MAGISTERARBEIT

Titel der Magisterarbeit

"Don't worry, we're from the Internet – Cyber Activism and Counter Governance in the Icelandic Economic Crisis"

verfasst von

Thomas König, Bakk.phil.

angestrebter akademischer Grad

Magister der Philosophie (Mag.phil.)

Wien, 2015

For my family

and all the restless souls out there

Acknowledgements

I could not have done this thesis without the help and guidance of several people who supported me and my research project.

First and foremost I want to express my gratitude to Prof. Katharine Sarikakis who finally guided my train of thought into a specific direction and towards the topic of this thesis. I am especially thankful for her enthusiasm, friendly advice and invaluably constructive criticism and before and during the project work. I also want to thank Dr. Joan Ramon Rodriguez-Amat for his progressive inputs throughout my studies.

I also want to thank my dear friends, the Shabka-Team Lukas Wank and Paul Winter, for their contagious excitement about the constant flux of society. Further I am grateful for my friends Michi, Tobi, Fabian and Anna for supporting me regardless of my state of mind. A special thanks to my family who has always be there for me and fueled me with motivation, coffee and food.

Last, but certainly not least, I want to thank Cara Tovey for proofreading my thesis, improving my language skills and providing tremendous feedback.

Table of Contents

Abbreviations

AES: *Advanced Encryption Standard*

ARPANET: *Advanced Research Projects Agency Network*

DDoS: *Distributed Denial of Service*

FME: *Financial Supervisory Authority*

FOSS: *Free and Open Source Software*

FSF: *Free Software Foundation*

GDP: *Gross domestic product*

GNU: *GNU's Not Unix*

GPL: *GNU Public Licence*

HDI: *Human Development Index*

IMMI: *Icelandic Modern Media Initiative*

LOIC: *Low Orbit Ion Cannon*

PGP: *Pretty Good Privacy*

RÚV: *Ríkisútvarpið*

TCP/IP: *Transmission Control Protocol / Internet Protocol*

URL: *Uniform Resource Locator*

VOIP: *Voice Over IP*

VPN: *Virtual Private Network*

XMPP: *Extensible Messaging and Presence Protocol*

1. Introduction

Increased internet accessibility over the last decades has infused the daily lives of people in many countries with technology. As a result, the internet has become increasingly important as a sphere for information dissemination, and subsequently a platform for dissent. While corporations manage to utilize user data for their own ends, the tech savvy hacking culture finds pleasure in tinkering with new media. With the growing connectivity, social movements began to use the internet's capabilities for their own causes. Cyber activism has since become an integral part of contemporary protest movements and social media have become important platforms for spreading information across the internet. Open source tools promise security for those who have to fear prosecution for standing up against the political elites, and thus, irreverent counter narratives as a part of internet culture are here to stay.

But apart from the often colorful and glorifying descriptions and metaphors about the internet and its allegedly revolutionary characteristics: What is really to it? What really constitutes the internet for a society? This thesis explores the relationship between cyber activism and social movements. It inquires into the consequences of technology-driven measures of counter governance. To accomplish this task, this thesis examines an extraordinary case study in Iceland during its economic crisis starting in 2008.

The "Icelandic Modern Media Initiative" (IMMI) was the Icelandic activist's answer to the systemic fail of the country's banking sector. Triggered by confidential documents published on WikiLeaks, IMMI provides an excellent example of the dialectic between cyber activism and a grassroots protest movement. It set out to turn Iceland into a global safe haven

for information online and whistleblowers, thus creating an anti-establishment counterpublic sphere.

The following thesis explores first the components of cyber activism and the influence of the internet on society. The second part deals with the findings of the case study, IMMI. It applies the theoretical discussions on the empirical findings to discuss the key values of cyber activism in IMMI's emergence. The following chapter begins the inquiry by providing a historical overview of the events in question. This contextual knowledge is important to understand the setting out of which IMMI emerged.

2. Historical Outline on the Emergence of IMMI

The following chapter provides a brief overview on the development of IMMI and the events that sparked its emergence. IMMI was originally an abbreviation for "Icelandic Modern Media Initiative". The following year, the "International Modern Media Institute" was founded as an overarching non-profit organization. "Founded in 2011 to address the growing need in Iceland and internationally, it is the descendant and natural progression of the synonymous Icelandic Modern Media Initiative" (IMMI, 2014a). Throughout this thesis, the abbreviation IMMI addresses the Icelandic Modern Media Initiative. Topic of the thesis is the proposal and its development, and not the institution.

In October 2008 the investment bank Lehman Brothers went bankrupt and during the 2008 financial crisis Iceland suffered a massive economic crash. Iceland's biggest financial institution suddenly went bankrupt on October 9, 2008 (Iceland Review, 2008). Two other large banks, Glitnir and Landsbanki, followed and all three were taken over by Iceland's Financial Supervisory Authority (FME). Iceland's currency, the Króna, dropped to half of its value almost overnight, and Iceland's external debt became 10 times its GDP (Matthiasson, 2012).

On July 30, 2009 WikiLeaks published a 210-page confidential document belonging to Kaupthing, which provided evidence of the bank giving away unusual loans to companies that were major shareholders (WikiLeaks, 2009a). Within 24 hours WikiLeaks received a legal threat from Kaupthing's lawyers, to which WikiLeaks answered that it will not "assist

the remains of Kaupthing, or its clients, to hide its dirty laundry from the global community" (WikiLeaks, 2009b).

At the same time RÚV, Iceland's national television broadcaster, was investigating on a story regarding Kaupthing's suspicious loan records. Bogi Ágússton, one of Iceland's main news reporters, received a restraining order from a judge, shortly before the evening news broadcast on August 1, 2009 (WikiLeaks, 2009a). The news report was based on internal documents of the bank published by Wikileaks and analyzed by journalists at RÚV. Because of the restraining order, Bogi Ágússton was not allowed to broadcast the scandal. Instead, he reported live on the evening news that he got an order from the judge, and thus, could not deliver the news as planned. He advised his viewers to look up the original documents on the Wikileaks website and posted the link to the documents on the screen (Lázaro, 2014).

The apparent attempt at media censorship turned the story into a scandal (Sigurgisdottir, 2009). The whole population of Iceland, all of a sudden, became aware of WikiLeaks. Julian Assange subsequently spent a few weeks in Iceland working with Icelandic activists, such as Birgitta Jónsdóttir and Smári McCarthy, to develop a proposal with the objective to turn Iceland into a safe haven for investigative journalism (Vallance, 2010). By adapting different laws from countries all over the world into the proposal, they combined their strengths and provided a powerful legal situation, which protected freedom of expression. The proposal was called the "Icelandic Modern Media Initiative" (IMMI) and was submitted to the Althingi, the Icelandic parliament, on February 16, 2010. It has the optimistic objective of providing the strongest media protection law in the world and to serve as a digital save haven

for information online. The Althingi approved the IMMI-resolution unanimously on June 16, 2010 (Fernández-Delgado & Balanza, 2012).

An IMMI steering committee was appointed by the Ministry of Education, Science and Culture. "Its role is to prepare necessary changes in legislation or implement new laws, looking at legislation abroad in the aim of combining the best set of laws to create a safe haven in Iceland for information freedom and freedom of expression" (IMMI, 2014d). The steering committee changes annually and is nominated by different ministries. Its members are responsible for putting IMMI into Icelandic law. The first IMMI steering committee was put together in May 2012, two years after the proposal was approved in the parliament.

Per design, IMMI cannot protect people in the flesh. IMMI was created to protect the material of whistleblowers, journalists and activists online. The protection of the persons behind the information is a far more complex topic that is too big for IMMI to cover. However, IMMI supports the protection of persons that are prosecuted because of the information they made public (IMMI, 2014c). The following pages delineate IMMI's core topics and provide a short overview of the proposal.

Synopsis of IMMI-resolution (IMMI, 2014b)

"Ultra-modern Freedom of Information Act": The current Icelandic Freedom of Information Law is based on Norwegian and Danish laws from 1970. Currently in Iceland, there is neither a central register of governmental documents nor a standardized request form. A feature as result of the new law would be an internet-published register where governmental documents would be listed and could be obtained. The new register would

include a search function by subject, whereas the current law requires users to be aware of the existence of a specific document to be able to obtain it. Also, limitation of the release of documents would be dynamic instead of absolute, as it is currently. Public interest would have to be weighted as well on a dynamic base. The concept of the new Freedom of Information act rests on the assumption that, governmental documents are by default public. This would apply as long as there is not an exceptional reason that would prevent publication.

"Whistleblower protection": Whistleblowers historically count for big exposure of corporate or public corruption and misbehavior. Therefore, it is proposed to put specific mechanisms in place to protect the revealing of unethical practices in the service of public interest. Government officials would be allowed to break duty of silence in case of justifying circumstances. The same would apply to municipal government officials. The act of reporting fraud would be weighed against public interest in procedures against public servants. Those who step forward to reveal important matters in the public interest are encouraged and protected, as the proposal states.

"Source protection": The current legal situation regarding the protection of a journalist's sources includes the right to refuse exposing the source. However, it can be overruled by a general court order. According to IMMI, this exception is too general and should be restricted further. For example, overruling judge orders will only be allowed in criminal cases.

"Source-journalist communications protection": Based on the Belgium source protection law, the communication between an anonymous source and a media organization should be

protected. However, if the communication data is collected by other corporations or the government, then protection is limited. The original intention of this section of IMMI was to prevent the implementation of the EU data retention, which at that time was still in effect. Currently, responsibilities of intermediaries, such as network providers and data centers, are limited. It is further proposed that exceptions to these limitations should be more clearly defined.

"Limiting prior restraint": Prior restraint is coercion of a publisher to prevent publication of a specific matter. While the Icelandic constitution provides the right to freedom of expression, modifications would needed to reduce the occurrence of prior restraint. Injunctions based on bank secrecy laws, as was the case in the Kaupthing gag order, would restrict freedom of information. Therefore, the potential occurrences of prior restraint would further need to be explored and limited.

"Protection from "libel tourism" and other extrajudicial abuses": In recent years, British libel law has been abused to enforce execution of judgments in foreign courts. An Icelander could be condemned by foreign law, which would have judicial consequences in Iceland as the Icelandic government has to complete the foreign judgment. The states of New York and Florida passed legislations under which a foreign verdict is not upheld if it contradicts the first amendment of the US constitution. Inspired by this concept, IMMI proposes a similar implementation.

"Process protections": The majority of legal suits related to publishing settle before the final judgment of a court. Often the financial risk for smaller media agencies is too big to participate in legal battles. Even though the process is ultimately won, there are significant

legal fees, which are financially infeasible for smaller media. Therefore, it would be important under IMMI for the court process to ensure that it is not used to suppress speech through unequal access to justice. Process protections permit a judge to declare the matter a free speech related case, at which point protections are activated to prevent such abuses.

"Protection of historical records": Recent rulings in Europe maintain that, for internet publications, each page view is its own, new publication again. This is regardless of how long ago the material was first released. Such implications have resulted in the silent removal of investigative newspaper stories. Reports were removed to avoid legal costs regarding lawsuits against articles that had been published years ago. IMMI proposes that, following a model in France, lawsuits related to online publishing have to be filed within two months after publication.

"Icelandic Prize for Freedom of Expression": Iceland would host its first internationally visible prize. It would honor those who have shown courage in defending freedom of expression. It is thought that the prize will be primarily awarded to journalists, whistleblowers and activists.

3. Relevance and Research Interest

The internet is highly relevant for contemporary means of communication. It has become a global playground for politics, policies and activism. Even though virtual spaces are not new, they are in constant flux. Social science is usually reactive to societal changes and always behind in addressing how a network society shapes and is shaped by its policies. Online media influence civil as well as institutional ways of interaction. They are, therefore, a fundamental part of Western life, and thus, an important matter of communication science.

IMMI calls for an interdisciplinary research approach that includes a broad variety of factors for Iceland's society, such as medial, cultural, judicial and economical aspects. The Icelandic economic crash tore a hole into the country's power structures and a grassroots movement challenged that vacuum. Because of this, many questions are now relevant regarding this development: Was the mindset for IMMI new in Iceland or was it just triggered by the crisis? How big was the influence of activist entities, mainly WikiLeaks and what was its role in the emergence of IMMI as well as in its further progress? What were the reasons to develop a proposal for laws protecting freedom of information in times of an economic crisis? How much of the proposal was implemented and what is its international relevance? Normally, in order to transform a proposal into a valid legal situation, many more steps than simply a proposal are necessary. There are a few studies on WikiLeaks that tackle IMMI on the side (Hindman & Thomas , 2013; Lindgren & Lundström , 2011; Thomaß, 2011; Cammaerts, 2013), but there is little scientific literature on IMMI itself. This thesis attempts to explore the relationship between cyber activism, social movements, and the

Icelandic society during the economic crisis in 2008. The main research question is the following:

How did cyber activism influence social movements in the Icelandic financial crisis and what are the consequences?

The methodology used to address this complex topic is a case study in Iceland including a field trip. Interviews with the persons involved are necessary for a deeper understanding of the Icelandic social realm and the circumstances of IMMI's emergence. The following chapters will provide a methodological overview and will clarify the research design.

4. Methodology

4.1.   Case Study Approach

One of the first issues at hand is how to address a multidimensional, transcultural, socio-economic, and partly virtual happening, such as the emergence of IMMI. Arguably, a one-dimensional approach would lead to one-dimensional results. By lacking context, erroneous generalizations and false causal dependencies would be likely to occur. The online world is a melting pot of different cultures, ages, times, and institutions, which are to some extent interdependent. The complexity and flux of the virtual realm calls for a flexible approach towards methodology. Addressing social happenings and how they are influenced by interactions between online and offline spaces with narrow research tools falls short of recognizing the complexity of the topic. For that reason, the multi-dimensional approach of using case studies should serve the size and structure of the topic. Yin describes the characteristic of case studies as follows:

> A case study is an empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon in depth and within its real-life context, especially when the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident. […] The case study inquiry copes with the technically distinctive situation in which there will be many more variables of interest than data points, and as one result relies on multiple sources of evidence, with data needing to converge in a triangulating fashion, and as another result benefits from the prior development of theoretical propositions to guide data collection and analysis. (Yin, 2008, p. 18)

Yin emphasizes the importance of multiplicity in data and of sources to be able to understand the phenomenon. A case study is useful if contextual conditions are important to and not always distinguishable from the topic (Yin, 2008, p. 18) which applies for IMMI. Berg writes that case study methods "involve systematically gathering enough information about a particular person, social setting, event, or group to permit the researcher to effectively understand how it operates or functions" (Berg, 2001, p. 225). Berg argues in favor of a broader investigation for reasons of interconnectedness of many aspects of social life that "cannot be adequately understood without consideration of the others" (Berg, 2001, p. 226).

For Yin, three conditions need to be fulfilled for a case study to be applied (Yin, 2008, p. 21): The first one addresses the form of the research question. Questions in form of "how" or "why" are suitable for case studies because they are explanatory. Second, control of behavioral events should not be necessary. And third, the focus should lie on contemporary events. What sets a case study apart from a history are, according to Yin, direct observation and interviews of the persons involved (Yin, 2008, p. 23). Thus, "the case study's unique strength is its ability to deal with a full variety of evidence" (Yin, 2008, p. 23).

The uniqueness and contemporary relevance of IMMI, and the influence of WikiLeaks on its existence make it an excellent case study. IMMI is unique in that it is an attempt at constructive counter-governance during Iceland's economic crisis. Additionally it is also influenced by cyber activism, like WikiLeaks as input source. IMMI also utilizes online tools for collaboration and collective research. The way in which IMMI functionally and structurally evolved also makes it an important contribution to contemporary discussions about freedom of expression online. In recent protest movements, such as the so-called Arab

uprisings or the Occupy movement, cyber activism was used first as a toolset for opposition and disruption. IMMI however, also uses online tools in constructive ways for grassroots activism that attempts to shift power structures by not only opposing existing structures, but by primarily providing an alternative.

IMMI's primary stakeholders are, to an extent, well known, which also facilitates the use of interviews. The size of Iceland, geographically as well as socio-economically, makes a comprehensive case study in this area possible.

Nevertheless there are limitations within the case as well as within the methodology itself. First, due to the involvement of international participants in much of IMMI's work, it is difficult to obtain information from a variety of international perspectives. Where the main founders of IMMI are residing in Iceland, there are primary and secondary stakeholders that are not available for interviews. There is also a linguistic issue at hand: Albeit most Icelanders are fluent in English, it is not their mother tongue. This needs to be kept in mind when conducting interviews and in considering observations. Because most of the parliamentarian cables are only available in Icelandic, it also affects the amount of documents that are available to the researcher. A more detailed description of the methodological limitations of IMMI can be found in the case study design in Chapter 4.2.

Second, there are limitations to the methodology of case studies itself. There is often a lack of rigor, especially when the investigation was not sound or systematic in its process (Yin, 2008, p. 25). This is especially relevant for bigger case studies with panoply of tools for collecting data. While the design of a case study needs to stay flexible, a systematic design pattern needs to be established. As a consequence of a lack of design, the research might

make too many subjective decisions (Berg, 2001, p. 231). Another a main concern towards the methodology is, that they look at a specific case, and therefore, provide little basis for scientific generalization (Yin, 2008, p. 26).

Further concerns can be raised about objectivity and reproducibility. Berg argues that objectivity is "a somewhat elusive term" (Berg, 2001, p. 231) and that it is closely linked to a feasibility of replication. The researcher needs to be aware of and reflect on biases and decisions. She or he also needs to be cautious of subjectivity in the research design, data collecting and interpretation. Interpretation is to a great extent always subjective. Therefore, it is important to take field notes, and include propositions and possible biases into the final thesis so as to make them apparent. Such biases can also be caused by the material itself or by cultural and linguistic differences of the researcher and the research field.

For the main source of information for this research, the interview, Briggs emphasizes the "systematic integration of metacommunicative routines" (Briggs, 1986, p. 99) to reduce bias and misinterpretations. By undertaking an extensive observation of the communicative structures and the social environment, the researcher is more likely to be able to capture important details in interviews. Knowledge of local socio-cultural factors is important for the researcher in order to be able to contextualize the discourse (Briggs, 1986, p. 106). Such factors can be social etiquette, body language, but also sarcasm and jokes.

4.2. Case Study Design for IMMI

The following chapter delineates the explorative research design of a single case study. As such it is, according to Berg (2001, p. 230), useful for a contemporary and rather unique

case, but difficult to ensure reproducibility. Most of the data was collected in Iceland on a 6 week field trip that included traveling across most parts of the island. The case study consists of several methods for collecting information. In order to contextualize it, there was an initial research phase prior to the field trip (Briggs, 1986, p. 106). In the second phase, an extensive field trip was undertaken to also lead to remote places and provide a cultural overview of the Icelandic citizens. For that phase, diversity of observations was important to capture the socio-cultural idiosyncrasies of Iceland. This included diversity in opinions on topics related to IMMI and the crisis as well as cultural values. The third phase consisted of interviews with the main stakeholders of IMMI in Reykjavik.

Throughout the thesis, interview partners are addressed with their full name or first name only. An Icelandic name consists of a first name and a reference to the father's name. In case of a female person, the second name consists of her father's first name and the ending "-dottir", e.g "Birgitta Jónsdóttir" being the daughter of Jón. A male person's second name consists of his father's first name and the ending "-son", e.g "Bogi Ágústsson" being the son of Ágúst. Referring to Icelandic citizens by only using their second name causes confusion and is often considered to be impolite.

The details of the following research design and input sources are based on Berg (2001), Briggs (1986), and Yin's "sources of evidence" (Yin, 2008, p. 102):

Interviews:

The interviews were semi-structured. There was an overarching theme in all interview questions but since every stakeholder played a different part in the case, the questions were altered in the details. All interviews were conducted in English and it was ensured that all

interviewees spoke English sufficiently. Audio was recorded after agreed upon. Notes were taken as well during and after the interviews to maintain details and accuracy. The interviews took place in Iceland's capital Reykjavik and were conducted in person. Berg (2001, p. 226) argues that the "home background" of the interviewees can be very rewarding. By that he means that the interviewee should be in a familiar environment, for example at home or at the office. Prior to the interviews a letter had been sent to the possible stakeholders of the research topic. It had asked for participation in a research study and can be found in the addendum of this thesis. The list of persons that agreed on an interview is as following:

- Guðjón Idir (IMMI Director)

- Birgitta Jónsdóttir (IMMI Spokesperson, activist, member of parliament)

- Kristinn Hrafnsson (WikiLeaks spokesperson, former journalist)

- Katrin Jakobsdottir (Former Minister of Education, Science & Culture)

- Bogi Ágústsson (Iceland's main news anchor)

- Ingólfur Bjarni Sigfússon (RÚV head of Online and New Media Department)

- Helgi Seljan (RÚV journalist, "Collateral Murder" video in collaboration with Wikileaks[1])

- Margret Magnusdottir (RÚV Head of Legal Affairs, part of IMMI steering committee)

---

[1] The video was put together by employees of RÚV in collaboration with WikiLeaks and IMMI. It shows an US military helicopter shooting at unarmed Reuters employees as well as civilians and children in Baghdad 2007. Several people were killed or seriously wounded. Attempts of Reuters to obtain information about the incident through the Freedom of Information Act had been unsuccessful. The video contains highly graphic material and led to controversial debates about the allegedly "clean" methods of US warfare (WikiLeaks, 2010).

