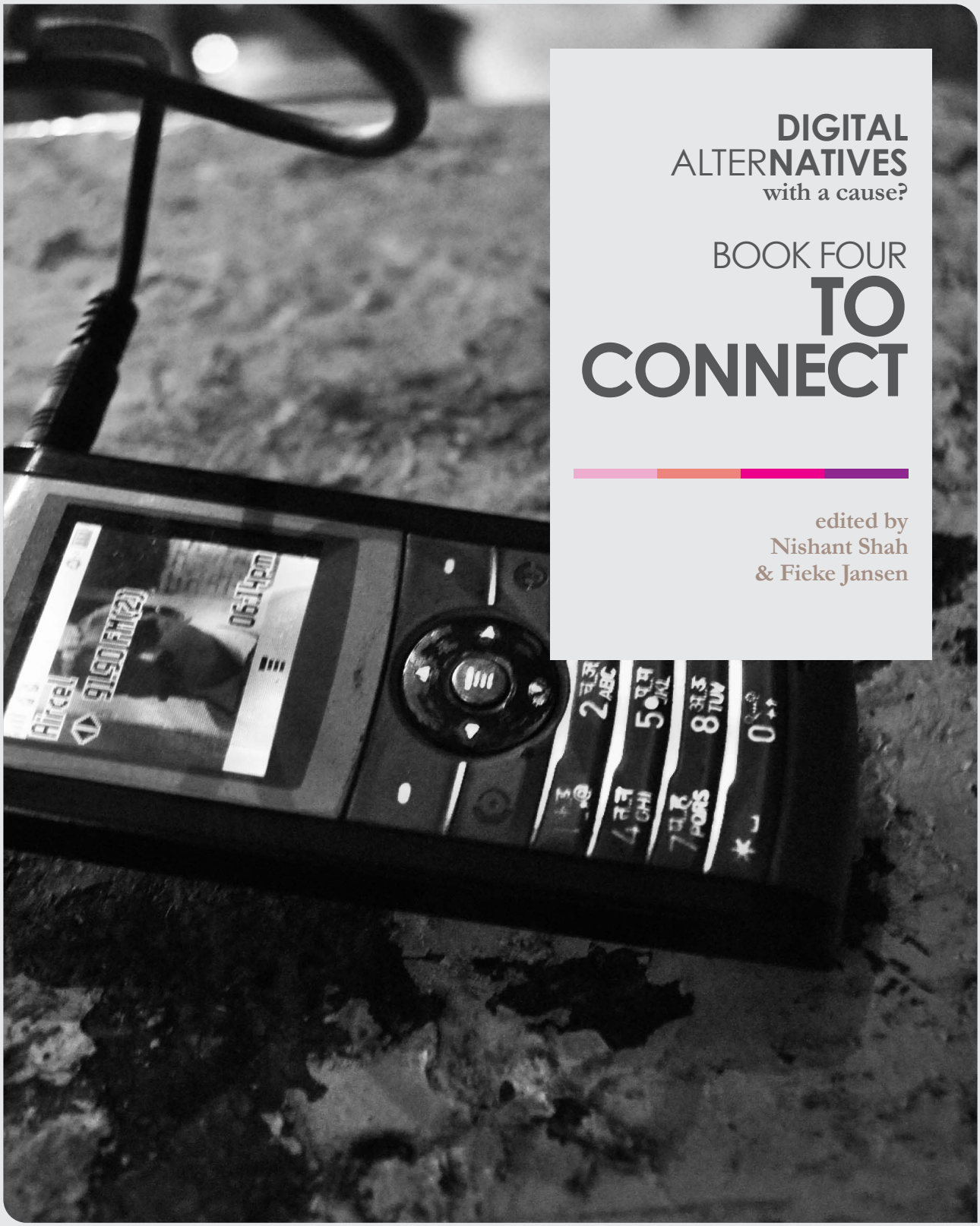

DIGITAL ALTERNATIVES with a cause?

BOOK FOUR

TO CONNECT

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 4 – To Connect

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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 4, *To Connect* of the *Digital (Alter)Natives with a Cause?* series, we try to understand digital natives through their environment. Digital natives do not operate in a vacuum, their actions are shaped by the fast changing geo-political landscape, interaction with other actors and the global architecture of technology. In our *Digital Natives with a Cause?* research, it has become clear that at the heart of all digital natives discourse lies the question of power. Along with power, questions of race, class, gender and socio-economic situation cannot be ignored when talking about digital natives. We found that on one hand digital natives are destabilising existing power structures and challenging the status quo. On the other, the geo-political context in which digital natives live, affect their activities, beliefs and opinions. Then there are actors that can destroy, influence or support digital native activity which give rise to questions of control that resonate within this new generation.

In the past years, technology has been at the centre of our discourse on new forms of activism or alternative approaches to change. Think of the uprising in the Middle East and North Africa, Wikileaks and Anonymous. These events and groups have placed digital natives and their relationship to power in the public eye. In his article Ben Wagner argues that digital native actions are destabilising existing discourse. The rise of technology is increasingly questioning the logic and legitimacy of established social and political boundaries. Generally, these changes are not of sudden groundbreaking nature, rather they are shifts which occur in our values and governance structures. For example, a fundamental shift in the younger generation has been the refocus from intellectual property right to the legitimacy of co-creation, re-mixing and sharing of knowledge and information.

In this transition to new values and structures, one of the main question which remains is if technologies truly change power dimensions or if it reframes our existing notion of the power and the powerless. According to Adam Haupt, the reason that nobody expected the Arab revolution to happen had more to do with our framing of the idea of power than with a technological revolution. In the international discourse, the Middle East and North Africa were being framed as regions that derived from their political will. They needed to be rescued and rehabilitated from their authoritarian regimes. In order to grasp the Arab revolution, in a region that was seen as derived from its political will, we framed it as a Facebook and Twitter narrative. Here, technology is seen as the spark and the mediator of protest. However, Adam argues that technology did not create agency, it made the preexisting power and agency of the citizen visible. If we truly want to understand the processes around power and agency, we need to contextualise digital technology.

Why is context so important? Normally, when we put power, technology, agency and inequality together, people refer to the digital divide. Their solution to inequality is to create infrastructural access to technology. Steve Vosloo, Eduardo Avila and Diego Gomez argue in their articles that when we look beyond the notion of infrastructure, we see that certain skills are required to navigate through the bits and bytes. Also digital natives' practices are shaped by people's context, history, cultural processes and governmental factors. In turn their activities can affect the power dimension in the 'real' world. Digital platforms do not only offer a way in which digital natives can express themselves, they also enable them to reinvent themselves and their communities. This book argues that online actions cannot be taken out of their offline context, as digital technologies are an assemblage of human and non-human actors.

In Latin America, the Arab Spring raises questions of doubt and suspicion. Hernan Bonomo sheds light on this perspective particular to the Latin American youth, where the much celebrated Facebook revolution has reemphasised the political interest of

Western governments to promote digital citizenship to destabilise anti-imperialist democracies. He argues that the lack of control over the internet correlates with how vulnerable Latin American youth feel in face of globalisation and a fast changing geo-political landscape. For them it does not matter how skillful or familiar they become with technology, ultimately these tools belong to people, corporates and interests over which they do not have any control. Ben Wagner frames this argument in a global context. He states that you can be in extremely different geo-political contexts, but you will still engage with almost the same digital spaces and platforms. Therefore, the technological ecosystem raises the question of who owns the internet.

Ivet Pieper's contribution touches upon a case where young people are shifting the power balance by engaging into a wider public discussion and challenging the status quo through open discussions on topics that are taboo. The article describes how young people aim to break the taboo and use technology to achieve that. This case tries to understand how causes that are not developed by professionals but organically grow from youth movements, spring from an intrinsical motivation. Ivet Pieper demonstrates that digital natives activity do not stand alone. They are part of a larger ecosystem - other actors are needed to amplify youth activities and guide them along the rocky road of change. To see these power structures and roles and responsibilities we need to stop focusing on the cause and understand the processes.

4.1 DIGITAL NATIVES WITH A CAUSE? **CERTAINLY A CAUSE TO BE SUSPICIOUS…**

by
Hernán Bonomo
ESSAY

Synopsis

During the Latin American Camp for Young Social Activists (Jóvenes Activistas Sociales or JAS '10) in 2010, a group of participants connected imperialism, international donors, new technologies and Facebook revolutions in a conspiracy theory that revealed a high sense of vulnerability in the face of globalisation, and some of the power structures behind it.

This essay uses the camp's episode to explore the relations of a group of young Latin American activists with the Internet ecosystem, its configuration of power, and how it impacts their perception of some of the most important social phenomena taking place in the world today.

Introduction

This article was inspired by an experience I had with a community of 130 young social activists from more than 20 Latin American countries; the Latin American Camp for Young Social Activists (Jóvenes Activistas Sociales or JAS '10). The intensity and depth of this exchange experience produced important lessons for those of us who participated in its coordination, in terms of the political views and social ills that propel these young people's activism and their complex relations with globalisation in general. Here, I will focus on a particular aspect of these relations, illustrated by the conspiracy theory that a group of participants stated during that camp. The degree of acceptance of this conspiracy, not only among the group of participants, but also within different social movements in the region revealed that internet and information and communication technologies (ICTs) play prominent roles as engines of globalisation and have a significant impact on the ways in which these activists relate with them.

It is a fact that internet is quickly becoming a central environment in the daily lives and activities of an increasing number of young Latin American men and women, whose learning, socialising and understanding of the world are moulded by it directly or indirectly. However, the examples I use here show how internet is in fact contributing to reinforcing the continuity of ideologies, language and debates that long predated Latin American digital natives, but still resonate powerfully among these young people's thinking and activism. In order to understand this influence, we need to look at how socio-economic circumstances affect their participation in the digital ecosystem, particularly in terms of their access to it. This will also contribute to understand the origin of some of the concerns expressed around internet's ability to affect social inclusion in Latin American countries with young democratic processes.

The importance that is attributed to the internet in shaping political movements is affecting dramatically the way young people understand what's going on in the world. The current social movements in the Middle East present an extraordinary, real-time window to witness how young people everywhere are rethinking ideologies to re-position themselves in confusing, fast-changing geopolitics.

In this sense, Latin American youth present a very particular mix between revolutionary legacies, anti-imperialism, and distrust towards ideas and technologies coming from the Global North, summarised by many of them *as the struggle against the system*. I analyse the reactions of the Latin American progressive media and blogs to the episodes in Egypt, Tunisia and Libya. I then take my essay to see how they articulated their vulnerability at the camp regarding their place in the digital environment.

A conspiracy to steal the grassroots' social knowledge

JAS '10 was a week-long experience intended to promote a community of mutual support among social activists working on a variety of issues across the region. At the camp, about 150 social activists, up to 30 years old, from more than 20 Latin American countries managed to organise the agenda, activities and rules for sharing the space in a participatory way and even took turns for overall facilitation. After the camp, the community remained connected and gained in diversity by not only using social media platforms, but also through smaller face-to-face encounters organised by its members.

The majority of participants had a photo or video camera, and made sure that almost every aspect of the camp was recorded. There was even a project created by 15 activists, who planned a series of theme-based documentaries to promote the social

With this article Hernan Bonomo argues that digital natives do not operate in a vacuum and that the way youth activist engage with digital technology is shaped by their context and the way that they are re-positioning themselves in a fast-changing geopolitical landscape.

Hernan shares with us an interesting Latin American perspective on the notion that Facebook and Twitter will save the world. In our euphoria of new technologies we should not neglect to notice that digital technologies are directly or indirectly shaping the lives of people all across the globe. This changing landscape revives the questions of power.

In the Hivos and CIS Knowledge Programme search for new insights into who digital natives are, what drives them, how can we understand their role in change processes and do technologies shift the current power dynamics, we have found that you cannot look at these questions without looking at the notion of an ecosystem for the following reasons.

1) There is no blue print of what constitutes a Digital Native. They are not necessarily young, they are users/creators of technology that have moved beyond the notions of how technology works, and want to know what it can do for them.

2) Digital natives have been too isolated in their activities and interactions. Hence when other actors want to engage with them, they often think of working one-on-one and making the digital natives managers of the infrastructure needed for their activities. We need to now see what kind of intellectual, emotional, logistical and financial infrastructure we can build to sustain digital natives' participation in the processes of change.

3) We need to question who controls the internet. Ben Wagner (Book 4, To Connect) raises the point that "the internet is perceived as an island of perceived uncontrollability in a sea of increasing control...." We perceive it as an open and free tool, yet the infrastructure and information architecture is owned by a multiple of actors, internet service

work of participants, which still continues today, a year after the camp. However, this omnipresence made an important part of the group increasingly uncomfortable, as activities progressed.

Even those who were taking pictures and videos for their own blogs and pages felt nervous about the possibility of all that material circulating online without their control. It was evident from the high degree of peer trust among the participants that the problem was with the institutions behind the camp, particularly the donor: *"Why are they paying for our expenses, and what do they really want from us?"*

These were some of the questions raised by them. Speculations about the funding organisation behind the activity fuelled concerns about the use of all that information for advancing political agendas of institutions they knew little about.

The conspiracy was summarised in an article distributed by an organisation called ALAI, or Latin American Information Agency, through dozens of blogs and websites. Using a participant's testimony, the author denounced the camp as part of a global effort led by the United States government in cooperation with international donors to destabilise "anti-imperialistic democracies" using the internet, social media and new technologies.

Vagueness and disputable aspects aside, this conspiracy reflects a deep concern in the face of power structures behind the internet that we are ignorant of. For example, who's administering the information exchanged through emails and social media platforms online, and to what extent is this data available to governments, corporations and other private entities. This concern turned into a sense of high vulnerability when combined with the little information available on the sources of the money behind the event, and other social projects, and a perception that both—the sources of money and the power structures—were probably the same. This recipe for conspiracy explains the basic arguments in the article that international cooperation is often a disguise to appropriate social knowledge, and these institutions (cooperation agencies and international donors) are ultimately contributing to agendas that are different than those of the social movements that they are supposedly helping. However, the article also shows important aspects of these young activists' perception of their place on the internet and the ICTs no matter how skilful or familiar they become in their use, that these tools ultimately belong to people, corporations and interests whom they cannot trust. Also it is suspected that, when push comes to shove, the owners of the online world will side with "the empire":

[…]It isn't hard to trace the trajectories of these organisations. Following their links, he [the source] arrived to pages such as Fundacion Nuevos Líderes, Jóvenes Empresarios of Chile, Union Mundial, and Tactical Technology Collective among others. All these organisations stand not just for things such as strengthening democracies, fighting against corruption and defending human rights, but also of course for defending the freedom of capital. They have high level contacts in the UN, in the WEF of Davos, USAID and many others. They promote initiatives in South East Asia, in Africa, and now they seem to be preparing their landing in Latin America.

Tactical Technology Collective deserves a mention in this too. "This NGO, financed by Soros (Open Society Foundations, which is chaired by George Soros) is dedicated to train social activists in the use of electronic tools. It provides manuals and guides to use tools such as online maps, graphics, audio, video, blogs, free telephony, information security, cellphones and much more. Their materials are excellent, and could be of great help for social activists lacking funding, censored, and with problems with the authorities."

After reading and tracing all these organisations, many doubts arose, especially around the reasons for their recent interest in our continent. Some of us suspected that their interest was in training people to destabilise anti-imperialist democracies. In fact, questions like these were piling up: Does all this have anything to do with the latest moves of the US Government to allow the export of Internet services to promote the opening of regimes considered authoritarian and repressive? We know that Facebook, Twitter and other tools have been key in the recent rebellion in Iran, and that Hugo Chavez is denouncing similar moves in his country.

Raul Zibechi. "How the Empire Expropriates Social Knowledge" (translation by Hernan Bonomo, from original in Spanish). Available at: http://alainet.org/active/37263

providers, search engines, content providers, governments, etc, all with different interests.

4) We need to understand why the international community wants to reach out to this group of digital natives. We see a potential that we want to harness for our goals and interventions, without questioning that digital natives might not want to conform to our notion of development.

The consequences and dilemmas of globalisation that young people are facing, which is making them rethink and reorient themselves in the current political landscape, is not something that is only bound to Latin America, the Middle East and North Africa. Hernan touches upon tensions that many digital natives face. Around the globe you see that the 'young generation' is confronted with a political system that is solving the past and current problems over the back of the future. They are creating a world where the rich are getting richer and the poor, poorer. In Spain and Greece the younger generation is marching the streets for similar reasons as the youth of Tunisia and Egypt.

Questions of infrastructure go beyond just questions of access. Hernan talks about the fact that the majority of participants of JAS '10 have a photo camera. In discussion of technology and social change, we assume that everybody is connected in one way or another. In the Knowledge Programme we are of the belief that the on- and offline worlds do not blend into each other. You do not have to have access to participate. There are those who are technologically disconnected but still part of a larger movement. And there are those who are affected by it but are not affected by technological change.

