The Outsider’s Guide experience

Journalism and Art in Digital Societies

A thesis submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the Doctor of Philosophy

Mauricio Rivera
Bachelor of Social Communications and Journalism
La Sabana University, Bogota, Colombia

Master of Arts (Professional Communications)
Deakin University, Melbourne Australia

School of Media and Communications
College of Design and Social Context
RMIT University
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<tr>
<td>ABS</td>
<td>Australian Bureau of Statistics</td>
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<tr>
<td>ACCES</td>
<td>Acceso Con Calidad a la Educación Superior* [Quality Access to Higher Education]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ACNUR</td>
<td>UNHCR</td>
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<tr>
<td>ACR</td>
<td>Agencia Colombiana para la Reintegración [Colombian Agency for Reintegration]</td>
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<tr>
<td>AIS</td>
<td>Agro Ingreso Seguro [Secure Agro-Income]</td>
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<tr>
<td>ARPA</td>
<td>Advanced Research Projects Agency Network</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AUC</td>
<td>Autodefensas Unidas de Colombia [United Self-defences of Colombia]</td>
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<tr>
<td>CCI</td>
<td>Cámara Colombiana de Infraestructura [Colombian Chamber of Infrastructure]</td>
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<tr>
<td>CCTV</td>
<td>China Central Television</td>
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<tr>
<td>CIA</td>
<td>Central Intelligence Agency (USA)</td>
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<td>CNNIC</td>
<td>China Internet Network Information Centre</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CODHES</td>
<td>Consultoría para los Derechos Humanos y el Desplazamiento [Consultancy for Human Rights and Displacement]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CPC</td>
<td>Communist Party of China</td>
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<tr>
<td>DANE</td>
<td>Departamento Administrativo Nacional de Estadística [National Administrative Department of Statistics]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DARPA</td>
<td>Defence Advanced Research Projects Agency</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EGM</td>
<td>Estudio General de Medios [General Media Study]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ELN</td>
<td>Ejército de Liberación Nacional [National Liberation Army]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FARC</td>
<td>Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia [Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FIP</td>
<td>Fundación Ideas para la Paz [Foundation Ideas for Peace]</td>
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<tr>
<td>GER</td>
<td>Gross Enrolment Rate (education)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ICFES</td>
<td>Instituto Colombiano para la Evaluación de la Educación [Colombian Institute for Education Evaluation]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IDEA</td>
<td>International Institute for Democracy and Electorate Assistance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Acronym</td>
<td>Full Form</td>
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<td>---------</td>
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<tr>
<td>IDMC</td>
<td>Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IDP</td>
<td>Internally Displaced Population</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>INVIAS</td>
<td>Instituto Nacional de Vías [National Roads Institute]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IOM</td>
<td>International Organisation for Migration</td>
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<tr>
<td>ISP</td>
<td>Internet Service Provider</td>
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<tr>
<td>MANE</td>
<td>Mesa Amplia Nacional Estudiantil [National Student Ample Table]</td>
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<tr>
<td>NER</td>
<td>Net Enrolment Rate (education)</td>
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<tr>
<td>OECD</td>
<td>Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development</td>
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<tr>
<td>OIM</td>
<td>IOM</td>
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<tr>
<td>PAHD</td>
<td>Programa de Atención Humanitaria al Desplazado [Program of Humanitarian Aid to the Displaced]</td>
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<tr>
<td>UNFPA</td>
<td>United Nations Population Fund</td>
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<tr>
<td>UNHCR</td>
<td>United Nations Head Centre for Refugees</td>
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* The non-English names in this list are Spanish.
Declaration

The work contained in this thesis has not been previously submitted to meet requirements for an award at any other higher education institution. To the best of my knowledge and belief, the thesis contains no material previously published or written by another person except where due reference is made.

Signature of candidate

Date

29 - April - 2013
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And to Laila for being my inspiration in the completion of this work.
Abstract

The aim of my research is to question the roles of journalism and art in so-called digital societies.

The aim of my research is to question the roles of journalism and art in digital societies. In order to address my original research question, the thesis focuses on two complementary questions about the influence of digital media on twenty-first century societies:

a) Is digital media contributing to the development of a global public sphere in the twenty-first century?

b) Does digital media represent a solution to problems common in digital societies, such as the third world brain drain?

These complementary questions relate to the two parts (Parts 1 and 2) into which I have divided my thesis. The first question focuses on the digital public sphere and the second one focuses on the Colombian case study.

My research is based (and has been inspired) by my experience as an international student from Colombia in Australia, and as a journalist and artist in what may be called a paleo-digital world. Therefore, this project may be seen as a reflection on myself, as part of the third world brain drain, and about how someone in my position can use digital technologies to counter this problem. This research project goes beyond my personal experience and aims to propose a new approach which is conceived with the purpose of addressing the problems of a third world -or developing- nation like Colombia. Furthermore, the research also addresses how the academy in a first world -or developed- nation like Australia may contribute to (and benefit from) supporting an alternative model of journalism.
Introduction

If I have to define my research in one sentence, I suppose I should call it: an outsider’s view on the digital world. The word outsider, in this case, does not necessarily describe me as what Prensky (2001) would call a “digital immigrant” after all I am one of the hundreds of millions of Facebook netizens. My understanding of this rather equivocal term relates more to my experience as an international student – that is, a physical (or national) immigrant. However, I am not interpreting the word outsider as a synonym of foreigner either.

Then, what do I mean by outsider? This is a definition that is hard to explain in one short sentence. Ryszard Kapuscinski (2007, 2009) exposed his career as an international reporter as the story of his relationship with others: that is, with people from different cultural, ethnic, and social backgrounds and varied religious and political beliefs. Based on Kapuscinski’s work (and life), as well as on that of other literary journalists including George Orwell and Tom Wolfe, I am arguing that the journalistic details in the stories of these authors (i.e., the details concerning their experience as employees of the editorial industry) are, to a great extent, merely circumstantial.

In Travels With Herodotus (2007), Kapuscinski tells of how, at the beginning of his career as a reporter, he received a copy of Herodotus’ Histories (c 450 B.C.). Since that moment, he continuously mirrored his experience as a foreign correspondent with the life (and work) of the ancient Greek historian. Therefore, rather than attributing his journalistic life to the existence of inventions like the printing press and the telegraph, Kapuscinski recognised his own desire to see what happened beyond his national borders, as a continuation of the same adventurous spirit that once led Herodotus to depart on his travels across the ancient world.

This brings to mind a passage from H.G. Wells’ The Outline of History (1930), which reads as follows:

There are people who seem to imagine that a world order and one universal law of justice would end human adventure. It would but begin it. But instead of the
adventure of the past, the “romance” of the cinematograph world, the perpetual reiterated harping upon the trite reactions of sex and combat and the hunt for gold, it would be an unending exploration upon the edge of experience. (pp. 1150 – 51)

Like Orwell (1941b), I am sceptical of how Wells’ ideal of “world order” and “one universal law of justice” would be like. Yet, I do believe Wells is right when he states that, in the future, the notion of “adventure” should go beyond “the trite reactions of sex and combat and the hunt for gold”. But what future am I writing about? We are currently living on Wells’ future, yet most of the information I receive from the media – most of the cover shots I see in newsstands and most of the headlines in television newscasts – revolve around that same “trite” Wells was writing about almost a century ago.

My research questions the roles of journalism and art in so-called digital societies. Therefore, one major focus of my thesis is to study the impact that journalism and the development of an editorial industry have had over the industrial societies of the modern world, and compare it with the impact that digital technologies are having over the societies of the early twenty first century.

**Key terms and concepts studied in my research**

Like any other research on the so-called social sciences, mine is constrained by the meaning of words. In my case, the most significant ones are rather equivocal terms like journalism (and journalist) and art (and artist). Hence, before addressing my main research questions, I should introduce the definitions and interpretations of such terms on which I will be focusing.

Then, what is journalism? One popular definition says: *Journalism is the first draft of history.* So, what is history? According to theorist like Brody (1999) and Nora (1989), history in modern societies is the collective memory turned into a commodity. In other words, history is an official version of past events, which, as the proverb goes, is usually written by the winner and then commercialised as any other product.

In the case of art (and artists) the definitions become more equivocal. The one I will be questioning belongs to Marshall McLuhan, who believed artists are “the antennae of the race” and “mankind’s early warning systems” (Wolfe, 1968).
By reconciling McLuhan’s view of the artist with the legacy of journalists like Orwell, Wolfe or Kapuscinski, I aim, on the one hand, to highlight the value that a proper combination of journalism and art can have in the development of democratic societies, and, on the other hand, to picture how these practices may evolve under the technological, social and economic conditions of the twenty first century.

Throughout his career, Orwell was very critical of journalism and of the editorial industry of his lifetime. Although it would be inevitably unfair to reduce Orwell’s legacy into one sentence, if necessary, I would say his work was a defence of truth in a world clouded by political fundamentalism and unscrupulous propaganda.

Thus, by studying Kapuscinski’s work, I understood that the role, that in modern societies belongs to the journalist and the reporter, is far older and consequently not a product of modern communication technologies like the printing press and (later) the telegraph, radio and television. Also, by studying Orwell’s writings, I understood that the sophistication of communication technologies does not necessarily lead to the production of more reliable information.

In his As I Please column published in Tribune on April 21, 1944, Orwell wrote:

> Our correspondent considers that the public and the journalists rather than the proprietors are to blame for the silliness of English newspapers. You could not, he implies, make an intelligent newspaper pay because the public wants tripe. I am not certain whether this is so. (...) But I do agree – and I said so – that the journalists share the blame. In allowing their profession to be degraded they have largely acted with their eyes open, whereas, I suppose, to blame somebody like Northcliffe for making money in the quickest way is like blaming a skunk for stinking. (Orwell, 1968, vol 3, p 130).

While reading this, I can’t help but ask myself: if one changes the name Northcliffe for the name Murdoch, would anyone notice the difference? Would anyone besides the literary critic and the Orwell aficionado realise this was originally written over six decades ago? On the other hand, in the article What if he is Right? (1968), Tom Wolfe explains McLuhan’s perception of artists by defining them as:

> Geniuses who detect the invisible truths intuitively and express them symbolically (...) divine ‘naturals’, gifted but largely unconscious of the meaning of their powers. (p. 158)
In this article, Wolfe also explains how McLuhan’s theories (1962, 1964) are founded on the idea – earlier introduced by other communications’ theorists like Harold Innis (1950) – that the societies and the institutions of the modern world were the product of an alteration in the sensory balance of humans. This alteration was caused by the introduction of the printing press in Europe in the mid-fifteenth century. According to McLuhan, the type press turned humans into an overtly visual species. As a result of this, came what McLuhan defined as a general fragmentation of society.

As Wolfe explains:

"Print, says McLuhan, stepped up the visual sense of Western man at the expense of his other senses. It led, he says, to ‘the separation of the senses, of functions, of operations, of states emotional and political, as well as of tasks.’ This, he says, had overwhelming historical consequences: nationalism and nationalist wars (cultural fragmentation); the modern army, industrialism and bureaucracy (fragmentation of tasks); the market and price structure (economic fragmentation); individualism and the habit of privacy (fragmentation of the individual from the community) - and schizophrenia and peptic ulcers (caused by the fragmentation of both intellect and action from emotion); pornography (fragmentation of sex from love); the cult of childhood (fragmentation by age); and a general impoverishment of man’s intuitive and artistic life (because of the fragmentation of the senses). (pp. 150-51)

At first, the notion of the artist as an “early warning system” sounds like a positive appraisal. It appears to grant the artist with a higher, more relevant role in society than that of a mere pursuer of beauty. But, thinking about it in more detail, I have found a fundamental problem with this role, which is: how can an “early warning system” be effective when nobody, not even the artists themselves, can understand the alarming nature of their messages?

**Note on the Outsider’s Guide experience**

During the early stages of my research, I was enrolled in a Masters degree, which focused on the development of a website called The Outsider's Guide to Melbourne (O.G.). This website was conceived as an interactive journal of the city and a space for the promotion of emerging artists. Later on, partly because I am not a web developer and have very limited knowledge of programming, but mostly because of a genuine and ever-growing interest in the theoretical framework that
constitute my thesis, I decided to extend my research and undertake a deeper and broader analysis on digital media and its influence on society.

At this stage, I must point out how, between the date I submitted my thesis and the date when I received the jury’s assessment (i.e. before writing the final amendments) the O.G.’s website was hacked and now I have no access to its administrator, and now, what appears when one visits its URL is a flash animation, which was the first draft I uploaded to show to a group of friends who were helping me during the early days of the website’s development.

Fortunately, I have been able to publish in other digital sites (so the reader may access) the stories that I analyse in Chapter 7, where I relate the development of the Outsider’s Guide (O.G) with the theories studied in my thesis (and where I expose how this development inspired my research). I also managed to take screenshots of the website during the different stages of its development, which I have included as visual documentation in the aforementioned chapter.

Looking back at the last few years, I would say that I conceived the O.G. as an digital media, which aimed to address (although, I would also have to say, not altogether consciously) the shortcomings I have detected about the roles of artists and journalists in modern societies. Therefore, I created the O.G. hoping it would turn into a space for the promotion of a new generation of the kind of artistic journalism, once produced by authors like Orwell, Wolfe, Kapuscinski or Garcia Marquez (to name but a few).

Although, in the upcoming chapters, I will be referring to different types of artists: painters like Brueghel and Goya; caricaturists like Gilray and Daumier and even television humourists like Jaime Garzón, still, the examples I can think of, of both the artist as an “early warning system” (e.g. Orwell) and of the journalist as an artist (e.g. Wolfe), tend to be writers. This might be attributed to the fact that, above all things, I like to think of myself as a writer; but I also think it is a reflection of that common belief that the modern era was (or has been?) the age of the printing press.

My research takes off from the premise that contemporary societies (i.e., the societies of the early twenty-first century) are living in a transitional period. And
that this transition is being influenced by the development of digital means of communication. While going through my thesis, the reader will hopefully notice that I do not have what Morozov (2011) calls a “cyber-utopian” and “very deterministic picture” of the role of digital technologies. In other words, although I am acknowledging digital technologies as an important factor in the shaping of current and future societies, I am not considering them as the only or as necessarily the most important factor to act upon this and upcoming generations.

In the original foreword¹ in the O.G.’s website I wrote that, our (the O.G’s) main belief is that physical contact and face-to-face interaction will always be the most satisfying experience for the human species, and as citizens of a global, multicultural planet, we will always feel compelled to remind the world of the beauty of witnessing things first hand. It was also in this foreword, where I first described the O.G. as an interactive journal of the city and as a space for emerging artists to expose their works, while contributing in the making and updating of this journal. Based on this, I can say that the authors who inspired my research are those in whose work I have seen the roles of the journalist and the artist converging.

*Figure 1* shows a visual representation of the convergence that I see between the roles of journalism and the art:

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¹This foreword may be found in the aforementioned draft of the O.G.’s website at: [www.outsidersguide.org](http://www.outsidersguide.org)
Thesis’ general outlook

The first chapter of my thesis is based on (and shares the title with) Mitchell Stephens’ book, A History of News (2007). In this book, Stephens describes news as a “social need”. He also exposes how this need appeared, as increasingly complex societies found it necessary to know what has happening beyond their borders. Therefore, the left side of the square that in Figure 1 represents journalism – the part that is not intersected by the ellipse that represents art - relates to that original task of carrying the news which, in modern societies, has been related to the practice of journalism and, to a great extent, fulfilled by an editorial industry. On the other hand, the right side of the ellipse that represents art – the part that is not intersected by the square that represents journalism - refers to that idea of “art for art’s sake,” which Orwell repeatedly criticised in his writings – that is, the idea of the artist “conceived as leaping to and fro in a moral, political and economic void, usually in pursuit of something called “Beauty” (Orwell, 1935).

One of the central premises on which my research stands is Orwell’s statement that: “all art is propaganda” (1940). But if, indeed, “all art is propaganda,” then the diagram in Figure 1 is necessarily wrong (and certainly out of proportion). It goes beyond the scope of my research to either confirm or deny Orwell’s statement. On a personal basis, I would say I tend to agree with him on this matter. I also tend to agree with his appraisal of modern journalism. According to Orwell, art can be seen as propaganda because: “all art has a meaning and a purpose” (1941a). How about journalism? Can one say that, like art, it is all propaganda? Once again, this is a question that exceeds the limits of my research. However, at this point I could also state that another central premise on which my research stands is: there is no such thing as objective journalism.

Based on these premises, throughout my thesis, I am focusing on examples of art that are clearly propagandistic and on a journalism that is openly subjective.

In the first part of my thesis, I present a historical analysis of the development of journalism and art. In Chapter 1, I highlight three features, as the most influential
factors affecting the way societies have communicated news throughout history. These are:

a) The communication of news has been shaped by technological advances.
b) News has been historically used as an instrument of power.
c) News has also acted as an agent for socioeconomic and political change.

Regarding the first of the aforementioned features, my research focuses on questioning whether digital technologies are leading to the consolidation of a global public sphere. This is complemented in the final section of Chapter 1, where I extend my analysis on the history of news by studying how digital media is affecting journalism in the present.

Regarding the second and third features I have identified as the most influential in the history of news, that is, news being used both as instrument of power and an agent for change, I aim to show how journalism has evolved as a type of propaganda. This part of the chapter runs in parallel to the analysis found throughout Chapter 2 – titled ‘Art and Propaganda’. Hence, after reading the first two chapters of my thesis, the reader would hopefully understand the convergence between art and journalism that I have introduced in Figure 1.

In the second part of Chapter 2, subtitled The Orwellian vision of Utopia, I focus on Orwell’s journalistic writings (i.e., essays and reviews) on the utopian and dystopian. Therefore, this section can be seen, on the one hand, as an example of journalism and art converging into one form of communication and as a case study of the artist as a propagandist. On the other hand, some of the issues exposed in Orwell’s assessment of his fellow utopian/dystopian authors – e.g., his divergence with H.G. Wells regarding the influence of technology on modern societies – serve as an introduction to some of the theories I am exposing later on in my thesis: particularly the debate between Naive Realists and Network Idealists studied in Chapter 3. Also, by exposing how Orwell and Huxley’s dystopias are still relevant, that is how most futuristic works from the second half of the twentieth century onwards are basically a continuation of either Orwell or Huxley’s prophecies (or a
mixture of both), I am introducing an argument later exposed in Chapter 4, which is that postmodernism is mostly a myth: as societies from the early twenty-first century still live under very similar economic, social and political structures (and suffer from basically the same socioeconomic problems) as the societies from the early twentieth.

In Chapter 3, where I am analysing a range of theories regarding the influence of digital technologies on contemporary societies under Heim's debate between Naïve Realists and Network Idealists (1999, 2000), I specifically focus on whether digital media is contributing to the consolidation of a global public sphere in the twenty-first century. My analysis in this chapter begins with the most extreme examples of Naïve Realism – e.g., the Unabomber Manifesto and its preaching against technology (1995) – and of Network Idealism – e.g. Ray Kurzweill’s belief that “The Singularity is Near” (2005). From these perspectives, I later move to other, more centred theories, which are more directly related to the field of communications and the practice of journalism. Amongst these theories stands Clay Shirky’s belief that digital networks are opening spaces for the exchange of information and, more importantly, for societies to have a conversation regarding such information. This, as Shirky points out (2011) is a fundamental element in the consolidation of what Habermas described as the public sphere (1989). On the other side of the spectrum, I have studied the views of theorists like Malcolm Gladwell (2010) and Evgeny Morozov (2011), who, in response to what may be seen as Idealist views like Shirky’s, present a Realist perception of the threats that digital networks represent to twenty-first century societies.

At the early stages of development of what, back then, came to be known as the information superhighway, Neil Postman (1995, 2000a) argued that, like all technological advances, digital networks present humanity with “a Faustian bargain”. Postman’s perception of electromagnetic technologies – particularly television – may be summarised by quoting a monologue from the movie Network (1976), when Howard Beale, “The Mad Prophet of the Airwaves,” tells the 62 million Americans in his audience that: “television is a goddamned amusement park” after having reminded them that:
Less than three per cent of you people read books (...) less than fifteen per cent of you read newspapers (...) the only truth you know is what you get over this tube (...). Right now, there is a whole, an entire generation that never knew anything that didn’t come out of this tube. This tube is the gospel, the ultimate revelation. This tube can make or break presidents, popes, prime ministers. This tube is the most awesome goddamn force in the whole godless world. (Chayefsky, 1976)

But, how about the Internet? From what he got to see, Postman (1998, 2000a, 2000b) did not seem to be particularly impressed. In Chapter 4, I have included a section subtitled Postman on Cyberspace. There, I analyse some of the videos that appear when one looks for the words: Neil Postman in youtube. While writing this, I keep asking myself, what would Postman think about that? What would he say about the verb to google?

After studying the theories I have framed under Heim’s debate between Naïve Realists and Network Idealists, I ended up with the impression that, beyond the enjoyment that it may (or may not) be provoked by a discussion on this matter, at the end it all breaks down to is the glass-half-full or half-empty kind of dilemma.

Yet, I believe it is still necessary for critical voices like Gladwell and Morozov’s, just like Postman’s before them and Orwell and Huxley’s before him, to continue reminding us that technology and progress are not synonyms. Just as it is also necessary, for voices like Shirky’s or Castells’ (2008), to continue to point out aspects by which society may benefit from digital networks.

However, beyond the value of these authors’ opinions, there is a question that remains: How wide – and how tangible – is their influence really? This is not necessarily a rhetorical question, and I believe it varies depending on the style and, more importantly, the time when these authors produced their work. It doesn’t seem too bold to say that writers will be less influential in the twenty-first century than they were in the twentieth. That is, of course, if one reduces the meaning of writing to the production of text. Based on McLuhan’s theories, one could say this is a “fragmented” interpretation of the word; one that may not prevail as humans regain their sensory balance.

Now, what are journalists and artists gaining from the development of digital networks? As in most (if not all) of the questions raised in my research, an answer
to this one would necessarily fall into the realm of speculation. Nonetheless, if forced to come up with an answer, I would say that something that journalists and artists may gain in the twenty-first century - if I am allowed such contradiction – is to lose some of the weight from their labels. This reminds me of yet another fragment from H.G. Wells’ Outline of History (1930), which states that:

...the essential task of men of good-will in all states and countries remains the same, it is an educational task, and its very essence is to bring to the minds of all men everywhere, as a necessary basis for world co-operation, a new telling and interpretation, a common interpretation, of history. (p 1145)

As is the case with the previous quote from Wells’ Outline of History, this one, in my opinion, also evidences a rather simplistic (I may even say colonialist) view of global issues. This is particularly so when Wells preaches for “a common interpretation of history.” Yet, as with the previous quote, I agree with its driving argument: which, in relation to my research, means that education is the point where the roles of journalism and art should converge.

Figure 2 (below), shows how the different chapters stand (and relate to each other) within the general structure of my thesis. Having exposed the arguments that led me to establish my first and second research questions (i.e., the ones regarding the influence of digital technologies on the development of a global public sphere and the roles of the journalist and the artist in twenty-first century societies), my analysis then focuses on a different symptom of what McLuhan defined as the *social fragmentation* of the industrial era – or going a step further, on how it may evolve as we move into this so-called era of information: this symptom is *nationalism*.

Thus, by focusing on what journalists and artists may be gaining from the development of digital networks, my aim is to bring together the arguments exposed in my first four chapters. Then, as I move forward to Chapter 5, I start introducing the differences I perceive between how digital technologies affect (and may affect) societies in a *developed* nation (like Australia) and a *developing* one (such as Colombia).
Before moving on, I feel I should clarify how, while writing the early drafts of my thesis, I preferred to use the terms *first* and *third* world, over *developed* and *developing* nations. Coming from a country like Colombia, I can't help but find several contradictions and inaccuracies in the branding of my nation as *developing*. *Developing into what?* is the question that comes to my mind when I hear this equivocal definition.

But my criticism of the term *developing nation* goes beyond my understanding of Colombia and its history. One of the main flaws I see in dividing the world between *developed* and *developing* nations, is that it necessarily implies that the latter should follow the way of the former. But, if *developing* nations are to follow the *developed* ones in their way of life – and particularly in their rate of consumption – then the planet’s natural resources may finish in less than a generation. This
reminds me of a question repeatedly raised by the likes of Orwell and (later) Postman: *What is progress?*

The other major flaw that I see in the distinction between *developed* and *developing* nations, is that it prolongs the division of the human species under a national scheme. In this sense, I believe the terms *first* and *third world* are more accurate at classifying the human population. After all, although comparatively small, there is a *third world* in Australia – just as there is a (comparatively small) *first world* in Colombia.

However, we still live in a planet divided by nations, with still evident differences between nations. And where humans are still classified based primarily on their nationality. For this reason, I am sticking to the more politically correct distinction between *developed* and *developing* nations.

Writing about national distinctions reminds me of a history class I had during the early stages of my undergraduate career. In this class, the professor was particularly emphatic when highlighting the differences between *authoritarianism* and *totalitarianism*. From this analysis, I understood that Latin Americans are not civilised enough to be totalitarian. In *The Open Veins of Latin America* (1971), Eduardo Galeano draws an inversely proportional relation between the development of the *Old* and *New* worlds since the *discovery* of America in the late fifteenth century. According to Galeano, the rise of Europe, and (later) the US as the world’s largest power, happened, to a great extent, at the expense of Latin America. Thus, it seems like more than a coincidence that one of the most prosperous, if not the most prosperous, period in the Latin American republican history was the first half of the twentieth century; when Europe was living through the worst of the so-called *crisis of modernism*.

In Chapter 5 – titled *Memory against History in Colombian Art* – my aim is to explicate the Colombian nation, based on three examples of art that may be described as modern. The first two examples are from what I believe are the most important novels written in Colombia in the twentieth century: one is the portrayal of the *Banana Fields Massacre* in Gabriel Garcia Marquez’ *One Hundred Years of Solitude* (1969) and the other is the representation of Simon Bolivar, in
Manuel Zapata Olivella’s novel *Chango el Gran Putas* (1983). The third example is a sort of hybrid from the electromagnetic and the digital realms: as it focuses on the work of the late political humourist, Jaime Garzón,² by studying some of his TV sketches available in Youtube.

In the same manner that my analysis of Orwell’s vision of Utopia works as a bridge between the first two parts of my thesis, Chapter 5 links the third part with the theories exposed up to that point (see Figure 2). Then, the analysis of Jaime Garzon’s sketches in Youtube also links this chapter with the following – Chapter 6 – where I expose a selection of cases from Colombian cyberspace.

This analysis of Colombian cyberspace can also be seen as complementary to the analysis at the end of Chapter 1, where I study the influence of digital media on communications in the early twenty-first century. At the end of Chapter 1, I point out how, according to theorists like Herold and Marolt (2011), instead of referring to Habermas’ theory of the *public sphere*, the Internet in China should be studied under Bakhtin’s theory of the *carnival*. Following this premise, I point out how there are elements in Colombian cyberspace that would be more accurately framed under Habermas’ *public sphere* and others which fit under Bakhtin’s *carnival*.

Hence, by (first) exposing examples of art acting as propaganda in Colombia during the twentieth century and (then) showing examples of how digital media is affecting communications in this nation during the early twenty-first, I relate the theories studied in the first two parts of my thesis with the Colombian case. This closes the theoretical framework and leads me to the case studies on which my research is founded (as shown in Figure 3).

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²Jaime Garzón was assassinated in Bogotá in August 13, 1999.
As mentioned earlier, in Chapter 7, I analyse my experience in developing the O.G. (as an international student from Colombia in Melbourne). Then, in Chapter 8, I study two educational programs developed by groups of artists in Melbourne, with the aim of addressing the needs of a third world or developing nation like Colombia. These projects are: (a) a program of photography and citizen journalism called *Visual Voices* –which I have developed together with a Melbourne-based Indian photographer called Sudeep Lingamneni\(^3\) and (b) a program of transnational collaborative art designed for children and adolescents called *My International Friend* [Mi Amigo Internacional], designed by two Melbourne-based Colombian artists named Claudia Escobar and Jorge Leiva.\(^4\)

\(^3\) I met Sudeep through the O.G. and he has been a regular contributor to the website.

\(^4\) They are a married couple who run the program under an organisation they have created, called People Art People (http://www.peopleartpeople.com/)
My analysis of these case studies is focused on how they may encourage conversations (following Shirky’s interpretation of the term as a fundamental element in the development of a public sphere) between different communities and across national boundaries.

Then, in the Conclusion, I compile and summarise the arguments presented in each chapter, and draw a relation between the preliminary conclusions outlined in Chapter 4 (at the end of the first part of my thesis) and the cases studied in the last two chapters. After doing so, I finish my thesis by stating how my research can lead to future projects, which focus would be to propose a new interpretation of both the influence (and possible future influence) of digital technologies, and of the role of journalism and art, where journalists and artists may evolve as educators. The purpose of this evolution should be to open spaces for different communities, particularly underprivileged communities (in both developed and developing nations), to have a conversation about the main problems affecting them. Within this scheme, the promotion of a digital public sphere should be regarded as a means to an end, rather than an end in itself. For, as Postman pointed out (1998), technology is not (and never will be) a substitute for human values.
The aim of this chapter is to address modern journalism as a step in an evolutionary process; and to portray it as an institution shaped by the image (and developed as a product) of the industrial revolution.

The historical references studied in this chapter (as seen in most of the figures I have included) are drawn from a chronology published at the beginning of the book: A History of News (Stephens, 2007, pp. xi to xxvii). In the opening chapter of this book, Stephens refers to the communication of news as a “social need.” To prove his point, he mentions various examples from different periods and places, some of which are quoted below:

For a period of time while he was living in Tikopia, Raymond Firth would walk every day from his house in the village of Faea to the temple of the chief of Uta. And every day the chief of Uta would greet him with the same question: ‘Any news from Faea?’

A letter written in 1461 described London before news of a battle had been received as a ‘sore city.

In 1814 a New York newspaper complained that lengthy interruptions in the flow of news from Europe on Napoleon’s fate had the effect of ‘leaving us for a while in a state of breathless anxiety. (2007, p. 9)

Following Stephens’ premise that the communication of news is a social need, I have recognised three main factors as the most influential in the way news has been communicated throughout history: (a) the communication of news is shaped by technological breakthroughs, (b) such communication has been historically

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5 Raymond Firth: An anthropologist and ethnologist born in New Zealand (1901 to 2002) whose work mostly dealt with Polynesian communities. In this chapter, Stephens points out that the historical assumptions made about how ancient civilizations used to communicate are based on anthropological studies of ‘pre-literate’ communities done during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. This particular chapter deals mostly with studies done about the Zulus from northern South Africa and Firth’s studies in the Polynesian islands (Stephens, p.17).
used as an instrument of power and (c) it has also acted as an agent for social and political change.

After exposing a selection of historical events in order to support the premises stated in the previous paragraph, in the second part of this chapter I study a number of contemporary issues that, in my opinion, are shaping the immediate future of communications. I am referring to these issues as the digital battles, because they appear as power struggles between different political, social and/or economic groups, which are taking place within the digital world.

My aim by exposing these digital battles is to question whether digital technologies are, indeed, acting as an agent for change, as the printing press did after its introduction to Europe in the mid-fifteenth century. The first of these battles involves national powers and digital media; the second one is between digital and traditional media and the third one is between different representatives of digital media.

The issues studied in this analysis date from the Iranian presidential election of 2009 – included in the group national powers vs. digital media – to the rumour of Anonymous threatening to destroy Facebook on November 05, 2011 – as an example of a conflict between two representatives of digital media. At this stage, it is important to point out that the distinction I am making between these three battles is merely a generalised view that helps me to structure my arguments (and would hopefully make them easier for the reader to understand). Thus, a rigorous analysis of the issues that constitute these battles will show they are far too complex to be seen as mere duels. Yet, there are many personalistic and sensationalistic elements in the way these issues are being registered and exposed to the public, that I cannot think of a more accurate term to describe them.

The complexity of these issues is well-illustrated by one of the cases included in this analysis: the emergence of the whistle-blowing website WikiLeaks. At first sight this site appears as an obvious example of digital media vs. national powers, but looking at this case in more detail, one can also identify elements that evidence the clash between traditional and digital media and between different representatives of digital media.
Beyond the debate of whether or not these so-called *digital battles* constitute an accurate classification to analyse the influence of digital media on twenty-first century societies, what the events listed as part of these battles seem to evidence is that the development of digital technologies is altering the structures of mass communication. But before being able to form a proper judgement on this matter, I believe it is necessary to study the most relevant antecedents, when a technological breakthrough has brought about a major change in human communications.

**News and Technology**

The timeline in Figure 4 – which I have designed based on Stephen’s chronology – shows a series of technological advances that have shaped communications: from the earliest civilisations to the beginning of the twenty-first century.

![Figure 4 – The influence of technology on news](image)

I have selected agriculture as the starting point of this timeline, because it is the technological breakthrough that led to what is known as civilisation. In *The Outline of History* (1930), H.G. Wells described civilisation as “the settlement of men upon
an area continuously cultivated and possessed, who live in buildings continuously inhabited with a common rule and a common city or citadel” (p. 159).

Later on, Wells clarified that:

One must not think of a nomadic stage as a predecessor of a settled stage in human affairs. To begin with, man was a slow drifter, following food. Then one sort of men began to settle down, and another sort became more distinctly nomadic. (p. 161)

Therefore, with the interaction between nomadic and sedentary groups, as well as between different nomadic groups, began the travelling of news that would evolve into the modern institution of journalism. This initial step happened when, in the temples and marketplaces of the early citadels, people started gathering to exchange both goods and information.

**Figure 5 - Early breakthroughs: from language to agriculture**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ca. 100,000 B.C.</th>
<th>ca. 40,000 B.C.</th>
<th>ca. 8000 B.C.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Language arrives with <em>homo sapiens</em>.</td>
<td>Settling of Americas. News spreads by word of mouth.</td>
<td>Agriculture and more stable societies. Meeting places, travel, messengers, criers, smoke signals and drums aid the flow of news.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


Stephens writes that “the news exchanged in market places or by travellers had been a democracy of anecdote and information – all subject to the same obstacles, all with approximately the same likelihood of being heard.” But, as societies became more complex and stratified, the scheme of communications was altered as:
The use of messengers (...) granted significant advantages to an elite selection of news items. This news gained speed as dawdling and detours along the route from source to receiver were reduced; it gained power as discipline and devotion were applied to its circulation. (p. 21)

The political implications of this change, that is, the implication of those “advantages to an elite selection of news items”, will be analysed in the following section. For now, I will focus on the gaining of speed as “dawdling and detours along the route (...) were reduced”, which is what Stephens defines as “the amplification of news.” This amplification was meant to “endow it (news) with the power to travel farther, faster, and to arrive with less distortion” (pp. 20 – 21).

News in Motion

This process of amplification begins with the common foot messenger. In order to point out the importance of the ancient messenger, Stephens refers to the battle of Marathon as “probably the best known instance of news being carried by a messenger” (p 22).

Figure 6 – Messenger in Marathon


If Figure 6 shows the importance of the common foot messenger in the early stages of human communications, Figures 7 and 8 show the evolution that, starting from the common foot messenger, allowed for news to “travel farther, faster, and to arrive with less distortion”. This evolution goes from animal limbs to satellites and electromagnetic waves.
Figure 7 – Technology at the service of speed and distance

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Event</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1838</td>
<td>First steamships—the Suez, on April 22, and then a few days later, the Great Western—cross Atlantic Ocean, making the trip in as little as 13 days.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1858</td>
<td>First transatlantic cable, built by Cyrus W. Field, completed in the summer of 1865, setting off huge celebrations. Although the cable breaks, a new one is completed by 1866.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1876</td>
<td>The telephone, a crucial tool for reporters, is invented by Alexander Graham Bell.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1895</td>
<td>Guglielmo Marconi, experimenting in the fields of Italy, develops “wireless telegraphy”—radio. He patents his system in England in 1896.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1941</td>
<td>Television broadcasting begins in U.S. Federal Communications Commission permits 18 T.V. stations to begin transmitting on July 1. Two of them are ready to go that day—the New York stations of NBC and CBS. That year CBS broadcasts two 15-minute television newscasts a day to a tiny audience in New York.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


Figure 8 – Documentation and preservation of the message

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Event</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ca. 3100 B.C.</td>
<td>The oldest known writing systems—tablets in Uruk in Mesopotamia and Egyptian hieroglyphics. Symbols represent words.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ca. 2500 B.C.</td>
<td>Tablets written in cuneiform in Mesopotamia and what is now Syria contain lists of possessions, agricultural records, school texts, literary works, state treaties.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ca. 1500 B.C.</td>
<td>The first alphabet developed by the Canaanites.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>105</td>
<td>Paper invented in China, according to legend, by Ts’ai Lun. Takes more than 1,000 years to reach Europe.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1041</td>
<td>Between 1041 and 1048, a Chinese artisan, Pi Sheng, uses moveable type to print. Invention is not a big success. Chinese has too many different characters to make such a system practicable.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ca. 1450</td>
<td>The letter press is first used by Johann Gutenberg.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Source: A History of News, Mitchell Stephens, pp. xi-xiii)

From the invention of writing and the domestication of the horse, to the digital transmission of information via satellite, humans have developed a system of communications that, by the turn of the twenty-first century, had reached global
immediacy. During this process, countless social structures and political and economic institutions have come and gone at the mercy of the given technological changes. As Postman points out (2000a), from approximately the mid-nineteenth century onwards, this process of amplification has experienced a progressive acceleration, prompted by the development of electromagnetic and (later) digital means of communication. This, as Postman also points out, has been related (erroneously says Postman) to the idea of progress.

In the following chapters – particularly in Chapter 3 (with the debate between Naïve Realists and Network Idealists) – I analyse Postman’s criticism on this idealistic view of electromagnetic and digital media in more detail, but before doing so, I must continue with my analysis of the history of news.

Just as the development of agriculture was the starting point of what we know as civilisation and the invention of writing marks the beginning of what we call history, other technological breakthroughs like the printing press, the steam engine, the telegraph, photography, radio, television and the Internet, have altered, and are continuously altering, human interaction.

Figure 9 shows some of the implications of the introduction of the printing press into Europe.

**Figure 9 – America and the printing press**
Because of the isolation of the northern Vikings and the absence of a technology of mass production to spread the news of their voyages, people in central Europe did not learn of their travels across the Atlantic. Five centuries later, after Galileo’s travels to the East and the subsequent introduction of a series of Eastern technologies into Europe (including the printing press), the news of Columbus’ voyages spread quickly across the European continent.

Theorists like Harold Innis (1950) and Marshal McLuhan (1962, 1964) considered Guttenberg’s printing press as the invention that unchained the *industrial revolution*. As mentioned in the Introduction, they argued that this technological breakthrough caused an alteration in the sensory balance of humans (particularly in Western societies); leading to the establishment of the economic, political and social structures of the modern world (Wolfe, 1968).

In The Outline of History (1930), H.G. Wells drew a distinction between what he called the *industrial* and the *mechanical* revolutions:

> There is a tendency in many histories to confuse together what we have here called the *mechanical revolution*, which was an entirely new thing in human experience arising out of the development of organized science, a new step like the invention of agriculture or the discovery of metals, with something else, quite different in its origins, something for which there was already an historical precedent, the social and financial development which is called the *industrial revolution*. The two processes were going on together, they were constantly reacting upon each other, but they were in root and essence different. (pp. 954 - 955)

Unlike Innis and McLuhan – who saw the changes of the modern world as the result of a neurological alteration – Wells analysed such changes from an economic standpoint and explained them in terms of production and labour. Despite this different approach, there is one unequivocal conclusion that can be drawn from both the views of Innis and McLuhan and that of H.G. Wells: that the societies of the modern world have been shaped by technologies of mass production. In this progression, critics like Brody (1999) and Nora (1989) argue that the development of mass media (from the emergence of an editorial industry and of large, industrialised newspapers in the late nineteenth century to the birth and growth of television networks in the twentieth) have led to a process of commoditising of the
collective memory of the human species. Within this process, theorists like Postman (1986) argued that the achievement of immediacy came with the cost of trivialising what used to be one of humanity's most priced assets: the legacy from its ancestors. And within this trivialised and commoditised memory produced by the media of mass communication, nothing seems to be more ephemeral, and ironically more relevant, than the short-punch news story.

Postman argues that all technological changes present us with what he calls a “Faustian bargain”. Therefore, as Postman also pointed out, the question(s) regarding the influence of these technologies (and how this influence may evolve) should revolve around who has won (or is winning) and what; and who has lost (or is losing) and what with the development of modern communication technologies.

According to Habermas’ theory of the public sphere, in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, conditions like the establishment of a capitalist economy, prompted by the inter-oceanic trade that occurred and steadily increased after Columbus’ discovery of America in 1492; and the emergence of the media (newspapers in particular) as a fourth state, prompted by the introduction of the printing press into Europe in 1450, led to the brief yet effective development of a bourgeois public sphere (Habermas, 1989, Roberts & Crossley, 2004). This bourgeois public sphere would be a fundamental element in and a major cause of the liberal revolutions of this period.

Thus, based on Postman’s premise, one could argue that the old monarchic and feudal powers of the Middle Ages were the losers, while the emerging capitalist bourgeoisie was the winner in the Faustian bargain presented by the printing press. Now, by the early twenty-first century, electromagnetic and digital media have allowed human communications to reach global immediacy. Well? Has this led to a solution to any of the major problems affecting modern societies? Following Postman’s statements (which I explain in more detail in chapters 3 and 4) it would seem that the answer is no. However, I believe it is necessary to reshape the question focusing it on how digital technologies can help in finding solutions to such problems.
This brings me back to my original research question – regarding the roles of journalism and art in so-called digital societies – as in the next two sections of this chapter, I will focus on the manner in which news and the technologies of mass communication have been used either for the imposition and preservation of a given economic and/or political order, and also for the alteration of outdated political and social structures.

**News and Power**

As mentioned earlier, at first “the news exchanged in market places or by travellers had been a democracy of anecdote and information”. Then, this local system of news was gradually *amplified* as technology allowed news to “travel farther, faster, and to arrive with less distortion” (Stephens, 2007, p. 21).

Stephens also points out how, from the beginning of this process of *amplification*, the spreading of news has been used as an instrument of propaganda:

> Whoever controlled the messengers could select which anecdotes and information would be favored by this treatment. Therefore, whoever controlled the messengers gained not only a conduit to the members of society – the ability to inform them of new regulations – but gained a measure of power over the selection of the news the members of a society received – the power, for example, to ensure that they received news of triumphs but not necessarily of debacles. Messengers were controlled, for the most part, by kings, chiefs, headmen. They were rarely channels of dissent. (pp. 21 – 22).

As mentioned before, the analysis presented in this and the following section is closely related to the analysis in Chapter 2, about the relation between art and propaganda. Thus, their combined aim is to show how art, like news, has been historically used as a tool for the promotion of given political messages.

Figure 10 compiles a series of examples of news at the service of different political powers.
As the examples in Figure 10 show, the manipulation of news has been a constant practice by rulers wanting to ascertain their power. Either when remarking on their strength (as in the case of Alexander the Great) or when hiding their shame (as in the Soviet reporting of Chernobyl), the media of mass communication have usually been at the service of those sitting in power.

In this sense, the science of communications can be compared to the science of cosmetics. Just as the cosmetics industry sells a product by promoting an ideal (the ideal of beauty), the media is often used to promote political figures by appealing to ethereal, sensitive values. On the other hand, just as cosmetics are previously applied on test animals to prove if they work (i.e., if they penetrate the skin, are antiseptic and if they have the right colour), the techniques used in the manipulation of news are based on a centuries-long process of social studies and
its consequent understanding of what makes us tick; what appeals to our more primary and intrinsic personal feelings.

In *Brave New World Revisited* (1959) Aldous Huxley exposed this analogy (and relationship) between the industry of communications and the industry of cosmetics in the following terms:

‘The cosmetic manufacturers,’ one of their number has written, ‘are not selling lanolin, they are selling hope.’ For this hope, this fraudulent implication of a promise that they will be transfigured, women will pay ten or twenty times the value of the emulsion which the propagandists have so skilfully related, by means of misleading symbols, to a deep-seated and almost universal feminine wish – wish to be more attractive to members of the opposite sex. (p. 77)

In the ancient world, an exhibition of might, like sending home the shields of the conquered enemy, was effective enough to appeal to the masses’ sense of security and national belonging. In the modern world, after the development of technologies of mass communication (and particularly after the development of an audiovisual media like television), the techniques of manipulation had to become subtler and more cosmetic.

As early as 1959, Huxley noticed how the techniques of manipulation and the influence of mass media trivialised and commoditised politicians; and how they ended up being sold in a bazaar of frivolity and entertainment:

As the art and science of manipulation come to be better understood, the dictators of the future will doubtless learn to combine these techniques with the non-stop distractions which, in the West, are now threatening to drown in a sea of irrelevance the rational propaganda essential to the maintenance of individual liberty and the survival of democratic institutions, (pp. 56-57)

Just as such, in a highlighted box titled ‘*Masters of News Manipulation*,’ Stephens mentions some examples from US politics during the second half of the twentieth century, where this trivialisation of politics (and politicians) is evident:

- James Haggerty, press secretary to President Dwight Eisenhower in the 1950s, who used to squirrel away stories that he might then release to make it seem the president was working on days when he was in fact playing golf.

- President John Kennedy, who showered his abundant charm on certain select journalists and was rewarded with kinder, gentler coverage.
• President Richard Nixon, who noted that attacks get placed on the front page, while responses to those attacks are buried near 'the deodorant ads' and who, therefore, was often attacked.

• President Ronald Reagan's White House and campaign staff, Michael Deaver, David Gergen, and others, who not only knew the proper moment to release the red, white and blue balloons at Reagan appearances, but who managed to keep their many colleagues focused on a singer, carefully crafted message each day, which ensured that that message made the network evening newscasts. (p. 78)

As Huxley (1959) pointed out, this mastering of the techniques of manipulation that Stephens would later recognise in recent American politics, was achieved earlier (and more thoroughly) by the Nazi regime in Germany:

Twenty years before Madison Avenue embarked upon ‘Motivational Research,' Hitler was systematically exploring and exploiting the secret fears and hopes, the cravings, anxieties and frustrations of the German masses. (p. 66).

One of the historical events included in Figure 10 (above) shows how, after becoming president in 1933, F.D. Roosevelt frequently used the radio to communicate with his constituency. While he was doing so, Goebbels was giving away 3.5 million of the Volksempfänger (or people's receiver) for German citizens to listen to the Fuehrer's speeches and the, often hyperbolic, reports of their army’s victories in the battlefield.

The manipulation of information by the totalitarian regimes of the twentieth century is probably the most obvious example of news acting at the service of power. Commenting on this matter in his As I Please column of February 4, 1944, Orwell wrote:

The really frightening thing about totalitarianism is not that it commits 'atrocities' but that it attacks the concept of objective truth. (Orwell, 1968, vol 3, p 88)

On a similar note, during his trial after World War II, former Nazi Minister of Armaments, Albert Speer, gave the following insight on Hitler's manipulation techniques:

Hitler's dictatorship differed in one fundamental point from all its predecessors in history. It was the first dictatorship in the present period of modern technical
development, a dictatorship which made complete use of all technical means for the
domination of its own country. Through technical devices like the radio and the loud-
speaker, eighty million people were deprived of independent thought. (Huxley, 1959,
p. 61)

The end of World War II and the subsequent period of Cold War staged the ancient
notion of East vs. West, with the struggle between democratic capitalism against
totalitarian communism. This led Huxley (1959) to predict a future in which under-
developed countries would be ruled under totalitarian regimes of a Soviet-like
nature, whilst developed nations would be ruled under a more cosmetic, yet
equally effective system of manipulation:

In the totalitarian East there is political censorship, and the media of mass
communication are controlled by the State. In the democratic West there is economic
censorship and the media of mass communication are controlled by members of the
Power Elite. (pp. 54-55).

But as recent as the irruption of mass media as a key player in the political arena
may appear, references of the media as a ‘fourth state’ date as far back as the mid-
nineteenth century (Carlyle, 1840). Just as such, in his dystopian novel, The Iron
Heel (1908), Jack London portrays an oligarchy formed by American trusts and
corporations, which was to rule the world for three centuries. Throughout the
novel, London repeatedly comments on the use of journalism and the media as
tools used to ascertain The Iron Heel’s power.

**Figure 11 – The Mass Media sits on top**

Today, the development of digital technologies and the so-called *social media* predicts a new rebalancing of power. This promise of a new power-shift will be analysed in more detail in the second part of this chapter. But before doing so, I will study some of the circumstances where news and the media have acted as instruments of change.

**News and Change**

I began this chapter by exposing how technological advances shape human communications. The analysis in this section also deals with the influence of technology on communications, but this time focusing on the actual use of such technologies by groups or individuals. Therefore, in the first part I conducted an analysis of an unconscious change, which usually takes place during the span of various generations. In this section, on the other hand, I am dealing with particular conscious actions that involve the use of mass media as an instrument (or weapon) against given social and political orders.

The human species have mostly lived under overtly hierarchical, pyramidal societies. Although the notion of equality amongst humans can be traced back, at least, as early as the sixth century B.C. with the origins of Buddhism; its recognition as a *fundamental right* did not happen until the late eighteenth century (and was not officially regarded as *universal* until 1948).

In the previous section, I have pointed out how news has often acted in the service of the ruling classes and how the development of writing, instead of altering social and political structures, ended up reinforcing the power of such classes. Therefore, the *Roman Acta* and the Chinese *Tipao* are examples of how the combination of writing, with other advances such as papyrus and paper, helped in the establishment of an official version of history. This is not necessarily the case with the printing press: an Eastern technology that, combined with another import from the East (paper) and a breakthrough from the West (the phonetic alphabet), played a key role in the social and political changes that occurred in the *Western* world between the fifteenth and nineteenth centuries.

Probably the most relevant example that shows the influence of the printing press in the alteration of the social order of the Middle Ages, is Martin Luther’s *Ninety-
Five Theses, as its publication in 1517 appears as one of the main causes of the religious and political dissent that spread across Europe during this period.

Stephens states the following about the role of the printing press during the late fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries:

News was managed and manipulated before Gutenberg, but those concerned with the power of individual news reports must quickly have realized the potential power of the machine that was so effective in amplifying Columbus’ promotional effort on behalf of “the Indies,” the machine that helped Martin Luther’s 95 theses, posted in 1517, became ‘known throughout Germany in a fortnight and throughout Europe in a month.’ The printing press would intensify the battle for the control of news. (p. 77)

To understand to what extend a new technology threatens an established social order, the first step, in my opinion, is to study the measures taken by the ruling classes against the use of such technology. Figure 9 shows three examples of the politics of censorship and repression taken against the printing press during its early existence in Europe.

**Figure 12 – Control over the press at the dawn of Liberal Thought**

![Figure 9](image)


Stephens’ referral to the printing press as an instrument – or a weapon – in the “battle for the control of news,” reminds me of Orwell’s arguments exposed in the article *You and the Atom Bomb* (1945):

Some months ago, when the bomb was still only a rumour, there was a widespread belief that splitting the atom was merely a problem for the physicists, and that when they had solved it a new and devastating weapon would be within reach of almost everybody. (...) Had that been true, the whole trend of history would have been abruptly altered. The distinction between great states and small states would have been wiped out, and the power of the State over the individual would have been
greatly weakened. (...) It is a commonplace that the history of civilisation is largely the history of weapons. In particular, the connection between the discovery of gunpowder and the overthrow of feudalism by the bourgeoisie has been pointed out over and over again. And though I have no doubt exceptions can be brought forward, I think the following rule would be found generally true: that ages in which the dominant weapon is expensive or difficult to make will tend to be ages of despotism, whereas when the dominant weapon is cheap and simple, the common people have a chance. Thus, for example, tanks, battleships and bombing planes are inherently tyrannical weapons, while rifles, muskets, long-bows and hand-grenades are inherently democratic weapons. (Orwell, 1968, vol 4, p 7).

The printing press, like the musket, the rifle and the long-bow, acted as a “democratic weapon” in favour of the liberal changes that followed the period of medieval feudalism. As the circumstances quoted in Figure 9 show, the monarchies of the old regime used all methods in their power (from open censorship and persecution to excessive taxation) to control the influence of the press over the public. Regardless of this, liberal thought spread all over the West and ultimately led to what, arguably, can be referred to as a global political change, which began with the revolutions of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries.

If Luther’s Ninety Five Theses stands as the most influential writing of The Reformation, the publication that holds this honour during the period of Liberal Revolutions is Thomas Paine’s Common Sense (1776). Just as Luther’s Ninety Five Theses strived against the abuses of power by the Vatican (particularly against the Church’s policy of charging for indulgences), Paine’s Common Sense was an open critique of the monarchic system in general and of the King of England in particular. Also, as had happened with Luther’s Theses in Europe, Paine’s message spread across the thirteen colonies shortly after its first publication.

