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The Emergence of a Freedom of Information Movement: Anonymous, WikiLeaks, the Pirate Party, and Iceland*

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Online rhetoric about the Internet's potential to change society, the need to reform intellectual property laws, and the evils of censorship is becoming increasingly similar across sites. The push for "freedom of information" is not restricted to online spaces, but it appears to be born from such spaces, with the concept itself shaped by the presence of the Internet and its effect on networked societies. Focusing on WikiLeaks, the Pirate Party, Anonymous, and Iceland, I describe the emerging coalescence of "freedom of information" advocates pushing for a simultaneous liberalization and homogenization of freedom of information regulations across democracies.

Key words: Activism, File Sharing, Politics, Hacktivism, New Media, Online Communities

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> *A common thread that binds many internet users and impels them toward Anonymous is the concept that information, by its nature, is free; and that communication should be unfettered.*
>
> - WhyWeProtest.net[1]

In highly populated, youth-dominated, English-speaking online spaces, such as file-sharing sites and the numerous "Anonymous" communities, a "radical" definition of freedom of information[2] is gaining strength (Beyer, 2011). This new way of thinking about freedom of information is informed by an old hacker ideology that argues against any restriction on the transmission of information (Levy, 1984). Over the past 3 years, discussion of and support for the idea of "freedom of information" have dramatically increased online. Online rhetoric about the potential of the Internet to change society, the need to reform intellectual property laws, and the evils of censorship of any kind is becoming increasingly similar across sites. Simultaneously, the ability of groups such as Anonymous to channel the power of like-minded but not tech-savvy allies is increasing.

In online communities, the idea of freedom of information tends to encompass a range of freedoms, but it has at its foundation the argument that communication in any form should not be restricted. Online the concept of freedom of information means that accurate public information can be made widely available without fear of censure or punishment. The concept also includes an implicit argument

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for greater government and corporate transparency. In addition, in some cases it also includes an argument for the dramatic revision or removal of current intellectual property regimes.[3]

The push for freedom of information is not restricted to online spaces, but it appears to be born from such spaces, with the concept itself shaped by the presence of the Internet and its effect on networked societies (Castells, 2009). In this article I describe the emerging coalescence of "freedom of information" advocates pushing for a simultaneous liberalization and homogenization of freedom of information regulations across democracies. Among these advocates are a rising number of online activists as well as the state of Iceland, which may serve as a norm entrepreneur in the area of media freedom (Ingebritsen, 2006).

This article explores this emergent phenomenon focusing on the case of the U.S. government's efforts to shut down WikiLeaks. In particular, it focuses attention on the various Anonymous activist groups and the International Pirate Party. I hypothesize about the future of this movement in light of the U.S. government's actions in the realm of intellectual property, given the lack of political power of many of the advocates of freedom of information—youth and the very small state of Iceland.

A Note on Methodology

This article draws on data collected online between 2007 and 2011 as well as on secondary sources. To collect the original data in online communities, I used participant-observer and observational research methods and textual analysis of materials in community spaces. In addition, I pieced together narratives from a range of Internet sites drawing on news reports of behaviors, archived community documents and artifacts, and published interviews of prominent community members. In any cases of contradictions between published accounts, I used accounts that were reported in more than one source or found an average point between reports.

My methodology is drawn from political ethnographic research methods used in Political Science (Schatz, 2009), as well as by a lineage of technology researchers (e.g. Dányi, 2006) and new media researchers (e.g. Garcia, Standlee, Bechkoff, & Cui, 2006) who have long drawn on ethnographic research to record important online spaces (e.g. Schaap, 2002); build theory about communication, interaction, and information flow (e.g. Nahon & Hemsley, 2011); and generate the tools for large-N analysis.

Possible Explanations

What theoretical perspectives might be useful in explaining the online mobilization around radical ideas of freedom of information? Social movement theory is an obvious choice to explain political mobilization online, because online mobilization in cross-national social sites should fit easily under the banner of work on transnational mobilization around common causes. However, most work within the social work paradigm articulates some type of social movement "life cycle" (e.g. Tarrow, 1998), and it is still unclear whether activists' actions and Iceland's proposed laws "count" as either a social movement or as a cohesive effort to reshape international norms. Although online activists have responded in support of WikiLeaks in large numbers, scholars such as Earl and Kimport (2011) have shown that the ease of online protest means more people can participate—and participate they do, as evidenced by the surges of new participants in Anonymous social spaces and by the increase in Pirate Party membership in states such as Sweden and Germany. However, it is too early to tell conclusively if this constitutes a social movement as it is possible that the ease of access may be a double-edged sword, with mobilization efforts dropping off quickly after initial surges.

