

INTERNET ACTIVISM: TOWARDS A FRAMEWORK FOR EMERGENT DEMOCRACY

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ABSTRACT

From its inception, the Internet has been touted as a tool for political change. The term “emergent democracy” has been used to describe the new forms of participation that the Internet will facilitate. However, there has been little discussion about how this behaviour will emerge, how to recognise it when it does, and how to integrate it into current models of democracy.

This paper traces the technological development of the Internet in terms of human behaviour and interaction, and examines the nature of online political activity in that context. It investigates exactly what is meant by emergence, why it is important to the study of Internet activism, and how it can be used to develop a framework for optimising political mobilisation using the Internet.

KEYWORDS

Internet activism, Emergent democracy, Political mobilisation, Web 2.0.

1. INTRODUCTION

“The political significance of computer-mediated communications lies in its capacity to challenge the existing political hierarchy's monopoly on powerful communications media, and perhaps thus revitalize citizen-based democracy.” (Rheingold 1993)

The early days of the Internet saw claims that this new communications technology could empower individuals, revitalise the public sphere, and ultimately lead to a new form of grassroots democracy, whereby anyone who was interested could have a say in local, national, and even global political decision-making. The mid to late 1990s was certainly an exciting time to be involved in online communities, and it seemed to some that if conversations need have no geographical boundaries, then neither should political beliefs; like-minded individuals could connect with others around the world and form global social and political movements, the like that had never been seen before. Nicholas Negroponte even went as far as to claim that “many of the values of the nation-state will give way to those of both larger and smaller electronic communities” (1995).

However, as with television and radio before it, there was initially little understanding amongst developers of the Internet's commercial possibilities, and the online landscape has since evolved to become a noisy environment with a lot of power consolidation, instead of the level, balanced democratic Internet many had envisioned.

In order to understand how new forms of political participation can emerge from this environment, we need to trace the technological development of the Internet from a human interaction perspective, and to investigate the nature of political activism in this environment. A thorough understanding of the concept of emergence is also necessary, so that we can identify patterns of behaviour in successful emergent activist campaigns. Previous research into the area has identified Internet tools that are in themselves emergent and may also facilitate emergent democratic change, but little work has been done to develop a framework that may help aid such change. It is hoped that, in identifying these patterns of emergence, a simple set of rules can be developed that will help activists optimise their use of the Internet for political mobilisation.

2. A TOOL FOR CHANGE

Many of the early adopters, including Howard Rheingold, participated extensively in online communities, communicating by email via email lists, newsgroups and listservs. Each of these methods of email communication allowed all members of an online community to receive any email that was sent to the group, and similarly each member could send a group email to every other member. Some groups revolved around specific topics, such as academic fields, sport, or music, and some were more general, possibly springing up so family and friends could stay in touch over long distances. Either way, the early adopters felt connected to each other, whether they had ever met in real life or not.

Ten years ago there were few barriers to entry to the Internet and its online communities. That is, of course, for those rich enough to own a computer, and fortunate enough to live in an area with Internet access. Once online, most websites were freely available, and access to information and people was relatively unrestricted. Graham Meikle refers to this open system of communication as the Internet Version 1.0 (2002).

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2.1 Internet Version 1.0

Internet Version 1.0 refers to the open, conversational, interactive system of communication that was once touted as the “new Athenian age of democracy” by Al Gore (1994). It includes newsgroups, listservs, free file-sharing applications such as Napster and Gnutella, and the ability for anyone, anywhere to publish freely to the Web.

Internet Version 1.0 is credited with helping the organisation of the protests at the World Trade Organisation in Seattle in 1999, and subsequent protests in Washington, London, Melbourne, Prague and Genoa. These protests brought concerns about capitalist globalisation into the media spotlight, and regardless of how the mainstream media viewed the protestors (they were referred to as “economic Luddites” (Krugman 1999) and “flat-earth advocates” (Friedman 1999)), it became clear that there was an organised yet leaderless, global force, capable of making an impact on mainstream Western media.

It is easy to see how these protests have fuelled claims for the democratic potential of the Internet. However, as the Internet’s use has grown, so too has its commercial exploitation, and global commerce is not exactly known for its openness.