Observation

An observation takes place in the natural setting of the case and is by default biased and heavily influenced by personal judgment (Yin, 2008, p. 128). For this thesis, observation was not predominantly used for a specific "event" which then became the case. The observation part was used for a general overview of socio-cultural values of Iceland. It was not a primary method for acquiring input material, but for integrating context and metacommunicative routines into the research. It included direct observations and casual interviews with the local population. By talking to Icelandic citizens, the observation was less passive and disconnected from the case and it leaned towards ethnographic field strategies (Berg, 2001, p. 133). Throughout the field trip personal notes were taken as well.

Documentation

Documentary information can be variable and take many forms, but has to be viewed critically since much of it is subjective (Yin, 2008, p. 120). For IMMI, the most relevant documents are the parliamentary proposal and documents and studies that can be found on IMMI's website. There are also several documentaries on WikiLeaks that briefly include IMMI in interviews, as well as video interviews of IMMI personnel on YouTube. Published documents are added to the bibliography, whereas unpublished documents, such as the project letter, can be found in the appendix.

The study was not ethically problematic. All interviewees are public figures in Iceland. As stated in the project letter sent to the participants, anonymity would have been granted if requested. All participants were be asked for permission to record the interviews and they were informed that the recordings are for use of this research only. The research did not

involve contact with vulnerable human subjects or subjects with physical or mental disabilities.

5. Social Media and Voices of Dissent

5.1. History: Of Publics and Counterpublics

Discussions about participatory democracy and counter-governance online often refer to the concept of public sphere(s), first uttered by Jürgen Habermas in 1964 and translated to English a decade later (Habermas, 1974). At a time when there was no Facebook, Twitter, Google or YouTube, society dealt with different issues and social struggles were still mostly class-related. This stands in contrast to social struggles in the information society the West considers itself in now. So why bother with it altogether? Nevertheless, Habermas' conception of public opinion is still a useful starting point when thinking about contemporary protest movements. The following pages provide a brief historical overview of the theoretical roots of public sphere(s) and how they can help analyze the ever-changing, fluid realm of media spaces contained on the internet. It is, however, not a discussion on the concept of public sphere(s) itself, as this would go far beyond the frame of this thesis. Moreover, constituting the basic conception that a myriad of publicly uttered opinions can form a rational and critical debate helps to grasp a (counter)-political sentiment within today's social movements. As Habermas puts it:

> By 'the public sphere' we mean first of all a realm of our social life in which something approaching public opinion can be formed. Access is guaranteed to all citizens. A portion of the public sphere comes into being in every conversation in which private individuals assemble to form a public body. (Habermas, 1974, p. 49)

Specifically, the second argument about access being granted is very reminiscent of a prerequisite of early hacking culture — it demanded access to information as a human right and a necessity for political participation (Jordan & Taylor, 2004, p. 97). Arguably, the claim for information freedom as a human right lacks a certain sense of reality, a flaw that occasionally reappears throughout philosophy and social sciences. Public access to information is something very hard to guarantee and did not necessarily change with emergence of the internet. Additionally, Habermas' original approach to *the* public sphere is too simple to explain potentially global political narratives and counter-narratives that are infused with virtual spaces.

Habermas draws his term from "bourgeois public sphere" describing a "sphere of private individuals assembled into a public body" (Habermas, The Public Sphere: An Encyclopedia Article (1964), 1974, p. 51). The public, in this sense, is merely a mediation between state and society and can "by definition only come into existence when a reasoning public is presupposed" (Habermas, 1974, p. 50). Simplified, a public opinion can only be formed by the existence of "political discussions about the exercise of political power which are both critical in intent and institutionally guaranteed" (Habermas, 1974, p. 50). The demand of an institutionally guaranteed forum for dissent, as a base for democracy, is still valid today; albeit the conditions for such a protection of freedom of speech are subject to many political controversies, due to the heterogeneity of a global network society.

Habermas pins the potential of democracy on rationality, consensus, and participation. As with the above prerequisite of "access to information", these normative values might function as an ideal worth approaching but are far from being a possible and realistic

achievement. Furthermore, Habermas' basic assumptions have certain flaws that do not accurately describe social struggles in the network society.

As Fraser pointed out, for Habermas, "societal equality is not a necessary condition for political democracy" (Fraser, 1992, p. 63), since a common good is not necessarily an individual good. Therefore, minorities are always outnumbered in public discourses and the "appearance of 'private interests' and 'private issues' are always undesirable" (Fraser, 1992, p. 62). Fraser's statement is insofar valuable as she criticized Habermas' myopia towards a pluralistic representation of private issues years before the emergence of the internet. What followed in the years after the millennium not only diminished the brackets between "private" and "public," but also in some ways mingled them extensively. A differentiation between the state and the private citizen is no longer given. Fraser also argues that a mere focus on the common good is a major obstacle to overcoming domestic violence and sexual abuse of women (Fraser, 1992, p. 71).

Conversely, in a quite paradoxical way, the internet even amplified a strong emphasis on individual issues for instrumentalization. In many cases institutionalized, the fate of individuals displayed on global and local media screens is often driven by specific intentions — faces are used as symbols and signifiers, sometimes for a revolutionary causes, profit, advertisement, or pure entertainment. For example, Julian Assange's private lawsuit was shown extensively in the media, although it has little to do with the publications on WikiLeaks. However, the focus on this individual amplified public knowledge about WikiLeaks. Thus, Fraser's wish for a focus shift partly came true, but probably not in the emancipatory way she imagined.

Additionally, Calhoun pointed out that by establishing a civil society out of a "world of work as a sphere of its own" (Calhoun, 1992, p. 22), the private sphere got reduced to the family and subsequently to consumerism. Public and private interests started to mix and compete with one another. Calhoun, by elaborating on Habermas' theories, situates the workplace as a new space between public and private (Calhoun, 1992, p. 21). He anticipated the reduction of public discourse to "more passive culture consumption on the one hand and an apolitical sociability on the other" (Calhoun, 1992, p. 23). Consequently, the public loses every potential of a critical discourse. Calhoun's argument bears resemblance to many aspects of cultural excesses in the internet age, such as memes, viral content, mashups and all sorts of cultural conglomerates.

Another critique uttered by Fraser was that the masculine "universal class" of Habermas would be far from neutral (Fraser, 1992, p. 60). It is largely constituted by an elite upper class that sets itself apart from lower classes, and therefore, the notion of "common good" by this class must be questioned. Negt & Kluge (1993) coined the term "proletarian public sphere" as a counter concept of Habermas' bourgeois public sphere and as a melting pot of individual interests — only there do workers have "the chance to develop as interests, instead of remaining mere possibilities" (Negt & Kluge, 1993, p. 54). Fraser also criticizes the limitation to a normative, single public sphere and argues that the bourgeois public's claim of being "the public" was never the case. By terming a concept of a multitude of "subaltern counterpublics" (Fraser, 1992, p. 67), she established a groundbreaking thought on fragmented social opposition that does not include or is limited to a single public sphere. Moreover, it reflects on a myriad of publics and counterpublics that are all part of *a* public

sphere but not *the* public sphere. The characterization of a multitude of spheres also contains no information about the nature of these publics; as Fraser puts it:

> Let me not be misunderstood. I do not mean to suggest that subaltern counterpublics are always necessarily virtuous; some of them, alas, are explicitly anti-democratic and ant-egalitarian; and even those with democratic and egalitarian intentions are not always above practicing their own modes of informal exclusion and marginalization. Still, insofar as these counterpublics emerge in response to exclusions within dominant publics, they help expand discursive space. […] In general, the proliferation of subaltern counterpublics means a widening of discursive contestation, and that is a good thing in stratified societies.
>
> (Fraser, 1992, p. 67)

Fraser subsequently developed a "new, post-bourgeois model of the public sphere" (Fraser, 1992, p. 58) that entails the concept of counterpublics, which is still valid in the context of network societies. The claim that not all counterpublics are necessarily supporting liberal and emancipatory causes helps to shed light on many aspects of internet culture in the late 2000s and afterwards. It still assumes, however, that there is a normative ideal of democracy around the globe. In that sense, democracy would be an overarching concept for societies worldwide, without taking note of its cultural differences. The benefits of such a generalizing ideal are questionable. For example, hacktivists and the government of the United States would most certainly clash on their own but different notions of democracy.

Calhoun (1992), in a 42-page introduction, offers an elaboration on the interdependence and intermingling of public and private spheres. He integrates consumerism and the notion of

"taste" into the shift of public cultures by claiming the internet culture is driven by entertainment, and thus, taste. Regarding entertainment, Habermas says in a later paper:

> Under the pressure of shareholders who thirst for higher revenues, it is the intrusion of the functional imperatives of the market economy into the 'internal logic' of the production and presentation of messages that leads to the covert displacement of one category of communication by another: Issues of political discourse become assimilated into and absorbed by the modes and contents of entertainment. Besides personalization, the dramatization of events, the simplification of complex matters, and the vivid polarization of conflicts promotes civic privatism and a mood of antipolitics. (Habermas, 2006, p. 422)

Hence, the often irreverent and bizarre forms of internet culture not only consume, but also subsequently create. They produce a meta-culture of internet memes that are highly politicized. They might stem from symbols created by the entertainment industry, but are at the same time being used differently. Internet memes reformulate their material and are often used to challenge its original intention. Nonetheless, a transition of political discourses towards entertainment is not deniable and, as a result of that, a mood of anti-politics that has emerged. However, the virtual realm is much more complex and complicated, as will be discussed later.

Following this short excursion into the historical roots of today's often cited notion of "counterpublics" the following chapters will elaborate on the role of social media in political participation. The ubiquity of the internet unequivocally altered the way social struggles are carried out, at least in Western societies. The differentiation between private and public

becomes more and more blurred, social movements amplify and polarize. Still, for better or for worse, they never cease to surprise.

5.2.   Towards Public Spheres on the Internet

Before moving on to the notion of publics and counterpublics on the Internet, it is useful to discuss the term itself, as it is used for this thesis: What does "the Internet" really mean in terms of the notions and values associated with it? What does it entitle? And what does it impose? A lot of misunderstanding in regards to the internet, its allegedly democratic values (Castells, 2012), its over-emphasis (Morozov, 2011), or its activist potential (Jordan & Taylor, 2004) lies in the common conception of it. Yet, there is no "right" or "wrong" notion of the internet, but at the same time it ultimately defines what we are talking about. Even after being around for more than two decades, the internet is still a vague concept for social sciences. By a lacking sharp definition of what it is and, much more importantly, what it entails, scholars are often talking past each other (Salter, 2003). The term gets even blurrier as more and more aspects of everyday life in Western society are being infused with network technology. Described as the "Internet of Things" (Ashton, 2009), many gadgets and tools of Western social life are connected to the internet; the extent to which this is the case will only grow in the future.

Another important factor when juxtaposing different notions of the internet in scientific literature is the date of publication,. The difference between the term as used by Hill and Hughes (1998) and by Fenton (Curran, Fenton, & Freedman, 2012) is fourteen years. For the fast and ever-changing virtual sphere, this is a very long time. In 1998, the virtual realm consisted mostly of simple webpages, email, and for the more advanced, Usenet. It was not

commpn practice for users to be online 24 hours a day, seven days a week. When Hill and Hughes are talking about users, they are referring to a difference in behavior between users before and after 1998. Fenton's notion of the internet and its users is clearly disparate. In 2012, mobile phones are equipped with all sorts of sophisticated technologies and are often deeply integrated in the daily life of European and North American citizens.

Even basic assumptions such as internet connectivity are completely different in 2012 than in 1998. Citizens are connected through smartphones rather than modems and big personal computers. Connection quality and speed are incomparable and so is the interaction with the content. Processes, such as transferring big amounts of files or working on big projects online improved rapidly over time. Additionally, the way the internet served as a space for counterpublics and activism has changed massively. Thus, it is not only important *what* we mean when talking about the internet, but also *when* we are talking about the internet and at *what time*.

This thesis does not intend to provide a clear definition of the internet as it is used in 2014. If it did, it would defeat the purpose, because that definition would quickly become obsolete. Instead, the intention is to distinguish between two very different meanings that are often addressed by the word "internet".

In drawing upon Morozov (2013) this chapter wants to differentiate between "The Internet" (with a capital "I") and the "internet". Morozov pointed out that "the physical infrastructure we know as 'the internet' bears very little resemblance to the mythical 'Internet' – the one that reportedly brought down the governments of Tunisia and Egypt and is supposedly destroying our brains – that lies at the center of our public debates" (Morozov,

2013, p. 20). The capitalized "Internet," written as a proper noun, contains a very specific and vague set of meanings. It refers to a normative concept of virtuality in the greater public discourse. As such it serves as an ideal where notions of power, democracy, transparency, openness and equality are united.

The "Internet" is a nebulous term loaded with stereotypes and generalizations — it is what "Internet-Centrism" (Morozov, 2011) points to when criticizing its over-emphasis in contemporary media. The Internet is also used by hackers and cyberactivists as a space of freedom of expression that needs to be saved from governments and private corporations. It entails moral values, an intrinsic character of liberal democracy, and it is allegedly made as a vessel for counterpublics. Curran (2012a, p. 3) wrote an eloquent summary of overstatements regarding the Internet. In his powerful debunking of the mythical powers of the Internet, Curran draws the following conclusion:

> The internet did not promote global understanding in the way that had been anticipated because the internet came to reflect the inequalities, linguistic division, conflicting values and interests of the real world. The internet did not spread and rejuvenate democracy in the way that had been promised, partly because authoritarian regimes usually found ways of controlling the internet, but also because alienation from the political process limited the internet's emancipatory potential. The internet did not transform the economy, partly because the underlying dynamics of unequal competition that make for corporate concentration remained unchanged. Lastly, the internet did not inaugurate a renaissance of journalism; on the contrary, it enabled leading news brands to extend their

ascendancy across technologies, while inducing a decline of quality not off set, so

far, by new forms of journalism. (Curran, Fenton, & Freedman, 2012, p. 180)

On the other hand, the *internet* (without capitalization) stems from a very technological term that refers simply to one or many computer networks. It has no inherent moral value. The internet does not care whether the data flowing through its vast nodes carries a virus, a love letter or both. It is based on the TCP/IP protocol which is the functional core of any contemporary computer network and responsible for its stability despite its humongous size. Simplified, this internet follows one rule and that is Lessig's "code is law" (Lessig, 2006). It is derived from sociality and reduced to a techno-deterministic conglomerate of functions; technologically speaking, it provides the basis for programming code. The possibilities are endless, even when viewed from only a technological perspective. If one adds a social dimension to it, the impact on society is difficult and to a certain degree even impossible to capture.

This notion of the internet, however, is also not subject to Curran's critique of a "narrow, decontextualized focus on technology" (Curran, Fenton, & Freedman, 2012, p. 179); it simply addresses a technological realm infused with sociality, which means that the outcome of technology is determined by its users, not its structure. Instead of assuming that the internet *must be empowering*, this thesis instead refers to the *potential* of empowerment. Also, the assumption of the internet serving a *necessary democratic purpose* is problematic; there is the *possibility* to use it in a democratic way, within the limitations of its structure. Nevertheless, this says not much about alternative ways of usage, such as propaganda, intimidation and exploitation. Moreover, the internet does not *create* counterpublics out of

nothing. Protest movements, by using platforms and social media on the internet, engage in online and offline civic disobedience. In this way, counterpublics can emerge out of collaborative and collective work online.

Virtuality is no social actor, it is a space social actors (users) are engaging in. Ultimately public spheres and counterpublic spheres are created inside and outside the space of the internet; they affect and are affected by social engagement in the physical world. Furthermore, there is always a connection to real human beings, which are shaping and defining their social environment. The internet itself is not much more than the shell of the nexus between virtual life and real life.

The internet connects endpoints of very different kinds. For example, the "Internet of Things" addresses many more or less useful gadgets that should make everyday life easier. Weather Stations with WIFI, bus systems for home control, even coffee machines with internet connection (Westaway, 2013). All this and much more is part of the internet. But when the media and scholars are talking about the impact of the internet on protest movements, they most likely are not referencing to a WIFI-equipped coffee machine. For sure there are some creative minds that could easily turn a coffee machine into a tool for dissent, but arguably the outcome might not be worth the effort.

This thesis will foremost use the notion of the "internet" to address a technical system driven by social interaction. The focus herein lies on the multifaceted forms of social interactions and is not determined by technological means, as Curran criticized (Curran J. , 2012a, p. 3). Following this statement, the internet does not *do anything* on its own. Moreover, it provides a basis for a very complex arrangement of interactions that have

enormous potential as well as certain obstacles. When talking about the internet, the topic should not be what *the internet does*; it is much more important *what users do on the internet*. An elaboration with this focus includes using technology the way it was intended and designed to function, on the one hand; on the other hand, it also accounts for adaptations of existing paths through cyberspace, as cyber activists and hackers do.

Still, this reduction does not fall into the trap to believe that technology is neutral (Morozov, 2011, p. 386). The functions implemented in a technology make it far from being neutral. Designed for a specific purpose, technology is always a product of its creators and thus developed with particular intentions in mind. Salter argues ironically against the widely believed erroneous conception that technology has no intrinsic qualities at all; "no matter how much social shaping takes place, it is absurd to suggest that a television can be used to wash clothes" (Salter, 2003, p. 121). To assume that technology has a necessary impact on society is as equally inaccurate as the notion of technology being neutral. The key is to differentiate between impact and potential, where the latter is always shaped through inner structure and usage.

The architecture of the internet was originally designed for military purposes and later adapted for universities. At its base, the already mentioned TCP/IP protocol is responsible for the transfer of information on the network. It is the reason why information usually will not get lost when transferred from Australia to Iceland, for example. For military reasons, reliability of information transfer was the key function of the internet's predecessor. Losing information would have had disastrous consequences; one only has to think about transmitting codes, instructions and targets throughout a military operation. This initial focus

on data transfer is the reason why the internet started out as a network for information transfer and not for tinkering on coffee machines.

The background of a military and scientific field of application did not necessarily determine the functional growth of the network but it helped shape it. By providing an infrastructure for cheap and quick data transmission, at some point the internet's use for societal and political discourse was ineluctable. Information is a key element in society and politics. Herein lies also one of the internet's biggest competences, particularly in regards to protest movements such as the so-called Arab Spring. Information distribution is inexpensive and fast, therefore also affordable for the lower income class (Tusa, 2013).

Fenton points out two main assertions made about the internet for public spheres; first, there is literature arguing towards a multitude of spheres in pointing out that "an emergent sense of the political that resides in multiple belongings (people with overlapping memberships linked through a myriad of networks) and flexible identities (characterised by inclusiveness and a positive emphasis on diversity and cross-fertilisation)" (Fenton, 2012a, p. 149); second, there are the "counter-arguments by those who interpret multiplicity not as political pluralism but as political dissipation and fragmentation (…) and interactivity as illusive rather than deliberative (…)" (Fenton, 2012a, p. 149). Both assumptions simplify and generalize. They leave out the whole spectrum in between by emphasizing stories supporting the respective claim and degrading contrasting cases. A justified question would be: What is success for social movement? Or, when is a social struggle successful? It is also highly doubtful that the internet is solely responsible for the outcome of any protest movement. Such assumptions towards the internet are, again, focused on its technology, and derive a

supposedly necessary impact. They are either plain optimistic or hopelessly pessimistic and thus, as Fenton argues, incomplete:

> The former, more excitable and often exciting approach focuses on passions stirred and protests realized, yet fails to take account of the prevailing conditions and particular contexts of power and control. The latter, more sober and frequently cynical approach fails to take account of the felt experience of real and potential political solidarity and the desire for a democracy that is yet to come. (Fenton, 2012a, p. 150)

To provide an adequate analysis of public spheres online and offline, one needs to juxtapose technological means and social demands. The following chapter will focus on a specific part of the internet that was promised to be ineluctably liberating (Shirky, 2008) and serving as a tool for dissent: social media.

5.3. Not-so-new Media tries to be social

"How to overcome participation inequality? You can't!" (Nielsen, 2006)

This chapter will delineate how the economy jumped on social media and successfully turned it into a million dollar business by advertising the necessity of "sharing". The impact of sharing on social movements is enormous; yet they often fail to recognize the profit-driven corporations behind social media. Hence, even online forms of protest can become subject to commodification.

