Reconceptualising the Idea of 'Power' in Cyberspace: A (J/L)og in to (Un)real

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Abstract

Technology seems to incorporate a post-ideological status quo where the 'old politics' of left and right are no longer useful or relevant. The politics are now more associated with 'real' and virtual. This politics of existence in real and virtual lives has left some questions vibrant: is technology a revolutionary tool or is it just a new epoch of Lord Clive's 'divide and rule' formation? Who has the access to cyberspace? To what extent can one get an exposure to cyberspace? Is cyberspace a bourgeoisie region? Considering Foucault, Althusser and Max Weber, the present paper focuses on the issues of power, surveillance, discipline, and power/knowledge structure in cyberspace. The discussion concentrates on the formation of cyberspace as a politicised area where technology supersedes other ideological apparatus. It also addresses the intricate issues of race and class as well as community formation in Second Life (SL).

Cyberpower

Power, in its simplest term, is the ability to act upon. But the idea of power is intermingled with our identity of self. Our existence in the society has been defined and re-defined with the notion of power. In this sense, power is a complex term that provides us the idea or knowledge of who we are and what we are supposed to do. Power may be expressed through consent based on the perceived legitimacy of those who hold it (e.g. the state, run by an elected government). Power in its more overtly coercive form may be seen to be expressed by control with a lack of perceived legitimacy. According to Marxism, a state wields its power through economic and ideological apprentice (Ideologies are set of rules through which power dominates). The term gets more meaning with the study of theorists like Michel Foucault and Max Weber. Though their works do not directly associate with cybernetics their ideas can be cited to discuss the role of power in cyberspace.

Weber and Foucault: power as possession and domination

This part of the paper tries to relate Weber and Foucault's idea of power with the power exercised in the cyberspace. According to Weber, power is the ability of a person or a group of people to exert their/his/her will on others whether they accept it or not. People seeking power may either conform to the existing authority to hold power or they subvert the authority to establish their own belief. For Weber, power in society assumes a pluralistic form. Weber conforms to Marxist idea that power is derived from those who hold the modes of production and power is somehow economically deterministic. But unlike Marxism, Weber objects that though economic power is the predominant form in modern capitalistic society, power has been exercised through hierarchy. Suppose a bureaucrat may wield his power though he/she is a paid employee. Power, for Weber, is a possession. It is a chance of a man or a group to exert their will on others, may be against existing authority. For Weber, power involves resistance. A power is established or proven if it faces resistance simultaneously:

> Power as a possession needs resistance to manifest itself and unless power manifests itself we have no idea that it exists. When power is only known because its effects are known and its effects are only known when there is resistance, power is absent when someone willingly does

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whatever is requested. Power is a negative phenomenon; it forces actions that are against the will of someone. We need power to be exercised for us to know that it exists.

(Jordan, 1999, p. 10)

In cyberspace power also appears to be a possession. An individual empowers himself/herself as soon as she/he logged into the cyberspace. Identity fluidity is the way through which an individual exerts his power over cyberspace. Online mask and masquerading allows a user to implement his/her full potential which is otherwise restricted in the offline. If Weber's theory can be applied in cyberspace, then we can say that cyberpower diminishes hierarchical elements and individual possess the power to log in and direct their will through pressing key board or clicking mouse. These flows of power enumerate more aspects of power—the ability to change gender, the ability to contact experts—that individuals take up and possess, utilising them to impose their will. (Jordan, 1999, p. 88). Another form of possession in cyberspace is participation. In his exciting book *Net Smart: How to Thrive Online* (2012), Howard Rheingold proposes that participation can be a power if one can transform the public online arena into a domain of interaction. It can be done by blogging, twitting or *facebooking*. Participation, however, is a kind of power that only works if you share it with others. Even if their form of participation consists of ranting on their blogs, bloggers need public to read, comment, and link to them (Rheingold, 2012, p. 112). It has been already proved that participation is a power; cyberpower leads the more vigorous forces that culminate in Revolution 2.0 in Egypt and rejuvenate the spirit of '71 among the youth of Bangladesh to lead a Generation Square at Shahbagh against the war-criminals. Disdaining the implicit inertia it helps breaking ice with the significant other through blog and other social sites. As Weber says power as a possession needs resistance to make it acknowledged. In cyberspace, individual's power is resisted through the techno-elite who manipulate and engineer information. Following this, we can come to Foucault's idea of power, i.e. the power that disciplines, punishes and surveils.