Gordon S. Wood, states in the introduction of Common Sense and Other Writings (2003), that: “Most Americans have never been able to make Paine a central figure in (...) the American Revolution” (p. xii). One reason for Paine’s ostracism is the fact he was not “born a gentleman.” Although, as Wood also points out, this condition also applies to other founding fathers like Benjamin Franklin. The difference was that Paine:

Never really shed his lowly origins (...) unlike Franklin he could never entirely throw the effects of all those years living in poverty and obscurity pressed close to the bottom of English society. (...) His writings became an entrée into liberal gentry society and enabled him to mingle with Washington, Jefferson, or Lafayette. Yet as
According to Wood, these “aristocratic likes” of America’s gentry, “called Paine many things (…) one of the most common and opprobrious (…) that he lacked connections (p. xix)”. Yet, it is in this “lack of connections” wherein lies the main difference between Paine and the other personalities of the American Revolution. Not just because of the fact he was looked down by the “aristocratic likes,” but because his “lack of connections” made him a non-patriotic man. He did not see the American Revolution as an end in itself, but as a starting point of (if I may use a stereotype of the late twentieth century) a new world order. Or, as Wood describes it:

He began to turn the criticism of himself as a person ‘without connections’ into a positive attribute. As early as 1778 (…) he declared that he wrote for no personal advantage, not even for America. ‘My principle is universal. My attachment is to all the world, and not any particular part, and if what I advance is right, it is right no matter where or who it comes from. (p. xx)

The universal character of Paine’s thought, together with his lack of a nationalist spirit, drove him out of America and back to Europe, where he was to play an active role in the French Revolution. But Paine’s French story is hardly a successful one. Figure 13 shows how, like the American, the French Revolution was highly influenced by the printing press. Although Paine had gained recognition after the publication of Common Sense and other works such as Rights of Man (for which he received French citizenship and a seat in the National Convention), this did not save him from being imprisoned for ten months after pleading for Louis XVI’s life (Wood, 2003, p xxi).

Figure 13 – the printing press during the French Revolution

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>1788</th>
<th>1789</th>
<th>1789</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Because of strict press controls, Paris has only four newspapers.</td>
<td>French Revolution begins with storming of Bastille on July 14—inspired in part by a false report, July 17 issue of the Gazette de France in Paris ignores event. The people of France turn to unreliable word of mouth. Rumors help fan the “Great Fear” that sweeps through the countryside in the summer of 1789.</td>
<td>Declaration of the Rights of Man in France labels “the freedom to communicate thoughts and opinions, . . . one of the most precious” of those rights.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Apart from its important place in the American and French Revolutions, the printing press also played an important role in other social and political struggles of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries: these include the abolition of slavery, the acknowledgement of the rights of colonised, indigenous populations and the denunciation of degrading conditions in the newly developed industrial centres.

Figure 14 shows some examples of publications that advocated for the rights of the enslaved and colonised populations and exposed the life of the working classes in the newly industrialised cities of the Western world.

**Figure 14 – News exposing social exploitation**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Event</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1828</td>
<td>Elias Boudinot publishes the first issue of the Cherokee Phoenix—partly in English, partly in Cherokee—in New Echota, Ga. First Native American newspaper. The Phoenix is suspended after presses are seized by the Georgia Guard in 1835.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1890</td>
<td>Journalist Jacob Riis, a reporter for the New York Sun, publishes his explorations of New York's slums in a book, <em>How the Other Half Lives</em>, which is designed to awaken the better-off to the abominable conditions under which people are living elsewhere in their cities.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Throughout the nineteenth century, newspapers played a key role in altering what Habermas called the relation between the *system* and the *lifeworld* (or between the State and civil society). However, by the end of the century, newspapers morphed from a force that empowered the *lifeworld* into a new kind of *system*.

Having recognised this, in *The Soul of Man Under Socialism* (1891), Oscar Wilde wrote:

> In old days men had the rack. Now they have the press. That is an improvement certainly. But still it is very bad, and wrong, and demoralising. Somebody – was it Burke? – called journalism the fourth estate. That was true at the time, no doubt. But at the present moment it really is the only estate. It has eaten up the other three. The Lords Temporal say nothing, the Lords Spiritual have nothing to say, and the House of Commons has nothing to say and says it. We are dominated by Journalism. In America the President reigns for four years, and Journalism governs for ever and ever. (para. 38).
This transition of news media – newspapers in particular – from a “democratic weapon” into a “fourth state”, can be seen as part of what Wells called the mechanical revolution: when the small, artisan printers that proliferated during the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries were driven into extinction by large, industrialised publishers. Since then, newscasting became a process of mass production: ruled by striking headlines, catchy phrases and a 5-Ws news-writing system.

Perhaps the most relevant example to show how the printing press turned into an instrument of power is the story of American publishers Joseph Pulitzer and William Randolph Hearst. This is particularly evident in the role they played in the outbreak of the Spanish-American War (1898). In 1975, Orson Welles wrote a letter, titled Was Citizen Kane really about Hearst? describing the attitude of America’s major publishers during this period:

When Frederick Remington was dispatched to the Cuban front to provide the Hearst newspapers with sketches of our first small step into American imperialism, the noted artist complained by telegram that there wasn’t really enough shooting to keep him busy. ‘You make the pictures,’ Hearst wired back, ‘I’ll make the war’. (para. 3).

In his own analysis of the Spanish-American War, Stephens’ wrote the following statement:

*The Examiner’s* exaggerations of minor accidents on the hated Southern Pacific Railroad foreshadowed exaggerations in later Hearst newspapers of the offenses committed by the Spanish in Cuba. (...) Out of the battle between Pulitzer and Hearst in New York – fought with what became known as ‘yellow journalism’– came war with Spain in 1898, circulations that occasionally surpassed 1 million, and a new burst of growth for the newspaper business. (p 198).

Although sensationalism did not begin with Pulitzer and Hearst, the ‘yellow journalism’ they introduced – sensationalism circulating by the millions – became one of the foundations of twentieth century journalism. In 1900, British publisher Alfred Harmsworth met with Pulitzer in a transatlantic ship, where the latter invited the former to experiment with *The World’s* first edition of 1901. This experiment ended up in a publication that was nine inches wide and 18 inches
high. A few years later Harmsworth founded his own newspaper in London, the *Daily Mirror*, which became the first of the major British tabloids (Stephens, 2007, p. 198).

The notion of newsworthiness within the frame of modern journalism goes beyond the idea of *news as a social need*. In this sense, the ancient need to know what was happening beyond the borders of a given civilisation (e.g., if there had been a natural disaster or if there was an enemy army approaching) was complemented with a thirst to know about the rare and the extraordinary. Thus, the news ballads – which preceded newspapers as the main written media – were filled with stories of dragons and other monsters that lived in the surrounding forests and remote seas. Then, the humanist movement of the Renaissance, followed by the scientific development of the Enlightenment (situations that were propelled by the development of the printing press) led to what is known as the *golden age of journalism*: a period when the flow of *news* pushed for the change of outdated political and social structures.

However, this impulse did not last for long, and by the end of the nineteenth century, the monsters of the middle ages were replaced by myths of a more worldly nature: like charismatic politicians, media magnates and Hollywood celebrities.

The oscillation of the media between instrument of power and agent of change and the role of the printing press and the newspaper within this scheme of constant evolution are, in my opinion, perfectly summarised in the following extract from Stephens’ *A History of News*:

Harold Innis has suggested that ‘the tendency of each medium of communication (is) to create monopolies of knowledge to the point that the human spirit breaks through at new levels of society and on the outer fringes.’ The newspaper, in the hands of patriot editors in colonial America, or perhaps pauper-press editors in England, can be said to have served as a tool of this renegade, radical ‘human spirit.’ An ‘ancient monopoly of intelligence,’ as Walter Lippman put it, was broken. However, the newspaper itself began to contribute to the formation of a new ‘monopoly of knowledge’ (or ‘information’) as the dissemination of news came more and more under the control of ‘men of … capital’. (p 199)
1a. The Digital Battles

After studying how societies have communicated news throughout history, from the development of agriculture until the late twentieth century, in this part I analyse a series of contemporary cases that show how digital technologies are affecting journalism in the early twenty-first century. As mentioned earlier, the battles studied in this part are divided in three groups: national powers vs. digital media, traditional media vs. digital media and digital media vs. (other) digital media. However, as exposed in the paragraphs below, these battles are not necessarily exclusive from each other: as some of their actors fluctuate between allies and enemies depending on the context and possible repercussions of the given battle.

In 2010, the BBC aired a series of documentaries titled The Virtual Revolution, conducted by American journalist and media scholar, Aleks Krotosky. These documentaries present a comprehensive analysis of the development of digital communications during the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries.

The first part of this series – titled The Great Levelling? – questions whether digital technologies are acting as a levelling factor in the relationship between the major political and economic powers (what in his theory of the public sphere Habermas defined as the system) and civil society. The documentaries begin by exposing the origins of the Internet and the subsequent development of the World Wide Web. Because of this, one of the central figures – if not the central figure – of the first part of the series is Tim Berners Lee, creator of the World Wide Web.

As a concluding remark for the first of Krotoski’s documentaries, Lee expresses his concern about the “levelling days” of the World Wide Web probably coming to an end. Before analysing the implications of Lee’s preoccupation, it is important to understand what were those original levelling ideals that inspired the development of this network; and to what extent have they levelled – or are levelling – society.
In *You and the Atom Bomb* (1945), Orwell wrote: “It is a commonplace that the
history of civilisation is largely the history of weapons”. As a technological
breakthrough, the Internet is probably the latest evidence of Orwell’s statement
(as the original ARPANET\(^6\), which would eventually turn into the Internet of today,
was developed in the Cold War, as part of the arms race between the Americans
and the Soviets).

But on the other hand, as Krotoski also points out, the World Wide Web was
conceived as part of the counter culture of the 1960s. This means it was,
“structured in a way that resists authority,” and as the “ultimate levelling”
technology, built to “match with the hippie dream”.

This counter-cultured, anti-authoritarian spirit, under which the World Wide Web
was developed, is evident in John Perry Barlow’s “Declaration of the Independence
of Internet” (1996); which begins by stating:

> Governments of the Industrial World, you weary giants of flesh and steel, I come
> from Cyberspace, the new home of Mind. On behalf of the future, I ask you of the
> past to leave us alone. You are not welcome among us. You have no sovereignty
> where we gather. We have no elected government, nor are we likely to have one,
> so I address you with no greater authority than that with which liberty itself
> always speaks. I declare the global social space we are building to be naturally
> independent of the tyrannies you seek to impose on us. (para. 1).

In the following paragraphs, I analyse how Barlow and Berners Lee’s ideal of the
World Wide Web as the *ultimate levelling technology* stands in relation to recent
events like the Iranian Green Summer and the Arab Spring.

**National Powers vs. Digital Media**

As Cole points out, by mid-2010, a year after the Iranian *Green Summer*, the *Green
Movement* was “weaker, the country more repressive, and its hardliners (sic) in a
stronger position” (Cole, 2010). On the other hand, a few months later the protests
in North Africa and the Middle East that would later be branded as the Arab Spring
began. Besides the political, religious and cultural similarities in these social

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\(^6\) ARPA = Advanced Research Projects Agency Network. The ARPANET was created by the Defence Advanced
Research Projects Agency (DARPA), an agency of the US Department of State.
movements, they have another common feature: the use of digital media in their organisation, and for the recording and broadcasting of the events that followed (i.e., the protests and subsequent reprisal by State forces).

The second part of Krotoski’s documentaries – titled “Enemy of the State?” – opens with an analysis of the Iranian Green Summer: highlighting the use of Twitter during this period as one of the most relevant cases of digital media acting in defence of the citizen. As Krotoski points out, during the first eighteen days after the election, “over two million tweets were sent out of Iran by over half a million people”. At its height, “200,000 tweets about Iran were posted every hour”.

In her analysis of the Iranian Green Summer, Krotoski includes the case of an Iranian woman living in London who, acting under her online persona “Oxford Girl”, helped the people in Iran to communicate their messages beyond their national borders. Another external actor highlighted by Krotoski is Austin Heap, a (then) 25-year-old computer programmer from San Francisco, who created an encryption program called Haystack, which allowed Iranian citizens to bypass the blockades set by the Iranian government to access certain websites within Iran.

These two cases show the capacity of digital media to evade national restrictions and support the original ideals of Barlow and Berners Lee. Yet, as Cole points out, in the matter of political rights and civil liberties, the situation in Iran has not improved (and might have even taken a turn for the worse) since the Green Summer of 2009.

Since that date, the debate about the real incidence of social media – for example, Twitter and Facebook – in countries under authoritarian, undemocratic regimes has intensified. Amongst the voices in this debate, the names of Michael Gladwell and Clay Shirky have emerged amongst the most relevant. According to Gladwell (2010) the movements that emerge from social networks are “built around weak ties”. Hence, the people who form such movements are not committed enough, and the movements themselves become a fad destined to recede at the same pace as they emerged. Shirky, on the other hand, argues that digital technologies and social media are contributing in the creation of spaces for both the diffusion and, most
importantly, the discussion of information. This “two-step process” is, as Shirky points out (2011), necessary for the consolidation of a public sphere.

Burns and Eltham coincide with Cole (and by extension with Gladwell) when they state that “those who believe Twitter and other social network technologies will enable ordinary people to seize power from repressive regimes should consider the fate of Iran’s protestors, some of whom paid for their enthusiastic adoption of Twitter with their lives” (Burns and Eltham, 2011, p. 298). But isn’t it still too early to judge the role of digital media in Iran? Shouldn’t one wait until at least the following elections (scheduled for June 2013) to draw any conclusions?

The use of digital media during the revolts in North Africa and the Middle East also raise new questions about the role that this technology is playing in the Islamic world. In the cases of Tunisia and Egypt, there were two specific events that seemed to unchain the movements that prompted the fall of Ben Ali and Mubarak’s regimes. These are the self-induced burning of Tunisian fruit vendor Mohamed Bouazizi and the death of 28-year-old Egyptian businessman Khaled Said. After Said’s death, an Egyptian Google executive named Wael Ghonim created a Facebook page called “We are all Khaled Said”. This page also turned into one of the main channels for the Egyptian population to express their discontent (Croitz, 2011). The snowball effect that followed the news of Bouazizi and Said’s deaths stands as a strong argument in favour of those who argue that digital media is empowering the individual in its relationship with the State. However, as Burns and Eltham point out, this instrument can also be used the other way around:

Iran’s Revolutionary Guard and the paramilitary Basij used Twitter to hunt down and target Iranian pro-democracy activists. (2011, p. 304)

It seems obvious to assume that, just as common citizens use digital technology as a defence mechanism against the larger powers, such larger powers (represented in North Africa and the Middle East by long-term, authoritarian governments)

7 Said was dragged out of an Internet café in Alexandria and beaten up to death by members of the Egyptian police after he had posted a video that showed members of the Egyptian police taking hold of a shipment of marijuana they had confiscated.

8 This page featured images of Said’s body - taken at the morgue with a mobile phone - that evidenced the brutality of the Egyptian police and contradicted the official statement given by this body.
would also use it to defend their own interests. However, following the premises exposed by Orwell in *You and the Atom Bomb* (1945), the fact that digital media remains accessible (or somehow accessible) to common citizens, seems to portray that this technology is a "democratic weapon", like the musket or the printing press.

On the other hand, an argument in favour of those sceptical of the democratic, levelling powers of the Internet lies behind the answer to the question: “Who is ruling in Egypt and Tunisia?” The latest news on this issue – to date (mid-2012) – was the election of Mohammed Morsí, of the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt. Although it is still too early to draw any conclusions on this matter, it reminds me of another statement from H.G. Wells’ *The Outline of History*:

...a revolution is an excretory operation, not a creative one.” (1930, p. 1117)

So far, the major forces from the West – particularly the US government – have publicly defended digital networks, portraying them as the ultimate embodiment of freedom of speech. But, what if that *speech* emerging from online discussions in the Islamic world turns into an attack against – and a denial of – all Western values? What if, at the end of the Arab Spring, the governments that rise are those which represent the most fundamentalist factions of the Islamic world? Would Hilary Clinton continue defending digital networks if the discussions in such networks are utterly antagonistic to the US? And would this mean such networks are no longer ‘democratic’? For an insight on what the answers to these questions may be, one may look at the way the US government responded to the democratic election of Hamas in Palestine.

**China vs. the Internet**

If events like the Iranian Green Summer and the Arab Spring are still too recent to lead one into forming a proper judgement of the role of digital media in the Islamic world, Chinese cyberspace seems too vast and distant to properly frame it within a given theoretical background. Nonetheless, this is what Kurt Herold and Marolt (2011) have done. Instead of analysing Chinese cyberspace in relation to Habermas’ public sphere, they have related it to Bakhtin’s theory of the carnival.
To understand what this carnavalesque view means, it is important to first analyse some of the most relevant facts and figures of Chinese cyberspace.

Technically speaking, within the entire digital universe, Chinese cyberspace is a world apart. As Herold points out, in China, “State or state-controlled entities own the physical backbone of the Internet”, while in other countries, “multiple private Internet Service Providers (ISP) run their own networks in competition with each other, under the legislated oversight of their respective owners”. This fundamental difference partly explains why Herold and Marolt argue that Chinese cyberspace should be studied under the light of Bakhtin’s theory of the carnival and not Habermas’ idea of the public sphere.

Following this premise, Li (2011) identifies various examples of parodies and political satires within the Chinese cyberspace. According to her, “these cases can also be understood in the context of the online carnival in the Bakhtinian sense that celebrates the turning of kings into clowns and clowns into kings” (p 83). In these cases (which I do not have the space to study in detail) the parodies target representatives of the establishment like the Chinese police, China’s major television channel CCTV and China’s wealthiest classes.

In 1995 China had “600,000 Internet users, 4,000 domain names, 1,500.cn websites, and the total bandwidth capacity of the Chinese Internet was 25Mbps (CNNIC, 1997)”. Twelve years later, by December 2009, the number of Internet users had risen to “384 million (...), there were 16.82 million domain names and 3.23 million websites registered under .cn, and the international connection bandwidth was 866 Gbps (CNNIC, 2010)”⁹ This, as Chen and Hwa Ang point out (2011, p. 40), means that the number of Chinese Internet users is larger than the entire population of the United States, where the Internet was invented.

Despite being the biggest, Chinese cyberspace is also one of the most regulated. At the top of the policies of censorship and control stands the so-called ‘Great Firewall’ – which, as Marolt (2011) points out, has been “designed to deny access to international websites such as Wikipedia, BBC or Technorati”, and also “blocks

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⁹ Quoted from Chen and Hwa Ang, 2010, p. 40.
content containing a long list of keywords such as ‘Tiananmen’ or ‘democracy’” (p. 54). Chen and Hwa Ang (2010) also state how China’s Internet police force has between 20,000 and 26,750 members. Adding to this, Marolt mentions how the Communist Party of China (CPC) hires an estimated “28,000 outsourced ‘web commentators”, commonly known as the ‘Fifty-Cent-Party’ or ‘Five Mao Party’ (2011, p. 56). Regarding this ‘army’, Marolt also quotes the following statement by David Bandurski (2008):

> China’s growing armies of Web commentators – instigated, trained and financed by party organisations – have just one mission: to safeguard the interests of the Communist Party by infiltrating and policing a rapidly growing Chinese Internet. They set out to neutralize undesirable public opinion by pushing pro-Party views through chat rooms and Web forums, reporting dangerous content to authorities. (p 56).

These facts and figures portray Chinese cyberspace as a strongly surveillanced Orwellian world. And the case of artist, blogger and activist Ai Weiwei, imprisoned on April 3, 2011 and released 81 days later, seems to confirm this impression. Yet, what Herold and Marolt’s research exposes, is that Chinese cyberspace is far too complex to explain under the simplistic, Western analogy of the cat and mouse chase (or as another battleground in the clash between the State and civil society). In this sense, Marolt also points out how “almost 85 percent of Chinese said they approved of Internet control and management, and more than 80 percent said their government should be responsible for this control”. (2011, p. 56)

The Habermasian public sphere emerges from civil society, and grows independently of the state. The Bakthinian carnival, on the other hand, is a space granted by the state, where civil society can enjoy a higher degree of liberty than in normal, everyday life conditions. In this sense, Chinese cyberspace can be seen as a valve that the CPC uses to release certain social pressures, which might otherwise erupt in the real world. This view complies with the arguments of theorists like Evgeny Morozov, who – as is exposed in more detail in Chapters 3 and 4 – denies what he calls the ‘myth’ that authoritarian regimes fear technology. As Morozov remarks (2011), in countries like China or Iran, the governments actually promote certain online discussions – mostly about local issues (e.g., the corruption of local functionaries). Thus, by appearing as a channel for civil society to express its
dissatisfaction directly to the ruling classes, rather than empowering the citizen, digital networks end up legitimating, and hence, ascertaining, the power of the state.

Would the kind of parodies that Li (2011) mentions be tolerated in other nations that, from a Western perspective, are regarded as authoritarian? Would they be tolerated in Iran? Or Saudi Arabia? The instance of Mohammed’s caricature, published in the Danish newspaper *Jyllands-Posten* on 30 September 2005, which occurred beyond the borders of the Islamic world, seems to prove otherwise. Then again, there are no antecedents in Chinese cyberspace that can be compared to the social movements that have been occurring throughout the Islamic world. Movements that, to a great extent, have been organised using digital media.

So, where do digital networks empower civil society the most: In China or in Iran? As analysed in more detail in Chapter 3, the *Network Idealist* answer would be: It doesn’t matter. What matters is that, in both cases, civil society is being empowered in its relation with the State. The *Naïve Realists*, on the other hand, would reach the same conclusion – it doesn’t matter – but for the opposite reason: in neither case is civil society being empowered, as in both cases they are being engulfed by a technological system controlled by larger powers. Who is right and who is wrong, I do not know. Yet, in the following chapters, the reader would hopefully find some elements to complement their personal judgement in this matter.

Another interesting question is: what is the standpoint of the major Western powers in this debate? So far, probably the most relevant statement(s) have come from US Secretary of State, Hilary Clinton, who has repeatedly spoken on behalf of freedom of speech and freedom of information within digital networks (NDTV, 2011). Does this mean unconditional support from the West for a free, global, uncontrolled cyberspace? Personally, I believe the word *unconditional* does not exist in the political lingo. Therefore, this support can be seen as yet another example of what, from an under-developed, non-Westerner perspective, may be regarded as the double standards of the Western world.

The most obvious example of this double standard is the reaction from the US government after the WikiLeaks diplomatic scandal erupted. Before that, the
obscure detention of the (then) 22-year-old Bradley Manning had already shown a
glimpse of the US government's standpoint in this matter. But the WikiLeaks affair
is just one of the many cases that show how those original, levelling ideals, that
Berners Lee imprinted on the World Wide Web, are currently under threat. And
none of these threats have been more publicised than the Protect IP Act and the
Stop Online Piracy Act – commonly known as PIPA and SOPA.

As Larry Downes wrote in Forbes Magazine (2011), the SOPA was billed as a “less
onerous version of the Senate’s Protect IP Act”. These two proposals appear as the
latest policies to combat “so-called ‘rogue’ websites – criminal enterprises
operating outside the U.S. that traffic in counterfeit goods and unlicensed
entertainment”. However, Downes argues SOPA – also known as the E-PARASITE
Law – did not correct the flaws of the original Protect IP Act, and is actually, “a
deeply flawed system of private enforcement, and a provision that makes a felony
of posting YouTube videos with copyrighted music – even playing in the
background”.

Various digital giants including Mozilla, Google, Yahoo, AOL, E-bay, Twitter and
Linked-in, have protested against this act: sending an open letter to its sponsors
openly opposing the legislation (Mozilla, 2011). But, is this case really an example
of digital media confronted against national powers? Or is it a struggle between
traditional media against digital media, which happens to take place in a national
arena? As unprecedented as this struggle for freedom in the Internet may seem,
the figure of large corporations and media groups lobbying before national
institutions (e.g., the US Congress) appears in artworks from, at least, as early as
the turn of the twentieth century – as in Jack London’s The Iron Heel (1908).

**Digital Media vs. Traditional Media**

When I started researching for this chapter, I based my analysis on a series of
articles and media releases that eventually led me to make the distinction between
the three aforementioned types of digital battles. One of these articles was the
Washington Post’s editorial of January 14, 2010: titled Google vs. China. This
editorial commended Google for “(its) decision to stop censoring its Chinese search
engine”, something that, the editorial argued, raised the question, “whether China’s
The gross and growing abuse of the Internet should be quietly tolerated or actively resisted”. However, as Herold (2011) would later point out:

Even though (...) Google transferred some of its business from China to Hong Kong in 2010 in a highly publicized and largely misrepresented move, this did not stop its collaboration with Chinese government departments in most of its Chinese offerings. (p. 3)

Herold’s statement shows how ideological principles in digital networks, as in the physical world, seem to come second after the promise of financial profit. And nothing promises a larger profit in the twenty-first century than the Chinese market.

In the Virtual Revolution (2010) Krotoski exposes how during its two decades of existence, the World Wide Web has been perceived from two main standpoints. On the one hand is the original conceptualisation of people like Tim Berners Lee and John Perry Barlow, who envisioned this network as one big, free digital library that would compile and make universally available all human knowledge (sort of like H.G. Wells’ idea of the World Brain); on the other hand, there is the later perception of the World Wide Web as one big market place (like a giant digital mall). As Krotoski points out, it was the emergence of this second view what led to the rise and subsequent burst of the .com bubble, which sparked the first – although brief – economic crisis of the twenty-first century.

But, by the beginning of the World Wide Web’s third decade of existence, the fact that free information sites like Wikipedia and YouTube prosperously co-inhabit the web with equally prosperous e-commerce sites like Amazon and E-bay, seem to prove that these two perceptions of the web are not necessarily exclusive from each other.

This, however, is not what can be implied by looking at the attitudes of certain representatives of traditional media, in regard to digital networks (and the threat they see in them). In 2009, the American Press Institute (API) published a report where they listed a series of steps or ‘doctrines’ that the American press industry
should take to confront the rise of online, digital media. Commenting on this report, Lena Rao (2009) argued that the aim of the API’s plan was to put ‘technological pressure’ on the technological giants. To do so, the API proposed the following five ‘doctrines’:

1. True Value Doctrine: Newspapers should create value by beginning to charge for it.
2. Fair Value Doctrine: In order to maintain the value of content, newspapers should aggressively enforce copyrights and right to profit from published content.
3. Fair Share Doctrine: News organisations should start to negotiate with the technology industry for higher prices for content that is aggregated, redistributed, broken up, and linked to.
4. Digital Deliverance Doctrine: Newspapers should invest in technology and digital platforms that could “provide content-based e-commerce, data sharing and other revenue-generating solutions” at “premium prices”.
5. Consumer Centric Doctrine: Newspaper need to refocus their content from advertisers to readers/consumers. (Quoted from Rao, 2009).

I will now focus on the first two ‘doctrines’ from the list, as I believe that they are the most relevant to the arguments exposed in this chapter. I believe this to be so, because they are the ones that focus on the relationship between the media and its audience and not (exclusively) between the media and the so-called “technological giants.”

The “true value doctrine”, in my opinion, is based on a major fallacy: that information becomes valuable just because a media charges for it. Besides from the fact that the word “valuable” is a subjective term, this doctrine also shows what has become a common feature in modern journalism since, at least, the rise of the industrial newspapers of Pulitzer and Hearst: which is that the larger media ends up setting the agenda and deciding what is and what isn’t newsworthy. This, as seen in examples dating from the Spanish-American War to the recent espionage scandal involving Rupert Murdoch’s News of the World, has led those who claim to be the defendants of journalism to act in a rather unscrupulous manner.

On the other hand, the API’s “fair share doctrine” seems like an early draft of the PIPA and SOPA acts exposed a few paragraphs above. In this sense, traditional media (or at least those representatives whose interests are represented by the API) seem to be lining together with other giants of the modern world, like the
major music and film studios. Therefore, if as Morozov argues (2011), digital networks are not necessarily the antagonists of authoritarian regimes, they do seem to be regarded as a threat by the major intermediaries and bureaucratic institutions of the modern world.

**Digital media vs. (Other) Digital Media**

As mentioned at the beginning of the chapter, one final analysis regarding what I have been calling the *digital battles*, involves the confrontation between institutions that are digital by nature. In her series of documentaries, Krotoski exposes the case of PayPal as an early attempt of what H.G. Wells (1930) had recognised as a “broad fundamental” for the “coming of a World State”: the establishment of a common, global currency. Thus, back in 2010, PayPal appeared as yet another example of digital media bringing about a new world order.

However, after the scandal that followed the WikiLeaks’ revelation of diplomatic cables, when online companies like PayPal and Amazon withdrew their support to the whistle-blowing website – these digital institutions came to be seen as enemies of a free cyberspace and were consequently targeted and hacked by the hardline, web-vigilante group *Anonymous*.

As mentioned at the beginning, when narrowing the scope of this analysis, I selected the rumour of *Anonymous* attacking Facebook on November 5, 2011, as the last episode in my study of these so-called *digital battles*. Regardless of the fact that this turned out to be a false rumour, its appearance evidences another controversial issue under debate during the early stages of our so-called information societies: the limits of privacy in public, digital networks. Instead of Facebook being hacked out of existence by *Anonymous*, the news regarding this matter, dating from November 30, 2011, told that the social network had reached a settlement with the US Federal Trade Commission (FTC) for its policies when dealing with the privacy of its more than 800 million users.

Commenting on this privacy settlement (which followed a two-year investigation and the ultimate result of which is practically identical as that of a previous investigation and subsequent settlement the FTC reached with Google regarding Buzz earlier this year), Mark Zuckerberg stated that his company had “made a
bunch of mistakes” on this matter (he failed to mentioned it also made a “bunch” of dollars). Because of these mistakes, Facebook will now be subject to twenty years of independent audits and, if it fails to comply with the FTC’s regulation, shall have to pay US $16,000 per privacy violation. The following table – quoted from Forbes Magazine’s website – lists Facebook’s “specific mistakes” identified by the FTC:

Table 1 - Facebook’s privacy violations

- In December 2009, Facebook changed its website so that certain information that users may have designated as private – such as their Friends List – was made public. They didn’t warn users that this change was coming, or get their approval in advance.

- Facebook represented that third-party apps that users’ installed would have access only to user information that they needed to operate. In fact, the apps could access nearly all of users’ personal data – data the apps didn’t need.

- Facebook told users they could restrict sharing of data to limited audiences – for example with “Friends Only”. In fact, selecting "Friends Only" did not prevent their information from being shared with third-party applications their friends used.

- Facebook had a ‘Verified Apps’ program & claimed it certified the security of participating apps. It didn’t.

- Facebook promised users that it would not share their personal information with advertisers. It did.

- Facebook claimed that when users deactivated or deleted their accounts, their photos and videos would be inaccessible. But Facebook allowed access to the content, even after users had deactivated or deleted their accounts.

- Facebook claimed that it complied with the U.S.- EU Safe Harbor Framework that governs data transfer between the U.S. and the European Union. It didn’t.”

(Hill, 2011, para. 4)

This case seems to round out what so far can only be described as an equivocal and contradictory early development of digital networks: as it shows a national institution (i.e., the FTC) protecting the citizen against the abuses of a digital power (i.e., Facebook). Based on these contradictions, I will later, in Chapter 3, focus on different perceptions and theoretical interpretations of how technology
(particularly digital technology) is affecting and influencing the societies of the early twenty-first century.

But before doing so, I will undertake a similar kind of historical analysis as the one presented in this chapter, but this time focusing on how art has been used as propaganda.
Chapter 2 – Art and Propaganda

This chapter interrogates George Orwell’s proposition that “all art is propaganda” (1940). Therefore, it relates to my research question – about the roles of journalism and art in so-called digital societies – as it studies art as a type of social and political communication. In Chapter 1, I pointed out three factors as being the most influential on the way societies have communicated news throughout history: (a) the communication of news is shaped by technological advances (b) news has been regularly used to impose and preserve power and (c) news has also acted as an agent for social and political change. This chapter relates to the second and third of these features, as it focuses on how art, like news, has also been used as an instrument of propaganda.

But before piling up examples that may either confirm or contradict Orwell’s proposition, I will focus on what he meant when he made such statement. To reference it is a rather difficult task, as it is an argument he often repeated, one way or another, throughout his career. The literal quotation is found in his 1940 essay about Charles Dickens, where he wrote:

Every writer, especially every novelist, has a ‘message’, whether he admits it or not, and the minutest details of his work are influenced by it. All art is propaganda. (Orwell, 1940)

But this same idea was brought out as early as his 1935 review of Philip Henderson’s The Novel Today, when he went as far as to state:

Few people have the guts to say outright that art and propaganda are the same thing. (p 288)

Later on, in the essay Why I Write (1946) Orwell wrote:

I do not think one can assess a writer’s motives without knowing something of his early development. His subject matter will be determined by the age he lives in – at least this is true in tumultuous, revolutionary ages like our own – but before he ever begins to write he will have acquired an emotional attitude from which he will never completely escape. (para 6)
There are two aspects in these quotes that, at first sight, seem to controvert with Orwell’s generalisation about art: (a) he is mostly talking about writing and (b) he is specifically referring to his own lifetime (which was an overtly political period). In the review of *The Novel Today* (1935), Orwell mentions a joke published a few years earlier in *Punch*, regarding what he called ‘art for art’s sake’:

> It was a picture of an intolerable youth telling his aunt that when he came down from the University he intended to ‘write.’ ‘And what are you going to write about, dear?’ his aunt inquires. ‘My dear aunt,’ the youth replies, crushingly, ‘one doesn’t write about anything, one just writes.’ (p 288)

In this review, Orwell also pointed out a change of mind in literary critics, who, prior to the political radicalisation of the 1930s, used to say “art has nothing to do with morality” and argued that “the artist was conceived as leaping to and fro in a moral, political and economic void, usually in pursuit of something called ‘Beauty’”.

During Orwell’s lifetime, the crisis of the twentieth century had debunked the notion of the artist as a mere pursuer of beauty. But does this mean Orwell’s statement applies to all periods in human history? And more specifically, is it still accurate today? In order to address this issue, in the following paragraphs, I will be drawing examples from different periods and places: focusing on how art has been used as a form of social and political communication.

Before beginning this historical analysis, there is one final clarification required. That is: what does the term *propaganda* actually means? After the rise of the totalitarian regimes of the first half of the twentieth century, the word *propaganda* was tainted with clearly political, and mostly negative, connotations. This interpretation is evident in sources like the Oxford Online Dictionary, which defines propaganda as:

> Information, especially of a biased or misleading nature, used to promote a political cause or point of view. (p N/A)

And in various academic publications, as shown in the following extract from a 1949 journal of sociology:
Propaganda may be defined as the planned use of any means of communication to impose one's will, in an actual or potential conflict situation, on anyone not ordinarily disposed to acquiesce peaceably to that will. (Becker, 1949, p. 221)

And the following one from a 1998 journal of communications:

Propaganda, by definition, is the embodiment of communication used to promote wrongdoing or untruth. (Bleile, 1998, p. N/A).

In opposition to these negatively biased definitions, there are some, more neutral ones, like Fredrik Strömberg’s, in the book Comic Art Propaganda (2010). These interpretations are more closely related to my own understanding of the word propaganda. As Strömberg writes:

Propaganda was for a long time a neutral term, until it was used just a bit too arduously during World War II to sell the ideas of Fascism and Communism by, respectively, the Nazis and the leaders of the Soviet State. Since then, propaganda has usually been seen as something bad. The Oxford English Dictionary defines propaganda as ‘any association, systematic scheme, or concerned movement for the propagation of a popular doctrine or practice’. (p. 8)

In Colombia, most people refer to television advertisements as propagandas. When I began my undergraduate studies in media and communications, I was told that this was a wrongful use of the word: that propaganda was “what politicians used in their campaigns”. One of the aims of this chapter is to question whether this popular misconception of the word propaganda is indeed a misconception. When Orwell stated that “every work of art has a meaning and a purpose,” he meant that, in order to be regarded as such, art has to stand for something. Just as every advertisement or political speech stands for something (i.e., they have a “meaning and a purpose”).

Strömberg and Orwell’s notions of the word “propaganda” also comply with the following distinction made by Aldous Huxley in Brave New World Revisited (1959):

There are two kinds of propaganda – rational propaganda in favour of action that is consonant with the enlightened self-interest of those who make it and those to whom it is addressed, and non-rational propaganda that is not consonant with anybody’s enlightened self-interest, but is dictated by, and appeals to, passions, blind impulses, unconscious cravings or fears. (p. 51)
In the forthcoming analysis, I aim to expose how, either rationally or irrationally, art has been constantly used to promote political standpoints.

I have classified the examples I study in the following paragraphs as either official or subversive artworks. When I call an artwork official, I do not necessarily mean its production has been commissioned (although in most cases it has); and when I call it subversive it does not necessarily mean it was independently produced or that it was popular or revolutionary at the time it appeared. The distinction is based on the nature of the message such artworks propagate.

The term propaganda derives from the Latin term Sacra Congregatio de Propaganda Fide or Sacred Congregation for the Propagation of the Faith, which is the institution created by Pope Gregory XV in 1622, to be in charge of the Catholic Church’s missionary work and the regulations of the Church’s affairs in non-Catholic countries.

Art, God and Power

In The Outline of History (1930) H.G. Wells mentions how since at least the early Sumerian civilisations, political power has been closely related to religious beliefs:

The earliest civilized governments were essentially priestly governments. It was not kings and captains who first set men to the plough and a settled life. It was the ideas of the gods and plenty, working with the acquiescence of common men. The early rulers of Sumer we know were all priests, kings only because they were chief priests. (pp. 213-214)

Besides from the mysticism and religious meaning of the great funerary buildings of ancient Egypt, they also had clear political connotations: they stood as testimony of the grandiosity of the Pharaoh. In the same fashion, the gothic cathedrals of the Middle Ages and many of the great artworks of the Renaissance were commissioned by the Pope. Based on this, Huxley (1959) acknowledged the

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10 In this sense, I have included as an example of subversive art, the paintings of Hieronymus Bosch and Pieter Bruegel the elder, which were actually produced under the patronage of Dutch and Flemish aristocrats and for many years were accessible only to a small, privileged fraction of the population.
effectiveness of religious symbolism when used in the act of persuasion in the following terms:

Sometimes the symbols take effect by being disproportionately impressive, haunting and fascinating in their own right. Of this kind are the rites and pomps of religion. These ‘beauties of holiness’ strengthen faith where it already exists and, where there is no faith, contribute to conversion. (p. 78)

At this point, it is important to recall how, as mentioned in Chapter 1, political powers of all kinds have regularly manipulated information. And by the mid-twentieth century, this practice came to be regarded as a science and an art form. The following, rather bizarre example, quoted by Huxley (1959), evidences this progression:

‘Hitler’, wrote Hermann Rauschning in 1939, ‘has a deep respect for the Catholic church and the Jesuit order; not because of their Christian doctrine, but because of the ‘machinery’ they have elaborated and controlled, their hierarchical system, their extremely clever tactics, their knowledge of human nature and their use of human weaknesses in ruling over believers’. (p. 64)

But way before Hitler, and prior to the existence of the Catholic Church, the usage of sensitive symbols: such as those ‘beauties of holiness’ of Egyptian and Catholic art, or those evidences of might (my italics), like sending home the shields of the conquered enemy (as Alexander the Great did, after defeating the Persian army at the Grankos River in 334 B.C.), have been a constant feature in what Habermas (1989) described as the relationship between system and lifeworld.

**Modern and Postmodern Officialisms**

There is one major irony – which I would not necessarily call a contradiction – in my research question. As exposed throughout Chapter 4, my hypothesis, that in twenty-first century societies the dividing line between the roles of journalism and art should fade, is based on McLuhan’s definition of the artist as society’s “early warning system”. According to McLuhan, the industrial societies of the modern world evolved the way they did because of an alteration on humans’ sensory balance, caused by the introduction of the printing press in Europe in the mid-fifteenth century. Therefore, the totalitarian state was the ultimate expression of those industrialised, nationalistic and, as McLuhan described them, “fragmented”
societies of the modern world (Wolfe, 1968). And yet, one of the most universally recognisable features of the totalitarian state is their promptness in burning books.

In the next section of this chapter, I will analyse what I believe is the most important (or at least the most obvious) example of subversive art standing against the totalitarian state: as it focuses on Orwell’s journalistic work on utopian and dystopian literature. But before that, I will study what I believe is the most evident example of official art during this period: the architecture of Albert Speer.

Hughes (2003b) defines Speer as “perhaps the most powerful architect that has ever lived,” and as “the scribe” who was to “translate Hitler’s vision of the world in marble and steel and space”. Amongst the leaders of German National Socialism, Speer remains as one of the most intriguing and controversial. This is mostly because he was the one high-ranked officer who was officially redeemed of his past. Tom Wolfe explains McLuhan’s theory of the artist by referring to them as “divine ‘naturals’, gifted but largely unconscious of the meaning of their power”. In Chapter 4, I argue that this idea of the artist as an unconscious ‘divine natural’ is a vision of the modern world, that connotes the disturbing idea that the artist enjoys a semi-diplomatic immunity. Or imbued, as Orwell called it in his 1944 review of Salvador Dali’s autobiography, with: “a kind of benefit of clergy”.

Despite describing Dali’s Life (1942) as “a book that stinks”, Orwell does not fall short in recognising Dali as “a draughtsman of very exceptional gifts” and a “very hard worker;” who “has fifty times more talent than most of the people who would denounce his morals and jeer at his painting”. His review thus focuses on the inability of the modern mind to separate these two notions. Orwell argued that a society where someone like Dali “can flourish has something wrong with it”. Yet, he also criticised the views of the likes of “Lord Elton, (...) Mr. Alfred Noyes (and) The Times leader writers” who: “would flatly refuse to see any merit in Dali whatever” and whose “impulse is not only to crush every new talent as it appears, but to castrate the past as well.” But then again, he states:

If you say that Dali, though a brilliant draughtsman, is a dirty little scoundrel, you are looked upon as a savage. (...) And between these two fallacies there is no middle position (...) on the one side Kulturbolschevismus: on the other (sic) ‘Art for Art’s sake. (para. 18)
At this moment, I can think of two hypothetical questions to ask in the game Hitchens (2007) recalled as the *WWGOD?* (What Would George Orwell Do?): (a) What would Orwell say about Speer’s ultimate redemption? and (b) What would he say about Dali’s role as the Maecenas of pop art?

At the end of this chapter, I will expose what I have identified as a recurrent comparison between Orwell’s *Nineteen Eighty-Four* and Huxley’s *Brave New World*; based on this comparison, the establishment of a *pop culture* in the *West* may be regarded as a post-modern, Huxleyan officialism.

Following this line, later on, in Chapter 5, I will study three examples from Colombian art in the twentieth century that challenge the historical, official version of Colombian republicanism. But before moving my analysis to Colombia, I will first make a stop at what I consider to be the most critical point of the so-called crisis of modernism (if the reader allows me such redundancy); in the following section, I will study how previous examples of utopian and dystopian literature influenced the subversive artwork of George Orwell.
2a. The Orwellian Vision of Utopia

In this section, I examine Orwell’s journalistic writings (i.e., essays, columns and reviews) on utopian and dystopian literature. The purpose of this analysis is to study Orwell’s work as a case of art acting as propaganda and also as an example of the artist being what McLuhan called society’s “early warning system” (Wolfe, 1968).

The analysis in this chapter focuses on the work of five major authors: Oscar Wilde, H.G. Wells, Jack London, Evgeny Zamyatin and Aldous Huxley. This selection of futuristic literature from the late nineteenth and early to mid-twentieth centuries is a fundamental element in my research; not only because it relates to the notion of the artist being an “early warning system” but also because I consider the prophecies, the hopes and fears of these utopian (and dystopian) writers to be accurate measures to diagnose contemporary societies.

As exposed in the last section of the previous chapter (and throughout the next one), it seems like a futile exercise to write about the influence of digital technologies on twenty-first century societies. History-changing events are happening on a daily basis. News is coming at us from everywhere, tweeting in the air amongst endless bytes of banality, sensationalism, pornography, art and all other categories included in the word “information”.

Many years must pass before someone can properly judge the effects of the present (i.e., the present of 2012) over the generation born in the early twenty-first century. But this feeling of uncertainty and expectation is hardly unique. At the turn of the last two centuries, humanity was also facing unprecedented technological, social and political conditions. Conditions that, like the ones happening today, augured a new world order (to use a common aphorism from the late twentieth century).

As Orwell’s review (1949) of Oscar Wilde’s The Soul of Man Under Socialism (1891) shows, by the mid-twentieth century, the nineteenth century ideals of
individualism and technological progress had degraded, leading societies into that stage of totalitarian collectivism that inspired the plot of *Nineteen Eighty-Four*.

In his *As I Please* column of 4 February, 1944, Orwell wrote:

> The really frightening thing about totalitarianism is not that it commits ‘atrocities’ but that it attacks the concept of objective truth. (Orwell, 1968, vol 3, p 88).

Later on, this fear would be reflected as one the driving arguments of *Nineteen Eighty-Four*:

> Who controls the past, controls the future, who controls the present, controls the past. (p 37).

In the world of *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, history was “a palimpsest, scrapped clean and re-inscribed exactly as often as necessary” (p. 35). There is another metaphor in English literature that involves the figure of the palimpsest. It is found in Thomas de Quincey's *Suspira de Profundis* (1845). Unlike Orwell's, de Quincey's metaphor does not relate to history and how it can be altered by those in power but to memory and how it endures and is preserved through some sort of artistic legacy:

> In the illustration imagined by myself, from the case of some individual palimpsest, the Grecian tragedy had seemed to be displaced, but was not displaced by the monkish legend; and the monkish legend had seemed to be displaced, but was not displaced, by the knightly romance (...) Alchemy there is none of passion or disease that can scorch away these immortal impresses. (p 152)

Based on de Quincey's (and not his own) metaphor, I compare Orwell's prophecies with those of his most influential predecessors. This analysis focuses on five major authors: Oscar Wilde, H.G. Wells, Jack London, Evgeny Zamyatin and Aldous Huxley.
Orwell on Wilde’s Socialist Utopia

In 1949, Orwell published a review of Oscar Wilde’s *The Soul of Man Under Socialism* (1891). The gap between Wilde’s socialist dream and Orwell’s totalitarian nightmare portrays what came to be known as the crisis of modernism or the decay of machine civilisation. In *The Soul of Man Under Socialism*, Wilde presents an answer to a question authors such as Orwell and Huxley would ask a few decades later: *What is progress?* To Wilde, progress meant “the realisation of Utopias”. But what were these Utopias Wilde dreamed about? And why had they turned into nightmares by the time of Orwell’s adulthood?

The three main arguments running across *The Soul of Man Under Socialism* are: (a) Socialism leads to Individualism and through Individualism the human being evolves (b) Socialism is achieved by the abolition of private property, as the abolition of private property will end social inequality and (c) in the future all unpleasant work is to be done by machines.

In his review, Orwell pointed out that the second and third arguments mentioned in the previous paragraph are the main fallacies in Wilde’s Utopia. About the abolition of property, he wrote:

Wilde makes two common but unjustified assumptions. One is that the world is immensely rich and is suffering chiefly from maldistribution. Even things out between the millionaire and the crossing-sweeper, he seems to say, and there will be plenty of everything for everybody. Until the Russian Revolution, this belief was very widely held – ‘starving in the midst of plenty’ was a favourite phrase – but it was quite false, and it survived only because Socialists thought always of the highly developed Western countries and ignored the fearful poverty of Asia and Africa. (Orwell, 1968, vol 4, p 427).

And about the replacement of labour by machinery:

Wilde assumes that it is a simple matter to arrange that all the unpleasant kinds of work shall be done by machinery. The machines, he says, are our new race of slaves: a tempting metaphor, but a misleading one, since there is a vast range of jobs – roughly speaking, any job needing great flexibility – that no machine is able to do. (Orwell, 1968, vol 4, p 428).

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11 The year 1984 was published and one year before Orwell’s death
But all together, Orwell is generous and positive in his appreciation of Wilde’s essay. Wilde’s Utopia represents Orwell’s childhood dream, seen from a world of atomic bombs and concentration camps. When Orwell sums up Wilde’s “optimistic forecast” by stating that “In effect, the world will be populated by artists, each striving after perfection in the way that seems best to him” there is no irony or resentment in his words: only the nostalgia of a dying man who has seen the world turned into his worst nightmare.

Something positive that can be said about *The Soul of Man Under Socialism* is that it (for a moment) made Orwell sound, if not necessarily optimistic, at least not utterly pessimistic. In his review, Orwell acknowledged his society was in a transitional period, although:

> The trouble with transitional periods is that the harsh outlook which they generate tends to become permanent. (Orwell, 1968, vol 4, p 428).

Orwell also acknowledged how Wilde had recognised authoritarian tendencies within the socialist movement. Within the context of this analysis, Wilde’s praise of the individual over the State – and his view of individualism as the path to human evolution – can be seen as the beginning of a train of thought that, by the mid-twentieth century, had evolved (or devolved) into Orwell’s fear of a big, omnipresent state, which held control over its citizens’ individuality.

Despite the naivety of Wilde’s utopian arguments, Orwell ends up praising *The Soul of Man Under Socialism* as an opportune reminder of that “original, half-forgotten objective of human brotherhood”. Thus, looking at Orwell and Wilde as “early warning systems” within our species, the first question that comes to mind is: are the societies of the early twenty-first century closer to Wilde’s Utopia or to Orwell’s dystopia? In fact, this is the most obvious question regarding all the authors included in this analysis (and particularly relevant in the comparison between Orwell and Huxley). But in the case of *The Soul of Man Under Socialism*, before asking such question, it is important to ask whether Wilde’s Utopia is still a Utopia; that is, whether humankind should still be aiming for a world where, in Orwell’s words:
Pain will cease to be important: indeed (...) Man will be able to realise his personality through joy instead of through suffering. Crime will disappear, since there will be no economic reason for it. The State will cease to govern and will survive merely as an agency for the distribution of necessary commodities. All the disagreeable jobs will be done by machinery, and everyone will be completely free to choose his own work and his own manner of life. (Orwell, 1968, vol 4, p 427).

Is the realisation of this technological, individualistic Utopia what contemporary societies should be considering as progress? For those who see the world portrayed in *The Soul of Man Under Socialism* as an ideal form of human evolution, it is always good to question the arguments exposed in Wilde’s essay. By the end of the 1940s, Orwell had detected two main fallacies in Wilde’s arguments: the abolition of private property did not necessarily lead to an egalitarian distribution of wealth, and machinery was still not able to replace human labour. Recent advances in software and robotics are turning the idea of machines replacing human labour into a not-too-distant possibility. From many perspectives – from Orwell’s to the Unabomber’s – this is not necessarily a positive thing.

Partington (2004) points out one fundamental difference in the way an Edwardian like Wells (which argument can be extended to a Victorian like Wilde) and a Georgian like Orwell perceived technology. The latter conceived the possibility that, as Orwell would express it in *The Road to Wigan Pier* (1937), “the machine itself may be the enemy”.

Who was right? Do humans shape technology or does technology shape humanity? Or both? And to what extent does the former supersede the latter? Or vice versa? These are questions that, like in the times of Wilde, Wells and Orwell are still impossible to answer (and might remain like this for as long as humans continue developing new technologies). However, I believe it is important to continue asking them.

In the matter of private property and the distribution of the planet’s wealth, things are even more complex. Not only poverty and inequality remain as current problems. Issues like climate change, an ever-growing human population and an increasing rate of consumption of natural resources are also continuously altering the equation.
The news of governments, such as China, as well as investment funds and multinational companies from the first world, buying farmlands in the third world (Barrionuevo, 2011; Vidal, 2011), augur that in the future, the rural areas of the planet will be operated under a new style of feudalism. On the other hand, most of the population will be living in cities (UNFPA, 2007). What will happen to those who remain in rural areas? Will they stay as serfs of an ethereal feudal lord? Can Oscar Wilde’s ideal of individualism flourish in overcrowded cities?

Orwell’s major criticism of both Wilde and Wells’ views was that they were too civilised. They could not grasp the reality of the third world. As mentioned in his review of The Soul of Man Under Socialism, “socialists thought always of the highly developed Western countries and ignored the fearful poverty of Asia and Africa”. Still, Orwell is way more critical of Wells utopianism than of Wilde’s. Why is this so?

From Orwell’s perspective, Wilde’s Utopia remained as a hazy dream from a remote ancestor. As distant as Wilde’s dream may have appeared from Orwell’s reality, the fact that it remained as a germ of that "half-forgotten objective of human brotherhood" was a faint, but still palpable, call for optimism. On the other hand, Orwell’s final impression of Wells’ was that of a disillusioned son at his father’s dying bed.

