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Digital Activism and the Public Sphere

by

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This thesis is dedicated to my best friend Nicholas.

For his love, support and encouragement.

ABSTRACT

This thesis examines the role that digital technology plays in the advancement of political and social goals. Though a fairly recent phenomenon, digital activism has become a highly contested topic as regards its effectiveness.

This thesis looks at two case studies in the use of digital tools for activism, the 2011 Arab Spring in Tunisia and then in Egypt.

Digital activism is theorized as is related to the public sphere as discussed by Jürgen Habermas. This thesis concludes by identifying a number of existing threats to digital activism inherent in the current governance structure of the Internet.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Introduction

Somos producto 500 años de lucha - Declaración de la Selva Lacandona,

Ejército Zapatista de Liberación Nacional

"We are the product of 500 years of struggle" - Declaration of the Lacandon

Jungle, Zapatista Army of National Liberation

2 January 1994[1]

On January 1st 1994 the North American Free Trade Agreement went into effect; on that same day the Ejército Zapatista de Liberación Nacional (EZLN) occupied seven towns in the Chiapas region of Mexico with a force of approximately 3,000. In response to the implementation of such neoliberal policies by President Carlos Salinas de Gortari the Declaración was published establishing the insurrectionary state of the EZLN forces and offering a model for society beyond the Mexican state. Salina's government quickly deployed both air and ground forces in response to this act of defiance. In the recovered territories they conducted interrogations using methods of torture as well as summary executions. An iron fist in the face of revolutionaries was a long-practiced method for the government but this would not last as soon the entire world was watching the unfolding events.[2]

The Zapatista movement represents a number of linguistically diverse indigenous groups predominantly of Mayan descent, mobilizing in response to "500 YEARS OF ROBBERY, MURDER AND DESTRUCTION OF THE INDIGENOUS PEOPLE".[3] Though this was by no means the first instance of indigenous resistance in the region, the work of foreign intermediaries such as NGOs and human-rights activists ensured the EZLN's plight reached a wider audience. These supporters published the writings of the insurgents via the Internet using email, list-serves and various websites.[4] The rapid dissemination of information drew support from concerned citizens in many of the world's wealthier nations and by 12 January 1994 the army's operations were suspended and Salina's government agreed to enter into negotiations with the rebel forces. This episode is often cited as the earliest example of digital activism.[5] Manuel Castells, a leading theorist on information societies, has labelled the Zapatista "the first informational guerrilla movement"[6] and further highlights the event's significance:

> The Zapatistas' ability to communicate with the world, and with Mexican society, and to capture the imagination of people and of intellectuals, propelled a local, weak insurgent group to the forefront or world politics.[7]

The goal of my thesis will be to explore the relatively new field of digital activism. This will include debates surrounding its role and effectiveness in modern activist causes as well as the challenges that these new

technologies introduce to activism. The theoretical public sphere as put forth by Jürgen Habermas will influence this analysis to gain a critical understanding of the roles of communication and participation in changing social spaces where activism plays an influential role.

The Changing Realities of Digital Activism

The literature surrounding other commonly cited examples of early instances of digital activism evoke a similar sentiment. In his study of the 1998 lobby against the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development's (OECD) Multilateral Agreement on Investments (MAI), Ronald J. Deibert describes the infiltration of the newly arrived citizen network on the scene of global politics. As information about this treaty of trade liberalization was shared over the Internet, rather than amongst traditional media outlets, protest and criticism grew and strengthened the position of the anti-MAI lobby. According to Deibert these networks and their technological capabilities resulted in a fundamental rethinking of the architecture of global politics.[8] Soon after occurred the 1999 World Trade Organization meetings and the "Battle of Seattle" when a three-day protest with nearly 500,000 activists effectively shut down the meetings. In addition to the action in the streets, online mobilization included: web sites, emails, bulletin boards, cell phones and chat rooms.[9] Perhaps the most significant strategy during the protests was the creation of the Independent Media Centre better known as Indymedia which continues to exist today. This network of sites allows for the rapid spreading of information via text,

images, audio and video in real time without having to rely on the media elite.[10]

> The Centre was designed so that anyone could post information directly online without moderation or limitation, and set the model for a many-to-many use of the media whereby activists can subvert the traditional one-to-many approach under mainstream and corporate media.[11]

In another study describing the changing nature of the 'global Internet' the authors also mention both the Zapatista movement and the Seattle protests in their focus on an increasingly politicized Internet:

> An international protest movement surfaced in resistance to neo-liberal institutions and their related globalization policies, while democracy, social justice, and a better world were championed. Since then, broad-based, populist political spectacles have become the norm, thanks to an evolving sense of the way in which the internet may be deployed in a democratic and emancipatory manner by a growing planetary citizenry that is using the new media to become informed, inform others, and to construct new social and political relations.[12]

These earliest examples of digital activism carry the same rhetoric; the technology is equalizing, accessible and emancipatory. The effects of it are citizen-driven, represent a challenge to the status quo, and have a global impact. It seemed that developing digital technologies would lead to the ultimate creation of a free and democratic world order. In reality as citizens became more technologically savvy so did their governments.

The Golden Shield Project, more commonly known as the Great

Firewall of China, is the ruling Chinese Communist Party's (CCP)

response to the pervasive influence of the Internet in regards to both the

growth of commerce and the spread of information. Though a logistical

nightmare for a government requiring a tight hold on its citizens' access to

information, the Internet has become a necessity for a healthy economy.

Using a combination of technical and non-technical methods the CCP has

one of the most proficient censorship operations in the world. Technical

methods include: censorship via keyword and packet filtering using a list of

banned words or phrases that are frequently updated and geared towards

individual user obstructions; the blocking of specific websites or platforms;

monitoring software; and in extreme cases cutting off Internet access to

specific geographical areas. Non-technical methods include: the co-opting

of corporations to assist in filtering, monitoring and disrupting service;

heavily controlled licensing to Internet Service Providers (ISPs), search

engines, and news outlets; hiring personnel to monitor content as well as

to generate pro-government content themselves;[13] and lastly using force

and intimidation via legal means to deter online dissent. Human rights

abuses in China are well-known and in many cases those who use digital

technologies to speak out against such abuses often fall victim to

persecution themselves. Clearly in the case of China these technologies

do not carry the equalizing force as was witnessed in the 1990s with

grass-roots reactions to neoliberalism. Truly, as is the case with any

technology, their propensity towards either helpful or harmful effects is dependent on the user of that technology. And in any case even in the face of such masterful censorship by the CCP activists within China still manage to circumvent total control. These netizens[14] find clever ways to ensure their messages are shared.

A Combined Approach to Methodology

Thanks to the continuous innovation of digital and information technologies, the proliferation of new digital tools and accompanying strategies for activists have resulted in a renewed study of activism complete with both grand visions for its future and countering criticisms. In October of 2010, in response to the media coverage of popular uprisings in Moldova and Iran espousing the term 'Twitter Revolution'[15] Malcolm Gladwell wrote the article "Small Change: Why the revolution will not be tweeted."[16] According to Gladwell "Social media can't provide what social change has always required." In his argument he compared these recent events with the famous Greensboro Sit-Ins of the American Civil-Rights Movement, the latter which he described as strong-tied, high-risk activism while the former he declared were the opposite. When the revolutions were in fact tweeted from Tunisia and Egypt in early 2011, *Foreign Affairs* ran "From Innovation to Revolution: Do Social Media Make Protests Possible?"[17] In this piece Gladwell debated social-media activism proponent Clay Shirky and reaffirmed his position that long before social media platforms existed protests were successful, and since these new

tools were not solving an existing problem, there was no way to prove that the uprisings in Tunisia and Egypt would not have been successful without them. Shirky on the other hand stated that the new strategies adopted through the use of these new tools is key. They allow for cheap and rapid spreading of information and group coordination and according to Shirky there now exists a new set of rules which activists can take advantage of. Underlying this debate are two contradictory positions: either these tools and conditions have the power to significantly enhance the work of disenfranchised populations, or, they are undeserving of the enthusiasm and attention they have recently garnered. We have already seen evidence supporting both hypotheses: the potentiality of digital technologies are far-ranging from the emancipatory power of citizen journalism to the abilities of oppressive governments to keep tabs on its citizens. It is through these examples that we can begin to appreciate the opportunities awarded by digital activism as well as the risks associated with digital technology in general.

This thesis will address the communications model of the public sphere as defined by Jürgen Habermas in his 1962 work The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere: An Inquiry Into a Category of Bourgeois Society. The public sphere, or *Offentlichkeit*, is the discursive space where participation in social and political issues are free to take place. This model of a place, not distinctly topographical but rather representative, is an effective allegory because it provides a theoretical

basis, a lens, for realizing the conditions in which activists find themselves today. This thesis will then look at two cases studies from Tunisia and Egypt and look at how digital technology is being used by activists. Using a methodological combination of theory and empirical examples this study aims to provide a more holistic picture of the context of digital activism; a focus on both the technical and material capabilities that these technologies afford as well as the specific social and cultural circumstances in which they operate. Finally this thesis will look at the work of new media theorists to address the challenges that these new technologies present. Using this model this study will aim to address a two-part question: (1) How has digital activism contributed to the public sphere; and (2) What can be done to ensure this potential is protected for the future of digital activism and the public sphere?

To answer these questions this thesis will do the following: Chapter One will define digital activism and further detail Habermas' public sphere. It will show how this concept can be readily applied to the topic of digital activism, and how new media theorists are responding to the changing dynamics. Chapter Two will present the two cases studies of the Arab Spring as it occurred in Tunisia and Egypt to show how in cases where a discursive public sphere is limited by repressive forces, digital technology can help create and support the necessary dialogues to advance change. In light of the potential that digital technology affords Chapter Three will frame the pervasive issues surrounding digital activism today. It will

recommend steps to ensure that the necessary technology, and access to

it, will remain available to the persons who need it most and thereby

support the future of digital activism.

NOTES

[1] José Rabas. Without History: Subaltern Studies, The Zapatista Insurgency, and the Specter of History. Pittsburg: University of Pittsburgh Press (2010); 6.

[2] Ibid.

[3] Thomas Benjamin. "A Time of Recounquest: History, the Maya Revival, and the Zapatista Rebellion in Chiapas". American Historical Review. April (2000); 443.

[4] Maria Garrido and Alexander Halavais. "Mapping Networks of Support for the Zapatista Movement: Applying Social-Networks Analysis to Study Contemporary Social Movements" in Cyberactivism: Online Activism in Theory and Practice, edited by Martha McCaughy and Michael D. Ayers. New York: Routeledge (2003); 168.

[5] See Carty (2011), Castells (2010), Kahn and Kellner (2004),

[6] Manuel Castells. The Power of Identity. West Sussex, U.K.: Wiley-Blackwell (2010). 82.

[7] Ibid. 83.

[8] Ronald J. Diebert. "International Plug'n Play? Citizen Activism, the Internet, and Global Public Policy". International Studies Perspectives 1 (2000); 255 - 272.

[9] Jeffrey S. Juris, "The New Digital Media and Activist Networking within Anti-Corporate Globalization Movements," Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science 507 (2005); 194.

[10] Carty.

[11] Carty. 2.

[12] Richard Kahn and Douglas Kellner. "New Media and Internet Activism: From the 'Battle of Seattle' to Blogging". New Media and Society. Vol 6(1) DOI:10.1177/1461444804039908. accessed February 25, 2010. 87-88.

[13] Elizabeth Dodson. "Cracks in the Golden Shield: the rising challenge of expanding Chinese Internet censorship technologies". (Masters Thesis, Georgetown University, 2010). Handle: hdl.handle.net/10822/553476. accessed July 10, 2012.

[14] A phrase describing citizens who are frequent users of the Internet.

[15] Twitter is a social media and micro-blogging platform allowing users to post text messages up to 140 characters long as well as links to other forms of multimedia.

[16] Malcolm Gladwell. "Small Change: Why the revolution will not be tweeted" The New Yorker (2010). www.newyorker.com/reporting/2010/10/04/101004fa_fact_gladwell?currentPage=all Accessed: February 19, 2011.

[17] Malcolm Gladwell and Clay Shirky. "From Innovation to Revolution: Do Social Media Make Protests Possible?" Foreign Affairs March/April (2011). Electronic. www.foreignaffairs.com/article/67325/malcolm-gladwell-and-clay-shirky/from-innovation-to-revolution

Chapter 1: Digital Technology and the Public Sphere

Defining Digital Activism

      This study employs the term digital activism rather than other possible appellations: web activism, cyberactivism, internet-enhanced activism, networked activism, computer-mediated activism, iRevolution, liberation technologies, electronic civil disobedience, social net-war or even insurgency online. What most of these terms have in common is their underlying meaning - the use of digital technology towards the advancement of political and social goals. Nevertheless the range of implied activities based on the chosen term varies greatly. The term web activism limits the scope of activities to only things occurring over the World Wide Web while both social net-war and insurgency online suggest destructive actions. Following in the steps of Mary Joyce in *Digital Activism Decoded: the New Mechanics of Change* this thesis uses the term digital activism because of its exhaustiveness and exclusivity: "Exhaustive in that it encompasses all social and political campaigning practices that use digital network infrastructure; exclusive in that it excludes practices that are not examples of this type of practice."[1] The strength of the digital network, according to Joyce, is in its reliance on the understanding of binary code - 0s and 1s; in effect "the whole world is speaking one language."[2] Mobile phones and the Internet are the most common examples of tools that utilize the power of the digital network and

allow for global communication. Though access to this digital infrastructure is in no way universal and very much dependent upon social, economic, and political factors its impact has a global reach.

So what types of activities does digital activism involve? In the paper "New Media and the Internet Activism: from the 'Battle of Seattle' to Blogging" authors Richard Kahn and Douglas Kellner put forth two specific types of this new form of activism: hackers and bloggers. They use the term 'hacktivists' to describe the former; members of a particular subculture that are effectively engaging in cyberspace in an effort to circumvent 'big brother'. These hacktivists are educating oppositional groups about government monitoring, are creating open-source software programs, and are securing and providing 'free' internet access points - an action that Kahn and Kellner have labeled "'gift economy' Internet connectivity".[3] Blogging on the other hand is described as a popular communication tool that allows users to engage in "democratic self-expression… global media critique and journalistic sociopolitical intervention".[4] Aside from writing about politically or socially sensitive issues bloggers have also been known to participate in an activity known as Google Bombing. A Google Bomb takes advantage of Google's search algorithm users can post specific content that would increase the likelihood of their blog achieving a high return when certain words are searched for. Though anyone can capitalize on this for personal gain when

it is used with political purposes in mind this action is then referred to as the 'Justice Bomb'.[5]

In "Activism, Hacktivism and Cyber Terrorism: the Internet as a Tool for Influencing Foreign Policy" Dorothy Denning differentiates between activism and hacktivism. Activism can take any of five forms: (1) collection of information; (2) publication through emails, newsgroups, or websites; (3) debate on policy issue such as found in web forums; (4) coordination of action plans; and lastly (5) lobbying decision makers. Hacktivism takes on four forms: (1) virtual sit-ins or blockades aimed at disrupting websites by generating high volumes of traffic; (2) email bombs delivering thousands of messages at once using automated tools; (3) web hacks – tampering with websites, DNSs or ISPs; and (4) the creation and spreading of computer viruses and worms.[6] You can see that even the term hacktivist can take on various meanings.

E-mobilizations, e-tactics and e-movements are the terms that Jennifer Earl and Katrina Kimport have chosen to differentiate between similar activities in their book *Digitally Enabled Social Change: Activism in the Internet Age*. Placed along a spectrum of technological affordances offered by digital activism - (1) reduced costs of protest and (2) no need for co-presence in time and space - they each represent the degree to which these affordances are leveraged. E-mobilization combines both online and offline protests making use of online tools to promote action in the streets. These methods represent low leveraging of affordances; the

offline protest still requires banners, signs and perhaps a variety of

equipment (each with a financial cost) and though the planning of the

protest action does not require participants to be co-present the execution

of the protest action does. In the middle of the spectrum sit e-tactics

representing "numerous instances of collective action with varying degrees

of off- and online components".[7] The example given here is online

petitioning where anyone can host a petition with virtually no financial cost

and very little time commitment. In addition participants can add their

signatures to the petition from anywhere at any time. Other examples of e-

tactics given include email campaigns, online letter-writing campaigns and

online boycotts. The final category, e-movements, denotes movements

that occur entirely online in terms of both organization of as well as

participation in. These movements, such as strategic voting initiatives,

leverage the technological affordances of digital activism to the highest

degree. Earl and Kimport argue that when high leveraging occurs these

methods have the most transformative impact on the nature of protest.

Rather than simply augmenting traditional activism these processes

instead are "critically reshaped".[8] Activities and methods that fall under the

guise of e-mobilizations tended to report little change in the fundamental

nature of activism. Though the digital technologies employed do help to

improve the scale of these actions, the processes involved were ultimately

the same.

The use of social media is another way people have come to describe instances of digital activism. Sebastián Valenzuela broadly defines social media to include: social networking sites (such as Facebook and Google Plus), microblogs (Twitter), video-sharing sites (YouTube), and "other forms of user-generated digital content."[9] Citing recent scholarship outlining numerous events and platforms that point to the use of social media in protest activity Valenzuela states the question is not whether social media is related to activism rather the important question is under what conditions this happens?