Though Foucault's writing never addressed cyberspace or new media it can be significantly used in analysing the nature of cyberspace or the politics of cybernetics. Foucault's idea of power as domination, power as panopticon and power as a disciplinary unit can be associated with cyberspace. Power of technocracy can be radically approached through Foucauldian theory. People or corporation who holds power tends to create knowledge out of it. Further, the knowledge is being disseminated and the inherent ideology carried by that knowledge or message is sprout to re-shape the perception of general mass.

Foucault's idea of disciplinarity has given rise to discourses through which human can be subjectivized. The evolution of criminology and social sciences are, according to Foucault, some discourses that try to fixate human under some category. The invention of prison and incarceration is another way of punishing 'subjects' who are considered to be renegades.

> Power applies to immediate everyday life which categorises the individual, marks him by his own individuality, attaches him to his own identity, imposes a law of truth on him which he must recognise and which others have to recognise in him. It is a form of power which makes individuals subjects. There are two meanings of the word *subject:* subject to someone else by control and dependence, and tied to his own identity by a conscience or self-knowledge. Both meanings suggest a form of power which subjugates and makes subject to.

(Dreyfus, Rabinow, & Foucault, 1983, p. 212)

In the celebrated fantasy novel *Lords of the Rings* (and later a box office hit movie with the same title) J.R.R. Tolkien refers to an all-knowing eye known as Sauron's Eye. The eye belongs to a dark lord of First Age. His vision pierces cloud and nothing can be concealed from his gaze. Cyberspace, to some extent, is the all-seeing eye that keeps every one under its observation. Let us imagine that everything we do or see is recorded by 'it'. What kind of pressure will it be if we find a police officer is guarding us while

we are driving? Will it not be uneasy and itchy for us if we imagine that our every step is being followed? This is exactly what happens in cyberspace and in an age run by techno-elite. The border line between public and private is being severely transgressed. Our interaction is being continuously recorded as information and can be used later from the database without our prior permission. In this way, our personal data becomes a component of our social identities, redefining and reconstituting who we are in terms of the database usage; databases are nothing but performative machines, engines for producing retrievable identities (Bell, 2001, p. 84). Our uses of credits card and digital identity cards are nothing but a medium through which we are being recorded by the technologies. The best example may be the use of CCTV and web cam, a modern version of Jeremy Bentham's design of the prison.

> Closed-circuit television cameras (CCTVs) cover all major public ways and most offices, shops and businesses also use cameras that are connected to the CCTV network. Cameras are sophisticated enough to identify a person by either retinal scan or facial heat image, without the subject knowing this has occurred. The scan or image can be compared with a database to identify the individual and cameras can automatically search for an individual the database has alerted them to. Once an alert is signalled, not only are your vehicles located but as soon as you step into the view of the cameras that cover all but the loneliest areas of society, you can be found as well.
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> (Jordan, 1999, p. 198)

But the creation of identity is a bit different from Foucault's 'subjectification'. Identity, in cyberspace, is created outside the subject. The information reserved in database can be loaded and retrieved to form a different identity an individual actually possesses. Suppose in Facebook, a guy changes his profile pictures now and then and every portrait of his bears some resemblance of style and gorgeousness. So, his identity has been created as a glamorous 'dude' whereas in 'real' life he is a rich spoilt brat and a

roadside junkie. We can call this a super-panopticon working through objectification producing individuals with dispersed identities, identities of which the individuals might not even be aware – identity is located *outside* the subject (Bell, 2001). The case becomes extreme when cyber culprits carry out cloak and dagger activities through using unauthorised profile pictures of *onliners* (especially female) either in their dating sites or semi-pornographic pages.

Enforcing power in cyberspace

Technology has the tendency to liberate and dominate simultaneously. It maintains a power of its own while doing so. Power, in cyberspace, is very elusive in comparing with the 'power' we normally encounter. Power in cyberspace (or we may tag it as cyberpower) can be discussed from three vantage points: the individual, the social and the imaginary. Each of these perspectives is derived from some compelling ideas about the nature of cyberspace. From an individual perspective cyberspace is the action of an individual while logging in to the online arena. The individual assumes cyberspace as a constitutive system where individuals like him/her reside. This assumption leads to three elements that come forward relating individual with the cyberspace. These are identity fluidity (as discussed earlier), the re-location of hierarchy and the concept of space that is made of information. These three elements together make cyberpower as an individual possession which ultimately results in the form of politics related to individual rights in cyberspace (Jordan, 1999, p. 8). Within this cyberpolitics can be found all the typical political issues that have arisen in and about cyberspace; these are: financial and cultural barriers to access, privacy, encryption, copyright and censorship. Understood this way, cyberspace offers powers to the individual. Secondly when cyberspace is understood as the social place, the notion of power changes from individualist to communities, greater freedom is given to the particular community or individuals who can manipulate the spatial context of internet through technology. Persons like Mark