Furthermore, social movement literature has tended to study the online world through the lens of traditional political behavior in two ways. First, as evidenced in Della Porta and Tarrow's (2004)

work on transnational protest, the social movement literature has been slow to consider the online world as anything but a facilitating extension of offline campaigns. Second, as evidenced in the work of Earl and Kimport (2011), when looking online, social movement researchers often examine political behavior that very closely matches offline political behavior—such as petitions, letter-writing campaigns, boycotts, and e-mail letters—and focus on the affordances offered by the Internet to activists rather than on a wider range of online political behaviors, such as hacktivism. While all of this work highlights important aspects of political processes, social movements, and the Internet, there is still much room for additional empirical work.

The cases of freedom of information mobilization indicate that the social movement paradigm's approach to understanding large-scale contentious politics needs to be revisited. Related to these limitations in the social movement literature, the online freedom of information issue is fundamentally different in form from the social movements previously studied. In contrast to the framework offered by transnational activist literature such as Keck and Sikkink's work (1998), in the cases I studied, there is no boomeranging of issues from international activist groups into authoritarian states. Unlike the argument made by Della Porta and Tarrow (2004), there is no diffusion of ideas from one country to another and no looking to an international organization to offer organizing resources.

Online activists are mobilizing around ideas that are *organic* to the Internet and information technology. As such, this work's empirical findings inform a broader literature about political behavior in politically oriented spaces online such as work by Bennett (2008) and Papacharissi (2004), as well as significant contributions made in the study of political blogs and email by scholars such as Karpf (2008) and important work on the transformative nature of the Internet on mass media and political campaigning by scholars such as Johnson, Braima, and Sothirajah (1999). Additionally, it contributes to the broader literature about oppositional politics online, such as important work by Kahn and Kellner (2004) documenting the historical impact of the Internet; work focused on hackers, such as that by Coleman and Golub (2008); research on hacktivists, such as that by Samuel (2004); and is part of the conversation about digital rights, such as that articulated by Postigo (2012).

WikiLeaks and Freedom of Information

The idea of "freedom of information" expressed online appears to be a cross-national online norm of freedom of information that is related to, but also often in conflict with, domestic legal practices. All liberal democracies adhere to some variation of a norm of freedom of speech—which, when considered in relation to the Internet, is usually a factor in information policy.[4] The conflict between online conceptions of freedom of information and domestic legal contexts can be seen in the recent case of the U.S. government's sustained effort to remove WikiLeaks from the Internet and the corresponding backlash by actors advocating for freedom of information. These groups include the International Pirate Parties, online activists such as Anonymous, and some states, such as Iceland. Further, although I do not discuss them in this article, there are also a number of nonprofit activist organizations such as the Electronic Frontier Foundation working on behalf of freedom of information.

What is WikiLeaks?

WikiLeaks is a nonprofit, whistleblowing organization and website that publishes materials provided by anonymous sources. The site relies on the work of a multitude of volunteers and is run by Julian Assange, the main spokesperson and editor-in-chief. WikiLeaks has been responsible for a wide range of information leaks about many countries and corporations. However, the site gained notoriety in the US when it published footage from a July 2007 U.S. Apache helicopter strike that killed Iraqi journalists and

when it published nearly 80,000 secret documents about the current war in Afghanistan. In November 2010, WikiLeaks released secret U.S. State Department diplomatic cables, and the site has also published other secret documents.

At the end of November 2010, unknown entities began a sustained Distributed Denial of Service (DDoS)[5] attack on WikiLeaks. WikiLeaks' administrators moved the site to Amazon, hoping that Amazon's cloud service would protect it from the DDoS attacks, but after pressure from the US government, Amazon also removed service from WikiLeaks (O'Connor, 2010). As WikiLeaks continued to search for a home, it lost all corporate infrastructure, which disrupted its lifeblood of donations (CBS News, 2011).

