



Edited by  
Nishant Shah  
Samuel Tettner  
Shweta Taneja

**D:CODING**  
**DIGITAL**  
**NATIVES**

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Bangalore 560071 | India  
T +91 80 25350955 | F +91 80 41148130  
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Nishant Shah, Shweta Taneja, Samuel Tettner

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# INTRODUCTION

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You have encountered a **Digital Native** recently. You might not have known them by that name, but they are all around you. The teenager who can set up your wifi while thumb-typing on the cellphone, the colleague at work who spends time on the Information Highway and makes flashy presentations, your friend who uses a webcam to keep in touch with older relatives across the world, or the student who posts videos on the web, sharing insights on lessons learned. Digital Technologies have revolutionised the way we live our lives, and many have tried to understand how.

In 2001 Marc Prensky coined the term 'Digital Native' to refer to that generation that grew up learning how to do things the 'digital way'. Prensky was amazed at how profound the effect of digital technologies was on the way young people processed

information, as compared to their parents. He described this term with an age-based idea. He explained that all young people around the world, who were born after the 1980s, were 'native' to digital technologies as fish is to water. In other words, they were digital natives.

Roughly 10 years have passed since then and the term 'Digital Native' has grown in its usage. With the spread of technologies around the world, a whole new set of people have started to relate to digital technologies in developing countries—in a wide range of ways—people who ten years ago didn't have these technologies at their disposal. In the same time period we have come to realise digital technologies have the potential to not only affect the ways people learn, like Prensky originally thought, but fundamentally affect the way in which they think and act. The need to understand the relationship between youth and technology has never been so high. The global youth population surpassed 1.2 billion in 2010 and 85 percent of people under 25 reside in developing countries. Unleashing the potential of even a part of this group promises a substantial impact

on our societies.

So how can we talk about these so called digital natives if they appear to be so different? What is the common factor between them? They seem to be tied in with their passion and extensive use of digital technologies. Research into the topic has shown us that access, affordability, location, culture and history define how different people have different relationships with technologies. In an effort to provide a definition of a digital native which encompasses all these varying interactions while keeping it open to interpretation, we suggest that a digital native is anybody – irrespective of age, class, location, gender and body – anybody who makes a **strategic use of digital technologies to produce a change in their immediate environment.**

This Information Kit speaks from this vantage point and is trying to decode what it means to be a digital native. In our research, which focuses on the effects of emerging technologies in the developing world, we threw open this question to people who identified with the Digital Native label at three regional workshops

in Latin America, Africa and Asia. This kit consolidates learnings from these three workshops and presents a series of multiple, sometimes conflicting opinions, ideas and perspectives on digital natives and the role they play in our rapidly transforming societies.

The booklet you are reading is a mashup of blogs, Facebook conversations, tweets and visuals that respond to popular conceptions of who is a digital native and what they do in our world. These responses provide both a complementary and sometimes contrarian point of view to that which you might have heard in the past. The intention is to introduce you to the wide range and diversity of digital native identities which don't get adequately talked about in contemporary mainstream perception. An insight into the world of digital natives as **they** see it.

#### Editors

Nishant Shah  
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Shweta Taneja

## CONTENTS

**All young people are born digital**

**Digital natives are online 24/7**

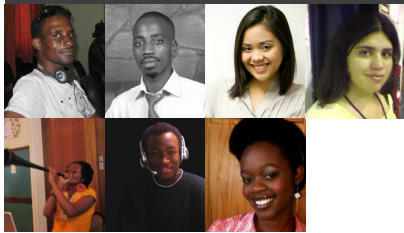
**On the internet everyone does the same thing**

**People on the internet cannot be trusted**

**Digital natives only do things for themselves**

**Digital natives are slacktivists**

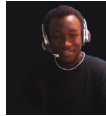
# ALL YOUNG PEOPLE ARE BORN DIGITAL



The idea of 'being born digital' is seductive but it hides the complex processes by which people, especially young people, acquire the skills to be digital.

Being digital is something one can choose to become, often with the help of support structures and guidance. In this section, we concentrate on how one becomes digital. The thought that young people take to technology as a 'natural way of things' is dangerous because it underplays the role that parents, teachers, etc. play in teaching

them how to be safe, responsible and literate with digital technologies. Frank Odongkara followed by Albert Mucunguzi tell us how the larger ecosystem around one, helps one become a digital native; illustrating how one isn't born digital but has to learn to be digital. And this is not restricted to age.



## MY DIGITAL JOURNEY

by

Frank Odongkara, Uganda

**"Dad, is that what they call a computer?"**

I asked.

"Yes, it is," he responded.

"What does it do? I have heard a lot of awesome stories about it."

"I do not know exactly, but it knows everything and everyone and can do almost everything...."

The year was 2001. I was 11 years old and in Primary level Five. I had read almost all the books the school library had and wanted more. Everything I knew about

computers were rumours. The school library contained no books on computers; the school itself had no computers. The most advanced technology they had were clocks and a typewriter. No teacher knew any more than I did about computers. At the library, the books were out-dated but to me, it was the most up-to-date information.

I knew I had to learn more about computers as soon as I could. **I had a feeling it would change my life. Maybe I could even manage to change it.** I ransacked the public library for information regarding computers. When I finished my Primary level Seven, my choice of secondary school was based on computer access. I opted for a private school in Secondary level Three which had a good computer laboratory but did not offer Computer as a subject because they doubted if I could catch up. I befriended the prefect with the keys to the lab and would sneak in at night and use the computers, after I had observed what the professionals were doing during the day. By the time I was completing Ordinary level, I had taught myself Microsoft Excel, Word, and PowerPoint, how to browse internet

and other basic stuff. On displaying my skills to my dad, I earned myself a laptop.

Today, I have over 1,000 volumes of ebooks to read on my laptop and I've read over 350 of them already. My dad is soon graduating with a degree from Washington University, while living and working from the upcountry part of Uganda. All my siblings know how to use a computer and now I am soon getting one for my mom. Life is just turning out as I had anticipated .... I am just another digital native.



## FIRST TIME I TOUCHED A COMPUTER

by

Albert Mucunguzi, Uganda

It seems a little bit strange, but I first touched a computer in 1999, as a 13-year-old Senior One of Ntare School in Mbarara, South Western Uganda. I don't remember whether I had seen computers in banks or any of such offices before, or if in fact, the banks even had computers in those days. Today, almost every household owns a computer, and I know people who may not

last a day without their laptops – that’s the difference 12 years can bring.

Our school had a computer-room with eight computers, two of which were servers. We, the beginners, were advised to practise drawing using Paint Shop Pro as that would help us learn how to use the mouse. After mastering the beautifully painted houses, we slowly moved to typing text in Microsoft Word, and later designing presentations in Microsoft PowerPoint.

Eventually, our teacher introduced a system for email messaging which was purely command line, and we would exchange emails internally since we had no internet connection. That is when I got my first email address.

Even within the developing worlds, there are digital natives for whom computers were always around. For those who happened to be born in more privileged positions in society, the digital was a much less mystical and more approachable world. And yet, the mere presence of pervasive computing does not mean that they take it like the proverbial fish to water. Estefania Salazar tells us how digital natives also need mentorship and

guidance to naturalise in the digital world.



### MY FIRST COMPUTER

by

Estefania Salazar, Venezuela

In my case, my earliest memory lies back in 1986, three years old, typing furiously on a 286 PC that belonged to my mother’s office. I do not remember anything else from that visit but the sheer joy of seeing green characters on a black screen rapidly appear out of nowhere.



**My parents were computer engineers, so technology was not far from our upbringing.** Since primary school, computing education – learning BASIC language, algorithms and playing Landmine in Windows 3.X — always came, alas, before lessons on Latin and Philosophy. It was always a mouse and floppy disk for me.

But I do claim the credit for having been the one to foray into a dialup internet connection for our home, before its formal introduction by our parents in 1997. It was then that I opened my first email ID in Yahoo Mail, that I still keep around, even if it is not used anymore. And ever since I became a professional journalist, a small part of my earnings has been devoted to the digital world.