2.2 Internet Version 2.0

Graham Meikle’s Version 2.0 Internet is one that more closely resembles the traditional broadcast model; a one-to-many communication channel, rather than the one-to-one or many-to-many opportunity afforded by Version 1.0. Version 2.0 is a closed system Internet where people can visit a website and download information from that site, but can rarely communicate information back to the site’s owners and developers. Large portals such as AOL and MSN are examples of Version 2.0, and are websites that are designed to generate revenue rather than communicate with users. The aim of these portals is to contain users within the portal itself or its partner sites for as much of the user’s duration online as possible. A visitor can check news headlines, read product reviews or shop, but cannot enter into direct conversation with the proprietors to let them know what they think of their slant on the news, or their choice of products.

Versions 1.0 and 2.0 applications and websites need not be mutually exclusive. Some of the most successful and popular websites embrace elements of both approaches. Amazon (www.amazon.com),

Epinions (www.epinions.com) and eBay (www.ebay.com) are all successful ecommerce sites that encourage discussion between buyers and sellers, and allow both parties to leave feedback on a product or transaction, which future interested parties can observe.

2.3 Web 2.0

Graham Meikle's Internet Version 2.0 should not be confused with the concept of Web 2.0. This buzzword was coined in a brainstorming session in 2004 between media companies, O'Reilly Media and MediaLive International. It initially referred to the Web as a platform for the development of web-based applications resulting in dynamic, interactive websites as opposed to the static pages that had preceded them (these belong to Web 1.0). Wikipedia (www.wikipedia.org), a constantly updated online encyclopaedia written by and for all Internet users, is an example of Web 2.0, with Encyclopaedia Britannica online (www.britannica.com) being its Web 1.0 equivalent.

The idea of Web 2.0 came about as a marketing concept, but the term has crystallised to include those websites that contain web applications that allow users to interact, and contribute to and edit the content of the website themselves. The tools of Web 2.0 allow users to reply to other users, or comment on their opinions, or change, augment or rank their entries. The following is a list of Web 1.0 applications and their Web 2.0 equivalents.

Table 1. Web 1.0 applications and their Web 2.0 equivalents

Web 1.0	Web 2.0
Ofoto	Flickr
Personal websites	Blogs
MP3.com	Napster
Bookmarks	Del.icio.us
DoubleClick	Google AdSense

Tim O'Reilly describes Web 2.0 as "an architecture of participation and democracy that encourages users to add value to the application as they use it" (2005). Paul Graham suggests that one of the biggest elements of Web 2.0 is its democracy (2005). He cites Wikipedia as an example of ways in which amateurs can surpass professionals, given the right tools with which to channel their efforts. Wikipedia may not be the most comprehensive source of information on the Internet for a given topic, but the critical point is that it is free. "On the web, articles you have to pay for might as well not exist. Even if you were willing to pay to read them yourself, you can't link to them. They're not part of the conversation."

Of course there are websites and web applications that display elements of Web 1.0 and Web 2.0. As with those that cross the divide between Internet Version 1.0 and 2.0, these sites tend to incorporate a static ecommerce element with user interaction. Again we can highlight this with the examples of eBay, Amazon and Epinions. What these examples tend to illustrate, is that there is no real dividing line between Web 1.0 and Web 2.0, Internet Version 1.0 and Version 2.0, but rather there is a sliding scale between each version, with each new development bringing about incremental changes in the way we use the Internet. While Web 1.0 and Web 2.0 definitions tend to describe the technical development and potential for Internet tools, the distinction between Internet Version 1.0 and 2.0 alerts us to the ways in which these developments can be used both for and against the individual user's benefit. In terms of openness and the previously discussed hopes for the development of democracy online, Internet Version 1.0 has more in common with Web 2.0, and it is a combination of these that needs to be examined in the search for new ways of enhancing political mobilisation on the Internet.

3. POLITICS AND THE INTERNET

When discussing politics and the Internet, it is important to draw a distinction between politics online, within the boundaries of cyberspace, and the use of the Internet to influence offline political decision-making. Political scientist, David Resnick, identifies three forms of Internet politics: "politics within the Net, politics which impacts the Net, and political uses of the Net" (1998).

3.1 Resnick's three forms of Internet politics

The first category describes the internal politics within Internet communities. This includes the political and hierarchical organisation of groups, the social dynamics within groups, the politics of open source publishing and the idea of a creative commons without the need for copyright. The second category refers to the offline political decisions that impact the Internet. Issues such as copyright, censorship and access have caused upheaval in Internet communities, the most notable example being the downfall of free peer-to-peer file-sharing application, Napster, at the hands of US copyright law.