The Ushahidi platform is one innovative example of the use of social media or perhaps 'medias' in digital activism. Ushahidi meaning 'witness in Swahili,[10] is a free and open source web-based mapping tool originally created to document Crisis Mapping. Launched in Kenya in 2008 as a way to report and document human rights violations during post-election violence it has since been launched in over 140 countries. The tool integrates other digital technologies such as SMS, email, Twitter, Flickr, and Facebook with the Google Maps platform acting in many ways as a social media aggregate. Using crowd-sourcing techniques Ushahidi allows for the creation of collaborative multi-media mapping to alter the balance of power between repressive governments and their peoples by allowing citizens to live-edit maps from a variety of devices. This is novel approach to the use of social media in for the advancement of political and social goals:

In other words, the triad: "synchronize opinion – coordinate action – document the result" is taken to an entirely new level with the live or near real-time geo-location of collated, publicly sourced and publicly accessible information. Just like the state-run television serves to synchronize public opinion, these live maps can create a different but unified understanding generated from the crowd itself.[11]

Two organizations that, from their inception, have existed solely for the purpose of influencing and participating in digital activism are the aforementioned Indymedia and the Electronic Frontier Foundation. Indymedia was begun in response to the 1999 protests against World Trade Organization meeting in Seattle and law enforcement's aggressive and physical response to the protestors. Today Indymedia continues to exist by providing alternative and independent media analysis from partner organizations through its website; it purpose is providing access to unfettered news coverage.[12]

The Electronic Frontier Foundation (EFF) was created in 1990 for the purpose of protecting U.S. Citizens' civil liberties affected by new digital technologies. The earliest work of the EFF focused on court battles, and the defense of these liberties, in cases where they believed the U.S. Government mishandled perceived threats to national security. The two earliest cases fought resulted in the legal protection of electronic mail from unwarranted searches and the defense of citizens' First Amendment rights to free speech (specifically by allowing individuals to publish their own encryption software). Today the legal focus of the EFF has shifted from

government interference to that of industry particularly defending Internet users around the topic of intellectual property and copyright law.[13]

In her Meta-Activism Blog on February 7, 2012 Mary Joyce attempts to limit the uses of digital activism into six over-arching categories. Though she acknowledges the possible applications of digital technology to activist causes are extremely broad and appear to be infinite, they are in fact limited activities carried out in a variety of contexts. According to Joyce digital technology allows activists to:

1. Share public opinion. Quoting social movement scholar Doug McAdam, Joyce reminds us that before collective action can happen "at a minimum people need to believe, need to feel aggrieved about some aspect of their lives and optimistic that, acting collectively, they can redress the problem." Digital technology, such as blogs, websites or social media platforms such as Facebook, allows users to post, read, converse, and in doing so develop a collective identity and shape public discourse. The key with the many-to-many decentralized communication style of digital technology, according to Joyce, is that the transmission of information corresponds with the creation of a collective identity.

2. Plan an action. In addition to many-to-many actions digital technology also affords few-to-few centralized communication styles integral to planning. Coordination via texting, emailing, or online calls and chats is cheap, easy and in most cases safer. And

in the case of leaderless actions, digital platforms such as Facebook, allow participants to reach a consensus when planning an action.

3. Protect activists. Anonymity afforded through encryption, pseudonyms and disposable cell phones offer tech-savvy individuals an added degree of protection when participating in digital activism.

4. Share a call to action. As is coordinating a protest, broadcasting a call to action using digital technology is easier and cheaper. As Joyce points out this ease of messaging makes it more difficult to be heard amongst the noise. Nevertheless the ability to spread a message far and wide very quickly is an advantage of digital activism.

5. Take action digitally. These types of action can occur entirely online and include e-petitions, changing one's Facebook status or avatar to draw attention to a cause, emailing a government representative, or even participating in a DDoS attack. The first two actions mentioned are most likely to draw cynicism and labeled as Clicktivism or Slacktivism.

6. Transfer Resources. Raising funds through online donations and micro-donations have become commonplace for organizations' and political parties' fundraising goals.[14]

Digital Activism as a Contentious Topic

The role that digital technologies play in activist causes has become a highly contested topic. An example of this has already been seen in the writings of Malcolm Gladwell. In an attempt to generalize the role of social media rather than focusing on case-by-case bases, Clay Shirky asserts that the strength of social media in protest activities is predicated on the users' access to conversation; because through communication and communicative freedom, these tools can strengthen civil society. Popular movements can only benefit from strong communicative bases afforded by social media as according to Shirky "positive changes in the life of a country, including pro-democratic regime change, follow, rather than precede, the development of a strong public sphere."[15] In a 2009 blog posting, scholar Evgeny Morozov puts forth an alternate view as a proponent of the derogatory reference to such activism known as 'Slacktivism'. In the post Morozov describes slacktivism as "feel-good online activism that has zero political or social impact"[16]. Behaviour he describes as acts of slacktivism include signing online petitions and joining a Facebook group. To him rather than merely providing disillusionment for a lazy generation slacktivism runs the risk of detracting from more conventional forms of activism, such as sit-ins and demonstrations, by allowing participants to believe they have done their part.

Avaaz.org[17] is one example of a transnational organization dedicated to drawing attention to a wide range of activist causes primarily via online petitioning and is self-described as "a global web movement to bring

people-powered politics to decision-making everywhere". As of August

2013, according to their website, Avaaz has over 25 million members

located in 194 countries and has taken 142,983,113 actions since its

inception in January 2007. The actions taken are influenced by the wishes

of the organization's members and range from human rights and the

environment to ensuring fair media practices around the world. It would

appear that Morozov's warning, in this case, is unsubstantiated.

Clicktivism is another unfavourable reference to similar actions

including tweeting, joining a Facebook group, or signing an online petition.

In addition to an implied ease of action Clicktivism references the use of

metrics in quantifying success; a tendency usually found in the realm of

marketing. The obsession over clicks, it goes, is damaging and degrading

to genuine political engagement.[18] Some recent scholarship has

addressed these criticisms head on. In "Online Political Mobilization from

the Advocacy Group's Perspective: Looking Beyond Clicktivism" 'David

Karpf's research highlights the flaws of the clicktivist critique, that mass

email action alerts are ineffectual. Firstly these actions represent the

switch to a digital format rather than an entirely new tactic. Email

notifications and petitions mirror earlier postcard-based campaign

strategies useful in citizen issue campaigning. In an effort to demonstrate

a high volume of citizen interest participants were targeted to write

supportive comments on preprinted postcards that were then mailed to

relevant representatives. The digital switch "represents a difference-in-

degree rather than a difference-in-kind"[19] strategy. Secondly these tactics should not be and cannot be assessed as singular strategies since they are only one component of a broader strategic effort; "there is no such thing as a mass email campaign".[20]

The diversity of practice within digital activism challenges activists and scholars alike to identify the opportunities afforded them. In any given situation it needs to be understood how a tool or set of tools can advance the actors' goals. What is the perceived effectiveness or efficiency of a certain action and will it be necessary to mitigate any risk? Ultimately how can we use digital technology for the betterment of global society? If we are to take an optimistic point of view such as Clay Shirky's belief that a strong public sphere based on communicative exchanges is foundational to the advancement of political and social goals, then we must look further into how digital technology can aide in the achievement of this; in other words how has digital activism contributed to the public sphere?

Defining the Public Sphere

The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere: An Inquiry into a Category of Bourgeois Society written by Jürgen Habermas was first published in Germany in 1962 finally making its way to English-speaking audiences in 1989 when it was published in North America. The book describes the rise and fall of the bourgeois public sphere, a place integral to the democratization of society where citizens engage in rational-critical debate about all things social and political. The origins of Habermas'

public sphere are the Greek city-states and the separation between the polis - the public world where political debate happened - and the oikos - the private world of the family. This distinction between public and private that carried on through Roman times was lost during the Middle Ages. It was then that the notion of 'public' was confined to the representative publicness of the court nobility; only as an attribute of their status were they living and acting 'publicly'. It was not until the mercantilist phase of the world economic system, and the initial appearance of capitalist financing techniques, that a meaningful separation between the notions of private and public again began to take shape. According to Habermas the roots of the bourgeois public sphere are found in the earliest social structures that were reflections of these distinct spheres.

Via the new commercial economy, property owners arose filling a dual role of business man and patriarch. The intimacy of the conjugal family, as the demarcated private sphere, became the locale for the origination of an individual's self-understanding. From the privacy of the home a human being among others, or *l'homme*, became actualized. Another foundation of this public sphere was the practice of literary criticism. To explain, with the rise of capitalist world system the vertical economic dependency that was characteristic of feudal society gave way to a new horizontal economy of commercial exchange. The increased scope of trade witnessed the trade in new commodities; news itself had begun to be trafficked. Correspondingly the world of letters witnessed the

rise of the novel popularized by a new social class. An emerging reading public, not yet participating in things political, were the first to experience an end to what had long been the church and state's monopoly on interpretation. A public of private persons, whose identity was formed in the private sphere of the conjugal family and who critically read and debated about culture, began the discourse essential to the public sphere.

The institutional bases of the bourgeois public sphere arrived, each with their own specific historicity, first in Great Britain and soon followed by France and Germany beginning in the late seventeenth century. The appearance of salons, Tischgesellschaften (table societies), and coffee houses reflected a social shift as the town became the centre of civil society and as a critical and debating public proliferated. The salons of France can be viewed as the cultural heirs to the French courts by blending the economically unproductive and politically functionless urban aristocracy with a new class composed of writers, artists and scientists. These gatherings served to foster analytical discussion over cultural happenings, not only literature but the theatre, concerts and art as well. According to Habermas in this setting: "the bourgeois avant-garde of the educated middle class learned the art of rational-critical public debate through its contact with the "elegant world".[22] Unique to the salons was the fact that they were shaped by women often in the role of hostess. The table societies of Germany on the other hand were not only limited to men, they also operated as secret societies; "reason… itself needed to be

protected from becoming public because it was a threat to any and all relations of domination".[23] The coffee houses in Great Britain embraced the widest strata of the middle class though were also limited to men. Here also the early traffic in news began to have a profound effect. Moral weeklies, precursors to the modern day newspaper, were used to circulate economic information and eventually social commentary further signaling a turn towards a more reflective and critical society: "the public that read and debated this sort of thing read and debated about itself".[24]

Though these centres of criticism differed in organization and even attendance they did have three critical features in common. Firstly there existed a claim that argument was based on merit rather than status; rational argument was to be the sole arbiter of an idea's reception not the identity of the speaker. The second feature has already been mentioned. Culture, in the form of letters, plays and music functioned as commodities open to interpretation (no longer under the guise of church and state). This allowed for the problematization of areas that previously went unquestioned. The final commonality of the salons, societies and coffee houses was that everyone should be able to participate. This of course was determined by whether or not an individual had access to cultural goods and so did not include all members of society (with a particular emphasis on race and gender limitations). Though equality was never realized in earnest, the notions of universality and "common humanity"[25] speak to the spirit of these institutions. Ultimately, according to Habermas,

it was in these centres of criticism where a rational-critical debate over the general rules of commodity exchange and social labour was formed with the use of reason and a principal of inclusiveness.

Habermas credits the parliamentary democracy of Great Britain as the first realization of the public sphere in the political world. The aftermath of the Glorious Revolution in 1688 witnessed the first cabinet government as well as the elimination of censorship. Though this allowed for a unique climate of political criticism, what occurred in Great Britain did not happen overnight rather it was a slow process that took over a century to evolve. Habermas cites Peels' Tamworth Manifesto of 1834 as the first time a party published its election platform thereby calling upon public opinion. Additionally the arrival of the Bank of England, founded in 1694, heralded in a new stage of capitalism. By the late nineteenth century Britain was in a position of market dominance and this combined with the Industrial Revolution resulted in a true laissez faire attitude - this phase was the only time where the political public sphere could achieve true emancipation from public authorities. Nevertheless there existed a contradiction in the 'model' sphere of Great Britain as the public sphere could never be complete without universal access to it and as long as specific groups continued to be excluded it would remain a form of ideology. Meanwhile the continental absolutism that existed in Germany ensured a prolonged separation between the nobility and bourgeoisie. In France a political public sphere did not exist until after the Revolution at which time the

newly created constitutional law guaranteed that the (bourgeois) public would have political clout - this did not last as the reign of terror soon took over followed by the rule of Napoleon.

It was only during the liberal phase of the capitalist economic system that the public sphere existed in any true sense; "only during this phase was civil society as the private sphere emancipated from the directives of public authority to such an extent that at the time the political public sphere could attain its full development in the bourgeois constitutional state."[26] Fraught with inherent contradictions, the most obvious being limited access, the bourgeois public sphere eventually devolved. Habermas describes the increasing state interventionism towards the end of the nineteenth century as the onset of what he describes as the refeudalization of the public sphere. The great depression of 1873 marked the closing of the liberal era and a growing environment of protectionism. An ensuing "societalization of the state" and a "statification of society"[27] blurred the division between the once private and public spheres. The audience-orientated intimate sphere of the family and the world of letters became inundated with messages from private and special interest groups and even political parties. The culture-debating public became a culture-consuming public in effect leading to the destruction of the public sphere. The newspaper, once the vehicle that fostered the development of the public sphere, became sensationalist. The consumer demanded immediate gratification and so journalism became conflated with cartoons,

pictures and human interest stories. New media - television, film and radio - saw society under tutelage; no longer was there an exchange or communication of ideas rather mass media became the authority of life's problems. This transformation into a mass media dominated, and manipulated, public sphere is where Habermas ends his work; "the outcome of the struggle between a critical publicity and one that is merely staged for manipulated purposes remains open."[28]

   The response to the English language translation of *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere* was immediate. Nancy Fraser's "Rethinking the Public Sphere: A Contribution to the Critique of Actually Existing Democracy" responds to the bourgeois public sphere as put forth by Habermas. Writing in 1990 she does not wholly refute the value of the 1962 work rather she identifies the limits of Habermas' assumptions and in doing so the limits of contemporary democracy. Using revisionist historiography Fraser acknowledges that although there existed limits to participation in Habermas' discursive public sphere there were always counter- and alternative-publics at work; particularly seen in the voluntary associations headed by women of elite status as well as the involvement of working-class women in class protest activities though predominately found in supporting roles. This revisionist position views the bourgeois public sphere as a vehicle for advancing the dominant group instead of as a place for rational-critical debate undertaken with the principle of inclusiveness.[29]

Seyla Benhabib in her piece titled "Models of Public Space: Hanna Arendt, the Liberal Tradition, and Jürgen Habermas," appearing in the same edition as Fraser, compares three existing models of public space: (1) the agnostic model, (2) the liberal model, and (3) the discourse model. Habermas' model of the public sphere makes up the latter as "discursive public space"[30], meaning, participation is based on democratic principles where social norms are reflections of collective political decisions based on practical debate. Addressing both *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere* and later interventions by Habermas, such as his notion of an 'ideal speech situation,' Benhabib describes and deconstructs the notion of egalitarian reciprocity from the feminist point of view. Part-and-parcel to an 'ideal speech situation,' egalitarian reciprocity indicates a setting where participants have an equal role in a dialogue and are guaranteed the opportunity to express their ideas and desires free of power relations or social constraints. Though Benhabib considers the discourse model of public space the one most compatible with advanced capitalist societies the public/private distinction is problematic. This has served to relegate issues identified as within 'female spheres of activity' - caretaker, housework, reproduction - into the private domain; read: by confining these issues to the private sphere rather than including them as public issues this distinction has served to legitimize women's oppression. Before egalitarian reciprocity can be realized in full, certain social issues traditionally treated as intimate must be opened for public discussion. A

discursive public space "cannot preclude the democratization of familial norms and norms governing division of labour."[31]

The interventions by both Fraser and Benhabib describe major limitations to the Habermasian model of the public sphere while maintaining that it still provides value. Key to a full realization of the potential of this public sphere would require opening up the dialogue to non-dominant groups as well as to topics previously confined to the private sphere. Does the advent of digital technology do this? Let's consider the three key components of Habermas' public sphere (1) the prominence of the merit of an argument, (2) open interpretation, and (3) universality. Conversations using digital technology often occur using pseudonyms, or usernames less complicated than given names, and many of these conversations can occur at a great distance with participants personally unknown to one another. In these cases one's identity has no bearing on the conversation and only the merit of the argument has standing. As for the second point mass media no longer has a monopoly on the interpretation of news and entertainment. As will be discussed later, user-generated content now makes up the majority of what exists on the Web. Lastly anyone with access to a computer and dial-up can participate. And though the requirements for hardware and infrastructure are issues the need to be resolved — popularized in the concept of the 'digital divide' — this situation is a far cry from the exclusion of anyone who was not a

propertied male. With every day that passes more people are connected by way of digital technology.