Accessibility and affordability are not the only elements which determine if and when someone becomes digital. People form very personal connections with digital technologies. To some people, the choice of being digital is part of a greater personal project, involving their identity, desires and convictions. Nonkululeko Godana’s

story tells us how, it is the ambition to do something new, the need to make a change that drives people to forge relationships with digital and online technologies.



### HER STORY

by

Nonkululeko Godana, South Africa

My story begins with a love for writing. A blood vein I share with my late father who is a writer/politician and cultural activist. When I was 16 years old and in high school, he bought me a typewriter. This was in an age where my peers had desktop computers. My school built a computer lab the year I left high school for university. I never knew the story behind the typewriter but I grew to appreciate it more through the years. I still have it, as a reminder of me and my father’s connection; as well as a reminder of the basic things in life, the ones that humble us.

Ten years later, I own a Macbook, a netbook and a Crackberry funded by my work missions. I am also volunteering my

skills for a group of students at a Science and Technology school in the large Cape Town township or slum, Khayelitsha. The project is called 'Students for Humanity' and they are an inspiring group between the ages of 16-18 years, who have a passion for technology as well as for telling stories about them and their community online. I engage them in discussion about burning social issues they may have and they blog as well as podcast about these issues.

My dream is to have a vast network of young people who use the online space to tell their stories about how they are changing their community, as well as rewriting the stories of their lives with ones filled with hope and great ambition. I look forward to all the challenges and the victories. It's all part of the story.

To some, becoming digital is remaining digital. For many digital natives who



The magic box

grew up with technologies around them, reaching adulthood presents the choice between staying connected and moving away from the digital. The fact that young people can consciously deliberate on this choice illustrates another reason why thinking all young people are born digital is flawed: Being digital is a choice and not everyone makes it.



### MY WRISTWATCH IS NOT DIGITAL THOUGH

by

Leandra (Cole) Flor,  
Philippines

Three things that make me cringe:

1) the internet going bonkers; 2) power interruption; and 3) the internet going bonkers.

Many times I find myself struggling to get a GPRS signal from my roaming mobile in the boondocks of Cambodia just so I can check my Facebook and Twitter accounts. I was this close to having a heart attack when I viewed the "unpaid charges" of my mobile phone given the fact that I hadn't called anyone, I hadn't messaged anyone – I just

went online for a few minutes. How internet and digital devices influenced my lifestyle, even if it meant paying a small fortune to keep me updated, is beyond me. All I know is **I thrive in this world, in this age – the digital age, that is. And with thriving comes interaction, interrelatedness and endless upgrades to keep up with the fast-paced, digitally-driven, web-based communities that I am born in and choose to stay in.**



My everyday kit

I am shaping my career and my perspective in development and social change through the use of the Web, not only as a tool but as an extension of myself. I have opened my social life online. It may entertain or be frowned upon. I weave my web of information, people, learning and communication right inside my room, together with my netbook, wifi with a relatively-decent bandwidth, and my thoughts after a day's work, or the lack thereof. I am restless, online and offline. If that isn't a digital native, I don't know what is.

There is another barrier to information and technology which is easy to miss: Gender. We tend to think of technologies as "unisex" or gender-blind, which further hides the ways in which technologies perpetuate gender inequities and also produce certain new forms of gendered violence and discrimination.



## CHANGING PERCEPTIONS ONE STEP...

*by*

Evelyn Namara, Uganda

While working at one of the university library in my Senior Six vacation, I discovered my cause that would later be my passion - Computers. Having been introduced to my first computer when I was 17 years of age, at my university's library, I just found myself desiring to know more about it. My father though, had a different vision for me. He wanted me to become a doctor. But I had developed a new found destiny for myself.

I opted to go with my heart and ultimately looked for a placement to do an IT course. Long story short, I did my course in IT and found myself seated in a class of 12 students with just two girls. At that time, it didn't matter if we were two girls in class - I mean what's the fuss? Right?

Reality struck when I started working at my first job. As a female techie, I was sent out to our small and medium enterprise companies to install various systems and troubleshoot; basically do a lot of system administration tasks. I met a couple of IT managers at some different occasions who when I walked into their offices first called back at my office just to confirm if a young female techie will be able to set up a mail server or do some hard core Unix

troubleshooting stuff! Are you still thinking why the fuss?

So after discovering the reality of gender bias and having experienced it first-hand, I was drawn to this as a passion; to want what I could do to change the situation. This ultimately became my dream in empowering more women to step up and shine in the industry, and through teaming up with other great women techies around the continent,

this dream is fast being realised.

One of the biggest flaws in thinking that people across the world are being 'born digital' is the uneven distribution of access to technologies. The huge digital divide in terms of access to infrastructure, support, learning opportunities and resources are often the deciding factors that decide who has the privilege to become a digital native.



Evelyn Namara and the technology empowered women of The African Networks Operators group





## DIGITAL DIVIDE: DIGITAL NATIVES AND DIGITAL OUTCASTS

by

Admiré Mare, Zimbabwe

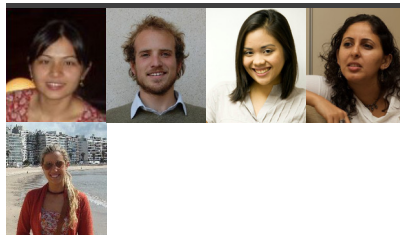
The notion of digital divide is the most relevant concept in Africa given differences in access, control and ownership of new media technology. It starts at the macro-level, where one can discern a global divide which refers to the divergence of internet access between industrialised and developing societies. Then it is also possible to talk of social divide at a meso-level which concerns the gap between information rich and poor in each nation. And lastly, within the context of online communities, democratic divide operates at the micro-level, which signifies the difference between those who do and do not use the panoply of digital resources to engage, mobilise and participate at the public level.

Access to information and communication technologies (ICTs) has been characterised as messianic to Africa given that over 40 percent of Africa's population is younger

than 24 years of age, the largest percentage of young people anywhere in the world. African youth constitutes a vast reservoir of talent, skills and opportunity but it faces many challenges. In the World Youth Report 2007, the United Nations acknowledged that poverty, violence and limited access to education, health and employment are inescapable for many African youngsters. This is the reason that the potential for learning remains severely compromised despite significant advances in new technologies in significant numbers of young people all over the world, particularly in Africa.

Being digital is something one can choose to become, not something one is born as. Because of the personal and intimate relationship we can form with digital technologies, people's emotions, beliefs and goals play a central part in this choice. Ultimately, access to the needed resources and support systems affects who gets to make the choice and who does not.

## DIGITAL NATIVES ARE ONLINE 24/7



The explosion of portable computing, mobile internet and technologies all around us has hardwired us into being connected all the time, in one way or another. While some digital natives thrive on this constant connectivity and at times are lost without it, it is important to take a step back and figure out if this is a cause-effect situation. What happens to digital natives who don't live in pervasive online environments? What happens when digital natives want to disconnect? Are all digital natives really always online?

The idea that some digital natives are online 24/7 is not a myth. There are some people who have integrated these technologies into their lives to great lengths. It is important to note however, that to them there is no clear-cut definition of "online" and "offline" spaces; both concepts bleed into each other in a seamless and integrated way. These digital natives only notice the connected character of their lives when it is taken away from them.



## I'M SCARED OF THE LIFE BEYOND THE DIGITAL

by

Leandra (Cole) Flor,  
Philippines

Perhaps, I was the one who limited me to the digital. I didn't want to step out of my comfort zone because I felt safe in my own space. I am particularly shy around people; get easily intimidated, so I avoid face-to-face conversations at all costs. I can't talk to others like my friends can; I can't argue or talk my way out of sticky situations in my everyday struggle. I must always have



something to aid me, like a radio, or my blog. **I became more dynamic and in touch with my surroundings because of the wonders of technology in communication.** Since I built my social life around it, the thought of having to leave all this one day doesn't 'appeal' to me at all. I facilitate my learning of all sorts online and I can't even imagine myself without gadgets and the products of today's technology.



