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Social Media and Social Movements: A Critical Analysis of Audience's Use of Facebook to Advocate Food Activism Offline

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SOCIAL MEDIA AND SOCIAL MOVEMENTS: A CRITICAL ANALYSIS OF
AUDIENCE'S USE OF FACEBOOK TO ADVOCATE FOOD ACTIVISM OFFLINE

By

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This dissertation is dedicated to my loving dog Maya (2005-2010)

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ABSTRACT

As social media have become a ubiquitous part of our daily life, questions remained to be answered by scholars who study social movements and new communication technology. This dissertation explores the role and impact of Facebook as it pertains to the food movement in the United States. Applying three main theories derived from communication and sociology, this manuscript explores the usage of Facebook among ordinary citizens who take leadership roles to make a social difference at the policy level. Taking as a case study the Right to Know Rally, through a qualitative content analysis of all posts of the 42 Facebook pages of the Right to Know Rally, as well as interviews with selected participants of the event, this dissertation attempts to answer three main questions. First, through the lens of Habermas's concept of the public sphere this manuscript addresses whether Facebook reinforces or challenge the notion of the public sphere. Second, Castells's work of network analysis serves to understand how virtual relations affect a movement both online and offline. Third, applying leadership theories, this study explores how leadership is manifested on Facebook and who takes the lead both online and offline. Last chapter explores a question that has been at the center of many debates among scholars who are studying new communication technology. Does Facebook offer a bridge to civic engagement offline?

I argued that while Facebook poses problems for the privacy of an individual, its power lies in the functionality of reaching heterogeneous networks made out of individuals who might or might not being part of the Right to Know Rally movement. In lack of physical spaces to express freedom of speech, Facebook reinforces Habermas's notion of the public sphere, in which individuals from the comfort of their home can pitch in, taking at times leading roles. In this way new leaders emerge. These people do not have to possess a priori experience in social movements, but they do need to be active participants of the web and offline.

In terms of the impact of Facebook on online settings, while this study cannot generalize its finding, it was blatant during the analysis that the social medium has an effect on offline mobilization. More specifically, Facebook expands social networks outside the realm of the web, through the function of event planning. These event attracted bystanders who were encouraged to visit the web to find further information and take action.

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Overview

In the past few years, there has been a proliferation of Facebook pages created by activists in an attempt to organize and plan demonstrations against corporations, the government or other power entities. This rapid emergence of social media[1] activism has led scholars to: (1) question the role of new media tools in shaping social movements' agendas and influencing people's behavior and attitudes offline at the local and global level (Carty, 2011; Joyce, 2010; Lievrouw, 2011; Postmes & Brunsting, 2002); and (2) to dwell on the relationship between offline and online action (Postmes, 2007). This study attempts to understand how ordinary citizens pushed by a desire to express their opinion come together online to challenge the system. Among all of the existing social networks (Twitter, Flickr, Tumbrl, YouTube, Facebook), this dissertation focuses primarily on Facebook because it is the leading social networking service, outpacing even Google as of 2009, with active traffic of more than 900 million users ("Facebook Traffic," 2012; Pepitone, 2011). Facebook, therefore, carries collective power. Power is understood "to be the structural capacity of a social actor to impose its will over other social actor(s)" (Castells, 2007, p. 239), whereas counter power is defined as "the capacity of a social actor to resist and challenge power relations that are institutionalized" (Castells, 2007, p. 239).

The ongoing transformation and evolution of digital technology has extended to all domains of human society (Castells, 2007, 2009). As a result of this ubiquity and immersion, the way citizens challenge relations and advance social and political goals is through the use of an online network that shapes communication online and offline.

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[1] Social media is here understood as "the democratization of content and the understanding of the role people play in the process of not only reading and disseminating information, but also how they share and create content for others to participate. It is the shift from a broadcast mechanism to a many-to-many model, rooted in a conversational format between authors and people" (Solis, 2011, para. 46-48). For the purpose of this dissertation, the terms "social media" and "social networks" will be used interchangeably, denoting virtual spaces that allow the flow of information generated by a variety of people connected via the web.

Today, "power relations […] as well as the processes challenging institutionalized power relations are increasingly shaped and decided in the communication field" (Carty, 2011; Castells, 2007, p. 239), more specifically, in the online communication field, despite traditional media are still widely used (Lim, 2012).

From issues pertaining to nuclear power, to gender inequalities, to food sovereignty, social networks have become an integrated activist tool for the practice of civic engagement, broadly defined as "the collective actions designed to identify and address issues of public concern" (Carty, 2011; "Definition of civic engagement," 2009; de Zuniga & Valenzuela, 2011). These issues do not focus solely on political matters. On the contrary, there are community issues "conducive to the collective-being" (de Zuniga & Valenzuela, 2011, p. 399). Activities that carry civic engagement range from discussions on specific matters with family, friends or acquaintances, sharing information with others, signing petitions, talking to each other, and more.

The utilization of social media as a channel through which activists take action does not exclude recognition of the limitations these media carry when used as social instruments. In this respect, it is important to mention that these new communication technologies are part of a business model that operates within a capitalistic-corporate system. In May 2012, Facebook announced to go public offering a share of the company for $38 (Albanesius, 2012). The commercialization of Facebook illustrates that social media can survive in the fast-pace market of technology and innovation if they can allocate a source of revenue for other businesses. However, the sudden and stable crash in stock value for Facebook also points at a conflict within the corporate and capitalistic system. Within the first month Facebook's shares went down to $28 and as of today October 23, 2012, price per share is at $23 ("Fb Share," 2012). According to media experts Facebook's IPO was a disaster, which affected other businesses in the same sector from expanding and monetizing on similar communication technology. Companies who do not operate in new communication technologies are hesitant in investing in social media because data cannot be quantified in such a way to predict ROI (Return on Investment) (Adamoli, 2012; Swartz and Krantz, 2012). Given the situation social media like Facebook have provided to be helpful for citizens who are not concerned about the financial aspects of Facebook.

An example that illustrates how Facebook was utilized to mobilize offline action pertaining to food issues in the United States is the "Right To Know Rally." On March 26, 2011, citizens in Washington D.C., and 21 other U.S. states participated in the "Right to Know Rally," protesting the lack of genetically modified food labeling regulations ("21 states," 2011; Asis, 2011; Fields, 2011; Main, 2011; Robinson, 2011). The event was well attended and documented by citizens who took videos and pictures in response to the absence of mainstream media ("21 states," 2011; Fields, 2011; Main, 2011). Despite the limited coverage by mainstream media (Fields, 2011), the protests resulted in getting the attention of state representatives like Congressman Dennis Kucinich (U.S. Representative for the state of Ohio), who, in addressing the rally attendees, announced the reintroduction of three bills (H.R. 6635; H.R. 6636; H.R. 6637) aimed at protecting the health of the population (Asi, 2011; Main, 2011). These Acts include: the Genetically Engineered (GE) Food Right to Know Act, the GE Safety Act, and the GE Technology Farmer Protection Act ("Agriculture," 2011).

The "Right to Know Rally" was the result of an online grassroots campaign, launched over a year ago, by the Organic Consumers Association (OCA), an online grassroots, non-profit organization "campaigning for health, justice, and sustainability" ("about," 2011, para. 1-4). The campaign spread through the web, virally producing a snowball effect and creating a sustainable campaign that was still in effect as of January 2012. As a matter of fact, on October 16, 2011, World Food Day, activists protested against GMOs throughout the United States, continuing the march initiated over a year ago. As of December 2011, 42 event pages pertaining to the Millions against Monsanto[2] and GMO food labeling have been created on Facebook, each organizing a protest in specific cities throughout the nation. These pages take the name of the Right to Know rally.

Utilizing a variety of online tools, with specific attention to social media applications, activists were able to communicate, organize and plan the march to the White House, while keeping those people who could not attend the event informed. Nationwide, the event was attended by a number of 10 to 345 people concerned about

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[2] The Millions against Monsanto campaign aims to collect one million signatures illustrating that citizens want GMO food labeling regulations.

GMO issues (Schauland, personal communication, September 8, 2011). The social network Facebook became a communicative vessel for citizens to rearrange, create, diffuse, and appropriate resources provided by organizations like the OCA or concerned citizens (Lievrouw, 2011).

The utilization of social media like Facebook illustrates two points as they pertain to social movements and new media. First, it highlights the notion of structured versus unstructured activism. While the OCA's personnel created the main page for the campaign that organized the march to the White House, other members and activists took the initiative to create their own page, repurposing information found on the main OCA's page, while advocating for local activism (personal communication, September 8, 2011), thus becoming front runners of the cause. The mobilization of these resources by activists and citizens, as in the case of the "Right to Know Rally," illustrates that social media can promote a decentralized social structure, offering citizens a portal to advocate offline, at the local level, but also at the (inter)national level (Carty, 2011; Castells, 2009; Samules, 2011). Not only do social media foster decentralization of social structure, but they also redefine the role of leadership and what it means to be a leader of a movement in today's society. Traditional social movements' approaches to leaders have focused on effective strategies employed by organizational leaders, or personal traits that shape the ideal leader of a social movement (Diani, 1995; Ibarra, 2003). However, recent research has observed that the traditional notion of one only powerful leader and his/her followers does not exist within new movements that challenge notions of structure and organization, favoring instead a decentralization of leadership in which everyone has agency (Coopman, 2011; Ibarra, 2003, Diani, 1995; Morris & Staggenborg, 2004). The use of social media allow actors to take the place of leaders, engaging in deliberative communication that fosters coordinating of events, understanding of issues, and sharing of information.

Online resources then become mobilizing strategies defined as "collective vehicles, informal as well as formal, through which people mobilize and engage in collective action" (Carty, 2011, p. 9; Garrett, 2003; McAdam, McCarthy, & Zald, 1996, p. 6; Neumayer & Raffl, 2008). In alignment with the notion of promoting ideas crafted by citizens online, social media provide for the creation of what Habermas (1974, 1987,

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1996, 1998, 2006) calls the "public sphere," an inclusive civic forum aimed at building a healthy society (Habermas, 1989; Garrett, 2003). As Habermas's notion has been applied to political matters, this dissertation also includes de Zuniga and Valenzuela's (2011) study, which incorporates nonpolitical, civic-oriented activities. What I mean by this is that this research is interested in how online messages (political or non-political) posted on the many Right to Know rally pages on Facebook provide for a discussion on new dimensions of the public sphere, questioning the type of online and offline action that this new space fosters. What has changed since the introduction of social media in the discussion of the public sphere and communicative action theory? How has communication technology altered, challenged, or reinforced the concept of the public sphere?

Second, the use of Facebook posits questions on the relationship between online and offline activism. Over the past few years, the distinction between offline and online action has become increasingly complex due to the confluence of different spheres of life. This complexity has pushed scholars to elaborate on (pre)existing definitions of collective action with regard to the new and old world. This dissertation builds on Postmes and Brunsting's (2002) model of collective action, which emphasizes both offline and online action. In their model, collective action refers "to actions undertaken by individuals or groups for a collective purpose, such as the advancement of a particular ideology or idea, or the political struggle with another group" (p. 290-291). Furthermore, they divide collective action into two dimensions: (1) solitary action; and (2) group action. The former emphasizes persuasive actions including writing letters, posting pictures on social media, making phone calls, and boycotting products. Group actions refer to confrontational acts such as riots, on-site protest camps, barricades, and blockading (Huang, 2009; Pickerill, 2000). Both dimensions emphasize collectivity. This dissertation specifically focuses on solitary action, noting that "many individual actions might be perpetrated for individual purposes, but the number of these actions carry collective purpose, thus studying these events should not be underestimated" (Postmes and Brunsting, 2002, p. 292). Solitary action is favored because of the nature of Facebook. The social structure offers individuals to engage from the private comfort of their homes into solitary actions, such as sharing posts, pictures, responding to posts that have a

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collective purpose. Offline action in regard to online action is defined in accordance to Postmes & Brunsting (2002) and de Zuniga and Valenzuela's (2011) discussion of networks of (non)political nature and stratification of actions between the virtual and real world. In this dissertation, offline action is defined in regard to the role of social media and social movements. Offline action is a change in human activity originated by online resources with the intent of collective purpose. The web is used to encourage individuals to contest existing social structures outside the realm of the web. Examples range from reading an online article and then discussing it with friends and family at the dinner table, printing online information to distribute to face-to-face local meetings, using the web to collect information to attend a rally, attending a rally after having read online posts, and finding sponsors (Guth, 2007; Huang, 2009). [3]

The web is used as a channel to mobilize people online and offline, becoming integrated in a circular model of communication, made out of a complex networked architecture (Castells, 2007; Lievrouw, 2011). According to Lievrouw (2011), activists have absorbed the cultural logic of online networking into "all aspects of movement values and action, online and offline" (p. 166). Social movements' messages that circulate online are in a continuous circle of life, where they fluctuate between the virtual and real world, reinventing themselves as people consume these messages. Users can read messages created by organizations like the OCA, but they can also appropriate those messages by creating spin off pages and campaigns, or by reinforcing these messages outside the virtual web and vice versa. New media, like social media, are nonetheless a "combination of material artifacts, people's practices, and the social and organizational arrangements involved in the process of human communication" (Lievrouw, 2011, p. 15). In the "Right to Know Rally," offline actions that were recorded by people using smart phones and digital cameras were later posted on social media outlets, the same social media that was used to initiate the campaign. The importance of this circulation of communication rests on reinforcing the cause, inciting a type of action that leads to deliberative democracy (Habermas, 2006; McChesney, 2008). In this way, social

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[3] For a detailed list of offline actions with regard to online activities, please refer to the methodology section of this manuscript.

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movements' messages are in a continuous motion, in which messages are reborn to keep the movement alive, giving birth to new movements and new recruits. Social media, like Facebook, facilitate the process of human communication, which mediates and influences users' attitudes and beliefs on worldviews (Castells, 2007; Du Gay, 1997). In alignment with Lievrouw (2011), Castells (2007), Juris (2005, 2008), and Carty (2011), new media are used both as channels for ends and modes of communicative action. As Lievrouw (2011) summarizes, "Contemporary movements manifest a "cultural logic of networking" or "network ideal" that is expressed in both the social/technical structures and the communicative actions among participants (Juris, 2005, p. 192) (p. 161). Thus, studying the use of online media tools becomes fundamental to understand cultural meanings of messages produced, distributed and consumed over the web (Morrison, 2002) because there is a blending of messages with channels, material with social, means with ends, and offline with online (Lievrouw, 2011, p. 161).

After the success of the "Right to Know Rally," more protests have been organized through Facebook periodically to encourage food policy changes as well as to inform consumers. New causes have emerged (e.g., a ballot initiative for GMOs labeling in California) and old ones have strengthened. These demonstrations are important to study as they illustrate not only a shift in the mechanics used by activists to plan, organize and create awareness around a certain issue. By integrating web technologies, they also show the evolution of a communicative model in which messages float between two worlds, reinventing themselves and shaping human activities (Carty, 2011; Castells, 2007; Du Gay, 1997; Juris, 2005; 2008; Lievrouw, 2011). As mainstream media limit human understanding of food issues, especially in regard to GMOs, citizens have learned how to fill that gap utilizing social media applications and devices such as smart phones (Carty, 2011; Castells, 2007; Joyce, 2010; Lievrouw, 2011). As an activist at the 2011 march points out, "Policymakers haven't upheld this right (GMOs food labeling), and now mobile technology has given us the opportunity to do it for them. Every time we widen our database, we get closer to total food transparency—the day when biotech companies won't be able to hide behind incomplete labels any longer" ("21 states," 2011, para. 21-24). The quote refers to the importance of new technology for civic engagement, allowing resources to be appropriated by citizens with the aim of creating awareness and

bringing social and political change. The increased focus on new media applications and social media, like Facebook, has identified these new media as a tool to reinvent social activism; "Where activists were once defined by their causes, they are now defined by their tools" (Gladwell, 2010, para. 52-53).

The increase of relying on new communication devices and technologies to pursue activism is problematic. On one side, the use of social media can benefit a movement by creating a buzz around an issue, reach a wide audience, and possibly influence individuals to take some sort of action. On the other hand, defining activists by social media can lead to a capitalization of activism. These tools are commercial instruments and despite an appropriation from citizens corporate interests might limit activists' future uses. Thus, precaution must be taken when studying new media and social movements.

As more emphasis is placed on resources that shape communication and civic engagement, scholars are left to question the role of online tools with regard to offline action as it pertains to social movements and communication. Do social media offer a bridge to civic engagement that extends offline? Do social media represent the modern public sphere made out of social ties of heterogeneous people? Do social media foster decentralized leadership? Many scholars would agree that the Internet can contribute to offline action, especially in regard to political engagement (Carty, 2011; Garrett, 2003; Leizerov, 2000; Mossberger et al., 2008; Joyce, 2010; Wojcieszak, 2009); while others are still critical about the effects of digital mobilization in offline settings (Bimber, 1998; Nickerson, 2007; Vissers, et al., 2011). Nevertheless, limited research has been conducted on Facebook users' online civic interactivity that fosters offline actions (Loader & Dan Mercea, 2012). What do Facebook activists do with online information once they log out? What type of discussion do users engage in on Facebook? If they engage in civic participation by exchanging information, do they bring that learned knowledge outside the walls of the Internet?

1.2 Food Issues

In recent years there has been an increased attention on food issues around the globe (Click & Ridberg, 2010; Cramer et al., 2011; Nestle, 2002; Pollan, 2006, 2010; Schlosser, 2001; Veronesi, 2010; Ward, Coveney, & Henderson, 2010; Wright &

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Middendorf, 2008). This increased attention, especially in the United States, can be attributed to the rapid rise in obesity; the lack of local, state and federal involvement in promoting nutrition and wellbeing; the lack of scientific evidence in regard to the effects of eating certain foods; the increased involvement of biotechnology in foods; and the role of media in covering food stories (Click & Ridberg, 2010; Nestle, 2002; Pollan, 2006, 2010; Veronesi, 2010; Ward, Coveney, & Henderson, 2010; Wright & Middendorf, 2008). Marion Nestle, a nutritionist professor at New York University, attributes the rapid rise of obesity to governmental agricultural policies started in the 1970 that have benefited private food and biotechnological corporations. According to the author of *Food Politics* (2002), "I have become increasingly convinced that many of the nutritional problems of Americans – not least of them obesity - can be traced to the food industry's imperative to encourage people to *eat more* in order to generate sales and increase income in a highly competitive marketplace" (p. 4). The dichotomy of the food system between multinational firms and governmental entities is furthered discussed by other scholars, journalists, and/or researchers. In the documentary, *Food Inc.* (2010), directed by Robert Kenner, Michael Pollan, author of *The Omnivore's Dilemma* (2006), highlights the dangerous power that food corporations hold in regard to not only the health of the population, but also to citizens' right to know. In her thesis, *Milking the Media: The U.S. Political Economy's Obstruction of Food Free Speech* (2010), Lauren Asmus discusses the way food censorship in the media illustrates the critical shortcomings of the legal system in protecting free speech and public wellbeing when corporate America holds large levels of power and lobbying in public goods. As she notes, "Consumer health is at risk because it is faced with a media no longer capable or confident to discuss food concerns" (Asmus, 2010, p. 1), indicating how food multinational companies are deeply rooted in each branch of the US political and social apparatus.

This saturated media environment poses limits to participatory democracy, as citizens are restricted in terms of what kind of news they receive (Bagdikian, 2004; Castells, 2009; McChesney, 2008; Mosco, 2009). Consequently, these citizens have a hard time participating actively and deliberatively in policy-making (Lievrouw, 2011; McChesney, 2008; Mosco, 2009). Scholars in political economy of media have observed that throughout the later part of the twentieth century, a handful of major media

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corporations have dominated the content and structures of the news, from movies and music to magazines and TV programming (Bagdikian, 2004; Bettig & Hall, 2003; McChesney, 2008; Mosco, 2009). In this context, citizens are viewed only as consumers whose sole point is to adopt a consumerist lifestyle (Bagdikian, 2004; Bettig & Hall, 2003; McChesney, 2008; Mosco, 2009). This promulgation of consumerist ideologies has been present also in the representation of food in the media (Cramer et al., 2011).

Media consolidation, in conjunction with interlocking board of directors, joint ventures and interlocking stock ownership and the lack of quality and diverse content of programming, have created an environment that favors social movement activity (Garnett, 2003). With accessibility to new media tools, citizens, in the past few years, have had opportunities to challenge established views, be more informed and politically mobilize (Garnett, 2003; Hara & Estrada, 2005; Neumayer & Raffl, 2008; van de Donk et al., 2004). With the rise of the Internet and the advancement of communication technology, a new generation of citizenship is emerging. Social movements scholars refer to this new movement in several ways, from "digital citizenship," "cyberprotest," "digital activism," "media activism," and "e-activism" (van de Donk et al. 2004; Earl & Kimport, 2011; Joyce, 2010; Mossberger, et al., 2008; Pickerill, 2003).

For the purpose of this dissertation, any mention of these words (digital citizenship, cyberprotest, digital activism, media activism, e-activism, cyberactivism) relates specifically to the appropriation and use of new media tools by consumers and citizens in response to the gap of information from the prominent and "traditional"[4] media environment. This definition follows Joyce's (2010) definition of digital activism as the use of "digital technology in grassroots efforts to achieve social and political change" ("Digital Activism," 2011, para. 23-25). It must be noted that the above terms ("digital citizenship," "cyberprotest," "digital activism," "media activism," "e-activism," and "online activism") will be used interchangeably and that "new media" in the specific context of this research refers to social media networks, like Facebook and its applications, unless otherwise noted. Furthermore, Lievrouw's (2011) discussion on mediated communication helps to identify another layer to the definition of digital activism in relation to communication. Lievrouw (2011) defines mediated

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[4] Traditional media are here referred to television, radio, and print media.

communication as the collaborative process among like-minded people through the use of online tools (e.g., e-petitions, e-mails, blogs, videos). The term rests on the idea of a participatory engagement with the scope of cultivating relationships and mobilizing for a common cause (Lievrouw, 2011, p. 25, 149-176).

Recent international and national protests (e.g. Egypt, Syria, Italy, Lybia, USA) illustrate that media are indeed a powerful tool, both for left and right activists, that influence political choices and encourage collective action when these tools are appropriated by citizens (Boyd, 2011; Eltantawy & Wiest, 2011; Kirkpatrick, 2011; Mainwaring; 2011; Preston, 2011; Rohlinger, 2011). The images and videos of these protests that have been divulged around the world through social media such as Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, and Youreporter indicate that mainstream media (e.g. TV, newspapers) are not sufficient sources of information, and that citizens are responding to this lack of information with the appropriation of alternative media.[5] It is not a surprise that Wikileaks and Twitter have been nominated for the 2011 and 2009, respectively, Nobel Peace Prize (Indvik, 2011; Snol, 2009), indicating that these types of awards should not be confined to a single person; rather it is the use by collective groups that determines humanitarian qualities. By taking advantage of emerging media technology, citizens can engage in participatory communication that challenges the status quo and existing power structures. Web-based social software applications are portals for the cultivation of interpersonal communication that facilitates mobilization of networks "to engage in live and mediated collective action" (Lievrouw, 2011, p. 25). As noted by Boyd (2011),

> Ideas spread more rapidly in densely connected social networks. So tools that increase the density of social connection are instrumental to the changes that spread. […] And, more importantly, increased density of information flow (the number of times that people hear things) and of the emotional density (as individuals experience others' perceptions about events, or 'social contextualization') leads to an increased likelihood of radicalization: when people decide to join the revolution instead of watching it (para. 44-51; Mainwaring, 2011, para. 19-24).

Emphasis is not placed on leaders, as change is achieved through collective action,

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[5] Alternative media is here defined in accordance to Lievrouw (2011)'s definition as: "alternative/activist new media employ or modify the communication artifacts, practices, and social arrangements of new information and communication technologies to challenge or alter dominant, expected, or accepted ways of doing society, culture, and politics" (p. 19).

through the masses. Nominating social media for the Noble Peace Prizes presents a new understanding of the potentials that new channels of communication have to allow change to occur. Analyzing the role of online resources for mobilization becomes fundamental to understanding the evolution of civic engagement.

1.3 Problem Statement and Purpose of Study

Social media, like Facebook, have recently become virtual public spheres where individuals exchange ideas on (tras)national and local matters (Bennett, 2003; Castells, 2007; Cramer et al., 2011; Habermas, 1987, 1996, 2006), by making comments, sharing information, donating money, and/or organizing online and offline actions. In recent years, scholars have focused on social media activism in an effort to explain the evolution of social and political revolutions as well as the role of alternative media, such as in the case of the Iranian election in 2009 (Gaffney, 2010), the turmoil in Egypt, Libya, and Tunisia in 2010 (Eltantawy & Wiest, 2011; Jansen, 2010), the Occupy Wall Street demonstrations (Preston, 2011), or the continuous protests in Italy and Greece (Boyd, 2011; Goodman, 2011; Kirkpatrick, 2011; Mainwaring; 2011; Preston, 2011; Reuters, 2011). One common assumption among these studies is the understanding that: "Whether information emancipates rather than controls citizens depends upon the extend to which there is scope to challenge, argument, or reject the authority of officially given knowledge" (Coleman 2007, p. 367), meaning that social media can be used by people as a vessel that challenges when there is injustice in the existing system. This injustice pushes citizens to find alternative means (social media) to connect with others who share same interests and causes (Garnett, 2003). People have used social media to empower and impact individuals' ability to take action in a new manner, redefining not only the citizen-consumers, but also what it means to take action. Social media have become to serve as a public sphere for citizens to discuss public issues and find a solution to resolve problems. This is not to say that social media are free of power structural constrains. It is important to reinforce the fact that these media are profit-driven by private companies. However, the focus is on users' agency of these alternative media. The question revolves around how citizens use these tools to counter act governmental and corporate practices.

In regard to food politics, the use of social media has the potential not only to expose socio-economic issues to a wider segment of the population, but it can also foster

an ongoing civic engagement by encouraging citizen-consumers to talk to each other and exchange opinions with scholars, experts, scientists, teachers, and parents (Kaplan et al., 2011; Montgomery & Chester, 2011). For example, Marion Nestle utilizes a variety of online channels to divulge information about food issues, ranging from her own blog at www.foodpolitics.com to her Twitter account twitter.com/marionnestle and Facebook profile https://www.facebook.com/profile.php?id=100000735513468.

This flow of information fills a gap left, for example, from nutritional and health outreach programs based on traditional communication models that "are crafted to reach mono-generational audiences without the active participation of other family members who can influence each other's food-related attitudes and behaviors" (Kaplan et al., 2011, p. 338). Kaplan et al. (2011) observe the limitations of traditional communicative programs that see receivers of food information as a passive entity. While the study does not revolve around social media in fostering family decision-making on food-related matters, a point remains relevant. Involvement of individuals in the decision-making process is fundamental to influence changing behavior and attitudes. Because social media promotes interaction, it is opportune to devote research on the relation between online and offline behavior and attitude using food as a case study. Furthermore, social movements cannot rely on mass media or outreach programs to meet their agenda and mobilize citizens, as these movements are confined by power structures (Huang, 2009), leaving them to adopt alternative media such as social media, radio, videos, etc.

The Right to Know rally's Facebook users share in common the notion that the food system needs reform, pushing for sustainable agricultural laws as well as a change in human behavior and attitudes toward the environment and the way we eat. One of the latest initiatives promoted on the Facebook by citizens and organizations such as the OCA is the GMO labeling ballot initiative in California, which seeks to gather 504,760 signatures ("Label GMO," n.p.). The law, if passed, will require mandatory labeling for GMO products in the state of California. Other topics of discussion on the web revolve around stopping genetically engineered fish, sugar, and corn production for human consumption and boycotting companies who relies on GMO products. In general, Facebook is used to "supply information and mobilization opportunities for the nations 50 million organic and socially responsible consumers" ("Causes," 2011, n.p.).

Users interact on the web through a variety of applications, including links to donations, e-petitions, sharing information with other members or friends, uploading videos and photos and engaging in civic debates with other web users. Through a call for action, organizations like the OCA, its members and nonmembers, plan and organize offline events, aiming to challenge the food system. Campaigns are launched via the web to rally supporters, raise awareness and money, and recruit new members. What is the role of Facebook users in the "Right to Know" rally? How do these users use Facebook as a space to organize protests or share information? What do users discuss on Facebook and how do they discuss civic issues? What leads to civic discussion and participation? And who takes the functions of leadership in such a decentralized network? Does this public space facilitate offline mobilization? What does Facebook add to the discussion about the public sphere? This dissertation explores Facebook users of the Right to Know rally's event pages to understand whether Facebook enhances or hinders the public sphere that allows people to organize offline events. It also questions the role of leadership in today's social movements in relation to Facebook. Ultimately, this manuscript explores whether Facebook as a public sphere fosters offline action.

