GOVERNANCE, SOCIAL MEDIA AND THE CYBERCITIZEN – ALWAYS IN MOTION IS THE FUTURE

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Abstract

This article considers the emerging technologies known as Web 2.0 and how changing technologies may change the way we think about governance. In the last thirty years digital computing has had a transformational effect on the way governments view the world. The use of Information and Communications Technology (ICT) by governments has led to a more quantitative approach to solving problems; seen in the emergence of new public management and managerialism in public administration. This article uses a theoretical framework, built on the phenomenology of tools and governance through choice, to argue that recent developments in the technologies generally referred to as Web 2.0, and social networking in particular, are leading to governments using technology in different and more interactive ways. The author concludes that these developments will broaden the impact of technology on governance, produce a more qualitative approach and empower the interconnected citizen.

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1. The Phantom Menace – Is it really different?

Changes in technology have had an impact on methods of governance for centuries. The invention of the stirrup allowed a rider to better control his horse and thus supported the spread of feudalism.[1] Karl Marx contrasted the hand mill, which produced a relationship between workers and a feudal lord and the steam mill, which produced a relationship between workers and an industrial capitalist.[2] Coleman provides examples of early technologies that were thought to signal the beginning of democratic change.[3] The growth and widespread availability of newspapers in the 1830s was thought to mean, *"a new majority must be consulted, the sentiments and desires of poorer men than at the present must be addressed; and thus a new influence of opinion would be brought to bear on our social relations and our legislative enactments."*[4] The invention of the telegraph in the 1850s led people to think there would be an elimination of any gap in information between individual States in the United States and between all of its citizens. The invention of the radio was also seen as having the potential for *"cultural unification"*.[5]

Changes in technologies have always influenced governance, but what is clear is that the rate of change in the development, introduction and normalisation of communications technologies is increasing exponentially. For example, the number of years it took to reach an audience of 50 million was, in the case of radio, thirty-eight years. Television took only thirteen years, while the Internet reached this audience in four years. More recent technologies have spread even faster – the iPod took only three years to reach an audience of 50 million, and Facebook achieved the feat in only two years.[6] However, claims that new communications technologies are bound to lead to more democratic outcomes have been rightly criticized for neglecting the ways in which technologies themselves are socially shaped.[7]

Technologies specifically designed to aid in the administration of government have become collectively known as e-government. Perri 6 provided a useful definition of e-government which he sub-categorised as; e-democracy, e-service provision, e-

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[1] P Henman, *Governing Electronically* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010) at 18.

[2] K. Marx, *The Poverty of Philosophy* (New York: International Publishers, 1963 [1867]) at 109.

[3] S Coleman, "E-Democracy: The history and future of an idea" in R Mansell, C Avgerou, D Quah, and R Silverstone (eds), *The Oxford Handbook of Information and Communication Technologies* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007) 363-383.

[4] P Burke and A Briggs, *A Social History of the Media: From Gutenberg to the Internet* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2001) at 202.

[5] S Coleman, "E-Democracy: The history and future of an idea" in R Mansell, C Avgerou, D Quah, and R Silverstone (eds), *The Oxford Handbook of Information and Communication Technologies* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007) 363-383.

[6] K Fisch, S McLeod, and J Brenman, "Did you know - Right Here, Right Now" (2008) available at http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ihbL8ewkP-o (accessed 11 Feb 2012).

[7] S Coleman, "E-Democracy: The history and future of an idea" in R Mansell, C Avgerou, D Quah, and R Silverstone (eds), *The Oxford Handbook of Information and Communication Technologies* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007) 363-383.

management and e-governance.[8] Perri 6 chose not to look at e-democracy, preferring to concentrate on the service provision, management and governance elements. Henman also chose to focus on these elements in *Governing Electronically* in which he examines the productive capacity of technology, specifically the contribution of technologies to policy making. Henman's contention is that e-government involves both a continuation of the normative development, and use of, emerging technologies by governments in addition to a distinct change to practice and policy due to the way ICTs can, in themselves, be a creative force. In this way e-governance is both *"a disrupture and a continuation of the nature of government in modern nation states."*[9] The concept of technology as a productive force working in conjunction with human inventiveness also finds expression in Actor-Network Theory.[10] Researchers have applied this to understanding the processes involved in implementing e-Government in developing countries,[11] in the study of IT implementation in healthcare[12] and in computerised decision support for pension planning.[13]

This creative or transforming force that can be attributed to technology has led to changes in practice and policy in such a way as to produce a more quantitative approach to the task of governance. Tasks are broken down into discrete and measurable activities more suited to analysis and automation. As the nature of the technology changes, the way problems are seen may also change. The change from Web 1.0 to Web 2.0 marked a transformation from a more quantitative view of data to a more qualitative view. The qualitative and interactive nature of Web 2.0 may better address the first of Perri 6's classifications of e-government, e-democracy.