Partington describes Orwell’s criticism of Wells as that a parricide. This term comes from Orwell himself, as in the essay Wells, Hitler and the World State (1941a), Orwell asked: “Is it not a sort of parricide for a person of my age to find fault with H.G. Wells?” Then he added, "The minds of all of us, and therefore the physical world, would be perceptibly different if Wells had never existed”.

By acknowledging Wells as the most influential figure over his generation, Orwell is praising Wells’ ability to visualise Wilde’s Utopia within the technological, social and political frame of the early twentieth century. But also, finding the same fallacies in Wells’ prophecies as he had found in Wilde’s (i.e., a simplistic – almost absent – view of the problems of the third world and an over-optimistic perception of technology), Orwell seemed to be telling Wells: You should have known better. I am who I am because of you, I know what I know because of you, and you were wrong; and look what we have done to the world.
Orwell on Wells: Motives for a Parricide

Nowhere is the imprint of the first half of the twentieth century more evident than in the career of H.G. Wells. How distant is the prophetic writer of technological romances from the angry preacher who finally prophesied:

The end of everything we call life is close at hand and cannot be evaded (...) there is no way out or round or through the impasse. (...) [man] has to give place to some other animal better adapted to face the fate that closes in more and more swiftly upon mankind. (Wells, 1946, pp 1 - 4).

The atomic bomb had blown to pieces what little remained of nineteenth century utopianism. For the ultimate believer in technological progress, it meant the end.

Orwell criticised Wells for being too civilised. This explained his inability to see a civilisation capable of emerging from the crisis of modernism. In H.G. Wells and the World State (1961), Wagar pointed out a similar view among some of Wells’ staunchest detractors: “Belloc and Chesterton never tired of censuring Wells for his sham cosmopolitanism”, describing his “so-called cosmopolis” as “only a Victorian suburb magnified to planetary proportions”. Wagar also mentions a German scholar, W. Halfmann, who “used Wells as a prize illustration of ‘Anglo-Saxon imperialism’” and as “the culminating figure (...) in a line that reached all the way from Bentham to Carlyle and Kipling”. (pp. 256-7).

Unlike Wells, Orwell had witnessed the relationship between the colonies and their European rulers first hand. Not only was he born in India, most importantly he had served as a colonial officer in Burma for 5 years. This experience explains Orwell’s scepticism of Wells’ idea of a World State.

According to Partington (2004), “Orwell’s support for patriotism was antiethical to Wells’ cosmopolitanism” (p. 54). Wells regarded nationalism as a symptom of ignorance. Orwell recognised it as a much more complex reality. Patriotic feelings had been latent in countless generations and were not likely to disappear for several more. As Orwell would write in Wells, Hitler and the World State (1941a), the main reason why Britain had stood during the war was because of “the atavistic emotion of patriotism, the ingrained feeling of the English-speaking peoples that they are superior to foreigners”.

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Bringing the debate between Wells and Orwell to the present, the questions, should begin with the issue of nationalism in a globalised, post-colonial planet (whatever that means). The celebrations after the death of Osama Bin Laden show that nationalism is still quite an issue. Yet, the estimates of our current and future population and of the consumption of natural resources are a call for global measures. How is this going to be resolved? What would Wells say about supranational institutions like the UN? Or the G8? Or the G20? Or the EU? How do they stand in regard to his World State?

According to Partington, next to nationalism, the other main discordance between Orwell and Wells revolved around their perception of technology. This is evident in the following extract from Wells, Hitler and the World State:

If one looks through nearly any book that he has written in the last forty years one finds the same idea constantly recurring: the supposed antithesis between the man of science who is working towards a planned World State and the reactionary who is trying to restore a disorderly past. (...) On the one side science, order, progress, internationalism, aeroplanes, steel, concrete, hygiene: on the other side war, nationalism, religion, monarchy, peasants, Greek professors, poets, horses. History as he sees it is a series of victories won by the scientific man over the romantic man. (para. 7)

Besides Orwell’s belief that “the machine itself may be the enemy,” there are other, subtler disagreements regarding the incidence of technology on mid-twentieth century societies. They also happen to relate to the issue of nationalism.

In his As I Please column of May 12, 1944, Orwell wrote:

Reading recently a batch of rather shallowly optimistic ‘progressive’ books, I struck by the automatic way in which people go on repeating certain phrases which were fashionable before 1914. Two great favourites are ‘the abolition of distance’ and ‘the disappearance of frontiers’. (Orwell, 1968, vol 3, p 145)

Then he added:

Take simply the instance of travel. In the nineteenth century some parts of the world were unexplored, but there was almost no restriction on travel. Up to 1914 you did not need a passport for any country except Russia. The European emigrant, if he could scrape together a few pounds for the passage, simply set sail for America or Australia, and when he got there no questions were asked. In the eighteenth century it had been quite normal
and safe to travel in a country with which your own country was at war. (Orwell, 1968, vol 3, p 145).

Although he does not specifically mentions Wells amongst the authors of those “shallowly optimistic ‘progressive’ books”, it is safe to assume that, one way or another, Orwell had him in mind when he wrote these lines. Not only had he previously described Wells as the “arch-priest of progress,” but the actual, literal phrases – for example, the “abolition of distance” – are recurrent in Wells’ work. For instance, in *The Open Conspiracy* (1925), Wells wrote:

> Now, with great rapidity, there has been that ‘abolition of distance,’ and everyone has become next-door neighbour to everyone else. (p. 7)

So, what can be said about “the instance of travel” today? On the one hand, many of the “restrictions on travel” that Orwell pointed out in the 1940s are no longer an issue for the average citizen of a Western developed nation. But what about the rest? As a Colombian, I can testify to “restrictions on travel” that a citizen from the first world would not know about. Still, I’m writing these words in Melbourne, Australia.

Nationalism, as it exists today and as it did in the 1930s, divides the world between first and second (and third) class citizens. Then again, these distinctions also exist within national boundaries. In criticising Wells for being too civilised, Orwell is questioning his capacity to grasp the complex relation between these two origins of inequality.

In his review of ‘42 to ‘44, Orwell wrote, “Mr Wells has never once suggested how the World State is to be brought into being” (quoted from Partington, 2004). In Wells’ view, in order to address the inequality between individuals, one should start by ending the differences between nations. But how do you do that? Orwell kept asking.

Whether Wells’ writings offer an accurate answer to such a question is still impossible to answer. According to Partington, a rebuttal to Orwell’s criticism for not offering solutions to the problems related to nationalism can be found in *The
Open Conspiracy (1925). As Partington points out, in order to “end national sovereignty in favour of popular sovereignty,” Wells “sought the cooperation of functional groups throughout the world” (p. 49). From Orwell’s perspective, these functional groups were bound to degenerate into the Ministries of Peace, Truth, Love and Plenty, of Nineteen Eighty-Four.

Artist as Propagandist

Although essentially futile, it is a good (or at least fun) exercise to ask hypothetical questions about the authors in this analysis. Regarding Orwell and Oscar Wilde, one question that jumps to mind is: What would they think about pop art? How do the artists of the so-called post-modern world stand in relation to the individuals idealised in The Soul of Man Under Socialism? Do the artists of the twenty-first century share Orwell’s believe that “all art is propaganda”?

If their views on nationalism are at the top of the differences between Orwell and Wells, then their position in relation to art and propaganda is amongst their most significant agreements. Both Orwell and Wells were criticised for having sacrificed their art in order to expose a political agenda. In the introduction of the Penguin Books edition of Nineteen Eighty-Four, Pimlott (2000) writes:

If Nineteen Eighty-Four is an accessible novel, that is partly because of the lucidity of Orwell’s writing. But it is also because of a lack of subtlety in his characterization, and a crude plot. (...) This works well, at one level, as entertainment. But it has limitations as art. (p. x)

Like Orwell, Wells perceived his work as a type of propaganda. In the final chapter of his Experiment in Autobiography (1934), Wells would describe the “structural frame” of his life as the propaganda of “a world-wide ‘Open Conspiracy’ to rescue human society from the net of tradition in which it is entangled and to reconstruct it upon planetary lines” (p. 549). Also, like Orwell, he would be criticised because of that. As Wagar pointed out:

The writing of his last thirty years was devoted (...) to the task of saving Western civilization from its sins. The very directness of his approach, his
This notion of the artist as a propagandist is evident in the work of all the authors in this analysis: from Wilde’s socialist Utopia, to Orwell and Huxley’s atrophied visions of the future.

Partington describes Orwell’s criticism of Wells as a “journalistic parricide.” As mentioned before, the “parricide” part comes from Orwell himself and explains a generational change of mind. But the “journalistic” part is more debatable. Wasn’t Wells the artist more influential on Orwell’s career than Wells the journalist? Finding an answer to this question is something that goes beyond the scope of my research. But the question itself is particularly relevant, as it is a clear example of what theorists like Innis and McLuhan described as the social fragmentation of industrial societies.

From the point of view of the orthodox literary critic – who in my opinion is the ultimate representative of print-based societies – it is not possible to conciliate journalism and art, without hampering one or the other (or both). Nonetheless, based on the appreciation they had of their own work, it is safe to assume that being accused of sacrificing their art was not too dramatic for either Orwell or Wells. On the other hand, the criticism that focused on their political views seemed to sting them in a particularly painful way. Amongst the anecdotes surrounding the relationship between these two authors, the one I believe most vividly portrays Wells’ reaction to Orwell’s criticism comes from an annotation in Orwell’s War-Time Diary of March 27, 1942:

Abusive letter from H.G. Wells, who addresses me as ‘you shit,’ among many other things. (Orwell, 1968)

Although Orwell would become the most devastating of Wells’ critics, the disenchantment with Wells’ ideal of progress had become evident before Orwell’s attacks. In The Prophecies of Fascism (1940), Orwell described Aldous Huxley’s Brave New World (1932) as a “post war parody” of H.G. Wells’ When the Sleeper
Wakes (1910). This is another evidence of how, more than a personal dispute, Orwell’s disagreement with Wells’ represented the disenchantment of an entire generation with their immediate predecessors. In Wells, Hitler and the World State (1941a), Orwell wrote:

...the singleness of mind, the one-sided imagination that made Wells seem like an inspired prophet in the Edwardian age, make him a shallow, inadequate thinker now. (para. 8)

Wagar mentions how Wells had “no terror of the tendency in Western civilisation towards ‘bigness’ in government, business, and social organization”. Also, that for Wells, “Bigness was intrinsically good. It made for efficiency, increased productivity, an enlargement in the range and scope of the individual life” (p. 254). On the other hand, this bigness in government, business and organisation was Orwell and Huxley’s main fear. In Brave New World Revisited (1959), Huxley constantly refers to the threat that “Big Business” and “Big Government” represent to the “Little Man.” He also considered that, next to “overpopulation”, “over-organisation” would be amongst the main problems troubling future societies.

The fact that Orwell regarded Brave New World as a parody of When the Sleeper Wakes, not only shows the generational discordance between these two authors but also implies a continuation between the writers of the latter and the former works. Based on their age and their perceptions of machine civilisation, one could place Orwell and Huxley in one group and H.G. Wells in the opposite. In Wells’ group, he would be joined by Oscar Wilde, his Victorian predecessor, and his American contemporary, Jack London.

However, Orwell would use a different criteria to relate and differentiate the prophecies of these authors. In The Prophecies of Fascism, Orwell celebrated the reprint of Jack London’s The Iron Heel (1908). In this essay, he compared London’s authoritarian dystopia with other futuristic novels including When the Sleeper Wakes and Brave New World. According to Orwell, the reason why Wells (and by extension Huxley) had failed to predict the rise of totalitarianism was because, unlike London – who had “the advantage to be enjoyed in not being, like Wells, a
fully civilised man” – they could not grasp that “hedonistic societies do not endure.”

**Between Hedonists and Authoritarians**

By 1984 (the year not the book) it was becoming evident that the *Soviet experiment* was not going to last. Back then, Orwell’s statement that “hedonistic societies do not endure” could have been answered with a “neither do authoritarian ones”.

Within the context of the Cold War, it was the hedonistic Americans who prevailed over the authoritarian Soviets. This fact seems to question Orwell’s prophetic accuracy. This is, of course, if one is to consider the American as a hedonistic society. But that is a question I leave for the reader to answer.

Nothing seems to last since the word ‘progress’ became a permanent reference in most human languages. About words, there is a footnote in *The Iron Heel* (London, 1908), where the future historian, looking back from the age of the “Brotherhood of Man,” describes, in partial amusement, the fascination that humans from the modern age had with them:

> The people of that age were phrase-slaves. The abjectness of their servitude is incomprehensible to us. There was a magic in words greater than the conjurer’s art. So befuddled and chaotic were their minds that the utterance of a single word could negative the generalizations of a lifetime of serious research and thought. Such a word was the adjective *Utopian*. The mere utterance of it could damn any scheme, no matter how sanely conceived, of economic amelioration or regeneration. (p. 62)

In this passage, London’s use of the word *Utopian* refers to the same socialist utopianism evident in *The Soul of Man Under Socialism*. Hence, Orwell’s criticism of Oscar Wilde could be extended to Jack London. Just as such, London’s faith in technology would also classify him together with Wilde and H.G. Wells. This faith in technology is evident in another passage of *The Iron Heel*, where Ernest Everhard (the novel’s socialist hero), while trying to convince a group of small capitalist to join the working class in their struggle against *The Iron Heel*, refers to the Luddites of the nineteenth century as “machine-breakers”. He concludes his appreciation by saying they were “very stupid” (London, 1908, p. 94).
But it is the fear of an almighty regime, able to manipulate language at its own convenience that, within the context of this analysis, represents a critical view that travels from *The Iron Heel*’s authoritarian oligarchy to the *IngSoc* (*Newspeak* for English Socialist Party) of *Nineteen Eighty-Four.*

In *The Prophecies of Fascism* (1941b), Orwell argued that both H.G. Wells and Aldous Huxley had failed to predict the rise of fascism because their vision was too civilised. London, on the other hand, who as Orwell pointed out, “with his love of violence and physical strength, his belief in ‘natural aristocracy,’ his animal worship and exaltation of the primitive (...) had what some might fairly call a Fascist strain”, could foresee authoritarian regimes coming into power.

Unlike most of London’s critics, including Trotsky, who in a letter to London’s daughter praised *The Iron Heel* for its “Historical Foresight” (Auerbach, 2006), Orwell (1941b) did not consider *The Iron Heel* to be “an accurate forecast of the coming of Hitler” but merely “a tale of capitalist oppression.”

As mentioned earlier in this chapter, Orwell’s experience as a colonial officer in Burma gave him a wider view of the major political and social issues of his time. This explains why he opposed the views of two English writers, such as Huxley and Wells (whom it might be added he personally met), with that of an American like London and (later) a Russian like Zamyatin.

The passage in *Nineteen Eighty-Four* where O’Brien tells Winston Smith to imagine the future as “a boot stamping on a human face—forever,” appears as one of the most obvious influences of *The Iron Heel* on *Nineteen Eighty Four.* In opposition to *The Iron Heel,* Orwell describes the ruling class in *When the Sleeper Wakes,* as “completely soft, cynical and faithless”. It is in this aspect that Orwell believed London had proven to be the most insightful; as he was aware that, “a ruling class has got to have a strict morality, a quasi-religious belief in itself, a mystique” (Orwell, 1941b).

About *Brave New World,* Orwell described it as “a brilliant caricature of the present (the present of 1930)” which, because of the same reasons ascribed to *When the Sleeper Wakes,* “probably casts no light on the future”. Today, something similar could be said about *Nineteen Eighty-Four.*
If one is to deal strictly with the author’s accuracy when foreseeing the future (i.e., the future of the 1940s), then one might argue Orwell’s relevance seems to be fading away. In the article Why Orwell Still Matters (2007)\textsuperscript{12}, Hitchens questioned whether the game “WWGOD?” (What Would George Orwell Do?) was still relevant in the twenty-first century. His conclusion is that it is, and it is so because Orwell’s view represents “the side of elementary humanity (...) against all experiments on the human subject” (p. 205).

Within the context of this analysis, Hitchens’ use of the word “experiment” particularly evokes the name of Aldous Huxley and his Brave New World. As it is exposed in more detail later on, the debate: Who was right Orwell or Huxley? is still very relevant. From a Western perspective, the events of the second half of the twentieth century seem to give Huxley the upper hand. But, as Hitchens pointed out, this conclusion is not necessarily accurate in countries under authoritarian regimes, such as Zimbabwe or China.

China’s case is particularly relevant, as its development as a national power is one of the biggest question marks of the twenty-first century. Marolt (2011) refers to China’s party-state policy towards the Internet as an “Orwellian surveillance and censorship” (p. 64). However, as Marolt also points out, the development of digital media might be altering this equation, empowering civil society in relation to the state.

The other major question mark – in terms of nationalism – involves the United States of America and what, at first sight, appears like its decline as the world’s only national superpower, which brings me back to Jack London and The Iron Heel.

In the passage quoted below, it is evident how, as early as the turn of the twentieth century, London was already denouncing the servility of the media – and the arts – to large economic and political powers:

\begin{quote}
I spoke of the professional men and the artists as villeins. What else are they? One and all, the professors, the preachers and the editors, hold their jobs by serving the Plutocracy, and their service consists of propagating only such ideas as are either harmless to or commendatory of the Plutocracy. (p. 115)
\end{quote}

Although it is a process that has been happening since, at least, the late eighteenth century, the establishment of the media as the fourth state became evident at the turn of the twentieth, when the newspapers of wealthy entrepreneurs like Joseph Pulitzer and William Randolph Hearst displaced the small, artisan prints that proliferated during the late eighteenth and early -to -mid-nineteenth centuries. It is not too bold to assume London had the examples of Pulitzer and (particularly) Hearst in mind, when he wrote the aforementioned critique on the media.

At first sight, it seems like an obvious deduction to relate Huxley's vision of the future with the United States and Orwell's with the Soviet Union. However, events like the Spanish-American War (1898), the McCarthyism of the 1950s and 60s, the Vietnam War and more recently George W. Bush’s National Security Strategy in the so-called War on Terror, can be fairly catalogued as Orwellian. Then again, they are probably not as Orwellian as the politics of the former Soviet Union, China and North Korea.

In his review of Zamyatin's 1924 book We, Orwell (1946) follows up on the premises he had earlier exposed in The Prophecies of Fascism (1941b). In one passage, he wrote: “The first thing anyone would notice about We is the fact – never pointed out, I believe – that Aldous Huxley's Brave New World must be partly derived from it”. Together with James Burnham’s The Managerial Revolution (1941) – from which Orwell took the notion that the world would be divided into two or three super-states, so big and powerful that they would not be able to conquer or destroy each other – Zamyatin’s dystopia can be regarded as the most influential work on Nineteen Eighty-Four.

In Orwell's words, it was We's “intuitive grasp of the irrational side of totalitarianism” that made, “Zamyatin's book superior to Huxley's”. A few years later, in the opening chapter of Brave New World Revisited (1959), while comparing his dystopia with Orwell's, Huxley reached the following conclusion:

Orwell's Nineteen Eighty Four was a magnified projection into the future of a present that contained Stalinism and an immediate past that had witnessed the flowering of Nazism. Brave New World was written before the rise of Hitler to supreme power in
Germany and when the Russian tyrant had not yet got into his stride. In 1931 systematic terrorism was not the obsessive contemporary fact which it had become in 1948, and the future dictatorship of my imaginary world was a good deal less brutal than the future dictatorship so brilliantly portrayed by Orwell. In the context of 1948, *Nineteen Eighty Four* seemed dreadfully convincing. But tyrants, after all, are mortal and circumstances change. Recent developments in Russia, and recent advances in science and technology, have robbed Orwell’s book of some of its gruesome verisimilitude. (pp. 12-13)

It seems like all recent futuristic literature is a continuation of either Orwell or Huxley’s visions (or a mixture of both). Beyond the debate about whose is (or has been) more accurate, the fact that they remain as the most relevant references in this matter casts a light (or rather a shadow) on the societies of the present. As Herold (2011) points out, the policies of surveillance and censorship in the Chinese Internet are defended with the argument that they are imposed in order to prevent China from turning into a decadent, hedonistic or Huxleyan society. Just as there is a tendency in the West to justify its flaws with ‘Well, at least we are not living under an Orwellian regime like China’.

**Orwell vs. Huxley**

So, who was right? Orwell or Huxley? More than six decades have gone since the publication of *Nineteen Eighty-Four* (1949), almost three since the actual 1984, and the debate goes on. If, by chance, the reader is expecting an answer to what I consider to be an unanswerable question, I will now clarify how this part of the chapter focuses on the *why* and not the *who* in this dilemma: why are Orwell and Huxley still so relevant despite all the political, physical and technological changes the world has experienced in the last six decades?

The most obvious answer seems to be: because despite all of the political, physical and technological changes, the societies of today are still very similar to those of the early to mid-twentieth century. This is, however, a debatable point, as there are various arguments, both optimistic and pessimistic, that would contradict my position. Amongst the pessimistic, Postman’s *Amusing Ourselves to Death* (1986) stands out as one of the most relevant.
Postman’s main argument is that television was turning Western societies into an early version of the superficial, dulled by entertainment, hedonistic society portrayed in Huxley’s *Brave New World*. In the foreword of his book, Postman summarises the views of Orwell and Huxley in the following terms:

> What Orwell feared were those who would ban books. What Huxley feared was that there would be no reason to ban a book, for there would be no one who wanted to read one. Orwell feared those who would deprive us of information. Huxley feared those who would give us so much that we would be reduced to passivity and egoism. Orwell feared that the truth would be concealed from us. Huxley feared the truth would be drowned in a sea of irrelevance. Orwell feared we would become a captive culture. Huxley feared we would become a trivial culture. (pp vii – viii)

He then concludes by stating that his book is “about the possibility that Huxley, not Orwell, was right” (Postman, 1986, pp. vii-viii).

When Postman published his book, his arguments appeared as a response to the idealistic perception of electromagnetic media that, within the context of this analysis13, begins with McLuhan’s view of the world as a *global village*. As mentioned in Chapter 1, prior to the publication of Postman’s book, an earlier, more popular criticism of a similar nature appears in Sydney Lummet’s 1976 movie *Network*.

Thus, as mentioned above, bringing the debate to the present, that is, to the early days of this so-called era of information, there are theorists like Gladwell (2010) and Carr (2008), who have recognised what might be described as Huxleyan features in the development of digital networks (similar to the ones Postman had recognised in television). Gladwell’s arguments are based on the assumption that online networks are built around “weak ties”. Thus, online networks not only do not help in the development of social activism, but they actually hamper social movements by trivialising what so far had been a serious thing: revolution. On the other hand, Carr’s arguments relate even closer to Postman’s, as he gained global notoriety for asking whether “Google is making us stupid?”

Besides, from the Huxleyan features identified by the likes of Gladwell and Carr, Morozov have recognised Orwellian threats within the model of online networks. As mentioned in Chapter 3, these threats are summarised in two particular

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13 i.e., based on the debate between Network Idealists and Naïve Realists exposed in chapter 2.
scenarios that evoke the plot of *Nineteen Eighty Four*: (a) how authoritarian regimes are *motivating* citizens to use digital networks to denounce whom they might consider to be an enemy of the state (e.g. the cases of the Chinese Fifty-Cent-Army and *Human-Flesh Search Engines* and the Thailand-based website *Protect the King*) and (b) how the omnipresence (or what some may call intrusiveness) of digital technologies can become an entrance for the State to invade the citizen’s private space. As Morozov points out, despite all “the good things” that can be said about Twitter, it is after all, a “public platform.” Thus, by organising protests via Twitter (or any other social network for that matter) the protesters are revealing critical information about themselves. Information that, as Morozov argues, “in the past States used to torture to get (and) now all they have to do is get on Facebook” (2011, p N/A).

After looking at these theories, the first conclusion that jumps to mind is that digital technologies are leading the democratic, industrialised West one step closer to Huxley’s *Brave New World*, while perpetuating an Orwellian state in the countries under authoritarian regimes.

Two decades have passed since the end of the Cold War and the fact that societies still differentiate themselves mainly based on geographical references (e.g., East vs. West) appears as evidence of how the national structures – which according to theorists like Innis and McLuhan started to form as we know them after the introduction of the printing press in Europe in the fifteenth century – are still standing strong.

So, what has changed since the publication of Huxley and Orwell’s dystopias? Can we *only* speak of technological advances? Hasn’t there been any social and/or cultural progress? To go as far as to answer “yes” would mean to deny the importance of the Civil Rights Movement (which is something that the reader would hopefully realise is *not* amongst the aims of my research); it would also contradict the work of Harvard psychologist Steven Pinker (2011) who exposes how violence has been steadily declining during the last centuries.
But still, the fear of humanity being doomed to bounce between Orwellian and Huxleyan futures lingers on and keeps morphing with the shape of new technologies.

At this stage, it is also important to point out how, to question whether there has only been technological progress in the late twentieth century, would be regarded as a fallacious argument by theorists like Postman (1986), who stated that “only those who know nothing of the history of technology believe that a technology is entirely neutral” (p. 86).

During the lifetime of Huxley and Orwell, it was already a commonplace to say change was the only constant feature of modernism. Orwell and Huxley were aware of this, and I believe this partly explains why their works stand above the rest of the futuristic literature of the twentieth century. The real value of Brave New World and Nineteen Eighty-Four (and the ultimately really frightening thing about them) is not their accuracy in predicting the future (which is a point that can be endlessly debated) but their preciseness in portraying the societies of their present. What Huxley and Orwell did was to relate the social and political conditions of their lifetimes to what the technologies of the moment promised. Then, if the nightmares of Orwell and Huxley are still so latent, it must mean we still haven’t properly addressed what might be the most important question authors like Orwell Huxley and Postman left us: What is progress?

In my opinion, in order to address this question, the first thing necessary is to try and understand whether this word has a universal meaning (or at least some common interpretations coming from different persons, groups and cultures). In this sense, the following chapters address this issue, as they focus on the relationship between technology and progress, and (later) on how this relationship is interpreted in a developed nation like Australia and a developing one like Colombia.
Chapter 3 - Naïve Realists vs. Network Idealists

Although the purpose of this chapter is to study different interpretations of how digital networks are affecting contemporary societies: the analysis it presents goes beyond the so-called digital divide, as it aims to expose a broader outlook of how technology acts upon the human species.

As mentioned in Chapter 1, my research focuses on Habermas' theory of the public sphere, as it questions whether the development of digital technologies is leading to similar conditions as those that allowed the consolidation of an effective bourgeois public sphere in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries (Habermas, 1989, Roberts and Crossley, 2004).

In 1999, Michael Heim drew the distinction between what he called Naïve Realists and Network Idealists. In this debate, Naïve Realists were those who "blame electronic culture for criminal violence and unemployment” (2000, p. ix) and the most striking example of Naïve Realism was the Unabomber Manifesto (1995), where the first (out of 232) paragraph(s) stated:

The Industrial Revolution and its consequences have been a disaster for the human race. They have greatly increased the life-expectancy of those of us who live in ‘advanced’ countries, but they have destabilized society, have made life unfulfilling, have subjected human beings to indignities, have led to widespread psychological suffering (in the Third World to physical suffering as well) and have inflicted severe damage on the natural world. The continued development of technology will worsen the situation. It will certainly subject human beings to greater indignities and inflict greater damage on the natural world, it will probably lead to greater social disruption and psychological suffering, and it may lead to increased physical suffering even in ‘advanced’ countries.

On the other hand, Network Idealists were those who “promote virtual communities and global information flow”. Amongst them, the most famous example was Marshall McLuhan and his theory that, thanks to the development of electromagnetic media, the world was turning into a “global village” (Heim, 1999; Wolfe, 1968).
But, as idealistic as McLuhan’s “global village” may sound, it seems to fall short in sensationalism to consider it the ultimate case of *Network Idealism* – especially if on the other shore, the *Unabomber Manifesto* stands as the most extreme example of *Naïve Realism*. In this sense, a more accurate counterpart to the *Unabomber Manifesto* would be something like Timothy Leary’s faith in computers and cryogenics or, to use a more contemporary example, Ray Kurzweil’s belief that the *Singularity is Near* (2005).

After Time Magazine featured the article: *2045 The year man becomes immortal* (Grossman, 2011), the name of Ray Kurzweil emerged as an icon of the digital era. Just like Julian Assange has become the symbol of what is known as ‘hacktivism’, Kurzweil, a scientist once defined as “Thomas Alva Edison on steroids” (Faraone, 2010), is now the most visible head amongst those who believe that, in a not-too-distant future, humans will be able to, “scan our consciousnesses into computers and enter a virtual existence or swap our bodies for immortal robots and light out for the edges of space as intergalactic godlings” (Grossman, 2011, p 5).

From the Unabomber’s perspective, this singularitarian ideal of scanning one’s consciousness and becoming “intergalactic godlings,” would be translated into, “(reducing) human beings (...) to engineered products.” But as unprecedented as all this may sound, rather than being a product of the digital era, the idea (or better the fear) of machinery conquering humanity was (or has been) a common feature throughout the industrial era.

Nonetheless, taking into account the role played by digital technologies in the major events of the early twenty-first century (e.g., the use of mobile recording devices and *social media* in the social movements in North Africa and the Middle East, and the appearance of whistle-blowing websites like WikiLeaks) Heim’s duality between *Naïve Realism* and *Network Idealists* continues to be as relevant (or more relevant) today than it was during the late stages of the last millennium.

For this reason and because it questions the influence of digital networks over the social structures of this so-called era of information, I have chosen Heim’s debate between *Naïve Realism* and *Network Idealists* as the spectrum that encloses the theoretical framework of my thesis.
Naïve Realism and Network Idealism Within the Theory of the Public Sphere

If the debate between Naïve Realism and Network Idealism is the spectrum that encloses the different perceptions of technology that I am studying in my research, Jurgen Habermas’ theory of the public sphere (1989) is the philosophical background that frames such views within my analysis of the influence of digital technologies on twenty-first century societies. This is represented in Figure 19, which shows Habermas’ theory of the public sphere at the back, while at the extremes appear the most radical views of both Naïve Realists and Network Idealists – views that go beyond the scope of digital communications and enter the realm of human evolution and the synergy of humans and machines. Then, as the theories move closer to the centre of the spectrum, they start dealing specifically with the first of my research’s complementary questions: whether digital media is contributing to the consolidation of a global public sphere.

Figure 15 – Theoretical framework: Naïve Realism vs. Network Idealism
But before addressing this question, it is important to understand what the terms *global* and *public sphere* actually mean. Castells (2008) defines the public sphere as “the space of communication of ideas and projects that emerge from society and are addressed to the decision makers in the institutions of society”. Following this line, Shirky (2011) argues that the public sphere is a space gained by civil society, where it can exchange information and – more importantly – have a *conversation* about the information that is being exchanged.

According to Habermas, societies are divided between what he called the *system* and the *lifeworld;* or in Castells’ words, between “the State and society.” Within this frame, the public sphere is the space where, “people come together as citizens and articulate their autonomous views to influence the political institutions of society” (Castells, 2008, p 78).

Roberts and Crossley (2004) point out “two central claims” exposed in Habermas’ Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere (1989): firstly, that “a variety of social changes during the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries in Germany, France and Britain, gave rise for a short period to an effective bourgeois public sphere” and secondly, that “conditions effectively served to undermine this public space almost the moment it had come into being” (p. 2).

From these “two central claims” emerge two questions (or sub-questions) that, when studied together, address the aforementioned complementary question (i.e., whether digital technologies are contributing to the consolidation of a global public sphere). These are: (a) How truly public was the eighteenth century public sphere? and (b) Is the development of digital networks establishing similar technological, social and political conditions to those of the late eighteenth and early nineteen centuries?

In regard to the first question, one could argue that there was also a public sphere in Athens during the time of Pericles. Hence, just as the Athenian public sphere was only accessible to Athenian citizens, the “bourgeois public sphere” of the eighteenth and early nineteen centuries was only accessible to a small fraction of the population: as only European males were allowed inside the coffee houses where, according to Habermas, the bourgeois public sphere came into existence.
At this point, I believe it is important to remark how the perceptions of technology are closely related to the perceptions of urban life. Thus, if one studies global demographics, the statistics show how, by the beginning of the second decade of the twenty-first century – and for the first time in history – more than half of the global population is living in cities. Then, by the year 2050, it is estimated that this number would rise to 80% (UNFPA, 2007). On the other hand, regarding access to the Internet and the use of digital networks, the statistics seem to show how human interaction is increasingly moving to virtual spaces (as the use of digital networks grows exponentially and people spend more hours online). So, is it possible for a public sphere to exist beyond physical interaction? This question raises a wide range of more profound (or more philosophical) questions, such as: is physical interaction necessary for the human being? Or is it becoming a thing of the past?

As the development of digital technologies increases and humanity appears to be entering what might be called a virtual stage in its evolution, this generational change between the Edwardian ideal of technological progress and the Georgian nightmares of machine civilisation, as well as the opposed views of some contemporary theorists like Shirky (2011) and Gladwell (2010) become easier to frame under Heim's debate between Naïve Realists vs. Network Idealists.

**Technology as a Social Actor**

There is a chapter in Jack London's, *The Iron Heel* (1908), where Ernest Everhard (the socialist hero of the story) meets with a group of small capitalists who plan to sabotage the factories owned by *The Iron Heel*. The following is a fragment from this episode:

“You are machine-breakers. Do you know what a machine-breaker is?” asks Everhard, “Let me tell you. In the eighteenth century, in England, men and women wove cloth on hand-looms in their own cottages. It was a slow, clumsy, and costly way of weaving cloth, this cottage system of manufacture. Along came the steam-engine and labor-saving machinery. (...) The men and women who had worked the hand-looms for themselves now went into the factories and worked the machine-looms, not for themselves, but for the capitalist owners. Furthermore, little children went to work on the machine-looms, at lower wages, and displaced the men. This made hard times for the men. Their standard of living fell. They starved. And they said it was all the fault of the machines. Therefore they proceeded to break the machines. They did not succeed, and they were very stupid. (p. 94)
Like the Luddites (or “machine-breakers”) of the nineteenth century, the Naïve Realists of today share the fear of humanity being replaced by machines. And they see the development of electronic and digital technologies as one step further in the process of losing our human identity. On the other hand, the Network Idealists believe that electronic and digital technologies are leading us away from the fragmented, mechanised societies of the industrial era and turning us into some sort of neo-tribal, interconnected species.

Wagar (1968) pointed out how, after the Great War, H.G. Wells attributed the crisis of the twentieth century to a “disastrous disruption of social equilibrium”. Wells argued that the crisis of modernity had erupted because “some institutions and ideologies had hypertrophied, whereas others had atrophied or grown much too slowly, so that civilization was (...) like a body suffering from cancer of acromegaly” (p. 55). In the 1920s, when Wells was writing about “acromegalian” societies, he was referring to the combination of a “hypertrophied” development of “science” and “the mechanical arts,” with the “atrophied” social conditions that led to the development of totalitarianism.

But is Wells’ diagnosis still accurate? Are we still living in an acromegalian world? And if so, do digital technologies represent a possible cure? Looking at the picture from a Colombian perspective, it seems like the social acromegaly of today is not as similar to that which Wells recognised in the European societies of the early twentieth century as to the one established in the colonial structures erected since the fifteenth. As I have exposed in the previous chapter, one of the major criticisms that Orwell made of Wells was that he was too civilised (so he could not grasp the problems of the third world). Hence, his diagnosis was mostly based on what was happening in Europe, North America and (possibly) Northern Asia (i.e. China and Japan) and disregarded whatever stood south of the Equator.

In the second part of my thesis I argue that peripheral regions (and in this context I am using the term peripheral both in a global/national scale and also within smaller social structures like countries, cities and neighbourhoods) should start thinking about their own definition of progress: that is, borrowing Jimmy Carter’s
famous metaphor, to realise that the solutions to their southerly problems cannot come from up north. And to understand that the solutions that do come from up north are often devised with northern interests in mind.

But before moving into the analysis of these issues, I must focus on the (related) belief that technology is killing the very essence of humanity; which drives the argument of the Unabomber Manifesto.

**The Unabomber’s preaching**

According to the Unabomber, the “industrial-technological society” has disrupted what he defined as the “power process”, which consists of four elements: *goal, effort, attainment of goal* and *autonomy* (paragraph 33). In many modern societies, the basic *goals* (or needs) like food, shelter or transportation are *attained* without any *effort*. Because of this, people have replaced such goals with what the Unabomber called “surrogate activities”, which include:

> ...scientific work, athletic achievement, humanitarian work, artistic and literary creation, climbing the corporate ladder, acquisition of money and material goods far beyond the point at which they cease to give any additional physical satisfaction, and social activism when it addresses issues that are not important for the activist personally, as in the case of white activists who work for the rights of non-white minorities. (paragraph 40)

On the other hand, the Unabomber argues that the individual has lost most of his or her autonomy by becoming too dependent on the collective at the time of fulfilling basic needs. This has led individuals to lose their sense of security:

> Primitive man, threatened by a fierce animal or by hunger, can fight in self-defence or travel in search of food. He has no certainty of success in these efforts, but he is by no means helpless against the things that threaten him. The modern individual on the other hand is threatened by many things against which he is helpless; nuclear accidents, carcinogens in food, environmental pollution, war, increasing taxes, invasion of his privacy by large organizations, nation-wide social or economic phenomena that may disrupt his way of life. (paragraph 67)

The ultimate *moral of the Manifesto* is that “freedom and technology are incompatible” (paragraph 113) and that the conflict of “power elite vs. ordinary people” is equivalent to the conflict “technology vs. nature” (paragraph 191).
However, by praising the life of the “primitive man” over the life of the “modern man,” the Unabomber fails to see the tools of that “primitive man” as technological advances. By turning stones and logs into spears and arrows, or by learning how to manipulate fire, didn’t the “primitive man” increase his sense of security? And by doing so, and by learning how to domesticate animals, didn’t he alter the order of nature? Isn’t human technology an extension of humanity? Looking at it from this perspective, the issue should not be “technology vs. nature” but “humanity vs. nature.”

**Blame It on Technology, Blame It on the System**

It is not amongst the goals of my research to debunk the arguments exposed in the Unabomber Manifesto (I believe Kaczynski does so himself); nor is my intention to promote humans as the antagonists of nature. What I want to expose is how narrow-minded it is to perceive a given technology as good or evil.

In one of the final chapters of *The Outline of History* (1930), H.G. Wells listed eight “broad fundamentals” for the development of a “World State.” At the top of the list was the following statement:

(1) It will be based upon a common world religion, very much simplified and universalized and better understood. This will not be Christianity nor Islam nor Buddhism nor any such specialized form of religion, but religion itself pure and undefiled; the Eightfold Way, the Kingdom of Heaven, brotherhood, creative service, and self-forgetfulness. Throughout the world men’s thoughts and motives will be turned by education, example, and the circle of ideas about them, from the obsession of self to the cheerful service of human knowledge, human power, and human unity.  

(p. 1148)

At first sight, Wells’ use of the word *religion* as a ‘broad fundamental’ for the consolidation of a ‘World State’, seems like a denial of the liberal principle of the separation of Church and State. Nevertheless, I believe he had a point when he stated that the first step towards anything close to his utopian “World State,” should be a global educational campaign that promotes the main values behind “the Eightfold Way, the Kingdom of Heaven.” But how would you do this? Isn’t the word *campaign* too political? Shouldn’t we be talking about a global education program? Or system? Or systems? And who shall coordinate them? And how would the official hierarchies of the most popular religions react to it? These were the
type of questions critics like Orwell kept asking about Wells’ utopian ‘World State’. And in Wells’ defence, I believe it is safe to say that not even by travelling a century into his future he would have found an answer. Nonetheless, one thing this education should include is teaching humans to take responsibility for their actions and stop looking for scapegoats like technology vs. nature or capitalism vs. socialism.

The Curse of Dualities

In 1994, Barry Jones stated that the “Information Society of the future” had the potential to be “a creative era in which Mozartian man and woman can evolve”:

> If we remain imprisoned in the linear thinking so congenial to bureaucrats, capitalists and commissars, the future will be a period of unemployment, alienation and unprecedented social crises. (Windschuttle & Elliot, 1994)

As futuristic as this crossroad between “Mozartian” evolution and “unprecedented social crises” may sound, there have been numerous situations in the past when, it has been thought, humanity faced a similar type of disjunction. To number a few of the most recent: during the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries there was the debate between republican liberalism and the old monarchic system. Publications from back then, such as Thomas Paine’s Common Sense (1776), carried a clear message of urgency: it was now or never and one was either for the revolution or against it. As mechanical technologies were increasingly developed and cities turned into industrialised centres, the debate became Capitalism vs. Socialism. And then, in the Russia of the early twentieth century, it was once again a matter of now or never; and of being friends or foes of the revolution. Then, the fall of fascism brought back the old debate between Capitalism vs. Socialism, now under the brand of Capitalism vs. Communism, or better the USA vs. the USSR, the commies vs. the yanks.

All the dichotomies mentioned above have four things in common: (a) They are based on the notion of us vs. them (b) they are not exclusive from each other (c) they are symptomatic of the main technological, social, economic and political conditions of their period, and (d) once these confrontations are resolved (when they are resolved), the interests of the leaders and heroes of the given revolution
end up prevailing over the interests of the common citizen. Or using Habermas’ terms, a new system emerges and establishes itself over the lifeworld.

The second question that emerges from Roberts and Crossley’s “two central claims” in Habermas’ theory of the public sphere (2004) – whether digital technologies are establishing similar conditions to those that “gave rise (sic) to an effective bourgeois public sphere” in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries – has a more direct relation to Heim’s duality between Naive Realism and Network Idealists, as it questions whether digital technologies are bringing about a new social order.

If one is to consider the development of digital technologies as a revolution, which is a view that can be implied from various sources studied in this research (e.g., Aleks Krotoski’s Virtual Revolution, 2010), then the fact that, as Krotoski points out, two decades after its creation the World Wide Web is being ruled by just a few institutions: one major search engine (Google), one major social network (Facebook), one major online bookstore (Amazon) and one major online market (E-bay), seems to contradict the democratic ideals attributed to such revolution.

Heim first coined the terms Naive Realism and Network Idealists at the turn of the millennium. Back then, the World Wide Web was in a stage of early development and most of the institutions that constitute the web of today were still inexistent. Prior to the publication of his book Naive Realism vs. Network Idealists (2000), Heim exposed the bases of his theory in an article published in the book The Digital Dialectic (edited by Lunenfeld, 1999). This book includes another article by Bob Stein (1999), where he argued that the development of digital media was preserving the same structures established by traditional media. Stein based his argument on the fact that, by 1999, “already the Internet seems to be dominated by the same mass culture we have on television and in movies:

Read the trades and you’ll see that the top ten sites are Time Magazine, ESPN, and so on. (p. 202)

A decade after the publication of Stein’s article, and, as Krotoski points out (2010) one quick look at the statistics of Internet usage would contradict his arguments. Then again, if institutions of a strictly digital nature are taking hold of the power
once held by the media giants of the twentieth century, does this represent a positive change for the common citizen? Does civil society stand closer to the bigger fishes of cyberspace (i.e., Google, Amazon, E-bay, Facebook, Twitter, etc.) than to the states and corporations of the industrial world?

Mayfield (2004) argues that, even though they might not entirely flatten the pyramidal structures of the industrial era, social networks do empower individuals in relation to the system. In Mayfield’s words, “the nodes at the peak of the power-law have the most ‘power’ to disseminate their views” but in the model of online networks “the network as a whole gains greater value”. In Mayfield’s metaphor, those “nodes at the peak of the power-law” represent what Habermas defined as the system (which during the industrial era was, or is, embodied in the form of states and corporations), and the “network as a whole” represents what Habermas defined as the lifeworld (or what theorists like Castells call civil society).

But if one is to agree with Mayfield, there is another question that remains: Where do the owners of the network fall within this equation? How does civil society stand in relation to Google? Or Facebook?

I am afraid this is a question impossible to answer without jumping into the future and looking at the development of these companies in the following decades. What can be done now is to look at examples of individuals (or groups) that, coming from civil society, have used, and are using, digital technologies, to stand against abuses from the system.

Is There Such a Thing as a Digital Revolution?

Malcolm Gladwell’s article Small Change: Why the revolution will not be tweeted, published in the New Yorker of October 4, 2010, questions the incidence of the Internet and social media in the major social and political movements of the early twenty-first century. Studied under the light of Heim’s duality, Gladwell’s article can be regarded as one of the most relevant, contemporary examples of Naive Realism. After comparing the social movements of today with the circumstances that triggered the Civil Rights Movement of the 1960s, Gladwell’s ultimate moral is: “The kind of activism associated with social media (and) the platforms of social
media are built around weak ties.” Therefore, “social networks are effective at increasing *participation*, by lessening the level of motivation that participation requires.”

The term “weak ties” seems to be the driving argument in Gladwell’s statement. So what does he mean when he says that, “the platforms of social media are built around weak ties?”

According to Gladwell:

> If Martin Luther King, Jr., had tried to do a wiki-boycott in Montgomery, he would have been steamrollered by the white power structure. And of what use would a digital communication tool be in a town where ninety-eight per cent of the black community could be reached every Sunday morning at church? The things that King needed in Birmingham – discipline and strategy were things that online social media cannot provide. (p 4).

One problem with Gladwell’s argument is that he is judging the incidence of social media in the third world, based on how it is used in the first. I believe Gladwell is right when he points out that, for most Internet users in Western, developed nations, *following* organisations like Amnesty International or the Red Cross is pretty much the same as *following* celebrities like Madonna or Ashton Kutcher. But this does not mean this is the case in countries under autocratic regimes like Libya, Egypt or Iran. Countries whose population live in similar conditions as part of the American population did before the 1960s.

Like the liberal revolutions of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, the revolts of the sixties were founded on the basic liberal ideals of liberty and equality (and were not as dogmatic and institutionalised as its twentieth century predecessors). Most of the movements from the sixties started off as popular responses to specific circumstances: the racial segregation in the USA, the independence of the former European colonies in Africa and Asia, the Vietnam War, the Soviet invasions of Hungary and Czechoslovakia, and the support from the *super powers* of the bipolar world to corrupt autocratic regimes in the third world (to name a few).

Now that four decades have passed since the Civil Rights Movement, there seems to be a feeling of *something left undone* – or of *an attempt made too early* –
surrounding this, otherwise, remarkable movement. As shown by the second of the “two central claims” recognised by Roberts and Crossley in Habermas’ theory of the public sphere, there is a similar feeling of discontent surrounding the liberal revolutions of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. From a historical perspective, one can see the French Revolution as a transitional period between the beheading of a king and the crowning of an emperor. Just as, if one lists the actions taken by the United States during its more than two centuries of republican life (particularly in the matter of international politics), one can find numerous contradictions with the ideals of freedom and equality that inspired their struggle for independence.

But looking at these events, not as independent historical facts, but as small steps towards what Jeremy Rifkin (2010) defined as an “empathic civilization,” then their relevance seem to become more evident.

**Digital Media and the Global Public Sphere**

Also during the sixties, theorists like Innis and (particularly) McLuhan became famous for publishing theories, the central argument of which was that the printing press had turned humans into an overtly visual species (which acted to the detriment of the rest of our senses). This led to a general fragmentation of society. Thus, as mentioned before, nationalism and nationalist wars were symptoms of cultural fragmentation; the modern market and price structures were symptoms of economic fragmentation; and institutions like the modern army and phenomena like industrialism and bureaucracy were symptoms of task fragmentation. Then, the development of electromagnetic media (particularly television) started to rebalance our senses, leading us to a world in the shape of a “global village” (Wolfe, 1968).

After Innis and McLuhan, other theorists, such as Lev Manovich, have stated that software is developing culture:

...in a sense that it is directly used by hundreds of millions of people and that it carries “atoms” of culture (media and information, as well as human interactions around these media and information). (2008, p. 3)
Therefore, despite McLuhan not living to see digital media in operation (he died in 1981), his theories seem to apply more to the recently developed, horizontal (or at least less vertical) networks of the World Wide Web, than to a hierarchical media like television.

Castells (2008) defines globalisation as “the process that constitutes a social system with the capacity to work as a unit on a planetary scale in real or chosen time”. He then adds that “new information and communication technologies (...) allow global networks to selectively connect anyone and anything throughout the world,” and that, “not everything or everyone is globalized, but the global networks that structure the planet affect everything and everyone” (p 81).

Following McLuhan and Castell’s theories, one may argue that globalisation is to be regarded as the real issue in the debate between Naïve Realism and Network Idealists. Thus, the question should be: Can a public sphere exist in a globalised world? And if so, is the World Wide Web an early (or beta) version of this global public sphere?

**Is Progress Making Us Stupid?**

If, on the one hand, McLuhan’s ideal of the “global village” is to be highlighted as the moral beacon of the Network Idealist, on the other hand, probably the most popular response to McLuhan’s idealism appears in the passage from Sidney Lumet’s 1976 movie Network, quoted in Chapter 1, when Howard Beale, the “Mad Prophet of the Airwaves,” tells his audience of 62 million Americans that “television is a goddamned amusement park” (Chayefsky, 1976). A similar train of thought is found in other sources like Postman’s Amusing Ourselves to Death (1986) and more recently, in Carr’s *Is Google making us stupid?* (2010).

According to Postman, “the decline of a print-based epistemology and the accompanying rise of a television-based epistemology has had grave consequences for public life, that we are getting sillier by the minute” (p. 24). Referring back to my analysis of Orwell’s vision of Utopia, there is another quote from Postman’s foreword that states that his book is “about the possibility that Huxley, not Orwell, was right”. Although Postman does not “care to claim that changes in media bring about changes in the structure of people’s minds,” as he argues McLuhan did, it is
safe to assume that his work is, in many aspects, a rebuttal of McLuhan’s theories on the influence of television. This is evident in the book’s first chapter, which, in a clear reference to another of McLuhan’s famous aphorisms, is titled *The Medium is the Metaphor*.

Postman’s driving argument is that “a major new medium changes the structure of discourse,” and that “the epistemology created by television not only is inferior to a print-based epistemology but is dangerous and absurdist” (p. 27). Following this line, other, more contemporary theorists, like Carr and Gladwell, are attributing to the Internet a similar type of Huxleyan epistemology as the one Postman attributed to television. In this sense, just like Carr’s article questions whether Google is “making us stupid”, Gladwell’s article in the New Yorker could be alternatively titled: *Is Facebook making us soft?*

Up to this stage, the reader would have recognised one train of thought, that starting from McLuhan’s *global village* argues that the development of (first) electromagnetic and (later) digital means of communication are altering the social structures that were formed by the printing press. These structures ultimately degenerated in the totalitarian movements of the twentieth century, which inspired the Orwellian nightmare of *Nineteen Eighty-Four*. In response to this view, there is another line of thought that argues that, by leading us away from Orwell’s dystopia, electromagnetic and digital technologies are taking us closer to the nightmare portrayed in Huxley’s *Brave New World*. This view is evident in Postman’s arguments when he states that “the epistemology created by television (...) is dangerous and absurdist”, as well as in Gladwell’s statement that online networks are built around “weak ties”.

For those of us who, like Postman, find pleasure not only in reading a book but also in the mere act of holding it and flipping its pages, his arguments are quite appealing at first sight. Yet, a more critical approach to his theories shows they are based on the nostalgic fallacy that *past times were always better*.

Postman argues the decline of a printed-based civilisation began with the invention of the telegraph (as the first electromagnetic media). Thus, he brands this socio-technological change as the passing from the “Age of Exposition” to the
“Age of Show Business”. While doing so, he exposes an argument that relates to my own analysis of the evolution of journalism since the late nineteenth century: which is that the development of industrialised newspapers (e.g., the newspapers of Pulitzer and Hearst) led to the decline of the quality of journalism in general. Yet, all the arguments that, like Postman’s, are focused on showing how modern technologies have been harmful to society, are contradictory to the statistics that show a general improvement in matters like life expectancy, poverty and violence, since the development of such technologies.

Pinker (2007) argues that:

...in the decade of Darfur and Iraq, and shortly after the century of Stalin, Hitler, and Mao, the claim that violence has been diminishing may seem somewhere between hallucinatory and obscene. Yet recent studies that seek to quantify the historical ebb and flow of violence point to exactly that conclusion. (para. 2).

To prove his point, Pinker quotes various studies, including one from criminologist Manuel Eisner, who has:

...assembled hundreds of homicide estimates from Western European localities that kept records at some point between 1200 and the mid-1990s. In every country he analysed, murder rates declined steeply – for example, from 24 homicides per 100,000 Englishmen in the fourteenth century to 0.6 per 100,000 by the early 1960s. (para. 9).

Pinker also points out how:

...according to the Human Security Brief 2006, the number of battle deaths in interstate wars has declined from more than 65,000 per year in the 1950s to less than 2,000 per year in this decade (meaning the first decade of the twenty-first century); and that, “according to political scientist Barbara Harff, between 1989 and 2005 the number of campaigns of mass killing of civilians decreased by 90 percent. (para. 10).