The conspiracy is global: Latin American activists decoding the Middle East.

The current process of dramatic reforms taking place in the Middle East is challenging world views and political thinking worldwide, and Latin Americans aren't exempted from this challenge. Atilio Boron's article's suggestion of a close association between the expansion of social media and the expansion of global capitalism reveal the confusion that popular revolts in the Middle East generated among Latin America's Left[1]. Suspicions of the empire's ever-present hand behind the revolts are being fuelled by the prominent role that Western media—especially from the USA—attributed to digital activists and tools like Facebook or Twitter in their making.

Many among the Leftist, progressive Latin American media, had problems with reading these movements outside Cold War parameters. If the Egyptian revolution was welcomed—Hosni Mubarak was unquestionably an ally of the West after all—the reactions towards the Libyan uprising were in some remarkable cases, of outright support to the Muammar Gaddafi regime in Libya. One of the most influential news services in the region among activists from the Left—the Venezuelan *Telesur*—showed their closeness to the Libyan regime by becoming the only foreign media with official permission to transmit from Tripoli, before the BBC was authorised. In an interview, *Telesur's* correspondent in Tripoli expressed that the international press, especially the internet, is to be blamed for the attacks against Libya's people and government[2].

Latin American youth are not alone in their discomfort regarding this narrative of social media at the centre of popular revolts. In fact, many social activists in the Middle East and across the globe remain sceptical—remarkably, bloggers and tech-activists. To understand their discomfort, one needs to look at the key elements of this narrative: A community of young, moderately-to-non-religious, very smart and tech-savvy men and women mobilise protests against an autocratic regime utilising Facebook, a tool developed by a genial, middle-class, Jewish young man from the USA—who happened to have studied at Harvard, one of the education flagships of liberal democracy.

The narrative implies a dormant Egyptian society, whose strength and potential for change is suddenly awakened by the commitment and courage of some among her youth, combined with the ingenuity and talent of their American counterparts. So what ignites the revolution is a cosmopolitan effort across presumed cultural and even religious divides that ends up fuelling massive popular revolts across the Arab world. The enthusiasm among western liberal media was such that many ventured to call them *Facebook revolutions* at their early stages.

It isn't coincidence that mainstream media in the USA were immediately attracted to these aspects of the story, which reinforce the argument of global capitalism as a democratising and modernising force. As told, this is an extraordinary example of how free-market entrepreneurship and globalisation can mobilise social power in a positive direction; in this case, by toppling Mubarak, the most powerful autocrat in the Arab world.

However, this narrative was received with scepticism by much of the mainstream progressive media in Latin America, and with outright contempt by the more militant Left. This isn't surprising either, given the history between the Latin American social movements and the US regional policies. In general, progressive media in the region was quick to respond to this narrative generated in media outlets in the US, saying that this same global capitalism praised as motorising the revolutions is actually the reason why these regimes survived for so long. Furthermore, the assumption of spontaneity of these revolutions, which attribute a central role to young digital activists and social media in their making, was challenged by many among the same youth supposedly at its centre. While Latin American mainstream media highlighted the hypocrisy of western democracies that maintained these autocracies in place, some bloggers in the region quickly picked up another narrative[3] coming from their counterparts in the Middle East, which pointed

to the long campaign of workers' union strikes as the key reasons to look at and to understand the collapse of these regimes[4].

The positioning of an important part of young social activists in Latin America in the face of these competing narratives shows a cautious attitude towards the role of internet in their social struggles, and to a certain extent, resentment towards what they see as an attempt of western media to "capture" revolutions that belong to local social movements. If the JAS camp's documenting incident revealed their vulnerability in the digital environment, their doubts regarding internet as the revolution maker, question its importance in social change. It is worth to highlight the different roles attributed to digital activism in the cases of Egypt and Libya. In the first case, the revolution is seen as a legitimate popular process, in which digital activism has a relatively marginal place. On the other hand, the role of internet in the case of Libya is portrayed as much more important, but the popular origins of this process are put into question. These differences seem to say that, for many of them, revolution doesn't come online, but reactionary movements sometimes do.

Finally, when they choose to see the revolutions in Egypt and Tunisia as the culmination of a process of social struggle instead of a spontaneous outburst, these social activists also make an important statement about the relative importance of the digital revolution in their own realities: Being digital

The information ecology and the changes that are attributed to this technology leave many people around the globe uncomfortable. In this article the prominent role that the Western media place on Twitter and Facebook has received sceptical and critical opinions from other parts of the world. A local cause is taken out of its context and framed in a one-liner. However, Esther Weltevrede (Book 2, To Think) argues that Twitter and Facebook have played a role in the Arab revolution, not because of the geopolitical propaganda that digital technologies are used for, but because for digital natives the on- and offline are no longer separate worlds and people do not only form ties with other people, they also engage with a hashtag, page rank and a Facebook like button. She argues that 'Trust' in the information ecology goes beyond the ties between people and is instead invested in both the people on your list as much as the digital technology one is using. Digital natives strategically make choices and use the digital ecosystem for their cause.

natives is a circumstance that doesn't alter much of the nature of the social challenges they face. Instead, it does change some of the environments where their struggles take place, and the means by which they need to be addressed.

Warm bodies in the cyberspace

In the JAS '10 camp evaluation, activists promoting the use of technology for social change noted the lack of interest that the majority of participants expressed in online security sessions, or for the matter, in most how-to workshops offered. A first thought was that online tools for advocacy, learning or exchange in general were still not that ubiquitous or popular among the majority of the group. But that's deceiving. For most of the 130 participants, digital tools are high among the main resources for learning, participating in the production of information and knowledge, and to some extent, for socialising. They show a familiarity similar to that of young people from true digital nations, despite their more limited access to connection. So other reasons that can be considered are the context of relatively high levels of freedom of expression in Latin American countries, and the social segmentation taking place in the digital environment. They can be summarised as follows:

1) Environmental safety: There is a context of respect of basic freedom of expression in Latin America in general, that makes special precautions in terms of privacy and management of information exchanges non-essential, contrary to what occurs in other regions of the world. The goal of social advocates in these countries isn't much to overcome the state's security apparatuses to get information out for international awareness, but rather internal advocacy aimed at authorities, which relies less on the use of internet. There is a lack of incentives for development of sophisticated applications or platforms, or for the matter, for caring much beyond the use of basic, mainstream tools available.

2) Social segmentation in the digital ecosystem: Socially, internet is regarded as a strong tool for communication and cooperation globally. Its potential to facilitate access to information and exchange makes it play a substantial part in projects promoting education and development in general. As such, it is permeated by similar ideas of Global North as producer and enabler, and the Global South as beneficiary and user which characterise most traditional principles of international cooperation.

On the other hand—economically—internet is a key instrument to expand commerce globally. This is perhaps the reason why youth in economically developed countries, whether they have the technical skills to "program" or do stuff, feel encouraged to see the internet as something they contribute to, create and shape, through their power as consumers.

There is undoubtedly an ever growing agreement of the benefits entailed in the new digital forms of exchange, communications and production of knowledge. Attributing internet a very positive value is almost common sense. However, most Latin American youth, without the technical skills, or economic power as significant consumers, perceive themselves as bottom-end users in a world where everything they see including their rules were created by others somewhere else. Only very limited groups and individuals with technical understanding—like the JAS '10 participants mentioned above—see themselves as part of a community with the ability to transform the digital ecosystem substantially. This position of disadvantage, combined with an access that is much more limited than in wealthier countries, certainly makes difficult a more proactive participation of young Latin Americans in shaping internet's environment.

Conclusion: Participation at crossroads

Looking at the relations between the development of internet and the expansion of global capitalism, we can argue that the extent of participation of any given group in one is closely connected with its role in the other. If Latin American youth lack in general a sense

of ownership over internet, this has a correlation with how vulnerable many of them feel in the face of globalisation, especially among the poorer ones, and the political Left. This vulnerability directly impacts their perception of the role they can play in the development of the digital ecosystem.

Latin America has a long history of local and international conspiracies that disrupted popular movements and governments. The cold war offers plenty of examples of US interventions in her countries, often subtle, but at times grotesque. It has also provided much of political language and categories still resonating strongly among the new generations of young leaders. It's not hard to see how the combination of vulnerability in the digital environment with political views marked by the historically imperial role of the US in the region create a fertile environment for a new generation of conspiracy theories, like the one generated within the JAS community.

Finally, if historical social inequalities determine similar inequalities in the digital ecosystem, there's an evident risk of the internet deepening already acute socio-economic gaps even further. This is the reason why the few digital activists in JAS '10 were so concerned and despaired about the little interest among the larger group of participants on critical issues such as open source software and free connectivity.

For them, the growth of the digital environment's influence in people's lives is redefining the meaning of activism and citizenship. If we are all becoming to some extent residents of this universal digital ecosystem, whether the takeover by the forces of global capitalism claimed by conspiracy theorists is inevitable depends on how active its citizens are in preventing it. Promoting active digital citizenship is therefore crucial in what's becoming a continuation of the long, historical debate around global capitalism, democracy and social rights, but by language, platforms and means relevant to those born in the digital era.

Hernan talks about competing narratives. The Arab revolution have only emphasised these conflicting narratives. On one hand there is the narrative of the local movements and on the other hand that of Western media highjacking the cause of the local movements. This foregrounding of the conflicting narratives can in part be attributed to the changing information ecologies. With the rise of the internet and mobile technology the speed and the way in which information travels has changed.

Anat Ben David (Book 1, To Be) tries to understand this new information ecology and competing narratives by shifting the focus from the digital native to the places that digital natives are native to. Digital activism takes place on local causes and digital and non-digital places, "at the same time, granulated and local practices of digital natives are still able to travel from one native place to another, each time adjusting to its local settings". Maybe what is native to the digital is that local causes can be taken out of their context and placed in an international arena.

In addition we institutionalise how information flows online. The internet is seen as a place where alternative voices are heard and where everyone can express their opinion. Yet if it wasn't for the content providers, search engines or communities of bloggers like Global Voices Online or Mid East Youth, who amplify and sometimes mainstream alternative voices, all this would be lost in a tidal wave of information.

[1] On the political aspects of this confusion, see Atilio Boron's article "No abandonar a los pueblos arabes" (Don't abandon the Arab Peoples) in Pagina12 http://www.pagina12.com.ar/diario/elmundo/4-163612-2011-03-07.html.

[2] http://www.telesurtv.net/secciones/noticias/91195-NN/jordan-rodriguez--medios-son-los-responsables-de-la-situacion-en-libia/#%C2%A0.

[3] See "*Hossam el-Hamalawy, periodista y bloguero egipcio: 'Las revoluciones no surgen de la nada'*", in Cubadebate: http://www.cubadebate.cu/especiales/2011/01/29/hossam-el-hamalawy-periodista-y-bloguero-egipcio/.

[4] Some examples of this narrative in Latin American blogs: http://www.kaosenlared.net/noticia/egipto-activismo-obrero-fue-origen-revuelta; E*gipto: Los trabajadores y la revolución:* http://laclase.info/internacionales/egipto-los-trabajadores-y-la-revolucion-0; *Perspectivas del proceso revolucionario en Egipto:* http://www.pts.org.ar/spip.php?article17082; *Egipto: La revuelta de la población trabajadora ignorada por los medios de comunicación occidentales:* http://lapupilainsomne.wordpress.com/2011/02/23/egipto-la-revuelta-de-la-poblacion-trabajadora-ignorada-por-los-medios-de-comunicacion-occidentales/.

Alaa Abd El Fattah's evocative piece (Book 2, To Think) on activism as mythology, helps understand this idea of reconceptualisation better. For Fattah, who has been an activist and uses digital technologies for rights-based activism, the emotional and personal relationships that people have with digital technologies is much more important than usage. He talks about activism as mythology, and how it connects loose affiliations of technology into concrete bonds of community and faith. This is why we need to integrate peoples' everyday practices, expectations, desires, ambitions and aspirations into the models of digital activism.

Joanna Wheeler's work (Book 2, To Think) on participatory video in several parts of the Global South also corroborates this idea that the relationship between citizenship and technology needs to be redefined more through peoples' experience of citizenship rather than through imagined ideologies or policies.

4.2 WHAT MAKES A DIGITAL NATIVE?

by
Simeon Oriko
REFLECTION

The generic notion that a digital native is born after 1980 does not hold true when you are growing up in Kenya. There are many socio-economic circumstances and contextual factors that influence who you are. For me being a digital native means that you recognise the value of technology and the opportunity it presents to you in your daily life. The mere use of digital tools and technology does not make a digital native a digital native. I prefer to map the production of a digital native to a transformative moment in their life when they understand their own ability to produce change due to the presence of technologies in their lives.

I want to tell two different stories from my own interaction with people and processes, to illustrate such moments of personal transformation as influenced by digital and online technologies:

The girl with a dream

I once met a girl who had a dream of becoming a pilot. In my discourse with the young lady, I discovered that she had no idea how to achieve her dream and I offered to help her. I used my mobile phone to Google the information that could help her. We were able to find a school that gave pilot training near where she lived and all the necessary details about obtaining a license to fly.
For this future pilot, this first experience of using digital technologies to search for relevant information is what defined her relationship with technology. I say this because a few months later when I met up with her again, she clearly outlined concrete plans of how she was going to achieve her dream of becoming a pilot. What struck me most was how she was able to use digital technology to unearth all the information she needed. It occurred to me that she had gone through a personal transformation at that precise moment when we googled for a pilot training school.

She understood, from that experience, the value of technology in her own context and that redefined her relationship with it. She did not have to go through an extended period of time to recognise and understand the value of technology. Just opening the information highway which can inform, change, influence, shape and transform her life and enable her with the ability to change her life, was enough.

The dream of a dream

However, just exposing people to information does not necessarily lead to such strong transformations. Information has the capacity to dramatically change peoples' lives but it also requires people to first know how to dream; they need to be able to dream of a dream. In my field of work this theme keeps recurring from time to time.

I work with African high school students. I teach them how they can use digital technology to affect change in their community and to achieve their objectives. In my country, Kenya, most of these students have a basic knowledge of technology that comprises mostly of definitions and historical backgrounds. This is largely because it is outlined in the national education syllabus. We normally conduct digital literacy camps where these kids are made aware of the digital tools available to them and how they can use them to affect social change in their communities and to achieve their own objectives.

One thing I've noticed is that there is a very large gap between the basic inferential knowledge of technology and the experiential knowledge. Very few

students are able to make a connection between what they are taught in school and the practical aspect of applying it. For most, a simple demonstration of basic arithmetic operations on the Google search bar is way beyond the possibilities they are made to understand in their classrooms.

This 'gap' is the determining factor that defines what a digital native is and I believe that it can only be bridged by undergoing a transformational moment that defines the relationship one has with digital technology. This is a relationship that is not only about interaction with technology but also about imagining how one has the power to produce the changes that we dream of.

Besides recognition of value, I'm also of the opinion that digital natives are able to recognise the opportunities offered to them by technology as a direct result of understanding its value. By this I mean that a digital native has the capacity to seek out and effectively make use of various tools to achieve their own objectives; be it for their own benefit, or for the benefit of their own communities.

First the dream, then the skills

A digital native is able to conceptualise the value of technology and build on it to affect whatever form of change or impact they seek in their context. This creates a framework for affecting social change that merges the use of technology and strategies of translating that use into offline access.

Maybe we need to start talking about digital natives as people who are first equipped with the skills and a dream to dream. Once these skills are in place, they might seek out ways of achieving various objectives using the tools and techniques they are most familiar with: the digital technologies.

4.3 NATIVES, NORMS AND KNOWLEDGE: HOW INFORMATION & TECHNOLOGIES RECALIBRATE SOCIAL & POLITICAL POWER RELATIONS COMMUNICATIONS

by
Ben Wagner
ESSAY

Introduction

It is well established that the information and telecommunications technologies have had a disruptive effect on societies and social institutions across the world (Klang, 2006). Although the mantra is becoming increasingly prominent that revolutions in Egypt and Tunisia provide final evidence that information and communication technologies (ICTs) also have political implications, there are many prior indications of this.

Whether we use digital technology or not, the vast majority of individuals live in the 'digital public sphere' (Gripsrud et al, 2010) and are consequently directly affected by digital technologies.

ICTs increasingly lie at the centre of modern societies; the grammar of possible and impossible

At the heart of all digital natives discourse, is the question of power. The reason that digital natives have come so much into the public eye lately is their ability to destabilise existing power structures through their intimate interactions with digital and internet technologies. Often this power is explored only in terms of governmental power and obvious structures of authority. However, technologies are not mere tools. They also have a complex relationships with ideology and knowledge and the presence and growth of a technology often translates into new knowledges and experiences for the people involved. This essay charts the other side of technology usage, looking at the pressures, norms and expectations that often bind digital natives in identities that are not always of their own making.