2. Attack of the Clones – Technology as one size fits all

Henman provides a useful conceptual framework for considering the nature and impact of technology in the realm of government. His conceptual framework has two distinct strands: Firstly, Heidegger's work on the phenomenology of tools is used to argue that the nature of the technology influences the action of government. Secondly, Henman's view that the way technology can set the agenda, or frame the question to suit its own limitations, is consistent with Foucault's view of governance as the *"conduct of conduct"*.[14] These two strands provide a framework for extending the analysis beyond the traditional database and computer modelling technologies which are at the heart of traditional e-government technologies.

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[8] P 6, *E-governance*, (Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004).

[9] P Henman, *Governing Electronically* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010) at 1.

[10] B Latour, *Science in Action: How to Follow Scientists and Engineers Through Society* (Milton Keynes: Open University Press, 1987). B Latour, *Reassembling the Social: An Introduction to Actor-Network-Theory* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005).

[11] C Stanforth, "Using Actor-Network Theory to Analyze E-Government Implementation in Developing Countries" (2006) 3 *Information Technologies and International Development* 35–60.

[12] K Cresswell, A Worth and A Sheikh (2010) "Actor-Network Theory and its role in understanding the implementation of information technology developments in healthcare" (2010) 10 *BMC Medical Informatics and Decision Making* 1-11.

[13] A Ranerup, "Electronic Government as a combination of human and technological agency: Testing the principle of symmetry" (2007) 12 *Information Polity* 153–167.

[14] M Foucault, *Discipline and Punish* (London: Penguin, 1975).

The essence of Heidegger's phenomenology of tools is that tools show us how we see the world. This work has been subsumed in the popular adage: if the only tool you have is a hammer then every problem looks like a nail. Heidegger's original work was of course more sophisticated than that.[15] A number of technologies have shaped the way public administrators view the tasks of governing and have caused them to adapt their methodologies to the capabilities of the technologies. For example, the growth of New Public Management (NPM), with its emphasis on measurable, quantifiable outputs is a consequence of the computational power available to governments. NPM sought to break up monopolistic public-service structures by using incentives to influence activities and by adopting private-sector management techniques. NPM administrative reform was market-based and competence-based, with an emphasis on deregulation and governance. These four categories of changes came from the view that a public organisation could be analysed in the same manner as a firm. An influential early work on NPM was *Reinventing Government* by Osborne and Gaebler who characterised NPM as entrepreneurial government and set out a clear road map for reform of government.[16] Government needed to be close to its customers; performance driven; target driven; committed to continuous improvement; decentralised; have tight cost control; and must practice performance management. A host of jargon entered the lexicon as governments needed to delegate implementation (steer rather than row), contract out activities (outsource) and seek partnerships with the private and voluntary sectors (joined-up government).

The purpose of implementing such changes was to produce specific results which are normally listed, for example by Pollitt, as savings, improved processes, improved efficiency, greater effectiveness, and increases in capacity.[17] All of these results had to be specific and measurable, and so were broken down into manageable, and more importantly, measurable units. Improved processes meant reduced waiting times or faster delivery. Improved efficiency measured changes in the ratio of inputs to outputs. Effectiveness meant less crime or more literacy, less homelessness or more jobs. All of these indicators could be measured, tracked and trended. Studies could be done quickly and improvements rewarded. As Henman states;

> New Public Management tools and networked ICTs have been a critical component in governing through networks, such as outsourcing marketization, and partnerships. This has helped to reconfigure public servants into contract managers.[18]

In short, e-government meant applying private business models to the public sector. *"E-government….is better thought of not as a revolution but as what it is: an attempt*

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[15] M Heidegger, *Being and Time* (London: SCM Press, 1962).

[16] D Osborne and T Gaebler, *Reinventing Government: How the Entrepreneurial Spirit is Transforming the Public Sector* (New York: Addison-Wesley, 1991).

[17] C Pollitt, "The New Public Management in international perspective: an analysis of impacts and effects" in McLaughlin, Osborne and Ferlie (eds), *New Public Management: Current Trends and Future Prospects* (London: Routledge, 2002).

[18] P Henman, *Governing Electronically* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010) at 239.

to bring the e-business model into the public sector."[19] ICT provided the tools to measure and evaluate, and NPM provided a methodology to fit the capabilities of the tool.