Zuckerburg, Bill Gates, Linus Torvalds exemplify this form of cyberpower because they possess different technological 'power' to manipulate virtual technologies. Thirdly, from imaginary level, cyberpower means the imaginary power an individual holds when he/she regards cyberspace as a domain of supremacy where everything remains unharnessed and unrestricted. Let us consider the case of Facebook; recently in Bangladesh many Hindu temples and Buddhist monasteries have been vandalised which led to religious conflict (Ain O Salish Kendra report, November, 2013). Going deeper, it can be found that the reasons were buried in some Facebook images (albeit photoshopped!) and posts that were considered by few as a degradation towards religious sentiment. The posts and photos spread like viral and nobody cared to investigate the authenticity of that news. This is cyber-manipulation or provocation that resulted in unharnessed action.

The Individual: Identity Fluidity

Individual possesses and exerts power in cyberspace through identity fluidity, re-location of hierarchy and re-discovering informational space. Identity fluidity is the way an identity is constructed according to the online forums and groups. Online identities are constructed by two ways: identifiers and styles. Identifiers are the username that partially (sometimes mostly) describes the user's nature. Suppose the id *hellboy666* may indicate the user is kind of rough, caring less and flamboyant in manner; whereas *fairy143* indicates the usual feminine attitude the id holds and it is much more calm and sober than the previous one. Another way of forming identities is style; it is the way some users or users of a particular community interact with each other. *Wazzup* for 'what's up', *Nada* for 'nothing', *NM* for 'nothing much' indicate particular idiosyncrasies that make the users different and easily distinguishable. As details have been discussed regarding identity fluidity in the previous chapter, we now proceed to the re-location of hierarchy.

Hierarchy in 'real' (or offline) life is the organisational structure where items or persons are ranked according to their level of importance. Maintaining hierarchy is a common way of expressing ones own disposition in 'real' life interaction. Power is very much associated with hierarchy in 'real' life. In fact, the world is now determined by the power driven hierarchy. May it be a power of knowledge or it can be power of nuke! But in case of online it is inherently anti-hierarchical. Interaction among different users is more egalitarian and unrestricted. The harnessing censorship of real life is rarely present in cyberspace. This is because of the availability of information. In offline we depend on the person of higher status for the knowledge or information they possess. Once the information is free and available it disrupts the boundaries of hierarchy. The censored stuffs that governments or courts might have restricted are almost impossible to hold back once it is free in cyberspace. Cyberspace becomes a global information hub where the demarcations of nation state are undermined. Hence, cyberspace offers individuals a scope of exerting power through the renovated hierarchies and allows taking actions which were near to impossible in offline.

The Social: Online Community

After encountering the initial effect of glee, bewilderment and unharnessed self an individual gradually (but not slowly) comes to realise that s/he is being emerged as a member of the particular online community. The transformation is not magical but sociological. The styles and features adopted by an individual are gradually disseminated on the forums where the individual frequently visits. It is kind of absurd that an individual can create a community or society. A particular idiosyncrasy, when shared by a group, becomes established and gets recognition. Similarly, individual cyberpower paves the way to collective bodies, forming distinct communities. Cyberpower of collective bodies is derived from the individuals who think that they are a part of the whole. Gradually cyberpower of the social become politicised because of the information manipulation and information overload. Elites from offline possess a tendency to engineer technological expertise on their favour. Due to information overload an individual demands for

more technological tools to maintain information. Therefore *technopower* is extended to control and manage the information overload which in turn increases the complexity of cyberspace. The ability and efficiency to act in cyberspace has been extended, either by the emergence of hacker and Hacktivist (see terms) or by technocrat like Bill Gates, Mark Zuckerburg or Linus Torvald. Cyberpower of the social is thus the power of domination that is managed and directed by the elites who have access to the technological expertise whereas an individual's influence gradually erodes due to minimal access to similar technology.

