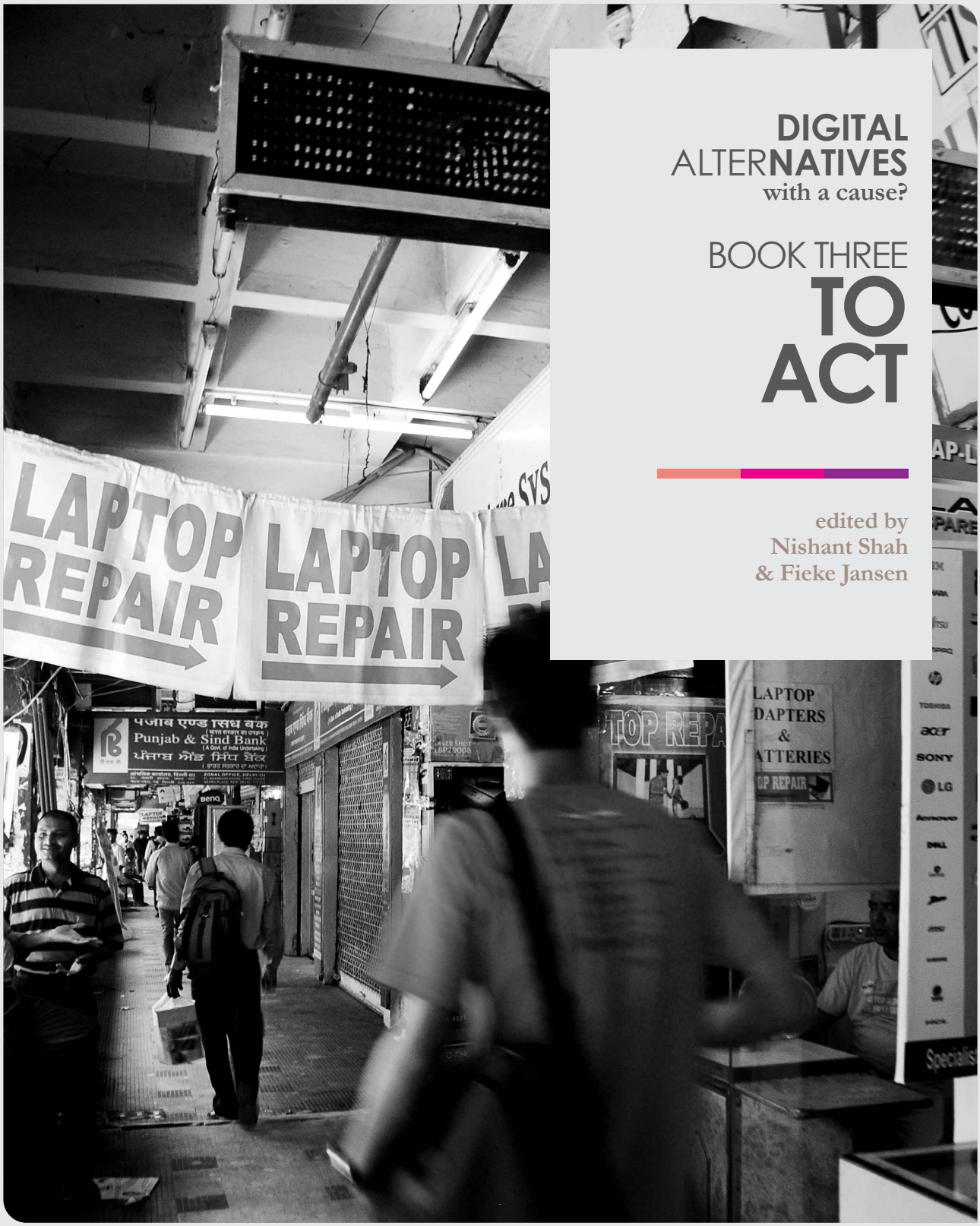

DIGITAL ALTERNATIVES with a cause?

BOOK THREE

TO ACT

edited by
Nishant Shah
& Fieke Jansen

THE CENTRE FOR internet & SOCIETY

Hivos people unlimited

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Digital (Alter)Natives with a Cause?
Book 3 – To Act

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PREFACE

In the 21st Century, we have witnessed the simultaneous growth of internet and digital technologies on the one hand, and political protests and mobilisation on the other. Processes of interpersonal relationships, social communication, economic expansion, political protocols and governmental mediation are undergoing a significant transition, across in the world, in developed and emerging Information and Knowledge societies.

The young are often seen as forerunners of these changes because of the pervasive and persistent presence of digital and online technologies in their lives. In popular discourse and practice around these young people and their digitally-mediated lives, there has been the imagination of a digital native – somebody who is born 'with' technologies. This idea of Digital Native has been helpful in looking at the new practices of knowledge production, community building, sharing, participation and collaboration that have emerged with the rise and spread of digital and internet technologies. However, more often than not, these young people are imagined as inhabiting certain bodies – White, middle class, educated, English-speaking, (mostly) male elites who live in environments of portable and pervasive computing. Their practices and engagements with technologies are taken as the norm by which the policy and research in other parts of the world is also framed.

The Digital Natives with a Cause? is a research inquiry that shifts the parameters of this imagination and uncovers the ways in which young people in emerging internet and communication technology (ICT) contexts make strategic use of technologies to bring about change in their immediate environments. Ranging from personal stories of transformation to efforts at collective change, it aims to identify knowledge gaps that existing scholarship, practice and popular discourse around an increasing usage, adoption and integration of digital technologies in processes of social and political change.

In 2010-11, three workshops in Taiwan, South Africa and Chile, brought together around 80 people who identified themselves as Digital Natives from Asia, Africa and Latin America, to explore certain key questions that could provide new insight into Digital Natives research, policy and practice. The workshops were accompanied by a *Thinkathon* – a multi-stakeholder summit that initiated conversations between Digital Natives, academic researchers, scholars, practitioners, educators, policy makers and corporate representatives to share learnings on new questions: Is one born digital or does one become a Digital Native? How do we understand our relationship with the idea of a Digital Native? How do Digital Natives redefine 'change' and how do they see themselves implementing it? What is the role that technologies play in defining civic action and social movements? What are the relationships that these technology-based identities and practices have with existing social movements and political legacies? How do we build new frameworks of sustainable citizen action outside of institutionalisation?

One of the knowledge gaps that this book tries to address is the lack of digital natives' voices in the discourse around them. In the occasions that they are a part of the discourse, they are generally represented by other actors who define the frameworks and decide the issues which are important. Hence, more often than not, most books around digital natives concentrate on similar sounding areas and topics, which might not always resonate with the concerns that digital natives and other stake-holders might be engaged with in their material and discursive practice. The methodology of the workshops was designed keeping this in mind. Instead of asking the digital natives to give their opinion or recount a story about what we felt was important, we began by listening to their articulations about what was at stake for them as e-agents of change. As a result, the usual topics like piracy, privacy, cyber-bullying, sexting etc. which automatically map digital natives discourse, are conspicuously absent from this book. Their absence

is not deliberate, but more symptomatic of how these themes that we presumed as important were not of immediate concerns to most of the participants in the workshop who are contributing to the book.

The conversations, research inquiries, reflections, discussions, interviews, and art practices are consolidated in this four part book which deviates from the mainstream imagination of the young people involved in processes of change. The alternative positions, defined by geo-politics, gender, sexuality, class, education, language, etc. find articulations from people who have been engaged in the practice and discourse of technology mediated change. Each part concentrates on one particular theme that helps bring coherence to a wide spectrum of style and content.

The first part, titled *To Be*, looks at the questions of digital native identities. Are digital natives the same everywhere? What does it mean to call a certain population 'Digital Natives"? Can we also look at people who are on the fringes – Digital Outcasts, for example? Is it possible to imagine technology-change relationships not only through questions of access and usage but also through personal investments and transformations? The contributions help chart the history, explain the contemporary and give ideas about what the future of technology mediated identities is going to be.

In the second section, *To Think*, the contributors engage with new frameworks of understanding the processes, logistics, politics and mechanics of digital natives and causes. Giving fresh perspectives which draw from digital aesthetics, digital natives' everyday practices, and their own research into the design and mechanics of technology mediated change, the contributors help us re-think the concepts, processes and structures that we have taken for granted. They also nuance the ways in which new frameworks to think about youth, technology and change can be evolved and how they provide new ways of sustaining digital natives and their causes.

To Act is the third part that concentrates on stories from the ground. While it is important to conceptually engage with digital natives, it is also, necessary to connect it with the real life practices that are reshaping the world. Case-studies, reflections and experiences of people engaged in processes of change, provide a rich empirical data set which is further analysed to look at what it means to be a digital native in emerging information and technology contexts.

The last section, *To Connect*, recognises the fact that digital natives do not operate in vacuum. It might be valuable to maintain the distinction between digital natives and immigrants, but this distinction does not mean that there are no relationships between them as actors of change. The section focuses on the digital native ecosystem to look at the complex assemblage of relationships that support and are amplified by these new processes of technologised change.

We see this book as entering into a dialogue with the growing discourse and practice in the field of youth, technology and change. The ambition is to look at the digital (alter)natives as located in the Global South and the potentials for social change and political participation that is embedded in their interactions through and with digital and internet technologies. We hope that the book furthers the idea of a context-based digital native identity and practice, which challenges the otherwise universalist understanding that seems to be the popular operative right now. We see this as the beginning of a knowledge inquiry that incites new discussions, invokes cross-sectorial and disciplinary debates, and consolidates knowledges about digital (alter)natives and how they work in the present to change our futures.

Nishant Shah
Fieke Jansen

INTRODUCTION

In Book 3 of the *Digital Alter(Natives) with a Cause?* collective, we enter into dialogue with some of the severest and most heated debates around digital natives and their ability to effect change. *To Act* collides with the discourse on young people's ability and role in technology-mediated processes of change, heads-on. It deliberates on some very dense questions about how digital natives execute their visions of change using new forms of mobilisation of resources and sharing/production of information.

There has been a large amount of scepticism and euphoria generated about how the youth, aided by the potentials of digital and internet technologies, are producing innovative ways of participation, interaction, community building and collaboration to make changes in their immediate and global environments. On the hopeful side are people who see this democratisation and un-institutionalisation as a positive sign of citizen driven action and need-based collectivisation. On the other side are people who produce cautionary tales of losing the human face of change because of over-determined use of technologies. In arguments from both the sides, there has been an immense amount of pressure upon digital natives to produce themselves as intelligible and coherent to the minute scrutiny that their actions are subject to.

As we have seen in other books in this collective, the contributors in this book also tackle these serious issues of engagement, participation, mobilisation, and dissemination by locating them in specific geo-politics and contexts to offer more fruitful ways of understanding and extrapolating from digital natives' everyday practices. David Sasaki's essay traces pathways into these debates by providing a comparative history of two events in recent and distant past to deconstruct a Revolution. He compares a revolution that happened in 1968 in the then turbulent France to the series of shifts that we have witnessed in the Middle-East, North-Africa (MENA) region in 2011. In the process, he starts unravelling the presumptions, prejudices, expectations and ambitions that are mapped on to digital natives' actions. He offers us insights not only into how external perspectives create spectacles and discourse of revolution where none might exist but also how the digital natives themselves, rooted both in time and space, articulate their own activities differently.

Luiz Fernando Moncau and Eduardo Magrani draw from scholarship and practice in Brazil to produce a critical framework through which to understand the roles that technologies play in structuring new paradigms of change. Through two case-studies located in the political history of change in their country, they show how these paradigms are not merely at the level of tools and technology aided participation. They argue that these paradigm shifts are at the level of attitudes, perspectives, ideas and practices that shape the world of law and policy making. The essay looks at the realms of the probable and the possible, giving evidence from what has already happened and teasing out the potentials of what large scale technology driven shifts can change in the world of policy making.

Prabhas Pokharel's essay also produces a mix of theory and case-studies, looking at the inequity of power in existing public policy and how they can be addressed by a series of unusual activities which are otherwise discarded as 'clicktivism' or 'slacktivism'. Building upon his earlier concept of 'discursive activism' where he argued for micro-blogging and interaction with social networking systems as producing concrete contexts for change, Pokharel explores the new processes that emerge in interaction between civic action driven individuals or groups and established concentrations of the State Apparatus. Through case-studies situated in Kathmandu and Kosovo, extrapolating from his experience as an activist, he critiques the current tokenisms of inclusion and engagement that policy actors offer digital natives through the metaphor of

story-telling. For him, the possibilities being offered to digital natives are those that incorporate them into existing stories but do not make them into change makers who can not only tell their own stories but also critically reflect on the narrative conditions or contexts that shape them.

Both Nonkululeko Godana from South Afirca and Kara Andrade who lives a nomadic life between Guatamala and the USA, also invoke story-telling as central to their understanding of digital natives' role in processes of change. For Godana, the new ways of telling a story – non-linear, distributed, not determined by cause-and-effect, and structured as a conversation – that emerge with platforms like Twitter, enable digital natives to actualise their visions of change. In a case-study from South Africa, she looks at conversations between people who start with expressing their opinions and eventually find support, trust and confidence to build networks that would initiate effective and concrete processes of change. Andrade on the other hand, brings in a different idea of story-telling and what it does to a digital native's imagination of his/her own role in processes of change. She looks at digital technologies as liberating the stories from a personal closet and making them collaborative, shared and jointly experienced. Seamlessly navigating between the physical and digital, she explores what it means to be a 'native' in either of the systems and what are the expectations and forces that determine how change narratives are articulated, documented and shared differently because of the presence of digital and internet technologies.

Maria del mar Zavala locates her research in Paraguay, to expand on this motif of story-telling that has serendipitously emerged through the different contributions. For Zavala, it is not the content but the process of story-telling that is important. The widespread infrastructure for information and communication technology in her country has resulted in novel spaces for the public to engage with traditional power centres. What becomes important is, how, through the telling of a story, in recognising that there is an audience that is paying attention to the tales, and in collectively mobilising to critically reflect on the reality and truth value of the narratives, a 'transformative context' is generated. This context might not immediately result into action but it provides the public with tools which, when necessitated by the local environments, can become powerful weapons of action.

Namita Aavriti Malhotra from India, shifts the terms of the debate by introducing specific questions of technology aesthetics which are often glossed over in the concentrated attention given to the content of story-telling. Malhotra makes a point, drawing from scholarship that arose within cinema studies, and her own practice as a digital film maker and archivist, to see how we need to question the stories not only for their content but also for the technologies that shape them. She argues that technologies determine how stories are told and how meanings can be decoded. She suggests that at the heart of digital natives' attempts at producing change, are new forms of narrating their reality. Hence we need to concentrate on the tools, the formats, and the platforms that serve as containers within which these stories are cooked. The essay looks at pornographic videos to see the ways in which they subvert older structures of story-telling and draws a framework that also helps us to see the huge volume of user generated videos on sites like YouTube in new lights.

The contributions in this book are grounded, both in their knowledge as well as in the evidence they produce. They all begin with a question of how we can account for different activities that the digital natives initiate and provide examples of how the presence of digital technologies is rapidly changing the course of action in our physical realities. Instead of making the physical-digital or analogue-digital distinctions, they build frameworks that look at actions of change as constituted by the interactions between these various spheres. Each contribution places itself in a dialectic relationship between action and change, trying to unravel the conundrum of whether action leads to change or change causes people to act. In the process, they introduce a third axis of relationship between action and change – the axis of knowledge and experience, and how they form the impetus for action and change.

3.1 THE YOUTH-LED REVOLUTIONS OF 1968 AND 2011

by
David Sasaki
ESSAY

Armed with cellphones and Facebook accounts, the digital natives of today are fomenting revolution and redefining citizenship. Or at least so go the breathless declarations found in Twitter, magazine covers, and the nightly news. But such proclamations lack a contextual analysis that considers the social, environmental, economic, political, and technological factors that have recently incited youth and opposition groups to mobilise around the world. Opinion makers depend on buzz words like 'digital natives' without explaining which characteristics distinguish today's youth from their parents' generation. Academics and public intellectuals, meanwhile, have focused on the influence of social media in so-called 'Facebook revolutions', but have largely ignored the role of technology in post-revolutionary politics.

This essay questions several popular notions around the use of technology by young activists. First it challenges the terminology of 'digital natives', arguing that such neologisms contribute to a psychological barrier which impedes wider adoption of digital literacy. In order to contrast and better understand the significance of today's protest movements, it then documents the multiple factors behind the youth-led protests of 1968. A brief account of my own personal appropriation of new technologies throughout my youth aspires to offer older readers a clearer understanding of the impact of growing up connected by computers. The essay concludes by zeroing in on the social media-fueled protest movements of 2011, which have prioritised the removal of the current political class without offering a concrete vision of what ought to come next. Ultimately I argue that, while it is easier to build large coalitions around movements that seek to overthrow the establishment, such "anti-power" activism must be accompanied by a clear vision of how to construct a networked democracy that features transparency, accountability, and civic participation.

Will future historians treat 2011 as the Internet generation's 1968?

Deconstructing digital nativism

New technologies give new meanings to established words; and those words, in turn, influence how we understand the social significance of each new technology. The term 'Current', for example, which previously described the flow of water, was later applied to the discovery of electricity. The telegraph gave new meanings to familiar terms like 'send' and 'message'. An 1873 issue of Harper's Magazine recounts the frustrations of an angry customer who paid good money to "send" a telegram only to see the operator later hang his handwritten note on a hook. An entire generation had to learn to detach the concept of message from the physical object of paper.

Today it has become standard to speak about the

comprehension and appropriation of internet tools and technologies in terms of digital natives and digital immigrants. We have recycled a vocabulary rooted in the exclusionary nature of nationalism to describe a perceived generational divide in how individuals respond to and appropriate new technologies. I suggest that rather than viewing technological appropriation in terms of nativism and immigration, we think in terms of literacy. From the Latin littera, or "letter of the alphabet", literacy speaks of our ability to understand and communicate effectively, to transmit knowledge and culture. The all-encompassing term 'digital native' is often a lazy shorthand that represents distinct and diverse types of digital literacies.

Our ability to communicate: Unlike our parents, who recall sitting down at a desk to deliberately draft a letter with paper, pen, envelope and stamp, today's youth have radically expanded options in how we communicate our observations, reflections and emotions. Oral and written communications have merged into a constant flow of commentary that tends to incentivise wit, irony and novelty. Of greatest significance, online communication is often many-to-many rather than one-to-one, an adjustment that has proven difficult for older generations.

Our ability to search for information: A woman in her mid-fifties once told me of a recurring childhood fantasy while she grew up in rural Venezuela. She frequently walked through the countryside, imagining supernatural glasses that provided her with extra information about anything she set her eyes on. Today, a self-described iPhone addict, she says the internet has become those magical glasses. Modern youth take for granted our ability to search for any type of information — song lyrics, actors, politicians, Facebook profiles — at any time. But we should be careful to not conflate potential with reality; a 2010 study by Eszter Hargitttai[1] and her colleagues at Northwestern University in Chicago found important limitations in how youth seek and evaluate online information.

Our ability to network: "It's not what you know, it's who you know," goes the only business school cliché.

David Sasaki's essay succinctly captures the debates and discussions that we hope to initiate in this book . In producing a comparative study of two moments of turbulence and dissent in recent and distant history, Sasaki lays bare the anatomy of a revolution and maps the different impetuses, catalysts, actors and technologies which help in the orchestration and execution of revolutions. When we started this research programme in early 2009, the Arab Spring had not yet happened. Most of the instances we had of youth-led, technology-mediated civic action were scattered and seemed to be more an exception than a rule. The terrains of intervention were more in the realms of the cultural and there was much noise around 'slacktivism' and 'clicktivism' from cyber-skeptics who were cautious in attributing agency to the presence of digital technologies.

In the two years that the research has grown and travelled across different geographies and time-zones, many things have changed. After the turbulent and terrific revolutions that marked 2010, and the significant role that digital and internet technologies played in creating spectacles, spectators and actors of change, there has been a distinct difference in the larger attitude towards use of technologies for social transformation. Sasaki refuses to join either party in the debate, and instead, maps out the growth and spread of an idea and how it becomes an ideology that is strong enough to mobilise massive numbers of people to come together for political demonstration and protest. By comparing the recent events with an earlier generation's efforts at changing the world, he shows us the similarity and the differences that have emerged in contemporary civic action. In the process, he touches upon questions of context, motivation, desire, access, infrastructure, costs, and more than anything else, of personal desires and transformations that fuel the processes of change around us.

His emphasis on context, history, legacies and ecologies resonate with many of the contributors in this book, who zquestion, critique and offer new models of understanding the world of digital natives

Today's youth are intuitively, if not explicitly, aware of the importance of social capital to open up economic and social opportunities. Whereas our parents may have joined a social club, cooking class, or sports league to increase their social capital, today we are often more likely to search out similar interactions through the use of online spaces geared toward particular lifestyles, sub-cultures and interests. As social interactions with strangers begin online rather than offline, they become more numerous, more fleeting, and yet, paradoxically, more persistent as each person from our past remains just a search away.

