Centre for Culture, Media and Governance

New Rules for the New Social Media in a Web 2.0 World

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CCMG Working Paper

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Social Media How Serious It?
A Game Changer?

1. A Cycle of Dissent

2. A Global Phenomena

3. A New Communications Platform

4. A Regime Change Devolution of Power Downwards

5. Discrediting of **the 'disconnected observers of the system'**

Anti-capitalist groups face global eviction as authorities take action

Occupy Wall Street protesters clash with police as they move in to clear the camp in New York's Zuccotti Park yesterday

We need a Better Theory of the Cycle of Globalization – A Third Great Iteration What's Next?

The Destructive Cycle of Globalization

1950-1975

25 Years - Growth-centred Keynesianism

Networked post-Seattle and contrarian counterpublics

Global competition

New rights for corporations as business restructures

Governments cut spending and increase taxes

Unemployment Rises

Slow growth causes deficits to rise

Consumers burned personal debt increases

Chilling effect on wages and public policy

25 Years - Slow-growth Monetarism

1980-2010
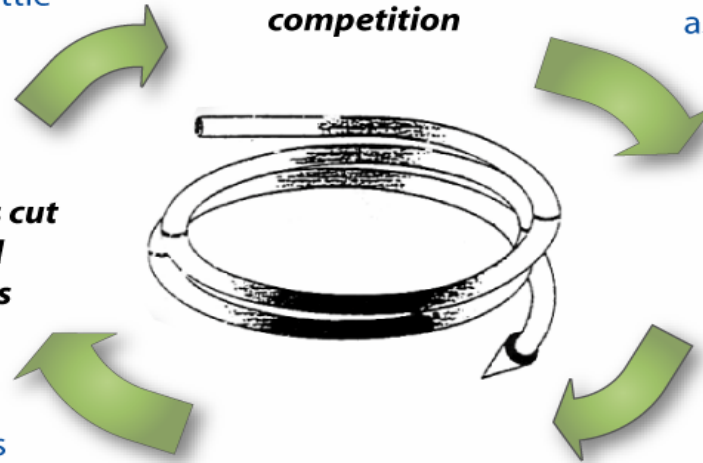
Figure 1 Global Cycle of Dissent Post-Cancun

Global Politics
Rejection of elite
vision of
Empowerment

Global Elites
Vision of empowerment
Through technology and
Free Trade

Global Dissent

Global Politics
Disillusionment with
Elites and lack of
Real outcomes

**Credibility
Gap**

Global Politics
'Buy in' to empowerment
through technology
and free trade

**Reality
Gap**

Global Politics
The gap between
Stated goals and real
Outcomes widens

Global Politics
Expect positive outcomes
from WTO rules

Source: Robarts Centre for Canadian Studies

ANGER, ACTIVISM AND WEB 2.0 SOCIAL MEDIA

The Occupy Wall Street movement marks another turning point for new social media that exploded in November 2010. In the US alone over 35 cities had occupation and dozens of others followed in the parks from Rome to Toronto, Vancouver, Montreal and Paris. Hundreds of thousands followed its innovative in your face push back against government inaction against corporate greed.

We still don't know a lot about social media and how it connects people and under some conditions they are able to take the huge step from on-line to engaged of- liners. Or why others choose to be disengaged citizens?

The Big Idea: Communities of Choice the Alternative to Ideological Based Communities of Fate

THE BIG IDEA BEHIND MUCH CITIZEN ACTIVISM IS THAT IT CREATES A NIAGARA OF INTERACTIVE ENERGY AND INFORMATION FLOWS. SO EVEN WHEN THE CITIZEN HAS A FRAGMENTED IDENTITY AND WHOSE RIGHTS ARE IN FREE FALL FROM NEOLIBERAL CUTBACKS AS RICHARD FALK HAS ARGUED IN HIS BRILLIANT WORK ON THE ROUT OF THE GLOBAL CITIZEN, HE/SHE ALSO HAS LEVERAGE IN THE PUBLIC SPHERE. THIS IS ONE OF THE PUZZLES OF OUR TIME OF HOW CITIZEN ACTS CREATE VOICE AND EMPOWERMENT THROUGH DISCUSSION AND DEBATE. THIS IS ALSO WHY CYBER SPACE IS SUCH A COMPLEX WORLD WITH INDIVIDUALS IN THEIR VIRTUAL BUBBLE HAVING THE CAPACITY AND DESIRE TO BUILD TRANSNATIONAL NETWORKS GLOBALLY.