The second component of Henman's conceptual framework is Foucault's notion of government as the conduct of conduct. This leads to an examination, not of the institutions of state, but rather of their governing practices.[20] Conduct can be governed indirectly. It is not necessary to employ force or the strict rule of law backed by punishment. Inducement, incentive mechanisms, persuasion by experts and discipline through surveillance are the possible tools of an approach to governmentality. Individuals are regarded as free subjects who are able to choose their forms of behaviour, but their choices are made in settings that have been constructed by a whole barrage of carefully-calculated tactics, such as performance indicators and audits, incentives and expert advice.[21] We are now *"governed through freedom"* in that freedom is used as a creative way of constituting strategies for the indirect shaping of conduct.[22] This approach to the use of power through agenda-setting, and through the manipulation of choice, is very much in the realm of the work of Lukes.[23] Lukes sees power as much more than the ability to make decisions and enforce action. What he describes as a 'three-dimensional view of power' consists of the power to influence the behaviour of another, the power to define the agenda, and the power to mould perceptions and preferences. This third dimension is the most effective kind of power. It can be exercised *"through the control of information, through the mass media and through the process of socialisation."*[24]

The ways in which technologies reveal the world have a capacity to shape the practice of public administration. For example, governments' use of computer modelling to help them predict future scenarios and the outcomes of proposed policy changes. Computer models enable policy makers and elected politicians to consider, problematize and manipulate future policy scenarios. In the complex interaction between social security and taxation policy, policy makers can experiment with policy variables such as income and assets test limits, age cut-offs, levels of tax rebates, and tax rates.[25] Technology provides a powerful tool to look at data and consider alternative policy options, but the options on offer are influenced by the nature and capabilities of the tool as much as by the ideology of the analyst.

The use of ICT in the delivery of services to the public has altered not just the process of integration, but also the content and the way policy is conceived. Digital computers reveal the world as a well-defined and largely quantitative place. This, combined with the NPM desire to quantify in order to measure, has meant that much of the administrative discretion of frontline staff has been eliminated. The role of frontline

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[19] A Pavlichev and GD Garson, "Preface" in A Pavlichev and GD Garson (eds), *Digital Government, Hershey* (PA: Idea Group, 2004).

[20] P Henman, *Governing Electronically* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010) at 33.

[21] *Ibid*, 213.

[22] N Rose, *Powers of Freedom* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999) at 62.

[23] S Lukes, *Power: a Radical View* 2nd ed. (Hampshire and New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005).

[24] *Ibid*, 8.

[25] P Henman, *Governing Electronically* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010) at 145.

staff in decision making is well argued by *"Bottom-up"* implementation theorists such as Lipsky, whom he describes as 'street-level bureaucrats'.[26] These street-level bureaucrats have had much of their discretion removed by the advent of the quantitative tools of ICT-led e-government initiatives. Henman's substantive claim is that the Internet and related technologies have enabled government agencies to act in ways that were not previously possible. In short, the technologies have brought about new modes of governance.[27] The way e-government reveals the world as quantitative reconfigures and defines our experience of it.

If we accept that traditional ICT systems and the NPM practices of public administration are creating a quantitative view of the world, do the newer technologies referred to as Web 2.0, only just emerging in the field of e-governance, fit within this model?

3. Revenge of the Sith – The technology is acting differently

Web 2.0 does not describe an update to any technical specifications of the web, but rather to cumulative changes in the ways software developers and end-users interact with the web.[28] Web 2.0 is associated with web applications that facilitate interactive information sharing, interoperability, user-centred design, and collaboration.[29] Examples include web-based communities, hosted services, web applications, social-networking sites, video-sharing sites, wikis, and blogs. A Web 2.0 site allows its users to interact with other users or to change website content, in contrast to non-interactive websites where users are limited to the passive viewing of information that is provided to them. If Web 1.0 was about broadcasting, Web 2.0 is about interacting.

Web 2.0 technologies are different because they are pervasive, user-friendly, non-technical, platform independent, and focused on collaboration and interaction. They are pervasive, in that young and old have found applications to suit their needs, from the six-year-old child playing games with friends online at Clubpenguin to the grandparent Skyping their grandchildren to read stories on the other side of the world. They are user-friendly, in that the software and its features are expected to be self-taught or intuitive; if it has to be learnt it will not be used. They are non-technical, in that no prior technical or programing knowledge is required for use, and increasingly the creation as well as the use of new applications is within the capabilities of the novice user. They are platform independent, not just between manufactures but applications are equally available on computers, smartphones, netbooks, tablets and every conceivable device. Finally they are different because their focus is not on using the software in isolation to perform some task (such as word processing or spread-sheet analysis), rather its focus is collaboration and interaction. Every time a user opens a Web 2.0 application they are communicating, interacting, collaborating and

[26] M Lipsky, *Street-Level Bureaucracy: Dilemmas of the individual in public services* (New York: Russell Sage Foundation, 1980).

[27] P Henman, *Governing Electronically* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010) at 41.

[28] T O'Reilly, *What Is Web 2.0* (2005) available at http://oreilly.com/web2/archive/what-is-web-20.html (accessed 7 Apr 2013)

[29] P Duffy. "Engaging the YouTube Google-Eyed Generation: Strategies for Using Web 2.0 in Teaching and Learning" (2008) 6 *The Electronic Journal of e-Learning* 119 – 130.

working in groups. Often this is so subliminal as to be invisible to the user, but when online they are now part of a community of users and contributing to the nature of the experience of all the others.