But as positive as the figures quoted by Pinker may sound, they may also be interpreted as a direct cause of what Aldous Huxley (1959) forecasted as one the major problems future societies will have to face: overpopulation. In this sense, the Unabomber Manifesto, with its praise of violence and “natural aristocracy” – borrowing Orwell’s words when he was referring to Jack London (1941b) – seems
to be more honest that many of the other attacks on technology; which, within the context of this analysis, are being framed as part of the standpoint of the *Naive Realist*.

Then again, the idea that electromagnetic and digital technologies are turning the world into a ‘global village’ seems to be an overstatement (to say the least). Regarding McLuhan’s aphorism, Kapuscinski (2009) believed it was:

> ...one of the greatest mistakes of modern culture, because the essence of a village depends on the fact that its inhabitants know each other well, commune with each other and share a common fate. Meanwhile nothing of the kind can be said of society on our planet, which is more like the anonymous crowd at a major airport, a crowd of people rushing along in haste, mutually indifferent and ignorant. (p. 61)

**Orwellian Threats in Cyberspace**

Based on Kapuscinski’s statement, one question that jumps to mind is: Can a public sphere exist in a society that resembles a major airport? Or, based on the analysis done in the previous chapter, in one that resembles Huxley’s Brave New World? There are, however, other arguments that, beyond the view of electromagnetic and digital technologies as the gateway to Huxley’s Brave New World, have recognised Orwellian threats in the development of these technologies. Amongst them, one of the most renowned is that of Evgeny Morozov (2010). Morozov argues that, when sharing information on online networks, the individuals facing an authoritarian state become more vulnerable: as in the past governments used to torture to obtain information, they now can find it by logging in to Facebook. Morozov also points out how authoritarian regimes are encouraging people to denounce those fellow citizens they may consider to be acting against the higher interests of the state. This invitation to *rat out* via the Internet can be seen in cases like the Chinese *Fifty-Cent-Army*.

This practice of online denunciation by common citizens reminds me of the passages in *Nineteen Eighty Four* where the children of Oceania were encouraged to denounce their parents to the *Thought Police*. Which brings me back to the question: How are the, so far neutral, digital institutions like Google or Facebook
going to act if (or when) they have to take sides in what Habermas (1989) defined as the struggle between the system and the lifeworld?

After piling up the aforementioned theoretical positions from both sides of the spectrum: what can be concluded about the role of digital media in the consolidation of a global public sphere? I am afraid the only responsible answer would be: It is still too early to draw any conclusions.

If, on the one hand, the Internet is turning out to be as trivial as television and, on the other hand, the omnipresence of digital technologies augurs a constant state of vigilance like the one portrayed in Nineteen Eighty Four, then the future of humanity is still hanging between the Huxleyan and the Orwellian dystopias. Therefore, if one is to follow the Naïve Realist conclusion, then one would have to disregard that there has been any significant change brought by the development of digital networks.

However, although they might not necessarily represent that “ultimate levelling technology” envisioned by Tim Berners Lee, the role digital networks have played so far in the major social and political movements of the early twenty-first century, does somehow portray this technology as what Orwell (1945) called a “democratic weapon”.
Chapter 4 - Journalism and Art in Digital Societies

The aim of this chapter is to summarise what I have been exposing until this point and to present a series of preliminary conclusions regarding my original research question (i.e., about the roles of journalism and art in so-called digital societies).

Regarding the development of modern journalism, Stephens (2007) points out how by the end of the nineteenth century, the newspaper industry had morphed from a proliferation of small, independent, artisan printers, to a few large, industrial printers owned by wealthy entrepreneurs like Pulitzer and Hearst. During this time appeared what at the time came to be known as new journalism. This new journalism (not to be confused with Tom Wolfe’s new journalism) was the style of newscasting that imposed a 5Ws news writing system. This system was implemented, mostly because it was the most efficient way to compile the largest amount of news stories within the least possible pages (using the least possible ink and leaving enough space for the advertisements).

The electronic media of the twentieth century (radio and television) works under a similar model. Not constrained by the space in a page, but by the minutes in an hour and the seconds in a minute.

By the turn of the twentieth century, journalism had become an industrial process: a factory destined for the mass production of news stories, a mechanical quest for immediacy. During the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, newspapers used to contain long opinion pieces like Thomas Paine's Common Sense (1776). They also contained poems, fiction stories and other more artistic features that, although not entirely absent from the modern newspapers, became an accessory of the short-punched, concise news story. Besides from the aforementioned Common Sense, the list of renowned literary works that were first published in newspapers include examples like Charles Dickens' The Pickwick Papers (1836), Harriet Beecher Stowe's Uncle Tom's Cabin (1852), Gustave Flaubert's Madame Bovary (1856), Leo Tolstoi's Anna Karenina (1873-77), Fyodor Dostoyevsky's The Brothers Karamazov (1879-80) and H.G. Wells The Time Machine (1895), to name but a few.
Fragmented Societies Produce Fragmented Institutions

As mentioned in the previous chapters, theorists like Innis (1950) and McLuhan (1962, 1964) argued that the printing press turned humans into an overtly visual species. As a result of this came a general fragmentation of society (Wolfe, 1968). On a similar note, Robinson (2010) argues that most (if not all) modern, Western educational systems have been developed under the same industrial, fragmented model recognised by Innis and McLuhan. Robinson points out how the modern educational system was “conceived in the intellectual culture of the enlightenment and under the economic circumstances of the industrial revolution”. Thus, modern education was “modelled on the interest (...) and in the image of industrialisation”. To expose his argument, Robinson mentions how schools today are still “organised under factory lines”, that is, they still work under ringing bells, separate facilities, specialised into separate subjects and still educating children “by batches” (Robinson, 2010, p. NA).

The analogy between modern journalism and modern education is relevant, not only because it shows how these two independent institutions evolved “in the image of industrialisation”, but because it also shows how they evolved in isolation from each other and the other major institutions of the industrial society. They are two more examples of the social fragmentation of the industrial era.

The journalistic Legacy

It was also during the modern era when journalists and media practitioners developed ethical codes and guidelines for responsible journalism. And when remarkable journalists like Jacob Riis, Nellie Bly, Ernest Hemingway, George Orwell, Robert Capa, Ryszard Kapuscinski, Tom Wolfe, Gay Talese, Truman Capote (to name but a few) published their work. But as positive as the legacy of these journalists may be, I don’t believe one should accredit such legacy to the existence of an editorial industry. In fact, when one reads Orwell’s Collected Essays (1968) or Kapuscinski’s chronicles and travel journals (2001, 2007, 2009) one gets the impression that they managed to produce their work, not thanks to, but despite, the existence of an editorial industry.
In Travels With Herodotus (2007) Kapuscinski writes of how he took Herodotus’ Histories (c450 B.C.) along in his first experience as a foreign correspondent in India. Since then, he continued carrying it throughout his career, drawing inspiration from the ancient Greek historian while travelling as a struggling journalist from a struggling Polish news agency. Just like Kapuscinski found a role-model in Herodotus’ inquisitive and adventurous spirit, my work is inspired by the image of Kapuscinski in Ethiopia, digging out the secrets of Haile Selassie’s regime (1983), or by Orwell’s explorations in the slums of London and Paris (1933), or Tom Wolfe’s interpretations of American pop culture (1968; 1973).

**Art and Journalism in the Twenty-first Century**

If, as McLuhan stated, artists are to be seen as “early warning systems”, then a work of art should be some sort of alarm: a message encoded in an aesthetic form, containing some kind of social warning. This reminds me of Orwell’s remark – which drives the argument of Chapter 2 – that “all art is propaganda.”

In the *Frontiers of Art and Propaganda* (1941a), Orwell exposes this notion in the following terms:

> The writers who have come up since 1930 have been living in a world in which not only one’s life but one’s whole scheme of values is constantly menaced. In such circumstances detachment is not possible. You cannot take a purely aesthetic interest in a disease you are dying from; you cannot feel dispassionately about a man who is about to cut your throat. (...) And this period of ten years or so in which literature, even poetry, was mixed up with pamphleteering, did a great service to literary criticism, because it destroyed the illusion of pure aestheticism. It reminded us that propaganda in some form or other lurks in every book, that every work of art has a meaning and a purpose – a political, social and religious purpose – that our aesthetic judgements are always coloured by our prejudices and beliefs. It debunked art for art’s sake.

The idea of all art being a type of propaganda was certainly relevant in the 1930s and 1940s, when Orwell developed most of his work. However, as Orwell himself pointed out, prior to the emergence of the nationalist and totalitarian movements of that period, art was perceived quite differently. In the review of *The Novel Today* (1935), Orwell remarks a change of attitude from literary critics, who, before the 1930s used to say that “art has nothing to do with morality” and that “the artist was conceived as leaping to and fro in a moral, political and economic void, usually in pursuit of something called ‘Beauty’”.
This vision, which complies with McLuhan's interpretation of the artists as “divine naturals (...) unconscious of their powers” (Wolfe, 1968), portrays them as people with a special sensibility that allows them to look at society from an outsider's perspective. They are able to perceive society as a whole and detect factors and forces that influence its structure. However, this peripheral view impedes them in grasping and understanding the way these forces operate. On the other hand, modern journalists have to deal on a day-to-day basis with the practical functioning of such forces. They report on the minutest facts and the most rigid figures; but because of the specificity of their job, they tend to miss the bigger picture.

**Subjectivity and Objectivity in the Era of Information**

Art by definition is a subjective exercise. Even collaborative art comes from the reunion of different subjectivities. Modern journalism, on the other hand, was developed under the idea of objectivity. Besides from being quick and economic (in space and time), the new journalism of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, that is, the journalism of the 5Ws, was allegedly objective. In theory, in the short-punched, concise news story there was no room for personal interpretations: just facts.

But now that over a century has gone since the establishment of the first major industrial newspapers (i.e., the newspapers of Pulitzer and Hearst), it has become clear that the modern editorial process is tainted by several subjectivities. From the subjectivity of the journalist who decides whom to interview and how to write (or in the case of the electronic media produce) a news story, to the subjectivity of the editor who decides which stories are included and in what order, and the subjectivity of the designers who decide how to present such stories in order to make them more appealing to the public. All these subjectivities are at the service of making a profit. No media, as independent and respectable as it may be regarded, stands above its own interests.

As mentioned before, the journalistic industry was developed as a mechanical quest for immediacy. Many centuries before the invention of the printing press and its subsequent introduction into Europe, different human groups had embarked on
this quest, which Stephens (2007) defined as the “amplification of news”. As mentioned in Chapter 1, this amplification consists of endowing news “with the power to travel farther, faster, and to arrive with less distortion” (pp. 20-21).

Throughout the history of human civilisation, there have been numerous technological advances that have contributed to this process of amplification. A few amongst them are: the domestication of the horse (c3.500 B.C.), the invention of writing (c3.100 B.C.), the printing press (invented in China in 1041 and introduced into Europe in 1450), the steam engine (1698), the telegraph (1844), the radio (1895), television (1941) and the Internet (1969) (Stephens, 2007).

During the nineteenth century, electromagnetic technologies were developed as the vehicle for mass media to reach immediacy. However, there is a paradox in this quest, as immediacy, by definition, implies the absence of intermediaries, that is, the extinction of the media.

Before the development of digital technologies, the media of mass communication had a meaning and a purpose. These were, to transport news from its place of origin to a distant, interested audience. This is why Stephens (2007) defined news as a “social need”. The major events of the first decade of the twenty-first century show that such meaning and purpose are becoming less and less relevant. From the attacks on the World Trade Centre on September 11, 2001, to the outburst of social revolts in North Africa and the Middle East in 2011, the events have been (and are being) originally reported by common citizens and not professional journalists (Krotoski, 2010; Hirst, 2010?).

Recent advances in communications, such as the development of social media and mobile recording devices, are altering the structure under which humans exchange information. In this scheme, the figure of the journalist as a technocrat in charge of the transportation of news is becoming obsolete. So, is there a space for journalists in the twenty-first century?

In the fragmented societies of the industrial era, journalism has been regarded as a profession. In Colombia, this led to the extreme that journalists were required to have a professional licence (just like doctors or engineers). But with the development of digital technologies and the establishment of specialised blogs and
websites it seems there is no room, not only for a professional licence for journalists but for professional journalists of any kind. After all, isn’t an economist better suited to write an analysis on economic matters, like the debt crisis in Europe, than a journalist? Or a doctor to do so about DNA mapping?

On the other hand, websites like WikiLeaks are allowing whistle-blowers to leak information without having to deal with traditional media.

This is why I believe that journalism in the twenty-first century should gradually evolve from being formally regarded as a profession to become a practice and a method that should be applied by people from all different backgrounds. In this sense, the principles of investigative journalism developed from the eighteenth to twentieth centuries, and the ethical codes and guidelines mentioned earlier in this chapter, should be the legacy that must be preserved from modern journalism.

One of the central hypotheses of my thesis is that in future societies, the dividing line between the roles of journalism and art should fade. On a related matter, H.G. Wells (1930) reached a similar view when he stated that: “the essential task of men of good-will in all states and countries (...) is an educational task”. (p 1145).

Throughout my thesis, I mention the influence that an ancient historian like Herodotus had over a modern journalist like Kapuscinski, as an example of the educational power that a proper combination of journalism and art can have. On a similar note, I have also studied the influence that earlier utopian and dystopian authors had over Orwell’s work.

On the other hand, based on my analysis of the history of news in Chapter 1 and the debate between Naïve Realism and Network Idealism in Chapter 3, I aim to reconcile this relation between journalism and art with the present technological conditions: to frame it within the so-called digital societies of the twenty-first century. In order to do so, I must now focus in more detail on other modern examples where journalism and art are combined.

**On the Novelty of New Journalism**

In the introduction of the book New Journalism (1973), Tom Wolfe described how, at the time he first entered a newsroom, the journalist was considered: “a pedestrian mind, a phlegmatic spirit, a faded personality” (p. 31).
As Wolfe pointed out, within the general structure of the literary arts, the novelist stood at the top; followed by the "men of letters", that is, the writers of essays, and finally, at the base of the pyramid, the journalists and freelance writers appeared as the "lumpen proletarians" of the literary world (pp. 31-39). Then, Wolfe acknowledged the rise of a group of American writers who, during the 1960s and 70s turned to journalism and impregnated it with a literary spirit. According to Wolfe, this meant the emergence of a new journalism, which rose to a level so far exclusively reserved for the novel.

Despite the undeniable value in the works of these new journalists, such as Wolfe himself, Gay Talese, Truman Capote and Hunter S. Thompson, I believe the new within the title is an overestimation. Although Wolfe did acknowledge some earlier examples as antecedents of this new journalism, including Orwell's Down and Out in London and Paris (1933), the general impression is that he is describing it as an unprecedented artistic and literary movement.

In his explanation of what constituted this new journalism, Wolfe recognised four devices that he believed could define it:

1. A scene-by-scene construction of the narrative.
2. The recording in dialogue in full-length.
3. The use of third person point of view.
4. The recording of gestures, habits, manners, decoration, ambience, etc. (Wolfe, 1973).

The combination of these devices, according to Wolfe, was what allowed the new journalism of the 1960s to rise to the level of the novel, like no other reportage or investigative style had done before. However, one can find a reply to Wolfe’s arguments (although it would have to be an implied one) in the work of one of Wolfe’s contemporary authors from the other side of the Iron Curtain, Ryszard Kapuscinski.

While Wolfe stated he and his fellow American authors were producing something new, in Travels With Herodotus (2007), Kapuscinski acknowledged his role as a journalist as a continuation of what Herodotus had done twenty-five centuries before him. Who is right? As in many of the questions exposed throughout this
thesis, to come up with a definite answer would exceed the limits of my research and, on the other hand, would not add anything particularly valuable to the debate on how journalism should evolve during the twenty-first century. What I believe is important to point out is the way art and journalism have converged in the works of the aforementioned authors. This combination is what has allowed such work to stand above thousands, if not millions, of artworks produced for “art’s sake” and remain as a more truthful representation of the world in which these authors lived (or have lived) than the millions, if not billions, of allegedly objective news stories produced by the modern editorial industry.

As mentioned earlier, one premise I defend is that, despite the emergence of major authors like Wolfe, Orwell and Kapuscinski, the editorial industry was hardly the ideal space for their kind of inquisitive spirit to prosper. So, how were conditions during the times of Herodotus? Did they make it easier for his inquisitive spirit to flourish? As Kapuscinski pointed out:

Herodotus was the contemporary of the greatest Greek tragedians – Aeschylus, Sophocles (with whom he might have been personally acquainted), and Euripides. His times were the golden age of theater (as well as much else), and stage art in those days was influenced by mysteries, folk rituals, national festivals, religious services, Dionysian rites. This affected how Greeks wrote, how Herodotus wrote. (p. 261)

Reading this, the notion of the 1960s’ new journalism as an unprecedented movement appears as, at least, a questionable matter. But, having exposed this apparent contradiction between the views of Wolfe and Kapuscinski, I believe it is more important to focus on the similarities in their standpoints: which in my opinion is what make these authors (and others like Orwell, Huxley, Capote or Talese), to be so valuable in their role as society’s “early warning systems”. These similarities revolve around the notion of the writer (and by extension the artist) as an outsider. And, as Kapuscinski also exposed, is defined by the way they interact with the other (2009).

Kapuscinski defined Herodotus as:

...the first to discover the world’s multicultural nature. The first to argue that each culture requires acceptance and understanding, and that to understand it, one must first come to know it. (2008, p. 80)
Therefore:

Herodotus is never shocked at difference, never condemns it; rather, he tries to learn about it, to understand and describe it. Difference? It serves by some paradox only to emphasize a greater oneness, speaking to its vitality and richness. (...) All the while he returns to his great passion, his obsession almost: reproaching his kinsmen for their pride, their conceitedness, their belief in their own superiority (it is from the Greek that the word ‘barbarian’ comes from). (...) He begins with a fundamental, transcendent matter: where did the Greeks get their gods? Where do they come from? What do you mean, where do they come from? The Greeks respond. They are our gods! Oh, no, blasphemes Herodotus, we got our gods from the Egyptians! (pp. 103-4)

Kapuscinski also narrated how, growing up in Poland during the Cold War, he was always intrigued by what lay beyond his national borders. But Kapuscinski was not a privileged Greek citizen: he was a common Polish one. From a historical/national perspective, the Polish of the twentieth century would be the equivalent to any of the enslaved peoples of the ancient world. Hence, it can be argued that, in general terms, and even in conquered territories and under authoritarian regimes, the modern world is more apt for an inquisitive spirit like Herodotus’ to flourish than the time of Pericles. And the main difference between these two periods might as well be the existence of the printing press.14

On the relation between newspapers and journalism

Following this premise (or at least very similar ones), organisations like the API15 are arguing that saving the editorial industry is the same thing as saving journalism (Rao, 2009). But it is easy to point out financial motives as to why the API would defend such premises. Thus, as laudable as their plan to rescue journalism may be, it still is nothing but a business plan. Their arguments must be evaluated with such bias in mind.

But there are other, uncompromised views that seem to concur with the API’s plan; or at least they do so when comparing the influence of the printing press with that of electromagnetic and digital means of communication. Amongst these views,

14 This, however, is a debatable point: for ancient writers like Diogenes and Aesop were slaves.
15 American Press Institute (see Chapter 1).
as mentioned in Chapter 3, stand out those of communications theorist Neil Postman.

Postman (1995, 1999, 2000a, 2000b) argues that, not only the development of television and digital media, but all technological advances present us with what he called a “Faustian bargain”. Hence, for all that the printing press may have altered our sensory balance – as theorists like Innis and McLuhan argued – as part of the deal it has at least allowed the emergence of writers like Orwell, Wolfe and Kapuscinski (to name a few). But where do these figures appear within the “epistemology of television”? Who is the television equivalent of Orwell? Or the equivalent of Wolfe?

On Media Epistemologies and the Artist as an Outsider

So, what do the artists studied in my research have in common? Based on the analysis in Chapter 2, I have recognised two features:

1. That inquisitive nature Kapuscinski shared with Herodotus; which is also evident in the work of other writers like Orwell and Wolfe, and also in the legacy of painters like Goya and Dix.
2. A critical view expressed in a form that lingers between moralism and satire: evident in the paintings of Bosch and Bruegel, as well as in the work of eighteenth century caricaturists and printmakers, such as Gilray, Hogarth and Daumier.

But, how about television? Are there names coming from this media that may be included in this list?

In my opinion, comedians like George Carlin, Bill Maher or John Stewart fit the standard; however, strictly speaking, their origin is more theatrical than electromagnetic. There is, however, one example from Colombian television that I analyse in Chapter 5: the late humourist and political critic Jaime Garzón.

One of the reasons why Garzón’s case is particularly relevant in this analysis, is because he became a major influential figure in Colombia – more influential than any writer from his generation – not despite, but because, he worked in television.
This reminds me of an insight from Eduardo Galeano about being a writer in Latin America:

One writes out of a need to communicate and to commune with others, to denounce that which gives pain and to share that which gives happiness. One writes against one’s solitude and against the solitude of others. One assumes that literature transmits knowledge and affects the behavior and language of those who read... One writes, in reality, for the people whose luck or misfortune one identifies with – the hungry, the sleepless, the rebels, and the wretched of this earth – and the majority of them are illiterate. (Galeano, 1978, para 1).

Through his comedic sketches in television, Jaime Garzón spoke to those who could not (or would not) get to read The Open Veins of Latin America. Does this speak highly of Colombian television? Does it mean Colombian audio-visual artworks are superior to its literary ones? That would certainly not be my conclusion. Yet, it does seem to give some credit to Garzón for choosing the media that reached not only the largest audience, but included that which suffers the most from Colombia’s major economic, social and political problems.

But before moving into the Colombian case, I must return for a moment to Postman’s discussion on media epistemologies. In Amusing Ourselves to Death (1986), Postman includes a personal anecdote to remark on the value of the written word. While presenting his “doctoral oral”, Postman received the following feedback:

The candidate had included in his thesis a footnote, intended as documentation of a quotation, which read: “Told to the investigator at the Roosevelt Hotel on January 18, 1981, in presence of Arthur Lingeman and Jerrold Gross. (p. 20).

As Postman remembers, the aforementioned citation “drew the attention of no fewer than four of the five oral examiners”, who believed it was not “suitable as a form of documentation”. The reason for this, argued the jury, was that:

...the written word endures, the spoken word disappears; and that is why writing is closer to the truth than speaking. (pp. 20-21).

The first argument I can think of as a possible reply to this statement would be: yes, but for the same reason, the written word is also the best instrument to turn lies into official truths. This is, after all, the driving argument in Nineteen Eighty-
After reading (and listening) to theorists like Postman (1986) or Morozov (2011), one gets the impression humanity is cursed to linger between the Orwellian and the Huxleyan dystopias. If this is so, then one of Postman’s contradictors may ask: isn’t orgy-porgy better than room 101?

**Postman on Cyberspace**

Another thing that one of Postman’s contradictors may ask would be: isn’t what I’m doing technically called typing? That is, of course, if the person asking the question is doing so in the same fashion as I am writing this thesis. Which leads me to another of those endlessly debatable questions: *What is writing?*

After typing in Google’s search engine – that is, after googling – the phrase “Postman on cyberspace”, the result at the top of the list links to the video of an interview Postman gave in 1995 on the PBS News Hour. At the beginning of the interview, Postman defined cyberspace as a “metaphorical idea”, representing “the space where your consciousness is located when you are using computer technology”. Later on, he introduced the notion that, not just the Internet, but all technological advances, present us with a “Faustian bargain”. And later, he argued that the development of an “Information Superhighway” could produce “people overloaded with information” and “information junkies” (Postman, 1995).

So, what can be said about these definitions? About their meaning and their epistemology? And about their validity as quotations in an academic work? Are they “suitable as a form of documentation?” The investigator, in this case, certainly hopes so. And if they are, this raises new questions about the validity of the written word. As Postman remembered, one of the arguments why the jury did not believe a spoken statement was a “suitable form of documentation” was because “the written word endures”, while the “spoken word disappears”. But, how – or where – do Postman’s answers in the aforementioned interview fit within this duality? So far, that is approximately sixteen years after the interview, Postman’s statements have “endured” through digital means.

Another of the jury’s arguments in response to Postman’s inclusion of a spoken statement was that he was “not a journalist”, that he was “supposed to be a scholar” (p. 20). This reminds me of Wolfe’s explanation of how people in the
sixties and earlier regarded the novel as intrinsically superior to all journalistic writings.

Beyond the issue of, whether by definition a journalistic investigation is less serious than an academic one, an argument in defence of the printed word, which can be extended to its comparison with an audiovisual recording, for example, a YouTube video, is that the printed word has to go through several filters and revisions before it gets published. This argument seems almost impossible to rebut, until one takes a look at most of the newspapers, magazines and even books displayed at newsstands and the few remaining bookstores one can find in cities around the world. On the other hand, what percentage of the population has access to serious academic publications? Which leads me to the question: How are those serious academic publications favouring society?

This reminds me of Tom Wolfe’s critical approach (1968) on the emergence of Marshall McLuhan as a public figure. As Wolfe described it, McLuhan’s sudden rise to fame did not happen despite the fact no one was able to understand him, but because no one was able to do so. In this regard, I believe it is fair to point out how Postman was so much clearer and, if I may add, far more entertaining in his writing, than McLuhan (and I mean that as a compliment).

Postman remarked on the necessity to raise what may be considered as uncomfortable questions about the influence of digital technologies on contemporary societies. In his PBS interview (1995) he presented three questions that, he argued, must be asked in regard to the development of all technological advances. They are the following:

1. What is the problem to which this technology is a solution?
2. Whose problem is it?
3. If there is a legitimate problem to which this technology offers a solution, what new problems are created with the development of this technology?
Also in YouTube, there is a seven-part series (i.e., a video divided into seven parts) of a conference called *Technology and Society by Neil Postman* (1998). In this conference, Postman once again raises the three aforementioned questions, and complements them with another three, which are the following:

4. Which people and institutions will be harmed the most by the introduction of this technology?
5. What changes in language does this technology bring?
6. What sort of people and institutions will acquire the most power with the introduction of this technology?

In Chapter 3, I have exposed some theories that address some of Postman’s aforementioned questions. In this analysis, I have remarked how theorists like Shirky (2011) argue that the development of digital means of communication have granted groups of common citizens with greater facilities to form a discussion and ultimately coordinate actions. In response to this, theorists like Morozov (2011) state that, if digital networks, indeed solve a problem by allowing common citizens to share information and coordinate their activities, it also allows authoritarian states and multinational corporations to track down this information and police citizens using digital networks.

Although his questions can be extended to the influence of technology on all social aspects, Postman’s theories are mainly focused on the issue of education. This brings me to the question: How can the development of digital technologies affect education and the academy as a social institution?

**Morality in So-called Information Societies**

As the reader would have hopefully noticed, I agree with what I believe is the most fundamental premise in Postman’s theories: that it is a mistake to believe that the development of digital technologies (or any kind of technology for that matter) by itself would solve the major problems that the societies of the twenty-first century are facing. Yet, I do tend to disagree with what I consider an over-idealisation of the past on Postman’s account. Thus, at this stage I think the contraposition of Postman’s arguments with those of Ken Robinson (exposed at the beginning of this

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16The original conference took place in Calvin College (Michigan, US) in 1998.
chapter) would throw some interesting light on how digital technologies may affect education in the twenty-first century.

In Amusing Ourselves to Death (1986), Postman expressed his preference for a “print-based epistemology” over a “television-based epistemology”, particularly when addressing a serious issue like education. In this sense, his work can be seen as a defence of the educational system that emerged from the Enlightenment and the Age of Reason. This train of thought is also evident in the title of his 2000 book, Building a Bridge to the Eighteenth Century.

In another of Postman’s YouTube appearances, he is interviewed in a program from the Canadian television station TVO, shortly after the publication of the aforementioned book. In this interview, Postman explains how his book aims to expose how technological advances do not imply, or necessarily lead, to social wellbeing. As a foundation for his argument, Postman references an essay by Jean Jacques Rousseau (1750), which questioned if “scientific progress contributed to the corruption or purification of morality”. As Postman pointed out, Rousseau’s conclusion was that “in fact, the great mistake we would be make is to assume that technological and scientific innovation are the same thing as human progress”.

Thus, by “building a bridge to the eighteenth century”, Postman meant we should be raising the type of questions thinkers like Rousseau asked about the influence of their contemporary technologies. This, in my opinion, is very good advice. But, isn’t he raising such questions? Haven’t I just listed them a few paragraphs above? This brings me to what I believe may fairly be the biggest problem with the current educational systems (or, to be more accurate, with the ones I know). This problem is a communications problem, of how the academy communicates with the outer world.

As I have implied earlier, by questioning how serious academic publications favour society, the problem I have observed (as a student in both Colombia and Australia) is that under the current educational system(s) the knowledge that emerges from the academy tends to remain isolated from the outer world: that is, from the greatest numbers of people.
This, I believe, is particularly problematic in the so-called social sciences. Taking medicine as an example, from an early stage in their careers, those aspiring to be doctors are introduced to the environment of the hospital. Now, if one were to rate medicine as a science in terms of progress, it would, arguably, be at the top of the list. But what can be said about the social sciences in this regard? Has there been any considerable progress since the Enlightenment?

This is not necessarily a rhetorical question. As the reader may remember, I have mentioned how the Civil Rights Movement of the 1960s is, in my opinion, the most important contribution of the twentieth century. And at this point I can also include other examples like the Save the Whales movement. Yet, without demining the importance of the right to protest or the power that this type of social movements may have, I can’t but help wonder: is this the ultimate meaning of the term participatory democracy?

As exposed in the previous chapters, so far the debate about whether the Internet and digital networks can be seen as a “democratic weapon”, as Orwell (1945) would have called it, or as the “ultimate levelling technology” envisioned by Tim Berners Lee, is mostly based on massive social protests. The most relevant, or at least the more renowned, of which are happening within the Islamic world. All conclusions on this matter are still far from being anything else other than mere speculation. What is going to happen in Egypt? Or in Tunisia? How about the 2013 elections in Iran? Or, to use a Western example, what about the Occupy Wall Street movement? If the worse happens – whatever that worse may be – is it going to be the Internet’s fault?

Education in Cyberspace

I am not saying the academy should stop asking this type of questions. But it should also be thinking about how to expose them – or better still, export them – making them accessible and understandable to the great majorities that cannot access the discussions where they are being raised. Various groups of academics have recognised this problem and started to use digital networks to offer free access to the knowledge formed in academic discussions.
One good example of is the RSA Animate series\textsuperscript{17}, which has provided me with various references for my thesis. Another example is the social entrepreneurship company, Coursera\textsuperscript{18}, founded by Professors Daphne Koller and Andrew Ng, recently highlighted in Thomas Friedman’s column in the New York Times (May 15, 2012). As Friedman writes: last semester (Ng) taught 100,000 in an online course on machine learning. “To reach that many students before”, he said, “I would have had to teach my normal Stanford class for 250 years” (Quoted from Friedman, 2012, para. 2).

One hundred thousand students at once! What would Postman say about that? Postman stated that the first question to ask when assessing the development of all new technologies should be: What is the problem to which this technology is a solution? In regard to digital media, one problem that comes to mind is the so-called third world brain drain. At this stage, it is important to point out how this problem not only implies a drain from developing nations to developed ones, but also within these nations. Thus, projects like the RSA and Coursera seem to be steps in the right direction. However, as Postman would say, the introduction of a new technology “always produces winners and losers” (1998, p N/A).

So, who is losing?

In Postman’s conference at Calvin College, he quotes an article from the Washington Post from June 1996: which spoke of a plan by the State of Maryland to spend 100 million dollars in connecting all the schools in the state to the World Wide Web by the end of the year 2000. He also pointed out that this was happening while schoolteachers were being underpaid and overworked, and that most teachers were happy about it. In response to this, Postman hypothesised about a different education plan, where: “the State of Maryland intends to spend 100 million dollars to increase the number of teachers in the state, to pay those we have more and to reduce teaching loads.” (p N/A).

\textsuperscript{17} http://www.thersa.org/
\textsuperscript{18} https://www.coursera.org/
There is one big difference between the State of Maryland’s plan and projects like Coursera: which is that the latter is not being funded with public resources. But still, in my very basic understanding of economics, I can see how one professor teaching 100,000 students represents a threat to other, less renowned professors. And I believe Postman could see how this situation also represents a threat to the students: for it may lead to the decline of physical interaction within the educational process.

**National issues in a digital world**

While in the first part of my thesis I have been addressing my research question (about the roles of journalism and art in digital societies) from what might be considered a global perspective, in the second part of my thesis I aim to relate this analysis to the Colombian case. Therefore, Chapter 5 (which focuses on how the contradiction between history and memory is portrayed in three examples of Colombian art from the twentieth century) is directly related to Chapter 2 (where I analyse the relation between art and propaganda. Just as such, Chapter 6 (which focuses on the Colombian cyberspace) is directly related to Chapter 1, particularly to the second part of this chapter, where I study a series of contemporary issues, which I have labelled as digital battles.

Then, in the analysis of the cases studied in Chapters 7 and 8, I focus on my own experience as a journalist and an artist, with the aim of relating such experience with the theories exposed until that point. Thus, the analysis of the final two chapters revolves around how journalists and artists may use digital media as an educational tool, in a way that encourages, rather than deters, physical interaction.

At this stage, I must point out how, by moving my research towards the Colombian case and while comparing it with other cases, like the Australian, as well as with certain global statistics (e.g. access to digital networks, access to education, quality of education) I have noticed how issues related to cultural and national identities complicate and ultimately prevent a research project of this nature to reach conclusions that could be regarded as universally acceptable.

Writing about national identities, reminds me of a concept exposed by the late Colombian humourist Jaime Garzón, in a conference he held in the city of Cali,
which I am studying in more detail in Chapter 5: that in Colombia, our understanding of the term *progress* is a foreign one, an imported one. This applies to virtually all economic, political and social practices; and journalism, like education, could not be the exception.

According to Garzón, the reason why Colombians have not been able to conceive our own definition of progress is because we don’t have an understanding of our own identity. To expose his argument, Garzón tells a joke of how in Colombia, the high classes want to be English, the middle classes want to be American, the intellectuals want to be French and the lower classes want to be Mexican.

Regarding the issue of national (and cultural) identities, and how they may evolve in the twenty first century, there are two factors that particularly relate to my research: (a) to what extent will (and should) the right to these identities be a limitation to the right of freedom of speech, and (b) to what extent is the preservation of the current national (and cultural) structures compatible with the economic, social and environmental conditions of the twenty first century.

The first of the aforementioned factors, relates to Habermas’ theory of the public sphere, as it basically questions the limits of such sphere. How public should a public sphere be? Or, bringing the argument to the so-called digital societies of the twenty first century, how free should the Internet be? Are there views, opinions or, to use a more technical term, information that should be excluded from it? And if so, who gets to make that decision? And if someone is making this kind of decisions, can we truly speak about a public sphere? On the other hand, if some information is censored and excluded from the public sphere because it is considered to be offensive and/or damaging to society, does this mean that the thoughts and feelings (and ultimately the actions) behind this information will ultimately vanish? Should the public sphere portray a realistic or an idealised image of society?

There are certain issues, like torture or child pornography, that although they are regarded as globally censorable, still exist in the real world. Therefore, it is necessary for these issues to be a part of the conversations that emerge from the
public sphere. And in the fulfilment of this need lies what I believe is the point where the roles of journalism and art should converge.

**The public sphere: a means to an end (not an end in itself)**

I agree with Shirky (2011) when he says that digital networks offer logistical facilities for the development of a public sphere like no other technology since the printing press, but I also believe there is a recurrent fallacy in the debate about the public sphere: which is to believe that the development of a public sphere is an end in itself (and not the means to an end).

This reminds me of the role of digital technologies in the social movements in North Africa and the Middle East. Although these movements are still too recent to draw any conclusions from them, it doesn’t seem too far-fetched to augur an increasing radicalisation of anti-Western feelings and a rise of the most fundamentalist factions within the Islamic world as a result of these movements. This, in my opinion, would not deny the fact there is a public sphere being formed by the use of digital means of communication; which means that the existence of a public sphere does not guarantee that the conversations emerging from it would necessarily lead civil society to do the right thing; to act in the most righteous manner.

So, what is the goal that contemporary societies should be aiming for? As mentioned earlier, during the first half of the twentieth century, H.G. Wells argued that this goal should be the consolidation of a World State. And in order to reach this World State, the first of what he called the “broad fundamentals” was the institution of a “world religion” (Wells, 1930, p. 1148). Later on, Wells’ World State would be criticised and its threats exposed by authors like Orwell and Huxley. Beyond the threats that they identified behind Wells’ ideal of the World State – which I have presented in the second section of Chapter 2 – another criticism that could be aimed at Wells’ utopian World State is that he was confusing the order of the factors.

Wells’ world religion was to be founded on “the Eightfold Way” and “the Kingdom of Heaven”. These are beliefs and ideals that have existed since, at least, a couple of millennia. And still, the achievement of these ideals represents what I believe
humans should consider as progress. Another, more recent, and more politically correct, term that compiles these ideals is what Rifkin (2010) calls the “Empathic Civilisation”.

The word *empathic* leads me to the Colombian case – on which the second part of my thesis is founded – for, as Jaime Garzón exposed in the conference which I am analysing at the end of the following chapter, the lack of empathy is one of the major, if not the major, problem troubling Colombian society.
PART II – On the Colombian Case

Chapter 5 - Memory Against History in Colombian Art

Veneration for the past has always seemed to me reactionary. The right chooses to talk about the past because it prefers dead people: a quiet world, a quiet time. The powerful who legitimize their privileges by heredity cultivate nostalgia. History is studied as if we were visiting a museum; but this collection of mummies is a swindle. (Galeano, 1971, p. 266)

Based on the aforementioned quote from Eduardo Galeano, and focusing on three examples of Colombian art from the twentieth century, I aim to expose how, by standing against the official versions, art often remains as a more truthful recreation of memory than history itself.

According to French historian and philologist Pierre Nora (1989), in modern societies, memory has been “seized by history”. This means that, as modern societies have increasingly developed, they have also grown in their urge to keep records and officialise the past. This process has led to the demise of the living, collective memory.

Following this line, Nora argues that “memory is blind to all but the group it binds”, which means that “there are as many memories as there are groups”. On the other hand, history “belongs to everyone and to no one, hence it claims to universal authority”. And because it “claims to universal authority”, it ends up “being perpetually suspicious of memory, and its true mission is to suppress and destroy it” (p. 9).

This chapter aims to locate art within the conflict between history and memory: as it may either stand in defence of the official, historical version, or remain as an independent voice that emerges from the remnants of memory.

In the following paragraphs, I analyse three artworks – or more accurately, fragments of these artworks – produced in Colombia during the twentieth century.
They are: (a) the chapter in the novel Changó el Gran Putas (1983)\(^{19}\) that deals with the execution of Admiral José Prudencio Padilla, (b) the part in One Hundred Years of Solitude (1969) that deals with the Massacre of the Banana Fields and (c) the sketches of the late humourist and political critic Jaime Garzón, which were originally produced for television but now remain accessible on YouTube.

**Bolivar’s betrayal in Changó el Gran Putas**

In 2010, many Latin American nations – including Mexico, Colombia, Argentina, Venezuela and Chile – celebrated the bicentennial of their independence from Spain. These commemorations showed how the battles and heroes of the independence have become the main symbols of Latin American nationalism: to the point of competing in holiness with the dogmas of the Catholic Church introduced during the preceding centuries of colonial life.

This holiness attributed to the heroes of independence is evident in the fact that two, allegedly opposite, politicians, such as Colombian former president Álvaro Uribe and the recently deceased Venezuelan president Hugo Chavez, have been regarded as heirs of Simón Bolívar (Barreras, 2011, Grant, 2010). Following this line, Chávez – who named his political movement the Bolivarian Revolution and changed the official name of his country to the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela – also drew a distinction between Uribe and himself by stating that: “I am the son of Bolivar (while) Uribe is the son of the traitor, Santander” (Grant, 2010). This is a reference to Francisco de Paula Santander, who was second in command during the independence campaign and who has also been accused of being involved in the assassination attempt against Bolivar, on 25 September 1828.

Within the Colombian literary tradition, the most renowned work about Bolívar’s life (particularly about the last days before his death) is García Márquez’s novel The General in his Labyrinth (1989). Despite showing Bolívar as a sick, tired and some may say defeated (or at least deflated) man, García Márquez remains faithful to the image of Bolívar as the great man: the liberator who steps into his grave

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\(^{19}\) In Jonathan Tittler’s translation (which is the only full translation of the novel into English) the novel has been titled *Changó the Biggest Badass*. However, in other references it has been translated as *Changó the Holy Motherfucker*. 
after seeing how his dream of Latin American unification has been shattered by the pressures of the world’s super powers and the caprices of the local elites.

This is not, however, the image of Bolívar portrayed in Changó el Gran Putas; as Manuel Zapata Olivella’s representation challenges the idealised figure of *El Libertador*, and by doing so, also questions the very essence of Colombian (and by extension Latin American) nationalism.

One of the reasons why I believe Changó el Gran Putas is amongst the most relevant examples of subversive art within Colombian literature, lies in its author’s ethnic and cultural background. Therefore, it can be argued that Zapata Olivella’s African heritage granted him the moral authority to challenge the historical, national myths of Colombia (and the Americas) in a way that might not be entirely acceptable to authors coming from an European or *criollo* background. Nevertheless, his authority goes far beyond his ethnicity, and must also be related to his intellectual and scholarly formation.\(^{20}\)

Despite having recently been recognised as the third best Colombian novel of the twentieth century – behind García Márquez’ *One Hundred Years of Solitude* (1969) and *Love in the Time of Cholera* (1985)\(^ {21}\) – Changó el Gran Putas still is, in general terms, an unknown work (both inside Colombia and abroad). However, as Tillis (2001) and Tittler (2002) point out, this novel also stands as one of the most important works of the entire Afro-American literary tradition.

The importance of Zapata Olivella’s novel lies, to a great extent, in the fact that it manages to compile in one work – and, more specifically, within one narrative – several of the most relevant episodes in the history of Africans in the American continent.

In his novel, Zapata Olivella challenges the official account of the trade of African slaves by exposing it as a curse imposed on Africans by one of their own deities: as it is Changó, the god of lighting, war and sexuality, who, after being exiled from the land of the gods by the supreme god Odumare for killing his brother Timi and

\(^{20}\) Besides from being a writer, he was a physician and an anthropologist.

\(^{21}\) Based on a selection done by *Semana Magazine* in 2007.
taking his sisters as concubines, decides to take revenge on his children, the Muntu (people), as they had also censored the actions that led to his exile.

Another important element regarding the curse that prompted African slavery, is the fact that Changó, together with other Orishas\(^\text{22}\), decided to accompany the Muntu in their exile and join them in their fight for liberty in the Americas.

The novel’s historical time spans approximately four centuries: beginning at the early stages of the African slave trade (with a chapter that narrates the capturing and shipping of a group of slaves that rebel during the voyage and sink the ship that was taking them to the New World) and finishing in the United States, with the Civil Rights Movement of the 1960s.

The book includes two episodes that take place in the territory that today holds the nation of Colombia. The first one focuses on the figure of Benkos Bioho: who during the early seventeenth century led various slave revolts and founded the community of San Basilio de Palenque\(^\text{23}\). In this chapter, the author begins what might be seen as his desecration of Colombian history, by challenging the figure of Saint Peter Claver. Claver was a Catalan Jesuit priest who arrived to Cartagena in 1610 and holds the title of patron saint of slaves.

If, in its first Colombian episode, Changó el Gran Putas challenges the first of the two common dogmas shared by all Latin American nations (their Catholic tradition); in the second episode it challenges the other major source of Latin American dogmatism: The Independence.

As exposed in the next section, while analysing the portrayal of the Massacre of the Banana Fields in One Hundred Years of Solitude, there are two main arguments that contradict the historical version of Latin American independence. The first argument, which is the main issue behind García Márquez’ account of the Massacre of the Banana Fields and is also the driving argument of another Latin American classic like Eduardo Galeano’s The Open Veins of Latin America (1971), is that, immediately after independence from Spain (and even during the late stages of

\(^{22}\) Deities of the Yoruba religion

\(^{23}\) Considered the first free town in the Americas.
Spanish colonialism) the Latin American nations became dependent (although never formally declared as colonies) on other foreign powers like the British Empire and (later) the United States.

The second argument is that, despite having experienced two centuries of republican life, the social structures in Latin America are still very similar to what they were during colonial times.

The idea of an aristocratic criollo elite that ruled on behalf of major foreign powers does not, from a historical perspective, challenge the myth of Simon Bolivar. After all, it was the criollo aristocracy which, according to Chavez, murdered him (Padgett, 2010). What Chavez failed to mention, and Zapata Olivella was not afraid to expose, is that Bolivar himself belonged to that criollo aristocracy. And that he finally became subjugated to the aristocracy's intentions by not pushing for the abolition of slavery and ordering Admiral Padilla’s execution.

Zapata Olivella’s interpretation of Bolivar’s betrayal goes beyond the fact that Bolivar and Padilla fought together in the independence campaign. As a baby, Bolivar was breast-fed by one of his household’s slaves, named Hipolita. This meant the Orishas had decided that an African girl (Hipolita’s daughter) should be sacrificed, for her mother to nourish the boy chosen by Changó to end slavery in America.

By titling this chapter: “Simon Bolívar: Memoria del Olvido” [Simon Bolivar: Memory of Oblivion], the author stated how Padilla’s execution is a stain in Bolivar’s legacy that should not be forgotten, although this would harm the historical figure that represents, like no other, the dream of Latin American unification. In this sense, Zapata Olivella’s portrayal of Bolivar can be compared to Ryszard Kapuscinski’s account of the life of Haile Selassie in The Emperor (1983), as it also exposes an inconvenient truth about a historical symbol that, in the eyes of many, represents the highest and most positive values.

Zapata Olivella’s account of Padilla’s execution exposes how independence from Spain and the birth of the Latin American nations did not bring liberty nor represented any significant improvement for African and indigenous groups in the subcontinent. This argument can also be implied from the fact that, regardless of
whether they were Spanish, Portuguese, British, Dutch, criollo or North American, the author refers to all those who oppressed and enslaved Africans as the “White Wolf”. It also explains why the author’s account of Padilla’s life (which in the novel follows Bolivar’s judgement before Changó) is titled: José Prudencio Padilla: Guerras ajenas que parecen nuestras [Jose Prudencio Padilla: Foreign wars that seem like ours].

Figure 16 – Bolivar and Padilla

(On the left: portrait of Simon Bolivar by Ricardo Acevedo Bernal; on the right: portrait of José Prudencio Padilla by Jaime Maya – no dates available)

The Banana Fields Massacre in One Hundred Years of Solitude

The idea of Yankee Imperialism in Latin America has been studied in countless academic and literary works and has also been a driving argument in the discourse of popular (some may say populist) politicians like Fidel Castro and Hugo Chavez. As mentioned earlier, it is also a major element in Garcia Márquez’ One Hundred Years of Solitude.

Within the novel’s plot, it is this massacre what leads to the demise of the town of Macondo. Posada-Carbó (1998) exposes this demise in the following terms:
The tale of a hurricane in the shape of a U.S. banana company that sweeps away Macondo is well known to readers of One Hundred Years of Solitude: Macondo was a prosperous place until it was exploited, corrupted and destroyed by the fruit company; this wave of destruction reached a peak during a general strike, when 3,000 workers were slaughtered by the Colombian army; this episode was erased from the collective memory – the recollection of the events by one of the survivors was contradicted by the false version accepted by the historians, and repeated in the school textbooks: ‘aqui no ha habido muertos’ [there’s been no death here]. (p. 396)

Yet, Posada-Carbó’s article is not about how the Massacre of the Banana Fields was erased from Colombia’s collective memory, as exposed in García Marquez’ fictionalised and hyperbolic version of the events. His argument is that this fictional account of the Massacre has become the official one. To prove his point, he quotes an extract from an interview Garcia Marquez gave to the UK’s Channel Four in 1990:

The banana events – García Márquez said – are perhaps my earliest memory. They were so legendary that when I wrote One Hundred Years of Solitude I wanted to know the real facts and the true number of deaths. There was a talk of a massacre, an apocalyptic massacre. Nothing is sure, but there can’t have been many deaths. But even three or five deaths in those circumstances at that time... would have been a great catastrophe. It was a problem for me... when I discovered it wasn’t a spectacular slaughter. In a book where things are magnified, like One Hundred Years of Solitude... I needed to fill a whole railway with corpses. I couldn’t stick to historical reality. I couldn’t say they were three, or seven, or 17 deaths. They wouldn’t even fill a tiny wagon. So I decided on 3,000 dead because that filled the dimension of the book I was writing. The legend has now been adopted as history. (pp. 395-396)24

Posada-Carbó’s article criticises Colombian historiography for not being able to draw the line between Garcia Marquez’ version and the actual events that took place on December 5, 1928. Yet, without denying the importance of Posada-Carbó’s argument, there is another reading that can be made of these events; one that relates another, more recent, episode involving Chiquita Brands; the same corporation that, when it was called The United Fruit Company, was involved in the massacre.

In 2007, Chiquita Brands was charged, and eventually pleaded guilty, to paying Colombian paramilitary groups for security in their banana plantations (Anderson, 2011). Bearing in mind the countless (and often horrific) crimes attributed to these paramilitary groups, one does not need to have an imagination like Garcia

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Marquez’ to find a relation between Chiquita’s actions in this episode and the United Fruit’s during the 1928 massacre.

Figure 17 – Art and The Banana Fields Massacre

(El Tren de la Muerte [The Train of Death], 1950, by Debora Arango)

Despite the fact that the memory of the Massacre of the Banana Fields has remained in a magnified form through the words of Garcia Marquez, and also by the imagery of Colombian artist Debora Arango, Chiquita’s support of paramilitarism in Colombia seems to prove that history has repeated itself. This complies with another driving argument throughout the plot of One Hundred Years of Solitude – repeated often by the character Ursula, the grandmother and founder of Macondo – when she stated that time (in Macondo, and by extension, Colombia) was not linear but seemed to move in circles.

Jaime Garzón’s Colombia: a Nation Through the Art of a Prophetic Humourist

In the following paragraphs, I aim to explicate Colombia as a nation, by analysing the work of Jaime Garzón. However, in order to draw a more direct relationship
between Garzón’s work and the main premises exposed in my research, it is important to point out how digital media (i.e., YouTube) has allowed Garzón’s message to remain accessible to future generations.

Jaime Garzón was shot dead in Bogotá on August 13, 1999. His assassination, as those of political leaders Jorge Eliecer Gaitán (9 April, 1948) and Luis Carlos Galán (18 August, 1989) remains amongst the darkest episodes of Colombian republican history. Not only because of the ascendancy that these men had over Colombian society, but also because the real causes, as well as the names of those responsible for their murders, remain unknown.

My analysis of Garzón’s work is based on some of his comedic sketches produced during the 1990s and also on some extracts from a conference Garzón gave at the Corporación Universitaria Autónoma de Occidente (a university in the city of Cali) in 1997. This conference, which is analysed in more detail a few paragraphs below, shows an aspect of Garzón’s character that goes beyond his role as a satirist and political critic; and relates to the notion of the artist as an educator that I have introduced in Chapter 4.

**Godofredo Cínico Caspa and the Colombian traditional parties**

One of Garzón’s most popular characters is the old-fashioned, hard-lined, conservative man of law, Godofredo Cínico Caspa.25 This character may be seen as a contemporary representative of that *criollo* aristocracy that, as exposed by Zapata Olivella in *Changó el Gran Putas*, was behind the execution of Admiral Padilla.

In one of this character’s sketches26, Godofredo broadcasts a monologue about the right to vote in Colombia. The transcript (and translation) is as follows:

> You are being addressed by Godofredo Cínico Caspa: last bastion of our national dignity and decorum. In these days our honourable republican congress has been debating about the so-called ‘obligatory vote.’ Since when do our rulers want to popularize a right, a right and a privilege of the *righteous people*?27

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25 The name Godofredo Cínico Caspa would translate into something like: Godfrey Cynical Dandruff.

26 The video’s URL is: [http://www.youtube.com/watch?feature=player_embedded&v=J1u8Sv11Cs](http://www.youtube.com/watch?feature=player_embedded&v=J1u8Sv11Cs)

27 ‘The righteous people’ translates from ‘la gente de bien’ [which may also be translated as the good people or the people of good]. Currently, there is a facebook group called Me dan miedo los colombianos de bien (which
I do not understand why they fail to refer to the fountains of democracy and the rivers of tradition and consult the constitutions of the nineteenth century: which stated that those with the right to vote were only men, over 35 years old, married, with an income greater than 1,500 pesos and who could demonstrate acts of intelligence. Since when are women allowed to vote? May they leave the polls and return to the kitchen. It's not O.K. for communists and opposites to have the right to vote. When did we allow this to happen? The *righteous people* should be electing the *righteous people*. We might be few, that's evident, but with dignity and discretion we shall elect our rulers. What the hell, Alvaro and I will end up electing the president of 1998. Good Night!28

Before analysing the content of Godofredo’s monologue, it is important to focus on the symbolism behind this character and what he represents within the Colombian social, political and historical context.