This dissertation offers to answer the above questions with an empirical study of the Right to Know rally Facebook members' use of media applications that have the potentials to influence offline mobilization. Messages posted by moderators and users will be analyzed to determine the following: (1) role of leadership in a decentralized structure; (2) role of Facebook as a public sphere; (3) role of social ties in social media; and (4) role of social media for offline mobilization. In this case, the "Right to Know" rally event launched by the Organic Consumers Association was selected for its predominance on Facebook. By exploring relations between Facebook users activities (online activism) and offline actions, this study explores how online information is disseminated, consumed, and transformed into agency offline. This study is a response to Garnett (2003), Joyce (2010), and Mossberger et al.'s (2008) call-to-action, to expand the research on social movements and the internet. In particular, this dissertation adds to current scholarship by including an analysis of social media and their applications (Joyce, 2010), using a Habermasian perspective as well as drawning from Castells's work on network analysis. This study examines a new area of research in digital activism,

audience member use of new media for food activism. The data for this study was collected primarily using in-depth interviews and qualitative content analysis of posts. In-depth interviews were conducted with those participants who indicated a willingness to participate in the study. Messages posted by users were analyzed to determine if they reflected Habermas's ideal public sphere. In addition, these posts were analyzed to understand how leadership in heterogeneous social structures who share commonality manifested on the web.

The three main arguments of this dissertation are the following. First, Facebook enhances civic engagement. Facebook can serve as a public sphere, where individuals with different social backgrounds can gather together to discuss public issues. These discussions lead to civic participation and mobilization online and offline. Thus, Facebook not only provides a space for individuals to enhance democratic participation, but it provides the tools to convert critical reasoning into physical action. Second, Facebook can enhance social bonds (social networks) with heterogonous individuals who, despite their anonymity, come together under one common goal. Digital communication technology (Fb) has created new forms of social networks and networked power, empowering citizen-consumers and giving them the tools to reconstruct power relations. Third, Facebook can enhance decentralization of leadership. Leaders are important, but leadership is not seen in the traditional social movements perspective. Everyone has the potentials and opportunities to function as a leader, when needed. The emphasis is on tasks, rather than personal traits.

The framework for this study is a cross fertilization of theories across disciplines that focuses on social movements and communication in mass media. In particular this dissertation uses two major theories and one sub-theory: (1) Habermas's concept of the public sphere; (2) Castells's social network analysis; and (3) various scholarship on leadership in social movements. The concept of the public sphere by Habermas, in addition to other works by him and other scholars, is included to provide a current overview of the public sphere. Ultimately, this dissertation attempts to offer an insight on the public sphere of the 21st century. The concept of the public sphere is discussed in relation to Castells's idea of the social network, a structure made out of ties among people. Castells's discussion is used as a premise to the construction of the ideal virtual

public sphere. Hence, another concept linked to both Castells and Habermas that must be included in the discussion is the notion of the citizen-consumer as defined by Johnston (2008) and Scammel (2000). This idea serves to illustrate the complexity of today's social movements and communicative practices.

The major contribution of this dissertation is providing a discussion on the role of Facebook in mobilizing offline action, despite criticism from political economist scholars who contest that the Internet and hence Facebook falls under capitalistic power structures and relations (McChesney, 2008; Mosco, 2009), losing real potentials to bring revolution. Another major contribution of this dissertation is expanding the scholarship in digital media and mobilization, by asserting that current and past social movements theories are not sufficient in explaining the phenomenon of social media in social movements; thus, suggesting that we need to draw from a variety of theories within different disciplines to explain certain phenomena of the digital sphere. This claim is in alignment with other scholars including Coopman (2011) who offers a new theory to analyze digital mobilization. Therefore, this dissertation lays the foundation for the development of a new theoretical framework more suitable for social media (Internet). The Internet has becoming such an interactive tool that we need to come up with new theories to understand rapid social movements events. A last contribution of this manuscript revolves around the methodology chosen to conduct this study. Chapter 6 in particular addresses a need to reconsider existing methods of research when studying social media.

By conducting a qualitative content analysis of Facebook's posts and interviews with Facebook users, this manuscript provides new evidence on why and how Facebook can be indeed a powerful social movement tool, redefining not only what it means to be an activist, but also redefining past and current theories of social movements that limit and fail to provide a true understanding of the potentials of new communication technology via web.

1.4 Research Questions

Until recently, activists were limited in terms of media exposure, by a consolidated media environment in the hand of a power elite (Mosco, 2009). Even with the rise of the Internet, activists were restricted to creating a web page visible only to those who specifically searched for that page. With the emergence of social media,

especially Facebook, organizations striving to challenge the system saw an opportunity to disseminate information globally, immediately, cost-efficiently, online and offline (Carty, 2011; Joyce, 2010; Mossberger et al., 2008; Samuels, 2011). Messages posted on one's page suddenly appeared on others' pages, reinforcing the meaning of those messages. While research on digital activism revolves around exploring capabilities of new media technologies that lead to mobilization (Joyce, 2010), a gap remains in understanding how online messaging created with new media tools used in specific campaigns can influence offline civic engagement. Thus, the overall question that this dissertation explores is whether social media can serve as a bridge to offline civic engagement. The main argument of this dissertation is that Facebook does mobilize offline, because it provides a space (public sphere) for citizen-consumers to exchange information, organize, and discuss issues rationally. More specifically, this study addresses the following questions.

RQ1. Do Facebook users of the Right to Know rally event pages engage in discussions on the wall of the Facebook page that encourage critical reasoning and civic engagement? If so, do these conversations result in some type of offline action?

RQ2. What do Facebook users of the Right to Know rally event pages mostly respond to? And how do they engage with each other?

RQ2. How is leadership manifested on the Right to Know rally event pages on Facebook? Does one single individual dominate the conversations present on any of the pages of the Right to Know rally on Facebook? Who assumes the function of the leader? What kinds of lead tasks do some Facebook users of the Right to Know rally event pages engage in?

RQ4. Do Facebook users of the Right to Know rally event pages use the web to organize offline? If so, what do they do offline? What type of networks are establish online and offline?

RQ5. Does Facebook challenge or reinforce Habermas's notion of the public sphere? If so, how?

As a case study, this research focuses on the Right to Know rally event pages present on Facebook. Currently they are 42 active Facebook profiles associated with the Right to Know rally. More details will be provided in the methodology section of this dissertation, including why this case is important for other scholars who do not necessarily focus on food studies.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF LITERATURE AND RESEARCH

2.1 Introduction

Social movements have been analyzed and understood using different traditions and theories that emphasize diverse aspects of collective actions. This multiplicity of approaches is due in part to reflect change, not only in theory, but also in society (Buechler, 2000). For example, after the turbulence of the 1960's, new theories developed and new traditions based on differences in sociohistorical and cultural contexts emerged (e.g., resource mobilization in America versus new social movements theories in Europe). Today, with the rapid change in technology and globalized population, many scholars are left to explain the complexity of social movements, at times, and more often cross-fertilizing theories across traditions and disciplines (Crossley; 2002; Huang, 2009; Mayo, 2005). It is within this scenario that this dissertation constructs a conceptual scheme by drawing upon two theories across disciplines in social movements and communication studies: (1) Habermas's concept of the public sphere and the communicative action theory; and (2) Castells's network analysis. In addition, scholarship in leadership within social movements will be analyzed in conjunction with Castells and Habermas.

The first part of this chapter begins with an overview of Habermas. Thus, a summary of *Structural Transformation* will provide the foundation for a discussion on the modern public sphere. This part of the discussion will include a special section on mass media and the public sphere. Next, the main points from Castells's concept of the social network paradigm will be identified. This part ends with a discussion on how Habermas and Castells can be linked together when studying social movements and mass media. Next, the concept of the citizen-consumer is introduced and discussed as it pertains to agency, followed by an overview of the literature on leadership in social movements. Next, this chapter provides a historical and current overview of social movements theories applicable to studying and understanding food movements. This section includes a definition of social movement and food movement. Last, online activism is defined, illustrating the democratic and political role of the Internet.

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2.1.1 Through the lens of Habermas

To address food issues that affect the entire population, citizens have engaged in a variety of social actions to influence governmental and private entities or inform other consumers. Some scholars have observed that the internet has played an important role in mobilizing people to act online and offline, either by calling state representatives, marching on the streets or informing other consumers (Carty, 2011; McCaughey & Ayers, 2003; Salter, 2003; van de Donk et al., 2004). These web actors have become "provider of direct assistance and advocacy" (Guth, 2007, p. 3), using the web as a platform to discuss solutions to public issues. The internet then becomes source for the creation of what Habermas calls a public sphere, a forum where communication as speech and language offers the basics for citizens to participate and engage in decisions that will affect their lives (Habermas, 1996).

The concept of the public sphere is important for several reasons. First, Habermas's ideas can be useful to understand how people come together to resolve public issues. Hence, an analysis through his lens enlightens us on the way people behave as single individuals and as a whole, regardless of geographical proximity or close physical and emotional networks. Second, the concept of public sphere is useful because it helps explain the mechanics used to resolve public issues. Studying what and how people utilize technological communication resources provide an insight regarding how the concept of the public sphere has evolved over the years. Most importantly, it illustrates how Habermas's work is still applicable in today's society. Furthermore, a discussion on the tools used by activists reaffirms and redefines the importance of communication in maintaining democracy in society. Third, the concept of the public sphere is valuable in understanding the communicative channels used to challenge the system. Not only does Habermas help us to take into account individual agency through communication speech, but he also raises the question of the role of technological structure. What is technology (e.g., Internet) and how does it relate to human action? Furthermore, how do communicative channels help the 'lifeworld' and the system in coordinating society?

The purpose of this section of the dissertation is twofold. First, the concept of public sphere originated with Habermas is analyzed through his work and his successors'

endeavors to redefine and expand on his concept. Second, applications of the Habermasian approach to the Internet are discussed, providing a platform for a justification of using his theory for the case study of the Right to Know rally and Facebook. This framework also helps to draw a connection between Habermas's ideas and Castells's concept of social network. Together, these theories will be used to suggest that a new approach to studying new communication technology is needed.

2.1.2 Public sphere: Yesterday, today and tomorrow

The concept of the public sphere originated with Habermas in his book, *Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere: An Inquiry into a Category of Bourgeois Society*, published in 1962. Since then, other scholars from a variety of disciplines including communication, humanities, and political science have extensively critiqued or embraced the concept, at times formulating their own versions of the public sphere (Ferre et al., 2002; McKee, 2005; Salter, 2003). Overall, scholars can agree that the public sphere revolves around the idea of providing a space where citizens can gather to discuss public issues, without the coercion of state or corporate authority. Using critical reasoning, individuals agree upon a solution to a problem (Ferre et al. 2002; Habermas, 2005; McKee, 2005; Salter, 2003; Templin, 2009). According to Habermas (1974), a public sphere refers to "a domain of our social life where such a thing as public opinion can be formed where citizens …deal with matters of general interest without being subject to coercion…[to] express and publicize their views" (p. 49-50). The public sphere is a space, whether virtual or physical, where messages float, are exchanged, debated and interpreted by others in the attempt to reach a common solution to a public problem (Ferre et al., 2002; Habermas, 1974; McKee, 2006; Salter, 2003).

In *Structural Transformation,* Habermas (1989) provides an analysis of the rise and fall of a public sphere from the 17th through the 20th century. He attributes a change in public participation to economic, political, and social events that shaped society at that time. Focusing on Germany, France, and England, he claims that a new power class (bourgeois) gathered around salons and coffee shops to talk about public issues, with the result of affecting policy-making decisions. This change in citizenry was possible due to the flourishing of mercantile trade throughout Europe, which assumed a foundational role in economic and political life because it created new structural and cultural forms of

communication and economic power (Goode, 2005). While during the Middle Ages, feudalism locked state military and public budget power under one entity (king, church and lords), the 17th century saw the polarization of "feudals powers, the Church, the prince, and the nobility, who were the carriers of the representative publicness" (Habermas, 1989, p. 11), which resulted in the separation of powers and the development of organs of public authority (e.g., parliament).

One of the major contributions of the emergence of a bourgeois public sphere was the establishment of a "public discourse as a mode of social integration separated from the state and political economy" (Templin, 2009, p. 79). The bourgeoisie through their practice of private commerce built a civil society, where private issues became subjects of public conversations around coffee shops, salons, and theatres. Habermas borrowed the concept of civil society from Hegel, defining it as the sphere of production and exchange, elements belonging to the private sphere. Hence, this sphere was subject to its own laws.

The economic expansion gave power to a new class of citizens who first distanced themselves from state and church authority, to later influence state legislatures. The shift of power, from kings to the bourgeois class consisting of merchants resulted much from a mode of communicative action determined by rational-critical reasoning, social equality, and universal access to the public sphere. These three elements allowed the public sphere to operate "as an intermediary system between state and society" (Habermas, 2006, p. 412) and are still today the foundation of the ideal public sphere.

To facilitate the process of citizenry, media (e.g., newsletters, newspapers, magazines) were used to diffuse ideas. While the press of the 17th century relied on private correspondences with other traders and the commodification of the medium and its content, it is not until the 18th century that the media played a political and public role Habermas, 1989). Hence, scholars or experts of special subjects (e.g., medicine) provided information, including historical reports, to discover 'the truth,' much in alignment with ideas embedded in the Enlightenment. At this point of the discussion of the public sphere, it is useful to differentiate the term in accordance with each century (17th, 18th, 19th, 20th). So far in the discussion, the public sphere of the 17th century has been characterized by a change in landscape, which gave rise to a civil society. Regularized printed

communication reached a wider audience of public interest. However, the content of the news was still narrowed in nature, reaching only a specialized public, because "merchants were satisfied with a system that limited information to insiders" (Habermas, 1989, p. 16).

The 18th century marked the rise of a literary public sphere around intellectual salons, political theatre, concerts, and museums that relied on critical reasoning. The previous public sphere of aristocrats was replaced by an aspiring bourgeois passionate about private-public matters. Habermas (1989) points out: "For the experiences about which a public passionately concerned with itself sought agreement and enlightenment through the rational-critical public debate of private persons with one another flowed from the wellspring of a specific subjectivity" (p. 43). Individuals used their intellectual capacities to discuss private issues in public spaces, diffusing ideas via print and face-to-face. As Habermas (1989) discusses: "The privatized individuals who gathered here to form a public were not reducible to 'society'; they only entered into it, so to speak, out of a private life that had assumed institutional form in the enclosed space of the patriarchal conjugal family" (p. 46). Private sphere was connected to the public sphere, by the commodification of goods and culture. Habermas initially sees the commodification of culture as a positive aspect of society, because it is through this commodification that well-reasoned ideas can reach others, resulting in democratic debates. It is only beginning half of the 19th century that Habermas attributes the mass commodification of culture to the shrinking of the public sphere. In his discussion, mass media, concerned more with money than quality and diversity, commodified culture for the masses, losing any relevant democratic element.

Habermas (1989) observes that in the 18th century the bourgeoisie class felt emancipated from state and confined to the private sphere when factually private matters were indeed public and of state noteworthy. The notion of free market and laissez-faire emerged when the bourgeois family recognized its own consciousness and with it the right to freely and publicly discuss and debate. The literary public sphere spread beyond printed pages. Debates gave rise to action, pushing the state to adopt legislatures of 'public interest.' Critical reason analyzed public issues and opposed state authority, preventing domination from the state. The 18th century marked the emergence of a sphere that "can be described as a network for communicating information and points of view"

(Habermas, 1996, p. 360), reproduced through communicative action. Habermas (1989) refers to this realm as a political sphere, which aimed to "secure the protection and integrity of the private sphere" (Goode, 2005, p. 9) and ironically led to its own fall in the 19th and 20th centuries.

At the core of the ideal public sphere of the 18th century rested the act of citizens engaging in critical public debate. This space was formed by "a public consisting of private persons whose autonomy based on ownership of private property wanted to see itself represented as such in the sphere of the bourgeois family and actualized inside the person as love, freedom, and cultivation – in a word, as humanity" (Habermas, 1989, p. 55). Hence, the public role of citizens became associated to ownership of property and humanity. This public sphere took the political function within this specific historical context delineated by the development and establishment of early capitalism. The state responded to the growing economy and people's interests by providing state rights to individuals belonging to the public sphere. As Habermas (1989) discusses, "the constitutional state as a bourgeois state established the public sphere in the political realm as an organ of the state so as to ensure institutionally the connection between law and public opinion" (Habermas, 1989, p. 81). The state strategy was to link the public to an idea of normative laws. Law was considered to be conceding out of rational-critical reason. Hence, the state alleviated ideas of oppression and domination by encapsulating ideas of the public sphere into the state apparatus. Habermas (1989) observes that the new public sphere conceived " as system whose immanent laws afforded the individual a sure foundation for calculating his economic activity rationally according to the standard of profit maximization" (p. 86). Capitalism was at work. Individuals were assured a free market where products could be exchanged for estimated 'value,' fueling the machine of production, distribution, and consumption. Class became the interest of public opinion, changing once again the public sphere. Habermans (1989) refers to the transformation of the late 18th century ideal public sphere as the bourgeoisie constitutional state sphere.

By the 19th century the public sphere had been deconstructed to meet a growing capitalistic economy and emerging population needs. The state, to lose the dogmatic connotation of previous centuries, launched and supported welfare programs, including social services, pensions, medical care, accident insurance and guidance on health habits.

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The state began to function as a protector of the citizens and promoter of the economic and social well-being of the population. Habermas criticized the involvement of state in private matters, by referring to a floodlit privacy. In other words, the private sphere without having to worry about necessary problems, were redirected to the "inner areas of the conjugal family largely relieved and function and weakened authority" (Habermas, 1989, p. 159). People found themselves with plenty of leisure time at their disposal. He criticized state involvement because it destroyed the double role of an individual as homme and bourgeois. Left with no private matters to discuss in the public sphere, individuals exchanged critical reasoning with consumption. As Goode (2005) points out, "a culture debating public, had according to Habermas, been displaced by a culture of consuming public" (p. 18). Urban planning and mass media helped solidifying a new consumerist culture at the expense of a public sphere. By the 20th century, the public sphere was characterized by interlocks between society-corporations and state. Capitalism had infiltrated the state and the private sphere by producing an audience of passive receivers, consumed by televised propaganda. Mass media brought to the private sphere the illusion of being part of a public sphere, by assuming advertising functions (Habermas, 1989). Citizens became consumers preoccupied with leisure activities, while corporate owners became public figures intertwined with politics.

Habermas spent considerable time discussing the role of mass media in the disintegration of the public sphere into a culture of consumption. In his view the mass media promulgated a culture industry that shaped the civic involvement of citizens. Literary periodicals were replaced by "advertiser-financed illustrated magazines" with the sole intention of making a profit (Habermas, 1989, p. 163). Salons were dissolved, and with them the social-political aggregation of people, of a community coming together. Group activities assumed more and more individual forms of relationship, with people spending hours in front of their television or in front of a movie theatre screen, without having to engage in conversations. While Habermas acknowledged the utility of the media in advancing the ideal public sphere, he concludes that mass media of the 19th and 20th century were one of the contributors to the disintegration of the 18th century public sphere. As he notes:

To be sure, at one time the commercialization of cultural goods had been the

precondition for rational-critical debate; but it was itself in principle excluded from the exchange relationships of the market and remained the center of exactly that sphere in which property-owning private people would meet as "human beings" and only as such. Put bluntly: you had to pay for books, theatre…but not for the conversion about what you had read, heard, and seen and what you might completely absorb through this conversation. Today the conversation itself is administered. (Habermas, 1989, p. 164)

Habermas (1989) recognizes that structural transformations have transformed the public sphere. He also observes that it is not the medium in itself that alters the public sphere. On the contrary, it is the content of these media, individual's interpretation of the content and followed up conversations among people that affect critical reasoning. On one hand, Habermas observes the unidimensional communication of new media (television, newspapers); on the other hand, he recognizes that content of a medium is controlled by individuals who have the intention to reach a wide audience to make money, thus they are really not interested in challenging people to engage in socio-political conversation. In Habermas's words: "The world fashioned by the mass media is a public sphere in appearance only" (Habermas, 1989, p. 171).

2.1.3 Criticism of the Public Sphere and Habermas

Habermas's ideal public sphere has been extensively criticized in the academic world. The main critique focuses on the exclusion of gender from the public realm, the emphasis on social stratum derived from education and propriety ownership, and the failure to recognize alternative public spheres. Briefly, this section summarizes the most dominant points of critique of Habermas's public sphere.

In terms of alternative public sphere and social class, Negt and Kluge (1988) introduce the concept of proletarian public sphere, focusing on the point of view of the marginalized entity - the proletarian population. Negt and Kulge observe that Habermas's public sphere has neglected to incorporate two important societal elements: "the entire industrial apparatus of business and family socialization" (p. 63). For Negt and Kulge, the bourgeois public sphere fails to represent society as a whole by confirming to a social stratum of educated, industrialized, propriety owners males. This lack of consideration gives rise to the working class public sphere, which poses itself as counter-publicity to the dominant bourgeois sphere. In Negt and Kulge's view, there are a multitude of public

spheres driven by self-interest, some which prevail over others, trying to legitimatize nonpublic matters as of general interest to the overall population. According to the authors, "the public sphere fluctuates between being a facade of legitimation capable of being deployed in diverse ways and being a mechanism for controlling the perception of what is relevant for society" (p. 66). In so far as it can be ascertained, the classical concept of public sphere is replaced by a production public sphere, which relies on the subordination "to the primary of the power relations that determine the domain of production" (p. 73). In other words, the production public sphere follows a clear organization and implementation of private and public interest, driven by profit. On the contrary, the proletarian public sphere is based on possibilities that yet must be transformed into interests. Workers must challenge the bourgeois public sphere that sees them as objects, thus blocking any of their attempts to form their own interests. Forms of (alternative) proletarian spheres that emerged under social forces are the labor movement (e.g. trade unions). Negt and Kluge's analysis of the public sphere is important because while Habermas (1989) focuses on communication discourse, Negt and Kluge (1988) emphasize collective action necessary to advance progressive social change (Goode, 2005). This inclusive model of participation reminds us that "making an independent film …can be both an existentially and socially 'meaningful' intervention in the public sphere, every bit as much as immersing oneself in political debate" (Goode, 2005, p. 37). Thus, utilizing the appropriate communication and communicative channel can result in a counter-public sphere.

The second most frequent critique to *Structural Transformation* is associated with the subordinated role of women in the public sphere. Fraser (1992) argues that Habermas's analysis does not take into consideration alternative public spheres, including for example woman-only clubs. Moreover, despite women being excluded from political discourse, they still played a significant role in salons where they stimulated conversations among guests. Women also took part of organizations that advocated for women's rights, pushing state legislatures to respond to new private demands. Fraser (1992) observes that failing to recognize the role women played in the public sphere resulted in elite and male oriented hegemonic ideologies, which are still present today. Her second criticism of Habermas's public sphere is linked to the notion of 'common

good.' She claims that certain private issues were considered inadmissible to the public sphere, because considered "too private" (e.g., rape). This limitation of consideration was due in part to the structure of the 'one' public sphere, made out of white men, which exacerbated inequalities (O'Donnell, 2001). Thus, Fraser calls for a multiplicity of publics, constituted by social equality (e.g., race, gender, income, education). As Goode (2005) points out, "Fraser wants to argue for a model of democracy which emphasizes the importance of groupings and publics which are defined by particular sets of interests and memberships" (p. 43). She concludes her analysis by suggesting to use Habermas's work to point out the gaps and inequalities of social, economic and political structures.

A third critique of Habermas revolves around the role of mass media. Calhoun (1992) provides a critique of Habermas's pessimistic opinion on the function mass media played in the disintegration of the ideal public sphere, maintaining that mass media have the potential to foster citizenry, especially because their structures allow for alternative democratic media strategies (Calhoun, 1992, p. 33). Calhoun refers to the creation of alternative public spheres via traditional media, regardless of limits imposed by politics and economics. In the matter of economic and political influence, Garnham (1992) points at his own criticism, overvaluing quality of news and politics, rather than "modes and functions of mediated communication" (p. 373). Garnham (1992) concludes by suggesting to work together to build a more democratic economic and political system. However, Garnham (1992) believes that in order to have a functioning democracy, we need a uniformed public sphere, thus rejecting the pluralistic approach to the public sphere. On the contrary, Downey and Fenton (2003) take Habermas's latest ideas on the relation between counter-spheres and media, arguing that with the advancement of technology (e.g. Internet) new forms of public spheres have emerged against traditional mass media spheres, allowing for a true debate to take place. These forums are constructed around group-identity, which share commonality of issues (Downey and Fenton, 2003). Discussions on the relation between mass media and the public sphere are still frequent especially among communication scholars. Because of the complexity of this dichotomy, the following section examines past and current scholarship on the above subject.

2.1.4 Public Sphere and Mass Media in the 21st century

The public sphere involves not only single individuals, but the media also constitute it (e.g. newspapers, the web, documentaries) (McKee, 2006; Ferre et al., 2002). First, the media inform us on issues. The information is interpreted by an audience who evaluates what to do with the material. For instance, a person who watches the news on television might learn about the dangerous consequences of eating raw fish. After he/she interprets the information he/she decides to act, either by boycotting sushi restaurants, initiating a ballot to require stricter regulations on food health inspection, or spreading the word to other people. She/he also can decide to be passive and take no action whatsoever. In any case, ideas have been shared, followed by a type of action (Klofstad, 2011). Habermas (1991) states, "today, newspapers and periodicals, radio and television are the media of the public sphere" (p. 398). In *Structural Transformation,* he notes that the 18th century was characterized by an epoch of newsprint, which reflected "critically on political issues" (Habermas, 1989, p. 65). However, traditional media such as television and newspaper have been subject to criticism by scholars who take an Adornian approach and by Habermas himself. This skepticism is due in part to the structure of the medium. In *Social Transformation,* Habermas gives an account of the role of the media in facilitating or hindering the public sphere. His view relies on the notion that mass media produce and deliver information to a passive audience, who has no opportunities to engage in a dual conversation. Mass media rely on unidimensional communication. Television and newspaper are not highly interactive media. News is written and filtered by few people within a strict environment (e.g., newsroom), delivered to an audience who is left to absorb what is given without the opportunity for immediate feedback. Even when feedback is integrated in the communication model, time becomes another limitation to a coherent flow of different ideas. It takes time to send a response to a reporter of a newspaper or an anchor of TV news, and the reality is that viewers might never receive an answer. News moves fast and is forgotten fast.

Another critique associated with traditional mass media relies on content of the news or programming. Quantity is preferred over quality. Habermas (1989) observes that while mass media fostered the commodification of culture, which was essential to the production of deliberative debates, current cultural commodification by the media led to

'junk' discussions (e.g. reality TV-shows). This view has been adopted by many scholars in political economy of media, who place particular emphasis on systems of communications and policies derived from neoliberalism initiatives (McChesney, 2008; Mosco, 2009), which in turn affect society. In their view, the commodification of 'junk' culture is a result of how power structures (systems of communications) construct a biased/tilted message through communication channels and how this message is produced, reproduced, distributed and consumed by an audience (Mosco, 2009). In the end Habermas argues that: "Mediated political communication in the public sphere can facilitate deliberative legitimation processes in complex societies only if a self-regulating media system gains independence from its social environments and if anonymous audiences grant feedback between an informed elite discourse and a responsive civil society" (Habermas, 2006, p. 411).

Scholars have taken the idea of the public sphere and civic engagement to explore whether the Internet can operate "as an intermediary system between state and society" (Habermas, 2006, p. 412) in which "ordinary citizens play a role in the creation and distribution of ideas about how society works" (McKee, 2006, p. 10). The introduction and adoption of the Internet has altered the communication flow of information, giving shape to a more interactive public participation, shaping what Habermas defines as the public sphere. In *Between facts*, the notion that the audience is just the bait for advertisers loses its core point, as Habermas recognizes that people can challenge what has been provided by mass media by implementing a variety of resistance strategies. In no means, though Habermas recognizes mass media as a democratic public sphere and we are still waiting for his academic opinion on the role of the Internet in the shaping of a public sphere and deliberative democracy. Several scholars have addressed the gap of a discussion on the new communication technology and communicative action in regard to Habermas's work.

Literature review on the web and the public sphere can be divided into three major academic approaches: (1) the optimistic approach, which argues that the World Wide Web is the new incarnation of Habermas metaphor of the ideal public sphere of the 18th century (Poor, 2005; Templin, 2009); (2) the moderate approach, which counterbalances both positive and negative aspects of the web as they pertain to civic

engagement (Papacharissi, 2010); and (3) the pessimistic approach, which heavily relies on the political economic structure of new communication technology (O'Donnell, 2001; Oswego, 2006). What follows is the selection of few scholars who present the main points of arguments revolving around the web and the public sphere from the above three approaches.

