The Undersea Network

"Our seemingly wireless lives are predicated on a mess of tangled wires" (251).

Introduction

“Cable networks not only build on past cultural connections, but they become entangled in contemporary cultural conflicts.”

- Flow of information + interaction with different factors (decentralization)
- Misconceptions about internet infrastructure
- Historical/political/territorial impact

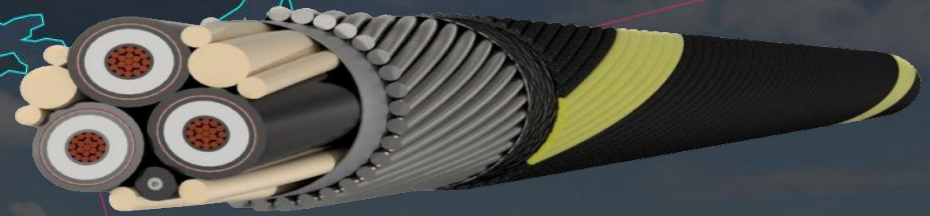
“We might think about the Internet not as a renewable resource but as a precarious platform, especially as moving our data to the cloud often entails increased dependence on undersea links”

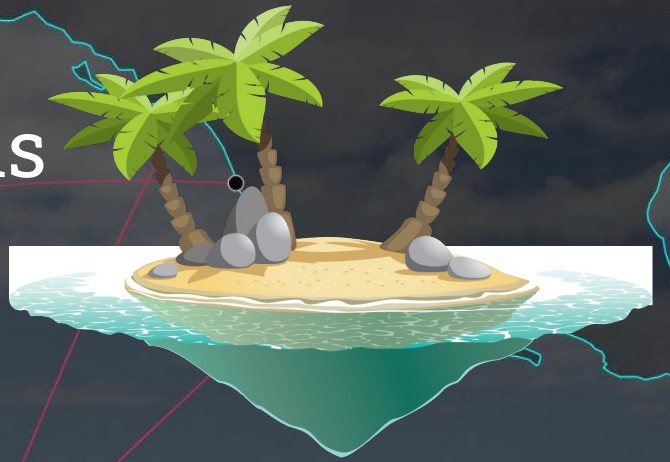
Chapter 4: Pressure Point

“By carefully embedding and disguising infrastructure in the natural environment, cable layers manipulate the route to accord with the local spatial politics of environmentalists, environmental organizations, and residents worried about lowered property values.”

- Cable infrastructure vs other systems (fishing, tourism/aesthetic resources)
- Obscuring vs promoting cable routes (security vs tech literacy)
- Benefits of community involvement

Chapter 5: A Network of Islands





"If the work of this book could be captured in a single action, it would be the attempt to grasp a surfacing cable before it recedes, to **connect the histories of network infrastructure to today's media environment**" (244).

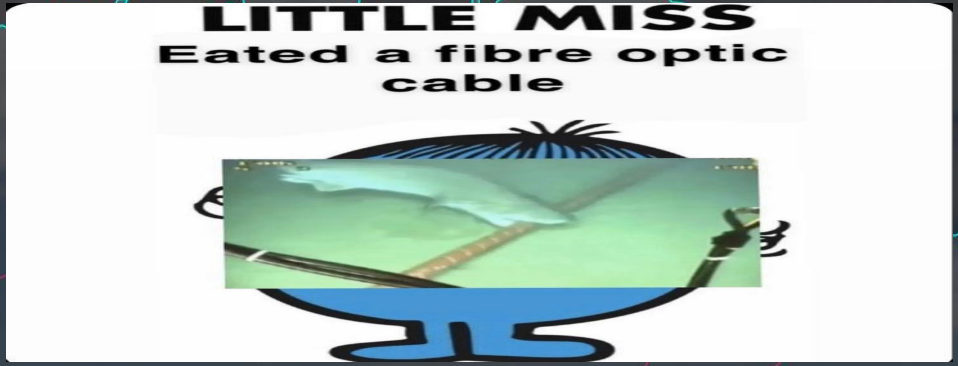
"...I outline how this revised conceptualization of **cable infrastructure translates into a politics of undersea networks**" (247).

"As Lisa Parks argues, **when we don't know about the communication infrastructures that support our network society, they tend to remain beyond the limits of public consideration or political engagement**" (248).

"...as the Internet expands, more systems will be established, more energy will be needed to keep facilities cool, and technologies will be expanded to maintain them" (252).

"If we think of the Internet as only a virtual environment, then our conception of how to change it will depend on changing only the virtual world" (252).