The first wave of e-government was focused on the back office; systems were automated, tasks were simplified, discretion in implementation was curtailed, some processes were put online, but essentially the systems remained unchanged. The growth of the Internet and the capabilities of Web 2.0 in terms of social networking technologies, mobile computing and the general pervasiveness of our online life, represents opportunities for structural changes in the way public services are understood, accessed and delivered. Large scale switchovers to the use of email and the evolution of websites from "shop windows" to the core of the service are examples of this. Two trigger points in this evolution may be: first, the point at which the electronic version of every file is considered the authoritative version and a hard copy only printed as needed; and second, the point at which a government agency no longer 'has' a website but rather 'is' a web site.[30] Web 2.0 and social networking in particular offer a different view of the world. In Heidegger's terms they are revealing the world in a different, more qualitative way. Social networks may reveal the world as less well-defined, more dependent on relationships and more collaborative. For this to be true in practice and not just in theory, one barrier to overcome is access. Social networking can connect us all but we must have the capacity, both cognitive and financial, to be able to engage.

4. A New Hope - The rise of the interconnected citizen

If social networking is to enhance democracy or lead to greater interconnection between citizen and state, then the degree to which citizens have access to the technology must be considered. As discussed above, previous e-government initiatives were focused on service delivery, or the provision of services and information online as a supplement to other forms of face-to-face interaction. Limited forms of opinion gathering or consultation were also used, but the flow of information was predominantly in one direction—from state to citizen. To implement processes that provide engagement between citizens, or that are focused on citizen input to government, democracy would demand equality of access to all citizens.

The gap in access to new technologies, which occurs between those who can afford expensive ICT equipment and those who cannot, is commonly referred to as the 'digital divide'. A variation of this argument is that a divide exists, not on the basis of affordability but on the basis of age. It is true that new generations accept as normal technologies which their parents still see as novel and that new technologies come at a cost for early adopters which can be high. However, rather than the economic divide growing, there is some evidence that it is shrinking. According to Sunstein *"...in both the domestic and in the international context, that problem (the digital divide) seems likely to diminish over time, as new technologies, above all the internet, are made*

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[30] P Dunleavy, H Margetts, S Bastow and J Tinkler, "New Public Management is Dead – Long Live Digital-Era Governance" *Journal of Public Administration Research and Theory* (Oxford University Press, 2005) 467-494.

increasingly available to people regardless of their income or wealth."[31] The issue is also well covered by Yochai Benkler in his 2006 book *The Wealth of Networks*.[32]

The economic argument has also been undermined by the emergence of the mobile phone as the preferred platform for much of the innovation in ICT. Hamadoun Touré, the Secretary-General of the International Telecommunication Union (ITU), speaking in February 2010 said that even the simplest, low-end mobile phone can do much to improve health care in the developing world. He provided examples such as sending reminder messages to patients' phones when they have a medical appointment or need a pre-natal check-up. Short Message Service (SMS) text messages can also be used to deliver instructions on when and how to take complex medication such as anti-retrovirals or vaccines.[33] An interesting finding by the Dubai School of Government in their recent Arab Social Media Report was that *"a few Arab countries (Djibouti, Iraq) actually have more Facebook users than Internet users, indicating that many Facebook users in these countries rely on mobile access."*[34] Clearly access to Facebook via a mobile device is still a matter of using the Internet but the point seems clearly to be that usage of mobile phones for Internet use is out-stripping access via more traditional computing platforms. According to the International Telecommunication Union more than 2.7 billion people are using the Internet, which corresponds to 39% of the world's population. In the developing world, 31% of the population is online, compared with 77% in the developed world.[35] The explosion in cell phone use has been driven not only by developed countries, but by developing nations. Again, according to the ITU, there are almost as many mobile-cellular subscriptions as people in the world, with more than half in the Asia-Pacific region. Mobile-cellular penetration rates stand at 96% globally; 128% in developed countries; and 89% in developing countries. The mobile phone is fast becoming the device of choice for access to the Internet, leaving the laptop, PC or Mac behind.

The digital divide based on age is also narrowing. Technology once requiring advanced and specialised knowledge to understand and operate is becoming better and simpler to use. Advances in our understanding of human computer interaction and usability engineering, combined with the natural progression of technology from novel to normal, is reducing this divide. Communication tools are becoming second nature to the most novice of user, young or old. In the United Kingdom, Ofcom's ninth annual Communications Market report notes that the take-up of smartphones is highest among the age group sixteen to twenty-four with 66% reporting smartphone ownership. In Ireland, market research commissioned by Irish mobile solutions provider Púca showed that more than half of adults claimed ownership of a

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[31] CR Sunstein, *Republic.com 2.0* (New Jersey and Oxfordshire: Princeton University Press, 2007) at 17.

[32] Y Benkler, *The Wealth of Networks* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2006).

[33] UN News Service, "Robust demand for mobile phone services will continue, UN agency predicts" (2010) available at http://www.un.org/apps/news/story.asp?NewsID=33770&Cr=Telecom&Cr1 (accessed 11 Feb 2012).