Poor (2005) focuses on four elements of the public sphere, including discourse, inclusion of new members, fostering of political discussions, and decentralized leadership. He analyzes Slashdot, an open source website, where individuals can write their own news stories, facilitating diversity and importance of issues. Poor argues that Slashdot is a type of counter-public sphere, not only because its content is user-generated, but also because the creators of the original site provide details on the mechanism used to judge and moderate information, by allowing users a certain degree of control in filtering content. Poor's (2005) major contribution to the scholarship in public sphere is the recognition that the web can be viewed either as a public sphere or not, depending on the researchers' approach to analyze a case study through the lens of Habermas. The question then should revolve around which element is the most important to maintain democracy and enhance civic participation. Is it the inclusion of all people, at all times? Does it even matter how many are participating?

Similarly, Templin (2009) in his dissertation *Rage Against the Machine: How Indymedia's Radical Project is Working to Create the New Public Sphere*, argues that Indymedia, an international news grassroots online network, represents a new public sphere, used by activists to organize protests, spread alternative information not covered in the mainstream media, emphasizing decentralization of leadership. Applying Habermas's theory of the communicative action and the concept of the ideal public sphere, Templin (2009) illustrates in part the emergence of an empowered private citizen who challenges the system infiltrated in the lifeworld by utilizing new communication technologies. Templin's arguments about the use of new media and activism were pertaining to the World Wide Web, setting up an open source site for activists to use. While social media allow people to use the site for activism, these individuals are also confined to policies established by the owner of these media or in the R2R case Facebook. However, the same can be said about the use of websites like Indymedia as the provider

of the site could decide to terminate activities on that domain, leaving activists without a space to divulge information. The point is that all media outlets are subjects of corporate practices and yet within this corporate model of operations, actions of activism and rebellion are observed and take shape everyday. Thus, the complexity of understanding the use of new media through Habermas provides a reason to explore even further the question of citizenry on social media.

Eickelman and Anderson (2003) attribute the emergence of a public sphere in Muslim countries to the development of new communicative channels. As they note, "These increasingly open and accessible forms of communication play a significant role in fragmenting and contesting political and religious authority," by creating and consolidating new identity groups (e.g., new bourgeoisie). Through the facilitation of mass media, these new groups can contest the status quo, demanding the establishment of a civil society. The importance of the public sphere lies in the creation of a new discourse around political and religious issues.

Papacharissi (2002) in her early work, initially argues that it is problematic to consider the Internet a public sphere because while "new technologies offer additional tools, (but) they cannot single-handedly transform a political and economic structure that has thrived for centuries" (p. 20). She refers much in alignment with Habermas, to the fact that corporate ties with government have obstructed media in playing a democratic role. Focusing on political online discussions and engagement, in *The Virtual Sphere: The Internet as a Public Sphere*, Papacharissi (2002) argues that the Internet does not promote or create a public sphere; rather it creates a public space where people can access information. A public space does not necessarily guarantee the exchange of critical debates and opinions. She relies on structural elements of the Internet and the consequences of these structures to support her argument, including a discussion on access limitation and the digital divide, overload of fragmented information and reciprocity of info, fluidity of identities, which hinders the public sphere and commercialization of the medium. Although Papacharissi (2002) seems skeptical of the role of the Internet in fostering public sphere, she leaves the reader by observing that "it has yet to be seen if Internet promotes solidarity" (p. 21).

In her latest book, *A Private Sphere: Democracy in a Digital Age*, she expands on

her previous argument by explaining:

> These commercially public spaces may not render a public sphere, but they provide hybrid economies of space where individuals can engage in interaction that is civic, among other things. These spaces are essentially in maintaining a politically active consciousness that may, when necessary, articulate a sizeable oppositional voice in response to concentrated ownership regulation (p. 129).

Papacharissi's (2010) statement is problematic, as it seems to rely on hypothetical circumstances, much in alignment with her criticism of Habermas's public sphere as a meaningful "metaphor that, when materialized, may take on several shapes and forms" (Papacharissi, 2010, p. 119). She addresses her statement by observing that today's society is made out of fluid and fragmented identities that are in a constant process of becoming. Thus, she proposes to focus not on the public sphere; rather on the private sphere, which fluctuates among the real and virtual world. Civic participation is achieved through the expression of the private sphere, because the private realm "effectively reconciles the personal with the political in a way that enables connection with like-minded individuals" (Papacharissi, 2010, p. 167). The Internet and especially social media enable private citizens to become active participants, to seek to "rectify perceived inconsistencies between what the citizen deems as public, but other civic institutions have excluded from their agenda as private" (p. 137). The Internet fosters civic participation by empowering single individuals to act in the comfort of their private homes for a common cause. The private sphere becomes the central locus for deliberative democracy.

Trend (2001) explains how democracy is exercised in the World Wide Web, by suggesting readers to abandon Habermas's idealized assumption of a homogeneous sphere. He argues to favor the notion of a fragmented audience who construct group-identities through speech mediated via the web. The Internet creates symbolic understanding of the world, by decentralizing cultural production in the hands of traditional media.

Other scholars take into account Mills's discussion on how individuals learn about public issues (O'Donnell, 2001; Oswego, 2006). According to Mills (1956), in an ideal situation individuals express and receive opinions back and forth. This flow of information leads to civic engagement and democracy. In the reality of the mass media, "far fewer people express opinions than receive them; for the community of publics

becomes an abstract collection of individuals who receive impressions from the mass media" (Mills, 1956, p. 303-304). He furthers his argument by observing that, "the realization of opinion in action is controlled by authorities who organize and control the channels of such action" (Mills, 1956, p. 303-304). In other words, because citizens do not control the structure of the Internet (the government and corporations ultimately do), they can only be producer of content. Opinions become subject of the same forms of authority that is nonetheless the foundation of the issue (Oswego, 2011).

O'Donnell (2001) conducted an empirical study applying seven elements to her analytical analysis, including exploring a links between public sphere and political participation through the use of alternative media (Internet). Taking as a case study the Womenslink, a project initiated at the Dublin City University, which "investigated computer and internet use by community and voluntary organizations in Ireland" (p. 43-44), O'Donnell was interested to find out if individuals use the web to "reflect, complement, or extend the mainstream media" (p. 45). She reports that a content analysis as well as interviews indicated that the majority of users preferred discussing issues based on their own personal experience, without relying on information from mainstream media, because perceived as bias. Content shared by users was found to be more relevant and reliable to the issues in question, allowing individuals to serve as check-and-balance when information was incorrect. Overall, O'Donnell argues that use of Internet among social movements vary depending on who is participating. In the case of the Womenslink, getting the attention of the mainstream media was not central. On the contrary, the web was used independently from mainstream media to organize women's movement politics outside the mainstream (p. 54). In regards to the internet and public sphere, participants felt constrained by their institutional affiliation, making the internet just a space for limited and controlled debate.

The variety of approaches and understanding of the public sphere in relation to the Internet and social movements illustrate two points. First, there is a need to continuing the discussion on the importance of Habermas's application to today's society. Second, the multitude of arguments shows that despite criticism, Habermas's concepts of his work provide the foundation for any understanding of conflicts in society as technology advances. Moreover, previous studies on alternative media, such as radio, TV,

and the Internet illustrate the complexity of understanding to what degree citizens can exercise agency through media that operate within a corporate controlled system. Concerns over privacy seem to be popular among individuals and activists who are using the web as a form to contest authority. At the Robert Kennedy Foundation workshop on social media and the Arab revolution, while activists praised the Internet and social media like Ushaidi[6] to be beneficial during the Egyptian revolution, they also expressed their concerns over hacking activities from the government, pointing at a need to understand how to use these tools without comprising individuals' freedom. In this respect, understanding what the collision between the corporate and public means will help evaluating the concept of the public sphere, social media, and social movements.

The following section continues to provide insights on how Habermas's work has been applied to social movements.

2.1.5 From Habermas to social movements and mass media

Scholarship on Habermas, social movements and mass media varies according to discipline, case study and researcher. However, these scholars suggest a new model of the public sphere, formulating revisions of Habermas's main ideas in relations to the development of mass media. Salter (2003) applies a Habermasian analysis to the study of the Internet and social movements. In his article he provides a critique of Habermas's major work including *Structural Transformation, Communicative Action* and *Between Facts*. He argues that *Structural Transformation* cannot be solely used to support the claim that the Internet serves as a public sphere, because according to Salter, while the bourgeois public sphere "sought to form a common will" (p. 122), the Internet fosters the opposite of commonality – pluralism. Salter's point will be taken in consideration during the analysis of this study, to determine whether his statement is valid or must be reconsidered when applying the concept of the public sphere to social media. From *Communication Action* and *Between Facts*, Salter observes that Habermas addresses some of the criticism received on *Structural Transformation*, including the idea of plurality and homogeneity. Thus, Habermas introduces the term lifeworld, a society

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[6] Ushaidi is an open source project not-for-profit oriented which allows users to crowdsource information around political and societal issues to be sent via mobile. More information can be found at www.ushaidi.com.

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where individuals' actions are generated through an internal subjective viewpoint of life, external to that of the system that is subject to an economical system. In his words, lifeworld is "represented by a culturally transmitted and linguistically organized stock of interpretive patterns" (Habermas, 1987, p.124). Individuals use cultural and linguistic skills they are familiar with to interpret the world around them. If a problem arises, people's lifeworld will either expand to understand the complexity of the issue or shrink under certain situations. The main significance of the lifeworld or private sphere is that communicative rationality free of coercion is used to assure the continuation and expansion of a democratic society. As Carroll and Hackett (2006) write, "what Habermas sees is that the 'lifeworld' exceeds 'everyday life', and that the state does not 'contain' politics" (p. 98).

The major contribution of Salter to Habermas' s work is his discussion on the Internet as a public sphere, which shapes social movements and help these movements to create a dialogue with different agents. Salter claims that it is not solely the structure of the Internet that asserts the public sphere. On the contrary, it is how individuals use the medium that shapes its communicative capacity. Taking as a case study the Association for Progressive Communications (APC), Salter observes that users of the Internet face similar challenging attributed to traditional mass media –commercialization and control of technology. It is up to the users to undermine this colonization by being an active producer of content. Hence, to adequately assess the role of the web in fostering a public sphere, one must take into account "the range of interests, and those that attempt to dominate discourse, while recognizing that struggles tale place between interests" (Salter, 2003, p. 120).

Ferre, Gamson, Gerhards and Rucht (2002) analyze the discourse around abortion issues in the United States and Germany. In their book, *Shaping Abortion Discourse*, they define public discourse as communication that takes place in a forum, which resembles what Habermas calls public sphere. In fact, they define public sphere "a set of all forums" (p. 10), which intertwines with each other around a common cause. For instance, within the abortion public discourse, a variety of forums interact with other (e.g., religious forum, mass media forum, social movements, and so on), but it is the mass media forum that prevails over the others. According to Ferre et al. (2002) "the mass media forum is

the major site of political contest because all of the layers in the policy in process assume its pervasive influence…The mass media present …discourse from other forums" (p. 10). Their model of public sphere is worth noting because they classified actors and forums according to their social networks. The arena is constituted by people who engage in discussions over certain issues (e.g., government ministries, organizational speakers, journalists). The gallery is made up of a heterogeneous audience who is exposed to information, or who is watching the discussion in the arena, but does not actively engage in the discussion (e.g., TV viewers, readers). The backstage is formed by those individuals who are part of the arena and are motivated by collective causes. For instance, a representative of an organization can speak up about his/her opinion on an issue, based on the benefits for his/her company. These people have been trained by their organizations to provide certain arguments in the arena. Ferre et al.'s (2002) application of the public sphere is limited as it revolves around a framing perspective, using newspapers as their primary data of analysis.

DeLuca and Peeples (2010) expand on the concept of public sphere by defining the term 'public screen,' which entails all discussions that take place on the screen (e.g. television, computer, front page of magazines, newspapers, etc.). Taking as the premise that new forms of technology, including television and the internet have changed the way we perceive and understand social issues, DeLuca and Peeples (2010) argue that "media are not mere means of communicating in a public sphere or on a public screen; media produce the public sphere and public screen as primal scenes of Being" (p. 132). The public sphere does not take into consideration the power of counter visuals to corporate domination. The authors claim that corporations and the government are vulnerable against visual images as evident with the anti-corporate campaign against Nike (DeLuca and Peeple, 2010, p. 135). To address the possible criticism of distraction created by a variety of fast images, the authors respond that, "distraction is not a lack of attention but as necessary for of perception when immersed in the technologically induced torrent of images and information" (p. 135). They address Habermas's critique of culture consumption embedded in entertainment TV shows, by arguing that these forms of visuals help constructing new meanings, whether by opposing or adhering to what has been shown.

2.1.6 Theory of communicative action of Habermas

      Much of the discussion of the public sphere and mass media revolves around Habermas's sequential work to *Structural Transformation.* In *Theory of Communicative Action*, Habermas (1984, 1987) addresses some of the criticism received on *Structural Transformation*, by switching to analyze social relations from an historical point of view to a living, breathing phenomenon. He abandons the Marxist reception of Weber's rationalization of society derived from human consciousness to favor communicative action. His main argument relies on exploring the role of speech as a means for coordinating action. Habermas explores how to create conditions for communication action to take place and shape decision-making. These actions are a result of communicative rationalities that influence the construction of meaning as it relates to three different worlds: subjective, social, and objective. Hence, he provides definitions of two archetypes of social action: (1) the purposively-rational action and (2) communicative action, differentiating between social actions "oriented to success and action oriented toward reaching understanding" (Johnson, 1991, p. 183). Instrumental action falls under the purposive-rational action, and it is said to be governed by rules that are predictable and observable in nature. These actions "realize defined goals under given circumstances" (Habermas, 1970, p. 92). Decisions made under the purposive-rational action are governed by strategies based on analytical and technical knowledge (Habermas, 1970, p. 92). These actions might involve both material and social goods. For instance, an organization might decide to implement membership fees and use the material resource to advance the organization's agenda in the interest of the people. Habermas further differentiates purposive action into strategic action, which refers to social action that takes into consideration people's behavior, insomuch as the goal to success becomes influencing other rational actors. Emphasis is placed on the self; rather than the collective. On the contrary, interaction actions are concerned with cooperation among social actors. This type of action is not subject to analytical knowledge and precise strategies. Actions are intersubjective in nature, deriving from mutual understanding to promote critical exchange of meanings between those who are engaging in communication (Habermas, 1985). As Bolton (2005) notes, "communicative action is individual action designed to promote common understanding in a group and to promote cooperation, as opposed to

"strategic action" designed simply to achieve one's personal goals" (Bolton, 2005, p. 2). Habermas favors social actions that derive from the collaboration of individuals after they have engaged in rational critical debates. For Habermas, rationality is the capability of an individual to use speech to deliberate ideas and come to consensus. Much in alignment with the concept of the public sphere and critical-reasoning, in the absence of coercion and domination people can freely coordinate action via deliberative discourse.

Habermas proposes to adhere to a criterion of validity claims for the success of social actions. Individuals must communicate ideas that are clear to the receiver; propositions must be valid and based on true facts; the speaker must also express truthful when uttering; and the speaker must be the appropriate individual to express propositions. Individuals taking place in the conversation will either accept the claims, test the validity of the claims, reject them on the basis on other valid arguments, or ask for more clarification. Each individual should be opened for discussion and understanding of the proposition.

Through this framework, communicative rationality leads to the restoration of legitimacy, defined as the perception that individuals have on the state. The common thread between these types of social actions is the use of rationality, but the tools and goals of social actions are different. Rationality is understood by Habermas as an "action capable of being "defended against criticism"" (Johnson, 1991, p. 184). One (instrumental action) is oriented toward labor that involves a business model (e.g. organizing meetings, collecting money for an organization, selecting a place to rally; imposing legislatures); while the other (communicative action) emphasizes discourse (e.g. how speech is used to achieve agreement). As Habermas writes, "in terms of the two types of action we can distinguish between social systems according to whether purposive-rational action or interaction predominates. The institutional framework of a society consists of norms that guide symbolic interaction […] Purposive-rational action are institutionalized" (Habermas, 1970, p. 93). At this point is important to note that although individuals act based on rationality and free will they are still functioning within an institutionalized framework and when systems like the government or corporations prevail over other social actions, the legitimation vanishes. As noted by Harrison-Barbet (2001), "the possibilities of reason and interpretation are both constrained by and

dependent on the cultural and historical context within which we act and communicate, Habermas believes it is possible to transcend such limits and still sees reason as having a central role to play" (para. 4).

In regards to the way individuals subvert socio-economical limits, Habermas introduces the concept of 'lifeworld,' a society where individuals' actions are generated through an internal subjective viewpoint of life, external to that of the system that is subject to an economical system (Carrol & Hackett, 2006; Habermas, 1970). For Habermas, there are two processes involving social action that influences society. The lifeworld is oriented toward using language that is communicative rational, while the system relies on instrumental rationality. Hence, systems such as state and companies can colonize the lifeworld with the use of instrumental rationality, making it difficult for the lifeworld to assert its legitimation. As a matter of fact, the single individual is disempowered by the systemic colonization (Habermas, 1970; Salter, 2003). What it is important to understand is that both systems are interdependent. The legitimation of the system depends on the lifeworld. At the same time colonization of the system by money and power influences communication in the lifeworld, preventing from reaching consensual agreement. Buechler (1995) writes about Habermas noting that, "more and more decision-making power (is) in the hands of experts and administrative structures, which operate according to the system logic of money and power and whose decisions are correspondingly removed from contexts of justification and accountability within the lifeworld" (p. 445). An example is the economic structure of traditional mass media owned by six major media corporations. Programming delivered by these companies is driven by profit and a unidimensional communication between the receiver and sender. In other words, coming to an agreement and engaging in elaborated discussions is not a priority. Consequences of a distorted communication are an institutionalized society, which pollutes the lifeworld (the self).

To address the issue of (re)integration to the system, Habermas observes that the because the legitimation depends on the lifeworld, at any time individuals can reestablish equilibrium in the system, with the use of an ideal speech. Hence, Habermas reconnects with the concept of the public sphere, by emphasizing the necessary conditions for the public realm to function. By engaging in arguments and debates, leveraging which claim

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is the strongest, and doing so in a public sphere will be the determinant factor in decision-making, restoring legitimation lost with the colonization of the system. Without directly alluding to counter-actions, Habermas believes that individual agency can challenge the system by counter acting it using communicative action. This is a fundamental point that will be addressed in my dissertation, as social media offer a forum where individuals can exercise their agency to restore democracy. "Colonization processes, therefore, provide new sources of struggle and change in agents seeking to defend traditional lifestyles or institute new ones on their own terms" (Habermas, 1981, p. 33; Edwards, 2004, p.116).

Few scholars have done so, by applying the concepts of communicative action theory to social movements, by associating the lifeworld to movements that challenge the colonization of society, while the system is attributed to the state and corporate authority (McCormick, 2006). In McCormick's words, "the lifeworld is the sphere in which cultural reproduction and social solidarity take place and in which there remains the potential for uplifting action, whereas the system is that bureaucratized arena often represented by government or economic interests" (p. 325). McCormick (2006) applies communicative action theory to analyze how coalitions between activists and experts on dam policy helped in constructing a counter-action discourse against state and industry authority. Studying the anti dam movement in Brazil, McCormick argues that communication action among activists' partnerships provided the basis for an open and deliberative dialogue. The stronger argument was used to change the framing of the issue of dam in such a way as to lead to concrete policy change.

Edwards (2004) addresses Habermas's discussion of the public sphere in conjunction with the emergence of new social movements beginning in 1960s. Edwards (2004) analyzes anti-corporate movements, arguing that Habermas's criticism of a conflict-shift from capital-labor to system-lifeworld fails to take into account the role historical development of capitalist played. According to Edwards (2004); "What Habermas does not adequately consider, however, is that it is not rationalization processes *per se*, but the use to which they are put, which generates destructive tendencies towards colonization" (p. 120). Edwards (2004) is interested in analyzing the relationship between distinct public spheres, between system, lifeworld and economic processes "for the analysis of contemporary protests as reactions against the negative

(and colonizing) effects that capitalist modernization has on everyday life" (p. 122). She argues for Habermas to distance himself from an emphasis on rational discourse.

Taking as a case study the based-system GRASS (Group Report Authoring Support System), Heng and de Moor (2003) were interested in the implementation of Habermas's concept of the communicative action theory in a functioning system. Their main question revolves around how the Internet improves open and 'undistorted' communication. They report that in terms of consensual formation of a variety of conversations, GRASS fosters credibility to individual's statement while at the same time allowing access to a wider audience.

2.1.7 Why Using Habermas for the Right to Know Rally

The first point to address in understanding how Habermas' work is applicable to the case study of this dissertation is the utilization of an element that works within a system that food activists are trying to reconstruct and are here to challenge. Within this form of lifeworld lies an individual home (private sphere) not subject to external constrains from the system and the virtual community (sphere) defined as a place of aggregation in which to contest or challenge the system. As a matter of fact, "the architecture of virtual spaces, much like the architecture of physical spaces, simultaneously suggest and enables particular modes of interaction" (Papacharissi, 2009, p. 200), as was the case of the R2R with the exchange of information and organization of rallies among online users. Despite Facebook operating under the system (capitalism), its loose, fluid, and dynamic structure allows a variety of agents to pursue lifeworld interests and push them in the system, thus attempting to change it. As a result, the problem of the institutionalization of the lifeworld through the system (Facebook) is not as vital as the people who operate the medium. These people who float between the private, public, and virtual sphere control their own lifeworld. The dependence on the structure (Facebook) to restore the self is independent from the fact that Facebook belongs to the system (capitalism), as if the system was enacting coercing forces to block consumers from spreading information about GMOs, the system would cease to exist. Examining the interdependence relationship between the system and the self (lifeworld) is vital. This is a simple point. If people stop using Facebook, Facebook would disappear and users would rely on a different platform to communicate. This is because Facebook depends on the

people who utilize it as much as individuals depend on Facebook to meet their own agenda.

This chapter has argued that despite Facebook operating according to the system, whether in the form of business (e.g. Monsanto, CoverGirl) or as a consumer (e.g. activist, student, mother), the real significance of Facebook revolves around the interaction of its users who are provided an interactive platform to work with. In regard to Habermas's discussion of the media in *Structural Transformation* (1989), he concludes that while the press had served as a form of free speech, the structure of ownership of media, including television, and radio had compromised their role of democratic vehicles for political engagement. In this regard, Habermas considers traditional media a manifestation of cultural and marketable junk. Following Habermas's thought reinforced by scholars such as McChesney (2008), Mosco (2009), Kellner (2003), and Harvey (2005), Facebook then represents another way in which ideologies of capitalistic system remains in place through the consensus of the masses, hence Facebook fails to foster civic engagement. On the contrary, it fosters consumerism. Kellner (2003) notes, "the media have thus been transformed from facilitating rational discourse and debate within the public sphere into shaping, constructing, and limiting public discourse to those themes validated and approved by media corporations" (p. 4). This is a claim argued against in this dissertation because this case study with its interviews and content analysis will prove otherwise. This is not an attempt to generalize the research findings, claiming that Facebook always produces political engagement, concluding that Habermas's public sphere is now restored through new social media. To make such a claim would be incorrect as some of the interviewees are aware of the downsides of Facebook, one being that Facebook is a marketing business oriented tool owned by a private corporation; another issue being that of privacy (e.g. monitoring, tracking).[7] What is argued here is that Habermas's criticism on the media must be reconsidered through an analysis of selected users' uses of new

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[7] Agape refers to Facebook as being 'little evil,' because of privacy violations. Andrew refers to Facebook as a business tool oriented to consumers, "a place to market to sell" (personal communication, March 31, 2012). What is interesting about these interpretations of the social media is that both Agape and Andrew also praise Facebook to be an effective and indispensable activist tool that they both utilize. There seem to be love-hate relationship with Facebook. Much of the hatred comes from capitalistic nature of the medium but also from the way users use it or misuse it.

media. Understanding how new media shape the public sphere is connected to Castells's work on social networks.

The sets that constitute the lifeworld on Facebook, previously discussed, intertwine with each other in a spherical motion with the commonality to construct some sort of communicative action. The lifeworld within an open virtual structure, such as Facebook, allows for the possibility of action through the exchange of communication in different spaces and in between spheres (private v. public v. virtual). Facebook is made out of a multitude of micro public spheres connected through social networks (people). Boyd and Ellison (2007) refer to web-based services as tools that "allow individuals to construct a public or semi-public profile within abounded system" (p. 211). These profiles become public spaces. At this point, it is practical to discuss how Facebook constructs or deconstruct public spheres. A reconceptualization of the concept public sphere follows. First, when referring to virtual spheres on Facebook one has to take into consideration the term social spheres. While this term has been used to refer to "cultural landscape on which various forms of performance and public drama are staged and through which social bonds are constructed and collective experiences articulated" (Lii, 1998, p. 116), stressing "sense, body, and performance" (Lii, 1998, p. 116), the nature of Facebook and the analysis of the data collected in this case study point at a refiguration of this definition as well as a reconceptualization of the traditional term, public sphere. While Lii's (1998) definition of social sphere has relevance to this study, it lacks an emphasis on language and reason, favoring the relation between individuals through media of their sentiments (e.g. body) (Lii, 1998). In the context of the R2R, language is fundamental and constructive debate becomes an important tool to understand issues, challenge dominant discourse, and encourage offline participation. For this reason Lii's (1998) social sphere must be reconfigured based on what the data of this investigation has revealed. Chapter 4 will define the term ethos sphere, which conceptualizes a new definition for the public sphere within the virtual world, based on how online users circulate their news through their private channel through a web of connections that can potentially extend to the global level. Papacharissi (2009) explains, "social networking sites are structured initially around a niche audience, although their appeal frequently evolves beyond that target market" (p.200). According to Facebook Data (2012), each

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profile or public sphere is constituted by weak and strong ties. These relationships are formed through some sort of commonality whether in the form of workplace, GMO groups, or school. Data from Facebook (2012) suggests that whereas an individual will most likely share information from a strong tie (e.g., close friend within one's private profile), weak ties are "collectively responsible for the majority of information spread" ("Facebook Data," 2012, para. 95-96), information that individuals would not seek out by themselves. In this regard, a discussion on the role of counter public spheres in the making of democracy must be noted to understand how new communication technologies have affected past scholarly arguments on the impact of alternative spheres on deliberative democracy.

Downey and Fenton (2003) discusses Habermas's concept of the public sphere in relation to the web and the emergence of counter spheres. They take into account Habermas's (1998) observation that, "the publics produced by the Internet remain closed off from one another like a global village" (p.120). This is not to say that Habermas does not recognize the possibility of counter public spheres to challenge dominant ones, but he sees a limitation with the structure of the Internet, which tends to connect through hyperlinks environmental activists with environmental activists, conservative activists with conservative activists, and so on. Habermas (1998) was referring to a pre-social media era. Today, the interactive structure of social media allows individuals to belong to a multiplicity of public spheres with the possibility of receiving information on a variety of issues. Ties are important because they educate the public and they enrich the discourse of the movement. These networks assure that the movement will not die after an event. While the event page R2R might aim to only target US citizens, it indirectly attracts outsiders who are concerned about the same issues. The friendships made on these group pages remain and allow for the promulgation of a variety of information regarding GMO's even after the rally. These networks stimulate individuals to organize more rallies and keep the movement alive. Despite the global diffusion of information through Facebook among weak and strong ties even on social media there is a tendency to form relationships and join groups with people who share similar interests. Hence, at times producing stagnation of communicative action.

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The R2R event pages on Facebook and interviews conducted with participants of these pages indicate that individuals utilize social media to challenge the dominant GMO discourse present on mainstream media and to fill the gaps from lack of GMO coverage from traditional media platforms. The Pew Research Center (2010) indicates that U.S. citizens are integrating more communication technologies when seeking news, pushing traditional media like television and radio to converge media. Suffice is to say that television programming these days display hashtags (#) illustrating among other factors that social media may have surpassed television and radio. In their observation of Habermas's later work, Downey and Fenton (2003) observe, "Habermas (1996) has moved away considerably from structural transformation work and wishes to maintain that autonomous public spheres can acquire influence in the mass media public sphere under certain circumstances" (Downey & Fenton, p. 188). However, reaching the public sphere of mainstream media should not be considered the overall goal of counter-public spheres and a way to make a difference at the policy level.