Resnick's third category refers to the use of Internet tools to influence political decision-making offline. This is the category of interest to those investigating Internet activism and the development of online grassroots movements to enhance offline political mobilisation. However, just as commercial interests have positioned themselves at the forefront of the Web, so too have traditional political parties. As early as 1998, Resnick had observed that the politics of the Web was less the politics of the grassroots community, than the politics of the electoral campaign and the ecommerce holy grail. This is consistent with the shift from Internet Version 1.0 to Version 2.0. He states that "political life on the Internet has moved away from fluid Cybercommunities in which civic life centers around free discussion and debate, and has entered an era of organized civil society and structured group pluralism with a relatively passive citizenry".

3.2 Activism, hacktivism and cyberterrorism

It is also important to remember that the term "activism" is not exclusively owned by those involved with grassroots political and social movements, or anti-globalisation organisations. A 2006 report by the Canadian Centre for Intelligence and Security Studies (2006) estimates that there are well over 5,000 websites run by terrorist organisations, up from under 100 in 1996. All offline terrorist groups identified by the organisation have established an online presence. These figures are backed up by the results of Gabriel Weimann's 2003-05 survey (2006), which found that at that time there were over 4,300 websites serving terrorists and their supporters.

Dorothy E. Denning's analysis of the Internet (2001) as a tool for influencing foreign policy provides a framework for understanding how subversive groups and individuals use the Internet. She identifies three methods of activity by non-state actors: "activism", "hacktivism" and "cyberterrorism". Activism refers to the normal use of the Internet in support of an agenda or a cause. Activists use the Internet to search for information, to post information about their own cause, and to plan and co-ordinate offline activities. Hacktivism involves operations that use hacking techniques, which are designed to disrupt temporarily a target's website, or access a target computer, but is not intended to cause serious or long-term damage. Computer break-ins and computer viruses are examples of hacktivism. Finally, cyberterrorism refers to the use of the Internet to cause grave damage, such as loss of life or severe economic harm, to individuals or groups. Hacking operations that could interfere with airline operations or stock market services are examples of cyberterrorism.

Denning is quick to acknowledge that the boundaries between these three categories are often fuzzy and prone to interpretation. For example, a terrorist organisation's Internet activities could fall solely into the activism category. A grassroots movement, whose members bombard a target website's message board with messages and slogans, may be interfering with that website's normal operations, without using any hacking techniques. For the purposes of this research, the term "activism" will refer to all politically active, non-state actors who use the Internet for organisation, promotion and mobilisation.

4. EMERGENT DEMOCRACY

The term "emergent democracy" has been used to describe the idea that new forms of democratic political participation will evolve or emerge from the collective use of Internet technologies. The rationale is that those disaffected by Western democratic processes will naturally band together online to form political groups large enough to influence national policy, much in the way that multi-national corporations do.

As we have discussed, the idea that Internet technologies can influence social and political mobilisation has been argued since online communities began. It was shown early on in the life of the Internet that its

technologies influence social relationships at a local level, whether that locality is geographical or virtual. The long-term study of Netville (Hampton and Wellman 2003), a Toronto suburb equipped with a high-speed network, found that those with access to the network maintained stronger ties both with friends and family locally and with those contacts that lived further away. If it is easier for individuals with access to Internet tools to stay in touch with each other, then it is reasonable to assume that the same Internet tools also facilitate better planning and organisation for politically active groups.

Joichi Ito's paper "Emergent Democracy" (2005) attempts to address the issues involved in how the development of Internet tools can improve democratic processes and aid citizens' involvement in the decision-making processes that will allow this happen. He paints a hopeful but vague picture of how advances in communications technology can be leveraged to provide "an effective next step toward a more participatory form of government".

Ito discusses the nature of emergence and the network patterns of organisation that underlie it. These networks are self-organising, have no central control and tend to be composed of clusters of nodes that are connected together by links from one or more of the nodes in each cluster. There has been a shift in recent years towards network thinking in many fields of academic research, from physics and engineering to economics and sociology. The fact that the Internet itself is a physical network has lent support to the idea that the networks of online communities have emerged from the tools of the Internet (Kavada 2003). Ito predicts that online social and political networks, capable of influencing national and even international policy-making, will emerge, given the right tools.