THE NEW RULES OF THE GAME ARE

1. POINT TO POINT, U CLICK U TALK;
2. DECENTRALIZED, NO HUB ONLY HUBBUB,
3. INTERACTIVE, TALK TO ANYONE ANYWHERE,
4. OPEN TO ALL, NO USER AUTHENTICATION NEEDED AND CRITICALLY,
5. HIERARCHY IS SUPER FLAT AND
6. EVERY USER A BOOTSTRAP BROADCASTER.
7. EVEN WHEN MINDFUL SURVEILLANCE IS EVER PRESENT. OUR MANIA TO TELL ALL MAKES US VULNERABLE TO FOUCAULTIAN REGIMENTATION FROM THE STATE, FROM OUR TRIBE AND OURSELVES.
8. WEB 2.0 HAS TWO CHARACTERISTICS: DIALOGICAL AND ORGANIZATIONAL. WHEN TALK AND BOOTS ON THE STREET ARE IN SYNC SOCIAL MOVEMENTS GET A HARD BOUNCE TO INNOVATE AND CHANGE THE CONVERSATION IN PUBLIC. WHEN THERE IS NO BOUNCE EVERYONE JUST DOES THEIR OWN THING IN CYBERSPACE. IT'S A GLOBAL VERSION OF A PLANETARY BABBLE TALK SHOP

OLD BROADCAST MODEL

(We see this in traditional TV, Radio, and the early Internet)

- Limited selection: not many channels/media outlets to choose from

- Owners had to have large infrastructure for creation and distribution

- Favored specific types of creative people (aka Florida's "creative class")

- Information easy to find (because there wasn't as much to find)

- Limited interactivity

- Limited spatial mobility – people connected to information in specific places only

- Local/National

- Professionalization of Journalism

- Online and Offline content mostly separate

NEW BROADCAST MODEL BUT….

(The revolutionary shift since social media)

- Unlimited selection

- People can create and distribute content with small initial investment

- Democratization and consequential devaluation of creative people

- Information difficult to find – Information overload

- Increasing interactivity

- Mobility – technologies/information accessed from anywhere

- Global/International

- Rise of amateur journalism

- Online and offline content must be integrated and work together

The Curve of On Line Activism

Co-Optation and filters

Legitimating
Event

Action
Challenged

Increasing
Potential for
Action
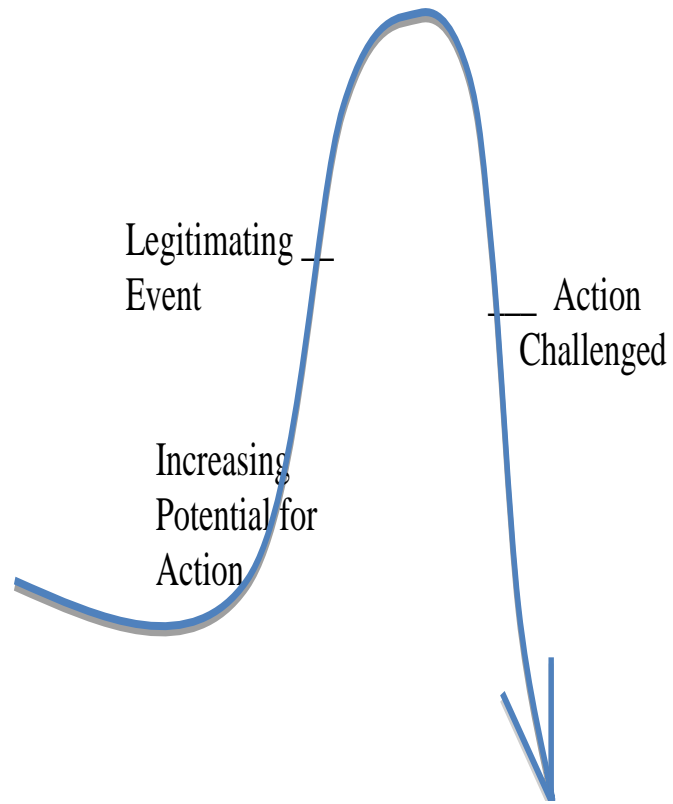
The Foucaultian Curve Goes South

