

CULS 5209 (Short Critical Reflection)

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Individual memory and the collective “imagined community”

-The voice of an accidental participant in 2019 Hong Kong protests

When spring finally comes, I look back on the past seven months, having experienced these traumatic days and witnessed this wonderful city turning into a conflict zone. I feel obliged to write this article to make voice for all those “accidental participants”—a group of marginalized in Hong Kong who were stuck in between, narrativizing my own individual memory to show the contradiction between media portrayal and personal memory, to demonstrate the complexity of this event , to unveil the different side of Hong Kong protests.



攝影 | 劉貳龍

The 2019–20 Hong Kong protests are lasting social movement which are triggered by a row over a government bill that would have allowed the extradition of criminal suspects to the Mainland China. And the protest escalated through frequent violent clashes between the police and protestors. But the portrayal differed in news reportage from various social media platforms. Local media such as [Apple Daily] declared :“It

was a just war fighting for the freedom and democracy and the bill would undermine judicial independence and endanger dissidents.. On the other hand, mainland social media like [People's Daily] regarded these protests as riots and most chaotic days that would ruin this city.

During that time, every day I not only read about the suffering of the local protestors but also got to know the great casualties of the police, not only I saw the paradox and dilemma where HK people trapped in but also saw the great tension of peaceful living environment(Figure 1 and 2). Both parties kept producing news report that focused on Hong Kong people and the Mainland government, mixed with truth and fake news that you can never tell unless truly witnessed the whole picture. I was great shocked when the riot really happened at that moment but the mainland media postpone revealing the news until a month later, I was also shocked when my friends were treated unequally and impolitely in the restaurant but our kind neighbors and university turned away only to care about those students who caused those act of violence and inequality.



Figure 1 and 2 were photographed by my friend Antonio in Fanling Station .

And so far I found one kind of voice was neglected during this historical event, it is those people who accidentally participated in the historical event , they are non-local, but they are not totally stranger, they have little thing with this place, like international students, Gang Piao, also some visitors who stuck in there. And my individual memory shared similarity with this [accidental participant] group, and it eventually formed

collective memory and the [imagined community] . Even though we didn't live together, we did share information and daily experience with each other, we expressed our feelings and thoughts from our perspectives to find our sense of belonging and support, same with any other official group and rebelling groups.

There is no doubt that history would finally be reconstructed by historians and be represented by journalists according to their perspectives and subalterns like us [accidental participants] would often be marginalized or excluded from the historical record. But our individual memory remained and kept fighting against our imagined community, against the fake news and one-sided records of history .As Susan Sontag said: "All memory is individual, it dies with each person, what is called collective memory is not a remembering but a stimulating. this is important, and this is the story about how it happened, with the pictures that lock the story in our minds." (Sontag,2003:83-86)¹.History is not only about the record of mainstream's movements, about the prevailing narrative or official narrative, it should both cover Individual memory and the collective "imagined community" and it should be continuously challenged by the voice and experience of minorities as well.

¹ Sontag, Susan. *Regarding the Pain of Others*. New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux,2003