Human and computer: hybrid attention machine

Things I know, or at least I claim to know, are acquired from my day-to-day interaction with the digital, and I don't refer to social networking sites of some sort. It's like everything around me no longer makes sense the very first second I know I'm disconnected. I won't be able to write this much, to talk this much, to speak out this much if I didn't have my connection to back me up. **When I'm stripped off these privileges, I am hungry.**

The downside of the connectivity paradigm is the lack of down-time. While the digital does beckon to digital natives, they also need some time off. It often leads to a love-hate relationship.



#### UNTITLED

by

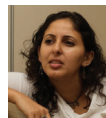
Hasina Hasan, India

I don't know what to do without a computer. The first day is extremely difficult.

By the third day I manage to interact with a smuggled computer.

It gives me great pleasure, I desire it.  
My back hurts.  
I have carpal tunnel syndrome  
My eyes water  
I am pale.  
My computer is sucking the life out of me.

Being "online" is not only about the physical act of logging onto the internet. It's not only about a connection, data transfer and bandwidth. Being "online" is a state of a mind, a cognitive space, a way of doing things, an approach to solving very personal problems.



#### I WANT TO RETURN TO MY COUNTRY, SIMPLY BECAUSE I WANT TO

by

Manal Hassan, Egypt

This story is of a young Egyptian woman, 27 years of age, who found herself trapped in a strange country and not able to return to her own.

This young woman travelled with her family to live in Saudi Arabia when she

was a baby, but growing up she hated her life there and yearned to go back to Egypt. Unfortunately that was not an idea that her parents liked. Her father took her passport and her residency documents, to make sure she remains imprisoned where he chose.

Saudi women cannot travel without the consent of their male guardian/custodian—be it a father, a husband, a brother or a cousin. No matter how old the woman is, and even if she is way older than her guardian/custodian. She went and asked for help at the Egyptian embassy in Saudi Arabia, part of whose existence is to look after Egyptian citizens abroad. Although she was an adult now, and only asking for her right that's protected by the law, she had to face all the gender biases, which are deeply ingrained in our society.

Through her blog she started to write about her problem and got in contact with some Egyptian bloggers and digital activists over the internet. I don't think she realised the potential of an online campaign before she took this step. She started a Facebook group, and her message went viral. Women rights organisations adopted her struggle, and a human rights lawyer took up her case

against the Egyptian ministry of foreign affairs. This made news in mainstream media, and although she didn't gain everyone's solidarity, it put the Egyptian ministry of foreign affairs, the Saudi foreign affairs authority and her family under pressure. And a week after she had started her online campaign, she was back in Egypt!

Shifting away from your family, your source of unconditional love and support, and discovering that you can **put all your**

**trust in a group of strange digital natives that you only know online** must have required a lot of strength.

**Not everyone actively chooses to be connected. Being offline is a tough choice for digital natives because they are under great pressure to tap into the network. This pressure comes not only from social expectations and economic norms, but also from their peers and friends.**



## THE RIGHT TO BE DISCONNECTED

by

Maria Del Mar Zavala,  
Paraguay

Many countries are already debating the right to access the internet, but what happens to those who want to exercise their right to be disconnected?

"Being disconnected" can lead a person to isolation that would not only affect their social life, but also their work life, given that most workplaces now demand that their employees be permanently connected via Blackberry, Twitter, etc.

Take for example my best friend, María José Zárate of Asunción, Paraguay. Up until very recently, Maria José did not have a Facebook account. Maria José was a little reluctant to use Facebook, and she often complained that she wished she was not connected. Tired of seeing my friend disconnected from the world, I decided to create an account for her by force!

However, I was very surprised some days later when over dinner she confessed that she had a Twitter account and that she

tweeted all day! Maria Jose later confessed that she only had a Twitter account **because her brother had set it up for her**. We later joked about how third parties were forcing her to become connected, even though she did not feel isolated before she had a Facebook account.

**The right to be disconnected is an interesting position in opposition to the desire to be connected that is so present in our society today. As society moves towards greater and greater connectivity, we should not let this desire persuade us into thinking connectivity is inevitable. More than ever, it is our task to figure out what kind of connectivity we want to implement.**



## THE DESIRE TO BE CONNECTED

by

Francisco Arellano, Chile

Many of us desire to be connected. We have seen people wait for days outside shops in order to buy the latest gadget. We believe that being connected will

make our life easier, enable us to access infinite resources from anywhere in the world and allow us to reach our loved ones instantaneously. I would like to present a different view: It may seem like we're rushing towards connectivity, but the truth is the large majority of us are being pushed into the network, whether we like it or not.

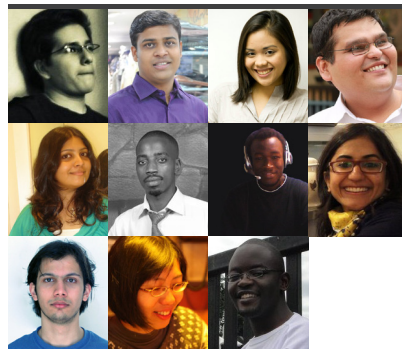
Today work can be done at home or at the office. Our "work time" does not end anymore; we can be working during the day or during the night, on weekdays or in weekends. People change jobs as frequently as they change their underwear. These changes may sound like a good thing, productivity wise, but they also raise many questions about the quality of our life outside our jobs. If we, thanks to our shiny new gadgets, are within reach of our bosses and our jobs requirements all day long, will we be able to have time for ourselves or to raise a family? Will we be able to build friendships, or have a hobby?

What I am trying to say is that nothing we humans create is inherently good or inherently bad. When Gutenberg introduced the printing press he opened the world to books and information, but it also meant

the rise of propaganda. Computers, cellphones, wireless communications and the internet will definitely change the way we live. **Connectivity, more than a choice we make, seems to be the trend that will define society in this XXI century.** This does not mean we do not have the choice of otherwise; on the contrary, we are tasked with the choice and the pursuit of a certain kind of connected world. Computers, cellphones, wireless communications and the internet will definitely change the way we live. The question, and the challenge is, what will this new world be like?

Generally speaking digital natives are more connected than not, this is in part due to the pressures and expectations they are under. This connection is not always what we normally think it is. However, digital natives don't think in the traditional way with divisions between the "offline" and "online", they inhabit a hybrid space in which the "digital" is way of being.

## ON THE INTERNET EVERYONE DOES THE SAME THING



Ask somebody to tell you what they do online, and they will probably list the same litany of things – staying in touch with friends, blogging, searching, emailing, etc. This leads to an erroneous perception that everybody does the same thing when they are online. In this section, we try and look at not the things people do but the intention and objective behind those things. Everyone might be on

Facebook, but their usage is determined heavily by their location, language, intention and desires. Within the limited number of options, users perform a wide range of activities which are not universally recognisable or relevant. We have heard a lot about globalisation of the internet, but with digital natives, we also need to look at the localisation of the internet.

While the internet might seem endless, it is a fact that the number of platforms that the internet provides is actually finite. While the following list of platforms used is very nearly the same, we encourage you to see how diverse the population of users actually is, by exploring the CD which is part of this kit.



**TAB TOGGLES**

*by*  
Shweta Taneja, India

**What are the first tabs you open in your browser as soon as you come online in the morning? Are there any peculiar early morning habits?**

**Albert Muc**

hotmail.com, facebook.com, soccernet.com, twitter.com in that order.

Of course pctechmagazine.com is the browser homepage so it opens automatically as #1

**Nilofar Shamim Ansher**

Google is homepage, then Gmail, Facebook, Twitter, then my work page, G3ict and then tech magazines and NY Times.

**Simeon Oriko**

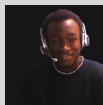
My homepage is Google, Twitter, Gmail, Basecamp, my blog

**Adolfo Fitoria**

Gmail, Twitter, Reddit, Facebook, Hackernews

**Nishant Shah**

My laptop sleeps next to me, but it doesn't really sleep. All my tabs in Firefox are always open. So I don't really restart anything

**Frank Odongkara**

Call me the addict, I prefer 'extremist' but Facebook is my homepage, then Twitter, Gmail, university webmail, robot.net, new vision, blogger, Yahoo!, digital natives blog

**Leandra Flor**

Gmail. UPOU Portal Site. Facebook. Twitter. Tumblr. Wordpress. In that order!!