James Moore refers to this global force as the "Second Superpower" (2005). The term originally derives from a 2003 New York Times article (Tyler 2003) which described "world public opinion" as the "second superpower", the first being the USA and the global capitalism that supports it. As with Ito's "Emergent Democracy" paper, Moore's essay harks back to the Utopian claims of Internet democracy, without attempting to describe how this democracy might form a legal framework. Again it assumes that new forms of democracy will simply happen as long as the technological environment is available to support it.

The second superpower exists alright; the millions that marched worldwide against the invasion of Iraq, the success of international NGOs such as Amnesty International and Greenpeace, the rising profile of independent media centres such as Indymedia are all a testament to that. However, the reliance on a simple model of emergence to describe this activist behaviour does not allow us to develop a framework to predict how certain Internet tools will facilitate the emergence of political activity, nor does it allow us to put in place provisions so that we can help this behaviour to attract media attention or influence policy. If we want to look at how the use of Web 2.0 tools in an Internet Version 1.0 environment can influence political mobilisation and decision-making, then we need to develop a model, or at least some rules, by which we can identify emergent behaviour, and learn from it to promote political organisation and mobilisation.

Adina Levin (2003) suggests that a model of emergent democracy needs to include a picture of how people organise and deliberate, and how government functions in a networked world. "Because the nodes of the network are intelligent, and the environment is built by people, it is not at all pointless to discuss a model of governance in a networked polity, and the answers are far from deterministic."

First of all though, we need to discuss exactly what is meant by the term "emergence", why it is important and how it can be identified.

5. EMERGENCE

Emergence refers to the process by which a group of individuals manage to produce a result that was unexpected, or a greater result than had been expected. The properties exhibited by the system as a whole are greater than the sum of the properties of its individual parts. These systems are known as complex systems.

An example of a complex system that displays emergent properties is a termite mound. A termite mound is an elaborate structure, up to six metres in height, with passages of heating and cooling shafts, chambers for housing, food storage and even areas for agriculture. No single termite carries the instructions for this development to the millions of other termites, they all simply work at a local level and co-operate with those around them to exploit opportunities that would not be available to any single insect acting alone. This outcome of this level of co-operation could not possibly be predicted by examining the potential for each

individual termite, and therefore a termite mound is considered to be an emergent structure, or a structure that displays properties of emergence.

A colony of termites is an example of a decentralised, self-organising system. A decentralised system is one that has no central control, no hierarchical, top-down chain of command; all decisions are made at a local level. Self-organisation is the evolution of a system into an organised form in the absence of external constraints or controls. Systems that display emergence tend to be decentralised and self-organising, although not all decentralised, self-organising systems display emergence.

5.1 Definitions of emergence

The Oxford English Dictionary defines emergence as “The process of coming forth, issuing from concealment, obscurity, or confinement”. It follows this up with “Also said of the result of an evolutionary process”. The former definition relies on perception; emergence must be seen to be believed. The latter definition allows for emergence to be an ongoing process, but does not suggest what the properties of this process should be.

Despite the recent interest in the concepts of network theory and emergence (Corning 2005), there has been no agreement amongst theorists as to what the term denotes.

Ernest Nagel (1961) and Brian McLaughlin (1992) cite John Stuart Mill's “Of the Composition of Causes” chapter of *System of Logic* (1843) as the basis for the definition of emergence. Mill makes the distinction between the two ways in which conjoint causes can produce an effect; non-emergent properties are effects that are the sum of the effects of each of the causal conjuncts, whereas emergent properties are effects that are not sums of the effects of each causal conjunct.

Michael Lissack describes an emergent system as one where the whole is bigger than the sum of its parts (1999).

John Casti associates emergence with evolving systems whose behaviour arises from the interaction among its parts and cannot be predicted from knowledge about the parts in isolation (1997).

John Holland explains emergence as “much coming from little” and imposes the criterion that it must be the product of self-organisation, not centralised control (1995). He appears to contradict Casti's criterion that the behaviour of the whole cannot be reduced to the sum of its parts.

Jeffrey Goldstein considers emergence to happen when novel and coherent structures, patterns and properties arise during the process of self-organisation in complex systems (1999), backing up Holland's assertion that emergence is necessarily the product of self-organisation.

5.2 Synergy

While there appears to be agreement between theorists that emergence results from parts of a system working together to achieve results that would not be achievable individually, there is no such agreement on whether or not these emergent properties are reducible, i.e. whether or not they can be broken down to reveal the properties of the individual parts.