WikiLeaks and the International Pirate Party

By mid-December 2010, the only reason WikiLeaks was still online was because of the work of Internet activists. A major source of support was the International Pirate Party—a party founded to advocate for the revision of current intellectual property regimes. WikiLeaks ended up on a domain registered to the Swiss Pirate Party and mirrored[6] by the international network of Pirate Parties.[7] After the Swiss Pirate Party donated its domain name to WikiLeaks, individuals and groups affiliated with the Pirate Party acted to support WikiLeaks, and the number of WikiLeaks' site copies began multiplying. In one week, 1,000 mirrors appeared (Beschizza, 2010), and as of March 2010, there were 2,552 mirrors of the site. The site ended up hosted by the Swiss Pirate Party, and it remained there after Swiss companies and the Swiss government refused to bow to U.S. and other government pressures to remove WikiLeaks (Halliday, 2010). The Swiss action was backed up by a collection of Pirate Parties who began hosting the site as well in various countries.

The Pirate Party was not a newcomer to political activism. The Pirate Party was founded in January 2006 because of concerns over the effect of copyright and patent law on the privacy of individuals. The original Pirate Party's membership—the Swedish branch—grew from the increasing legal woes of the popular filesharing site, The Pirate Bay. Although the Party's membership was growing steadily prior to May 2006, a police raid on The Pirate Bay in May caused its membership to double overnight, bringing total membership to around 3,600 members.[8] In April 2009, after the guilty verdict in the Pirate Bay trial, the party gained 3,000 members in 7 hours, and, within a week, it had 40,000 members, a large increase over the 15,000 members in the party before the guilty verdict (Pirate Party, 2009). Thus, the Swedish Pirate Party suddenly became the third largest youth organization in Sweden (Anderson, 2009). In 2009, the Swedish Pirate Party also won two seats in the European Parliament.

There are now Pirate Parties in more than 38 countries.[9] In September 2009, the party received 229,117 votes in the European Parliament election. In October 2009, the German party managed to gain 2% of the vote in parliamentary elections, amounting to around 845,000 votes (Pirate Party, 2009). The German Pirate Party also received 1.9% of the vote in the 2009 Saxony state election. It has won seats in local elections in Münster and Aachen. In the 2009 elections, around 13 percent of first-time male voters voted for the Pirate Party (Allen, 2009). As of July 2012, the German Pirate Party had seen 209 members elected to office at various government levels, with 45 of these being seats held at the state level (German Pirate Party; Ernesto, 2011).[10]

WikiLeaks and Online Communities

As the International Pirate Party mobilized to support WikiLeaks, another group of activists born from online spaces also geared up for battle (Vance & Helft, 2010). Anonymous, first covered in the press as an "Internet Hate Machine,"[11] also began online protests on behalf of WikiLeaks. Both the individual members and the overall group known as Anonymous are the products of a posting board system that

began with a loose focus on discussion of anime, manga, and related popular culture topics.[12] The name now refers to many different subgroups of the larger Anonymous group (Beyer, 2011; Coleman, 2011). Because of the widespread use of the name "Anonymous," the term can now mean any of a diverse number of groups pursuing different strategies online, some of which are at war with other Anonymous groups (Beyer, 2011). So many online spaces could be considered part of the Anonymous community that it is difficult to measure the size of the community. However, the most trafficked posting board system, 4chan.org, is one of the largest systems online. As of August 2012, the site had been accessed by 134 million unique visitors and had 4.5 billion page views (Poole, 2012).

In the websites where Anonymous organizes and decides who will be targeted, users framed the WikiLeaks issue as an "infowar," saying they would be fighting censorship on behalf of freedom of information. For example, one online flyer stated:

> Julian Assange [the head of WikiLeaks] deifies everything we hold dear. He despises and fights censorship constantly, is possibly the most successful international troll[13] of all time, and doesn't afraid of fucking anything[14] (not even the US government)....Therefore, Anonymous has a chance to kick back for Julian. We have a chance to fight the oppressive future which looms ahead. We have a chance to fight in the first infowar ever fought.