Thinking everyone does the same thing online also incorrectly assumes that people present the same version of themselves online all the time. Just like in "real" life, digital natives have a variety of facets to their identity, which affect how they use the internet. The idea of many online identities, which are linked but not necessarily equal to an offline identity, is worth pondering over.



**DIGITAL IDENTITY: WHY DO WE CHOOSE TO BE WHO WE CHOSE TO BE?**

by

Ajay Kumar, India

A lot of individuals have been living on the

internet for years and have maintained an online identity. It is what you want the world to see you as. It can be the real portrayal of you or a fake, cooked-up character. Reasons of doing so may vary. For instance, if you are a whistle-blower "leaking" malpractices of your organisation, you might cook-up an online name or choose to be anonymous for obvious reasons of protecting yourself. You find techno-savvy kids calling themselves 'hackers', the marketing firm guy calling himself a 'social media expert'. Most of these images or identities chosen are synonymous with people's work area or interest. Some, like 'Fake Steve Jobs' ([fakesteve.blogspot.com](http://fakesteve.blogspot.com)) use it to play around with the reputation of well-known people like Steve Jobs, creating a lot of speculation. In the examples above, one set of people like to reveal their real identity, while the other group remains anonymous. Have you ever pondered over what image of yours you show to the world? Are you particular about what people think or perceive about you?

In a conversation, our fellow digital native Maesy Angelina pointed to us that "the

internet is clearly emerging as a public sphere now and identities are how people express or present themselves in public. It's also important to note that the internet is not a single public sphere, but consists of multiple pockets of public spaces. People may choose to present themselves differently in each space. The many platforms and spaces people use every day then have an effect on their online identities.

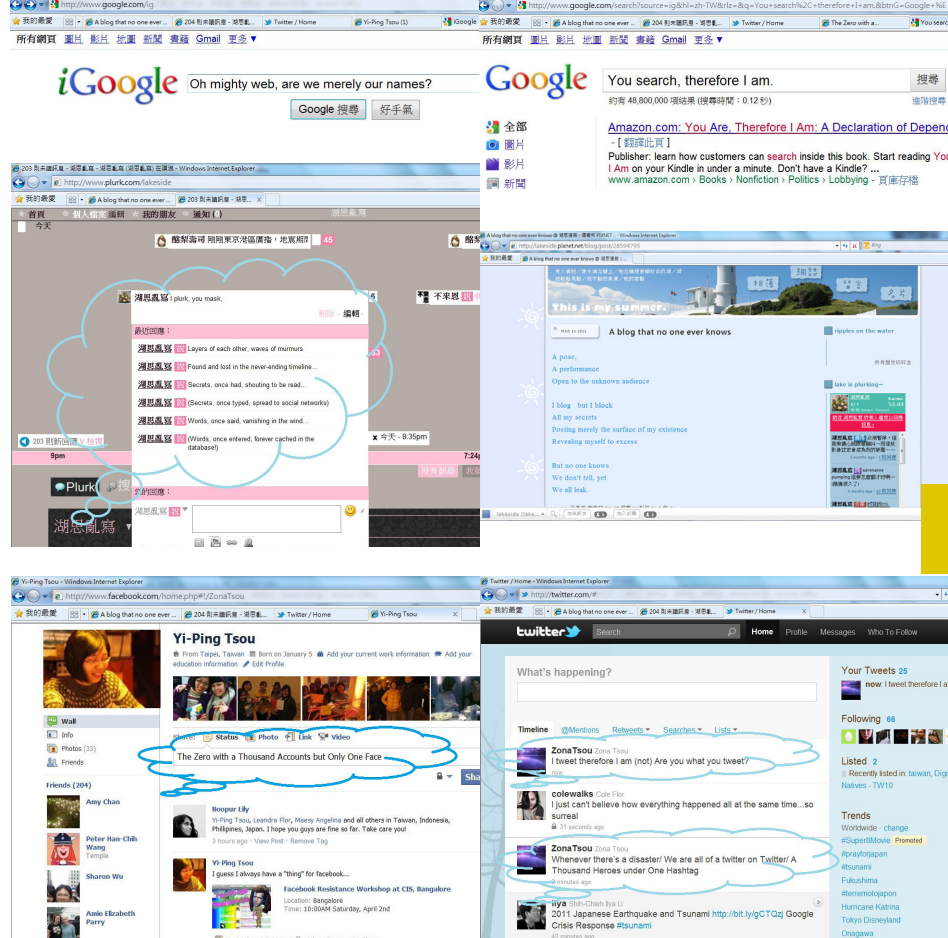


**A THOUSAND (INTER) FACES**  
by  
Zona Yi-ping Tzou,  
Taiwan

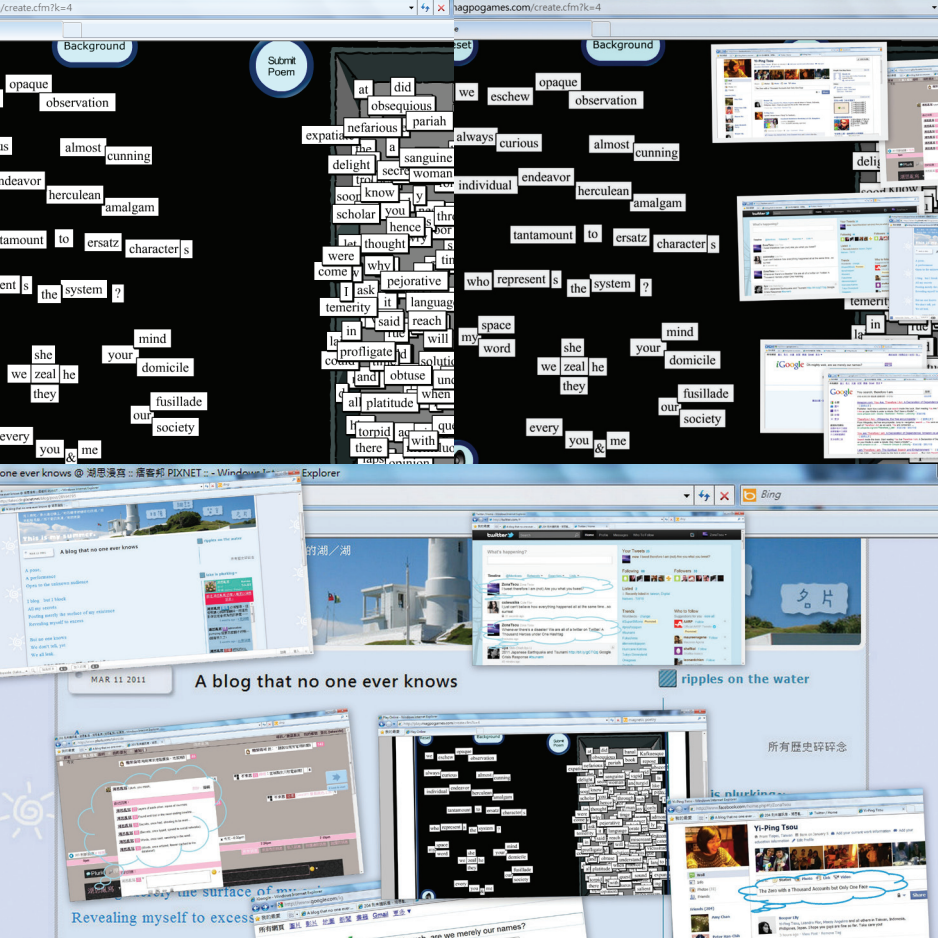
Virtually all of us have a presence on Facebook, Twitter and other social media, for some, maybe even a couple of existence with different accounts. In other words, we can give birth to our own digital beings, being here and there or elsewhere at the same time, being in-between or to the extremes. It's almost like a perfect world where we can virtually be movie stars with a thousand faces.

