

The Internet and the Rise of a Transnational Counter-Democracy

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Abstract

My goal in this paper is to clarify the role of the Internet on the international stage and to defend the following ideas. First, with the advent of the Internet as a transnational public space we are experiencing the advent of a new type of transnational actor: “citizen initiatives” (CI), with characteristics different from those of traditional representatives of civil society at the international level such as NGO. Second, building on an analysis of CI, I will argue that these new players represent the emergence of a transnational “counter-democracy”.

Keywords : Internet, Counter-democracy, Transnational Democracy, Public Space, Citizenship.

Today it is quite obvious that the international stage is anarchical. As Kenneth Waltz (1959 : 159) once remarked, there are “many sovereign states, and no system of law enforceable”. This of course doesn’t mean that anything goes. There are international treaties, there are institutions created to avoid conflict, or to regulate certain aspects of the law. But there is nothing resembling a monopoly of violence on the international stage.

International relations are not ruled by laws that a supreme authority could enforce. States can act as they see fit. Of course they always have to act with a touch of diplomacy, but it stems more from a fear of retaliation than from of a functioning legal system. And this looks more like the hobbesian state of nature than anything else.

On top of that, one could argue that every international organization there is, from the UN to the World Bank and from the WTO to the WIPO cannot be said to be democratic. Of course the way they work is supposedly democratic. In the UN one country equals one vote, but 5 of them have a right of veto, and most of the countries there don’t even have a real democratic government anyway. How can international organization really said to be democratic when some countries have more power than others and when politicians there, are not really representing the people of their country but their government?

So democracy on an international scale seems far fetched. There is nothing resembling a international state, and most institutions are nowhere close to real democracy. It goes even further than that, as Kymlicka (1999) argues, since there is no such thing as a transnational political community. So even if we could make international institutions more democratic, it is not a

guarantee that we will see the emergence of a real and functioning transnational democracy.

In two decades, the Internet has established itself as a forum for political discussion and action. The fantasies of a global public space allowing for the emergence of a transnational democracy may still be prevalent in the media, but they are not supported by any empirical data. This does not however mean that the Internet does not change anything, quite the contrary.

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I. The Internet as a Transnational Public Space

In this section I will argue that the Internet can be understood as a transnational public space. I will first try to give a definition of what a public space is and show how the Internet fits this definition. Instead of focusing on reason or visibility as other definitions do, I will argue that the Internet can be seen as space of action, a transnational space of political action.

1.1 What is a public space?

In order to argue that the Internet is a transnational public space, I need first to offer a definition of what a public space is. This concept has been widely used throughout the 20th Century, and it can mean at least three things:

1. First it could be understood in the habermassian sense as a sphere of political deliberation.
2. It could also be understood as a sociological concept. That is, as a space that is visible to each and every one.
3. And it could lastly be understood in a way inspired by H. Arendt (1983) as a space where political activities take place.

When I say that the Internet is to be understood as a public sphere, I mean it in this third sense. It is a space where each and everyone of us could act in a political way. Some might argue that my third definition of a public space can be subsumed under the first or the second one. Don't all political activities take place in visible spaces? As the feminists taught us “Personal is political” (Hanisch, 1969) and thus, there can be political activities taking place in the private sphere. To have a debate with friends and family in your living room is one example of that, even though probably not the kind which feminists have in mind when they use the phrase. And political activities can be far more diverse than mere deliberation. Being a member of Greenpeace, sending a letter to your

MP, drawing caricatures for a website etc., all those things are kinds of political activities and have nothing to do with deliberation even if you give this concept a very broad meaning. It seems to me then, that this third definition even though it's less common than the two others is a legitimate one.

As can be understood from what I just said, these three definitions are not mutually exclusive. Political activities often take place in visible spaces, though not always and political deliberations are a form of political activity. So the Internet could also be said to be a sociological public space, though things seem a bit more complex (Cardon, 2010), and it could also allow for a habermassian public spheres to emerge (Dahlberg 2001). But those are debates that extend far beyond the frame of this paper.