**Figure 18 - Jaime Garzón and his characters**

(On the left: Jaime Garzón, photograph by Carlos Duque; on the right: snapshots from Youtube videos of Jaime Garzón’s TV sketches.)

As Figure 23 shows (bottom left snapshot), Godofredo always addressed the nation from his office, which was full of books and folios. This is a reference to the abundance of laws and a criticism of the bureaucratic nature of the Colombian legal system. The lighting in Godofredo’s office fades from the red to the blue. This is an allusion to the Colombian traditional parties: the *Liberal Party* (historically represented by the colour red) and the *Conservative Party* (historically represented by the colour blue).

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28 My translation.
When Godofredo talks about the constitutions of the nineteenth century, he is referring to a period in Colombia’s history that was marked by a succession of constitutional changes, followed by a succession of civil wars (see Table 2).29

**Table 2 – Civil wars and constitutional changes in Colombia in the nineteenth century**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Civil Wars</th>
<th>Constitutions</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• War of 1831 between centralists and federalists.</td>
<td>• Constitution of 1832: constitution of the Republic of Nueva Granada and installation of a presidential/centralist regime; Santander elected as president.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• 1840 War of the Supremes a.k.a. War of the Convents (Guerra de los Supremos o de los Conventos).</td>
<td>• Constitution of 1843: radicalisation of centralist politics.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• War of 1851: conservative uprising against the politics of Liberal president José Hilario López.</td>
<td>• Constitution of 1853: first federalist constitution.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• War of 1854: between the “Golgotas” (traders and defendants of free-trade) and the Draconianos (artisans defendants of protectionism).</td>
<td>• Constitution of 1858: centralist by nature, the “Confederación Granadina” is the new name of the county.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• War between 1860-62: between the conservative/centralist government and the liberal/federalist party.</td>
<td>• Constitution of 1863: federalist by nature, the “Estados Unidos de Colombia” is the new name of the county.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• War of 1876-77: because of the division in the liberal party between the radical Aquileo Parra and the moderate Rafael Núñez.</td>
<td>• Constitution of 1886: which lasted until 1991 and was conservative by nature (i.e., acknowledged the relationship between the state and the Catholic church, was centralist and was economically protectionist.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• War of 1895: Against the presidency of Rafael Núñez who on this occasion was president from the Conservative Party.</td>
<td>(Source: Virtual Library Luis Ángel Arango, Central Bank of Colombia30)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As Table 2 shows, since the early stages of its republican life (and until the late twentieth century) Colombia was governed under a rigid bipartisan structure. For

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29 This table begins from 1830, after the death of Simón Bolivar and the dissolution of the Great Colombia, which was a period between 1819 and 1831, when the nations of Colombia, Venezuela, Ecuador and Panama were united into one State.

many years (until the creation of socialist and/or Marxist guerrillas in the 1960s and later with the proliferation of drug-dealing mafias in the 1970s and 1980s), partisan sectarianism was the main cause of violence in Colombia. Because of this, the violence between Liberals and Conservatives has been a constant reference in many artworks from Colombia’s republican history: including *One Hundred Years of Solitude*.

In one of the novel's passages, when Colonel Aureliano Buendia (before becoming a leader of the Liberal cause) is talking with his father-in-law, Don Apolinar Moscote, the latter describes the main ideological differences between the two parties in the following terms:

> The Liberals (sic) were Freemasons, bad people, wanting to hang priests, to institute civil marriage and divorce, to recognise the rights of illegitimate children as equal to those of legitimate ones, and to cut the country up into a federal system that would take power away from the supreme authority. The Conservatives, on the other hand, who had received their power directly from God, proposed the establishment of the faith of Christ, of the principle of authority, and were not prepared to permit the country to be broken down into autonomous entities. (p. 98)

However, as García Márquez also pointed out, after the aforementioned description, beyond the ideological differences between the two parties, and throughout its entire republican history, as was also evident in the period of Spanish colonialism, Colombia has been ruled by a small elite.

This semi-aristocratic, dynastic political order is evident in the fact that many Colombian presidents have been the sons, grandsons and nephews of former presidents and/or political and military leaders. To name a few of the most recent: the current president Juan Manuel Santos (elected in 2010) is the grand-nephew of former president Eduardo Santos (president from 1938 to 1942); his predecessor Álvaro Uribe (president from 2002 to 2010) is the descendant of Rafael Uribe (who was the military leader of the Liberal army during the Thousand-days War); and his predecessor Andrés Pastrana (president from 1998 to 2002) is the son of former president Misael Pastrana (president from 1970 to 1974).

31 Quoted from the 1970 translation by Gregory Rabassa
32 The largest and, arguably, most gruesome civil war of the Colombian republican era.
At the end of his monologue, when Godofredo says that “Alvaro and I will elect the president of 1998”, he is referring to Álvaro Uribe, who back then was Governor of the State of Antioquia and was emerging as a national figure, partly because of his promotion of self-defence groups (as exposed in more detail a few paragraphs below).

**John Lenin and the Colombian Left Wing**

Amongst Garzón’s characters, the one who stands as the opposite of Godofredo Cínico Caspa is the left-wing, militant, public-university student John Lenin. In one of his sketches, available on YouTube³³, John Lenin speaks about the relations between the US and Colombia, particularly in regard to the traffic in narcotics. The transcript (and translation) is as follows:

The gringos’ tails are made of straw and their noses full of powder compañeros! Besides, from snorting it all, they also want to nose into our huts³⁴, which might be also made of straw, but are as honourable as the sweat of the oppressed peoples compañeros! Because the enemy sees the straw in our wagon³⁵, but fails to see the cosa nostra sticking out of his imperial eagle-eye compañeros! Behind every ‘traco-democracy’³⁶ there is a ‘narco-imperialism’ compañeros. Look at the case of Dukakis and Gore compañeros, who have the snow of corruption upon their shoulders, in the sense that they get closer to power with the ‘narco-dollares’ given to them by our ‘narco-paisanos.’ Against the drugs, may the gringos snort them all! Thank you compañeros.

This sketch follows on the idea of Yankee Imperialism exposed in Garcia Marquez’ account of The Massacre of the Banana Fields, and presents the traffic of narcotics and the so-called War on Drugs, as the latest episode of what may be interpreted as a neo-colonialist relation between the USA and Colombia (and by extension other drug-producing and/or exporting countries like México, Perú, Bolivia and Venezuela).

As shown in Figure 24, behind John Lenin, there is a graffiti that reads “Extra Adicción para los Gringos” [Extra-Addiction for the Gringos]. Here, Garzón is playing around with words in order to make reference to the extradition treaty.

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³³The video’s URL is: http://www.youtube.com/watch?feature=player_embedded&v=vEuVyNqoyAk
³⁴Translation of ‘metérsenos al rancho,’ which is a colloquial term similar to nose into our business.
³⁵Wagon is the translation of carreta, which is also slang for gibberish.
³⁶Traco is short for traquito, which is a colloquial term for the small-time drug dealer.
that marked the relations between Colombia and the US in the late 1980s and early 1990s (which led drug lord Pablo Escobar to declare war on the Colombian State).

**Figure 19 – Jaime Garzón as John Lenin**

Garzón created the characters of Godofredo and John Lenin while working in the TV show *Quac!*, which was a parody of a newscast from the mid-1990s called QAP. During this time, Garzón also created the characters of Dioselina Tibana and Nestor Elí. Dioselina was the maid at the Casa de Nariño, which is the house of government and residence of the Colombian president. Nestor Elí was the doorman of the fictional *Colombia Building*.

**Figure 20 – Jaime Garzón as Dioselina Tibana and Nestor Elí**
Quac! aired during the presidency of Ernesto Samper (1994-1998). This government was marked by a scandal known as the 8,000th process: where it was proved that Samper's presidential campaign had been financed by members of the Cali Cartel. With the 8,000th process, the incidence of drug-dealing mafias in Colombian politics became an open truth.

At the end of Samper’s government, the guerrilla groups in Colombia, particularly the FARC, grew in number and strength, shifting their strategy from guerrilla warfare to holding a positional army. During this period, the FARC managed to seize political power in many regions. This rise of the guerrillas can be explained by the fact that, unlike most Latin American guerrillas from the 1960s and 70s that vanished with the fall of the Berlin Wall, the Colombian guerrillas found in the traffic of narcotics a source of income that has proved to be more reliable than aid from the former Soviet Union.

Between 1996 and 1998, the FARC reached its maximum military and political power since its creation in 1964. During this period, they struck the heaviest blows on the Colombian armed forces, and also began a practice of indiscriminate kidnapping of civilians that ended up turning the population against them (and, as exposed in more detail a few paragraphs below, also led to a general support of right-wing policies and ideologies that matched the rise of Alvaro Uribe’s popularity).

Samper was followed in the presidency by Andrés Pastrana. After losing the 1994 election, Pastrana was the person who revealed the audiocassettes that were the original evidence of the infiltration of drug-related money into Samper’s presidential campaign. In 1998, Pastrana came to power with the promise of organising a peace process with the FARC. This process began on January 7, 1999, and was ended by the government three years later, after the FARC seized an airplane that had departed from the city of Neiva and kidnapped the senator Jorge Eduardo Géchem, on 20 February 2002.

Jaime Garzón had a personal relationship with Pastrana, as he had worked as chief of tours when Pastrana was campaigning for Mayor of Bogotá in the late 1980s. During this time, Pastrana was kidnapped by Pablo Escobar’s Cartel of Medellin.
Garzón was there at the time Pastrana was seized. In an article titled *Memorias de risa y tragedia* (*Memories of laughter and tragedy*), published on the tenth anniversary of Garzón’s death, journalist Fabian Cristancho (2009) tells of Garzón’s reaction when this was happening:

That day, 18 January 1988, seeing Pastana’s imminent kidnapping, Jaime said to the kidnappers that they should take him as well. "Can’t you see I’m the chief of tours?" \(^{37}\) (p N/A)

During the first years of Pastrana’s presidency, Garzón created one of his most popular characters, the shoe polisher Heriberto de la Calle. Dressed as Heriberto, Garzón interviewed different personalities from Colombian public life while polishing their shoes: from politicians to celebrities and sports figures. Below, I quote two of Heriberto’s polishing interviews. In one of them, Garzón interviews Fabio Valencia Cossio: a political leader from the Conservative Party, who at the time was a congressman and would later become Minister of Interior and Justice during Álvaro Uribe’s government. The following is an extract from this interview:

**Heriberto de la Calle (HdC):** “Look Dr. Valencia I had to tie up my shoe polish (…) because there’s a lot of politicians coming here.”

**Valencia Cossio (VC):** “That’s why I wear sneakers… (laugher)… I heard rumours they are kicking you out.”

**HdC:** “Kicking me out of the newscast?”

**VC:** "Yes, because you are too much of a hassle, and people don’t like it.”

**HdC:** “But who am I hassling Dr Valencia? Nobody. I’m just repeating what I hear in the neighbourhood; for instance about the AUC.\(^{38}\) they say the biggest electors in the country are ‘el Mono Jojoy’ \(^{39}\) and Fabio Valencia Cossio.”

In another interview, Heriberto is polishing the shoes of his former boss, the then presidential candidate, Andrés Pastrana. The following is an extract from this interview:

\(^{37}\) My translation.

\(^{38}\) AUC is the abbreviation for Autodefensas Unidas de Colombia (United Self-defences of Colombia), which was the name of the major paramilitary group in Colombia at the turn of the twenty-first century.

\(^{39}\) Víctor Julio Suárez a.k.a el Mono Jojoy, was one of the FARC’s military leaders, killed on September 22, 2010.
HdC: “You know something else Dr. Pastrana, when you’re sitting over there (meaning in the presidential seat), you have to be aware of the paramilitary. How come the army passes by, then the police passes by and a few moments later: Boom! Someone wipes out 14. How’s that possible?”

Pastrana: “Strange isn’t it?”

HdC: “I’m just trying to help. So don’t say I didn’t tell you so; you know, when they are kicking your ass.” 40

As mentioned before, the failure of the peace process with the FARC led the majorities in Colombia to shift towards the right and ultimately elect the candidate that personified the thirst for retaliation against this guerrilla: the former governor of Antioquia Álvaro Uribe Vélez.

On February 11, 1994 (during the last year of César Gaviria’s presidency), the Congress passed a law that authorised the formation of neighbourhood watch groups named Convivir41. Between 1995 and 1997, when Uribe was governor of Antioquia, he became the main promoter of these organisations. Since that moment, Jaime Garzón was openly critical of these groups, which were often related to the paramilitary groups that had been forming all over the country since the 1980s.

In the first sketch quoted above – where Godofredo speaks about the right to vote in Colombia – Garzón makes a reference to Álvaro Uribe as a member of what he called the righteous people. Below, I quote another of Godofredo’s sketches, in which he specifically speaks about Uribe. The transcript (and translation) follows:

What national pride did I feel when I saw the cover of Semana Magazine showing the image of the pacifist, cooperativist and most dignified governor of Antioquia: Dr. Álvaro Uribe Velez. A man with a strong-hand and an armed fist; a leader who, with his mighty cooperativism, impulses peaceful ‘self-defence-groups’; which he, enlightened by the sons of Faruk, has decided to name Convivir. The magazine is right in projecting over the national arena the light of this neo-liberal genius. Álvaro can fit the country inside his head; he foresees this great nation as one big zone of total public order: in other words, as one big Convivir. Where the righteous people may finally enjoy our rents in peace, the way it should be. And it shall be him who will

40 The URL of the video including these two interviews is: http://www.youtube.com/watch?feature=player_embedded&v=ajYkr5l8npg
41 Acronym that forms the word “Cohabitate.”
finally bring the redeeming North American soldiers, who will humanise the conflict and make of Uribe Velez the dictator that this country needs! Good night.\footnote{The video’s URL is: \url{http://www.youtube.com/watch?feature=player_embedded&v=pgnpj8Ll1e0}}

Garzón also satirised and criticised the Colombian armed forces. This can be seen in another video on YouTube, titled \textit{Sieg Heil, mein Führer! – La verdad de Álvaro Uribe Velez} [the truth about Alvaro Uribe Velez]. This video includes two sketches from \textit{Quac!}, and a short extract from the conference that Garzón gave at the university in Cali. Throughout this video, dividing the selected footage – there are titles where, whomever edited it, accuses Uribe of promoting paramilitarism in Colombia and refers to the armed forces as “pawns in Uribe’s political chessboard.” This clip was uploaded to YouTube on April 5, 2007, by the user reyes300; the video has no credits.\footnote{The video’s URL is: \url{http://www.youtube.com/watch?feature=player_embedded&v=s5EXINW063I}}

Beyond the speculation about who is behind Garzón’s assassination – where rumours point to the paramilitary groups, to members of the Colombian army and, as the aforementioned video shows, to Uribe himself – what can be said is that Uribe was elected president in 2002, forming a political coalition that included various politicians who have been declared guilty for having links with illegal paramilitary groups. It can also be said that while in his first term, Uribe’s coalition reformed the constitution, allowing him to aspire for re-election – which he did and was elected as president for a second term; and that two members of Congress (named Teodolindo Avendaño and Yidis Medina) have been judged for receiving a bribe to vote in favour of the constitutional reform that allowed the re-election.

In the extract from the conference at the University in Cali (which took place in 1997), Garzón acknowledged what at the time was a slight rise in Uribe’s popularity, which he believed to be “very dangerous”. In this conference, there is a moment when an attendant asks him about the role of NGOs in Colombia and, while stating the risks of being independent, he ends up talking about the threats that he was receiving by that time (two years before of his death). The text and translation of this extract are as following:

\begin{center}
\textit{...the fact is that the risk of being independent is not the most serious threat I was receiving. The real threat was my own weakness...} \footnote{In the extract from the conference at the University in Cali (which took place in 1997), Garzón acknowledged what at the time was a slight rise in Uribe’s popularity, which he believed to be “very dangerous”. In this conference, there is a moment when an attendant asks him about the role of NGOs in Colombia and, while stating the risks of being independent, he ends up talking about the threats that he was receiving by that time (two years before of his death). The text and translation of this extract are as following:}
\end{center}
Independence has a price, and that price is to subject oneself to something ... take me for example, I'm not truly independent, I'm just making jokes, and yet they keep calling my house and leaving messages saying, 'we know where you live, we are going to cut your tongue' and so forth. Everyday. That's my daily bread. That changes one's life. For instance, I now change my underwear everyday. Of course, imagine if they find my corpse all shot down. I'm not afraid they won't recognise me, because who else has teeth like these... But one life's changes and every morning one gets ready to die.

Looking at Jaime Garzón as an “early warning system” within the Colombian society, it can be said that his work augured the rise of right-wing tendencies within the Colombian political scenerio. This rise meant the legitimising of political forces supported by paramilitary groups and drug cartels.

In the following chapter, I discuss to what extent Garzón’s prophecies have become a reality; and also to what extent digital technologies provide a space for voices like Garzón’s – as well as Zapata Olivella and Garcia Márquez’ – to reach the public and influence Colombian civil society.
Chapter 6 – Colombian Cyberspace

Having introduced the Colombian nation by studying three examples of art from the twentieth century, in this chapter I analyse a series of cases from Colombian cyberspace, which, based on the theories exposed until this point, show how digital networks in Colombia have elements that relate to Habermas’ theory of the public sphere (1989) and others that relate to Bakhtin’s theory of the carnival – as theorists like Herold and Marolt (2011) have argued is the case of Chinese cyberspace.

One of the aims of my research is to question whether the development of digital media is altering the social structures that, if not created, as argued by theorists like Innis and McLuhan (Wolfe, 1968), have been preserved and defended by traditional media and the establishment of an editorial industry. This aim relates to my original research question – about the roles of journalism and art in so-called digital societies – and has led me to propose a way in which journalists and artists could use digital technologies in order to channel their efforts towards education. Following this premise, from the previous chapter onwards, I wonder whether the conclusions on this matter are the same (or similar) when studying a first world, developed nation (like Australia) and then comparing it to a third world, developing one (like Colombia).

Beyond the fact that I was born in Colombia and have lived there most of my life, I believe the Colombian case is particularly relevant to address the questions exposed in the previous paragraph. Despite its historical problems of violence, poverty and inequality – which since the late twentieth century have aggravated with the proliferation of the illegal traffic in narcotics (which may be read as the external imposition of the War on Drugs by the government of the US) – Colombia still praises itself (not entirely without reason), as being the most stable country in Latin America, in macro-economic and even macro-political terms. Thus, Colombia has arguably been the most reliable country in Latin America at the time of paying
its external debt (Echeverry et al. 2009). Also, excepting the military dictatorship of General Gustavo Rojas Pinilla\(^{44}\) (which some argue was less authoritarian than many of its preceding and succeeding civil governments), the country has usually been ruled by formally democratic regimes (i.e., by presidents who have come to power after an election).

In this sense, I believe it is safe to say that, within Colombian political history (or at least its recent political history) there is no equivalent to a Rafael Leonidas Trujillo in the Dominican Republic; or to a Videla in Argentina; a Fidel Castro in Cuba or a Hugo Chavez in Venezuela for that matter. Yet, Colombia is the second country in Latin America with the highest number of forced disappearances. As Mechoulan points out (2011):

> Figures from the National Commission for the Search of Disappeared Persons – a permanent national body, created in 2000 by Law 589 – suggest that after more than 50 years of internal conflict, they have witnessed at least 61,604 cases of forced disappearances. [This means that] Colombia stands second amongst such countries with the most disappearances in Latin America after Argentina, where disappearances occurred mainly during the Dirty War. (para 2)

As exposed at the end of the previous chapter, prior to his assassination, Jaime Garzón predicted the rise of authoritarian tendencies (which means the decrease of civil liberties) in Colombia. Therefore, to begin my analysis of Colombian cyberspace, I will focus on a news article dealing with a proposal of law that, in my opinion, appears as evidence of the authoritarian rise predicted by Garzón. The following analysis is based on the comments posted in the website of a Colombian newspaper *El Espectador*, which I believe comprises the most relevant elements of the online discourse in Colombia.

**Conversation in Colombian Cyberspace**

The article *A Salir del Closet Psicoactivo* [*To come out of the psychoactive closet*], published in El Espectador on October 2011, focuses on a proposal of law sent by the Colombian government, to be assessed by the National Congress. The aim of

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\(^{44}\) Rojas Pinilla was president from 1953 to 1957, and he came to power following a period of Colombian history known as *La Violencia* [*The Violence*], which was a time of extreme and violent partisan sectarianism that followed the assassination of political leader and presidential candidate, Jorge Eliecer Gaitán, on April 9, 1948.
this proposal is to criminalise the possession of a personal dose of narcotics\textsuperscript{45}. At the time I am writing this, the aforementioned proposal is the latest of a series of legal changes regarding this matter, which have either occurred or have been proposed in Colombia during the last twenty years.

In 1991, there was a constitutional change in Colombia. Amongst the civil and political liberties the Constitution of 91 introduced, there was the establishment of the \textit{free development of personality} as a fundamental right\textsuperscript{46}. Based on this right, in 1994, the Constitutional Court\textsuperscript{47} published a sentence that de-criminalised the possession of a personal dose of narcotics. The magistrate who exposed and promoted this sentence was Carlos Gaviria: a jurist who would later become congressman and presidential candidate for the left-wing party, \textit{Polo Democratico}.

In 2009, at the end of Alvaro Uribe’s second presidential term, the Colombian National Congress passed a law that established that the possession of a personal dose was now prohibited. However, this law did not establish prison terms for those who were found in possession of what was earlier established as the personal dose. As exposed in El Espectador’s news article (2011), the (then) current proposal contemplated prison terms of up to 18 years, for those who destined a property for the use of psychoactive substances. It also included other equivocal measures, like punishing those who use email and global networks to promote the distribution or consumption of drugs. In this sense, as stated in the article by the interviewed analyst, Raúl Tovar, this measure might also mean that something like a needle exchange program to prevent contagious diseases may be interpreted as promoting the consumption of drugs.

Also in this article, analyst Carlos Carvajal argues that the reason why Alvaro Uribe promoted the 2009 law that refuted the 1994 ruling by the Constitutional Court, was because of a personal dispute existing between Uribe and former magistrate

\textsuperscript{45}This personal dose - as stated in the Sentence C-221 of May 5, 1994 of the Colombian Constitutional Court - represents: (a) no more than 20 grams of marijuana, (b) no more than 5 grams of marijuana hashish, (c) no more than 1 gram of cocaine or any other substance with a cocaine base, and (d) no more than 2 grams of methaqualone.

\textsuperscript{46}The Constitution of 1991 also typified the \textit{Habeas Corpus} right and established the forced disappearance of citizens as a crime; it also pronounced that Colombia is a multicultural country, acknowledging special rights for the minorities (i.e., indigenous and Afro-descendant groups).

\textsuperscript{47}This court was also created by the Constitution of 1991 and its ultimate role is being the Constitution’s safe keeper. Therefore, it is the highest court and ultimate estate in all constitutional matters.
Carlos Gaviria\textsuperscript{48}. For this, Carvajal states he finds it: “unfair that a ruler’s pride should lead us to commit blunders against society”\textsuperscript{49}.

The nature of these blunders goes beyond what Carlos Gaviria argued was an implicit contradiction between criminalising the personal dose and the constitutional right to a \textit{free development of personality}. This means there are other, more palpable incongruences between criminalising the personal dose and the Colombian judicial and penitentiary systems. According to a study done for the Colombian Ministry of Justice:

> In general terms, the probability of a crime being penalised in Colombia does not exceed 20%. Regarding homicide, such probability revolves around 3%. (Barreto & Rivera, 2009a, p N/A)

Even so, by 2008, the number of convicts in Colombia was 66,345, while the country’s penitentiary system could only host 53,969. This means that Colombian jails are overcrowded by 23% (Barreto & Rivera, 2009b).

As mentioned earlier, the 2009 law that prohibited the possession of the personal dose, together with the 2011 proposal that would criminalise it, can be seen as evidence of the rise of authoritarian tendencies predicted by Jaime Garzón. This rise can also be evidenced in the fact that, from its creation in 1991 to the year 2008, the constitution has been reformed 26 times, including the 2004 reform that allowed Álvaro Uribe’s re-election (Paredes, 2008)\textsuperscript{50}.

In the following paragraphs, I present a sample that contains some of the most important elements in the Colombian online discussion. The first extract shows what, beyond a few swearwords and colloquialisms, can be seen as a serious (or at least honest) debate. It reads as follows:

\begin{flushleft}
\textsuperscript{48} Beyond the fact they have represented opposed political parties, the relationship between Gaviria and Uribe dates back to the time when Gaviria was Uribe’s professor while the latter was studying law in the University of Antioquia.
\textsuperscript{49} Unless otherwise stated, the translations in this chapter are mine.
\textsuperscript{50} During the early 1990s, Garzón worked in César Gaviria’s administration (Gaviria was president from 1990 to 1994), helping in the translation of the constitution of 1991, to the languages of different indigenous groups in Colombia. This, to a great extent, explains why Garzón was constantly defending this constitution and the liberties it proclaimed.
\end{flushleft}
Opening statement by user danlon001

Fri. 10/07/2011 - 22:40

The general interest primes over the particular. If it is necessary to prohibit the consumption of drugs for the good of society, although consumers may argue their right to do whatever they want with their bodies, they should sacrifice that right for the greater good.

Reply by user: nuevafuerza

Fri 10/07/2011 - 22:49

So, for the greater good, they should also penalize the EXPENDITURE OF VOTES with punishments even greater than 18 years in prison, because it is a major crime (...) let see if those thieving politicians and lawmakers would like that!!! Let’s see if they also rush into passing that law!!! No, then they’d stay still!!! But when it is about shitting on the people, they are always ready the SOBs!!!

New comment by user: Juanfelipe

Fri. 10/07/2011 - 22:51

Right on, nuevafuerza!!"

Reply by user: danlon001

Fri. 10/07/2011 - 22:54

The expenditure of votes is typified in the article 251 of the penal code and considered a punishable offence.

Reply by user: nuevafuerza

Fri. 10/07/2011 - 23:00

How many years in prison?

Reply by user: danlon001

Fri. 10/07/2011 - 23:04

Article 251, Penal Code – Corruption of the electorate. He or she who would pay money or grant goods to an elector to cast his or her vote in favour of a given candidate, party or political current, or to vote in blank or refrain from voting, shall be punished with a prison term from one (1) to five (5) years and a fine from ten to fifty thousand pesos. The voter that would accept the money or goods with the ends pointed out in the previous paragraph, shall be punished with a prison term from six (6) months to two (2) years.
Reply by user: nuevafuerza

Vie, 10/07/2011 - 23:10

1 to 5 years in prison, ok, SO TO OBSTRUCT THE FREE EXERCISE OF DEMOCRACY – IN A COUNTRY THAT PRIZES ITSELF ON BEING DEMOCRATIC – IS A MINOR CRIME COMPARED TO SMOKING A JOINT? YOU ARE GRANTING ME THE REASON, MY DEAR FRIEND: THE LAW NEVER FALLS WITH THE SAME WEIGHT OVER THE POLITICIANS AS IT DOES ON THE COMMON PEOPLE, AND THIS PROPOSAL IS ANOTHER PROOF OF THAT: YOU, BY READING SUCH ARTICLE, HAVE JUST PROVED IT.

Reply by user: danlon001

Vie, 10/07/2011 - 23:19

The fallacy, of the *Ad hominem* type you have just exposed is irresponsible. You can argue with all the examples of this type that you like, but that doesn’t controvert the veracity of the statement I presented at the beginning.

New comment by user: miguelitoun

Fri, 10/07/2011 - 23:19

It is the truth that the general interest primes over the particular (...). But the wellbeing of society does not imply prohibiting the consumption of drugs... in fact, what is truly convenient for society is to legalise consumption; not in order to increase the number of consumers, but to finish, once and for all, with that damned illegal business that allows people without values and without education to have so much power.

New comment by user: AngelaPlant

Sat, 10/08/2011 - 00:04

I agree with the rest (i.e., with those who oppose danlon001), prohibition does not represent a greater good. In fact, with the legalisation of alcohol, the crimes related to its traffic were reduced to 0%. Prohibition is a mediocre solution to a problem that is basically moral, because if you investigate you will see drugs have ALWAYS been a part of human history. Prevention, education and a strong government that provides opportunities to the people are the only solutions to avoid the abuse of drug consumption. To legalise consumption would undoubtedly bring more benefits than inconveniences. Except for the owners of the business, that is, the DEA, the national government, the guerrillas, the paramilitary, etc. Read about Afghanistan and the opium trade and you will understand why the superpowers are not interested in legalisation: BECAUSE OF THE MONEY. Because to them, people’s lives are worth an ASS"51 (El Espectador, 2011).

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51 This word was originally written in English.
When I say the aforementioned discussion is a serious, or at least an honest one, I mean that, on the one hand, its comments are a positive defence of a given point of view rather than a senseless attack on their contradictors; also, that there is no apparent reason to believe these opinions hide more than their author’s view on the matter. This, however, might not be the case of other comments posted in this same forum, as shown in those quoted below:

Comment by user Toronto:

Sat. 10/08/2011 - 14:50

THAT'S VERY GOOD!!!!!!!!!! WE DON'T WANT ANY F***ING DEALEARS AND CRACKHEADS52 IN OUR PARKS AND STREETS!!!!!!! PRISON FOR ALL THOSE RATS!!!!!!!!!!!

To which user Juan K Forero replies:

I sometimes think people like “taradonto...tontoronto...Toronto” or all his name’s variations related to stupidity...are hired by some political party to say such atrocities in the opinion pages only with the aim of heating up the discussion. Although that’s what I like to think, most of the times it’s just stupids doing it for free... (El Espectador, 2011).

The appearance of allegedly hired commentators – who may be seen as the equivalent to the Chinese *Fifty-Cent Army* – has been a recurrent feature in Colombian cyberspace for several years. According to a news article published in the website of the Colombian broadcasting network RCN (RCN Radio, 2010), this type of commentators were employed in the electoral campaign of the current president Juan Manuel Santos. The hiring of online commentators has become such a common practice, that this news article does not focus on the fact there were hired commentators in Santos’ campaign, but on the fact they were complaining because they had not been paid for their services.

Apart from their role in electoral campaigns, it is also widely rumoured that many of these, allegedly paid commentators, are being hired to promote the point of views of both guerrillas and paramilitary groups. Beyond the rumours, what

52 I’m using the term ‘crackheads’ to translate ‘bazuqueros,’ as bazuco is the name of an inexpensive drug that, like crack, is made by using cocaine paste as a base.
anyone can confirm by taking a brief look at the Colombian online discussion is the aggressiveness, the sectarianism and the lack of rational arguments in many of the comments posted in online forums. Because of this, some renowned columnists like Daniel Samper have decided to block the comments in their columns; proclaiming they were even receiving death threats through this channel. This leads me back to one of the preliminary conclusion I presented in Chapter 4: that the mere development of a public sphere does not necessarily lead to what Rifkin (2010) defined as an “empathic civilisation”.

In April 2010, El Malpensante magazine published an article that exposes another, rather disturbing element of the Colombian online discussion. This article is inspired by a comment made in the magazine’s website, in the forum of an article by writer Juan Manuel Pombo. The following is a fragment of one such comment:

Juan Manuel Pombo, the alcoholic, published in El Mapensante (the article) *The Cartographers of Babel*. Who is this man blowing in this magazine? What a shit of a text! If you get to see Juan Manuel from up close, give him clothes and money for an oral treatment, his teeth are rotten. (para 3)

After tracking down the user who posted this comment, El Malpensante found out it was someone who had been the editor of a website that gathers literature students in Colombia; who had a blog in El Tiempo’s website; had been published in an anthology of new Colombian writers and who had won two journalism awards. Furthermore, the article also states that, after asking “various columnists” from the Colombian press, they had confirmed that the “most vulgar” and “most polarized” commentators in the Colombian cyberspace are the “most educated people”.

Based on the comments that I have just quoted, it would seem that Colombian cyberspace relates more to Bakthin’s theory of the carnival than to Habermas’ theory of the public sphere – as Herold (2011) believes is the case with Chinese cyberspace. Although the first discussion I quoted shows how online forums in Colombia do provide a space for an honest contraposition of ideas; the following

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53 Daniel Samper is one of the most famous Colombian writers and journalist of the last four decades and is also the brother of Ernesto Samper, who was the Colombian president from 1994 to 1998.

54 El Tiempo is the largest newspaper in Colombia.
two extracts (particularly the latter one drawn from El Malpensante) show all discussions happen in an environment where, like in a carnival, everyday rules do not apply. And it's also where masked representatives of the “most educated people” ventilate their most primal impressions. In this sense, the Internet demonstrates, like no other media in Colombia, the aggressiveness and lack of respect that Jaime Garzón had recognised and diagnosed as a problem deeply embedded in Colombian society.

Returning to the forum in El Espectador’s article (about the criminalisation of the personal dose), there is one final extract that shows what might also be seen as a contradiction to the arguments exposed in the previous paragraph. I have argued that, despite its violent and irrational nature and the presence of hired commentators, Colombian cyberspace presents a more accurate radiography of Colombian society than traditional media. Yet, as the comments below show, online networks are not exempt from censorship.

Before introducing these comments, it is necessary to point out how, on the same day the aforementioned article was published, Julio Mario Santo Domingo, one of Colombia’s wealthiest entrepreneurs and major shareholder of El Espectador, passed away. The comments read as follows:

**Comment by user: TKG**

Sat, 10/08/2011 - 09:50

El Espectador (also) has to come out of the closet and acknowledge it vetoes and offends its readers when it suits its directives, as in this occasion, when they have blocked the comments on the news about Julio Mario Santo Domingo, the man who exploited many and helped few.

and:

**Comment by user: Verdad que...**

Sat. 10/08/2011 - 12:06

El Espectador also supports prohibitionism, one cannot comment on Julio Mario Santo Domingo, can’t you see El Espectador belongs to the Santo Domingo group (…)?
If El Espectador, maybe out of respect for the family of its major shareholder, decide not to open an online forum in the article that publicises his death: can this be interpreted as censorship? I am inclined not to think so and I am almost certain most legal systems – including the Colombian – would agree. Yet, the fact some users consider this to be an offense against the newspaper’s readership seems to suggest a contradiction between the media’s right to free enterprise and their users’ freedom of expression.

However, there are other precedents involving not the users, but the journalist who work for the media. They also seem to evidence a conflict between freedom of enterprise and freedom of expression. These examples do not involve El Espectador but its top competitor: the El Tiempo Editorial House. At the beginning of 2010, this editorial house closed down what many considered was its most important publication in investigative journalism: Cambio Magazine. Back then, El Tiempo argued they had decided to do so because Cambio was no longer a profitable publication. However, the following extract from an interview with Rodrigo Pardo, then chief editor of Cambio, conducted by journalist Cecilia Orozco raises a different interpretation of El Tiempo’s motives:

Cecilia Orozco: “Was the closure of the magazine an abrupt decision communicated to you all of a sudden or were you previously informed of it?”

Rodrigo Pardo: “Last year I knew the board was evaluating what it called “the business model” and that there were uncertainties about it. On the other hand, I also heard rumours about the nuisance that our denunciations and our analytical journalism were causing. In 2009, Cambio revealed the links between Guillermo Valencia Cossío55 and the mafia, the agreement between the US and the Colombian governments about the military bases56, the Agro Ingreso Seguro (AIS) scandal57, amongst other polemical issues. I thought these good results would lead to the editorial house continuing to support the magazine. I never imagined of its closure, nor of my exit from El Tiempo. And I was not informed beforehand.” (Orozco, 2010, para 1).

56 In July 2009, the government of Ecuador decided to close the US military base of Manta (located within the Ecuadorian territory). As a result of this, the Colombian government offered the opportunity to the US to use up to seven military bases in Colombia. This caused a diplomatic tension between Colombia and its neighbours. Eventually, in 2010, the Colombian Constitutional Court declared the agreement unconstitutional (see Guardian, 2010).
57 The Agro Ingreso Seguro (AIS) program was originally conceived to grant financial support to underprivileged farmers. However, those who ended up receiving the aid (which in many cases added up to hundreds of thousands of dollars) were some of the wealthiest families and landowners.
This happened in the early stages of the 2010 presidential campaign won by Juan Manuel Santos. As mentioned in the previous chapter, Juan Manuel Santos is the grandson of Eduardo Santos (President between 1938 and 1942) who, although not the founder, was the person who made El Tiempo the biggest and most influential newspaper in Colombia. Not long before the closure of Cambio, after publishing a column that criticised the way El Tiempo had covered the Agro Ingreso Seguro (or AIS) scandal, the editorial house decided to fire its columnist Claudia López. In what would be her last weekly column in El Tiempo, Lopez argued that this newspaper put a spin on its coverage of the AIS scandal in order to favour the image of Juan Manuel Santos against that of Andres Felipe Arias, who at that time was a pre-candidate of the Conservative Party for the 2010 presidential election.

Like Santos, Arias was part of Alvaro Uribe’s cabinet during most of his two presidential terms. As former Minister of Agriculture, Arias has been considered the main person responsible for the AIS scandal, to the point that, as I write this, he is being tried for corruption regarding this case. López defined El Tiempo’s coverage of the AIS scandal as a “biased fabrication” in favour of Santos’ presidential aspirations. The following extract from López’ column explains her arguments:

The biased fabrication began with a question raised in a forum at eltiempo.com, continued with a note that highlighted what the forum users had said and concluded with a so-called analytical article. In the forum, the users were asked if they thought Arias should quit because of the AIS scandal. Let us remember El Tiempo never considered asking in an online forum if Juan Manuel Santos should have resigned because of the ‘false positives’ scandal. In Arias’ case it did. After the forum, they (El Tiempo) published a note titled ‘Andres F. Arias generates indignation and rejection amongst the readers of eltiempo.com because of AIS case’; there, they highlighted that ‘most users are asking the former minister (Arias) to resign from his pre-candidacy’ and that ‘very few defended Arias’. After the induced forum and the highlighted note, they finished off with an article which was titled: ‘Andres Felipe Arias is weakened and Juan

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58 Until recently the Santos family remained as the major shareholders of El Tiempo. In August 2007, they sold their 55% of the editorial house El Tiempo to the Spanish group Planeta. However, in 2012, and to a great extent because of the economic crisis in Spain, Planeta sold its shares of El Tiempo to the financial group owned by Luis Carlos Sarmiento, who, according to Forbes Magazine, is the wealthiest person in Colombia and the 64th wealthiest person in the world (Forbes, 2012).

59 The “falsos positivos” [false positives] is the name given to what UN special rapporteur Philip Alston defined as a “systematic practice” by members of the Colombian Armed Forces, of capturing civilians from underprivileged backgrounds and later killing them and dressing them up as guerrilla fighters, in order to present them as war casualties. This practice was prompted by a resolution signed by former Defence Minister Camilo Ospina, which granted rewards to soldiers who reported guerrilla casualties. The scandal became public when Juan Manuel Santos was serving as Defence Minister during Alvaro Uribe’s presidency.
Manuel Santos takes the advantage in the middle of the AIS scandal’. (López, 2009, para 3)

López then queried how El Tiempo had concluded it was Santos who was being favoured by Arias’ downfall, when at the time it was Noemí Sanín who was confronting Arias to become the official candidate of the Conservative Party. She also pointed out that at the time, Santos was not even a presidential candidate; as he was waiting for the resolution of a law that would have allowed Alvaro Uribe to run for a third presidential term if the Constitutional Court would not have declared it unconstitutional.

At the end of López’ column, El Tiempo published a note that read as follows:

EL TIEMPO rejects Claudia López’ comments, as it considers them false, ill-intentioned and defamatory. The Directory of this diary interprets her disqualification of our journalistic work as her letter of resignation, which it makes effective immediately. (Lopez, 2009, p N/A)

Beyond the question of whether López can claim, or not, for compensation for being laid off, there are not many legal arguments to be raised against El Tiempo in the aforementioned cases. However, this does not mean there should be no judgement in the matter. But this judgement is to be done by the newspaper’s targeted audience. So, have these cases affected El Tiempo’s credibility? Or, more importantly, have they affected its readership? Regarding the first question, all I can do is to give my opinion and that would be yes, which means that, in general terms, I have stopped reading El Tiempo. Regarding the second one, the statistics seem to prove the answer is no. According to the Estudio General de Medios60 (EGM), by mid-2011 El Tiempo still had the highest readership in Colombia, with an average of 1,109,121 daily readers, followed by El Colombiano61 with an average of 229,681 daily readers. Furthermore, the study reports El Tiempo’s readership outside of Bogotá has increased by 32% in Medellin, 31% in Cali and 17% in Barranquilla; and that eltiempo.com is the most visited online media from Colombia, with 1,538,491 weekly visitors (quoted from Noches de Media, 2012).

60 Translates into General Media Study. This study is conducted by the Asociación Colombiana de Investigación de Medios (ACIM), which translates into Colombian Association of Media Investigation. Its website is: http://www.acimcolombia.com
61 The major newspaper from Medellin.
But as big as El Tiempo’s audience may seem when compared with that of its direct competitors: its 1.1 million daily readers is not precisely a critical mass in a country with a population that surpasses the 40 million. According to a study by the National Department of Statistics (DANE, 2009)\textsuperscript{62}: 96% of Colombians between 12 and 65 years watch television every day; while a study by the Ministry of Education stated 68.5% of Colombians do not read newspapers (Ministry of Education of Colombia, 2005).

But so far, I have studied online forums that, far from being examples of independent, web-based media, are just the digital portals of established, traditional media. In the following paragraphs I expose some cases of a more digital nature.

**Bacteria’s Facebook and Other Freak Shows of the Colombian Online Carnival**

The first of the episodes in this selection of what I believe can be fairly regarded as **freak shows** from Colombian cyberspace, involves the work of the caricaturist Jaime Poveda, most commonly known as Bacteria. Although Bacteria usually publishes his caricatures in El Espectador, and has also published work in other renowned printed media like El Tiempo and the magazines Semana, Cambio, SoHo, Cromos and Carrusel, this case occurred within the boundaries of digital networks.

The story, like Claudia Lopez’ column, takes place during the 2010 presidential campaign and also involves the candidacy of Juan Manuel Santos. As it was, somehow, predicted in Lopez’ column, former Minister of Agriculture Andres Felipe Arias ended up losing the internal election against Noemí Sanín, who participated as the official candidate of the Conservative Party. However, it was not Sanín but the former Mayor of Bogotá, Antanas Mockus, who ultimately stood as the major opponent of Santos in this election. Mockus aspired to the presidency representing the newly created Green Party, which started off as a coalition formed by three former Mayors of Bogotá: Mockus, Enrique Peñalosa and Luis Eduardo

\textsuperscript{62} In Spanish: Departamento Administrativo Nacional de Estadística.
Garzón. Later on, they would be joined by the former Mayor of Medellín, Sergio Fajardo (who ran as Mockus’ intended vice-president).63

Although Santos ended up winning the election in a second round against Mockus, during the months preceding the first round64, Mockus and the Green Party’s popularity rose continuously. The motto of Mockus’ campaign was: “No todo vale,” [“Not everything is allowed”]. This shows his campaign mainly stood against corruption in the Colombian political system (and, more broadly, against a tendency towards corruption in Colombian society). For this reason, the rise of the Green Party was seen as the emergence of an opinionated electorate that stood against the political machinery of the traditional parties.

At the moment the Green Party’s popularity was reaching its peak, Bacteria published a caricature that, like Lopez’ column, denounced what he saw as a systematic manipulation of information that aimed to favour Santos’ candidacy. The caricature is shown in Figure 26 (below):

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63 A year later, in the local and regional elections of 2011, Mockus abandoned the Green Party after Peñalosa accepted the support of Alvaro Uribe while running once again for Mayor of Bogotá. Peñalosa ended up losing this election against Gustavo Petro.

64 In the Colombian electoral system, the president must be elected by an absolute majority of votes (i.e. 50% of the votes + 1). When this doesn’t happen in a round, a second round between the two candidates with the highest number of votes is organised.
In the caricature, on the left-hand side, Antanas Mockus is standing on top of a statistics’ bar that is rising, while on the right-hand side Santos is piling up stuff: a desk, a television set and a box with the logo of El Tiempo – all references to his influence on the Colombian traditional media – on top of a decreasing popularity bar, and saying: “bring more filters.” Shortly after publishing it in his Facebook profile, this caricature was branded as ‘offensive material’ and removed from the social network.

The second case in this selection of freak shows from the Colombian cyberspace also takes place – if a social network can be referred to as a place – on Facebook. It is the story of Nicolás Castro a (then) 23-year-old arts student from the Jorge Tadeo Lozano University, who once made a comment on – and allegedly created – a Facebook group called: “Me comprometo a matar a Jerónimo Alberto Uribe, hijo de Álvaro Uribe” [I commit myself to kill Jerónimo Alberto Uribe, son of Alvaro Uribe.]

The following is a shortened translation of a summary of this case, written by journalist Carlos Cortés and published in the online media La Silla Vacía (a media
that I will analyse in more detail a few paragraphs below, which I consider are positive examples of independent, digital media in Colombia):

**July 9, 2009:** Caracol Television informs there is a Facebook group that invites to kill Jerónimo Uribe. The group has 13 followers and a photograph of Tomás Uribe (oldest son of Álvaro Uribe) – instead of Jerónimo. There is also a script that reads: ‘Te Vamo’ a Matar’ [We are going to kill you]; and the group’s description, which presented it as:

A group of those who want to take revenge on the tyrant, legitimate ruler, massacrer, genocide, cowardly monster, named Alvaro Uribe, by killing his no less of a criminal and no less of a barbarian son, Jerónimo Uribe.

**July 10, 2009:** Jerónimo Uribe denounces the threats against him to the nation’s General Prosecution Office.

**July 13, 2009:** The police fail to find the group, as it has already been removed from Facebook. However, checking the Internet cache they found the names of some of the group members, as well as a comment left in the group’s wall by Nicolás Castro that reads as follows:

This guy with his Colombian crafts it’s only exploiting the indigenous people and the people with low income. Besides from this, he has also been accused of plagiarism in Los Andes University, and he is well known for silencing this and all other problems he has had in this university, threatening to kill whomever confronts him...SOB.

From this moment on, Cortés mentions a series of procedures taken by the investigating authorities, which the tribunal assessing the case found violated Castro’s right to a due process. This ultimately led Uribe’s denunciation against Castro to be dismissed. However, on December 2, 2009, Castro was arrested from his own house and remained imprisoned for several months under charges of terrorism and inciting to commit a crime.

As Cortez’ analysis of this case shows, there are two major questions that emerge from this scenario: (a) Was the aforementioned Facebook group a real threat against Jerónimo Uribe? And (b) Would the local authorities have acted in such an
expedite manner if the threats were against someone who is not the son of the president?

Regarding the second question, an article published in Semana, on 5 December 2009, stated that similar Facebook groups attacking figures from the opposition like former parliamentary representatives Gustavo Petro and Piedad Cordoba – and even a group called “Quiero Matar a Uribe” [“I want to kill Uribe”] – had never been investigated. Later on, in an article published on December 3, 2009 (one day after Castro was arrested), Semana also stated how, at the time, several social organisations, as well as political leaders, journalists and common citizens, were being regularly threatened by guerrilla and paramilitary groups, as well as other violent groups, and that the authorities were not acting with the same diligence as they did in the Castro against Uribe case. (Semana, 2009a).

The first question – whether this was a real threat or just a joke – raises even more complex issues about what can and cannot be published on the Internet; which is the same as questioning the limits of freedom of expression in the digital world. The second question, regarding the diligence of the Colombian authorities to investigate the alleged threat on Jerónimo Uribe’s life in comparison to other, more evident, threats – seems to prove the statement from online commentator *nuevafuerza* (quoted above) that “the law never falls with the same weight over the politicians as it does on the common people.”

So, what has changed with the introduction of digital technologies in Colombia? To what extent are digital networks and social media contributing in the solution of Colombia’s historical problems? So far, I can point out the use of YouTube to preserve Jaime Garzón’s message as one contribution to the Colombian collective memory. Furthermore, in the following section I present a list of what I consider to be positive examples of independent, online media from Colombia.
Examples of Online Media in Colombia

a) Verdad Abierta and the memory of paramilitarism in Colombia

Verdad Abierta [Open Truth], is a website created in 2008 as a joint effort by the organisation Fundación Ideas para la Paz (FIP) and the editorial house of Semana Magazine. This venture is also sponsored by the Government of Canada and the Open Society Soros Foundation. The aim of this website is to remain as a record of contemporary paramilitarism in Colombia. The reason why I emphasise the word contemporary is because paramilitarism has been a recurrent practice throughout the republican history of Colombia. In this sense, the nineteenth century civil wars – which I have introduced in the previous chapter – were, to a great extent, fought between private armies commanded by local and regional leaders (mostly landowners), commonly known as caudillos. Then, during the period of Colombian history known as La Violencia (in the 1940s and 1950s) the nation saw the emergence of various right-wing, conservative armed groups that pursued (or rather hunted) Liberals (i.e., members of the Liberal party) mostly in rural areas. Also during this period, and as a response to such violent reprisals, various liberal guerrillas appeared. From these groups, in the 1960s, emerged the guerrillas that still operate in the present (i.e., the FARC and the ELN).

The most famous (or infamous) of the 1950s paramilitary groups was known as Los Pájaros [The Birds], and the most renowned work about such groups is the novel Condores no Entierran Todos los Días [Condors are not buried everyday] (1971), by Gustavo Álvarez Gardeazabal (this novel would later be turned into a movie in 1984). However, this paramilitarism, the story of which (or part of it) is compiled in Verdad Abierta, is that which originated and developed hand in hand with the drug-dealing mafias that started to proliferate in Colombia from the late 1960s and 70s.

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65 URL: http://www.verdadabierta.com
66 Spanish for: Foundation Ideas for Peace.
The circumstances that motivated the development of this website were: (a) a peace process with the AUC\textsuperscript{67} that began in 2003 and has led to the demobilising of 52,403 combatants, 31,671 of whom come from paramilitary groups that demobilised collectively, and 20,732 who are from both guerrilla and paramilitary groups, who have demobilised individually\textsuperscript{68}; and (b) the Ley de Justicia y Paz [Law of Justice and Peace], which regulates the reincorporation to society, of former members of illegal armed forces, and also aims to warrant the victims’ rights to truth, justice and reparation\textsuperscript{69}.

Thus, Verdad Abierta may be seen, on the one hand, as an online journal of Colombia’s conflict (or at least of a major side of it) during the last three to four decades. These are the decades marked by the traffic of narcotics, and on the other hand, this website has also acted as a space for victims to denounce and bring to the surface several human rights violations that have happened and are currently happening (caused by both illegal and state armed forces).

b) La Silla Vacía: online media against corruption in Colombia

Like Verdad Abierta, La Silla Vacia [The Empty Chair]\textsuperscript{70} is an online media created in response (or at least which gives answers) to a specific, recent event in Colombian politics. Within the Colombian legal system, the empty chair is a figure that came into existence in mid-2009, as part of the political reform that aimed to regulate the links between the illegal armies and drug-dealing mafias with politicians and political parties. With this figure, the members of Congress who have received support from any illegal group may no longer be replaced by someone from their own party; that is, they lose their seat in the Congress (ergo the name: the empty chair).

The main circumstance that prompted this reform was the scandal known as La Parapolítica [The Para-politic]. In this scandal, it was found around 30% of the

\textsuperscript{67} Autodefensas Unidas de Colombia, see footnote 23 in the previous chapter.
\textsuperscript{68} Since 2011, there have been various scandals regarding these demobilisations. Partly because some of the militants who gave up their weapons have now joined emerging criminal bands that many analysts view as the continuation of the paramilitary armies; and also because there have been cases of false demobilisations, like that of a FARC front called the Cacique Gaitana. This issue is analysed in more detail in Chapter 8.
\textsuperscript{69} In Spanish: Verdad, Justicia y Reparación.
\textsuperscript{70} URL: http://www.lasillavacia.com
Colombian National Congress is either being tried (or has been tried) for receiving support from paramilitary groups (UNHCR, 2008). La Silla Vacía (the website) was first published in March 2009, when the aforementioned political reform was being debated. However, as stated in an article in Semana Magazine (2009b), the name also evokes other episodes of Colombian recent history: like the peace process with the FARC guerrillas, at the beginning of Andrés Pastrana’s administration, at the opening ceremony of which (in January 1999) the former FARC leader Manuel Marulanda (a.k.a Tirofijo) did not show up, leaving his chair (at the negotiating table) empty.