It is remarkable how fast Western society co-opted social media and integrated them into everyday life. After the privatization of the public internet in 1995 (Curran J. , 2012b, S.

37) the emergence of solely economically driven media platforms was mostly a matter of technology and time. Social media is a phenomenon of the post-millennium, post-dotcom-crash era that managed successfully to commodify big parts of the internet. "Web 2.0", a term first coined by O'Reilly (2005), became a buzzword for marketing campaigns. Although there has never been a "Web 1.0", O'Reilly's phrase gave the impression of a clean and fresh start of the internet. Advertised as being something radically new, Web 2.0 should attract investors to reinvest in an economic space that has just been shattered by the dot-com crash. In spite of being not much more than a meaningless marketing phrase, it was successful and a lot of money was pumped into online business again.

At the center of social media lies the notion of "sharing", which is a rather ill-defined term. To share something means, in layman's terms, giving part of one's personal belongings to somebody else. The common phrase "sharing means caring" expresses that the gesture is usually symbolic for respect and sympathy. The concept of sharing on social media, however, is more derived from the notion of "sharing information"; Albeit, in that context it is more likely closer to "distributing" than "sharing". Of course, "Distribute it!" would not function as well as a catchphrase as "Share it!" Much more importantly, sharing creates a particularly positive sentiment and reflects on a desirable social behavior. As shown above, it expresses empathy for the situation of one or more other people. Conveniently, social media (or any media on the internet) can deliver just that — they offer to distribute information to an often unknown number of citizens living in an unknown number of countries (Shirky, 2008, p. 148). Therefore, the seemingly infinite desire of human eccentricity is infused with the digital adaptation of the socially welcomed gesture of sharing.

At the same time the potential of sharing for information distribution should not be underestimated. Above all, social media has proven to have certain novel characteristics regarding distribution of dissent, organizing of collective action, or collaborative development across borders and time zones. Social media allows fruitful cooperation between individuals who otherwise might have never met or worked together. Nevertheless, the issue at hand is similar to what has been stated a few pages back and will be stated again: the potential and the impact do not share a direct causal relationship. When Shirky stated that revolutions do not happen with new technology but with new behaviors (Shirky, 2008, p. 160), he was referring to one of the success stories outlined in his book.

Although he may have a point in his cases, Shirky ignores a myriad of examples that paint a very different picture. The "new behavior" of sharing also led to countless selfies, food pictures, coffee-related Facebook-status updates, and cat videos. While of course they are said to be incredibly cute and entertaining, the liberating impact of most cat videos is dubious. Yet, they are part of social media culture of sharing as well. At the same time, there are also numerous attempts of collective action that just did not work (Morozov, 2011, p. 205), such as the Green Movement in Iran 2009. Thus, not every act of sharing is useful or adds to a cultural multiplicity, as Fenton (2012a, p. 155) and Morozov (2011) argue.

5.4. Social Media as an Economic Realm

An important question to ask in regards to social media is the question of power: Who controls social media? Subsequently, trying to find an answer leads to more questions about ownership, digital property rights, economic values, and underlying business models. Scholars such as Clay Shirky (2008), Jeff Jarvis (2009), Manuel Castells (2012) or Don

Tapscott and Anthony Williams (2007) have mostly emphasized the collaborative, collective, and democratic action social media would enable.

Interestingly, these scholars tend to leave out questions of institutional power. However, the perception of the internet being a space free of government regulations and economic influences is an illusion. Much more importantly, the economic influence is said to have an even stronger effect than internet policies and media governance. As Freedman put it:

> The dynamics of the free market have been abstracted from their daily iteration and replaced with a technologically induced version of an economic system based on an innate tendency to equalize and make transparent the social relations on which capitalism rests. (Freedman, Web 2.0 and the death of the blockbuster economy, 2012, p. 92)

Above all, the digital realm bears more resemblance to unregulated capitalism than to the democratizing space it is often portrait as (Curran, Fenton, & Freedman, 2012, p. 180). Consequently, asking about the potential of social media has to scrutinize the intentions of social media corporations first. Google, Facebook, YouTube or Twitter are being developed and run by private companies that seek revenues. In contrast to the liberal values often imposed on social media, the business models of these corporations are far from being democratic. To use Facebook as a tool for spreading dissent to overthrow a government would simply be using one absolutistic structure to get rid of another. Apart from that fact is Facebook's impact on protest movements often overrated.

Social media companies do not understand their platforms as tools for collaboration and freedom of expression; social media platforms are products in a capitalistic market structure

that happens to be in the digital sphere. The corporations running the platforms are in absolute power of its users in terms of their identity and their behavior on that site. Accounts can be deleted for various reasons, messages not delivered, or access blocked. Social media companies have to obey little more than their own rules. There are, of course, certain governmental regulations and laws, but they often do not tackle ethical concerns. The blocking of user accounts, selling of private data, or denying service are procedures not covered by domestic or international law. The company's policy has a much stronger impact on the user.

The social media industry acts as one of many gatekeepers present in the online sphere. For example, the algorithm of Facebook's "timeline" determines its content for each and every user. Except for direct messages, the algorithm defines how fast and how far information spreads on Facebook. Furthermore, only Facebook knows how the algorithm works and they are smart enough to keep it that way. To its users, Facebook is a black box that regulates the flow of information throughout the platform, without any possible intervention by the user. For this reason it is important to question the intentions of social media companies when elaborating on protest movements in cyberspace.

Salter (2003, p. 141) argued more than a decade ago, that the internet has taken a shift and is increasingly influenced by economics and politics. Whereas the former is predominantly driven by profit, the latter seeks power. Social media serve both, an economic purpose and they also allow various forms of surveillance and political imprints. Sarikakis (2004) speaks of a "trial period" of non-profit-purposes where the internet has proved to be successful (Sarikakis, 2004). Freedman points out as well that the digital sphere is not that

novel in economic terms and profit-driven forces are often overlooked. As he puts it vividly: "The pipes may be increasingly digital, but the piper is still being paid and looking to make a profit" (Freedman, 2012, p. 70).

5.5.   Social Media and Communication

Given the aspects above, online corporations have a powerful position in social struggles if they are in charge of the platforms and media being utilized by protest movements. How does that relate to the characteristic of empowerment that is allegedly intrinsic to the internet? Are social media fundamentally changing citizen's communicative behaviors, given the structure and economic background of these platforms? Arguably, one needs to differentiate social media in its cultural contexts as well as in its different forms of utilization. Everyday communication through social media focuses on different aspects than political expression and activism. Although decentralized and faster ways for interaction lead to a more efficient exchange of information, its benefit for participatory democracy is uncertain. An increase of quantity in communication does not necessarily encourage increase of quality.

According to Fenton, there are three crucial issues in utilizing social media for political participation (Fenton, 2012a, p. 161): firstly, a significant amount of false information and gossip circulates online. Authentic and useful content does not distinguish itself clearly from deliberately placed false and propagandistic information. In an attempt to extend Fenton's argument, authentic content does not necessarily mean that it adds to a productive discourse. Quite the opposite, authenticity can also be expressed through hate speech, racism or sexism. Not all social movements necessarily have moral values that strive for an open democracy.

The internet is a space where often irreverence dominates over Habermas' notion of a rational motivated discourse, as he himself admitted (Habermas, 2006, p. 413). Gossip, best described as "noise", can flood virtual networks and cover rational means of protest; in this way it can marginalize counterpublics by using the very same channels to confuse, irritate and debilitate.

Morozov (2011, p. 91) compares the political sphere in social media with the Roman Empire and its politics of entertainment. He argues that, for authoritarian governments, it is more useful to flood social media with distraction than to ban content altogether. Banning would boost interest and ultimately politicizes, while distraction keeps citizens entertained. For example, according to Morozov, perhaps in order to distract citizens from politics China lifted many bans against online pornography in 2009 (Morozov, 2011, p. 92). To complete Fenton's claim to "separate the authentic from the deliberately placed" (Fenton, 2012a, p. 162), is not enough to detach the noise from the authentic; as not only authorities, but also users generate a lot of noise by themselves. The challenge lies in filtering information. Social media plays a crucial role by amplifying and multiplying popular (and thus often populist) content.

For this reason, Fenton's second issue is about the intentions of social media companies. They are, as stated above, capitalistic entities seeking economic power and wealth. Therefore, they are not primarily concerned with establishing and sustaining social balance (Fenton, 2012a, p. 162), but with revenues. Using Facebook and Twitter as tools for spreading dissent ultimately results in advertising the platforms, and thus, generates more users, which leads to a greater income. In this way, protests can have an economic value for

internet companies, because they cause a boost in publicity and result in more user accounts. Therefore, "accumulation of information is pursued through registration of new users" (Sarikakis, 2010, p. 122).

Fenton's third concern is closely connected to the first; in repeating possibly erroneous information, "social media tend to amplify inaccuracies, as speed generates its own momentum" (Fenton, 2012a, p. 162). Once reached public awareness, false information is often repeated endlessly and becomes an internet myth. The interconnectedness and parallelism of networks creates what Fenton called a "momentum". Erroneous information transcends platforms and networks at high speed, which makes falsification ineffective because it is simply too late. Such inaccuracies are hard to debunk and possibly add to stereotypes, strengthen racism and sexism, and create scapegoats. Altogether, the contribution of social media to enlightened public discourse is frequently exaggerated, which also leads to the prevalent mythical conception of the "Internet".

A good example was the "Twitter Revolution" after elections in Iran in 2009. Critically discussed by scholars (Morozov, 2011, p. 11), the protests in Tehran in 2009 had a huge impact on Twitter. Tweets regarding the Green Movement circulated countless times; global media, as a consequence of lacking local sources in Iran, jumped on the Twitter hype and soon numbers of protesters were estimated at three million (Fenton, 2012a, p. 162) and the fall of the Iranian regime seemed inevitable. In contrast, according to Morozov, Aljazeera confirmed only around sixty active Twitter accounts in Tehran at the time of the protests (Morozov, 2011, p. 13). Contrary to media reports, the Iranian regime was not quite at the brink of collapse. Subsequently, independent assessments reduced the number of estimated

protesters to a few hundred thousand. Even more interestingly, the manager of a Farsi-language news site told the Washington Post, "Twitter's impact inside Iran is zero" (Musgrove, 2009). In summary, Iran's so-called Twitter Revolution was not much more than a hoax; ultimately no revolution happened and Twitter did not play a dominant role in the protests. Still, the importance of social media for information distribution is not to be underestimated. Nevertheless, the role is often more of a reactive nature than of an active one. Getting information out of Iran through Twitter definitely served its purpose for raising awareness outside the country. Concluding from a virtual impact on Twitter to a physical impact on the street is a dangerous venture that amplifies inaccurate information and supports a mystical notion of the internet.

During and after the Iranian elections, the Green Movement was the most popular topic on Twitter; soon afterwards the topic vanished from Twitter's front page because of the death of Michael Jackson (Morozov, 2011, p. 80). Ironically, Michael Jackson was not even overly famous in Iran, which also supports the conception of Twitter being foremost a Western phenomenon. This example also shows that entertainment and pop culture globally outnumbers local social struggles. The death of such a public figure is newsworthy for sure, yet its Twitter resonance was big enough to completely cover the Iranian unrest (Morozov, 2011, p. 80). If anything, this case shows that the role of social media on communication can never be generalized and thus needs to be put into its cultural and political context. Social media serve a myriad of everyday purposes that should not be scrutinized from a merely rational point of view. The user's desire for entertainment is hardly a rational one. The death of Michael Jackson, a public figure of Western pop culture, resulted in a massive flood of content on the topic, leaving little room for anything else.

To examine another aspect of online communication, user's interests are very often self-centered and self-promoting. That is, on the one hand, a very individualistic approach in representing merely the self and its interests. Users are often more concerned about leisure and consumerism than about collective participation (Fenton, 2012b, p. 123). This view is very much connected to entertainment and distraction, as discussed above. Self-mediation, therefore, serves merely ego-centered purposes, also in sharing and distributing one's own interests. That means that users are not necessarily publishing only eccentric content about themselves but content that is of interest to them. Ultimately, there is a similar force at play and that is the publication of the private sphere. Castells optimistic "interactive production of meaning" by mass self-communication (Castells, 2009, p. 132) may address a potential of social media, but not a necessary impact. "Meaning", in Castell's sense, might serve its purpose only to a single, eccentric entity that is the user. Only because "meaning" is created by publishing big parts of the private sphere online, it does not inevitably contribute to a collective signifier. Simply because not all meaning is concerned with rationality and society as a whole, the internet is filled up with noise. "Meaning" does not necessarily "mean something" to others. On the contrary, selfish acts of self-mediation can lead to forms of inaccurate information, gossip and fraud, as examined by Fenton (2012a, p. 162). On the internet, civil disobedience, entertainment and counter-narratives can be meshed, even interwoven. As such, a counterpublic sphere is not limited by geographical or virtual borders and it can even be entertaining. This transcendence of cultures is a novelty of the network society, but also leads to a multiplicity of noise that needs to be kept in mind.

Besides the immense amount of noise, self-mediation can support the emergence counter-narratives and serve as a political tactic for protest (Cammaerts, 2012, p. 122). In an

act of not only self-mediation, but also self-documentation activists can produce artifacts of their struggle; the protest movements in the Arab world as well as Occupy Wall Street and social movements in its periphery demonstrate rich examples of such tactics. In publishing statements, photos and videos they can help creating a counter-narrative that is to a certain extent self-mediated and independent from big media corporations. Still relying on commercial platforms, not necessarily global media, activists can add to, and by some degree, even alter global protest narratives (Cammaerts, 2012).

What constitutes the difference between self-mediation as an act of eccentricity and as a political tactic is context. That counts for the context of the user as a mediator; similarly the context of the user as recipient is equally important; over and above that the user as a prosumer is often both, mediator and recipient at the same time. Furthermore, the economic, cultural, and political context shapes content online. Subsequently, the context of the platform determines to a certain degree its scope. Citizen journalism is likely misplaced in social media self-marketing platforms like LinkedIn and would reach a different demography of users. In the past, MySpace was one of the main platforms for everyday conversation in Western society but due to declining user accounts this is scarcely the case anymore. Therefore, as Curran concluded briefly and simply: "different contexts produce different outcomes, something that is repeatedly obscured by overarching theories of the internet centered on its technology" (Curran J. , 2012a, p. 25). Acts of self-mediation can support a multiplicity of narratives, the emphasis lies on "can", not "will". Therefore, they allow producing a more accurate picture of social struggle through means of content distribution and communication. The private sphere and its projection into the virtual space transcends into a form of civic engagement.

5.6.   The Dialectic of Internet Anonymity

Underlying the original characteristics of the internet, yet changing over the last decade, is the disembodiment of citizens and users. The concept of internet anonymity has triggered many discussions; with the rise of social media, corporations have consequently undermined anonymity online. Anonymous users have hardly any economic value for companies because they are hard to monetize (Youmans & York , 2012, p. 319). Besides the internet currency "Bitcoin", money is usually bound to a physical or legal person. Net anonymity usually leads to questions of responsibility, property and legitimacy.

Anonymity is a double-edged sword that holds very powerful advantages, but also disadvantages; it can empower and disempower both, activists and authorities. Salter (2003, p. 129) argues that many scholars drawing on Habermas' public spheres underemphasize the question of responsibility. Anonymity would mean that "the fundamental requisite of the human communication, responsibility, is lacking in Internet communication" (Salter, 2003, p. 129). However, this thesis does not argue that citizens are acting completely irresponsibly online. But there is definitely a certain tendency in online communication, which does not bring out the best of humanity.

John Suler, a psychologist focused on the behavior of users online, coined the term "Online Disinhibition Effect" (Suler, 2004). It characterizes the loosening of social restrictions in communications with others online. In a regular face-to-face conversation certain social obligations apply; virtual debates are lacking these obligations (Suler, 2004, p. 321). Suler argues that online users are affected by several factors that lead to anti-social

behavior (Suler, 2004). In short, a few factors relevant to anonymous online communication are introduced:

"Dissociative anonymity" allows users to separate actions between the virtual and the physical sphere. They are able to alter their behavior and feel less vulnerable because they believe that their online actions are not linked directly to their physical self. Users are able to express hostile behavior online without feeling the need to take responsibility for it.

"Invisibility" means the characteristic of being invisible online while watching the screen. An unknown amount of users can access a website at the same time without feeling watched by the others. By disconnecting the online visibility from the physical appearance, users can express themselves in ways they would not otherwise. By not having to deal with the physical presence of the other, factors such as appearance, body language, and voice are nonexistent. Online, users do not have to look into each other's eyes, which reduces anxiety and apprehension.

"Asynchronicity" characterizes online communication not happening in real time. Consequently, users do not have to immediately deal with reactions. Real time feedback has a very powerful effect on how a conversation progresses. Lacking this input can lead to users participating in an "emotional hit and run" (Suler, 2004, p. 232)

"Minimizing authority" addresses the internet's lack of hierarchy; while in a face-to-face conversation a person's social status is more or less apparent, this is not the case online. Influential factors for internet communication are less related to a social status; they reflect much more on communication skills, quality of ideas or technical know-how.

A more humorous approach was published 2004 by the webcomic "Penny Arcade": "John Gabriel's Greater Internet Fuckwad Theory" cynically points out that "Normal Person + Anonymity + Audience = Total Fuckwad" (Penny Arcade, 2004).

Anonymity online is an important ingredient to cyber activism, but it has also a problematic side to it. The potential of empowerment combined with a lack of responsibility often leads to antisocial behavior. Nevertheless, in authoritarian environments the benefits usually outweigh the cons. Salter made perhaps one of the most congruent statements regarding anonymity by juxtaposing its role in authoritarian governments and liberal cultures:

> The balance of anonymity and responsibility often depends on what sort of discourse is sought. On one hand, if the background culture of the user is authoritarian (to whatever degree), then anonymity is an important tool that enables criticism without the fear of repression. On the other hand, if there is a liberal political culture, the likes of which exist only in approximation, then anonymity loses its role as security, leaving the question of whether anonymity serves to allow utterances to carry only their internal weight at the expense of responsibility. (Salter, 2003, p. 129)

The line between an authoritarian regime and a liberal one is often hard to draw. Whereas the West presents itself typically in a very liberal way, actions against whistleblowers and activists paint a very contradictory picture. On the other hand, authoritarian regimes often at first underestimate the power of cyber activism as a supplementary force in protest; where, governments tend to overestimate the role of the internet. Morozov argues that, in the case of

the Green Movement in Iran, the government heavily cracked down on bloggers mainly after the protests. The Western world was bragging about the power of social media, a supposedly Western technology, which lead to the government's aggressive behavior towards bloggers, because all of a sudden, they were seen as a threat. Irresponsible punditry placed the internet in a revolutionary realm, where it did not belong. Before, bloggers were just seen as hipsters; afterwards, they were criminalized. (Morozov, 2011, p. 4)

Nevertheless, online anonymity is still one of the biggest advantages of cyber activism. Because of increasing criminalization, it is even more important to provide security for citizens. A promise of freedom of speech has no meaning if dissidents are being persecuted afterwards. The reason for the large amounts of gossip, propaganda, and false information is not that it is inherent in the technical structure but in human behavior. Consequently, social media can hardly be blamed for the antisocial consequences of society. As stated initially, the internet allows social processes to take place in a high-speed virtual realm; by default it does not judge and it does not censor. This happens in applications that build upon the infrastructure of the internet.

Another aspect regarding anonymity deals with its disclosure. Often, users not necessarily want to stay anonymous towards each other; their main interest might be remaining invisible towards the state or an institution. When engaging online, a certain amount of knowledge of participants of a collaborative action can be useful. It builds trust and confidence to know more about each other than just one's nickname. However, it can be crucial that this information stays within the group and does not transcend to the opposition; that can be a government, a corporation or another group of activists.

This issue is highly relevant, but also underemphasized by scholars. Similar to the binary way of thinking about social media, empowering and disempowering, the discussion about net anonymity is filled with generalizations and stereotypes; meaning that anonymity leads either to complete mayhem or complete freedom. But what if the former does not contradict the latter? Scholars such as Shirky (2008), Castells (2009; 2012) or Tapscott & Williams (2007) seem to have such a high opinion of the human nature that they pin every failure on technology. But as a common phrase among IT-administrators, "the error happens often between the screen and the chair."