[34] Arab Social Media Report, "Benchmarking Facebook" (2011) available at http://www.dsg.ae/NEWSANDEVENTS/UpcomingEvents/ASMRFactorsAffectingFacebookPenetratio nPI.aspx (accessed 11 Feb 2012).

[35] International Telecommunication Union (2013) The World in 2013: ICT facts and figures, available at; http://www.itu.int/ITU-D/ict/facts/material/ICTFactsFigures2013.pdf (accessed 21 Mar 2013).

smartphone. In the United States, a Nielsen survey of more than 20,000 mobile consumers showed that 66% of those in the twenty-five to thirty-four age group reported smartphone ownership.

The argument that the digital divide is diminishing should be balanced by the potential emergence of a knowledge divide. Research with disadvantaged families in the United States found that disadvantaged families experience a knowledge gap with regard to digital media. The research was less concerned with the difference in access to technology, but rather that teenagers experienced frustration with their parents' lack of experience with digital media. Young people perceived this lack of knowledge as damaging to their social or academic goals.[36] Those working in the area of disability have also seen a mixed response from hardware and software developers in making their products and services accessible. The advent of the Internet and the digitisation of data hold out great potential for disabled users in that the digitisation of data allows its reproduction in many forms. Unlike the written word on a page, digital content can have its font size increased, translated into another language, turned into audio or transferred to a Braille tablet. However the principal ways of accessing data are still keyboards and touch screens, which present challenges to many disabled users. With the proliferation of websites, services and tools available online, accessibility is often secondary to commercial considerations such as time to market and profitability. Due to our aging population this figure is likely to grow. If added to this we consider the proportion of those normally considered able-bodied, but who are temporarily disabled for periods due to accident or illness, there is a significant number of people disadvantaged by poor access to technology.

Nevertheless, as the digital divide diminishes, the acceptability of using technology for democratic engagement becomes more practical and more acceptable. The more people there are online, the larger the size, scale, and efficiency of the communication "market". As Shirky has said, *"communications tools don't get socially interesting until they get technologically boring. It's when a technology becomes normal, then ubiquitous, and finally so pervasive as to be invisible, that the really profound changes happen."*[37] The growth of social networks has been rapid and shows no signs of slowing. Sites aimed specifically at children include HabboHotel, Clubpenguin and Barbie.com. These sites have users numbered in the hundreds of millions worldwide. Facebook, with a user population of 845 million as of December 2011 has more than 483 million daily active users.[38]

Social networks have also expanded the market for online interaction. The massive growth in computer games moved younger users from the television to their laptops for interaction with their peers in Massively Multiplayer Online Role-Playing Games (MMORPGs). Social networking appeals to young women in greater numbers than gaming ever did and there is massive growth in the use of ICT in that segment. These issues are well discussed by Mazzarella in *Girl Wide Web: Girls, the Internet, and the*

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[36] L Schofield-Clark, "Digital Media and the Generation Gap" (2009) 12(3) *Information, Communication & Society* 388-407.

[37] C Shirky, *Here comes everybody* (London: Penguin, 2009) at 105.

[38] E Protalinski, "Facebook has over 845 million users" (2012) available at http://www.zdnet.com/blog/facebook/facebook-has-over-845-million-users/8332 (accessed 1 Feb 2012).

Negotiation of Identity.[39] In this sense, changing technology is no longer about the technology itself but about the individual, the user, the citizen. The most powerful tools of communication and group working yet developed are now mundane, commonplace and ubiquitous. The focus has instead moved from the technology to the task. The importance we place on group effort means that anything that changes the way groups function will have a profound effect on everything from commerce and government to media and religion. This *"wiring of humanity"* lets us treat free time as a shared global resource, and allows us to design new kinds of participation and sharing that take advantage of that resource.[40] Flexible, cheap, and inclusive media offers opportunities to do all sorts of things we once did not or could not do. Now that group forming has gone from hard to ridiculously easy, we are seeing an explosion of experiments with new groups and new kinds of groups.[41]

Of course the power of social networking does not come without risk. New technologies, especially the Internet, make it easier for people to surround themselves with the opinions of like-minded but otherwise isolated others, and to insulate themselves from competing views. Sunstein argues that for this reason alone, *"they are a breeding ground for polarization, and potentially dangerous for both democracy and social peace."*[42] This has implications for the use of the Internet for democratic deliberation and brings us back to the conceptual framework used by Henman as described at the outset of this article. Just as the emergence of traditional ICT provided a set of tools through which we saw the world in a particular, largely quantitative way, so the new tools of social media are giving us a more qualitative and interconnected way of seeing the interactions between citizen and state. Equally the notion of government as the "conduct of conduct" is even more present in the Web 2.0 environment where our constantly connected selves can feel like we are in a virtual or online panopticon.