The question then becomes, what is a political action? If the main criterion for a space to be public is that one can act politically in it, it should thus be important to have at least a clear definition of what it means to act in such a way, one could argue. I'm not really sure that this is the case. Even if I don't provide a strict definition of what politics is and what political actions are, it seems to me that we share a common understanding of these concepts that is sufficient for my argument. When I argue that a public space is a space where political actions can take place, my understanding of the concept of politics is intuitive. If something seems political, then it probably is! I could give examples such as, a political rally, or a political petition, a political discussion. Apart from the fact that they are political because they are said to be, the question about what makes them as such, is a complex one that would require its own paper, at least. But what I think is important is that even without a clear definition, we tend to agree when someone calls something political, and this is seen to imply an intuitive definition of what political actions are that is enough, I think, for what I am trying to achieve here.

1.2 Is the Internet a public space?

Contrary to what most usually believe, the Internet is not just another mass media. Whereas traditional media are top-down organizations where a source feeds information to passive consumers, the Internet has been built as a network of "intelligent" end-users (Lessig, 2006, Wu, 2010). Thus what is important is not what is inside the network, but its end points. The networks are merely tubes that enable users to exchange what ever they feel like.

As everyone who's used the Internet knows, it's a great place to gather information. Almost every newspaper has a website. There are a few online encyclopedias. One can listen to radio or even watch TV on the net. Blogs and web pages add diversity to this already quite rich ecosystem of information. What ever you are looking for, you can probably find on the Internet. And information is an essential part of taking action, and especially political action. The Internet also allows us to communicate; there are emails, chat rooms, social networks, forums etc. But is this enough to make a public space? Well, as I argued, debating about a political topic with friends or family in your living room qualifies as political activity. So I don't see any reason why debating on a social network wouldn't also qualify as such. But I believe that the Internet allows for far more

political activity than just that.

The recent event surrounding the Cablegate controversy and the actions of a group called Anonymous give a striking example of political action on the Internet. On one side the US government decided to pressure companies to take actions against Wikileaks. On the other side, the group called Anonymous decided to respond to those companies by attacking them with a Distributed Denial of Service attacks (“Denial-of-service attack”, *Wikipedia: the free encyclopedia*), which can be argued to be the modern equivalent of a sit-in (Peterson, 2009, Morozov, 2010). Whether one agrees or not with all this, there is no question that the actions taken by both parties were political in nature.

There are also other ways of acting politically on the Internet. One could upload a short clip denouncing police violence. One could send an email to one’s MP. One could show support to a cause by putting a sign on its website. This last example might seem trivial, but it’s the Internet equivalent of putting a sign supporting a politician in ones garden, or going to a political rally or even just wearing a badge. Political action can take many different forms in real life as does it on the Internet. So political activities do take place on the Internet and, as such it is a public space. But can we say it is transnational?

1.3 Is the Internet a transnational public space?

On the Internet it doesn’t really matter where you are, you can always access any website you want. Whether you are in France, in Japan or in Canada, you will always be able to access Facebook. One could always argue that there are some States censoring the Internet (some would argue that most States are doing it (Deibert, 2008, 2010)) and that Facebook is hardly accessible in Myanmar for example, and this is true, but lets pretend for a minute that there is no State censorship (I will come back on that particular point in a minute). On the Internet, space doesn’t exist. Everything is only a Google search away, and this is very close. So, for instance, if an Israeli says something on the Internet a Lebanese could always answer. Is this enough to make it transnational? Probably. The simple possibility of having a transnational conversation on political subjects is an indicator that the Internet could be a transnational public space.

But, as I have already said, there are more ways to act politically on the Internet than simply by having a conversation. And one of the best examples of this is once again the Cablegate. Here we have an (probable) American whistle-blower, using a website created by an Australian hosted in Sweden, in Germany and in the US, with a team composed of Germans, Icelandic, and Swedes and probably Chinese, backed-up by a group of newspaper from France, Spain, the US, Germany and the UK, in order to leak diplomatic cables written by American embassies form all over the world. There is no disagreement that the Cablegate was a transnational political act, which occurred on the Internet! And this is only a portion of the story since after Amazon decided to stop hosting Wikileaks’ website the events turned even more transnational. The organization called on its supporters to donate some server space. As a result, there are now a few hundred Wikileaks

mirrors hosted worldwide.

Following the leaks of the diplomatic cables, Mastercard, Visa and Paypal decided to make donation to Wikileaks impossible (and it seems that it still is the case today (Numerama, 2011)). Seeing this as an attack on free speech, a group called Anonymous, an informal gathering of hackers and computer-savvy young people from all over the world, chose to retaliate by launching DDoS attacks on those companies resulting, in transnational virtual sit-ins. The tool used by the Anonymous was freely downloadable on a website so anyone with an Internet connection could take part in what was called “Operation Avenge Assange” (“*Operation Payback*”, *Wikipedia: the free encyclopedia*). So here we have international yet American corporation deciding to act against a transnational organization, that are being “attacked” by a very loose gathering of people from all over the world. If this is not a transnational political event, I don’t really know what is!