At this point, a thought shall be introduced that is articulated by Fuchs when drawing on Horkheimer and Adorno and their work "Dialectic of Enlightenment", one of the basic works of critical theory (Horkheimer & Adorno, 2002). The assumption is that a liberal ideology ultimately turns into the opposite of what it originally questioned. As Horkheimer and Adorno put it in abstract terms:

> Adaptation to the power of progress furthers the progress of power, constantly renewing the degenerations which prove successful progress, not failed progress, to be its own antithesis. The curse of irresistible progress is irresistible regression. (Horkheimer & Adorno, 2002, p. 28)

Fuchs applies this model to capitalism and, thereafter, Anonymous: "The freedoms proclaimed by liberal enlightenment ideology find their actual violation in the practice of capitalism: the ideal of freedom turns into an opposite reality – unfreedom" (Fuchs, 2014, S. 103). Subsequently, Fuchs argues that the Hacktivist group Anonymous "demonstrates and discloses the contradictions of freedom and liberal ideology by demanding the very rights

and values that capitalism, its constitutions and politicians proclaim and that in economic and political reality turn into their opposites" (Fuchs, 2014, S. 104). This thesis argues to broaden Fuchs' argument to the extent that not only Anonymous as an irreverent internet culture, but online anonymity itself is subject to such "immanent critique of liberalism" (Fuchs, 2014, S. 104). This claim is supported by the fact that Anonymous mostly grew out of the functional advocacy of anonymity in message boards such as 4chan[2].

Anonymity is therefore not only a critique of liberalism, but also an immanent critique of itself. The same applies to another platform that was born out of cyber activism and its partner in crime, anonymity: WikiLeaks. Fuchs' understanding of showing "the contradictory dialectic of liberalism" (Fuchs, 2014, S. 104) applies not only to Anonymous, but also to several entities emerging in and out of the network society. WikiLeaks is an equally powerful denominator of opposition in offering a channel for anonymously submitted documents. It has different values and strengths than Anonymous or IMMI. But it belongs to the panoply of means for counter-governance that are as diverse as the digital sphere. WikiLeaks ideally provides physical security to the source not by disguising its identity, but by not knowing it. While Anonymous is action-oriented and WikiLeaks information-oriented, IMMI tries to institutionalize modern ways of opposition into the judicial system to make dissent legal.

---

[2] The infamous message board 4chan is said to be one of the main sources of power for Anonymous. It is also where the movement started. Originally intended to be a big prank against Scientology, 4chan drew a lot of attention to it, and from there users continued to engage in Anonymous' actions. 4chan may contain strong graphical and offensive content (4Chan, 2014).

5.7.   Privacy, Surveillance and Consequences of Policies

The notion of internet anonymity and its potential consequently points to the opposite: The attempt to uncover the opponent's identity—real people are not only easier to monetize (Papacharissi, 2010), but also to persecute. The internet offers many ways of achieving such a task, with different levels of sophistication. The unavoidability of leaving traces online, no matter where one goes, makes it a prime spot for surveillance. Watching citizens, activists, or even foreign governments has never been that easy before.

Because of the size and the complexity of this topic, it needs to be narrowed down for this thesis; the possibilities of online surveillance are endless enough to fill entire books with it, yet many case-studies perhaps remain widely undiscovered; especially alternative forms of surveillance in authoritarian governments, as discussed by Morozov (2011), need further investigation. This chapter therefore delineates the possible impact of surveillance on cyber activism, predominantly in the Western network society. There are different forms of surveillance and the term generally has a bad connotation; nonetheless, activists can utilize tactics of counter-surveillance as a powerful political weapon.

Since protest organizations or information distribution often address an unknown and dispersed audience, a lot of information exists publicly on the internet so that not only likeminded but generally everyone with an internet connection can gain access to it. Even without technical ingenuity, what citizens publish online can simply be used to analyze and react towards protests that may not even have happened yet. In a publicly organized protest everyone can intervene.

Therefore, it is wise for governments and institutions to keep an eye on what is happening on social media, because online surveillance is cheap and usually does not require a lot of human resources. Governments can make use of big data and its often transparent statistics about the behavior of users and what platforms they use. They can easily monitor the gossip on Twitter and Blogs and also public Facebook groups. More in-depth surveillance is possible once the dataflow through servers of Internet Service Providers (ISP) is analyzed.

The situation of ubiquitous online surveillance can be described as a form of a digital Panopticon. Jeremy Bentham, a British philosopher, originally proposed the concept as a design for prisons. Having one central watchtower in the middle, the prison cells are built in a circle around it, facing the watchtower. The spotlight of the tower also illuminates the cells. Thus, inmates cannot know when they are being watched by the guard, because they are blinded by the light.

The concept was later famously adapted by French philosopher Michel Foucault to describe the way power and surveillance work in modern society (Foucault, 1975). The digital sphere however, is somewhat more complex. It involves "not the subjection of the individual to the gaze of a single, centralized authority, but the surveillance of the individual, potentially by all, always by many" (Vaidhyanathan, 2011, p. 112). In other words, everybody can monitor everybody. Yet, the more sophisticated methods of surveillance are often still reserved for institutions equipped with the power and resources.

Most of today's online surveillance involves at least one of three entities. Firstly, there are governments monitoring their citizens in order to sustain political power. Secondly, there are companies, like Facebook and Google, seeking economic power and profit. They have

the most sophisticated methods of surveillance on their own platforms; that is because developers know their own system best. Thirdly, users can engage in surveillance themselves by using the functions provided by the internet and social media.

Morozov warns of reducing surveillance and censorship to a, what he calls "Orwell-Huxley Sandwich" (Morozov, 2011, p. 96). Most of authoritarian and liberal regimes nowadays do not fit into a one-dimensional scale between the dystopian societies of George Orwell and Aldous Huxley. Some regimes, such as the Arab states, have become weaker; other regimes, such as the USA, Russia or China, became even stronger by means of online surveillance. While the Arab states relied on more traditional forms of controlling their public sphere, Western regimes tended to focus on distraction and entertainment. Arguably, the second tactic is much harder to overcome for activists, although this is not because citizens usually do not have to fear persecution (Snowden or Assange would argue differently). Moreover, entertainment keeps citizens from widely engaging in politics, which is also a key factor why regimes focusing on distraction successfully sustain power (Morozov, 2011, p. 92).

Fuchs, on the other hand, emphasizes the possibility of counter-surveillance. He argues that "corporate watch-platforms" (Fuchs, 2012, p. 150) effectively use the internet's means for documenting corporate social irresponsibility. Citizens can utilize the internet's surveillance capabilities for their own ends and turn them against the political and economic elites. By watching the watchers, users can raise public awareness and make corruption and power abuse globally visible (Fuchs, 2012, p. 150).

While there have been watch-platforms[3] before, WikiLeaks is arguably one of the most influential and also most controversial platforms of the last decade (Zajácz, 2013). The platform received millions of classified documents over time and caused several international scandals with their reveals. WikiLeaks' policy of publishing original documents led to discussions about security, state integrity and, in the case of Chelsea Manning, treason. In this way, the website is different from "traditional" watch-platforms because it acts merely as an information hub.

Wikileaks also plays a crucial role in examining the case study of this thesis; it is a mechanism of a very radical form of civil disobedience and will be discussed in the following chapters on cyber activism.

---

[3] With the possibility of data collection on a semi-global scale, NGOs dealing with freedom of expression and censorship of media could drastically improve their range. Companies like Committee to Protect Journalists (CPJ), Reporters without Borders or Human Rights Watch (HRW) benefitted from data accumulation and a variety of citizen informants. The internet played a crucial role in the scale of the data that could be collected by these organizations.

6. Cyber Activism as a Form of Political Dissent

6.1. Cyber Activism VS Hacktivism

This chapter will firstly address the different denotations of the two terms, cyber activism and hacktivism, since they are often used with different meanings. Many phrases and words used in the digital realm are based on catchphrases or marketing terms, such as "Web 2.0" or "netizen"; "cyber activism" and "hacktivism", and suffer from a similar lack of clarity. As was the case when differentiating between "Internet" and "internet" the intention is not to provide a clean definition of these terms. Simply the differences between how cyber activism and hacktivism are used will be shown, since they are referred to in different contexts.

Hacktivism is a portmanteau word of "hacking" and "activism", which are both ambiguous terms. Therefore, it is useful to describe what it is not and differentiate it from terms used in a similar way. Specifically, the media often uses cyber activism as an equivalent of hacktivism. Their meanings might overlap, are at some point even similar, but they still address a very different cultural heritage.

Jordan and Taylor (2004) provide what is perhaps the most conclusive description of hacktivism. Their work is based on the notion of hacktivism as a marriage of grassroots political action and computer hacking (Jordan & Taylor, 2004, p. 1). For Taylor, hacktivism is a result of a trend where hackers became politically aware and activists more tech savvy: "Hacktivism has built upon the nascent political agenda of hacking, and arisen in the context of an intellectual climate increasingly sensitive to the effects of globalisation"

(Taylor, 2001, p. 3). Hacktivism is pinned to the anti-globalization movement that ought to criticize the neo-liberal and capitalistic elites, and therefore, asserts a specific political direction of hacktivist movements.

Jordan and Taylor argue clearly from an activist point of view towards hacktivism and leave out questions of class, ethics, law, and security. For them, hacktivists are the seventh generation of computer hackers: "the mid-1990s marked the merging of hacking activity with an overt political stance" (Jordan & Taylor, 2004, p. 12). This classification clearly sets the heritage of their notion of hacktivism in hacking culture. Yet, their approach imposes a liberalist political stance to hacktivists. Hacker groups with a political but nationalist attitude, such as the Syrian Electronic Army, or cyberterrorist groups are left out of the equation.

Hacking, as the predecessor of hacktivism, originates in re-engineering of technological systems (Taylor, 2005, p. 625), manipulating and "reprogramming systems of rationality" (Gunkel, 2001, p. 20). Cyber activism, under close scrutiny, seeks civil disobedience and strategies of political opposition in the digital realm. It is an overarching term for activism in virtual space that may or may not be connected to the physical space through real action. The process of hacking, as part of hacktivism, happens in cyberspace and stays closer to subcultures of geeks and nerds; cyber activism means a broad range of political tactics against repression, but still stays within these "systems of rationality".

To sum up, cyber activism simply qualifies as hacktivism if there is hacking involved. That bald statement does not make the term "hacking" any less ambiguous, but that task shall be left as a challenge for linguists. The differentiation made above is, nevertheless, useful for juxtaposing WikiLeaks and IMMI since both are working in a similar field of application, yet

with very different methods. Differentiation can as well be useful from a merely judicial point of view; cyber activism, as element of opposition, works within the means of digital systems. This is not necessarily legal but does not manipulate the functions of a given system. Hacktivism, on the other hand, often transcends the borders of online systems to redesign their original functions and meanings.

6.2.   From Hacktivism to IMMI

Wikileaks and IMMI are both infused with the ethos of early hacking culture; the focus on information and its transparency to the public as a democratic value lies deep within the origins of hacktivism. "Information wants to be free" is a catchphrase originating in the late 80's hacker culture that bears a strong resemblance to claims of many of today's social movements; the description "freedom of information movements" (Beyer, 2013) emphasizes this connection. The following chapter will focus on the early concept of freedom of information in hacking culture.

In 1984, Levy published what was perhaps the most substantial work on hacking culture of that time (Levy, 2010). The book was republished twice and entails a set of moral standards and guidelines for the hacking culture, widely known as the "Hacker Ethic" (Levy, 2010, p. 27). Levy focused on hackers from the perspective of designers and engineers, people who fix things that are, in the hacker's opinion, broken (Levy, 2010, p. 28). Levy's work is mainly idealistic and so are his claims of the hacker ethic. Nevertheless, freedom of information movements are peddling with ideas that may not have originated but have been manifested in hacking culture more than two decades ago. Outlining a few of Levy's claims is useful to juxtapose them with ideologies of new social movements:

Information should be free: Levy argues from a reformer's point of view. Information is necessary for understanding the structure of a system, and therefore, is able to fix it (Levy, 2010, p. 28). Levy speaks foremost about computers and programs, but he also addresses knowledge in other contexts and not limited to technology.

Mistrust Authority – Promote Decentralization: Arguing generally against bureaucracy, Levy harshly criticizes any form authority (Levy, 2010, p. 29). He warns from hackers and elites gaining power through technology because it would disrupt the original intention of making the world a better place. This sentiment reflects Horkheimer and Adorno's work about liberal enlightenment ideology, discussed in Chapter 5.6.

You can create art and beauty on a computer: In the year of Levy's book, 1984, the use of computers for pop culture was still limited. But he already describes the importance of multimedia content in the future; this trend puts graphical internet memes and YouTube videos of movements, such as Anonymous, into the international spotlight. Levy's notion of art and beauty was much more connected to 80's geek and nerd culture. (Levy, 2010, p. 32) than today's internet culture. Even more artistically, Graham (2004) understood hackers as digital painters who solve problems in abstract and creative ways (Graham, 2004, p. 130); a hacker in his sense has to be a rebel, to violate rules for the greater good (Graham, 2004, p. 50). Graham clearly falls for a similar digital romanticism as Levy.

Computers can change your life for the better: Levy's view on technology understands computers as a kind of digital slaves that are enriching and enhancing human lives (Levy, 2010, p. 34). This romantic view implies a renaissance of collaborative online platforms of new web technologies. The Piratepads (PiratePad, 2014), Etherpads (Etherpad,

2014), LiquidDemocracies (The Liquid Democracy Organisation, 2014) and all sorts of online tools attempt to reinvent collaborative work and participation. By focusing on the (possibly anonymous) individual argument, these tools aim to provide a basis for rational discourse in Habermas' sense.

While Levy's perception of hacking culture is lacking a political stance, Jordan and Taylor subsequently built upon Levy and understood hacking culture as part of a political landscape. They addressed hacktivists as the next generation of hacking. The hacker ethos seeks to make technology and information accessible to a wider public (Jordan & Taylor, 2004, p. 13). Jordan and Taylor's conception of a "system" transcends Levy's technological limits and challenges spheres and spaces in society. As Taylor concludes, "hacktivists mark a revitalized attempt to re-engineer the penchant of hacking for systems and to apply it to the biggest system of them all: capitalism" (Taylor, 2005, p. 644).

The novelty of cyber activism and also hacktivism comes partly from its system-immanent struggle. Hardt and Negri, in drawing on Foucault, used the term "biopower" to describe "the tendency for sovereignty to become power over life itself" (Hardt & Negri, 2004, p. 334). Sovereignty, in that sense capitalism, has successfully made its way into private lives; therefore, in an age of technological ubiquity in Western society, every form of social struggle happens within its system. Jordan and Taylor argue that "biopolitics allow new forms of social militancy to arise within capital's circuits" (Jordan & Taylor, 2004, p. 150).

Cyber activism, on the one hand, appears as "dialectic of enlightenment of the 21st century information capitalism" (Fuchs, 2014, S. 103-104). Opposition takes the same routes

as the system it is opposing. The irony of using Facebook, Twitter or YouTube as tools against capitalism and the banking sector is apparent. On the other hand, hacker subcultures tried to stay out of the commercial infrastructure by developing their own tools; some of which are widely known today, such as GNU/Linux, Apache Webserver, P2P networks and much more. Movements such as the Occupy Movement or Anonymous combine the ingenious knowledge of technology with the experience of activists, now that technology and society are closer than ever.

Perhaps this is why cyber activism and its movements advocate for similar political demands as the allegedly "parasitical hacking culture" (Gunkel, 2001, p. 21) now more than two decades ago. For example, Wikileaks states on its website that publishing "improves transparency, and this transparency creates a better society for all people. Better scrutiny leads to reduced corruption and stronger democracies in all society's institutions, including government, corporations and other organisations" (WikiLeaks, 2011). IMMI seeks to provide a "safe haven for freedom of information and freedom of expression" by "bringing together the best functioning laws (…) and reflecting the reality of [a] borderless world and the challenges that it imposes locally and globally (…)" (IMMI, 2014a).

As Jordan and Taylor argue, social movements cannot be reduced to class conflicts in Marx' sense any more (Jordan & Taylor, 2004, p. 47). Instead, there is a multiplicity of social movements defining themselves in a globalized, yet not homogenized society. Freedom of information movements, figuratively, cannot be reduced to just that. There are similarities of the so-called Arab Spring, the Occupy Movement, Wikileaks, and IMMI. Yet, their motivations and goals are different because their opposing system is a different one.

The Occupy Movement, inspired by the Arab uprising and the Spanish Indignants movement, protested against social inequalities in the world. The Arab revolutions, however, were much more local issues and perhaps more concerned with labor situations, state oppression and arbitrariness. Their agenda was somewhat different from Occupy Wall Street, although the demand of social equality is present in both.

Protests in cyberspace and the "real world" have a dialectical relationship with expanding and at the same time limiting each other. Their interdependence, in forms of tools and spaces for protest and its manifestation, in a network society is apparent. Nevertheless, the cause for revolts is always a human one, not a virtual. Protest movements are part of civil society and as long as physical lives have not transcended into cyberspace, the reason for struggle is embodied in the physical world. The so-called "new social movements" where physical and virtual spaces are intertwined are only possible if accessibility to virtual space is granted. There is simply no Twitter Revolution if nobody in the country has internet access, despite the fact that it is highly doubtful that there ever was or will be such a thing as a "Social Media Revolution". This perception is already widely argued by critical scholars (Khamis & Vaughn, 2011; Cammaerts, 2012; Morozov, 2011; 2013; Curran, Fenton, & Freedman, 2012). As Morozov put it, regarding Iran's alleged Twitter Revolution: "If anything, Iran's Twitter Revolution revealed the intense Western longing for a world where information technology is the liberator rather than the oppressor" (Morozov, 2011, p. 3).

Stripping protest movements from their cultural context can lead to short-sighted and generalizing assumptions, which subsequently lead to even more simplified predictions. WikiLeaks, Anonymous, or IMMI would not have been possible in the late 90s. They grew

out of technology reaching into the private sphere and becoming intertwined with everyday life. Likewise, WikiLeaks would not have been possible in a country without technological ubiquity (Curran & Gibson, 2013). Sure, the internet allows for global accessibility, but first WikiLeaks had to grow out of a cultural environment with demands for political and economic transparency. The 2008 financial crisis fueled this demands and led to protest movements that successfully used the virtual sphere as a playground for the expression of social struggle.

IMMI is a child of these events. It was built upon social demands for transparency and streamlined with the ethos of the first "digital natives" and it grew in the safe environment of the Icelandic political sphere. It had a chance of having a real impact on the political landscap. And above all, it had tremendous support of the population due to the power vacuum created by the crisis.

6.3. Hacktivist Heritage as Fools for Social Movements

Cyber activism not only bears resemblance to the demands of early hacking subculture, but programs designed by the paranoids and anarchists in geek culture precipitously found new use in resilient social movements. By adapting and applying these technologies in sophisticated ways, outgunning the elite's range of power was unexpectedly imaginable. Machiavelli's "Prince" was all of a sudden one step behind. Yet, success is still a matter of human engagement, as long as techniques work as promised. Faulty tools can corrode a movement from the inside and open doors to surveillance and persecution. Excellent tools, however, do not necessarily lead to triumph. These platforms and programs are still operating inside the liberal social structure; they take shortcuts in the network, bypass obstacles, reveal

and also hide information. In this manner, they are often not that different functionally from what they are opposing, and therefore, "arise within capital's circuits" (Jordan & Taylor, 2004, p. 150).

There is a myriad of software accessible on the internet, and most of it has little purpose for regular users or activists. The internet is flooded with programs and noise, in forms of scripts, tools, and deprecated software. Even in the early days, the internet fragmented quickly and users had to bookmark URLs of websites and remember where to find what information. The rapid rise of Google in the mid-90s is a vivid example of the desperate need for search engines and organizational structures on the internet. Ethically driven programmers, Jordan and Taylor's sixth generation of hackers (Jordan & Taylor, 2004), started to develop software in line with Levy's hacker ethos. Free and Open-Source Software (FOSS) revolutionized the hitherto profit-driven computer branch. In attempting to undermine the profit driven software industry, FOSS developers published the source code for free and invited fellow programmers to contribute.

Richard Stallman, founder of the Free Software Foundation (FSF), published the "GNU manifesto" in 1985 (Stallman, 1985). He laid the cornerstone for the FOSS movement in declaring that software and its code should be available openly and for free. By allowing hackers and programmers to improve and update the code, software would reduce "the amount of work that the whole society must do for its actual productivity" (Stallman, 1985). At first, it appeared to be not much more than a blunt ideology. But with the size of computers shrinking, their processing power improving, and prices swiftly lowering, technology made its way into the private sphere; the Personal Computer (PC) made

technology available in citizen's homes and created a whole new branch of nerds. Effectively, their profession turned into a hobby by allowing tinkering on computers at home.

The panoply of free software[4] available today subsequently emerged out of the FOSS movement. Its relevance to the development of the internet and the rise of social media is often underrated and understated. Famous and widely used examples for FOSS are the GNU/Linux operating system, the core of Mozilla Firefox, the core of Google Chrome and Android, OpenOffice as well as a variety of protocols and software standards. Chat functions in social media platforms like Facebook are usually based on the open-source protocol XMPP. Compression and encryption standards, such as AES and PGP, are free and open-source. Until 2012, around 65% of all websites were hosted on Apache web servers. The open-source software still holds around 40% market domination in 2014 (Netcraft, 2014) after losing market share to Microsoft.