In a YouTube video viewed nearly 900,000 times, Anonymous stated (LetterfromAnon, 2010):

> When we all have access to information, we are strong. When we are strong, we possess the power to do the impossible—to make a difference, to better our world. This is why the government is moving on WikiLeaks. This is what they fear. They fear our power when we unite. Please, do not forget this. The intention of Anonymous is to protect free flow of information of all types from the control of any individual, corporation, or government entity. We will do this until our last dying breath. We do this not only for ourselves, but for the citizens of the world. We are people campaigning at this very moment for your freedom of information exchange, freedom of expression, and free use of the Internet.

And, protest they did—bringing down Mastercard and Visa's service temporarily and slowing PayPal's service, all corporations that had removed service from WikiLeaks in response to pressure from the U.S. government (Cohen, 2010).

While Anonymous has a long history of online mobilization, its impact in December 2010 on the normal business operations of multinational corporations such as Mastercard was the result of Anonymous employing a tool that overcame one of the principle barriers to mass online hacktivist protest—supporters' lack of technological know-how. Every time Anonymous has been in the news—or news of Anonymous action online spread across online sites—new people flood to Anonymous community spaces. Many among the nonactivist Anonymous groups regard these new people as "the cancer that is killing" Anonymous, but for activist Anonymous members, these new users represent untapped potential.

In the past, activists in Anonymous have hosted detailed guides for new Anonymous members aimed at teaching them to engage in activist behavior, such as DDoS attacks. However, for novices, the technical details are difficult to understand, and these new actors often put themselves at risk with their inability to remain unidentified online. However, with the WikiLeaks protests, activist Anonymous groups simplified and streamlined the education process to bring new Anonymous members to important information sources and coordination locations. Additionally, Anonymous participants more widely

used a tool that they had first used on other attacks—the "Low Orbit Ion Cannon" or LOIC. The LOIC was a way for people who do not know anything about technology, but who want to help out, to engage in DDoS attacks. To use it, people downloaded an application onto their computer with a field in it to enter the target. The application also included a giant push-button. Once the user had "pushed the button," the application then managed the user's actions—either directly engaging with the site in question or routing through a person directing the traffic. LOIC targets were announced through various Anonymous websites and Twitter accounts. The use of the LOIC was monitored by Anonymous members who offered the community instructions about the safest way to participate. Although we now know that the LOIC used during the WikiLeaks action was not secure, the tool indicates the potential of tools that allow non-tech-savvy individuals to easily participate in hacktivism.

The scale of the WikiLeaks protests capture both the support for Anonymous as well as the ways in which Anonymous members are able to create and adapt technology to further their goals. For example, various observers, including myself (2011), noted that during the WikiLeaks protests more than 10,000 people were logged into the attack coordinating IRC servers[15] day after day. After a Dutch teenager was arrested for participating in the attacks, so many Dutch people logged into the servers that operators had to create "Dutch only" channels to handle the flow.

WikiLeaks and the Broader Offline Public

As stated previously and illustrated by the examples of the Pirate Party and Anonymous, during political ethnographic research in multiple highly populated online communities, I observed discussion of and support for the idea of "freedom of information" increasing over time. My findings in this diverse group of highly populated online communities are supported by polls about WikiLeaks, as well as by the amount of money donated in support of the project. In many widely reported surveys, pollsters found that the majority of U.S. citizens did not support WikiLeaks. For example, a CNN poll (2010) found that 77% of people in the US disapproved of WikiLeaks for placing leaked diplomatic cables online. However, when public opinion polls were broken down by age group, a different pattern emerged.

For example, in a telephone survey taken in December 2010, 59% of those interviewed said that individuals who publish secret U.S. documents should be prosecuted, with only 31% responding that the publication of such secret documents should be protected by the First Amendment. However, 52% of the individual respondents aged 18–29, agreed that publication should be protected by the First Amendment (Marist College Institute for Public Opinion, 2010). These numbers raise the question of whether the CNN poll results would be different if CNN had only polled people under the age of 30.

American youth are not the only people who support WikiLeaks and Julian Assange. In Australia, 59% of the population supported WikiLeaks' choice to make the diplomatic cables public while 25 percent opposed that choice. The percentage of supporters increased among younger voters (Lester, 2011). In Britain, older individuals were far more likely to support Assange's deportation to Sweden as well as his prosecution for releasing secret diplomatic documents than were those between the ages of 25–34 (Martinez, 2010).[16]

These polls asked different questions, and so should be taken as illustrative rather than definitive proof of public opinion. For example, polls that asked about WikiLeaks' mission and then separately asked about the release of the secret diplomatic cables tended to find higher levels of support for WikiLeaks itself than for its choice to release the diplomatic cables.

