

This week I enjoyed a lot learning about Morozov's ideas and his calls for 'reality check' on our enthusiasm about the Internet, especially when it comes to issues regarding freedom of expression and democratization. Perhaps Morozov is one of those people who come to a party, lower the music volume and ask everyone to speak softly. The point is that his arguments brings a lot of realism to a debate in which enthusiasm for the possibilities opened up by new technologies has led many to believe that there is an automatic link between increased Internet access and more freedom.

As Rory pointed out in the week 8 white paper: "Evgeny Morozov has risen to prominence in recent years by pointing out that the Internet has not been as subversive of authority as expected."

In fact, a few years ago we were discussing how to make the Internet more freely and as it has evolved we started to imagine how to control it in so many different ways, such as (a) books publisher and newspapers are looking for ways to protect their original content, (b) parents are looking for ways to protect their children from cyber-bullying, (c) legislators are exploring mechanisms in defense of the privacy of citizens, (d) governments are trying to avoid that private files are leaked into the Internet, (e) public figures and entrepreneurs are struggling to prevent competitors to slander them or their business, (f) more and more people are horrified on how lives are recorded, filmed or uploaded to the Web, and so on.

Morozov's skepticism is also shown about the capacity of mobilization in online social networks becoming a force for change. According to him, "the problem with political activism facilitated by social networking sites is that much of it happens for reasons that have nothing to do with one's commitment to ideas and politics in general, but rather to impress one's friends"¹. He also points that, before the advent of online social networks, repressive governments had to make a lot more efforts to find out about people linked to the street protests.

A good summary of his take on 'cyber-utopianism' can be found at the RSA Animate, adapted from a talk that Morozov gave in 2009, presenting the seductive idea that the Internet plays a largely emancipatory role in global politics.

<http://www.thersa.org/events/rsaanimate/animate/rsa-animate-the-internet-and-society>

¹ The net delution