Peter Corning (2005) makes the distinction between synergy and emergence. Synergy is the combined, co-operative effects that are produced by two or more particles, elements, parts or organisms, and are effects that are not otherwise attainable. The results are not more than the sum of the parts, but cannot be achieved without all the parts of a system working together. Synergistic effects are measurable and predictable.

Corning suggests that some of the confusion surrounding the term “emergence” might be reduced by limiting its scope. He proposes that emergent phenomena be defined as a subset of synergistic effects, where synergy is the result of individuals working together to produce more than the sum of the parts, and emergence results when the sum of the parts is more than could have been predicted. In this definition, all emergent phenomena produce synergistic effects, but many synergies do not entail emergence.

5.3 Summary of emergence

For the purposes of this paper, emergent properties are considered to be those properties of a system that result when the sum of the parts is more than could have been predicted, as described by Corning. Unlike Holland and Goldstein's assertions to the contrary, the system need not be wholly decentralised or self-

organising; it may combine elements of both central and local control. Synergistic effects, as identified by Corning, will also be considered and examined.

5.4 Why is emergence important?

There are two reasons why the concept of emergence is important to the study of political activism on the Internet. The first of these is that it allows us to investigate whether or not the Internet influences political activism. If an activist campaign that uses the Internet can be shown to display emergence, then the Internet can be considered as an influential tool in the success of that activist campaign. That is not to say that all successful activist campaigns that use Internet tools and that also display emergence could not have succeeded without the use of the Internet, but if the Internet can be shown to be a contributing factor to the emergent behaviour, then it can be argued that it has influenced the activist behaviour.

The second reason why the study of emergence is important is that it allows us to observe which Internet tools have succeeded above and beyond expectations, to investigate reasons why this may have happened, and to allow us to plan for the future by creating technologies and environments that we hope will have as great an effect.

An example of a technology that was itself emergent, and also facilitated emergent behaviour amongst users is SMS or text messaging. When text messaging was introduced on mobile phones in 1992, nobody could have predicted that it would grow to an industry of 1,000 billion messages per annum by 2005 (Portio Research 2005). Its growth follows the principles of emergence – it could not have been predicted, the outcome is more than the sum of its parts with SMS spawning a new form of communication, text speak or “txtspk”, and the networks that support its growth are decentralised and self-organising. SMS is also credited with facilitating “swarming” tactics amongst demonstrators protesting at the World Trade Organisation meeting in Seattle in 1999 (Johnson 2002). Swarming is a military tactic, whereby members of a group organise themselves to converge on a particular point at a particular time in order to leverage the military principle of mass. The group does not have to number more than its opponents as a whole, but it can do so at the point of conflict by employing swarming tactics.

6. EMERGENT DEMOCRACY IN ACTION

In order to examine whether or not those Internet activist campaigns that display emergence have common characteristics, we will look at two examples of Internet activist campaigns that display emergence, and two that display synergy.

6.1 Two examples of emergent Internet activism

The following two examples, the first using a Web 1.0 tool, the second using a Web 2.0 tool, both display emergent properties in that the level of participation was greater than could have been predicted, and there was no central control of individual behaviour.

6.1.1 LabourStart

In December 1998 Eric Lee saw a story on the BBC website about a Chinese union organiser who faced a treason trial and a likely death penalty for organising protests by workers who had lost their jobs. The trial was due to take place on Christmas day, a day which could have been chosen in order to avoid international attention. Lee could not find any information about the trial on the Amnesty International or the Human Rights Watch websites, or those of any other union groups. Lee ran the LabourStart website, a UK news and resource site for trade unionists, and decided to send out a bulk email to the 1,000 LabourStart members.

The response was swift. Within minutes a message arrived from South Africa. Then a group of activists in Sheffield contacted their local MEP. Then an Austrian trade unionist translated the message into German and it was sent out to Austrian trade unionists, and faxed to the Chinese embassy in Vienna. Within hours Chinese embassies in six countries had received protest messages, without any of the official human rights organisations lifting a finger.

The trial went ahead and the Chinese unionist was sentenced to ten years' jail. Lee credits the Internet, and email in particular, with saving the unionist from the death penalty.