Conclusion



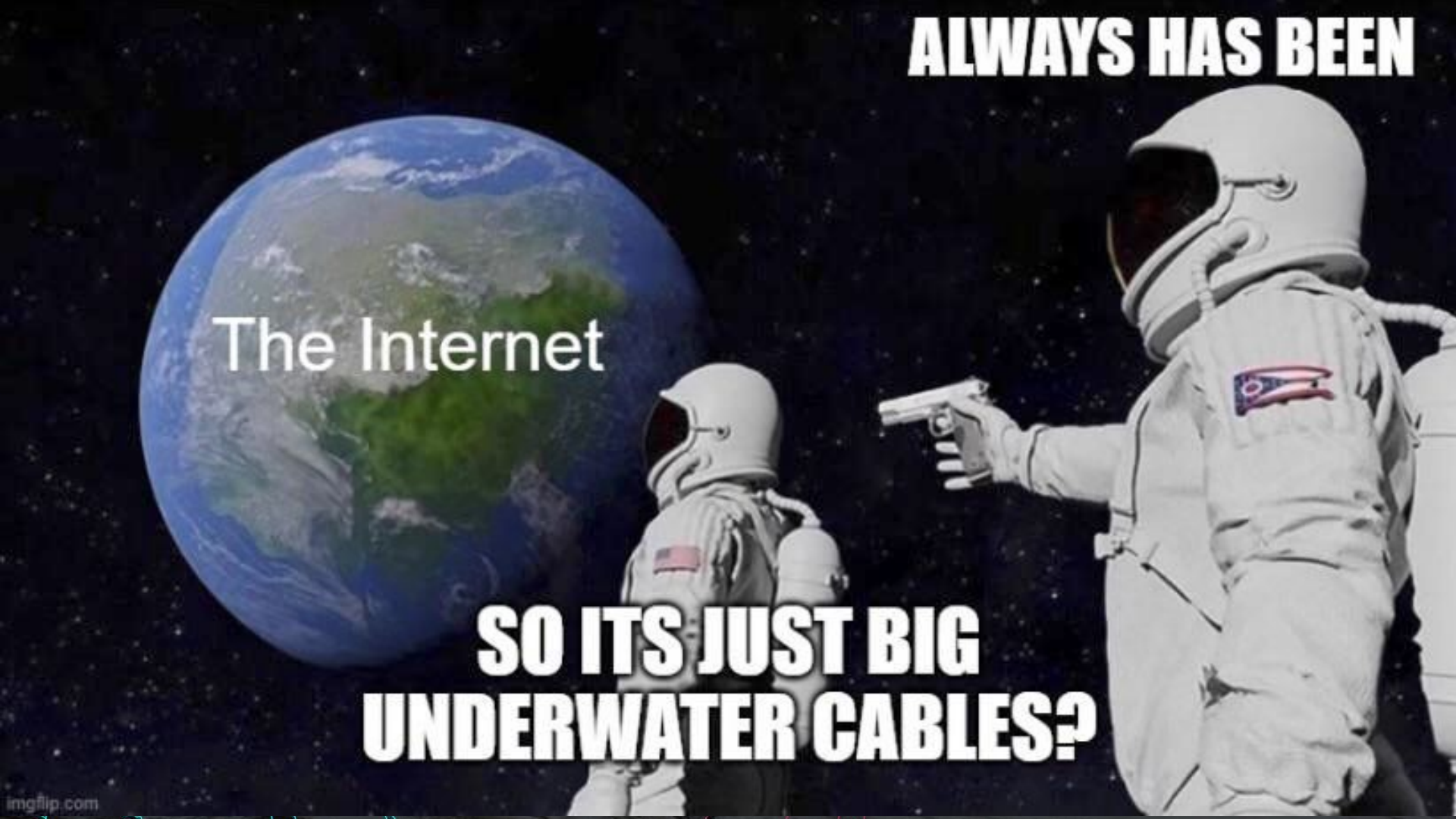
"As satellites become a secondary technology for Internet transmission, islands that were dependent on this infrastructure, such as Fiji in the 1990s and Yap today, are put at an increased disadvantage. Although in the 1970s, satellites were seen as an ideal and appropriate technology for island nations, and a possible facilitator of socioeconomic development, today satellites are no longer cost-effective, and Yap cannot afford to connect to a high-speed Internet infrastructure" (208).

"In both cases, the perception of the island as a potentially insulating structure remains important: companies continue to seek out sites where network circuits will be safe. As sites of insulation and interconnection, not isolation, islands continue to affect the topography of the overall cable network, shaping its traction for future currents" (216).

"Chapter 5 looked at networked islands like Guam and Fiji as **critical nodes**: places where transpacific information exchange—often seen as virtual lines of connection—can be understood as a material, geographic, and environmental process and where existing currents can be grounded and triangulated. The chapter also revealed the support needed by many islands in order to interconnect with cable networks. Not every location in the world will get cables, even leftover ones, given the current economic model. If we truly value democratizing communication infrastructure, governments or other organizations will have no option but to subsidize these systems. The chapter also shifted our understanding of progress in content production: without the extension of equitable infrastructure networks, the transition to high-bandwidth content may lead to further inequality" (250).

Discussion Questions

- Is it necessary to keep information about undersea cables somewhat obscured? Is it possible to promote this information in a way that doesn't put these systems at risk?
- Starosielski states that cable networks are often built on top of other preexisting networks- what other kinds of networks can we apply this to?
- In what ways do these systems build community? In what ways do they cause tension or conflict? What can we do to encourage community?
- Why is it important to stay educated about communication infrastructure? (or why not?)
- How could we as a society more fairly distribute/provide communication infrastructure?


ALWAYS HAS BEEN
The Internet
SO ITS JUST BIG UNDERWATER CABLES?
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This is Terry the Fat Shark
He hopes you accept this piece of an undersea internet cable he chewed off the sea floor as a token of friendship
Terry will return with another gift next Wednesday


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Anonymous
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>buy wireless device
>look inside
>wires

The End