Our ability to absorb knowledge: Information anxiety has become part of the human experience. As the amount of information made accessible grows exponentially, the percentage of available information we are able to process necessarily declines.

I believe that all generations are struggling as we move from a world of relative "information scarcity" to "information abundance". But youth are especially aware of the need to develop strategies and coping mechanisms to survive in a world with more information than any one person could come close to comprehending.

Our ability to create social change: For the purposes of this book, I am particularly interested in a final digital literacy — our ability to shape meaning out of information, and social change out of meaning. To better understand the evolution of how we change the world around us, we must look more closely at the social movements of our parents, and of today.

The youth of 1968

On New Year's Eve, 1967 French president Charles De Gaulle announced to the nation, "I greet the year 1968 with serenity. It is impossible to see how France today could be paralysed by crisis as she has been in the past". Little did he know what was yet to come. "There has never been a year like 1968, and it is unlikely there will ever be again," wrote Mark Kurlansky in his comprehensive book, 1968: The Year That Rocked the World[2].

Less than 25 years earlier, World War II had concluded with over 50 million dead, including an unprecedented number of civilians. Those who survived returned to their countries, cities and towns to experience the greatest period of economic growth since the peak of the Industrial Revolution. After World War II, much of the world experienced a surge in births and housing. In the West, liberal theories of childrearing gained currency. Public and higher education expanded like never before, as did corporations, chain stores, and mass marketing. Most importantly, this was the first generation to grow up with television, which had two profound, paradoxical effects: alienation and solidarity.

Alienation, solidarity and protest

In 1967, Guy Debord published his influential book *Society of the Spectacle,* which became one of many catalysts for the student-led protests in Paris the following year. For Debord, increasing corporatisation combined with the alluring power of mass media and slick marketing engendered a consumer culture in which our social interactions are mediated by the products we buy. "All that was once directly lived has become mere representation," he wrote. Mexican intellectual Octavio Paz argued that reality was beginning to imitate television more than television imitated reality. Alienation, the estrangement from a sense of community and meaning, was the key word that kept appearing in essays and on the walls. A 1968 poster hanging outside of Paris' Sorbonne University warned:

"The revolution which is beginning will call into question not only capitalist society but industrial society. The consumer society is bound for a violent death. Social alienation must vanish from history. We are inventing a new and original world. Imagination is seizing power."

While broadcast television was largely responsible for the "mere representation" of "all that was once directly lived", it was also the medium through which youth would learn to attract attention to their causes and inform themselves about the latest protests by like-minded peers around the world. Television, it can be argued, created a generation that was more self-aware and more globally united than ever before[3].

TV screens flashed images of major protests in communist, capitalist, and non-aligned countries throughout 1968. In the United States, the Civil Rights, Women's Liberation, Black Power, and anti-war movements were all at their peak. In Spain, students at the University of Madrid protested against the Franco regime and the presence of police on their campus. In Poland, 300 student protesters at the University of Warsaw were beaten by state-sponsored thugs and over a thousand were later jailed. Massive protests erupted in then-Yugoslavia on July 2, 1968 where Belgrade University students participated in a week-long hunger strike and handed out copies of the banned magazine, *Student*. In Brazil, military police killed a protesting teenager, which led to the country's first major protests against the military dictatorship. The University of Rome was shut down for two weeks following student protests against police violence. Over 10,000 students protested the Vietnam War in West Berlin. The Prague Spring brought Martin Luther King-inspired non-violence to Czechoslovakia, as tens of thousands protested against the impending invasion of Soviet forces. A 21-year-old Czech student, Jan Palach, set himself on fire in Prague's Wenceslas Square to protest against the suppression of free speech. In South Africa, protests erupted at Cape Town University when administrators withdrew an employment offer to a black professor. Japanese students protested against the presence of US troops in their country. In New York, Columbia University students took three school officials hostage in protest of allegedly racist school policies, while in Chicago thousands of anti-war protesters disrupted the Democratic National Convention. In Mexico City, an escalating series of conflicts between the police and student demonstrators eventually led

(while questioning the name itself!) and how we can make a sense of their actions and everyday practices. The emergent questions and the analyses help to reformulate what it means to 'act with technologies' and what are the benefits and costs of this move into the world of digital activism. In many ways, this essay provides a bridge between Book 1, To Be and this Book 3, To Act by letting us see how questions of identity and being get mapped and are shaped by the actions that technologies enable and allow, and the design of activism that defines the change that we want to become.

to a violent crackdown in Tlatelolco Plaza, which killed up to one hundred protesters and observers just weeks before the 1968 Summer Olympics. The following month Pakistani students launched a nation-wide campaign against an ordinance which empowered the military dictatorship to withdraw the degree of any student.

But the protest movement that is most emblematic of 1968 began in January at Paris' Nanterre University, a recent suburban extension of the Sorbonne that was based on the American model of an enclosed campus, rather than the traditional French universities, which were smaller and integrated into the city layout. In many ways, the corporate efficiency of the university campus and the suburban isolation of the students was representative of the social alienation documented by Debord the previous year. On January 26 administration officials called in the French riot police to quell a small demonstration against the lack of student facilities. Soon the student protest joined the anti-war movement, and by May 6 the French government unsuccessfully attempted to ban all public demonstrations. Daniel Cohn-Bendit, a German exchange student who was one of the original leaders of the small protest at Nanterre, was christened 'Danny the Red' by the media (as much for the colour of his hair as his politics), and became the unofficial, charismatic leader of the movement. "The catalyst for his fame," writes journalist Sean O'Hagen, "was television".[4]

In 1968 two technological innovations transformed the nightly news reports: The use of videotape, which was cheap and reusable, instead of film, and the same-day broadcast, which meant that often unedited images of rebellion were disseminated across continents almost as they happened. Student protesters in Berkeley and Columbia cheered their TV sets as footage from the Paris barricades made the American news in May, while French students took heart from images of the huge anti-war demonstrations now occurring across Europe and America.

"We met through television," Cohn-Bendit later said of his counterparts in other countries. "We were the first television generation." Indeed, the radicals had a much better grasp of the galvanising power of television than the politicians they were trying to overthrow. "A modern revolutionary group headed for the television, not for the factory," quipped the late Abbie Hoffman, one of the great political pranksters of 1968, who helped provoke a bloody battle between anti-war protesters and the Chicago police force at the Chicago Democratic convention. As the police attacked them, the protesters chanted: "The whole world is watching!" And, for the first time, it was.

While the causes and context behind each protest were unique, a shared spirit of revolution was communicated across television. "Be realistic, demand the impossible," ran one slogan in Paris that was later echoed by youth in other countries. Psychologists like Eric Erikson[5] argued that youth were merely searching for a unique identity, which caused them to rebel against the values and morals of their parents. But the youth themselves decried social alienation, the sense that they were purposefully isolated from the forces that would determine their individual and collective futures.

1968 in hindsight

In hindsight, and in balance, the protest movements of 1968 were largely failures. Significant civil rights advances were made in the United States, but the Franco regime continued in Spain, as did Brazil's military dictatorship. The demands of Mexican students were never met and justice was never brought to those responsible for the massacre. The Mexican student movement would later dissolve in fear of the increasingly oppressive government. By August, Soviet tanks rolled into Prague and remained until 1989. The temporary, weak alliance between the French labour and youth movements fell apart before the onset of winter. The Vietnam war continued, Apartheid in South Africa continued, Charles De Gaulle remained in power, and neither the capitalist, industrialist, nor consumer societies were overthrown. If anything, they expanded enormously over the following decades as most of the 1968 protesters eventually settled down with office jobs,

families of four, and homes in the suburbs. Richard Nixon won the 1968 US presidential election, a wave of violent military dictatorships took over Latin America, and by 1982 conservative prime minister Margaret Thatcher claimed, "We are reaping what was sown in the sixties... fashionable theories and permissive clap-trap set the scene for a society in which the old virtues of discipline and restraint were denigrated".

On the other hand, the Women's Liberation movement turned out to be one of the most influential and enduring. The global environmental movement was also born out of the late sixties. Cohn-Bendit is now a Green Party leader in the European parliament, and is referred to by the media as 'Danny the Green' rather than 'Danny the Red'. Tom Hayden, who was charged with conspiracy to cause violence in Chicago for his role in the protest against the National Democratic Convention, later became a California state congressman for 18 years, advocating for progressive environmental, labour, and foreign policies.

1968 was a collective catharsis, not a social revolution. But in the decades that followed, civil rights, gay rights, women's rights, and sovereign rights all expanded thanks to the enormous growth of higher education, and the sustained advocacy of civil society.

Growing up with a gameboy

I was born in 1980, two years before Margaret Thatcher claimed that we were reaping what was sown in the sixties. I was nine years old when crowds of East and West Germany chipped away at the Berlin wall, greeting each other with celebratory hugs. My parents let me stay up late into the night with a bowl of ice cream to witness the historic moment. The same year my father brought home our first computer, a Macintosh SE. Apple's first attempt at a fully enclosed, appliance-like desktop computer, the SE had a 20 megabyte hard drive, one megabyte of RAM, and an eight megahertz processor. In comparison, the cellphone in my pocket now has a 32,000 megabyte hard drive, 512 megabytes of RAM, and a 1,000 megahertz processor.

As a child, I would turn on the magical, new machine, head to the kitchen to make toast, and then return before the operating system was fully booted. Mostly I used it to play games, but the computer came bundled with a program called HyperCard[6], which was based on Ted Nelson's[7] theories of hypertext and hypermedia — forms of inter-linked, multimedia content that could not be represented on paper; to print it out was to lose its meaning. The most famous and lasting version of hypertext is the HyperText Markup Language, or HTML, which was developed in 1989, the same year that witnessed the fall of the Berlin Wall and the violent suppression of pro-democracy activists in China. Even as a nine-year-old boy, my early experience with the HyperCard program opened my eyes to the fact that the future of communication would be interactive, linked, and always evolving.

In 1989 the desktop computer was still not a reference source. Having already spent so much money on the Macintosh SE, my parents could not afford the illustrious Encyclopædia Britannica, despite the travelling salesmen's best efforts. Instead we opted for the more affordable 1988 edition of *World Book Encyclopedia*. In total, I read around 100 of its nearly 14,000 pages. By the early 1990s most new computers included CD-ROM drives. Unlike traditional floppy disks that stored less than a megabyte of information, compact discs stored nearly 700 megabytes. In 1993 Microsoft took advantage of this expansion of portable memory and released its *Microsoft Encarta* digital encyclopedia with nearly 50,000 unique entries, hundreds of images, a world atlas, and a comprehensive dictionary. Never before had so much knowledge taken up so little physical space. Throughout high school *Microsoft Encarta* became the go-to reference source for nearly every homework assignment. I quickly became accustomed to a startling new reality; the answer to my every question was just a quick search away. (In 2009 Microsoft discontinued *Microsoft Encarta;* Wikipedia now receives 98 percent of all visits made to online encyclopedias.)

In the fall of 1996 I signed up for my first Hotmail email account. That same year I signed up for an ICQ instant messaging account, and spent many nights chatting with the same friends I saw every day at school, but also occasionally with complete strangers. Throughout college (1998 - 2002) the internet was still something of a Wild West. On the one hand, it became more commercial with the launch of eBay, PayPal, Amazon, and thousands of other ventures that eventually burned out during the dot-com bust. On the other hand, many of the laid-off employees began contributing to open source programming languages, software programs, and platforms like PHP, the Firefox browser, and Wikipedia. Programmers began to focus on the development of websites that provide social value rather than sell products.

In 2002 I created my first social networking profile on Friendster. The next year I followed most of my friends to MySpace. By 2005 a regular day would include five or six updates to several different blogs, even more updates to profiles on MySpace and Facebook, a number of Skype voice calls with contacts around the world, and dozens of emails and IM conversations. As former Google CEO Eric Schmidt frequently points out[8], every two years the human species now creates as much information as we did from the dawn of humankind up until 2003. Likewise, a study by researchers at the University of California at San Diego found that in 2008 the average American consumed 34 gigabytes of information per day, an increase of about 350 percent since 1980.

I offer this personal account to demonstrate how I — and millions like me — grew up with new technologies that inevitably affected how I saw the world, and how I would try to change it.

The Arab Spring and beyond

In December 2009 I was in Beirut with some of the most active and activist bloggers[9] from across the Middle East and North Africa. The meeting, organised by Tunisian dissident Sami Ben Gharbia[10] — who would later play an instrumental role in the spring 2011 Tunisian uprising — brought influential Arabic-speaking bloggers and activists together to build a regional knowledge and support network. At some point during the discussions I grew restless. For years I had observed hundreds of well-intentioned online projects that strove to consolidate democracy, but I could point to few results. Just two months earlier I was in Kiev, Ukraine where hundreds of thousands of tech savvy[11] youth brought about the so-called Orange Revolution[12] of 2005 only to see it slowly dissipate into the same corruption and political clientelism as before[13]. Back at the meeting in Beirut, I turned to some of my new Egyptian friends and asked them just what they were hoping to accomplish. "Get Mubarak out of power," they replied in unison. That was their one goal, and they claimed that until it became a reality, it made no sense to focus on any others.

The year in protests, so far

The worldwide protests of 2011 go far beyond what the media have dubbed the 'Arab Spring'. In November 2010 students rallied in central London against the government's increase of school fees[14]. Though the hike in tuition narrowly passed, the protests were seen as largely successful in holding politicians to a far greater level of scrutiny and accountability than they were accustomed to. As the media emphasised, the protests were organised almost completely using online tools[15].

Just as the UK student protests began to wind down, a new movement was building in Tunisia, where well-organised opposition groups took advantage of escalating protests against youth unemployment and high food prices to ouster long-time authoritarian leader Zine El Abidine Ben Ali. Once again, commentators cited social media as instrumental tools in organising the protests. Andrew Sullivan and others quickly dubbed it a "Wikileaks Revolution"[16], ignoring years of on-the-ground constituency-building by groups like Nawaat[17]. The successful movement to ouster Ben Ali inspired similar opposition groups throughout the Middle East and North Africa. Egyptian protesters were able to force out[18] president Hosni Mubarak in just three

weeks — after nearly 30 years of dictatorial rule. Major protest movements also took place — and continue to take place — in Libya[19], Bahrain[20], Syria[21], Yemen[22], Algeria[23], Iraq[24], Jordan[25], Morocco[26], and Oman[27].

Meanwhile, in Europe, austerity measures provoked the so-called Desperate Youth[28] of Portugal and the May of Facebook[29] movement in Greece. In nearby Spain tens of thousands of mostly youth protesters camped out in Madrid's Puerta del Sol Plaza, demanding their very own Spanish Revolution[30]. The movement was rooted in the Real Democracy Now[31] online platform, which called for the evolution of political representation to catch up with the pace of technological innovation. The acampadas or "camps", of protesters throughout Spain then inspired similar youth protests in Guatemala, Mexico, Brazil, and El Salvador — all of which were organised on Twitter and Facebook.

The protest fever also spread to Sub-Saharan Africa. Gabonese activists both inside the country and abroad used social media to draw attention to the human rights abuses[32] of president Ali Bongo Ondimba, son of long-time strongman Omar Bongo. In Senegal, the Twitter hashtag #ticketwade was used to organise successful protests against a proposed constitutional amendment that would change electoral rules[33]. In Uganda, the government went so far as to request that internet service providers block access to Facebook and Twitter[34] as anti-government protests built-up amid rising food and gas prices.

In Latin America social media have been instrumental in organising protests against violence in Mexico[35], a university tuition hike in Puerto Rico[36], and a proposed hydro-electric dam in Chile[37]. Even in the United States, long free of traditional protest movements, social media have helped bring together students and unions[38] in opposition to proposed legislation that takes rights away from workers. Tens of thousands of Malaysians organised a Bersih 2.0[39] rally to push through electoral reforms. As I write, a streaming video of student protests[40] against the privatisation of education in Chile hangs in the background on my desktop. Tech-savvy activists taped an iPhone to a balloon and live-streamed the day's protests to thousands of viewers across the world.

Out of work, losing hope

Just halfway into 2011, the protests of 1968 ("the year that rocked the world") look minor in comparison. It would be wrong, however, to view today's protest movements only through the prism of technology. We must also consider social, environmental, political, and economic factors.

A few months before British students began organising their protest movement on social networks, the United Nations' International Labour Organization released an extensive report[41] on youth unemployment which warned of a "lost generation" of young people who have given up their search for meaningful work. According to the report, "of some 620 million economically active youth aged 15 to 24 years, 81 million were unemployed at the end of 2009 — the highest number ever". Not only were they under-employed, but many were "over-educated", having taken out massive school loans while trusting the advice of their parents and politicians that a university degree was the fast track certificate to financial stability.

In 1968, Western youth reacted to social alienation, a by-product of years of economic and middle class growth. Rapid industrialisation created factory and office jobs with decent salaries but often numbing work routines. The suburbanisation of residential areas stifled self-expression and induced uniformity. Unlike their grandparents who grew up during the depression, or their parents who grew up during times of war, the youth of 1968 had all of their basic needs (food, shelter, safety) met. But their higher needs (a sense of belonging, esteem, self-actualisation) were still wanting. Similarly, the youth of today are also products of extreme, global economic growth. Even taking the 2008 financial crisis into account, the

entire global economy doubled in size from 2000 - 2010[42]. In 2009 The Economist magazine declared[43] that "for the first time in history more than half the world is middle-class". Furthermore, according to World Bank data[44], all levels of school enrollment have skyrocketed over the past ten years.

In other words, depending on your definitions and methodologies, a majority of youth across the world are now growing up in middle class homes and attending secondary education[45]. They enter adulthood with greater schooling, skills, and expectations than their parents, but rarely with secure employment. The invention of the automobile created millions of jobs in the 20th century, whereas one of today's most talked-about companies, Facebook, has just over 1,000 employees. Today's youth grew up ready to take on the world, but too many are left working in coffee shops and supermarkets.

Around the world this phenomenon was quickly adapted by local politicians and pundits. Writing for Bloomberg Businessweek, Peter Coy offers[46] an assortment of buzzwords:

"In Tunisia, the young people who helped bring down a dictator are called *hittistes*—French-Arabic slang for those who lean against the wall. Their counterparts in Egypt, who on February 1 forced president Hosni Mubarak to say he won't seek re-election, are the *shabab atileen*, unemployed youths. The *hittistes* and *shabab* have brothers and sisters across the globe. In Britain, they are NEETs—Not in Education, Employment, or Training. In Japan, they are *freeters*: an amalgam of the English word 'freelance' and the German word *arbeiter*, or 'worker'. Spaniards call them *mileuristas*, meaning they earn no more than 1,000 euros a month. In the US, they're 'boomerang' kids who move back home after college because they can't find work. Even fast-growing China, where labour shortages are more common than surpluses, has its 'ant tribe'—recent college graduates who crowd together in cheap flats on the fringes of big cities because they can't find well-paying work."

In Mexico they are called 'ninis' — shorthand for "neither studies nor works" — and they have been blamed by pundits for the increase in the country's violence. One governor even went so far as to propose[47] mandatory military service for all Mexican youth who are not enrolled in school or employed.

They let us down

It is all too easy to assume that unemployed youth are taking to the streets because they have nothing else to do, but such a conclusion ignores some crucial factors. Young people in the United States who "grew up green" were dismayed by Obama's bailout of the automobile industry, a 20th century technology that will continue to cause environmental harm, but offers few new jobs for young people. Why not invest the $25 billion in research and development to create employment in the renewable energy sector?

Then came the bailout of the financial sector in the United States and Europe. Banks propped up with over a trillion dollars of taxpayer money in 2008 and 2009 went on to reward their irresponsible executives with obscenely large bonuses. The US and EU bailed out private banks with taxpayer money, and then went on to make major cuts in the public sector, including education and social security.

The price of commodities has soared. World food prices have more than doubled since 1990 and Oxfam predicts[48] that the trend will only accelerate over the next 20 years. Higher gas prices raise the cost of daily commutes, winter heating, and summer vacation. But the oil companies are not only taking in record profits; they also receive $4 billion a year in taxpayer subsidies in the United States[49].

Privatisation trends are also igniting protests. The ongoing privatisation of education, for example, was behind the major protests in the UK and Chile[50], as were successive increases in tuition for higher education. Once seen as a right for all, higher education is increasingly a privilege for the wealthy.

Finally, over the past 20 years, the implementation of electoral democracy has expanded significantly from Eastern Europe to Southeast Asia to Latin America and Sub-Saharan Africa. But the symbolic right to vote (think of all those Newsweek covers with a raised purple finger) has expanded at a faster pace than the institutions and characteristics on which real representative democracy depends, such as freedom of press, civic participation, and accountability.

In short, the youth of today have plenty to be fed up about, but, like the youth of 1968, they have mostly been excluded from the powers and policies that will decide their future. Instead, they have taken their activism to the internet and, increasingly, to the streets.