The open-source achievements in encryption and transmission protocols fueled the development of powerful tools for secure communication and surveillance circumvention. Software useful for social movements can be divided into roughly three categories: social media platforms, (active) tools for collaborative action, and (passive) tools for security. Of course this categorization is not exclusive and often programs overlap across more than one category. Also, since this cannot be emphasized enough, the benefit is always socio-technological and is determined by the type of usage. Obviously, the use of software depends

---

[4] "Free software" is not to be confused with "freeware". The latter concerns merely the price, but says nothing about terms of use and the legal conditions of the code. Free software, however, means that the software is free for use, distribution, and modification. GPL and Creative Commons are widely used licenses.

on its purpose. In an authoritarian regime, securing online communication or hiding a user's identity can be a primary asset where security is more important than means for creative collaboration. In liberal states, freedom of expression is, to a certain extent, less problematic. However, progress still needs to overcome structuralism and bureaucracy. Hence, fast and reliable tools for collaborative projects and documentation can be crucial. Social media, in this context, can deliver parts of the requirements stated above but cannot be trusted since they are profit-driven and closed systems. Since social media and their economic value have already been discussed, the following lines will focus on active and passive toolset for social movements.

Tools to provide security are mostly important in authoritarian regimes where the government rules with an iron fist. This thesis will only refer to these methods briefly since they are of secondary importance for the case study, IMMI. However, for WikiLeaks, source security and anonymity is a crucial factor for success. Encrypting of communication is important when government and institutions should be prevented from monitoring content of online communication, such as social media, email, text messages, and Voice-Over-IP (VOIP)[5]. There are applications for end-to-end encryption of data on every operating system, often even across platforms. Open PGP is a standard for email encryption working with digital signatures. There are also mobile applications for encrypting text messaging and VOIP. The main drawback is that mostly all endpoints have to have the same application or

---

[5] VOIP is a technology for establishing voice calls over the internet. Skype is one of the most used VOIP-clients.

have to exchange digital signatures first in order to provide secure communication. This obstacle has often prevented secure technologies from a broader dissemination.

Another approach to circumvent tracking is using Virtual Private Networks (VPN) and the popular software "Tor" (Tor, 2014). Instead of encrypting the message, these methods aim at hiding the messenger. Simplified, users connect to a server that forwards the requests through its IP-address[6]. Thus, the real IP-address of the user's device stays hidden since the endpoint only receives the request from the VPN-server, not from the computer connected to it. VPN-services are paid services provided by internet companies promising anonymity. However, their trustworthiness can be questionable since there is no guarantee that they are keeping their log-files clean. Tor works in a similar way, but uses a network built out of all connected devices to disguise IP-addresses. That makes the connection more secure but at the great cost of speed, depending on how many nodes are connected to the network. Tor also allows citizens to engage in illegal activity from which a multiplicity of black markets and questionable content grows.

Tor's peer-to-peer architecture circumvents central servers and created a so-called "darknet"[7]; hidden inside the internet it can only be accessed by software such as Tor. "Silk Road", one of Tor's most famous black markets received international media attention when FBI informants took it down. Silk Road offered a space to sell drugs, weapons, pornography

---

[6] An IP-address identifies a device in the network and can be linked to its owner, and therefore, tracked back to the physical person. While being less of an issue in public WIFI-networks, tracing IP-addresses to a person's home can be crucial. Hiding one's real IP-address is often the first step when engaging in online protest and illegal activities.

[7] The term "darknet" originates in the very beginning of the internet's predecessor, the ARPANET. It described subnetworks that were hidden from the main network, mostly for security reasons. For more detailed information about the darknet see Wood (2010).

and many other things. Nevertheless, with one such black market disappearing, a dozen more emerge. With this in mind, extensive anonymity undoubtedly boosts the proliferation of ethically questionable content, not to mention the risk for activists due to the increasing criminalization of such spaces. Most of what has been described above as "tools for security" is very ambiguous in nature. To reiterate this point, once more usage defines the nature of the tool. However, this is often not reflected in internet policies when such software and its methods are generalized and condemned.

Tools for collaborative action refers to software and services that are mostly free and based on open-source technologies. Software such as "Etherpad" allows its users to edit documents in real time and simultaneously. It was used to write parts of the IMMI proposal and also for the attempt to rewrite the Icelandic constitution. While Google Docs offers a similar functionality, Etherpad is completely open-source and can also be installed and configured on a private server. Even though Google bought Etherpad, what makes it different from Google Docs is that it can be used without Google's servers. A similar situation applies to "Diaspora", which is a FOSS attempt to create a social network platform similar to Facebook. Jitsi is another service to replace proprietary software for VOIP and video conferencing, such as Skype or Google Hangouts. IMMI uses a variation of such tools to collaborate with others, and at the same time bypasses proprietary services that act as a black box to its users. Ultimately, nobody can tell what happens with the data stored on servers of social media companies, and therefore, integrity and security of these data must be questioned.

A more disruptive weapon of collaborative action is Anonymous' LowOrbitIonCannon (LOIC)[8]; the small program was used extensively during Anonymous' cyber-attacks on different websites. Eventually, LOIC was nothing more than a simple DDoS-attack with an intuitive graphical user interface (GUI). All a user had to do was type in the URL of the target website and press Enter. On the one hand, LOIC allows users without any technical knowledge to engage in a mass-DDoS-attack; on the other hand, the fact that many users do not know what it is exactly they are doing can lead to fatal consequences. If LOIC is used from a home computer without a security environment such as Tor or a VPN-network, it is easy to trace the attacker. For many users without technical knowledge, launching LOIC in the Anonymous attacks against Visa, MasterCard and PayPal was a potentially dangerous endeavor that could have led to imprisonment and persecution. Ultimately, providing nifty usable tools for cyber-attacks does not compensate for a lack of knowledge in using them.

In conclusion, the accessibility to all kind of software on the internet cannot be generalized and judged altogether. The situation is much more complex and depends on the movement itself, the socio-economic as well as the socio-political environment. While most critical approaches in literature tend to generalize technologies of dissent, this chapter aimed to differentiate tools for diverse fields of applications. The potential for social movements to get their message across the internet cannot be drawn by simplifying their methods under the phrase "social media". The activist toolkit consists of much more than just Facebook, Twitter

---

[8] LOIC is an open source tool for detecting security issues on webservers. The source code can be found at (abatishchev, 2014)

and YouTube. One has to put a movement's means for communication and collective action under closer scrutiny.

6.4. Collective Action: "We are from the internet"

The term "citizen of the internet" appears frequently in combination with self-mediation of social movements and hacktivist groups. Adopted by the media, the term is used to describe a form of solidarity and togetherness shaped by digital means of communication. The hacktivist group "Telecomix" describes itself as "citizens of the internet" (Greenberg, 2011); the cyber activist collective Anonymous often refers to the same term in its press releases and YouTube videos; IMMI refers to "citizens of the internet" by discussing the importance of network neutrality (McCarthy & Saitta, 2012). As strange as the concept of an "internet citizen" may sound, the notion is not derived from physically belonging to a geographical area with common societal and cultural values. Much more importantly, the reason to consider oneself as a citizen of the internet refers to cyber activism and its potential of reshaping policies in the space that is "inhabited" by users.

Likewise, "don't worry, we're from the internet" is an iconic phrase and online meme often used in demonstrations by members of Anonymous. It refers to the notion of an "internet citizen". Similar catchphrases have been written on protest banners as well as been the subject of countless internet memes on websites such as 4chan and 9gag (9Gag, 2014). Such an expression refers in an ironic way to the internet as a space allegedly deprived of state control and censorship. As a space where anything goes, the internet would be a model of unleashed human expression, in all its cultural excesses. Therefore, the digital sphere would be free of physical boundaries and obligations that are characteristic of the physical

sphere. As the phrase sarcastically indicates, society should not worry, because those who have already mastered the challenges of virtuality have arrived to fix the bugs of the real world. The ones from the internet, the hacktivists, geeks, nerds and all the other kind of digital natives, know exactly what they are doing and have come to reinstall freedom in the operating system of the world that is capitalism.

Obviously, this humorous approach is far from the truth. The tagline reflects on countless controversies and expectations of virtuality that have not been fulfilled; most notably, the phrase also highlights the potential of virtual spaces to address society's issues, which have only been induced by the emergence of virtuality after all. With this in mind, the sentiment of new social movements towards the real world becomes clearly visible. In referring to Adorno and Horkheimer (2002) and their dialectic of enlightenment, as Fuchs' immanent critique of liberalism does (Fuchs, 2014, S. 104), the overstatement of the internet by cyber activists is also a humorous critique from within. After all, "don't worry, the internet is here" and alike refer to the grassroots counter-governance potential of the web, while simultaneously unmasking its over-emphasis in perfect irony.

Although politics and economics influence significant parts of the virtual sphere, it is still seen as a space of freedom and liberation, a space that needs to be defended. Even Curran, who is repeatedly arguing against a prejudiced conception and mystification of online spheres, speaks of a "battle for the 'soul' of the internet" (Curran J. , 2012b, p. 36). The question here is, whether he refers to a future "soul", whose meaning is still up for discussion, or to an inherent "soul" of the internet which would need to be defended. The latter would fall under Morozov's critique of "internet-mystification" (Morozov, 2013, p. 20)

by imposing a liberal character onto the internet. The former assumption, conversely, accounts for the dynamic of the online sphere. Always in flux, the "soul" of the internet would need constant redefining and reshaping, a process for which Curran, and many other scholars, uses the terminology of warfare. Cyber activists are a necessary counter-part for the socio-political and socio-economic tendencies of internet policy making.

As Sarikakis (2004) pointed out, there is no participation by civil society in internet policy making. By focusing on "market-directed and profit-motivated policies" (Sarikakis, 2004), issues of privacy, social justice, and freedom of expression are often underrepresented in the agenda of the information industry. Social media companies exploit the lack of international regulations regarding behavior towards users. To a large extent, a platform's policies shape its range of capabilities. These policies are widely independent of international laws and regulations, simply because of the weakness of international jurisdiction. Overarching internet governance is as well decided mostly by economic elites; this leaves the citizen uninvolved in the process of decision-making regarding the basis of the internet. The user neither has a voice in platform policymaking, nor in internet governance. As Freedman demands:

"The internet is itself a creature of public policy and it is entirely legitimate to propose that fully democratic states – and not outsourced private interests, partisan administrations, authoritarian governments or opaque supranational bodies – should regulate the internet as a public utility that is accessible and accountable to all their citizens" (Freedman, 2012, p. 98)

Additionally, a hopelessly outdated legal situation allows economic elites to abuse laws that are effectively applicable, yet no longer appropriate. International copyright regulations

display vividly how a set of laws can miss its target and act merely in favor of information and entertainment industry. Laws for freedom of expression collide frequently with libel laws, which also lead to a phenomenon called "libel tourism", as "the act of a company or individual choosing to pursue lawsuits against individuals or companies in a country with a low threshold for libel lawsuits" (McCarthy & Saitta, 2012, p. 48). The decentralization on the one hand and global availability on the other leads to a panoply of legal challenges that have not been met so far. The examination of IMMI in Chapter 7 will go into further detail about judicial implementations dealing with the complexity of the virtual sphere.

In their examination of case studies, Youmans and York argue that a platform's policy often conflicts with the intentions of activists (Youmans & York , 2012, p. 316). In drawing on Lessig's "code is law", they state that social media limits participation of users in two ways. First, code defines a platforms structure and its possibilities (Youmans & York , 2012, p. 316). What users can and cannot do is predetermined by the company's intentions that are manifested in the source code of a platform and its services. Therefore, the generation of counterpublics and counter-narratives within a specific service has to be permitted by the platforms policies. Also if it has not been allowed explicitly, distribution of dissent can act against company's policies, which are ultimately enforced by code (Youmans & York , 2012, p. 316).

Sarikakis criticizes that the increasing criminalization of the online sphere reduces the potential of the internet as a space for emancipatory expression (Sarikakis, 2004). The arbitrariness of legal proceedings in internet-related fields of application is apparent. The case of Chelsea Manning and her prosecution paint a very clear picture of how an allegedly

democratic country like the USA deals with its dissidents. However, the quite spectacular revealing of American war crimes in the Iraq hardly had consequences on a large scale. Whether or not the internet provides evidence for or against a case depends to a large extent on the opponent.

The secret cables WikiLeaks published in regards to the Iraq war or the NSA documents are only worth as much as they raise public awareness. While success of such an endeavor can hardly be predicted, a strong reaction from the affected political players such as the USA is only natural. Apparently, the attempt to reveal practices of their warfare does not suit the USA particularly well. Regarding WikiLeaks published documents, public figures in the USA would even call for Assange's assassination than for legal action.[9] An assassination is hard to prevent by law, since it is illegal already. Yet, an organization publishing information relevant for the public can be protected by a national law.

Fenton, in juxtaposing several scholars, argues towards "micro-politics" and "micro-power" (Fenton, 2012a, p. 166). Citizens would not necessarily become less political; they approach politics in "preferring a minoritarian stance that rejects the ultimately essentialist and pointless search for a universal blueprint" (Fenton, 2012a, p. 167). Yet, at the same time, activists find their common signifier in such overarching and abstract concepts as freedom of information. The "commitment to the value of difference and (…) appreciation of everyone's right to dissent" (Fenton, 2012a, p. 166) will most likely not be enough to create a sentiment of togetherness among activists. As long as there are common signifiers, which are often the

---

[9] A compilation of death threats against Julian Assange can be found at (PeoplesUnderground, 2013)

key factors in making a difference, collective action can create counter-narratives. IMMI is a creature of a whole set of common signifiers, that is not primarily concerned about micro-politics but addresses a far bigger picture.

WikiLeaks raises public awareness and turns civic disobedience into a radical form of information distribution. It is usually less concerned with the procedures of governance or participation in policy making. WikiLeaks always stays in opposition, and therefore, refuses any sort of responsibility. That is left to media organizations, which can take the raw material on WikiLeaks and use it as a journalistic source. Thus, WikiLeaks can be compared to a radical form of news organization (Hindman & Thomas , 2013, p. 549).

Thomaß as well argues that WikiLeaks lacks accountability in form of responsibility (Thomaß, 2011, p. 22). The "right to know" for citizens has hitherto been bound to journalism. WikiLeaks challenges the accuracy of such a compound. Nevertheless, where journalistic institutions can be held accountable for their actions, this is not the case for WikiLeaks (Thomaß, 2011, p. 22). By trying to stay outside the judicial system and act as a merely activist entity, WikiLeaks refuses any responsibility for its revelations. Thomaß argues that despite its advocacy for absolute transparency, WikiLeaks still selects when and what to publish, even though this criteria is not a transparent process and its ethical code is unknown to the public (Thomaß, 2011, p. 22).

Estop argues that the basic assumption that total transparency would lead to a free society is wrong because it follows a very mythical notion of power that presents secrecy and transparency as contradictory:

If transparency can be equated to truth, and secrecy to a kind of lie, it should be noted that, whatever the apparent paradox, power can perfectly lie and manipulate people using precisely truth and transparency as its main tool. When it comes to politics, the opposition real/apparent is no more relevant. (Estop, 2014, p. 41)

Estop therefore questions not only Assange's intentions with WikiLeaks, but the underlying ideology of freedom and transparency. IMMI, on the other hand, chose a different path, although its first proposal was written in collaboration with Assange. Instead of acting as a voice of dissent that is infused with a very radical ideology of transparency, IMMI intends to build a protective judicial frame for projects like WikiLeaks. It cannot solve the ideological discussion of transparency, in which WikiLeaks has clearly picked a side. But IMMI sets out to reduce the arbitrariness of international political entities in regards to information online. IMMI's form of civic engagement is not only civil disobedience, and it is also not just protesting against the prevalent power structure. It is actually an attempt to recreate these power structures and not follow merely an oppositional strategy, as WikiLeaks does.

What makes IMMI not only interesting, but also very relevant is not primarily the content of its proposal but the way activism shaped the political landscape of a country in crisis. Out of the power vacuum of Iceland's financial meltdown arose the attempt of citizens to govern media spaces. Cyber activists in Iceland took the chance to not waste a crisis, and created a highly relevant conglomerate of new ideas to challenge power structures not only in Iceland, but also on a global scale. Because of the internet and its topology, even a small country can engage in border-transcending endeavors that can have a greater impact.

The following chapter reflects on the process of IMMI's emergence in the context of Iceland's financial crisis. It will analyze the findings of the research and delineate the potential as well as the obstacles of such a large project. No less important is the aspect of "success" which will be discussed as well.

7. Case Study Results: IMMI

7.1.   Influences

The first part of the research question explores the influence of cyber activism has on protest movements. This topic was discussed on a theoretical level in Chapter 6. In this case study, WikiLeaks functions as a signifier for cyber activism. IMMI tries to institutionalize the demands of a post-crash social movement in Iceland. Sparked by the Icelandic economic crisis, these two entities "followed a similar vision, but with a slightly different objective" as Bogi Ágústsson stated in an interview (personal communication, August 19, 2014). Tracing IMMI's development led to interviews with the RÚV employees Ingólfur Bjarni Sigfússon, Helgi Seljan and Bogi Ágústsson. The emergence of IMMI originated in an anonymous tip regarding secret documents of Kaupthing published on WikiLeaks:

> Few days before this particular evening, […] a colleague of ours got a tip. He is a bit of a cyber-nerd and he got a tip that on this website none of us has ever heard of were explosive documents about the inner working stuff of one of the Icelandic banks that have recently gone bust. [It was] their loan book and documents about their criminal dealings and sloppy hand work. And of course we were interested, so we got the documents and we tried as best as we could to verify them. (Ingólfur S., personal communication, August 19, 2014)

RÚV had tried to contact Kaupthing in regards to these documents, but could not get a statement from the bank. Also, on a press conference two days before the collapse of the

bank in October 2008, Kaupthing told RÚV reporter Helgi Seljan that everything was fine and "the fall of the other banks wouldn't affect them" (Helgi S., personal communication, August 19, 2014). As it turned out, the bank had lied to the journalists at the press conference. But, according to Helgi, there was a lot of money from the state involved as well. Days before its bankruptcy, Kaupthing received loans from the Icelandic Central Bank as part of the bailout, which, according to Helgi Seljan, secretly disappeared:

> That was the loan Kaupthing got from the Central Bank. That was part of the bailout of the banks. And we never had a good explanation on a) why did they lend them the money with guarantees of a Danish bank which turned out not to be a good guarantee and b) what happened to the money. (Helgi S., personal communication, August 19, 2014)

This incident shows that the public outrage after the gag order was not solely related to freedom of press. Surely, Kaupthing tried to suppress information about its business practices. But furthermore, it seemed that a few people even profited from of the bank's bankruptcy. From that perspective, RÚV's interest in WikiLeaks is comprehensible. They had decided to run a three-day-story on the incident. On the day of the gag-order, Kaupthing already knew that RÚV had planned a big broadcast for the evening show and thus the bank tried to suppress it. Ingólfur described the events as follows:

> Just before 7 o'clock we were going on air. This was supposed to be the lead story of that evening. Bogi was the anchor. And about 5 minutes before we go on air, we get a letter saying "no". [The] judge described it a "temporary injunction" barring RUV from reporting based on these documents. […] You can't get a general

complete ban on others doing it, I think. [But] nobody had done anything with these documents except us. I was mad, Bogi was mad, so we were both in agreement. Fine, we won't run the story but we'll run the headline: "We were going to tell you more about the documents turning up the bank, but we can't. So here are the stories that we can't report tonight. We have got an injunction barring us but not other media from using the documents and the documents are also available on this website. […] And [we] put up a banner saying in fairly large letters […] "wikileaks.org" and the rest is sort of history. (Ingólfur S., personal communication, August 19, 2014)

Surprisingly, the gag order was not referring to company secrecy or libel, but to the banking secrecy law in Iceland. Therefore, the bank was trying to argue that it was protecting its shareholders and their confidentiality. They used the banking secrecy law to temporarily suppress the RÚV report. The injunction would have stayed in force until a judge would have ruled a verdict:

Because these are legal documents, [subject] to banking law […] and banking secrecy law. So it's not a matter of freedom of media or freedom of expression or anything like that. […] Publishing these documents is a breach of banking secrecy laws, so a temporary injunction is set on that premise until a judge takes a case and weights the arguments on both sides. That never happened. (Ingólfur S., personal communication, August 19, 2014)

An incident like this was entirely new to Iceland. There was "no clarity how to proceed," and therefore, for RÚV, it was a matter of "journalistic integrity", said Ingólfur (personal

communication, August 19, 2014). What brought WikiLeaks into the equation was not intrinsic to its efforts to make the world more transparent. WikiLeaks did not actively approach RÚV or Icelandic activists, but it was rather a chain of events in Iceland's socio-political landscape that pulled WikiLeaks into a leading position of IMMI's establishment. WikiLekas did not involve itself, instead it was involved by external forces. It had served as a passive resource until Assange realized what his website had stirred up in Iceland.

