1 INTRODUCTION A (GOVERNANCE AND FALSE PUBLICS)

[al2: The internet isn't public! or "Why has democracy largely failed on the web?"]

For the better part of 30 years, the ethos expressed by Barlow in 1996 has motivated how we talk about the web [1]. Inspired by the Declaration of the Independence of the United States of America, Barlow envisioned and advocated in cyberspace a world that was untangled from the limitations that physical embodiment carried, freeing people to express whatever they want, believe whatever they want, and ultimately to *be* whoever or whatever they want. [al2: even a dog! [insert dog new yorker internet comic here]]

But it's not clear that the web has delivered on that promise in any sense. Legal regimes, such as copyright enforcement policies, net neutrality, the GDPR, and others effectively mediate cyberspace from physical space, assuredly to the dismay of people like Barlow and those who saw the potential in the future he articulated.

But more deeply, the web that Barlow described no longer exists, if it ever did. In this paper, we take a tour of online platforms and services, illustrating a relationship between people and the designers of platforms that suggests that while we are indeed denizens of cyberspace, we are in fact serfs to feudal spheres of near–total hegemonic influence over our lives [al2: or something].

[al2: Things we'll do: (1) illustrate that people are effectively stuck in various platforms (2) show that these platforms(/companies) make unilateral decisions, and only back down in the face of overwhelming pressure.]

REFERENCES

[1] John Perry Barlow. 1996. A Declaration of the Independence of Cyberspace. https://projects.eff.org/~barlow/Declaration-Final.html