

# WEB SHUTDOWN

## WHAT WILL HAPPEN IF THE WEB DISAPPEARS?

In a society where we are becoming more dependant on the Web, should we be concerned with the consequences of one day losing access to it? **Anthropology** and **Economics** could hold the answers. **PETER WEST**

### COULD IT HAPPEN?

We often temporarily lose access to the web, but what could cause more permanent loss?

- Natural disaster
- Technical failure (e.g. IPv4 addresses running out)
- Cyber warfare
- Censorship
- Commercial interest (e.g. ISP's limiting bandwidth)

### THE VICTIMS:



**Betty**

"I can no longer communicate with friends"

Community



**Barry**

"I can't get the information I need for my diabetes"

Health



**Leanne**

"I can't communicate with the activist group I lead"

Activism



**Hector**

"I've had to close my e-commerce business"

Business



**Victoria**

"I've lost access to all my investments"

Investment



**Rolland**

"I've lost my job in e-commerce"

Employment

Our victims are diverse in background. As a cultural and social tool, it would be beneficial to have a study of the web from both scientific and humanistic approaches. A discipline which offers such approaches is **Anthropology**.

80% of the UK use the Web. For some it is a basic need, for others it is just a convenience. Who will be affected?

We can investigate the consequences of a shutdown using the **Social** and **Cultural** fields of Anthropology to study the structure of our society and culture - e.g., people's beliefs and practices, and the notion of materialism.

#### CASE STUDY

##### NEW YORK BLACKOUT

"With only the couple snacks we had left, I knew Monday we had to get somewhere west of Brighton. We simply didn't have any food left. I heard a story about a lot of looting on the news, but that story didn't repeat. It must have been true. My Beretta 9mm was dutifully holstered to my hip at that point." - Donald Alley



#### CASE STUDY

##### GREAT FIREWALL OF CHINA

"Weibo has already convinced the Chinese government, 'we will not become the stage for any kind of a threat to the regime.' ... If you want to have some gathering, before you go there, the police are already waiting for you."

"If you dare to retweet or mention any fake coup about Beijing, you definitely will be arrested ... censorship is normal. Something you find is, freedom is weird." - Michael Anti

### MULTIDISCIPLINARY STUDY

To better understand a shutdown, we can use holistic methodologies informed by both disciplines. **Economic Anthropology** is one existing method, offering scientific and humanistic approaches to understand the problem.

These disciplines permit studies to be conducted in an ethnographic and comparative manner, and are scalable for both small and large studies. These are attractive features for studies of the web - a socio-technical tool with over 2 billion people using it.