Habermas's work is important because it resonates a discussion on power and democracy through participatory communication. His key points from *Structural Transformation*, regardless of extensive criticism (e.g. race, gender, class) are still applicable to today's society as they help us breaking down issues of democracy and civic participation as socio-political and economic context evolves. Habermas invites us to reflect on how structures of communication can lead to the rise and fall of a public sphere constituted by a new class of tech savvy. Today, we are experiencing what Habermas observes in the *Structural Transformation* an historical time both economical and political much like the one that defined the 17th and 18th century. Within this historical time the internet is redefining communicative action, mining to unfold the processes by which citizens come together to resolve public issues, challenging not only state and corporate authority, but also resisting cultural and structural ideologies. While television fostered an individualistic life, social media gave birth to the rediscovery of society as a whole where people became close neighbors, helping each other. The Internet challenges the urban planning of the 1950s that dissolved salons and hence the possibilities of debates.

Applying *Structural Transformation* to the case study of Facebook and the 'Right to Know Rally' is not to disprove or prove Habermas' s concept of the public sphere since his work has extensively been critique (Calhoun, 1992; Goode, 2005); rather through the lenses of his work, we can examine how technological advancement in communication, within a specific economical and political context, has allowed citizen-consumers to mold virtual spaces into (trans)national public spheres. Today's public sphere depends on technology, but especially it relies on who uses the medium, how, and for what reason(s). Thus, the emphasis is on users' agency. The literature review in this section illustrates that more work is needed to assess the role of technology in fostering civic participation online and offline. In addition, it shows that discussions on the Internet and the public sphere are complex and arguments are dependable on the approach and methodology of researchers.

The overall argument of my dissertation is that social media, in particular Facebook, can embody the functions of Habermas's public sphere, a space that fosters civic engagement through critical reasoning discursive. The debate instigates offline action. Thus, social media revitalize the 18th century public sphere where individuals gather around salons to discuss private issues diffused via print or vice versa. However, the modern public sphere is characterized by a fragmented audience who shares commonality. Social networks become fundamental to the maintenance of rational debates. These ties take shape on Facebook from the comfort of one's private sphere (e.g. desk), but they come to be realized offline. Social media do not prevent the public sphere from becoming an idealized abstract metaphor for deliberative democracy. Social media enable agents to properly engage in critical debates and action. Facebook is a mediator between the private and public sphere.

2.2 Network Analysis

Studies on network analysis tend to focus on the structure of relationships between the Internet and society. Wellman (1988) defines network analysis as a "comprehensive paradigmatic way of taking social structure seriously by studying directly how patterns of ties allocate resources in a social system" (Wellman, 1988, p. 20). Past and recent scholarship has explored networking activities in national or global, virtual and physical spaces (Castells, 2006, 2008, 2009; Diani, 2004; Pickerill, 2000;

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Wellman, 1988). Network analysis has also been used to expand research on social movements (Diani, 2004; Kavada, 2003). Diani (2004) provides an application of social network theory to social movements. He explains that an analysis of social networks have facilitated the understanding of processes of recruitment and individual participation. He concludes by suggesting that scholars to look into the role of digital networks in replacing physical ties and constructing trust. Kavada (2003) deepens the discussion of social movements and network analysis by observing that new communication technology has pushed scholars to rethink social movements theories by incorporating other approaches. In her view, the Internet facilitates communication and organizational structure of networks that make social movements. As she states, "the Internet is thought to influence the characteristics of the movement itself, its structure, ideology and scale" (Kavada, 2003, p. 4). Thus, traditional theories are not sufficient to understand new phenomena.

In terms of new media, Boyd and Ellison (2007) offer a summary of past and current research on social networking sites (SNS), expanding up on the concept of network analysis and technology. They define SNS as web-saved services such as Facebook, Flickr, Twitter, and YouTube that enable strangers to come together and share common interests, by engaging in discussions. This is an important concept because it explores the intersection of individuals, state and private entities. Within this area of work questions on civic engagement and democracy have been raised (Castells, 2010; McAdam et al., 2001). Castells (2001) has discussed the role of resistance networks in challenging dominant systems at the global level. He explains that, "[t]he anti-globalization movement is not simply a network, it is an electronic network, it is an Internet-based movement. And because the Internet is its home it cannot be disorganized or captured. It swims like fish in the net" (Castells, 2001, p. 141-2). Thus, he favors to focus on the relationship between structure (e.g. technology) and individuals in advancing a common agenda. For Castells, advancement in communication technologies has transformed culture and society, providing new opportunities for other voices to advance their goals.

Diani and McAdam (2003) provide a detailed account of various applications of social network paradigm to social movements, by highlighting the applicability of the concept; "its flexibility…enables researchers to deal with phenomena of change, which

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are difficult to contain within the boundaries of formal bureaucracies or nation states, or at the other pole, the individual actor" (Diani & McAdam, 2003, p. 4). It is precisely this flexibility and ambiguity that have allowed scholars like Castells to distance ourselves from traditional theories, looking at phenomena from a new angle, not grounded in normative laws. Thus, Castells (1996) uses a holistic, multicultural and ground approach to derive to the conclusion that transformations in society are a result of shifts in organization and culture, stemming from a variety of historical events occurring around the globe (e.g. IT revolution, capitalism, social movements). He argues others to use theory as a research tool: rather than the end product of research (Castells, 2000). Examples of applications of social network are extensively summarized in Diani and McAdam's (2003) book, *Social Movements and Networks: Relational Approaches to Collective Action,* and will be futile to repeat. Concepts the manuscript covered range from interorganizational networks, to attention to mechanisms in the diffusion of information and collective action, application of political process approach to social networks with emphasis on alliance and oppositional fields, role of leaders in social networks and importance of discourse in constructing solidarity in social networks.

These studies are important because they provide a way to assess how and why social movements have changed within a shift in technological and economic context. For the purpose of this dissertation, an in-depth discussion on Manuael Castells, who is a prominent scholar accredited to network analysis, will serve to construct a new model for the modern public sphere. I want to point out that despite my research questions do not address specifically relationships among members of a network or structure, it comes a necessity to still include Castells's work to my study. The following section highlights the major points of Castells's work, suggesting why his work is significant for my dissertation.

2.2.1 Castells

In 2001, Castells, in *The Internet Galaxy*, addresses conflicting claims about the Internet. Most of his discussion addresses past empirical studies arguing that the 'new' medium fosters isolation and fake reality. Castells contends that these claims are fading away, as researchers are recognizing the limitations of these arguments. For example, Castells (2001) observes that "role-playing and identity-building as the basis of on-line

interaction are a tiny proportion of internet-based sociability, and this kind of practice sees to be heavily concentrated among teenagers" (p.118). Thus, Castells focuses on Internet research that disproves the assumption of isolation. Citing scholars including Howard, Rainie, Jones, Katz, Rice, and Aspden, Castells points at the beneficial relationship between the Internet and civic engagement. In general, he notes that the Internet has an impact on social relationships, enhancing solidarity and friendship. Not only the Internet fosters social ties, but it also breaks geographical boundaries. Castells (2001) explains that, "internet use strengthened social relationships both at a distance and at a local level for strong and weak ties, for instrumental or emotional purposes, as well as for social participation in the community" (p. 122-123). Here, Castells dwells on the notion of 'community' understood as a network "built by the choice and strategies of social actors, individuals, families, or social groups" (p.127). Thus, networks emerge out of commonality: sharing common values, interests, and causes. However, these ties (whether weak or strong) are characterized by individualism, meaning that individuals come together as a whole pushed by their own interests, affinities or projects. This point is important because it delineates a network that is made out of fluid and malleable nodes. In other words, virtual communities can be seen as open clubs where people can come and go as they please. What results is a continuous flow of information-meaning sharing. The concept of individualism leads Castells to introduce the Self, which denotes the individual's identity, which shapes the creation and interpretation of meaning in an environment that is in constant cultural shift (1996, 2000, 2004).

In his trilogy, constituted by *The Information Age: Economy, Society and Culture* (1996); *The Power of Identity, The Information Age: Economy, Society and Culture Vol. II.* (2004); *End of Millennium, The Information Age: Economy, Society and Culture Vol. III* (2000), Castells attempts to draw a picture of society resulted from economic trends derived from a variety of historical international events. He divides his discussion based on the Net, which refers to social networks (corporations, communications systems, organizations) which function on strategic decisions to fulfill goals; the Self, which focuses on fulfilling his/her own interests based on individual identity; and last the impacts the intersection between the Net and Self has on society.

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Before Castells (1996) explains in depth the concept of network, he provides an historical account on how economic structures have led to what he refers to an information technology revolution. This technological change, which aimed at increasing productivity, has altered the processes of business operations, favoring a decentralization of production, distribution, and consumption. Thus, Castells (1996) observes that firms around the globe have adopted new technology to "reduce production costs…increase productivity; [to] broaden the market; and [to] accelerate capital turnover" (p. 81). The adaptation of technology has given rise to a logic of network, organizing operations around social ties that do not drive on a vertical communication. In other words, "diffusion of networking logic substantially modifies the operation and outcomes in processes of production, experience, power, and culture" (Castells, 1996, p. 469). Castells (1996) observes that capitalism has created an individualistic society, "powerless over its destiny" (p. 4).

In *The Network Society: From Knowledge to Policy* Manuel Castells (2006) observes that advancement in communication technology should not be attributed as the catalyst for change in society. He argues that it is the way individuals use a new technology that shapes culture and society. He supports his claim by focusing on studying new forms of social organizations that rely on new communicative technology. Hence, he pays attention to the role of the Internet in constructing forms of social networks that can influencing political decision-making. To do so, Castells refers to a *network society,* term coined in his trilogy, as "the social structure resulting from the interaction between the new technological paradigm and social organization at large" (p. 3). A network society is made out of interconnected nodes (e.g. individuals, television systems).

> Social structures are organized around relationships of production/consumption, power, and experience, whose spatio–temporal configurations constitute cultures. They are enacted, reproduced, and ultimately transformed by social actors, rooted in the social structure, yet freely engaging in conflictive social practices, with unpredictable outcomes. A fundamental feature of social structure in the Information Age is its reliance on networks as the key feature of social morphology. While networks are old forms of social organization, they are now empowered by new information/communication technologies, so that they become able to cope at the same time with flexible decentralization, and with focused decision-making (Castells, 2000, p. 5).

For example, Facebook constitutes a social structure within the social structure of the Internet, which facilitates interaction among other social entities, whether they are part of organizations or not. These networks are flexible and adaptive due to "their capacity to decentralize performance along a network of autonomous components, while still being able to coordinate all this decentralized activity on a shared purpose of decision making" (Castells, 2006, p. 4). Castells observes that communication is a central component of a network, where individuals receive and interpret information. Communication that is exchanged and takes place over a medium aims to discuss issues of collectivity rather than individualism, giving shape to a source of political decision-making (Castells, 2006).

In *Communication Power*, Castells (2009) applies social network theory to look at the relationship between power and digital communication technology. He contends that new technology has allowed for the decentralization of communication (from vertical to horizontal) and a more interactive and accessible model of communication, which has redefined power relationships. Castells argues that the rise of new technology in communication has created a mass self-communication, "increasing the autonomy of communicating subjects vis-à-vis communication corporations, as the users become both senders and receivers of messages" (p. 4). By analyzing the structure, distribution, and consumption of information in global digital networks of communication, Castells comes to the conclusion that symbolic meaning of messages depends not only on how and who frames the message (e.g. corporations, state), but people's own interpretation will dictate the creation of meanings, especially in a new communication system that is versatile, diversified and open-ended. In the end, Castells takes almost a political economic approach of the media, by stating that, "the heart of global communication networks is connected to, and largely dependent on, corporations that are themselves dependent on financial investors and financial markets" (p. 424). Within global financial networks, other forms of networked powers can arise, independent from the original agents. Even thought Castells does not mention consumers' networks power, his general arguments could be expanded to analyze the role of citizens in the creation or deconstruction of power relations on digital structures. In fact, Castells recognizes that as financial networks operate, so social movements' networks emerge as resistant agents to dominant ties. This is because social networks carry power, which affects the human mind, which

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in turns impact social action. This power is exercised by social actors within "their respective areas of influence through the networks that they construct around their interests" (Castells, 2009, p.). Thus, activists can assume the functions of leaders within their restrictive circle of connections when they feel the need to take action. The role of leadership then becomes a third unit of study to this dissertation and will be discussed in the following sections.

2.2.2 Toward a link between Habermas and Castells

Verma and Shin (2004) addresses the question of whether it is possible to apply a Habermasian tradition to planning theory with the incorporation of Castells's construct of the network society. The authors provide a table showing how the scholars are similar and different. Habermas's concept of the lifeworld and the system can be compared to Castells's Self and Net. Structurally these systems are similar. There is a tension between them which results in the manifestation of the colonization of the lifeworld by the system and the increase in distance between the Self and the Net (p. 135). In addition, much in alignment with Habermas, Castells (1996) believes that rationality, which calls for reason can lead to social action. He furthers his claim by explaining that it is the lack of communication among agents in the various networks that prevent action from occurring. Thus like Habermas, Castells places emphasis on the role of communication in transformation of society. Another point of commonality between the scholars is Castells's definition of the network as a set of intersected nodes. Similarly one could apply Castells's term of network to the members of the public sphere. For Habermas, the bourgeoisie constituted the public sphere. According to other scholars utilizing Habermas's idea, the multiplicity of public spheres are formed by a variety of members all sharing similar interests and values (e.g. feminists, civil rights activists, Tea party). The point is that social ties are essential in the constitution of the public sphere as there would not be public sphere without networks. Thus, fusing Habermas and Castells becomes essential when studying communication phenomena.

What is different between the scholars is the orientation of their work. While Habermas focuses on a normative approach where communicative action will lead to the disintegration of conflict and the restoration of legitimation, Castells does not provide a straightforward solution, because he recognizes the complexity and fluidity of culture and

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society. Hence, the major differentiation lies in the conclusion/application of the researchers. Verma and Shin (2004) concludes by arguing that planning theory must rely on both approaches. Similarly my dissertation argues that in order to fully understand the case study of the Right to Know rally it is fundamental to fuse both works based on the premise that Castells recognizes how shift in economy and technology leads to a new culture and society. In the matter of the public sphere, Castells (2008) argues that the public sphere is not mediated only via media; rather "it is the cultural/informational repository of the ideas and projects that feed public debate" (p.79). Human interactions via media channels lead to a dialogue between state and citizens, assuring the maintenance of democracy. Castells is interested in understanding how new public spheres are constituted and how they operate within the global market. His approach tends to emphasize relationships between agents (e.g., state, corporations, citizens, consumers, church) that shape the forces of globalization. For example, he mentions the Zapatistas's movement, which opposed the global commodification of Mexican culture. For Castells "the public sphere is the space of communication of ideas and projects that emerge from society and are addressed to the decision makers in the institutions of society. The global civil society is the organized expression of the values and interests of society" (Castells, 2008, p. 78). He continues by asserting that in the past "networks were the domain of the private life, while the world of production, power, and war was occupied by large, vertical organizations…that could marshal vast pools of resources around the purpose defined by a central authority" (Castells, 2006, p. 4). Digital technologies allow the expansion of private life networks into public network through horizontal organizations. Trough relationships emerged out of new networks democracy is maintained. He believes that public diplomacy, which is the result of ideas and opinions not meant to assert power, rather public diplomacy, is a form of public opinion that "induce(s) a communication space in which a new, common language could emerge as a precondition for diplomacy, so that when the time for diplomacy comes, it reflects … meaning and sharing" (Castells, 2008, p. 91). The web represents the space where public opinion can be transformed in public diplomacy. As technology shapes society, so society is capable of shaping technology "according to the needs, values, and interests of people who use the technology" (Castells, 2006, p. 3). Communication is exercised via

technology by individuals who become part of a network in the attempt to make a difference. Hence, the new public sphere is the result of shift in technology, which prompted people to organize, operate, communicate and relate to one and another in such a way as to provide new meaning and resources to civic engagement and democracy. To clarify the use of Habermas and Castells' work in identifying whether Facebook represents the modern public sphere, the following table will be useful to consider.

Public Sphere Power Distribution

■Church, Lords
■Citizens
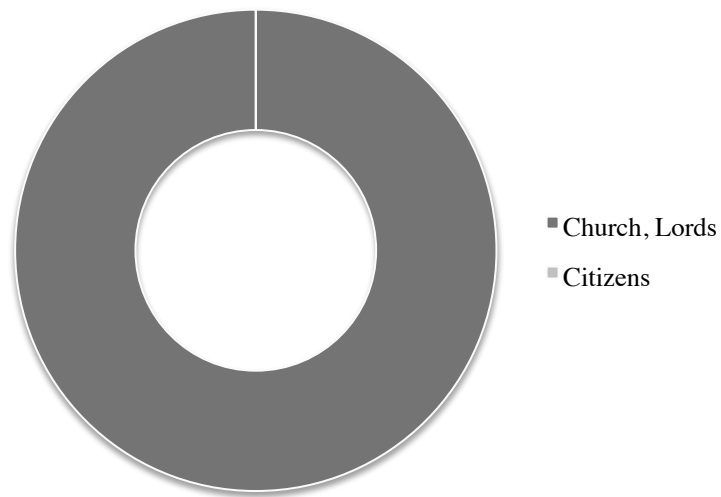
Figure 1: Power Distribution Pre-17th Century

The first quadrant represents the public sphere prior to the 17th century. Thus, power relations were tilted versus Church and lords. Citizens had no saying.
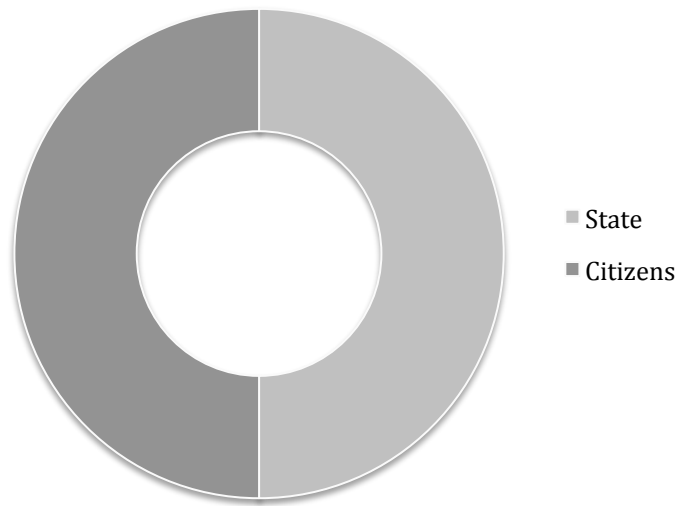
Figure 2: Power Distribution 18th & Mid 19th Century

The 18th and early 19th century is a period of time when the public sphere reached its ideal state of being. Here state loses its dominant discourse, while citizens gained power. It is within this period that balance is achieved among actors.
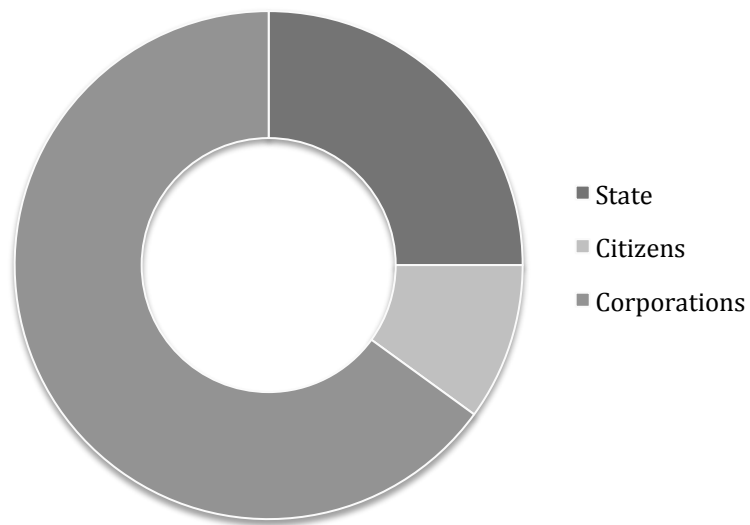
Figure 3: Power Distribution Mid 19th & 20th Century

By the mid 19th and 20th century, those citizens who created balance in the 18th century become to exercise dominant control over the state and other citizens. Thus, the

bourgeois class reverses the 17th and pre 17th public sphere, leaving out other public spheres of marginalized groups.
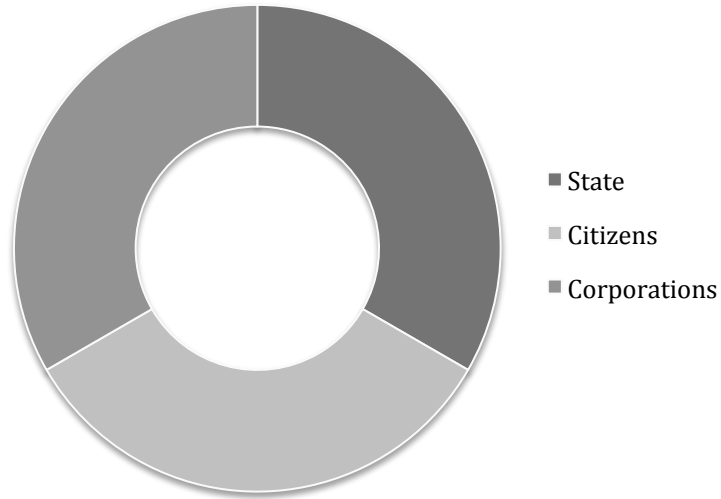
Figure 4: Power Distribution 21st Century

The last figure represents today's relationship between state, citizens, and private industries. The domain for contention is opened for assertion. Any of the three parties can exercise agency to dominate discourse in the public sphere. The space of contention (in this case technological communication like Facebook) provides opportunity for social change. It is yet to see who will prevail. What we know is that the 21st public sphere is much different from the early 17th or late 20th century ones and must be given attention. Within the 21st domain of contention, more attention is given to citizens who contest state and corporate power-relations. Within this population one of the dimensions this dissertation looks at is the role of leadership in social movements that rely on virtual communicative action. Thus, the following section offers a review of literature that discusses leadership in social networks within social movements.

2.3 Leadership

Leadership in social movements has been studied using a variety of perspectives and yet it is still to determine which approach provides a broader understanding of the concept (Earl, 2007; Morris & Staggenborg, 2004). Early research on the subject posits

that individual traits (e.g. charisma) affect those that will take charge and those who will follow orders and decisions at a specific stage in a movement development (Downton, 1973; Ibarra, 2003, Morris & Staggenborg, 2004, Platt & Lilley, 1994). Downton's (1973) contribution to the conception of leadership to personal traits leads the reader to understand leadership as a hierarchical structure, where followers have no ways to exercise agency (Ibarra, 2003, Melucci, 1996; Morris & Staggenborg, 2004). This systematic structure allowed social movements to engage in successfully coordinated manifestations over a long period of time on the behalf of the entire group. These leaders, according to Ibarra (2003) were, "those who were more able at pursuing their followers best valued options and most desired rewards" (p. 49). By late 1980s, research on leadership shifted away from individual traits and homogeneity of goals, to focus on identification (group identities) within a movement. This former view is associated with New Social Movements theories that challenge the resource mobilization assumptions that a movement to be successful needs to rely on a structured organization and centralized leadership (Diani, 1995). On the contrary, decentralization and fragmented audience seems to be at the core of movements that are analyzed using a new social movements' perspective. Hence, social networks become essential to the promulgation of campaigns and programs associated to a new movement, but they are not dependable on a specific organization or leader. For example, an organization like the Organic Consumers Association can launch a campaign, but both members, or not members can take the role of leaders at the local level to share information about the campaign or organize rallies in their community (Ibarra, 2003). According to Ibarra (2003), "goals were no longer generated with reference to ideological principles, but were continually reshaped in the light of activists' changing needs and orientations" (p. 50). Quality of relationship between leaders, members, non-members, and organizations became the central focus of a given social movement.

Emphasis on social networks gave rise to a multitude of research explaining structural relationships among organizations, individuals, and coalitions of a given movement, using social network analysis. Garrido and Halavais (2003) examine the hyperlinked network of the web sites of the Zapatista's movement to understand how the movement has become successful at the global level, inspiring others to adopt new

communication technologies. Other scholars including Opel (2004) and Coopman (2009, 2011) studied the role of low power frequency radio, operated by activists in an effort to change micro radio policies. Ibarra (2003) observes that, "the initiatives promoted by these structures (e.g. radio) …enabled people, lacking any specific organizational membership, to preserve their connections to those sectors of the public opinion with similar orientations" (p. 51). No need of structural organizational skills was needed. Coopman (2011) reinforces the role of networks and decentralized leadership by narrating the story of Mbanna Kantako, a citizen in Springfield, IL, who founded and still operates Human Rights Radio Network, which aims at informing the community of police oppression. Coopman uses this story to introduce the dissent network theory, which "focuses on the creation or utilization of new repertoires of action and organization to meet immediate community needs outside the bounds of existing regimes" (p. 159). In regards to leadership, Coopman (2011) borrows Diani's (2003) concept of broker, an individual whose role is to create a bridge between people not directly in touch (also see Ibarra, 2003). Hence, brokers help to overcome barriers individuals might encounter when trying to be part of a social movement. Coopman sustains that brokers' actions help heterogeneous networks to form, providing an environment of dense relations and nodes, ideal for social movements to achieve their goals.

Current studies on the Internet and social movements tend to emphasize decentralization of leadership without losing the functions associated with leaders. Earl (2007) calls attention to tasks performed by activists that have leading elements. She argues that the elusive definition of leadership in social movements' literature derives from a gap in the analysis of leading tasks. She argues that, "scholars can resolve these conceptual difficulties by unpacking the concept of leadership into sets of tasks and focusing on how those tasks are identified as salient by key organizers and how those tasks are acted on by key organizers" (Earl, 2007, p. 1329). She based her analysis on previous research that mentions tasks and leadership. By collecting all articles discussing the subject matter she provides a conceptualization of leadership from a task approach. Earl (2007) provides 9 categories of actions ranging from articulating vision and ideology to engaging the political environment to framing the movement and it issues and organizing specific actions. Among these categories this dissertation will focus on the

following: organizing specific actions; managing the internal life of the movement; making strategic and tactical decisions; and providing social capital. These four categories were chosen based on the research questions. For example, for the first category of action, McNair Barnett (1993) analyzes leadership by studying the initiation and coordination of actions. For the second category, several scholars, including Gusfield (1966) and McNair Barnett (1993) focus on tasks that motivate individuals to follow certain leaders. Providing social capital includes studies that revolve around the importation of new tactics and "new ideas" through networks (Brown & Hosking, 1986; Earl, 2007, p. 1331; Morris & Staggenborg, 2004). Earl (2007) suggests that role of leadership is also associated to episodic events, such as voting campaigns. In regard to this latter subject, Ibarra (2003) notes, "co-operations and other exchanges between social movement organizations … may well develop on the occasion of specific projects and campaigns" (Diani, 1995; Ibarra, 2003, p. 53), meaning that people will perform leadership functions under specific circumstances, like in the case of the Right to Know rally. Morris and Staggenborg (2004) discuss the relationship between agency and structure in the context of leadership in social movements, providing a literature review of past and current studies, including Ganz's research on "features of organizations that generate effective leaders" (p. 1016-1018). Much of the discussion on Ganz revolves around the argument that in order for leaders to be successful in their role, they must have access to an organizational structure, which provides a space for engagement between participants and leaders. For example, meetings in specific location can provide opportunity for deliberative communication among members of a social movement. However, this approach tends to omit non-participants or non-members of specific organizations. Moreover, in the case of Facebook, it is yet to be seen whether social media represent an organizational structure or whether it is the use of the tools by individuals that foster some type of organizational structure within a broader system. What Morris and Staggenborg (2004) point out about Ganz's study is his claim that a leader is the result of many teammates, thus the outcome of a campaign or rally is the result of the participation of all members and nonmembers of a social movement. The emphasis lies on social networks and how these nodes perform actions of leadership. Of importance to the role of leadership in the digital age is the set of organizing skills a

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multiplicity of individuals can performance. Facebook and the Internet overall seem to foster non-hierarchical, decentralized leadership. Basic skills are required to use the web to coordinate initiatives; informal ties are formed among heterogonous individuals who share a common cause; and costs are limited to access availability (Brown, 1989; Morris & Staggenborg, 2004). According to Diani (2003); "By creating new bridges through their multiple personal involvements, either directly or indirectly, movement activists facilitate the spread of solidarity…among different groups and organizations (Diani, 2003, p. 118). More importantly, the continuous exchange of information among users fosters a space for growth and fluid leadership, where one day one can be the leader, the next day another person will be. The flexibility in leadership is ideal in situation where repressive agents try to hinder the image of social movements. Hence, these repressive actors will focus on one single leader who represents the overall organization or social movement. With digital technology social movements have the opportunity to strategically not identify a specific leader, strengthening the social ties and goals of the movement (e.g. Occupy Wall Street) (Carty, 2011). According to Morris and Staggenborg (2004); "Any approach to leaders in social movements must examine the actions of leaders within structural contexts and recognize the myriad levels of leadership and roles of participants" (p. 171).