We are what we “appear to be”: The layout and font, animated avatars or pictures (possibly photoshopped) we choose to represent us as much as the words and information we post or share on different social media. On the other hand, we are still what others “perceive us to be” when it comes to Google search and Facebook where we can hardly hide our given names and tagged faces that we haven’t got a chance to digitally alter and modify.

However, as in the analogue world, “identity” is not merely how others identify me but what I claim to be. In this sense, digital identities are not merely a variety of assumed personae but more of multiple split personalities wherein a thousand faces surface at the interface and everyone who views them is entitled to make what they want of it. Hence, I present my imagination of digital identity as an overlapping of screenshots of my self-presentation on different platforms in juxtaposition with a collage made by magnetic poetry, in which we have to make a poem out of a set of scrambled, nonsensical words. While each unit exists in its own right, more possibilities emerge when all interact with each other to







The interplay between analogue and digital identities is a complex one. Both are deeply influenced by local factors like culture, gender, and religion. The more variable nature of online identities allows digital natives to play around with these factors and respond to them in different ways. Sometimes digital natives take them as points of departure when crafting their online identities, other times they choose to completely disengage from them.



**THE DEMON CALLED DIGITAL**  
by  
Nilofar Ansher, India

The internet is home for me. It's my security blanket. I am a virtual Hindu who crossed the seven seas and lost the right to belong to a religion. I too have left the familiarity of home and jumped into the virtual ocean. Here, **the tripartite lines of imagination, dreams and reality collide and collude to create a hyper-reality that is tangible for me.**

Clichés of course never leave us. They are just recycled and born again. Running away from the multiple identities of being an Indian, a Muslim, an ethnic minority, a linguistic notation, a woman, a writer, a historian, a girl child, a scholar, a leftist or rightist – has only taken me so far. The internet forces me to forge



identities too. Constantly. Click. Click. New Persona Emerges. Double Click. Space. Click. New Name Created. Click, click. Enter. Congratulations, you are now the 89,76,334 member of Farmville. Http. Type. Type. Enter. Click. Welcome, you have 700 new messages.

My online identities have no contexts or larger milestone-defining moments in the tripartite lives of my dreams, reality and imagination. I am Nilofar Haja on Facebook, nilofar.ansh on Google mail, spotthebluelotus on Yahoo mail and culture\_curate on Twitter. Here, temporary relationships are created in a temporal space that comes across as disembodied and runs the spatial length of a Twitter minute. My identity is varied. My sense of “who” is ever-changing.

Whenever we read a post on a user board, a news story on a website, or a comment on a friend's page and we don't make our presence felt in anyway, we act like lurkers. Lurking is a very common activity, yet the emphasis in popular perception is on the ways we visibly participate. What about all the instances of participation which go

unnoticed yet have tangible effects on our lives? Are we allowed to engage with that which we haven't “liked”, commented on, retweeted or recommended?



### LURKING IS OK

by

Prabhas Pokharel, India

In an age of increasing digital participation, silent participation must be considered participation too, and left be. Not everyone needs to comment, vote, whatever else. Some may just read/watch/listen, and perhaps, appreciate. It is okay if no ‘Like’ button is clicked. No quick reply sent back. No blog written.

O designers of engagement, let us, sometimes, enjoy the noise of our computer fans as the bits whizz by. A click here and a scroll there, and pitter-patter of rainfall rather than a keyboard.

Thinking everyone does the same online leads to another false generalisation: that all it takes to be a digital native is to be a whiz at technology. While it is true that a

significant percentage of digital natives can fix your computer, it is worth asking if that is the only necessity for being a digital native. Are all digital natives techies? Or better yet: Are all techies, digital natives?



### THERE'S GOT TO BE MORE TO DIGITAL NATIVES THAN THIS!

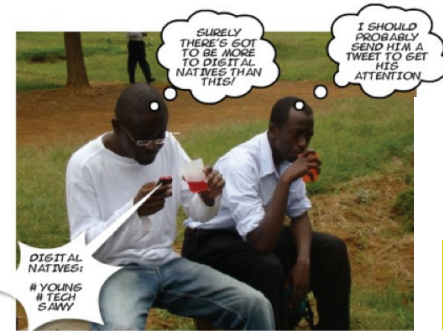
by

Simeon Oriko, Kenya

I'm Googling the term 'digital natives' on my phone (mobile web) and I'm a bit shocked that there's nothing more to it than just being young and tech-savvy. The guy seated next to me is a representation of how the rest of the non-digital native world looks at digital natives.

Digital natives use the internet for a host of purposes and in a multitude of ways, but because we tend to focus on the platforms at use rather than the motives, we tend to miss them. Not all digital natives know code or are techies; some choose to not participate visibly

and choose to be lurkers. But all have many components to their identity that the many platforms they frequent to allow them to construct and express.





# PEOPLE ON THE INTERNET CANNOT BE TRUSTED



There has been an imagination of the internet as a space of the forbidden and the desired. You do not always know who you are talking to. There are no protocols by which designs of trust can be established. There aren't many people who know how to completely be 'at home' online. Add to this the constant public discourse that bombards us with images of scams, frauds, identity theft, etc. and the picture becomes complete. We need to realise that the internet, just like any other public space of

interaction is fraught with dangers. These dangers are not new: We experience them in our everyday life but we have learned how to cope with them. So we don't give out our credit information to the person sitting next to us in a bus; we don't get into cars with strangers; we avoid dark and isolated places. What we need is not a lament about how the internet is not a safe place, but how we can design processes of trust and belonging in this new space.

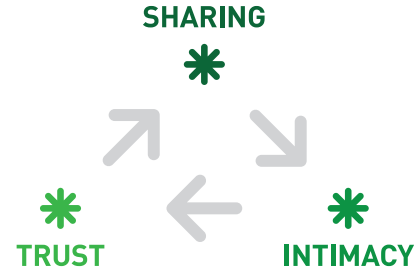
Establishing ways we can trust online is imperative because of the high degree to which digital natives are sharing information about themselves online. It seems now more than ever, young people are comfortable with sharing information which in the past would have been considered personal and off-limits.



## ONLINE SAFETY - A PERSPECTIVE

by  
Aditya Kulkarni , India

'Sharing' leads to 'Intimacy' which leads to 'Trust' which again leads to 'Sharing',



and round and round it goes. Different people, different perspectives, different temperaments. The comfort zone of every single person is different: Imagine a circular area around the person where he/she does not feel threatened. A decade ago, people were more hesitant to put up their personal picture or their email addresses online. I find a certain level of truth in Zuckerberg's widely criticised statement, "People have really gotten comfortable not only sharing more information and different kinds of it, but more openly and with more people. That social norm is just something that has evolved over time". The circular zone has increased a bit now.

The novel aspect of the internet as a social

space means that digital natives often do not have the advice and guidance of older generations. Our mothers said "don't take candy from strangers" but she did not say "don't give out your personal information on discussion boards". Many digital natives then must learn the dos and don'ts of the online experience by trial and error.



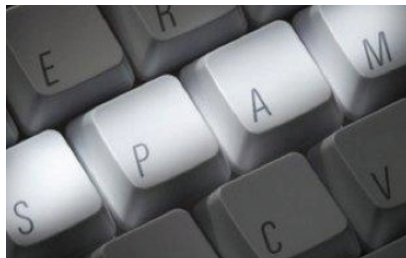
## MY PREDICAMENT!!

by  
Ritika Arya, India

*I'm writing this with tears in my eyes. I came down here to London, England for a short vacation to visit a resort and got mugged at gun point last night in the park of the hotel where I lodged. All cash, credit cards and my cellphone were stolen from me. I've been to the US embassy and the police here but they're not helping at all. My flight leaves in some time from now and I'm having problems settling the hotel bills. The hotel manager won't let me leave until I settle the hotel bills (\$990). Now I am freaked out. Please reply and let me know if you can have the money wired to me through Western Union. I promise to pay back as soon as*

*I get back home.*

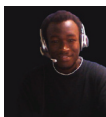
I had received many spam mails in the past, but on receiving this one, naive that I am, I seriously panicked. I frantically called a common friend to find out about the safety of the friend from whose email address I had received the above email from. I learnt in a while that it was some kind of a spam and that my friend whose email address had been unlawfully accessed was safe back in Texas.