Kristinn Hrafnsson, WikiLeaks' spokesperson since 2010, was working at RÚV at the time of the bank scandal. Kristinn and Helgi had also been reviewing the Kaupthing documents and were assigned to verify them. Kristinn subsequently got involved with WikiLeaks while working on the "Collateral Murder" video (WikiLeaks, 2010). According to him, the Icelandic media failed to represent the general public during the crisis:

> From my perspective as a journalist for 25 years, […] we exposed the absolute lame institution of the mainstream media in absolutely failing in addressing the fundamentals that we have exposed. […] One of the most [important] things for joining WikiLeaks [was this] failing of mainstream media. (Kristinn H., personal communication, August 12, 2014)

In a documentary about IMMI, Bogi Ágústsson argues similarly. He said that most reporters who understood banking systems had been bought by them. In offering jobs to journalists, the banking sector incorporated journalists and thus eliminated oppositional voices in the media landscape. According to Bogi, investigative journalism had never played a significant role in Iceland, partly due to time and resources (Lázaro, 2014). Iceland's small population of

merely 300 000 inhabitants and its political stability did not create an apparent need for investigative journalism.

Partly due to the minimal media coverage of the crisis, Icelanders did not perceive their country as corrupt. When they suddenly realized that their banking sector had lost 10 times the country's GDP because of questionable business practices, the country was shocked. Throughout the research trip in Iceland, "embarrassment" was by far the most common emotion expressed in regards to the crisis. In 2007, one year before the collapse, Iceland ranked number one (UNDP, 2007) in the Human Development Index (HDI). The "Press Freedom Index" also ranked Iceland number one worldwide in 2008 (Reporters without Borders, 2008). Iceland had ranked number one since the beginning of the index in 2002. When in 2008 Iceland's economy collapsed, their ranking dropped. Icelandic citizens said they were embarrassed that the world's most developed country seemed to have a "rotten core" (Icelandic farmer, personal communication, August 08, 2014).

Many Icelanders felt betrayed by the social system they took pride in for two main reasons: first because they had a political system that had allowed for such a crash to happen, and second because there existed a media landscape that hardly touched upon real issues of Iceland's politics and economy. Iceland currently has only a few newspapers. Morgunblaðið is the country's biggest newspaper and received heavy criticism after appointing Davíð Oddsson, former Prime Minister and former head of Central Bank, as an editor. The same Central Bank had granted extensive loans to the already bankrupt Kaupthing, money that allegedly disappeared. It is not surprising that Morgunblaðið did not have any interest in investigating the WikiLeaks documents.

Another issue Icelanders were concerned about, was the fact that a foreign website had shown that their economic as well as their political system was corrupt. A common phrase in Iceland is "people mind their own business," meaning Icelanders consider themselves to be responsible for of their own problems. Birgitta Jónsdóttir described her country as a "classic underdog nation" that is "very defined when forced to do stuff" (personal communication, August 11, 2014), such as paying off the foreign debt of the crisis. This mind-set partly explains the shame some citizens were feeling. At the time of the bank scandal, the majority of the Icelanders supported WikiLeaks, a foreign website, and not their national banks (Birgitta J., personal communication, August 11, 2014). While other countries and institutions had pinned the fault for the financial crisis on each other, Icelanders felt embarrassed for their own country, a country that, according to the Icelandic phrase, should have minded its own business but did not. Furthermore, it needed a foreign whistleblower platform to prove it and the only media that seemed to care was the national broadcaster and not investigative newspapers.

As argued in Chapter 5.5 and Chapter 6.2, cyber activism always happens in a socio-political and socio-economic context. In this case, myriad factors piled up and created a strong initial support for a freedom of information movement. Its most significant outcome is IMMI. Due to the globality of the internet, technically as well as legally, IMMI's implementation would affect not only Iceland. It could also have an international impact on the virtual sphere by hosting data in Icelandic data centers, which would then make it subject to Icelandic law. The parliament that followed the start of the financial crisis was so optimistic that it even passed the IMMI resolution unanimously, a sign that Iceland responded swiftly to the corruption of its banking sector.

However, prior to the emergence of IMMI the role of cyber activism was a more passive one. As stated above, WikiLeaks did not involve itself actively at first. Its influence was initially limited to being merely the source of secret documents of a collapsed bank. However, this does not deprive an act of whistleblowing of its activist element. Nevertheless, the documents were not hacked with the mere purpose to use them actively and publicly against Kaupthing as a political strategy. WikiLeaks served as an information hub that contained these documents. If nobody had used them, they would still be in the depths of WikiLeaks' cables, unrecognized and unimportant. Therefore, this act of cyber activism only gained meaning through its public use. The RÚV incident and its media attention stirred up trouble and subsequently lead to a broad consent regarding WikiLeaks and its ideals of freedom of information. This consent might have been there before the crisis, but not as closely linked to WikiLeaks and its measures.

It was only when Assange got together with activists such as Birgitta Jónsdóttir, Smári McCarthy and others that WikiLeaks was included into the Icelandic social movement. Together they were working on what turned out to be the Icelandic Modern Media Initiative proposal. This was before Kristinn Hrafnsson became involved with WikiLeaks. Also, the collaboration between IMMI and WikiLeaks ended with the application of IMMI's proposal in the Althingi. WikiLeaks and Julian Assange got caught up in legal affairs and IMMI had all the input they needed from WikiLeaks. After the approval of the parliament, IMMI minded its own business and went on to the bureaucratic process of the Icelandic legislation (Guðjón I., personal communication, August 11, 2014).

For IMMI, WikiLeaks nevertheless still serves as "a model to build on" (Metahaven, 2013), as it managed to withstand pressure and keep information online. WikiLeaks is an activist platform for dissemination of documents published out of civil disobedience and thus has no legal basis. But even if whistleblower protection by national law would be beneficial, according to Kristinn Hrafnsson, WikiLeaks would have to stay outside of the socio-economic and socio-political system:

> [It's] very hard to press charges online. […] But there have been attempts to take us down. We do have a fairly strong position to go wherever it's save. We can get hundreds of mirrors. But the kind of the idea would be beneficial to us to have it [Wikileaks] secured on national level. In the big picture we're sending a signal that you have to take the reality of the free internet and incorporate it into a national legal structure, take it down to the reality there. So we can stop talking about the light web and dark web and start talking about the web as a unit that is part of our environment. (Kristinn H., personal communication, August 12, 2014)

Kristinn was emphasizing the oppositional value of WikiLeaks as an impetus for change in society that could be achieved by incorporating the virtual sphere socially and legally. He strongly criticized the undermining of cyber activism as a social force. By persecuting whistleblowers and activists, the internet has become a widely criminalized sphere with a very dubious legal situation. Kristinn condemned the voices, predominantly from the USA, that called for Assange's assassination:

> [Regarding death threats against Assange] This overreaction is itself a hint that people do see that these […] sort of small measures are [an] indication that […]

bigger social change can be made. Basically they are, by their reaction, underlying the huge potentials that are there. Which is cute.

If I go around with a spraying can, I spray the houses […] and the owner of the houses will come and demand that I'm shot, what is this saying? They are so deadly afraid of my spraying measures? What are they afraid of? (Kristinn H., personal communication, August 12, 2014)

Assange argues similarly when he says that WikiLeaks was either accused of risking lives or having no impact at all. "It can't be both. Which is it?" (Assange, 2010) Yet, the potential that WikiLeaks holds, cannot fully unfold outside of society. An attempt to shape society in embracing and incorporating contemporary technology needs to have judicial legitimation. Margret Magnusdottir, who is head of legal affairs at RÚV and also member of IMMI steering committee, criticized WikiLeaks for its lack of responsibility:

[The] problem is: Wikileaks. What is it? Is it a medium? Or are they just offering information? Because if its media website, then they have certain freedoms. And they have protections. […] Then they also have responsibilities. But a website like WikiLeaks, they don't want to have responsibilities. They only want to have the freedoms but they don't want to have the responsibilities. And that's why they don't want to be in the legal term of "media". And that's why they say, "We only exchange information, we aren't media". But they want to have the freedoms. (Margret M., personal communication, August 19, 2014)

For Margret, IMMI aims at providing more than just an information hub like WikiLeaks does. IMMI would be able to overcome WikiLeaks' obstacles and incorporate its basic ideals

of transparency into the judicial realm. The influence of cyber activism in the Icelandic financial meltdown was less of a practical nature, and thus, contrary to the role of Anonymous and Hacktivist culture in the Arab uprising. There, social movements used cyberspace as another space for expression of dissent. Icelandic citizens neither discovered new ways of protest through cyberspace nor engaged themselves in something Jordan and Taylor call "Mass Action Hacktivism" (Jordan & Taylor, 2004). Instead, concepts for freedom of expression with anti-capitalistic stances through transparency were adapted and aligned with Iceland's fundamental principles of freedom of expression. When fully implemented, IMMI should "make […] phenomena such as Wikileaks perfectly legal", said IMMI director Guðjón Idir (personal communication, August 11, 2014).

Projects like WikiLeaks along with Hacktivist cultures like Anonymous, raise awareness to certain topics that had previously been untouched. In the case of Iceland, an apparent attack on media freedom unfolded as a matter of freedom of expression on the one side and transparency on the other. The public discourse about these topics was triggered by a series of events, starting with WikiLeaks' publication of Kaupthing's documents in an act of online protest. Kristinn argued as following regarding cyber activism:

> It reflects a growing awareness, which is positive, that there is a way to protest with online activity. […] Internet has both, the potential of being an extremely important vehicle for social change but at the same time of course it's a very worrying platform of abusive attacks on basic principles of civil liberty and freedom. And so it's a double-edged sword. The fight for internet freedom is not a

fight for the freedom of Google to profile you and sell you like a bloody slave on a market. (Kristinn H., personal communication, August 12, 2014)

Therefore, the potential of awareness raising comes at a price. Liberal freedoms can have dangerous side effects. Especially companies such as Google or Facebook manage to make profit out of profiling and user data, as discussed in Chapter 5.4, and still act within the legal boundaries of neoliberal markets. WikiLeaks, on the other side, must act in a legal grey zone to fulfill its purpose as a whistleblower platform.

To actually bring social change, however, a more constructive force than WikiLeaks is needed. Due to its emphasis on staying outside of the social system, WikiLeaks is merely an oppositional force. As Margret Magnusdottir observed, it lacks responsibility. IMMI tries to be a responsible input. It is, so to say, inside of the social system. Born out of civil disobedience, IMMI tries to actively change the basic issues, which led to its emergence. However, it still has a strong activist attitude. Birgitta Jónsdóttir described herself as an activist and anarchist (Birgitta J., personal communication, August 11, 2014). Guðjón Idir emphasized the importance of protection for whistleblowers and activists (Guðjón I., personal communication, August 11, 2014). After all, IMMI's demands bear a strong resemblance to WikiLeaks' ideals. While the former tries to incorporate them into the rules and regulations of a social system, the latter is merely oppositional.

In conclusion, the role of WikiLeaks as a signifier of cyber activism has had two main functions in the Icelandic crisis. First, it served as an information source. The ease and speed of data transfer makes the internet a prime platform for whistleblowing and hosting of large amounts of data. Second, WikiLeaks serves as a role model for providing information that is

in the public's interest. Therefore, IMMI aims at protecting platforms and projects that expose unethical and illegal activities of corporations, politicians and their stakeholders. IMMI tries to protect those who are acting against corporations and in the public interest. Katrin Jakobsdottir argued that activism is a necessary part of social structures, online and offline:

> Activism and civil disobedience is very important in real life. I think that's also very important on the internet. But we need to have some regulations of what's going on in the internet. But we can't do that by banning or closing stuff that's on the internet; but we need to somehow find new ways really to use the internet but that people can't use it for criminal offenses. (Katrin J., personal communication, August 15, 2014)

Birgitta and Guðjón also pointed out the importance of protecting civil disobedience online. They referred several times to the book "The Shock Doctrine" by journalist Naomi Klein (Birgitta J. and Guðjón I., personal communication, August 11, 2014), which is also referred to on IMMI's website:

> In her book, "The shock Doctrine", Naomi Klein illustrates how crisis in societies have repeatedly been utilized and harnessed to push through controversial legislation that infringe upon our civil liberties and amass more centralized state power: Protecting self-interests at the cost of public-interests. The IMMI proposal is developed to counter this tradition and utilize the crisis as a chance to bring about positive fundamental changes in the best long-term interests of the public. (IMMI, 2014e)

Klein argued that, similar to psychological shock treatments, economic shocks were used since the 1970's to force neoliberal reforms in times of crisis. Such reforms would be to the benefit of multinational corporations and at everyone else's expense. In order to push through neoliberal practices, it is important to silence political and ideological dissent (Klein, 2008). This is why IMMI tries to create a safe haven not only for Iceland, but also on an international scale. As the proposal stands, Iceland therefore would have to make sure dissent stays online, no matter what country tries to suppress it.

Another influence on IMMI that should briefly be mentioned is the panoply of tools for collaborative work. As discussed in Chapter 6.3, a lot of contemporary software used by social movements and activists stems from the FOSS movement, which emerged in the 80's. IMMI uses a variety of free software (Guðjón I., personal communication, August 11, 2014). For example, Etherpad allows for collaborative real-time editing of IMMI's documents. Jitsi is a full-featured open-source software for video conferencing that supports encryption, similar to Skype. Google Docs is also used in IMMI's workflow.

Further, according to Birgitta Jónsdóttir there are some experiments in Iceland with tools for direct democracy, similar to the "Liquid Democracy" software used by the Pirate Party in Germany:

It needs to develop further in a sense that it needs to be easier for people, ordinary people, to use it. It's still too "geeky". We are using a very similar system but we haven't really developed it as far as the Germans. They call it liquid democracy. [...] It's too "geeky". Nobody understands that. (Birgitta J., personal communication, August 11, 2014)

Birgitta also briefly touches upon the aspect of usability in software designed for democratic participation. IMMI is promoting software that organizes and regulates feedback loops in legislation. Birgitta argued that we "need to redefine our democracy in the digital era" (personal communication, August 11, 2014). This democracy has to be easy to use and secure, which are both major issues in contemporary systems for participatory governance. Katrin Jakobsdottir, as former minister of education, observed similar issues in Iceland:

> We've been having experiments here in Icelands, very concrete experiments with Reykjavik city. Small things. […] And then we've been making some progress in putting legislations on the internet before it becomes legislate. So we put a bill to legislation on the internet and we say we want to have comments. But it often tends to be that the general public find that too technical, so they don't comment. (Katrin J., personal communication, August 15, 2014)

Although the last paragraphs already dealt with issues regarding the situation of IMMI, the following chapter goes into detail. It delineates the obstacles that have emerged in the process of IMMI's implementation.

7.2.   Obstacles

In 2014, four years after the approval of the proposal, IMMI has been partly turned into national law in Iceland. But progress had been slow and numerous issues piled up, which will be discussed in this chapter. IMMI is still a work in progress, so this examination on the status quo concerns the time frame between June 2010 and August 2014 (IMMI, 2014f).

First and foremost, there are issues concerning IMMI's perception in international media, according to journalist Helgi Seljan. On the one hand, it was in the national news only briefly at the beginning. Helgi said that as a journalist he "never fully understood why they have been so reluctant to put it in news" (personal communication, August 19, 2014). On the other hand, when IMMI was described in international media, there would have been misconceptions, argued Helgi. He found that too often IMMI was treated as if it was already implemented into Icelandic law:

> And there's a general misunderstanding among the foreign press actually. That Iceland is some kind of a safe haven for journalists and whistleblowers and stuff, just because of the proposal and the legislation. That was one of the key factors that made Edward Snowden seek asylum in Iceland, and was a part of that misunderstanding. (Helgi S., personal communication, August 19, 2014)

The main issue for IMMI proceeding slowly is a lack of funding, which was confirmed by all interviewees and also stated on IMMI's website (IMMI, 2014c). The members of the steering committee are not only appointed with IMMI, but have a variety of tasks. Margret Magnusdottir was dealing with media policy as a lawyer at the Ministry of Education, Science and Culture in 2012. She was part of the first steering committee and struggled with the lack of funding for the work on IMMI:

> When IMMI was approved in the parliament there was no funding that came with it. So it has been really tough […], because people had to do it for free, because there is no funding. […] They had one person that was the director of the steering committee and also because it was appointed in 2012, we were into it at first and

we were looking into the whole resolution and what we can do. We were making a report. […] It's a huge task. I think it was a failure that they didn't secure funding for the project, from the beginning and that's been really a waste of time to trying to convince the government to get some money because of the financial crisis.

(Margret M., personal communication, August 19, 2014)

The bureaucratic process did not secure funding for the project. Also, the first steering committee had to evaluate the tasks of IMMI and the size of the endeavor. After the proposal passed, the political interest in IMMI dwindled. Iceland's politics focused more on local issues and on the financial crisis, and therefore, cut the budget of several ministries. "The first committee, it took about two and a half years to get it together. Because it was very hard, even if there was a unanimous vote in the parliament, to get budget for it" (Birgitta J., personal communication, August 11, 2014). Guðjón Idir's describes his perception regarding the work of the steering committee as follows:

But they can only focus on maybe two or three topics at a time. They're understaffed, they don't have the appropriate funding. [There's also a] lack of political will, maybe. […] So the minister was asked about the progress of the committee. And in his written reply he said […] due to the fact that ministries had to endure budget cuts and […] he was explaining the slow process of the committee, saying that there's lack of personnel and there's lack of funding. And they didn't really earmark proper funding to the committee in the first place.

(Guðjón I., personal communication, August 11, 2014)

IMMI became stuck in the ministries, and although it was approved unanimously, there is no guarantee that it will ever be finished. There had been tremendous support initially, but the political willpower has since cooled down. Once the first steering committee shed light on the size of the task, politicians hesitated to push it further. Many of IMMI's proposals also conflict with other parts of Icelandic law. Therefore, the implementation of IMMI's laws leads to an organizational and judicial overhead because there are many more laws and regulations connected to it. Many of which were revealed by the first steering committee.

> In May 2013, when we were supposed to hand in our legal proposal, we found out that it was too big, the task. And we asked the minister if it was OK that we focused on each topic a time. […] The problem was that in 2013, last year, we had this new parliamentary elections and a whole new government. And then we had to convince the new minister of culture that we should go on with it and […] finally he decided that he wanted to do it when he was able to look on our proposal. (Margret M., personal communication, August 19, 2014)

Apart from funding the complexity of the implementation turned out to be difficult. These two factors have a strong connection. If a task turns out to be even bigger than originally thought, it often becomes a political risk as well. If financial support goes into an endeavor that might not be finished by the end of the term, the party in power risks its re-election. IMMI was struck by the same political stagnation that is often characteristic for large bureaucratic democracies. Birgitta, an avowed anarchist, strongly criticized the complexity of Iceland's legal system. It would make it almost impossible to improve things without starting from scratch (Birgitta J., personal communication, August 11, 2014).

Another factor connected to funding was the socio-economic situation in Iceland. The country suffered from a massive economic crash that put many citizens in debt. The crisis degraded Iceland's national identity and diminished the living quality of the population. A sentiment often uttered throughout the research was that Icelanders had different issues to manage than IMMI. Although Kristinn criticized this behavior as short-sighted, post-crash Iceland was mainly concerned with reducing debt, ensure housing, and reducing unemployment. However, the measures for achieving that have been criticized as being short-term. In Kristinn's opinion, "the fundamental issues were never touched". With Iceland trying to "rebuild a society out of an economic meltdown", IMMI, unfortunately, turned out to be "not a priority" (Kristinn H., personal communication, August 12, 2014).

> Obviously, in the aftermath the obstacles were piling up when it came to actually realizing the ideas, something that could have been foreseen. My sort of [speculation] is that it's a combination of suddenly realizing that it is very hard to cooperate with the current legal structure and international obligations and various treaties. So in the formal front it could be hard to push through IMMI entirely. (Kristinn H., personal communication, August 12, 2014)

Bogi Ágústsson, who has a generally critical point of view in regards to IMMI, said that it is not a political priority for anyone any more (personal communication, August 19, 2014). IMMI received its political attention and now it is politically stagnating. Helgi Seljan mentioned a further obstacle for the implementation. He argued that it is a "known secret that some of the people that were used to drawing legislations […] in the ministries weren't pretty fond of the idea of somebody doing it for them" (personal communication, August 19, 2014).

Some Icelandic politicians were not happy about a group of people, partly outside of Iceland, tinkering with Icelandic law. Even though the implementation is a task for the appointed steering committee, the impetus for IMMI came from outside the parliament. Interestingly, Iceland's stance of minding its own business has perhaps gotten in its way to realize IMMI, after the project was already approved.