For the purpose of this dissertation leaders are defined according to Morris and Staggenbord (2004) as, "strategic decision-makers who inspire and organize others to participate in social movements" (p. 171). These leaders are brokers who connect members and non-members of social movements together. They guide individuals, help them participate actively in the cause, by building solidarity and strong ties. These leaders are dynamic and shift from a role of leader to the role of a follower. In this way connections are created that provide "access to a wider repertoire of strategies, promote coordination between national and local strategies, and encourage interorganizational cooperation and coalition" (Morris & Staggenborg, 2004, p. 182). Thus, one can say that Facebook represents indeed a public sphere where all voices are balanced and everybody has access to function as a leader in specific situations. However, it is also important to mention that the rise of new communication technologies while allowing more people to perform leading skills, might also result in the individual self-promotion of self-interest,

preventing people from pursuing collective solutions to a problem, resulting in pushing

followers away (Barker et al., 2001). To facilitate promotion Facebook on October 2012,

after the completion of this dissertation, introduced a new feature for posts. This future,

which costs $3.20, allows to "promote posts and move (your) important news, links and

photos higher in news feed ("Promote," 2012). Promotion of messages can alter the

identity of individuals, especially if used by movements or/and its members to promote

leadership roles. This future was not in effect when conducting my study, thus leadership

on Facebook in this manuscript was not impacted by this new option. It will be of interest

for other scholars to study the evolution of leaders on Facebook as the company

introduces more commercial features.

This dissertation analyzes the concept of leadership within social movements that

use Facebook illustrating that the dynamics of online social movements' networks rely on

a leadership that should be measured and understood through the tasks performed by

members and nonmembers of a given social movement, as in the case of the food

movement of the Right to Know rally. This analysis of leadership within the Right to

Know rally will also illustrate that leadership is episodic and does not rest on the same

individual, but it flows among different people as campaigns are launched or ended. By

taking an approach to leadership that focuses on tasks rather than individual traits, this

study raises two major questions. First, how has technological advance in communication

affected the role of leaders in new movements? Second, what are the implications of

advancing leadership based on performance rather than traits?

2.4 Defining Social Movement

Defining social movements in itself is a meticulous job. Scholars never seem to

agree to a single definition. For this reason, depending on the context and study,

researchers have come up with their own term. Mayo (2005) and Crossley (2002) provide

a clear summary of the most prominent definitions of social movements including

Blumer (1969)'s "collective enterprise seeking to establish a new order of life" (p. 99);

and Eyerman and Jaminson (1991)'s "temporary public spaces" (p. 4) for the collective

creation of ideas, opinions and identities. Mayo (2005) is mostly impressed by Della

Porta and Diani (1999/2006)'s definition which relies on four themes: informal

interaction networks, shared beliefs and solidarity, engagement in collective action upon

conflict, and use of protest to challenge existing order (p. 55). Nevertheless, one can say that social movements share a collective desire for a change, challenging existing power relations. To achieve this change each movement employs distinct strategies that evolve over time and over organizations. According to Crossley (2002) "social movements share a family resemble rather than a fixed essence and their definition inevitably rests upon the fuzzy logic of ordinary language" (p. 7). Social movements' definitions emerged also in accordance with social movements' theories. Hence, scholars including Della Porta, Melucci and Diani whose focus is on new social movements and the creation of symbolic meaning tend to define social movements in terms of collective identity and solidarity (Crossley, 2002; Hunt & Benford, 2004). On the contrary, scholars of resource mobilization who focus more on an organizational view of social change through movements have defined social movements as "a complex, or formal, organization, which identifies its goals with the preferences of a social movement and attempts to implement those goals" (McCarthy & Zald; 1977, p. 1218). Political opportunities theorists emphasize the interaction of movement and institutionalized politics (Tarrow, 1988).

This work will focus on the interaction of Facebook users and the tools they utilize to encourage collective action offline, following Della Porta and Diani's (1999/2006) discussion of social movements. The authors, point out that understanding social movements must rely on "co-presence and interaction within each of them of both movement and (bureaucratic) organizational processes (2006, p. 27). The authors suggest 4 critical elements that play into social movements (e.g. informal interaction, share beliefs, engagement in collective action, and use of protest). First, online interaction especially on social media, tend to be informal. This is an important point because it connects the concept of decentralized leadership to building bridges among a heterogeneous audience made out of informal ties. Second, the web becomes a space for aggregation for those who share similar interests, creating a collective identity. Thus social networks are heterogonous but collectively they are homogenous. Third, the web serves as a space for planning and organizing in response to discontent, ultimately becoming a forum (public sphere) to challenge power structures. More important the web

allows messages to be created without external state constraints. These messages then can be disseminated offline, increasing awareness and encouraging action.

2.5 The Rise of the Citizen-Consumer

"Citizenship is not dead, or dying, but found in new places, in life-politics […] and in consumption" (Scammell, 2000, p. 351). Scammell (2000) argues for scholars to move from the pre-established notion that political involvement rests in production; rather she calls for an understanding of how consumption is becoming a way for consumers to become politically involved. She critiques Adorno's notion that the buyer or viewer of a certain product is nonetheless a corporate worker - consumer. By pointing out the results of globalization in terms of consumers pressing corporations to adapt 'socially responsible' programs, Scammell (2000) sees a politicization of the consumer, which leads to a consumer who is demanding, concerned and socially and politically active. As she notes,

> by drawing attention to their capacity to escape state regulation, they (corporations) inadvertently highlight their own responsibility for good or ill. They are no longer disguised as an almost nonpolitical fact of life, as they were in the welfare democracies, where the state is the focus of all politics. In the process they politicize consumption. (p. 353)

Scammell (2000) argues that today's activism has changed in response to deregulations of the 1980s and 1990s, which led to a privatization, internationalization, and concentration of corporate power. As a result of the "corporate hijacking of political power" (Klein, 1999, p. 340), citizens have used their consumer power to pressure corporations to be more environmental, socially and politically involved. The Internet seems to be a tool that has allowed this citizen-consumer mobilization against corporate power (Bennett, 2003).

While Scammell seems optimistic about the concept of the citizen-consumer, recently published articles that have explored the citizen-consumer model of environmental issues such as organic farming and marketing, have criticized this optimism, concentrating more on contradictions of coexisting ideologies within capitalistic practices (Guthman, 2003, Johnston, 2008; Sassatelli, 2006; Schröder and McEachern, 2004; Smith, 1998). A recent counter-trend in the food industry is the Slow Food movement emerged in Italy in the 1980 in response to the global

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"McDonaldization." The movement calls for 'good, clean and fair' food, promoting local and seasonal ingredients, local farmers, sustainable agriculture and artisan cooking techniques. The slow food movement is not considered to be a countermovement to mass production and consumerism; rather it is a countervailing trend. This emphasis has questioned the political role of this movement and its effects on policy-decisions (Honorè, 2004). Another counter-trend is the organic food movement, which supports organic farming and agricultural organic laws that protect the environment and the population from the exploitation of developing countries' producers (Guthman, 2003). Fair Trade coffee activism seeks to establish an alternative trading system to the current neoliberal bourgeois system, by certifying and promoting fairly traded coffee (Jaffee, 2007).

Seeking to understand counter-trends in the food industry (e.g. slow movement, Fair Trade coffee activism, and organic food movement), scholars like Johnston (2008) and Smith (1998) have explored first the role of corporations in "green" marketing and then dwelled on whether consumers have 'real' agency. According to these scholars, despite recognition that consumers play a major role in decision-making and hence have agency, corporations can co-opt this agency (DuPuis, 2000; Guthman, 2003; Pollan, 2006). A common assumption is that even with the emergence of a new socially responsible buyer, food companies have adapted new marketing strategies to fulfill their corporate agenda (Johnston, 2008; Smith, 1998).

The complexity of the citizen-consumer is further analyzed in Livingstone et al.'s (2007) article on the rhetoric and discourse of the citizen-consumers in UK regulatory apparatus, pointing out advantages and disadvantages for activists and citizens to position themselves as citizen-consumers. The advantage of defining citizens in terms of consumers lies in its economic-political influence. Livingstone, et al. (2007) point at the importance of discourse in advancing the interests of the 'citizen-consumer' for the media and communications environment. In their interview, the Chairman of Voice of the Listener and Viewer, notes that,

> It is much easier to regulate consumer issues which are basically economic issues and redress and fair representation and so on than citizenship issues which involve social, cultural, democratic issues which are far more difficult to quantify and measure (p. 72).

His statement illustrates that when working within a neoliberal regulatory market, the most efficient way to empower citizens is through shopping. The outcome of such emphasis on consumers, rather than citizens is emphasized by Livingstone et al. (2007), who state,

> The outcome is a conception of the citizen as a vulnerable minority, leaving the majority to express their citizen interest primarily through their active role as consumers in the marketplace. But this is a conception that critics would question, because it does not offer citizens a route to represent themselves directly, and because it concentrates the citizen interest on the vulnerable few rather than the public as a whole. (p. 85)

On one hand, the citizen is encouraged to shop (whether locally, or to boycott certain brands) to assert his/her political voice. On the other hand, the environment in which this concept originates lies on an economic agenda of market regulation. Nevertheless, one more point must be considered in regard to the citizen-consumer model that will help placing this model within the scope of this dissertation- the point of view of social movements. How do social movements see the citizen-consumer model?

Sassatelli (2006) provides an answer,

> The movements which marshal the language of critical consumption have posed themselves as agencies for the representation of the consumer as fundamental subject-category within public discourse, together with other more visible cultural agencies such as advertising, marketing and conventional consumer defense organizations. (Sassatelli, 2006, p. 220)

Emphasis is placed on discourse used in fighting the cause, and one opposed to marketing strategies employed by corporations. This is evident for organizations like the OCA whose messages are in dual opposition with those conveyed by companies such as Monsanto and Whole Foods Market. For example, the organization's campaign against Monsanto uses different slogans to inform consumers of the dangers of GMOs. These slogans are "I deserve to know it's GMO," referring to the need to have food labeling laws, or "stopfrankenfish," alluding to the proposed genetically modified salmon to be put on the market ("millions against," 2011, n.p.).

Organizations such as the OCA or Greenpeace prompt consumers to become politically active, demanding corporations to be socially responsible and demanding the government to implement regulations that will assure the cooperation of food companies.

The way these movements encourage collective action is by counteracting corporate practices (e.g. marketing, advertising) utilizing a variety of communication strategies and tactics. These practices include the utilization of media through which messages are conveyed to the target population (e.g. launching of campaigns). In the food scenario, because everyone eats and therefore everybody shops to cook his/her meal, an individual becomes automatically a consumer. This edible consumer is affected by the way he/she eats, which poses a social and political problem, especially when food corporations and the government fail to represent citizens. As a consequence, there is no act of eating or shopping for food without politics. The consumer is no more just a marketable audience, he/she carries agency, political agency. For this reason, the term citizen-consumer in this dissertation entails an individual who has political agency when certain conditions are met, meaning that it is important to understand the limitations of the model and explore when it actually works. These limitations are fundamental in understanding the circumstances in which a consumer becomes a citizen.

In the digital world, the citizen-consumers has agency through the access to technology used as vehicles of protest. Castells notes that the traditional assumption of a passive audience is replaced by, "the concept of the active audience, (which) is now well established in communication research (Castells, 2009, p. 4). Alexander, Ball-Rokeach, and Cantor (1986) contested the notion of a passive audience, observing that new emerging media provide "the opportunity for media access and the ability to control some aspect of media content, (which) translates to political power" (p.18). This is a concept reinforced by other scholars, including van Dijck (2009) who categorizes social media audience into three main categories: (1) passive spectators; (2) inactive spectators; and (3) active participants. He further observes that,

> The majority of (social media) users consist of 'passive spectators'(33%) and 'inactives' (52%); while the former category perform activities such as reading blogs or watching peer-generated video, the latter category does not engage in any of these activities. (van Dijck, 2009, p. 44)

He continues by explaining that active participants are those who create, transform, distribute, and consume content on the web. Thus, these are potentially members of the new public sphere; these are citizen-consumers. Social media play a fundamental role in fostering civic engagement, because "they constitute by and large the space where power

is decided" (Castells, 2007, p. 242), where citizens can exercise power. Content is determined by a variety of users, providing for an unlimited range of communication and messages that flows from space to space, constructing and reconstructing the "production of meaning in the public mind" (Castells, 2007, p. 239). The participation of active users in discussion on social media becomes the basis of civic engagement and activism (Neumayer & Raffl, 2008). By providing choices, citizens can engage in critical debates to find a common consensus to a problem. As Jasper (2004) notes, "Participants in social movements constantly face choices. It is in those choices that we see the cultural meanings, moral sentiments, emotions, and forms of rationality of groups and individuals" (p. 10). Civic engagement becomes embedded in supporting a social cause where participants "seek, adopt, appropriate, and invent ways to participate in cultural production" (Rheingold, 2008, p. 97). As consumers become more involved in social media discussions that revolve around social problems, a new space for political engagement is formed (public sphere), providing a vehicle for citizens to challenge authority at the local and global level. As Delli Carpini and Williams (1998) note, the internet, "has created new opportunities and pitfalls for the public to enter and interpret the political world" (p. 23).

The premise of this dissertation is that the audience is not passive as traditionally being conceived. On the contrary, users of social media can be categorized according to three degrees of participation. When citizens decided to engage in online activism they open doors for high-quality political engagement and activism. Online discussions can bring users to organize offline protests. Thus, the web becomes a vehicle for activists to advance their causes and affect policy-change.

2.6 Understanding Social Movements and the Emergence of Food Movements

To explain the complexity of today's food movement in the United States, one can draw from multiple theories including collective identity, political opportunity, resource mobilization and the framing perspective (Burns, 2005; Diani, 1996; Edwards & McCarthy, 2004; Einwohner, 1999; Eyerman, 2002; Gaytan, 2003; Mayo, 2005; Meyer, 2004; Polletta & Jasper, 2001; Reed, 2005; Snow, 2004; Snow, Soule & Kriesi, 2004). This cross-fertilization of theories enables one not only to identify food movements' efforts toward collective action, but also to expand on past and current empirical studies

on social movements and the media. The job of a scholar then is to identify the most suitable theoretical framework that will best explain and understand a certain social movement within a specific context. This dissertation, as previously mentioned focuses specifically on the concept of the public sphere. Facebook is seen as a facilitator for the mobilization of ideas. Following Habermas' notion of public sphere, the web expands the opportunity for "quality communication for reaching consensual definitions of the public good" through cultural resources (Della Porta, 2007; Habermas, 1989, 1998, 2006). What is important to note is the fact that the web creates a space of decentralized interaction where anyone can post, exchange or claim resources. Cultural resources might have originated from leaders such as the Organic Consumers Association or from members of the organization, but Facebook proves to be a space where anybody can exercise the functions of a leader. Leadership is fragmented, placing emphasis on the democratic role of the resource itself. Thus, studying food movements through the lens of Habermas helps identifying how users of the Right to Know rally on Facebook exercise agency, how democracy is maintained through the use of new communication technology and how food movements benefit from new media.

2.6.1 Food Movement

Food is political. In the instance we grow a tomato, we buy a turkey at the supermarket and we prepare a meal to eat, we have indulged in politics. According to Wendell Berry, eating is an agricultural, ecological, political and communicative act (Pollan, 2006). Food is also more than politics. Food unites people and creates a collective identity. People getting together around a table to eat engage in discussions over their personal life or issues affecting society. In a certain way food can stimulate the creation of a public sphere where individuals exchange ideas on (tras)national and local matters (Greene & Cramer, 2011; Pollan, 2007). Food therefore, carries a communicative participatory element, which is important for the maintenance of democracy. According to Counihan (1999) "food is a product and mirror of the organization of society" (p. 6). Food is a powerful communicative tool because it is used to maintain and identify socioeconomic inequalities in our society and the parties involved in this unequal democracy. Insofar as it can be ascertained food "acts as a conveyor of culture *precisely because* we use it as means of communication" (Cramer et al., 2011, p. 6). Hence,

studying food within a communicative and social movement perspective is imperative if we want to respond to the increased inflation of food prices, the paradox of overabundance of food and hunger, environmental issues associated with GMO cultivations, and corporate monopolies of the agricultural system.

Attention to the study of food in communication and social movements' literature has recently remerged due to an increased cultural attention on food and environmental issues. While studies on environmental movements populate communication scholarship, food was left to be analyzed using an agricultural or anthropological approach. As a matter of fact, environmental scholars tended to omit considering food an important and dominant environmental issue (Walsh, 2011). Current events around food issues have led many scholars in different disciplines to pay attention to the way food is produced, distributed, and consumed. In communication special attention has been given to a range of topics: media frames of GMO issues (Crawley, 2007; Hibino & Nagata, 2006; Yamaguchi, 2005), marketing food to children (Moore & Rideout, 2007; Morrison Thomson, 2011; Schlosser, 2001), discursive analysis of Nature (Packwood-Freeman, 2010; Thompson, 2011); media and agricultural disparagement law (Asmus, 2010); media and film (Lindenfeld, 2011; Parasecoli, 2011) and negotiation or construction of identity around food (German, 2011; Greene, 2011; Todd, 2011).

Food research in communication and social movements then tends to focus on issues of democracy, (trans)national fair trade issues, consumer identity and agency, political economy of the food industry and the media, implementation of communicative strategies of activists, effects of ad campaigns of social movements, and analysis of media frames of food issues (Asmus, 2010; Germov, Williams, & Freij, 2010; Veronesi, 2010; Ward, Coveney, & Henderson, 2010). The variety of studies in food illustrates the multitude of social movements that are currently addressing one of the many issues related to food. From organizations like PETA, fighting animal cruelty, to the Slow Food movement promoting traditional mechanics to produce food in such as way as to provide a sustainable environment, to Food Democracy Now, which is dedicated to fighting the dependency on GMO products, to the Center for Science in the Public Interest, advocating life habits to stay healthy, to Jaime Oliver's food revolution, which initiated a program to improve school lunch streamed on television network ABC, food studies have

exploded into an academic trend. It is precisely this blossom of different colors that makes it harder for scholars to define the food movement and confine it to a fixed and rigid definition. Several scholars have used the term "food movement," but failed to operationalize and generalize the term (Maurer, 2002; Pollan, 2010; Walsh, 2011). According to Pollan (2010) food movement is the recognition that "industrial food production is in need of reform because its social environmental/public health/animal welfare/gastronomic costs are too high" (p. 2). He continues listening 16 threads of advocacy that fall under this movement including school lunch reform, farm bill reform, combatting obesity and diabetes II and farm worker rights (Pollan, 2010). However, Pollan never seems to provide a clear definition of the movement to the reader, illustrating the complexity of making sense of this movement. He also relies on the assumption that the only solution is a reform of the system. While social reform is essential, rediscovering the pleasure of eating and constructing a new identity based on solidarity are elements at the core of the food movement (Gaytan, 2003; Honorè, 2004). What we know is that this movement includes activities and ideas that center on promoting healthy food at an affordable cost, without invading and harming humans or the environment. Individuals are taught to develop new ethics of tolerance and respect toward Nature and civilization thus, changing their worldview about Nature. According to Wright and Middendorf (2008) current social changes in food "signify a mounting reflexivity and new modes of action among producers, consumers, and activists in the production and consumption of food" (p. 3). These changes are reflected in communicative practices employed by activists, including ad campaigns to prevent animal cruelty (e.g. PETA), on-site protests against opening of McDonald's restaurants in Rome (1986), and documentaries revealing the dark sides of corporate practices (e.g. *The World According to Monsanto*). This promulgation of protests indicates the "rise of an "alternative" food system that attempts to exist outside of the mainstream commodity-driven network" (Wright & Middendorf, 2008, p. 2). For the purpose of this dissertation the following definition, which I derived, is used to describe food movement: *food movement is a dynamic and reflexive process in which food is used as means to cultural, political, environmental and socioeconomic change. Food movement is the collective*

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mobilization of individuals who challenge the current production, distribution, and consumption of the food system.

Food movement is cultural because it attempts to challenge the way we think about food. For example, the Slow Food movement emerged in Italy in the 1980s in response to the global "McDonaldization." The movement calls for 'good, clean and fair' food, promoting local and seasonal ingredients, local farmers, sustainable agriculture and artisan cooking techniques (Honoré, 2004; Slow Food, 2011).

The food movement is also political. Based on Wendell Berry's notion that eating is a political act, consumers can vote with their dollars to support and request a better food system. The adaptation of a philosophy of life that centers around eating healthy, organic produce, or a vegetarian diet leads to political opportunities and a change in policy-decisions. While there are organizations that are precisely focusing on advancing changes at the political level, the food movement does not need to be centered around social reform as the end goal. Social reforms are a natural consequence of a cultural identity switch. The Slow Food movement initiated as a way of life, but it now extends to provide initiatives like the Slow schooling that requires political change. School lunch reforms are another example of the political aspect of food movement (e.g. Michelle Obama). By creating a collective identity, changing the meaning associated with food, health, and life new political opportunities open. Mobilization then occurs through awareness and adaptation of a new identity.

The food movement is also an environmental movement because nature is the foundation of food. If water is polluted, if the soil is contaminated with pesticides, and animals' diets are genetically altered, the food we eat is also contaminated and potentially harmful for humans. Food movements aim to create a sustainable environment. As Pollan observes (2010),

> For some in the movement, the more urgent problem is environmental: the food system consumes more fossil fuel energy than we can count on in the future (about a fifth of the total American use of such energy) and emits more greenhouse gas than we can afford to emit, particularly since agriculture is the one human system that *should* be able to substantially rely on photosynthesis: solar energy. It will be difficult if not impossible to address the issue of climate change without reforming the food system (p. 3).

Organizations work to create and sustain organic and locally produced foods, and farmland preservation.

Food movements have also a socioeconomic element. To address hunger and the disparities of gender, class and income, community gardens in urban and residential areas have been designed to assure access to healthy food to low-income populations. These organizations don't necessarily have to be associated with food. The mission of the American Society of Landscape Architects (ASLA) "is to lead, to educate and to participate in the careful stewardship, wise planning and artful design of our cultural and natural environments" (ASLA). While the focus might be on the preservation of landscape, this profession has worked to design community gardens, with the intent to educate the masses on the health and economic utility of a sustainable environment. Initiatives that resulted from the involvement of ASLA include food gardens in low-income schools and farming areas in residential and urban communities.

2.7 Mass Media and Social Movements: Moving toward Online Activism

With innovation in technology that is not entirely controlled or owned by these corporations, citizens have the opportunity to challenge the social order. According to Buechler (2000), "social order can be contested and malleable; rather than natural and given" (p. 5). Thus, citizens can exercise agency, defined generally in terms of anti or counterhegemonic action, through social movements and a variety of communicative strategies (Buechler, 2000, p. 46). Several scholars including Leizerov (2000), Andrejevic, (2003), Joyce (2010), Mossberger et al. (2008) and Earl and Kimport (2011) have studied the use of the Internet among activists as a channel for mobilization, challenging authority and corporate practices (e.g. blogging, creating specialized web-sites, on-line petitions). These studies highlight two fundamental points associated with social movements and online media. First, research on cyberactivism illustrates that when media are not entirely operated and controlled by multinational corporations, there is more freedom of information, more diversity in content and more voices are heard (Carty, 2011; Lievrouw, 2011; Mossberger et al., 2008; Papacharissi, 2002). One has to note that Facebook is indeed owned by a private entrepreneur (e.g. Mark Zuckerberg) and that the company has been subject of criticism for privacy policy issues and its ability to disable accounts. Nevertheless, popularity of the site increases among private and public,

corporate and activist sectors (Womack, 2011). In addition, monitoring content and pages on Facebook is not determined by the company per se, but it can be controlled by third parties (e.g. Chinese and Italian government). In October, the Italian version of Wikipedia was closed by the organization in response to a gag law proposed by Italian Prime Minister Silvio Berlusconi. The law if passed will force any "websites to correct content deemed detrimental to a person's image within 48 hours of a complaint, with no right of appeal" (Hornby, 2011, para. 11-12). The complexity of who is involved in using communication tools highlight the need to learn more about a medium that benefits from an 'uncontrolled market.' Facebook has been used successfully as democratic tool for activists (Cnn, 2011; Ghonim, 2011; Smith, 2011), but it is yet to see whether its utilization has limitations for activists.

Second, research on cyberactivism highlights the potential and power of the Internet to function as a counterhegemonic tool. The web is seen as a strategic tool capable of advancing a movement's goal (Carty, 2011), by forming a social system where individuals decide to get involved (Rohlinger, 2011). When activists exploit these resources they create alternative media messages that allow people to obtain different information, protest, manifest discontent, and organize online and offline activities (Mossberger et al., 2008; Reed, 2005; Rosenfeld, 1997; Snow, Zurcher & Peters, 1981). Recent studies on the role of mass media and social movements have focused on the web as an alternative outlet for activists to challenge the system (Carty, 2011; Lievrouw, 2011; van de Donk, et al., 2004). Within this work of literature the concept of online activism has been defined in many different ways using a variety of terms from "cyberprotest," to "digital activism," to "cyberactivism," to "hacktivism." (Carty, 2011; Joyce, 2010; Mossberger et al., 2008; van de Donk et al., 2004). At the core of these terms lies the fundamental notion that the web can serve to challenge the status quo, providing a public space for civic engagement (Castells, 2009). As Joyce (2010) further explains, "everybody can challenge the claims by the mainstream media, make their own voice heard, and become a citizen journalist" (p. 23), when the right tools are selected for the right campaign (Schultz & Jungherr, 2010). While each term used to define online activism specifically focuses on a segment of the digital network infrastructure, this dissertation embodies Joyce's definition of digital activism as the study and

understanding of "a set of digitally networked campaigning activities – or practices" (p. viii), where citizen-consumers appropriate these tools to bring a sociopolitical change (Earl & Kimport, 2011). Common actions derived from the use of online instruments include electronic petitions, webpages, and/or e-mails sent to governmental representatives, videos, podcasts. Actions that take part offline after reading an article on the web, become part of civic engagement (Du Gay, 1997; Earl & Kimport, 2011; Habermas, 1998, 2006; Postmes & Brunsting, 2002). These forms of action that are regularly submitted by single individuals aim for a collective outcome (Postmes & Brusnting, 2002). As Lievrouw (2011) observes, new media are used by people "as means to mobilize social movements – collective action in which people organize and work together as active participants in social change" (p. 150). This mobilization of people through the internet is possible when individuals already sympathize for a common cause or have similar interests and values as in the case of many food movements (Della Porta & Diani, 2006; Garnett, 2003; Pollan, 2010).

Many activists adopt these new media tools because they have many advantages compared to more traditional means of protesting. Functions such as organization and coordination of events are less time-consuming and are low costs (Bennett, 2003; Earl & Kimport, 2011; Garrett, 2003; Postmes & Brunsting, 2002; Scammell, 2000). According to Earl & Kimport, (2011) an appealing function of the Internet is the ability to coordinate "action toward a common goal without presence in physical time and space" (p. 11). It is cheap, easy to access, anonymous, decentralized and immediate (Joyce, 2010; Leizerov, 2000; Mossberg et al., 2008; Papacharissi, 2002; Postmes & Brunsting, 2002). It allows for a coalition builder and the coordination of on and offline protests (Earl & Kimport, 2011; Joyce, 2010; Mossberg et al. 2008; Postmes & Brunsting, 2002). In other words, "the Web sharply reduced costs for creating, organizing, and participating in protest" (Earl & Kimport, 2011, p. 10). Similarly, Lievrouw (2011) summarizes the predominant function of new media, by observing that

> New media technologies help seek, find, and assess information and each other. Mobilization and social movements today depend on people's abilities to cultivate relationships, seek and give advice, make recommendations, and amass and trade "reputation capital" and trust online (p. 151).

