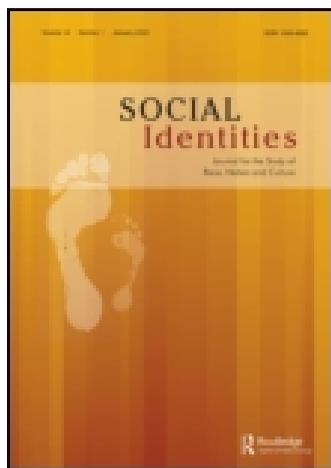


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Editorial

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Editorial

Corporate power is challenged. State authority is compromised. Avant-garde art and politics are centered. The young are masters, not victims. Technologies represent freedom, not domination. Revolutions are fomented by Twitter, not theory; by memes, not memos; by Facebook, not Foucault; by phone, not protest.

Political participation is just a click away. Tweets are the new streets and on-line friends the new vanguard, as 140ism displaces Maoism. Cadres are created and destroyed via BlackBerry. Teens tease technocrats. Hackers undermine hierarchy. Leakers douse the fire of spies and illuminate the shady world of diplomats. The endless iterations offered by digital reproduction and the immediate exchange promised by the internet have turned the world on its head.

We are advised that the media in particular are being transformed. Tradition is rent asunder. Newspapers are metaphorically tossed aside. What was once their fate in a literal sense (when we dispensed with print in *poubelles*) is now a figure of speech that refers to their financial decline. Journalists are recycled as public-relations people, and readers become the new journalists. Cinema is irrelevant, TV is on the way out, gaming is the future, telephony is timeless, and the entire panoply of scholarship into the political economy of ownership and control is of archeological interest at best.

This technophilic vision of old and middle-aged media displaced by the new is espoused by a wide variety of actors. The corporate world signs up: Netflix proudly proclaims that ‘[i]nternet TV is replacing linear TV. Apps are replacing channels, remote controls are disappearing, and screens are proliferating’ (Netflix, n.d.). IBM disparages ‘Massive Passives ... in the living room ... a “lean back” mode in which consumers do little more than flip on the remote and scan programming.’ By contrast, it valorizes and desires ‘Gadgetiers and Kool Kids’ who ‘force radical change’ because they demand ‘anywhere, anytime content’ (IBM, n.d.).

The state loves this new world, too. Let’s drop in on a Pentagon web site to see its share of the joy:

Take the world’s most powerful sea, air and land force with you wherever you go with the new America’s Navy iPhone app. Read the latest articles. See the newest pics and videos. And learn more about the Navy – from its vessels and weapons to its global activities. You can do it all right on your iPhone – and then share what you like with friends via your favorite social media venues. (US Navy, n.d.)

Civil society is also excited. The wonderfully-named Progress & Freedom Foundation’s *Magna Carta for the Information Age* proposes that the political-economic gains made through democratic action since the thirteenth century have been eclipsed by technological ones:

The central event of the 20th century is the overthrow of matter. In technology, economics, and the politics of nations, wealth – in the form of physical resources – has been losing value

and significance. The powers of mind are everywhere ascendant over the brute force of things. (Progress & Freedom Foundation, n.d.)

The Foundation has closed its doors, no doubt overtaken by pesky progress, but its discourse of liberty still rings loudly in our ears. Meanwhile, a prominent international environmental organization surveys us about its methods and appeal, asking whether we are prepared to sign petitions and embark on actions under its direction that might lead to our arrest. We prefer cosily comfortable clicking to infantile attention-seeking incarceration, but either way, twinning the two is a telling sign of the times.

Is this still politics? What are the identities on display and under construction? As you read the fantasies mentioned above, does this speak to your experience or empirical investigations of social phenomena, as opposed to magazine articles and coffee-shop gossip?

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