The Imaginary: Utopian Bonding

> Nation is an imagined political community - and imagined as both inherently limited and sovereign. (Anderson, 1991, p. 6)

Basically our relationship with people and the society is kind of imaginary as stated by Benedict Anderson. We just endeavour to match our thoughts with the other to imagine ourselves as part of a community. From the definition laid down by Anderson, we can argue that nation is imagined because every member cannot meet one another at a time; it is limited because there are demarcations beyond which dwells another community. Finally it is political because the inequalities in a particular community initiate some kind of power play. A similar imagined community exists in cyberspace. "From a purely visual perspective, much of *SL* looks and feels like a country (or series of countries), or in other words, *SL* possesses the territorial and societal trappings which define many if not all nations... [there] are three-dimensional representations of familiar settings, including virtual villages, towns, and cities. Such settings contain a wide array of virtual objects and life forms, including trees, roads, cars, houses, buildings, animals, and, of course, people" (Ensslin & Muse, 2011, p. 38). Cyberspace's imaginary is driven by the compelling idea that everything is changing and both utopia and dystopia reside in cyberspace. "Cyberspace's utopia and dystopia stem from the awed realisation that everything is controlled by information codes that can be manipulated, transmitted and recombined through cyberspace" (Jordan, 1999, p. 205).

On one hand cyberspace is utopic because it can give rise to human hope, probably the ancient human fantasy of being immortal. The importance of 'flesh' will be reduced and transformed into 'information code' which can be stored in the virtual world. Human expects to reach a point of singularity through which human will not be a human anymore, rather a drive full of information reserved for future use. Flesh will be withered but the program will not. As stated earlier, cyberspace makes human imagines themselves in a world where the most common form of discrimination will be eroded and the era of post-revolution will began. Cyberspace is subversive because they can 'reverse and displace the hierarchical dualisms of naturalized identities' (Haraway, 1990, p. 68). On the other hand, cyberspace implies fear – the fear of privacy being disrupted, the fear of surveillance and the fear of amputation by technology (as suggested by Marshall McLuhan). The rise of techno-elite in the cyberspace disrupts the users' privacy and gives a notion that 'visibility is a trap'. As every step in the cyberspace is related to information flow, it is much more prone to scrutiny, surveillance and examination. Developed countries such as the USA and UK have already moulded their cyber system according to their security level that culminates in taping phone calls, fax, domain securing. Cyber society is also being supervised through the eyes of techno-elite. Being simultaneously a provider of fear and fantasy, cyberspace controls the imagination of its user. Hence, cyberspace at the imaginary level constitutes a broader virtual society where individuals and community come to realise that they are just a part of the greater whole that shapes their psyche or cyber-psyche to be specific.

Is cyberspace a classless society?

> *Are you on the network?* could become as big a social and economic differentiator in the late 1990s as *Are you employed?* ha[d] been in the early 1990s; indeed, the

answer to either question might now well depend on your access to the other. (Haywood, 1998, p. 25)

Although apparently cyberspace seems to be anti-hierarchical there are also inequalities covertly creating two classes; privileged and deprived. This mainly turns into an issue of information inequality. Rendering earlier discussions, the information super-highway is controlled by the techno-elites. In an industrialised society class is determined according to the consumption of production; but in case of cybernetics it depends on the consumption of information or data. However, in Bell's *Introduction to Cyberculture* (2001), Alessandro Aurigi and Stephen Graham formulate an architectural representation of cyberspace where they divide class in cyberspace according to the consumption of information. According to them, cyberspace constitutes three broad categories of culture:

> The *'information users'*: an elite of transnational service workers, who have the skills and knowledges to achieve positions of dominance in the digital economy (the digital elite).
> The *'information used'*: less affluent and less mobile workers, whose main connection with the digital economy is as home-telematics consumers (the digital shoppers).
> The *'off-line'*: marginalized underemployed/unemployed and 'technologically intimidated' groups who lack the financial resources to participate at all in cyberculture (the digital underclass).
> (Bell, 2001, p. 131)

This kind of categorization reveals that mass contribution or democratic ideals in the cyberspace is a far-fetched ideology which keeps the majority inside a matrix of illusion (Voila! An illusion exists inside a virtual world!). The producer of information (relate it with the controller of modes of production) and the consumer of that information share a bizarre kind of relationship. Simultaneously the information consumers are vulnerable and resilient against the dissemination of cyber discourse (read information). According to