The before mentioned complexity and scope of IMMI's implementation does not only affect a broad range of national laws. Iceland is bound to a panoply of international treaties and multilateral contracts. "Most of the laws that we wanted to be changed, are complex because they go into international laws that we are part of", said Birgitta Jónsdóttir (personal communication, August 11, 2014). As a result, some of IMMI's objectives are hard to push through because they cannot be carried out as originally drafted. Hence, Margret Magnusdottir does not believe that IMMI can be realized as proposed and approved:

[Regarding IMMI's full implementation] I don't think so. Because [of the] financial cuts in the ministries, we don't' have the resources to make these changes. […] Also you have to understand that we have to do so many changes to laws. And they have to go through the parliament and they have to be discussed and sometimes [they are] really controversial issues, like decriminalizing defamation. […] We have to understand that we are part of a lot of international conventions and agreements we have to take into account and we're not as free to make every law that we want to do. (Margret M., personal communication, August 19, 2014)

The involvement in international contracts does not only increase the necessary effort of IMMI's implementation. It requires more legal expertise as well. Members of the steering committee have to dig much deeper into international law. They have to closely analyze international contracts and their consequences. Additionally, one has to keep in mind that although Icelanders speak fairly good English it is not their mother tongue. International law is most likely not translated to Icelandic. Even if the treaties are partly translated, most of the underlying foreign laws are not. Therefore, many more resources are needed than just a committee of eight members, most of which are working on IMMI in their spare time.

Hoeren argues similarly in his elaboration on the EU's perspective on IMMI. The implementation of IMMI would require "special training for judges" to adequately address the new legal situation (Hoeren, 2010, p. 145). There is a much bigger legal field to cover than just Icelandic law. In his analysis of IMMI's topics, he concludes that "a very difficult balancing of interests will be necessary" (Hoeren, 2010, p. 145) to put IMMI on reasonable, legitimate grounds. Also, Iceland would then very soon have to deal with international legal threats against the ones it ought to protect. This is especially critical due to a number of inconsistencies between US and EU law, both of which Iceland has liabilities with.

There have also been some voices that doubted that IMMI would have a big impact when implemented. Bogi Ágústsson and Ingólfur Bjarni Sigfússon argued that the budget cuts are merely a sign for a lack of political interest in general. Bogi stated that he doubts that IMMI would have much of an impact within Iceland, "except to look nice" (personal communication, August 19, 2014).

Getting a law passed which doesn't really mean anything except you want to change press freedom and laws regarding those who leak documents that are of public interest, etc. That doesn't have anything to do with budget issues. It has to do with political interest in it. There was probably slightly more political interest in the last government [which was] sort of immediately post-crash and also more left-wing. But the interest died down. (Ingólfur S., personal communication, August 19, 2014)

In fact, the gag order against RÚV was the first and only one in Iceland's history. Before the crisis, Iceland ranked as the world's number one developed country with an exemplary freedom of press. Therefore, the question concerning IMMI's impact in Iceland is certainly justified. Also, the information that would be protected by IMMI is most likely not primarily concerning Iceland. Ingólfur argued that he had "a hard time imagining such a huge influx of data that would need protecting" (personal communication, August 19, 2014).

To sum up, three main obstacles were identified that led to the consequences outlined in the next chapter. First, there is a lack of funding regarding the implementation of IMMI. The government did not secure resources in the process of its approval. Therefore, IMMI became subject to administrative arbitrariness and ended up being almost a leisure activity. Second, the political interest declined rapidly after the resolution was approved. The government dealt with different, more local issues and focused on pushing Iceland through the crisis. When the first steering committee determined the scope of IMMI's implementation in May 2013, political support declined further. This was also because of the new government in place. Third, the complexity of the topic and its entanglement in international law impedes

further implementation. Due to multilateral contracts, parts of IMMI cannot be realized as planned.

The next chapter discusses the consequences of IMMI and its status quo in 2014, four years after its approval. It identifies projects and movements that can be seen as following IMMI's topics.

7.3. Consequences

IMMI is a constructive child of the Icelandic crisis. Although it remains stuck in legislative process, it still serves as a vivid example of grassroots counter governance. The IMMI resolution was written by activists and not by the political establishment. IMMI is meant to be more than just another petition. It tries to make a connection between activism in the virtual and the social system. In times of crisis it is important to come up with something concrete and use the power vacuum created by the crash, argued Birgitta Jónsdóttir (personal communication, August 11, 2014). Our contemporary democracies are "outdated" and were created for different societies (Metahaven, 2013). Petitions are worthless according to her, which is why Birgitta is working with Hacktivists and the Pirate Party. Kristinn Hrafnsson uttered a comparable opinion:

> […] Nothing changes the simple fact that gathering together in physical presence is and has always been a simple most effective way to bring about social change. […] A simple internet protest is not going to change anything. Petitions, where you have million people signing a petition online, it's easy to dismiss that. It's easier to dismiss a million people signing strongly worded demand online that it is

to dismiss ten thousand people showing up in front of a building. (Kristinn H.,
personal communication, August 12, 2014)

Besides the demonstrations in Iceland in 2008, physical presence can also refer to Julian
Assange, Birgitta Jónsdóttir, Smári McCarthy and a few other activists getting together in
Iceland to develop IMMI's resolution. As a result, activist Birgitta Jónsdóttir became a
member of parliament, where she then tried to get support for the project. IMMI, as a
reaction to the crisis, would fill the vacuum with something new that has the potential be less
reactionary in the future:

> If you only have a revolt, [...] and you don't put into place new mechanisms to
> replace the old ones, then history repeats itself. This what those who want to take
> away our power, have advantage […]. So IMMI, in itself, is an attempt to work
> like them. To be a step ahead of them. [...] So, instead of only being reactionary,
> we actually created something that was a concept […] that was preventing stuff. It
> should be a model for others to work in the same methods in advance of a crisis.
> So when you have a crisis, you're actually ready with something. (Kristinn H.,
> personal communication, August 12, 2014)

Following that argument, part of IMMI's objective is to provide legal grounds for new
platforms. "Ready with something" in a crisis means to have IMMI as a backbone for
political freedoms and grassroots movements. It can support counter governance and allow
the incorporation of the online sphere into the political decision-making. Tools can empower
citizens to participate in the shaping of their society and political landscape. Therefore, solid

platforms are needed to involve citizens more and directly into the decision-making process, argues Birgitta (Metahaven, 2013).

In 2014, IMMI had partly been turned into Icelandic law. But for reasons explained in the previous Chapter 7.1, a lot of the work has since slowed. Out of IMMI's nine main points, as described in Chapter 2, merely three have been partially turned into Icelandic law (IMMI, 2014f). However, it must be kept in mind that most of the active work on the implementation of IMMI started with the first steering committee in 2012. The implementation did not begin until two years after its approval. A new Information Act was passed in January 2013. However, it does not satisfy IMMI's requirements regarding public access to information (IMMI, 2014f). Source protection, the second objective, is part of the new Information Act. Journalists are not entitled or forced to name their sources without their consent or a court order. IMMI also successfully blocked the incorporation of data retention into the European Economic Area (EEA) agreement. However, the data retention directive was declared to be invalid by the Court of Justice of the European Union in April 2014 (Court of Justice of the European Union, 2014). In another set of laws, liability of journalists (intermediaries) was defined and came into effect mid-2011. According to these laws, journalists cannot be held responsible for quotes of their sources if they contain libelous statements. The clause is also a reaction of Iceland to a ruling against Iceland by the European Court of Human Rights (IMMI, 2014f).

Further, a bill regarding whistleblower protection has been drafted and is ready for submission at the Althingi (IMMI, 2014f). Controversial topics, such as decriminalizing acts of defamation, are in need of further discussion. Until it was revised in 2011, Iceland's

defamation law has been "almost unchanged since its enactment in 1940" (IMMI, 2014f). The EU-Report on Iceland's post-crisis progress praised the intention of IMMI, saying that the European Parliament "reiterates its support for the Icelandic Modern Media Initiative, and looks forward to its transposition into law and judicial practice, enabling both Iceland and the EU to position themselves strongly as regards legal protection of the freedoms of expression and information" (European Commission, 2012).

The first indicator of success for IMMI might be simply that the resolution was passed by the Althingi unanimously. This shows a strong support for the concept of a data safe haven. It also exemplifies the need for judicial reforms regarding information online. IMMI was the first grassroots resolution that was approved by the parliament. Regarding the full implementation Birgitta Jónsdóttir, like Margret Magnusdottir, is skeptical:

> This was the first big one in Iceland, ever, like this to go through; and actually being implemented. But, for me, if we don't get these laws through in this session, then it's not going to happen. Then some other country needs to pick it up. (Birgitta J., personal communication, August 11, 2014)

However, as Katrin Jakobsdottir summarized:

> One of the lessons learned from the IMMI Project is that you can't really put everything into laws and regulations. You always have to have debate going on in society. (Katrin J., personal communication, August 15, 2014)

In the end, the obstacles that were piling up led to a public discourse as well. They at least generated knowledge and raised awareness to topics that are necessary to discuss.

Internet law in regards to whistleblowing, liability of intermediaries or different perceptions of defamation, is still complex and obscure. A society engaging in a debate about the topics on IMMI's agenda can achieve transparency where necessary and political participation where sufficient. Considering the ambitious goals of IMMI, every public discourse concerning its controversies has the potential to be fruitful. These discourses in Iceland can also lead to similar undertakings, locally and globally.

As a consequence of IMMI, Birgitta Jónsdóttir and other activists tried to rewrite the Icelandic constitution with crowdsourcing methods. In an unprecedented use of Etherpad, they invited a select council of participants to write a new constitution for Iceland. Naturally, there was strong political opposition. The Independence Party in particular, one of the main parties in the Althingi, was against the new constitution. Albeit broad public support, the ruling parties ultimately rejected the constitution. For Kristinn Hrafnsson, a new constitution should have been the first priority:

> The priority when you reach such a critical state [of crisis] is not a practical issue, you have to focus on the foundations of our society. And the foundations were broken. At the same time this was sidelined to cool down. In the aftermath you had bigger issues with rewriting the constitution going through a very difficult stage, stalling and in the end sort of being pushed to the side by the political elites. Whereas, I would have seen that as an ultimate priority when we have such a shock to the system. To rewrite the constitution; to create a consensus of a social contract that would include automatically to rethink the basic idea of IMMI,

incorporated in the ideals of information, freedom, security, etc. (Kristinn H., personal communication, August 12, 2014)

The defeat regarding the new constitution can be seen as another failed attempt, similar to the issues with IMMI's implementation. Nevertheless, as long these topics continue to be raised and discussed in public and in the political landscape, there remains a high level of awareness. The question is whether this awareness is reflected elsewhere other than just in Iceland. Also, to follow up on Bogi's concerns regarding the importance of IMMI, the global impact can be questioned. If IMMI were to be fully implemented, where would the data that needed protection be stored? If IMMI protects information online, the data must be in some way subject to Icelandic law. This raises further concerns about Iceland's IT infrastructure. Iceland is by far not a global player when it comes to data centers, server farms, and storage facilities. Yet, this is something the Ministry of Industry wants to invest in, according to Margret Magnusdottir (personal communication, August 19, 2014).

A report the International Modern Media Institute, wrote in collaboration with the pirate party, addresses such concerns. The report is another consequence of IMMI and should analyze Iceland's capacities in terms of cloud computing. According to the "Islands of Resilience" report, three criteria must be met for a prime location for server infrastructure: Energy, connectivity and jurisdiction (McCarthy & Saitta, 2012). According to this model, Iceland would be a secure and reliable location for IT infrastructure due to its political stability and its natural energy resources. Theoretically, such an observation might be accurate. But there are more factors that need to cooperate in order to carve Iceland a niche in the global cloud computing market. Companies might not be interested in a reliable and

stable judicial base when they can operate out of a country with almost no internet laws. This would give them the advantage of a lack of regulations regarding privacy, user data, and taxation. The report states that energy costs would be rather low in comparison to other countries that have similar industrial standards (McCarthy & Saitta, 2012, p. 10). Still, it leaves out the discussion regarding costs for employees, buildings, and taxation. Hoeren also doubted that the technological infrastructure in Iceland is capable of delivering the grounds for a "safe haven of bits" (Hoeren, 2010, p. 145).

Nonetheless, the report highlights Iceland's capabilities for a clean and sustainable IT infrastructure. Iceland's stability will have to be proven in the future, but it can nevertheless be an attractive quality now. Also, the report focuses on different aspects than IMMI by addressing economic factors, which are important for foreign countries who need to trust the Icelandic economy with data centers.

One additional aspect easily overlooked is the impact of IMMI as a political statement. With the unanimous approval the Althingi took a very specific position towards freedom of media and expression. Such a position can be a powerful weapon against conservative and repressive deliberations that try to regulate and restrict the online sphere. Margret Magnusdottir gave an example:

> The parliament came out and said: "We want to have free internet; we want to have freedom of speech and we want to secure it." And I think when […] a government of some country […] accepts such a resolution, it's really a good thing. Last government, their minister of interior he was saying that we should […] filter the internet. Because there is so many bad things going on the internet.

But then it was really good to have this resolution, saying "Hey, the government has said that we should think about freedom of expression and information". Such a government shouldn't propose filtering the internet. (Margret M., personal communication, August 19, 2014)

Furthermore, IMMI can serve as a political statement outside of Iceland. By acting as a role model for others to engage in these ways of thinking, IMMI can trigger similar projects internationally. Birgitta Jónsdóttir argued that there is the "need for […] Hacktivists and countries to work on pressuring that similar things be done there" (personal communication, August 11, 2014). She calls for other countries to pick up the topic.

To conclude the findings, several aspects were discovered when asking about IMMI's consequences. There is, on the one side, the status of the implementation of the laws that were proposed. Considering its complexity, the obstacles and the somewhat utopian objective, IMMI still has made progress. Its judicial consequence is not necessarily a myriad of revised laws but an open discussion. IMMI put many topics onto the Alghingi's agenda that were not there before. The approval of the resolution also led to a political statement that can be used advantageously for social movements in the future. The government signed not only a parliament resolution, but also stated a political point of view. Moreover, there have been projects as a consequence of IMMI. Most noteworthy is the attempt to rewrite the Icelandic constitution with crowdsourcing. Albeit the constitution did not go through, it can still be considered a work in progress. Another follow-up task was the research project "Island of Resilience," which analyzed Iceland's competences as a data haven from an economical and technological point of view. Most of the topics and discourses stirred up by

WikiLeaks, and subsequently IMMI, are still a work in progress. Thus, it would hastily to carve a conclusion in stone. The next chapter concludes the findings and attempts to provide a cautious outlook into IMMI's future.

8. Conclusion

IMMI is an attempt to institutionalize a protest movement by providing protection for civil disobedience. While such endeavors are often undermined by the political elites, IMMI gained strong initial support. The process of its implementation, however, was complicated by many difficulties. While some of them could have been foreseen, others had to be discovered during the process. Throughout the research, many interview partners doubted that IMMI would ever be fully applied. Nevertheless, considering the size of the project, a partial realization of IMMI can already be considered successful.

The initial research question asks about the influences of cyber activism. It is here where the Icelandic case is different from other protest movements in the last decade. Cyber activism was not predominantly used for bypassing restrictions on free speech or hacker attacks on governmental websites, as in the Arab uprisings. IMMI co-opted the ideals of freedom of expression that are valued by hacktivist cultures and whistleblowing platforms. IMMI incorporated normative concepts, such as whistleblower protection and freedom of expression, into the proposal as worth protecting. While IMMI was initially triggered by an act of cyber activism (Guðjón I., personal communication, November 26, 2014) it used WikiLeaks also as an inspiration model to build upon. The fact that Julian Assange was personally involved in the first draft of IMMI's proposal highlights WikiLeaks' influence.

The consequences of IMMI during the years after the proposal's approval were uncertain. Several obstacles piled up and slowed down the implementation process. It took two years to establish a steering committee and they still did not receive proper funding when

finally formed. The initial political support vanished and the members of the steering committee realized the size and complexity of the topic. For full implementation as planed, IMMI's proposal was too utopian. It included many controversial topics that need further discussion, such as decriminalizing defamation. Also, the local effect of IMMI's implementation in Iceland would be rather small and in case there was an international impact, Iceland would quickly face political pressure. IMMI, when implemented, would make a project such as Wikileaks perfectly legal, emphasized Guðjón Idir (personal communication, November 26, 2014). However, in this case, Iceland would share the threats and critique that WikiLeaks is facing.

Nevertheless, IMMI sparked a discussion about the judicial aspects of information online that was long overdue, and therefore, also supported by the European Union (European Commission, 2012). This discourse is needed and could also lead to further projects, which could clarify the legal situation of online content. Libel tourism as well as source protection and whistleblower protection are among the topics that need to be discussed. Regardless of the status of its implementation, IMMI can be used as a model for others to continue. It represents a pilot project for grassroots counter governance in Iceland, and as such overcomes the limitations of a mere oppositional force. IMMI's constructive research in international laws can be of further use for follow-ups.

Although a full realization of IMMI will probably never happen, there are many possible scenarios for the future of proposals like this. Parts of IMMI can be discussed and may be implemented through smaller projects, possibly in different countries or throughout the

European Union. Also, if Iceland invests heavily in its technological infrastructure to offer a prime spot for cloud computing, IMMI could receive political support again.

The internet is no longer a new platform and projects such as IMMI show that it has evolved. Technological ubiquity expands further and needs to be addressed as a part of our society. Cyber activism will continue to play a major role in social movements in the future. As the role of technology in society grows, internet activism can be applied to an ever increasing number of societal spheres. While many countries rely on surveillance and persecuting whistleblowers to deal with these forms of dissent, Iceland has promised resistance.

9. Bibliography

4Chan. (2014). *4Chan*. Retrieved 12 18, 2014, from 4Chan: http://4chan.org/

9Gag. (2014). Retrieved December 8, 2014, from 9Gag - Why So Serious?: http://9gag.com/

abatishchev. (2014). *LOIC*. Retrieved December 20, 2014, from Sourceforge:

      http://sourceforge.net/projects/loic/files/

Ashton, K. (2009). *That 'Internet of Things' Thing.* Retrieved October 12, 2014, from RFID Journal:

      http://www.rfidjournal.com/articles/view?4986

Assange, J. (2010). *Don't shoot messenger for revealing uncomfortable truths.* Retrieved July 10,

      2014, from The Australian: http://www.theaustralian.com.au/in-depth/wikileaks/dont-shoot-

      messenger-for-revealing-uncomfortable-truths/story-fn775xjq-

      1225967241332?nk=f85d857165aea7fd9d2af7b2da0cea36

Berg, B. L. (2001). *Qualitative Research Methods For The Social Sciences* (4th ed.). Boston: Allyn &

      Bacon.

Beyer, J. L. (2013). The Emergence of a Freedom of Information Movement: Anonymous,

      WikiLeaks, the Pirate Party, and Iceland. *Journal of Computer-Mediated Communication*,

      141 - 154.

Briggs, C. (1986). *Learning how to ask. A sociolinguistic appraisal of the role of the interview in

      social science research.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Calhoun, C. (1992). Introduction: Habermas and the Public Sphere. In C. Calhoun, *Habermas and the

      Public Sphere* (pp. 1 - 50). Cambridge: MIT press.

Cammaerts, B. (2012). Protest logics and the mediation opportunity structure. *European Journal of Communication, Vol 27*, pp. 117–134.

Cammaerts, B. (2013). Networked Resistance: The Case of WikiLeaks. *Journal of Computer-Mediated Communication, Vol 18*, pp. 430 – 436.

Castells, M. (2009). *Communication Power.* Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Castells, M. (2012). *Networks of Outrage and Hope. Social Movements in the Internet Age.* Cambridge: Polity Press.

Court of Justice of the European Union. (2014, April 8). *PRESS RELEASE No 54/14. The Court of Justice declares the Data Retention Directive to be invalid.* Retrieved November 14, 2014, from CVRIA: http://curia.europa.eu/jcms/upload/docs/application/pdf/2014-04/cp140054en.pdf

Curran, G., & Gibson, M. (2013). WikiLeaks, Anarchism and Technologies of Dissent. *Antipode, Vol 45*, 294 – 314.

Curran, J. (2012a). Reinterpreting the internet. In J. Curran, N. Fenton, & D. Freedman, *Misunderstanding the Internet* (pp. 3 - 33). New York: Routledge.

Curran, J. (2012b). Rethinking internet history. In J. Curran, N. Fenton, & D. Freedman, *Misunderstanding the Internet* (pp. 34 - 67). New York: Routledge.

Curran, J., Fenton, N., & Freedman, D. (2012). *Misunderstanding the Internet.* New York: Routledge.

Estop, J. D. (2014). WikiLeaks: From Abbé Barruel to Jeremy Bentham and Beyond (A Short Introduction to the New Theories of Conspiracy and Transparency). *Cultural Studies <=> Critical Methodologies, Vol 14*, 40 – 49.