Support for the idea of "freedom of information" can also be seen in the financial donations WikiLeaks received in 2010. A German foundation, which processes most donations given to WikiLeaks, reported that in 2010 WikiLeaks received about US$1.9 million in donations—and that more than $700,000 of that was donated at the height of WikiLeaks' difficultly finding a stable home, in November

and December of 2010 (Zetter, 2010). The foundation reported that the average donation was €25, but that they also occasionally received large donations, such as a donation from a single person of over €50,000.[17]

WikiLeaks and Iceland

Into this fray stepped Iceland, which was designing a new set of domestic laws configured to create a media haven for journalists, publishers, and threatened media prior to WikiLeak's woes. In June 2010, the Icelandic Parliament unanimously passed the Icelandic Modern Media Initiative (IMMI). The IMMI is a proposal to turn Iceland into the leading media haven with the strongest protections for journalists and publishers in the world. The Icelandic Parliament's vote began a process of changing Icelandic law through borrowing the most stringent national legal codes governing these aspects of information policy from around the world. The IMMI specifically proposes changing Icelandic law to match various aspects of U.S., European Union (EU), Belgian, British, Estonian, Georgian, Norwegian, Scottish, and Swedish laws.[18]

In the "FAQs" attached to the proposal, the IMMI cites the example of WikiLeaks, which distributes its infrastructure across national contexts to take advantage of strong legal protections for journalists, sources, and publishers. For example, until December 2010, WikiLeaks was routed through Belgium and published from Sweden, a process that theoretically protected WikiLeaks under the Swedish constitution's provisions for source anonymity and the Belgian laws regarding communications confidentiality.

The June 2010 Icelandic Parliament vote on the IMMI marked the beginning of a legal revision process involving at least 13 current Icelandic laws. The revisions attempt to incorporate "best practices" of strong legal protections for speech from countries around the world while eliminating the weaknesses of each national legal context. For example, the IMMI proposes:

- Aggressive source and whistleblower protections. The proposal specifically cites the U.S. Federal False Claims Act (31 U.S.C. §3729-3733) as the model for whistleblower protection.
- Communications protection. The authors propose changing Icelandic law to match Belgian law concerning the protection of interaction between journalists and sources stored on third party sites.
- Process protection. The proposal lists California's anti-Strategic Litigation Against Public Participation (SLAPP) statutes as the model for providing support for publishers in costly legal battles.
- History protection. The proposal highlights the issues generated by a 2009 European Court of Human Rights ruling that stated that each time a viewer looked at an article online it meant that the article had been published again—and instead advocates for French law concerning leaving controversial articles in accessible archives.
- Protection of intermediaries. The proposal cites Swedish law covering intermediaries such as Internet Service Providers.
- Libel tourism protection. The authors use New York's Libel Terrorism Protection Act as an example of protections against actors choosing the most hospitable legal climate to persecute publishers.
- Limits prior restraint.[19] To protect against actions preventing publication, the new Icelandic law will incorporate portions of Estonian, Scottish, British, and Norwegian code.

The IMMI also modifies the Iceland Freedom of Information Act and creates an international prize for Freedom of Expression. The hope of the IMMI is that if materials are housed, routed, and published from Iceland, Icelandic law will provide protection, and thereby, increase worldwide media freedom. The work of integrating the IMMI proposals into Icelandic law is currently in process (Lamant, 2011).

Iceland has long been considered one of the countries with the most freedom of the press in the world (Freedom House, 2010). However, the IMMI represents an effort to take a more aggressive step to protect freedom of information. The timing of the IMMI, the mention of WikiLeaks, and the concerns of the US and other governments about WikiLeaks' actions means that the IMMI also represents a normative statement about freedom of information. However, a considerable barrier is the resistance of power holders across national contexts against WikiLeaks' model of whistleblowing.