Wendy Chun's work on technology as ideology is fundamental in understanding the far-reaching and persuasive impacts of technology penetration and usage. For Chun, technologies which are often looked at as mere instruments of governance, also significantly affect and shape the very structure and nature of government practices. She posits a model of dialectic relationship between state-technology which affects the citizens and their material as well as discursive practices.

The idea of the techno-social was first made popular by Arturo Escobar who explored virtual reality – real life interactions to see how the capabilities and capacities of the user within one system augments and aids his/her functioning within the other. Escobar's ambition was to find hybrid spaces of interaction, thus dissolving the gap between the virtual and the real. The socio-technical processes build on Escobar's postulations, to focus specifically on the social life of technologies. The techno-social often gets deployed to see how technologies affect the social practices. The socio-technical is interested in looking at how different social, cultural and political transactions have an impact on the development and production of different technologies. Especially within the context of digital natives, this posits that digital natives are not merely users or consumers

that they project is equally performative and restrictive. What has been described as the 'ideology' (Chun, 2006) of ICT is only now beginning to be understood and has far reaching consequence for the functioning of both states and societies (Bovens and Zouridis, 2002).

That technical innovation is leading to a techno-social innovation is by no means a foregone conclusion, rather it represents a specific and context-dependent evolutionary response in which neither the social nor the technical element can be divided out (Brey, 2005). Due to the speed and scale of this evolutionary process, logic and legitimacy of established social and political boundaries are increasingly called into question. This phenomenon of shifting boundaries will be explored across three dimensions in the following analysis: shifting sociological boundaries, normative boundaries and knowledge boundaries. Each dimension of the analysis will attempt to understand the following question: **How are the respective boundaries shifting and how are these shifts being legitimised?**

In the conclusion these three dimensions will be brought together, in an attempt to compare the different dimensions of shifting boundaries, their internal logics as well as their legitimisation. As this is an exploratory analysis which attempts to bring together differing components of what seem to be common phenomenon, it should be noted that these three dimensions are by no means exhaustive. Rather they represent an attempt to understand a similar process through three different analytical lenses.

Digital natives or digital elites?

Socio-technical processes of evolution are wanted to make a vast majority of the world's population 'objects' of change processes. Which individuals or organisations are actually objects of these changes is another matter. The debate on digital natives is heavily linked to this question by postulating 'causes', typically thinly veiled political agendas (Shah and Abraham, 2009, 21). Disruptive technologies would also lead to disruptive natives, a highly problematic assumption which is frequently called into question. What the technologies have done is give greater 'leverage' to certain specific groups and individuals, who were not previously empowered to the same extent. Typically this has enabled digital natives – often defined as individuals born after 1980 (Prensky 2001) – access to tools that were not previously at the disposal of previous generations. There is a significant bias towards youth, affluence and the developed world in this regard, as the vast majority of digital natives are concentrated within these segments of society.

But access to these tools does not necessarily have the effect of limiting the power of existing elites, decentralising information and power or even democratising societies as is often suggested (Anderson, 2007).

Rather it seems that the existing elite has simply expanded and been complemented by an additional 'digital elite'. While these digital elites are empowered, there is an equally great group of society who lack this empowerment and whose sources of information used to interact will continue to decrease in quality (Davis, 2010). In this context the suggestion that digital natives might actually gain greater subject capacity through ICTs is highly problematic. Like most debates about the social and political effects of ICTs and particularly the internet it serves to emphasise the agency-enhancing capacity of the technologies while ignoring many of its more subtle effects.

Consequently , it would seem particularly import to consider the cultural dimension of the legitimation of shifting sociological boundaries, particularly in regard to their public representations. While academics have created a discourse on digital natives, this group of individual has generally been termed differently by the general public which prefers the terms 'geek', 'hacker' or 'nerd'. All of these terms are linked to existing social nomenclature, with 'hackers' typically challenging established legal

boundaries and thereby implicitly criminal (Ziccardi, 2011) while the latter is typically an 'excluded social other', although the concept of the 'nerd' admittedly extends beyond 'technology nerds.' There has been extensive discussion in both academic and popular circles on how nerds and particularly 'technology nerds' are increasingly entering the public sphere and are even becoming important icons of popular culture as early as 1998 (Foer, 1998).

Particularly in this context is recalibration of social power relations suggested by much of popular culture about 'technology nerds', or 'hackers'. Whether looking at the long established 'Bastard Operator from Hell' series of online stories (Travaglia, 2011) or the more recent British television series 'the IT crowd', one of the core challenges for the main characters in these stories is dealing with new found power or authority. The roles created within these stories are indicative of shifting power structures and asymmetric power and information that lie at the base of much IT-driven change. The stories created within these community are also indicative of a new set of norms and values created and propagated by their 'users' who are increasingly attached - or addicted - to them (Chun, 2006).

While representations of digital natives in popular culture deal with the challenges and responsibilities of dealing with power, they also provide a venue for popular culture to 'other' these individuals. It can be argued that by constructing digital natives as socially-inadequate others, their particular power can be justified and rationalised. It can also be argued that these representations of digital natives serve to legitimise their specific role within modern societies. It may also allow their unusually powerful roles to be both acknowledged and contextualised.

Three of the most prominent individuals for whom symbolic representations of digital natives are particularly relevant are Bill Gates, Mark Zuckerberg and Julian Assange. For all of their wealth, power and international prominence, their success is consistently attributed not just to any skills the individuals might have, but rather to their difficulty forming interpersonal relationships

of technology. They do not become digital natives because they use technologies. Instead, they also have a huge stake and role to play in the development and shaping of technologies. Which is why, technology interfaces might be universal but the usage, adoption, intention and deployment is defined and shaped by the immediate environments of the users.

In the report that is being referenced here, we discovered that digital technologies have specific biases. Sometimes these biases are overtly visible – questions of class, affordability, access, literacy, etc. However, often, these biases are so endemic to the socio-political and cultural contexts of the users that we are not even aware of how they proliferate them in our technologically-mediated interactions. Shafika Isaacs (Book 1, To Be) particularly comments on this in her formulation of a 'digital outcast' – somebody who has been granted overt access to digital and online infrastructure but is not equipped with the skills, the capital or the critical acumen to tap into the transformative capacities of these technologies.

The cultural dimension to understanding the often complex and blurred boundaries of social communication online cannot be overemphasised. There has been a sudden growth of Web 2.0 experts who have been producing 'blue-prints' and 'best-practices' for social media revolutions and engagements. These models reduce the value of cultures of participation and information sharing and produce models of engagement and community mobilisation which are not sensitive tothe embedded practices and location of the participants involved. Anat Ben David (Book 1, To Be) makes a very convincing argument about the flawed nature of such models which take away the granularity of practice and locatedness of usage.

While digital natives have to bear this pall of expectations, they are still pathologised in most approaches to them. Governments continue to view their activities with suspicion – the recent arrests

and social awkwardness. Whether this is true or not, these narratives are consistently attributed to these individuals to build a 'socially coherent story'. Actual practices are moving to 'back stage' while popular culture increasingly comes to dominate the dramaturgic picture of these individuals on 'front stage' (Goffman, 1959).

Digital native norms?

Moving from the sociological to the normative dimension, it seems that there are very few 'digital norms' that can be associated with digital natives or the internet per se, nor does an exhaustive list seem possible. Rather it seems likely that the tools provided by the internet have unmasked pre-existing norms which were not previously evident. The tools of the internet bring these norms to the surface by allowing for their practise an environment which seems to offer endless opportunities to those connected to it.

One of the most notable in this regard is the low social respect for intellectual property, as suggested by the vast number of individuals in most societies with high internet penetration who engage in 'file sharing', often of material protected by copyright. There is some research suggesting that particularly most young people view this behaviour as normatively legitimate and ethically justifiable (Svensson and Larsson, 2009). As file sharing is extremely widespread not just among young people but among what seems to be the vast number of internet users, it seems that the technological capacity of the internet has given rise to new norms in this regard. While this behaviour has been heavily contested by public and private actors, it does not seem to have abated significantly.

Another norm that is increasingly entering into the public debate through the development of ICT technology is that of privacy. While typically established as a relevant issues in various international legal systems (Whitman, 2004), it is particularly through the advent of computing technologies to process vast amounts of potentially personal data and communications technologies to transport then that debates on privacy have been revived (Loeblich et al, 2011). This is not to say that questions of individual privacy are getting better or worse, but rather that questions related to individual privacy are openly and extensively debated in the public sphere in a way that was far less likely even a decade ago. Although this may seem like an unusual norm to discuss, it is doubtlessly relevant in the context of the debate on digital natives. Throughout the periods of industrialisation and modernisation in the, eighteenth, nineteenth and twentieth centuries, states have sought to increase the 'legibility' or their societies (Scott, 1999). This had the effect of making these societies more manageable and thereby also easier to control. In this context ICTs and particularly the internet represents an island of perceived uncontrollability in a sea of increasing control in which individuals can act imperviously. Of course this is not true in all situations, or possibly even in many, but the perception of the possibility of uncontrollable action, matters.

The most obvious norm which the internet suggests is perhaps its 'globality', but here too the norm is deceptively clear. Internet technologies bring with them not just global connectedness but also a global cultural melange which is often Anglophone and heavily oriented towards American cultural production. Critical media theorists have become increasingly concerned in this regard that the internet is nowhere close to fulfilling the emancipatory function they hoped it could achieve and may indeed be leading to the opposite (Thiel, 2010). Although local and regional internet cultures do exist these are heavily connected to what is increasingly a nascent global public sphere.

These new normative dimensions raise an important question which has already been posed by others, most notably Colin Maclay from the Berkman Center for Internet and Society at Harvard University: how can the new norms created by digital natives be communicated to other members of society who may or may not be digital natives? More fundamentally it also begs the question how norms

generated by digital natives can be reconciled with existing social norms. There are no easy answers to either of these questions and both pose key challenges to policy makers, academics and society at large. The most prevalent response which is simply to continue reaffirming the established order is clearly insufficient and likely to be ineffective in the long term. However, there are only relatively few situations in which these norms are actually integrated into the existing dominant social discourse.

Political parties would typically fulfil this function of mediating between different segments of society and helping norms evolve and there are some signs that they are beginning to take up this role. The Iceland Modern Media Initiative (IMMI) is heavily driven by Icelandic political parties and in many ways draws on existing 'digital native values' as well as existing established human rights norms. Another possible hope for the transmission of digital native values is the Pirate Party , which claims to represent many of them. In Germany, although the Pirate Party was not able to enter the Parliament, its attainment of a substantial number of votes served as a 'shot across the bows' for established political parties and has led to noticeable changes in the political discourse about the internet and internet-related issues among established political parties. In Tunisia post-revolution one of the ministers in the new transitionary cabinet is even a member of the Pirate Party, prompting suggestions that this would fundamentally change Tunisia's highly restrictive relationship towards the internet (Wagner 2011).

How are these norms legitimised and how do they themselves contribute to creating a form of legitimacy for the identities and practises of digital natives? The first is a form of legitimacy that can be postulated in this context is 'legitimacy through possibility' or 'legitimacy through activity', in which digital natives justify their activity through their ability to act. Although this has led to suggestions of a 'wild west culture' or that spaces of interaction on the interaction are almost entirely unregulated borderlands - as was suggested by President Sarkozy in his recent speech to the eG8 conference in Paris - of young computer users who participated in the processes of data verification with Anonymous stands as an example. While we might have made cultural heroes of the digital natives, there is a paucity of research that focuses on what kinds of infrastructure of safety, security and sustainability need to be built in order to promote their activities. Book 4 To Connect, deals with these issues at length and offers different perspectives on how these shifting cultural and power dimensions need to be explored further.

In our interactions with the digital natives from Asia, Africa and Latin America, we were actually surprised at the fact that privacy did not emerge as a central question that needed to be discussed. Approaching them through our scholarship lens, we had expected, given the extremely high visibility of privacy in almost all discourse around digital natives, this to be one of the burning concerns. But when asked to choose topics for discussions, privacy was almost invisible from the debates. We realise in hindsight, however, that this does not mean that they were less concerned about privacy. It was just that their experience, articulation and understanding of privacy was different. Their stakes were different. This was something that became clearer when we put together multiple stakeholders in dialogue at the Thinkathon. The vocabularies that different groups have developed to address different issues is symptomatic of how there is not a single notion of privacy but multiple conceptualisations of it and this complexity needs to be captured in conversations. In the information kit, D:Coding Digital Natives, we have a sampling of a group discussion among the digital natives, looking at the multiplicity and form of privacy in their everyday life and work.

The rhetoric of the 'globality' of internet also perhaps emerges from the fact that at the level of the infrastructure, the internet is slowly getting homogenised. Just like in traditional media landscapes, there are clear high-rollers who own and design the internet in specific ways. ISPs, spectrum controllers, manufacturers of computing

this is anything but the case. Rather the governance structures that have progressively developed on the internet are not as amenable to existing social institutions as these institutions would perhaps wish. The capacity of digital natives to openly flout such established institutions with relatively little fear of retribution and limited other means, serves to call these established institutions in question. Another type of legitimacy which digital natives are able to develop in this context is one of a specific expertise. As there is a long established social tradition of agency being attributed to experts, this is less socially contentious than the previous form of legitimacy through activity. However as digital natives have typically not developed the 'habitus' of experts (Abels and Behrens, 2009) and often do not possess the qualifications associated with their social role as experts, this source of legitimacy is not always available.

Perhaps the most important source of legitimacy however may stem in the context of norms created by digital natives themselves. Questions of intellectual property, privacy and global digital culture are increasingly directly associated with digital natives. As these norms are increasingly transported 'back' into wider social debates and become increasingly relevant for broad sections of society, they serve to legitimise digital natives through their ability to 'navigate' these normative debates. As digital native norms increasingly enter the public debate and the debate on these norms mature, it in turn serves to increase legitimacy of digital natives.

(Re)Bordering knowledge

Another highly relevant challenge faced by both democratic and authoritarian states on the internet is an attempt to create 'public order in private spaces'.

This challenge is not necessarily new for states and the difficulties of persistent and widespread micro-violations mirror other forms of public order policing (Waddington, 1994). Nonetheless, the global nature of the internet makes it almost impossible for states to agree on any kind of common framework for public order (Drezner, 2007). The result is a grinding and incessant conflict between states on the nature of permissible content and the extent to which any form of 'public order'can be enforced and in what manner.

As the nature of 'public order' on the internet increasingly becomes a geopolitical struggle, the concept is only likely to become even more contested (McCarthy, 2011).

Moreover, there are various regulatory and geopolitical lacunae which have not actually entered public debate yet, but will doubtless enter into wider public debate in coming years and decades. These issues include the regulation and control over cross-border internet communications, the power relations created by peering agreements between internet service providers (ISPs) and the transfer of internet control technology (Wagner 2011).

Interestingly, much of what was once 'public order' is increasingly provided by private actors. Mirroring developments elsewhere in modern societies such as the proliferation of private security companies (PSCs) and even private military companies (PMCs) (Singer 2003) much of the creation of 'public order' on the internet is increasingly carried out by private actors. The privatisation of typically public functions is likely to be particularly challenging both for the private actors themselves and the states within which they operate. While the former are often wary of accountability for the functions which they gain in these news roles, the latter often prefer to suggest that they are powerless to intervene (Leutheusser-Schnarrenberger in Hildebrandt and Wefing, 2011).

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At their root, all of these challenges revolve around the same difficulty which is how to create legitimate boundaries to information, communications and knowledge on a global internet. This bordering of knowledge – broadly defined – has immediate and far reaching effects around the borders themselves, while actors which are able to draw such borders are likely to gain power through them. At the same time these borders are likely to be contested and internet communications makes it particularly easy for such contestation to take place as they allow for the easy communal production of knowledge and easy connections between different repositories of knowledge.

One associated difficulty is that decisions on the legitimate bordering of knowledge are typically taken with little transparency and unclear governance processes. This has the dual effect of disempowering individual actors from making their own decisions about what they consider legitimate boundaries of knowledge and of depriving wider society of a debate on what such legitimate boundaries might be. This is particularly relevant as one of the main effects of the internet has been a flood of additional information, communications and knowledge which was previously not available to individuals on this scale. While internet provision remains highly uneven, questions about its bordering relate to all members of the 'digital public sphere' which are essentially most individuals in the world, regardless of whether they have access to the internet or not.

