one.

- Communication between participants
- Information about activities
- Encourage the mobilization
- Awake people's consciousness
- Show the truth
- Inform about police intervention

- Inform about Central and SAR Government's role
- Others (please specify):

17. At the time of the Umbrella Movement in 2014, how did you feel about the political situation in Hong Kong?

- Angry
- Dissatisfied
- Lack of trust
- Hopeless
- Satisfied
- Optimistic
- Indifferent
- I don't know/want to disclose

18. How do you feel about the current political situation in Hong Kong?

- Angry
- Dissatisfied
- Lack of trust
- Hopeless
- Satisfied
- Optimistic
- Indifferent
- I don't know/want to disclose

19. Did you vote in the September 2016 Legislative Council Elections?

- Yes
- No
- I don't know/want to disclose

If your answer is yes, did the use of social media have any influence on your political decisions?

- Yes (please provide a reason):
- No (please provide a reason):
- I don't know/want to disclose

D. Political Interest Questions

20. Do you read the newspaper online?

- No
- Yes

If your answer is yes, what newspapers do you often read? You can choose more than one answer

- Apple Daily
- Ming Pao
- Oriental Daily News
- South China Morning Post
- Wen Wei Po
- Hong Kong Economic Journal
- Passion Times

- Others (please specify):

21. **Do you read online alternative media such as In-Media 香港獨立媒體, Initium Media (端傳媒), or others?**

- No
- Yes (please specify which ones):

22. **What do you think about the role of alternative media platforms such as In-Media (香港獨立媒體) or Initium Media (端傳媒)? Please give a score of 0 to 10, with 0 representing very unimportant and 10 representing very important.**

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

23. **How important do you think democracy is? Please give a score of 0 to 10, with 0 representing very unimportant and 10 representing very important.**

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

24. **How important do you think the Chief Executive Elections are? Please give a score of 0 to 10, with 0 representing very unimportant and 10 representing very important.**

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

25. **What is your impression of the rise of localisms? Please give a score of 0 to 10, with 0 representing very negative, 10 representing very positive, and 5 representing so-so.**

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

26. **Do you agree with the “one country two systems” in Hong Kong?**

- Yes
- No

27. **Regarding Hong Kong future, which are your main concerns? You can choose more than one option. Please indicate the order of preference – 1, showing the most important matter.**

- Employment
- Housing
- Economy
- The Basic Law
- Universal suffrage
- Corruption
- Net freedom
- Media freedom
- Speech freedom
- Self-determination
- Others (please specify):

Appendix 2. Survey Questions

Questionnaire: Hong Kong Undergraduate University Students

This is a questionnaire for an individual PhD research project at the Graduate School of Asia-Pacific Studies, Waseda University, in Japan. Please note that your answers will be kept confidential and only used for research purposes.

The goal of this questionnaire is to better understand how and why the use of social and alternative media can affect university student's political engagement and participation.

Please fill in the following questions. If there are any items you feel uncomfortable with, please skip them. Note that answering the whole questionnaire, divided in 2 different parts, will take you less than 9 minutes. Thank you for your cooperation!

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A. Socio-demographic Questions

1. Where were you born?

- Mainland China
- Hong Kong
- Others

2. Gender

- Male
- Female
- Others

3. How much is your monthly income? Including any family or guarantor economic support and part-time job salary, in case you have one.

- Less than \$HK 10,000
- \$HK 10,000 to \$HK 15,000
- \$HK 15,000 to \$HK 20,000
- More than \$HK 20,000

4. From which University do you come from?

- The University of Hong Kong, HKU
- The Chinese University of Hong Kong, CUHK
- The Hong Kong University, HKUST
- Others (please specify):

B. Civic Media, Engagement and Participation Questions

5. How many hours do you spend connected on-line per day?

Less than one hour **1-3h.** **4-6h.** **7-9h** **More than 9h**

6. How often do you do the following activities?

	Never	1-2 times a week	3-5 times a week	Almost everyday	Everyday
Receive political information through alternative media ¹	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Share political information online	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Express your opinion about political issues online	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Find news about politics on alternative media platforms	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Participate in online forums and discussions	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Read alternative media	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Watch TV	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Visit a website of a political or civic organization	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Bring political and social topics into discussion with others online	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Note¹ Alternative media refers to non-mainstream and non-profit online pro-democracy media platforms such as In-Media (香港獨立媒體) or Stand News (立場新聞).