In the interview, which is the focus of the aforementioned article (Semana, 2009b), the director and founder of this media, Juanita Leon, emphasised how this website:

Is not attached to any large media, or belongs to any of the country’s powerful families, which is how media has traditionally emerged in Colombia.

Therefore, as León argues, the aim of La Silla Vacía is to be a platform for discussion, where the largest number of voices may participate. One of the voices that has joined this discussion, is that of journalist Claudia López; whom, as I have exposed earlier, was fired as a columnist from El Tiempo after publishing an article where she argued this newspaper was favouring the candidacy of its former shareholder, Juan Manuel Santos, during the 2010 presidential campaign.

Another interesting aspect about La Silla Vacía is that, although not exclusively a law or legal-based media, most of its editorial staff and closest collaborators (including the founder and director, Juanita León) have a background in law. In other words, they are lawyers turned journalists. In Chapter 4, I stated that, instead of being regarded as a profession, journalism in the twenty-first century should be considered as a practice (and a method) to be applied by people from all sorts of backgrounds. There, I argued that a medical doctor would be better suited to write (and run a media) about medicine than someone with a degree in journalism. At this point, the case of La Silla Vacía, appears as a non-hypothetical argument in favour of this argument.
Looking at these cases under the light of what I have exposed in the previous chapters so far, I can point out how Verdad Abierta particularly relates to the idea of preserving memory within the context of the Colombian internal conflict. On the other hand, La Silla Vacía appears as a space for civil society to denounce and, following Shirky’s idea of the public sphere (2011), have a conversation about corruption in the Colombian political system.

Some paragraphs above, I introduced these cases as examples of independent online media in Colombia. Yet, the independent part in the case of Verdad Abierta is questionable (given that it is supported by an established media like Semana Magazine). But this, in my opinion, does not diminish this online journal’s value as a digital media or its validity as a case study. On the contrary, I believe it stands as an example of how an established media can see beyond the apparent threat brought by digital technologies and instead, use them to provide a valuable service to society.

c) El Pequeño Tirano satire and political criticism in the Colombian cyberspace

The third case study from Colombian cyberspace that I am analysing in this section is the animated series, El Pequeño Tirano [The Little Tyrant] (2012). This series has been created by a group of three visual artists from Bogotá named Santiago Rocha, Simón Wilches and Santiago Rivas. The two main characters in this series are two children, twin brothers, one of whom is the Left-wing Tyrant and the other one is the Right-wing Tyrant (as shown in Figure 27). Through these characters, the creators aim to expose and satirise the most radical standpoints in the Colombian political arena.
In an interview for the online media blog.com.co, which belongs to Semana Magazine’s editorial group (2012), Wilches and Rocha stated how the idea of the Little Tyrant came up during a period when there were several marches and manifestations in Colombia\(^\text{71}\). Thus, this project was born as a response and a critique to what the creators saw as a widening polarisation in Colombian politics (and in the Colombian society in general).

After producing two seasons – the first season began in early 2008 and has 11 episodes, while the second one began in October 2009 and has 8 episodes – the crew of El Pequeño Tirano began a third season (in which, so far, they have only released two episodes) and then they were granted a space, or as it is actually called an editorial lookout\(^\text{72}\) in La Silla Vacía.

To relate this project with an artwork I have already referenced in my thesis, I would say the political humour in El Pequeño Tirano is, to a great extent, inspired by the work of Jaime Garzón. The influence of Garzón is most evident in the seventh episode of the first season, where the ghost of Dioselina Tibana – one of Garzón’s most popular characters whom, as I have stated in the previous chapter,

\(^{\text{71}}\)The biggest of these marches took place on February 4, 2008 and as it names shows: A Million Voices Against FARC, was organized in response to the FARC actions in the last decades. 
\(^{\text{72}}\)In Spanish: atalaya editorial.
was the fictional maid of the Colombian presidential palace – appears to the two little tyrants (together with the ghost of another celebrity cook from Colombian television called Segundo Cabezas) and tells them the recipe to *cook a better future* for Colombia (see Figure 28). Following this line, in an interview published in the website of Soho Magazine, another publication of Semana Magazine Editorial House, Rivas stated how *El Pequeño Tirano* was born in response to what he describes as a void in Colombia’s political humour, left by Jaime Garzón’s death (Soho, 2010).

**Figure 23 - Jaime Garzón (as Dioselina Tibana) featured in el Pequeño Tirano**

![Image](image)

*(On the left: Dioselina Tibana appearing to the little tyrants; on the right, Jaime Garzón playing this character.)*

My analysis of *El Pequeño Tirano* is focused on the episodes that, in my opinion, address the same historical, political and social issues I have exposed in the preceding sections of this chapter (and throughout the entire previous chapter). Hence, there are two episodes that, in various aspects, are closely related to the alternative (or subversive) versions that appear in Changó el Gran Putas, *One Hundred Years of Solitude* and Jaime Garzón’s sketches.

The first episode that I include in this analysis is the third episode of the first season. In this episode, the *little tyrants* are commemorating the sixtieth anniversary of an event known as *El Bogotazo*. On this day, April 9, 1948, the then presidential candidate, Jorge Eliecer Gaitán, was assassinated in Bogotá. This assassination was followed by a series of revolts and lootings throughout the city, which later extended all over the country. The episode begins with the two little
tyrants arguing about Gaitán’s assassination. The following is an extract from the beginning of this episode:

**Right-Wing-Tyrant (RWT):** “Gaitán was killed by a crazy man because he wouldn’t give him a job.”

**Left-Wing-Tyrant (LWT):** “Gaitán was killed by the CIA, in association with the oligarchy and the Empire.”

**RWT:** “During El Bogotazo, Fidel Castro was instigating the revolts.”

**LWT:** “Fidel was only leading the blind masses with his light, in order to liberate them from the oppression of the Empire and the narco-para-government of Mariano Ospina Pérez, and then establish the just dictatorship of the proletariat.”

**RWT:** “The proletariat was busy looting and getting drunk; and Mariano Ospina was a faultless, dignified and exemplary ruler.” (El Pequeño Tirano, 2012, p N/A)

Comparing the two little tyrants with the characters created by Jaime Garzón, I would say the Right-wing Tyrant is an extension – or an heir – of Godofredo Cínico Caspa, while the Left-wing Tyrant is the heir of John Lenin (see Chapter 5). In this sense, the view of former president Mariano Ospina, as a dignified and exemplary ruler, in opposition to the proletariat that was only looting and getting drunk during El Bogotazo, is a caricaturised but still fairly accurate portrayal of the right-wing perspective in Colombia. Whereas the theory that Gaitán was killed by the Colombian oligarchy in league with the CIA and the US government is common in left-wing circles.

Continuing with the interpretation of Colombian history in El Pequeño Tirano, the first episode of the third season dealt with the commemoration of the bicentennial of the independence from Spain. In the first episode of the first season, the Right-wing Tyrant introduces himself as a member of the righteous people. This, as I have exposed in the previous chapter, is the same term used by Jaime Garzón while introducing his character Godofredo Cínico Caspa. Then, as I have also stated in the previous chapter, from a political (or governmental) perspective, this figure of the righteous people is reflected in the fact that many presidents in Colombia have been (and are) the descendants of former presidents. Therefore, in the first episode of the third season (i.e., the episode about the bicentennial), the creators of El Pequeño Tirano give voice to some of the Colombian presidents; whose busts,
speaking from a background that looks like a currency note, provide a brief summary of their legacy (see Figure 29).

**Figure 24 – Brief account of Colombian rulers in El Pequeño Tirano**

![Image of César Gaviria and Simón Gaviria](image)

(On the right, former president César Gaviria and on the left, the then future president, Simón Gaviria)

Besides from criticising and satirising the legacy of Colombian rulers, this episode highlights what may be seen as the dynastic nature of Colombian politics. This is most evident at the end of the episode, when the progression of presidents steps into the future and, in the year 2042, appears the figure of an aged Simón Gaviria – son of former president César Gaviria, celebrating that he finally got to be president. Incidentally in December 2011, Simón Gaviria was elected as the president of the House of Representatives (the second chamber of the National Congress) and also as the director of the Liberal Party.

However, the aforementioned dynastic features in Colombian society are not exclusive from the political arena. As exposed in the tenth episode of the first season, it also extended to the nation’s editorial industry. In this episode, the two little tyrants go down to hell, where, by “pure coincidence” the devil looks exactly like the late (back then, still alive) millionaire, Julio Mario Santo Domingo. In the episode, the devil asks the little tyrants to help him get rid of the two, recently deceased, FARC leaders, Tirofijo and Raúl Reyes,73 who since their arrival in hell had kidnapped Stalin, extorted Lenin, stolen Hitler’s girlfriend and were now

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73 Tirofijo, historical leader of the FARC, died of natural causes in March 26, 2008, and when he did, he was the oldest guerrilla fighter (in age and in years in combat) in the world. Raúl Reyes was killed on the first of March 2008, in a bombing by the Colombian Army on Ecuadorian soil. His death caused a diplomatic quarrel between Colombia and Ecuador.
trying to overthrow the devil and install the dictatorship of the proletariat in hell. Then, the Right-wing Tyrant decides to call the Santos (Spanish for saints and also, as I have exposed earlier, the family name of both the current president and former vice-president). At this moment appear the caricatures of Juan Manuel and Francisco Santos, dressed as angels, and then, the Left-wing Tyrant says to the devil: “No! They are also going to overthrow you”. At the end of the episode (as an epilogue) the devil (that is, Santo Domingo) appears reading a copy of El Espectador newspaper (see Figure 30) saying: “people say I am guilty of everything, but I am a mere spectator74”.

Figure 25 – Two Santos in heaven and the devil a mere spectator

(On the left: Juan Manuel and Francisco Santos, as angels; on the right: a devil that looks like Julio Mario Santo Domingo reading El Espectador)

In the first episode of the second season appears a hard-lined, right-winged landowner explaining how he has enjoyed the benefits of the AIS program. In this model, as Figure 31 shows, wealthy landowners who are related to the paramilitary – or better still, who are the paramilitary – receive onerous subsides from the state. This episode touches on what may well be Colombia’s most difficult problem: the permeation and growing influence of drug-dealing mafias and their armies, not only into politics (although particularly evident in this arena) but in all layers of the Colombian society.

74 In Spanish, ‘espectador’ means spectator
Based on the cases that I have defined in the previous section as freak shows from Colombian cyberspace, I argued that digital networks in Colombia relate more to Bakhtin’s carnival than to Habermas’ public sphere. Yet, these three last cases (i.e., Verdad Abierta, La Silla Vacia and El Pequeño Tirano) also show how digital media may be pushing towards the consolidation of a public sphere. The creators of El Pequeño Tirano, have acknowledged that there is criticism (criticism that I do not share) that these kinds of projects (or messages) are far from providing tangible solutions to the problems mentioned above (Blog.com.co, 2012). This reminds me of a moment in Jaime Garzón’s conference in Cali, when one of the students attending the conference asked him what else did he did for Colombia, besides political humour. Today, one could answer this question with a quite melodramatic but still truthful reply such as: he gave his life for his nation. But, as courageous and praiseworthy as Garzón’s decision to stay in Colombia after receiving practically daily threats for more than two years, I believe it is wrong to value Garzón’s legacy only under the light of his martyrdom. In response to this question, Garzón did not try to justify himself by piling up other actions or contributions – which he might have done, after all, since at the time of his death he was helping as a mediator in the release of a person kidnapped by the ELN guerrilla. Instead, he defended his role as a humourist and a political critic by stating that he was convinced that: of everything he said something would endure; that his message would remain in the memory of at least a fraction of his audience. To this, I would

(A stereotypical landowner celebrates the goods received from the AIS program)
add that works like Garzon’s are fundamental to encourage conversation, in the way Shirky defines it: as the most important element in the consolidation of a public sphere.

Another element regarding these last three examples that I must point out – from a communication point of view and not necessarily as a criticism – is that they are using digital media as an extension (a much more economical extension) of modern media. In other words, they are producing work to be seen – or consumed – in isolation. This is a good thing. Although at this stage of the twenty-first century it is hard to find praise for individualism, as in Oscar Wilde’s in The Soul of Man Under Socialism (1891), I am still convinced that some moments of isolation are more than necessary for the individual to prosper. And it’s better to have good products which need to be consumed in isolation.

So far, digital media has been labelled as interactive because it allows its users to interact with the media by making comments and, thereby, to an extent, becoming a part of such media (e.g., by having a blog within the media's website). It has also been perceived as democratic or even revolutionary because – at least in theory – it bypasses intermediaries and makes obsolete the notion of media that emerged from the modern world. In the time I have spent working on this research, I have also noticed how digital media has increasingly moved away from the screen and is now “everywhere and nowhere”, as Professor Michio Kaku would say (2007). However, beyond the advantages that these changes may bring, I believe there are still a few things lacking before digital media can be regarded as something truly different from modern media. One of them is to use it to encourage – and not deter – physical interaction.

Following this premise, in the final two chapters I analyse three cases where digital networks have been used to encourage conversation and a personal interaction between (and within) different communities.

In Chapter 7, I focus on my experience as a journalist and an artist from Colombia in Australia. This analysis is based on the development of a website called the Outsider’s Guide to Melbourne and, more specifically, the production of a series of documentaries titled the Sonnets from the Gatwick. The aim of this series was to
open a communicational space for a population that is traditionally excluded from the mainstream media.

In Chapter 8, I study two educational programs developed by artists and media practitioners, which have been developed with the idea of addressing the problem of the third world brain drain. The first one is a program called Visual Voices, which I developed together with a Melbourne-based Indian photographer called Sudeep Lingamneni (whom I met while developing the Outsider’s Guide to Melbourne). The goal of this program is to teach the basic notions of photojournalism and online publishing to young people from at risk and/or underprivileged communities. The second one, called My International Friend (or My Amigo Internacional in Spanish), is a program of collaborative art and online interaction involving young people from Colombia, Australia and Afghanistan.

With my analysis of these cases, I aim to explore how, and to what extent, can digital networks be conceived as what Orwell would call a *democratic weapon*: one that empowers civil society (particularly its less privileged members) in a way that allows them not only to express their views on certain specific issues, but also to develop a deeper understanding of the main problems that affect them and their communities.
Chapter 7 – the Outsider’s Guide Experience

The aim of this chapter is to contextualise my experience in developing the website: the Outsider's Guide to Melbourne (O.G.), with the theories I have been studying up to this point. In the following paragraphs: I expose how the development of this online media inspired my research and also, how the theories I have studied have been increasingly influencing my practical development as a journalist and as an artist (i.e., writer, photographer and filmmaker).

As I mentioned in the Introduction, between the time I submitted my thesis for examination and the moment I received the jury’s assessment, the O.G.’s website was hacked. Since then, I haven’t been able to access the site's administrator and now, what appears when one visits the website’s URL75 is a flash animation, which was the first draft I uploaded to show to a group of friends who were helping me during the early stages of the website’s development.

Figures 27 to 29 (below) show the different stages of development of this website: from the aforementioned first draft, to the design of the latest version, which was online at the time I submitted my thesis for examination.

Figure 27 – First draft of the O.G. website

75 www.outsidersguide.org
Figure 28 – Beta version of the O.G. website

Figure 29 – Design of latest version of O.G. website
In the forthcoming analysis, I am dividing the development of the O.G. into three main stages: (a) a pre-digital stage, in which I study the circumstances that led me to create the O.G., (b) a paleo-digital stage, in which I expose the most important aspects regarding the original publication of the O.G., and (c) an experimental stage, where I expose how the development of the O.G. led me to undertake the academic research that has now materialised as this thesis.

Pre-digital Stage: Events That Led to the Development of the O.G.

If I had to choose a scene where to begin this story, it would have to be the first time I entered the Gatwick Private Hotel. The Gatwick is a rooming house (or halfway house) located at Melbourne’s beach suburb of St Kilda. The reason why I went to the Gatwick in the first place was because I had to write a 500-word news story, as an assignment for a news-writing class that I was taking at the time. With two days to go before the assignment was due, I still had not found anything newsworthy to write about. Then a friend, who had recently lived in St Kilda, suggested that I should go to the Gatwick, as there was usually something “happening” over there.

The moment I entered the Gatwick, I realised that here was a story worthy of more than a mere 500-words news piece. I ended up writing my article about something else – I can’t remember what – and then continued visiting the Gatwick for a couple of months. During this time, I wrote a 7,000-word piece about the story about the hotel and some of the tenants who were living there at the time (June to August 2007). During these interviews, someone suggested to me that I should stay at the Gatwick. Something I did, for a week, a few months later (in March 2008). After that, instead of one, I had two 7,000-word stories and nowhere to publish them.

These experiences at the Gatwick showed me a side of Melbourne and Australian society that is rarely evident to immigrants – especially to those who come as international students. Coming from Colombia, I have witnessed poverty all my life. However, facing the poverty of a developed nation, like Australia, has enriched my interpretation of Australian society and allowed me to draw new differences and similarities between Australia and Colombia (and by extension between developed and developing nations).
One of these differences is evident in a passage from Kapuscinski’s *The Shadow of the Sun* (2001), which I included as a quotation in my second story at the Gatwick. The passage reads as follows:

The European and the African have an entirely different concept of time. In the European worldview, time exists outside man, exists objectively, and has measurable and linear characteristics. According to Newton, time is absolute: ‘Absolute, true, mathematical time of itself and from its own nature, it flows equally and without relation to anything external.’ The European feels himself to be time’s slave, dependent on it, subject to it. To exist and function he must observe its ironclad, inviolate laws, its inflexible principles and rules. He must head deadlines, dates, days and hours. He moves within the rigors of time and cannot exist outside them. They impose upon him their requirements and quotas. An unresolvable conflict exists between man and time, one that always ends with man’s defeat – time annihilates him. Africans apprehend time differently. For them, it is a much looser concept, more open, elastic, subjective. It is man who influences time, its shape, course, and rhythm (man acting, of course, with the consent of gods and ancestors). Time is even something that man can create outright, for time is made manifest through events, and whether an event takes place or not depends, after all, on man alone.

During the week that I stayed at the Gatwick, I felt somehow free from the constriction that, according to Kapuscinski, *mathematical time* exerts over *Europeans* (which I believe can be extended to all Westerners). Therefore, I feel that the inclusion of this quote evidences an early concern about the differences between the first and the third world – or between developed and developing nations – which would later lead me to focus my research on how digital technologies are acting upon the third world in comparison with how they are acting upon the first. But before getting there, I must move into the second stage of development of the O.G.

**Paleo-digital Stage: First (or beta) Version of the O.G. Website**

Looking back at these early stages, I can see I was facing two main barriers: (a) a linguistic one (English not being my first language) and (b) a spatial or logistical one, as there is not much room for 7,000-word articles in the printed world (especially for an unknown author). These limitations led me to invite some friends (mostly international students from the fields of arts, media and communications) to publish our work on a website conceived as an *interactive journal of the city*. I first thought of the idea of an *interactive journal of the city* – as well as of the name, *Outsider’s Guide to Melbourne* – while couring a university
subject, where students had to come up with a hypothetical venture and then work on a business plan throughout the semester. Besides the submission of the business plan, the final assignment included writing an essay picturing the imaginary venture in the year 2020. When I began my doctoral research, approximately a year later, I started by extracting what I thought were the most relevant fragments from that essay, which are the following:

1. The Outsider’s Guide is born in a moment when the future of this so-called ‘era of information’ is starting to be defined. As stated by Barry Jones, the Information Society of the future has the potential to be ‘a creative era in which Mozartian man and woman can evolve (or) if we remain imprisoned in the linear thinking so congenial to bureaucrats, capitalists and commissars, the future will be a period of unemployment, alienation and unprecedented social crises’ (Windschuttle and Elliot, 1994).

2. In the early twenty-first century, out of a population of approximately six billion people, three billion are living in cities. By the year 2030, the urban population is expected to rise from its current 50% to 81% of the total global population (UNFPA, 2007). Regardless of the positive and/or negative connotations this may have, city life will be the main source of inspiration for the following generations of artists.

3. Based on the technological breakthroughs that have been taking place in communications since the 19th century, I believe that by the year 2020, immediacy in the media will be a thing of the past. The use of digital video and photography in the coverage of major political events: like the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan and the political repression in Tibet, show how humans already have the capacity to broadcast, not only words, but also images and videos of an event seconds after its occurrence.76

These are still, to a great extent, the foundations of my research. Then, in the early stages of my PhD, I started deepening my studies on digital journalism (i.e., the use of digital devices to communicate news in the early twenty-first century) and the different perceptions of digital technologies (which would lead me to the analysis exposed in Chapter 3, concerning Heim’s debate between Naïve Realists and Network Idealists).

In a parenthetical note I must point out how, it was during these early stages that I met the artists whose projects I am studying in the following chapter. I come from the same city (Bogota) as the creators of My International Friend – Claudia Escobar and Jorge Leiva – but it was in Melbourne where I met them. They had also come as

76 This essay was originally written in May 2008.
international students and arrived just a few days after I did (January 2007). A few months later, we became housemates. While living together, we started organising an event called *El Tarro, the smallest performing space in the world.* It was at the first session of *El Tarro* (on April 6, 2008) that I met Sudeep Lingamneni. During this meeting, Sudeep and I decided to collaborate, combining his background as a photographer and mine as a writer. After that day, he started sending me some of his photographic essays to publish in the O.G. Later on, Sudeep began a Master’s degree in Community and Cultural Development and the focus of our collaborative work changed: leading us to work on an educational venture. But there are still more elements in this story, which I need to expose before analysing the Photography and the Citizen journalism program that we would later design under the name of *Visual Voices.*

As I have mentioned above, I began the O.G. by combining my work with that of a group of friends (other than Sudeep, Claudia and Jorge), who, like me, were also international students from the fields of arts, media and communications. For all the value that I then saw (and still see) in their work (and how it complemented mine), there was a fundamental skill lacking amongst this initial group with whom I formed the original O.G.: none of us had a background in IT or web development, nor knew anything beyond the most basic programming. This, as I expose throughout the following paragraphs, has been a constant limitation in the development of this online media.

During the second semester of 2008, I organised a photojournalism competition – called *Capturing Melbourne* – with the intention of compiling a new series of stories to add to the O.G. For this event, I received a quick response grant from the Arts Council of the City of Melbourne, which I spent in the promotion of the competition, and I also managed to find a sponsor to donate the major prizes. The

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77 As stated in *El Tarro’s* blog, this project is: “a creative moving space where people come together to be part of contemporary performing arts experiments (...)el tarro combines monthly live sessions with virtual postings (and) has showcased over 75 performances involving 60 performance artists, 90 musicians and 45 visual artists in Melbourne, Sydney, Bogota, San Francisco, Buenos Aires, Berlin, Cesena and Venice.” (http://smallestperformingspace.blogspot.com.au)

78 At that stage, I was about to upload the first (or beta) version of the O.G.’s website (see figure 2).

79 Their names are Diego Graue and Shreya Dube
participants in the competition needed to submit a photographic essay based in Melbourne, containing from 2 to 12 images, together with a written article, which could range from 300 to 2,000 words. The terms and conditions of the competition established that the copyright of the artworks submitted to the O.G. belonged to the author, but the O.G. had the right to publish such work in its website and other, related publications and to use it for promotional purposes.

At the end of the competition, I received 12 submissions, one of which would later be withdrawn. The stories submitted covered a wide range of subjects: from horse races to drug and alcohol rehabilitation centres. It also included portrayals of indigenous Australians in Melbourne; abandoned buildings in the city and surrounding suburbs; and registered common practices like skateboarding and the functioning of certain commercial ventures, including a strip club and a tattoo parlour.

Figures 30 and 31 are samples of the promotional art used to promote the photojournalism competition Capturing Melbourne, while Figure 32 shows samples of promotional artwork done with images submitted to the competition.

**Figure 30 – Screenshot of Capturing Melbourne’s promotional site**
During the first semester of 2009, I tried to continue organising competitions as a way to invite artists to contribute stories to the O.G. During this occasion, I aimed to organise a short documentary competition following similar patterns. However,
I had to cancel the competition when the major sponsor decided to withdraw sponsorship at the last minute.

This happened at the same time that I was beginning this academic research. As the timeline in Figure 32 shows, it was also around this time when I published the second (and current) version of the O.G.’s website.

**Figure 33 – Timeline: development of the O.G.**

Experimental Stage: Publishing of the Second Website, Beginning of Academic Research and Production of the Sonnets from the Gatwick

In Figure 32, I draw a distinction between the practical development of the O.G. and the academic research that this development has inspired. This distinction is there mostly as a device to help me expose the relation between my journalistic/artistic experience as editor of the O.G. and the theories that I have studied in my research. In real life, I could not separate one aspect from the other.
So far, I can say that the editorial development of the O.G., as an *interactive journal* of Melbourne, starts and finishes at the Gatwick Private Hotel. My last experience at the Gatwick was the production of a series of seven short documentaries called the *Sonnets from the Gatwick* (July to December 2009). As on the occasion that I decided to stay at the Gatwick, the idea of producing the documentaries also came to me when I was doing research for my first written story. One of the tenants I was interviewing back then – an Indigenous Australian artist I shall refer to as *R* – told me he had suggested to other tenants that they should do a documentary at the Gatwick. No need for an external crew, just bring in a camera and start filming. I kept thinking about this while writing my story, and wanted to ask *R* if he would help me organise this project as soon as I had finished; but before being able to do so, *R* left the Gatwick – and from what I managed to find out, he also left Melbourne – and I have not seen him ever since.

Approximately two years after this, I went back to the Gatwick with the purpose of producing the documentaries in a similar fashion to that suggested by *R*. This means I was to be the only external contributor to the project, while the rest would be people who were directly related to the Gatwick (i.e., current and/or previous tenants and the hotel’s administration). At this stage, I should clarify how during the last few decades, the suburb of St Kilda has lived through a process of gentrification. As a result of this process, the number of rooming houses in the suburb has steadily declined. While undertaking research for my first story, I found out that in 1954, there were 636 rooming houses hosting 9,500 people in St Kilda, whilst by 1997 the number of rooming houses had declined to 60, hosting 1,157 people (see City of Port Phillip, 2007). It is also important to mention how, during the last few decades, the Gatwick has acquired a rather infamous reputation, partly because of various cases of violence, including a few homicides, that have happened in the Hotel and also because the Gatwick is one of the favourite places in St Kilda where people with housing problems like to gather. Because of this, most of the Gatwick’s appearances in the media tend to have a negative tone.

I first described this series of documentaries as *an experiment in online broadcasting and editorialising*. The editorialising part comes from the fact that the ultimate goal of this project was to produce a subjective, even biased, message that
portrayed life in Melbourne (and in St Kilda in particular) from the Gatwick’s perspective. Therefore, while producing Sonnets from the Gatwick, I was departing from the premise that there is no such thing as objective journalism. The broadcasting part is, on the other hand, far more questionable. Looking back at it, I would say the term narrowcasting would suit the nature of this experiment much better. The reason why I use this word is because this series of short documentaries, together with the stories I had written before, were to be the first example of something I had called the Broadcasting Spots in the O.G.

For the reader to understand what these Broadcasting Spots are all about, I should first explain how the O.G. was originally conceived as a location-based website. Thus, the earliest version of the O.G. website had a map of Melbourne on its front page. Through this map, visitors could access the stories by clicking on their location in the map. This is evident in the designs shown in Figure 3X (above).

I started thinking about the Broadcasting Spots as a possible way to generate revenue with the O.G. These spots were to be addressed to small to medium businesses in Melbourne, for them to promote their brand while endorsing local artists. When I was first thinking about the Broadcasting Spots in the O.G., I wrote that they were to be addressed to businesses and organisations in Melbourne with a story behind them. This story could relate to: a presence over fifty years long or it could be about just starting the business, but it had to be a story worth telling.

Therefore, the goal of the Broadcasting Spots was to promote businesses and brands by focusing on the persons behind them; and not by appealing to unconscious, irrational responses. Later on, I read how, in Brave New World Revisited (1959), while writing about communications in “Western democracies”, Huxley diagnosed them as possessing: “two faces and a divided personality.” One of these faces was a “democratic Dr Jekyll” who was in charge of the editorial department and “would be very happy to prove that John Dewey had been right about the ability of human nature to respond to truth and reason”. At the same time, at the advertising department, was an:

...anti-democratic (...) anti-rational Mr Hyde – or rather a Doctor Hyde, for Hyde is now a Ph.D. in psychology and has master’s degree as well in the Social Sciences (whose) business is to study human weakness and failings, to investigate those unconscious desires and fears by which so much of men’s conscious thinking and overt doing is
determined. And he does this (...) simply in order to find out the best way to take advantage of their ignorance and to exploit their irrationality for the pecuniary benefit of his employers. (pp. 73-74)

Despite not having read this extract until after I first thought of the *Broadcasting Spots*, it was while thinking about possible alternatives to that irrational advertising that Huxley criticised, that I started thinking about them.

But I didn’t find a business or organisation to use as the first example of the *Broadcasting Spots* in the O.G. Instead, I went back to the Gatwick, as, on the one hand, it was the one story in Melbourne on which I had already done somewhat extensive research but also because, after writing the first two articles, I felt my work there was still inconclusive.

The production of the *Sonnets* began with a meeting I had with the two owners (who also tend the place). Together, we listed various issues that were to be treated in the documentaries. These issues were: (a) the history of the Gatwick and some of its long-term tenants; (b) the relationship between the Hotel and its neighbours; (c) the food and health programs that take place at the Gatwick; (d) nightlife in St Kilda; (e) prostitution in St Kilda (as this suburb has historically been Melbourne’s red-light district) and (f) art produced at and/or inspired by the Gatwick (and artists who live or have lived there).

In this meeting, I was also told that there was a tenant who was interested in being a part of this project. This was an artist commonly known around Melbourne as *Budapest*. He would later become the artistic director of this project. The original idea was to invite more tenants and have a larger crew – even have different crews for the different parts of the series. However, it was ultimately just *Budapest* and I who were actively involved in this project.

The production of the *Sonnets from the Gatwick* took place between July and December 2009. From the beginning, the idea was to keep filming, editing and uploading the documentaries as they were being produced. During this period, we organised two screenings at the St Kilda Library, which gave us (*Budapest* and I) the opportunity to discuss our experience with members of the St. Kilda community.
Figure 34 shows samples of the promotional art designed for the screening of the Sonnets from the Gatwick at the St Kilda Library.

Figure 34 – Promotional art, Sonnets from the Gatwick

But, did this project truly represent the view of the Gatwick? Or was it just my interpretation of the Gatwick’s point of view? These, I believe, are the most relevant questions regarding the editorial part in this experiment. And it is something that the reader, in the event that he or she ends up watching the documentaries, would be more impartially suited to assess. Yet, as valuable as I would find this assessment, to study it here in more detail would go beyond the scope of my research. Thus, the conclusions I consider to be more relevant at this stage revolve around the broadcasting (i.e., the logistical) part of this experiment.

80 The URL for the first video of the series on youtube is: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=y6KsdWexOCY&list=UUxVSAFBWGY6Qskhq1HiGRA&index=7&feature=plcp
In this regard, I should begin by referring back to the earliest mistake (sort of like the original sin) in the development of the O.G. (way before the production of *Sonnets from the Gatwick*): which is that, of the original group of friends who started publishing their work in the O.G., none of us was a web developer or knew anything beyond the most basic programming. Then, a mistake of a similar nature regarding the production, or more accurately, the broadcasting, of the *Sonnets* was that at first I uploaded the videos to the O.G.’s website and not to a video-sharing site like *youtube* or *vimeo*. This meant I had to break down all the videos (because the O.G.’s website has a limited uploading capacity) and it also made it harder to promote them and to assess the number of online viewers. Therefore, I would say that the only valuable feedback came from the personal responses we received during the screenings at St Kilda Library.

Following this, I believe I can look back at this experience from (a) a commercial or administrative perspective and (b) an educational perspective. The commercial or administrative perspective leads me to learn from the mistakes made during the production and publication of the documentaries. The educational, on the other hand, is focused on how a project of this nature can encourage conversation, as Shirky (2011) defines it, as a fundamental element in the consolidation of a public sphere.

At this stage, I must point out how the presence of a camera in an environment like the Gatwick’s proved to be automatically disruptive. Since the beginning of the project, I knew that I was not going to film anyone who did not wish to appear in the documentaries. But still, as soon as I pulled the camera out of my bag, the environment in the hotel immediately changed. This is something I had noticed when I was writing my first story at the Gatwick, when I invited a photographer to gather visual documentation to complement my story.81 Such was the shock caused by the camera on that occasion that I ended up writing about it in my story.

Later on, while furthering my research on the elements affecting the development of a public sphere, I started noticing how, as theorists like Boyd (2010) and Morozov (2011) point out: one of the most fundamental questions about so-called

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81 Her name is Shreya Dube.
digital societies revolves around defining the boundaries between the public and private, within such societies.

It is under this light that I will analyse the case studies Visual Voices and My International Friend, in the next chapter. But before doing so, I must introduce Figure 35, which exposes how the development of the O.G. relates to my research.

**Figure 35 – Development of the O.G. in relation to academic research**

In this figure, Q1 represents my questioning of whether digital networks are leading to the consolidation of a global public sphere (on which the first part of my thesis is centred), and Q2 represents my questioning of how digital networks may
provide a solution to the third world brain drain (which is the question that drives the analysis in the second part of my thesis.

**Summary of Development of the O.G. and its relation to my academic research:**

**Pre-digital stage - June 2007 to April 2008**

- Compilation of the first series of stories (including first two written articles about the Gatwick Hotel) and conception of the O.G. as an interactive journal of the city and a space to promote emerging artists.

**Paleo-digital stage – (a) April 2008 to December 2008**

- Publication of the first (or beta) version of the O.G.’s website: uploaded to the Internet on 7 April 2008, as a digital journal of the city.
- Writing of the essay picturing the O.G. in the year 2020.
- Organisation of the photojournalism competition ‘Capturing Melbourne’.

**(b) January to April 2009**

- Development of second (and current) version of the O.G.’s website.

**Experimental stage – (a) April to December 2009**

- Beginning of academic research.
- Production of the ‘Sonnets from the Gatwick’.

**(b) January 2010 to June 2011**

- Analysis of the literature review exposed in chapters 1 to 6.
- Conception and development of *Visual Voices*.

**(c) June to July 2011**

- Organisation of the first workshops based on the *Visual Voices* program, in the city of Bogota and the town of Pamplona, in Colombia.

**(d) August 2011 to August 2012**

- Completion of doctoral research.
Chapter 8 – Case Studies

In this chapter, I study two educational projects where digital technologies are used to encourage *conversation*, in the sense meant by Shirky (2011), as a fundamental element in the consolidation of a public sphere. As I have mentioned earlier, these projects are: (a) a program of photography and citizen journalism called Visual Voices, which I have designed together with a Melbourne-based Indian photographer called Sudeep Lingamneni, and (b) a program of collaborative art between children and adolescents from different national and cultural backgrounds, called My International Friend [Mi Amigo Internacional], designed by a couple of Melbourne-based Colombian artists, Claudia Escobar and Jorge Leiva.

The analysis of Visual Voices is focused on the initial experiences gained while running this program. Between June and July 2011, I organised two photojournalism workshops with groups of teenagers, in association with two foundations that work in the city of Bogota and the town of Pamplona in Colombia.

The analysis of My International Friend is based on the development of this program between the years 2009 and 2011. During this period, the developers have run the program involving schools and organisations in Australia, Colombia and Afghanistan.

By studying these cases, I aim to present a general outlook of the phenomenon of migration in Colombia and, based on this, to analyse the problem known as the third world brain drain and its incidence in the Colombian society. The main reason why I have chosen these programs as case studies is because they have been conceived with the purpose of countering that *drain* of knowledge that, as the statistics studied in the following paragraphs show, is both cause and effect of the major socio-economic problems affecting the Colombian society. Also, as figure 3X, below, shows, these programs relate to the premises exposed throughout my thesis, as: (a) they both rely on the use of digital technologies as a tool to generate and promote conversations between (and within) diverse communities and (b) they both interpret art as a universal language that has the capacity to bypass linguistic, national and cultural barriers.
This chapter is divided in three main sections: in the first section, I present a series of statistics about violence, education, migration and the access to digital networks in Colombia; in the second section I describe the case studies I am analysing and outline their goals and methodology; and in the third section, I present my own interpretation of these case studies, relating them with the statistical analysis presented in the first section. My reflection also focuses on a series of interviews I conducted with some of the persons involved in these programs.

As mentioned earlier, the analysis in this chapter raises the question: why do people from Colombia migrate? And, as the data presented in the following section shows, there are two main causes that prompt this phenomenon: violence and education. These two causes may be framed under Paulo Freire’s distinction (1970) between what he calls the *oppressed* and the *oppressors*. Therefore, in general terms, it can be said that in Colombia the *oppressed* are forced to migrate because of violence and the internal conflict, while the *oppressors* decide to migrate because they want to receive more and better education.
Freire’s theories are particularly relevant to this analysis, because, on the one hand, they revolve around the issue of education and how this practice should evolve as a bilateral process, where, “the teacher-of-the-students and the students-of-the-teacher cease to exist and a new term emerges: teacherstudent with students-teachers” (p 61). This, on the other hand, also means that, by channelling their efforts towards the education of the oppressed, the oppressors are also contributing to their own liberation, for, as Freire also points out, “is the great humanistic and historical task of the oppressed: to liberate themselves and their oppressors as well” (p 26).

In this regard, I can speak of my role while organising the photojournalism workshops that I analyse as the first of my case studies, as an experience of true educational value, which not only enriched my understanding of the Colombian society, but also, on a wider sense, strengthen my empathic behaviour. For this reason, in the final analysis of these case studies, and later on, in the Conclusion of my thesis, I aim to promote the integration of these and other projects of a similar nature, within the general structure of the Colombian educational system.

But before jumping into such conclusions, I must present a series of statistics that would hopefully provide an understanding of why people from Colombia feel the need to migrate. Besides from providing a general outlook of the phenomenon of migration in Colombia, these statistics also have a direct relation to the case studies at hand. Hence, the data about violence and the internal conflict relates to the participants of one of the photojournalism workshops included in the first of my case studies (Visual Voices), as well as to the participants of the program of collaborative art (My International Friend) that constitute the second of my case studies. Just as such, the statistics about education and the access to digital networks in Colombia, relate to the participants of the second workshop included in my first case study, as well as to the roles of the organisers of both programs and their efforts to counter a problem like the third world brain drain.

At this stage, I should also point out how, in some of the statistics presented below, I have included a comparison between the Colombian and the Australian cases. The main reason why I have included this comparison is because the organisers of the programs that constitute my case studies are Colombians, who migrated to
Australia as international students. However, this comparison also allows me to analyse a developing (or third world) nation like Colombia under the light of a developed (or first world) nation like Australia. By doing so, rather than to portray the Australian nation as the ideal kind of social order for Colombia, I aim to underline how there is a perception in the Colombian student population that foreign education is better. This perception is supported by international studies, some of which I have included in the statistical analysis below.

As a final comment before moving into the aforementioned statistical analysis, I must point out how the statistics regarding the town of Pamplona have been included in the second section of this chapter, in the part where I study the photojournalism workshop that I organised in this town.

a.) Related Statistics

General data about migration in Colombia

There are two major migratory waves in Colombia: (a) the internal displacement caused by the conflict – which, as I explain in more detail below, depending on the source, ranges between 1.9 and 3.8 million people (ACNUR, 2006); and (b) an ongoing flow of emigrants that, according to data from the International Organisation for Migration (IOM, ), has risen from 1,500,000 in 1985 to 4,167,388 in 2008.

Statistics related to violence and the influence of the internal conflict on society

The war in Colombia is often considered the oldest internal armed conflict in the world (United Nations, 2008). Its origins date at least as far back as 1964, with the foundation of what it is also regarded as the oldest guerrilla group in the world: the FARC. However, as I have pointed out in Chapter 5 by exposing the three examples of Colombian art from the twentieth century, Colombia has lived under recurrent cycles of violence throughout its entire republican history.

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82 In Spanish OIM stands for: Organización Internacional para las Migraciones.
83 Accounting for approximately 9% of the total population.
84 Acronym for: Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia [Colombian Armed Revolutionary Forces].
At this stage, I should clarify that the statistics regarding the Colombian conflict are hardly reliable. For example, as stated in a report from the UN Refugee Centre (ACNUR), there is a variation in the numbers of internally displaced population, between the official figure presented by the government of 1.9 million and the figure presented by independent organisms such as the Consultancy for Human Rights and Displacement CODHES of 3.8 million (ACNUR, 2006).

For this reason, I am giving prevalence to the statistics presented by independent and/or supranational organisms (e.g., the United Nations, Human Rights Watch) and to those that have been filtered by recognised academic researchers.

**Note About the Internally Displaced Population (IDP)**

On a clarifying note about the IDP: regarding its estimated number and growth rate, I quote a somehow extensive extract from the website of the Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre (IDMC):

Figures published by CODHES at the end of September, 2011, show that some 89,000 people were displaced during the first half of 2011. CODHES’ report found levels of displacement during the first year of the Santos government did not change compared with the preceding year (CODHES, 2011). As on previous occasions, CODHES’s figures differ greatly from the government’s. According to Acción Social, the agency responsible for IDPs, 44,000 people were registered as displaced during the first half of 2011.

Since CODHES began monitoring in 1985, it has counted 5.2 million displaced people. The government’s total is 3.6 million since it started counting in 2000.

CODHES estimates that 34% of the country’s IDPs are not officially registered, and that 25% of applications for IDP status are turned down (CODHES, 2011).

The number of people registered in the Government’s IDP system in recent years are influenced by the decision of the State Council that invalidated Decree 2569 of 2000, which put in place a one-year limit for IDPs to request registration after their displacement. Constitutional Court’s decision 011 also ordered the Government to take more aggressive steps to reduce under-registration. (IDMC, 2011, para. 1 - 4)

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85 The agency’s acronym in English is UNHCR.
86 Acronym for: Consultoría para los Derechos Humanos y el Desplazamiento [Consultancy for Human Rights and Displacement].
About the internal conflict

Number of Combatants: According to Isaza and Campos (2007), by the end of the first decade of the twenty-first century, the Colombian armed forces had approximately 200,000 combatants (rising from 160,000 in the year 2002 to 209,741 in 2007), fighting against approximately 33,000 members of the illegal armies divided in the following fashion: 16,900 from the FARC, 3,700 from the ELN\(^87\) and 12,175 from the AUC\(^88\); adding up to a total of 32,775 combatants (p. 6).

Situation of Child Soldiers: according to the 2008 *Child Soldier Global Report*, Colombia is the only country in the Americas (and in the Western hemisphere) where children were recruited or used in hostilities. Figure 36 shows a map taken from this report, which shows the countries where child soldiers are recruited.

Figure 37 – Map of countries where children’s are recruited as soldiers

![Map of countries where children were recruited or used in hostilities - April 2004 to October 2007](image)

(Source: *Child Soldier Global Report, 2008.*)

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\(^87\) A guerrilla group whose acronym stands for: Ejército de Liberación Nacional (Army of National Liberation).

\(^88\) The main paramilitary group in Colombia during the last decades; the acronym stands for: Autodefensas Unidas de Colombia (United Self-defence Forces of Colombia).
The process of demobilisation: the aforementioned Child Soldier Global Report (2008) also points out how, between the years 2003 and 2006, 31,000 members of the AUC were demobilised as part of a peace process between the government and this group\(^89\). However, as Isaza and Campos (2007) also point out, this figure more than doubles the approximate of 12,000 members estimated to belong to this armed group. In relation to this, between the end of 2011 and the beginning of 2012, various scandals of fake demobilisations have surfaced, involving high-ranked members of Alvaro Uribe's administration (BBC, 2012).

Beyond the inconsistencies between the number of demobilised combatants and the total number of combatants, according to the official statistics from the office of the Colombian Agency for Reintegration (ACR),\(^90\) the total number of demobilised combatants in Colombia between 2003 and 2012 is 56,599; out of this total, 35,411 (i.e., 62.56%) belonged to self-defence groups and 21,148 (i.e. 37.36%) belonged to the guerrillas. Also, out of this grand total, 56.3% made collective demobilisations and 43.7% demobilised individually (quoted from Verdad Abierta, 2012b). Also, according to data from the Program of Humanitarian Aid to the Displaced (PAHD),\(^91\) of the total of combatants who demobilised individually from 2002 to 2010, 14% were minors; this number represents 2,803 former child soldiers (quoted from Verdad Abierta, 2010).

Note about the situation of demobilised combatants: In an article published on October 14, 2011 in El Espectador: journalist Elber Gutierrez pointed out a series of factors acting against the process of demobilisation. Besides the scandals regarding fake demobilisations, Gutierrez remarked two problems that demobilised combatants are facing: (a) the lack of work opportunities, and (b) threats against their security after abandoning the armed groups to which they used to belong. Regarding the second problem, Gutierrez includes a couple of graphs using data from the council of Bogota, the council of Monteria and the state government of Cordoba.\(^92\) these graphs show that from 2006 to 2009, there were

\[^{89}\text{Isaza and Campos talk about 25,000 (2007, p. 2).}\]
\[^{90}\text{In Spanish: Agencia Colombiana para la Reintegración.}\]
\[^{91}\text{In Spanish: Programa de Atención Humanitaria al Desmovilizado.}\]
\[^{92}\text{Monteria is the capital of Cordoba; since the 1980s this state has been one of the strongholds of the paramilitary groups in Colombia.}\]
48 cases of homicide involving demobilised combatants in Bogota (13 cases in 2006, 19 in 2007, 10 in 2009 and 9 in 2009); whilst between 2005 and 2010, there were 206 cases of homicide involving demobilised combatants in Cordoba (10 in 2005, with 2 of them occurring in Monteria; 15 in 2006, with 8 of them in Monteria; 34 in 2007, with 8 of them in Monteria; 72 in 2008, with 20 of them in Monteria; 37 in 2009, with 10 of them in Monteria and 38 in 2010, with 8 of them in Monteria).

According to Gutierrez, these are the main factors why, out of the 26,000 former members of the AUC who abandoned their arms in the peace process between the government and this group, more than 8,000 have left the process of reincorporation, and it is believed most of them have now joined the emerging illegal groups that have appeared after the dissolution of the AUC.93

Statistics Regarding Emigration

According to data from the IOM, in 2008, the main destination for migrating Colombians was the USA with a number of 722,269 migrants; followed by Venezuela with 295,829 migrants; Panama with 252,353 migrants; Ecuador with 195,764 and Spain with 177,413 migrants. Because of the emigration, the number of international remittances has increased, so that in 2007 Colombia became the second highest country from Latin America to receive remittances from the USA; receiving 4.6 billion dollars – far from Mexico’s 25 billion but above Brazil’s 4.5 million (OIM, 2008).

Migratory comparison between Colombia and Australia

According to the Colombian Consulate in Sydney, there are approximately 17,000 Colombians living in Australia (Leiva, 2010). As the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade of Australia (2012) states, 8,803 of them (I should say of us) are enrolled in Australian educational institutions.

The emigration rate of tertiary educated in Australia is 2.72%, while in Colombia it is 10.37% (Docquier, Marfouk & Lowell, 2007). The international migrant stock –

93 For information about these new groups see the Human Rights Watch Report about Colombia, of January 2011 (Human Rights Watch, 2012).
that is, the percentage of people who live in a country other than where they were born – is 21.26% in Australia and 0.26% in Colombia (UN, 2008). The net international migration rate, that is, the net overseas migration per 1,000 population, is 7.7% in Australia (ABS, 2011b) and 0.66% in Colombia (CIA, 2012).

Statistics regarding education in Colombia

Access By Level of Education

Using data from the Colombian Ministry of Education, I have designed the graph shown in Figure 3X, regarding education coverage in Colombia. The Gross Enrolment Rate (GER) divides the number of students enrolled at a given education level (e.g., elementary, secondary, higher education) by the total population of the age corresponding to such level (this is why the rate may exceed 100 percent).

Figure 38 – Access to education in Colombia (by level of education)
The Net Enrolment Rate (NER) on the other hand, divides the number of students enrolled at a certain level who belong to the corresponding age of that level by the total population of the age corresponding to such level. Thus, transformed to NER: the 114.11% of GER in elementary education in Colombia is 89.70% of NER; the 103.00% of GER in secondary education is 70.00% of NER; and the 78.60% of GER in middle education is 41.60% of NER (Ministry of Education of Colombia, 2010).

Also, as stated in a report of a World Bank educational program in Colombia called ACCES,94 the access to higher education in Colombia has been increasing at all levels since the last decade of the twentieth century. As the authors of the report point out:

In 2002 (...) the enrolment rate in tertiary education among the low-income population was less than 20 percent, compared to close to 60 percent for high-income students”, whereas by 2006, “enrolment in tertiary education increased by 30 percent in the last 3 years to over 1.3 million students (...) improving equitable access by allowing economically disadvantaged students to attend tertiary education and reducing the probability that they drop out by 30 percent. (Cedran-Infantes and Blom, 2007, p 1)

**Quality of education – Comparison Between Colombia and Australia**

Despite the positive outcomes mentioned above, and even though the access to education in Colombia has been increasing its percentages and the indexes of illiteracy are dropping: still, in terms of education standards, the gap between a developed nation like Australia and a developing one like Colombia keeps widening. Below, in Figures 38 to 43, I show graphs based on the 2009 PISA tests (OECD, 2010)95 comparing both countries’ proficiency level in the areas of reading, mathematics and science.

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94 Acronym for: Acceso Con Calidad a la Educacion Superior [Quality Access to Higher Education].
95 As stated in the PISA/OECD website, this test: “is an international study which (...) aims to evaluate education systems worldwide by testing the skills and knowledge of 15-year-old students in participating countries/economies. Since the year 2000 over 70 countries and economies have participated in PISA” (OECD, 2012).
Figure 39 – Global standards proficiency in reading

World education map- PISA test: proficiency in reading

In this figure, blue represents the countries with the lowest percentage of students, who are below the most basic level of proficiency in reading; and red represents the countries with the highest percentage of students below the most basic proficiency level (OECD, 2010).

Figure 40 – Comparison: Colombia and Australia proficiency in reading

Comparison between Colombia and Australia - proficiency level in reading

source: the PISA 2009 profiles by country/economy
This figure shows how, in the area of reading, 4.2% of the students who took the test were below the most basic proficiency level in Colombia; while in Australia, the percentage of students below the most basic proficiency level was 1.1%. The OECD average was 1.1% (OECD, 2010).

**Figure 41 - Global standards proficiency in math**

**World education map - PISA test: proficiency in math**

In this figure, blue represents the countries with the lowest percentage of students, who are below the most basic level of proficiency in math; red represents the countries with the highest percentage of students below the most basic proficiency level (OECD, 2010).
This figure shows how, in the area of math, 38.8% of the students in Colombia who took the test were below the most basic proficiency level; while in Australia the percentage of students below the most basic proficiency level was 5.1%. The OECD average was 8.0%. (OECD, 2010)
In this figure, blue represents the countries with the lowest percentage of students who are below the most basic level of proficiency in science; red represents the countries with the highest percentage of students below the most basic proficiency level (OECD, 2010).

**Figure 44 - Comparison: Colombia and Australia proficiency in science**

This figure shows how, in the area of science, 20.4% of the students in Colombia who took the test were below the most basic proficiency level; while in Australia the percentage of students below the most basic proficiency level was 3.4%. The OECD average was 5.0% (OECD, 2010).

**Statistics related to Internet Access in Colombia**

**General Statistics**

According to data from the Colombian Ministry of Technology, Information and Communications (2011), there are 5,552,035 Internet subscribers in Colombia. Of this total, 4,075,720 have a broadband connection (that is 73.8% of all Internet connections). Of the total of broadband connections, 61.2% are landline connections and 38.8% are 3G mobile Internet connections. 58% of all landline
connections are from the country’s five largest cities: Bogota, Medellin, Cali, Barranquilla and Bucaramanga. The city with the highest penetration of landline Internet connections is Bucaramanga with 15.58%, followed by Medellin with 14.75% and Bogota with 13.29%. 87.15% of all landline connections are residential, 12.46% are corporative and 0.30% belong to educational institutions (the remaining 0.10% is divided between call-centres, local councils, Internet cafés and health institutions).

**Internet Connection by Social Strata**

Of the total of landline, residential connections: 7.06% are from stratum 1 homes (Ministry of Technology, Information and Communications of Colombia, 2011) – with 10.1% of the national population belonging to this stratum (DANE, 2010); 31.0% are from stratum 2 homes – with 35.16% of the national population belonging to this stratum; 35.25 are from stratum 3 homes – with 38.60% of the national population belonging to this stratum; 16.23% are from stratum 4 homes – with 9.37% of the national population belonging to this stratum; 6.27% are from stratum 5 homes – with 5.03% of the population belonging to this stratum; and 4.19% are from stratum 6 homes – with 1.74% of the population belonging to this stratum.