In this dimension of re-bordering knowledge there is a great deal of tension between natives generated by digital natives and existing social norms. In this context the legitimacy such bordering process is heavily contested, particularly as the actors involved

devices and media giants like Google and Facebook are slowly consolidating all data about the internet users, forming new attention and data economies. So you could be in extremely diverse geo-political contexts, but you would still be engaging with almost the same digital spaces and platforms. With the mass introduction of cloud computing, these notions of global cultural mélange is likely to only grow stronger as your location seems to have no specific relationship with either your data access or interaction.

On its home page, the Pirate Party International claims that it "is a non-governmental organisation (NGO) that exists to help establish, to support and promote, and to maintain communication and co-operation between pirate parties around the world. It was officially founded in 2010 during the Brussels conference from April 16th to 18th." You can read more about the participating countries and the history of the Pirate Party at
http://www.pp-international.net/

The public nature of the internet has been critically examined and contested by many different scholars. A naïve acceptance of the internet as expanding the scope of the public needs to be questioned. It has emerged from our research, as well as existing discourse, that the publicness of the internet is often exclusive and discriminatory. The cyber-utopians often herald the democratic and participatory powers of digital and internet technologies. However, they often forget that the internets, like any other technology, are subject to great regulation and control. And these processes of regulation are not merely at the level of law and policy. Mark Stumpel's work (Book 2, To Think) points out how protological and design controls are also established on user behavior, data access and communication within digital social networking systems.

Wikipedia, the largest collaborative knowledge production site, stands as the best example of such repositories of knowledge. In 10 years, Wikipedia, which seeks to produce a sum total of

are not typically public. Often re-bordering processes are re-enacted either through representatives of private corporations or through diffuse governance structures, both of whom have the capacity to do so. Although justifications for such actions are often based on existing social norms, property, privacy or security, the implementation of such norms in the digital spaces is heavily contested.

Conclusion

In his Keynote Address to the eG8 conference in Paris in May 2011, Lawrence Lessig chose to dwell extensively on the 'outsiders' who represent the future. He drew extensively on metaphors of fringe individuals in society who were young, dropouts and often not even American as the pioneers of the internet who were not invited to the eG8 conference (Lessig, 2011). To all extents and purposes he was referring to digital natives, if in a more different sense and under a slightly different name. His appeal can be seen not only in terms of allowing innovation and facilitating growth, but also speaking to inter-generational conflict and allowing for social, not just economic change.

Digital natives have long entered the heart of society. In another decade they will represent the vast majority of the world population. This shift brings with it a shift in values and governance structures, often with unclear outcomes and consequences. The first argument made here is the creation of a new 'digital elite' of empowered individuals, which does not represent a broad cross-section of society but rather a specific, limited group of individuals. Following Lawrence Lessig, all that can be done in this regard is to keep the barrier to entry to these elite as low as possible.

The second argument was in regard to digital native norms that are shifting the way societies think about certain basic values. Here the new perspectives of digital of digital natives on these issues pose not only considerable challenges but also significant opportunities, particularly in regard to harnessing the abilities of digital technologies. The third is that a process of re-bordering knowledge is ongoing and likely to affect the whole digital public sphere. This area is likely to produce a great deal of conflict, while there is equally a danger that much of the re-bordering takes place outside of realms where it can be contested.

In all of these three dimensions the question of legitimacy was posed, in order to understand by which discursive strategies these practises could be legitimised. Of all of the types, the most prevalent seems to be a highly problematic conflation of capacity and legitimacy. Popular culture and concepts of meritocracy also assist in providing legitimacy across these dimensions, as do postulations of technical possibility. Lastly, expertise and 'affectedness' provide two other important dimensions which provide legitimacy to digital natives and their normative constructs. Whether these forms of legitimacy are sufficient to justify the shifting sociological, normative and knowledge boundaries remains to be seen.

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all human knowledge, has become the world's most visited website. It allows users, through a consensus building deliberation process, to document knowledge that is at once local, personal and global. It subverts the existing knowledge industries by producing an extraordinary amount of everyday knowledge and experience which can be produced as objective knowledge artifact. While there are problems with Wikipedia in the terms and conditions that it establishes for the production of knowledge, other user-generated-content sites are quickly emerging as spaces through which contestations of traditional knowledge and power structures can be voiced.

There is a certain imagination that digital natives are forever young. We have had three decades of digital natives who have grown up with digital and internet technologies, and are now involved in the day-to-day functioning of the world. Steve Vosloo (Book 4, To Connect), in his case-study on trying to mobilise a 'young' community of users, demonstrates how we need to move away from the idea of digital natives as removed and outside of the central power structures and processes. Digital natives have now entered governments and corporate structures. They are embedded in complex knowledge and information economies. They are in universities and libraries, in offices and at work, already producing changes in existing practices by the mere introduction of digital paradigms and technologies in their analogue contexts.

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4.4 DIGITAL NATIVES: TELLING STORIES

by
Steve Vosloo
CASE STUDY

Introduction

With the emergence of mobile computing and wireless internet, especially internet-access made available at affordable rates through mobile phones, the ways in which people interact with information has changed. Easy access to information, affordable ways of information dissemination and the ability to reach a large asynchronous and geographically-distributed audience has led to some very interesting forms of collaborative communication, artisanship and conversations. This casestudy looks at the emergence of the mobile novel (m-novel) in South Africa and showcases some important learnings which are often not talked about in discussions around digital natives and the different projects that cater to them. It additionally also looks at digital storytelling as a powerful form of social mobilisation and change that cuts across generations of digital natives.

On 30 September 2009, the first mobile novel (m-novel) to be published in both English and isiXhosa was launched in South Africa (SA). *Kontax,* a teen mystery story, was created for the Shuttleworth Foundation's "mobiles for literacy" (m4Lit) project. The ambition of the project was to see if teens would read long form content – 25 page stories – on their mobile phones (like teens in Japan do, for instance) and whether they would engage with those stories

through commenting, voting and participating in competitions.

Since then the project has grown significantly. It is now called Yoza Cellphone Stories with 22 m-novels, five Shakespeare plays and a collection of classic poems. Genres for the m-novels include teen issues, romance, soccer and adventure. Yoza stories are published on a mobisite – a website accessible from mobile phone web browsers and computer web browsers – at www.yoza.mobi, and on MXit[1] and Facebook[2]. Stories are found in English, Afrikaans and isiXhosa.

The m4Lit team consisted largely of suppliers and freelancers who provided authoring, moderation and production services.

As of January 2011, the project has had the following uptake:

- **Complete reads[3] of m-novels: more than 1,21,000**
- **Number of comments: > 34,000**
- **Number of votes: > 44,000**
- **Number of competition entries: > 8,500**
- **Number of unique visitors: > 1,13,000**
- **Number of MXit subscribers to Yoza: > 61,000**
- **Number of MXit subscribers to the original Kontax story: > 71,000**
- **Number of page views: > 16,00,000**

These figures would be looked at as indicators of success for the project. However, it is necessary to go beyond the figures and numbers and try to highlight certain key findings and lessons that the experience has led to. These findings are relevant to all Digital Native projects because they unravel the presumptions and processes that are taken for granted by most projects that deal with youth, technology and change.

a. Shifting demographics

When m4Lit was launched we aimed to reach 15-18 year olds. In January 2011, the biggest single user group of Yoza is 18-25 year olds. It is difficult to know why this has happened. It has been suggested that the 18-25 year olds of today were the teens of yesterday when MXit rose in popularity. In other words, these young adults have grown up with MXit and still use it a lot.

On Yoza there are slightly more female users (55 percent) than male (45 per cent) ones, mostly black (based on indigenous language usernames and comments), and mostly living in urban centres. However, there is also a good number of users from rural provinces.

These findings challenge the traditional realm of digital natives' studies. It is clear that an age-based definition of digital natives does not work. While we might identify younger people as engaging more with digital technologies, digital technologies themselves are quite old. The young users continue to grow older even in the otherwise temporal cyberspace. And these users do not cease to be digital natives just because they are beyond a particular age.

It also needs to be mentioned that the rural-urban divides which are a part of the information and communication technologies for development (ICT4D) discourse, has been significantly bridged by the emergence of mobile phone cultures and that we need to understand questions of digital divide in new and innovative ways. Perhaps the question to ask is: "Who has the ability to make something out of their access to technology?" rather than continue asking who does and does not have access to the digital realms. These shifting demographics help us open the field of digital natives and offer more inclusive frameworks for studying them.

b. Long can work

The biggest "aha moment" of m4Lit is still that mobile phones are a viable distribution platform for longer

form content, not just SMSes and MXit chats, and for enabling user participation. This has been demonstrated in the developing country of SA. Not all users will read the content, but a significant number will connect with it, as long as the experience offers some value for them (entertainment, education, etc), and is accessible and affordable enough.

Especially with the over-emphasis on tweet-sized information bytes and the advocacy of small information capsules, the m4Lit project was an incredible eye opener about how the digital natives are not only engaging with long forms of content but also producing it. Storytelling emerges as the most powerful trope of producing, distributing and consuming information and it showed that if the stories have resonances with the readers, the length or the format does not become a gating factor. This is a lesson that is particularly helpful to understand the trends of viral information, which do not necessarily have to be short.

Telling stories: The mechanics

In the domain of digital storytelling, especially with the m-novel, there are some points which need to be kept in mind. While these findings are specifically from a SA community, there are some key points which might help other projects that engage with digital natives and the way they tell stories of change. The mechanics of m-novels and how their audience responded to them are lessons to be learned when engaging with user-generated content and community mobilisation around storytelling.

a. Keep it real

An often heard comment from readers about why they enjoy reading the Yoza stories is that they are "real" and "about teenage life." The most popular stories are the ones about teens' issues, for example, 'Confessions of a Virgin Loser', or romances like the 'Sisterz' and 'The Awesomes' series, and adventures like the 'Kontax' series. Some of these stories are written in first person in an almost confessional, diary style. Given that so much socialising on MXit happens in this style already, it is not surprising that it is popular. I believe that m-novels in this style are well suited to the mobile medium.

Through comments and the "What do you want from Yoza" competition run in November 2010, Yoza readers have made it clear that they like to be entertained as well as educated. Stories about a wide range of issues, such as pregnancy, HIV/AIDS, xenophobia, drugs, career counselling, money, have been requested. Real life stories that inspire the youth have also been called for.

b. Mobile data, not SMS, worked for Yoza

A key decision for m-novels is the publishing technology for mobile phones – the two main options are via SMS, or via mobile data through GPRS.

The SMS-based solution has a wider reach (works on all phones), but has limited functionality in terms of length of message, interface and interaction, and is very expensive (an average Yoza chapter would span about 13 SMS messages). At R0.70 per SMS, the story would cost about R191.10 to read!

Using mobile data to deliver content, such as a GPRS-based solution means publishing a story on a mobisite or through a phone application such as MXit. The mobile data option provides much greater flexibility in functionality and interaction, and is much cheaper in SA (mobile data is priced differently from SMS by the network operators). On the downside, not all phones are GPRS-enabled, so the reach is not as wide as with SMS, and there is less data coverage in SA than there is for SMS.

However, given that many young people do have GPRS-enabled mobile phones in SA, and that number will increase over time, a mobile data solution (future-oriented) was chosen for the project.

It must be noted that the mobile landscape across Africa is highly uneven. Every country has a different

mobile data infrastructure, pricing and uptake. Yoza would most definitely not have worked in Mozambique simply because most mobile usage is almost entirely voice- and SMS-based. The decision of which technology to be used must be based on the country in question. We need to remember that the mobile is a powerful gateway to the internet and those capacities are only going to increase in the future. Hence, thinking about mobile-internet (SMS + data) structures is useful for larger mobilisation.

c. Made-for-mobile

m-Novels commissioned for Yoza follow a particular style[4]. Chapters range from 200 to 400 words long (although some are up to 700 words) and are written in a fast-paced and punchy style. Often our stories are serialised – published as a chapter a day, like a "soap opera on your phone". Made-for-mobile stories range from 4,000 to 12,000 words in length.

This style has certainly worked for Yoza. It is also clear that there is an implicit conversation happening between the story, the readers andsometimes the Yoza brand. We have created interesting and deliberately provocative scenarios in the stories to elicit reader opinion, and they have usually responded in full force.

The longer stories, like Shakespeare's plays and not made-for-mobile content, has also been read, but not as much as the made-for-mobile content. Many projects work with the idea that mere digitisation of content and making it available to the digital natives will increase the exposure and engagement with the content.

It is very clear from this experiment that both the Web and the mobile phones have specific requirements, aesthetic and writing styles. These need to be encouraged and replicated. Existing data needs to be rendered through these stylistic devices in order to make it accessible and viral on the portable computing networks.

d. Interactivity is king

Being able to comment, vote and enter in competitions is very important for some users. More interactive features, such as being able to choose different story endings, were recommended by users. Reader comments were a very important part of Yoza. The comments generally fall into the following categories: complimentary of m-novels; complimentary of the individual stories and format; comments related to the stories; suggestions; comments on comments; and general comments.

Even if users could only read the stories and vote on what they thought of them, or respond to chapters questions, it would still add much value to Yoza. The interactivity element also needs to be foregrounded because it shows that the users are not merely interested in broadcast-based information reception. With the digital natives, engagement is an act of co-creation. They look at themselves in conditions of collaborative authorship and what the users say is as important, if not more important than the original story. An emotional and personal investment of the user is what propels the story further.

e. Expect the pyramid of participation

In 2006, Jakob Nielsen pointed out that "all large-scale, multi-user communities and online social networks that rely on users to contribute content or build services share one property: most users don't participate very much. Often, they simply lurk in the background"[5]. In the pyramid of participation usually "90 percent of users are lurkers who never contribute, nine percent of users contribute a little, and one percent of users account for almost all the action."

Yoza has followed this trend, although only seven percent of all visitors to the site have ever left at least one comment. There certainly is a small group of hardcore fans, some leaving 50 or more comments per month. Nielsen notes that it is impossible to overcome participation inequality – it will always be there. He does, however, offer some useful (if a little

obvious now in 2011) suggestions on how to make it less unequal.

Marketing is critical, but needs to be complemented with other efforts. Publishing on mobile phones means competing against popular consumer brands that are also utilising the same medium, and it is challenging to "get noticed". Teens also have active social lives and many commitments during the day, which reduce the amount of time they could be reading m-novels.

Thus marketing is critical to draw attention to the m-novels and marketing on MXit has worked for Yoza (99 per cent of traffic to Yoza comes via MXit). Every time a Tradepost message or Splash Screen campaign has been run there was a spike in the number of subscribers. Although with every subsequent ad campaign that spike was lower. Approaches complementary to marketing are needed, for example, big PR drives or competitions.

f. Mobile is a content monster

Mobile, like the web, is a "content monster" that constantly needs to be fed. Yoza readers often complain that only reading one chapter per day is boring and that they want to read at least two chapters per day. Others have asked for the whole serialised story at once. When only one story has been published at a time, some readers have asked when the stories in other series will continue. The monster is insatiable! This is a good thing in the sense that readers are hungry for content, but it presents a challenge to us to constantly source good – not just any old – content.

It also means that you cannot just hope that the content will organically grow. There are volunteers and other infrastructure that need to be cultivated and grown so that the content can be constantly pushed into the community. Often this is expensive and requires a huge amount of effort to build relationships between other kinds of traditional media sources.

Digital natives might access information digitally, but they still look at traditional media sources for a large part of their information. Think of the mobile not as a way of producing new information but as a mashup of existing information which can be distributed in unusual learning environments.

g. The sustainability challenge

A key question is: How to make Yoza, or other m-novel sites, sustainable? After all, this particular project was donor-funded. Looking ahead for Yoza, and for other publishers using the Mobisite platform, monetisation could be achieved through commissioned content, sponsorship, advertising, or selling Yoza merchandise, e.g. wallpapers.

Sustainability is one of the key challenges with the m4Lit project: the necessary transition from a funded to a self-sustaining initiative. Self-sustaining could mean funding from other donors, sponsorship from companies or foundations interested in using Yoza for marketing and communications purposes. Charging users for content has been considered, but there is the risk of turning users away. Users do not have to pay to read the story – the content is free. The only cost to the user is for mobile data: each chapter cost from R0.05 to R0.09 (depending on user rates and mobile packages) – a price point sensitive to lower-income groups in SA.

Conclusion

The m4Lit project case-study is not trying to suggest that a similar project would work in exactly the same way in other contexts. In fact the intention of this case study was to show how, working with the local histories, cultural practices, economic and governmental factors, mobile and internet infrastructure, and community processes help shape and strengthen digital native networks. The project has shown that instead of focusing only on digital natives as an isolated category, it is good to map their relationships with existing networks and movements and see how models of sustainability can be built.

Storytelling remains one of the most potent tropes by which this can be achieved.