7. How many of the following types of contacts do you have in your social media accounts?

	No contacts	1-5 contacts	5-10 contacts	More than 10 contacts
Leaders from the Umbrella Movement	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Pro-democracy Organizations	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
NGOs	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Student Unions	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

8. How many times did you participate in a demonstration or social protest in the past five years (2014-2018)?

Never Once 2-4 times More than 4 times

9. To what extent, would you like to be involved in political activism? Please give a score of 1 to 5 (5 meaning “to a great extent” and 1 “not at all”)

1 2 3 4 5

10. How much do you agree with the following statements? Please give a score of 1 to 5 (5 meaning “totally agree” and 1 “not agree at all”)

	1	2	3	4	5
I would participate in a social protest if I felt strongly about an issue	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I would participate in a political cause if I could create a better society	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

11. How do you feel with the current political situation? Please give a score of 1 to 5 (5 meaning “very angry” and 1 “not angry at all”)

1 2 3 4 5

Appendix 3. SEM Analysis Output

Result (モデル番号 1)

Minimum was achieved
 Chi-square = 348.946
 Degrees of freedom = 116
 Probability level = .000

Parameter Summary (グループ番号 1)

	Weights	Covariances	Variances	Means	Intercepts	Total
Fixed	20	0	0	0	0	20
Labeled	0	0	0	0	0	0
Unlabeled	27	43	24	0	0	94
Total	47	43	24	0	0	114

Assessment of normality (グループ番号 1)

Variable	min	max	skew	c.r.	kurtosis	c.r.
V1Origin	.000	1.000	1.288	11.830	.340	1.563
V64FeelingPoliticalsituation	.000	10.000	.228	2.097	.232	1.064
V32AttendDemo	.000	3.000	.920	8.446	.160	.736
V23WatchTV	.000	5.000	.491	4.509	.535	2.459
V2Gender	.000	1.000	.095	.872	1.991	9.142
V3Income	.000	3.000	2.483	22.804	6.202	28.475
V22ReadAlternativeMedia	.000	5.000	.411	3.770	.926	4.252
V40PartPolcauseBetterSociety	.000	10.000	1.012	9.293	1.067	4.898
V39PartPolCauseStrongIssue	.000	10.000	.931	8.554	1.022	4.691
V38InvolvePolActivism	.000	10.000	.523	4.805	.546	2.507
V29ContactsPolOrganizations	.000	3.000	.929	8.529	.371	1.705
V28ContactsPolActors	.000	3.000	.764	7.017	.024	.112
V31ContactsStudentUnions	.000	3.000	.616	5.658	.180	.828
V30ContactsNGOs	.000	3.000	.618	5.674	.060	.275
V26BringDiscussion	.000	5.000	1.090	10.005	.343	1.577
V21ParticOnline	.000	5.000	1.252	11.500	.837	3.841
V19ExpressOpinion	.000	5.000	1.340	12.307	1.445	6.636
V18SharePolinfo	.000	5.000	.890	8.174	.492	2.260
V20FindNewsPolitics	.000	5.000	.471	4.328	1.009	4.633
V17ReceivePolinfo	.000	5.000	.313	2.872	.514	2.362
Multivariate					81.936	31.066

Estimates (グループ番号 1 - モデル番号 1)

Scalar Estimates (グループ番号 1 - モデル番号 1)

Maximum Likelihood Estimates

Regression Weights: (グループ番号 1 - モデル番号 1)