5. The Empire Strikes Back - Implications for governance

The use of social networks by governments is at a very early stage.[43] Individual politicians have begun to use technologies like Twitter to communicate with supporters or *"followers"*. Political parties are less engaged with the medium and governments struggle to do more than post press releases. Amongst individual politicians the degree of usage spans from the local county councillor who is tweeting once a week from the council chamber, to the co-ordinated assault on social

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[39] S Mazzarella, *Girl Wide Web: Girls, the Internet, and the Negotiation of Identity* (New York: Peter Lang, 2005).

[40] C Shirky, *Cognitive Surplus* (London: Penguin, 2010) at 27.

[41] C Shirky, *Here comes everybody* (London: Penguin, 2009) at 54.

[42] CR Sunstein, *Republic.com 2.0* (New Jersey and Oxfordshire: Princeton University Press, 2007) at 63.

[43] PT Jaeger, JC Bertot, and K Shilton, "Information Policy and Social Media: Framing Government—Citizen Web 2.0 Interactions" in CG Reddick and SK Aikins (eds), *Web 2.0 Technologies and Democratic Governance, Public Administration and Information Technology* (New York: Springer Science and Business Media).

networking technologies performed by President Obama.[44] The influence of technologies like Facebook on elections is, according to researchers, *"complicated"*, but they appear to be building civic skills amongst younger voters.[45] Services like Twitter are eroding the distinction between traditional notions of media and communication by fusing personal messages and publicly available forums.[46] At the same time government organisations, such as Dublin City Council[47] and The Irish Government News Service,[48] are establishing a presence on Facebook and attempting to engage an audience. [49]

In an alternative to government-driven initiatives, people are coming together on social networks and interacting in a socio–political way, building a form of social capital. As Coleman states;

> Civic engagement can take many forms...opportunities afforded by online and multimedia interaction can lead to reflections and negotiations about power that are not easily recognized by political scientists in search of conventional signs of *"civic participation"*. The digitally facilitated influence of supporters upon the corporate management of football teams, disabled people upon the governance of public transport, diasporas upon domestically-insulated dictatorships, and rock music fans upon government policies towards third world debt all suggest that the democratic affordances of new media are unlikely to be confined to the familiar world of constitutional politics.[50]

One recent example has been the political protests and regime changes in the Middle East, notably in Egypt. Much has been written about a *"Twitter Revolution"*.[51] Google's Middle East and North Africa Marketing Manager Wael Ghonim was credited with organising the demonstrations in Cairo. The thirty-year-old marketing executive became one of the heroes of the protest movement in Tahrir Square. He told CNN;

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[44] W Zhang, TJ Johnson, T Seltzer and SL Bichard, "The Revolution Will be Networked: The Influence of Social Networking Sites on Political Attitudes and Behavior" (2010), 28(1) *Social Science Computer Review* 75-92.

[45] J Vitak, P Zube, A Smock, C T Carr, N Ellison, and C Lampe, "It's Complicated: Facebook Users' Political Participation in the 2008 Election"(2011), 14(3) *Cyberpsychology, Behaviour and Social Networking* 107-114.

[46] C Shirky, *Here comes everybody* (London: Penguin, 2009) at 299.

[47] Dublin City Council, "Facebook", available at https://www.facebook.com/DublinCityCouncil (accessed 9 May 2013).

[48] The Irish Government News Service, "MerrionStreet", available at http://www.merrionstreet.ie/ (accessed 9 May 2013).

[49] E Gilmore, "Democratisation and New Media" (2012) 23(1) *Irish Studies in International Affairs* 5-12.

[50] S Coleman, "E-Democracy: The history and future of an idea" in R Mansell, C Avgerou, D Quah, and R Silverstone (eds), *The Oxford Handbook of Information and Communication Technologies* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007) 363-383.

[51] E Zuckerman, The first Twitter revolution? (2011) available at http://mideast.foreignpolicy.com/posts/2011/01/14/the_first_twitter_revolution (accessed 10 Feb 2012).

> This revolution started online. This revolution started on Facebook.
> This revolution started in June 2010 when hundreds of thousands of
> Egyptians started collaborating content. We would post a video on
> Facebook that would be shared by 60,000 people on their walls
> within a few hours. I always said that if you want to liberate a
> society just give them the Internet.[52]

Even those who do not accept this admittedly simplistic view of events and argue
against the notion of a "Facebook Revolution" acknowledge the importance of
Facebook in contributing to the process of change;

> Few can deny that social media has enabled the most significant
> advance in freedom of expression and association in contemporary
> Arab history. During the protests, social media aggregated,
> disseminated and accelerated vital news and information.[53]