The Cablegate is just one of the most recent and most prominent cases of transnational political actions taking place on the Internet but there are plenty more. I think it is also one of the most telling, since it involves people fighting against censorship from national governments and this is something new. Of course there are instances of NGO “fighting” against governments, be it Greenpeace against whaling in Japan, or Amnesty International against authoritarian regimes. But the Wikileaks controversy shows something new: people don’t have to be tightly bound together in organizations to act transnationally anymore.

1.4 The Internet has borders

In a 2006 book, Jack Goldsmith and Tim Wu made an interesting argument. They were arguing against the idea that on the Internet there are no borders and against the idea that States don’t have any control over what their citizen can access. What they were saying is that since the Internet is not only pure cyberspace, but also real hardware and real people, States can enforce national laws by going after those assets. For example, in 2000 (Goldsmith and Wu, 2006) France was able to sue Yahoo over its auction site selling Nazi memorabilia, which was illegal in the country, because Yahoo had assets on the French territory.

Some might argue then, that this goes against my claim of an Internet as a transnational public space. I don’t think so. What I was trying to get at, is not that with the Internet we are witnessing the advent of a border-free society, but that people are using the network to be transnational actors. This is a totally different claim than the one against which Goldsmith and Wu were arguing. The whole point of their argument is that contrary to the perceived view of the 90’s borders do matter on the Internet. I’m not arguing against that. All I’m saying is that on the Internet space doesn’t really matter and as such, people can live in Canada and do something about, say a situation in the Middle-East, or express an opinion about an international war between Argentina and Chile. Of course, when you live in Myanmar or in China where the web is highly censored (Deibert et al. 2008, 2010), it is hard to take part in some transnational political activities, but it doesn’t mean it’s impossible, and it doesn’t mean that people elsewhere are not doing it.

My argument here is not about the end of Nation-States. It is much weaker than that. What I'm saying is that, since the Internet makes space almost disappear, it becomes easier, though not always possible, to take part in transnational political activities. This is not to say that everyone is or should use the Internet in such a way, but that it makes it easier to do so.

II. Citizen Initiatives : A New Type of Political Actor

The Internet as a new technology and as a new public space does not change everything. One has to be careful to avoid techno-determinism. For most political actors, the advent of the Internet changes nothing. It's business as usual. Political parties don't really change the way they work etc. But as we have seen in the case of the Cablegate, the Internet allows for new types of political actors and action to emerge:

Many groups and movements have not fundamentally changed their organization and strategies. Yet at the same time we should not be blind to genuinely novel forms of citizen action like hacktivism or hybrid forms such as MoveOn. It is not hyperbolic to state that these were unimaginable before the Internet. (Chadwick, 2006: 142)

These new forms of "citizen action" came to be not only because people don't need, as I have remarked earlier in the case of the Cablegate, to be tightly bound in order to act together, but also because the cost of acting have been drastically reduced (Benkler, 2006, Shirky, 2008). What this means is that new forms of action are possible because there are new forms of organizations. Wikileaks, Anonymous and MoveOn are examples of this. There is no way to understand how they work and what they do if they are studied from a traditional point of view. Is Anonymous an NGO the same way Greenpeace is? Definitely no! Wikileaks might be closer though, but I wouldn't be too sure. It seems to me that it's better to look at those groups from a different perspective. They are not organization in the traditional sense; they are more like gatherings of people coming together at the initiative of someone, citizens working together on a particular subject for a certain amount of time without doing only that. That's why I call them "Citizen Initiatives" (CI).

One could argue that there are no real differences between traditional NGO and CI. Of course the way Anonymous works has nothing to do with the way Greenpeace does, but Wikileaks is not that different from Oxfam, and as such, it can be said to be an NGO much like many others. Let's pretend that this is the case, what about Anonymous then? Can we really argue that it is an NGO? I don't think so! The question then becomes: What is it? And the answer could be that it's not much, just an anarchical group, but this seems to me not very satisfactory. Doing that would be trying to refuse the fact there are novel forms of actions and organization because of the Internet. So if there are differences between CI and NGO, they must be in how both types of groups act and organize themselves.