This quote illustrates that the web serves not only to plan a specific campaign in a

specific timeframe period, but the web also enables the cultivation of human relationships that go beyond a one time call for action. Thus, the traditional connotation associated to action (e.g. protesting on the streets, boycotting companies) is expanded to integrate a notion of communicative action. Habermas (1998, 2006) and later Bennett (2003) discuss the concept of public sphere and appropriation of a public space. Because the internet is not subject to the same laws and regulations of other media including broadcasting, cable and print, it allows individuals to expand agency and to enact that agency upon a corporate or governmental system. In a sense there is an appropriation of a public space that serves the public interest when other media outlets such as television fail to do so (Castells 2007; Lievrouw, 2011; Postmes & Brunsting, 2002). Habermas (1996, 2006) defines public sphere as a discursive space for communication to take place, where all discussions should be free of external and internal oppression. Bennett (2003) and Papacharissi, (2002) refer to the Internet as a public space, which still provides opportunities and access to challenge the predominant worldview imposed by a power elite. However, they observe the role of existing economic and structural contexts that might limit the degree of freedom of the web (e.g. democratic versus dictatorial regimes, Italy, China). Nevertheless, whether you write in a blog, you upload a video of an Iran protest on YouTube or Twitter, or you send a text message, that action becomes immediately a source for collective action, that might lead to a blockade as in the case of a sudden rise in gas prices (Vider, 2004). As Reed (2005) points out, it is "the right to feel home within the confines of the United States" (Reed, 2005, p. 110) that push individuals to reclaim a spectrum of their public rights. The internet seems to have accelerated the pace in which activists can counteract power-institutions, thus changing the dynamics between the power and the powerless.

While the web has opened new opportunities for activism, there is one issue that must be addressed in regard to this technology – the digital divide. Brodock (2010) defines the term based on the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development,

> as the gap between individuals, households, businesses and geographic areas at different socio-economic levels with regard to both their opportunities to access information and communication technologies (ICTs) and to their use of the Internet for a wide variety of activities. (p. 71)

She argues that access to new technologies is a privilege for those belonging to a higher economic status and who live in democratic societies. This limitation becomes a problem if the goal of an organization is to educate the masses, reaching those groups more affected by a power elite, as in the case of healthy food or organic food for low-income families (Brodock, 2010; McDonald, 2008; Mossberger et al. 2008; Papacharissi, 2002). The second limitation of new technologies according to Brodock (2010) Bennett (2003), Mossberger et al. (2008), and Papacharissi (2002) is skills. In order to use new technologies individuals must be trained effectively and efficiently and media tools must be tested out and matched with a specific campaign or task. The real question then becomes whether it is essential for the success of a social movement to mobilize a large spectrum of the 'unskilled' population. To address this dilemma, McDonald (2008) relies on the notion of a civic engagement, looking at how characteristics of online communication have encouraged participatory communication among race, gender, and age. Many scholars have agreed that today the digital divide, at least in the United States, has shrunk over the years, to a point that it does not undermine the actions and success of activists using the web (Vericat, 2010).

Regardless of the limitations of new technologies, new media have played and still are playing a fundamental role in activism, redefining not only human interactions but also politics and what it means to be socially and politically active (Bennett, 2003; Earl & Kimport, 2011; Joyce, 2010; Mossberger et al. 2008). While there is no evidence that the web is the reason why many activists get together, plan protests or influence policy-decisions, we cannot underestimate its power. Power, however, does not lie in the medium in itself, but it lies in the people and how these individuals utilize the tool to mobilize (Nielsen, 2010). Castells (1996) points out,

> the ability or inability of societies to master technology, and particularly technologies that are strategically decisive in each historical period, largely shapes their destiny, to the point where we could say that while technology per se does not determine historical evolution and social change, technology (or the lack of it) embodies the capacity of societies to transform themselves, as well as the uses to which societies, always in a conflictive process, decide to put their technological potential. (p. 7)

The assumption is that power is malleable and derives from human agency through a vessel (media), and that "media audiences and consumers are now also media users and

participants" (Lievrouw, 2011, p. i).

2.7.1 Social Media and Social Movements

In the last years, much research has been devoted to social media defined as an extension of the Web 2.0 and user generated content concepts (Brennan & Schafer, 2010; Lievrow, 2011; Mankoff et al., 2007). Insofar as it can be ascertained, social media are interactive and dynamic user-generated electronic media that "support the democratization of knowledge and information and allows general users to go from being content consumers to content producers" (Brennan & Schafer, 2010, p. 13).

Studies on this emerging technology range from social marketing (Brennan and Schafer, 2010; Holtz et al., 2009; Nalty, 2010; Tuten, 2008), to health communication (Chou et al., 2009; Mcnab, 2009), to social movements (Carty, 2011; Joyce, 2010; Lievrouw, 2011; van de Donk et al., 2004). Despite the variety of the existing research on this subject across disciplines, one can say that social media have become so ubiquitous in our daily activities to a point that they have changed the way we live and think (Lievrouw, 2011). The Pew Internet & Life Project reported that 65% of adults use social media sites such as Facebook, Twitter, Myspace, and Flickr. Among these sites the most frequented is Facebook, that in 2009 outpaced Google, illustrating a change in behavior in how people use the web to search for news, share content or take part in interactive discussions (Pepitone, 2010). Constant users of social media are people under age of 30 (60%), even thought it has reported that adults ranging from ages 50-64, represent now 60% of social networking users, an increase of 30% from last year ("Who Use It," 2011). Facebook's average user is 38 years old ("Who Use It," 2011). Facebook users who most frequently access the network have some kind of college education (34%), while only 5% of the target population, with less than high school education, use the social media ("Who Use It," 2011).

In regard to what people do on the leading social media network, research has reported that 53% of Facebook "users comment on other users' statuses at least 1-2 days per week" ("What Users Do," para. 27, 2010), while 44% of users "like" their friend's page content on a daily basis. In respects to using the network for emotional support, companionship, and tangible support, Facebook users reported significant higher scores of the above variables compared to other social media networks ("Support," 2011),

illustrating that Facebook serves as space to receive and absorb advice on a variety of issues. Furthermore, 26.7% of social media users reported that they belong to a community group, compared to 22.3% of non-internet users belonging to a community group. The slight difference in percentages indicates that social media facilitate interactions with local and community groups via the web. The utilization of the web and its technology then can be said to facilitate "communication across borders" (Earl and Kimport, 2011, p. 25).

In terms of news consumption, the Pew Internet & Life Project reported that as of 2010, 34% of Americans went online for news, but the report does not indicate what type of news respondents search for. Young people reportedly rely on the internet to read news more than television. According to the Pew Center, "for the first time, the internet has surpassed television as the main source of national and international news for people younger than age 30" ("News Online," 2011, para. 22-25), illustrating the opportunities the web offers for alternative voices. This current trend suggests that the way people consume news is changing and will impact human attitudes and behaviors. One has to see what role social media will play in news' consumption in the future. However, the report indicates that among low-income families, television is still the predominant source of news.

In the context of civic engagement, which pertains to on-line activism, one has to note that success is determined by users participation (Earl and Kimport, 2011; Hara and Estrada; 2005). According to the Pew Internet & American Life Project "nearly half of all Americans have expressed their opinions in a public forum on topics that are important to them, and blogs and social networking sites provide new opportunities for political engagement" ("Civic Engagement," para. 1-3, 2010). Furthermore, the report indicates that 35% of adults signed a petition on-line; and that 25% of online users have contacted a national, state, or local official via web ("Civic Engagement," Earl and Kimport, 2011). In respect to Facebook, studies reported that during political elections, 11% of Facebook users attended a meeting, 26% tried influencing somebody's opinion, and 65% voted or intended to vote ("Political Influence," 2011). While these findings provide optimistic view for online activism, research on online and political communication, indicate that civic engagement is significantly related to level of education ("Civic Engagement," 2009,

n.p.). Furthermore, those who are politically more involved on the web are also more involved outside the virtual wall (Papacharissi, 2002; "Political Influence," 2011). Since this study focuses on Facebook, the following section provides an overview of the literature on Facebook and social movements.

Studies on Facebook and social movements are limited (Eltantawy and Wiest, 2011; Neumayer and Raffl, 2008; Samuels, 2011), pointing to a need to expand literature on the subject. Randi Zuckerber, former marketing director of Facebook, observes that "social media used effectively for fundraising is, in many ways, still in its infancy" (Vericat, 2010, p. 177). Thus, monitoring the evolution of the use of social media for social movements will lead to insightful understanding on how issues become discussed and resolved in society. Generally, studies on Facebook and social movements have revolved around the idea that these social networks are tools that facilitate collective awareness and mobilization globally (Neumayer and Raffl, 2008; Samuels, 2011). Neumayer and Raffl (2008) explore the role of Facebook in carrying out a protest against FARC beyond the virtual world. In their view, the Internet and specifically Facebook allow for the creation of a community that interacts with individuals to change politics. In their case study, they investigated the potential of the Internet to spread political activism globally, arguing that despite the success of breaking geographical boundaries, social software must be supplemented with traditional activist tools to leverage the inequality gap of access to these technological tools.

In another study on social media including Facebook, Twitter and YouTube, Samuels (2011) discusses the unpredictable nature of these tools when used to mobilize a discontented crowd. He argues that social media foster a decentralized social structure where people not only use "new media to organize political protests, but these protests themselves tend to mimic the structure and methods of new social media" (para. 27-28). Hence, he calls scholars to question the relationship between agents and structure. Taking as a case study the mass protests in California against college tuition increases, the author discusses how a simple e-petition created a snowball effect that ultimately resulted in a march that blocked L.A. traffic and got the attention of mainstream media. As a result of initiating an electronic petition via social media, supplementing it with a

variety of media outlets, a $500 million increase in funding for the University of California was awarded.

In an interview for the *Journal of International Affairs* Randi Zuckerberg (2010) discusses the role of Facebook in enhancing democracy. She calls the social media a forum for civic engagement that fulfills the gap of those forums that "are absent from day-to-day political life or where individuals liberties are curtailed" (p. 178). Facebook is a tool that requires little expertise in technical skills on the part of those marginalized groups who use it to speak out against injustice or misrepresentations of traditional media (Vericat, 2010).

Questions on the role of social media in social movements have become a recurrent trend in popular press as well as popular culture. *CNN*, *Huffington Post*, NPR, and the *New York Times* have designated sections on their websites addressing how social media has revolutionized the way activists respond to discontent (Siddique et al., 2011; Smith, 2011). After the fall of the Egyptian government, activist Wael Ghonim, in a video interview with CNN reporter Wolf Blitzer, thanked Facebook for the success of the Egyptian revolution, by stating, "This revolution started online. This revolution started on Facebook" (Cnn, 2011; Ghonim, 2011; Smith, 2011). With limited literature review on Facebook and social movements this dissertation aims to fill that gap producing knowledge that can be used by other scholars in the field.

CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY
3.1 Introduction

Markham and Baym (2009) suggest that qualitative inquiry or qualitative Internet research entails the "study of the multiple meanings and experiences that emerge around the Internet in a particular context. These meanings and experiences can relate to contexts of design and production processes" (p. 34). Previous studies concerned with Internet usage and human behavior have used a variety of methods (e.g., interviews, observations, online surveys) to collect data from various sources, seeking "understanding of human experience or relationship within a system of culture" (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994; Mann & Stewart, 2000, p. 2; Markham and Baym, 2009; Strauss & Corbin, 1990; Walther, 1999, p. 1). More frequently, these studies have employed both quantitative and qualitative data to understand a certain phenomenon (Mann & Stewart, 2000; McKee & DeVoss, 2007; Morrison, 2002; Wimmer & Dominick, 2005). Qualitative research adapts multiple research strategies as part of a process of triangulation to derive qualitative understanding (Mann & Stewart, 2000; Morrison, 2002). Two qualitative methods will be employed in this dissertation: (1) semi-structured interviews; and (3) qualitative content analysis of selected Facebook's pages (messages, videos, pictures posted by users). Denzin and Lincoln (1998) suggest that combining both online and non-digital techniques to gather data is frequent among scholars in social movements, because it offers a wider understanding of the phenomenon studied from different angles. This section on methodology provides a description of the methods used for my research, by analyzing how other researchers have studied similar phenomena.

3.2.1 Participants

The first step to collect data was to identify possible recruits for the in-depth interviews. To do so, the researcher contacted those users of the 42 event pages of the Right to Know rally who showed to be mostly engaged on the web (e.g., replying to posts, initiating discussions on the wall). The individuals were contacted by Facebook e-mail. A request e-mail was sent to each individual, asking if permission could be granted to administer an in-depth interview. Rationale for investigation as well as clear instruction

about the process was displayed in the e-mail (see table A). Participants' real names when given, were kept anonymous to meet privacy requirements and concerns. Purposive and snowball sampling was selected for this study because the research seeks to "find individuals who have experienced the phenomenon under study and are prepared to be involved" (Mann & Stewart, 2000, p. 78; White, 1999). Participants were selected based on active participation online and offline. Active participation was defined according to van Dijck (2009). He observes that;

> The majority of (social media) users consist of 'passive spectators'(33%) and 'inactives' (52%); while the former category perform activities such as reading blogs or watching peer-generated video, the latter category does not engage in any of these activities (van Dijck, 2009, p. 44).

He continues by explaining that active participants are those who create, transformed, distribute, and consume content on the web. Thus, these are potentially members of the new public sphere. This selection also helped identifying potential leaders of the movement. Hence, for the R2R event pages on Facebook active participants were those who initiated posts or responded to messages, posted pictures or external links.

The sample population can possibly result in 239,082 people, the total of number of Facebook users following one of the 42 pages selected for this study. This study of respondents' identification has been used in social movements research that employs qualitative analysis. Ayers (2003), who studied collective identity of online and offline NOW Village participants, recruited his respondents on the basis of willingness to participate in the study and degree of participation online. Out of 10 people who responded to his initial inquiry, he interviewed 5. He analyzed the data using a grounded theory approach. For the purpose of this dissertation 200 Facebook users were contacted and 15 were interviewed. Each Facebook user was interviewed at least once. Follow – up interviews were conducted with two of the initial participants to seek clarification of certain data. Participants were asked questions that revolved around the concept of the public sphere and leadership, such as what prompted users to reply to a specific message, or how Facebook allowed users to perform leadership tasks. In additions, participants were asked to express their opinions on how Facebook fosters offline mobilization. Interviews were informed by a qualitative content analysis of messages posted on any of the 42 event pages on Facebook. This means that participants were often recruited based

on content of messages present on Facebook and coded accordingly (e.g., public sphere, leadership). This study does not try to generalize its findings to the overall population (Dillman et al., 2009; Mann & Stewart, 2000). Thus, concerns of accessibility to the Internet will be addressed by focusing exclusively on users who have the expertise and access to the technology (e.g., users of Facebook) (Dillman et al., 2009).

Before the questionnaire was designed and distributed, the first step was to identify all of the Facebook pages revolving around the Right to Know Rally. These pages were defined based on individual and organizational capacities to publish, remove, edit material, interact with other members, and action implementation tools (Earl & Kimport, 2011, p. 217). This phase of research began July 2011 and ended December 1, 2011. After searching for all possible matches through the search engine on Facebook, 42 entries were recorded. Care was taken in the search by using the "All Results" option on Facebook to assure that all pages were accounted in the study. For each category, the researcher identified title of the page, type of page (e.g., group), URL, administrator(s), geographic location of the campaign, number of followers, online activist tools (e.g., links to donate money, signing petitions), and brief notes about the page.

A pilot interview was conducted upon approval from the Human Subjects Committee at Florida State University. The pilot questionnaire contains all the questions discussed in the appendix at the end of this manuscript, in addition to a question asking how to improve the interview protocol (see Appendix D). The questionnaire was administered to food activists that follow any of the pages on Facebook and participated in any of the discussions labeled as 'Public Sphere,' and/or 'Leadership.' Three people were selected. The questionnaire was administered via phone and transcribed. These pilot interviews were included in the overall results because no major changes occurred to the original questionnaire.

3.2.2 Interviews

3.2.2.1 In-depth interviews. In-depth interviews were conducted with Facebook users of any of the 42 event pages pertaining to the Right to Know rally. These interviews were conducted over the phone and/or via e-mail (Baumer et al., 2011). The discussions were recorded, transcribed, and coded in accordance to Strauss and Corbin's (1998) coding paradigm founded in grounded theory. The researchers suggest four categories for

coding qualitative data: (1) phenomenon; (2) conditions; (3) actions/interactions; and (4) consequences. Phenomenon is defined as the behavior that the researcher is trying to understand; conditions refer to the events that lead to a specific behavior. Actions are denoted as strategies used to respond to the target behavior, and consequences are the ends result of actions (Strauss & Corbin, 1990, 1998; Morrison, 2002). For instance in this study, the phenomenon is characterized by Facebook users' behaviors. Strategies refer to online resources defined in this study as the "collective vehicles, informal as well as formal, through which people mobilize and engage in collective action" (McAdam, McCarthy, & Zald, p. 3, 1996). These strategies allow events to take place. These events emerge in different forms (offline and offline actions). According to Strauss and Corbin (1990), axial coding is fundamental as it puts, "data back together in new ways by making connections between a category and its subcategories" (p. 97), noting that researchers are often switching between open and axial coding to provide a better analysis of a phenomenon.

There are two types of interviews common in research: (1) structured interview and (2) semi-structure interview. The former is associated with a set of predefined and fixed questions, often in form of questionnaire. Participants are given a limited set of respond categories. These questions are the same for each participant (Blee & Taylor, 2002; Mann & Stewart, 2000; Dillman, et al. 2009). Surveys or self-completion questionnaires are examples of standardized or structured interviews. Data is usually analyzed statistically following a pre-established coding scheme (Mann & Stewart, 2000). Over the years structured interviews have been conducted using the Internet. Hence, e-mail surveys, web-page-based surveys have replaced mail, phone and face-to-face interviews (Mann & Stewart, 2000). This dissertation employed semi-structured interviews, which is a common technique in social movements' studies (Blee & Taylor, 2002).

Semi-structured or non-standardized interviews leave more freedom to researchers and respondents because questions are usually arranged based on themes or a list of open-ended questions, allowing flexibility to expand on certain questions or skip others that do not reveal to be useful at the time of the interview (Blee & Taylor, 2002; Mann & Stewart, 2000). The flexibility of expanding upon certain questions allows

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researchers to elaborate or clarify on issues pertaining to their study, while getting an in-depth understanding on how participants feel about certain issues (Blee & Taylor, 2002; Mann & Stewart, 2000). According to Blee and Taylor (2002), semi-structured interviews are valuable to study social movements for seven reasons. First, in contrast with document analysis, interviews with activists, by-standers, online users can provide information that is not apparent on a press release or mission statement of an organization. As the scholars observe, "interviewing is one means of counteracting the biased availability of documentary material about social movements" (p. 94). This point is relevant for my study because in contrast to many social movements' studies, my research does not revolve around an organization; rather, the emphasis is placed on citizens and their agency that shift between what Habermas calls, the role of the *homme* and *bourgeois*. In my case, this means the role of the citizen/activist and consumer. Second, semi-structured interviews take into account a broader spectrum of the issue studied, meaning that talking to individuals might lead to information that was not even considered by researcher. This type of information could not be displayed following a structured interview format such as surveys. In other words, semi-structured interviews allow new phenomena to emerge and be counted into the initial research questions. Third, the type of information that emerges out of semi-structured interviews reveals scrutiny of meaning (Blee & Taylor, 2002). Researchers are faced to analyze a phenomenon through the lens of the participants who might feel and perceive issues in a different way from the scholar. As Blee and Taylor (2002) note, "scholars have found such attention to subjective meaning particularly useful for understanding how social movements participants make sense of and justify their actions" (Blee & Taylor, 2002, p.; Jenness & Broad, 1997, Taylor & Whittier, 1992). Fourth, semi-structured interviews can provide a longitudinal picture of shift in participation, involvement, growth and decline of a social movement. Fifth, semi-structured interviews are ideal for conducting research on collective and individual identities (e.g., creation of identities, social networks and identities). Last, semi-structured interviews are valuable for scholars who study consumption of messages (Blee & Taylor, 2002; Gamson, 1998).

In terms of conducting, evaluating and formulating effective questions, Blee and Taylor (2002) suggest relying on few basic but key elements. In general, researchers must

provide a positive experience for the participant, by assuring that the respondent does not feel constrained by the questions. Questions should be clear and formulated in accordance to the target sample population. Hence, they should not contain technical jargon, comprehensive only by researchers.

When appropriate, the researcher might introduce new themes, redirect the conversation, and focus the conversation on specific issues. In any case, participants are selected according to experience and participant (Blee & Taylor, 2002). For example, Ayers (2003) conducted "nine in-depth qualitative semi-structured interviews with two groups of feminist activists" (p. 149). These women were selected based on two criteria: their involvement with an online website that advocates women's rights and their involvement with women's rights independent from online use of the NOW's website. He chose to conduct interviews rather than a content analysis because he compared online and offline groups. Hence, it is important to note that choosing the right methodology is contingent on the type of study and questions a research desires to answer (Ayers, 2000; Blee & Taylor, 2002; Mann & Stewart, 2000). Similarly, Pini, Brown and Previte (2004) administered twenty semi-structured interviews to understand how members of Australian Women in Agriculture (AWiA) use the web. The technique was chosen because; "A semi-structured approach was useful in that it allowed us to contextualize approaches to address the views of particular individuals" (Cohen & Manion, 1989; Pini, Brown, & Previte, 2004, p. 264).

Semi-structured interviews are categorized into: historical (assessing events occurred during a specific time by interviewing people who were part of that epochal time); life history (focusing on understanding the experience of individuals during a specific event in time); key informant (gathering information about social movements from interviews that could be collected with other methods, but it would be too time consuming); and focus group (group interviews guided by a moderator). At times these forms of interviews intertwined with each other, blurring the distinction. For the purpose of this dissertation, two types of semi-structured interviews will be combined because of the nature of the case study. The Right to Know rally is an event that took place at a specific time, October 16, 2011. Hence, interviews took place with participants who took part in the rally (organization, sharing of information) whether online or offline. However,

these interviews might also reveal information that could also emerge from a qualitative content analysis of messages posted on the many R2R event pages on Facebook. Thus, it would not be valuable to choose one format over the other.

In terms of interpreting and evaluating the data collected through semi-structured interviews, Blee and Taylor (2002) emphasize the distinction between quantitative and qualitative approaches, by noting that qualitative analysis is time consuming and "This is one of the reasons that studies based on semi-structured interviews are generally based on a fairly small number of interviews" (p.110). Moreover, they explain that in most cases, during the phase of data analysis, researchers will find themselves to readdress research questions and the overall "direction of the study" (p. 110). This is because "In semi-structured interviewing, analysis and interpretation are ongoing processes" (p. 110), that might reveal the need to take other factors into account. To limit the overall shift of the study, Blee and Taylor (2002) suggest employing a triangulation of data-collection techniques, which assure validity of claims and strengthen of arguments.

3.2.3 Coding

In regard to data analysis, coding has been commonly used. Strauss and Corbin (1990) provide a detailed section on their book, *Basics of Qualitative Research*, devoted to the processes of coding qualitative data. The first procedure to coding data is to break down text, images, and observations into ideas or events that characterize a phenomenon. Once these conceptual labels have been identified, researchers can categorize and name them to help answering research questions. According to Blee and Taylor (2002):

> Coding transcribed interview narratives depends, therefore, on the objectives of the study. Passages in interviews can be coded descriptively for topics such as movement goals and strategies, names of individuals or organizations, chronologies of protest events, style and emotional content of narration, and any other meaningful dimensions. Linking coded interview passages together makes it possible to trace the history of the movement, activist networks and organizations, biographies of leaders or members, and chronologies of events. (p. 110)

Hence, researchers should pay careful attention how they approach the first analysis of interviews or event observations. Three approaches are identified by Strauss and Corbin (1990). First, a researcher can choose to analyze data line-by-line. This method entails looking at each phrase to identify possible phenomena of interests. Second, researchers can employ a sentence or paragraph coding system, which emphasize the

major idea of the entire sentence. Third, researcher can apply a broad coding approach by looking at the entire document. None of these techniques are more valuable than the other. At times, researchers will go back and forth among these three as they move on with their document or interview analysis. As Strauss and Corbin (1990) observe, one might start with a broad analysis to "return to the data and specifically analyze for those similarities or differences" (p. 73). Because of the nature of open coding, I will employ all three coding techniques. However, this initial open coding will serve to draw to axial coding, "a set of procedures whereby data are put back together in new ways after open coding, by making connections between categories. This is done by utilizing a coding paradigm involving conditions, context, action/interactional strategies and consequences" (p. 96). As previously mentioned in this section, axial coding allow for subcategories to have a relational form to other categories. The main difference between open coding and axial coding is that while the former identify conditions, specific phenomena, the latter points these categories into relations (condition, consequences, strategy). As Strauss and Corbin (1990) explain, "The actual conceptual labels placed on categories won't necessarily point to whether a category denotes a condition, strategy, or consequences….in grounded theory we link subcategories to a category in a set of relationships denoting casual conditions, phenomenon, context, intervening conditions, action/interactional strategies, and consequences" (p. 98-99). Hence, they suggest a model characterized by casual conditions that lead to a phenomenon, which leads to a context, which leads to action strategies, and so on.

The idea behind choosing axial coding relies on the following. First, the phenomenon of study is the use of Facebook as a public sphere to incite offline action; thus, causal conditions are determined by pre-existing economic and social conditions in the food and media system that push people to come together on the web. Context is identified as "a set of properties that pertain to a phenomenon" (p. 101). Hence, we would want to know how users interact on the web, what information is shared, how they used Facebook to organize the rally and what types of people dominate the conversation. Intervening conditions are referred to as the "broad and general conditions bearing upon action/interactional strategies" (p. 103) and include factors such as age, technology, economic status and history. For instance, Facebook features can facilitate or hinder

action/interaction. Strauss and Corbin (1990) explain that it is "up to you the analyst to identify which to apply and to weave them into the analysis, by showing how they facilitate or constrain action/interaction and when appropriate how action/interaction are managed" (p. 103-104).

Action/interactional strategies are useful in evaluating the food movement and Facebook because they are goal-oriented, aimed at responding to a certain situation. In the case of Facebook, online strategies are developed and utilized for specific goals including encouraging people to attend the rally and responding to the lack of food labeling regulation in the United States. Last, any action that results from previous categories has some type of consequences. It is impossible to assume outcome of a certain phenomenon before completing an analysis of all data. In the case of Facebook, one can potentially derive to the conclusion that Facebook serves as a public sphere, fostering civic engagement offline. The opposite can also be true. Our categories and subcategories will eventually provide evidence that will "support or refute our questions" (Strauss & Corbin, 1990, p. 108).

Strauss and Corbin (1990)'s coding procedures can be applied to qualitative content analysis, which will also be included in my analysis.

3.2.4 Qualitative Content Analysis

Content analysis has been extensively used both in quantitative and qualitative studies, mostly to analyze political campaigns, framing of news, advertising, and attitudes and behavior of people (Harwood & Garry 2003). In social movements qualitative content analysis has been used to understand perception and attitude of individuals toward a certain issue and social movements, recruitment strategies, campaigns' effectiveness, information sharing, and use of the web by activists (Huang, 2009; Mekile, 2003; Todd, 2011). Qualitative content analysis has been defined by Hsieh & Shannon (2005) as a "research method for the subjective interpretation of the content of text data through the systematic classification process of coding and identifying theme or patterns" (p. 1278). Zhang and Wildemuth (2009) observe that qualitative content analysis is used primarily to "explore the meanings underlying physical messages" (p.1), which could lead to generating ground theory. Scholars who employ qualitative content analysis "purposively select text which can inform the research questions being investigated" (p.

2). For example, Todd (2011) takes a rhetorical approach to analyze the Eat the View!s, a campaign initiated by Roger Doiron in 2008 to persuade the upcoming president of the United States to support a "vegetable garden at the White House" (Todd, 2011, p. 298). She relies on print and online publications of the campaign, focusing on how the discourse constructs an alternative way of talking and understanding food. Gupta (2001) explores the role of the Internet in fostering or hindering opposition/support for the Falun Gong movement, by analyzing 250 sites devoted to the movement. Germov, Williams and Freik (2010) explore how print media in Australia positively or negatively framed the slow food movement, using a content and discursive analysis. They analyzed 64 articles. Foot and Schenider (2006) provide an analysis of web electoral campaigns for the years 2000, 2002, and 2004. They identified 2,500 sites of possible interest through a grounded theory approach. These sites were analyzed in terms of content (images, audio, text) and agents who produced the content. Additionally, interviews, focus groups, and surveys were conducted with site producers as well as "citizens who were potential users and coproducers of the Web sphere" (p. 42). Ayers (2003) analyzes collective identity of feminists online and offline through a document analysis of the NOW website as well as interviews with NOW Village participants.

Other scholars, including Mitra and Cohen (1999), DeLuca (1999) observe that images and sounds can also be included in content analysis. Tweddell (2000) focuses on layout of websites and users' interface to analyze the use of Internet of Japanese religious movements. Data is organized into categories or themes, which help researchers to answer their research questions and to understand social movements. As Atkinson and Dougherty (2006) point out; "The purpose of qualitative content analysis is to uncover themes found in content to address latent meanings contained within texts" (p. 78, Krippendorff, 1969; Mayring, 2000).