		Estimate	S.E.	C.R.	P
Online_Political_Participation	<--- Alternative_Media	.427	.062	6.860	***
Online_Political_Participation	<--- Socio_political_Networking	.213	.075	2.830	.005
Online_Political_Participation	<--- V3Income	.133	.044	3.052	.002
Online_Political_Participation	<--- V2Gender	.050	.055	.924	.356
Online_Political_Participation	<--- V23WatchTV	.009	.021	.434	.664
Online_Political_Participation	<--- V32AttendDemo	.030	.041	.743	.457
Online_Political_Participation	<--- V64FeelingPoliticalsituation	.041	.016	2.487	.013
Online_Political_Participation	<--- V1Origin	.041	.070	.581	.561
Offline_Desire_Involvement	<--- Online_Political_Participation	.320	.206	1.554	.120
Offline_Desire_Involvement	<--- Alternative_Media	.577	.156	3.694	***
Offline_Desire_Involvement	<--- Socio_political_Networking	.281	.153	1.835	.067
Offline_Desire_Involvement	<--- V3Income	.048	.091	.524	.601
Offline_Desire_Involvement	<--- V2Gender	.118	.162	.729	.466
Offline_Desire_Involvement	<--- V23WatchTV	.071	.044	1.607	.108
Offline_Desire_Involvement	<--- V32AttendDemo	.210	.084	2.509	.012
Offline_Desire_Involvement	<--- V64FeelingPoliticalsituation	.217	.037	5.830	***
Offline_Desire_Involvement	<--- V1Origin	.057	.144	.398	.691
V17ReceivePolinfo	<--- Alternative_Media	.806	.051	15.965	***
V20FindNewsPolitics	<--- Alternative_Media	1.014	.059	17.317	***
V18SharePolinfo	<--- Online_Political_Participation	1.000			
V19ExpressOpinion	<--- Online_Political_Participation	1.254	.097	12.926	***
V21ParticOnline	<--- Online_Political_Participation	1.288	.117	11.039	***
V26BringDiscussion	<--- Online_Political_Participation	1.295	.117	11.064	***
V30ContactsNGOs	<--- Socio_political_Networking	1.000			
V31ContactsStudentUnions	<--- Socio_political_Networking	.767	.061	12.584	***
V28ContactsPolActors	<--- Socio_political_Networking	1.213	.065	18.757	***
V29ContactsPolOrganizations	<--- Socio_political_Networking	1.276	.066	19.471	***
V38InvolvePolActivism	<--- Offline_Desire_Involvement	1.000			
V39PartPolCausefeltstrongly	<--- Offline_Desire_Involvement	1.313	.075	17.512	***
V40PartPolcauseBetterSociety	<--- Offline_Desire_Involvement	1.456	.082	17.745	***
V22ReadAlternativeMedia	<--- Alternative_Media	1.000			

Standardized Regression Weights: (グループ番号 1 - モデル番号 1)

		Estimate
Online_Political_Participation	<--- Alternative_Media	.705
Online_Political_Participation	<--- Socio_political_Networking	.175

		Estimate
Online_Political_Participation	<--- V3Income	.123
Online_Political_Participation	<--- V2Gender	.034
Online_Political_Participation	<--- V23WatchTV	.017
Online_Political_Participation	<--- V32AttendDemo	.037
Online_Political_Participation	<--- V64FeelingPoliticalsituation	.108
Online_Political_Participation	<--- V1Origin	.023
Offline_Desire_Involvement	<--- Online_Political_Participation	.154
Offline_Desire_Involvement	<--- Alternative_Media	.456
Offline_Desire_Involvement	<--- Socio_political_Networking	.111
Offline_Desire_Involvement	<--- V3Income	.021
Offline_Desire_Involvement	<--- V2Gender	.039
Offline_Desire_Involvement	<--- V23WatchTV	.065
Offline_Desire_Involvement	<--- V32AttendDemo	.123
Offline_Desire_Involvement	<--- V64FeelingPoliticalsituation	.276
Offline_Desire_Involvement	<--- V1Origin	.016
V17ReceivePolinfo	<--- Alternative_Media	.711
V20FindNewsPolitics	<--- Alternative_Media	.769
V18SharePolinfo	<--- Online_Political_Participation	.641
V19ExpressOpinion	<--- Online_Political_Participation	.804
V21ParticOnline	<--- Online_Political_Participation	.749
V26BringDiscussion	<--- Online_Political_Participation	.737
V30ContactsNGOs	<--- Socio_political_Networking	.722
V31ContactsStudentUnions	<--- Socio_political_Networking	.578
V28ContactsPolActors	<--- Socio_political_Networking	.870
V29ContactsPolOrganizations	<--- Socio_political_Networking	.909
V38InvolvePolActivism	<--- Offline_Desire_Involvement	.688
V39PartPolCausefeltstrongly	<--- Offline_Desire_Involvement	.889
V40PartPolcauseBetterSociety	<--- Offline_Desire_Involvement	.914
V22ReadAlternativeMedia	<--- Alternative_Media	.795

Covariances: (グループ番号 1 - モデル番号 1)

		Estimate	S.E.	C.R.	P
Alternative_Media	<--> Socio_political_Networking	.484	.051	9.527	***
V32AttendDemo	<--> V64FeelingPoliticalsituation	.452	.080	5.642	***
V23WatchTV	<--> V64FeelingPoliticalsituation	.208	.120	1.724	.085
V2Gender	<--> V64FeelingPoliticalsituation	.054	.043	1.252	.210
V3Income	<--> V64FeelingPoliticalsituation	.116	.059	1.980	.048
V23WatchTV	<--> V32AttendDemo	.130	.056	2.336	.019
V2Gender	<--> V32AttendDemo	.010	.020	.487	.626
V3Income	<--> V32AttendDemo	.018	.027	.683	.495
V2Gender	<--> V23WatchTV	.014	.031	.457	.647
V3Income	<--> V23WatchTV	.020	.041	.480	.631
V3Income	<--> V2Gender	.008	.015	.535	.593