Let's focus first on the organization part. NGO do it traditionally, they have a board, a president, public faces etc., and they also have members. So basically, there are two groups, actors and supporters. Supporters are loosely attached to the group and without any real organization whereas actors are hierarchically structured. In CI you could always find this division if you looked closely enough, but it is less clear and less relevant to understanding the way the group organizes itself. I'm not saying here that they don't have any sort of hierarchical organization, or that they don't need one. What I'm saying is that the important thing for a CI to succeed is not a powerful hierarchical organization, but to have a good user base that integrates itself vertically. Because they operate on the Internet it is possible to have a powerful group with one man as the sole organizer, has in the "stolen sidekick" tale told at the begin of *Here Comes Everybody* (Shirky, 2008), where a single man armed with a computer and a website was able to identify the person who had stolen his friend's phone and push the NYPD to arrest her.

We can now turn to the part about how NGO and CI work. The first thing one has to notice is that they don't operate from the same space. NGO are real world types of organizations whereas CI are Internet based organizations. What I mean here is that they use their websites for different purpose. An NGO will still exist even without the Internet, its website is just public face like any other. What is important for it to be active is that its hierarchal organization, its members, act. Without (a lot of) members this type of organization is nothing. For a CI, the Internet is crucial since they can only exist because of the tools made possible by the Internet. They don't need to have (a lot of) active members to be working properly, they only need people to be interested and participate even loosely in its activities. This difference is made clear by the use both types of group make of their websites. Greenpeace's website is a great place to get info on the current campaign its members are working on and on the organization. It's also an easy way to give money to it, but if you want to participate in it's activities, the website is of no help. On the other hand, even if Anonymous has no real websites of its own, they rely on an IRC channel to coordinate themselves where anyone can come and jump in the discussion. It's possible to download their DDoS tool freely from a Website, and it's also possible for anyone to help edit any text the group is writing by using another tool made freely available. NGO use their website as an extension of themselves in cyberspace in order to give information. CI "are" their website, without them they don't exist at all.

What is at stake here is not the impact that those two types of organizations have. It seems to me that both CI and NGO have a somewhat similar role. But they act very differently, and in a different space. Organizations representing civil society are always necessary. Since traditional political actors are themselves organizations they will only treat, or negotiate with organization never with individuals. Only an organization the size of Greenpeace could have an impact on a global phenomenon like whaling. Two or three individuals looking to make a difference on this topic by claiming a right to dialogue with governments would be laughed at. It is only on a national scale that individuals can be heard, either through manifestation or through media outlet, or whatever communication channel available to them. Ever since there have been international

relations, citizens as citizens have never had their say on the international stage, it has always been a “chasse gardé” of global organizations. With the Internet making CI possible, citizens can finally take their place on this stage, and maybe balance what can only be described as a democratic deficit (Kymlicka, 1999).

III. Counter-Democracy and the Internet

3.1 What is Counter-Democracy?

The concept of “counter-democracy” (CD) was developed by Pierre Rosanvallon a French historian and philosopher in a 2008 book.

By “counter-democracy” I mean not the opposite of democracy but rather a form of democracy that reinforces the usual electoral democracy as a kind of buttress, a democracy of indirect powers disseminated throughout society – in other words, a durable democracy of distrust, which complements the episodic democracy of the usual electoral-representative system. Thus counter-democracy is part of a larger system that also includes legal democratic institutions. It seeks to complement those institutions and extend their influence, to shore them up. (Rosanvallon, 2008: 8)

Counter-democracy thus is the form taken by the people’s political distrust of their governing body in order to act as a counter-power to ensure that it serves the common good. For Rosanvallon this distrust understood as CD can manifests itself in three ways. Its first manifestation is the *power of oversight* on which I will say more in a minute. Its second manifestation are *forms of prevention* in which the people use whatever mean they can, elections, strike, manifestations etc., to show their refusal of certain government decisions. The third way in which political mistrust manifests itself is with the advent of *the people as judges*: “The judicialization of politics is the most obvious manifestation of this. It is as though citizens hope to obtain from a judicial process of some sort what they despair of obtaining from the ballot box” (Rosanvallon, 2008: 16).