The Powerless and the Powerful

Youth public opinion may be shifting towards greater freedom of information, but this is a demographic that lacks political power. Additionally, Scandinavian countries may have normative capacity in the international system (Ingebritsen, 2006), but Iceland is a small, relatively powerless country. Thus, will this shift amount to anything?

U.S. Government and Iceland

While small state theory posits that small states can influence international affairs as norm entrepreneurs (Ingebritsen, 2006), Iceland's vulnerability to outside pressure is often mentioned in news stories in relation to the IMMI. Often journalists ask IMMI authors about the possibility of pressure from powerful governments such as the US and China. In response to journalists' questions, policymakers have acknowledged the influence from outside governments, but state that they do not consider it a reason to stop the revision of Iceland's laws. Instead, supporters usually recognize that whether other countries' courts decide to honor these legal frameworks or not is discretionary; concern over diplomatic ties offers some restraint (e.g. Chu, 2011).

There is some indication that the U.S. government is willing to use political pressure against supporters of WikiLeaks. For example, in January 2011, the U.S. Department of Justice subpoenaed the content of the Twitter accounts of individuals associated with WikiLeaks including Julian Assange, the spokesperson and founder; Pfc. Bradley Manning, the most well-known "leaker" associated with WikiLeaks; Birgitta Jónsdóttir, a former WikiLeaks intern and current member of the Icelandic Parliament; and Jacob Appelbaum and Rop Gonggrijp, activists associated with WikiLeaks (Singel, 2011). Iceland's foreign ministry demanded a meeting with the U.S. ambassador to Iceland in response to the subpoena and the Icelandic interior minister described the action as "very odd and grave" (Ruche, 2011; Iceland Review Online, 2011). As I will discuss in a moment, the actions of the U.S. government in the area of intellectual property could foreshadow future behavior.

The Fate of Online Activists

As a series of highly publicized arrests show, groups such as Anonymous may frame their actions in terms of online protest, but governments frame them in terms of criminality. For example, on 27 January 2011, in response to the arrest of five young men involved in the pro-WikiLeaks DDoS attacks, an Anonymous press release argued that the young men had been engaging in civil disobedience and that the DDoS action was the same as a peaceful protest. In contrast, British law enforcement arrested the five men under the Computer Misuse Act for suspected involvement in cyber-attacks. The crime can carry up to a 10-year prison sentence (Williams, 2011). These five individuals were only the first arrests in an increasing effort by authorities across countries to end Anonymous' and other activists' online activities (Sengupta, 2011).

Lessons From Other Areas of Freedom of Information

It is also unclear whether the U.S. government, as its policies dealing with this new online challenge to its authority evolve, will act with as extensive a use of coercive power as it has in the area of intellectual property. Considering that actors such as WikiLeaks are releasing classified documents, and therefore engaging the U.S. government on areas defined as security issues, it seems likely the U.S. government will react strongly.

In the area of intellectual property the US has used threats of trade sanctions to encourage a wide range of countries to contradict and/or change their intellectual property law in response to industry claims of significant financial loss caused by file sharing.[20] For example, although the claims are contested, there are allegations (and some evidence) that Sweden (Ahrens, 2006; Ernesto, 2010b), Russia (Anderson, 2006), Spain (Elola, 2010; Wilson, 2010; Geist, 2010), Australia (TVNZ, 2011), and Costa Rica (Long, 2010), among others (Linkletter Knapp, 2000), have all succumbed to U.S. government pressure regarding intellectual property laws. Because the international center of the recording and film industries is in the US—with major domestic branches of this industry in most Western countries—the push has, over time, become more and more a push for harmonizing other countries' domestic law with the US's intellectual property laws through the use of international treaties and trade agreements (Beyer, 2011).

Some countries are more vulnerable to trade pressure from the US than others. For example, countries may be more vulnerable to the US because of needing access to the U.S. market, needing U.S. support vis-à-vis regional hegemons, and/or because of fear of pressure from international organizations such as the WTO. Such countries are more likely to acquiesce to U.S. pressure. In these countries, the U.S. government advocates for harmonization of copyright with U.S. law and the closing of file sharing sites, putting trade pressure on national governments (Sandoval, 2009). For example, in 2006, the U.S. government put direct pressure on the Russian government to shut down Allofmp3.com even though the site appeared to comply with Russian copyright laws (Office of the United States Trade Representative, 2006). Russian prosecutors refused to try the site, in spite of pressure from the Russian government, because they did not agree that the site violated Russian law (Deleon, 2007). The US implied that it would hold up Russian acceptance into the WTO unless it shut down the site (Robinson, 2011).