[1] MXit is a popular mobile Instant Messaging (IM) platform in SA and Kenya, the Yoza Cellphone Stories can be found in Tradepost>MXit Cares>mobiBooks

[2] www.facebook.com/yozacellphonestories

[3] See http://m4lit.wordpress.com/2011/01/13/what-does-number-of-reads-mean/ for an explanation of what "number of reads" means.

[4] See the Yoza Manifesto for more on this http://tinyurl.com/yozamanifesto

[5] http://www.useit.com/alertbox/participation_inequality.html

4.5 ALTER(NATIVES) IN A VIOLENT CONTEXT

by
Diego Gómez
CASE STUDY

This is the story of Hiperbarrio[1] a small Colombian initiative that started in 2008 with the desire to try and empower vulnerable communities of the city of Medellin and generate change by something as simple as telling their stories to the world.

In Medellin, Columbia, violence is one of the major constraints for self-expression. Since the inception of Hiperbarrio we have seen that when the youth are given the opportunity to use digital technology, they adapt themselves to this new context and find creative, careful, but still moving ways to tell their stories and spread their ideas. All this, without putting their personal safety at risk.

Through my experience with Hiperbarrio[2], I want to argue that in this Colombian context, vulnerable communities relate to technology with certain nuances and limitations that are not reflected in the digital natives' concept of Marc Prensky.

A tough world for strong youngsters

Andrés was born in one of the hardest neighbourhoods of Medellin, Colombia. Comuna 13 is in the steep hills of the city and is known for the presence of various urban wings of guerrilla and paramilitary groups. "You almost had no option," says Andrés[3], "Either you were in the guerrilla gangs or in the paramilitary groups or you were in the middle of gunfire. What could I do? I decided to be part of the war."

Andrés is one of the Hiperbarrio youngsters who decided to turn his live around and exchange his rifle for a computer; bullets for words. Andrés is incredibly hyperactive. He is always moving, watching videos, reading news, taking photos, planning meets and answering the phone. When you talk to him, you begin to understand why he was part of the war. He just couldn't stand still and do nothing in the midst of it all.

Since then the war has changed. Through a military intervention, the government ousted the paramilitary and guerrilla groups and small gangs have taken control of the city. They have created what are called 'invisible borders' within the city, making it impossible for people from one neighbourhood to go to the other. In this scenario, Andrés (and many others like him) is now negotiating between freedom and constraint. "For me, I know how far I can go," he says, "both in online and offline worlds."

Hiperbarrio: Building digital experiences

The Hiperbarrio experience was initiated in 2008 by Alvaro Ramirez[4] , Mauricio Múnera and I (Diego Gómez)[5] . It was our ambition to help communities use technologies as a means of self-expression and as a way to gain visibility in the public realm. Our first workshop, Videobarrio, in the neighbourhood of La Loma was developed together with an artistic group called Alma de Antioquia, a vibrant collective of people dedicated to create theatre performances and musical shows for community's festivals.

Around the same time another group in La Loma got interested in the initiative. They started a literary group called Convergentes[6] , focused on retrieving the historical memories of their neighbourhood. Gabriel Vanegas, the librarian at the community library, who led the literacy group, played an important role in the establishment of Hiperbarrio.

Videobarrio and Convergentes were the first steps. After the workshops, Hiperbarrio got support from Rising Voices[7] , an organisation that gives micro-grants for initiatives around the world that aim to promote digital media and citizen journalism. The mentor programme of Rising Voices helped the project to move into the next phase and connected the project to a global community. Technology and digital media were the opportunities to gather people in a community and generate movement towards a common goal.

At Hiperbarrio we realised that enabling the youth to navigate the digital world can lead to change on the ground. The Convergentes group managed to build a new house for an old man[8] , their neighbour, who was living in a house that was falling apart. He was extremely poor and couldn't afford to do it himself. The community used blogs, videos and other technological tools to get the neighbours and other actors involved. Brick by brick, this group of youngsters, built the old man's house.

There was also a downside to the connected world. The youngsters were blogging about their immediate environment--the invisible war in Medellin, drugs and the lack of government presence in La Loma. Their online presence exposed them to people that they did not know and who did not like what they wrote.

Blogs, the stories that change lives and stop violence

Andrés' story does not stand alone. Within the Hiperbarrio network we saw other youngsters experience significant change in their lives as a result of their personal blogs. Another example that comes to my mind is Catalina: A young woman who was confronted with constant social conflict while no one respected her rather different opinions. Catalina was very shy, always at home watching TV or reading a book. This was her way of hiding from the outside world.

Catalina has a condition called Turner Syndrome which doesn't allow a girl to develop as a physically mature woman. When she began to attend Hiperbarrio sessions, she slowly started to open up in her blog. One day she decided to tell the group everything. At first she was fearful of what the

group would say, but it was also an act of freedom. The blog enabled her to act differently and go through a process in which her shyness completely disappeared because she felt accepted.

It is not my goal to delve into the psychology of the change that happened in her. I just want to emphasise on how the use of digital media tools propitiate personal change. More importantly, how blogging made her deal with the subtle violence of social exclusion. Catalina wrote some posts about the Turner Syndrome which were read by others with the same syndrome in Latin America. Through connecting with them, she became confident and began to write on other topics as well. Soon, she transformed herself into a great leader of the Convergentes group. She won[9] the Talented Woman Contest, which was a major event in the city and designed to replace popular beauty contests. Catalina continues to write about things that happen in her neighbourhood[10] . Hidden in her poems it is possible to find beautiful reflections about being different in a world where she knows it is difficult to be accepted.

For Andrés, Catalina and other Hiperbarrio participants, blogs are a way to get connected and have conversations between themselves and their local communities. In fact, one of the most significant changes that has taken place through these blogs is a renewed sense of community. This has resulted in an awareness of their environment, who lacks what, and how lives around them can be improved.

Awareness of their context also makes it is inevitable for them to denounce violence that they witness all around them. Many posts tackle these issues. Yet writing about these topics is not without its risks. To save themselves from a backlash of sorts, the participants regularly encode their opinion. For example, a poem that talks about roses has a reference to a possible intervention from armed forces. An artistic black-and-white photo of a dove asks for a ceasefire between gangs. Youngsters in a violent world are smart and have developed an instinct to say just enough to denounce violence but not enough to expose themselves. Their messages are a form of subtle action that little by little gets embedded in the collective consciousness of their community.

Social networks: Places to be a friend, places to be careful

In Medellin, the current war is between gangs. These gangs use word-of-mouth or written pamphlets to threaten each other. Recently, there have been cases where social networks have been used to threaten other gangs through the posting of images of weapons, circulating lists of people who are threatened or discussing on who should be attacked next. These cases show that the war has started to come into the digital realm as well.

At the beginning of the project, the Hiperbarrio participants were more careful about the use of their blogs than their social networks. In their opinion, blogs could be read by anyone and their Facebook Wall was only open to their friends. This all changed when gang-related individuals started to request virtual friendships with some of the Hiperbarrio members. Perhaps this was done without any interest to involve them in their activities. Still being on their friend list made you an actor in the (virtual) war.

These events transformed the internet from a space that was related to the library and to cultural activities to a space that reflected the war happening in the offline world. It made it necessary for Hiperbarrio members to pay attention to some things that were not very important before: The use of privacy settings, blocking pictures, debugging buddy list and in cases of guys who had some history in the conflict, finally closing the account or changing your real name for a pseudonym.

In these very encouraging times where proponents of new technologies promote and promulgate the use of open networks where you can talk about what you want and to whomever you want to talk to, where there is an open flow of knowledge, we cannot ignore communities like these. The way in which these bloggers are digital natives is affected by their real

environment. They are posed with challenges other communities usually don't have to face.

Libraries, an oasis in the desert

From the online opportunities and challenges to the offline again. In Latin America, libraries are more than libraries; they are vibrant places that enable community activities. Many young people can be found here as libraries are common points of internet access. Therefore, libraries became the point of entry for Hiperbarrio. Our model raises the digital appropriation for citizen empowerment through social established groups that have some strength in their communities and in Latin America it is the libraries where you would normally find these types of groups.

Libraries allow something very important: knowledge sharing. They become an articulating point, a connecting shaft of knowledge. And in this sense, a key figure is the librarian. In the digital age the librarian continues to play a similar role as the pre-digital era. Previously, the librarian was responsible for instructing users on how they could find information about a particular issue, in which book or what magazine. Today, the librarian must be able to indicate or guide the search for information on the web. In addition the librarian also connects people. Hiperbarrio´s participants understand that knowledge is not only in books. Social networks and digital media can now make a dream become reality: To facilitate access to people with specific knowledge and remove barriers of time and place. Our digital natives are beginning to understand that the network is an unsurpassed opportunity to learn.

An important point to consider is the fact that libraries in our neighbourhoods have certain immunity from the ravages of violence. They are like an oasis in a desert of conflicts and from the perspective of the armed groups they are still a place to respect and hence avoid. Of course this does not guarantee anything in a country where massacres have taken place in sacred places like churches. But, it does provide a little security and some freedom for young people to meet and speak openly about what is happening in their neighbourhood.

In fact, the same library of La loma, the neighbourhood where Convergentes work, was once ransacked after Hiperbarrio won the Ars Electronica prize in Austria. The prize was a statue of the Winged Victory with wooden interior and a layer of gold. Obviously this was a brilliant reason for thieves to enter in the night, damage the roof of the library and steal the statue. Not only that, they took the librarian, Gabriel's, laptop and some flash drives that were around. This robbery was particularly painful for the person who had won this award. The attack was very symbolic. It was a direct attack on the symbol of a great achievement of the community. The statue made an appearance some days later discarded in a corner. None knows why.

Putting it all together

Blogs, social networks, digital media or libraries- Hiperbarrio is just an example of the importance of properly interpreting the context in which young people in Global South live. Of course there are many threats, but there are also many opportunities to create experiences that can only happen in this part of the world. Technology should address these needs. Platforms must be designed in a way that ensures their functionality in these contexts. We cannot assume that young people around the world are faced with the same challenges, but there are definitely commonalities between them: The immense desire to learn and change their reality if necessary, no matter how difficult or how dangerous.

[1] http://hiperbarrio.org

[2] According to Marc Prensky, a digital natives is someone who is born after 1980

[3] Name changed for to security reasons.

[4] Alvaro Ramirez is a Colombian professor at Bergen

University in Norway. His Spanish blog: http://otexto.b.uib.no/

[5] Alvaro's former research assistants at EAFIT University´s Informatics and Education Research group

[6] http://convergentes.hiperbarrio.org [es]

[7] http://rising.globalvoicesonline.org or see Eddie Avila's article in Book 4, To Connect: "Breaking taboos: Life is more than a Walt Disney movie"

[8] The story of filthy Suso in Rising Voices Online http://rising.globalvoicesonline.org/blog/2007/12/20/suso-gratitude-and-human-dignity/

[9] http://rising.globalvoicesonline.org/blog/2009/08/11/catalina-restrepo-awarded-miss-talent-medellin-award/

[10] See her writing at http://catirestrepo.wordpress.com/

4.6 COMBATING CHILD ABUSE THROUGH YOUTUBE: **STUKYOUTOO CHALLENGES POWER RELATIONS**

by
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ESSAY

Summary

This is a story about Dutch and Flemish young people who produce videos about child abuse and upload these videos onto YouTube. They call themselves STUKYOUTOO. The videos have been watched over 1,40,000 times during the last two years. The aim of these young people is to break the taboo of child abuse and they use YouTube to achieve that. In doing so, they have managed to shift power balances. STUKYOUTOO has not been designed by a professional organisation, but consists of a youth movement and springs from intrinsical motivation. Youngsters and adults involved in STUKYOUTOO explain their commitment and experience with YouTube as a means for change. This essay deals with opportunities, risks and dilemmas felt in the project.

Introduction

When scanning YouTube, you'll find an innumerable amount of videos made by youngsters, voicing their hopes, dreams, problems and solutions[1]. An extensive scan of YouTube shows a variety of videos, with different content, countries, aims and messages. Youngsters in the USA reach out to LGBT youth, in Kenya youngsters report about the Millennium Development Goals whereas Christchurch youth skate in cracks caused by a major earthquake. You'll encounter youth from Ecuador rapping against violence, Vietnamese children showing the effects of climate change on their village and Middle East youngsters playing a major part in the political revolutions by posting their videos on Facebook and YouTube[2].

This article sheds a light on a Dutch-Flemish youth movement that makes use of YouTube to air self-made videos about child abuse. They call themselves STUKYOUTOO. STUKYOUTOO is interesting for two reasons. It appears to have characteristics of a Civic Driven Change (CDC) process. CDC is an international discourse that focuses on how change comes about[3]. CDC states that change is realised by civic actors and that not too much can be expected from states, the market and/or civil society. Individuals, groups of people, unexpected coalitions with an intrinsical motivation (drive) realise change, often in a non-linear and unplanned manner. STUKYOUTOO intends to alter power balances. In practice, many projects operate from drawing table plans, crystallised strategies and fixed target numbers; they have difficulty in finding participants and hardly ever address the fundamental power imbalances that underlie injustices[4]. CDC types of change processes work quite the opposite.

The second reason for investigating STUKYOUTOO is its strategic use of YouTube. YouTube has a tremendous reach, has a low technical threshold and thrives on user-generated content. These qualities seem natural allies for CDC-type processes. But speaking out on YouTube might also put people in danger: They become visible whilst they take a stance. This is extra relevant when it concerns minors. The STUKYOUTOO combination of social change, CDC-type process and the strategic use of YouTube connected well to the existing exploration of 'Digital Natives with a Cause?', the HIVOS Knowledge Program.

This article has grown organically: searching, reading, thinking, discussing, surfing, listening and writing. It did not grow from a strictly-bounded research question, but grew out of an in depth curiosity into two interwoven issues: What are the core features of a youth movement against child abuse, and what chances, risks and dilemmas are encountered when putting YouTube to work? In the next two paragraphs the main stakeholders will be given the floor. First of all youngsters who are at the core of the movement: Shehab Saddal, Farah Fahad, Dylan van der Heij and Sunita Biharie[5]. Subsequently, three grown-up stakeholders share their take on the movement: Har Tortike (director), Marjon Donkers (previously working for the Dutch foundation Kinderpostzegels, Netherlands) and Myra ter Meulen (independent consultant on child abuse). In the last paragraph overarching themes will be analysed.

Farah, Dylan, Shehab and Sunita

Come a bit closer; listen in on a conversation in a cafe in Amsterdam. Farah (22), Dylan (19), Sunita (31) and Shehab (21) are seated around an old wooden table. It's early in the morning. I (37) order a coffee, they drink coke and water and together we discuss STUKYOUTOO. Farah has started her internship just this week, she studies media production. Dylan has been the 'behind the scenes' guy since the start of STUKYOUTOO, organising the website, lighting, film, and sound. Shehab floated the idea of doing community theatre about child abuse in 2005 with a group of youngsters in Amsterdam-West[6]. The theatre play STUK was conceived, building upon the concept of Forum Theatre of Paulo Freire and Augusto Boal. Har Tortike and Jona Rens served as directors. The main concept of Forum Theatre is:

let's address the issues, let's talk about it. In the years that followed, STUK theatre became a huge success in the Dutch and Flemish youth. Many showings and workshops were organised at schools and youth-care facilities aimed at youngsters. Professional organisations started inviting STUK to perform, e.g. local government policymakers, youth care, police and medical staff. Child abuse became an important topic on the agenda, initiated and driven by youngsters themselves[7].

Motivation and effects

Sunita starts to glow when she takes me back to the early days of STUK, sitting contently amidst stacks of boxes in her new home in Apeldoorn.[8] "We had such a drive. We'll do things differently; we'll break through the taboo. Child abuse is completely wrong! So we, a rebel group of youngsters, we'll make theatre, we'll enter into the debate, we will confront people. We were driven by our passion. We never envisioned STUK to become this big. We weren't doing this for ourselves, you know, we were acting because we had an ideal."

Shehab pointed out: "It was our vision: this is what we want to achieve."

"It was a form of therapy for me," explains Sunita when I ask her why she became active against child abuse. "When you climb a certain mountain with great difficulty, you learn what you encounter on the way. You learn how things are done and what obstacles you face. My past was not in vain. Child abuse is a taboo. Victims are looked upon differently and are treated differently. Quite often they only receive attention when they become a hazard for the society. With my knowledge, with my experience, I can pave the road for others, I can open eyes."

People were touched during the theater show and discussions--both the actors and the public. Shehab recalls: "There was so much crying going on, by everyone. We were all wimps, that too in public. People would come up to us crying."