A recent review of the impact of social networking on the 2011 Tunisian revolution
from a psychological perspective found that Facebook performed a political function;
an informational function; and a media platform function.[54] It is important to note
that the impact of this technology in providing alternate forms of communication is
not limited to the extreme situation found in times of war and revolution. The
devolution of power to local communities is discussed in the UK White Paper
'Communities in Control: Real People, Real Power'.[55] In discussing the contribution
of Web 2.0 technologies to this process, Morison quotes the former UK Secretary of
State for Communities and Local Government, Hazel Blears, who said, *"people
should have the maximum influence, control and ownership over the decisions, forces
and agencies which shape their lives and environments is the essence of democracy.
There are few ideas more powerful, or more challenging."*[56] This work is related to
the research fields of choice, community, big-society and communications;
technology has a role to play in these debates but is just one of the factors. Another
factor is the changing psychology of online users. While it is too big a subject to
address here, suffice it to say, the Internet empowers people in general, and people
with social inhibitions, in particular. The protection the Internet provides may
encourage introverts, neurotics, lonely people, those suffering from social anxiety, and

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[52] J Cohen, "Google's Wael Ghonim Thanks Facebook For Revolution" (2011) available at
http://www.allfacebook.com/googles-wael-ghonim-thanks-facebook-for-revolution-2011-02 (accessed
11 Feb 2012).

[53] J Ghannam, "In the Middle East, this is not a Facebook revolution" (2011) available at
http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2011/02/18/AR2011021806964.html
(accessed 10 Feb 2012).

[54] Y Marzouki, I Skandrani-Marzouki, M Bejaoui, H Hammoudi, and T Bellaj, "The Contribution of
Facebook to the 2011 Tunisian Revolution: A Cyberpsychological Insight" (2012) 15(5)
Cyberpsychology, Behaviour, and Social Networking 237-244.

[55] Communities and Local Government, (2008) "Communities in Control: Real People, Real Power"
(2008) available at http://www.communities.gov.uk/documents/communities/pdf/886045.pdf
(accessed 10 Feb 2012).

[56] J Morison, "Gov 2.0: Towards a User Generated State?" in *The Modern Law Review* (Oxford:
Blackwell Publishing, 2010) 551-577.

people with physical disabilities to build social links—a task that would otherwise prove more challenging in an offline environment.[57]

As social networks progress from coordination to governance, groups of users are gaining enough power and support to be able to demand deference. This public and civic value which is being created by social networks requires commitment and hard work among the core group of participants. In this way the practice of governance is being learnt by individuals and often by younger members of society, or by groups not traditionally engaged in the political process. In many ways these groups are serving an apprenticeship in citizenship. As Shirky goes on to say;

> Civic value rarely comes from sudden social conversions, or from individual actions. It comes instead from the work of groups, small groups at first that grow in size and importance, the pattern of collaborative circles, communities and practice, and many other group patterns....It's from groups trying new things that the most profound uses of social media have hitherto come and will come in the future.[58]

This promotion of civic value and the building of an awareness of governance is an important advance in the contribution of technology. Social networks may provide a forum for discussion and interaction but do they have any capacity to contribute towards decision making? One early attempt to test this functionality has been with Online Dispute Resolution (ODR). Katsh describes a number of experiments with ODR: a Virtual Magistrate to aid in disputes between ISPs and users, an Online Ombudsman Office to offer a general dispute resolution service (run by the University of Massachusetts) and an ODR to resolve family disputes (proposed by the University of Maryland).[59] Online Dispute Resolution is, *"not intended to challenge or displace an existing legal regime but to fill a vacuum where the authority of law was absent."*[60]

The online auction site eBay is an example of a company whose ability to be successful is dependent its customers' trust that goods and services will exchange at agreed prices and that buyers and sellers will act in good faith.[61] The feedback rating system goes someway to providing this assurance, but when disputes arise there needs to be an effective process for dispute resolution. eBay engaged an Internet start-up, SquareTrade.com to provide this service. By automating the process and using web pages with forms and options to choose from, rather than an open ended email system, SquareTrade is able to handle many million individual disputes each year.

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[57] Y Amichai-Hamburger, "Potential and promise of online volunteering" (2007) 24 *Computers in Human Behavior* 544-562.

[58] C Shirky, *Cognitive Surplus* (London: Penguin, 2010) at 186.

[59] E Katsh, "Online Dispute Resolution: Some Implications for the Emergence of Law in Cyberspace" (2007) 21 *International Review of Law, Computers & Technology* 97-107.

[60] *Ibid*, at 99.

[61] J Boyd, "In Community We Trust: Online Security Communication at eBay" (2002) 3 The Journal of Computer-Mediated Communication's http://jcmc.indiana.edu/vol7/issue3/boyd.html#Conclusions (accessed 7 Apr 2013).