As much as internet may have become an integral part of my life it has not yet earned great levels of my trust. Yes, every time that I engage in an online monetary transaction I fight against a voice that repeatedly yells "BE CAREFUL". I take precautions and make it a point to check my email for confirmation,

small things like whether http has changed to https or not, read the privacy policy of every website I sign into and use only one credit card for online transactions.

Conversations about safety and trust in the analogue world usually involve centrally the concept of privacy. This idea that some types of information should be restricted or safeguarded has morphed greatly in its transition to the digital. The great amount of sharing has led to the apparent disregard for privacy by the newer generation. This has sparked intense debates in policymakers and researchers over the safety and well-being of this generation. Saying that digital natives do not care about privacy is too simplistic. However, we should first ask what digital natives understand by "privacy"? Is it even a relevant concept to them? What kind of information is worth protecting to them, and from whom?



#### ARE WE CONCERNED ABOUT PRIVACY?

by  
Frank Odongkara, Uganda

Just how much are digital natives concerned about privacy? Is it just noise from critics and policy makers?



#### Ajay Kumar

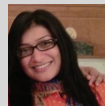
I just live with the fact that someone's always watching :P



#### Maesy Angelina

Most DNs I know don't think that there is a single concept of privacy.

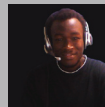
The concern is more about privacy from whom? Most are not concerned about Facebook apps having access to all our data or tweet random things everyone can read, **but are mortified if their parents have access to these data.** It's a different concern for DNs who are activists for instance, but I really do find this view quite common.



#### Nighat Daad

I think it's hard to escape privacy concern with the many things we

do today: swiping our credit cards, geotagging, browsing on google.com, facebook.com and foursquare.com etc., that allow "others", whoever they might be, to access this information whether we want to publicise it or not. While the internet may be a whole new type of public sphere where possibilities to be connected are endless, the issue concerning geotagging is a problem for me – why would you want someone to know your location???



#### Frank Odongkara

Interesting quote I picked from PC Tech magazine: "If you have

something that you don't want anyone to know, maybe you shouldn't

be doing it in the first place.” Eric Schmidt, Google CEO in a Dec 2010 interview with CNBC responding to questions about Google’s privacy policies. While he might have spoken ideally, it makes sense to ask why you are uploading information to a shared space if you don’t want it to be accessed.



#### James Mlambo

One thing I see is that information companies need to shorten their privacy policies. If I were to read the privacy policies of each and every app, website or software I use I don’t think I will do anything else. Some of the most serious breaches in privacy are tacked on page 20 of the terms and conditions document or privacy document. As a result people don’t know what they would have agreed to when they click

the famous I AGREE icon even if it means agreeing to go to hell....



#### Nilofar Haja

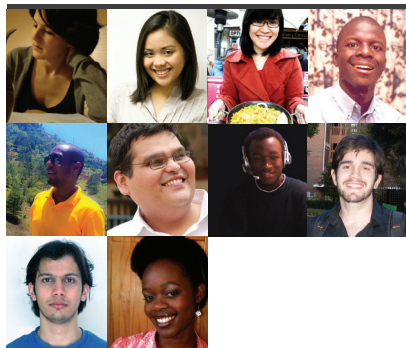
For me, notions of privacy and safety online are still bound up with my terrestrial value systems. Or so I continue to delude myself. I am still working out how privacy is an issue in to-day’s times. **My earlier fears of violation have dimmed and everyday as I share more and more morsels of my personal life online, I seem to forget that all this was “supposed” to be personal.** Someone as private and obsessed with her personal space has extended it virtually to the entire cyber world – inviting everyone a peek into her private life.

Today, I am being told that privacy and safety online are important

aspects of being a netizen and one must fight for these value systems to be embedded as part of our cyber culture. Individual freedom is being attacked on the net and we must collectively fight with private companies overtaking spaces reserved for public discourses in the virtual world.

The online world as we know it is still very new, and just like any other new space, the first people to enter it do so with precaution. Digital natives are aware of the potential risks involved in their activities, but they seem to have formed different concepts of what safety and security are online, and privacy features lightly in them. Sharing personal information does not seem to be a big concern for them.

# DIGITAL NATIVES ONLY DO THINGS FOR THEMSELVES



There is a common conception of digital natives as apathetic, consumerist, caught in a customised, neo-liberal world without ideologies and politics. We often hear how they only care for self-gratification and instant pleasure. This way of thinking presumes that just because digital technologies are present, young people ought to use them to change the world. In

reality, people have spent most of their lives finding their dreams and creating their own journeys. Where does this sudden expectation of 'agents of change' come from?

Social Change can take many shapes and forms. So much emphasis is placed on large-scale projects, those which mobilise thousands of people and appear on the news, those that happen once in a decade, those that have funding from international NGOs, that we miss the smaller, more personal and everyday ways in which young people change their surroundings. It's time to ask digital natives how they perceive their own role in processes of change. This will help us see the changes they produce in their own ways, which we might have missed because of our own presumptions of what constitutes social change.



## A COMMITMENT OF LOVE AND CARE

by  
Karl Jean Jeune, Haiti

When I decided to move back to my

hometown, Haiti, I never thought that I would find myself in the midst of an earthquake, facing for the first time the reality of the way my people were living and how because nobody tried to do something before, we are now facing a country which is lost.

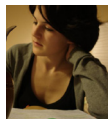


Easter of 2010, a little over two months after the quake, a couple of friends and I decided to cook some soup for underprivileged people who were living in camps as an

Easter gesture. Well to make a long story short, we did not go to any tent camp and ended up giving the soup to children in a surrounding slum called Cité Soleil. The next day, we took time on the radio to talk about our experience the day before. The overwhelming response we got from friends and some food companies who wanted to contribute to what would later be entitled the Sunday Project ([thesundayproject.org](http://thesundayproject.org)) was incredible. From the 25 US dollars which helped prepare the soup to feed about 75-100 children, we are now feeding 400-500 kids every Sunday.

**The Sunday Project is not an NGO and never will be.** As we grow in number of friends and friends of friends who come out every Sunday to volunteer, we realise how much impact we were having on influencing the lives of many who want to help out but never had someone to inspire them or push them. I have learned throughout these months that we sometimes do not have to wait for others to better our environment. Fact of the matter is we know it better than they do. And **no amount of work is too little or too big to make an impact to the lives of others.**

When we start to realise that social change is a gradual, slow and often boring process, we begin to demistify the idea of having a cause. A cause – something worth fighting for – is a very powerful motivator for people around the world. Yet, a cause does not have to be magnanimous in nature for it to be important. Those digital natives who want to make their small corner of the world a better place have as a legitimate of a cause as those who want to overthrow national governments.



### WHAT'S IN A CAUSE?

by

Carmelita Lapadaula,  
Argentina

Nico, my imaginary friend, has a radio program, with which he keeps company to those who are home alone. He plays the music they like, chats with them, and tries to make them happier. That's his cause.

Julia is a secretary; she works from 8am to 6pm. She does her work responsibly, and is very considerate to everyone in the office. She goes back home in the bus

and says 'hello' to the driver. While she is making dinner she separates the garbage into organic and inorganic and recycles all plastic and cans she uses. She does all those little things to help the world become a friendlier place for living. That's her cause.

So then what's a cause exactly? It's a REASON for all your acts. It's SOMETHING that you take care of to make the world a better place. As simple and naïve as it sounds all causes are important and lead to social change.

**Cole:** A cause can be one's *raison d'être*, a reason for existence. It can begin with a concern that grows into a passion. Not all digital natives dedicate their professional and personal lives for a cause such as social justice, the eradication of poverty, equity or food for all. On the other hand, the majority of people who do work for a cause are not exactly digital natives.

**Samuel:** Do all digital natives have causes? No, but that's because not all people in general have causes. I think that finding

what you are passionate about is a process. But is it easier to find a cause in the digital age?