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- We see this curve at work if we examine a history of online activism in the Global North, but also if we look at more recent digital activism in the Middle East.
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- As the adoption of networked technologies grows among citizens, we first see the technologies being used by defiant publics for microactivism. It is here that it picks up speed and offers the most political potential, because while it allows for mass communication by an engaged public, it is viewed as being inconsequential or silly by those in power.
- As more and more groups use the technology for political action, sooner or later an event happens to bring the use of these technologies into the spotlight. This is a legitimating event, and causes a massive uptake of this technology by elite groups
- After the legitimating event, we see a growth of the new broadcast model as large companies try to combine offline communication strategy with the new online technologies.
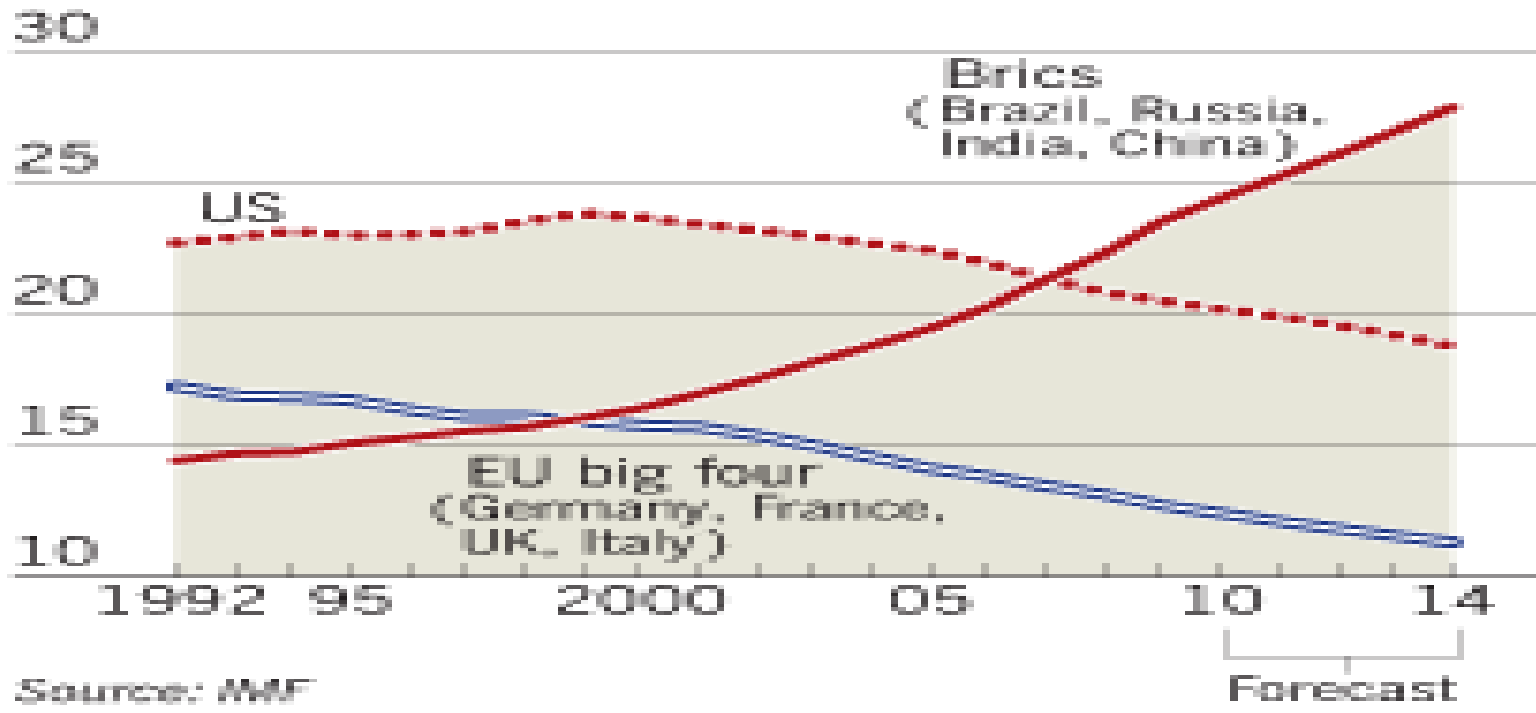- Those people who initiated the technology (Mark Zuckerman – facebook; Larry Page, Sergei Brin - Google, TED talks) become the new elite because they now control the technology – and we see the rise of the Technocracy
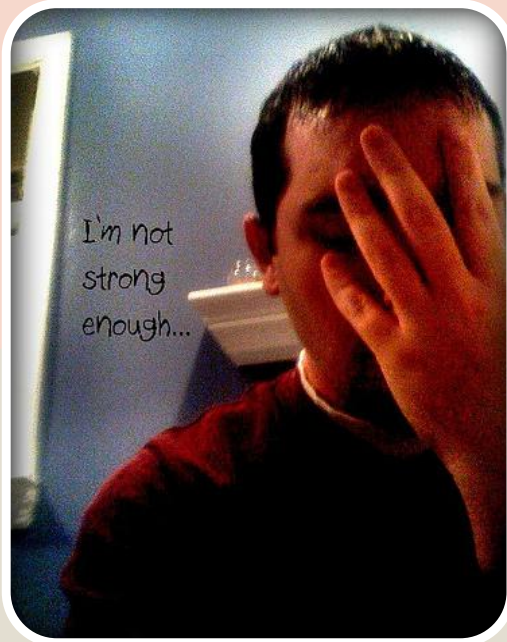- The technocracy installs filters on the technology, co-opting it for their own gain. At this point we see a decline in the use of these technologies for micro activism.
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The Rise of the Rest A Bigger Structural Change