Anti-power and counter-power

Long before the protests of 2011 began to take shape, an entire pseudo-academic industry emerged in the publishing houses and conference auditoriums of major cities to repeatedly dissect a seemingly simple question: Do social media cause social revolutions? On one end of the spectrum, Evgeny Morozov, the very person who popularised[51] the term "Twitter Revolution" in the spring of 2009, went on to publish *The Net Delusion* [52], a stinging critique of the use of online tools to foment protest and revolution. On the other end of the spectrum was Andrew Sullivan who seemed to proclaim "the revolution will be Twittered"[53] every time more than 50 people gathered in a public place. Then New Yorker contributor Malcolm Gladwell jumped in the fray to have a go at explaining "why the revolution will not be tweeted"[54]. A week later Turkish professor Zeynep Tufekci penned[55] an extensive takedown of Gladwell's poorly received article, which one commentator referred to as his "tripping point". Somewhere in the middle of all this back and forth were Clay Shirky [56] and Ethan Zuckerman [57] who argue that social media are powerful new instruments in the toolbox of activists, but that the success of any movement depends on how those tools — and others — are used by the activists themselves.

Strangely, there was one question that all the pundits seemed equally willing to ignore: What happens after all the protests and revolutions?

University of Texas professor Dave Parry eventually declared on his blog that social media have indeed proven effective at stirring up revolution, but then he asked, "Are they bad for democracy?"[58]. What if social media tools incentivise incessant protest rather than the new forms of civic participation and transparency necessary for a functioning 21st century democracy?

The Egyptian activists I met in Beirut were successful at forcing Mubarak out of power, but what will come next? There are still no signs of a functioning government, or plans for new democratic institutions, and yet many of the same protesters continue to raise their fists in Tahrir Square, though their motivations are murky. A 62-year-old homemaker, passing by the broken bottles and stones from yet another clash between police and youth, asked[59]: "What's all this for? Commodities are expensive; life isn't any better. What have these youth and protests done for us?" Writing for Al Jazeera, Esther Dyson expressed[60] her concern that Egyptian youth are not yet aware that running a government is not as easy as "running a Facebook group".

Again, Dave Parry [61]:
"While generally I am a cautious optimist when it comes to the question of does social media enable people to resist and coordinate against oppressive regimes, I am far more skeptical on the question of whether or not social media-powered revolutions yield stability. They might be really good in the short term, but the attributes which make social media powerful in the short term, might also be a hindrance in the long term."

To frame the problem, Parry borrows two concepts from sociologist John Holloway[62]: counter-power and anti-power. Counter-power is an attempt to

replace one power structure with another. Most traditional revolutionary conflicts have begun this way, with an opposition movement that attempts to replace the group currently in power. For example, Ukraine's Orange Revolution sought to replace the government of Viktor Yanukovych with that of Viktor Yushchenko, who was seen by the youth as less corrupt and more modern. Or, reaching back even further, Mao Zedong inspired Chinese peasants to overthrow Chiang Kai-shek and the Chinese Nationalist Party. Anti-power, on the other hand, aims not to substitute power structures, but rather to undo the current power structure without any notion of what ought to come next. It is easier to build a coalition around anti-power because the framing of resistance rests solely on what's wrong, not on what ought to be done. "In the case of Egypt, the movement seems to me more constituted by anti-power — get rid of the current regime; and less around any other institution replacing the existing one," writes[63] Parry. "The protestors were clearly saying no to Mubarak but what kind of power they were saying yes to was less than clear."

No protest movement of 2011 is more representative of anti-power than the so-called 'Spanish Revolution'. "This isn't a protest against any particular politician or political party," remarked one protester, "this is a rejection of the entire political class". In fact, the most commonly cited success of the protest movement is a lack of voter turnout[64] in the May elections.

Spanish discontentment consolidated in 2008 when then-president José Luis Rodríguez Zapatero approved a government bailout of the financial sector similar to the bailout approved by his American counterpart, Barack Obama. Soon Spain's public debt skyrocketed. As journalist Bernardo Gutiérrez recounts[65], "while unemployment reached record highs in 2010, the 35 largest companies at Madrid's stock market announced profits of 50 billion euros, 24.5 percent more than in 2009. Telefónica caused an outcry when the company fired 6,000 workers in Spain while announcing EUR 450 million in bonuses to its executives and 6.9 billion in dividends to its shareholders". Resentment among Spain's mostly unemployed youth then turned into outrage when the government passed the highly controversial internet regulatory legislation known as Ley Sinde, which allows for the shutdown of any website without due process. Significantly, Gutiérrez notes that while 92 percent of Spanish youth are regular internet users, only 10 percent of Spanish MPs use Twitter. Networks of activists converged around the online platform Real Democracy Now![66] which called for a massive demonstration against the political class, and for ... well, it's not exactly certain.

If Guy Debord's *Society of the Spectacle* was the intellectual fountainhead of 1968, then it is another Frenchman, the 93-year-old Stéphane Hessel, whose book *Time of Outrage* [67] is to be found in the backpacks and iPads of European protesters today. The thin booklet, which calls on readers to get angry about the state of modern society, even topped the Christmas bestseller list in France[68]. Hessel, who was tortured by the Nazis for his resistance during World War II, says that it is time to resist the "international dictatorship of the financial markets" by defending the "values of modern democracy". But that is essentially where he leaves readers. The French philosopher Luc Ferry, responded with an open letter in *Le Figaro,* which admonishes Hessel for inciting outrage without offering any constructive suggestions. Indignation, writes Ferry, is a sentiment "that is applied only to others, never to oneself, and real morality starts with demands one makes on oneself". Prime minister François Fillon added that "nothing would be less French than apathy and indifference, but indignation for indignation's sake is not a way of thinking". In other words, Ferry and Fillon criticise Hessel for encouraging anti-power resistance without offering any constructive proposal.

Some critics say that the rhetoric of Stéphane Hessel and the Spanish Revolution smack of 1968 utopianism, but for Michel Bauwens "the relative indeterminacy of the Spanish movement is not a bug, but a feature". He even declares[69] that the protest movement in Spain is the "Ground Zero for

the start of a process towards deep transformation of our civilization and political economy". It has been said that the protests in Spain were in part inspired by similar protests in Iceland[70] and neighbouring Portugal[71]. Buoying Bauwens thesis, the Spanish protesters then inspired peers in Greece, and now across the world with the Take the Square![72] campaign, which has registered over 800 protests on its map so far[73]. It calls on readers to keep organising such protest campouts far into the future until global revolution is achieved.

The future of youth activism

The majority of people in the world are under the age of 30, and more than a quarter of the world's population is under 15. As they enter adulthood they will take for granted their ability to connect to the internet at any time. In fact, the dichotomy between "connected" and "disconnected" will likely fade into history.

It should not surprise us that today's youth activists are using internet tools to provoke social change. The mutually dependent relationship between technology and activism has a long, complicated history. Anti-slave trade activists took advantage of the invention of the printing press. E.D. Morel and his supporters in Congo Free State depended on the newly released one-click Kodak Brownie camera[74] to expose the gruesome violence of Belgian forced labour in Africa. The Women's Suffrage movement made use of the newly invented international postage stamp to create the world's first global rights movement, which also led to international support against foot-binding in China and widow-burning in India. In other words, young activists have always adopted new technologies to push for social progress.

The youth of 1968 grew up with television; we grew up with the internet, and we have incorporated it into our daily lives for better and worse. A far more difficult question then is - what do the youth want? How do they envision their future and the future of their governments?

An informal survey of internet-assisted activism[75] over the past few years suggests a rudimentary taxonomy of approaches:

Anti-power: First and foremost, we can expect to see the continuation of anti-power protests that demand for the resignation of the political class without offering any concrete proposals for what should replace it. Young activists are not yet willing to suggest a return to the socialist forms of governance that have slowed growth in countries like Vietnam, Cuba, Laos, and Nepal. But they also realise that current forms of democratic governance tend to favour the already wealthy and powerful. Recent data from the World Bank[76] suggests that global economic inequality is higher than had been previously estimated, and that inequality continues to grow along with youth unemployment. Until these trends begin to reverse, we can expect global youth to demand the resignation of those responsible for the policies that disadvantage them. As we have seen in the cases of Egypt and Spain, however, such movements could lead to an endless cycle of protest, rather than the implementation of real social change.

Hacktivism: When MasterCard, Visa, Amazon, Paypal, Swiss Postal Finance, and others refused to process donations to Wikileaks following the release of secret US diplomatic cables, a loose network of activists calling themselves 'Anonymous' launched Operation Payback,[77] an attack on the companies' servers which rendered them inaccessible for up to an entire day. Wikileaks itself exemplifies the spirit of hacktivism[78], using technology to threaten the privileged position of the powerful through the use of radical transparency. In the past month alone the hacktivist groups Anonymous and Lulzsec have attacked several government websites[79] in Brazil, Chile, and Venezuela. In Peru a group calling itself 'Piratas de la Red' hacked into a Peruvian police database and published the names of special force police officers[80]. The Mexican chapter of Anonymous even gained access to the database of the Federal Elections Institute[81] just one day before crucial elections in Mexico State. Some commentators, like Evgeny Morozov[82], claim that denial of service (DDoS) attacks are a legit form of civil disobedience while

others, like Benjamin Greenberg[83], say such attacks are an affront to free speech. While most media coverage of hacktivism focuses on attacks against the servers of governments and major corporations, human rights organisations are also frequently affected[84].

Public policy advocacy: Many, perhaps most youth activists are drawn to anti-power forms of protest, but others focus their time on reforming public policy. In Mexico, for example, activists were able to repeal a federal tax increase on internet access by launching the #InternetNecesario campaign[85], which drew massive online participation, led to a debate with members of congress, and the tax's eventual repeal. Such campaigns can also target the policies of corporations. In 2010 Greenpeace launched an effective campaign[86] to pressure Nestlé to stop using palm oil from plantations that are linked to deforestation. Over the past few years 'new media advocacy' has transformed from its grassroots beginnings to become an entire industry of consultants who explain to NGOs how to use social media to increase donations, build up mailing lists, and influence politicians. As such activism formalises into institutions, however, it also tends to drive young people away.

Open data: Another movement that aims for reform rather than overthrow is the Open Data community, which calls on governments to provide its citizens with access to raw data that can be analysed, visualised and re-used in applications[87]. For years groups like Sunlight Foundation[88] and Open Knowledge Foundation89 have promoted the use of Open Data in the US and UK respectively, but they are now joined by the likes of Garage Lab[90] in Argentina, Open Data Mexico91, Fundación Ciudadano Inteligente[92] in Chile, the World Wide Web Foundation[93] in Ghana, Janaagraha[94] in India, Afrographique[95] in South Africa, and SODNET[96] in Kenya. These organisations are young and tech savvy. They believe that greater access and use of government information will lead to greater accountability and more civic participation.

Public constituency: A common criticism of internet-assisted activism is that it only empowers groups that have access to computers, smart phones, and internet connections; in other words, the middle and upper classes. It is for this reason that we should not be surprised that internet users in Mexico carried out a successful campaign against a federal tax on internet access. But, unsurprisingly, we have yet to observe any online campaigns for access to potable water in rural villages. A truly representative democracy requires a representative public constituency, where the voices of all citizens are heard; not just the urban elites. Groups like Rising Voices[97] and Digital Democracy[98] work with under-represented communities to educate them on the use of online tools to increase civic presence and engagement. Similar projects work around the world at the local level - including in many public libraries - but they tend to attract a smaller share of participation from youth activists.

Autonomy: Finally, we see a segment of youth activists that seem to care little about either reforming or overthrowing the government. They use social networks and technology to improve their own communities without any government involvement at all. Residents of Guadalajara and Mexico City grew tired of city governments that ignored their pleas for bike lanes and pedestrian crosswalks. They formed an online community[99] that meets offline once a week to paint a new bike lane or crosswalk in a zone identified as dangerous for pedestrians and cyclists. They have even printed out "wiki-tickets"[100] to place on vehicles parked on sidewalks and crosswalks. In China the 1KG[101] project (short for "one more kilogram in your backpack") encourages urban youth to take school books with them on their travels to rural China. They have distributed textbooks to over 1,000 rural schools without any government involvement. The "guerilla gardening"[102] movement aims to make effective use of municipal land that has been ignored by the government and absentee property owners. Activists in Taiwan, for example, regularly reclaim neglected areas of Taipei[103] to create community gardens with a strong focus on herbal medicine and acupuncture. It is doubtful that we will see a return to the kind of "turn on, tune in, drop out" activism of the 1960s, which led to experiments in communal, off-the-grid living, but it would not be surprising to see

a reactionary movement that emphasises autonomy and local community.

These six approaches to internet-assisted activism should not be seen as exclusive and contradictory, but rather overlapping and complementary. Many of the same young activists who paint guerilla crosswalks on Saturday afternoon are also lobbying congress on Tuesday and visualising government data on Thursday. In 1968 images of youth raising their fists in angry defiance splashed across television screens and created the world's first global social catharsis. The protests of that year now seem minor compared to what has taken place so far in 2011, led by the first generation of youth to grow up with computers. Still, it remains to be seen what, if anything, we will achieve with our growing networks of activists as we face economic inequality, youth unemployment, food shortages, and climate change.

Some, like Michel Bauwens, see "the start of a process towards deep transformation of our civilization and political economy" while others predict much more of the same political infighting and government secrecy. What young activists have already shown is that there is agency in their activities. They have already overthrown dictators, repealed unjust laws, and called the world's attention to stories that the mainstream media were too willing to ignore. As George Landow once remarked, "technology always confers power to someone. It gives power to those who possess it, those who can use it, those who have access to it". A slightly simplistic interpretation is that technology confers power to young people. What we will do with that power will be for future historians to contemplate.

This essay is not a blanket criticism against anti-power activism. Indeed, in countries such as Egypt and Tunisia, the old political class must be removed in order to create spaces for new forms of accountability and participation to blossom. Too often, however, anti-power mobilisations lose their strength and unity once the old political class is forced out. Though "good governance" is not nearly as sexy as revolutionary slogans, anti-power activism must go hand in hand with movements for transparency, constituency building, and smart policy to bring about a truly progressive future.

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3.2 DIGITAL NATIVES & POLICY MAKING: THOUGHTS ON PARTICIPATION

by
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ESSAY

In the digital world, different types of digital devices have become vital tools to register events and news. However, more importantly, they are being used by digital natives to share information about their world, their personal lives, and also to foster participation around public interest issues. In the later, technologies are used to transform a passive consumer into an important source of information and at the same time an active protagonist of social change.

In this new scenario, which is profoundly affected by the digital revolution, present generations eagerly contribute to the decision-making processes that deeply affect our lives. There are critics that state that cyberactivism or the use of social networks is just a way through which digital natives avoid the responsibility of engaging in a more effective form of action. We set out to analyse what in fact is the exact role that digital natives and digital immigrants play in fostering citizen participation through the use of Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs), thus clarifying the importance of these practices.

The present article aims to offer a brief conceptual analysis of how the development of the internet and digital technologies can enable different and new ways of participation and share some emblematic examples from Brazil of digital natives' participation in public issues.

Digital revolution and collaboration

Many authors say we are going through a revolutionary era. The denominations coined along this process vary in the attempt to define this innovative period: "Digital Revolution"[1]; "Entertainment Revolution"[2]; "Digital Era"[3]; "Era of Information"[4], and; "Era of Information Technology"[5] are just a few examples of the expressions created by scholars and specialists.

Jack Balkin, professor of Yale, defines this digital revolution as the "creation and widespread availability of technologies that make it easy to copy, modify, annotate, collate, transmit, and distribute content by storing it in digital form. These technologies also include the development of vast communication networks that connect every part of the world for the purpose of distributing digital content".[6]

Digital technology, combined with internet infrastructure, distinguishes itself from the traditional media in a very substantive manner: It is a two-way communicative platform, through which participants are not just passive receivers of content. The importance of these digital tools is that they enable the creation of a new communicative environment, which permits anyone, at a much more affordable price than in the recent past, to transmit their ideas with an unprecedented ease. Thanks to these characteristics, this environment permits the foundation of new spaces for debating public and private issues. And digital natives and immigrants are taking advantage of the internet and the digital tools.

The question that arises in this article, though, departs from the public interest perspective. Does the use of digital technologies truly improve the level or quality of digital natives' influence in public policies as well as the decision-making processes?

Is the public debate on social networks, really effective? To what extent does it impact public issues?

To defend that new technology fosters participation, which can be stated quite safely, let us briefly remember Yochai Benkler's conception of "loose affiliation". Benkler explains that within the new technological environment "individuals can do more in loose affiliation with others, rather than requiring stable, long-term relations, like co-worker relations or participation in formal organisations, to underwrite effective cooperation. (...) As collaboration among far-flung individuals becomes more common, the idea of doing things that require cooperation with others becomes much more attainable, and the range of projects individuals can choose as their own therefore qualitatively increases".[7]

Benkler argues that the fluidity and low commitment required in the cooperative relationship increases the range and diversity of relations that people can join in. Therefore, loose affiliation creates new forms of collaboration and enables the emergence of new collaborative projects which people can form and participate in.

The question that rises is if this concept of loose affiliation aided by the characteristics of two-way participation is able to improve digital native access to public policy. Despite the potential that digital technologies offer, it does not erase social inequalities and cannot ensure that all sides and voices are heard in the discussion. The main obstacle to participation in the digital era is the lack of access, which is more visible in emerging economies.

Looking beyond access to infrastructure, participation also revolves around skills and inclusion. What types of conversations are happening on what type of platforms by which type of users? When analysing digital natives' participation and collaboration it is important to be aware of exactly how these tools are functioning and who the users are.

A recent article[8] in *The Economist*, based on Danah Boyd's research on social/racial discrimination, said that while almost 80 percent of internet users in Brazil used Orkut, there has been an exodus of well-off Brazilian internet users from Orkut to Facebook. The Brazilian elite abandoned Orkut and in a way segregated and stigmatised Orkut's users. Understanding these digital social manoeuvre helps us realise that the elites are (un)consciously shaping a sort of "social media ghetto" which narrows the potential and decreases the value of social media as a participation tool.

According to Danah Boyd's report: "Facebook's architecture makes it easy for groups to remain closed. For example, it suggests new friends using an algorithm that looks at existing ones. But simpler, more open networks also permit self-segregation. On Twitter, members can choose to 'follow' anyone they like, and can form groups by embedding words and shortened phrases known as 'hashtags' in their messages."

Benkler points to loose affiliation as a positive characteristic that increases an individual's autonomy. We can say that the very fluidity and low-level of commitment required to participate in any collaboration effort (and in our case, in a public interest causes), specially in the "networked economy", may constitute one of its frailties, since influencing public policies requires, in most of the cases, an advanced level of organisation, persistence and commitment.

This is the opinion of Malcom Gladwell[9], who argues that in most cases of activism that involve some kind of risk, the level of dropouts and commitment to the cause is defined by the personal connection of the individual to the movement. In other words, high-risk activism would be a strong-tie phenomenon. The weak-tie relationships of the social networks (somehow defined by the loose affiliation idea exposed by Benkler) would seldom lead to high-risk activism. More than this, traditional activism possesses the advantage of being hierarchically organised. While cyberactivism and social media are organised in the form of a network, with all their advantages; "being

more resilient and adaptable in low risk situations", and disadvantages; "having a real difficulty reaching consensus and setting goals"[10].

Considering this critique, let's dig a little deeper in how digital technologies can serve as a platform for social activism and on the role of digital natives and immigrants in fostering engagement in public debate.

a) Fostering participation and collaboration

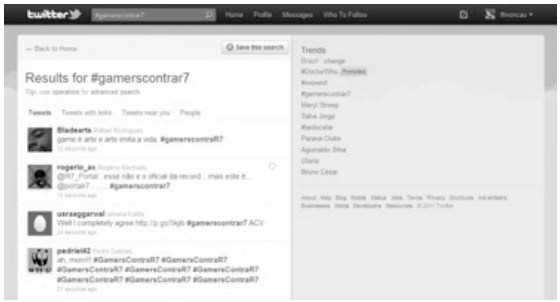
Benkler observed that technology made it easier for individuals to express themselves, access information, and work in collaboration with others. It enabled the new generations to be part of the policymaking dialogue through facilitating more effective participation and interaction. This can point towards a possible solution to very well-known problems of the offline environment.

While we write this article, people from all over Brazil are using Twitter and Facebook to express and spread their discontent about a television report that associates games and violent behaviour to a tragic episode that occurred on April 7th, 2011 in Rio de Janeiro. The news reported that an armed man entered a public school and killed 13 children. His enthusiasm for games explained his cruel behaviour. Using the Twitter hashtag #gamerscontraR7 thousands of social network users expressed their unhappiness on the biased coverage.

Through the new tools placed at their disposal, the younger generation was able to express their disagreement to the Brazilian television news coverage on the event. Adding to the Twitter and Facebook claims, a YouTube user posted a video[11] criticising most of the news' rationales. By the time we finished this article, at least four other videos were uploaded[12], some of them created by users who were debating other important and relevant issues related to the games environment (taxes, age ratings, bills on congress).