An analysis of the Right to Know rally's pages on Facebook will be conducted to provide a broader understanding of the research questions (Huang, 2009; Yin, 1994). In particular, messages posted by individuals will be categorized in accordance with Strauss and Corbin's (1990) coding paradigm previously mentioned. My analysis has three main purposes. First, studying messages posted by Facebook users will allow gaining an insight on the role of decentralized leadership in the world web wide. The importance of

qualitative content analysis relies on the notion that this type of resource data can be very helpful in capturing "the key trends and characteristics of the activists' Internet use" (Huang, 2009, p. 151). Second, a qualitative content analysis of messages posted on the Right to Know rally pages on Facebook will help understanding how and why Facebook can or cannot reinforce or challenge the notion of the public sphere. Salter (2003) analyzes the movement, Association for Progressive Communications (APC), to explore whether the Internet can serve a public sphere. He conducts a qualitative content analysis of the webpage of the movement, providing first a section on the history of the APC. Then, he analyzes segments of the page that can help constructing his argument. For instance, he looks into the mission statement of the movement, coalitions with other organizations, and election for board of directors. McCormick (2006) employs a triangulation of multiple methods to explore the relation between the anti-dam movement in Brazil and changes in environmental policy. She conducted 78 interviews with activists, governmental officials and researchers, as well as a document analysis of governmental and non-governmental reports on the issue at stake and ethnographic observation of the anti-dam social movement. She argues that a multi-method approach "provide(d) background on the movement itself and [to] describe how and why movement activists construct new realms of communicative action" (p. 329).

Third, qualitative content analysis allows to chart social networks, explaining the role of these ties in the realm of social movements. Garrido and Halavais (2003) explore the role of social ties in the Zapatista movement. They collected 250 pages of the most predominant website dedicated to the movement. In addition, they coded and collected additional pages of other sites that had any relation to the Zapatista movement. In the end the researchers used in their analysis 392 domains. The analysis of social networks thorugh websites is helpful to understand how users use the web, but mostly how they interact with other.

The process of qualitative content analysis for this dissertation began with an early stage of data collection. As previously mentioned after selecting event pages to consider for examination, all messages were subject to an open coding to identify possible themes. The researcher took notes while coding, writing short descriptions of what each code meant and how it could have been used to understand the phenomenon

studied (Baumer, Sueyoshi, & Tomlinson, 2011; Zhang & Wildemuth, 2009). The first coding process revealed the following categories: (1) external links; (2) maps/pictures; (3) solidarity; (4) not attending/solidarity; (5) attending; (6) others; (7) leadership; and (8) public sphere. Next, an axial coding analysis was conducted to refine the categories and select themes appropriate to answer the research questions of the dissertation. Thus, this dissertation focuses on these categories: (1) Leadership; and (2) Public Sphere. A subsequent axial coding was conducted to identify possible subcategories within each dominant theme. Leadership was operationalized broadly in accordance to previous literature review. In particular, McNair Barnett's (1993) rank order of most important leadership roles and Earl's table of leading tasks in the 2000 and 2004 mobilizations of strategic voting were used as a base for the criteria of coding messages under the category leadership. To validate the accuracy of my list, I interviewed activists and personnel from the OCA, asking in their opinion if the list provided an inclusive description of the role and tasks of a leader (Barnett, 1993). Based on their responses the list was altered. The following table provides the criteria used to categorized messages under the label 'leadership.' Each item represents a subcategory of leadership. Subcategories were coded as following: (1) organizing specific actions; (2) making strategic and tactical decisions; (3) providing social capital; and (4) managing the internal life of the movement. The table in the following page shows how the messages and interviews were coded. These sub-categories were based on Earl's table of leading tasks (2007).

TABLE 1: Coding Criteria for Messages under the Category 'Leadership'

	Leadership Task
1	Provide assistance to activists who have questions/resolve issues
2	Teach/educate/train followers and leaders
3	Organize/coordinate/initiate action
4	Formulate/developing/deciding tactics and strategies
5	Importing "new idea" (through network)
6	Importing new information that is relevant to decision making through networks/to solve a problem
7	Importing new tactics and strategies through network

It must be noted that within the category 'leadership,' the sub-topic self-promotion was omitted from the study because only one case of 'leadership self-promotion' was observed. Thus, in the case study of the R2R the problem of self-promoting did not occur.

Posts about the 'Public Sphere' that were selected for analysis involved several factors of consideration. First, number of replies to posts indicated interest of topic. Castillo (2008) observes that even though high number does not determine richness of conversation, it is still indicative of what type of conversations people are more willing to engage in. Thus, posts with a higher number of responses (more than 3 replies to an original post) were read closely. Second, only conversations with high number of responses and with at least three different respondents were analyzed closely, to avoid unidimensional conversations, which limit the notion of the public sphere. The third criterion for consideration was the "substance of arguments" (Castillo, 2008, p. 91). Posts such as "I will be there in spirit" ("SF," 2011), or "Awesome" ("LA," 2011) were omitted from the analysis given the focus of the dissertation. Most of the times these messages meant to evoke emotions or solidarity, but did not raise civic engagement online (Castillo, 2008).

TABLE 2: Coding Criteria for Messages and Interviews under the Category 'Public Sphere'

Public Sphere	Description	Examples
Consensus mobilization	• Supporting the cause • Planning to attend the event	I am planning to attend and would like to volunteer my time to help you at the booth. I plan to be in Portland that weekend.
Disagreement mobilization	• Promoting GMOs and/or Monsanto practices. • Opposing food labeling regulations	I like Monsanto. They help farmers! I don't believe it is the answer.

Posts that discussed GMOs food labeling, supporting the protest, organic farming, and opposing GMOs were sub-categorized as "Consensus to mobilization," while those messages opposing anti-GMO movements were labeled as "Disagreement to mobilization." The differentiation was helpful during the analysis of the data to better understand how users with different perspectives engage with each other on the web.

3.3 Choosing a Multi-Method Approach

Multi-method approach to the studying of social movements is frequent and relies on the notion that applying a triangulation of methods will provide a broader understanding of the research questions (Huang, 2009; Pini, Brown, & Previte, 2004). This view is supported by Pini, Brown, and Previte (2004) who employed semi-structured interviews and document analysis to explore uses of the web by members of Australian Women in Agriculture (AWiA) use the web. O'Donnell (2001), in her study on the Womenslink, employs a multi-method approach consisting of: (1) in-depth interviews with 14 staff members of the Womenslink; (2) content analysis of "all 500 Womenslink messages produced during the research period" (p. O'Donnell, 2001, p. 44); and (3) a focus group. The study does not mention whether the interviews were conducted over the phone, face-to-face or over the web, though the researcher alludes to the fact that the members of the organization were part of a mailing list. In his dissertation, Huang (2009) utilizes a multi-method data collection to investigate how the Internet shapes the Falung

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Gong movement. He conducted interviews with participants of the movement (including volunteers and administrators of the websites), survey to all website users as it pertained to the movement, observation of how participants utilize the web in regard to the Falung Gong movement and a document review of the Falung Gong website (e.g., campaign material, links, videos). Snow and Trom (2002) discuss the implications of choosing to analyze a phenomenon using a case study, such as the Right to Know rally. They observe that a triangulation of multiple methods is encouraged when conducting case study analysis because it provides a richer, contextualized and holistic analysis (Snow & Trom, 2002).

A common theme among these scholars is the adaptation of multi-method data collection, which can increase "analytical comprehensiveness and complexity" (Klandermans & Smith, 2002, p. 112) of a study. Much in alignment with current and past research methodology in social movements and media, this dissertation applies a multi-method data collection, proving a more accurate understanding of the issue in question. This holds especially true, given that research suggests that social media usage is on the rise and that more activists are using it for mobilization purposes (Samuels, 2010;"who use it," 2011). Understanding the particular behavior of the target population through multi-method approach is essential to understanding the role of social media in both online and offline civic engagement.

3.4 The Case Study: The Right to Know Rally

The Right to Know rally was chosen as the case study for this dissertation in accordance with Snow and Trom's discussion on choosing a case study for conducting research. The Right to Know rally is a (trans)national event that aims at challenging state food policies. However, current events have indicated that the battle against genetically modified organisms "has moved well beyond the realm of science, and its political impact on the health and food-conscious" (Fulton, 2011, para. 54-55). During the outbreak of Occupy Wall Street, foods advocate groups have suggested that food movements are about social change and justice. The massive class disparities in the United States have drastic consequences on the population. One out of 5 people in the U.S.A. is on food stamps (Fulton, 2011). While the government subsidizes corn production and deregulates Monsanto's pesticides and GMO cultivations, organic

farming is constrained by strict regulations, which inflate prices of organic products. Thus, fresh and healthy produces are only affordable for the 1% of the population who hold 40% of the wealth in the state (Fulton, 2011). This paradox has consequences on citizens' health and perception of justice and democracy. According to Murphy (2011), "Today market concentration is so great that only four firms control 84 percent of beef packing and 66 percent of pork production, which has resulted in forcing more than 1.1 million independent livestock producers out of business since Ronald Reagan was elected in 1980" (para. 66-70). In addition, while other countries including Bolivia have proven to be more democratic in terms of GMO food regulations ("Food Freedom," 2010), the United States has showed to be driven by corporate neoliberalism philosophy, leaving citizens to question democracy. Thus, the case of the Right to Know Rally, which embodies a specific time and place in history (Snow & Trom, 2002), entails a broader meaning and object of research – democracy.

This dissertation can be used by other scholars who do not necessarily focus their studies on food movements, because the Right to Know Rally is a case study of "an instance of variant of some more generic phenomena" (Snow & Trom, 2002, p. 149). Moreover, this research illustrates what mechanisms citizens use to challenge the system. Technology is seen as a resource, a powerful tool. Thus, this case study helps to "develop thick, detailed, holistic elaborations of selected cases or systems of action" (Snow & Trom, 2003, p. 150), providing a broader multilayered picture of a social issue (David & Sutton, 2004; Huang, 2009; Yin, 2003).

CHAPTER IV

THE PUBLIC SPHERE AND FACEBOOK

4.1 Introduction

> I have all kind of interesting discussions with people (on Facebook). What makes Facebook works so well in that aspect is that it provides not only an open and unlimited form for public discussion, but it also provides it in a format where you can search for a specific topic and because it is such a large market you can have a page about whether or not there should be labeling or requirements for genetically modified food. There is no way you can go in a normal size town or city and start a discussion on something that specific most of the times, because it is hard for people to do, plus it takes a lot of time, to actually start these discussions in person. Forums have been around for quite some time but someone has to get you to the forum in order for you to start the discussion whereas Facebook, the nature of the friends and how Facebook informs you on how and what your friends are doing, helps you find things that are common interests and start a discussion about topics you might never hear about. (Archippos, personal communication, March 26, 2012)

The above quote epitomizes the dynamic role Facebook plays in fostering a space for open and inclusive debate, in which agreement[8] on an issue or point of view can be achieved after having shared opinions or/and ideas, to act outside the realm of the web (Habermas, 1984; Leedham, 1996; Steenbergen, 2003). This space is opened to those who are willing to participate whether as supporters or opponents of the cause and that are specifically looking to make a difference in their world. To better understand the utilization of Facebook in the R2R in relation to the concept of the public sphere within the milieu of social media, this chapter employs a qualitative analysis of all posts appearing on the 42 event pages of the R2R on Facebook as well as selected interviews conducted with Facebook participants.

This chapter highlights three main points contingent to the concept of the public sphere and Facebook. First, this section of the dissertation analyzes how the social medium serves as an open and inclusive space for individuals to freely express their ideas.

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[8] Agreement is here defined as the process of reaching a compromise among participants. Agreement, does not necessarily mean that all parties must mutually share the same point of view on an issue. Individuals must respect and understand all variety of angles of an issue. The mutual acceptance of compromise will result in constructive politics (Cohen, 1989; Habermas, 1981; Steenbergen, 2003).

In regard to Habermas' concept of the public sphere, this chapter argues that Facebook both challenges and reinforces Habermas's work. Social media reinforce the public sphere by creating an arena in which to express ideas through a variety of channels, including text, audio, or pictures. A main key finding the research, conducted on the Right to Know rally (R2R) event pages on Facebook, illustrates is the importance of having a space in which individuals feel free to express their "alternative voices" that are in contention with the dominant authority (whether it is the USDA or Monsanto).

Second, this chapter argues that Facebook adds a new dimension to the public sphere, because it provides a new space, which supplements the traditional space (e.g. townhomes, streets) made up of physical boundaries imposed by external authority such as police. The virtual arena assumes a 'comfort zone' for citizens to challenge governmental and corporate practices. These citizens are able to pitch in on public issues from their private homes, creating a sense of protection. Facebook also offers an inclusive and open access forum for constructive debate, which is open 24 hours. Busy citizens can access the arena at their convenient time, allowing asynchronous communication.

Following Habermas's work on the ideal speech and the public sphere, the third argument this chapter makes is that credibility becomes to be essential for problem solving, including negotiating, contesting, or deliberating a certain point of view. Credibility is constituted on Facebook based on three elements: (1) respect; (2) clarity of language; and (3) choice of channel to communicate a message. These elements enable Facebook to function as a space in which individuals have equal opportunities to leverage their claims during political debates.

Despite the benefits of using Facebook to foster deliberation, this chapter provides a discussion on the limitations of the medium. For instance, while this case study reveals that Facebook allows individuals to back up their claims with evidence (e.g., external links to scientific articles), adding credibility to their voice, some of the findings also disclose the tendency of people to share information without taking the time to read it. The immediacy of clicking 'share,' leaves scholars with many questions to consider in regard to social media, the public sphere, and social movements. In addition, Habermas's (1998) concerns about the quality of conversations and their pluralism on the web remain

applicable to the era of social media. For example, this section discusses how groups on Facebook tend to foster a homogenized conversation, creating at times "stagnation of communicative action," a term that emerged after the analysis of the data, to which I will refer throughout this chapter. Thus, the fourth argument in this chapter is that a normative model of Facebook and the public sphere cannot be elaborated because each case study, despite similarity among each other might carry distinct elements that result in new understanding of social media and social movements. The structure of Facebook and in particular its agents determine the limitations of the medium for social change.

In terms of challenging the public sphere, the structure of the medium, which relies on the diffusion of information through weak and strong ties, contests Habermas's traditional idea of selected exclusive public sphere, in which debates occur within a specific class and gender, for which he has been criticized in the past (Negt and Kulge, 1988). A main argument this chapter makes is that Facebook challenges Habermas's public sphere, because of the structure of the medium. In this regard, Castells's work on social network analysis becomes highly important to arrive at a new understanding of the public sphere as it relates to social media. His work leads to the investigation of not only how Facebook produces a new type of public sphere, but how Facebook leads to collective action (see chapter 6). Moreover, an adequate conceptualization of the social media, public sphere, and ideal speech is important to address the process of democratization through new communication technology. The success of GMO activists of the R2R event pages on Facebook rely on a multiplicity of 'closed-public spheres' made out of intersected nodes within their private circle of friends (Castells, 1996, Habermas, 2006). This chapter eventually refers to these micro spheres as *ethos spheres* (see chapter 2). Facebook users have their own circle of friends, within their private profile, but once they belong to a group or event page, these users have the ability to share information and connect with people outside their private network, but within the network of the R2R event page. What is meant by this is that there are two concentric circles of friends on Facebook with the narrowest one being the private profile of immediate friends, the second one being a group or an event pages' circle of friends. This interconnectivity is important for the diffusion of information, which may lead to civic

participation online and offline. Figure 5 illustrates the possible connections between users on Facebook through a group or event page.

Facebook Information Network
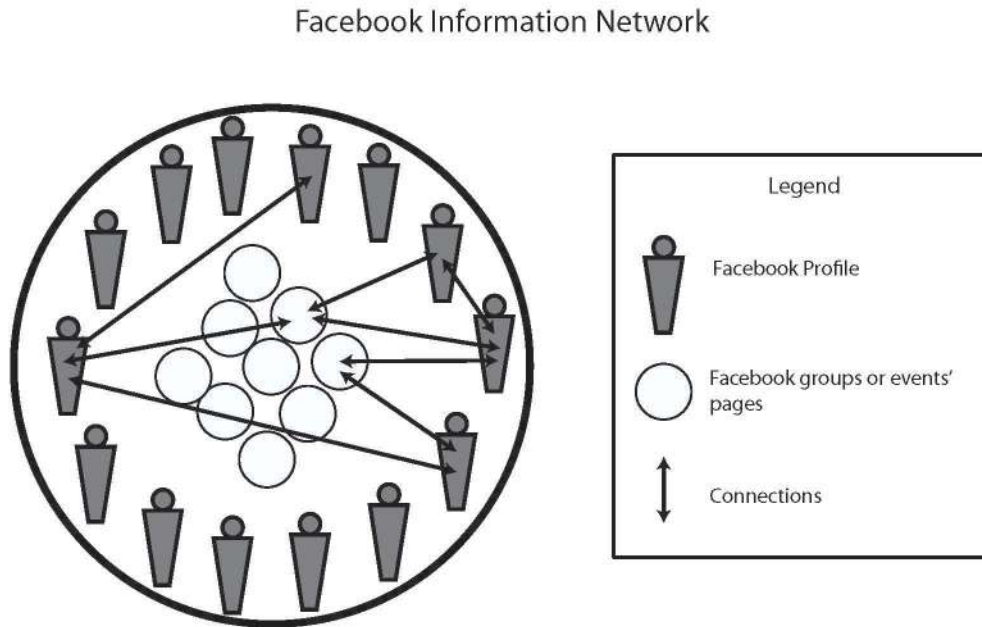
Figure 5. Facebook Model of Interactivity

Much in alignment with Coopman's theory of dissent network (2010) and Castells's work on social networks (1996) that were discussed in details in Chapter 2, common concerns about GMO issues have led people to utilize Facebook as an outlet for education, solidarity, civic engagement, and mobilization. Facebook has become a place of political contention as well as support. The R2R event pages developed around a concern for the health of the population shared by ordinary citizens who have a combination of skills. From mothers, to writers, scientists, and professional advocates for organizations like the OCA, the R2R event pages function as a place for individuals to make a difference in their immediate community as well as global community (see chapter 6). This role of consumer empowerment through social media was evident during the analysis of the messages posted on the 42 event pages of the Right to Know rally (R2R) on Facebook as well as interviews conducted with selected Facebook users of the

R2R event pages. The analysis of the data also leads to a reconceptualization of Habermas's notion of the public sphere based on the dynamics and use of Facebook.

This chapter focuses on answering the first research question posited by this dissertation: (1) *How does Facebook challenge or reinforce the concept of the public sphere?* Answering this question implies evaluating a set of sub questions that relate to Habermas's communicative action theory as well as Castells's network analysis. For example, (2) *How do social networks, understood here as relationships among individuals on Facebook belonging to different virtual spheres, affect the model of the public sphere and ideal speech?* (3) *How does the virtual structure of Facebook enable or disable arguments to evolve or dissolve into political communication?* (4) *How is credibility constructed on Facebook?* To answer these questions there were two primary steps. First a qualitative content analysis of all posts, collected between October 2011 and December 2011 was conducted to evaluate what users discussed on the web. *What do users of the R2R event pages on Facebook post about?* Particular attention was given to those posts coded as 'Public Sphere' (refer to methodology section of this dissertation). In addition, semi-structured interviews were conducted with Facebook users who posted on any of the R2R or/and attended the rally. These individuals were asked to express their perceptions on how Facebook can/cannot foster a space for open deliberation, how and why they used the R2R event page and what connection they had with other users belonging to any of the R2R event pages on Facebook (see appendix for interview protocol). Fifthteen participants were interviewed. Both research methods aimed to identify and clarify two main themes that are at the core of this dissertation: (1) the concept of deliberation; and (2) the limits of Facebook as they pertain to deliberation.[9] To illustrate these topics both interviews and comments posted were combined during the analysis. This means that at times interviewees were asked to comment on posts they submitted or responded to on the R2R event pages on Facebook to reinforce or clarify thematic concepts. This combination of analysis and data was the most effective in understanding the phenomenon holistically and also to draw relations between posters and posts.

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[9] A third main point of this dissertation is mobilization. This concept is entirely discussed in chapter 6.

The first section of this chapter provides background information on the Right to Know rally, including a description of what it is, where it originated, and who has been promoting the cause. Next, an overview of the Right to Know rally event pages on Facebook, including descriptions of content, offers an initial overall picture of how Facebook is used by consumer-citizens. Then, a discussion of content of specific messages and interviews illustrates how theories of Habermas have been applied to the case study of this dissertation, pointing at new directions in the field of studying the public sphere in today's society.

4.2 The Right to Know Rally: Emergence

The Right to Know rally event emerged around the Million Against Monsanto campaign and the World Food Day celebration occurring every year in October. The Million Against Monsanto campaign was originally launched by the Organic Consumers Association (OCA), an online U.S. based non-profit organization striving to promote organic agriculture and consumers' rights. In particular, the organization focuses on "building a healthy, equitable, and sustainable system of food production, and consumption" ("about," 2011, para. 64) by launching a variety of campaigns ranging from topics on food safety, ethical issues, obesity in children, and many more.[10] The scope of these campaigns is to change attitudes and behaviors and influence governmental regulations that pertain to food. In particular the Million Against Monsanto aims to collect one million signatures from citizens illustrating that people are concerned about GMOs. The campaign has evolved to support the Right to Know Rally's initiative, whose goal is to demand food labeling for GMOs products, across all states.

The World Food Day held in October every year around the globe aims to inform, educate, and promote food issues, from hunger in the world, to GMOs' cultivations, to the McDonalization of food, and environmental issues associated to conventional farming ("World food day," 2012). The first recognition of the event in the United States dates back to 1981. The event was in response to the efforts and programs launched by the UN Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) established in 1945, in Rome, Italy ("World

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[10] Additional campaigns include: Mad Cow U.S.A., Stop Toxin Sludge, Healthy Raw Milk, Planting Peace, Organic Transitions, Clothes for a Change, Coming Clean, USDA Watch, and Millions Against Monsanto. For a full detailed list please refer to http://www.organicconsumers.org/.

food day," 2012). Both the Million Against Monsanto and the World Food day can be considered part of the food movement. In particular, activists of the Right to Know Rally contest and attempt to change the mainstream scientific understanding of GMO's. The event aims to form the foundation for policy-change by demanding food labeling for GMO's. As previously mentioned in the introduction of this dissertation, the Right to Know rally can be divided into two periods of time – the first one that appears on Facebook dates back to March 2011, while the most recent, which prompted the creation of additional event pages on Facebook, reaching 42 pages, is attributed to October, 16, 2011. Because this dissertation focuses on Facebook, the 42 pages that support the rally constitute the case study. These pages vary in names. Out of the 42 entries, 13 were named Right to Know rally or a combination of World Food Day- Right to Know rally. Out of 42, 10 of the event names revolved around the words World Food Day; among 42, 15 mentioned the Million Against Monsanto as part of the title of the event page, illustrating the connection with the Organic Consumers Association's campaign or the worldwide recognize food day celebration. Only 2 out of the 42 entries had names that did not clearly indicate the rally (e.g., Protest Monsanto, and Revealing the Future of Our Food). Common features of all of the pages are a virtual map illustrating the location of the rally, time and address where the rally takes place, and goal of the march. Facebook also allows tracking of users who indicate that they will be (maybe, not) attending the event, as well as number of people invited to the event. This latter number ranges from page to page from a minimum of 5 invitees to 5,551. The divergence in number can be attributed in part to location (smaller city versus bigger cities).

4.3. I feel like me on Facebook: Facebook as an Open and Inclusive Space for Discussion

Generally, Facebook is used by citizen-consumers to divulge information about the harm of GMOs, to recruit, organize rally, ask questions, engage, and serve as representatives of the cause. As noted by other scholars who are currently studying social movements and Facebook, the loose structure of the medium provides "a democratic forum where movement leaders and supporters discuss efficacy of different issues and candidates, strategies, and actions" (Rohlinger & Klein, Forthcoming). In the case of the R2R, users recognize the powerful role of Facebook as a platform for freely exchanging

opinions, discussing issues pertaining to the food system in the United States as well as organizing protests offline. As one of the interviewees observes, "It is what it was all about, I thought" (Aristotle, personal communication, March 2, 2012), commenting on the function of event or group pages of food issues like the R2R event page. For Aristotle, a book writer and advocate of healthy eating, Facebook is about having the opportunity to express one's own ideas without being constrained by mainstream ideologies and authority. There is an underlying common assumption among 14/15 (93%) interviewees that on Facebook everyone can express their opinions freely and these statements are led by truth. As Penelope (2012) notes,

> I can be really true and honest (on Facebook) with my answers and it is great and I like to take the time to educate people in a larger way than I might be able to do face-to-face, because I have more time to research what it is that I am trying to say and make sure that I have been really clear on what I am saying. (personal communication, March 2)

> I also think it (Facebook) is an important vehicle to be able to do so (speak freely and solve problems), but I also think you need to be discerned with anything you do. Don't post too much personal stuff that you don't want the whole world to know about. (Caterina, personal communication, April 1, 2012)

Habermas's (1981) notion of the ideal public sphere revolves around free access to a space in which individuals can engage in conversations driven by well-reasoned debates not confined by external authority. This is a point that connects to the restoration of the lifeworld through ideal speech, as language becomes a tool for activists to challenge the system and restore legitimation of the self. Recent scholars including Craig Calhoun (2012) and Richard Grusin (2011) have commented on the actions by mayors and university presidents across US cities (e.g. New York City) in response to the Occupy protest. Whereas the first amendment provides the right of any citizen to express their opinions in public, Calhoun (2012) observes how the case of Occupy Wall Street reminds us of a fracture in USA democratic system; this fracture is manifesting in physical public space. In this regard, the virtual space becomes the new space for expression of freedom when physical space is constrained by authority. Within this space, language plays a dominant role in freedom of expression. Among 15 respondents, 14 (93%) perceived Facebook as a place that allows individuals to be "totally free," freer than on a phone and/or face-to-face conversation.

> On Facebook I feel like me and many people feel even freer than in real life because…certain comments that you post on Facebook, if you were going out and discuss them in a real life with people that are not really asking about them, it would seem that you are preaching…Facebook is such a venue for free expression. People would post much stronger opinions and comments than in real life or even talking on the telephone (Adara, personal communication, March 21, 2012).

> I want to tell the truth and as I learn the truth I want to speak it and Facebook has been a good vehicle to do that (Caterina, personal communication, April 1, 2012).

In addressing the concept of freedom, Habermas (1974, 1981) defines the ideal speech as a conversation in which both parties make claims based on some true facts. The strongest argument leads to the solution of a problem, whether in the form of other participants agreeing, understanding an issue from a different perspective, or simply acknowledging that their argument was not as valid as others. In the context of the R2R event pages on Facebook and according to interviewees Facebook provides a comfort zone, in which individuals can take the time to support their claims with credible facts. This comfort zone is represented by the private space from which individuals take action (e.g., home). These participants are able to be free and ""call into question any proposal," to "introduce any proposal, and to express any "attitudes, wishes, and needs"" (Jacobson & Storey, 2004, p. 103; Habermas, 1990, p. 88-89).

In addressing the ideal speech Habermas, specifically (1973) notes:

> The very act of participating in a discourse, of attempting discursively to come to an agreement about the truth of a problematic statement or the correctness of a problematic norm, carries with it the supposition that a genuine agreement is possible. If we did not suppose that a grounded consensus were possible and could in some way be distinguished from a false consensus, then the very meaning of discourse, indeed of speech, would be called into question. In attempting to come to a 'rational; decision about such matters we must suppose that the outcome of our discussion will be the result simply of the force of the better argument and not of accidental or systematic constraints on discussion. (McCarthy, 1973, p. 145)

In regard to the R2R there are two main communicative claims that must be met to have an ideal speech within the public sphere: (1) expression of free opinions through (2) the support of evidence in the form of external links to articles, videos, or audios. In this regard, credibility becomes to play an important role when utilizing links to negotiate,

contest, or deliberate a certain point of view. Credibility is here constituted by three elements: (1) type of tool chosen to express ideas (videos, audios, and text); (2) respect; and (3) quality of argument(s)/language (e.g. clarity). Credibility is manifested on Facebook through personal arguments supported by external links to audios, videos, and images. Credibility is constituted by language. The choice of text must be governed by respect (the omission of vulgarity), evidence of argument(s), and clarity.