The Brics' rising share
Share of global GDP at purchasing power parity (%)

Brics (Brazil, Russia, India, China)

US

EU big four (Germany, France, UK, Italy)

1992 95 2000 05 10 14

Forecast

Source: IMF

Going Public

Privacy

Surveillance

When we put ourselves out there, others can watch. Privacy is our buffer between extremes.

Image Credits: L – bp6316 is alive, C – BarelyFitz, R - Soctech (via Flickr)

Capitalism and its Discontents

- The 'disconnected observers of the system' another term once in fashion to describe the public as a kind of undifferentiated mass is also now largely discredited as an accurate descriptor for our age. Some experts like Cass Sunstein and Bruno Latour believe that these networks and networking practices should be thought of as an extension of the Habermasian ideal of a transnational sphere of interactive communication.

- They contend that slowly over time, the global publics have emerged as a consequence of Web 2.0 a high powered two way model of participation. Simply put the radio and television made us passive consumers of information and the internet has transformed millions into active producers of information and ideas. We can use it for distraction as easily as engaged and informed action.

- The rapid diffusion of new information technology correlates very closely with Castell's original insight that capitalism is under fire from transnational networks, coalitions and advocacy campaigners with their own iconic heroes and ideas. These social networks provide a badly needed incentive structure for micro groups on and off line to organize and mobilize across state boundaries in unprecedented ways.

Is the Message Getting Through?

- **Utopian ideological thinking has been pushed to the backburner by the increasing success of the micro activist culture of yes we can and new citizenship empowerment**
- **Increasingly elections have lost their function as a means of choosing between competing ideologies**
- **Elections don't produce clear winner's but split decisions**
- **Obama's stunning victory goes against the tide when he defeated McCain's war patriotism and neoliberal tax cutting appeal**

So what has been accomplished?

- It has succeeded in both educating and empowering skeptical publics about inequality and has pushed the envelope about the structural imbalances of neoliberal globalization. A first big step. The public agenda is under scrutiny in a way that has not existed previously.   A second accomplishment if the regime change underway holds the course. The ranks of defiant publics are larger than ever and the new activism has challenged the cynicism that there is no alternative. Thousands are demonstrating in Moscow, Spain, Syria and Egypt defying the authorities. Organizationally the decentralized character of the OWS is itself in a changeover mentality and morphing into new kinds of political activism in response to local and national pressures. The greatest uncertainty lies in the organizationally sustainability of the cycle of dissent. There are nodes of global activists but no organizationally structure to guide and shape it. It is stamped by the curse or flexibility of decentralization. With such a fragile structure this can be said with certainty: so far so good. The question is how much bounce is there in the anti-authoritarian global flare up and confrontation?

- The late autumn global occupations are signal moments in a much larger and more prolonged crisis of capitalism and its deep wedge issues of equality and fairness. In a winner-take-all economy the fault lines are deep and in a highly polarized environment instability and unpredictability are coming through the cracks in the wall..

A Bigger Braudellian Transformation is on its Way

- Web 2.0 inspires people to find issues of common concern and this is also why discussion and dialogue are Habermasian. Still the nation state is still the site of Foucaultian discipline. We are transitioning out of chapter one of a very large contentious and evolving global narrative

The Expanding Universe of Dissent

Are You …

A Paradigm Shifter?
A Radical Feminist?
An Anti-Racist Activist?
A Poverty Eradicator?
A Human Rights Crusader?
A Globalization Fixer?
A Raging Blogger?
A Socialist Agitator?
An Active Localist?
An Online Hacktivist?
A Union Militant?
A Cosmopolitan Iconoclast?
An Anti-Corporate Culture-Jammer?
A Transnational Networker?

The Compass of Dissent

Reinforcing Social Inclusion

Protecting Human Security

Building Political Community

Enhancing Individual Freedom

A Strong Social Bond

Social Revolution

Poverty Eradication

Paradigm Shift

Democratic Activism

Racial & Sexual Equality

Trust & Human Safety

Voice & Empowerment