			Estimate	S.E.	C.R.	P
Alternative_Media	<-->	V64FeelingPoliticalsituation	1.058	.130	8.147	***
Alternative_Media	<-->	V32AttendDemo	.623	.063	9.893	***
Alternative_Media	<-->	V23WatchTV	.527	.088	5.969	***
Alternative_Media	<-->	V2Gender	.025	.030	.832	.405
Alternative_Media	<-->	V3Income	.010	.042	.243	.808
Socio_political_Networking	<-->	V64FeelingPoliticalsituation	.448	.061	7.313	***
Socio_political_Networking	<-->	V32AttendDemo	.282	.031	9.177	***
Socio_political_Networking	<-->	V23WatchTV	.203	.043	4.676	***
Socio_political_Networking	<-->	V2Gender	.028	.014	2.001	.045
Socio_political_Networking	<-->	V3Income	.020	.019	1.072	.284
V64FeelingPoliticalsituation	<-->	V1Origin	.159	.037	4.292	***
V32AttendDemo	<-->	V1Origin	.072	.017	4.227	***
V23WatchTV	<-->	V1Origin	.063	.026	2.420	.016
V2Gender	<-->	V1Origin	.005	.009	.555	.579
V3Income	<-->	V1Origin	.037	.013	2.912	.004
Alternative_Media	<-->	V1Origin	.153	.026	5.788	***
Socio_political_Networking	<-->	V1Origin	.059	.012	4.776	***
e7	<-->	e8	.085	.029	2.930	.003
e6	<-->	e8	-.026	.029	-.896	.370
e4	<-->	e5	.153	.039	3.912	***
e4	<-->	Alternative_Media	.042	.052	.811	.417
e4	<-->	V32AttendDemo	.083	.033	2.554	.011
e8	<-->	V2Gender	.036	.013	2.721	.007
e14	<-->	V2Gender	.029	.048	.597	.550
e13	<-->	V2Gender	-.056	.045	-1.251	.211
e12	<-->	e15	.023	.047	.501	.616
e9	<-->	e15	.053	.019	2.871	.004
e8	<-->	e15	-.049	.019	-2.584	.010
e8	<-->	e17	.032	.028	1.126	.260
e11	<-->	V23WatchTV	-.088	.031	2.866	.004
e9	<-->	V3Income	.057	.020	2.787	.005
e3	<-->	V3Income	.108	.038	2.840	.005

Correlations: (グループ番号 1 - モデル番号 1)

			Estimate
Alternative_Media	<-->	Socio_political_Networking	.666
V32AttendDemo	<-->	V64FeelingPoliticalsituation	.261
V23WatchTV	<-->	V64FeelingPoliticalsituation	.076
V2Gender	<-->	V64FeelingPoliticalsituation	.055
V3Income	<-->	V64FeelingPoliticalsituation	.088
V23WatchTV	<-->	V32AttendDemo	.104
V2Gender	<-->	V32AttendDemo	.022
V3Income	<-->	V32AttendDemo	.030

		Estimate
V2Gender	<--> V23WatchTV	.020
V3Income	<--> V23WatchTV	.021
V3Income	<--> V2Gender	.023
Alternative_Media	<--> V64FeelingPoliticalsituation	.452
Alternative_Media	<--> V32AttendDemo	.577
Alternative_Media	<--> V23WatchTV	.312
Alternative_Media	<--> V2Gender	.041
Alternative_Media	<--> V3Income	.013
Socio_political_Networking	<--> V64FeelingPoliticalsituation	.384
Socio_political_Networking	<--> V32AttendDemo	.525
Socio_political_Networking	<--> V23WatchTV	.241
Socio_political_Networking	<--> V2Gender	.094
Socio_political_Networking	<--> V3Income	.050
V64FeelingPoliticalsituation	<--> V1Origin	.195
V32AttendDemo	<--> V1Origin	.191
V23WatchTV	<--> V1Origin	.108
V2Gender	<--> V1Origin	.025
V3Income	<--> V1Origin	.131
Alternative_Media	<--> V1Origin	.302
Socio_political_Networking	<--> V1Origin	.235
e7	<--> e8	.169
e6	<--> e8	-.054
e4	<--> e5	.251
e4	<--> Alternative_Media	.039
e4	<--> V32AttendDemo	.104
e8	<--> V2Gender	.127
e14	<--> V2Gender	-.058
e13	<--> V2Gender	.107
e12	<--> e15	.034
e9	<--> e15	.191
e8	<--> e15	-.199
e8	<--> e17	.060
e11	<--> V23WatchTV	-.178
e9	<--> V3Income	.129
e3	<--> V3Income	.157