The only manifestation of CD that will be of interest to me here is the first one: *the power of oversight*. The other two, as interesting as they may be, are less relevant to the political understanding of the Internet. The Internet is clearly not the place where people manifest their judiciary power. As for *forms of prevention*, people can, of course, manifest their discontent on the Internet, but it would be hard to argue that a government would back down only because an action has taken place on it. Nobody really takes an Internet manifestation seriously, at least for now, although, as I have already hinted on, DDoS could be said to be virtual sit-ins and this form of manifestation has been taken quite seriously. On the other hand, the Internet seems to be built for *the power of oversight*, as Rosanvallon argues:

In my view, however, the major role of the Internet lies elsewhere, namely, in its spontaneous adaptation to the functions of vigilance, denunciation, and evaluation. More than that, the Internet is the realized expression of these powers. (...) The Internet is not merely an “instrument”; it is the surveillance function. (Rosanvallon, 2008: 70)

Traditionally, the press was one of the embodiments of the power of oversight. Since the advent of the Internet, many different websites have taken on this role. Blogs and bloggers are the new investigative reporters. For example, they were the ones that discovered that Dan Rather’s “evidence” about Bush’s National Guard service was forged, and there are many more stories like this one showing how the Internet can be understood to be an instrument of vigilance (Benkler, 2006). Any YouTube video out there showing police abuse can be used to show how the Internet can be used as a tool of denunciation. And there are also tools developed on the web to allow citizens to evaluate their MP by giving them information about their vote etc.

There is one last point in Rosanvallon’s account of CD that I wish to emphasize. A counter-democracy is “a democracy of indirect powers disseminated throughout society” (Rosanvallon, 2008: 8), it is a “diffuse democracy”, a democracy that can be understood outside of national borders (Rosanvallon, 2008: 46), and that can help grasp transnational political action since “practices that can be grouped under the head “vigilance” [I would go even further by adding denunciation and evaluation] serve increasingly as levers of intervention for citizens who do not yet constitute a true political body” (Rosanvallon, 2008: 40-41). Thus CD can be used to understand politics at the transnational level and as such it helps us bypass Kymlicka’s earlier argument against transnational democracy, as I will now try to show next.

3.2 Citizen Initiative as instances of Counter-Democracy

As I have argued, the Internet as a public space allows for the emergence of new type of political actors: CI. And following Rosanvallon I think it is fair to say that the Internet embodies certain aspects of CD. But are CI instances of counter-democracy? I would argue that they are. As political actors, most CI, but not all, can be understood as the expression of citizens concerns about certain subjects, what most of these initiatives were created for, is to exert what Rosanvallon calls the power of oversight. Let me take two examples to illustrate my point.

Wikileaks is a website dedicated to bringing leaked document under public scrutiny that may reveal “suppressed and censored injustices” (Wikileaks, 2010). Since its creation, it has made public documents regarding corruption in Kenya, and classified documents describing both the war in Iraq and the war in Afghanistan. But its most famous “coup” is the leaking of 250 000 diplomatic cables, that have revealed numerous cases of corruption, as well as other international scandals. By providing a secure way of leaking documents to whistle-blowers around the globe and working with the press to make those documents public, it seems to me quite clear that Wikileaks can be said to practice the power of oversight by exercising both vigilance and denunciation.

Another CI worth noticing is the French website www.nosdeputes.fr. Its goal is to provide citizens with “a tool to understand and analyze how their political representative work” (RegardsCitoyens, 2010). This website consists of a list of every French MP with an analysis of his activity in terms of his presence at the Assemblée Nationale, how much he has spoken, and about what he has spoken. It is an amazing tool to evaluate how good an MP is at doing his job.

I think those two examples are quite clear examples of CI embodying Rosanvallon’s power of oversight and as such are clear instances of Counter-Democracy. They are examples of citizens using tools made available to them through the Internet in order to analyze the way governments are acting. Wikileaks gives an opportunity to whistle-blowers from around the world to give proof of an organization’s wrongdoing. Nosdeputes.fr allows one to scrutinize the work of any MP to see if he or she truly represents their constituent. This is oversight in its purest form.

Political Citizen Initiative, (I emphasize the word political here, because there can be CI on just about anything) are created not as lobbying groups, but as tools to empower the layman. They are not created as organization whose sole goal is the defense of a particular interest, such as human rights, or the protection of nature. They are created as providers of information and tools that help make sense of it. Their goal is not the promotion of a goal, but the empowerment of citizens. They are created as tools of democracy, as means that give citizens the opportunity to get involved in democratic life in one of the few ways our system of representative democracy makes possible: oversight.