Digital Technology and the Public Sphere

In 1998 Lincoln Dahlberg's article "Cyberspace and the Public Sphere: Exploring the Democratic Potential of the Net," echoes the position of Fraser that a true public sphere should be modeled on multiple forms of social interaction and recognized from a diversity of voices. Writing specifically on the topic of the public sphere as associated with the Internet, Dahlberg also developed some very serious critiques of its democratic potential. Firstly, corporate control of the Internet and profit-driven attitudes are according to Dahlberg a form of censorship; by subjecting the online discourse to market mechanisms certain information becomes privileged. Secondly, access restrictions are of significant concern. In addition to the financial costs to participate online (such as network charges and costs for Internet-enabled devices) access is also restricted by the lack of skills necessary to participate online. The final warning is what he describes as the 'privatisation of interaction.'[32] Via cyberspace, citizens have easy access to personal entertainment where they may be more likely to spend their time rather than in political discussions. In the event that they want to participate politically, according to Dahlberg their interactions are one-sided as recipients of political messages rather than participants in a discussion. Keeping in mind that Dahlberg was writing in 1998 his concerns over access have been at least

partially addressed by the advent of Web 2.0[33] and the proliferation of smart phones in non-Western countries and the Global South.

In his work "The Practice of Everyday (Media) Life: From Mass Consumption to Mass <Cultural> Production" Lev Manovich investigates the explosion of user-created media content within the technical, economic, and social developments of Web 2.0 and identifies a non-too-subtle trend: the replacement of the mass consumption of commercial culture by the mass production of cultural objects. This mass production by the public has been made possible only with the advance of social media via the Internet. As Manovich explains users are able to produce media content such as websites and videos and are engaging in 'conversations' that have long been beyond their reach. To further develop this cultural reversal Manovich turns to Michel de Certeau's 1980s work The Practice of Everyday Life in which de Certeau differentiates between strategies and tactics. Strategies refer to things created by institutions and power structures while tactics are the ways in which the individuals negotiate these strategies. The example given is the layout of a city where signage and roads are the strategies developed by the municipality. The choices an individual makes to navigate through the city, such as route planning or short cuts, are tactics. According to de Certeau mass produced goods are strategies of producers and the application of tactics that make use of these products result in identity-building; for example choice of fashion is one such way that tactics are applied to manage the

strategies of designers. As Manovich explains, much has changed in consumer society since the 1980s particularly with the arrival of Web 2.0 and these processes have now become interactive. The companies developing consumer products are engaging in strategies that more often resemble tactics as products are increasingly designed to be customizable in the face of the producing consumer, or 'prosumer'. In addition the prosumer is changing the dynamics of the conversation. Rather than merely being recipients, such as in the one-to-many approach of traditional media, by producing content not only are they acting as participants they are publishers as well engaging in a many-to-many multimedia relationship. This is an interesting shift that implies a distribution of power into new hands.

The "Dictator's Dilemma" plays on this idea of power distribution affected by digital technologies. Originally formulated in 1985 by American and then Secretary of State George Schultz the "Dictator's Dilemma" refers to the double-edged sword that information technology and the information age plays in a closed state. In a globalized world subjected to a free market economy it is nearly impossible for a country to restrict citizens' access to information while maintaining a healthy economy:

> Totalitarian societies face a dilemma: either they try to stifle these [information and communication] technologies and thereby fall further behind in the new industrial revolution, or else they permit these technologies and see their totalitarian control inevitably eroded. In fact, they do not have a choice, because they will never be able entirely to block the tide of technological advance.[34]

This technologically deterministic approach is a popular concept for

advocates of the democratic potential of the Internet, social media and

digital activism. And though this theory of communication was directed at

the demise of the Soviet Union it can be further projected back into history

where examples of radical social change following on the heels of

technological innovation are celebrated:

> In a broader historical context, advancements in the means of
> communication have profoundly influenced characteristics within
> and interactions between societies since the time when language
> was invented. Writing created permanence; the printing press
> widened distribution; the telegraph conquered distance; the
> telephone facilitated interactivity; and television mastered visual
> images. Now, asynchronous electronic telecommunication networks
> likewise represent another fundamental, substantial, and
> discontinuous improvement in the ability to communicate. Modern
> communication innovations differ from previous technologies in
> fundamental ways that relatively favor sovereign individuals over
> sovereign governments.[35]

But how can any one technology be inherently more democratic or

applicable for those working towards an open society? As we have already

seen the Chinese government is managing a booming economy while

maintaining a tight control over citizens' access to information via keyword

and packet filtering, blocking sites and restricting access. Though they

cannot manage total control they are certainly proficient at mitigating the

effects of these technologies while maintaining a one party oligarchy.

Evengy Morozov is a vocal critic of the "Dictator's Dilemma" theory.[36]

In his book *Net Delusion* Morozov draws attention to issues of censorship,

surveillance, and propaganda and describes how, rather than used as emancipatory technologies, a number of authoritarian governments are using digital technology for their own purposes. He employs the term 'cyber-utopianism' in reference to the idealistic view of these technologies; it is "a naive belief in the emancipatory nature of online communication that rests on a stubborn refusal to acknowledge its downside."[37] The potential of these technologies is really only that, a potential. As access to the Internet is dependent upon physical infrastructure authoritarian states can easily block this access; a route recently taken in both China and Egypt with differing outcomes.[38] Additionally the prevalence of entertainment sites points to a lack of interest in political content. To suggest that citizens living in authoritarian regimes are primarily interested in living in a democratic society is unrealistic. Access to food, education and the ability to make a living are all more important on a day-to-day basis. Governments are also becoming savvy at delivering the message. Pro-activist content exists in the same spaces as pro-government content and for those only moderately interested in politics it could be hard to discern propaganda from the truth. Lastly with the popularization of many social media platforms it has become even easier for governments to keep tabs on its citizens. A lot of information can be gathered from one's Facebook page— who one's friends are, what groups s/he is a part of and what kinds of things a person 'likes'— all there for easy viewing. But if it

seems as though such tools and platforms are inappropriate for activist causes they are in fact well-suited towards them.

According to Ethan Zuckerman "if the purpose of Web 1.0 is to share physics papers, the purpose of Web 2.0 is to share cute pictures of kittens."[39] Speaking on the subject of digital activism Zuckerman's statement is the opening to his "Cute Cat Theory on Digital Activism" a topic originally presented at O'Reilly's Emerging Technology Conference, ETech, in 2008. From 1995 until 1999 Zuckerman was working at a social media business called Tripod created for the purpose of hosting user content and giving practical advice to college students. Early on Tripod staff realized that rather than accessing the developed content, for example information on mutual funds, users were by-and-large posting and viewing cute pictures of cats. The reality was that with the development of Web 2.0 "it's not about professional creators creating content, it's all about everyone creating content."[40] Another realization by Tripod staff related to the nationality of its users. Being a US-based server it was surprising to discover that Malaysians made up the third-largest user group accessing and publishing content on Tripod. Unbeknownst to Tripod's creators they were hosting the Malaysian Democratic Opposition Movement in support of Anwar Ibrahim. Anwar Ibrahim served at Deputy Prime Minister of Malaysia from 1993 until 1998 when he became a prominent critic of the government and subsequently fell out of favour. In 1999 he was imprisoned on charges of corruption and soon after was also

convicted of sodomy (a charge that was largely dismissed by the international community and was later overturned by Malaysian courts). Tripod, originally intended as a business to support college students, was instead popularly used for sharing banal social content and turned out to be an ideal tool for an activist cause against a corrupt government agenda; "We had a very, very simple tool, with very low barriers to entry, there was no cost, it was reasonably easy to use and it had to be that way because we wanted 15 million people using it."[41]

Almost 20 years after Tripod's creation the prevalence of social media and social networking sites (SNS) has grown exponentially. Facebook, Google+, Renren[42] and Bebo are perhaps the most well-known SNS worldwide. Sites such as Xing (European-based) and LinkedIn are geared more towards professional and business networking development. There are also numerous blogging and micro-blogging platforms for users with limited abilities to code HTML or limited time to spend on their site: WordPress, Tumblr, Blogger, Instagram, Posterous, and Twitter are some of the most popular. Popular Content Management Systems (CMS) for the more tech-savvy user would be Drupal or Joomla allow users to create their own websites or even social networks. Numerous other 'types' of social platforms exist with services ranging from sharing pictures and videos to geo-location, but the point is that today users from around the world have countless options with which to partake in the digital conversation. They have the ability to create their own content with ease

and share their creations with the world and many of them are using the very same platforms to do this.

From Zuckerman's example of Tripod we already know that most users were viewing cute pictures of cats while only a very small percentage were using the platform for political purposes. But what would happen if a government, in an attempt to shut down political activities, shut down access to the entire site? Ordinary users, many of whom would consider themselves as non-political, would be affected as much as activists. As we will see in the next chapter in January of 2011 Egypt's government shut down Internet access in response to growing unrest which had the adverse effect of forcing bystanders on to the streets. The regime was not only censoring activists, it censored the entire country and this is the underlying basis of the Cute Cat Theory:

> Cute cats are collateral damage when governments block sites… Blocking banal content on the internet is a self-defeating proposition. It teaches people how to become dissidents – they learn to find and use anonymous proxies, which happens to be a key first step in learning how to blog anonymously. Every time you force a government to block a web 2.0 site – cutting off people's access to cute cats – you spend political capital. Our job as online advocates is to raise that cost of censorship as high as possible.[43]

Activist causes with a presence on popular social media sites are inadvertently supported by the mass of users, many engaging in behaviour far from political. Though sites and networks specific to activist causes such as Indymedia already exist, few non-political users would access this content on a regular basis if at all. And though they may be very good at

doing what they were created to do, it is unlikely that they would garner

mass social attention that is required for a movement to succeed. Even if

they were to draw significant attention, in areas of the world where Internet

and telecommunications users find themselves heavily censored and

surveilled it is unlikely their governments would even allow them to access

such content in the first place. By posting content on popular social media

sites their messaging is both protected and more accessible to a greater

group of users. And it is with these examples that we can see how digital

technologies are opening access to the public sphere. This is not to say

they are inherently democratic or emancipatory, as there are also many

examples for the contrary, but the technological and material affordances

of these technologies prove that they can be effective for diverse activist

causes. We will now see an example of the social and cultural

circumstances in which they operate.

NOTES

[1] Mary Joyce. Digital Activism Decoded: the New Mechanics of Change. Englewood: Libraries Unlimited (2010); viii.
[2] Ibid. 3.
[3] Kahn and Kellner; 90.
[4] Ibid; 91.
[5] Ibid.
[6] Dorothy Denning. "Activism, Hactivism and Cyber Terrorism: the Internet as a Tool for Influencing Foreign Policy". In Networks and Netwars: The Future of Terror, Crime and Militancy, edited by John Arquilla and David Ronfeldt, 239-288. Santa Monica: RAND (2001).
[7] Jennifer Earl and Katrina Kimport. Digitally Enabled Social Change: Activism in the Internet Age. Cambridge, Massachusetts: MIT Press (2011); 9.
[8] Ibid, 13.

[9] Sebastián Valenzuela, "Protesting in the age of social media: Information, opinion expression and activism in online networks." (paper presented to the 5th Latin American Public Opinion Congress,
World Association for Public Opinion Research (WAPOR), Bogotá, Colombia, July 2012).

[10] Patrick Philip Meier. "Do "Liberation Technologies" Change the Balance of Power Between Repressive States and Civil Society?" (PhD Dissertation, The Fletcher School of Law and Diplomacy, 2011); 9.

[11] Ibid.

[12] Independent Media Centre, http://www.indymedia.org/or/

[13] "A History of Protecting Freedom Where Law and Technology Collide," Electronic Frontier Foundation. https://www.eff.org/about/history

[14] Meta-Activism Blog. http://www.meta-activism.org/

[15] Ibid; 32.

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[20] Ibid; 9.

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[22] Jürgen Habermas. The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere: An Inquiry into a Category of Bourgeois Society. Cambridge, Massachusetts: MIT Press (1989); 29.

[23] Ibid; 35.

[24] Ibid; 43.

[25] Ibid; 36.

[26] Ibid; 74.

[27] Ibid; 142.

[28] Ibid; 235.

[29] Nancy Fraser. "Rethinking the Public Sphere: A Contribution to the Critique of Actually Existing Democracy" Social Text, 25/26 (1990): 77

[30] Seyla Benhabib. "Models of Public Space; Hannah Arendt, the Liberal Tradition, and Jürgen Habermas." In Habermas and the Public Sphere, edited by Craig Calhoun, 73-98. Cambridge, Massachusetts: MIT Press (1992); 73.

[31] Benhabib; 93.

[32] Lincoln Dahlberg. "Cyberspace and the Public Sphere: Exploring the Democratic Potential of the Net" Convergence, V. 4 No. 70 (1998); 75

[33] Web 2.0 is a set of design and business model principles that negate the users' experience with the World Wide Web. There is no technological difference between Web 2.0 and its earlier form. This term is often attributed to Tim O'Reilly.
Tim O'Reillly, September 30, 2005, "What is Web 2.0: Design Patterns and Business Models for the Next Generation of Software," O'Reilly Spreading the Knowledge of Innovators Blog accessed December 21, 2012 http://oreilly.com/web2/archive/what-is-web-20.html

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[35] Ibid.

[36] Morozov, Evgeny. Net Delusion, New York: Public Affairs (2011): 96.

[37] Ibid: xiii

[38] Ibid: 53.

[39] Ethan Zuckerman. "Geeks and Tweets: What LOLcats can teach us about human rights and the internet", Chicago Humanities Festival, Nov 12, 2011. Youtube. Accessed March 26, 2011. http://www.meta-activism.org/2011/12/ethan-zuckerman-on-the-big-picture-of-digital-activism/

[40] Ibid.

[41] Ibid.

[42] A SNS in China commonly dubbed China's version of Facebook.

[43] Ethan Zuckerman. "The Cute Cat Theory of Digital Activism," ETech - O'Reilly Emerging Technology Conference, San Diego (2008).

Chapter 2: Egypt and Tunisia: A Tale of Two Martyrs

Rebirth, awakening, and blooming. These are the words that come to mind upon mention of the Arab Spring; a Pan-Arab citizen-centric movement pursuing an end to darker days. Beginning with the flight of despot Zine al-Abidine Ben Ali from Tunisia followed by the fall of Egypt's Hosni Mubarak less than a month later, the opening weeks of 2011 drew cautious comparisons to the unforgettable years of 1848, 1968 and 1989 in the Western psyche. Was democracy finally coming to the Middle East? Debates ensued over how and why these revolutions happened. In the case of Tunisia unrest began in the outlying regions and ultimately spread inward engulfing the entire country. In Egypt planned demonstrations were called by the 'shabab' - youthful activists in the major urban centres - whose determination quickly inspired other segments of society. One of the common threads hailed by commentators early on was the use of social media, specifically Facebook and Twitter, by the Arab activists. These platforms were used to promote the cause, organize protestors, and perhaps most importantly spread real-time information and images. Terms such as 'Twitter Revolution', 'Revolution 2.0', and 'Facebook Generation' became ubiquitous with the movements each as fervently critiqued as it was championed. And meanwhile outwards and onwards the Arab Spring spread. What is clear is that in Tunisia and Egypt digital technology played a major role though to declare that these technologies are the root cause of success is far too simplistic. Though the early

successes of 2011 would continue to be celebrated there appeared no

magic recipe for overthrowing a government. Libyans saw the end to their

own tyrant Muammar Gaddafi but only following a bloody civil war and

international intervention by NATO. Yemen, Bahrain and Syria witnessed

their own uprisings as well as aggressive responses from their regimes

and unending authoritarianism.[1] Unique to the unrest in Tunisia and Egypt,

two martyrs became a rallying cry for early mobilization and support; a cry

that was amplified by the use of digital technology. One was the victim of

police brutality and an attempted cover-up, the other took his own life to

protest the conditions he was forced to live in, without the opportunities for

betterment or recourse in the face of injustice. The telling of the Tunisian

and Egyptian Revolutions would not be complete without the tale of these

two martyrs but first some background is necessary.

A Brief History of Tunisia and Egypt

Endemic poverty and corruption has plagued the majority of citizens

in these two countries as well as many neighbouring countries in the

Middle East for many years. Absolute power long defined this region's

governments either in the form of monarchies or dictatorships and in many

cases control and stability was maintained through the use of food

subsidies. Tunisian scholar Larbi Sadiki referred to these social contracts

as "democracies of bread"[2] where the states would substitute food

handouts for democratic and economic reforms. From the 1970s and

onwards many of these states received billions in loans and grants from

the United States and the International Monetary Fund; in many cases in the form of cheap wheat. The result was dissolving agriculture sectors and the displacement of agrarian workers; extremely ironic considering the history of the region:

> The region once known as the Fertile Crescent is now the world's most dependent on imported grain. Of the top 20 wheat importers for 2010, almost half of them are Middle Eastern countries… In 1960, Egypt was producing enough wheat to be almost self-sufficient; by 2010, it was importing roughly half the country's total intake (nine billion tons), making it by far the biggest wheat importer in the world.[3]

With approximately an eighth of the population of Egypt, Tunisia was the 17th top wheat importer in 2010.[4] This had a crippling effect in recent years as global food prices skyrocketed and more and more citizens were forced to take advantage of these subsidies. With rapidly increasing poverty the ability to appease dissent using these old methods soon proved impossible.