Variances: (グループ 番号 1 - モデル番号 1)

	Estimate	S.E.	C.R.	P	Label
Alternative_Media	1.458	.145	10.050	***	par_71
Socio_political_Networking	.362	.040	9.122	***	par_72
V3Income	.459	.029	15.888	***	par_73
V2Gender	.249	.016	15.896	***	par_74
V23WatchTV	1.961	.123	15.954	***	par_75

	Estimate	S.E.	C.R.	P	Label
V32AttendDemo	.800	.050	15.944	***	par_76
V64FeelingPoliticalsituation	3.759	.237	15.890	***	par_77
V1Origin	.177	.011	15.890	***	par_78
e15	.184	.034	5.347	***	par_79
e16	1.212	.149	8.132	***	par_80
e2	.929	.072	12.979	***	par_81
e3	1.039	.088	11.821	***	par_82
e4	.802	.059	13.628	***	par_83
e5	.461	.045	10.336	***	par_84
e6	.696	.057	12.242	***	par_85
e7	.757	.061	12.433	***	par_86
e8	.331	.024	14.106	***	par_87
e9	.424	.028	15.060	***	par_88
e10	.171	.016	10.875	***	par_89
e11	.124	.015	8.240	***	par_90
e12	2.616	.182	14.363	***	par_91
e13	1.082	.115	9.404	***	par_92
e14	.967	.131	7.375	***	par_93
e17	.849	.075	11.364	***	par_94

Squared Multiple Correlations: (グループ番号1 - モデル番号1)

	Estimate
Online_Political_Participation	.657
Offline_Desire_Involvement	.480
V22ReadAlternativeMedia	.632
V40PartPolcauseBetterSociety	.837
V39PartPolCausefeltstrongly	.787
V38InvolvePolActivism	.470
V29ContactsPolOrganizations	.826
V28ContactsPolActors	.757
V31ContactsStudentUnions	.335
V30ContactsNGOs	.522
V26BringDiscussion	.543
V21ParticOnline	.561
V19ExpressOpinion	.646
V18SharePolinfo	.386
V20FindNewsPolitics	.591
V17ReceivePolinfpo	.505

Modification Indices (グループ番号 1 - モデル番号 1)

Covariances: (グループ番号 1 - モデル番号 1)

	M.I.	Par Change
e13 <--> V1Origin	6.366	.056
e12 <--> V1Origin	5.678	-.071
e12 <--> e16	15.615	.361
e9 <--> V1Origin	13.828	-.043
e9 <--> V23WatchTV	4.189	-.078
e9 <--> Alternative_Media	4.411	.057
e8 <--> V23WatchTV	5.041	.078
e8 <--> e16	5.453	.075
e8 <--> e10	4.106	.025
e7 <--> V32AttendDemo	5.517	.071
e6 <--> e10	6.397	.050
e5 <--> e12	6.341	.139
e5 <--> e10	4.414	.033
e4 <--> V64FeelingPoliticalsituation	8.568	.195
e4 <--> e15	4.165	-.044
e4 <--> e16	13.397	.174
e4 <--> e17	4.568	.086
e4 <--> e9	4.242	.052
e4 <--> e6	5.098	.080
e3 <--> V64FeelingPoliticalsituation	11.148	.286
e3 <--> e7	4.331	.098
e3 <--> e6	5.457	.106
e3 <--> e5	6.646	.094
e3 <--> e4	42.025	.280
e2 <--> V64FeelingPoliticalsituation	18.122	.337
e2 <--> e15	15.945	-.104
e2 <--> e16	13.996	.211
e2 <--> e9	5.926	.073
e2 <--> e8	5.497	.064
e2 <--> e7	8.025	.124
e2 <--> e6	11.675	.144
e2 <--> e4	21.885	.187

Model Fit Summary

CMIN

Model	NPAR	CMIN	DF	P	CMIN/DF
モデル番号 1	94	348.946	116	.000	3.008
Saturated model	210	.000	0		
Independence model	20	4702.607	190	.000	24.751

RMR, GFI

Model	RMR	GFI	AGFI	PGFI
モデル番号 1	.100	.935	.882	.516
Saturated model	.000	1.000		
Independence model	.757	.307	.234	.278

Baseline Comparisons

Model	NFI Delta1	RFI rho1	IFI Delta2	TLI rho2	CFI
モデル番号 1	.926	.878	.949	.925	.948
Saturated model	1.000		1.000		1.000
Independence model	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000