Kroker & Weinstein cyber-authoritarianism is a remarkably *technotopian* movement which boldly takes initiative in shutting down the mass from data and providing them with 'trash' (Kroker & Weinstein, 2001). This 'executive elite' holds the key jobs in multinational corporations, and has been rendered increasingly 'footloose' by advances in information and communication infrastructures. Moreover, these corporations have themselves 'gone digital'. Those corporations are also the same ones who are interested in selling the 'information used' to the social class that is the primary target market for the new digital products and services. This 'pay-per' consumer class is subject to 'the panoptic sort' – the systems of information gathering and market research that have proliferated with the virtualization of the life-world (Bell, 2001, p. 132). The new economy of information consumption has considered idea of class as a marketing concept. New media is one of the few tools those techno-elites try to get a hold over. Corporations such as Facebook, Twitter, IBM, Apple, Samsung Electronics, Dell, and HP are simply undermining the contributions of under-class *onliners*. Through the production of enticing gadgets they are just noosing the under-class *onliners* into a technological and electronic ghetto.

Cyber-interaction: A new form of subculture?

Subcultures have been seen as spaces for deviant cultures to renegotiate their position or to 'win space' for themselves. In this sense the online users are more likely to subvert the customary practices of routine life and nurture their subterranean values such as 'the search for risks, excitement which serve to underpin rather than undermine the day-time ethos of production' (Hebdige, 1979). They form a subculture because they are trying the alternatives. Cohen sees subculture as a 'compromise solution between two contradictory needs: the need to create and express autonomy and difference from parents... and the need to maintain the parental identifications' (Cohen 1980). The cyber-interaction bestows the online users to try the unresolved conflict between 'real' life interaction and the virtual one. They are creating their spaces amidst the PC monitor which suggests either a transgression or a

resistance against embodied interaction. This group of *netizen*, though curtail or limit their emotion only in *smileys*, is unbiased in mediating information. For example, there are lots of facebook pages which are engaged in circulating live news and events. These pages are not state or any company authorized but are self-driven in their action. Their news and information seem to be of different perception in comparing with the mainstream ones. The irony lies within: the space is an unreal one, then how come it is to be depended upon? Hence, in this way like other subcultures, the *netizens* are also not properly acknowledged by the mainstream media. But this does not enfeeble their stance; it rather allows them to compete with a full phase in the news arena. The *Mig33Community* (a chatting site) organise their party and get together without even stepping outside the home! Their level of emotion is very much influenced by e-motion and cannot be categorised according to our 'real' life idiosyncrasies. Like the former Mods, Punks, Teddy boys and Goths the online users also share their common interests, values and ritualistic pastimes. Their attitude is more covert and less expressed and their status is more *translocative* than being subordinated.

Virtual Determinism

With the furtherance of post-industrialist society we have encountered an 'e' with everything previously familiar; e-banking, e-commerce, e-communities, e-democracy, e-voting, e-motion, e-sex, and e-dating are some of the authoritative coining that governs the age of information or the era of 'super-industrialism'. The industrial age was regularised by the modes of production where Orthodox Marxists used to consider economy as the base that tends to control the superstructures. Althusser seems to be over-deterministic in this case and suggested that causes can be many for a particular effect. This over-determinism further led us to Althusser's ISA (Ideological State Apparatus) and RSA (Repressive State Apparatus). The age of information is way too much different where services surmount labour. The age has turned 'virtually

deterministic' i.e. the generation depends more on an 'information economy' in which the exchange and manipulation of symbolic data excels, exceeds and colligates the importance of material processing. The society emphasize more on 'informational materialism' than commodity fetishism and clings to a new system of symbolic wealth which is increasingly dependent on the virtual exchange of data, information and knowledge. This is an age where land, labour, financing and raw materials become less important than the symbolic knowledge which can increasingly discover substitutes for them; where technological and organisational innovation are at a premium; where faster decision-making and better internal communication are a central commercial objective; where mass production is replaced with flexible production systems synchronised to detailed customer feedback about market conditions and preferences; where electronic transfers replace metal or paper money as the major medium of exchange; where goods and services are modularised and configured into systems requiring a constant multiplication and revision of standards; where new abstract and intellectual skills demanding high levels of education and training become the crucial attributes of the labour force; where computerised monitoring governs the profitable recycling of wastes; and where global news and data flows are an essential strategic asset. These techno-economic changes have a far reaching effect in society. The revolution brought about by the information technology has created optimism in the *onliners*. The undesirable features of industrial society—monotonous work, huge impersonal organisations, rigid routines and hierarchies, anonymous and alienating urban existences are seen dissolving. In their place, the information age holds out the hope of diversification, localism, flexibility, creativity, and equality. In this regard, we can relate this information superhighway with the *Neuromancer*, the celebrated novel by William Gibson. In the novel, the protagonist, 'console cowboy' Case 'jack into' (read log into) a system to hack the information under the obligation of a larger system network known as Armitage.