At this stage, it is important to point out how, according to data from the World Bank (2010), Colombia has the most inequitable distribution of income in South America. The measure to determine a nation’s inequality is called the GINI index (or GINI coefficient), which, as the World Bank report states, “measures the extent to which the distribution of income or consumption expenditure among individuals or households within an economy deviates from a perfectly equal distribution”. Within this measurement, “a GINI index of 0 represents perfect equality, while an index of 100 implies perfect inequality”. Thus, Colombia’s GINI

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96 Based on socio-economic terms and for purposes like billing for basic services (i.e., electricity, gas, water) municipalities in Colombia are divided into six strata: stratum 1 being the one with the lowest economic income and 6 being the one with the highest.
index for 2010 was 55.9, exceeding that of other countries in the region like Brazil 54.7, Argentina 44.5, Ecuador 49.3, Paraguay 52.4, Peru 48.1 and Uruguay 45.3.\footnote{The World Bank's report does not present data from Australia. However, according to data from the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS, 2011a) the Gini coefficient in Australia for 2009-10 was 32.8.}

b.) Presentation of case studies

Case study # 1 - Visual Voices

What is Visual Voices?

Visual Voices is a practice-based educational program focused on teaching photography and citizen journalism. The aim of this program is to empower communities, giving them a voice to register their own reality. As stated in the program’s proposal:\footnote{Attached as a supporting document.}

\textit{Visual Voices} was conceived with the purpose of teaching and promoting the use of photography as a form of communication. We expect the program to guide interested students to a career path, and a commitment to a tertiary education to further their development in media fields such as photography, journalism and multi-media.

Also, as stated as the project's ultimate goal:

\textit{Visual Voices} aims to provide students with a tool kit for production, an understanding of design and a platform where they can challenge stereotypes and negative pre-conceptions. This will empower students to move beyond the passive role of mere receivers of information into the role of news providers, for the greater development of their communities. Students' work will be reviewed and critiqued on a weekly basis so that audiences embrace the news board material as a source of professional news coverage.

Origins

When Sudeep Lingamneni and I started developing this program, we aimed to address it to adolescents and young adults from at risk communities in Melbourne. As Moore (2006) points out, there are three main subjects on whom the term ‘at risk’ is usually applied: children, the family and the community. There are many reasons why a community may be declared at risk: climatic reasons, sanitary...
reasons, or reasons of national security; Visual Voices was designed for children and youth from communities in the metropolitan area of Melbourne classified as at risk, based on socioeconomic reasons.

Nonetheless, as I have mentioned earlier, the experiences gained in running this program, which I am analysing as a case study, took place in Colombia. But before beginning to study these cases, I shall briefly explain the program’s curriculum.

**Curriculum Description**

Visual Voices’ original curriculum runs for an academic term (i.e., it consists of eight weekly sessions). However, the program has been designed so that it can be flexible to the needs of our possible partners (e.g., schools and foundations) as their availability in terms of time, infrastructure and technological resources is likely to vary.

**Resources Required for the Program**

The following is a list of resources required for the program. The first three items on the list are absolutely necessary; the rest, are important to integrally fulfil the program’s objectives, but in the event that one (or more) is not available, the program could run without them:

a) Group of students  
b) Cameras  
c) Classroom (or similar type of venue to run the program)  
d) Computer lab/Internet connection  
e) Data Projector  
f) Photography editing software (e.g. Adobe Photoshop/Premier elements)  
g) Printer  
h) Visual diary: A4 clear page scrapbook  
i) Materials for camera obscura (shoe boxes –with lid-, black paint, aluminium foil, transparent (or albanene) paper, needles, gaffer tape)  
j) Venue for final exhibition
k) Transportation expenses (bus/van hiring, etc.) (only for specific projects that require them)

Curriculum Structure

The Visual Voices' program combines three main elements: (a) **introductory activity**: the sessions begin with a workshop or a game inspired by the journalistic practice (e.g., hypothetical scenarios where the participants act as journalists); (b) **photography theory**: this section consists of a 10 to 15 minute screening of photographs that emphasise the main concepts that are being studied during the session (e.g., framing and composition, light and colour, the photographic essay); and (c) **photography practice**: the students take a camera and produce a body of work based on the concepts studied during the photography theory section.

The following are examples of **introductory activities** and how they fit into the curriculum:

**The Broken Telephone**

In this workshop, the students begin by sitting in a circle and then one starts by whispering a message to the person sitting either on the right or the left, who will then forward the message to the person next and so on, until the message reaches the end of the circle. Then, the message is revealed and compared with the original. For the second part of the exercise, this same dynamic is repeated, but now the students are dispersed all over the classroom and have to walk across the room to forward the message. In this manner, they are introduced to notions like: how information may get distorted as it travels and how writing preserves the fidelity of the message.

**Building a Camera Obscura**

During the previous session (Session 1) the students are handed a shoebox and black paint. While half of the class is learning how to operate a camera, the other half will be painting the inside of their
boxes (and vice versa). This way, by the beginning of Session 2, the paint should be dry and the students would be able to start building their camera obscura. The first step is to carve a square hole in one of the sides of the box, leaving a margin of approximately 2cm per side; then, they will have to cut a smaller hole (about 2cm of diameter) in the opposite side of the box; after that, they will paste a piece of foil inside the box, covering the smaller square hole and with a needle they will prick a small hole in the foil; after that, they will paste a piece of transparent (or albanene) paper over the larger square hole; finally, they will close the box and seal it with gaffer tape in order to avoid light going inside the box. Following these steps, they will have built a camera obscura and through it they will see images reflecting inside the box. The aim of this workshop is for the students to understand the basic functioning of a photographic camera.

**Journalism Scenario**

This workshop consists of a role-play game, in which students will be re-enacting the coverage of an ancient historical event as if they were in a modern newsroom. The first scenario will cover the end of the Trojan War, with some of them acting as journalists and others acting like historical figures telling their version of the story. At the end, they will write on the board, a short lead of the news story, using the technique of the 5 W's (what, where, who, how and when). If there is time for a second scenario, the roles will be exchanged and this time the students will re-enact a fairy tale of their choice (Snow White, Cinderella, etc.). The aim of this workshop is to introduce the students to the idea of journalistic research and the journalist's responsibility of contrasting his/her sources.
The Editorial Team

Students will be divided into two groups and each group will be asked to make a collage with images from the press given to them (each group will receive the same images) to paste onto a piece of cardboard. The collage should look like the front page of a newspaper. Once the groups have finished their front page collages, they will be compared and the students will have to explain why they placed certain images where they did. Then, they will repeat the exercise, but this time they will use prints of their own images. The aim of this workshop is to show the students how the editorial task is based on subjective decisions.

Illustrated Stories

Students will be asked to draw a comic book narrating a real story that they have witnessed. The aim of this workshop is to introduce the concept of the visual narrative as an introduction to the photographic essay that the students need to produce as the program's final assignment.

After the first session, the photography theory section will include the revision of the work produced by the students. The final session\textsuperscript{99} will focus on teaching the students how to publish their work online and on the organisation of an exhibition with a selection of the work produced during the program.

First Experiences – Colombia 2011

When Sudeep and I were about to finish writing the curriculum for Visual Voices, I found that I had to travel to Colombia and thought it was the perfect opportunity to run the program for the first time. I managed to contact two foundations and organised one workshop in each one between June and July 2011. One foundation is called *Taller de Vida*\textsuperscript{100}: it’s based in Bogota and works with adolescents who, from an early age, have been recruited by armed groups in Colombia (i.e., guerrilla

\textsuperscript{99}The number of sessions may vary depending on factors like the length of the program and the technical resources available.

\textsuperscript{100}Spanish for: *Life Workshop*. Website: http://www.tallerdevida.org
and paramilitary groups). The aim of Taller de Vida is to help them reincorporate into civil society.

The second foundation is called Entre Libros y Lectores101 and works in different locations across Colombia, including the town of Pamplona, in the North-east of Colombia, with the aim of promoting education and the habit of reading. They work with young people from families with a low economic income.

The workshops were done with very basic digital cameras, which were donated to the foundations for this purpose. The participants in both workshops were teenagers from 12 to 18 years. The workshop done at Taller de Vida, in Bogota, had five sessions that took place in the duration of two weeks; the workshop done at Entre Libros y Lectores, in Pamplona, also had five sessions, but these took place during a long weekend, that is, three days from Saturday to Monday, with two sessions per day on the first two days and one final session on Monday morning.

**Workshop at Taller de Vida**

**About the Foundation**

*Taller de Vida* is a non-governmental organisation that "promotes the development of personal (...) and social resources for children, youth, families and communities affected or at risk of being affected by socio-political violence (Taller de Vida, 2007).102

The organisation is based in Bogota, a city where most of its clients have arrived as victims of the Colombian internal conflict. Amongst the foundation’s clients, there are some who have been recruited as child soldiers by the illegal armed groups that operate in Colombia (e.g., guerilla and paramilitary groups).

The workshop I organised involved a group of former child soldiers from the ages of 15 to 17 years of age.

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101 Spanish for: Between Books and Readers. Website: http://www.entrelibrosylectores.org
102 Quoted from the organization’s website (see footnote 3); translated by the author.
Workshop at Entre Libros y Lectores

About the Foundation

*Entre Libros y Lectores* is an independent organisation that promotes the development of local communities in Colombia through educational and cultural projects. The foundation’s mission is to execute programs that promote community involvement, aiming for a more egalitarian society through the improvement of the educational and cultural conditions of different communities across the nation (Entre Libros y Lectores, 2012).

One of the locations where the foundation operates is the town of Pamplona, where I ran the second of the photojournalism workshops I am analysing in this chapter.

Related statistics

About Pamplona

**Location:** the town of Pamplona is located in the North-east of Colombia, 488 kilometres away from Bogota, close to the border with Venezuela.

**Demographics:** according to the Colombian National Department of Statistics (DANE, 2005), Pamplona has 55,300 inhabitants, making it the eighty-second most populated municipality in the country. 51.8% of Pamplona’s population is female and 48.2% is male.

**Education:** 31.4% of the population that resides in Pamplona has reached the level of basic primary education; 26.5% has reached the level of secondary education and 28.5% has reached the level of tertiary and/or postgraduate education. Also, 6.1% of the population does not have any education, 5.1% of the population above 5 years of age and 4.7% of the population above 15 years of age do not know how to read or write (DANE, 2010).

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103 Acronym for Departamento Administrativo Nacional de Estadística.
Access to basic services: 98.4% of the homes in Pamplona have access to electricity; 90.9% has access to the aqueduct, 90.6% to sewerage and 40.5% has access to the telephone (DANE, 2010).

Access to computers and the Internet: According to a study by the Colombian Ministry of Education, by 2009, in the schools of Norte de Santander (the state where Pamplona is located), there were 22 students per computer – which is the same as the national average – and 87% of the students in the state had access to the Internet – higher than the national average, which was 79% (Ministry of Education of Colombia, 2009).

Analysis of first workshop

Based on my experiences in collaborating with both Taller de Vida and Entre Libros y Lectores, and noticing the differences between the work that these organisations do, I realized how a program of the nature of Visual Voices stands on a fine line between citizen journalism and art therapy. Regarding the workshop I did at Taller de Vida, I think it would be more accurately listed within the latter category.

Because of the students’ former involvement in an armed group, the foundation had to be very cautious with the images captured during the program. Also, the students were not allowed to take the cameras home with them and could only take photos within a specific timeframe and in a controlled environment.

Aron Rubin (1999) defines art therapy as a “multifaceted field” where “a multitude of ways (...) can be used for either understanding (assessment) or for helping (therapy)”. She also refers to this practice as a “paradox” for "it is both extremely old and very young," as, "art for healing is as ancient as the drawings on the walls of caves, yet the profession itself is a child in the family of mental health disciplines" (p. 1).

The interpretation of art, as a method for healing, seems to contradict Orwell’s statement that “all art is propaganda” (1940). For in this case, the art produced as part of a therapy is not intended to convey a message for anyone other than the person producing it. However, I believe there is some sort of propagandistic
drive in the artists and groups who collaborate with institutions like *Taller de Vida*. Otherwise, I do not think they would be offering their time and their knowledge if they didn’t see this as some sort of antidote against certain social illnesses like, in the case of *Taller de Vida*’s clients, violence, poverty and inequality. This is, at least, the interpretation of the role of the artists that Sudeep and I followed at the time of developing the Visual Voices’ program.

However, the workshop I did at *Taller de Vida* relates more to the idea of art therapy as an instrument for *helping* than for *understanding*. Something that, I must confess, goes beyond my academic background and my professional experience. Yet, there is another element from my experience at *Taller de Vida* that is close to my research: the concern expressed by staff members and some of the directives of the foundation, regarding their clients’ use of social media. Out of the seven students that began the program, six had a Facebook account. This reminds me of what theorists like Boyd (2010) and Morozov (2011) argue about; the need to establish boundaries between the *public* and the *private* within the realm of digital networks in order to consolidate a digital public sphere in the twenty first century. In their relationship with its clients, there is nothing that *Taller de Vida* can do to prevent them from publishing personal information in online public networks like Facebook. Not that this is the biggest of their concerns: for, once their clients turn eighteen, they must leave the foundation and, in many cases, end up returning to the armed conflict.

Looking back at my experience in running this workshop: when one is involved – either superficially as I was or profoundly as the people who work (often voluntarily) in foundations like *Taller de Vida* – I believe it is inevitable to end up with mixed emotions. On the one hand, the statistics do not augur a prosperous future for those who have been involved in the conflict (including, of course, those who were recruited as child soldiers). However, there is also a glimpse of optimism that appears by looking at the efforts, not only by the people who work at organisations of this nature, but also by the many external collaborators who approach these foundations with the sole purpose of helping other human beings.

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104 In the broad sense of the word, propaganda as used by authors like Orwell and Huxley. See Chapter 3 on Art and Propaganda.
On a note regarding the logistics of this workshop, I believe the main reason why there was a decline in the number of participants – the last session only had one student – was because I had to break up the workshop with a week’s difference between two sessions, because there was a theatre company that had previously scheduled their workshop during that period.

Following the premises I have exposed while analysing this workshop, the analysis of the second case study included in this chapter – My International Friend – shows another, more mature (and therefore more valid) example of an artistic educational program addressed to young people affected by an armed conflict, which involves the use of digital means of communication. But before moving into this analysis, I will focus on the second photojournalism workshop I organised in Colombia in 2011.

Figures 45 to 48 show samples of the photographs taken by the participants in the four different sessions of this workshop.

**Figure 45 – Photographs from session 1 at Taller de Vida**
In the first session the participants were asked to take photographs without any preconceptions.

**Figure 46 – Photographs from session 2 at Taller de Vida**

In the second session, the participants were asked to take photographs focusing on framing and composition.
In this session the participants were asked to take photographs focusing on light and colour.

**Figure 48 – Photographs from session 4 at Taller de Vida**
The one participant who attended this session was asked to produce a photographic essay. The photographs were taken at the Independence Park in the centre of Bogota. I selected the photos included in Figure 48, as I did not get to run the fifth session, where the participants were expected to select their own images and publish them on a blog they would have also created during this session.

Analysis of second workshop

The workshop I did at Entre Libros y Lectores, in the town of Pamplona, is closer to the idea of using digital technology to promote citizen journalism, the premise on which Visual Voices stands. Although, from a strictly numerical, statistical perspective, the students who partook in this workshop would count as coming from poverty, they have had a healthier, less troublesome upbringing than the students from Taller de Vida. This, combined with the fact I could run the workshop in a shorter and more regular time frame, leads me to think I can draw valid conclusions regarding the roles of journalists and artists in twenty-first century societies.

The workshop’s first session began with a game of the broken telephone, which was described a few paragraphs above. After this, there was a screening that explained the origins of photography – including drawings, paintings and photographs from different periods. Then, the students were given the set of cameras and, after a brief introduction on the functioning of the camera, were asked to go and take photos as they pleased (the idea of this experience was for the students to take photos without any preconceived thoughts, and then these images were to be compared with those taken after the concepts of photography theory were exposed in the following sessions).

The figure below shows samples of the photographs taken during this session:

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105 The workshop lasted 2.5 days, with morning and afternoon sessions on the first two days and a morning session on the third.
In the second session, the students began with the first step to build a *camera obscura*: painting the inside of a shoebox black – the second part of this exercise was done on the following day when the paint was dry. After this came a screening using photographs, to explain the basic notions of framing and composition (e.g., different types of shots, differences between horizontal and vertical framing, different camera angles, placement of subject). Then, the students were asked to produce a body of work based on these notions and bring it to class on the following day.

The figure below shows samples of the photographs taken during this session:
The third session began by revising the photos taken on the previous day; and comparing the series taken after the first session – where the students were asked to shoot freely – with the ones taken following the notions exposed during the second session. After this, the students finished building their camera obscura with the boxes they had painted and some aluminium foil, translucent paper and duct tape. Then came a screening with photographs that emphasised colour and light (e.g., basics of colour theory: colour contrast, predominance of colour, difference between natural and artificial light). After this, the students were asked to produce a body of work following these concepts.

The figure below shows samples of the photographs taken during this session:
At the beginning of the fourth session, the students were given a large sheet of cardboard and a print of one the photos they had taken, and were asked to put them together as if it was the front page of a newspaper that they were designing. After this, came a screening of photographic essays, focusing on combining the notions studied in the previous sessions with the aim of telling a story with images. Then, the students left with the homework of producing their own photographic essay.

The figure below shows samples of the photographs taken during this session:
In Figure 52, I have included three photos from three different essays produced by the workshop's participants.

Up until this point, the workshop took place as it was intended. Then, on the fifth and final session there were some technical problems. This session was focused solely on showing the students how to publish a blog with the photographs they had taken, as there was not time to spend in doing a thorough selection of the work, being that it was a Monday and the students only had permission to skip school until midday. Besides, there were only two computers with an Internet connection (to be used by a group of six).
This shortcoming is reflected in something that Monica Villamizar – who is a honorary member of Entre Libros y Lectores and is the person in charge of administrating the foundation’s activities in the town of Pamplona – told me in an interview that we did, to follow up on the results of the workshop:\textsuperscript{106} two of the students, who belonged to families with the lowest economic income and live in the periphery of Pamplona over a mountain that surrounds the town, could not grasp how to work with the computer and were finding it displeasing.

This relates to Prensky’s distinction between Digital Immigrants and Digital Natives (2001) and raises questions about the implications of having different degrees of digital literacy: not only from nation to nation, but from regions within a nation, cities and towns within a region and neighbourhoods and boroughs within a city or town. It also relates to the differences that I will expose in my analysis of the next case study, not only in regards to the access to education, that is, the quantity, but also the quality of such education. As I argue a few paragraphs below, this seems to point to the fact that the gap between a developed nation like Australia and a developing one like Colombia is widening.

But, back to my analysis of the workshop at Entre Libros y Lectores. One positive aspect, which I have interpreted as some kind of continuance from the photojournalism workshop which I ran, was the organisation of an exhibition with the photographs taken during the workshop. This was done entirely on the foundation’s account and that of the students who partook in the workshop. However, it has not been possible for the students who were in the workshop to forward the knowledge they have acquired to other of the foundation’s clients, as was intended, because, as Monica stated, in the aforementioned interview:

\begin{quote}
The students involved in the workshop are all entering into adolescence and, due to problems related with that age, it is becoming increasingly harder to motivate them to gather at the library. This has also complicated their meeting with other students involved in the foundation and to forwarding the knowledge that they (the original group) received during the workshop. On the positive side, I feel that there was an engagement with photography on the participants’ account and an improvement in their photographic techniques. On the other hand, I knew beforehand that the restrictions I had in terms of time and resources were likely to be reflected in, at least, one of the main elements (i.e., photography and citizen journalism) of the program.
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{106} A transcript of this interview is attached as a supporting document.
I agree with Monica’s answer when I asked her what she thought was missing, or could be improved, in the realisation of future programs:

Time, definitely time. Time to organise more workshops, involving more participants, and to focus not only on the capturing of images but in the creation, design and constant updating of their blogs; as this is a way of making visible the results of this kind of programs and in that way promote it amongst other members of the community.

Monica’s comments show me that there is a recognition of the Internet and of digital networks as a space for the possible consolidation of a public sphere; and of the combination of photography and digital technologies as a valuable instrument for the production of citizen journalism.

Now, I shall move into my analysis of the second case study; which, as I stated above, may fairly be regarded as more mature project; it is also more clearly focused on the idea of using art to establish a *conversation* between different communities, in this case communities from different nations and with different socioeconomic and cultural backgrounds.

### Case study # 2 - My International Friend

**What is My International Friend?**

As stated in the project's Participants Manual\(^{107}\), My International Friend is an “educational cultural exchange program where young people from different backgrounds and living in various countries explore and express their sense of identity, culture, community and world through visual arts shared through the web” (My International Friend, 2011).

The program’s mission is to:

\(^{107}\) Attached as a supporting document.
Create an educational cross-cultural experience accessible to all children and young people in the world, where they develop through art, an understanding of identity and diversity while learning about other human beings, other countries, other cultures and open their view about the world. (My International Friend, 2011, p 6)

The program’s objectives are to:

- Contribute to the wellbeing of the participants through building their sense of identity and cultural background.
- Develop creative, social media and ICT skills, and critical thinking through recognising similarities and differences with other fellow youth.
- Increase the students’ understanding of the links between individual and community identities to build understanding, empathy and skills for connecting to others.
- Promote respect for diversity and human rights among students, teachers, organisations and the general public.
- Generate sustainable networks through the development of partnerships between not for profit organisations, educational institutions and the general public through art education.
- Facilitate international support for communities at risk.
- Promote cross-cultural exchange and dialogue through young people’s artwork. (My International Friend, 2011, p 7).

Origins

As mentioned above, My International Friend is a project developed by Melbourne-based Colombian artists Claudia Escobar and Jorge Leiva. They run the program under an organisation they have created called ‘peopleartpeople’.

As they express in the program’s Participant Manual: My International Friend was “born as an initiative to continue supporting internally displaced children in Colombia who are victims of the armed conflict while we are living in another country” (My International Friend, 2011).

In 2006, before Claudia and Jorge moved to Melbourne, they collaborated with the Arte Sin Fronteras Foundation: organising art programs with internally displaced children who had been forced to move to Bogota from different regions in Colombia. The final outcome was the production of a theatre play, which was conceived as a collaborative project, performed by a group of children and youth clients of the foundation and directed by Claudia.

108 Website: http://www.peopleartpeople.com
109 Website: http://fundacionartesinfronteras.org/site
110 This play was titled El Pez de la Conciencia [The Fish of Conscience].
In 2009, they organised the first program of My International Friend, with the same group with whom they had produced the play and students from Preshil School in Melbourne. In this program, the students shared artworks that expressed the participants’ identity – for example, me, my family, my neighbourhood, my city – using digital means of communication (i.e., email).

In 2011, My International Friend established a partnership with Skateistan – a non-profit organisation that works with internally displaced youth in Afghanistan\(^\text{111}\) and organised a three-way collaborative project, in which students in Bogota (linked to the Arte Sin Fronteras Foundation), Melbourne (from Northland Secondary College) and Kabul, drew a comic together\(^\text{112}\).

Regarding possible future projects, My International Friend has received expressions of interest from educational institutions from the USA, Angola, Ethiopia, England and Italy (My International Friend, 2011).

**About the Program**

**Necessary Resources**

As stated in the Participants Manual, for the organisation of My International Friend’s program, the following resources are necessary:

a) **Teacher**: An art teacher who is socially committed, has good computer image editing and social media skills and is fluent in English.

b) **Students**: A group of children or young people between 10 and 19.

c) **Technology**: access to computers, the Internet, a scanner and a printer.

d) **Art materials**: Materials and techniques will be defined according to the outcomes.

e) **Art room**: for the participants and teacher, to hold the art class.

f) **Art class**: 3-4 hours a week. (My International Friend, 2011, pp 11 - 14).

g) **Program Structure**

My International Friend is a hands-on, practical program, which has been structured to the following seven steps:

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\(^{111}\) Website: http://skateistan.org

\(^{112}\) Attached as a supporting document.
Step 1 - Introduction to the program

The participants will reflect on their culture and identity, and the differences and similarities between them and their international friends. The participants should present a one-page piece of writing about their identity. The teacher, in collaboration with the participants, will take a portrait photo of each of the participants and save it in Dropbox.

Step 2 - Introduction to comic strips

Taking each of their texts on identity and culture as inspiration, each participant from the Starting country will need to develop the first scene or group of scenes of the comic. The teacher will present the photographs of the international friends and photograph each participant holding their international friend’s photo and save it in Dropbox.

Step 3 - Digital Technology

The teacher will present the photographs of the International friends. Each participant will take the first scene(s) they have created and will apply either traditional or digital image editing (depending on available resources) to finalise it. Then, each participant or teacher will need to scan the scenes and upload them to Dropbox. Images need to be scanned in high resolution, 300dpi and saved as JPG.

Step 4 - Ongoing Communication

Each participant will receive the scene(s) from their international friend and respond by creating another scene, digitalise it and upload it with the help of the teacher into Dropbox, and repeat the same process according to the times agreed. The teacher should emphasise the meaning of collaboration and the importance of looking carefully at the artwork sent by the international friend: the content, characters, actions and techniques, and carefully respond to it.

Step 5 - The Cover

Once the comic scenes are complete, the participants can decide what will be the cover and name of the comic. For this, the international friends must propose and illustrate ideas and solutions, in order to build the cover and create a title as a team and with the approval of all parties. When complete, it must be scanned and saved into Dropbox.

Step 6 - Final Production

This section will focus on (the) final editing and printing.

Step 7 - Online publication and exhibition.

The comics will be organised for printing and final details will be included. The comics will be printed. Final results will be ready for exhibition. (My International Friend, 2011, pp 18 - 21)
Analysis of My International Friend

Reflection

As I have mentioned above, from my experience running the program of Visual Voices at Taller de Vida, I managed to draw a different interpretation of art than that coming from Orwell’s statement that “all art is propaganda”. This experience also showed me how artists in the twenty-first century may play the role of educators (as I propose throughout my thesis). And that this evolution seems to be more necessary in countries where, following Paulo Freire’s premises (1970), there is a clearer distinction between oppressed and oppressors. From my experience running the program at Entre Libros y Lectores, I have learnt that when the effort of the artist/journalist is to channel both knowledge and its praxis as a form of education, and when this is combined with a promotion of digital technologies, the outcome may be the opening of a space for conversation; and consequently may lead to the consolidation of a public sphere.

These initial conclusions were reaffirmed after analysing my second case study: My International Friend. However, from both my case studies, I could also pick up what I believe are the major challenges and limitations that this type of project is facing, in order to effectively lead to the consolidation of a public sphere. The first of these limitations is the fuzziness there is in the dividing line between the public and the private within the realm of digital networks. Regarding this issue, there is one anecdote I heard when interviewing Claudia Escobar and Jorge Leiva about their experience running My International Friend. One of the artworks produced by a participant from Colombia, where she was meant to express her identity and background, was considered too graphic and harsh by both the teacher in Colombia and the coordinators (i.e., Claudia and Jorge), for the participant who was meant to receive it in Australia, as it included representations of sexual violence. In this case, they had to censor the artwork and, in my opinion, this action was justified. Yet, this need to censor what I also believe to be an honest and truthful representation of the Colombian reality, evidences the major differences in the upbringing of children and youth from backgrounds that may almost be regarded as opposites: as are the at risk communities in Colombia and the not at risk communities in Australia. The question, in this regard, seems to revolve
around how to balance the wellbeing of the program's participants, and at the same time maintain an honest conversation between the two communities. In Claudia and Jorge’s experience, these differences would become more evident when they started working with children and youth from Afghanistan, where the differences in both personal liberties and the level of education were bigger than in Colombia.

The other major challenge that I managed to identify in the development of programs like Visual Voices and My International Friend: is that for all the values and the knowledge they may impart, and for all the projects of a similar nature that are being developed by artists – as I noticed while running the workshop at Taller de Vida – these are still isolated efforts. Just like Monica Villamizar from Entre Libros y Lectores expressed her concern about the limitations of time and resources, so did Claudia Escobar and Jorge Leiva express how their major limitation lied in the fact they had to run the program while also having to work full-time jobs, and without receiving financial support.

The cases studied in this chapter show there is a need to conceive and develop new structures where projects of this nature may evolve from more than mere isolated efforts – and therefore become sustainable. Following this premise, in the Conclusion, I propose that this kind of programs should be integrated to the Colombian educational system, focusing on creating bonds and promoting ongoing conversations between institutions of higher education and at risk and/or underprivileged communities and the organisations that support them.
Conclusion

In an interview published in the Age, on May 2009 (AFP, 2009), Rupert Murdoch stated that “the future of newspapers is digital.” Based on this, in an early draft of my thesis, I presented a hypothetical scenario picturing one of these digital newspapers:

In the newsrooms of Murdoch’s future digital newspapers, the information arrived via tweets uploaded from everywhere in the planet, and there a news-writing-software re-arranged them following a 5Ws news writing system.

A couple of years later, by the time I was finishing the final draft of my thesis, I saw a video on Youtube called EPIC 2014\textsuperscript{113}. The movie was originally released as a flash animation in November 2004, by Robin Sloan and Matt Thompson, and is based on a conference they gave at the Poynter Institute earlier that year. EPIC stands for Evolving Personalized Information Construct, and it is described as “the system by which our sprawling, chaotic mediascape is filtered, ordered and delivered.” In this system, “everyone contributes now - from blog entries, to phone-cam images, to video reports, to full investigations.”

The story in this video is presented as an archival piece from a fictional Museum of Media History from the year 2014. Hence, the movie can be divided in two main parts: the first part is based on a series of real live events starting from 1989 (when Tim Berners Lee invented the World Wide Web) to 2004 and the second part is based on a series of fictional events occurring from 2005 to 2014. The most relevant of these fictional events is when, in the year 2008, Google buys Amazon, forming a new company called Googlezon. This is the company that develops and, by the year 2014, releases the EPIC system.

Before this happens, the movie talks about the “news wars of 2010”, which are “notable for the fact that no actual news organisations take part.” Therefore, the

\textsuperscript{113} This video was later updated and is called EPIC 2015, the URL of the updated version is: \url{http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OQDBhg60UNI}
main contenders in these wars were Googlezon and Microsoft. Being Googlezon the one that stood as the ultimate winner, because, as the movie describes it:

Using new algorithms, Googlezon’s computers screen stories for names, places, images and other contextual cues; isolating facts from quotes and turning statistics into flexible equations. Then Googlezon resorts, recalculates and recombines these scraps with our information, our blog entries, our photos, our purchases, our lives, suddenly news is more relevant than ever before.

Regardless of the fact the prediction of Google and Amazon merging into the biggest digital giant has failed to materialise by the year 2013, the picture that this video present about the future of journalism seems somehow inevitable.

In the early draft where I first pictured Murdoch’s future digital newspapers, I wrote that: only then could one speak of something close to an objective journalism –although only partially-objective – as an object would be organising the information being fed by different subjects around the world. When I wrote this, I did it, not to promote the objectivity (or half-objectivity) of a software-produced journalism, but to underline the importance of subjectivity in the process of communicating the human story.

At the end of Chapter 4, I presented a series of preliminary conclusions. One conclusion was that, although digital networks do provide logistical facilities for the consolidation of a public sphere –like no other technological breakthrough since Guttenberg’s type press – the sole consolidation of a public sphere does not necessarily lead to what Rifkin (2010) defines as an empathic civilisation. The other preliminary conclusion was that in twenty-first century societies, journalists and artists should direct their efforts towards education.

**Summary of arguments leading to final conclusion**

At this stage, I should summarise the most relevant arguments that led me to these conclusions. From Chapter 1, on the history of news, regarding the influence of technological advances on the communication of news: I conclude that, as I have mentioned earlier, digital networks have the potential to emerge as what Orwell
(1945) would call a “democratic weapon”. However, this does not mean such a weapon is going to be pointed at the right direction.

From my combined analysis of Chapters 1 and 2, I would like to point out how both journalism and art have evolved as propaganda; and highlight two main features evident in the work produced by the artists and journalists I have studied: (a) that inquisitive spirit Kapuscinski recognised in the legacy of Herodotus (2007), which I have also recognised in the legacy of modern authors, such as Kapuscinski himself, as well as in Orwell, Huxley and Wolfe, and in visual artists like Goya, Dix or Robert Capa, and (b) a critical viewpoint that lingers between moralism and satire, which appears in the paintings of Bosch and Bruegel, the caricatures of Gilray, Hogarth and Daumier, and the comedic television sketches of Jaime Garzon.

The second part of Chapter 2, the Orwellian vision of Utopia, leads me to question how unprecedented the crises threatening the so-called information societies of the twenty-first century would really be. Looking at the legacy of authors like Orwell and Huxley, it is possible to point out a precedent, not only from their so-called industrial societies, but evident in all stages of human history: that most, if not all, human groups seem destined to walk on a fine line between decadent hedonism and intrusive authoritarianism.

The debate between Naïve Realism and Network Idealism (Heim, 1999) studied in Chapter 3, has not only showed me how the analysis of the influence of digital technologies on twenty-first century societies ultimately depicts a glass either half-full or half-empty; but that such a glass is half-full (or half-empty) of very thick and stagnant matter. Thus, if digital media do provide greater facilities for civil society to exchange information and coordinate activities – as theorists like Castells (2008) and Shirky (2010) point out – it also provides large political and economic forces with new tools to survey and control civil society, as reinforced by theorists like Morozov (2010) and Boyd (2010). Also, although digital networks seem to allow a more democratic access to knowledge, as examples like the RSA Animate series or the Coursera online courses show, theorists like Postman (1986, 1995, 1998), Carr (2008) and Gladwell (2010) argue that this is happening within an overtly frivolous environment.
After presenting the preliminary conclusions exposed in Chapter 4, the examples from Colombian art in the twentieth century studied in Chapter 5 assisted me to introduce the Colombian case and showed me how art tends to provide a more accurate portrayal of society than most official, historical sources. Then, in the analysis of Colombian cyberspace presented in Chapter 6, I observed that there are elements about the influence of digital networks on Colombian society that relate to Habermas’ theory of the public sphere, as proposed by Shirky (2010) and Castells (2008), and others that relate to Bakthin’s theory of the carnival, as proposed by Herolt and Marolt (2011) in their analysis of Chinese cyberspace.

This dichotomy leads me to introduce what might be called the south-western perspective: which represents, to a great extent, the entire Latin American region. Of the writings produced in this region during the industrial era, nowhere is this perspective more evident than in Eduardo Galeano’s The Open Veins of Latin America (1971). According to Galeano, there has been an inversely proportional relation between the progress of the north – or the northwest to be more precise – and the progress of that south-western corner that is Latin America. Thus, one of the aims of my research is to question whether the proportionality of this relation is being altered by the development of digital technologies.

On a personal note, I find the conclusions from Chapter 7 particularly valuable, as they represent knowledge coming from my own personal mistakes. In this regard, I have highlighted my ignorance regarding technical aspects in the development of an online media as the most evident shortcoming in the development of the O.G. I have also exposed how a thorough analysis of these technical aspects goes beyond the scope of my research. Therefore, the mistake – or rather misinterpretation – to highlight, regards the use of the word broadcasting during the planning of Sonnets from the Gatwick.

As mentioned in Chapter 7, Sonnets from the Gatwick was a series of short documentaries conceived as an experiment in online broadcasting and editorialising. However, I would later realise how a term like narrowcasting – although probably less spectacular – would be more suitable to describe the nature of this experiment. Theorists like Boyd (2010) and Morozov (2011) argue that one of the major challenges that so-called information societies are facing lies in how,
and where, to define the limits between the *public* and the *private*, within the realm of digital networks. On a personal note, I believe my experience of having to balance the *public* with the *private*, while producing a series of documentaries in an environment like the Gatwick, helped me to better understand the problems related to the use of social media by the students from *Taller de Vida*, with whom I organised the first of the photojournalism workshops studied in Chapter 8.

Then, the statistics studied in this chapter, about the Colombian internal conflict and about education and migration in both Colombia and Australia, showed me that, rather than decreasing, the gap between a *developed* nation like Australia and a *developing* one like Colombia during the early stages of the twenty-first century seems to be widening. Which, in relation to my research, raises two fundamental questions: (a) how are digital technologies affecting this growing difference and (b) how can digital technologies be used to affect it in the future.

Regarding the first of these questions, it seems like the only conclusion is that it is too early for conclusions. For this reason, I have focused my research on the second of these questions. In my studies, I have recognised a train of thought – running through the work of authors like Innis (1950) and McLuhan (1962, 1964) to Manovich (2008), Castells (2008), Shirky (2011), Robinson (2010, 2011) and Lima (2012) – who have detected a general *fragmentation* in modern societies; and have recognised the need to evolve modern educational and institutional frameworks, so that they respond to the technological, cultural, political and sociological challenges that twenty-first century societies are facing (and will be facing).

**Relation between the theories and the cases studied in my research**

After summarising the theories I have presented in my thesis, I must now focus on how the cases I study in Chapter 8 fit into this equation. As I have stated in the Introduction, this work is mostly about my experience as an international student from Colombia in Australia. Thus, my research could be seen as an analysis of me being a part of the problem known as the *third world brain drain*. 
If, as Huxley foresaw (1959), overpopulation is going to be the major problem for present and future generations, then the emigration of the student (i.e., the person) may, rather than being a problem, be a relief. And if the need is for the knowledge (and not the person) to return and favour the parent community, as for example happens with the financial remittances sent to Colombia, which in 2010 added up to 3.9 billion dollars (World Bank, 2011), then one does not need to be a visionary to see how digital networks could fit into this equation.

Yet, in my analysis of the case studies included in Chapter 8, I noticed how, although digital networks are a valuable tool, especially for the first instalment of the kind of educational projects studied in this chapter, they are just one of various elements necessary for the creation and sustainment of this sort of projects. My conclusion about these case studies – which I believe can be extended to all educational projects of a similar nature – is that, despite all the effort and the positive ideals behind these projects, and beyond the fact it would be impossible for me to list all of the projects of a similar nature that either exist or are currently under development: these are still *isolated* efforts. And because they are *isolated*, their efficiency is necessarily limited.

This reminds me of Robinson’s statement (2011) that the first thing necessary to *change the education paradigm* is to recognise education as a personal activity. Which means the *human* should be regarded as the most important resource in the development of all educational ventures. Hence, the technological elements involved in these ventures, although important, and in cases even fundamental, should still be regarded as secondary (and as an accessory) to the human element.

Remembering that beyond the journalistic and artistic elements in my research, this work is ultimately a reflection about my role as an international student in an allegedly globalised planet, then before questioning the influence of digital technologies on twenty-first century societies, I believe it is necessary to question the role of the student in such societies. Now, the word *student* is certainly as equivocal as most of the terms I have studied in my research – for example, art and the artists, journalism and the journalist, history and memory. In this context, I am specifically referring to the students of tertiary or higher education (as opposed to Robinson whose theories specifically address basic and middle education).
Therefore, for the purpose of my research I could reduce this definition to the demographic group of people in their twenties.

So, what is the role of this group within the educational process? How does it relate with younger demographic groups, such as children and adolescents? Kapuscinski (2009) criticised McLuhan’s belief that so-called information societies resembled a *global village*. According to Kapuscinski, this definition disregarded one of the most fundamental elements of the village: that in a village everyone knows everyone else. In this sense, Kapuscinski believed the impersonal nature of contemporary societies resembled more the waiting lounge of an airport. This is something I find evident in the *fragmented* educational systems developed in *modern* societies.

In a village, the learning process mostly consists of people from younger age groups looking up to people from older age groups. But in modern educational systems, young adults (i.e., people in their twenties) are educated far from children and adolescents. Hence, beyond personal and family ties, the only young adults that children have to look up to are those presented to them by the media. Regardless of their origin and the nature of their practice – from sports figures to movie stars and rock and pop idols – they all share what Tom Wolfe calls celebrity status (1968).

But what about the rest, that is the great majority, of people from that age group? What is their responsibility towards society? Towards younger age groups like children and adolescents? Thomas Carlyle referred to the media as a *fourth state*, in an essay about *heroes* and *hero worship* (1840). Whether, as Carlyle stated, *heroes* and *hero worship* should still be regarded as fundamental elements in the development of what is known as civilisation, is an argument that may be challenged in a similar way as Oscar Wilde’s praise of *individualism* in The Soul of Man Under Socialism (1891). However, before anyone can come up with an answer to this dilemma, I believe it is necessary to question the nature and origin of contemporary *heroes* and the reason why they are being *worshipped*. According to authors like Huxley (1959), Wolfe (1968) and Postman (1986), the reason why these mediated heroes (or role models) of the modern world are being
worshipped, is merely because they are being presented by the media of mass
communication.

In my opinion, there is not much that contemporary societies can expect from the
media in its role as a fourth state and, by extension, from the heroes such media
have created. Therefore, I believe it is necessary for other institutions – such as the
academy – to emerge as new balancing forces, in a similar way to the response of
the media after the introduction of the printing press in Europe in the mid-
fifteenth century.

Based on this, in the final section of my thesis, I wanted to highlight the value of
two programs that aimed to use digital networks as a media for education instead
of a media for entertainment or mere information. By doing so, I realised how the
academy (and in this case I am talking specifically about the Colombian case) has
the potential to fill the gaps and fulfil a balancing role that other institutions (like
the media) are failing to fulfil. And, as an initial step for the academy to do so, I
propose it should look into, and ultimately embrace, programs of the nature of
Visual Voices and My International Friend.

**Possible directions for future research**

Following the premise that in the so-called information societies of the twenty first
century, journalists and artists should focus their efforts towards education, in the
following paragraphs I present an example of how programs like Visual Voices and
My International Friend may be integrated into the Colombian educational system.

In Colombia, the law that regulates higher education\textsuperscript{114} stipulates how institutions
of tertiary education have a responsibility of social projection or social extension
(Aponte, 2007). Therefore, my classmates and I had to undertake a social practice
in the last year of our undergraduate careers (in Colombia most undergraduate
careers last five years). In my case, I undertook a task that may be seen as
proportional to the stage I was in my career – I did my practice in a foundation that

\textsuperscript{114} Law No. 20 of 1992.
teaches and promotes Ultimate Frisbee amongst children and adolescents from low socioeconomic backgrounds, and my role was to take photos of the activities organised by the foundation during the semester. However, when talking to the rest of my classmates, I realised that most of them were being asked to do utterly unintellectual tasks like running errands and photocopying documents. It is not my intention to diminish the value of the unpaid intern, especially for organisations that tend to work with a limited budget. But this is something that students in the first semester of their careers could do. In fact, I believe it would be beneficial for them to do so. But shouldn’t five years of higher education produce a more significant social projection than this?

The way I see it, if a university, or to be more precise, if a program of social practices from a faculty of media and communications, wants to have a real social projection: then students at an early stage of their careers should be doing the tasks that most students at the late stages of their undergraduate careers are currently doing in their social practices; students in the middle of their careers should be doing tasks similar to the one I did in my social practice; and students in the late stages of their careers should be either organising or maintaining educational projects like Visual Voices and My International Friend. Which means that, instead of being regarded as a stand-alone subject for one particular semester, the social practice should be a broader institution fitting into a gradually developing career converge. This could evolve into the designing of entire curriculums as an ongoing social practice, that is, a community-based, online media, administered and operated by students in partnership with members of related communities, and supervised by teachers and faculty members.

But, what about Australian universities? Is there a specific reason(s) to believe developing and/or supporting projects of this kind addresses one of the main problems and shortcomings in the Australian higher education system? And if so, are Colombian universities the proper partners for the development of this sort of programs?

The support of practice-based and socially oriented projects on media and communications in developing nations is not a proposition that exclusively fits the Colombian and the Australian cases. If the problem being addressed is the so-
called *third world brain drain*, then, in the long run, it is necessary to organise collaborations, not only based on national and geographical criteria, but also to establish an interdisciplinary platform that combines different types of knowledge. Therefore, Australian universities are just a part (a comparatively small part) of the universe of higher education institutions that could provide help and at the same time benefit from supporting socially oriented, practice-based programs like the one that I am imagining.

However, there are specific elements about Australian universities that seem to act both *for* and *against* the development and supporting of this kind of program, in partnership with institutions from a developing nation like Colombia. Although the development of digital means of communication seems to reduce the obstacles inherent in the issue of physical distance, on a daily basis: such distance still adds up to the costs involved in supporting and developing this kind of program. Also, although not precisely an insignificant number, the (approximately) nine thousand Colombian students living in Australia do not really compare to the more than one hundred thousand Chinese or the more than seventy thousand Indians living in Australia (DFAT, 2010, 2012a, 2012b). On the other hand, from a commercial perspective, these nine thousand Colombian students may also be interpreted as a potentially growing market – and as a possible gateway to an even bigger market, such as Latin America.

Although it would be naïve to disregard these (and other) commercial and financial factors, it goes beyond my professional background and the scope of my research to analyse them in detail. Yet, from the theories I have studied in my research, I have noticed a relation between the regions of Australia and Latin America, in that they both share (to a different degree) the advantages and disadvantages of being peripheral. One of these disadvantages – judging from my experience after living and studying in Australia for almost six years – is that in both Australia and Latin America we have what Jaime Garzón called an *imported* interpretation of the meaning of *progress*.

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115 Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade of Australia.
Final statement

During the industrial era, the development of mechanical technologies of mass production created a scenario where journalism and the media came to be regarded as basically the same thing. Then, by the turn of the twenty-first century, the proliferation of digital means of communication started to alter this relation, drawing journalists away from the media. Noticing this, in my thesis I argue that, if there is, or ever will be, such thing as a digital public sphere, then the value of the journalists’ contribution to such sphere should revolve around their subjectivities and not around that illusion of objectivity that was created with the development of the modern journalistic industry. It is based on this defence of the journalists’ subjectivity that I have drawn a line between journalism and art.

During the early stages of the twenty-first century, most human societies seem to be living a transitional period that – at the risk of ending with what may sound like a stereotype – may be considered a crisis or an opportunity. In this sense, I believe that, besides the potentially negative and harmful elements inherent in digital networks, some of which I have exposed throughout my thesis, the current technological frame invites a different educational approach. One, where journalists and artists focus their work towards education; and where, following Robinson’s premise that education is, above all things, a personal activity, digital technologies are used to develop a closer, more personal interaction between the academy and civil society.
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Appendixes
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My International Friend / Mi Amigo Internacional

PARTICIPANTS MANUAL 2011-2012

VISUAL ARTS / COMIC
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“While ensuring the free flow of ideas by word and image, care should be exercised so that all cultures can express themselves and make themselves known. Freedom of expression, media pluralism, multilingualism, equal access to art and to scientific and technological knowledge, including in digital form, and the possibility for all cultures to have access to the means of expression and dissemination are the guarantees of cultural diversity.”

UNESCO Universal Declaration on Cultural Diversity
Dear international friends,

It is a pleasure to welcome you to the inspiring journey of My International Friend. This innovative project was born as an initiative to continue supporting internally-displaced children in Colombia victims of the armed conflict while we were living in another country. Thanks to technology and the unconditional support of the Arte Sin Fronteras Foundation in Colombia and Preshil School in Australia, we began the project in 2009 with 16 participants who shared their identity, dreams and creativity through the Web. Many of the Colombian participants didn’t have an email account or access to computers until then. The final artworks were exhibited at the Arts Centre in Melbourne.

Since then, we have welcomed other educational and not-for-profit organisations with special interest in education and social change such as Northland Secondary College (Australia). In 2011 we started a new exciting phase of the project linking with Skateistan, a NPO that engages growing numbers of urban and internally-displaced youth in Afghanistan. This new phase saw youth from Kabul, Bogotá and Melbourne sharing their identity and art through the Web.

Since 2009, My International Friend has engaged with over 60 children and youth and over 6 teachers from Australia, Colombia and Afghanistan who have experienced a cross-cultural dialogue expanding their sense of community, diversity and world through visual arts.

The project has been presented at the Australian UNITE Festival in 2009 and the Australian Human Rights Arts and Film Festival 2011. My International Friend has not received any economical support other than the resources offered by the participating agencies and the effort of the organisers. In 2011 we have received expressions of interest from other educative institutions in the USA, Angola, Ethiopia, England and Italy for future participation in the project. We believe My International Friend has a strong potential for future growth.

We want to thank all the participants, teachers and organisations that have supported My International Friend!

We hope you and your students enjoy this international voyage!

Sincerely,

Claudia Escobar
Jorge Leiva
1. About My International Friend
My International Friend is an educational cultural exchange program where young people from different backgrounds and living in various countries explore and express their sense of identity, culture, community and world through visual arts shared through the web. The project was initiated during 2009, with the participation of the Margaret Lyttle Preshil School in Australia and Fundacion Arte Sin Fronteras in Colombia. Since then, the program has incorporated new participants in Australia (Northland Secondary College) and Afghanistan (Skateistan).

My International Friend is a project created and directed by peopleartpeople cultural organisation with the support of different educative institutions and organisations from various countries. It is a not for profit project and it has not received any economical support other than the resources offered by the participating agencies and the effort of the organisers.

“It has been interesting to know how people from a whole other place in the world live”

Anna, 16 years old, Australia
Create an educational cross-cultural experience accessible to all children and young people in the world where they develop through art, an understanding of identity and diversity while learning about other human beings, other countries, other cultures and open their view about the world.

Mission
Create an educational cross-cultural experience accessible to all children and young people in the world where they develop through art, an understanding of identity and diversity while learning about other human beings, other countries, other cultures and open their view about the world.

Vision
To be the most recognized international project for cultural and artistic exchange through the Web where children and youth from diverse cultural and social backgrounds have the opportunity to learn and share their sense of identity and culture.
Objectives

Contribute to the well-being of the participants through building their sense of identity and cultural background.

Develop creative, social media and ICT skills and critical thinking through recognizing similarities and differences with other fellow youth.

Increase the students' understanding of the links between individual and community identities to build understanding, empathy and skills for connecting to others.

Promote respect for diversity and human rights among students, teachers, organisations and the general public.

Generate sustainable networks through the development of partnerships between not for profit organizations, educational institutions and the general public through art education.

Facilitate international support for communities at risk.

Promote cross-cultural exchange and dialogue through young people’s artwork.

“I have met people from the other side of the world, very different from the people I’m usually surrounded by”

Alexander, 15 years old, Colombia
2. Policies
My International Friend will take place in a safe environment both at the arts school and through the Web. The participating organisations will make sure this will be accomplished and that any restricting Web access is programed in advance. The teacher must make clear to the young participants of their rights to speak to them if they feel unsafe during the development of the program.

My International Friend will foster the ability to understand and share the feelings of another no matter their tradition, religion, way of looking, social status or cultural backgrounds.

The participating organisations will be responsible for maintaining the commitments attained when participating in My International Friend and the ongoing communication with the coordinators and other participating organisations.

The participating organisations will be responsible to communicate to My International Friend any cultural traditions and beliefs that might become sensitive issues when sharing and creating visual artwork. In case a sensitive issue might arise, the participating organisation will let My International Project know.

All My International Friend participants should have fun with this experience and enjoy.

The participating organisations will be responsible for meeting the educational needs of the young participants. This means providing highly skilled arts teachers who are socially committed and have the capacity to help each participant do the best they can and achieve the best outcome.

The participating organisations shall have a collaborative working practice with other teachers or psychologists in case their professional services might be needed throughout the development of the program. The participating organisation will let My International Friend know of any situation where other teachers or psychologists might be involved.

According to each country's law, the participating organisations will obtain any necessary permission from parents, guardians, schools and/or organisations for youth access to the Web, appearing in photographs and publication of the artwork in My International Friend Website, future exhibitions and publications.
Before beginning, each participating organisation will need to complete and sign the peopleartpeople agreement from and send it to peopleartpeople@gmail.com.
3. Resources
The participating organisations should be able to supply:

1. **Teacher**
   An arts teacher who is socially committed, has good computer image editing and social media skills and is fluent in English. The teacher will need to work 4 to 5 hours per week on My International Friend Project.

2. **Participants**
   A group of children or young people between 10 and 19. (The number of participants and age will depend on the participating groups from all countries involved).
“I hope we will be good friends forever”

Faranaz, 14 yrs Afghanistan

Technology

During class, the participants will need to have access to computers, the Internet, a scanner and a printer. The computer(s) should have image editing software such as Adobe Photoshop or GIMP (free software). It is recommended to supply a photo camera to collect photographs of the participants, they love to see what’s happening in the other side of the world!

Arts materials

The participating organisations will supply arts materials to the participants for developing the artworks. (Materials and techniques will be defined according to the outcomes).
Art Room
The participating organisations will supply an art space for the participants and teacher to hold the art class.

Art class/3-4 hours a week
Each participating group will need to allocate 3 to 4 hours per week for the development of the project.

Tool Box
Mi Amigo Internacional will provide a virtual tool box where teachers can download support material such as power point presentations on participating countries, cultural links and comics.
4. Program
The Program is structured in 7 steps that can run over a semester or trimester system. The semestre system would last between 15-18 weeks and the trimester system would last between 10-12 weeks. The length of the program depends on the structure and scheme of the participating organisations.