While there is no doubt that digital natives are producing different kinds of changes, not all changes easily get identified as change. Often the vocabulary, the process of engagement, the structure of negotiation and the site of activity are so diverse that digital natives' practices often go unrecognised. Additionally, it becomes diffcult to figure out what change means. Whose change are we talking about anyway? Should it be change that gets recognised by dominant developoment discourse? Is it change only if it subscribes to the existing ideas of social change? In our conversations with digital natives we often found that their ambitions of change – the things they want to change – are often in synergy with the earlier generations' imagination of social change. However, the way they articulate these ambitions of change and the models of participation and mobilisation that they subscribe to are radically different from traditional activism. The stories that we hear about digital natives producing change are often the stories that reinforce older ideas of change. These stories locate digital natives in an unchanging rubric of civic action and social change. One of the ambitions of this project is to start looking at digital natives' own perceptions and ideas about what constitutes change and their role as change makers. This approach allows us to evaluate their actions and intentions through their own lenses instead of evaluating them through parameters which might miss out on the nuances of their everyday practice and the potentials for social change and political participation embedded therein.

Ironically, the very possibilities of change – remix, reuse, share – are often the basis upon which digital natives are villified. The large scale paranoia propagated by defenders of rigid intellectual property rights, treat digital natives as pirates or thieves, lobbying for strict regulation and censorship of their everyday activities. Even the biggest champions of digital natives' choices and relationship with digital content, have expressed cautiously, the need to "rehabilitate" these young users of technologies into existing Intellectual Property regimes through education and teaching. However, we need to start examining how these digital natives are not merely



The #gamescontrar7 on second place in Twitter Trending Topics for Brazil

The reason why #gamerscontraR7 gained such momentum is at par to Benkler's perception of a new way of expression and interaction, which makes joining a movement extremely easy in the online environment. Besides that, new tools and applications make interactions richer and increase their range. People can like the YouTube video that criticised the news report, share it through Twitter, Facebook and Orkut, and encourage their friends and followers to use the hashtag in order to reject the broadcaster rationale. But despite this clear progress of improved participation, we need to think what we can achieve with all of this. In other words, what are the real results that can be achieved through these kinds of interactions? Can it reach congressmen and other decision-makers? Would this network be able to organise a protest if a bill that prohibits games was proposed in the Parliament?

b) Challenges to online participation

Even though participation in the public debate is made easier by digital tools, the effectiveness of digital participation still faces important challenges. Some were already present in the offline environment, and reappeared in the digitally mediated spaces. But new challenges, typical to the online world, can also be envisioned.

An old problem is the difficulty that organised groups and individuals face in making their claims reach the decision-makers (such as congressmen and governments) and inform public policies. In fact, the state commonly follows a set of rules and bureaucracy that prescribes specific forms in which it will receive contributions from the public. Moreover, there are some lobbying strategies that can make an organisation or individual communicate more effectively. Considering that the distinguishing character of online participation lies in the lack of hierarchy, the question of how one can define an effective communication strategy or build capacity for lobbying efforts, remains unanswered.

Both in the on- and offline world it is possible to observe a general dissatisfaction among social networks who are concerned with public policy and are not able to create direct change. No one knows how to effectively provoke and attract the government's or a public official's attention to its cause in order to initiate a change in a process. Below we will elaborate on two emblematic cases that were successful in overcoming this challenge.

A typical online challenge is related to this idea of "loose affiliation" created by Benkler and explored by Gladwell. The question that arises is:

> How does one take full advantage of a group of people who are only interested in participating with a low level of commitment? Is it possible to keep the crowd organised and force policy-making changes inside traditional representative institutions like the Congress or government ministries? How does one avoid the dispersion of this crowd, surpassing the problems created by the weak-ties that bind online activists and the lack of hierarchical structure that define the networks?

As these ideas are apparently in conflict with the notion of "loose affiliation". One could think that organising this disordered, fragmented and anarchic movement would diminish its very strength. It will create excessive responsibilities and costs to garner the attention of a crowd that might be interested in participating only sporadically. Analysing two interesting cases, we intend to show that this is not necessarily true.

Two emblematic cases

(i) The Ficha-Limpa case

The Ficha-Limpa case started in 1997, when a catholic organisation Conferência Nacional dos Bispos do Brasil (CNBB) led a movement to present the Congress a bill aiming to prevent the candidature of corrupt politicians. The means to achieve this goal was to propose a law that would forbid any citizen who had criminal offenses on his record to run up for any public position.

As corruption is considered to be a major problem in Brazil, this was an enormous challenge to be overcome and there was great expectation for the proposal. The bill was presented in Congress in 2009 as a popular-initiative proposal, containing more than 1.6 million signatures. Nevertheless, when it came for deliberation in Congress, the bill encountered a strong opposition.

Internet participation came onto the scene through the international NGO Avaaz. Avaaz played an important role in building up public pressure for the bill's approval by channelising voices of a great number of people who were not in the front of the battle, but who supported the bill's approval.

Avaaz used its network (emails, Twitter, Facebook and Orkut) to overcome the challenges of loose affiliation and served as an intermediary between the general public and the public officials. The NGO gathered contributions from the crowd and translated it into one (or many) bureaucracy-readable document, which for example took the form of a petition with thousands of signatures. In addition Avaaz used its network to mobilise cyberactivists to send thousands of identical emails, and flooded the inbox of Congress representatives, of the president or of specific public officials. Using its know-how in public-interest advocacy, Avaaz defined an efficient strategy and was able to present the general public's interest and feeling to the state and advance the cause.

having fun" in their engagement with digital and cultural content, but are actually recalibrating the political and economic structures of knowledge production, consumption and distribution.

The new communicative environments find an interesting explication in Maria Del Mar's essay (Book 3, To Act). Del Mar builds a case study of Cronicas Ciuadadanas in Paraguay, where the ABC Colour newspaper opened up its website to citizen journalism. Harnessing the wisdom of the crowds, they asked their readers to upload images and videos taken through their mobile devices, as an instance of something they would like to change. The material started pouring in fast and documentation ranged from potholes on the streets to drivers violating traffic rules. With new information trickling in everyday, the site soon became the finger on the pulse of the local situation and concerns of citizens. Citizen reports with many endorsements or comments eventually also became action points for the newspaper to impact change patterns. Such forms of environments where individual knowledge and institutional abilities can come together are quickly changing the topography of citizen action and engagement.

Benkler's idea is also relfected in David Sasaki's essay (Book 3, To Act) that looks at the multiplicity of activities that get clubbed under the digital natives umbrella. Sasaki points out that the loose affiliations are not merely between the actors within the movement of change but also within the actions of change. So it is highly possible that on Monday a digital native might hack Paypal, on Wednesday s/he might march the streets for a political demonstration and on Friday, click on a petition to support it. These myriad form of activities ensure, in fact, that the politically-motivated digital native, who wants to produce change, has many avenues for engagement which would not have been available about ten years ago.

The image retrieved from the Avaaz campaign for the Ficha-Limpa law says: Sign to end corruption.

Contact is one of Avaaz's strategy to keep people engaged. Every time a user registers to take action in one specific cause, they save her contact with them for future involvement in different causes. By doing this, the organisation has managed to create an interesting form of solving or mitigating the problem of the activists' dispersion. With this mechanism, it accomplishes the task of avoiding the dismantlement of the movement before it reaches the final and desired result, and does this without creating barriers or excessive costs for people to act in loose affiliation with others.

In an interview[13] Graziela Tanaka, one of the campaign coordinators of Avaaz, confirms the role of the organisation as a channel to transform the general public "clicks" into a more effective form of social pressure for change.

Reporter: How do you make the act of mobilisation something more than a simple click?

Graziela: The work of mobilisation goes much beyond the 'click' on a web page. 'Avaaz' means 'voice' in many languages and our mission makes it clear that we bring the voice of the civil society to moments of political decision. The click is a form of representation of people around the world, but beyond that, someone needs to work to make sure these voices are represented, help in decision-making process, and reach the decision-makers. We have the commitment to create a political bridge and we count through traditional channels with governments and politicians and a specific form to deliver our message to them effectively. That is what guarantees our political impact.

In the Ficha-Limpa case, Avaaz used the internet to send a collective mail to congressmen asking for the bill's approval. Once the bill was approved in the House of Representatives, the organisation created an online petition to put pressure on the senators. For those wishing to participate more actively, Avaaz provided them with the telephone number of the congressmen involved in the bill's discussion.

After the bill was approved, the Brazilian Supreme Court challenged it to be unconstitutional. Avaaz took the initiative to organise an important petition to the Brazilian Supreme Court ministers, collecting more than 175 thousand signatures against their claim of unconstitutionality. All these efforts created awareness among Avaaz users and generated great media attention. As a result the law was finally in forced.

Avaaz is a good example of an initiative born in the civil society that bridges the gap between new forms of expression and the traditional representative system. But is it possible to work the other way around? Can the government take steps in the direction of capturing what the internet crowd has to say?

(ii) The internet civil framework (Marco Civil)

In the last few years Brazilian organisations and government ministries have been working together to bring more citizen participation into the law-making process by utilising free, open and accessible internet tools. The project called Marco Civil da Internet was created in 2009 in partnership with the Center for Technology and Society at Fundação Getulio Vargas (CTS/FGV) and the Brazilian Department of Justice. It brought to the attention of Brazilian congressmen, a successful model of integrating people's opinion into the law-making process.

Technologically, the project consists of a WordPress blogging platform which allows participants to comment on specific articles of proposed legislations. Nevertheless, the biggest innovation did not come from the technological facet but from the project's social aspect, which managed to take advantage of this simple technology to mobilise civil society and economic actors at large, in a deep and highly participatory debate about the regulatory future of the internet in Brazil.

Through a website http://culturadigital.br/marcocivil/ different stakeholders were invited to contribute in two different phases. The intention was to create awareness for the public officials involved in drafting the law around regulation of Internet access, of the larger public desire and intention. It was the first effort at integrating the intended subjects of the law to actually participate in the forming of regulations that would affect them the most.

A screenshot of the Marco Civil website where the contributions were aggregated.

In the first phase of the consultation, which begun on October 29, 2009 and ended on December 17, 2009, the platform received contributions of a small set of principles that would later on be developed into the text of law. In that phase, the platform received more than 800 comments on them.

After a four month pause, which was used to compile and analyse the contributions received and draft a new bill, the Ministry of Justice released a second phase of consultation in April 08, 2010, which ended on May 30, 2010. In this second phase, the objective was to present the Brazilian people with the draft bill and

Esther Weltevrede (Book 2, To Think), in her essay on how digital objects produce new ecologies of change, looks at the hashtag as a new form of digital information that cannot be understood by older and more traditional frameworks. The hashtag does not have a narrative structure but it produces narratives around it. The information in a hashtag is highly condensed and yet very sparse. What objects like the hashtag do is show us how information can be coded, decoded, stored, archieved and shared in new forms. These kind of systemic changes open up ways to understand the world of digital natives and how they organise, orchestrate and mobilise their lives around these digital objects.

There has been a lot said about participatory technologies lately. A wide range of stakeholders from governments to private companies are using participatory technologies in order to mobilise resources and engage with the peoples' opinions. However, as Seema Nair points out (Book 1, To Be), mere infrastructure is not going to solve the problem. Equipping people with smartphones and connectivity is only a small part of the problem, and unfortunately, the easy one. Once people have access to these resources, what are they going to do about it? What are the kind of digital and critical literacies and acumen that we need to foster, to make sure that people with technology access also feel enabled to actually see themselves as bearers of knowledge which can shape larger policies and discourse? These are questions that need to be asked in all technology-access environments.

The two cases that are going to follow are going to show how loose affiliation structures operate in interesting ways. We want to add to that our own understanding of loose affiliation as a surivval skill. One of the flip sides of digital technologies, as Yiping (Zona) Tsou (Book 2, To Think) will demonstrate, is that the very technologies and tools that the activists and interventionists use, are the tools that the authoritarian powers are also going to deploy. In countries where the governments crack down easily on identified groups that come under the public eye,

open it to public criticism. The second phase gathered 1,168 contributions, criticisms and suggestions.

With the Marco Civil experience, the government was able to bridge the gap between policymakers and the public by creating an institutional space that permitted the Brazilian people to directly influence the decision-making process. To maintain the contributors interested in the debate a Twitter profile of the project was created and constantly updated. In addition the website emerged as an important source of information regarding the diverse views on internet regulation as all contributions were made public.

The experience also shows that the government can (and should) play an important role in fostering participation though the use of internet and digital tools.

Conclusion

Through the analysis of these two emblematic cases, it is possible to affirm that digital technology can provide important tools for different models of participation in the public debate. In this context, digital natives can play an important role in fostering the use of innovative models for dialogue and collaboration. Being (in most of the cases) at the forefront of technology adoption, digital natives adapt easiest to emerging tools that allow the enhancement of democratic practices. Based on this understanding, the Avaaz initiative can be interpreted as a first step from those who dominate technology, toward a more direct and effective civil participation in the state's decisions.

On the other side, digital immigrants and established governments have a duty to make the official institutions more permeable to online practices and different forms of digital expression, such as videos and manifestations of thought through social networks, as long as this permeability increases the legitimacy of the whole democratic system.[14] The Marco Civil initiative can be understood in this context as an initiative by the state to become more integrated with the inputs provided by society through the digital means.

Last but not the least, a query is necessary to contemplate all other forms of expression that are not necessarily channelled through initiatives such as Avaaz or collected by participation forums such as the Marco Civil experience. The question is: Are these expressions ineffective or worthless?

We believe they are not. As Hannah Arendt puts it, speech is essential for the identity constitution of the speaker. Arendt states: "This disclosure of who somebody is, is implicit in both his words and his deeds (...) In acting and speaking, men show who they are, reveal actively their unique personal identities and thus make their appearance in the human world."[15]

Thus, by constituting one's identity, one has gone through an important step before a further and more committed participation is made possible. And even if this hypothetical next step is never to come, the simplest speech is not to be considered irrelevant. The words of Arendt represent an emblematic statement about the power of action and speech:

"Action and reaction among men never move in a closed circle and can never be reliably confined to two partners. This boundlessness is characteristic not of political action alone, in the narrower sense of the word... the smallest act in the most limited circumstances bears the seed of the same boundlessness, because one deed, and sometimes one word, suffices to change every constellation." [16]

In this sense, considering the potential that arises from the use of digital tools, a broader range of possibilities for participation shall not be ignored or underestimated. The examples mentioned above are only a glimpse of the power of activism through the internet and the social media. Once initiatives such as Avaaz and the Marco Civil become more integrated, will we need strong-ties to promote concrete changes? Or will the loose affiliation model of Benkler lead us in the opposite direction and be revealed as an insufficient form of activism?

and trace and punish the members associated with the group, loose affiliations are in fact a way for people to remain pseudonymous and support their causes without putting themselves at personal risk.

In fact, the loose affiliation structure is one of the major factors that enables young people to participate in political and social demonstrations and processes of change because it offers them a safe space, where they don't have to engage with traditional political factions, and can still support things they believe in. As Jasmeen Patheja and Juliana Rotich both discussed at the Thinkathon, loose affiliations can sometimes become the strength of a movement, because they are more inclusive, receptive and open structure and allow for many diverse views and ideas to co-exist and interact within a safe environment of solidarity.

Collectives like Avaaz are extremely important in the visibility that they can grant to certain causes. In the case of India, in another protest against corruption, Avaaz was responsible for mobilising huge number of people to come and support the political leader Anna Hazare who started a crusade against corruption, demanding the installation of a 'Lokpal Bill' in the country. Again, through their digital networks, they were able to mobilise people, not only in joining the public discourse but also in initiating public meetings and consultations at their local level. However, analysts who studied the phenomenon lament the fact that the mobilisation activities had their impetus in an emotional appeal to join the 'fight against corruption' rather than an inform opinion pool that would help the citizens to recognise the problems at stake.

In stark comparison, web portals like www.ipaidabribe.com, which is an initiative by the Bangalore-based citizen's collective Janaagraha, use a different approach. The initiative recognises, for instance, that anti-corruption legislation and laws abound the country. The problem is not in the lack of legal infrastructure or its execution. The problem perhaps resides in mindsets and expectations of the people on an everyday basis. It

[1] Balkin, Jack M. 'Digital Speech and Democratic Culture: A Theory of Freedom of Expression for the Information Society'. *New York University Law Review*, Vol. 79, 1, April 2004.

[2] Fisher III, William W. *Promises to Keep: Technology, Law, and the Future of Entertainment*. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2004.

[3] Godwin, Mike. *Cyber Rights: Defending Free Speech in the Digital Age*. Cambridge, Massachusetts: The MIT Press, 2003.

[4] Catells, Manuel. A Sociedade em Rede – *A Era da Informação: Economia, Sociedade e Cultura*. Volume I. São Paulo: Paz e Terra, 1999.

[5] Id, Ibid.

[6] Balkin, Jack M. 'Digital Speech and Democratic Culture: A Theory of Freedom of Expression for the Information Society'. *New York University Law Review*, Vol. 79, 1, April 2004. Pp. 6

[7] Benkler, Yochai. *The Wealth of Networks: how social production transform markets and freedom*. New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2006. Pp. 9

[8] 'A cyber-house divided' available at http://www.economist.com/node/16943885

[9] 'Small Change; Why the revolution will not be tweeted', available at http://www.newyorker.com/reporting/2010/10/04/101004fa_fact_gladwell

[10]http://www.newyorker.com/reporting/2010/10/04/101004fa_fact_gladwell

[11] http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EWWdSrZgAhM,

[12] http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2Pu4lLaugg8; http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EZ19dTNHrTI;http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EZ19dTNHrTI;http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0ajPCeosxpY

[13] http://pagina22.com.br/index.php/2011/04/mobilizacao-avaaz/

[14] Few problems can be envisioned here, such as the deepening of the divide between those who have access to the digital tools and those who will be isolated from the democratic practices because of the lack of access or purchasing power to access those tools.

[15] Arendt, Hannah. *The Human Condition*. Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press. Pp. 178/179.

[16] Id. Ibid. Pp. 190.

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Websites
http://culturadigital.br/marcocivil/
http://pagina22.com.br/index.php/2011/04/mobilizacao-avaaz/

YouTube resources:
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EWWdSrZgAhM
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2Pu4lLaugg8
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EZ19dTNHrTI
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EZ19dTNHrTI
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OajPCeosxpY

recognises that instead of mobilising people against an unknown, non-existent enemy against whom we should all mobilise and fight, it is necessary to make people aware of the fact that they are complicit in acts of corruption in their daily life. The portal invites people to confess when they paid a bribe, leading to informed discussions drawing from personal experience, generating discussions around the cicrumstances under which we pay bribe.

They are both interesting structures of mobilisation and both have their relevance in different scenarios. A combination of the two would be highly effective and successful in informed mobilisation that includes the 'doers' and the 'thinkers' in a fruitful dialogue.

3.3 CHANGE IS YELLING. ARE YOU LISTENING?

by
Nonkululeko Godana
CASE STUDY

This is the story that affected a lot of young people in South Africa. We watched the story spread across social networks and eventually result in a campaign that continues to receive support as in unzips the tight mindsets of the contemporary urban society in my country.

It was a story of a girl who was gang-raped in a Johannesburg high school (on the school field) by a group of boys who studied with her. Her outcry was heard because of headlines that broke out on the news in South Africa on 10th November 2010. The boys were let off the hook as the National Protection Association of South Africa claimed that the boys were in the midst of exams and there wasn't enough evidence against them. This decision came in the face of a video that had surfaced of the heart-wrenching act, which quickly went viral, first in the school, then across the country and is now being sold for 10 Rand on the internet.

The story sobered the country up, once again to the alarming statistics of sexual violence against women and the growing number of young girls getting raped. Traditional and new social media were abuzz with the 'progress' of the case. The Hashtag #JusticeforJulesRapeSurvivor started trending in Twitterville. The complaints about failing justice systems, ignorance and apathy of educations, the violation of women, the risky society that girls (and boys) are growing up in, started getting a voice.

Two Twitter handles Akona (@akona1) and Lebogang (@Ltdn) started a conversation about what it would take to convert all this Twitter-talk into action. Akona said that she had no delusions that if the conversations were not anchored in action, they would eventually fizzle out. She was convinced that "activism and social change can be achieved through twitter". Lebogang argued that Twitter conversations cannot translate into real action; that real action emerges from physical spaces and Twitter can only be used for dissemination and engagement. He referred to Malcolm Gladwell's views on using social media to drive social change versus lobbying people on the ground.

Lebogang's argument seemed more plausible. It is something we have all heard many times – Twitter and Facebook timelines are fickle and don't have a permanent link or a strong tie that can inspire people to actually engage in collective citizen action. He suggested to Akona that she herself, as a person, can become the pivotal point that would produce strong ties. His recommendation was that Akona becomes the solitary warrior, a figurehead, a symbol, a catalyst for change that would lead to impactful action. He was of the opinion that it is only when one person takes the lead that the cycle of self-referential discussions on the social media would actually be disrupted and 'real action' could emerge.