Dylan affirms: "They just thought it was beautiful, they were moved. Sometimes people would even leave

In the scouting mission on *Digital Natives with a Cause?*, Nishant Shah and Sunil Abraham found that digital natives worldwide are characterised as an 18-year-old, white American male. They argue that this perception does not give any insights into the role that young people, who are growing up with digital technology, play in today's fast changing geopolitics landscape. This digital natives' construction especially does not relate to digital natives from developing and emerging countries. The aim of the Knowledge Programme was to give digital natives from the South a voice and move beyond the glorification or demonisation of high profile digital native activities in order to understand what is really changing.

Ivet Pieper's article on Dutch digital natives, who are active to combat child abuse, shows that the white American male not only overshadows our understanding of digital natives from the South, it also neglects to understand young people in countries like the Netherlands and Belgium. This article shows that even though the context and background are different, digital natives around the globe face many similar challenges, problems and concerns. Youth in developed countries are also fighting stereotypes and use technology to express themselves and alter existing power relations

The way in which digital natives are engaging in, or circumventing existing power relations is new. Maesy Angelina (Book 2, To Think) argues in her article on an 'Alternative Approach to Social Change' that what makes digital native's activity different from traditional social action is that it doesn't identify an opponent. They are trying to change mindsets. Their approach to social change is in the creation of personal change at individual level, by engaging with others in their network. To gain a better understanding of how these new processes of change work, new lenses need to be created as existing frameworks are too limited to find new narratives of change and processes of personal transformation. Existing frameworks limit our understanding of what is happening in this new geopolitical (digital) landscape. One new lens

the hall during the show." STUK always arranged support during the play.

"Crying makes us stronger, really," agrees Shehab. Not only has Shehab become stronger, he's also become more perceptive to his own surroundings with regards to child abuse. Laughingly he points his fingers in the air just above his ears, as though his fingers are antennas. "Nowadays, when I see a father hitting his child, I have the urge to step in and say: this is completely unacceptable. Come to STUK, you need to know how to raise your child. My head is filled with antennas doing blip blip."

Shehab spins his fingers above his head. Shehab also shares his frequent encounter with youngsters who turn to him for help. "I've called Har Tortike, the director, many times, explaining that a desperate girl, who has run away from home, is calling me. What can I do? We have been turned to for help many times, not only me, also Ahmed and Abdoela. We discuss amongst ourselves what to do. Are we the ones to help these kids, because of what we do know?"

Sunita shares her experiences: "I don't consider myself a social worker. All I do is provide a sympathetic ear. I think along with the girl in need and I show my understanding, you know. I understand where you're coming from, I'm sorry, I feel for you. I think you are strong. Something like that, complimenting such a girl. I say what I would have appreciated to hear when I was in that position."[9]

What is the strength of the movement?

"As a group, we ate together, laughed together and cried together," recalls Sunita. I ask her what contributed toward strengths of the movement. Sunita suggests it has to do with Har Tortike, the director. 'Har is an extraordinary, pleasant man. He's the father of the pack; you can always turn to him with your story. He'll talk to you on your level, not in an old or pedantic tone. It's like, he's one of us. He's human, focused towards you and towards the emotion of those in the group."

Shehab also points towards the personal motivation that sits at the centre of the movement: "Take a look at yourself, and then just do it. Stay close to yourself. We were just like a bunch of hippies at the time."

Dylan adds another perspective; he points at the focussed message combined with a large operating space. "We broadcast a focussed message, but we ourselves are not so focussed. We are very creative and playful. What strikes me is that we teach professional organisations about child abuse. These organisations have strict rules and regulations. We don't have any regulations and we are able to teach them. They can learn from our organisational setup."

What does YouTube have to offer?

In 2009 STUK sprung to YouTube, naming itself STUKYOUTOO. Weeks to end youngsters were busy making their own videos, which were uploaded onto YouTube and linked to their own site. "These videos state: We are not piteous and we are not different. The videos invite you to think," tells Sunita. In 2004 she made a rap video clip for a television show about her personal experiences with child abuse. This clip was posted some two years ago on YouTube and since then has been watched 3,422 times. Sunita founded and co-hosts a Hyves[10] page about child abuse with 1,505 community members.

The YouTube channel of STUKYOUTOO hosts 87 videos from the Netherlands and Flanders. The videos link to the website of STUK. This is an interactive website. Youngsters write about their STUK projects, post tips and links for peers. The videos have been watched over 1.40,000 times.

Shehab and Dylan share their take on why the videos are that popular. "The strength of the videos is that it's young people themselves, young people who have lived through these experiences; young people speaking out in public, not anonymously on the internet. Can you imagine what that entails? On the internet? One of us might travel to China and out of the blue some Chinese might say: "Wǒ kàn dào nǐ zài YouTube." ("I saw you on YouTube!") Shehab laugh and rolls over the table.

Dylan puts it as follows: "Internet is a public space, and because we want to get child abuse out of its taboo, we need a public space. We want to be able to discuss child abuse openly. That was our first goal when we started in 2005."

The videos on YouTube are interconnected with the theatre, the groups of youngsters, and the director. The approach as well as the theme is comparable. YouTube however does open up a brand new world.

Farah argues: "Media does not determine how we think, but what we think about. Now it's the other way round. We broadcast about certain topics, send them into the world. So we tilt the power."

Not only does YouTube allow the youngsters to get more leverage with respect to traditional media, it also allows them to circumvent the power of the traditional institutions. "In earlier days we would have had to get past youth care institutions," explains Sunita. "They would have had to agree with us, find it sensible that we discuss our agenda with their youngsters. That all has become obsolete now. YouTube has enabled us to broadcast our message towards all youngsters: listen, you are OK, but what has happened to you is not OK. We have become more powerful, we have gained space to send out our message."

YouTube also enables people to watch videos on their own terms. Dylan explains: "You can watch a video, close it down and subsequently play an online game. That's completely OK. YouTube takes our videos into the normal home setting."

Shehab sketches his take on surfing: "One might be relaxed or emotional or up for something fun. You open your laptop and search for different subjects, a holiday for instance when you want to relax. But sometimes you feel shitty and then you'll visit websites on how to commit suicide. Possibly you've just been hit and then you might search on child abuse. And then you'll find us."

From Sunita's perspective internet brings additional

through which one can understand digital natives' activity is through the civic action framework in which Pieper has chosen to look at STUKYOUTOO. CDC is a new framework that places citizen at the centre, in order to understand certain development processes.

The lens of CDC assumes that citizens drive change, they form unexpected coalitions to tackle problems that exists in their immediate environment. Through their actions they realign existing power relations. STUKYOUTOO breaks away from the notion that children who suffer from child abuse are only victims. We do not want to argue that child abuse is not a very serious issue. However the way in which societies construct child abuse frames the child as a helpless soul who needs to be saved. When child abuse is recognised governmental agencies take over for the sake of the child. STUKYOUTOO frames children in a different way. They are seen as actors in their own environment. The digital natives who are active in STUKYOUTOO are aware of what is happening and have the ability and courage to speak out and become an agent of their own and other children's change.

Shafika Isaacs (Book 1, To Be), in her deliberations on policy actors and agencies working with young people and technology, provides a very strong critique of how the young are always produced only as victims who need to be helped. She looks at how international agencies, in their quest for providing safe and secure environments for children online, often miss out on the fact that the young are not only more embedded in these practices but also have opinions and ideas on how to build conditions of safety for themselves. Not integrating these practices and opinions in larger policy discussions, often produce a great dissonance between the imagination and practice of youth led change.

Anat Ben-David (Book 1, To Be) in the article on "Digital natives and the return of the local cause" argues that if we want to understand digital native practices we have to move beyond the on- and offline discussion. The only way to do this is to refocus our attention from a digital native as an actor to effect of

added value: "Before internet was big, you'd have to attend therapy groups. You'd have to sign up for special therapy groups. Now you can contact each other, on your own terms, without professionals around, without interference . That makes you feel a whole lot more normal. If the only way to contact peers is through therapy groups, you'll never perceive yourself as normal. Not everyone is there, so there must be something wrong with you. Whilst everyone is there on the internet."

Being visible as an individual

Publicly posting your personal abuse story on the internet, open and recognisable for anyone to see, that's not something everybody does. "Did you hesitate, doubt whether you should proceed?" I ask Sunita. "To be honest, I did realise that this could become dangerous for me. In the Indian culture, honour-related revenge and violence is known. But I told myself: Don't let others tell you what you should or should not do. I've had to reckon with my caretakers, my family and my culture for all of my life."

"I do receive lots of reactions in response to my video on YouTube; Har sends them through to me. For example the response: every word is true. That kicked in." Sunita – laughingly - shares that she has received many compliments from youngsters about her rap-skills. But immediately she flips back in a serious tone. "For quite some time I exchanged emails with a 15-year-old girl, still at her parents' place and still being abused. I have asked her: what do you want, what do you dare?"

What about negative reactions? Sunita refers back to 2004. That was the year in which the video clip of her rap was aired repeatedly on national television. "I'd pick up my son from day care, and a large group of children would gather around me. Or we'd do groceries, and out of the blue a man would start talking to me about child abuse. My son did not understand why that happened. At one moment in time I was completely fed up with it all. I kept my son at home for two weeks. But my boyfriend told me to get out. I became more famous than I was up for. It is timeless with all these repetitions of television programs, you see?" We discuss the dilemma of wanting to get child abuse out in the open, out of the taboo. "But you don't want yourself becoming a sensation. And that's difficult with people the way they are." Sunita was uncomfortable with the situation for several months, after which the media's attention shifted away. She did bring her son to the STUK theatre to a discussion she was hosting herself. "My son took the microphone in his little hands and stated: Child abuse is wrong, you are not allowed to hit little children. He is such a brave kid. Then I realised it wasn't harmful to him."

Future

One lakh, forty thousand hits are not enough for the STUK youth. Shehab: "Our videos are being watched often, but we are 16 million Dutch people. Only 1,40,000 have watched a video of STUKYOUTOO. Every year 1,50,000 Dutch children are being abused. One child dies every week as a result of child abuse by parents in the Netherlands. So yeah, I believe those numbers are not nearly as high as they should be. I feel we should step it up and optimise these numbers. Just think about Justin Bieber and the fact that his recent video has been watched over 10 million times in the Netherlands. That's what I'm talking about. Those numbers are more like it."

Har, Myra and Marjon

At STUK, grownups do play a role, even though they hardly feature in the stories of the youngsters. Sunita explained the pivotal role of Har Tortike (director), and also Myra Termeulen (consultant, child abuse) and Marjon Donkers (previously Kinderpostzegels Nederland).[11] Come along; join in for a conversation about collaboration, trust, risks and dilemmas. The late afternoon sun lights the sturdy kitchen table. Some tea, coffee and cookies add to the friendly but dedicated atmosphere. It's a conversation between three people who know each other quite well, have spoken so many times about this project; so well that they can finish each other's sentences. To break through this pattern, I've invited all three to tell a 'story of change', a

story that sheds light on the change that they have perceived as a result of STUKYOUTOO. Join in on the story of change that Marjon shared, and the discussion that followed[12].

Trust as a building block in financing

Marjon recounts the day she first met Har. "My first encounter with STUK was through the stories of Har himself, at the restaurant of Platform One, Amsterdam Central Station. Har told me about his personal background, his own motivation. Then he shared the stories of the children involved, Shehab and others. He did not present a project outline, there was no clear agenda for our meeting, no specific purpose other than to explore whether it could be interesting to do something. The approach and vision appealed to us. After our meeting, we entered into an email conversation. Is this fundable? It was such a completely different way of looking at projects, of funding change. Hardly anything was trusted to paper, we formulated results in the broadest of strokes. We did agree that the aim was to post videos on YouTube. This idea had originated from Myra."

Myra clarifies her role: "Kinderpostzegels had requested me to search for initiatives combating child abuse involving migrant youth. I suggested they post videos on YouTube. That one sentence has caused the biggest effect in my life."

Marjon concurs: "It was a one million dollar sentence."
Har turns to Marjon and voices his appreciation: "I'm delighted that you share this story. Kinderpostzegels trusted STUK; you had faith in what we did."
Marjon: "That's right, it was not about money, and the amount was not that big. But the innovativeness for us was in the funding process. The collaboration with Har was pleasant. Har directed the videos and Myra provided back-up services and coaching for Har. We trusted the adults and the youngsters. I remember thinking: these people know what they are doing; they know best, we better leave them completely free. For us this resulted in a new approach to funding, relying more on the 'beautiful blue eyes'. This has triggered a change in our thinking with regard to all projects."

the immediate environment in which digital natives reside. It is the context of a person that constructs their digital activities. We should not look at the dot cause but look at the dot cause dot place.

We encountered Ritika Arya in the workshop in Taipei. Arya is from Mumbai and she started an NGO when she was 19 years of age, in order to work with underprivileged children in her city. Instead of doing the traditional practices of starting literacy programmes or schools, Ritika and her friends saw their role more as facilitators of access rather than individual instructors. They started mobilising huge communities of young people in the city, to spend time with the children in these communities, imparting to them literacy and vocational skills through play groups, workshops, discussions and exercises, thus introducing a radical pedagogy. As the programme grows, we see that the young who were the beneficiaries of the early initiatives also became stakeholders and agents of change, passing on their knowledge to others in their families and communities. This ability to produce change-makers rather than beneficiaries of change, is something that we need to recognise.

The idea that a Chinese person would walk up to them and say: "I saw you on Youtube" does not only excite Shehad and Dylan. If you think about it, this is not completely unimaginable. This idea just skims the top of the iceberg. It also illuminates two other aspects that are worth mentioning. First questions who the actors that you engage with are, have they changed and secondly it sheds light on how information travels.

Who are the actors that you engage with to contribute to social change? In the more traditional structures it would be an NGO around the corner, the government or maybe a social movement. For the younger generation this has changed. Traditional actors are no longer their first point of entry, either because they do not occupy the same space or through a deliberate action of wanting to be disassociated. Digital natives might express themselves through a blog or connect to like minded individuals on Facebook. Their cause

Har is also curious to learn from Marjon at what moment in time Kinderpostzegels felt it had made the right choice in providing funding for this movement. "Way before I even saw the videos I knew it was worth it. The process was valuable in its own right. The vision, the approach, the fact that the youngsters could so completely do their own thing, and the fact that they could enhance each other's capacities and make each other stronger."

Internet, chances and dilemmas

At the start of STUKYOUTOO, use of internet in social change processes was quite unknown at Kinderpostzegels, admits Marjon. "We just did not know what the internet could do. Our experience in that field was limited, what it is, does and realises. We did acknowledge the emergence of this virtual world, one where change and learning takes place. Once we became aware that the youngsters were forwarding the links to each other, we realised the potential for distribution. Through STUKYOUTOO we learnt about digital social change, its tremendous scope and its international character. It has lots of potential, also in different languages. Internet is such a powerful tool. No, we as a donor have never considered commissioning effect study. For us the effect is so visible."

One of the major dilemmas in posting personal videos on YouTube is around implications for the individual. Har explains his point of view and the way he brings this into practice. 'I always discuss this with youngsters. I'd say: posting your video has consequences. Are you aware of what that entails? Are you up for that? An example: Tatyana in her video calls her childhood home a 'black hole filled with violence'.[13] Multiple times we discussed this. She stated that this is what she wanted to say, that this is the way she wanted it. Later on she showed the video to her mother, and the relationship between daughter and mother has improved since then. The youngster ultimately bears the final responsibility. Another example: One of the videos was made by a girl recounting the sexual abuse that was inflicted on her by her brother. In the video she remains anonymous, but she did use her own first name and voice. After some 4,000 hits someone recognised her[14]. As a result she requested that we change her name into an alias. And of course that was done.'

Har is prone to explain that posting these types of videos on YouTube is an act of strength. "I am absolutely certain that anyone who posts a video through STUKYOUTOO feels pride in it. Making the video will remain one of the important things they have accomplished in life. They will never regret it because it will remain an act of strength, to support others.'

"The presentation in the videos is not piteous, nor is it anonymous. It's presented as a fait accompli, not to fuss about, but to discuss and to take action upon. It's far worse to appear on YouTube with a video of you too drunk to walk straight in Paris," states Myra.

Future

Our afternoon discussion reaches its final stage. The future is on the menu. "It's up to us now to make the right decisions about the scale of STUK. We started out small. Nowadays so many STUK projects and plans have emerged; we keep on being invited for workshops. How do we keep the purity and strengths of the small scale? STUK must never turn into an NGO with a board, an office and grants that make us dependent. STUK must continue to be small revolutionary cells. STUK must remain in the ownership of youngsters who want to speak up: Child abuse is not normal and we must address this."

How do you catch a cloud and pin it down?

The singing nuns in the movie *The Sound of Music* define creativity (Maria) as a cloud: it cannot be pinned down *(How do you catch a cloud and pin it down?)* I kept on humming the tune during the conversations with Shehab, Dylan, Sunita, Farah, Har, Myra and Marjon and during the writing process. My search into STUKYOUTOO sprung from two fields of interest: what entails a Civic Driven movement that aims to combat child abuse, and what qualities, chances and

risks does YouTube bring into the equation. Several observations come to mind.