**Maesy:** Being a digital native helped me more in finding my cause rather than in taking action for the cause. The event that first planted the seed and led me to activism and feminism happened in May 1998. There were mass riots and rapes against the Chinese in Indonesia that became the catalyst for the downfall of a 32-years dictatorship. That's when I started

questioning all sorts of things related to gender, the body, and feminism. The internet was how or where I transformed the questions posed by my real-life experience into a cause. So Prabhas, to answer your question, the link for me so far is that **being digital led me to my cause.**

**Nishant:** Change is not always dramatic, in fact it very seldom is. Change is a constant and it happens on an idle Wednesday when you are not looking. Change doesn't always have to be external, to be huge, to be mappable, or to be quantified. Change is often slow, tenuous, contextual and

inscrutable. And the point of being a digital native is that you are within conditions of change; you have new tools and technologies at your disposal, and that, if and when motivated, you might be able to orchestrate and mobilise patterns of change. Which

is why, the cause is not in your politics in the narrow sense of espousing a political ideology, but in the idea of being political.

**Nonku:** I use technology and internet to explore ultra-existence, much like those kids in the township who use technology

### WHAT IS A CAUSE?

**Prabhas:** Do all digital natives have a cause? What does your personal experience say? How did you come to have a cause? How was that affected by your 'digital nativity', and vice-versa? For me, my cause has definitely re-enforced my digital fluency: The relationship between digital activity and activism have redefined how I label my activities, as productive or frivolous.

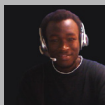
to tell their stories of hope, aspiration and sometimes, downright confusion. I want to learn, share and grow. That is my cause. The rest I'm figuring out as I go along. Does that make me a digital native with a cause? Yes, I think so.

We are used to thinking that social change is toward liberal, progressive, democratic and in general Western conceptions of how things should be. Sometimes, social change is bizarre; it goes against what most social workers and NGOs might perceive to be good for society. It is important to be aware that social change can go in multiple directions, and that "progress" is a subjective term. Change is not something that is perceived by somebody from the outside, but by the person using it.

## IS THERE SUCH A THING AS "BAD" SOCIAL CHANGE?

*conversation between*

Frank Odongkara and Samuel Tettner



### Frank Odongkara

As a digital native, the digital community affects you and you likewise

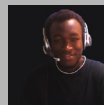
affect it. When sanitation gets poor, clean it up; or else an epidemic will break and you shall surely be affected. Join and start good causes, they shall occupy your internet time and also those of your friends and followers. Keep away from participating in bad groups or shady and doubtful causes and activities but you may join to clean it up.



### Samuel Tettner

What happens when people are doing "perceived" good but actually might be doing bad? Take for example religious groups who utilise social media to evangelise their message. In their mind they're saving millions of people from damnation. My point is: Does the cause have to

adhere to any moral standard? If so, whose?



### Frank Odongkara

I do not think that anyone has a right to decide what is good and bad for others. Everyone however has that right for him/herself. A general good cannot exist. Recently, my university IT department blocked youtube.com on the wifi. What they assumed was that Youtube was a misuse of wifi, but my lecturers often refer us certain video clips to watch from Youtube. We complained and it was unblocked.

At other times social change can be disguised and people's causes hard to identify, or it happens in ways in which we were not expecting it to happen.



## CAUSE REDEFINED

*by*

James Mlambo, Zimbabwe

In September 2010, two students at the Harare Polytechnic, Harare, Zimbabwe, filmed themselves whilst having sex using a webcam. The two first-year students filmed a steamy video that first got viral on the college computer network before it went viral on the internet.

Soon when the video was discovered on the college network, students at the institution started saving the video onto their laptops, flash drives, mobile phones and the video started spreading in whole of Harare. So popular was the video that people could pay whatever amount in order to get it. Later the video was eventually uploaded on Youtube and it recorded thousands of downloads before it was pulled out of Youtube. As this whole debacle unfolded a global debate and conversation amongst Zimbabweans both in the country and the diaspora emerged on different web 2.0 platforms which included a Facebook group page completely dedicated to discussing this story.



By gleaning hundreds of comments on this story as well as email exchanges with some bloggers who did not have predetermined mindsets because of culture or beliefs (according to me), I found out that whilst pornographic has been widely available, many people thought it was “filthy and taboo to view as the people associated with it are evil, barbaric and crazy”. The students from Harare Polytechnic changed that perception and a number of people who viewed the video now agree that pornstars are really “normal” human beings.

It is easy to think that digital natives are not involved in processes of social change because they don't go about it the same way older generations did. Digital technologies have allowed for a more personal and customised engagement with social issues. The increase in information about one's own social context has allowed young people to dictate their own ways to get involved, which has made the experience more subjective and easier to miss.



## USING THE INTERNET TO FIND WHAT MOVES US

by

Samuel Tettner, Venezuela

I don't really know how people found out what their calling was before the internet. Was there a place where one had to physically go and they had flyers about social projects or issues currently affecting the community? Did causes travel from mouth to mouth? Or did people dedicate their time for those ideals their parents, teachers and mentors did years before them? For me figuring out what I care about in the world has been a process heavily mediated by the internet. One aspect which defines my identity is my vegetarianism. The friend who introduced me to it did not live in the same city, so we exchanged many emails, links to videos, pages, articles, reviews of books, online arguments, and discussion boards, among others. Exploring vegetarianism was an online journey: I would look up the most used arguments for both sides, learn the rhetoric, memorise the facts, etc. Vegetarianism is an idea which I discovered online, developed online, connected with

online, and finally appropriated into my own analog life as my diet.

I don't know how someone would have done something similar without the internet. It would have certainly been much more harder. I spoke to Brendon O'Brien, a Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender (LGBT) activist from Trinidad and Tobago, and he believes that the internet provides us with the tools to exercise our passion:

“The internet allows us to get involved and be informed in a very personal, non-intrusive, and at-your-own pace way. I, for instance, always wanted to fight these good fights, but I didn't know where or how. It was during the Trinidad and Tobago general elections, when a politician said something about LGBT rights that really upset me, and I looked it up online, that I ended up being acquainted with the group I work for now, Coalition Advocating for Inclusion of Sexual Orientation (CAISO). Not only did I get the information I needed to be more informed about LGBT rights in T&T, I also found a space where I could be involved in the fight for those rights locally. A lot of us have that inner curiosity or drive or passion for these

things, but never find the space or the tools. But the net has all that and more.”

Contrary to some popular perceptions, digital natives are interested in social change, and at times they have used the internet to shape their convictions. This change can be easily missed because of the everyday character it has and the personal relation that people develop with it. This change is often glossed over because we expect it to be of a gigantic nature, overthrowing governments and destabilising social structures. But the change happens slowly, silently, at the level of the individual. It is the transformation of the person that eventually leads to the collective change in societies. Digital technologies offer this transformative moment to digital natives, who are best positioned to engage with



# DIGITAL NATIVES ARE SLACKTIVISTS



Have you clicked a 'Like' button on Facebook to support a cause? Have you signed an online petition because you wanted to endorse a change? Have you passed around messages on SMS and email to spread information about something that was important to you? If you have, chances are somebody has called you a 'slacktivist' (or a slacker activist). In other words, somebody who does 'easy' things for political mobilisation but does not come out on the streets or go out of the way to attend a political meeting. There has been much written about slacktivism online and how the young people are abdicating themselves of 'real' politics

by merely engaging with the concepts in their online environments. We want to tease out certain presumptions which are embedded in the idea of slacktivism. If we stop thinking about the online as separate and detached from the physical world but see how it integrates in our everyday life, we see new forms of amplification, augmentation, sharing and mobilisation that the digital natives have evolved to.

The online world has direct and measurable consequences on the physical world, which because of the nature of the internet, are easy to miss. Interacting with social causes through the internet and other technologies of distance can create an appearance of disconnection. This apparent disconnect leads us to think our actions online are isolated from a physical grounding; that there is a one-way relationship where the physical world influences the digital, but not the other way around.