Akona took up this challenge but she believed that the way to engage with communities, people and actors that she would need the support from was not in traditional physical movements. So she found herself stronger rather than vulnerable as she started an online campaign, where she said "Maybe I'm just a girl standing in front of the virtual world asking it to help me find the real world". She started with a story, and this time, it was not somebody else's story but her own. She tapped into her own experiences and pain, and decided to write a story, a purging confessionary, which would hopefully inspire others to join her in creating virtual communities of

support and action.

Her existing blog account www.akmosaic.blogspot.com became the space where she started putting her thoughts together.

"It was January 23rd of the year 2000, 6 months after the passing of my beloved mother. I was 15 and in standard 7 (9th grade) of high school....

About halfway through the drink, I wasn't feelinh good at all, dizzy and nauseous... so I excused myself and went inside the house to the bathroom...R led me inside and suddenly the door shuts with a bang and he was in there with me...the room was spinning, my heart was hammering at my chest and my legs were about to give in when I was jolted into shock, as he reached under my skirt and frantically tugged at my underwear... 'No' wasn't getting me anywhere...I said it again...He pushed me to the ground in the corner of the bathroom... I was ever so grateful for the pain on my back which was helping me not to concentrate on the burning sensation coming form him entering me...minutes passed and he got up, zipped his pants, bent down and kissed me on the forehead.... I went to school the next day and didn't say anything to anyone about what happened..."

Akona's story became the catalyst for thousands of young women to come and share their own experiences of violence. The hashtag #JulesHighRapeSurvivor got a new life and a larger focus. Her call at the end of her blog post – "'let's march, let's shout, let's petition, whatever! Let us please do something...." found an instant resonance with her 2,000 followers on Twitter, who immediately retweeted it and started responding to it.

A new hashtag #ISaidNo came into currency and inspired people who would otherwise have never associated themselves with such a campaign, into taking action. As one of the followers tweeted, "#ISaidNo is the first time I'm taking initiative. I've just grown tired of feeling impotent and decided to use the momentum created by Akona. I managed to get website for the campaign sponsored by a hosting company". Something had clicked.

Different people had different motives for engaging with this movement. While it is impossible to trace all of these motivations, what is significant to note is that people were moved, not just emotionally but also into action. People who only had opinions and light discussions to offer around what happened to somebody else, started forming stronger bonds by looking at how it can or it has happened to them. An entire community started conferencing with Akona about how to bring about change. She received countless messages of advice and people offering help. A voluntary task force made out of people who only knew each other on Twitter, including well-known South Africa media professionals and personalities emerged. Celebrity Twitter handles championed her cause and helped spread the word around, mobilising large numbers of people to disseminate the information.

On the 19th November 2010 they hosted an #ISaidNo Twitterthon (60 hours of non-stop tweeting against sexual violence), calling out for sponsors. 1440 Twitpic poster views later, the steady-growing campaign has a theme-song called #Powa that a well-known South African poet-emcee, Tumi Molekane recorded and performed in a live music TV show - on South Africa's leading channel. The song is available on a few websites for free downloading. The campaign has received the attention of traditional media. Word spreads. The signal lives. The story continues to find new supporters.

For me, this is the power of digital storytelling. It can lead to physical action, but the physical action is sometimes secondary. What is important is that the stories we tell in our Twitter and Facebook timelines, are stories that produce a change at the level of the individual and the personal. Not everybody will eventually join the campaign and demand for better policies. Not everybody will engage with the physical processes of demonstration, protesting and negotiating with the law. However, in this one instance of storytelling, the entire country was listening, reading, downloading, scanning, and sharing the same story over and over again. Something in their heads had change. They saw themselves as not mere spectators to an event but as

people who have an opinion, an idea and an ambition to change the world, to make it a better place. And it is this knowledge that marks a digital native – that in interacting with digital technologies, they saw the world differently, got exposed to new ways of thinking, and most significantly, saw a possible role for themselves in the processes of change.

People forget that the digital media like Twitter and Facebook, blogs and mashups, are actually new ways of telling a story. We often reduce them to mere information dissemination and mobilisation tools. In the process, we forget that there is a relationship that the users have with these spaces – and that is the relationship of telling a story, re-telling it, listening to it, adding to it, changing it, and eventually making it a part of the social fabric of interaction and communication. The argument of a weak bond holds because that viewpoint is unable to see the way in which stories operate and the emotional bonds they form within the communities. Digital natives understand this possibility and hence can find new communities of belonging and action which slip under the radar and are not always obvious to people who are looking for older processes of change being replicated in this new world.

3.4 WE ARE OUR HISTORY

by
Kara Andrade
REFLECTION

the idea of the personal. The stories hence need to be read both literally and figuratively, as Andrade reiterates the need to see ourselves as creatures of histories, informed by a series of personal, filial and communitarian shifts and transitions. The digital native, for her does not only 'do' things, but also 'becomes' things, inspired and influenced by the various systems and contexts that they occupy. We find these stories opening up affective and effective histories which are often not granted to digital natives who are reduced to nothing more than their interactions with tools and technologies and trends.

Editors' Note

Kara Andrade's anecdotal reflections exploit a digital natives' view of the world, not only in its content but also in its style. As she strings together different ideas around technology and change, she plays with the notions of native-immigrant-settler in order to examine what it means to belong to any of those categories. She travels seamlessly between the digital and the physical, seeing how the questions of being a native in a foreign country can also be mapped on to those who claim a digital native identity. Drawing from her own personal histories, she then reverses the lens so that we get to see how the discourse around digital immigrants and settlers also affects the way in which we look at people who are uprooted from their geographies and find new lives and stories to tell. She then goes on to debunk both these structures and proposes the metaphor of a Trickster – someone that changes, mutates, adapts, naturalises and exploits its surroundings for survival; but in the process also recasts the environments it inhabits – in order to understand the spaces and identities that digital natives occupy and how they navigate between the two. In many ways, these evocative stories and myriad tales resonate the questions that Anat Ben David explores (Book 1, *To Be*) in the formulation of 'hybridity' or Nilofar Shamin-Ansher addresses (Book 1, *To Be*) in her study of her cyber twins, or Hernan Bonomo argues (Book 4, *To Connect*) for in his call for localisation, or Kerryn Mckay emphasises (Book 1, *To Be*) with

I was once an undocumented immigrant in the USA. I was afraid, and I was apologetic. But mostly I hid. I minded my own business until my legal status came in 1987 under former president Ronald Reagan's sweeping immigration reform bill. Never in my sane mind then would I have come out to the world and gone beyond all the risks presented to me, owning my own humanity in the same way as the youth of the Dream Act movement in the United States have done by coming out as "undocumented, unafraid and unapologetic". The Dream Act bill was introduced ten years ago to promote a path to citizenship for undocumented youth through education or military service and every mounting political slap down the years has served to fuel the youth behind it to form a movement of setting their own terms for defining what is "American". The message has been clear: You don't control our narrative, you don't control our communities and we will not be punished for a common humanity.

Then one hot Sunday afternoon in late June as I stood in the middle of New York City's busy streets my heart started to beat faster and then my jaw dropped when I read Pulitzer Prize-winning journalist Jose Antonio Vargas' 'OUTLAW: My Life As an undocumented immigrant' in the *New York Times* Sunday magazine in June 2011. In the article Vargas, a former *Washington Post* reporter, comes out and declares himself as an illegal immigrant. He talks about the challenges of living a web of lies from fake documents to hiding information from friends and employers. The newspaper fell out of my

hands, hit the pavement, the sheets scattered and the wind blew them down the subway stairs. I had that familiar flight instinct in my throat I'd had so many times in my life when someone used the word 'illegal', but for once I couldn't move or run away. Tears suddenly welled up in my eyes.

Vargas wrote: "I've decided to come forward, own up to what I've done, and tell my story to the best of my recollection. I've reached out to former bosses and employers and apologised for misleading them — a mix of humiliation and liberation coming with each disclosure. All the people mentioned in this article gave me permission to use their names. I've also talked to family and friends about my situation and am working with my legal counsel to review my options. I don't know what the consequences will be of telling my story."

I read that over and over again and the punch line knocked the air out of me: You can call me whatever you want, but I'm a human being, I'm an American and I will tell my story regardless of the consequences. It was a risk I would never have taken. I tell my story today as a documented American citizen, but to tell one's story and claim that universal entitlement to being here and belonging is something I am starting to grapple with in my own journey. Simply reaching a mindset where you have a choice to define your story and share it with the world is a shift in your sense of belonging in the world and your role in it.

The story of me…

Things had changed since I crossed the border in 1982 as a *mojada* or a wetback – an illegal crossing the Rio Grande that separates Mexico from the United States of America. I knew the word *mojado* before the word 'immigrant' ever entered my life. Wetback was my first step into the Rio Grande as a six-year-old with my Guatemalan family. We crossed the border from Mexico into the USA in 1982. None of us could swim and I was carried on someone's back halfway across.

I clutched one small suitcase all the way from Guatemala to the border of Mexico. I hauled it with me through buses, *jalones,* hitchhiking, walking – using any means necessary to keep pushing north. I replaced the clothes in it with small creamers and sugars I found along the way in restaurants. I was the only child in the group of one dozen family members and friends who split up into various groups to blitzkrieg the vast stretches of desert, open fields, sprawling cities with houses built along steep ravines. We left no trail of who we were and where we were headed, shadowy figures following *mi mama* who was a coyote – a smuggler, a trickster maneuvering on instinct and hunger for a life not available in Guatemala.

In the middle of our trip through Mexico as we headed north to the United States, my mother put a disposable camera in my hand with 25 exposures in it and said, "I want you to document this trip and tell the story, here use this camera". She took my arm and put it in my hand. I had no idea what to do, but the power I felt was undeniable. I took all 25 pictures in the first hour. But that's how I began to think of a story as a series of captured moments that I orchestrated. Those moments were mine to organise and re-arrange in the closest approximation to how I perceived that event, experienced it and knew it. When my pictures were gone, my mother gave me a pen and pad of paper and said: "Write it!" and I picked up where I left off with the pictures, barely knowing even how to write, but drawing what I saw.

In today's world, a transformation is happening in which people have begun to take control of their own narrative, telling their own stories using whatever tool and online means available to them. The citizen uprising that peacefully ousted Egyptian president Hosni Mubarak from power in February reminds us of this: You're not alone and that we're all connected. We have not only begun to tell our stories, but we've connected them to others around the world simultaneously as well. The simple act of self-representation that comes from a place of owning the humanity in each of us, also binds us in broader place of full information citizenship with the rest of the world. This act requires a whole shift in identity and thinking that's more complex, bringing

up questions such as: How do we tell our stories? What does becoming a "citizen" mean? When does our personal story shift from "me" to "us"? How do we make these shifts? How do we create the environments where we can make that possible? How do we inspire action and empower others to tell their story? How does information and technology help people do that?

Years later my mother told me that the story had to be told from the beginning of how someone progresses from waiting to be fed to learning to bait a hook and finally to catch a fish. "It was the hunger that brought me here. The hunger. What else could it be? What can motivate you more?" asked my mother after we had been in the USA for some years. "Looking for bread, looking for a roof. I'm not ashamed of any of that because all of my life has been a discovery. I am always discovering new things."

The story of my mother…

My mother's story begins with her urgency to feed herself, her daughter, and her family in the banana plantations of United Fruit Company, labour towns along the Motagua River's banks in a place called Bananera or 'Banana town'. The town provided a pool of cheap labour for the United Fruit Company from generations of families. My mother put stickers on bananas and her mother's mother picked the best bananas to ship to the United State. It was the 1980s, a time of cholera and genocide in Guatemala where eighty percent of the Maya indigenous population would be murdered by the time the Peace Accords were signed in 1996.

My mother, who always wanted to go northwards, would spin evolutionary tales of her growing so mentally swift, developing a creative intelligence so intense that the entire family could move towards *La frontera*, the border. My mother's way of finding possibilities inspired us. My mother told us stories along the way – in dark motels, swinging from tangled hammocks, crossing deserts, hopping trains, trucks, anything. She modelled for us how we can create our own narratives simply by putting one foot right in front of the other to make the path. Sometimes that path could be a border and sometimes it was an expanse. We as children trusted the fact that she could outwit the trap, though it would also make us all outlaws in both Mexico and the United States.

La frontera in her narratives was a mythical place of intersection and crossing. You lived or died to get across or hugged it for the rest of your life hoping for one small opening. Some of us carried it inside like a deep scar, a mapline to a larger grid, to a path we made by walking, better yet running it. It was a clear physical boundary between worlds, deprivation and opportunity, legal and illegal, Spanish and English, mi tierra and theirs, a destination and a passing through. The streets were cleaner, the air was different on the other side. Every street corner had lights. No matter how long we inhabited this world, we would never belong. Our home would become the crossing, that space of intersection between two worlds. "Borderlands," that's what Gloria Anzaldúa, Chicana writer and scholar, called it – a place of geographic boundaries, but also a playground for identity.

The story of an immigrant…

"Immigrant" was what my teachers called me the first day of school when I couldn't speak enough English to answer their questions. "Oh I see, you're an immigrant! From Mexico right?". "Guatemala," I would reply softly as they patted me on my back and pushed me gently to my seat at the front of the class where all the new kids sat.

An immigrant adapts, assimilates or acculturates, successively and ceaselessly responding to another language, another culture, people that look nothing like you as if your very survival depended on a trickster intelligence to outwit the prey, to not drop off the cliff like in the cartoons we grew up watching with the Road Runner and Wyle Coyote. At times you were the Road Runner, at times you were the Coyote – our job in this country was to exploit opportunity, to encode and decode what was said and what was to be deciphered

from the landscape. In that space was opportunity. Nothing stayed consistent, not the landscape, not the road, not the hours, we lost them when we headed north. Change had its price and we paid it.

"Trickster isn't a run-of-the-mill liar and thief. When he lies and steals, it isn't so much to get away with something or get rich as to disturb the established categories of truth and property and, by so doing, open the road to possible new worlds," writes Lewis Hyde in *Trickster Makes this World: How Disruptive Imagination Creates Culture*. My mother opened the door and I walked right in. She created that environment where disruption was the norm. The key to her survival and mine was creativity. If someone said "No", you were asking the wrong person or the wrong question. But more than anything it was the way you thought about problems as solutions.

Technology became that for me, an opening, a portal through a closet, an interminable solution, flexible, agile eminently moldable to my needs. In high school I discovered Usenet, the Users Network, and how librarians were using these invisible pipelines to connect between libraries for book loans – typing long strings of numbers and letters, white type against a black screen, on a large bulky monitor that sat in the corner of the library. It was an imagined world spun from pixels, no boundaries, no frontiers, another border, another intersection. But this one was mine, a discovery I had stumbled upon.

Everyday during lunch I would volunteer to type long strings of what were later called web addresses for the librarians. I began chatting with people at the other end, terminals across galaxies, or at least down a few streets. I didn't care that it was a time capsule, a wormhole to other worlds.

"It seemed like I didn't belong to that world," my mother told me when I asked her why she would leave her country entirely instead of trying to find a job that would pay her well. "I just knew I had to do something and at least I did it. There was nothing else, because from *Guate* to *GuatePeor* (from Guatemala to Guatemala worse) wasn't possible, I was already in the worst. From there everything was a step forward." From Guatemala to Guatemala worse, those were her options. In her stories she talks about finding your don, your gift, y tu camino, your path, which I eventually understood as your life's work. A sense of purpose, belonging and your role in the world.

My mother knew as I would later know that if you tell your story better than anyone else, you could make them lean in and listen. Then you could teach others to do the same thing. I discovered that technology and storytelling were inseparable from the way I came to perceive the world – from that camera I held in my hand, to the pen and pad, to the objects I put in my pocket to remind me of where I'd been.

In search of histories…

In October of 2009, my husband and I drove back down to Guatemala, the country of my birth, 3,118.5 miles, 53 hours, one minute of driving, according to BING maps, all the way from California. This time we weren't headed down to bring back some family members. We weren't at the mercy of US immigration officials to determine our legal status in the United States. This time we weren't leaving because that was the only choice for a better life. This time I was driving down to Guatemala as a Fulbright scholar, on a grant awarded by the US State Department, making me a diplomatic representative of the United States (the irony doesn't escape me). My Fulbright project was to research online citizen media and to create a collaborative citizen journalism website for Guatemalans to share information from their mobile phones to a website. With all my community organising, non-profit and journalism background, I was going down to listen, to learn and to orchestrate an online participatory space for civic issues in Guatemala.

I knew communication had changed in Central America. It had changed in Guatemala since 1996 when the whole telecommunications sector was privatised. But in 2006 I experienced it while on a reporting assignment in Petén. On the top of an excavated Mayan pyramid called El Tigre, one of

three pyramids in a remote archaeological site deep in the Guatemalan jungle of Mirador Basin, I rested my weary legs from hiking 27 miles in 90 degrees heat. I was barely able to raise my head enough to see someone holding up a mobile phone. Josué Guzmán was one of the Guatemalan archaeologists I was accompanying into this ancient Mayan city and he was sending a text message to his girlfriend.

"In Guatemala we're very connected," he told me. That's when I started to believe that mobile phones and the developed telecommunications industry in Guatemala were one of the reasons for this interconnectedness. It gave me faith in mobile technology as a tool for journalism and democratic development when Guatemala's evolving mobile sector, representative of the region, shows how this technology can offer unprecedented participation in both local and global civic conversations and actions. It is presenting an opportunity for nation-building (however nascent) and democratisation that neither the Guatemalan government nor the USA and European foreign policy have been able to do.

Affordable access to information was making Guatemala and the rest of Central America transform because it was creating a way for people to orchestrate their quantum leap, to participate in governance, to gain an economic advantage, to transmit culture, to create literacy and to make the unattainable, attainable. It was something my mother had hungered for and wouldn't accept not having. Information is opportunity, is air, is life itself.

In 2011, I returned again, retraced my mother's footsteps through Mexico and into Guatemala, this time under an Ashoka fellowship. I returned to put down *mi granito de arena,* my grain of sand, and to help define and create the environments where it's possible for everyone, from city residents to indigenous youth, to begin that journey. It's the journey of our shared history together to go from "my story," to "your story" to "our story" together. It's a place where we are all fully informed and engaged citizen in the world – where we not only belong, but we share the responsibility to make it a reality for all of us.

Some sections of this article were printed in "ReVista - Harvard Review of Latin America" in 2011.

3.5 YOUTH AND TECHNOLOGY: AN UNSTOPPABLE FORCE

by
Maria del Mar Zavala
CASE STUDY

"Young people should be at the forefront of global change and innovation. Empowered, they can be key agents for development and peace." (Kofi Annan)

Introduction

Technological tools of communication—from luxury goods to public tools for advocacy

For many years, technology was a luxury good only the wealthy could afford. Only the rich had access to the first telephones, the first computers, the first cameras. Youth–a group of society that does not often have access to luxury goods—could only dream of owning one of these technology communication tools.

As the years went by, new tools were invented, old ones were innovated, and the former luxury communication tools became accessible to the public. The first group to jump at the opportunity to access these technological tools of communication was youth. The young are always keen to try new things and are not afraid of change. The use of technological tools of communication has been especially gratifying to the young because it has served to empower them. Through the use of technological tools of communication, they have managed to make their voices heard. They can now advocate for any and every cause that is of interest to them. They can bring about change. Youth, by means of the use of technology, has become an unstoppable agent of change.

We have seen how authoritarian leaders around the world have closed down social networks and websites in an attempt to quieten "unruly" groups. However, people, and youth in particular, have somehow always managed to leak through and communicate. Technology has also rendered communication immediate. The minute someone publishes something online, it is immediately accessible in the virtual world. Technology has also increased the capacity for incidence at all levels: local, regional and global. Users can choose the level they want their impact to reach, although it often expands further. As a major tool for advocacy, technology can also be used by youth to affect policy.

In this article, two examples are analysed of how youth has used technological tools of communication in order to affect policy in the author's home country of Paraguay. One is an example of citizen journalism via a digital newspaper, and how it has led the Asuncion City Hall (the Paraguayan capital's City Hall) to respond by enacting regulations. The other is an example of how youth groups have used social networks to advocate for a case of injustice against a Paraguayan native tribe—the Aché.

A few facts on Paraguay

Paraguay has what is considered to be a young population. The median age in Paraguay is 25 years.[1] One out of four Paraguayans are between 15 and 29 years of age Forty percent of the population is younger than 15 years of age, and 66.3 percent is under 30.[2]

Another factor that must be taken into consideration when discussing youth activism in Paraguay is how the young are trying to break out of the legacy

of conformism that stems from many years of an authoritarian government that ended in 1989. Older generations, who in the past were forbidden to speak up against anything they disagreed with, have unfortunately been taught to not question anything. Young Paraguayans, who were born either after the dictatorship was overthrown, or who do not remember the dark days of dictatorship, have an attitude that is different to their older fellow countrymen. While older Paraguayans sometimes prefer to just go with the flow, younger generations know that in order to change something they do not agree with, they must speak up. Armed with the internet, young Paraguayans have begun a true revolution of activism.