Intrinsical Motivation (drive)

STUKYOUTOO is defined by an intrinsical motivation (drive) to liberate child abuse from the taboo. The motivation is found in (1) the commitment that the people involved have for the cause, (2) the effort they put into it, and (3) the strategy they deploy. The interviewees portray a strong commitment to the cause, dating back to their own personal childhood experiences, being confronted with abuse of friends, growing into the cause, and/or because they operate with a professional mission. They want to help children and youth and they want to improve the youth care system. They are prepared to put effort in the activities, e.g. by talking straight into the camera and becoming a 'public' person, by engaging in discussions with strangers, by assisting youths to break free from abuse situations, by daring to act differently than what is expected, by funding the uncertain. At the core stands the crystal clear mission: break the taboo of child abuse and open up debate. Contrary to the clear mission, the strategy is flexible. Whatever works goes, there is no pre-designed strategy translated into an input, output, outcome matrix, no logical framework. The youngsters are the primary owners of the strategy; they are being coached by adults. All three traits of intrinsical motivation are apparent in STUKYOUTOO (commitment, effort and strategy). The combination of a crystal clear mission and a flexible strategy seems to be a major contributor to its success.

Roles and responsibilities

There seems to be hardly any discussion about the way roles and responsibilities take shape. For me the word 'unorthodox' keeps springing to mind, as in not according to traditional beliefs and customs. The unorthodox youngsters own the movement; they break free from traditional norms and walk new roads by building them in their movement to combat child abuse. Har is the unorthodox father of the movement that facilitates a process, juggling between protection and participation. Examples of can be supported by an individual on the other side of the world, who speaks a different language. One more thing that has become clear in this Knowledge Programme is that the younger generation is approaching relationships, cooperation, networking and structures from a different perspective.

The fact that a Chinese person could say something about a Dutch action implies that information is changing rapidly. In the *To Be* book of the *Digital (Alter)Natives* series we are making the case that digital natives activities are located in their context and geography. Still we should not forget about the information environment in which they live. The way in which information travels has changed significantly and that has influenced the way people connect. Ben-David and Esther Weltevrede in "Digital methods to study digital natives with a cause?" (Book 2, To Think) talk about how digital natives methodology can be applied to understand how information travels.

The most dramatic changes that have happened with young peoples' integration of technology in their everyday life is how cultural practices took a political turn. What was earlier relegated to the realm of the popular and entertainment, has actually become a site of crucial negotiations and contestations. The emergence of User Generated Content which does not depend on traditional knowledge structures, but allows them to create their own infrastructure and support system has enabled them to create their own references and processes of expression and coping, without being judged or labelled by larger external communities. This creation of safe spaces, of spaces which help to form bonds of trust, affection and belonging, are the basis of collective action and change.

One of the key debates that keeps coming back when discussing the topic of digital natives is the issue of trust. If you have not met a person in person and you start talking to each other online how are you able to trust them. All your points of reference have been taken away. In our workshop in Asia, Africa and Latin

that can be found in his screening of reactions before sharing them with the youngsters, and bringing into practice his viewpoint that the youngsters are the ones that are in the end responsible for the content of their videos. In addition, the unorthodox donor follows a gut feeling of trustworthiness, and finances on the basis of 'beautiful blue eyes'. Further research could dive into the specific workings of these roles and responsibilities, zooming in on frictions, the boundaries, power relations and sustainability.

YouTube and agency

STUKYOUTOO videos have been watched over 140,000 times in the last two years. It is interesting to analyse this from the perspective of agency. Agency has to do with the intention to realise change, to exert influence. A youngster can act and exert influence during the video-making process, but what about once the video has been uploaded? Then it's out there, for the viewer to watch, to think about, to form an opinion about and to act upon (or not). An important feature of STUKYOUTOO appears to be that the videos are part of a broader approach, using theatre, workshops, discussions and confrontations. It's in that interaction that the youngsters can shape their agency, influence the process and exert influence. Responses to the individual videos can at times be difficult to manage for the youngsters. The story of Sunita clearly shows this. But the overall experience is that YouTube is too powerful a tool to miss out on, in their aim to tip power balances in the battle against child abuse.

[1] I would like to express my gratitude towards the youngsters and adults who are involved with STUKYOUTOO and who trusted me with their experiences.

[2] In reference to a broad selection of participatory videos made by children and youth see: www.youtube.com/user/ivetpieper.

[3] For more information about Civic Driven Change refer www.civicdrivenchange.org

[4] See Hart, J. (2008). "Children's participation and international development: attending to the political". In: *International Journal of Children's Rights* 16, pp. 407-418.

[5] In the timeframe that was available for this case study, it was possible to interview four youngsters, three of whom had been involved with STUK from the start. STUK has had a much larger scope. From November 2008 till December 2010 some 224 youngsters and 103 adults have been involved in making videos. 50 youngsters have facilitated workshops with 642 youngsters and 53 youngsters have facilitated a workshop with 902 adults. The four youngsters that were interviewed cannot be considered to be a representative of the whole group.

[6] See Shehab's video: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YXD6uj6lbGc&feature=channel_video_title

[7] See Ahmed's video, with his personal story and footage from a group discussion: http://www.youtube.com/user/stukyoutoo#p/u/36/5tTGnIr88vo. English subtitled

[8] See Sunita's video: http://youtu.be/sjbKUohVXzo.

[9] See a video in which a youngster interviews a professional about reluctance in acting out against child abuse: http://www.youtube.com/user/stukyoutoo#p/u/14/397BRw0V36E

[10] Hyves is a Dutch social networking site.

[11] BZN Atlas from Flandres is a donor as well.

[12] The story of change that Marjon shared opened up new perspectives, that of the relationship between a donor and a recipiënt. The stories of change of Myra and Har were more in line with those of the youngsters.

[13] See Tatyana's video: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uBXQTy2KA0o

[14] See Cleo's video: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YOAvLS4A8iE. English subtitles.

References

Stichting Stuk website: www.stichtingstuk.com
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America it became clear that most of the digital natives had at some point in time met each other online, and they did trust one another. Technology and the merger of the on- and offline are redesigning our notions of trust. Digital natives are intuitively designing new protocols for it

There are many questions regarding sustainability, consolidation and expansions that we do not have the answers to but STUKYOUTOO and their support structure shows that it can be done and that there is a need to rethink our approaches and expectations on digital natives activity.

4.7 BREAKING TABOOS: LIFE IS MORE THAN A WALT DISNEY MOVIE

by

Eddie Avila

CASE STUDY

When one talks about access to technology or the lack of it, one always presumes it is an infrastructural question. If you look beyond the notion of infrastructure, it becomes clear that certain skills are required to navigate the bits and bytes. Rising Voices (rising.globalvoicesonline.org) helps underrepresented communities across the world to connect to the digital world. The four stories presented in this article give an interesting insight into the dynamics of enabling local communities to navigate these new spaces.

Enterramento Unido, Guinea-Bissau

Plastic chairs are neatly stacked underneath a towering tree, which provides shade for the clearing where dozens of children, teenagers, and adults will soon assemble for their daily gathering. It is here in the neighbourhood of Enterramento, located on the outskirts of Guinea-Bissau's capital city Bissau, where many forms of cultural expression can be seen, heard, and felt. The residents are members of the group Enterramento Unido (United Enterramento), a cultural organisation involved in theatre and entertainment which is a source of pride for the neighbourhood. There are folkloric dance and music groups for girls and boys of all ages, and the adult women arrange the chairs in a circle to practice the songs and wooden block accompaniment for the Mandjuandadi group. While the youth perfect the dance moves through repetition and guidance from the older and more experienced members, the women usually first catch up with one another on the latest happenings from in and around the neighbourhood.

All of this activity happens day after day, week after week here in the neighbourhood, a part of the city of Bissau that suffered greatly during the civil war in the late 1990s. The offices of the NGO Associação dos Amigos da Criança (AMIC), which sponsors the group and provides the space, had its offices burned down during the conflict. Now is it being rebuilt and its presence in the area is providing more opportunities for the residents.

It is also here in the neighbourhood where a new project is taking shape. The cultural group, in collaboration with AMIC, applied and was awarded a micro-grant from Rising Voices to teach members of the group how to use digital media to share their own stories. They think they have a lot to offer, and are eager to show the world that Guinea-Bissau is much more than the stereotypical perspectives of many African nations. On this day, a workshop on the use of digital cameras is taking place. Many of the youth will hold photographic equipment for the first time in their hands. Later, the teenagers will learn how to upload photos to the internet, through their newly-created Flickr accounts. They aim to showcase in images what regular life is like in Enterramento.

Yet some questions remain unanswered. Do these residents really need to blog? Should they spend their free time in front of a computer monitor? What will happen to this regular ritual of activities, where children play outside, youth preserve their culture, and residents talk to one another? Who is to decide that a community should learn how to use these digital tools?

Guinea-Bissau is a type of country that Rising Voices

is eager to support. It is a country that faces a lot of technology-related challenges. With the country's internet penetration rate at only 2.4 percent, poor connectivity and frequent electrical blackouts, it is no wonder that Guinea-Bissau is not very well-represented online. Even though the country also faces extreme poverty, political instability, and an increasing problem of drug trafficking, the activities that take place every afternoon in Enterramento is only one example that the country is so much more than the problems that it faces.

However, it is not Rising Voices' imposition that people in Guinea-Bissau should be on the internet. When the initiative started in mid-2007, through a grant from the Knight Foundation, Rising Voices started to offer small micro-grants to communities as a way to close the participation gap in online media. Through this financial support and other mentoring activities, 29 projects have been added to the community. To date, Rising Voices has funded projects from the Ivory Coast, Romania, Uruguay, Bangladesh, China, Serbia, Iran, South Africa, Jamaica, Sierra Leone, India, Bolivia, Congo, Yemen, Kenya, Liberia, Ukraine, Mongolia, and Colombia. Many of these places share the same idea as the project in Guinea-Bissau--that citizen media can help show a different side of life than what is normally portrayed in the mainstream press.

Each of the projects starts with a simple idea. During our open call for proposals, we ask applicants to describe their vision for the project and how they would go about implementing activities. One question in particular asks applicants about their relationship with the target community. More often than not, the applicant is a member of the community or has worked for many years with the target community. This means that the project originates from within the community and they decide that it is well worth being able to tell their own stories on their own terms.

Rising Voices is careful not to dictate too many conditions on its projects. With microgrants ranging from USD 3,000-5,000, in many cases, the funds can go a long way in purchasing equipment or internet connectivity. But it is still small enough that it is a low-risk investment, in case the project fails. Of course, we work closely with the project to ensure that their vision is achieved, but a high degree of independence is also allowed to them to enable them to fully take part in the experience of implementing a project teaching their local communities.

The most recent open call for proposals yielded more than 750 applications from 90 countries. The project from Guinea-Bissau is still in its preliminary steps, and it's hard to tell what the results will be.

HiperBarrio, Colombia

The neighbourhood of La Loma in Medellín, Colombia has had a troubled past and is often still associated with the darker days of violence and armed conflict. Of course the area still suffers from some of these problems, but residents can tell you that there is much more to life in La Loma today, than violence. It was the work of a local branch of the municipal library system that helped create a space for residents that allowed the world (and their own peers) to have a look into their lives.

Since years, the local pilot library had occupied a traditional role as a gatekeeper of knowledge where the community could come and read books. Though it provided a service, the books and encyclopaedias had the monopoly on information. The idea that the community itself might have a wealth of knowledge and perspective that could be of value to others was not something that many libraries had considered at the time.

It was a young librarian named Gabriel Vanegas, with support from local bloggers and encouragement from Alvaro Ramírez, a university professor, who transformed the library into a centre of local participation. Because the library had a computer lab with access to the internet, it was a prime location for one of the earliest workshops for Rising Voices grantees. Through blogging workshops and lessons on the use of digital photography and video, the computers soon became not only a lifeline to

the outside world, but also a window for the outside world to see the community of La Loma through the eyes of its young people.

As a result, stories were told about some of the members of the local community who could be seen walking around in the neighbourhood on a daily basis, but no one ever bothered to ask them their story. This is how the story of one aging man named Manuel Salvador aka 'Suso', who could often be seen collecting glass bottles for recycling in order to provide for his daily sustenance, came out. One of the bloggers who didn't know who he was saw him one day conversing with Vanegas. It turned out that the man's family had donated a large plot of land to the community some years ago and that is where the local church parish, school, library, and town square were all located now. His family was responsible for much of the life in the community, and now he was the one living in poor conditions.

The youth from the HiperBarrio project started to tell Suso's story through a video that was soon posted online, and soon translated into other languages. His story attracted international attention and was a driving force for a fundraiser held to help rebuild his house.

From there, interest in their community elevated. Many youngsters participated in other activities that told the story of their neighbourhood and discussed how they can take a more active role to face some of its challenges. This participation has even led to leadership opportunities as some of the youth started conducting workshops to teach others. What started in the community of La Loma has now expanded to the communities of Ituango, and other sites like Villactivos, Funacráte, and Revolución Esperanza.

Much can be said about the content that emerged from these workshops and the HiperBarrio project, but there are other results that are harder to measure. Like the confidence one acquires from being involved and taking decisions regarding how one's surroundings can be presented to the outside world.

Even though a meeting place and technology facilitated much of this learning and leadership opportunities, it was actually the encouragement and support from the librarian, local bloggers, and mentors that helped place La Loma on the map.

FOKO Blog Club, Madagascar

Three Malagasy bloggers, Joan Razafimaharo, Lova Rakotomala, and Mialy Andriamananjara, founded the FOKO Blog Club at a time when most of what was known about their country originated from the animated movie *Madagascar*. Even though the world's fourth largest island has rich biodiversity and great natural beauty, the FOKO project wanted to place the focus back on the Malagasy people and their role in protecting their environment. What is interesting about this project is that all three bloggers were living in different parts of the world and they connected through an environmental organisation in Madagascar's capital Antananarivo. That's how FOKO blog club got up and running.

Part of the effort was to encourage new local bloggers to write exclusively on Malagasy culture and about life in various parts of the country. One of the new bloggers was quite clear that he would be writing about things other than the popular movie. The blogger Tahina Rakotomanarivo named his blog 'Madagascar, Not the Movie' and filled its pages with interesting titbits of information about daily life, as well as Malagasy culture and current events.

Even though there were many committed workshop leaders, it was the support and interest of the Blog Club founders living abroad that was key to their success. To motivate new bloggers, their strategy was to leave comments and engage in other forms of interaction. For them, this was a way to demonstrate that what the new bloggers had written is of great value. In addition, Razafimaharo also participated in Skype calls from her home in Canada during the workshops which was an important sign of encouragement.

These technologies allowed for a new form of collaboration among the coordinators and strengthen the links between the Malagasy and the diaspora thousands of miles away. Many of the ideas for the Blog Club and the workshops were born over email and chat sessions. Some of the project founders didn't even meet each other in person until much later.

What started out as a project that was intended to encourage Malagasy to blog about whatever was important to them, with a special focus on the environment, took a turn in 2009 during the political crisis that shook the nation. During a series of anti-government protests that led to the eventual accession of an opposition leader, Andry Rajoelina, there was a media blackout and information was difficult to come by. Some members of the FOKO Blog Club began to disseminate information about the situation on the ground; their experience with blogging had equipped them with the knowledge of accessing an international audience. Some even ventured out on the streets to capture images despite great danger.

Exploring Taboos, Egypt

Egypt boasts a thriving blogosphere, and many young people are quite active on Facebook and Twitter. The country has one of the highest internet penetration rates in the Middle East, so it would be difficult to classify Egypt as an underrepresented country online.

However, there are topics that are often off limits for many users on the internet. Ironically, as Noha Atef notes in a post on Rising Voices, "In 2006, Google Trends released some interesting statistics concerning internet searches that include the term 'sex,' revealing that the city of Cairo topped the list of cities for these types of queries on the Google search engine and overall, Egypt was the second country in the world for this search.

Despite this finding that many Egyptian internet users look for anything related to sex, it should be noted that they are not always interested in learning about sexuality. Or talking about it for that matter. For many discussing these topics are often perceived as going against one's religion. Atef also notes that many Egyptians participate in inappropriate behaviour that violates personal boundaries. A study found that 83 percent of Egyptian women have reportedly being sexually harassed.

It's quite difficult to change these behaviours overnight, but for a group of young people from the Cairo-based project Nazra for Feminist Studies, merely talking about these issues in an open manner is a step in the right direction. Keeping these topics hidden can run the risk of misinformation and stigma. However, the team also realises that not all Egyptians are ready for these frank conversations and it should not be forced on anyone who does not want to participate. For them, citizen media could play a large role in starting this process. Their Rising Voices project called Exploring Taboos received interest from young people who wanted a safe place to discuss these issues.