Parsimony-Adjusted Measures

Model	PRATIO	PNFI	PCFI
モデル番号 1	.611	.565	.579
Saturated model	.000	.000	.000
Independence model	1.000	.000	.000

NCP

Model	NCP	LO 90	HI 90
モデル番号 1	232.946	180.603	292.919
Saturated model	.000	.000	.000
Independence model	4512.607	4292.842	4739.627

FMIN

Model	FMIN	F0	LO 90	HI 90
モデル番号 1	.691	.461	.358	.580
Saturated model	.000	.000	.000	.000
Independence model	9.312	8.936	8.501	9.385

RMSEA

Model	RMSEA	LO 90	HI 90	PCLOSE
モデル番号 1	.063	.056	.071	.003
Independence model	.217	.212	.222	.000

AIC

Model	AIC	BCC	BIC	CAIC
モデル番号 1	536.946	545.103	934.240	1028.240
Saturated model	420.000	438.223	1307.573	1517.573
Independence model	4742.607	4744.342	4827.137	4847.137

ECVI

Model	ECVI	LO 90	HI 90	MECVI
モデル番号 1	1.063	.960	1.182	1.079
Saturated model	.832	.832	.832	.868
Independence model	9.391	8.956	9.841	9.395

HOELTER

Model	HOELTER	
	.05	.01
モデル番号 1	206	224
Independence model	24	26

Execution time summary

Minimization:	.124
Miscellaneous:	1.929
Bootstrap:	.000
Total:	2.053

Appendix 4. Interview Guide

1. Alternative Media Editors

Established themes	Questions
Self-perception and mission	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Tell me about your media platform (In-Media/Worker News/Radical HK). 2. What is the mission your media platform (In-Media/Worker News/Radical HK)? 3. Which are the main characteristics of it? 4. Did you participate in social protests such as the Umbrella Movement? Which was your role?
Present and future of alternative media in Hong Kong	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 5. What is the current role of In-Media/Worker News/Radical HK? 6. What is your perception about the situation of alternative media in general? 7. In your opinion, what is the future goal of alternative media in general and of your platform in particular?
Press and media freedom and self-censorship	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 8. What do you think about press and media freedom in Hong Kong? 9. What do you think about the self-censorship topic? Have you ever experience it?
Discourse creation and engagement	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 10. Do you think that if people read your articles, they will get more involved or interested in politics and protests? 11. Are you trying to involve your readers in forums and discussions online?
Readers and readership	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 12. What is the profile of your readers? 13. Are you trying to reach a wider variety of readers?
Relationship and collaboration with activists, alternative media platforms and civic groups (locally, regionally and	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 14. Do you have something in common with other alternative media platforms in Hong

internationally)	<p>Kong?</p> <p>15. Is there cooperation or competition between alternative media platforms in Hong Kong?</p> <p>16. Do you have some connection with other platforms in Hong Kong and overseas?</p>
Impacts on mainstream media news agenda	<p>17. Do you think that alternative media can influence what people talk about online?</p> <p>18. Do you think your media can influence mainstream media somehow? Can you think of an example that happened to your media platform?</p> <p>19. Do reporters from mainstream media platforms follow In-Media/Worker News/Radical HK's SNS and the website?</p>
Working and financing methods	<p>20. Could you briefly explain to me how does your media platform work? For instance, which type of articles do you write, do you have contributors who write them for free, what is your target?</p> <p>21. Do you hire people?</p> <p>22. How do you get financed?</p>
Questions without established themes	<p>23. Tell me about yourself (age, origin, studies, other professions)</p> <p>24. What is the connection between the Umbrella Movement and the Anti-ELAB Movement?</p>

2. University Student Protesters

Established themes	Questions
Social and alternative media usage	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Do you read alternative media? 2. What do you think about mainstream/mass media in Hong Kong? 3. What do you think about alternative media platforms such as In-Media, Stand News, Worker News, HK Radical News...? 4. What do you think about the role of traditional or mass media, and