As is the case in most other countries of the world, internet is most heavily used by youth. According to the International Telecommunications Union—which is the United Nations agency dedicated to information and communication technologies—an estimated 16 percent of Paraguay's population has regular access to the internet. This number may seem small, but it takes on a whole other meaning when one takes into consideration that the growth of internet usage in Paraguay from 2000 to 2009 has been of 4371 percent! In 2000, only 0.4 percent of the population had regular access to the internet.[3] The liberation of the internet, together with cost reduction and increased navigational speed are some of the main factors that caused this growth in usage.

Also, the index of cellphones to landlines is considerable: Paraguay has 14 cellphones for every landline.[4] Most of the cellphone use is concentrated in young populations, which in the Paraguayan case is the majority. Information published by mobile phone companies in January 2011 showed that the sale of smartphones with internet access had grown by 300 percent in the last trimester of 2010.[5] The growth in the use of mobile phones with internet access was an additional factor affecting the 4371 percent growth in internet usage and has also significantly helped to spur the phenomenon of advocacy via technological tools of communication, particularly in the hands of the youth. Young people use their smartphones to constantly document and share things they see, their thoughts and anything else they want to communicate to others.

Crónicas Ciudadanas

ABC Color (www.abc.com.py) is the newspaper with greatest circulation in Paraguay, and its digital version—ABC Digital—is unarguably the most visited of all Paraguayan digital newspapers. ABC has a history of defending democracy and encouraging advocacy. It was closed by the Paraguayan dictator Alfredo Stroessner in 1984, and re-opened in 1989, after democracy was established in Paraguay.

As a means of increasing user interactivity, in 2007, ABC Digital opened a digital forum within its digital version called ABC *Ciudadano,* which translates to "Citizen ABC". It was re-designed and re-launched in 2010 under the name of *Crónicas Ciudadanas,* or "Citizen Stories" in English.[6]

The way *Crónicas Ciudadanas* works is the following: Regular Paraguayan citizens send photos and videos taken with their cellphones of situations they would like to denounce, or simply bring attention to. This includes pictures of people breaking laws: a driver crossing a red stoplight, or riding a motorcycle without a helmet; as well as the government failing to deliver: a street full of potholes, a cop taking a bribe, a street littered with trash. More examples can be seen at: http://www.abc.com.py/seccion/cronicasciudadanas/

Crónicas Ciudadanas emphasises the role of citizen journalism. Upon accessing the section, one can read the following invitation to users:

"The best journalist…
...is the citizen who captures photos with his cellphone, films irregularities or reports situations he or she is experiencing or witnessing. ABC Digital is re-launching its gallery for citizen journalism in which the protagonists are people and their everyday lives.
We ask that you send us:
- Short texts (no more than 25 lines per report)
- Photos and/or films
- Name and telephone number to confirm the information (without this information, the material sent will not be able to participate in the election of best citizen story)
-Materials should be sent to ciudadano@abc.com.py"

Note: translated from the original Spanish version[7]

The journalists who created *Crónicas Ciudadanas* clearly state that their best colleague is the average "Juan Pueblo" (who, in Paraguay, would be the equivalent to the Average Joe or Jane) who simply goes about his regular life, documenting things he or she believes is newsworthy. Even the email address users send their material to is named *ciudadano*, or 'citizen' in English.

Over time, *Crónicas Ciudadanas* has grown significantly. It began as a small corner in the digital version of ABC Digital. However, it became so popular, that ABC Digital now has an entire section dedicated to it and regularly publishes the most popular posts in the printed version. ABC has also started a competition for the best story. Users can vote for the best story via Facebook, Twitter, or by sending text messages with their cellphones.[8]

Online votes via Facebook and Twitter of the Crónicas Ciudadanas post. "No news: Broken-down bus causes a car jam during rush hour"

These popular posts have also become the subject of ABC's own journalists' articles. Newspapers are an industry, and they of course respond to market demands. When ABC sees that one of *Crónicas Ciudadanas* posts has received numerous hits and has been shared many times, they know that the story is worthwhile, and follow up on it, often converting it into a series of articles. Thus, social network activity has become a sort of "thermometer" to measure how newsworthy a *crónica ciudadana* is.

Crónicas Ciudadanas posts often constitute demands for government officials to react. For example, in a *crónica ciudadana* published on June 14, 2011, one Gabriel Ozuza Ibáñez shared a picture he took of a transit policeman getting in a car's co-pilot seat in order to take a bribe: http://www.abc.com.py/nota/nuevo-sistema-de-pago-a-zorros/. He entitled it: "New payment system for 'foxes'" ('fox' is a slang term in Paraguay for the transit police).[9] In his *crónica ciudadana,* Mr. Ozuza is denouncing a case of corruption in an attempt to raise awareness and make government officials take action against it.

As a result of thousands of *crónica ciudadanas* similar to this one, the Asuncion City Hall Municipal Board—who are Asuncion's elected officials to the City Hall and are responsible for enacting all municipal norms and regulations—has recently declared in municipal ordinance N° 452/02 that *Crónicas Ciudadanas* is of special interest to the municipal government[10]. One of the main arguments for this declaration was the fact that a great percentage of the posts sent to *Crónicas Ciudadanas* are pertaining to municipal issues. With this declaration, the Asuncion Municipal Board committed the City Hall to pay special attention to posts sent by *asuncenos* (citizens of the city of Asuncion).[11]

In an interview with a staff member of the Asunción Municipal Board, Ms. Felicitas Rivas, she explained how municipal ordinances work when something is declared to be "of interest" to the Asunción City Hall. First, a city councillor brings the subject to the table during an Assembly. In the case of *Crónicas Ciudadanas* she said that the case was unique in the sense that it was a multi-party committee of city councillors that proposed to enact the municipal ordinance. Once it was approved, and as is the case with all municipal ordinances when they are passed,

it was referred to the City Hall General Secretariat. In turn, the General Secretariat must refer it to different Departments within the Asunción City Hall to follow up on the municipal ordinance and enforce it.[12]

Ms. Rivas said that the municipal ordinance on *Crónicas Ciudadanas* had already been passed on to the General Secretariat, and it is currently being decided to which Departments the ordinance must be referred to in order to be enforced. She added that because *Crónicas Ciudadanas* dealt with many different types of municipal issues, then it was probably going to be referred to more than one Department, such as the Social Area Department, Environmental Management Department, Health Department, Safety Department, to name a few. Ms. Rivas further explained that the Asunción City Hall is obliged to apply and enforce all municipal ordinances coming from the Municipal Board, but that this formal process must always be followed when an ordinance is enacted.[13]

It will be interesting to see how the City Hall decides to act to enforce this new policy, although the fact that the municipal ordinance was passed is already an important step. By enacting this municipal ordinance, the city councillors have sent the *asuncenos* a sign that they are listening to their demands sent via *Crónicas Ciudadanas*.

Thus, *Crónicas Ciudadanas* is a clear example of how regular citizens can use the available technological tools of communication to affect policy. In this case, the Asuncion municipal government responded to a virtual forum created by the press, but used and maintained by regular citizens demanding their government to act on situations they consider to be imperative. Using their cellphones to report, citizens (and particularly young citizens) have led the Asuncion City Hall to modify its policy.

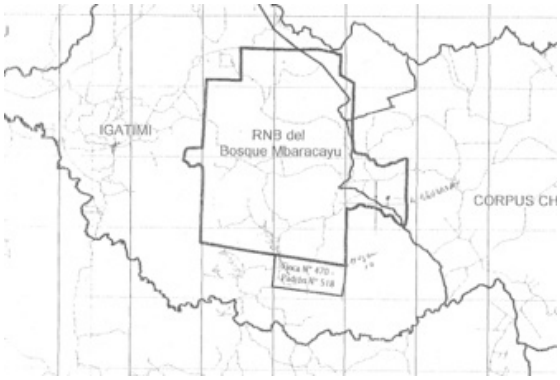
The case of the Aché tribe

The current case of the Aché tribe consists of a territorial dispute over a property called *Finca* 470. *Finca* 470 was originally purchased by the Paraguayan government in 2003 as a mitigation measure for the creation of *Ruta* 10, or Highway 10 in the Northeastern region of Paraguay, which cut through the Aché traditional territory.

Ruta 10 cutting through Eastern Paraguay

Finca 470 was going to be designated as a natural reserve, and there was a recommendation that it should become an indigenous reserve due to the fact that this was Aché traditional land, and there were Aché communities living in the area.

An agreement was signed between the Paraguayan Ministry of Environment and Aché representatives in 2004 that stated that the reserve would eventually attain the status of indigenous reserve. Nonetheless, due to numerous institutional changes, including the substitution of Ministers heading the Ministry of Environment, the indigenous reserve for the Aché was never formalised. However, the government did issue a decree that recognised the property as Aché traditional territory and granted them usufruct for five years or until the land was properly titled to them. These five years ended in 2009, and the Aché never got the titles over the land.



Finca 470 is the rectangular area beneath the Mbaracayu Forest National Reserve.
Map credit: IDEA, Paraguay

In addition, there is now another indigenous tribe, the Ava, claiming the land corresponding to the Aché. As was aforementioned, *Finca* 470 has always been the traditional land of the Aché, and there is a small group of Avá living in *Finca* 470 who has moved there only recently. The Avá are a tribe completely different to the Aché: with a different language, different customs and different origin.

The current administration of the Ministry of Environment, in addition to breaking their commitment to grant the Aché titles on the indigenous reserve, passed an administrative decision to provide a "simple solution" for this land claim issue. The administrative decision divided *Finca* 470 in two: Half for the Aché and half for the Avá. This proposal for a "simple solution" is no different to the internationally-known land claim issue over the West Bank in the Middle East, and that land claim issue began more than five decades ago and is yet to be completely resolved.

The Aché thus decided to take this to the courts, and since this case addressed serious issues concerning indigenous rights, it garnered a great deal of not only national, but international attention.

In order to pressure the Ministry of Environment further into providing them their titles over the land, the Aché decided to camp out in protest in front of the Ministry's offices. In response, a group of young Paraguayans decided to create a Facebook group (*Amigo de los Aché*, or 'Friend of the Aché') and Twitter hashtag (#twpyaxe) to support the Aché cause. The Facebook group page includes a description of the Aché tribe as a 10,000-year-old hunter-gatherer group, as well as the following invitation:

From its seven settlements, the Aché people continue to fight for their land and right to live with dignity. If you think you can make their cause your own, join this community and support them from where you can with what you can by means of this group.[14]
Note: Translated from the original Spanish text

The support for the Aché has not been limited to mere online activism. Young supporters have used these social media tools to organise meetings, protests, and even a food, medicine and clothes drive for the 400 Aché camping out in front of the Ministry. The purpose of this drive was to provide them with enough supplies to subsist until the Paraguayan authorities resolved the case.[15] The social media tools served as a multiplying factor to reach out to more supporters in a faster, more immediate pace.

Aché supporters were instantly informed of a new development in the Aché case, which in turn led to an instant reaction from them.

The massive response from the public by means of these technological tools of communication, and particularly from young citizens, attracted the attention of the press. The Facebook and Twitter groups made headlines in the news:

"Facebook and Twitter users mobilise and help the indigenous Aché" http://www.ultimahora.com/notas/413772-Usuarios-de-Twitter-y-Facebook-se-movilizan-y-ayudan-a-los-indigenas-ache

"A campaign for aid for the Aché is organised through Twitter"

http://www.abc.com.py/nota/a-traves-de-twitter-organizan-campana-de-ayuda-para-los-ache/

The Aché case was also reported on radiocasts and television newscasts. This attracted the attention of a group of legislators from the *Patria Querida* political party.

In an interview with a member of Parliament from *Patria Querida*, Mr. Sebastián Acha, who was one of the key actors in this case, he stated the importance of social networks in today's political arena. He said, "The voice of youth is heard today mainly through social networks. The access of young people to social networks is very important, particularly the access of opinion makers such as journalists, union leaders, professionals, student leaders, among others."[16]

He also described the way members of Parliament decide on whether an issue becomes a priority. He explained that an important measuring tool, although it is not the only one, is the number of comments following a story in newspapers' digital versions, or the number of "likes" in Facebook or retweets in Twitter. Once again, as was the case for *Crónicas Ciudadanas*, we see how social networks act as a thermometer to evaluate an issue's priority level. Mr. Acha added that when something is "... taken to the print versions, it means that is has a greater relevance. This is a new type of indicator."

When asked if the Facebook and Twitter advocacy groups were important factors that led his party to act on this cause, he replied: "Definitely. We parliamentarians, who have Twitter and Facebook accounts, or accounts in other social networks, were in permanently communication with the Aché activists, and this was definitely what led us to make the final decision."

Technology allows the members of Parliament to be more accessible to the citizens they represent, and for there to be constant communication and an exchange of opinions between policymakers and regular citizens. There is a chance for a more immediate response to a claim or need.

The final decision the *Patria Querida* parliamentarians made was to personally visit the Aché campsite in March 2011, and listen to their claims. Consequently, this group of legislators presented a bill in the Lower House of the Paraguayan Congress that would force the Ministry of Environment to grant *Finca* 470 to the Aché

tribe. Should this bill become a law, then the Aché would immediately gain access and titles to their traditional lands and would no longer have to wait for the Paraguayan courts to solve the case.

The advocacy groups continued to gather followers and voice their support for the Aché. Such was the impact of these groups and public advocacy that the government authorities finally came to a decision. As this article is being written, the Paraguayan Congress has announced that it has approved the bill "which opposes the dominion of the Ministry of Environment and transfers *Finca* 470, located in Cai Cue, District of Curuguaty, Department of Canindeyú, at no cost to the indigenous community of Kuetuvy Ko'eti of the Aché Guayakí tribe".[17] This means that the bill has been passed through both houses of the Paraguayan Congress, and is now only pending approval from Paraguayan president Fernando Lugo. Surely the social media tools will generate smoke from all the activity as youth—and the public in general—demand their president to enact the law.

The case of the Aché tribe, and the reaction it provoked among youth groups, is another excellent example of how young people can use the technological tools of communication they are familiar with to spur a desirable reaction from their elected officials. They managed to speed up a process that would have otherwise taken a very long time to be solved in the courts and would have cost a lot of money. By attracting the attention of congressmen, activists involved another government power that sought for a quicker solution to the Aché land claim issue, rather than wait for the judiciary to respond.

Conclusion

The two Paraguayan cases explored in this article serve to show how youth has been a major actor affecting policy by making use of the technological tools of communication available to them. In one case, they posted photos and texts in a virtual forum called Crónicas Ciudadanas that led the Asunción Municipal Board to commit the City Hall to include this virtual forum in its policy by declaring it to be of special interest to the municipal government.

In the other case, youth utilised social media to encourage the three branches of the Paraguayan government: the executive branch, represented by the Ministry of Environment; the judiciary branch, represented by the courts who were addressing the case of the Aché; and the legislative branch, who passed the bill that would grant the Aché the titles to their traditional land; to react to a situation they considered to be unjust.

Youth has used technology to take activism to another level. It has demonstrated that if they use technology for advocacy, communication is immediate, their degree of incidence is greater, and they are indeed unstoppable.

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[13] Ms. Felicitas Rivas. Interview by María del Mar Zavala, June 13, 2011

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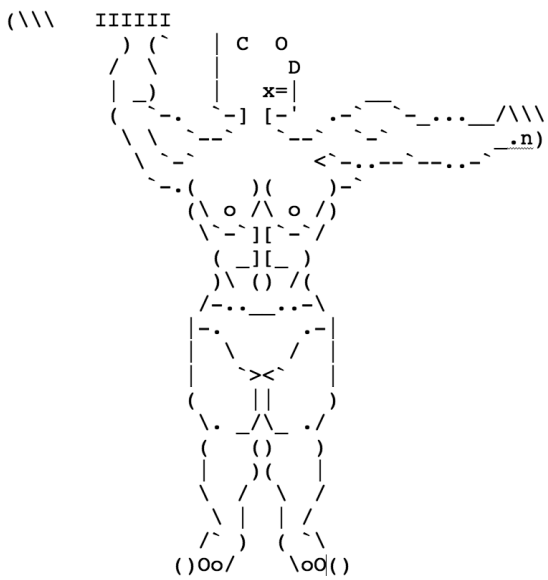
3.6 TIME, SPACE AND DIGITAL CONTINUUMS: DIGITAL VIDEO POLITICS

by
Namita Aavriti Malhotra
ESSAY

The internet began with text as the mode of information exchange, but has rapidly become the multiplier of formats and experiences, changing how we connect, work with and live along with technology. Twitter in its largely textual exchange seems a throwback to a time when sharing images was too heavy on limited bandwidth, a time for other quaint ways of rendering images such as ASCII art and pr0n .



hunky04.txt[1]

One of the first widespread uses of the internet was communication and my email account, set up through the college server, was referred to as a Telnet account. The interface was similar to Word Perfect, with white glowing letters on a black or grey background, similar to the Terminal theme available in Gmail now. More sophisticated users of computers were experimenting with Internet Relay Chat (IRC). Even in India in the late 90s, and more than ten years later, when Chat Roulette would appear on the networks as an addictive, often pornographic way of meeting strangers, it would be described as IRC with video.

By the early 2000s, peer-to-peer networks for file sharing began appearing – especially Napster before it was taken down because of copyright notices, especially by the metal band Metallica. Napster and the attendant legal and ethical controversies around sharing music online was one of the first conundrums posed by the internet to pre-digital practices of creativity and sharing[2].

Now the internet also hosts unimaginably large amounts of content (text, images, videos, sounds, and combinations of all these) and this includes pornography to academic articles, software code to distributed storage for movies, books findable via Torrent clients and search engines. YouTube itself is a massive engine of video, and statistics about it show that 24 hours of video are uploaded every minute. Piratebay remains 60th of the 100 most visited websites in India, which includes all the social networking sites, and search engines such as google.in and rediff.in. Youtube is in the top 10 most visited websites in India.

The YouTube Reader (and its online version)[3] attempts to create a schema of how YouTube is used globally, which ranges from soft porn, bukkake in PVC, full-length movies and movie clips, documentary film, Al Jazeera, hidden camera footage, mobile phone videos of experiencing an earthquake in the supermarket, official music videos and those made by fans, cat and kitten videos, dogs doing the salsa, music of all genres including

recording LPs playing, remixes, mash-ups, make your own movie clips, interviews, documentary, LOL cat videos, machinema clips, and birthday parties. The list is endless or rather there is literally no list of what is on YouTube – it remains an impressive archive of the endless chaos, neuroses, obsessions and drives of this tiny bit of the century. Since it began in early 2005 it has accumulated 1700 years of footage, which is more than cinema has produced since its advent in late nineteenth century.

Time and affect

The enmeshing of technological and social change is hard to unravel and attribute, and the impact is not merely in terms of tools and instruments of technology, but how technology has changed aspects of human experience, including our experience of time and embodiment .

While clocks were invented to create a uniform time experience, they also functioned as the ultimate connection machine, integrating lives into a social, economic, and religious system[4]. Simultaneously, the endeavour of humans has been to invent forms of entertainment that escape the stranglehold of a uniform experience of time, and the necessary links of that with work, labour and progressive industrialisation in the nineteenth century. Cinema is one of those forms of trickery invented by humans that allowed for the manipulation of how time is experienced[5]. It is this form of trickery that also is an important component of the mesmerising effect of cinema, which is then not only about the visual or even the sensorial and embodied experience, but also about the slowing down, shifting through and looping through time.

Deleuze, in relation to new forms of cinema (which he describes as cinema post World War 2), says that what characterises them is a different relation to time – "we are plunged into time rather than crossing space".

Namita Aavriti Malhotra's essay is an attempt to question the overwhelming textual determination of the internet and looking at the politics of the cultural domain which is often in images and videos. The visual nature of cyberspaces is often looked at only as an end-point of a process – as a method of documentation – and is studied largely for its content. Thus, a video that captures human rights violation or performs a 'sting' on a popular figure is analysed for what it shows. There is very little attention given to the aesthetic and the processes by which the video captures and in effect determines the nature of reality. For digital natives who do not accept cinematic realism as the default mode of capturing reality, the new forms of digital videos and video-based storytelling, are as much about the form as they are about the content. The availability of cheap video capturing and processing devices, user generated video sharing sites, and the viral modes by which videos get popular, has changed the way in which we understand the ways in which videos are produced, consumed and distributed.

Malhotra provocatively decides to look at video sites of consumption which possibly generate the highest amount of traffic online but are never a part of the Digital Natives discourse – she looks at the pornography sites of video exchange and generation in order to see how the aesthetics and processes of video making and sharing found in these peer2peer sites also determines the way in which more sanitised websites like YouTube operate.

Moreover, she looks at the pornographic way in which spectacles of user captured video informs our mainstream discourse around youth and technology.