Tunisia

Prior to the 2011 revolution Tunisians had lived under authoritarian rule since achieving independence in 1956, after shedding its colonial yoke as a French Protectorate. From Independence until 1987 Habib Bourguiba controlled the political scene as President until he was replaced by then Prime Minister Ben Ali in a bloodless coup. Ben Ali came to Bourguiba's administration as an army general with experience in

Tunisia's internal security and intelligence services;[5] this background

would serve Ben Ali well. In 1997 the Ministry of Communications made

into law the decree "Approving Specifications for Setting Up and Operating

Value-Added Internet Telecommunications Services" known afterwards as

the Internet Decree. The Internet Decree requires Internet Service

Providers (ISPs) to censor the sites and pages it hosts otherwise risk

being held accountable for content posted. It requires surveillance by the

ISP's as well as frequent updates of the identities of its users to the

government Internet agency. ISP's are also required to maintain and make

accessible to authorities, a complete set of its archives and additionally it

bars encryption without government approval. This decree combined with

the provisions of the Press Code and the Penal Code gave the regime a

legal free-hand in silencing dissidence.[6] According to Human Rights

Watch:

> President Ben Ali's government actively monitored, interfered with,
> and censored online expression, blocking political and human rights
> websites it disliked and prosecuting persons for their online
> postings. The government was widely believed to be behind the
> commonplace sabotaging of the e-mail accounts of human rights
> activists, which caused e-mail communications to disappear or be
> replaced by spam-like messages.[7]

With such legal apparatuses in place Ali's Tunisia was credited with the

most sophisticated surveillance and censorship capabilities of the Arab

states.[8]

In response to this regime of repression Tunisian activists were forced to experiment with a variety of services and platforms to ensure the injustices they faced were exposed. In the early 2000s the young Tunisian blogosphere was opened to political rhetoric with the creation of sites such as TUNeZINE a site known for its criticism of the government; this site would become famous for the additional reason that its creator Zouhair Yahyaoui would be the first blogger to be arrested.[9] Nawaat.org was another such vehicle used by activists. The website was developed using WordPress, an open-source blog publishing software program created in 2003. Through the publication of videos and images, articles relating to censorship and human rights abuses, and instructional tutorials describing ways to circumvent surveillance, the activists used the site to spread awareness to the greater population.[10] Through years of digital activism and building networks of support Tunisia activists were in a position of readiness when unrest hit the country in December 2010.

Egypt

Egyptian activists faced a similar situation to their Tunisian counterparts; in 1952 Egyptian forces defeated the pro-British monarchy in a military coup d'état and established an independent republic. With each new leader from Gamal Abdel Nasser through Anwar el-Sadat and ultimately Hosni Mubarak, the Egyptian government became increasingly authoritarian and repressive.[11] In 1981 following the assassination of Sadat a State of Emergency was declared in Egypt and the corresponding

emergency law remained in place through Mubarak's accession as well as his 30 year rule.

Emergency law provides for the legal suspension of a citizen's rights via 'special powers' allocated to government forces. These powers gave Egyptian police and security forces a significant degree of indulgence:

> free to arrest suspects and detain them without court order to trial; to refer civilians to military courts at which there is no right of appeal; to ban strikes, demonstrations and public meetings of more than ten individuals; and to censor or close newspapers.[12]

Even with these restrictions in place a number of uprisings have littered modern Egyptian history over issues related to bread prices and access to clean water, as well as the working conditions of soldiers. Since the early 2000s and up until the 2011 Revolution these protest activities are seen to have expanded in 'cycles of protests': support for the Palestinian cause, protests against the invasion of Iraq, pro-democracy movements such as Kifaya (or 'Enough!'), the rising cost of food, and even labour action as witnessed through various strikes and demonstrations.[13] In addition to this heightened activism, participants began coordinating in the digital realm through text messages and blog postings to coordinate actions and disseminate information.

The April 6, 2008 strike at Al-Mahalla Textiles provides an early glimpse of the growing exchange occurring between activists demanding change and digital technology. Endorsed by a number of diverse groups including professional associations, opposition parties and even Kifaya,

the April 6 strike was able to gain popular support. Amongst youthful activists Facebook was used as a platform to promote the strike and for their work on this Facebook page two members of what would later become known as the April 6 Youth Movement, were sought out by security forces. Israa Abdel Fattah was arrested on the day of the strike and detained for two weeks while Ahmed Maher was abducted and tortured shortly afterwards; these actions served only to aggravate the situation as the abuse Maher suffered at the hands of government forces garnered even more public attention.[14]

In addition to the arrival of social media platforms such as Facebook, the Egyptian blogosphere also witnessed a large degree of politicization during these years. From 2005 until 2008 the blog "Egyptian Conscience" authored by Wael Abbas published anything and everything related to torture happening in Egypt in an effort to expose human rights violations. In May 2006 the arrest of the well-known Egyptian blogger Alaa Abd El Fattah incited supporters into action resulting in what came to be known as the "Free Alaa" campaign, in which activists engaged in international awareness growing strategies such as blogging and Google-bombing.[15] Alaa had been responsible for the creation of the website the "Egyptian Blogs Aggregator" using the open source content management system Drupal. This site linked multiple Egyptian political blogs making it easier for interested parties to remain informed.

With a shared purpose Egyptian and Tunisian bloggers and digital activists collaborated on more than one occasion to coordinate their efforts towards life in a freer and more open society. The 2008 Arab Techies Collective is one such example where participants with a greater degree of technical know-how worked towards improving existing open-source platforms for Arab-language users while building ties with other developers as well.[16] The bilingual, and sometimes trilingual,[17] nature of these communities ensured their causes crossed national boundaries. Support came from other Arab states as many others found common cause whilst living within authoritarian and repressive regimes themselves. Nevertheless the demographics of these transnational groups remained both young as well as technologically-oriented leaving wide segments of society disconnected from them. When the time came to connect these activists to the other members of society, the situations in Egypt and Tunisia were quite different: in Tunisia the activists were able to act on the grievances of the people. By sharing and spreading information surrounding the unfolding events, the original protests were amplified with the use of technology. In Egypt the activists and supporters, still predominantly of a younger demographic and largely connected via these technologies, took to the streets inspired by the revolution in Tunisia. It wasn't until they achieved the support of older Egyptians, families, and workers that the regime's fate was sealed. In both cases it was the

combination of online and offline work that made the Tunisian and
Egyptian revolutions possible.

How Events Unfolded

It is already clear that online activists in both Tunisia and Egypt were
at work for nearly a decade when events came to a head in late 2010 and
early 2011. Many friends and colleagues had already lost their lives either
within the repressive legal system or due to brute force by government
officials and hired goons. One such victim received much more attention
both regionally and internationally than most, ultimately becoming a
rallying cry for both activists as well as Arab youth who for the first time
found themselves participating in the political scene. On June 6, 2010
Khaled Said, a 28 year old middle-class Egyptian from Alexandria, was
approached by two undercover police officers upon his entrance into a
cyber café. According to eye witnesses the two men asked Said for money
and when he was unable to pay they removed him from the café and
savagely beat him. Eye witnesses recounted that Said begged for his life
before finally succumbing to his head wounds. His family was later notified
of his death though the cause was reported as asphyxiation due to his
attempt to swallow a bag of marijuana. Soon a graphic image of his face
and head, reportedly taken at the morgue and showing obvious signs of
trauma, surfaced and was shared widely over the Internet; this photo was
later used by the family and supporters to refute the claims by the
government that Said was a victim of his own criminal behaviour.[18]

It was later reported that Said had been in possession of a video appearing to show corrupt members of the police and secret police divvying up confiscated drugs and money, and it was widely speculated that this video was the reason for Khaled Said's brutal death. The Ministry of the Interior remained in support of the actions of the two officers by publicly defaming Said and reporting that he had been wanted by police for: "drug-dealing, illegal possession of a weapon, sexual harassment, and evasion of military service".[19] In the public eye the events of June 6th, the condemning picture of Said's face post-mortem, and the Ministry's response shed light on the deplorable conditions of a citizen's rights in Egypt. As one commentator put it:

> Unfortunately such developments are routine, what is rarer is that we hear about them. Human rights groups have long been saying that torture is systematic and endemic in Egypt, this is what this means in practice. It also points to the criminalization of the police — not only is the Ministry of Interior coming out in full force to protect its own, but the officers in question appear to be involved in drug dealing. What this shows is that Egypt is continuing its slide from authoritarian state to mafia state, where the authorities don't even have to answer to institutions anymore.[20]

On June 8th while browsing on Facebook from his home in Dubai, Egyptian national and Google employee Wael Ghonim first came across the image of a brutalized Khaled Said. Like many other Egyptians Ghonim was outraged by the story and with a wealth of Internet and marketing experience he decided to use his skills to bring attention to the cause: to bring justice to Said by punishing those responsible. He immediately

created a Facebook page entitled "Kullena Khaled Said" - or "We Are All Khaled Said" - which he administered anonymously. Another page dedicated to the deceased that went by "My Name is Khaled Said" had already existed; an indication of the magnitude of the issue for people as well as how social media was seen as a potential alternative for protest in a country were the legal system outlawed such endeavours. On June 11th over 1,000 people attended Khaled Said's funeral in Alexandria. In Cairo members of the April 6th Youth Movement protested in front of the Ministry of Interior. Both events were actively promoted on the "Kullena Khaled Said" Facebook page and both were largely ignored by the Egyptian media.[21]

Under Ghonim's direction the Facebook page underwent a number of campaigns aimed at promoting justice. The first was dedicated as an awareness campaign and asked followers to change their profile pictures to an image of Khaled Said (unbrutalized) in front of an Egyptian flag with a caption reading "Egypt's Martyr". Additionally, when some opposition newspapers and private media channels began reporting a version different from that of the government and state media, the Facebook page began posting the telephone numbers of various talk shows urging followers to pressure mainstream media to take up the story. The pressure was working as by June 15th a second-autopsy was ordered for Khaled. During this time the support for the cause extended past Egypt's borders; groups in Yemen and Tunisia created Facebook pages dedicated to

Khaled Said. Freedom from corruption was an attractive idea to rally

behind.

The next campaign to promote the cause came to be known as the

Silent Stand. On Friday June 18th supporters were to stand in silent

protest facing the sea in Alexandria or along the Nile in Cairo. They were

to display their disapproval by wearing black and by reading the Qur'an or

Bible in peace. On the day of the Silent Stand the greatest turnout was in

Khaled Said's home town of Alexandria though participants from Cairo,

Mansoura and even Qatar sent images to the Facebook page showing

their support of the event. Within 10 days its creation the Kullena page had

achieved more than 100,000 followers and had successfully coordinated a

non-violent, silent protest with thousands participating.[22] There were three

more Silent Stands organized by the Facebook group: June 25th, July 9th,

and July 23rd. The fourth and last stand was also to take place on the

anniversary of the 1952 Revolution and came to be known as "The

Revolution of Silence".[23]

In the midst of these stands progress began towards bringing Khaled

Said's killers to justice. On July 1st the Nadeem Center for Rehabilitation

of Victims of Violence published the records of two suspects who had

been arrested and interrogated relating to the murder of Khaled Said. The

resulting contradictory statements seemed to further corroborate the eye

witness accounts as well as the position held by Said's family and

supporters and soon a trial date was set for July 28th.[24] Amnesty

International was also following the case closely and the organization released its own independent report declaring support for bringing the case to trial as their findings concluded that the Egyptian autopsy failed to follow international autopsy standards.[25] Nevertheless when the trial began the cause of death was still labeled as asphyxiation and the accused were being prosecuted for unjustified violence rather than murder; as time went on the trial was continuously postponed for procedural reasons.

During the first two months of the Kullena Khaled Said Facebook page the demographics of participation were notably young. On the 25th of July a survey sent to the page users was administered by Ghonim and of the 4,000 plus who responded 81% were under 30 and more than 50% were in the 18 to 24 age bracket.[26] There was still a significant portion of the Egyptian population that was not included in this movement and in the words of Wael Ghonim this would be the challenge that needed to be overcome:

> Together, we wanted justice for Khaled Said and we wanted to put an end to torture. And social networking offered us an easy means to meet as the proactive, critical youth that we were. It also enabled us to defy fears associated with voicing opposition. The virtual world seemed further from the oppressive reach of the regime, and therefore many were encouraged to speak up. The more difficult task remained, though, which was to transfer the struggle from the virtual world to the real one.[27]

An important collaboration between the online and offline world was initiated on July 8th. Ahmed Maher of the April 6th Youth Movement and Wael Ghonim, whose identity was unknown to Maher as he was still acting

as the anonymous administrator of the Facebook page, agreed to collaborate and coordinate their actions in an effort to motivate the youth into political action.[28] Useful during the promotion of the Silent Stands this agreement would prove monumental later when the momentum of change swept through the hearts and minds of Egypt's youth in early January.

Back-to-Back Revolutions

On December 17th, 2010 26 year old Tunisian fruit vendor Mohamed Bouazizi went to work supporting his family as he did every day in the small central town of Sidi Bouzid. Since the age of 10 Bouazizi was the main supporter of his mother and five younger siblings. Most days the vendor was met with hostility from the police if not by verbal harassment then through the confiscation of his equipment or produce. Six months prior to the day's events he was fined two months' worth of wages for operating without a permit. On the morning in question he was reportedly assaulted by a female police officer who then confiscated his belongings. As friends report, this was not the first time that Bouazizi was publicly humiliated but this event became more than he could bear. He went to the local municipality building to seek recourse but was turned away without the opportunity to speak to a government official. In despair he returned with paint fuel and set himself on fire.[29]

This act of self-immolation was not the first in Tunisia that year. Rather it was the second time in 2010 that a fruit vendor would engage in such a desperate act. How did this particular event propel a country into

revolution? Mohamed Bouazizi did not immediately die from his wounds and was sent to the hospital in critical condition. His family and friends began protesting in front of the municipality building later that day. In most cases protests in Tunisia were quickly quashed by government forces but rather than disappearing news of the event spiraled, the protests grew, and 24 days after Bouazizi's sacrifice President Ben Ali fled from Tunisia and the departure inspired what came to be known as the Jasmine Revolution. The reasons behind the explosiveness of Bouazizi's particular action were laid out by Ethan Zuckerman, director of the Center for Civic Media at MIT, during his 2011 lecture at the Chicago Humanities Festival. There were a number of factors that played into the victory of the protestors and as Zuckerman points out the reasons behind this success are very complicated. A significant contributing factor was that the Army refused to fire on the Tunisian citizens.[30] Had the Tunisian Army turned against the people there is no telling what would have happened though it is certainly likely, as later became the case in Libya and Syria, that the amount of bloodshed and resulting civilian deaths could have pushed the country into full scale civil war. Another contributing factor was the speed and breadth with which news of the uprising reached across Tunisia as well as its borders. Mohamed Bouazizi's cousin uploaded videos of the protests in Sidi Bouzid to Facebook. Though Facebook can in fact be a powerful tool for sharing information and media files, Zuckerman reminds us of the nature of the Tunisian Internet. The citizens of Tunisia were very

much aware of the restrictions and surveillance put in place by their government and so in reality these videos were not widely shared. This is where the Tunisian dissidents and their years of network building come into the picture. The digital activists, such as those behind the aforementioned nawaat.org, made certain news of the protests made it to the body with the reach necessary to spread the message; the international news network Al Jazeera.[31] Unlike the state controlled media in Tunisia Al Jazeera publicized the footage of the growing protests and the corresponding police brutality via traditional media outlets as well as online. People in coffee shops all over Tunisia were able to see the unrest in their own country and the protests grew. As the pressure was mounting Ben Ali himself went to visit Mohamed Bouazizi in hospital shortly before his death on January 4, 2012 but even that simple gesture came too late. On January 14th 2012 as the world was watching Ben Ali met the demands of his former people and left Tunisia never to return.

Throughout the events in Tunisia citizens and activists from Egypt were closely following reports emerging during the unrest. Towards the end of December Wael Ghonim and Ahmed Maher began discussing a collaboration for the upcoming statutory holiday on January 25th known as National Police Day. On December 30th Ghonim posted the following excerpt on the Kullena Khaled Said Facebook page:

> January 25th is Police Day and it's a national holiday… I think the police have done enough this year to deserve a special celebration… What do you think?[32]

This would not be the first time that protests would take place on National Police Day; the April 6 Youth Movement had done so before though with the momentum following the protests of corruption in recent months, as well as the inspiring bravery of Tunisian protestors and the ultimate departure of Ben Ali, it was clear this year's event would be an entirely different matter. In the days leading up to the revolution Ghonim and Maher worked tirelessly. Ghonim's focus was using the online tools at his disposal to spread the call to march far and wide. Maher and other April 6 Youth Movement activists began preparing newer recruits for action on the ground. April 6 had long studied other successful protest movements in an attempt to teach themselves how to not only mobilize people into action but as importantly how to behave when mobilization had already begun. Key to their method was disciplining themselves in the Gandhian method of non-violent non-cooperation. They were taught, and in turn taught others how to engage in peaceful demonstrations in an attempt to avoid violent repercussion from the police or army. Even so, in addition to learning how to behave peacefully they trained themselves in how to respond to violence.[33] Protests were expected in larger cities across Egypt: Cairo, Alexandria, Suez and Mansoura. In Cairo specifically it was decided that rather than all arriving at one location it would be advantageous to begin in spread out locations, such as poorer neighbourhoods or areas with a strong Muslim Brotherhood presence, and

make way towards a central location such as Tahrir Square; the goal was to inspire other Egyptians to join the movement along the way.