	<p>alternative media on covering the news of Umbrella Movement or protests in general?</p> <p>5. Can you tell me more about the LIHKG forum, and what is your opinion about it?</p>
Contacts on SNS	<p>6. Which social media do you use in your daily life (Facebook, WhatsApp, Twitter, Wechat, Line) and which are the most interesting things these platforms can offer you?</p> <p>7. Are you in touch, or did you check at some point the platforms of Umbrella movement leaders or leading pro-democracy organizations, activists?</p> <p>8. In your opinion, which are the advantages or disadvantages of being a member or have any kind of contact with civic or political organizations?</p>
Online participation	<p>9. Do you participate in online activities such as political forums or discussions? Why?</p>
Past, present and future participation in protests and socio-political causes	<p>10. Historically, Hong Kong had a tradition of pro-democracy movements, what image do you have about the movement and the protesters?</p> <p>11. Have you ever been a member of any association, student group, NGO, civil society platform?</p> <p>12. Have you ever attended a political protest?</p> <p>13. Overall, were you supportive of the Umbrella Movement? Did you always have the same opinion?</p> <p>14. How did you become interested or motivated to join the Umbrella Movement or any other protest?</p> <p>15. If there would be another Umbrella Movement in the future would you join?</p>
Communication tactics during and after the Umbrella Movement	<p>16. How were the protests during the Umbrella Movement organized? And how did people communicate to each other?</p> <p>17. What went right and what went wrong?</p>

	18. After the Umbrella Movement, what did it change?
Perception about the social and political situation	19. I am coming from outside, and I would like to know what is going on in Hong Kong? 20. How do you think attitudes changed from the LegCo elections in 2012? What did it change since then? 21. What is your opinion about the relationship between the Hong Kong and Taiwan Movement? 22. What things do you like and dislike from living in Hong Kong?
Perception about the future of Hong Kong	23. What do you think about the future of Hong Kong? 24. What would be the reasons that could encourage you to move to another country? 25. Do you think another Umbrella Movement will happen?
Questions without established themes	26. Tell me about yourself (age, origin, studies, other professions)

Appendix 5. Error of Internet Survey

Internet surveys face various challenges and problems that can affect their reliability and validity. According to Groves et al. (2004, pp.39-65), each of the stages followed in the survey design, coding and analysis' processes are exposed to imperfections and statistical errors. Therefore, there are two basic conditions that the survey statistics need to meet regarding questions and sample in order to avoid inaccuracy: 1) the answers given by individuals must detail the respondents' characteristics and, 2) the respondents must have similar attributes to individuals of a larger population. Having said that, there are four common Internet survey errors: measurement errors, coverage error, sampling error and non-response error. These are divided in two lines: measurement (involving answers to questions), which includes the measurement error; and representation (the extent to which the results from the survey can represent the whole population), including coverage error, sampling error and non-response error (Groves et al., 2004).

Measurement errors or errors of observation occur when there is a systematic misreporting during the response process. Concretely, when there are deviations between the information in the answers and the true value of the element being measured. This can be because of the questionnaires characteristics and the way the components were designed such as, unclear, judgmental or politically sensitive questions, lack of instructions, inadequate order of the inquiries, among others (Groves et al., 2004, pp.40-52). In this dissertation, the pilot questionnaire served to improve the final questionnaire's design and solve wording and comprehension problems. Section 4.2.3 introduces the questions and variables. The researcher stated the questions clearly, including some clarifications and examples when necessary and it did not include questions that could make the respondent feel uncomfortable.

Coverage error occurs when the ones included in the sampling frame (members and elements selected) differ from those who are not included in the sampling frame. Therefore, they do not reflect the target population we want to study, considering that coverage errors exist independently and before the sample is gathered (Groves et al., 2004, pp.54-55). There are many reasons for some members of the population being underrepresented. One of them can be the level of accessibility to the Internet. It should be highlighted that Hong Kong is a highly technological city and the youth have especially high access to the Internet. Furthermore, the researcher facilitated the device to answer the online questionnaire, which was connected to the campus' Wi-Fi.

Sampling error occurs in the selection process and it is the most common point of criticism in the social sciences field. It occurs when the selected sample is not representative of the frame from which it is drawn, and there are discrepancies between target population and sample. Sampling error can lead to sampling bias, which can be eliminated by giving all members of the sampling frame an equal chance of being selected (Groves et al., 2004, pp.57-58). Therefore, this dissertation defends in section 4.2.1.2. that the use of statistical analysis with non-randomly collected data is accepted in the social sciences field; it explicitly describes the data collection procedure in section 4.2.1.3.; and it presents the case selection and justification in section 4.2.2.

Non-response error occurs when the data set includes missing values and data are incomplete. In other words, it arises when the values of statistics (responses) computed diverge from those of the entire sample data, which happens in almost all surveys (Groves et al., 2004, p.45). This study has eliminated the cases where various

missing values or incomplete data was detected during the data cleaning process. To avoid lack of motivation from respondents, it constructed a short survey (which took 9 minutes to respond on average).