## I'M AFRAID FOR THE 'UNPLUGGED'

*by*  
Simeon Oriko, Kenya

As a digital native, the fundamental way in which we engage in our activities is by clicking...clicking as in a mouse click. Think about it for a second. We click to tweet. We click to update our status. We click to publish a blog post. We click to send an email. We click to share photos. Thinking about it a little deeply, the medium we use to connect, the web, was created by the exact same processes of clicking and connecting. **With every click we are essentially changing the world!**



However I'm a little worried about how my digital activities affect those around me and beyond me. **My retweets and likes could well be causing a much greater impact than what I simply imagine.** While this is commonly viewed as a good thing, I'm scared of the negative impact it creates. Here's an example: The recent turmoil in Northern Africa (Egypt, Tunisia and Libya) prompted me to help get the word out using digital technologies, all the while hoping that my efforts may contribute to helping people. I strongly feel that there's a chance that I made things worse for a lot of people. Because of my actions, the Arab world is now unstable and living in uncertainty and possibly in fear.

Who helps rebuild fallen countries after they've toppled their governments? Who helps them get back on track? Do we bother? I'm afraid my actions in digital spaces are possibly making the world worse off than it was before. Perhaps I need to reconsider the consequences of my actions not only to my digital counterparts, but to those people on the ground, who do not have a way to tell us how they are being impacted by our digital activities.

While it is true that in the online world one can remain in an idle state of support for ideals without any action, this does not mean that to take effective action for social change one must leave the digital realm. Not all digital activism is slacktivism. In fact, a lot of digital activism supports and sustains action and movements in the physical world.



### **SOMETIMES ALL IT TAKES IS A CLICK**

by  
Rotimi Olawale, Nigeria

Young people are out there clicking and tweeting and ping. In a flash, something catches their attention that speaks to them in a way and they go for it. For example, Christmas day, last year, Nigerians woke up to discover that a Nigerian citizen was involved in a failed attempt to blow up an airplane on American soil. The backlash was immediate. Nigeria was immediately listed as one of eight suspect nations by the United States, leading to the further battering of an already battered image of the nation. In the midst of these, a Nigerian,

Zainab, based in Singapore started a Facebook group which spread and quickly attracted more than 30,000 Nigerians. The name of the group is '150 Million Nigerians speaking up against Terrorism...Yes we can'. I won't call all more-than-30,000 people who joined the cause as digital natives with a cause in the traditional sense of it, but because the cause connected with them in a way they desired, they stood up to be counted.

Will digital activism replace offline activism? A combination of both is probably the best approach right now, but to understand that, we must leave the "either-or" dichotomising way of looking at activism vs. slacktivism. Slacktivism may not be the be-all and end-all of effective activism, but it sure does become the first important step of engaging public attention towards citizen action.



### **THE LANGUAGE OF DIGITAL ACTIVISTS**

by  
Brendon O'Brien, Trinidad and Tobago

Activism is a difficult sort of outreach. There are multiple types of target audiences that are drastically different and all need to be touched by the same story or idea. This creates a very dynamic kind of activist - someone who is capable of navigating all those different groups by crafting special approaches for each group while engaging with all of them physically.

But does the digital activist have the same skill? Activism through social media and other web-based tools is the product of a necessity to reach and mobilise a large amount of people quickly and easily, which is something the internet does best. However, those messages don't change from computer to computer. The student and single mother, politician and preacher - all see the same thing.

While the primary purpose of mobilising people for the cause it met online very well, converting any sort of digital mobilisation to change is near impossible when the message to grab the common man is the same one that tries to usher change amongst those who have the authority to create solutions. Multiple approaches for each group under the same cause may

be the fix for this now, but is there a way for digital activism to appeal to all those affected and those making the changes, simultaneously?



### **TWEETING IS JUST NOT ENOUGH**

by  
Francisco Arrellano, Chile



Translation: "Twitting is just not enough. Believe again in collective action."

Source: [www.izquierdaautonomia.cl](http://www.izquierdaautonomia.cl)

"Politics is about the totality of social relations, online and offline. The web must be a tool to enhance the reach and the massiveness of our actions, but it shouldn't

prevent us from seeing the wider picture.”

Digital activism has limitations and digital natives know it. Whenever we partake in it, we must make an effort to remember that our actions online have direct and meaningful consequences on the ground.

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## CONCLUSION

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This booklet was designed to be a decryption key; A guide to unravel some of the problems and concerns that have emerged in scholarship, practice and discourse around the ideas of youth, technology and social change. In the first decade of the 21st Century, we have seen young people taking active roles as citizens and affecting change through the digital and online technologies they have at their disposal. Better access, stronger infrastructure, affordable costs and larger integration of these technologies in our everyday lives has led to a questioning of processes and objects that we had taken for granted. Governments have been destabilised, battles promoting equity and rights have been won, interpersonal and family relationships have undergone a dramatic change, and the young people around the globe have found themselves recognising the potentials of transformation embedded in their technology-mediated

practices.

At the same time, not all people who access technologies resonate with the name 'Digital Native'. Not all of them want to remain incessantly connected, and indeed the pressures of expectations and paranoia that surrounds them, often takes its toll. We have also seen people use technologies for actions and ambitions which are not the most desirable. Cyberbullying, moral vigilantism, destruction of life and property, public vandalism, dangerous collectives that put people in situations of danger, etc. are also the darker sides of digital natives' practices.

This booklet hoped to explode the popular beliefs and perceptions about digital natives to bring out hidden assumptions, cultural biases, premises and political arguments embedded in these perceptions. We want to acknowledge that we are living in interesting times, where the winds of change are often turbulent and unexpected. However, we do not want to provide best practices and blueprints of understanding who is a digital native or how to become one. Instead, we presented to you, view points from 60 people who identify themselves as Digital Natives,

and how their practices, perspectives and ideas are influenced by their geographical, political and social contexts.

These contributors from three continents and emerging-information societies help us look at the world of technology and change from a different perspective and emphasise that digital natives are different in different parts of the world. They show, in their responses to the popular perceptions, how they experience and understand their interactions and relationships with digital technologies, differently, and often uniquely. You can learn more about these contributors in the CD that accompanies the booklet in this information kit.

The different voices in this booklet are representative of a much larger research project. They are a prelude to much more nuanced analyses, discussions, viewpoints and debates that we have captured from a variety of stakeholders – digital natives, NGOs, scholars, researchers, academics, corporate and donor agency representatives, artists, and policymakers who form the complex ecosystem within which processes of social change can be understood. These new knowledges

are consolidated in a book titled *Digital Alien Natives with a Cause?* that is available for a free download at:

<http://digitalnatives.in>. You can also write to us for more information or queries, or a free physical copy of the book (limited edition) at [digitalnatives@cis-india.org](mailto:digitalnatives@cis-india.org).

**We hope that this booklet and the other content in the kit help you ask some new questions and gain some novel perspectives around technology-mediated practices of social change in our rapidly digitising world.**



**Nishant Shah**  
[nishant@cis-india.org](mailto:nishant@cis-india.org)



**Samuel Tettner**  
[tettner@cis-india.org](mailto:tettner@cis-india.org)



**Shweta Taneja**  
[me@staneja.com](mailto:me@staneja.com)



This booklet and kit is based on three workshops across the world in three different continents. For more details log on to [www.digitalnatives.in](http://www.digitalnatives.in)



**Hivos**  
Raamweg 16  
P.O. Box 85565  
2508 CG The Hague  
The Netherlands  
T +31 (0)70 376 55 00  
F +31 (0)70 362 46 00  
[info@hivos.net](mailto:info@hivos.net)  
[www.hivos.net](http://www.hivos.net)



**Centre for Internet and Society**  
No.194, 2nd 'C' Cross  
Domlur 2nd stage  
Bangalore 560071  
India  
T +91 80 25350955  
F +91 80 41148130  
<http://www.cis-india.org>



**Lucid Design India Pvt. Ltd.**  
453, 1st Cross  
H.A.L 3rd stage  
Bangalore 560075  
India  
T +91 99803 80909  
[amit@lucid.co.in](mailto:amit@lucid.co.in)  
[www.lucid.co.in](http://www.lucid.co.in)



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