In a virtually deterministic society the superstructures are moulded within the technology. Cyberspace offers something more than mere entertainment. Otherwise it would have been impossible for a large mass to reserve their maximum waking hours for online participation. Though we dwell online, we carry a massive effect of it in our offline interaction. We 'like' one another's attire, we 'comment' on food, we 'share' gossips and we 'twit'. This virtual determinism is not detached from the cultural orientation that this generation is experiencing. The discussions in the previous chapters acknowledge that extensive exposure to technology shapes our perception in determining a symbiotic co-existence with the technology itself.

New Media: The power of the prompt

> The need to understand the effects of the extensions of man becomes more urgent by the hour. (McLuhan & Lapham, 1994)

When McLuhan was writing the book, *Understanding media*, the human history was standing at the brink of a new explosion: the explosion of technology. Gradually the geographical locations have been shrunken, the questions of races, class and nationalities are evaded and the demarcations are transgressed. People have entered into a global network, if not global world. Human approaches towards a final extension: "the final phase of the extensions of man- the technological simulation of consciousness, when the creative process of knowing will be collectively and corporately extended to the whole of human society, much as we have already extended our nerves and our senses by various media" (McLuhan, 1994, p. 5). Three decades of societal and cultural alignment of new media have yielded a host of innovations, trials, and problems, accompanied by versatile popular and academic discourse. New Media Studies crystallized internationally into an established academic discipline, and this begs the question: where do we stand now? Which new questions are emerging now that new media are being taken for granted, and which riddles are still unsolved? Is contemporary digital culture indeed all about 'you', the participating user, or do we still not really understand the digital machinery and how this constitutes us as 'you'? (Boomen, Lammes, Schäfer, Raessens, & Lehmann, 2009) New media sites like Facebook, MySpace, Twitter, and Blog have re-defined the application of internet and World Wide Web. These are some of the transformations that re-locate the human consciousness to a different level. We can say the internet and World Wide Web have become 'new-mediatised'- they have become a central part of a new way of 'doing media' (and 'thinking media', too); they unsettles or disrupts the age-old thinking of producer/consumer, amateur/professional and reality/fiction. The conscious level is being maintained by the unconscious when sites like MySpace and Facebook have been heralded as transforming what we 'do' in cyberspace, in crafting new forms of social interaction mediated by the Internet and the World Wide Web (Bell, 2009). This means the days of command and control are over, instead we need to embrace and engage. The new media make us aware of the ultimate screen between the self and the other, of the ways in which communication can be (is inevitably?) dubbed, misheard, drowned out, screened and mediated (Zylinska, 2002, p. 224). But simultaneously it re-configures our consciousness by allowing us to differentiate whether the truth is out there or not. On one hand, New Media is instantaneous and prompt, on the other it is deluged with information overload. New media or the digital media have generated two types of opposing discourses: one utopian and one dystopian. The utopian version proclaims the convergence of new and old media where the consumers (information consumers to be specific) are not satisfied with pre-fabricated media feed rather they become interactive distributors of media content. Digital media imply Stuart Hall's model of communication where the receiver is not a passive consumer but an active participant.

> Hall's essay challenges all three components of the mass communications model, arguing that (i) meaning is not simply fixed or determined by the sender; (ii) the message is

never transparent; and (iii) The audience is not a passive recipient of meaning.

(Procter, 2004, p. 58)

Thus, New Media empower a form of communication that concentrates on cultural participation. Online networks such as Napster, Slashdot, or Wikipedia serve as the chief witnesses of this 'participatory turn' in our media culture, in which the consumer gains control over the production and distribution of media content. On the dystopian side, the cultural participation of the users is exploited by the new media goons.

Conclusion

Cyberspace is prone and vulnerable towards power exertion. Exertion of power has always been answered by a counter-power. This is no different in case of cyberspace too. The power-play is an open ended theme here that continuously changes its shape through ideologies and counter-ideologies.

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