In preparation for the protest the Kullena Khaled Said Facebook page posted a number of items to unify the supporters including one post entitled "Everything You Need to Know about Jan25". This post included information about the purpose of the protest, the time and place of protests, the demands of the protest, protesting guidelines and unified chants. The guidelines stressed the need for participants to remain peaceful and outlined ways for them to protect themselves. The demands included firing the Minister of Interior, repealing the Emergency Law, limiting the office of the Presidency and finding an end to poverty.[34] At this time the activists made no mention of removing Hosni Mubarak from his Presidency though following events in Tunisia the question undoubtedly hung in the air. When National Police Day finally arrived the estimated turnout numbered in the thousands. Protestors found themselves in skirmishes with the police first during the march to Tahrir Square and later in the evening when the security forces were ordered to remove all persons from the square.[35] The police used tear gas, sticks, rock throwing and water cannons as their arsenal.[36] These actions by the police when faced with peaceful demonstrations only served to fuel the call for change; when the protestors in Tahrir reached critical mass the seasoned activists were no longer in charge and the demands of the crowd took a crucial turn. The chant became: "EL SHA-AB YUREED ISQAAT AN-NIZAM!" -

"THE PEOPLE WANT TO TOPPLE THE REGIME!"[37] To keep momentum going future plans were made to continue protests daily with a significant push for another mass protest on the following Friday.

Throughout the ordeal those connected to social media were constantly updating events as they transpired. On Twitter the hashtag #Jan25 became the trending topic for real-time information about the experiences of the protestors. From his mobile phone Wael Ghonim was posting to the Kullena Facebook page so anyone who had 'friended' or 'liked' the page but did not join in the demonstration was able to remain in the know. True to form Al Jazeera had camera men on the ground while Egyptian state-owned media relayed their own version of events:

> One very famous TV anchor claimed the protesters in Tahrir were attacking unarmed police soldiers while the innocent soldiers were voluntarily carrying fainting protestors to ambulances… Al-Ahram's major headlines on January 26 were about protests in Lebanon, and the newspaper noted that some Egyptians had celebrated National Police Day by handing police officers chocolate and flowers in appreciation for their great efforts. Political analysts affiliated with the regime announced that the Jan25 protests had been driven by foreign efforts to cause chaos in Egypt.[38]

At varies times both Facebook and Twitter became inaccessible and soon began a debate over whether or not this was because the social networks collapsed from high-traffic use (the position taken by Egypt's ruling party the NDP) or because the sites had been intentionally blocked by the government. On January 26th Ghonim appeared via cell phone on a TV segment hosted by Mona al-Shazly and countered the NDP's claims. He

explained that using a proxy server he was still able to access the social networking sites (supporting the claims that the sites were in fact blocked) and denounced the government's use of censorship. During the broadcast, even with all that was happening on the ground, Ghonim was not allowed to mention the protests. Even though thousands had turned out to march the regime's denial left millions of Egyptians in the dark about what was really going on. At this time involvement in and support for these protests were predominantly youth based though it was evident that the message was spreading. In the days following the Jan 25th protests smaller demonstrations continued while plans went ahead for greater protests on Friday January 28th. In a significant turn of support the Muslim Brotherhood, who had decided not to support the Jan 25th events, decided they would march on January 28th. Plans for the day's events were the same in the capital city as before: after morning prayers the demonstrations would begin in various locations spread out across the city and move inwards. Activists would purposefully seek out support from the poorer neighbourhoods where many of the country's most disadvantaged lived.

On the evening of January 27th in an ominous statement as he prepared for events the following day Wael Ghonim tweeted: "Pray for #Egypt. Very worried as it seems that government is planning a war crime tomorrow against people. We are all ready to die #Jan25".[39] By this time Facebook had already been shut down and soon the rest of the Egyptian

Internet would follow. In a desperate act of self-preservation the Egyptian government took Egypt offline.[40] Internet service providers and mobile operators were shut down and an integral method of communication to the protests thus far was dismantled.

In an interview with the New York Times Egyptian native and communications professor Mohammed Nawawy described the adverse effect this action had. Many Egyptians who had been unwilling to protest earlier had followed events closely by monitoring a variety of social media sites and news feeds and expressed their frustrations via the web. When the government took away their Internet access they were then forced onto the streets.[41] Shortly after his Twitter statement, and before he could learn if his prediction was right Ghonim was kidnapped by three State Security officers and remained imprisoned for the next 11 days. Like many activists who had come before no one in his family was notified of his detainment.

Hundreds of thousands across Egypt turned out for Friday June 18th's protest far exceeding the number on the ground during the original march. With the Internet down the police reacted with brutality adding live fire to their battle with protesters resulting in hundreds killed across Egypt. The government also introduced 'thugs' into the crowd; armed violent men paid to attack the protesters. Hopes for a peaceful demonstration were dashed as the marching routes became battle grounds. The protesters were responsible for torching the vans of the Central Security Force as

well as the headquarters of the NDP party. Before the day was over the police were removed from the streets and the army was sent in to enforce a national curfew. Mubarak appeared on national television announcing he would remain President but at the head of a new cabinet; a concession that failed to win over the protestors. Though the Internet remained inaccessible to most some were able to get their message out. The ISP on which the Egyptian stock exchange ran was the only one permitted to remain open and a few were able to access this. Others were able to phone friends or family abroad via landlines who then iterated the information on their behalf while others borrowed the satellite links of foreign media outlets.[42]

The Internet would remain disabled for another four days. Meanwhile the protestors failed to acknowledge the curfew and in Cairo refused to abandon Tahrir Square. With the police removed from the streets it was feared that chaos would take over but in turn groups of citizens banded together to protect their own neighbourhoods. The army, conspicuously silent though ever present thus far, made a decisive announcement: "The presence of the army in the streets is for your sake and to ensure your safety and wellbeing. The armed forces will not resort to use of force against our great people".[43] Mubarak began to make further concessions. The newly appointed Vice President Omar Suleiman would begin talks with opposition parties towards constitutional reform and Mubarak would not seek another term as president come elections in September. The

result was a split in opinion. Some were swayed by Mubarak's second announcement and believed the president should be allowed to leave with his dignity intact, while the others viewed these gestures as a sign that the regime's resolve was crumbling and continued the call for Mubarak's departure. Pro-Mubarak counterdemonstrations appeared in the streets and soon the violence escalated. Plain-clothed security forces were remobilized significantly adding to the bloodshed. The fighting was ignored by Egyptian state TV but was relayed live by international news outlets and by protesters with mobile phones via the newly reinstated Internet.[44] On Twitter:

Sandmonkey 13:40:24 Feb 2
"1000 pro Mubarak demonstration is heading towards Tahrir. The military is withdrawing. This will get ugly quick #jan25"

TravellerW 13:46:50 Feb 2
"Real panic in tahrir. Square overrun by Mubarak drmonstrstion #Egypt #jan25"

3arabawy 15:01:23 Feb 2
"Plainclothes thugs (police) are on horses now, trying to storm Tahrir Square, with whips! #Jan25"

beleidy 16:21:14 Feb 2
"They're coming from all directions now, we're being surrounded"

ashrafkhalil 16:43:45 Feb 2

"#jan25 I saw at least a dozen guys coming back badly bloodied from the front line. Incredibly violent scene and the soldiers are just watching"

norashalaby 17:48:04 Feb 2
"Protestors are putting on cardboard helmets for protection against rocks"

TravellerW 18:58:48 Feb 2
"I am seeing - not reporting, seeing - Mubarak ppl throwing ,molotov cocktails on demonstrators, and on shops. #Egypt #jan25"

Gsquare86 19:39:22 Feb 2
"I WILL NOT LEAVE TAHRIR TONIGHT so stop telling me to do so! We need more people in TAHRIR NOW!! Get here for our freedom!!! #Egypt"

MohammedY 20:49:24 Feb 2
"Ppl still call me to tell me protestors should step down. I'm sorry, the blood of martyrs who died for freedom is too precious #Jan25"

mosaaberizing 23:29:11 Feb 2
"The museum battle was the toughest today. Took over 8 hours. Huge win. #Tahrir #Jan25"

Beleidy 00:53:00 Feb 3
"I did not take part in the violence, which is a real moral dilemma for me right now, for it's the people who did who saved me"

mosaaberizing 04:43:14 Feb 3
"People are devastated for the martyrs. Praying for them and chanting against Mubarak. Very emotional scenes. #Tahrir"

mosaaberizing 06:39:10 Feb 3
"Sunrise in Cairo. Blood spilled in Tahrir more noticed now. All over the place. #Jan25"[45]

Violence continued through to the following day though it did not reach the scale that it had previously. Meanwhile, Tahrir Square became the locale for dialogue as those demanding change debated over what steps to take next. The protest had reached a sort of stalemate - the protestors refused to leave Tahrir, now a symbol of the revolution, and Mubarak refused to leave the presidency. On the following Sunday, February 6th, many in Egypt went back to work as the banks were reopened in the regime's attempt to restore normalcy; the country was divided leaving the outcome uncertain.[46]

With the movement at a critical point there were many on the streets who swore they would not be appeased until Mubarak stepped down. On the other hand the regime had made some concessions and in some people's eyes the last 12 days had thus proven successful. It was the government's hope that eventually the protest would fizzle out. Monday February 7th added renewed support for many following an emotional television appearance by the recently released Wael Ghonim. Over the course of the uprising hundreds had been arrested or kidnapped by the police but Ghonim's disappearance had received a significant amount of attention. Shortly before he was taken by police Ghonim had been meeting with two of his colleagues at Google and so when it became known that he was missing Google executives made international appeals

pressing for his release. Mona el-Shazy, the TV personality on whose

show Ghonim was recently a guest, also called for knowledge of his

whereabouts. When his release did come he became a guest on el-

Shazly's show that same evening. It was at this time that it became

publicly known that Ghonim was the anonymous administrator of the

Kullena Khaled Said Facebook page. Ghonim described his treatment

while in detention, that he was not tortured, and how he tried to tell the

police he encountered the reasons for the protests. He explained on

behalf of the Egyptian youth that contrary to how the government was

portraying them they were acting not as traitors but instead because they

loved their country.

> This revolution belonged to the internet youth, then the revolution
> belonged to the Egyptian youth, then the revolution belonged to all
> of Egypt… At first they had a hard time believing what it means for
> a bunch of youth activists, like I used to call them, Facebook kids,
> that's what they used to call us at the beginning during the Khaled
> Said protests. 'Those noisy kids on Facebook'… The secret behind
> the success of the page is that before any decision was taken, we'd
> take a survey and everyone would give their opinions, and the
> opinion of the majority would prevail.[47]

During the interview Mona el-Shazy showed Ghonim pictures of many of

the youth who died during the uprising and overcome with grief Ghonim

walked off the stage. As a successful Egyptian national living in the UAE

his story touched many middle class Egyptians and his tearful and

heartfelt interview, according to one commentator, brought renewed

support to the movement.

The tone of Wael Ghonim's interview, at that particular moment, won over the nation. He had gently expressed the brutality of the regime, and brought home with unsurpassed emotion the price that had been paid in blood. For those uncommitted Egyptians who were not yet revolutionaries, it was decisive. For the regime it was devastating.[48]

The following day support for the protests swelled and on Wednesday February 9th labour strikes broke out across the country.[49] There had already been a number of strikes during the course of the demonstrations but on this day they occurred en masse. Historically labour had been the most active segment of society in expressing discontent and this support became the straw that broke the camel's back. On February 10th rumours spread that Mubarak would be stepping down but it wasn't until the following day Tuesday February 11th 2011, labeled the Friday of Martyrs, that the protests became a revolution and the 30 year dictatorial presidency came to an end.

Martyrdom

To proclaim that the deaths of Khaled Said and Mohamed Bouazizi were the cause of the two revolutions is far too simplistic. It would be the same as to suggest that the assassination of Archduke Franz Ferdinand in 1914, heir to the Austria-Hungarian throne, was the cause of World War One. Widely accepted as the spark that ignited the conflict the cause instead was the result of complex alliances and years of tension between the colonial powers. In the case of Egypt and Tunisia it was the combination of years of repressive governance, sky-rocketing global food

prices and rising poverty, a youthful and increasingly educated population, and the growth of digital technology allowing for the rapid spreading of information. Nevertheless the story of these two revolutions would be incomplete without the stories of these two men.

The word martyr comes from Greek meaning 'witness'.[50] A martyr is one who is willing to give up his or her life rather than lose their faith and with this sacrifice earns veneration. Key to the act of martyrdom is the retelling and remembering of the martyr's story and serves to set an example for the community of which s/he was a part of. These 'narratives of heroism' are powerful community forces shaping not only a community's history but identity as well.[51] Tales of martyrdom exist in Judaism, Christianity, Buddhism and Islam to varying degrees. David Cook a professor of religious studies identifies the stages and components usually present in a martyrdom narrative. First there must be the suffering of the martyr and the injustice of the enemy. Khaled Said and Mohamed Bouazizi, as well as many of their countrymen, were bereft of opportunity while members of their corrupt governments prospered. During the incidents specifically Khaled Said was pulled from an Internet Café by plain-clothed Egyptian officers and beaten while Mohamed Bouazizi was assaulted and humiliated by Tunisian officers. Next there is often some communication of defiance. It was reported that Khaled Said was in possession of a video depicting police corruption when he was confronted in the Internet café. Mohamed Bouazizi attempted to speak to a

government official to complain of his treatment and was turned away. The next stage of course is death. Said was ultimately killed by the officers and Bouazizi lit himself on fire eventually dying from his wounds; in the case of Bouazizi it could also be argued that this self-immolation was in itself an act of defiance.

Key to martyrdom is the role of the audience in shaping historical memory and transmitting this emotionally powerful narrative. According to Cook "the audience need not be physically present at either the pre-martyrdom suffering or the act of martyrdom, but must have access to information concerning them."[52] In both cases, thanks to digital technology, the audience quickly surpassed the communities in which the two men lived and became regional and eventually global audiences. The post-mortem brutalized face of Khaled Said was first published on blogs and in media articles and was further disseminated with the creation of the Kullena Khaled Said Facebook page. The protestors in Tunisia shared videos via social media as well which were then spread to a wider audience by Al Jazeera. Also key to the process of martyrdom is the existence of an absolute evil to which to compare the martyr. In both cases the evil was the corrupt and oppressive governments that had ruled their peoples for far too long. The last common component of martyrdom is the spectator audience who stood aside during the martyr's suffering. Though many witnesses were present no one intervened to help Said while he was being murdered and no one came to the aid of Bouazizi

when his fruit cart was confiscated nor when he stood in front of the municipal building and threatened to light himself on fire. The guilt of this acquiescence is important because it is from this population that support for the martyrs is eventually derived:

> In a martyrdom narrative, this group ideally should suffer guilt for their lack of involvement, for their unwillingness to stand up for the wronged martyr, or for their fear of the consequences of confrontation with evil. In the end, the guilt that is produced among this spectator audience is capable of generating a large-scale movement that can use the martyrdom as its standard, its rallying point and its magnet for converts.[53]

Said and Bouazizi became representative of the everyday Tunisian and Egyptian and when mobilization began they became revolutionary symbols.

In many ways the transmission of the narrative to the audience, the recipients of the story, and spectator audience, those who stood aside during the martyr's suffering, is the most important component of martyrdom. In these cases the sheer power and speed of digital technology had a telling effect. The deaths of both men were largely ignored by the national media but as ordinary citizens and independent news organizations were able to discuss the incidents using social media, anger over their suffering did not fade. As stated earlier Said was killed on June 6th and by June 15th, owing to pressure from outraged citizens, a second autopsy was performed. Later in Tunisia then President Ben Ali visited the hospital bed of Bouazizi in response to growing protests across

the country.[54] The transmission of the narratives was incredibly effective

even ultimately taking on a life of their own. According to Cook this is not

uncommon for many martyr narratives:

> The audience will rely upon this initial interpretation of the
> martyrdom event in order to continue to build a tradition, often
> vastly expanding upon the initial narrative and perhaps even
> creating a whole cycle or series of cycles of stories that sometimes
> bear little relation to the initial event.[55]

In the aftermath of the revolutions more information about the

circumstances of the two men came to light. In the case of Khaled Said

the existence of a video in Said's possession showing corrupt police

officers is now questioned and it has become clear that the Said depicted

by his supporters appears to be a romanticized version of the man. Said

did on occasion use marijuana and hashish. His online presence was less

that of an activist as his time was often spent online dating. Contrary to the

tale that Said was about to upload the video in the Internet café it is

instead very likely that he was set up by an acquaintance and did in fact

have drugs on him that night.[56] None of this makes him any less a victim to

police brutality though one can see that this depiction is less favourable. In

the case of Mohamed Bouazizi his assault by a female police officer has

also been called into question. Fedia Hamdi, the infamous officer, was

arrested in the days following the incident and jailed for four months before

she was released of any wrong-doing. Hamdi herself and witnesses to the

event deny a physical assault took place.[57] The 'hero narratives' that

evolved out of the deaths of the two young men and the knowledge of their

inconsistencies do not make their deaths any less tragic. Kahled Said and

Mohamed Bouazizi were both victims of long-standing corrupt regimes

and because of this became emblematic of the need for change. One

commentator's writings about the reality of Said's tale speaks to the

importance of this tale and is truthful for the case of Bouazizi as well:

> Khaled Saeed is a myth, but a necessary one. The extended
> Egyptian revolution is also a war of ideas whose story will prevail.
> The fate of Khaled Saeed is a reminder and an encapsulation of
> why Egypt rose up and keeps pushing the revolution painstakingly
> forward. Khaled Saeed enabled Egyptians to personalize and
> humanize complex issues that could otherwise have drifted into
> murky abstractions.[58]

This comment sheds light on the ongoing challenges that Egyptians and

Tunisians face on their road to democracy. The departure of the fallen

presidents was only the first step in the transition from an authoritarian

regime to a freer and more open society. Both Tunisians and Egyptians

participated in their country's first democratic elections but the road is still

rocky and remnants of despotism still remain. Whatever may happen in

the future the 2011 Tunisian and Egyptian Revolutions witnessed the

populace confront their oppressors. In doing so they demanded the right to

have a voice in the governing of their own country. This opening public

sphere was not the product but rather the cause of the revolutions; a

public sphere affected and forever changed by digital technology.