6.1.2 MySpace and the high school protests

On Monday 27 March 2006, tens of thousands of US high school students walked out of school to march against HR 4437, a bill that would make illegal immigration a felony rather than a civil offence. Throughout the country, thousands of teens walked out in protest; in Los Angeles alone, 36,000 students walked out and took to the streets (Adelman 2006). The previous weekend had seen half a million people around the country march against the bill. The student protests had been organised that weekend through bulletin board posts on MySpace.com, where teens had encouraged each other to speak out against the bill.

MySpace is a free social networking website that provides members with a pre-designed, customisable website where they can post photos, videos, MP3s, blogs ("weblogs" or online journals), bulletins and information about themselves. All MySpace websites are connected to the MySpace network and it also has an internal email system. According to Alexa Internet (www.alexa.com), it is currently the world's fourth most popular English-language website and the sixth most popular global website. This vast network enabled co-ordinated action to be organised without any centralised control, in a short amount of time, among a small, specialised and densely interconnected social niche.

6.2 Two examples of synergistic Internet activism

The following two examples describe highly organised and co-operative behaviour between activists and supporters, but do not display the properties of emergence.

6.2.1 Global anti-Iraq war marches

On 15 February 2003, millions of people in an estimated 800 cities around the world marched in protest against a possible invasion of Iraq. It is listed by the 2004 Guinness Book of Records as the largest protest in history. It has been estimated (Callinicos 2005) that between 3 January and 12 April 2003, 36 million people across the globe participated in almost 3,000 protests against the Iraq war.

Through large-scale Internet organisation and co-ordination amongst political parties, NGOs and activist groups, these protests resulted in unprecedented turnouts. These differ from the MySpace student protests however, in that they were organised over longer periods of time, involved a lot of centralised control, each local protest was organised locally with involvement from many different social and political groups, and although the turnouts were unprecedented, they were not unexpected. Although the marches as a whole were ultimately a synergistic exercise, it is possible that there were incidents of emergent democracy among them, or that the ongoing behaviour of some of the participants could be shown to be emergent.

6.2.2 MySociety.org

MySociety.org is a project of the charity, UK Citizens' Online Democracy, founded in 2003, that builds socially-focused websites that aim to give people offline benefits. MySociety is not party political, and merely builds Internet tools which help others become politically active. MySociety's projects include WriteToThem.com, a website that allows voters to contact elected representatives at all levels of UK government. Statistics gathered by MySociety show that 44% of people who use WriteToThem have never contacted an elected official before. Pledgebank.com allows people to set up a pledge to do something, provided a certain amount of others will do the same. Prime Minister, Tony Blair, has recently started a pledge himself, to become patron of a community sports club if 100 notable figures will do the same (BBC 2006). GiveItAway.com is a website that aims to reduce landfill whilst helping charities and community groups. These websites, along with several other similar ones, aim to connect citizens to politicians to change what they can, and to connect citizens to each other to help them get involved in areas that representative democracy has failed to address.

MySociety and other organisations like them are examples of activist behaviour that uses synergy to encourage political mobilisation that initiates online to effect changes in the offline world.

6.3 Common characteristics of emergent Internet activism

Both of the examples of Internet activism that display emergence explored here are very simple and involve no quantitative analysis. They are simply meant to illustrate the concepts discussed previously and lay down a foundation for further research. However, there are still some striking similarities between the two examples, from which we can visualise some basic characteristics of emergent Internet activism.

1. It begins with action from a few, informed people.
2. A message is distributed via an Internet technology.
3. The message reaches a large group of people within a short amount of time.
4. Unco-ordinated, individual, local action results in global success.

It is hoped that with further analysis of activist behaviour, that some simple rules may be developed that will help activists optimise their use of Internet tools to achieve success in mobilisation and campaigning.

7. CONCLUSION

The Internet Version 1.0 is alive and well and continues to provide an open system of communication online. This has been helped by the development of Web 2.0 tools, which provide a democratic platform that allows participants to add value to an application and to the networks of communities that support it. These tools have facilitated the emergence of activist campaigns that could not have succeeded to the extent that they did without the use of the Internet. Their success is measured by their emergent properties; the effect of the campaigns was greater than could possibly have been predicted.

Emergent behaviour, by its very nature, cannot be predicted. It does appear, however, that incidents of Internet activism that display emergent properties may have enough in common for the development of a framework within which we can understand the environment and the tools that best support such outcomes. It is hoped that further research into this area will enable us to use these patterns of emergence to develop a simple set of rules that will help optimise political mobilisation using the Internet.

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