In many ways, Malhotra's piece also resonates what YiPing (Zona) Tsou (Book 2, To Think) has been arguing for – the flip sides, the grey zones, the darker practices of digital natives online, which never enter serious discussions. Just like the Human Flesh Search Engines that Tsou talks about, pornography also remains at the fringes of digital discussions. When it is invoked within youth-technology discourse, it is generally only there as a cautionary tale of how it 'corrupts' youth and 'preys upon' the innocent. It

In *Cinema 2: Time-Image*, Deleuze says that cinema had moved from the movement-image of so-called classical cinema to the time-image – that time was set free reversing its subordination to movement. That what was of cinematic interest was "no longer the co-existence of sheets of past (with the present) but the simultaneity of peaks of present". This is characteristic in digital and new media forms as well, whether the simultaneous existence of several personas or images in different social networks (on Facebook, online dating sites, anonymous presence on Twitter, etc.) and the endless nature of continuing events (footage), interactions and conversations through networks that we enter, leave and re-enter.

Mark B. Hansen writes about how our experience of time has changed in the wake of digital computation revolution, which has been both an experience of simultaneity or diachronic nature of time[6]. This 'digital gift' of time is not the result of the invention of a futuristic time machine such as H.G. Well's complicated chair, or the mechanical car as in *Back to the Future* or even Calvin's cardboard box[7] .

This time warp that places us within reach of a revolution in the Arab world, through video and newsfeeds on Twitter and Facebook, is a result of an object like the computer or mobile phone connected to others like itself in a network. What has transformed our experience of time is passing through the looking glass of an ordinary screen on a laptop, in a cinema hall, on the wall, etc .

Being moved through time or enveloped by sensations would seem to be the property that is missing in the idea of watching something on a flat screen. The distance between the screen and the body seems oddly intact, and yet it is precisely this experience that is one of being surrounded – of being and moving through a film, a video, a constantly updating Twitter timeline or whatever is happening on a screen. It is via the screen that we move through epic narratives and random fragments, believe and embody characters, follow their bodies as they fall down stairs or rush madly while being chased. Jennifer Marilyn Barker says that, "The film has a body like ours. It moves and inhabits the world in similar ways"[8].

Perhaps a video shared online or through mobile phones is even more so like the human body – it occupies and moves in the world in very similar ways. Like we do, it stares unseeingly at the world's banality (surveillance footage), or it rushes recklessly into the crowd of protesters and revolutionaries, towards tear gas shells (amateur footage from protests and revolution sites in Egypt, Tunisia and other places). Or as in the case of video porn, it moves into crevices in the human body and creates a bodily relationship of withdrawal and arousal with the viewer. The affective relation to fragments in video clips is complicated by embodiment, notions of realness of the footage and the grainy viscid texture and incomplete nature of the video clip that invites projection and speculation into the lives of others.

What often ties the video and the person watching into a knot of feeling is the idea of presence, and this sensing of presence transforms what could be abstractly a disaster, a protest, and a moment elsewhere into something that is felt, and should not be collapsed into an analysis in terms of representation . Such an analysis would assume a totalising picture of reality as structured meaning, and by doing so does not allow for grasping at the unstructured sensations that are set into motion by watching. Elena Del Rio speaks about the Deleuzian idea of the body without organs, but made of sensations and intensities – the body (in film, video, performance) as a line of flight rather than a representation. She says that understanding of the body as an assemblage of forces or affects that enter into composition with a multiplicity of other forces or restores to the body "the dimension of intensity lost in the representational paradigm".[9]

Whose Room is that?

Amateur sex video clips dispel the distance of the screen from the body, more so when taken from the point of view of a person looking at another. The body of the viewer moves with the camera sinking into an abyss of fascination with the human body (moving with it and following it). When taken from a stationary hidden camera too, it involves the twitching nerve ends of the body as if the fear of being found out goes beyond the camera to the viewer as well. In the anonymity of the clip that comes without a beginning or an end, lies the space to imagine not just your own desire, but other kinds of stories – of death, suicide, ostracism, fear and even occasionally escape or happy endings for those in the clip. Video online is a liberated object, with a complicated set of affects surrounding it that often expand beyond the schooled and disciplined response to cinema.

In this particular video, the man, in spite of the presence of a camera and a willing woman, does not get an erection. This particular oddity of a relatively non-pornographic moment being captured and shared, is not the only reason why as a form, amateur video porn contradicts many tenets of pornography itself. While it contracts with the nerves of the body in a guilty sensation of arousal and apprehension, as pornography should, the material is most often not explicit. Rather than close-up of genitalia and the

becomes a strong pretext for introducing regulation and censorship of content and access to the internet. Malhotra's essay hopes to rescue spaces like these from the 'protect our children' attitude and instead face it squarely to see how we need to understand the aesthetics and politics of such spaces in order to engage with the world of digital natives.

Technologies have traditionally been looked at as tools that help human beings achieve certain tasks with greater efficiency and lesser effort. While academia has invested a lot in trying to see how technologies capture, shape and represent our reality to us, it is not an attitude that has trickled into practice and policy. Malhotra explains quite eloquently how cinema has led to a radical reconstruction of our relationship with time.

For digital natives, who subscribe to a global community, time is often, not only a precious commodity but is also non-linearly distributed so that they connect with different time-zones even when their physical bodies are located in certain geographies. This ability to transcend your physical contexts and subscribe to a space-time continuum where new structures of time are developed is one of the most seductive moments for digital natives to remain in the digital space-time.

Leandra Cole Flor's photo essay (Book 1, To Be) maps personal experiences of time in a day in her life and provides an interesting case to understand these ideas of time and embodiment that Malhotra talks about.

Ben Wagner in his essay (Book 4, To Connect) discusses the production of local spectacles for global consumption and the normative realities it produces. Malhotra's argument adds to it significantly because she points out how timelessness on the internet is experienced due to lack of decay of information. Digital information, archived, shared and stored in multiple locations and travelling without any loss of data can almost be taken out of time-streams and re-introduced without any seams. During the Arab

anonymity of that, such video in its blurred vision becomes about occupying spaces, bodies, moments that seem familiar, sensations of the people in the video mixing with the watcher's corporeality.

The amateur porn video rarely shows a completed sexual act, and often does not contain explicit shots of close-ups of genitalia, cum shots or money shots or many of the conventional markers of pornography. Its file formats are usually 3GPP, flash; its resolution is sometimes as low as 176 X 144 pixels and file size often lesser than 2 MB. Yet this miniscule amount of content is disrupted with a demand for payment for bandwidth usage or payment for downloading each time. This often, tiny fragment of video (sometimes even as short as 5-6 seconds) encapsulates an intense mix of shared sensations, empathy and curiosities about the sexual lives of ordinary people.

It seeks to convey little except the sexual and yet it tells of the rooms, bed sheets, curtains, televisions, bodies, desires of people within the video and of those watching and sharing. It seeks simultaneously to hide and share – conceal faces and identities and reveal bodies and acts and there remains an insidious aura of duplicity in how these videos are made. The attempt to convey as little as possible allows for glimpses into the private rooms and sharing sensations with bodies of anonymous people.

I am Jan 25

The website http://iamjan25.com/ is a collection of videos made by those at Tahrir Square in Cairo, demanding the stepping down of Hosni Mubarak after a 30 year dictatorship. These videos are largely made on mobile phone and digital video and camera recorders, and constitute a significant part of how the world saw the revolution that began in Tunisia and spread to other parts of the Arab world, especially Egypt. Al Jazeera was the only conduit for real information about the revolution that was a voice from within these countries, and along with that these countless videos of protest, of running away from police firing and tear gas shells that come to us literally from within the 18 days of sit-in and protest in Cairo, Alexandria and some other parts of Egypt.

This particular image is from a hazy video taken from inside the crowd at Tahrir Square, where hands are raised in a frenzy of protest, and fists are shaken towards what seems to look like a burning effigy or a bright red light. The quality of the video makes it anonymous and yet the repeated chants to step down, to declare love for Egypt and what it can be, rather than what it is, make this small video clip stirring and moving. Pixillated video today is the carrier of revolutions in the Arab world (January, 2011), of disasters like the earthquake in Japan (March, 2011), of prosaic home videos shared online and the amorous adventures and pornographic encounters of many in Asia (Malaysia, Indonesia, India leading the rest). It is these videos by ordinary people that have made the moment of revolution shareable and real to so many others who watched events unfold in Egypt.

While the dictates of conventional filmmaking determine that it is high quality video that allows for the viewer to feel enveloped and transported into different worlds, it is precisely the low quality, the rushed nature, the seemingly unmediated and real nature of such video that makes it a vehicle for emotions. Speed, movement and degrees of intensity are also part of how a video is experienced and plays a role in how we relate to it.

This then is also about the way affective energies were pushed into play around the globe by rapidly changing Twitter timelines, Facebook updates and of course streaming video channels of Al Jazeera and protestors uploading their own videos on YouTube. Technology not only played a role in informing, but also in making people participate in a moment; or in a less prosaic sense, of feeling the intensities, pent-up angers and frustrations of those who gathered, prayed, and lived at Tahrir Square. The distanced response to news from elsewhere was broken down by a video that jerks, that dives into the moment, that runs from tear gas shells and firing, is far from unscathed, gets hurt and knocked down, could die and sometimes does – a video that just doesn't record but is transformed by the events itself.

What is a video made of?

What we call a video usually has one or more tracks – audio, video and subtitles track. Video such as an .avi or.mp4 file is actually a container, not a file. A container defines how things can be stored, not what is stored in them, and a container file can also have metadata about the file as well, including information such as what aspect ratio it should be played with (4:3 i.e. letterbox or 16:9 i.e. widescreen or cinematic)

Audio Video Interweave or AVI (patented by Microsoft) is the form in which video has existed for the longest time, and is the most familiar container after MPEG. Other formats like Ogg (.ogv),WebM and Matroska (.mkv), are open formats on which there are no patents and of these Matroska has been introduced recently in the last year. In 2004[10] the most common formats for distribution of video were AVI (Audio Video Interweave) and MPEG, including the .dat in Video CDs which can be contained in MPEG1 (.mpg). The same year, I was attempting to create a collection of movie clips that spanned 20-30 years of Indian cinema in Hindi. The compilation titled 'Queering Bollywood' was a collection of queer and erotic moments in mainstream Bollywood films where the narrative is of heterosexual romance, the buddy film or revenge film. Yet intimacies and moments were shared between unlikely figures – two

Spring documentation for example, there were many collectors who took stunning visuals which belonged to other geo-political contexts and introduced them into the live feeds capturing the hyper-visual realities of spaces like Tahrir Square. The images, which espoused the sentiments of protest, subversion, challenge and demonstration, were not 'real' because they belonged to a different time and space. And yet, because they belonged to a similar moment in history, they were accepted as a part of the larger reality and became viral as emblematic of the revolution.

The critiques of such 'manipulations' often fail to see what Malhotra is unravelling for us – that digital information, especially images and videos are not subject to earlier notions of consumption time. They can be unstitched from older narratives and transplanted on to newer ones easily, often adding to the moment of reality rather than distorting it. These images remained viral even after their 'space-time fallacy' was established because they were not being consumed and shared for the truth value of their content. The digital natives consuming and sharing these images were more interested in the creative possibilities that these images offered and the signal they helped in propagating.

Nilofar Shamin Ansher's experiments with engineering a cyber twin (Book 1, To Be) complicate this idea of presence. There is an imagination of the digital presence as defined by actions. Even within the digital video, there is a way by which the presence of the people in the frame, in the process of distribution and production, seems to give it meaning and content. However, Ansher shows us how digital presences are more complex – they are marked by traces, vestiges, impressions and inactions; where lurking also becomes a sort of presence. The experiential and the affective become stronger and cannot be understood by existing frames of representation. The 'Who' and the 'What' in digital spaces is more than a mere extension of the body of the user and the spaces that it occupies. When these two strongholds of representation studies collapse, new frameworks need to emerge.

brothers (Parinda, 1989), women competing for the love of the same man (Utsav, 1984), two friends who were avengers and heroes together (Sholay, 1975). The movies were collected from pirate CD markets in Shivaji Nagar and National Market, Bangalore or from video lending stores that were still open. The specific scenes were clipped on a Windows PC, using trial versions of video clipping software downloaded off the net. At the end, all the clips were of a differing format (.dat, .mpeg3, .mpeg4, .avi, .vob, .mov, .dv). The different codecs available made the making of this collection a difficult enterprise that often ended in tears, and when finally done, the video files included were of the lowest format (MPEG1) and were as small as thumbnails with some discernible movement.

Silsila, Bollywood movie, 1981.
Director: Yash Chopra

The difficulties of making that collection possible and to distribute it, is perhaps the reason why digital nativity seems often laughable for those who had to struggle and wrestle down the analog monster formats (betacam, 35 mm film, 16 mm film, VHS) and work with their logic of labour and beauty, and occasionally force them into digital formats.

Today, VLC player (VideoLAN) that plays everything solves the problem of different video codecs and formats, including accompanying subtitle tracks. Video can now be downloaded, streamed, embedded and podcast. Unlike the tangible physicality of analog, digital video is basically numbers conveying information – a package of binary digits passing through wires and hard drives that if copied produces the exact same thing, and if lost, it can technically be computed all over again. It can be easily copied, modified, distributed and manipulated – it can now be computed in a variety of unpredictable ways, such as what is the average colour of the clip, kind of camera movement it records, etc[11], and yet it is the obscene logic of obsolete intellectual property that controls what is possible with video online. Varying levels of legal controls (on sharing copyrighted content, filtered search results in Google, censorship via State and corporate bodies such as YouTube, etc.) and technical controls (patents on video codecs, video players, flash format for YouTube videos) still determine how accessible video can be made online. It was the competing patents on video codecs, that made the making of the compilation 'Queering Bollywood', a particularly difficult and fraught exercise, and yet ultimately the most rewarding as well, because once accessed, the conduits of more accessible video formats ensured that it travelled extensively, both online and as CD database.

Often the tendency has been to describe changes in technology as progressing towards higher

competence and efficiency – a successive unravelling of the world's materiality through human endeavour and mastery. This notion of evolution – of passing from phase to phase is challenged by Henri Bergson's treatise on time. In Creative Evolution Bergson speaks of the cinematographical method as being a method to knowledge – that an understanding of the world can be achieved by examining and putting together of immobilities to make mobility. This is similar to the way in which a film is essentially made of still moments that have been captured and 25 such stills or frames make a second of film possible. However, Bergson's thesis is to move away from this cinemtographical method to knowledge – he says that to grasp at the suppleness and variety of life, you have to install yourself within the change and its many successive states or sudden immobilities.

Bergson shows how becoming and evolution are continuous processes and the fixing on top of this, of phases and distinct moments of change may not be effective mode of understanding life, time and change. For Bergson, the seeking of higher precision, led to the shift between phases of human evolution.

He says – "instantaneous photography isolates any moment; it puts them all in the same rank, and thus the gallop of a horse spreads out of it into as many successive attitudes as it wishes, instead of massing itself into a single attitude, which is supposed to flash out in a privileged moment and to illuminate a whole period".[12] What can be gleaned from Bergson, is that the fixing on top of technology its progressive movement or a particular phase (social networking age, digital era, etc.), may not be helpful in understanding the contemporary – that what is insightful are the constantly mutating practices, subjectivities and experiences of technology.

Perhaps rather than privileging any one particular moment of technological change or a phase, knowledge can be gleaned from experiences and detours that are part of the rolling of the timeline, the simultaneous ticking of different time zones, the split screen views of varying access and uses of technology

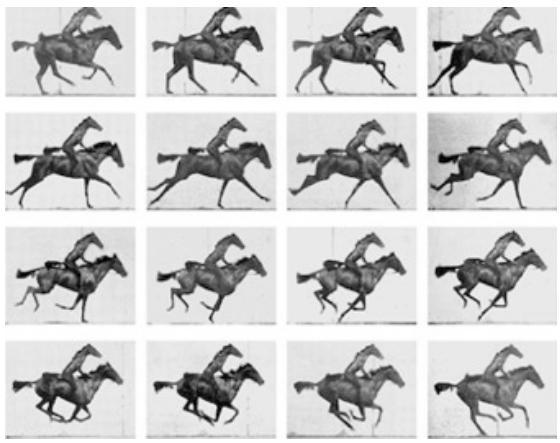
This is a question, that perhaps needs to be asked of each digital object that we encounter. People who concentrate only on the content and the quality of the visual, often form seamless connections between the digital artefact and its analogue counterparts. For example, blogging is often defined as a digital personal diary, Twitter is seen as a successor to passing notes, Wikipedia is looked at as an online encyclopaedia. While all these connections have some merit because they allow us to see how other technologies had produced similar moments and instances in history, trying to pass off the digital object, without understanding the technology and the different formats involved in it, is like sniffing at food and determining what it tastes like.

Malhotra's question comes from a position of practice, where it is necessary not only to look at the aesthetic politics of the video but also to see how different formats and technologies help us understand the nature and texture of consumption as well as production of such videos. The formats also give us a clue of how videos go viral, how people are enabled to become remixers, and what are the devices that form the physical infrastructure of this video sharing network.

While we do think of digital natives as existing in environments of pervasive computing and access, they haven't always and still don't have access to infinite hyperspace. Connectivity, speed, access and attention form a large part of the material economy of being a digital native. Even today, in developing countries in the Global South, internet speed remains a problem and even those who do have access to it, are often stuck on the slow lane on the information highway. This is why formats, usability, resolution and technical compression become important. Attention needs to be paid within digital natives research to how digital information can be made to travel and given visibility within the increasing cacophony of cyberspace.

or the ways in which time can loop back across a century and replace the human with a horse.

Edweard Muybridge
Title: Animal Locomotion, Horseback Rider, Plate N. 637 Date: 1887



Kim Beom, Horse Riding Horse (After Eadweard Muybridge), 2008.
Single-channel video, 24 seconds[13]

[1] http://www.textfiles.com/art/ASCIIPR0N/hunky04.txt

[2] By this time, virtual rape in cyberspace in MUDs was being talked about in the first world. See Julian Dibbell, *A Rape in Cyberspace* (Or TINYSOCIETY, and How to Make One), 1998. http://www.juliandibbell.com/articles/a-rape-in-cyberspace/

[3] *The YouTube Reader*. Pelle Snickars and Patrick Vonderau (eds.). YouTube as a Mirror Maze - An Exhibition by Giovanna Fossati. See http://www.youtubereader.com/

[4] Eric Kluitenberg. *Connection Machines, The Book of Imaginary Media: Excavating the Dream of the Ultimate Communication Medium* (Edited by Eric Kluitenberg, Siegfried Zielinski, Bruce Sterling). NAi Publishers, 2007.

[5] Curiously the likening of cinema to magic and sorcery were also the reason why it was considered deceptive and dangerous, and hence worthy of pre-censorship. Mutual Film Corporation v. Industrial Commission of Ohio, 236 U.S. 230 (1915 is the first decision of courts in relation to cinema that lays down that the interaction of the public with cinema must be controlled.

[6] Mark BN Hansen. "Living (with) Technical Time: From Media Surrogacy to Distributed Cognition". *Theory, Culture & Society* 2009. SAGE, Los Angeles, London, New Delhi, and Singapore, Vol. 26(2–3): 294–315.

[7] Calvin travels to the future to find the Calvin who has finished the homework, to bring it back, only to realise that the future Calvin is as irresponsible. This is the conversation in the strip that can be found online at http://web.mit.edu/manoli/mood/www/calvin-full.html or as part of Bill Watterson, The Days are Just Packed (Andrews McMeel Publishing, 1993).
Calvins: Hobbeses, the 8:30 Calvin and I are going to go back to 7:30 and make THAT Calvin do the homework.
Hobbeses: We'll wait here. All this time travel makes us queasy.
Calvins: We'll be right back. Off we go!
Hobbes 1: This HAS to be the least efficient way to write a paper.
Hobbes 2: All this modern technology makes people

try to do everything at once.

[8] Jennifer Marilyn Barker. *The Tactile Eye: Touch and the Cinematic Experience*. University of California Press, 2009.
[9] Elena Del Rio. Deleuze and the Cinemas of Performance: Powers of Affection. Edinburgh University Press, 2008.
[10] 2004 is the same year as the World Social Forum in India, the then-unknown beginnings of Facebook in Cambridge, Massachusetts, first release of Ubuntu operating system, Farah Khan's fun and playful first movie Main Hoon Na.

[11] The interface in the online video archive Pad.ma (Public Access Digital Media Archive) and the online cinema database 0xdb exploits this feature of digital video in the way that video is displayed via a timeline. The software for both is created by 0x2620 in Berlin, Germany. An example of such a timeline (La Region Centrale, Michael Snow, 1971) can be found at http://0xdb.org/0130232

[12] Henri Bergson. *Creative Evolution.* Translated by Arthur Mitchell, Random House, first published 1911.

[13] For more details see http://www.e-flux.com/shows/view/9465

3.7 TOWARDS 2 WAY PARTICIPATION

by
Prabhas Pokharel
CASE STUDY

Formal actors are increasingly using technology in order to push youth participation forward. Incredible stories of grassroots youth engagement efforts that use technology have given and continue to give inspiration to many of these efforts. In this essay, I use this inspiration as a premise to argue that the power of story-making and narrative formation is important to consider when designing participation efforts. Using examples from UNICEF Kosovo Innovations Lab, I urge practitioners in this area to loosen their narrative constraints on efforts encouraging youth participation through technology, and to re-interpret youth participation as a two-way dynamic.