Through workshops, the young people create their own blog and meet other like-minded individuals, and are able to communicate after the workshops have ended. The concept behind Exploring Taboos was that blogs allow individuals to remain anonymous and present their views on a platform where it is an opt-in decision for readers to interact with the ideas.

Topics discussed on the blogs have ranged from the view of homosexuality in Egyptian society, virginity, and female genital mutilation, which have seldom been seen on Egyptian websites. After the workshops, many individuals who held the belief that the topics should be discussed in the open, began to use their personal blogs to hold conversations with other participants and the general public. Some blogged under their real names, while others chose to do so under pseudonyms, but what was an important outcome of the activity was the ability to find like-minded people and remain in contact with them in a safe place for frank discussions.

Conclusion

All four stories take place in completely different contexts, in different part of the world, but the commonalities are that all have provided young people with a platform on which they not only can express themselves but also has enabled them and their surroundings to reinvent themselves. In Colombia, the youth realised that they are not passive bystanders but have the ability to construct their future. In Madagascar, a digital network was established that has broken down the barriers between the diaspora and local communities. And in Egypt, blogs provided a platform where taboos can be discussed openly. The stories suggest that digital natives might still be a small percentage of our population, that they might be very different in their interactions with technologies, that they might be embedded in their practices and contexts, but what brings them together is a cause – a vision that the everyday technologies in their lives can help them make changes in their immediate environments. The real changes are not about collective action and public participation; they are about transformation at the personal level and the ability to engage with this transformation and to give it a larger direction.

4.8 POP CULTURE DEFYING POWER DIMENSIONS

with

Adam Haupt

INTERVIEW

by Nishant Shah

ADAM HAUPT

Dr. Adam Haupt is a senior lecturer in the Centre for Film & Media Studies at the University of Cape Town. He is the author of *Stealing Empire: P2P, Intellectual Property and Hip-Hop Subversion* (HSRC Press, 2008), which is available under an open content license at www.hsrcpress.ac.za.

NISHANT SHAH

Nishant Shah is the Director-Research at the Centre for Internet and Society, Bangalore. He is the lead researcher for the *Digital Natives with a Cause?* Project.

When talking about Digital Natives, one of the things that remain unquestioned across geographies and lifestyles is the politics of power. While we often concentrate on questions of political participation, social engagement, interaction, mobilisation, etc, most of these questions remain stymied because not enough attention is paid to how power operates in defining causes, enabling participation and influencing change. Who has the power to subscribe to a cause? What allows people to see themselves as change makers? Whose causes are legitimate and whose causes remain invisible? An interview with Adam Haupt, a researcher at Capetown University, gives us insights into digital divides and the power needed by people to imagine themselves as agents of change.

Nishant Shah (NS): How do we even begin asking questions of power within the digital worlds?

Adam Haupt (AH): I shall talk from a South African perspective, drawing from my own experiences. In the process, I hope that this shall open up dialogues for other geographies where technologies are not ubiquitous or pervasive. My sense is that agency in cyberspace is shaped by issues that enable or constrain agency offline. Or in other words, it is not fruitful to make the online-offline differences because the person who is accessing and living within digital worlds is equally housed in the physical world. We should ask questions around power and agency of a more comprehensive universe – recognising that the actions and capacities in one realm obviously shape and affect the capabilities and capital in the other.

NS: So what would be the site for asking such questions?

AH: The obvious issue to point to is the digital divide in Africa. Online access as well as participation in generating knowledge in the digital world is largely difficult for Africans, who find themselves on the wrong side of the divide. This divide is not merely about access and infrastructure. It cuts across issues of language, cultural capital, gender and various other inequities in the Global South.

The available discourse on Information and Communication Technologies for Development (ICT4D) resonates with earlier development imaginations that begin by presuming that no agency exists. Such discourses perpetuate stereotypical assumptions about Africa. However, research by Francis Nyamnjoh, Mirjam de Bruij, Inge Brinkman[1] and Sokari Ekine[2] , for example, suggests that mobile access to the internet is challenging our assumptions about access and participation. This research is interesting because it suggests that not only do digital technologies develop new forms of access and power but they also help dismantle the existing notions around it.

NS: This would be more obvious within the recent developments in Middle East and North Africa?

AH: Yes, the Arab Spring allows us to be optimistic about citizens' will to employ available technologies to exercise their political will.

The revolutions took us by surprise because we had always imagined these regions as bereft of political will. These were countries that needed to be 'rehabilitated' or 'rescued' from authoritarian regimes and politics. It was presumed that the citizens, in this context would have no agency or political will. The presence and use of technologies did not produce new agencies; they made visible the power and the agency that the citizens already had and how they could channelise them towards making change.

NS: But we are using the concept of 'citizen' rather loosely. In your own work you have talked of how the citizen is not a homogeneous category.

AH: While the internet is challenging our assumptions about access and participation for the citizens, we need to recognise that the digital divide has not affected everyone equally. In South Africa, for instance, apartheid as well as post-apartheid economic policies, have sustained a racialised class divide that has created a very unequal access to the internet and knowledge production. This

question of race or class cannot be ignored when talking about the 'common man on the streets' who has been empowered to make change. We need to qualify who this person is and look at a series of inequities that define the person who becomes the legitimate face of internet-based change.

NS: Would you like to dwell on the notion of power inequities for some more time? Where do we even begin articulating these questions to understand how digital natives imagine themselves as agents of change?

AH: Perhaps the best site to locate this is in everyday cultural practices. We often fail to see the political potential embedded in cultural revolutions that are often technology-mediated. I can offer an example that relates to hip-hop in South Africa. There has been much talk about how access to digital technologies helps young people emerge as artists. Especially over the past two decades, where hip-hop artists have employed digital technologies for their sampling-based practices of music[3]. With hardware and software becoming more accessible and affordable, this has shifted toward using PC-based home studios. One part of this story is that of non-commercial sharing of software as well as informal education between aspiring musicians and producers. Within the larger debates, this would get glossed over as 'piracy' and the only visible power structures discussed would be that of economic and revenue loss. The efforts are focused on giving more digital access.

NS: And as you hinted earlier, it makes us presume that digital natives are simultaneously unique and similar- that digital natives are engaged in certain practices that are the same everywhere and yet, they remain disconnected from their larger contexts and are imagined as operating only in silos.

AH: Yes, and the story I have in mind illustrates it very well. I want to point out that digital natives' technology-based practices, are so embedded in the local, that even within the same country, you see them operating very differently.

I cannot overemphasise the need to contextualise digital and internet technologies. That is going to be the first step in opening up dialogues around power and agency.

The emergence of hip-hop and Kwaito artists that changed the black culture scene in Gauteng, one of the provinces of South Africa, in the 1990s is often cited as an example of how access to technology will revolutionalise the youth. However, this is not a one-size-fits-all solution. Even within the same countries, the equities play out differently. So what worked in Gauteng does not find similar parallels in say, Cape Town.

In Cape Town, socially conscious hip-hop artists were less successful in breaking into mainstream commercial success that their Gauteng counterparts have enjoyed. Access to technology alone did not guarantee these artists success. As anthropologist David Coplan suggests, South Africa's music scene has shaped apartheid policies. For example, jazz often brought musicians and music fans together across colour lines in places like Sophiatown and Cape Town's city centre. If jazz brought people together, apartheid was intent on breaking the party up. This forced many jazz legends into exile or into an extended recess. This meant that new generations of aspiring artists had no mentors or teachers in the arts. This is what continues to constrain artists' success, especially in Cape Town.

Additionally, an outdated copyright law act, serious inefficiencies in the operation of collecting societies and the influence of transnational entertainment media monopolies, create a problem that is so much bigger than just offering young people access to technology.

If we are going to employ digital media effectively in our pursuit of constructive social change, then we have to attend to the legal and economic parameters that constrain or enable the agency of creators, activists, educators or consumers. We need to see the

histories, the legacies, the relationship with existing movements and patterns. This is what I mean by mapping the inequities in the physical world and then seeing how they affect the very process of access; how they play out and get amplified and mutated within the digital domains.

NS: The idea of the contextual, the local and the everyday is something that we have been trying to pursue through our Knowledge Programme. Especially as a research inquiry, it is too easy to fall in the trap of producing universal knowledge and imaginations of digital natives and their practices. What are the recommendations you would give to escape this?

AH: I don't have a best practices list, but it seems to me that the trick would be to avoid constructing master-narratives. We need to look at specific communities and pay attention to their needs in that context. We also need to recognise the forms of agency that are exercised in those contexts. So dialogue at grassroots level is what is needed; in this regard, I know of a number of community projects that employ technology in basic ways in order to meet their objectives.

Another dimension to this issue is to register what kind of online presence we are talking about. In South Africa, many young people's access to the Web is via MXit and Facebook on their mobile phones. We are talking about a kind of production that is not anything like contributing to Wikipedia, or organsing a flashmob outside Parliament. From a research perspective, much more could be done to engage with what people are doing with technology.

One negative response to young people's agency has been in the use of peer2peer platforms. The framing of file-sharers in the mainstream press has done very little to understand how newer technologies could be used to bridge the divides and protect and extend the public domain. These kinds of negative or positive images often close up the realm of young peoples' relationships with technologies and produce monsters and heroes.

NS: How do you see the 'newness' that digital natives bring to the table when talking about social change? Is it restricted to new actions or is there a certain legacy within which we can understand these changes?

AH: We should be wary of technological determinism; technology itself does not instigate change. Tools only become useful when people see the need for them. These needs do not only differ from one generation to the next; they also differ from one community to the next or from one region to another. Also, I think that every generation probably thinks that they are the first to motivate for change of a certain kind, but there are always some continuities regardless of the breaks. This is why research about diverse communities and contexts is so important.

NS: Can you relate a story about digital natives and change that can illustrate your ideas about the role that young people play in new processes of change?

AH: A wide range of aspiring black musicians have become visible on the South African music scene, thanks to social media. Many artists, like Tumi & the Volume, Jaak, Black Noise, Driemanskap, Zubz, Rattex and Terror MC, have employed social media connects with audiences as well as to enlist support for their community projects (e.g. Heal the Hood). While many have succeeded in creating a profile for themselves or their causes in niche markets, few have managed to break into mainstream media.

As I have suggested earlier, the reasons for the lack of mainstream exposure are complex: The apartheid past and neo-liberal present continue to haunt us. One key exception to this story is the success of Die Antwoord, a spoof rap act that mocks gangsta rap, but also appropriates racial stereotypes specific to South Africa. The stereotypes that it invokes are those of white, Afrikaans working class people and those of Cape, 'coloured' working class males. The punch line is that Die Antwoord's leader, Waddy Jones, is neither white, 'coloured', he is neither Afrikaans nor working class. Jones

is white, English and well-resourced, unlike the stereotypical character that is portrayed in his performances. This ability of people to subvert cultural and social practices which have been endemic within discourses of power discrimination is a new thing, and digital technologies often help a lot in these contestations of power.

Questions about cultural appropriation aside, the issue that is at stake is that Die Antwoord has been able to leverage the power of social and mass media effectively to ensure the viral success of its bizarre and surreal music videos. It has been able to so because Jones occupies a class position that makes it possible for him to overcome the limits of the digital divide in South Africa.

[1] Bruijn,de M., Nyamnjoh, F. & Brinkman, I. (2009). Mobile Phones: The New Talking Drums of Everyday Africa, edited by Bamenda, Langaa Research and Publishing Common Initiative Group (RPCIG) and Leiden, African Studies Centre.

[2] Ekine, S. (2010). SMS Uprising: Mobile Activism in Africa. Cape Town: Pambazuka Press

[3] In many forms of popular music, sampling is a practice where musicians take small snippets of music from other existing forms and then build upon them. Especially with digital music practices, it has become easy to take samples from many different tracks and put them all together to form new synthesised music compositions. This cultural practice is often at loggerheads with Intellectual Property regimes which fail to recognise the creative impulse of such practices and determine them as piracy.

[4] Kwaito is a music genre that emerged in Johannesburg, South Africa, during the 1990s. It is a variant of house music featuring the use of African sounds and samples. Typically at a slower tempo range than other styles of house music, Kwaito often contains catchy melodic and percussive loop samples, deep bass lines, and vocals. Although bearing similarities to hip hop music, a distinctive feature of Kwaito is the manner in which the lyrics are sung, rapped and shouted. (Source: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kwaito)

[5] David Coplan is professor in and chair of the Department of Anthropology at the University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg, South Africa

[6] MXit is a free online mobile instant messenger and social network. It originates from South Africa and is now available in South Africa, Namibia, Kenya, UK and Indonesia

CONTRIBUTORS

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BEN WAGNER

Ben Wagner is a researcher at European University Institute in Italy and coordinates the Dynamic Coalition on Freedom of Expression and Freedom of the Media at the U.N. Internet Governance Forum (IGF). He has a background in international relations, public administration and international development and has published extensively on Internet Governance issues.

DIEGO GOMEZ

Diego Gómez was born in a little town inside the Colombian mountains called 'El Carmen de Viboral'. It was there when he had his first encounters with wires and circuits, and learned to program computers (with black and white screens) after playing with them a lot. He thinks that it was because of internet that he received a scholarship to study computer science at EAFIT university. He enjoyed discovering the world through a 24kbps modem connection and it was natural for him to learn about everything in "proto-web". He began his professional life as a computer programmer and software architect in different companies. Now he works for EAFIT University in its virtual education division and is also engaged with a research group in the same university about "technology and education" where he is finishing his master degree.

It was not long ago when he began working with other partners in building an independent project called Hiperbarrio which is an effort to promote social change through the use of technology (in colour screens) in working class neighborhoods and peripheral communities in the city of Medellin.

EDDIE AVILA

Eddie is the director of Rising Voices, the outreach arm of Global Voices Online. The initiative seeks to support underrepresented groups around the

world through micro-grants and mentoring, as a way to encourage others to join the online global conversation through the use of citizen media tools to tell their own stories. Prior to that, he was the Latin America and Spanish Language Editor at Global Voices, where he coordinated a team of volunteers that wrote about what was happening in the blogospheres across the region. He started with Global Voices in 2005as a volunteer author covering current events being discussed in Bolivian blogs.

Currently living in Cochabamba, Bolivia, Eddie started a number of digital-inclusion projects, such as Voces Bolivianas (Bolivian Voices), which has conducted workshops and public events to teach how to use blogs and other citizen media tools to under-represented groups in different communities in Bolivia. In addition, he helped start and is an advisor to the Jaqi Aru project, which has been engaging young people from Aymara indigenous communities in El Alto how to use digital tools, such as blogs, social networking sites, and wikis, as a way to preserve and promote their language on the internet.

HERNAN BONOMO

Hernán Bonomo is an Argentinean graphic designer and sociologist. He works at an international foundation, coordinating youth activities in the Latin America Region. Mr. Bonomo co-authored the book Critical Tolerance and active citizenship: a practical introduction to educational debate (Idebate Press, 2010), and wrote several articles on regional issues affecting youth and their participation in society.

IVET PIEPER

Ivet has focused her professional career on enhancing the capacity of organisations to deal with children and youth as civic actors, and enhancing the capacities of children and youth themselves in shaping their own lives and futures. She's worked in Suriname, Kenya and the Netherlands, doing participatory action research, designing methods platforms and curricula for participation, and doing evaluations for clients like schools, municipalities, INGOs, youth care facilities and youth organisations. Ivet is venturing out in the field of participatory video-making and ICT4D. She hosts a YouTube channel linking videos worldwide made by children and youth themselves (www.youtube.com/user/ivetpieper). At the time of writing this article she was working at context and international cooperation on the theme o Civic Driven Change (CDC) and children. Currently she's an independent consultant on youth participation and video, based in Amsterdam. For more information see:
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SIMEON ORIKO

Simeon Oriko is a 22-year-old from Nairobi, Kenya. He is the Founder/Executive Director of The Kuyu Project (www.thekuyuproject.org) which is a digital literacy initiative aimed at teaching African youth how to fully utilise social media and other digital

tools to effect social change in their communities to achieve their goals and objectives. Simeon is passionate about using technology to respond to real world challenges and opportunities, to effect social change and to achieve personal objectives. He is also deeply rooted in technology with a keen focus on mobile technologies and cloud computing. He is currently the Innovation and Strategy Lead for Story Spaces, a social network aimed at lowering the barriers of participation in online conversations as well as to help people identify with these conversations. Simeon blogs at http://mtotowajirani.com, tweets at @mtotowajirani and is on Facebook at http://facebook.com/mtotowajirani".

STEVE VOSLOO

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