But some would ask what exactly were the measurable effects of digital technology during the Arab Spring? The Tahrir Data Project began collecting empirical data during the Egyptian Revolution almost immediately following the ouster of President Hosni Mubarak. Data gathering took the form of both informal and semi-structured in-depth interviews, structured surveys, and archiving of tweets[59] by gathering specific hashtags relating to protest content. In total 25 in-depth interviews of actors involved in the coordination of the protests, 1,056 valid surveys relating to media use of protesters in Tahrir, and 675,713 tweets with the hashtag #jan25 were collected and analysed. The goal of the project is for the Tahrir Data Sets to be made public under a Creative Commons License to facilitate further research on the use of digital media in the Egyptian protest movement as well as digital activism in general.

In a preliminary analysis based on these data sets Christopher Wilson and Alexandra Dunn have described a number of interesting revelations in their paper "Digital Media in the Egyptian Revolution: Descriptive Analysis from the Tahrir Data Sets". The survey results relating to the media use of protesters would suggest that the use of digital technology during the protests was less a factor than popular conception implied; for general purposes social media was dramatically outscored by the use of traditional media such as television and telephone which had higher numbers of users. This is particularly surprising considering the sample population represents a segment of Egyptian society highly

connected to the Internet. Nevertheless when the various types of media were used for protest purposes (rather than generally) the synchronous social media such as Facebook, Twitter and blogs, as well as satellite television fared much better.[60] These observations led the authors to suggest that these media-- dynamic and multiparty-- are better-suited for protest activities than are asynchronous media such as email, and one-to-one media of, telephone and SMS: "some digital media are inherently and demonstrably well suited to use in the highly dynamic context of protest movements, despite a low absolute number of users."[61] Additionally survey respondents indicated that content distributed through social media scored high for perceived reliability as well as in its tendency to motivate users to participate; Facebook and Twitter both ranked the highest in terms of the effect specific media had in terms of motivation.

Their investigation of the use of Twitter during the revolutions is also telling. Through their in-depth interviews with Egyptians coordinating protests they know that the use of Twitter was "deliberate and well considered"[62]; nevertheless Twitter users only make up 0.001% of the Egyptian population. For their analysis of the tweet set the top 200 tweeters, or "power users", served as a proxy to determine the language and location of tweeters and retweeters.[63] Of the proxy tweet set close to 75% of the users were from Western countries while slightly more than 25% were from Egypt and other Middle Easter and North African (MENA) countries (though most were Egyptian). As for the actual percentage of

tweets produced, Egyptians were the most active followed by North Americans, European and citizens of other MENA countries. Particularly significant is the predominance of original Egyptian content that was then retweeted by other power users:

> This indicates a clear tendency to favour redistribution of content originating in Egypt. While not surprising to any casual observer the hype surrounding the Egyptian revolution, these data provide an important counterpoint to assertions that the significance of social media in protest contexts can be determined solely on the basis of how many active users that media has in-country.[64]

Surprisingly it appears that broad use of a technology is not indicative of its instrumentality. Based on the results from these datasets we know that Twitter was used intentionally for information dissemination and coordination by protest organizers, we know that an international audience was effectively engaging in content pertaining to the Egyptian revolution either through messages of support or by further disseminating information via retweets, and lastly we know that the protestors themselves were largely motivated by Twitter as through the highly transnational nature of the media they knew the world was watching.

If we remind ourselves of Habermas' three components of the public sphere: (1) argument trumps identity, (2) open interpretation, and (3) universality, it is safe to say that the Tunisian and Egyptian Arab Springs fit the bill. The greater populace, by forming a collective identity, in effect revoked the legitimacy of the ruling dictators. As many different actors from many different walks of life, they declared the regimes of Ben Ali and

Mubarak to be corrupt and unequal. It was at this time that the monopoly

of interpretation by state-controlled media was lost to real-time, multi-party

exchanges happening with the use of digital media. And during the

revolutions no segment of society was excluded. The use of digital

technology, and networks of support, were crucial to bringing regional and

international awareness to the mobilizations early on. Digital technology

had a place in the public sphere.

  The next chapter will address what these changes mean for our

future global society. How is rapidly advancing digital technology affecting

our day-to-day lives and, more to the point here, what do these changes

mean for the future of political and social movements? Seeing the

potential these technologies afford we return to the second part of the

thesis question: What can be done to ensure this potential is protected for

the future of digital activism and the public sphere?

NOTES

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[3] Ibid.
[4] Ibid.
[5] Christopher Alexander. Tunisia: Stability and Reform in the Modern Maghreb (Routledge: New York 2010) pp 51- 52
[6] Human Rights Watch, Tunisia's Repressive Laws (New York 2011).
[7] Human Rights Watch, Tunisia's Repressive Laws (New York 2011) p 24.
[8] Rebecca MacKinnon, Consent of the Networked: the worldwide struggle for Internet freedom (Basic Books: New York 2012) p 4
[9] Jillian York, "The Arab Digital Vangaurd: How a Decade of Blogging Contributed to a Year of Revolution" Georgetown Journal of International Affairs (Winter/Spring 2012) p 37.
[10] MacKinnon, 21-23.

[11] Phillip Marfleet, "State and Society in Egypt: The Moment of Change eds. Rabab El-Mahdi and Phillip Marfleet (Zed Books, London 2009) pp 14-33.

[12] Ibid. 23.

[13] Rabib El-Mahdi, "The democracy movement: cycles of protest" in Egypt: The Moment of Change eds. Rabab El-Mahdi and Phillip Marfleet (Zed Books, London 2009) pp 87-102.

[14] Wael Ghomim. Revolution 2.0: The Power of the People is Greater than the People in Power (Houghton Mifflon Harcourt, New York 2012); http://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2012/02/12/opinion/sunday/20120212-tahir-timeline.html accessed February 11, 2012.

[15] York, 35.

[16] MacKinnon, 23.

[17] Members of this community spoke either Arabic, English or French (as Tunisia had been colonized by the French).

[18] Issadr El Amrani, "The murder of Khaled Said" The Arabist http://www.arabist.net/blog/2010/6/14/the-murder-of-khaled-said.html, accessed: Mar 26, 19:17 2011.

[19] Ghonim, 64.

[20] El Amrani.

[21] Ghonim, 58-65.

[22] Ibid, 81.

[23] Ibid, 101.

[24] Ibid, 79-97, 101.

[25] Ibid, 108-109.

[26] Ibid, 108.

[27] Ibid, 67.

[28] David Wolman. "The Digital Road to Egypt's Revolution". The New York Times Sunday Review. Electronic. http://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2012/02/12/opinion/sunday/20120212-tahir-timeline.html accessed February 12, 2012.

[29] Jasmine Ryan. "The tragic life of a street vendor" Al Jazeera English. Electronic. http://english.aljazeera.net/indepth/features/2011/01/201111684242518839.html accessed September 10, 2011.

[30] Ethan Zuckerman. "Geeks and Tweets: Technology and Media in the Developing World", Chicago Humanities Festival. 2011. Video. The Meta-Activism Project. Blog. http://www.meta-activism.org/2011/12/ethan-zuckerman-on-the-big-picture-of-digital-activism/ accessed December 12, 2011.

[31] Ibid.

[32] Ghonim. 121.

[33] Al Jazeera English. "Egypt: Seeds of Change". Youtube video, uploaded February 9, 2011. http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QrNz0dZgqN8&feature=youtu.be accessed July 14, 2011.

[34] Ghonim, 122-169.

[35] Nadia Idle and Alex Nunns. Tweets from Tahrir, Eds, Nadia Idle and Alex Nunns, (OR Books: New York, 2011), 31-32.

[36] Ibid, 31.

[37] Ghonim, 184.

[38] Ibid, 191.

[39] Idle and Nunns, 53, 57.

[40] Ibid, 59.

[41] Ibid.

[42] Idle and Nunnws, 59-65.

[43] Ibid, 87.

[44] Ibid, 87-101.

[45] Ibid, 104-119.

[46] Ibid, 135-159.

[47] Youtube. "Wael Ghonim's Dream Interview Part 2"http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yW59LZsjE_g accessed June 9, 2012

[48] Idle and Nunns, 165.

[49] "Egypt Revolution 2011: A Complete Guide to the Unrest" The Huffington Post February 9, 2011. Electronic. http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2011/01/30/egypt-revolution-2011_n_816026.html accessed September 16, 2011.

[50] Aviad Kleinberg. Flesh Made Word, (The Belknap Press: Cambridge, 2008), 15.

[51] Kleinberg, 15-28.

[52] David Cook. Martyrdom in Islam, (Cambridge University Press: New York, 2007), 2.

[53] Cook, 3.

[54] Ryan.

[55] Cook, 3.

[56] Amro Ali. "Saeeds of Revolution: De-Mythologizing Khaled Saeed". Jadaliyya. http://www.jadaliyya.com/pages/index/5845/saeeds-of-revolution_de-mythologizing-khaled-saeed. Accessed February 8, 2013.

[57] Wyre Davis. "Doubt over Tunisian 'martyr' who triggered revolution". BBC. Electronic. http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-middle-east-13800493. Accessed February 8, 2013.

[58] Ali.

[59] A tweet is a message posted on one's Twitter account using 140 characters or less.

[60] Christopher Wilson and Alexandra Dunn. "Digital Media in the Egyptian Revolution: Descriptive Analysis from the Tahrir Data Sets", International Journal of Communication 5, 2011; 1252.

[61] Ibid; 1254.

[62] Ibid; 1250.

[63] A tweet can be considered original content as it

[64] Wilson and Dunn; 1267.

Chapter 3: Internet Governance for the Future of Digital Activism

"Sudden extensions of communication are reflected in cultural disturbances" (Harold Innis, The Bias of Communication[1])

Harold Innis, a Canadian historian and political economist, first published *The Bias of Communication* in 1951. This work details the implications of changing media communications over time for the development of civilizations. The connections he puts forth are as follows: though Ancient Greece had a rich oral tradition, this tradition was never able to achieve political unity of the city-states. With the arrival of the parchment codex, Christianity prospered and Latin was able to dominate over vernacular languages. With the invention of manufactured paper in 2nd Century C.E. in China, Confucianism and its complex pictographs became a 'religion' of the learned while the oral tradition of Buddhism that spread from India was adapted by the illiterate population. The expansion of Islam into the West coincided with the introduction of paper and the transmission of the Greek classics, 'Arabic numerals' (origin India) and the growth of business. Ultimately writing spread and the rise of vernacular languages weakened Latin; the arrival of the printing press echoed the death knell to the monopoly of the Latin bible and eventually the Catholic church over Christianity. The increasing rise of vernaculars led to divisive nationalisms in Europe, the arrival of 'the press', and the ultimate end to ruling

monarchs in favour of parliaments, republics and constitutions. Innis' portrayal of these cultural disturbances maps the rise and fall of civilizations and empires through the material effects of communication technology on society and culture, or in other words social change through the eyes of changing media.

Innis' intervention traces the effects of changing forms of communication on a time scale spanning over 6,000 years. His is a compelling and grand narrative showcasing that the way in which we communicate may have as significant an impact as does what we are communicating. Today evidence of cultural disturbances due to rapidly developing digital technology are plain— whether its once subordinate groups rising up to challenge the status quo or governments keeping tabs on their citizens— but considering such a short timespan we have only a glimpse of what these changing communication practices can do. It is simply too early to know what the effects of new media will be, especially considering the time scale that Innis works on.

In the previous chapter we saw how the authoritarian governments of Egypt and Tunisia were able to use digital technology to control their citizens. To force them into compliance whether it was through brutality or fear. But when life became too hard for these citizens to bear they took to the streets. It was not digital technology that caused these revolutions, but digital technology had a place in both. Its use was purposeful and widespread but in no way universal. It contributed to the development of

the public sphere, it did not recreate it. And in the immediate future in societies with access to the necessary infrastructure and technology it will be hard to imagine another popular movement without the use of digital technology, for its potential is vast. This chapter will now try to answer the second part of the thesis question: what can be done to ensure this potential is protected for the future of digital activism and the public sphere? This chapter will show the high stakes of rapidly advancing digital technology and how 21st century technologies are challenging the administration of prevailing laws and norms. It will detail the various actors with a stake in the functioning of the Internet, over which most digital technology functions.

Rapid Change

In their book *The New Digital Age* Eric Schmidt and Jared Cohen describe what the world could look like in the future with the rapid advancement of digital technology and global connectivity. According to the authors "in the first decade of the twenty-first century the number of people connected to the Internet worldwide increased from 350 million to more than 2 billion"[2]; they predict that by 2025 the majority of the world's population will be connected. Happening even more rapidly than Internet connectivity is the proliferation of mobile phones as today's subscribers number over 6 billion.

Schmidt is the executive chairman of the mammoth technology company Google and Jared Cohen the founder and director of Google

Ideas. These two men are consistently in-the-know when it comes to new technologies, their possible commercialization, and the speed with which an ever increasing global population is taking up their use. Their predictions of the effects of technology range from automated haircuts and thought-controlled social robots, to the installation of microscopic robots in our circulatory systems and personalized medicine in the form of pharmacogenetics. Their predictions of social effects include decentralization of corporate operations, increased employee out-sourcing (geographically speaking), flexible education and increased access to educational tools in poorer countries. Obviously with these predicted developments come a number of political and social issues but that is the nature of technological developments; rarely are any either inherently good or bad. According to the authors the coming data revolution will both empower citizens while stripping them of control.[3] And the major issue that users will face in the future is the disappearance of privacy:

> Near permanent data storage will have a big impact on how citizens operate in virtual space. There will be a record of all activity and associations online, and everything added to the Internet will become a repository of permanent information.[4]

All users will have highly documented pasts, in effect freezing periods of their lives in time. This notion is uncomfortable, especially considering those coming of age. How many youth have the foresight to determine which of their actions they are willing to display publicly and for years into the future? The examples of potential employers and university

admissions departments reviewing the Facebook pages of applicants is well known. What the consequences of this for activists is another issue all together. In authoritarian countries this could be dangerous if and when these governments choose crack down on suspected dissidents. In the West there is risk as well. For example, during the 2011 Occupy Wall Street protests in New York City a protest on the Brooklyn Bridge resulted in the arrests of over 700 participants. One of those arrested and charged with disorderly conduct was Malcolm Harris, also a Twitter user who goes by the handle @destructuremal. As part of the prosecutor's investigation leading up to the criminal trial Twitter was first asked and then eventually subpoenaed into handing over "any and all user information, including email address, as well as any and all tweets posted for the period 9/15/2011 – 12/31/2011."[5] Twitter argued that handing over the records was a violation of not only the fourth amendment but also Twitter's terms and conditions which states that users retain the rights to the content they post. After the subpoena they complied.

The right and rules of governments, corporations and citizens, when it comes to digital technology, are highly contested and are currently being figured out on an *ad hoc* basis. One of the most zealously argued points of contention is intellectual property (IP). IP refers to the property rights individuals or organizations hold over creative content such as music, art and design, patents, and symbols or trademarks. These rights are legally regulated by intellectual-property law and its subsets: copyright law for the

protection of "original forms of expression,"[6] patent law for the protection of the rights of inventors, and trademark law which protects the use of a distinctive symbol or design used to represent a company's product. Internet Freedom, on the other hand, is the belief in a free and open Internet based on the principles of expression, access, openness, innovation, and privacy.[7] The United States is a fervent defender of IP and has also committed themselves to the defense of Internet Freedom.[8] The problem is that these two policies are often in conflict with one another. On January 18, 2012 many of North America's website powerhouses, in a joint sign of protest, participated in SOPA/PIPA Blackout day by either blacking out or censoring content on their site for the entire day. Participants included Wikipedia, Reddit, WordPress, Wired, Boing Boing, Electronic Frontier Foundation, Mozilla, Google, Twitpic, and Flickr. SOPA, or Stop Online Piracy Act, and PIPA, Protect IP Act, were two— now deceased —bills that were designed to protect IP from overseas "rogue" websites that traffic in counterfeit goods, by allowing the Department of Justice to remove these sites from search engines. Though there exists a general agreement that the distribution of pirated goods needs to be combated, both SOPA and PIPA raised too many alarm bells particularly on the following five points as laid out in PC Mag:

1) An integral component of the bills is the principle of anti-circumvention which would put the onus on Internet companies. This means that any sites containing user-generated content, such

as Facebook or YouTube, could be held accountable if one of their user's chooses to post information instructing others on how to circumvent the bill's censorship means. This would result in major liability issues and policing costs for many Internet companies.