Etherpad. (2014). *Etherpad*. Retrieved December 14, 2014, from http://etherpad.org/

European Commission. (2012, March 14). *Enlargement report for Iceland. European Parliament resolution of 14 March 2012 on the 2011 progress report on Iceland.* Retrieved June 20, 2014, from European Commission: http://www.europarl.europa.eu/sides/getDoc.do?pubRef=-//EP//NONSGML+TA+P7-TA-2012-0084+0+DOC+PDF+V0//EN

Fenton, N. (2008). Mediating Hope: New Media, Politics and Resistance. *International Journal of Cultural Studies, 11(2)*, 230 - 248.

Fenton, N. (2012a). The Internet and radical politics. In J. Curran, N. Fenton, & D. Freedman, *Misunderstanding the Internet* (pp. 149 - 177). New York: Routledge.

Fenton, N. (2012b). The internet and social networking. In J. Curran, N. Fenton, & D. Freedman, *Misunderstanding the Internet* (pp. 123 - 149). New York: Routledge.

Fernández-Delgado, F. C., & Balanza, M. (2012). Beyond Wikileaks: The Icelandic Modern Media Initiative and the Creation of Free Speech Havens. *International Journal of Communication, Vol 6*, 2706 – 2729.

Foucault, M. (1975). *Discipline & Punish: The Birth of the Prison.* New York: Random House.

Fraser, N. (1992). Rethinking the Public Sphere: A Contribution to the Critique of Actually Existing Democracy. In C. Calhoun, *Habermas and the Public Sphere* (pp. 109 - 142). Cambridge: MIT press.

Freedman, D. (2012). Outsourcing internet regulation. In J. Curran, N. Fenton, & D. Freedman, *Misunderstanding the Internet* (pp. 95 - 121). New York: Routledge.

Freedman, D. (2012). Web 2.0 and the death of the blockbuster economy. In J. Curran, N. Fenton, & D. Freedman, *Misunderstanding the Internet* (pp. 69 - 95). New York: Routledge.

Fuchs, C. (2012). The political economy of privacy on Facebook. *Television & New Media 13(2)*, 139 - 159.

Fuchs, C. (2014). Anonymous. Hacktivism and Contemporary Politics. In D. Trottier, & C. Fuchs, *Social media, politics and the state. Protests, revolutions, riots, crime and policing in the age of Facebook, Twitter and YouTube* (pp. 88 - 106). New York: Routledge.

Graham, P. (2004). *Hackers and Painters. Big Ideas from the Computer Age.* Sebastopol, CA: O'Reilly.

Greenberg, A. (2011). *Meet Telecomix, The Hackers Bent On Exposing Those Who Censor And Surveil The Internet*. Retrieved November 10, 2014, from Forbes: http://www.forbes.com/sites/andygreenberg/2011/12/26/meet-telecomix-the-hackers-bent-on-exposing-those-who-censor-and-surveil-the-internet/

Gunkel, D. J. (2001). *Hacking Cyberspace.* Bolder, CA: Westview Press.

Habermas, J. (1974). The Public Sphere: An Encyclopedia Article (1964). *New German Critique, No. 3.*, 49-55.

Habermas, J. (2006). Political Communication in Media Society. Does Democracy Still Enjoy an Epistemic Dimension? The Impact of Normative Theory on Empirical Research. *Communication Theory*, 411 - 426.

Hardt, M., & Negri, A. (2004). *Multitude. War and Democracy in the Age of Empire.* New York: Penguin Press.

Hill, K., & Hughes, J. (1998). *Cyberpolitics: Citizen Activism in the Age of the Internet.* Lanham,
MD: Rowman and Littlefield.

Hindman, E., & Thomas , R. (2013). When old and new media collide: The case of WikiLeaks. *New
Media & Society, Vol 16*, 541 – 558.

Hoeren, T. (2010). IMMI. The EU Perspective. *CRi 5*, 141 - 145.

Horkheimer, M., & Adorno, T. (2002). *Dialectic of Enlightenment.* Stanford, CA: Stanford University
Press.

Iceland Review. (2008, October 09). *Iceland's Financial Authority Takes Over Kaupthing.* Retrieved
October 20, 2014, from Iceland Review: http://icelandreview.com/news/2008/10/09/icelands-
financial-authority-takes-over-kaupthing

IMMI. (2014a). *About IMMI*. Retrieved November 12, 2014, from International Modern Media
Institute: https://en.immi.is/about-immi/

IMMI. (2014b). *About IMMI: What is included in the proposal?* Retrieved October 22, 2014, from
International Modern Media Institute: https://en.immi.is/about-immi/faq/

IMMI. (2014c). *FAQ.* Retrieved December 12, 2014, from International Modern Media Institute:
https://en.immi.is/about-immi/faq/

IMMI. (2014d). *Steering Committee*. Retrieved November 12, 2014, from International Modern
Media Institute: https://en.immi.is/about-immi/steering-committee/

IMMI. (2014e). *Vision*. Retrieved December 12, 2014, from International Modern Media Institute:
https://en.immi.is/about-immi/vision/

IMMI. (2014f). *Progress Report.* Retrieved December 26, 2014, from International Modern Media

    Institute: https://en.immi.is/immi-resolution/progression/

Jarvis, J. (2009). *What Would Google Do?* New York: Collins Business.

Jordan, T., & Taylor, P. A. (2004). *Hacktivsim and cyberwars: Rebels with a cause?* London:

    Routledge.

Khamis, S., & Vaughn, K. (2011). *Cyberactivism in the Egyptian Revolution: How Civic Engagement*

    and Citizen Journalism Tilted the Balance. Retrieved November 22, 2014, from Arab Media

    & Society, Vol 14: http://www.arabmediasociety.com/?article=769

Klein, N. (2008). *The Shock Doctrine. The Rise of Disaster Capitalism.* Toronto, ON: Knopf Canada.

Lázaro, P. (2014, January 29). *Icelandic Modern Media Initiative - Documentary by Paula Lázaro.*

    Retrieved December 12, 2014, from YouTube:

    https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xGcQKC_x6zw

Lessig, L. (2006). *Code. Version 2.0.* New York: Basic Books.

Levy, S. (2010). *Hackers. Heroes of the Computer Revolution. 25th Anniversary Edition.* O'Reilly

    Media.

Lindgren, S., & Lundström , R. (2011). Pirate culture and hacktivist mobilization: The cultural and

    social protocols of #WikiLeaks on Twitter. *New Media Society, Vol 13*, 999 – 1018.

Matthiasson, T. (2012, August 21). *Iceland's debt-relief lessons for eurozone.* Retrieved September

    11, 2014, from The Guardian: http://www.theguardian.com/business/economics-

    blog/2012/aug/21/iceland-debt-relief-lessons-eurozone

McCarthy, S., & Saitta, E. (2012). *Islands of Resilience. Comparative Model for Energy, Connectivity and Jurisdiction.* IMMI Research Report. Retrieved June 10, 2014, from http://islandsofresilience.eu/pdf/ior_full.pdf

Metahaven. (2013). *An interview with Birgitta Jónsdóttir | Black Transparency.* Retrieved November 14, 2014, from Vimeo: http://vimeo.com/92383093

Morozov, E. (2011). *The Net Delusion: The Dark Side of Internet Freedom.* New York: Public Affairs.

Morozov, E. (2013). *To Save Everything, Click Here: Technology, Solutionism, and the Urge to Fix Problems that Don't Exist: How the Pursuit of Transparency, Efficiency, and Connectedness Threatens Our Freedoms.* London: Allen Lane.

Musgrove, M. (2009). *Twitter Is a Player In Iran's Drama.* Retrieved November 12, 2014, from Washington Post: http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2009/06/16/AR2009061603391.html

Negt, O., & Kluge, A. (1993). *Public Sphere and Experience: Toward an Analysis of the Bourgeois and Proletarian Public Sphere.* Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.

Netcraft. (2014). *April 2014 Web Server Survey*. Retrieved November 20, 2014, from Netcraft: http://news.netcraft.com/archives/2014/04/02/april-2014-web-server-survey.html

Nielsen, J. (2006). *The 90-9-1 Rule for Participation Inequality in Social Media and Online Communities*. Retrieved October 21, 2014, from Nielsen Norman Group: http://www.nngroup.com/articles/participation-inequality/

O'Reilly, T. (2005). *What Is Web 2.0. Design Patterns and Business Models for the Next Generation of Software.* Retrieved December 8, 2014, from O'Reilly: http://www.oreilly.com/pub/a/web2/archive/what-is-web-20.html?page=1

Papacharissi, Z. (2010). *Privacy as a luxury commodity.* Retrieved November 11, 2013, from First Monday Journal, Vol. 15, No 8: http://firstmonday.org/ojs/index.php/fm/article/view/3075/2581

Penny Arcade. (2004). *Green Blackboards (And Other Anomalies).* Retrieved November 10, 2014, from Penny Arcade: http://www.penny-arcade.com/comic/2004/03/19

PeoplesUnderground. (2013, 01 03). *Wiki Leak's Julian Assange Death Threats [Video File].* Retrieved October 15, 2014, from YouTube: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AylDiZet3fo

PiratePad. (2014). *PiratePad.* Retrieved December 28, 2014, from http://piratepad.net

Reporters without Borders. (2008). *Press Freedom Index 2007.* Retrieved November 13, 2014, from Reporters without Borders: http://en.rsf.org/spip.php?page=classement&id_rubrique=33

Salter, L. (2003). Democracy, New Social Movements and the Internet: A Habermasian Analysis. In M. Ayers, & M. McCaughey, *Cyberactivism: Online Activism in Theory and Practice* (pp. 117 - 145). London: Routledge.

Sarikakis, K. (2004). *Ideology and policy: notes on the shaping of the Internet.* Retrieved May 08, 2014, from First Monday: http://firstmonday.org/ojs/index.php/fm/article/view/1167/1087

Sarikakis, K. (2010). The Precarious Citizen. Control and Value in the Digital Age. *Nordicom-Information, 32 (2-3)*, 119 - 126.

Shirky, C. (2008). *Here comes everybody. The power of organizing without organisations.* New York: Penguin Press.

Sigurgisdottir, H. (2009, August 04). *Iceland court lifts gag order after public outrage.* Retrieved November 12, 2014, from WikiLeaks: https://wikileaks.org/wiki/Iceland_court_lifts_gag_order_after_public_outrage

Stallman, R. (1985). *The GNU Manifesto.* Retrieved 11 22, 2014, from GNU Operating System: https://www.gnu.org/gnu/manifesto.en.html

Suler, J. (2004). The Online Disinhibition Effect. *CyberPsychology & Behavior, 7(3)*, 321 - 326.

Tapscott, D., & Williams, A. (2007). *Wikinomics: How mass collaboration changes everything.* New York: Penguin Press.

Taylor, P. A. (2001). Editorial: Hacktivism. *Semiotic Review of Books*, 1 - 4.

Taylor, P. A. (2005). From hackers to hacktivists: speed bumps on the global superhighway? *New Media Society, Vol. 7*, pp. 625 – 646.

The Liquid Democracy Organisation. (2014). *Liquid Democracy e.V.* Retrieved December 28, 2014, from https://liqd.net/en

Thomaß, B. (2011). WikiLeaks and the question of responsibility within a global democracy. *European View, Vol 10*, pp. 17 – 23.

Tor. (2014). *Tor.* Retrieved December 21, 2014, from https://www.torproject.org/

Tusa, F. (2013). How Social Media Can Shape a Protest Movement: The cases of Egypt in 2011 and Iran in 2009. *Arab Media and Society, Vol 17*, 1 - 19.

UNDP. (2007). *Human Development Report 2007/8.* Retrieved July 08, 2014, from United Nations

      Development Programme. Human Development Reports:

      http://hdr.undp.org/sites/default/files/reports/268/hdr_20072008_en_complete.pdf

Vaidhyanathan, S. (2011). *The Googlization of Everything. (And why we should worry).* Berkeley,

      CA: University of California Press.

Vallance, C. (2010, February 12). *Wikileaks and Iceland MPs propose 'journalism haven'.* Retrieved

      November 12, 2014, from BBC: http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/technology/8504972.stm

Westaway, L. (2013). *Qualcomm's Wi-Fi coffee machine: High-tech caffeinated kicks.* Retrieved

      September 23, 2014, from CNET: http://www.cnet.com/news/qualcomms-wi-fi-coffee-

      machine-high-tech-caffeinated-kicks/

WikiLeaks. (2009a, July 30). *Financial collapse: Confidential exposure analysis of 205 companies*

      each owing above EUR45M to Icelandic bank Kaupthing, 26 Sep 2008. Retrieved November

      11, 2014, from WikiLeaks:

      https://wikileaks.org/wiki/Financial_collapse:_Confidential_exposure_analysis_of_205_com

      panies_each_owing_above_EUR45M_to_Icelandic_bank_Kaupthing,_26_Sep_2008

WikiLeaks. (2009b, July 31). *Icelandic bank Kaupthing threat to WikiLeaks over confidential large*

      exposure report, 31 Jul 2009. Retrieved November 12, 2014, from WikiLeaks:

      https://wikileaks.org/wiki/Icelandic_bank_Kaupthing_threat_to_WikiLeaks_over_confidentia

      l_large_exposure_report,_31_Jul_2009

WikiLeaks. (2010, April 05). *Collateral Murder.* Retrieved December 21, 2014, from

      http://collateralmurder.com/

WikiLeaks. (2011). *WikiLeaks: About*. Retrieved November 12, 2014, from WikiLeaks:

      http://wikileaks.org/About.html

Wood, J. (2010). The Darknet: A Digital Copyright Revolution. *Richmond Journal of Law &*

      Technology, Volume XVI, Issue 4, 1 - 60. Retrieved November 10, 2014, from Richmond

      Journal of Law & Technology: http://jolt.richmond.edu/v16i4/article14.pdf

Yin, R. (2008). *Case Study Research: Design and Methods.* (4th ed.). Thousand Oaks: Sage.

Youmans, W., & York , J. (2012). Social Media and the Activist Toolkit: User Agreements,

      Corporate Interests, and the Information Infrastructure of Modern Social Movements. *Journal*

      of Communication, Vol 62, 315-329.

Zajácz, R. (2013). WikiLeaks and the problem of anonymity: A network control perspective. *Media*

      Culture Society, Vol 35, pp. 489 – 505.

Addendum

Project Letter

Fakultät für Sozialwissenschaften
Institut für Publizistik- und
Kommunikationswissenschaft

Univ.-Prof. Dr. Katharine Sarikakis
Währingerstraße 29
A-1090 Wien

T +43 (1) 4277-493 94
F +43 (1) 4277-493 16
katharine.sarikakis@univie.ac.at
http://univie.ac.at/publizistik

Vienna, 2th of July 2014

Dear Sir/Madam,

I am writing to request your support for **Mr. Thomas Koenig** (thomas.koenig@thok.at) in a research project about the **International Modern Media Institute** (IMMI) in Iceland. The project is conducted at the Faculty of Social Sciences at the University of Vienna, Austria under my supervision.

The project aims to research the interdependence between the IMMI, cyber activism in the European crisis and the Wikileaks case. Therefore it is of great importance that Mr. Koenig speaks with key actors engaged in this topics in Iceland.

Interviewees will have the opportunity to check those parts of the interviews for accuracy that will be used in the final project report. Source protection is of great value to this project and anonymity will be granted unless agreed otherwise. You will be offered access to the final research outcomes if you wish. Please find the summary of the project aims below.

Project aims:
- Understand the socio-economic processes leading to the IMMI
- Identify the role of cyber activism and grassroot governance in the emergence of the IMMI
- Understand the embedment of the IMMI in Icelandic governance processes

Please, do not hesitate to contact me with any questions.

Yours sincerely,

Prof. Dr. Katharine Sarikakis

Abstract

The purpose of this thesis is to explore the influence of cyber activism in contemporary protest movements. It investigates the "Icelandic Modern Media Initiative" (IMMI), a parliamentary proposal that was triggered by WikiLeaks and carried out by a grassroots movement. IMMI aims at turning Iceland into a safe haven for information online. By collecting and adapting the world's strongest freedom of expression laws, it tries to protect online content with Icelandic law. IMMI provides an important case study for constructive counter governance during the financial crisis in 2008. The case study was designed to investigate IMMI through a research trip to Iceland in 2014, which provided important contextual knowledge and local information. Interviews were conducted with the most influential stakeholders in IMMI and the events which lead to its emergence. The diversity of the information collected allows for a holistic picture of IMMI's influences, obstacles and consequences.

Based on the results of the study, it can be concluded that the influence of cyber activism in the tech-savvy country unfolded in two main stages. First, the emergence of IMMI was originally caused by confidential documents on the whistleblower platform WikiLeaks. Second, WikiLeaks also served as an inspiration model for IMMI's proposal. Julian Assange was part of the original activist group that drafted IMMI, and therefore, his notion of freedom of expression is part of IMMI as well. Although the proposal was approved unanimously in the Althingi, the Icelandic parliament, its implementation has since slowed. A lack of funding and political will resulted in the near stagnation of IMMI with only part of it being turned into Icelandic law. The result of IMMI is consequently not the

Icelandic data safe haven that was originally intended. IMMI's significance resides on a less formal level and could be a basis for further research, in Iceland and in other countries as well. As such, IMMI is an important part of the contemporary discussion on freedom of expression and its protection online.

Zusammenfassung

Die vorliegende Master-Arbeit befasst sich mit den Einfluss von Cyberaktivismus in aktuellen Protestbewegungen. Thema der wissenschaftlichen Auseinandersetzung ist die „Icelandic Modern Media Initiative" (IMMI), ein von WikiLeaks ausgelöster und von Aktivisten verfasster Gesetzesantrag in Island. Der Antrag wurde 2010 einstimmig im isländischen Parlament Althingi verabschiedet und sollte Island in einen „Safe Haven of Bits" verwandeln. Inspiriert von den stärksten Gesetzen zur Meinungs- und Medienfreiheit in verschiedenen Ländern, schlägt IMMI eine umfassende Gesetzesnovellierung vor. Sie zielt darauf ab, Online Information in Island unter juristischen Schutz zu stellen. Dadurch bietet IMMI eine hervorragende Fallstudie für konstruktive Gegenöffentlichkeit. Im Zuge dessen wurde in Island eine Feldforschung durchgeführt, um die Fallstudie mit Kontext und lokalen Informationen anzureichern. Schlüsselpersonen, die zur Entstehung von IMMI beitrugen, hatten sich ebenfalls zu Interviews bereit erklärt. Die Diversität der Informationen erlaubt ein holistisches Bild von IMMIs Einflüssen, Problematiken und Konsequenzen in den Jahren nach der Verabschiedung im Althingi.

Die Ergebnisse der Studie führen zu dem Schluss, dass Cyberaktivismus in Island zwei zentrale Rollen spielte. Erstens wurde die Idee zu IMMI ausgelöst von vertraulichen Dokumenten auf der Whistleblower-Plattform WikiLeaks. Zweitens diente WikiLeaks auch als Inspiration für den von IMMI eingebrachten Gesetzesantrag. Julian Assange war Teil der Aktivistengruppe, die den ersten Entwurf verfasste und damit maßgeblich an der Entstehung beteiligt. Somit ist Assanges Auffassung von Informationsfreiheit ein integraler Bestandteil von IMMI. Obwohl IMMIs Gesetzesvorschlag im isländischen Parlament einstimmig

verabschiedet wurde, verzögerte sich die Implementierung. Fehlende Finanzmittel und auch mangelnder politischer Wille führten beinahe zu einem frühen Stillstand, obwohl IMMI nur teilweise in isländischem Gesetz implementiert worden war. Die Konsequenz von IMMI ist schlussendlich nicht der ursprünglich angestrebte isländische „Safe Haven of Bits". Die Initiative spielt vielmehr eine informelle Rolle und kann als Basis für weitere Projekte und Forschungen dienen, lokal in Island als auch international. IMMI ist ein wichtiger Bestandteil des gegenwärtigen Diskurses zum Schutz von Meinungsfreiheit online.

Lebenslauf

Zur Person

Name	Thomas König
Geburtsdatum	21.06.1987
Staatsbürgerschaft	Österreich
Kontakt	thomas.koenig@thok.at

Studium

seit 10/2012	Masterstudium Publizistik- und Kommunikationswissenschaft - Wien
seit 10/2007	Bachelorstudium Medieninformatik - Wien
03/2008 - 07/2011	Bachelorstudium Publizistik- und Kommunikationswissenschaft - Wien
09/2001 - 07/2006	HTL, Schwerpunkt: Technische Informatik - Braunau am Inn

Qualifikation

07/2014 - 08/2014	Forschungsaufenthalt für Master Arbeit - Island
04/2013 - 11/2013	Buch "Revolution as a Process" - Co-Autor – Wien/Kairo
seit 01/2013	Baxter BioScience – IT Consultant - Wien
seit 05/2013	Online-Magazin Shabka – Gründungsmitglied - Wien
11/2011 - 11/2012	Auslandsaufenthalt Work & Travel – Kanada/USA