In another example, in the CAFTA negotiations between the US and Costa Rica, the US delayed Costa Rican sugar access to U.S. markets until the government agreed to U.S. copyright demands (Long, 2010). The possible changes to copyright law sparked widespread protest in Costa Rica, most notably by students.

The US's aggressive and sustained response to other nations' copyright laws suggests that, were there to be a safe harbor for WikiLeaks, or WikiLeaks-like sites, the U.S. government may take aggressive action against it. U.S. pressure against corporations in an attempt to remove all WikiLeaks' infrastructure could be widened to include governments in ways similar to the struggle to harmonize intellectual property standards across contexts.

Conclusions

Individuals and groups are coalescing into a transnational social movement focused on freedom of information. Online rhetoric about the potential of the Internet to change society, the need to reform intellectual property laws, and the evils of censorship of any kind is becoming increasingly similar across sites. Simultaneously, the ability of groups such as Anonymous to channel the power of like-minded, but not tech savvy, allies is increasing.

Whatever the future of this newly forming "freedom of information" movement, its emergence from the online world offers evidence for the power of the Internet and online communities in shaping

participants' political beliefs and actions. Young people online are willing to mobilize on behalf of abstract rights claims, and that willingness spreads quickly across the social spaces online.

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Notes

1 WhyWeProtest.net is the home of an online activist group born from the Anonymous versus Church of Scientology campaigns.
2 This is not the same as government policies that regulate access to state-held data. Rather, it is a broader term that encompasses the flow of information online.
3 This definition is an abbreviated version of the definition that was housed on WhyWeProtest.net in August 2011.
4 I refer to information policy in its broadest sense—as policy regulating the production, organization, consumption, and flow of information.
5 A Distributed Denial of Service attack is a coordinated attack intended to make a computer resource (such as a website) unavailable. This is accomplished by flooding the target with so many external requests that the servers cannot answer requests from legitimate users.
6 A mirror is a complete copy of a website placed online for download, often to prevent it from being "disappeared" from the Internet. The redundancy serves as security for the site content.
7 The International Pirate Party's success is connected to the legal woes of The Pirate Bay, a prominent file-sharing site with over 25 million users (Beyer, 2011).
8 The Swedish Pirate Party member count is available online (August 2012): https://pirateweb.net/Pages/Public/Data/MemberCountHistory.aspx
9 A complete list of countries can be found at: http://www.pp-international.net/ (Accessed 12 August 2011).
10 A list of German Pirate Party seats can be found here: http://wiki.piratenpartei.de/Mandate
11 This term was first used by Fox affiliate KTTV on July 26, 2007 during a news report. Know Your Meme provides the original news clip here: http://knowyourmeme.com/memes/internet-hate-machine
12 Anime is the Japanese term for "animation." Manga is Japanese term for cartoons or print form animation.
13 A troll is a user who tries to goad others into responding in a certain way. To do this, a troll usually posts inflammatory, off-topic, or ludicrous material in the hope of generating an emotional response.
14 This phrasing is an joke that originated on 4chan.org. Most now refer to the phrasing as the "Pretty Cool Guy Meme." The original phrasing is, "i think halo is a pretty cool guy. eh kills aleins and doesn't afraid of anything."
15 IRC channels are Internet Relay Chat Channels. IRC is a form of synchronous online text communication designed for group communication in channels. It also supports one-to-one communication and file sharing.
16 The Swedish government has issued arrest warrants for Julian Assange to question him on charges of rape and other sexually related crimes (Gentleman, 2010).

17 These numbers come from a Der Speigel interview with Hendrik Fulda (2011), who is on the board of the foundation that is one of WikiLeak's main funding channels.
18 The entire proposal is housed on the IMMI website here: http://immi.is/Icelandic_Modern_Media_Initiative
19 Prior restraint is when the state outlines prior to publishing the types of information that cannot be published.
20 The purpose of this article is not to wade into the debate over the ethics of file sharing, but rather to offer copyright as an example of an area where there is a similar mismatch of norms and U.S. state action.

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