2) Immunity for participating companies would push companies to act first and ask questions later. As "SOPA/PIPA provide blanket immunity to those who take voluntary action against suspected copyright infringers," users' access could effectively be cut-off and there would be no one who could be held immediately accountable.

3) Broad definitions found in the bills could result in legitimate users or sites being prosecuted.

4) The bills could seriously hamper innovation and harm the technology industry. Internet companies would find themselves in a veritable strait-jacket.

5) Domain Name System blocking, originally a component of both bills but eventually dropped from SOPA, would require ISPs to block rogue sites resulting in the purposeful tampering and manipulation of the technical architecture of the Internet.[9]

Amidst the bills' scrutiny and the popular protests joined by the various Internet companies, both SOPA and PIPA were quickly scrapped. In 2013 the one-year anniversary of the Blackout day was celebrated by activists as "Internet Freedom Day". The major corporate and public backlash against SOPA/PIPA ensured the bills would not become law but this points

to the contestation between IP and Internet Freedom. Ultimately the challenges of piracy need to be addressed and this will most likely occur with future legislation. However this happens the rights of users must be protected without causing undue harm and costs to Internet companies. With the rapid growth of Internet users worldwide these legislation and governance issues will become ever more important.

Author Rebecca MacKinnon likens today's situation to the introduction of the notion of "consent of the governed" in English law with the signing of the Magna Carta in 1215. Up until then the 'divine right of kings' allowed rulers to govern unconstrained, but with the signing of the Magna Carta the concepts of sovereignty and legitimacy were introduced. According to MacKinnon the signing of the Treaty of Westphalia in 1648 furthered the concept of sovereignty with the formalized acknowledgement of the nation-state and the writings of political philosophers brought into full maturity the notion of consent of the governed; or the sovereignty of the people. Today sovereignty is most at risk in terms of the digital commons — the virtual space where "citizens can mobilize to express their interests and protect their rights."[10] Here power is contested by a number of different voices in a global framework. The sovereignty of the nation-state and consent of the governed does not immediately translate into this new commons. What is now required, for the future of democracy, is consent of the networked.

Governing the Internet

> Governments of the Industrial World, you weary giants of flesh and
> steel, I come from Cyberspace, the new home of Mind. On behalf of
> the future, I ask you of the past to leave us alone. You are not
> welcome among us. You have no sovereignty where we gather.
>
> We have no elected government, nor are we likely to have one, so I
> address you with no greater authority than that with which liberty
> itself always speaks. I declare the global social space we are
> building to be naturally independent of tyrannies you seek to
> impose on us. You have no moral right to rule us nor do you
> possess any methods of enforcement we have true reason to
> fear…
>
> A Declaration of the Independence of
>
> Cyberspace
>
> John Perry Barlow,
>
> 1996

As one of the founding members of the Electronic Frontier Foundation or

EFF (created for the protection of civil liberties in the Information Age)

John Perry Barlow's 1996 Declaration calling for Internet Freedom, or a

self-governing Internet, is now widely accepted as more idealistic than

realistic. Nevertheless it alludes to the highly contestable nature of Internet

Governance nearly twenty years ago; in this regard not a lot has changed.

Rebecca MacKinnon looks at the risks associated with today's

functioning of the Internet, or what she deems as the "increasingly high-

stakes fight over the future of Internet governance."[11] She looks at the

intersection between governments (both democratic and authoritarian),

corporations and 'netizens', or Internet citizens. Numerous examples exist

of how the Internet has been used to both empower and repress these

netizens but what is important to MacKinnon is "How digital technology can be structured, governed, and used to maximize the good it can do in the world, and minimize the evil?"[12] MacKinnon outlines today's current Internet governance model, more or less a combination of four different types of actors: (1) international multi-stakeholders, (2) industry, (3) nation-states, and lastly (4) netizens.

Multi-Stakeholders

Today, all-encompassing global governance of the Internet only exists in one form: the Internet Corporation for Assigned Names and Numbers (ICANN) which controls the Internet's core functions and technical standards. The predecessor to today's Internet was the U.S. Department of Defence's 1960s project the ARPANET, a network allowing computer terminals to communicate with each other. In its final form, as it functions today, Internet Protocol (IP) addresses and the Domain Name System (DNS) are the technologies used to locate specific computer services and devices worldwide. These are what make the Internet work. An IP address is the unique numerical, or computer-readable, format that locates a specific server, and the DNS is the naming convention for each corresponding domain name, written in human-friendly text. This system has been likened to telephone numbers and the telephone book. The phone number is what you dial to reach a specific location (the IP address) but a phone book provides the corresponding information about who you are calling (domain name).

ICANN's subsidiary the Internet Assigned Numbers Authority (IANA) is the entity responsible for assigning these unique identifiers. With the rapid growth of the Internet changes have recently been made to this system. Prior to 2011 all domain names were made up of characters in the Roman alphabet such as readme.com or readme.org. Even domain names dedicated to a specific country by way of country-code top-level domain (ccTLD) was written in Roman letters, for example readme.ca (for Canada) or readme.cn (for China). This was fine for Western nations but made things difficult for citizens and businesses of nations with other alphabets. Beginning in 2011 ICANN brought forth internationalized domain names or IDNs, so countries with the technical capacity could begin to register IDN ccTLDs and finally have web addresses entirely in their native alphabets or characters, such as Arabic or Chinese.[13] It is through the sale of these domain names that ICANN derives its budget and with the continuous expansion of Internet 'real estate' the opportunities for future profit are significant as is the influence that ICANN wields.

ICANN is managed by a Board of Directors and describes its governance style as a "bottom-up, consensus-driven, multi-stakeholder model."[14] In addition to the appointed Board a number of sub-groups exist to raise and discuss policy issues and to ensure that the governing of ICANN includes diverse perspectives from around the world. Included in these sub-groups are Advisory Committees , Supporting Organizations,

task forces and standing committees. Many of these sub-groups are comprised of volunteers making participation in them restricted to only those individual or organizations that have the resources to do so. Though the intention of ICANN's governing structure is to represent all interests equally, it has been critiqued as both Western-centric and biased towards government (including authoritarian) and business interests;

> The interests and rights of dissidents, politically unrepresented minorities, and cyber activists from nondemocratic countries have no meaningful representation at ICANN from any quarter, except indirectly from the very few international human rights and free-speech groups with the staff, resources, and expertise to engage in ICANN policy-making processes.[15]

In addition to these biases, in today's governing structure the ultimate oversight of ICANN lies with the U.S. Department of Commerce. This has also been challenged by many countries which would prefer the functions of ICANN to be transferred to an international body allowing all countries to have an equal voice such as the United Nations International Telecommunication Union (ITU). This seems like a fair request but as MacKinnon points out the UN has a history of lending legitimacy to dictators. We already know of the breadth and sophistication of Ben Ali's surveillance system in Tunisia but nevertheless this is where the UN chose to host the 2005 World Summit for the Information Society (WSIS). Throughout the conference local and international opposition and human rights groups were barred, local activists were arrested, and the Internet was heavily censored.[16] Such actions are why many human rights and civil

liberties groups, in addition to the U.S. Government of course, are opposed to transferring the core functioning of the Internet to the UN. It is easy to imagine how the 'bottom-up' structure of ICANN would change if the Chinese government had a hand in controlling the workings of the Internet.

Although we can agree that a multi-stakeholder model, with the UN body as facilitator, would not have the teeth necessary to protect activists and ensure the public sphere remains open, this is not to say that the UN does not have a role to play for the future of digital activism. Take for example the role of the UN Human Rights Council (HRC) and the existing Special Procedures mandates.

In May of 2011 Frank La Rue, Special Rapporteur submitted to the HRC and the General Assembly a report on the Special Procedures mandate: the promotion and protection of the right to freedom of opinion and expression. This mandate is one of many thematic Special Procedures of the HRC that exist for the purpose that they "contribute to the development of international human rights standards, engage in advocacy, raise public awareness, and provide advice for technical cooperation".[17] La Rue's report specifically related the challenges associated with freedom of expression and the Internet. According to La Rue the Internet has the ability to be a positive force in the world. Not only does it promote development in economic, social and political spheres,

when opportunities for expression remain open, it can be an enabler of human rights.

La Rue's concerns were about access, both in its general meaning and in access to content. According to La Rue general access to Internet infrastructure is key to combating inequality and so the focus should be on the transfer of technology to developing states (as well as disenfranchised sectors of the population within developed States). His report is most elaborate concerning purposeful access restrictions to content by States. As expected his observations document the actions taken by repressive governments such the arbitrary blocking or filtering of content on the Internet, criminalization of legitimate expression, and cyberattacks. Additionally his report includes concerns over actions, or attempted actions, taken by democratic states. Such actions include the imposition of intermediary liability, disconnecting users from Internet access, including on the basis of intellectual property rights law, and inadequate protection of the right to privacy and data protection.[18] The first two points are some of the issues that came up with respect to SOPA and PIPA which were challenged so aggressively. In the following section the concerns over, and real risks associated with privacy and data protection will be discussed.

It is easy to view issues of restricting content on the Internet from the high horse of Western liberal democracies in comparison to repressive societies. Surveillance issues aside, our citizens are not subject to

arbitrary filtering of content and will not be persecuted or prosecuted for criticizing our governments.[19] But as the La Rue report points out there are a number of other ways our government can go about restricting our access to content on the Internet such as disconnecting users, in effect challenging our right "to seek, receive and impart information and ideas of all kinds through the Internet. It is vital that reports of this nature exist to bring awareness to these issues and shed a light on the highly fragile system that is in place today.

<u>Code is Law</u>

Ultimately, without a consensus on a new globalized governance structure for the Internet, the status quo of ICANN remains. And though the functions of the Internet that ICANN overseas are integral to its core operation, these are not the only technical standards influencing the functioning of the Internet. As Lawrence Lessig first argued in Code and Other Laws of Cyberspace "code is law".[20] What he means by this is that code has become a new, salient regulator that affects our online experiences. Anyone who writes code, builds hardware, or creates new platforms, influences the way users engage with the Internet:

> So code is law here. That code/law enforces its control directly. But obviously, this code (like law) changes. The key is to recognize that this change in code is (unlike the laws of nature) crafted to reflect choices and values of the coders.[21]

Here Lessig is describing the changes to coding in the online virtual world Second Life, specifically that related to a user's control over 'property', that overtime modified the users' experiences and affordances in the game

itself. Simply put the code shapes what users are able to do. This 'code is law' notion can be applied to anything developed for the online environment. Think of Facebook. The ability to add friends, like posts, and block users from accessing your Facebook page are all regulators of your experience and behaviour. So whether it is an individual writing code for their personal applications, say a netizen, or an employee designing the features of a company's newest social platform, these actions are influencing the Internet as we know it. The code acts as de facto law in the generally ungoverned global network, which of course presents its own problems and benefits.

Industry and Nation-States

There has long been significant resistance from the private sector to increasing government interference in many aspects of industry function [or, in many aspects of industrial life or industrial activity]. In Capitalist countries the resistance reasoning is that the market mechanisms of the 'invisible hand' foster healthy competition and that too much government regulation will stifle innovation. Conversely, those inalienable statutory rights currently afforded the public sphere do not and will not extend to the private sphere of industry without government involvement. The rights to freedom of expression and to privacy are two of the most commonly discussed rights featured in contemporary debates related to the effects of digital technology on our society. Freedom of expression is one of the

Fundamental Freedoms of the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms,[22]

> freedom of thought, belief, opinion and expression, including freedom of the press and other media of communication;[23]

It is the First Amendment to the U.S. Constitution,

> Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof; or abridging the freedom of speech, or of the press; or the right of the people peaceably to assemble, and to petition the government for a redress of grievances.[24]

And it makes up Article 19 of the United Nations' Universal Declaration of Human Rights,

> Everyone has the right to freedom of opinion and expression; this right includes freedom to hold opinions without interference and to seek, receive and impart information and ideas through any media and regardless of frontiers.[25]

A right to privacy is constituted by one of the Legal Rights of the Canadian Charter,

> Everyone has the right to be secure against unreasonable search or seizure.[26]

It is established in the Fourth Amendment to the U.S. Constitution,

> The right of the people to be secure in their persons, houses, papers and effects, against more reasonable search and seizures, shall not be violated, and no warrants shall issue, but upon probable cause, supported by oath or affirmation, and particularly describing the places to be searched, and the persons or things to be seized.[27]

And is set out explicitly in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights,

> No one shall be subject to arbitrary interference with his privacy, family, home or correspondence, nor to attacks on his honour or reputation. Everyone has the right to the protection of the law against such interference or attacks.[28]

These two rights, so fundamentally established as inalienable in the Western liberal democratic mindset, have not always succeeded at transferring as given rights into the digital landscape. As a reminder the protection of these rights marks the first two cases that the EFF took on in the early 1990s in their court battles against the U.S. government. Esteemed as they are in greater society they do not apply wholly without limitation to the private functioning of business, and though this has long been the case, the effects of this appear more pronounced today than ever before. In 2010, in the months leading up to the Egyptian Arab Spring during which the Kullena Khaled Said Facebook page was actively spreading awareness, promoting non-violent protest, and even urging followers to boycott parliamentary elections, Facebook suddenly and without warning suspended the page. The suspension was explained as the use of pseudonyms by the page administrators, including Wael Ghonim, violated Facebook's terms of service.[29] Users of Facebook may not use "fake" accounts. After all, Facebook's motto is "Making the world open and connected"[30] and its founder Mark Zuckerberg is a firm believer

in 'radical transparency', "the idea that humanity would be better off if everybody were more transparent about who they are and what they do."[31]

It is evident that the Kullena Khaled Said page was being used to bring awareness of police brutality and corruption in a country where freedom of expression and protection against unwarranted search and seizure are not protected rights. Here, anonymous political action is perceived as the only way to guarantee personal safety. Nevertheless Facebook's officials are required to apply and enforce corporate policies regardless of any external human rights agendas; thus the Page came down without notice. As it turns out, the activists had contacts within the senior levels of Facebook and within 12 hours the page was reinstated when Nadine Wahib, an Egyptian national living abroad with personal ties to Ghonim, agreed to become the official page administrator.[32]

Through a combination of coding and internal policies, Facebook determines the entirety of their users' experiences. And although Facebook is a global American company headquartered in Palo Alto, California, it is not required to uphold the First Amendment of the U.S. Constitution nor Article 12 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights in application of its policies *vis a vis* its users. This is reflective of industry standards and objectives at large, which focus on the creation of profit over the defense of personal and/or human rights of its customers. It is simply not their obligation. Greg Beck, an attorney for the nonprofit consumer advocacy group Public Citizen, put it this way:

> Facebook and other social websites have become the public squares of the Internet— places where citizens can congregate as a community to share their opinions and voice their grievances… Facebook's ownership of this democratic forum carries great responsibility."[33]

Beyond its legislative obligations, whether or not a company also sees its position of power as one of 'responsibility' is wholly up to the company.

Also in 2010 PayPal famously suspended online payments destined for WikiLeaks, the online publishing organization promoted to releasing any information they deem to be in the public interest. According to the company the action they took was in response to illegal activity taken by WikiLeaks by publishing confidential U.S. Government cables which was contrary to PayPal's Acceptable Use Policy:

> The US department of state publicised a letter to WikiLeaks on November 27, stating that WikiLeaks may be in possession of documents that were provided in violation of US law. PayPal was not contacted by any government organisation in the US or abroad. We restricted the account based on our Acceptable Use Policy review. Ultimately, our difficult decision was based on a belief that the WikiLeaks website was encouraging sources to release classified material, which is likely a violation of law by the source… We understand that PayPal's decision has become part of a broader story involving political, legal and free speech debates surrounding WikiLeaks' activities. None of these concerns factored into our decision. Our only consideration was whether or not the account associated with WikiLeaks violated our Acceptable Use Policy and regulations required of us as a global payment company. Our actions in this matter are consistent with any account found to be in violation of our policies.[34]

Here PayPal's general counsel explicitly declares that their company decisions are not impacted by broader free speech debates, rather only their company policies. This is entirely in their legal rights but is this (in their customers' (the users') interest?) the right thing to do?

A more recent example shows this issue from the perspective of both industry and democratic governments. On June 6, 2013 The Washington Post broke the story of PRISM, a secret, court-approved program of the National Security Agency that saw the NSA and FBI tapping directly into nine American service providers to collect intelligence related to foreign communication patterns. Audio and video chats, photographs, e-mails, documents, and connection logs that have been sent to U.S. Servers from overseas are collected for analysis. In most, if not all Western nations it is unlawful for government authorities to collect a citizen's data unknowingly and without a warrant, but this program, according to the article, is entirely legal.[35] The program was begun in 2007 with Microsoft as its first 'partner' with the other companies subsequently joining over the following six years. The same laws that make this type of data collection legal also immunized cooperating private companies from legal action. Microsoft, Yahoo, Google, Facebook, PalTalk, AOL, Skype, You Tube and Apple were the nine named companies though each denied providing the government direct access to its servers. In response to the article James R. Clapper, the Director of National Intelligence is quoted as saying:

> Information collected under this program is among the most important and valuable foreign intelligence information we collect, and it is used to protect our nation from a wide variety of threats. The unauthorized disclosure of information about this important and entirely legal program is reprehensible and risks important protections for the security of Americans.[36]

On Monday June 10 The Guardian published an interview with Edward Snowden "the whistleblower behind the NSA surveillance revelations". Snowden had worked as a technical assistant for the CIA and most recently as an employee of the defense contractor Booz Allen Hamilton the company working on the PRISM program. His reasoning for leaking the program is clear,

> I will be satisfied if the federation of secret law, unequal pardon and irresistible executive powers that rule the world that I love are revealed even for an instant… I can't in good conscience allow the US government to destroy privacy, internet freedom and basic liberties for people around the world with this massive surveillance machine they're secretly building.[37]

When a person becomes an employee of a company they become subject to an implied or expressed duty of loyalty and fidelity. What this means is that in order to protect business interests employees have a fundamental primary duty to maintain business confidence and confidential information. Snowden, as a consultant on behalf of Booz Allen Hamilton, was bound by the same primary duty to maintain confidence and confidentiality. Nevertheless he decided it was important to disclose what was occurring under PRISM. He was expressing his moral beliefs. Did he have a right to do that? No. In this setting he does not have a right to freedom of

expression. But it is his argument that the U.S. Government was not adequately safe guarding the right to privacy.