Story and narrative

In order to make my argument coherently, I will first try to describe two objects, the narrative and the story.

A story is simple; roughly, it has a beginning and an end, a plot and a flow that guides one from the beginning to the end, some characters, and some action. It is a tale, a set of events glued together one after the other, a set of characters moving through time or space in one form or another. The narrative, on the other hand, is the framework within which these events and actions happen. It sets the rules that stories must follow: The types of characters that are allowed, and the kinds of interactions they can have with each other. The fairy tale narrative, for example, includes magic, wizards and witches, princes and princesses, gingerbread men, and happy endings. The western rational narrative of the world, on the other hand, insists on causality according to the laws of physics, biology and various other sciences. Stories simply exist (are told) within these narrative frameworks. In a fairy tale, Cinderella finds her prince in a ballroom, uses pumpkins that turn magically into chariots, and has a fairy godmother. In the western ration world, Darwin rides a boat through the Caribbean, observes many different kind of animal life as they progress through generations, and *deduces* the existence of evolution.

Simply put, the story is the flow of events, a motivation that prod some actions which are followed by consequences. The narrative is the framework, the rules and constraints that dictate what kinds of interventions are appropriate given certain motivations and what consequences actions can have.

And now that I have described these two objects, I will move on to the subject of this paper: the contemporary practice of youth participation through technology.

Youth participation through technology

In this paper, I will talk to and about formal actors involved in the practice of youth participation[1] through technology.

But before getting to technology, the practice of youth participation that formal actors engage in is worth breaking down, as participation is a broad term. In the paper, formal actors mean government organisations, aid organisations, non-profits, and even private sector participants—entities with budgets, employed staff, rules of operation and so on. And youth participation refers to the practice of involving young people in the kinds of processes the aforementioned formal actors perform[2]. To give an example, I am referring to something like UNICEF Kosovo's effort to engage young people in its anti-smoking program, by hosting debates to bring out issues important to youth, and by asking young people to design media campaigns

that would appeal to their peers. Another example would be the program through which Plan Benin has been getting young people to contribute reports about child-related abuse and violence, in order to help the organisation get a better understanding of the child protection needs in Beninoise communities[3]. Youth participation efforts like these can be thought of as participatory planning[4] extended to action—involving young people directly into work formal actors are engaging in. Planning is one type of work in which people can be engaged, but also included are activities such as designing new campaigns (for example against smoking), developing better maps of communities, or creating better pictures of on-the-ground situations (for example of child-related violence). And formal actors like UNICEF, Plan, and governments around the world have been interested in such efforts for a long time, for reasons that range from enabling youth participation itself, to electoral considerations, promotion of volunteerism, and many other reasons. Such kind of youth participation both exists and is desired by many formal actors.

It is here then, that technology and recent history enter. For in the recent years, what has arisen is that the very "audience" of these participation efforts has been organising themselves using technology in highly notable ways.

I will use an example that I am intimately familiar with, that of the NepalUnites protests organised in Kathmandu in demand for Nepal's new constitution to be written in May of 2011. By then, Nepal's constituent assembly was running short on its second deadline for writing the constitution (the first was a year before, in May 2010), and phenomenally little progress had been made[5]. So young people got together using Facebook as a primary organisational tool, to protest against the inaction of the constituent assembly members. Starting with the slogan of

ज्याला पुरै लियौ, अब संबिधान देऊ

("You have taken your full salaries, now give us the constitution"), the group organised protests ahead of the constitutional deadline, gathering crowds of thousands of people repeatedly[6]. The protests were interesting in that (1) their declared interests were simply those of tax-paying citizens, and (2) they were organised and led by youth not affiliated with any political party, union, or organisation—both rare enough in Nepal for people to take notice.

And notice people did: the protests received media coverage for many weeks of their existence. It started with simple reports of the protests that people had organised, but moved quickly on to the discussions of the pure "citizen" stance of the effort, criticism of the classed nature of technology-based organisation in a country with 58 percent literacy[7], and rebuttals cautioning against sticking only with supposedly tried and true but ineffective methods of influence. All in all, the protests stayed on national newspapers for at least two weeks around the constitutional deadline. The protests didn't receive any concrete goals in terms of achieving constitutional progress, but media coverage extended even to international media8. The story of how young people in Nepal organised themselves using technology, and articulated their demand loudly, was indelibly entered into the annals of national and international media[8], and the minds of the public consciousness.

What this means is that any designer of a program for youth participation in Nepal's future will now be forced to confront, discuss, and address this set of protests of May 2011. Formal actors can no longer frame youth participation efforts inspiring apathetic youth to action; they will instead have to frame their audience in terms of one that was able to use technology to organise themselves and articulate themselves loud and clear in May of 2011. As the access to and usage of technology increases (as it has been), more and more youth participation efforts in fact will be using technology directly. And more than any other participation efforts, these will have to speak to movements such as NepalUnites.

And they have. While the example I have used is so recent that it forces me to foretell consequences, many events of the past lend credibility to what I have argued. The 2011 revolutions in North Africa and the Middle East, the Pink Chaddhi campaign in India,

the Ushahidi Haiti crowdsourcing effort, the Map Kibera project, and the uprisings in Iran and Moldova are just a handful of youth efforts with a heavy technology component that the world knows about. Efforts like these are notable, widely discussed, and already play a crucial part in the design of new youth participation efforts by formal actors. I myself have seen these very examples repeatedly appear in opening paragraphs and motivating slides talking about formal participation efforts that deal even tangentially with technology. Often, these grassroots efforts act as the very catalysts for technology usage within youth participation projects. And even when not, they are bound to act as inspiration, or at the very least as examples who can provide lessons learned.

To me, this is a very welcome way of doing things. Formal efforts for youth participation should learn from how young people themselves organise and have their own say using technology. What I want to do in the rest of this essay is break down two particular attributes of participation efforts: story-making and narrative power, and argue for their inclusion (and if not inclusion, at least consideration) in new participation methods that use technology.

Crowdsourcing and competitions; Story-making and narrative power

In this section, I want to describe two methods of youth participation through technology: crowdsourcing and competitions. In the process, I will tease out two properties of youth participation efforts: story-making and narrative power.

One increasingly popular method of technology-based participation uses the technique of crowdsourcing.

The idea of crowdsourcing is to get large numbers of people (the 'crowd') to contribute information or an action of some sort. The goal is to obtain (source) something from the crowd; the something varies from some information individuals already have to small tasks they have to complete.

Popularised by the Ushahidi initiatives to solicit information from large numbers of people during crises in Kenya and Haiti, the method has been used for soliciting reports of child violence in Benin as well as to collect information during disasters by UN-OCHA[9].

Crowdsourcing depends on a crowd, i.e., a large number of people. The tools that enable crowdsourcing, because of its very nature, try to enable as many people to contribute to an effort as possible. The reliability of aggregate results is improved by the number of contributions; 'number of contributions' to a crowdsourcing effort are in fact one of the measures of its success. In order to enable large-scale participation in such a way, however, the barrier to action has be reduced as much as possible—the action each person performs has to be made atomised and simple. But when contributions, or 'participation' if you will, are (is) so atomised, the crowd is left with control of neither story nor narrative. By the time a young person is invited to participate, the task that should be done is already defined, the story of the why and the how are already told. In what ways the crowd is supposed to contribute, how the need for the effort translates to the specific pieces of data or action that the crowd has to be performed, all of that is determined pre-'participation'.

Simply put, crowdsourcing efforts give participants very little control of either the story or the narrative.

There will be a story produced by the information that the crowd contributes. But the story of why the effort was started (i.e., the need that motivated the effort), how that translated into the specific actions the crowd is now performing, and decisions to change these actions based on new information: all of that is out of participants' hands. This is especially true in formal efforts, where there tends to be a large separation between the 'crowd' (the participants) and the 'crowdsourcers' (the formal actors). The language of crowdsourcing itself carries with it the notion of a disempowered 'crowd' which can be 'sourced' for effort and information. But the crowd cannot define

the 'why' (the story) or the 'how' (the narrative) of what they contribute.

In contrast is yet another popular method for youth participation through technology: Competitions. The World Bank's apps4dev competition, state department-sponsored Apps4Africa, and challenges sponsored by private sector companies such as GSMA (2011 Mobile App Challenge) and Nokia (Calling All Innovators program) work by developing a broad problem definition, and then accepting a wide range of submissions to solve the problem. The problem statements reflect the needs and priorities that the formal institutions seek to be addressed, but there is usually plenty of freedom to define why and what to do. Apps4Dev, for example, asked technologists young and old to create apps (applications) using World Bank data. Creators of apps could tell their own stories about what kinds of data they wanted to use, how they wanted to use the data, why, who the audience would be, and so on. The basic constraint was only that the application had to use WorldBank data. This of course restricted approaches to be data-centric and analytic. But besides that, there was a lot of freedom in choosing what kind of story to tell and what narrative to use. The MigrantsMovingMoney app10, for example, told a story about migration around the world, while DevelopmentTimelines tried to tell the stories of development of individual places through time. And the narrative constraints by which their motivations manifested to interventions were their own. Participants defined 'app' in their own way (MigrantsMovingMoney was a simple web-based visualisation of data; Get a Life! presented intuitions in the form of a game; Bebema was a mobile app directed towards mothers), thereby defining what interventions were appropriate for the kind of story they were trying to tell.

I have on purpose not yet argued which of these is the better approach as no technique of enabling youth participation is a panacea. However, I find this property of story-making and narrative to be an important one to consider when designing youth participation efforts. In the next section, I will bring out examples from my experience at the UNICEF Innovations Lab Kosovo, which has suggested to me that allowing for these freedoms in fact enables more powerful mechanisms of youth participation.

Some real life examples

Here, I would like to share my experience from UNICEF Innovations Lab Kosovo, which was founded in November 2010, and which I led for the initial six months of its existence. The Lab has a mandate of increasing youth participation through technology among other things, and experience with young people's projects there has me convinced that narrative and story-making powers are of great value in youth participation efforts [11].

An early challenge that the Lab was given was to make better digital maps of Kosovo for UNICEF's use—existing public maps had little information about points of interest such as health facilities, youth centres, schools, and other public service resources. Young people, including those from the organisation Free Libre Open Source Software Kosova (FLOSSK) wanted to make better maps of Kosovo and were already working on this issue. Given that part of our mandate was to increase youth participation through technology, then, our task was to craft a methodology to involve these (and other) young people in processes of making maps that would be useful for UNICEF (and ultimately the Kosovo government and the Kosovo public). Two basic methods were obvious: (1) to start with a certain set of interesting points to map from UNICEF's perspective, define the correct way to map each point, and ask young people to contribute individual pieces of data; (2) to simply tell young people what we were doing, and ask them how they wanted to contribute to our effort. The first method is the method of atomisation: to define the process and break the task into small chunks. The second is a non-atomised method that leaves all of the 'how questions' (and some of the 'why') to be defined by young people themselves.

We tried both methods. Kosovo Youth Map (http://kosovoinnovations.org/youthmap) was a project to map youth resources in Kosovo using the atomised/crowdsourced approach. We defined exactly the

kind of data we wanted ("youth resources": youth NGOs, youth centres, student councils and peer clubs), atomised the data collection process (give us information for one of these resources; here is a form to fill), and invited young people to contribute points of interest onto the map (after starting with a base layer of data we obtained through other means). Two projects were born out of the latter method, of just putting our request to young people of Kosovo. One of the projects was to map polling stations throughout Kosovo (http://kumevotu.info), and another wanted to map public facilities (schools, municipality offices, health centres, etc.) throughout the country. The methods for mapping were similar in both these youth-defined projects: they included getting as much public data as possible, and then using GPS units to locate specific facilities and putting them on the Wikipedia-like mapping platform OpenStreetMap.

I worked with all three projects. While I have no rigorous evaluation method to stand behind me, and more confounding variables that anyone could count, young people's engagement in projects they defined themselves, and told their own stories for, were much higher than the project where participation was more atomised. I can particularly differentiate between the KuMeVotu project and the Kosovo Youth Map, two projects that were more or less completed during my tenure at the Lab. Judging by number of contributions received, number of person-hours contributing to a given project, and the amount of material contributed, the participatory output was simply higher for the youth-defined project.

One of the reasons why I think the engagement was higher in this case points directly to narrative power; a lot of it came down to simply the somewhat technical choice of a mapping platform. For a UNICEF that wanted good maps most of all, the slight preference of open source tools was no match to the much greater quality and quantity of data available from proprietary vendors like Google. So the Kosovo Youth Map used proprietary map information from Google as the default base layer, and Ushahidi, the popular crowdsourcing software for collecting information about youth resources. The polling station and public institution projects, on the other hand, were working with OpenStreetMap, which is a community-based mapping platform that places very few restrictions on public consumption and re-use of mapping data. The young people we engaged with had already been working on OpenStreetMap, and had a very high preference for continuing to work on that platform for ideological reasons (the license that OpenStreetMap uses is a Creative Commons license that puts only two basic restrictions on usage of data: that credit be given, and that any new work based on that work must also have a similar license and therefore also allow re-use). The group of youngsters wanted to contribute to a global knowledge base that would be expounded on by others after them, and was simply more excited to work using these tools.

So ultimately, engagement was driven by the how of the project (ie, how it was implemented), with the hidden politics of choice of tools. It was a narrative choice, a choice of how motivation (need for mapped polling stations) translated to intervention (create points mapped on OpenStreetMap). The Lab could have done interviews with the young people to bring out this preference and accounted for it in designing our atomised participation tools. But allowing narrative flexibility was another, easier way to deal with the same issue. And there might be subtler issues that our assessment tools might miss, issues that can only be captured by putting young people in the driving seat of the narrative.

There was also something behind the story-making power that the youth-defined projects offered the participants. Motivations for all three projects were built with somewhat of a collaborative approach, but the main responsibility and ownership of storytelling fell on the young people for the project they themselves defined. There was simply a greater feeling of ownership and therefore responsibility that led to higher engagement. Moreover, this is not an uncommon phenomenon—it has been documented repeatedly by those working in issues of community and sustainable development[12].

The drawbacks

There are drawbacks to such approaches. I see three big drawbacks: potential cost, loss of outcome control, and loss of process control. The first one is simple: some ways of providing young people their own story-making and narrative facilities can be costly, precisely because there is a greater domain to explore. The WorldBank Apps4Dev competition needed to put forth substantial resources in the form of competition prizes as incentives for people to participate, because it wanted to draw in and incent a wide audience. Most atomised participation methods, where participation is made as effortless as possible, have no need for such incentives. The second drawback is that there isn't always full control of what the outcome will be. UNICEF was interested in better maps of Kosovo, but its first priority for mapping wasn't necessarily polling centres—health facilities would have been preferred without doubt. The Lab was lucky that youth participation was part of its mandate, and it could afford a narrative-rich approach to participation that didn't yield preferred outcomes. Other formal actors may be more constrained. And finally, there is the possibility of the loss of process control. When formal actors let young people control the narrative of progress (i.e. the how), it will likely not fit exactly with the processes already being employed by the former. There will be differences in the kinds of communications protocols, archiving, decision-making, and evaluation processes that communities of young people and formal institutions employ, and this will simply be something extra to deal with.

Towards 2 Way Participation

Despite the drawbacks, however, I think many institutions can commit to youth participation through technology efforts that let young people make up their own stories and narratives of progress. And those who can, should, for story-making and narrative power are building bridges towards real 2 Way Participation.

I believe many institutions are beginning to focus increasingly on such approaches. I will share here my knowledge of UNICEF Innovations Lab Kosovo, which certainly has. The Lab has tried to design programs that meet young people halfway in participation platforms—where formal processes (such as the use and development of digital maps) and young people's inclination (such as of using digital tools that ensured public contribution) are both respected. One way it has done so is by creating a project framework where young people are asked to "submit innovative projects for social good". Young people define social good themselves (their motivational story) and "innovative" themselves (their narrative of change), and the project framework is innately flexible enough to let people define their own motivations and methods.

I think one of the most interesting things that comes out of this is that the notion of "youth participation" itself is re-interpreted. Usually, when formal institutions talk about "youth participation", it is framed in terms of some decision-making or formal process that young people are encouraged and invited to participate in. There is no thought of formal institutions themselves participating in the processes of youth, despite the motivation I provided in the beginning of this essay, of the need and responsibility for formal actors to learn from grassroots efforts of young people using technology. This has to change—formal institutions need to think about how they can tap into the realities of communities like NepalUnites[13].

The release of story-making and narrative power in youth participation efforts through technology is one way to start working on this issue immediately. By allowing young people to define the why and the how of projects, institutions can tap into ecologies of existing practices that people are already a part of. When the Innovations Lab asks young people to submit "innovative ideas for social good", young people submit ideas that they are already working on, whether they be about developing open maps, tackling environmental issues using photography, or developing new methods for inter-ethnic co-operation through the arts[14] . When the ideas are new, they build on existing communities, existing sensibilities and values. When participation includes the ability to define the story of why, and the narrative of how, participation begins to become two-way.

[1] Actually, what I really want to talk about is participation efforts geared towards a digitally active public: perhaps best represented with a term such as "digital participation". However, such a term de-links the efforts I want to talk about from very similar efforts which do not use technology, which to me have much more similarity than differences. Therefore, I will use the cumbersome phrase "youth participation through technology". For then, the base idea is "youth participation", a universe in which technological and non-technological interventions lie close together. Many of the efforts I talk about do include non-youth actors, but the audiences of technologically-capable audiences are largely young people, and the language about digitally-capable publics and youth correspond closely. Therefore, despite the impreciseness, I find "youth participation" to be the best established term I can pick up and talk about.

[2] To make this even clearer, it might be worth breaking down the relationship between youth and formal process. Four basic relationships between youth and formal process are obvious: formal process for youth, youth for formal process, youth in formal process, and formal process with youth. I am talking about the latter two—formal process (or action) with youth, and youth in formal process. I am not talking about the formal processes that are designed for young people, or the process of mobilising young people in support for formal process. I am talking about incorporating young people directly into the processes themselves: formal institutions enacting these processes with young people as involved participants.

[3] More about UNICEF Kosovo's anti-smoking efforts: http://kosovoinnovations.org/w/?s=smoking&search=Search More about Plan Benin's work on child-violence reporting: http://www.globalhealthhub.org/2011/01/13/revisiting-the-sms-violence-reporting-project-in-benin/

[4] Wikipedia: Participatory planning is an urban planning paradigm that emphasises involving the entire community in the strategic and management processes of urban planning or community-level planning processes—urban or rural.

[5] Before the last month, in the entire one-year extension period, the constituent assembly met for a total of 95 minutes and even then on procedural issues rather than those of content (http://www.ekantipur.com/the-kathmandu-post/2011/05/17/top-story/a-tale-of-idleness-in-365-days-constituent-assembly-sweated-for-95-minutes/221797.html). By the time the one-year extension was again renewed, only two major issues were decided, one of which was the name of the constitution (http://www7.economist.com/node/18775293)

[6] http://nepaliblogger.com/news/nepal-unites-via-facebook-and-speaks-up-at-khula-manch/2062/attachment/nepali-singers-at-nepal-unites-khulamanch-event/

[7] UNICEF Nepal Statistics http://www.unicef.org/infobycountry/nepal/nepal_nepal_statistics.html

[8] Even the Economist began an article on Nepal's political climate with "A gaggle of protesters want to turn the Arab Spring into a Himalayan Summer". (http://www7.economist.com/node/18775293)

[9] See Plan International's SMS violence reporting networking in Benin (ref. http://www.globalhealthhub.org/2011/01/13/revisiting-the-sms-violence-reporting-project-in-benin/) and UN-OCHA's crisis map for Libya at http://libyacrisismap.net/

[10] This, and the rest of the apps mentioned in this paragraph can be found at http://appsfordevelopment.challengepost.com

[11] And here I do have to add the disclaimer that the Lab is only less than eight months old at the time of writing, and therefore has not "proven" its success or the robustness of its approach yet (however that will be defined).

[12] For instance, a quick Google search finds a product sheet from the Sustainable Development Group International which includes the following sentence as motivation: "SDGI believes that the best governed projects are those in which communities are encouraged to take an active part in identifying

needs and formulating solutions". http://www.sdg-int.org/view/english/ensuring-local-participation-and-ownership

[13] One possible method is the Innovations Cafe hosted at UNICEF Innovations Lab Kosovo. The Lab is essentially hosting a community of young people working for social change using technology. These include people working on projects supported by the Lab, but include an open and welcome invitation for anyone working on similar projects. The Lab brings this community together every two weeks in an informal event where everyone gets together. The discussions involve Lab staff and sometimes revolve around the work that young people are doing in various ways, or ideas and problems posed by either UNICEF or the various government ministries UNICEF partners with.

[14] See http://kosovoinnovations.com/w/byfy/projects for a list of projects that young people are working on at the Innovations Lab.

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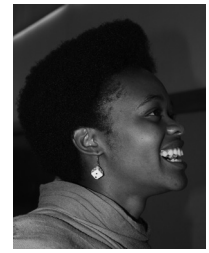

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