Depending on time differences, there will be a starting group that will lead the artwork cycle. This group is called the Starting.
My International Friend is an educational cultural exchange program where young people from different backgrounds and living in various countries explore and express their sense of identity, culture, community and world through visual arts shared through the web. The project was initiated during 2009, with the participation of the Margaret Lyttle Preshil School in Australia and Fundacion Arte Sin Fronteras in Colombia. Since then, the program has incorporated new participants in Australia (Northland Secondary College) and Afghanistan (Skateistan).

My International Friend is a project created and directed by peopleartpeople cultural organisation with the support of different educative institutions and organisations from various countries. It is a not for profit project and it has not received any economical support other than the resources offered by the participating agencies and the effort of the organisers.

“It’s about taking initiative to get work done, so you don’t let your friend down”

Molly, 16 years old, Australia

For the teachers:

Each teacher should have a wide range of material when presenting theoric content such as maps, art books, music, images, video, etc.

1. Keep a physical folder
Each teacher will need to keep a physical folder for each student to collect all the artwork. It is important to keep the work in order of development so it is ready for future exhibitions.

2. Keep a digital folder in Dropbox
Dropbox is a free service that lets the teachers and coordinators keep and access all the artwork and documents anywhere. This means that any file we save to My International Friend Dropbox will automatically save to all computers, phones and the Dropbox website. Dropbox also makes it super easy to share with others, this is why it’s perfect for My International Friend. It is important to keep the work in order of development so it is ready for future exhibitions.

The teacher can download Dropbox at http://www.dropbox.com/
For Windows, Mac, Linux, and Mobile.
peopleartpeople will provide each teacher with the username and password to access this service.

For more information, visit http://www.dropbox.com/tour

3. Keep it going!
It is recommended not to exceed more than two weeks per level (unless there are holidays or important or extreme events occur) otherwise the process will start to crumble and participants will lose interest. It is important that teachers are in constant communication with each other so the work on the other partner organisations doesn’t stop and the process is fluid.
Step 1:

Introduction
This section will give all participants an overview of:
- My International Friend project
- Participating organisations
- Cultural, historical, geographical and demographical information of the participating countries and communities
- Identity: Individuality or group affiliations (such as family, country, religion, school, and such)
- Communication and language. The language of arts and visuals and the importance of commitment and responsiveness to the other

Task:
After the introduction, the participants will reflect on their culture and identity and the differences and similarities between them and their international friends. The participants should present a one page piece of writing about their identity. The teacher in collaboration with the participants will take a portrait photo of each of the participants and save it in the Dropbox.

Outcomes:
- Deeper knowledge of the project, the participating organisations and the cultures involved
- Critical thinking on similarities and differences as an individual and as a member of a community
- Minimize the need to copy other participants’ ideas: originality and individuality

Participants will be able to describe cultural, historical, demographic and geographic characteristics from the different participant nations-cultures. Also they will be able to discuss their different concepts of identity and recognise the importance of commitment and responsiveness for the success of the project.

Step 2:

Introduction to Comic
This section will focus on the following themes:
- Comic History and Theory. Examples and demonstration
- Sequential narrative and comic art styles and technique
- Tools for comic development

Task:
Taking each of their texts on identity and culture as inspiration, each participant from the starting country will need to develop the first scene or group of scenes of the comic. The teacher will present the photographs of the international friends and photograph each participant holding their international friend’s photo and save it into the Dropbox.

Outcomes:
- Deeper knowledge of comic history and techniques
- Deeper knowledge of art styles
- Development of creative and narrative skills
- Handling equipment tools and materials

Participants will be able to identify characteristics related to comic history, theory and its different techniques. Also, they will recognize various art styles related to comic. They will be able to apply their knowledge on the topic to create artworks (comic scenes) and propose ways for narrating a visual story. Participants will also use and implement various equipment, materials and tools for comic development including ICT resources.
Step 3:

**Digital Technology**
This section will focus on:
- Traditional and digital image editing introduction
- Introduction to Internet and email accounts if necessary
- Scanning if necessary

**Task:**
The teacher will present the photographs of the international friends. Each participant will take the first scene(s) they have created and will apply either traditional or digital image editing (depending on available resources) to finalize it. Then, each participant or teacher will need to scan the scenes and upload them to the Dropbox. Images need to be scanned in high resolution, 300dpi and saved as JPG. If a participant decides to create more than one scene and the teacher believes it is necessary, they all should be scanned together as one JPG file.

**Outcomes:**
- Development of social media skills
- Development of image editing knowledge and skills
- Finalized first comic scenes

Participants will build social networks with participants abroad. Also, they will edit and enhance images through traditional and digital means and will use internet and email accounts in a responsible and safe manner (if possible depending on resources). They will also finalize the first scene(s) of the comic.

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**Step 4:**

**Ongoing Communication**
This section will focus on:
- Comic Development
- Creative Collaboration
- Visual Communication
- The best possible outcome/quality of work

**Task:**
This is the creative part! Each participant will receive the scene(s) from their international friend and respond creating another scene, digitalize it and upload it with the help of the teacher into the Dropbox and repeat the same process according to the times agreed. The teacher should emphasize on the meaning of collaborating and the importance of looking carefully at the artwork sent by the other, the content, characters, actions, techniques and carefully respond to it. Also, how important it is to be determined to give the best possible outcome. This way, everyone is inspired by the artwork!

The teacher will need to keep in mind and follow through each comic and its sequential narrative (introduction, body or climax and ending) when guiding the development of each next scene.

**Outcomes:**
- Development of responsibility and decision making processes
- Development of skills for team work
- Development of narrative skills

With staff and teacher support, participants will organise their time and schedules during sessions and in their extra time in order to keep the communication with team members (international friends) and comic construction flowing. Through these sessions, the participants will be able to plan pathways for visual narrative development, decide, formulate and apply best possible solutions for creative problems (problem solving skills), deconstruct and reconstruct visual scenes and develop a complete comic narrative in collaboration with an international team.
Step 5:

The Cover
This section will focus on:
- Negotiation and Conciliation

Task:
Once the comic scenes are complete, the participants can decide what will be the cover and name of the comic. For this, the international friends must propose and illustrate ideas and solutions in order to build the cover and create a title as a team and with the approval of all parts. When complete it must be scanned and saved into the Dropbox.

Outcomes:
The different participant teams (international friends groups) will review the comic stories, discuss the possible images for cover and titles for comic and together determine the best possible solutions for the comic cover. The participants will create and finalize a quality cover page for the comic.

Step 6:

Final Production
This section will focus on:
- Final Editing and Printing

Outcomes:
The comics will be organized for printing and last details will be included. The comics will be printed. Final results will be ready for exhibition.
Step 7:

**Online publication and exhibition**
on available resources

Certificate of participation, final report and evaluation.

**Outcomes:**
The comics will be published online and showcased at a public exhibition. The project will be evaluated and the final report written.

**Educational program indicators:**
The following indicators are a guiding list for teachers when assessing the participants:
- Cultural knowledge acquired
- Knowledge of new IT techniques
- Level of engagement
- Participants assistance
- Quality of final artworks

**Variables:**
- Number of participants variation: absence and drop-outs
- Lack of access to technology and resources
- School holidays in different parts of the world

"It has been great to interact with another teacher, seeing her work has been very inspiring for me as an artist and for me as a teacher"

Peta Close, Preshil Art Teacher Australia

**Tips for the teacher:**
It is important to keep space in the classroom to share with all the participants all the work that is sent by all international friends.

It is ok to save work in progress in the Dropbox, but the finalized scenes are the ones that will be delivered to the participants. A finalized scene is a scene fully developed in its visual content, digitalized and clearly linking to the previous scene(s).

It is recommended that the teacher prints the sequence of scenes for each comic so the participants have a good overview of the narrative of the comic. This makes it easier to give continuity to the creative process, specially after having more than 3 scenes.

The story will be written as it is being created. The use of imagination, resources, improvisation and spontaneity is essential.

It is necessary to have a constant communication between all parts involved in order to maintain a constant process, give and receive suggestions, share ideas, adjust to different schedules and timeframes and generate constructive feedback.
5. Staff
Staff

Jorge Leiva – Project Manager

Jorge Leiva is an artist and educator with international teaching and training background and experience. Leiva has worked in Schools, Colleges, TAFE Institutes and Universities in diverse areas such as music, art, design, ESL and Spanish. Leiva is devoted to cultural development, educative initiatives and social inclusion. Leiva has experience researching and working on cross-cultural education and initiatives especially between Australia and Latin America and has initiated international education projects and partnerships between these regions.

In 2009 Leiva co-founded peopleartpeople, an organisation that links people through the arts and in 2008 co-founded ‘El Tarro’ the smallest performing space in the world, a creative moving space that connects people through arts experiments.

Leiva combines music, writing and visual arts to create innovative multi-art experiences and open multidisciplinary learning spaces. He has performed/exhibited in various international events and venues such as Melbourne International Arts Festival (2007); Celebrating Literacy - New York City College (2003); Santa Cruz Gallery (2001); Suba Biennial (2002, 2003, 2004); Iberoamerican Theatre Festival Bogota, Colombia (2000); Feria de Cali (2000); and across Australia: Maroondah Festival (2010); Globe to Globe Festival (2009); Sounds of Colombia (2009); Suzuki Night Market (2009); St Kilda Festival (2009); Little Red and Ground Components Australia Tour (2008); Folk, Rhythm & Live Festival (2008) among others.

Claudia Escobar – Project Management and Marketing Advisor

Claudia Escobar is an international artist currently living in Melbourne, Australia. Born in Colombia, Escobar’s artwork has been internationally catalogued as effective and deeply provocative. She has devised and directed a series of solo performances, theatre works and visual arts projects raising spectres of childhood and war. Major works: los tumba peligros (2006) was devised and performed with over 60 colombian children affected by war. play:ground (2008) was devised and performed by a group of Australian children on Colombian child soldiers. She is artistic director of EL TARRO the smallest performing space in the world with productions in Berlin, Sydney, Melbourne, Buenos Aires, San Francisco, Bogota and Venice. Escobar has recently performed in SWEAT (Branch Nebula, Sydney, Melbourne, Berlin 2010/2011) and manola (solo work 2010) as part of Performance Space season, Carriageworks, Sydney. In 2009 Escobar co-founded peopleartpeople organisation that links people through the arts.

Claudia has over eight years of experience in marketing management and has worked as a consultant for cultural management. Escobar is currently the Marketing & Development Officer at Multicultural Arts Victoria, Australia.

Felipe Escobar – Interactive Designer

Felipe is an interactive designer with wide knowledge in social media, human-media interaction, human-object interaction, animation, character design and comics. He is highly experienced in web, multimedia and digital graphics design. He has created an extended portfolio of digital art, animation and characters. He is interested in cellular automata, graffitti, generative art, urban vinyl, literature, arts and Asian culture.

Felipe is currently studying for a MSci in Interaction Design at TU Delft, in the Netherlands, he has completed a Graduate Diploma in Marketing Management, Graduate Diploma in Multimedia Design and a BA in Industrial Design in Universidad de los Andes, Colombia.
6. Acknowledgements and Credits
We want to thank all the young people that have travelled the journey of My International Friend, your amazing creativity and continuous effort has made the program what it is today! Thank you!

We also want to thank all the people and organisations that have supported My International Friend since the beginning:

- Fundación Arte Sin Fronteras – Colombia
- Academia de Artes Guerrero - Colombia
- Comunidad del Barrio Bella Vista, Soacha, Colombia
- The Margaret Lyttle Memorial School – Australia
- Centre for Cultural Partnerships – Faculty of the VCA and Music – The University of Melbourne – Australia
- Skateistan - Afghanistan
- Northland Secondary College - Australia
- Multicultural Arts Victoria - Australia

Carlos Guerrero
Frank Moore
Margaret Hepworth
Rosalie Hastwell
Tim Dargaville
James Caudle

Teachers/Profesores:
- Peta Close – Arts Teacher Australia - The Margaret Lyttle Memorial School
- Verónica Chavarro – Arts Teacher Colombia – Academia de Artes Guerrero
- Erika Rubio Parra – Arts Teacher Colombia – Academia de Artes Guerrero
- Jake Simkin – Arts Teacher Afghanistan - Skateistan
- Sonia Baroudi – Arts Teacher Australia - Northland Secondary College
- Nicole Anderson- Arts Teacher Australia - Northland Secondary College

Credits:

p2: Academia de Artes Guerrero 2011 y Jake Simkin (Skateistan) 2011
p3: peopleartpeople 2011
p4: Jake Simkin (Skateistan) 2011
p5: This is my school by Bridget Murray, Australia 2009
p6: peopleartpeople 2009
p7: Academia de Artes Guerrero 2011
p8: Jake Simkin (Skateistan) 2011
p11: Mi casa por Felipe Cepeda Vargas, Colombia 2009
p12&13: My family by Matilda, Australia 2009; Mi casa por Alexander Hernandez Gonzales, Colombia 2009; This is me by Tess Sokolowski, Australia 2009; Mittens by Greer, Australia 2010; This is me by Mikayla Treacy, Australia 2011 ; Solo en la calle por Yurieth Castellanos, Colombia 2011
p14: Scarlet Ace by Ed Marschall, Australia 2010; This is me by Hedwig Crombie, Australia 2009
p15: Mi familia por Jaider Hernandez, Colombia 2011
p16: This is our world by Hedwig Crombie, Australia 2009
p17: This is my family by Bridget Murray, Australia 2009
p21: Detalle de comic por Jineth Patalagua Gutierrez, Colombia 2010
p22: This is my school by Peta Close, Australia 2009
p24: Detalle de Comic por Ivan Molina Diaz, Colombia 2011
p27: Good y los Chicos - Grissy's Trip por Griselda Crombie, Australia y Hector Rodriguez, Colombia 2010

Graphic Design:
Felipe Escobar
7. Agreement Form
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# AGREEMENT / ACUERDO

This agreement is made the Day, Month and Year first above written: / Este acuerdo se lleva acabo el día, mes y año de este formulario entre:

where the parts agree to devote their best efforts, time and attention to the delivery of My International Friend Program / donde las partes acuerdan dedicar sus mejores esfuerzos, tiempo y atención al desarrollo del programa Mi Amigo Internacional to be held with / ser desarrollado con un grupo de:

years old, for a total period of / años de edad por un periodo total de:

The parts agree to the policies and responsibilities referred at the back of this agreement and in the My International Friend Manual 2011 by peopleartpeople / Las partes acuerdan el cumplimiento de las políticas y responsabilidades citadas al revés de este acuerdo y en el Manual Mi Amigo Internacional 2011 escrito por peopleartpeople.

Either part may terminate the Agreement by giving to the other not less than one month’s notice in writing, in which case peopleartpeople reserves the right to find a different organisation to continue the program. If any part commits a serious breach or consistent breaches of this Agreement or is guilty of any conduct which may have a serious and detrimental effect on the Agreement the other Part may by notice in writing retire from the Agreement. peopleartpeople reserves the right to the program My International Friend. / Cualquiera de las partes puede terminar el Acuerdo siempre y cuando de previo aviso a la otra parte de no menos de un mes por escrito, en este caso peopleartpeople se reserva el derecho de ubicar una nueva organización para continuar el programa. Si cualquiera de las partes comete una falta grave o faltas consistentes al Acuerdo o es culpable de cualquier conducta que pueda afectar seriamente el Acuerdo, la otra parte puede retirarse del Acuerdo por escrito . peopleartpeople se reserva el derecho del programa Mi Amigo Internacional.

In witness of which the parties hereto have signed this Agreement / Las partes firman este Acuerdo

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<th><strong>Representative peopleartpeople / Representante de peopleartpeople</strong></th>
<th><strong>Representative Organisation / Representante de la Organización</strong></th>
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POLICIES / POLITICAS

- Respect, well-being and safe environment
  My International Friend will take place in a safe environment both at the arts school and through the Web. The participating organisations will make sure this will be accomplished and that any restricting Web access is programmed in advance. The teacher must make clear to the young participants of their rights to speak to them if they feel unsafe during the development of the program.

- Empathy, understanding and openness
  My International Friend will foster the ability to understand and share the feelings of another no matter their tradition, religion, way of looking, social status or cultural backgrounds.

- Commitment and responsiveness
  The participating organisations will be responsible for maintaining the commitments attained when participating in My International Friend and the ongoing communication with the coordinators and other participating organisations.

- Cultural traditions and religious awareness
  The participating organisations will be responsible to communicate to My International Friend any cultural traditions and beliefs that might become sensitive issues when sharing and creating visual artwork. In case a sensitive issue might arise, the participating organisation will let My International Friend know.

- To have fun and enjoy
  All My International Friend participants should have fun with this experience and enjoy.

- The best possible education and training
  The participating organisations will be responsible for meeting the educational needs of the young participants. This means providing highly skilled arts teachers who are socially committed and have the capacity to help each participant do the best they can and achieve the best outcome.

- Collaborative working practice. Support for the teachers
  The participating organisations shall have a collaborative working practice with other teachers or psychologists in case their professional services might be needed throughout the development of the program. The participating organisation will let My International Project know of any situation where other teachers or psychologists might be involved.

- Agreement for Web access and publication of artwork and photographs
  According to each country’s law, the participating organisations will obtain any necessary permission from parents, guardians, schools and/or organisations for youth access to the Web, appearing in photographs and publication of the artwork in My International Friend Website, future exhibitions and publications.

- Agreement
  Before beginning, each participating organisation will need to complete and sign the peopleartpeople agreement from and send it to peopleartpeople@gmail.com

COPYRIGHT / DERECHOS DE AUTOR

Copyright
- Copyright of the name My International Friend and Mi Amigo Internacional belong to peopleartpeople
- All material to be published on My International Friend needs to credit peopleartpeople as the founder and creator of the project. Copyright of the project structure and concept is to be retained by peopleartpeople
- The participating organisations agree to the photographing or video recording of artwork, workshop sessions or events for promotional or archival purposes only to be published in My International Friend website, future exhibitions and publications
- Copyright of the artwork will be retained by the participants who created it
- In the case of material created collaboratively, ownership shall be shared between the participants who created it, in proportions equivalent to the share each had in creating it
- All changes or new arrangements to a new, current or ongoing My International Project will need prior approval by peopleartpeople in writing
- Any organisation who wishes to initiate a My International Friend project/program with a new or ex participant organisation will need prior approval by peopleartpeople in writing
- No organisation or individual has permission to initiate a My International Friend project/program under the original name or under a different name with the same misión, structure and objectives
My International Friend /Mi Amigo Internacional

More Information

Website: https://sites.google.com/site/miamigointernacional/
Email: miamigointernacional@gmail.com
http://www.peopleartpeople.com
Visual Voices - Partnership proposal

About Visual Voices

Part I - What?

1.) What does Visual Voices has to offer to its partnering organizations?

Visual Voices is a practice-based educational program focused on teaching photography and citizen journalism. The aim of this program is to empower communities, giving them a voice to register their own reality. The expected outcome of the program is for students to learn the basic skills of photojournalism. By doing so, the students will partake in a ‘hands on’ creative process. With the skills learnt, students will have an awareness of the work of the photographer and the role of telling and broadcasting news from their communities. The final result of the program will be the production of a body of work. This work will be regularly published in the online journal the Outsider’s Guide (see part II). At the end of the program, Visual Voices will organize an exhibition with a selection of the works developed during the program (for more information refer to the curriculum attached to this document).

2.) What are the benefits for our partners?

Visual Voices develops its curriculum based on the needs of its potential partners.
We aim to be a regional provider of innovative and applied education for Years 7 - 13 with a specialised, high-quality program in visual arts, multimedia, design and technology. Visual Voices has conceived a program that focuses in promoting values like multiculturalism, social awareness and intercultural exchange. Prior to the commencement of the program, we will schedule a meeting with the council/school to discuss the curriculum and (if necessary) implement all the suggested changes.

3.) What Visual Voices expects from its partners?

By partnering with Visual Voices, the council/school will be compromising to select a group of students (no larger than 10) to undertake the program. It will also be offering a classroom (or similar kind of venue) to hold the program. In addition to this the program will require a series of facilities. These are the
following:

a.) Computer lab  
b.) Internet connection  
c.) Data Projector  
d.) Adobe software: Photoshop/Premier elements  
e.) Printer  
f.) Visual diary: A4 clear page scrapbook  
g.) Materials for Camera Obscura (shoe boxes –with lid-, black paint, aluminium foil, transparent (or albanene) paper, needles, gaffer tape)  
h.) Venue for final exhibition  
i.) Transportation expenses (bus/van hiring, etc.) (only for specific projects that require so)

The provision and implementation of these facilities will be discussed in the meeting where the final curriculum will be established.

Part II - Who?

Who is involved in Visual Voices?

a.) Developers

Sudeep Lingamneni

As a professional arts worker, I am passionate about the craft and artistry of my practice. Combining diverse storytelling skills from both visual media and music has enabled me to immerse myself in a variety of cultural contexts. This is the basis of my Community Cultural Development [CCD] practice.

By constantly questioning and challenging my skills and knowledge I am able to stay abreast of new forms of artistic and community practices and I have developed a flexibility that enables me to adapt to contemporary challenges in the field. Furthermore, this flexibility has led to engagements with numerous organisations, businesses, and cultural and community groups (see full resume attached).

Mauricio Rivera
I am a journalist from Colombia. Currently I am doing a doctoral research about the influence of digital media in 21st century societies at RMIT University. Before this I did a Masters in Professional communication with a specialization in Professional Writing at Deakin University.

While coursing my bachelor degree in Colombia I stood out in the courses of Journalistic and Creative writing, as well as in the subjects related with audiovisual productions.

During my stay in Australia, I have been developing a project called the Outsider’s Guide to Melbourne, which is intended to be an interactive journal of the city and a portal for Melbourne’s emerging artists to start publishing their work, while contributing in the update of this interactive archive of the city (see full resume attached).

b.) Alliances

The Outsider's Guide (www.outsidersguide.org)

The Outsider's Guide to Melbourne is a project being developed as an interactive journal of the city.

Our conception of the word Outsider goes beyond any geographical, religious, racial or cultural connotation. In this sense, the Outsider’s Guide project is conceived as a space for Melbourne’s emerging artists to start exposing and publishing their work, while contributing in the making and updating of this interactive archive of the city. The Outsider’s Guide is a journal that is to be kept by the people who are witnessing history, while being a part of it.

As an emerging artistic and professional entity from the XXI century, our main belief is that physical contact and face-to-face interaction will always be the most satisfying experience for the human species, and as citizens of a global, multicultural planet, we will always feel compelled to remind the world of the beauty in witnessing things first hand.

Part III - Why?

Why was Visual Voices conceived?
Visual Voices was conceived with the purpose of teaching and promoting the use of photography as a way of providing a social service. We expect the program to guide interested students to a career path, and a commitment to a tertiary education to further their development in media fields, such as photography, journalism and multi-media.

What is our ultimate goal?

Visual Voices aims to provide students with a tool kit for production, an understanding of design and a platform where they can challenge stereotypes and negative pre-conceptions. This will empower students to move beyond the passive role of being mere receivers of information into the role of news providers for the greater development of their communities. Students' work will be reviewed and critiqued on a weekly basis so that audiences embrace the news board material as a source of professional news coverage.
Program Curriculum:
The program consists of eight, 3-hour weekly sessions that will take place at local schools/councils after class. Each session will be divided in 3 parts. The class will begin with a Workshop, organized by Mauricio Rivera, in which the students will be introduced to the focal topic for that session. The second part of the class will be Photography Theory; this part will alternate the presentation of Sudeep Lingamneni’s work with the showcasing of images by a renowned photojournalist (which will vary every week depending on the session’s topic). The third part will be Practical Photography; during this part, the students will take the provided cameras and practice the concepts taught during the session. At the end of the session, half of the class will each take a camera home and will be asked to document their environment. On the following class, the images taken by the first group of students will be assessed, while the remaining half will then take a camera home and develop their own body of work. The program will run for one academic term. The full curriculum is explained in the following section of this document:

SESSION 1

Overview: Journalism And Photography

Purpose Of Workshop: Communication Travels
Communication and miscommunication understanding exercise, as well a warm up bonding experience between students in the classroom.

Workshop: The Broken Telephone
In this workshop, the students begin sitting in a circle and then one starts by whispering a message to the person sitting either on the right or the left, who
will then forward the message to the person next and so on, until the message reaches the end of the circle. Then, the message is revealed and compared with the original. For the second part of the exercise, this same dynamic is repeated but now the students are to be dispersed all over the classroom and having to walk across the room to forward the message. That way they are introduced to notions like: how information may get distorted as it travels and how writing allows to preserve the fidelity of the message.

Photography Theory: Writing With Light
An overview of historic images and photographs from renowned publications like National Geographic, Time, Newsweek and Magnum Photos.

Practical Photography: Camera Operations
Students will be handed a camera and will be taught how to operate it. While doing so, they will be introduced to the following concepts:
- Basics of photography: light, exposure, aperture and shutter readings
- Types of lenses: 50mm, telephoto, wide angle, micro and macro
- Camera care: blow brush, lens cleaning liquid and tissues, silicon crystals and spare batteries

Assignment: Homework
At the beginning of the program, each student will be given a photo diary to fill with images they find in the media (e.g. newspapers, magazines, the Internet). Every week, they will be asked to search, find and cut out a few images. On the following session (starting in week 2) they will be asked to explain why they have chosen these images. The sharing of these images will help them build a better understanding of what makes a good image. Half the
class (Group 1) will take a camera home to produce their first series of images during the week and show them to the class on the following week.

SESSION 2

Overview: Photography And Landscape

Purpose Of Workshop: Mechanics Of Photography
By building a Camera Obscura, they will be introduced to the mechanics of photography.

Workshop: Building A Camera Obscura
On the previous session (Session 1) the students are to be handed a shoebox and black paint. While half of the class is learning how to operate a camera, the other half will be painting the inside of their boxes (and vice versa). This way, by the beginning of Session 2 the paint should be dry and the students should be able to start building their Camera Obscura. The first step is to carve a square hole in one of the sides of the box, leaving a margin of approximately 2cm per side; then, they will have to cut a smaller hole (about 2cm of diameter) in the opposite side of the box; after that, they will paste a piece of foil inside the box, covering the smaller square hole and with a needle they will pin a small hole on the foil; after that, they will paste a piece of transparent (or albanene) paper over the larger square hole; finally, they will close the box and seal it with gaffer tape in order to avoid light going inside the box. Following these steps, they will have built a Camera Obscura and through it they will see images reflecting inside the box. The aim of this
workshop is for the students to understand the basic functioning of a photographic camera.

**Photography Theory: Design Principles**
During this part, students will be introduced to the concepts of composition:

**Framing:**
- Emphasising a subject

![Figure 1, Sudeep Lingamneni](image1)

- Making a choice, what to include and exclude of the subject

![Figure 2, Sudeep Lingamneni](image2)

- Vertical, horizontal and diagonal framing
Figure 3, Sudeep Lingamneni

Placement:

- Central placement

Figure 4, Sudeep Lingamneni

- Asymmetrical placement

Figure 5, Sudeep Lingamneni

- Edge of frame
Figure 6, Sudeep Lingamneni

- Extreme edge of frame

Figure 7, Sudeep Lingamneni

Weight Of Subject (Vertical Format Framing):
- Looking up (high shot view)

Figure 8, Sudeep Lingamneni

- Looking down (low shot view)
Alignment:

- Stable

- Unstable
Figure 11, Sudeep Lingamneni

Cropping:
- Open format cropping (makes us question and try to finish the image)

Figure 12, Sudeep Lingamneni

- Closed format cropping (image completely within frame)
Pattern:

- Structured pattern (repetitive pattern)

- Unstructured pattern (mosaic, repetitive but not order)
Colour:

A.) Colour wheel

- Primary colours (red, yellow and blue)
- Secondary colours (mixture of 2 primary colours)
- Complementary contrast (2 colours opposite in a colour wheel e.g. blue vs. orange, yellow vs. violet)

Figure 16, https://classshares.student.usp.ac.fj/ED182/colour%20wheel.jpg

Figure 17, Sudeep Lingamneni
B.) Colours representing emotions

- Red equals passion, fire and anger

Figure 18, Sudeep Lingamneni

- White equals purity, light and calm

Figure 19, Sudeep Lingamneni

- Blue equals cold, subdued and soothing
Design Rules:
- Golden Mean (divine proportion and the rule of thirds), the perfect place for the centre of interest

![Golden Mean Diagram]

- Rule of two-thirds, harmony within the image (doesn’t have to be equal thirds, better uneven)

![Rule of Thirds Diagram]

Featured Photographer: Ansel Adams (1902 - 1984)
Ansel Adams is the American photographer and environmentalist best known for his photographs of the American West. He was the Founder of Group f/64,
an organization that in turn created the department of photography in the Museum of Modern Art of New York.

Figure 23, Ansel Adams

**Practical Photography: Composition And Capturing**

Analysis of the rules of design based on the photos selected by the students in their photo diaries:
- Revision of Group 1 first series of images (based on what has been taught)
- Capturing with shutter speed and aperture settings controls

**Assignment: Homework**

The half that did not receive a camera in session 1 (Group 2) will now take one camera and will be asked to produce their first series of work during the week (applying what they have been taught so far). This week, the class will be asked to look for landscape images for their photo diary.

**SESSION 3**
Overview: Photography And Society

Purpose Of Work: News Board
Understanding how to cover news events and how to go about writing the news event stories for the public.

Workshop: Journalism Scenario
This workshop consists of a role-play game, in which students will be re-enacting the coverage of an ancient event as if they were in a modern newsroom. The first scenario will be covering the end of the Trojan War, some of them will be acting as journalists and others will act like historical figures telling their version of the story. At the end, they will write in the board a short lead of the news story, using the technique of the 5 W’s (what, where, who, how and when). If there is time for a second scenario, the roles will be exchanged and this time the students will re-enact a fairy tale of their choice (e.g. Snow White, Cinderella, etc.)

Photography Theory: Playing With Light
Using images of paintings and photographs, the students will be shown examples of the way artists have experimented with light in order to express different emotions.


**Featured Photographer: Sebastiao Salgado**

Sebastiao Salgado is a Brazilian social documentary photographer and photojournalist, who has been regarded as the most important photographer of the 21st century. In his work, he usually deals with social issues such as migration and refugees and the life of workers in less developed nations.

**Practical Photography: Photographing People**

Students will take photos of each other, changing the lighting conditions and the camera angles.
Revision Of Work:
A review and comparison of work for the first series of work produced of Group 1 and Group 2 based on what has been taught in Sessions 1 and 2.

Assignment: Homework
Group 1 will be handed a camera and will be asked to produce their second series of work, applying what they have been taught in the last sessions. This week, the class will be asked to look for portraits to add to their photo diary.

SESSION 4

Overview: The Photographer As An Eyewitness

Purpose Of Work: Front Page Newspaper
Understanding the order and importance of news material.

Workshop: The Editorial Team (Part 1)
Students will be divided into two groups and each group will be asked to do a collage with images from the press that they will be handed (each group will receive the same images) and paste it to a piece of cardboard. The collage should look like the front page of a newspaper. Once the groups have finished their front-page collages, they will be compared and the students will have to explain why they placed certain images in locations they did.

Photography Theory: Depth Of Field
Students will be taught how to combine aperture and shutter speed in order to obtain different depth of field.
Figure 26, http://www.eviltaco.blogspot.com/

**Featured Photographer: Magnum Photos**

*Magnum Photos* is an international photographic cooperative, which is owned by its members. It has offices in New York, Paris, London and Tokyo. It was founded in 1947 after the end of World War 2, by photojournalists Robert Capa, Henri Cartier-Bresson, David Seymour and George Rodger.

Figure 27, Robert Capa
Practical Photography: Creative Use Of Aperture Settings

Students will take a camera and experiment with depth of field using different combinations of aperture and shutter speed.

Assignment: Homework

Group 2 will be handed a camera and will be asked to produce their second series of work. This week, the class will be asked to look for images that they consider having a social commentary to add to their photo diaries.

SESSION 5

Overview: Photo Essay Technique

Purpose Of Workshop: Narrative Illustrations
Using illustration to storyboard news.

Workshop: Illustrated Stories
Students will be asked to draw a comic book narrating a real story that they have witnessed. The aim of this workshop is to introduce the concept of the visual narrative as an introduction to the photographic essay the students need to produce.

**Photography Theory: Producing A Photo Essay**

In a useful article called *5 Photo Essay Tips* written by Christina Dickson.

Students will be introduced to the following method:

1. **Find a topic:** Photo essays are most dynamic when you as the photographer care about the subject. Whether you choose to document the first month of a newborn in the family, the process of a school drama production, or even a birthday party, make your topic something in which you find interest.

2. **Do your research:** If you photograph a birthday party, check out the theme, the decorations they plan on using and what the birthday kid hopes to get for his or her gifts. If you cover the process of a school’s drama production, talk with the teachers, actors and stage hands, investigate the general interest of the student body find out how they are financing the production and keeping costs down. All of these factors will help you in planning out the type of shots you set up for your story.

3. **Find the “real story”:** After your research, you can determine the angle you want to take your story. Is the birthday party for an adolescent turning 13, or the last birthday of a dying cancer patient? Is the drama production an effort to bring the student body together? Or is it featuring a child star? Though each
story idea is the same, the main factors of each story create an incredibly unique story.

4. Every dynamic story is built on a set of core values and emotions that touch the heart of its audience. Anger. Joy. Fear. Hurt. Excitement. The best way you can connect your photo essay with its audience is to draw out the emotions within the story and utilize them in your shots. This does not mean that you manipulate your audience’s emotions. You merely use emotion as a connecting point.

5. Plan your shots: Whether you decide to sit down and extensively visualize each shot of the story, or simply walk through the venue in your mind, you will want to think about the type of shots that will work best to tell your story. I recommend beginners first start out by creating a “shot list” for the story. Each shot will work like a sentence in a one-paragraph story. Typically, you can start with 10 shots. Each shot must emphasize a different concept or emotion that can be woven together with the other images for the final draft of the story.

**Featured Photographer: Emerging Photographers Based In Melbourne**

**Practical Photography: Photo Essay Of Class Activities**
Students will be asked to do a photo essay of the class as practice for their final assignment.

**Revision Of Work:**
A review and comparison of work for the second series of work produced of Group 1 and Group 2 based on what has been taught in Sessions 3 and 4.
Assignment: Homework

Group 1 will be asked to produce a seven-image photo essay during the week. In this week, the class will be asked to look for photographs that they consider tell a story to add to their photo diaries.

SESSION 6

Overview: Digital Photography

Purpose Of Workshop: Front Page Image
Understanding the order and importance of news images.

Workshop: The Editorial Team (Part 2)
As on session 4, the class will be divided into two groups and will be asked to do a collage simulating the front page of a newspaper. But this time they will be using their own images. The aim of this workshop is to show the students how the editorial task is based on subjective decisions.

Photography Theory: Editing Images In Photoshop
Cropping, levels/colour adjustments, sharpening of images and learning to export images in print and web media resolutions.

Practical Photography: Print And Web Publishing
Students will edit their own images getting them ready for print and Internet browsing.

Assignment: Homework
Group 2 will be asked to produce a seven-image photo essay during the week. This week, the class will be asked to look for images that they think have been digitally manipulated to add to their photo diaries.

SESSION 7

An overview of the process, the final selection of images that are going to be exhibited.

SESSION 8

Organization of exhibition in gallery space.

Final Session: Exhibition
Students participating will be involved in the presentation of their work. During session 8 they will hang their images in the way they think represents their work and its intention. Students will have the assessment of a curator from the space (gallery) but ultimately they will decide on the basic issues such as order of images and placement. Students will hang 2 A3 prints of their images.

Aftermath: Program Conclusion
With the skills learnt, students will have an awareness of the work of the photographer and the role of telling and broadcasting news from their communities. This will help them to form a judgment about their environments and open their minds towards the possibility of developing a career in photography, media and journalism. The project contains several expected practical and conceptual outcomes.

The practical outcomes are the following:
- 10 CALD and 'at risk' students will learn the basic skills of photojournalism and discover and partake in new ways of learning (practice based, 'hands on' learning).

- Participants will have a brief immersion in the role of the journalist and will be shown ways how to create new media.

- A final selection of the participant’s work will be shared with the wider Australian community through an exhibition.

- The participants will lead the organisation of the final exhibition.

- The work produced each week by the participants will be published online in the Outsider's Guide to Melbourne (www.outsidersguide.org).

- Two profile stories of Visual Voices will be publicised in the media where students will be interviewed about the process.

The conceptual outcomes are the following:
- Participants will gain an understanding of the role of photography and the journalist in society.

- Participants will gain a deeper understanding of each other's cultures and backgrounds.

- Participants will gain self-confidence and feel empowered to share their stories with the wider Australian community.
- A wider Australian community will see the final exhibition.

- The parents of participants will attend the final exhibition of the project.

**Influences:**
Visual Voices has been influenced and inspired by a number of photographers, journalists, artists, scholars and news media. In this age of mass media and instantaneous communication, little room is left for investigative photojournalism and in-depth coverage of issues. Meaningful stories are reduced to sound bites. Tragedies in our backyards remain unreported. Images are pieced together out of context, only mitigating the work photojournalists put into their story.

No matter how ambitious they may be, most novice journalists won’t get their start at ‘The Age’ or ‘New York Times’. They get their first jobs at smaller local community newspapers that require a different style of reporting than the detached, impersonal approach expected of major international publications.

The work done at MediaStorm originally founded in 1994 at the University of Missouri School of Journalism, relaunched in March of 2005 with a focus on creating cinematic narratives for distribution across a variety of platforms is an important reference point for Visual Voices. This is because in November 2005, MediaStorm premiered its award-winning multimedia publication http://mediastorm.org by utilizing animation, audio, video and the power of still photography.

MediaStorm pride themselves on publishing diverse narratives that speak to the heart of the human condition. Their mission is to fill the void with
comprehensive coverage of stories that need to be told. Each story is licensed as a package to encourage editors to run complete bodies of work, which preserves the photographer's vision.

Another source of inspiration for Visual Voices is “Born into Brothels”, by Ross Kauffman and Zana Briski, is the winner of the 77th annual Academy Award for Best Documentary Feature. A tribute to the resiliency of childhood and the restorative power of art, the film is a portrait of several unforgettable children who live in the red light district of Calcutta, where their mothers work as prostitutes. Zana Briski, a New York-based photographer, gives each of the children a camera and teaches them to look at the world with new eyes.
Appendix 3 – Translation of interview with Mónica Villamizar from Entre Libros y Lectores

1.) What expectations did Entre Libros y Lectores (ELL) have before the photojournalism program took place?

Mónica Villamizar (MV): The foundation has been very enthusiastic ever since we were informed about the possibility of organising a workshop of this kind. Especially as the students had already been introduced to the use of cameras, although in a very empirical manner. Our idea has always been to introduce our participants with a wide range of cognitive tools so in the future they can succeed in whatever career they wish to follow. Therefore, we were very pleased with receiving the knowledge the program could provide us.

2.) Were these expectations fulfilled?

MV: Yes, the students have continued using the terminology learnt during the program, and the application of the concepts is evident in the images they have been capturing since.

3.) What impression does ELL has about the students’ participation in the program? What was the impression the students got of the program?

MV: It has been an active participation and it hasn’t been exclusively limited to the work done in the foundation. The students have taken it as an extra tool for their daily lives. They have been proposing new ways to register their activities; which has also led them to get more familiar with the cameras as well as with the concepts studied during the workshops. I can assure this subject matter (i.e. photography) is of their liking. For the students who live in more favourable conditions, it has been easier to follow up updating their blogs and also helps them accessing information on the internet. On the other hand, regarding the students who live in the periphery, they have found working with computers harder –and not entirely of their liking.

4.) Has there been any activities following up to the original photojournalism program?
MV: There was an exhibition addressed to the community, done with the images captured by the students during the workshops. After that, unfortunately the foundation haven’t had the resources to organise other activities. The students who made part of the original workshops are all entering into adolescence and, due to problems related with that age, it is becoming increasingly harder to motivate them to gather at the library (where the workshops took place). This has also complicated their meeting with other students involved in the foundation and forward the knowledge they (the original group) received during the workshops.

5.) What does ELL considers to be the most positive aspect of the program?

MV: The knowledge acquired by the students during the workshops and the opportunity to multiply the information and to increase the coverage and to raise interest in photography-related programs; which may also work as a way to promote reading in the community.

6.) What does ELL think has been missing or can be improved for the realization of future programs?

MV: Time, definitely time. Time to organise more workshops, involving more participants, and to focus not only on the capturing of images but in the creation, design and constant updating of their blogs; as this is a way of making visible the results of this kind of programs and that way promote it amongst other members of the community.

(Next page: Appendix 3b – copy of original interview in Spanish)
sobre cursos de fotografía

Monica Villamizar <monica@entrelibrosylectores.org>  8 de febrero de 2012 09:53
Para: Mauricio Rivera <maurorivera8@gmail.com>

Hola Mauricio q bueno tener noticias tuyas, genial q le des continuidad a tu proyecto...

Bueno dando respuesta a tus preguntas iniciemos.

1.) Qué expectativas tenía Entre Libros y Lectores antes de la realización del programa?
Desde el momento que se nos informo de la posibilidad siempre fue muy satisfactorio porque es un tema de mucho agrad o aceptación para los jóvenes ellos tenían unos acercamiento previos a las cámaras, pero todo muy empírico la idea de la fundación siempre fue proveerles a los chicos herramientas cognitivas para despeinarse en sus quehaceres, entonces nos parecía formidable poder contar con el conocimiento q tu nos podías aportar.

2.) Fueron cumplidas estas expectativas?
Sí, claro los chicos siguieron manejo tanto la terminología y la puesta en práctica es evidente en las nuevas imágenes q ellos capturaron.

3.) Cómo ha sido la participación de los alumnos en el programa? Qué impresión se han llevado de éste?
La participación es muy activa no solo se limita a lo realizado por la fundación, lo tomaron como un herramienta mas de sus vidas ellos ya proponen hacer registros de todas sus actividades y eso genera cierta familiaridad con la cámara para afianzar el conocimiento y sus destrezas, puedo asegurar q este temática les complace mucho, para los chicos q cuentan con condiciones mas favorables han podido seguir alimentado su blog y les permite también estar mas conectados a la información q les ofrece el Internet, mientras q las niñas de la periferia se les complica y no es de su agrado el uso del computador y las herramientas q este les provee.

4.) Cómo se ha continuado éste programa después de la realización de los primeros talleres? Qué proyectos se han realizado?
Bueno, se organizó exposición de las imágenes realizadas en el taller en la comunidad, pero lamentablemente no hemos contado con recursos para hacer mayores actividades, los chicos con sus problemáticas propias de la adolescencia no les agrada el lugar de encuentro q era en la biblioteca y hemos tenido dificultades para el lugar de encuentro con los demás chicos de la fundación.

5.) Qué considera la fundación ha sido lo más positivo de la realización de este programa?
El conocimiento adquirido y la oportunidad de multiplicación de la información q permite mayor cobertura e interés por la realización de programas ligados a la fotografía donde podemos incentiv ar la promoción de la lectura en la comunidad.

6.) Qué ha quedado faltando o puede ser mejorado para la realización de futuros programas?
indefectiblemente tiempo, para realizar mas practicas con mas participantes nos solo en la toma de fotografías en sí el montaje diseño y alimentación del blog ya q es una opción de visibilizar las actividades conjuntas y así incentivar a otros nuevos participantes.

Espero esto pueda aportar a tu trabajo disculpa pero no había tenido acceso a Internet y no había visto este correo, si necesitas mayor información o algún dato en particular no dudes en escribirme.

Abrazos
El 30 de enero de 2012 22:32, Mauricio Rivera <maurorivera8@gmail.com> escribió:
[El texto citado está oculto]

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Monica Vanessa del Pilar Villamizar Rios
Tel. 300 371 07 47
Pamplona N de S
Appendix 4 – Translation of interview with Stella Duque from Taller de Vida

1.) What advantages does a foundation like Taller de Vida find in the art-therapy workshops organised by different groups of artists involving clients of the foundation?

Stella Duque (SD): Art-therapy enables the expression of feelings and favours the possibility of dialogue where they can establish bonds with peers and overcome the isolation that in many occasions they have to face.

2.) How are these advantages reflected in the clients who leave the foundation once they reach the age of majority?

SD: It increases their possibilities of interacting and establishing relations with others who are not their peers, allowing them to venture into looking for employment and other occupational options, or helps them to integrate to other processes with other entities or art-spaces.

3.) How efficient is the process of reinsertion (to civil society) once the clients leave the foundation?

SD: We think it is too hard to refer to it in terms of efficiency, as there are too many situations that they have to face, some return to committing illegal activities, others survive with a low income but basically isolated, only relating to their friends from the foundation and there are others who get involved in occupational activities and even manage to find full-time jobs. Usually those who have children make more of an effort.

4.) How common is for them to return to the armed group they used to belong?

SD: We estimate that around 15% end up going back to the armed conflict, but usually not to the same group, they end up finding another one.

5.) What kind of opportunities do the clients find in a city like Bogota?

SD: Very few opportunities, and most of these are offered by organisations like Taller de Vida.
6.) How common is for the clients to use social networks and digital media (e.g. Facebook, Twitter)?

SD: Very common. But in most cases they change their names and publish information that is not real, like, for instance, that they are coursing studies in higher education.

7.) How does Taller de Vida regulate the information that its clients publish in social networks and digital media?

SD: They (the clients) must sign an agreement that commits them not to publish any information regarding the development of our projects.

(Next page: Appendix 4b – copy of original interview in Spanish)
Para Stella Duque -sobre taller de fotografía organizado en 2011

Taller De Vida <info@tallerdevida.org> 15 de agosto de 2012 06:15
Par: Mauricio Rivera <maurorivera8@gmail.com>

Apreciado Mauricio

Disculpa que no respondieramos antes

Enviamos la carta y nuestras respuestas

Stella Duque Cuesta

----- Original Message -----  
From: Mauricio Rivera  
To: info@tallerdevida.org  
Sent: Monday, July 16, 2012 10:00 PM  
Subject: Para Stella Duque -sobre taller de fotografía organizado en 2011  

Hola Stella,

Escribo para para enviarte el borrador de mi reflexión sobre el taller de fotografía que organicé el año pasado, la cual estoy incluyendo en mi tesis doctoral, que pienso entregar dentro de un mes aproximadamente. He decidido publicar el último borrador de mi tesis en mi pagina de internet: este es el hipervínculo al capítulo en cuestión (click acá). La página está online para que así puedas accederla, pero no la he publicitado ni mostrado a nadie. Lamentablemente, por ahora no tengo tiempo para traducirla. Como puedes ver, incluí unas fotos como material de apoyo, en las cuales, como habíamos acordado, no aparece ninguno de los participantes. Igual quería confirmar que no hay ningún problema con mostrar estas fotos. De ser así, necesitaría una autorización por escrito. Te estoy enviando dos cartas (una en español y otra en inglés) las cuales sólo tocaría firmar y de pronto hacer cambios en la parte de la firma (no sabía cual es tú título oficial dentro de la fundación o si eres tú quien firmaría la carta). Como puedes ver, mi borrador esta en una etapa casi final, sin embargo, sí es posible, me gustaría complementar mi análisis con una corta entrevista relacionada con el tema. Tengo que enviar mi tesis al editor para la revisión final el 31 de Julio, así que necesitaría las respuestas lo más pronto posible. Es una entrevista corta y no muy compleja, estas son las preguntas:

- ¿Qué ventajas percibe una fundación como Taller de Vida de los talleres de terapia de arte organizados por diferentes grupos, en los que participan los clientes de la fundación?

La terapia de arte posibilita la expresión de sentimientos y favorece la posibilidad de diálogo logrando establecer vínculos con otros y superar el aislamiento que en muchas ocasiones se enfrenta

- Cómo se ven reflejadas estas ventajas en los clientes que dejan la fundación al cumplir la mayoría de edad?

En la posibilidad de interactuar y establecer relaciones con otros que no son sus pares y atreverse a buscar empleo y otras opciones ocupacionales o par integrarse a otros procesos con otras entidades o espacios de arte

- Que seguimiento hace la fundación con respecto a los clientes que han dejado la fundación?

Realizamos un seguimiento que se proyecta por dos años para conocer su situación, obstáculos y también las capacidades y competencias para afrontarlas. Se ha constituido un fondo de emergencia para ayudar cuando
se les presentan situaciones difíciles relacionadas con su protección.

- ¿Qué tan eficaz es la reinserción en la sociedad de los clientes que han formado parte de algún grupo armado?

Consideramos que es muy difícil referirnos a ella en términos de eficacia porque son muchas las situaciones que se presentan, algunos vuelven a actividades delictivas, otros sobreviven con bajos aportes pero aislados relacionado solo con sus compañeros y otro grupo logra vincularse a actividades ocupacionales o a un empleo, sobre todo los que tienen hijos se esfuerzan

- ¿Qué tan común es que vuelvan al grupo armado al que pertenecían?

Consideramos que un 15% se revuelve al grupo armado pero no al mismo, escogen en la mayoría de los casos otro

- ¿Qué tipo de oportunidades encuentran los jóvenes en una ciudad como Bogotá?

Son muy pocas las oportunidades y estas se ofrecen desde organizaciones como Taller de Vida

- ¿Qué tanto hacen uso los clientes de la fundación de redes sociales y medios digitales de comunicación (ej. Facebook, twitter)?

Muchísimo uso, pero en la mayoría de los casos se cambian el nombre y colocan información que no es real, como por ejemplo que están cursando estudios superiores

- Cómo hace la fundación para regular la información que sus clientes publican en redes sociales y medios digitales?

Firman un compromiso que exige que no publiquen lo relaizado en el desarrollo del proyecto

Si me pueden ayudar con la entrevista y la autorización para incluir las fotos se los agradecería inmensamente. Le he recomendado la fundación a amigos que están interesados en hacer programas de arte terapéutico, puede que oigas de ellos en los próximos meses. En cuanto acabe la tesis seguiré buscando apoyos en Australia para seguir organizando programas de este tipo.

Espero que todo vaya bien por allá. Saludos y mucha suerte,

Mauricio

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Gmail - Para Stella Duque - sobre taller de fotografía organiz...
Appendix 5 – Transcript of interview with Claudia Escobar and Jorge Leiva from *My International Friend*

1.) What expectations did you have when you first developed the program of *My International Friend*?

**Jorge Leiva (JL):** One of our major drives was to maintain the bond we have forged with the *Arte Sin Fronteras Foundation*, with whom we have collaborated in other artistic projects before coming to Australia. Therefore, we developed *My International Friend* while thinking on how to continue helping them from the other side of the world.

**Claudia Escobar (CE):** We also wanted to raise awareness in the Australian community –particularly amongst young people- about the situation that some people from their same age group have to live in countries like Colombia.

2.) Have these expectations been fulfilled?

**JL:** I would say they have, but to a limited extent. So far, we have had successful experiences running the program, but we are also struggling in making it a sustainable project.

Regarding the attitude and the commitment of the participants: I believe the students from Colombia have shown more interest and have been more involved in their projects of collaborative art than their Australian counterparts.

**CE:** We have also had to face various logistical problems and limitations related, on the one hand, to the physical distance and the cultural differences between Colombia, Australia and Afghanistan; and also because we have had to develop the program in our free time while working full-time jobs.

**JL:** And without receiving any external funding.

3.) Can you explain how those cultural differences you mention have been reflected in the participants’ work?

**JL:** Sometimes it is hard to reconcile the different upbringings that the participants have had. For example, we had a student from Colombia who had suffered from
physical and sexual abuse within her family household and she expressed it quite graphically in the comic book she was creating together with her Australian counterpart. In that occasion we were forced to censor her artwork.

CE: We have also noticed a gap between the level of literacy and the technical qualities of the students from the different countries. Hence, there is a considerably big gap between the students in Australia and those in Colombia, which becomes more evident when we add the students from Afghanistan into the equation.

4.) What do you think is the most positive aspect of the program?

JL: Something quite positive about this project is that it offers a space and a voice for the participants to tell their own stories.

CE: It also promotes art as a therapeutic practice and hopefully might lead some of the participants into a career path in the arts.

JL: Another good thing, particularly in regard to the Australian participants, is that it widens the participants’ perception and shows them that the world is a bigger and far more complex place than what they can see in their daily realities.

5.) What do you think has been missing or can be improved for the realization of future programs?

JL: As mentioned earlier, we have identified various economic and logistical problems, which at the moment are preventing us from making My International Friend a sustainable project. Thus, the first thing I believe it is necessary for a successful development of this project is to have someone fully committed as the project’s coordinator.

CE: That is someone who is properly hired, maybe not as much as working full-time, but definitely someone who can be hold accountable for his role as coordinator.

JL: And unfortunately at the moment neither Claudia or myself can take care of this role.