Social networking sites are self-governing, either by the collective will of the users or by the use of moderators. Behaviour on such sites which is considered inappropriate by other users causes a reaction and can lead to exclusion. The choice of moderation style is important in influencing the nature of the online conversations and the ethos of the environment. Wright outlined two broad types of moderation that are used in British and European government-run online discussion forums.[62] These are content moderation, which can be either automated or manual, and interactive moderation, which has a broader remit. Interactive moderation requires a range of roles for the moderator such as replying to messages, encouraging people to join the debate and providing summaries. Interactive moderation is similar to Edwards' description of the moderator as a democratic intermediary.[63]

How will social networking be used as a tool of government? The potential for communication, collaboration, decision making and so on are all positioned as broadly positive. However the potential exists for government to use technology for forms of online participation that replace traditional community forums and methods of influence. This brings us back to the discussion of governance through freedom. In this case, governance is positioned as choice though online participation used as a creative way of constituting strategies for the indirect shaping of conduct, and for the manipulation of choice. Will the technology change the nature of the interaction? This will depend on more than the ability of the technology to promote discourse. It is this potential for discourse that distinguished the quantitative nature of first phase eGovernment initiatives which sought to measure, allocate and manage resources with the more qualitative Web 2.0 technologies which allow for group forming discussion and engagement. In order to promote continued engagement, interconnected citizens will need to find a government willing and able to engage. In the absence of such engagement the digital divide may re-emerge as a gap between Gov 1.0—the traditional organs of the state and citizen, and Gov 2.0—the self-governing community on online users, or 'Citizen 2.0'.

The growth and universality of social networking in the community is leading to a new form of governance amongst individuals not traditionally motivated to be involved. This is a resource of talented and socially aware individuals and groups who need to be engaged in a broader sense in the governance of society. The digital divide may be narrowing, but there may be a governance divide opening between traditional, state-centred notions of governance and local, issue-based network governance.

6. Return of the Jedi – Empowering the Citizen

The falling price of memory and increasing processing power has led directly to the emergence of what we call Web 2.0 technologies, or existing Internet technologies being used in new and unexpected ways to link citizens in a constant conversation with each other. We are all adjusting to this technology, trying to understand the implications of these changes in the way we interact with each other and with the state. What advances in democratic engagement are now possible as a result of the

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[62] S Wright, "Government-run Online Discussion Forums: Moderation, Censorship and the Shadow of Control" (2006) 8 *British Journal of Politics and International Relations* 550 – 68.

[63] A Edwards, "The Moderator as an Emerging Democratic Intermediary: The Role of the Moderator in Internet Discussions about Public Issues" (2002) 7 *Information Polity* 3–20.

new tools through which we can now see our world? How will initiatives developed in the context of social networking be adopted or realised by government? Can a form of governance exist in parallel with the formal mechanisms of government or will there be a converging of these systems of human interaction?

Morison wrote in 1998 that *"Government now is only one of many actors that may influence the course of events in society."*[64] Rose went further in 1999 by maintaining that *"The state now appears simply as one element – whose functionality is historically specific and contextually variable – in multiple circuits of power, connecting a diversity of authorities and forces, within a whole variety of complex assemblages."*[65] Ten years on, reviewing the growth in data available to all online users, Morison was still of the view that *"the Web 2.0 phenomenon…has potentially dispersed this governing resource much more widely. While it may remain the most powerful, government is still only one of a range of actors able to develop this information."*[66] Technology is enabling the realisation of this statement. It is not that the technology in itself is particularly innovative, but rather, the innovation lies in the inventive ways in which we are learning to use these technologies.

Web 2.0 technologies have brought unprecedented opportunities for civil activity and for the promotion of interaction between government and citizens. Citizens are empowered through the potential for political participation; accessibility; and the ability to supervise and influence government decisions.[67] This informed citizenship is described by Amichai-Hamburger as "globalization from below".[68] The new public forums provided by social networking technologies provide a qualitative perspective on the issues of governance that concern us. Coleman maintains that we must *"explore those currents of new mediation which nurture the non-politically political and sustain the democratizing practices of the disengaged."*[69] As technology transitions from broadcasting to interaction we are no longer passive observers of content, but participants in change. Heidegger's work showed that the tools we use influence the way we see the world, and both Foucault and Lukes provided us with an insight into the power of observation and choice in the control of behaviour. The new tools of social media are allowing us see the world in a different way. Governments with the imagination to embrace these tools may seek to govern and exercise control by providing citizens with the means to engage and participate in the process of governance. The digitising of democracy provides those in power with new insights into the process of governance, but can also be an empowering force for the connected and engaged citizen.

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[64] J Morison, "The Case Against Constitutional Reform?" (1998) 25 *Journal of Law and Society* 510-535 at 518.

[65] N Rose, *Powers of Freedom* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999) at 5.

[66] J Morison, "Gov 2.0: Towards a User Generated State?" in *The Modern Law Review* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2010) 551-577.

[67] Y Amichai-Hamburger, K Y A McKenna, and S A Tal, "E-empowerment: Empowerment by the Internet" (2008) 24 *Computers in Human Behavior* 1776-1789.

[68] *Ibid*, 1786.

[69] S Coleman, "E-Democracy: The history and future of an idea" in R Mansell, C Avgerou, D Quah, and R Silverstone (eds), *The Oxford Handbook of Information and Communication Technologies* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007) 363-383.