The response from the government declared that PRISM was collecting 'metadata' and not the conversations happening. Metadata is information about information. What is meant by this is that rather than collecting and analyzing the content of the communications they were collecting the context of the communications. Who were these international calls going to and coming from? How often were these calls happening? Who else contacted the user and who else did the user contact? It was these patterns that Clapper referred to as being "valuable foreign intelligence".

At the time that Snowden was interviewed by the Guardian he also disclosed a number of documents that he carefully evaluated to be of "public interest," and so days after the original article on PRISM was published further evidence of government spying, this time in Britain, was disclosed to the international public. "GCHQ taps fibre-optic cables for secret access to world's communications" identifies a massive government surveillance program in which the United Kingdom's Government Communications Headquarters (GCHQ) had accessed transatlantic fibre-optic cables to collect and process vast amounts of personal data. Tempora, the name the program goes by, has been compared to a dragnet as the operation collects and analyzes both metadata as well as content such as phone calls and email messages. Similar to the PRISM

program Tempora was also administered under the full protection of British law though secretly and without any public oversight.[38]

These revelations by Snowden are alarming. Two democratically elected governments with well-established electoral processes and numerous checks and balances have undertaken the greatest public surveillance campaigns in history; and shockingly enough this has all occurred under the legal affordances of the law. It comes as no surprise that Canadians are offered no further privacy protection under Canadian law. According to Michael Geist – blogger, technology law columnist, and law professor at the University of Ottawa – section 21 of the Canadian Security Intelligence Act "provides a warrant that permits almost any type of communication, interception, surveillance or disclosure of records for the purpose of national security."[39] The warrant does not require probable cause and can be obtained by the Director of CSIS (Canadian Security Intelligence Service) or a representative of the Solicitor General with an affidavit stating the belief that the warrant is required. The same legal framework allowing PRISM to exist in the U.S. exists in Canada. Sure enough on the same day that Snowden's identity was released to the public it became known that Defense Minister Peter McKay approved a Canadian metadata-collection program in 2011.[40]

Have these governments abused their citizen's trust? Each government's actions have been declared as necessary in the face of national security challenges and have all respected their federal laws.

Ultimately it is the public's response that will decide this question. On July 16th the EFF along with 19 various organizations, including the First Unitarian Church of Los Angeles and Human Rights Watch, formed a broad coalition and filed suit against the NSA for "violating their First Amendment right of association by illegally collecting their call records".[41] By recording the information about the calls the government is able to gain a detailed picture of many of these organization's association patterns potentially exposing them to high-stakes political issues. It is actions such as these that will determine the future direction of such surveillance monitoring programs.

In light of programs such as PRISM and Tempora it is tempting to ask whether or not nation-states should have a role in Internet governance, or if their current control should somehow be limited. But security is a major issue for today's Internet, both cyber- and in the physical world, and governments are in many ways the only figures with the resources capable of protecting its citizens; it would be hard to imagine their willingness to relinquish control. As long as the American public decides the Patriot Act is a just law needed to defend the greater good, many of the resources widely available on today's Internet, many of which come from California's Silicon Valley, will be subject to these laws. And this is a point that Michael Geist also makes. Currently we are stuck with twentieth century laws, inappropriate for dealing with twentieth century technology:

The problem is that surveillance technologies (including the ability to data mine massive amounts of information) have moved far beyond laws that were crafted for a much different world. The geographic or content limitations placed on surveillance activities by organizations such as CSEC [Communications Security Establishment Canada] may have been effective years ago when such activities were largely confined to specific locations and the computing power needed to mine metadata was not readily available. That is clearly no longer the case with geography often a distinction without a difference and the value of metadata sometimes greater than the actual telephone conversations. If we genuinely believe in preserving some privacy in an environment where every cell phone call is tracked, we must be open to significant legislative reforms and increased oversight that better reflects the realities of modern day communications surveillance.[42]

Netizens

Netizens have been instrumental at keeping corporate and government influence at bay since the World Wide Web went live in 1990 and the greater public first had a stake in this new commons. In fact it was a singular netizen, Tim Berners-Lee, who created the World Wide Web (the Web) for the purpose of sharing physics papers with colleagues. Could anyone have imagined where this creation would lead? The functioning of the Web is based on three standard protocols: Hypertext Markup Language (HTML) for viewing a website, naming a website universally using a Universal Resource Identifier (URI), and making it available over the Internet using Hypertext Transfer Protocol (HTTP).[43] The Web has affected the way we do business, has altered our

entertainment patterns, and has changed the way we engage with one another.

The open source movement is another way that netizens have engaged in the development of digital technology to promote the Internet as a global commons. The non-profit Open Source Initiative (OSI) is dedicated to the promotion of, and education around the importance of non-propriety software. The OSI also offers trademarked licenses to open-source software that complies with the rigorous ten-point Open Source Definition ultimately ensuring developed software can be "freely used, modified, and shared".[44] One of the most impressive examples of netizen work is the creation of the open-source and fully functional GNU/Linux operating system. Similar in functionality to the Unix operating system it was created in the early 1990s by software engineer Linus Torvalds and the Free Software Foundation (FSF), with ongoing support from unpaid hobbyist developers. The system, and its later developments, are distributed freely and when combined with the open-source web server Apache, make up one-third of the servers used on the Internet[45]. An indication of the sophistication and complexity of this free system, Google's Android system used in mobile devices operates using the Linux kernel, the fundamental program on which the operating system functions, as do the software packages produced by the free operating systems Ubuntu and Debian. Debian's "Social Contract" is a voluntary contract, or

set of commitments, that show the heart of the purpose of open source software:

1.   Debian will remain 100% free.
2.   We will give back to the free software community.
3.   We will not hide problems.
4.   Our priorities are our users and free software.
5.   [The inclusion of] works that do not meet our free software standards.[46]

With the existence of open source operating systems and software packages digital technology users and small-scale developers are able to make use of the Internet to its fullest capacity and at a limited cost. By doing so they keep the competition for the Internet market more open and accessible. If every software or application developer had to come up with their own operating system, or if they were forced to pay usage to a propriety operating system, such as Microsoft Windows, it could prove extremely difficult to gain a foothold in the digital technology market.

The development of the Creative Commons (CC) license in 2002 provides another example of how netizens have the power to affect the global Internet commons. Lawrence Lessig, amongst others, introduced the CC licenses in an effort to offer content creators—from artists to programmers—free, flexible and customizable intellectual-property licenses. His 2004 book Free Culture, describes the impetus behind this project. Lessig's book relates his concern over the growing tendency of American culture to move from what he terms "free culture," or non-

commercial culture, to "permission culture", culture that is produced with the intention to be sold and "a culture in which creators get to create only with the permission of the powerful, or of creators from the past."[47] The CC licenses return to the notion of shared culture, content that can be "copied, distributed, edited, remixed, and built upon, all within the boundaries of copyright law."[48] Six CC licenses are currently offered:

1. Attribution – this allows other to use one's original creation however they deem fit, as long as they give credit to the content's creator.
2. Attribution-ShareAlike – similar to Attribution this gives others significant freedoms in reusing the original content, with the stipulation that resulting new creations must be licensed under the same terms. Wikipedia operates under this license.
3. Attribution-NonCommercial - this license is different from Attribution-ShareAlike only by requiring the remixed content to be used non-commercially but it does not require identical licensing terms.
4. Attribution-NonCommerical-ShareAlike – work can be used with significant freedom but it can only be used non-commercially and new creations must be licensed under the same terms.
5. Attribution-NoDerivs – allows content to be redistributed without any modification to original content; the creations may not be remixed.
6. Attribution-NonCommercial-NoDerivs - the most restrictive of licenses users may share works but they cannot be changed and they must be used non-commercially.[49]

Today some of the most well-known organizations that make use of CC licensing include Google, Flickr, Al Jazeera, and the British Library. Similar

to open-source software the option to use CC licenses provides netizens more control.

Other forms of netizen involvement in the development of the global commons consist of examples of working both from within and from outside of the system. An example of working from within the system is the formation of political parties dedicated to protecting netizen interests. The Pirate Party offers the best example if this. The Pirate Party was formed in Sweden in 2006 with its roots in the so-called 'pirate movement' of the early 2000s concerning issues related to illegal wiretapping, copyright restrictions and file-sharing.[50] Today over 60 countries, including Canada, have their own Pirate Party.[51] The core of the Pirate Party's belief system is empowerment, or set out more explicitly it is the belief that "people have become empowered, and the governing authorities must treat them as such, assuming good faith".[52] With the enhanced communication potentials of the Internet, many more people now have a voice and so governments must adapt; now is the time to move from ruling to governing.[53] The Pirate Party envisions its policies as represented in a Pirate Wheel. At the centre, or hub, is Empowerment followed by eight principles or spokes on which the policies rest: (1) Privacy; (2) Transparency; (3) TICKS or advocacy to create, remix or exchange Tools, Ideas, Culture, Knowledge, and Sentiments; (4) Humanism; (5) Diversity; (6) Resilience (of societies and infrastructure); (7) Swarm Economy, meaning find ways to increase the

value of unpaid production such as volunteer work; and lastly (8) Quality Legislation.[54]

The most successful party to date has been the Swedish Pirate Party earning 7.1 percent of votes in the 2009 European Parliament election. This success is an indication of the growing issues that are affecting voters, in this case specifically party policies related to wire-tapping and file-sharing.[55] With the creation of a new political party dedicated to issues of Internet governance, netizens and voters are given the opportunity to participate in the future direction of policy. In today's situation, where laws and norms are determined ad hoc it is ever more important for this type of representation.

Then there are those who believe that "real change" cannot come from inside the system. In recent years hacktivist groups have received significant attention for actions that range from civil disobedience to the outright illegal. The group Anonymous is perhaps the most well-known. In 2010 in response to PayPal's, MasterCard's and Visa's decision to disallow online donations to WikiLeaks, Anonymous coordinated distributed denial of service (DDoS) attacks in what it has termed "Operation Payback." The purpose of the attack was to bring so much traffic to these sites to effectively shut down normal operations. A representative from Anonymous declared their actions to be for the good of Internet Freedom.

We're against corporations and government interfering on the Internet… We believe it should be open and free for everyone. Governments shouldn't try to censor because they don't agree with it. Anonymous is supporting WikiLeaks not because we agree or disagree with the data that is being sent out, but we disagree with any form of censorship on the Internet."[56]

Although disrupting the normal service of a website seems like civil disobedience it can in fact cause a targeted company significant loss in revenue. Some would instead label these actions as cybercrimes. A 2010 Council on Foreign Relations paper describes the issues of cybercrime, cyber espionage and cyber warfare and estimates its annual costs to the global economy at $1 trillion USD. The Council believes all governments should actively pursue criminal prosecution against any hacktivist targeting of foreign states.

If cyberattacks become an acceptable form of international protest, the effects could be extremely destabilizing economically and could open the door to conventional military conflict.[57]

In 2012 Harvard law professor and information technology scholar Yochai Benkler wrote the impassioned article "Hacks of Valor: Why Anonymous is Not a Threat to National Security". Benkler asserts that first and foremost Anonymous should never be viewed outside the context of protest. He categorizes the work of Anonymous into four types of action: web-site defacements, non-cyber action (such as street protests or pranks), DDoS attacks and document disclosures. The first two he considers merely

disruptions, likening web-site defacements to graffiti. DDoS attacks are compared to sit-ins or the illegal occupation of a given space. Though DDoS attacks can be destructive, such as causing power outages to critical infrastructure, those of Anonymous have only been symbolic. The most difficult actions to judge by Anonymous are document disclosures which have ranged from the invasion of an individual's privacy to wasteful government expenditures. Nevertheless the political nature of Anonymous's targets must be considered. And though Benkler acknowledges that at times members may go too far —meaning beyond legitimate protest — overreaction risks harming the creativity and expression that the Internet has fostered. To sum it up,

> Anonymous is not an organization. It is an idea, a zeitgeist, coupled with a set of social and technical practices. Diffuse and leaderless, its driving force is "lulz"—irreverence, playfulness, and spectacle. It is also a protest movement, inspiring action both on and off the Internet, that seeks to contest the abuse of power by governments and corporations and promote transparency in politics and business.

As we have already seen digital technology can be used to enhance and promote diverse activist causes. And with an ever-increasing number of world citizens gaining access to these technologies, particularly in the developing world, there is an ever-increasing potential of these technologies to effect change. But for this potential to become a reality the governance structure of the Internet is paramount. Legal codes and norms that were first developed nearly 800 years ago must be respected and

updated for the 21st century. Key here is the notion of the peoples'
consent.

Today a plurality of voices are directing change and the 'right' course
is not always obvious but multi-stakeholders, governments, industry, and
netizens all have a role to play. Perhaps it is unfair that ICANN remains
under U.S. Government jurisdiction. After all the human rights record of
the U.S. Government is murky when it comes to 'friendly' dictatorships.
But what is the alternative? The UN is not the appropriate governing body
for the Internet. Not only does it not have the teeth required to enforce its
decisions it has a history of lending legitimacy to dictators. Nevertheless
the work of the Human Rights Council is vital and we should continue to
support the work they do, bringing education and awareness on these
pervasive issues from every corner of the globe. As for governments,
legislation needs to begin to reflect the realities of the 21st century. In more
explicit terms there needs to be limits set to the collection, use and
disclosure of citizens' information. That being said, fear is a powerful
motivator and when governments declare their actions to be in the interest
of national security, citizens must scrutinize these claims. Industry should
be held accountable by consumers. Companies that earnestly approach
their role in the Internet as more than a profit-driven mechanism should be
acknowledged and rewarded. As the SOPA/PIPA Blackout Day shows,
when these companies choose to act their influence is significant. When it
comes to everyday citizens more involvement in the issues at hand is

needed. Unfortunately you cannot force someone to have interest. Still,

the role of individuals in the digital commons is key.

NOTES

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[12] Ibid: xx.

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[14] "Welcome to ICANN!" ICANN, accessed July 6, 2013. http://www.icann.org/en/about/welcome.

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Conclusion

The future of digital activism is highly dependent on the greater environment in which activists operate. And with the continuous and rapid proliferation of digital technology issues of Internet governance will only continue to grow in importance. The work being done by activists in all corners of the globe is for the same goal; the ability to live one's life safely, securely, and with opportunities for betterment. Ideally this can be achieved with a discursive public sphere where traditionally marginalized groups are safe from persecution whether based on gender, ethnicity, sexuality, or one's belief system. These of course are not universal values and highly traditional societies would likely resist such openness. Digital technology allows for an equitable, fair, and inclusive discursive space where a healthy public sphere can thrive. The argument is key, interpretation of the issues is open, and anyone connected can participate. But digital technology also permits repression. And activists have a much more difficult time enabling societal change from the shadows.

All of these issues discussed here, from access restrictions to privacy violations, need to become front and centre in public debates - not relegated to the back for only those with a research interest, financial interest, or with the technical or legal knowhow to assess the risks at face value. Citizens of democratic countries must demand from their governments the protection of rights that were established centuries ago.

Citizens elsewhere must be given the opportunity to demand their own rights.

There also must be recognition of what digital activism cannot do. At the time of writing, nearly three years after the undoing of Tunisia's Ben Ali and Egypt's Mubarak both countries are in turmoil. In Tunisia secular and Islamist factions are at odds and in recent months two secular opposition leaders have been assassinated. In Egypt much of the population is disenchanted with their own Islamist-led government. In response, the Egyptian Army removed the democratically elected Egyptian President Mohamed Morsi resulting in a terribly divided country, violent clashes, and a return to emergency law. Digital activism can help to bring about change but it cannot cover all of the other factors required for long-term political change and stability. There is no 'tool' yet invented for that. These technologies may change the speed with which we do business but for the most part the basic requirements of the democratic process remains. Party leaders, platforms, consensus, and a respect for the opposition are all part of the process, they are all part of a healthy public sphere. When those who achieve power fail to acknowledge these other factors, factors that continue far beyond election results, the democratic process is stifled.

> Twelve voices were shouting in anger, and they were all alike. No question, now, what had happened to the faces of the pigs. The creatures outside looked from pig to man, and from man to pig, and

from pig to man again; but already it was impossible to say which was which[1].

NOTES

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