Appendix 6. Sampling and Types of Internet Surveys

Sampling is a technique and a procedure for selecting a subset of units of analysis from a population, aiming to achieve representativeness (Balnaves & Caputi, 2006: 90). Theoretically, samples are selected by a random process to represent the population of interest and to allow making generalizations about populations (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2007, p.7). Random selection is possible when there is no subjective influence by the researcher (Groves et al, 2004, p.93). There are two types of sampling methods for Internet surveys: probability and non-probability ones. This study chose to conduct a Non-probability Sampling (NPS) as a valid method utilized in certain cases in the social sciences field.

Probability Sampling (PS) methods are the ones when each element and member of the population in the sampling frame - the list of the elements or individuals forming a population - had an equal chance of being chosen (Balnaves & Caputi, 2006, p.90; Henry, 1990, p.17; Groves et al, 2004, p.94). The main advantage of this method is that it allows controlling the survey errors. However, not all samples are easily obtainable or quantifiable (Balnaves & Caputi, 2006, p.95). Besides, time and cost are two precluding factors that do not allow the researcher to collect data on the entire population and have all information. Therefore, drawing a sampling frame is essential to overcome these challenges (Henry, G., 1990, p.9).

Nonetheless, Non-probability Sampling (NPS) in social research is used in three different scenarios: a) when the researcher is not able to establish an equal chance of being selected to every component in the population; b) when the researcher does not entail a sampling frame (Henry, 1990, p.17); and c) when the researcher selects the situation, events or individuals in accordance with a theoretical purpose (Balnaves & Caputi, 2006, p.95). There are various reasons that can justify the use of this type of sample such as, restricted resources, incapability to identify units of the population, and the necessity to determine the existence of a problem (Henry, 1990, pp.17-23).

One of the major non-probability techniques is judgment or purposive sampling, which means that the sample selection is based on the criteria established by the researcher to achieve particular research purposes; for instance, age, sex or occupation (Henry, 1990, p.17). According to Trochim (2020) most sampling methods are purposive in nature since the researcher undertakes the sampling problem having a predefined and specific plan as well as a clear focus on certain groups. This study utilizes the purposive sample and a critical case sample design (Henry, 1990, pp.17-18). In this type of design, a limited and crucial number of cases that will allow generalization to the population are selected (Gary, 1990, p.21; Henry, 1990, p.18). With this type of sample, the researcher can obtain the opinions of the target population, but the subgroups in the target population that are more approachable can be overweight.

Using a NPS includes a subjective nature of the selection process and involves having more knowledge regarding the distribution of variables and the correlated attributes of the population frame with main survey statistics, but generally the researcher does not have acquaintance with it (Groves et al, 2004, p.382). Therefore, it increases the uncertainty regarding the representativeness of the data and, the survey

errors described above are more difficult to control, while using this method has validity and credibility risks of the study findings (Henry, 1990, pp.24-25).

However, NPS is useful and acceptable in sociology and the social sciences in certain conditions and situations, considering that as Kish (1965) claims “probability sampling for randomization is not a dogma, but a strategy, especially for large numbers (p.29).” NPS can be contemplated “when the target population is stable and well-understood” (Brick, 2014) and can be accurate when the researcher “collects a sample twice as large as would be needed under simple random sampling” (Salganik, 2006, p.112). According to Gary T. (1990, pp.17-25), NPS are useful tools for example, when they are chosen based on systematically employed criteria, chosen for convenience or because they faced limited resources. Using this technique has the advantage of lowering the cost of collecting a vast number of respondents. In addition, the 2011 report from the American Association of Public Opinion Research (AAPOR)’s Task Force examined the conditions under which survey designs using NPS can be functional for making deductions to a larger population, considering that NPS has become popular because an increasing number of surveys are being conducted online.

At the same time, there are various aspects that researchers using NPS need to take into consideration. One of them is that transparency is essential regarding the methods used to determine the sample, make inferences and the process of data collection. An explicit description of methods and comprehensive identification of the assumptions is essential for understanding the usefulness of the estimates; making sure there is evidence to support those assumptions (Baker et al., 2013). Also, according to Trochim (2020) the fact that NPS does not involve random selection, does not necessarily mean that those samples are not representative. Hence, considering that all surveys are subject to biases and that random selection alone does not guarantee that a given sample will be representative (Groves et al, 2004, pp.94-382), NPS can be used in social science research when the sample selection process is clearly defined and when facing economic and timing limitations. Also, it is essential to conduct innovative research to overcome confusion regarding this technique and make use of the existing methods. This can help to provide the framework for making inferences from NPS (Brick, 2014).