3.3 Transnational Citizen Initiative as instances of Transnational Counter-Democracy

The examples I’ve given of CI should have made clear that even though some are only of national scope, others, as Wikileaks or Anonymous, are transnational by nature. Their membership is transnational, and their websites use complex architectures that rely on servers based in different countries. And what is even more important is the fact that their impact is transnational. Wikileaks has leaked documents from many different countries, and Anonymous’ attacks have been targeted at companies and governments from around the globe. Because the Internet is a transnational public space, anyone can become a transnational actor. As soon as someone takes an interest in the politics of a country that is not his own and tries to act in order to affect the outcome of a situation in that country, I believe we are warranted to see this as an act of transnational politics.

The arguments I’ve given above, about CI being instances of Counter-Democracy, could thus be easily extended at the transnational level, and Transnational CI should then be seen as instances of Transnational CD. The problem is, it’s easy to grasp the meaning of CD at the national level because there is such a thing as a democracy, but transnational democracy doesn’t exist. So what are we to make of this? How can there be a “counter” democracy if there is no democracy? I believe seeing the problem this way is getting it backwards. As Rosanvallon says at the beginning of his books, CD is not the opposite of democracy; it’s just another form of it. Representative government

doesn't need to exist for democratic distrust to happen. In a way, where there is no representative government, CD can be seen as a proto-democracy since the wish to oversee one's government is the first step toward a real democracy. A transnational CD is thus an expression of the desire for more democracy worldwide. Thus, what a transnational CI is doing when challenging national governments by trying to "oversee" their actions, has to be understood as a form of transnational Counter-Democracy. Yet this is very different from what a transnational democracy should be, as there are no transnational democratic institutions needed for a transnational counter democracy to occur. It is closer though to what a transnational citizenship could be, as CI are gatherings of people who share a concern for certain ideas. But it is only the first step toward a true transnational citizenship since Counter-Democracy is only the expression of distrust, and you need more than that for a true citizenship to emerge as Kymlicka (1999) rightly argues.

For him, for a true democratic community to exist, there is need for a common language because in order to take part in a political debate, one needs "a fluency (...) [that] is far greater than the sort of knowledge needed to handle routine business transaction or for tourist purpose" (Kymlicka, 1999 : 121). My claim in this paper is quite weaker than the one against which he is arguing here. I'm not arguing that the Internet allows people from all over the world to join in a political deliberation that will form a "collective will". What I'm arguing is that the Internet allows people from all over the world to participate in a global effort to oversee national and international government activities. CD is not akin to "collective will formation", it is not a positive and constructive democracy. It is a more negative democracy, a democracy of distrust that doesn't need a fine grained mutual understanding, but only a rough one. In order to act in a counter-democratic way two people don't need to really understand one another, but only to roughly be on the same page. This is why Rosanvallon sees in CD a way to understand politics taking place outside of already constituted political bodies (Rosanvallon, 2008: 40-41).

Kymlicka claims that there can't be any democracy without citizenship. But following Rosanvallon I have argued that it is possible to have some democratic activities on a transnational scale. I'm not saying that the Internet gives rise to a transnational democracy but only to a counter-democracy, which could be said to be the first step toward a transnational community.

Conclusion

As I have argued, the Internet seems to allow the emergence of a new type of political actors "CI" that are to be understood as the form citizen political distrust takes both at the national and transnational level. In a world where the best form democracy can have is representative government, they offer a way for citizen to express themselves and hold government accountable of their actions.

Because this process occurs not only at the national but also at the transnational level, it is possible to argue that transnational CI are the first step toward a true transnational political

community. This does not mean however that the Internet will bring about a cosmopolitan citizenship, but that it allows for citizens for all over the world to act as if they were a true community.

On the other hand, the picture I've just showed is not all rosy. First, what can be used as a force for more democracy can be used as a force against it, and CI could (and are most certainly) used as tool of propaganda (Morozov, 2011) or cyberwar ("2007 cyberattacks on Estonia", *Wikipedia: the free encyclopedia*). Second, too much oversight can either prevent a democracy from functioning correctly or even lead toward a populist regime. What one has to understand though, is that both those risks exist even without the Internet, they are inherent to democracy. Giving more power to citizens is a noble idea but one has to be willing to prepare them for it.

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