An example of discourse emphasizing open and honest expression of ideas follows. Liliana (2011) posts:

> Are we anticipating any legal trouble? I want to bring my son (he has the right to fight for his future), but I would hate for him to go to social services because our right to assemble was violated..Also, if someone needs a ride from fort Carson area, send me a message, I have room for one more ("Are we anticipating any legal trouble?," para. 1-4)[11]

Liliana feels that she cannot express her opinions freely in a physical public space in the form of protest, but she feels a sense of protection in the virtual space. The salon, the public city square, or the city townships are perceived as spaces institutionalized by the system and possibly frequented by forcible authority (e.g. police), opponents, supporters, and persuadable. As a result, people rely on the virtual world, in this case the R2R event page on Facebook to find solidarity, assurance, and express concerns. For instance, Carlo responds,

> The 1st Amendment gives us the right to peacefully assemble in public spaces. The sidewalks are public. Avoid private property and blocking traffic and you will be fine. See you there. ("Are we anticipating any legal trouble?" (para. 8-11)

Carlo and Agape reassured Liliana about her rights as a citizen, by telling her for example that they had previously brought their three children to past protests and never had an issue or by recounting the constitutional rights of American citizens. Connecting to people through Facebook fuels restoring the legitimation of the self within the colonization of the system. In other words, social ties foster solidarity, empowering those who were hesitant in taking some type of action whether online or offline. The comfort zone of the house allows individuals to express their opinions and concerns, coming out

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[11] All posts and interviews quoted in this dissertation have been transcribed verbatim including capitalization and/or grammatical mistakes, to maintain authenticity.

of their shell that they wear when in 'public.' When interviewed, Agape and Carolina were asked whether Liliana had shown up with her children. None of the respondents could confirm, but they all noted that many children attended the protest. [Liliana could not be reached for interview].

Similarly, for the R2R event page on Facebook for Maui Hawaii, a user commented, "Cops are already here..." (Nicoletta, 2011, para. 1), pointing at the fact that authority showed up at the location of the rally in front of the offices of Monsanto. In this regard, Hermes who had organized the rally using the R2R event page on Facebook was asked to explain the situation with the police. As he recounts:

> I *was a little surprised to see them there*, (author emphasized) even before we started but here in Maui, we have a sign levy ordinance and I have researched the legality of holding the protest there in advance. I knew that we were in compliance with the ordinance…but *I was a little surprised to see the police there* (author emphasized)…But they just stood in the driveway and the only issue with the police came up when we were ready to end the event. They came around and started saying, "Ok, it is time for you to pack up and go," because it was noon. Some of the Occupy Wall Street people did not understand how the police could tell them when it was time for them to stop. I did not see that as an issue because we had publicized this event in several newspapers prior as being from 9:00AM to 12:00PM. If the police saw that, they would have been expected to be leaving at noon…They were some issues in the minds of some people when the police came around and said, "Ok you gotta go now, because it is noon." Some people took issue with that.[12]

While this passage is lengthy, it illustrates the dichotomy between police and social movements and among social movements themselves, in which police protects corporations rather than people. First, Hermes assured that no tension or police brutality occurred during the protest. However, he said twice how surprised he was to see them there reasserting their authoritative figure when they gave the ordinance to Hermes. This authoritative symbol is further reinforced from the position and location the officials took (stood up by Monsanto's offices), delineating a position of power and the boundaries between the masses and the authority. Second, the quote shows how the perception of

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[12] While this dissertation does not focus on the phenomenon of emergence of other movements during the R2R protest (The Occupy Wall Street Movement), a side note must be addressed. Hermes felt that the Occupy activists were hindering the R2R's cause and in this specific occasion stirring up unconstructive and useless tensions with the police.

freedom of expression's rights is shaped by individuals and their movements. The Occupy Wall Street activists were antagonizing the police for pushing them to end the protest at exactly 12:00PM. At the same time, officials were antagonizing citizens by limiting their rights to a specific time and space. Regardless of who took part in the rally one point emerged even from this passage – physical and public space limits freedom of expression by authoritative figure. Elmer and Opel (2008) refer to this trend as the Miami model of law enforcement "characterized by the deployment of overwhelming numbers of law enforcement officers (especially for small non-violent protests like the R2R). The model also includes arrests and surveillance, which were not present at the R2R.

Liliana's concern over expression of opinions in public spaces and Hermes's story highlight one major point of interest in understanding Habermas's work within the virtual sphere – the lack of trust in the government in protecting people's rights. This skepticism in the system has been observed by other scholars analyzing the Occupy Wall Street movement or other environmental movements utilizing social media as a form to protest (Brissette, 2012; Coopman, 2010; Harlow, 2011; Hawkins McCrery and Newhagen, 2004). Brissette (2012) comments on the violent acts at Occupy Oakland questioning "whether tactics involving property destruction makes sense in this particular time and place" (para. 27-29). Coopman (2010) discusses how activists infiltrated the structure of the system (radio) to meet demands of local communities. Harlow (2011) analyzes how the Guatemalan social justice movement relied on Facebook before moving the movement offline. Fahmy (2009) observes that when physical urban spaces fail to provide a forum for citizens to express their opinions, the web fills that gap reinventing new tactics to take back public spaces in Cairo, Egypt. Similarly, Facebook facilitates the diffusion of messages through a wide range of social networks, because individuals feel that their privacy and rights are more protected in a virtual world. As Clementina (2012), an advocate of food labeling for GMOs who runs a website to promote the R2R observes,

> I think people are less shy about expressing themselves on FB because their audience is removed from them. If we were to express controversial issues in an audience, people might feel inhibited about expressing an idea that is unpopular, by comparison to writing a message in the comfort of your home without interacting with others. (personal communication, March 30, 2012)

Some of the messages posted on the R2R event pages criticize not only Monsanto, but they point at the internal and external relations with governmental agencies like the FDA or the USDA and corporations like Monsanto. From emotional statements such as "Fuck Genetically Modified Goods…Gmos = Cancer" (Claudio, "Fuck Genetically – SD," 2011, para. 1), to explicit statements about local versus mass produced farming, "We need to be protecting our local farmers who provide "real" food! Not support corporate pigs like Monsanto…" (We Need To – Portland," 2011, para. 6-7), to a detailed explanation of the forces that shape the labeling movement, these individuals utilize Facebook to express their discontent with the system, whether it is the government or Monsanto. These quotes further reinforce the utilization of Facebook to state opinions about governmental agencies and food corporations:

> We want the food labeled so we can choose…but you might take a look at this www.gmoreform.org/documents/gras-fabrication. Because 20 years ago when they (FDA) decided it was safe, people have assumed it was tested but there was a very thin reason it was not even called a food additive and then in 2000 it was uncovered that the thin reason was actually falsified. So when we have a lot of science and the FDA dismisses it completely and won't even make GMOs a food additive that requires some safety testing and normal labeling rules now we have to go through this huge deal just for our right to choose because i know it is unsafe to eat. (GMO-Free Portland!, "You go ahead," 2011, para. 99-113)

> We are up against corporations who have bought off our gov. [sic] officials so that they can put poison in our food. It is up to the govt. to protect the people and they are doing a lousy job. (Vincenzo, "Many people are concentrating - Boise," 2011, para. 58-61)

These quotes illustrate the continuous discontent in the democratic system, considering that the government should represent the interest of the people, protecting citizens from potential harm.

The concept of inhabitation to discuss personal or controversial issues on the web is not new. Scholars studying computer-mediated communication among people with cancer or disabilities suggest that the web can serve as a support group (Braithwaite et al., 1999; Jonassen & Kwon, 2001; Seale, Ziebland, Charteris-Black, 2006). As a matter of fact Jonassen and Kwon (2001) report, "computer-mediated communication appears to support problem solving by eliciting more focused, on-task, and purposive communication" (p. 50). What is even more interesting is how new technology

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communications shape the concept of freedom of speech, because the elicitation of constructive communication is driven by the perception of free expression. In this regard, Balkin (2004) observes, "digital technologies change the social conditions in which people speak, and by changing the social conditions of speech, they bring to light features of freedom of speech that have always existed in the background but now become foregrounded" (p.2). In the context of the discussions that emerged on the R2R event pages on Facebook, social media facilitate a discussion of issues revolving around GMOs that would be otherwise left in the background as noted by the following quotes, "The market has been quite adept in keeping it out of mainstream arenas" (Gelsomina,"Sorry, but I believe," 2011, para. 28-29). Point further reinforced by Hermes (2012), "Having Facebook on this issue is an advantage, otherwise we would be in darkness on this (GMOs issues)" (personal communication, April 11, 2012) as well as Gelsomina (2012), "I used Facebook to organize the rally because it is an effective way to get information out to a large numbers in a short period of time…and I have connected with people across the country as well as people in my own town that I would never have otherwise met" (personal communication, April 1, 2012). In this sense, the message that would be limited to a physical space becomes salient and unlimited on the virtual web. Facebook provides a place in which to freely contest and deconstruct cultural assumptions of the world in which individuals live. Balkin (2004) argues that this new freedom of expression through digital technologies leads to:

> a culture in which individuals have a fair opportunity to participate in the forms of meaning making that constitute them as individuals. Democratic culture is about individual liberty as well as collective self-governance; it is about each individual's ability to participate in the production and distribution of culture. Freedom of speech allows ordinary people to participate freely in the spread of ideas and in the creation of meanings that, in turn, help constitute them as persons. A democratic culture is democratic in the sense that everyone—not just political, economic, or cultural elites—has a fair chance to participate in the production of culture, and in the development of the ideas and meanings that constitute them and the communities and subcommunities to which they belong. People have a say in the development of these ideas and meanings because they are able to participate in their *creation, growth, and spread.* (p. 3-4)

Meaning making is constructed through many different voices via Facebook, "Facebook allows many voices to come together to stand up against things that would be otherwise overwhelming to take on alone" (Gelsomina, personal communication, April 1, 2012).

Facebook comes to serve as a facilitator for freedom of expression for several reasons drawn from the analysis of the data used in this section of the chapter. In this way, a new dimension of the public sphere emerges. First, as previously mentioned, certain Facebook users feel threatened by the system in place. Even though American citizens have the right to protest in public spaces to speak about issues important to them, the reality is that police brutality and mainstream media coverage of activists have implicitly found a way to control the masses and repel citizens to implement their constitutional rights. For example, Earth First! activist, Judi Bari, was accused by the FBI of having placed a bomb in her own car, leaving her crippled and killing her partner (Coleman, 2005). In 1989 Dave Foreman, co-founder of the organization Earth First! was arrested for terrorist acts and convicted for assaulting two bison hunters who were violating safety laws with a ski pole. He received a 90 day sentence and served about 30 days in prison (Taylor, 1998). More recently, during college demonstrations for the Occupy Wall Street movements, videos captured a police "officer brandish(ing) a red canister of pepper spray, showing it off for the crowd before dousing the seated students in a heavy, thick mist" (Cherkis, 2011, para. 7-9) at UC Davis in California. The list of these fear tactics by authorities goes on. The case of Judi Bari or the UC Davis police officer mislead the public, exacerbating social conflicts by inducing fear and panic "thereby encouraging and promoting a violent reaction by vigilantes, and even by law enforcement authorities themselves" (Taylor, 1998, p. 25). Moreover, this fear leads other citizens to repel themselves from attending manifestations (Earl, 2003; Elmer and Opel, 2008; Opel and Pompper, 2003). Elmer and Opel (2008) observe that authoritative strategies "marginalize dissent, spatially and politically speaking…Space has become a tool to limit open debate, freedom of speech, and political dissent in the US" (p. 31). This point is further reinforced by Agape (2012) who notes, "If the government wants to blame something on me be it. We just keep passing these insane laws so we can't protest" (personal communication, March 21). She is here referring to what Elmer and Opel (2008) call ""free speech zones" and the proposal for protest-free Pedestrian Safety

Zone" to the political screening of participants in political "town hall meetings"" (p. 31).

Conversely, these people rely on virtual protests on social media like Facebook to express their opinions, appropriating the system (Facebook) to contest another element of the system (authority, government, corporations). While social media are currently utilized by activists as a strategy for social change, because they are not confined by limits imposed on physical spaces, attention must be paid to possible negative consequences these new media can have on people's rights and privacy. This is an important discussion to address as activist and scholars are starting to be preoccupied about the safety of their friends and activists. During the Robert Kennedy's workshop on social media and justice in the Arab revolution, held in Florence in July 2012, activists have expressed their concerns on using social media without understanding how authoritative force can access and hack activists' information. But before addressing a discussion on the downsides of Facebook it is important to analyze the content of selected messages people post and respond to on Facebook that pertain to the public sphere. These messages provide for a broader understanding on how Facebook can be utilized to foster deliberation and social change.

4.4 Quality of discussions

So far this chapter has suggested that Facebook has in some ways altered the functions of the physical public sphere of the town squares or salon of the 18th century, producing a new space for freedom of expression, thus pushing scholars to consider a reconceptualization of the public sphere. In this context, interviewees and to some extent posts on Facebook have illustrated that the social network creates a civic open space for participation from the comfort of one's home, facilitating expression of opinions, thus, replacing at time the function of the physical public arena. It should not be suggested that citizens have stopped protesting in civic spaces as the R2R events prove otherwise (McCrery & Newhagen, 2004). On the contrary, chapter 6 will argue that initiating discussions online encourages political participation offline. What is suggested is much in alignment with Balkin (2004), digital technologies allow people to redefine what freedom of speech means and how it is expressed. Interviewees and selected posts on Facebook indicate reluctance on the current democratic system, especially in regard to authority, as well as a need to discuss issues not salient on mainstream media or other public spheres.

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As Agape (2012) mentioned, "mainstream media are not opened to it (GMO's), unless you do something ridiculously outlandish that makes you look like a fool" (personal communication, March 21, 2012), whereas on Facebook individuals are exposed to a variety of alternative resources that come from many different perspectives and countries. Most articles posted on the 42 R2R event pages came from foreign media channels including UK, Australia, India, and Germany. While identifying how Facebook adds a new dimension to the concept of the public sphere, before coming to a conclusion, it is important to analyze what people post about. In other words, *are the conversations driven by rationality and well-reasoned debates?* Or put it simply, *are participants of the R2R event pages on Facebook discussing issues of GMOs by simply writing, "Monsanto go to hell"? How does this sphere influence political engagement and social movements? How are Facebook users of the R2R event pages redefining the ideal speech in the public realm? How exactly are users of the R2R event pages on Facebook responding to an infinite open space? What are the boundaries they are setting for themselves in terms of language?*

The first criterion for ideal speech on Facebook is to build credibility. Credibility on the R2R event pages on Facebook is constituted by three elements: (1) clarity of language, (2) respect for others' opinions; and (3) channel used to communicate (e.g. videos, text, pictures). For example, claims to be perceived valid must be supported by some type of evidence that helps participants to evaluate the validity of such claims. These evidences that emerged on Facebook have different forms from arguments deriving from the dominant assumed anti-GMOs discourse, external links to articles, pictures, videos, and/or audios. For example, this user posted a picture of the rally that took place in Los Angeles, referring to a website with more archived photos.[13]

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[13] The responses to the pictures can be located at https://www.facebook.com/events/156793347733610/ For privacy issues the names and messages of these respondents were not included in the dissertation.

Figure 6: Los Angeles World Food Day Rally

The following message illustrates the dominant anti-GMO discourse, emphasizing the need for a change in the food system,

> The revolving door between Monsanto and the FDA/USDA/White House is staggering. Michael Taylor, former VP and lobbyist for Monsanto, is now currently "Director of Foods" (a position created for him to move into) and he is also Nutrition Advisor to the Obama Administration – remember Michelle's push for more veggies in public schools? We can thank her puppeteer, Mr. Taylor. The conflict of interest is absolutely mind numbing when you look at the facts, and I hope you do. ("I'd just like to point," 2011, para. 23-30)

Other posts show the use of external links to article reinforcing the point that GMOs are harmful for humans and the environment: "Check this out and learn about the dangers: http://www.responsibiletechnology.org/…" ("I'm not going – OR," 2011, para. 11-12); and http://www.realfooddigest.com/how-to-avoid-dangerous-genetically-modified-foods/ scroll down and look at the testicles of rats ("I'm not going – OR," 2011, para. 13-15).[14]

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[14] The author of the dissertation checked the validity of these websites. The first website was determined to be legitimate. The institute for responsible technology was founded by Jeffrey

Media legitimacy is constructed through external links to pictures, videos, and/or audios and supervised by other users who participate in the discussion. As one of the interviewees notes,

> Comments like that are not particularly productive because if you post, "I hate Monsanto" chances are you not going to get a lot of people to say, "Geeh if they hate Monsanto, I should hate Monsanto too." You have to actually produce some evidences; "I hate them for these reasons. Here is what they do that is wrong. Here it is why." If you can make a compelling argument you might actually get some people to agree with your position, maybe join your cause or whatever it is that you are attempting to accomplish. The difference then is whether you are going in to accomplish something as opposed to a desire to vent your frustration (Archippos, personal communication, March 26, 2012).

In the case of the R2R, credibility is built within Facebook avoiding statements deriving from emotions and not supported by evidence. Among 15 interviews each of them seem to agree on this point, regardless of their personal and political stance on GMO issues. Some of the interviewees associated emotional statements, such as "Monsanto FU," with the failure of recruiting more people to attend rallies and advancing policy change in local communities. Emotional and unsupported claims tend to hinder the cause of a movement, by inhibiting the conversation to evolve, discouraging people from understanding the issue, and constructing the stereotype of activists as radical and ignorant as noted by Adara (2012),

> I try to shift away from hunger and judgment toward the companies that approve GMOs and toward people that are promoting GMOs…having so much emotion, hunger and judgment is not going to be positive for the movement (personal communication, March 31).

This is especially true when opposite points of view are introduced into the conversation. If disrespectful and unproductive language was used to insult people with a different point of view, other users participating in the conversation tilted the conversation back to its ideal place. Facebook is seen as an open forum that facilitates civic debate on GMOs issues. An assumed prerequisite for participating in the conversation is to be respectful, to

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Smith, one of the key players in policy changes that pertain to GMOs. The second link is a blog. The blog post provides detailed information about US consumption of GMOs and side effects, providing an extensive lists of external scientific and credible links. Thus, both websites were determined to be credible.

use proper and constructive language. When Aella wrote, "I'd just like to point out that I'm currently farming with my dad every day and if we didn't have GMO crops, we couldn't have the yields we have which is why we couldn't feed the world" ("I'd just like to point," 2011, para. 1-4), he received a comment from one of the respondents saying, "Congratulations Aella, Monsanto owns your ass" ("I'd just like to point," 2011, para. 33), to which Aella replied by writing, "That's very astute analysis Rino. Whereas I need to take time to study and understand Molly's viewpoint, it takes me all of .05 seconds to tell you to go fuck yourself" ("I'd just like to point," 2011, para. 34-36). His message illustrates that when conversations among people are constituted by respect and constructive arguments, these discussions tend to evolve. Respect is here understood in alignment with Habermas (1981) and Steenbergen et al. (2003) who developed a discourse quality index based on Habermas' discourse ethics. In their words, respect "implies that participants, either implicitly or explicitly, acknowledge the needs and rights of different social groups" (Steenbergen at al., 2003, p. 26). The participants of this particular post on Facebook dismissed the 'name calling post,' readdressing the conversation to the initial issue as indicated by the follow up post, "I am sad to see the discussion devolve into this…if you have any questions or need professional sources to review, I will be happy to provide you with the information" ("I'd just like to point," 2011, para. 37-39).

Similarly, on the R2R event page of Ocala, Florida, when a conversion among anti and pro-GMOs users heat up, one of the respondents pointed at the invalid claims made by the pro-users. He writes, "Notice, how he answered w/what shabby info he has read or heard, and did not articulate anything about the suggested readings given to him-so, NO, he did not research anything" ("I like Monsanto," 2011, para. 106-109). Participants do not accept unconstructive discourse. Those engaging in the conversation are presumed to read, listen to all sides, and build on what has been said/written. All different sides are taken into consideration if articulated well, challenged and absorbed, providing opportunities for people to understand the problem, debate, and negotiate. The goal is to create and fuel the anti-GMOs discourse, as Clementina (2012) notes:

> Even a conversation that began with someone refuting the danger of GMOs would spark a debate in our community to create more of a buzz about GMO labeling. For example, someone might say, "My cousin works for Monsanto, and he says

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GMO crops will feed the hungry and the poor." Another person might say, "GMO crops have never been designed to increase crop yields; these crops are simply designed to withstand the natural elements: cold, drought, and bugs. They are designed to withstand ever increasing amounts of chemicals, chemicals which we would prefer not to feed our families." The first person might say, "That doesn't sound so bad." and someone from our side may say, "don't we have the right to know if our food has been mutated and exposed to increased amounts of chemicals?" My point is that even when the discourse is seemingly negative, our cause is well supported by our members. (personal communication, April 1)

Aella will not stop conventional farming nonetheless, he is now faced with decisions and options. He is provided with external links, and a wide range of perspectives on why conventional farming is not the answer to world hunger. Topics of discussion range from corporate control, which even Aella agrees on by stating, "It's absolutely disgusting (referring to corporate control). If there were one agency I could get rid of it would be the FDA…And, Diana, your statement makes complete economic sense to me" ("I'd just like to point," 2011, para. 62-67). But underneath there is favoritism to capitalism in Aella's response and interpretation to other posts. While other users criticize corporations and the government for allowing these firms to have political power, they still believe that regulation (food labeling) is the first step to a solution of all the problems derived from GMOs. This view is in contradiction with Aella's take on the issue. He blames it on the FDA and finds the solution to be inherent in the market. This is a point of interest that emerged on the Boise, Idaho page of the R2R on Facebook. Similarly to Aella's post, another user had posted opposing the rally because he believes the government should not interfere in a free market system. The market will self correct the problem. When interviewed the initiator of this post further clarified his comment, by explaining that the responses did not help change his point of view on the subject, being of demanding GMOs food labeling regulations.

> I am a libertarian. My view is generally that it is better to keep the government out of the picture…I am not sure if my opinion would have been changed, but if they (participants) had it approached it from an economic stand point, making an argument as to why the cost of … although businesses would have to undertake this cost it would somehow result in an economic benefit in the long term…I would have been more inclined to at least giving it a thorough consideration because I am more inclined to the economic argument than to the social argument. (Archippos, personal communication, March 31, 2012)

Archippos, a web designer running for state representative in Idaho, with his argument drawn from an economic stand point, was much in alignment with Mill's (1998) notion of the common good, a utilitarian angle to solve societal problems. On Facebook the common good is expressed through solidarity. [15]

The assumption underlying the concept of authenticity lies on the idea that justification of one's claim with valid evidence will create authenticity as, for example, in the case of many environmental movements that throughout the years, through a variety of media stunts and tactics, have finally achieved national credibility. PETA, regardless of its controversial tactics, is now globally recognized as an authority that speaks out for the prevention of animal cruelty, while the Center for Health, Environment, and Justice provides information about toxic activities by third parties in local community. The organization started in 1978 by a concerned mother Lois Gibbs. Today the organization has achieved authenticity status. Lois has been the recipient of many environmental awards and was nominated for in 2003 for the Nobel Peace Prize ("Our Story," 2012).

One's credibility on the virtual world, as in the case of the R2R users on Facebook, comes from a variety of factors: a sense of social responsibility embedded in the consumer-citizen model, which pushes individuals to engage in productive conversations, but also from the omission of insulting and unsupported arguments and authenticity. As noted by Agape (2012), "I do realize that being on the frontline like I am puts me at risk but you are either helping by being a bystander or by being salient to it or you are going to go out…I don't feel there is another option for me. This is what it feels right" (personal communication, March 26). Caterina (2012) when asked about her response to Liliana who wanted to bring children to the rally she explained, "I feel it is

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[15] Aella's post previously mentioned illustrates the concept of solidarity that emerged on Facebook. Because Aella, a conventional farmer is opened to the process of argumentation from users who oppose his farming methods, solidarity becomes fundamental for the continuation of the argument and process of persuasion. Mirko, writes, "Aside from the lack of long term sustainability of GMOs (look at science), part of your problem is competing with large agri-businesses that get subsides and tax breaks. THAT is the battle you should fight, Andrew and other farmers. We will help you" ("I'd just like to point," 2011, para. 78-81). This is farther reinforced by other messages that provide additional resources for Aella to read, sympathizing with him. Chiara writes, "Just remember most of us started exactly where you are – not really knowing both sides of the story" ("I'd just like to point," 2011, para. 111-112). Solidarity then becomes a tactic for pacific and constructive argumentation.

important that children are aware of the danger of GMOs because GMOs affect children more than they do adults…I feel it is important to educate your children and have them actively involved in the process" (personal communication, April 1, 2012). Furthermore, Gelsomina (2012) expressed her social responsibility in taking some sort of action; "since I learned about GMOs I have felt a responsibility to help educate others about genetically modified foods. I think it is unfortunate and almost criminal that our food system does not disclose such crucial information" (personal communication, April 11, 2012). Concern for the health and the environment push these individuals to feel a social responsibility to take action to change the system and inform others of the dangers. In this regard, language comes to play a significant role in the dissemination of information through the web. Offensive speech is considered to be irrelevant and detrimental.

Chiara (2012) recounts a conversation on Facebook in which "one of the guys started using profanity…We call them trolls. People who just come in and insult people" (personal communication, April 6, 2012). These individuals who use a provocative, irrational, and unsupported rhetoric to assert their point of views limit the productivity of the conversation, by distracting other users from the issue in discussion. Examples of these types of posts follow: "I'm sure your facts are crap…I hope you leave now to go to "occupy Whatever" cause it's gonna be a long walk and you wouldn't want to hurt mother Gia…Go eat yourself!" (Gordias, "They Help Ocala-FL, 2011, para. 8-14); or "About the rally, if you want to go and karma dance and chant with your tie dyed friends, go ahead!" (Gordias, "They Help Ocala-FL, 2011, para. 73-74). Few of the responses to Gordias followed his unsupported and emotional style, "Gordias a big man living on the EDGE! Why don't u inhale some rat poison then and just get it over with?" (Riccardo, "They Help Ocala-FL, 2011, para. 57-58).

The argument that emotional and unsupported claims are not accepted by the virtual community of the R2R event pages on Facebook is applicable also outside the realm of the web. Thus, modes of communication are crossing from online to offline settings. Adara (2012) recounts an episode during the final hearing for a proposal to use public land for GMO cultivation in Colorado. The leader of the anti-GMO movement verbally bashed unsupported claims about Monsanto in front of a crowd of 500 people (personal communication, March 31). As a result, those who attended the meeting, who

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had not decided on the issue, sided with the farmers (Adara, personal communication, March 31, 2012). The anti-GMOs movement lost its cause. Adara, who participated in the meeting, says that these actions make GMOs activists look crazy. In regard to the consequences of emotional language used to shape a movement's cause, Facebook similarly has the ability to lose potential anti-GMOs supporters and ralliers. This is due to multiple factors, ranging from unsupported claims, providing information that is funded on unreliable sources, misinterpreting messages because of the lack of nonverbal communication, and stagnation of debate due to 'hit and run posters," as Archippos pointed out. These points will be illustrated in this section of the chapter.

When the dominant anti-GMO discourse is used without the support of external links to articles or relevant websites, users request more information. It is only then that clarity and authority is achieved. In the following post, Aristotle says,

> I plan to attend to photograph to include in upcoming book to release to KINDLE first week in November…would love to contact to arrange potential "model releases. ("I plan to attend to photograph," 2011, para. 1-2)

Even if the quote, on the surface, did not directly incite a debate over GMO, the message led to a conversation on the problems associated with the American agricultural system based on close ties between the government and private food corporations. The respondent addresses the issue of food labeling regulations. First, she states that current organic regulations imposed by the USDA favor corporations that rely mostly on GMOs, by allowing labeling products organic even if they contain small percentage of GMOs. Second, she addresses the issue of advocacy groups, like the Organic Trade Association (OTA) that fail to represent the interests of the people because the organizations are intertwined with the food industry by an interlocking of their board of directors. The claims are not supported by external links or quotes from scientists or experts, but they rely on a dominant anti-GMO discourse. For this reason, Aristotle expresses a desire to understand, in depth, the arguments made, by asking, "would you be able to direct me to better understand the behind-scenes at OTA – specifically which special interest groups are apparently doing their dirty work?" ("I plan to attend to photograph," 2011, para. 43-45).

At this point, the respondent offers Aristotle the opportunity to contact her on her private e-mail, which she provides on the Facebook page. In alignment with the interview conducted with Aristotle, Facebook was helpful in getting additional information on GMO issues, by "serving as a vehicle to get the message out" (Aristotle, personal communication, March 2, 2012), encouraging a back and forth conversation. The social media facilitated a conversation that led the two participants to act outside the realm of Facebook. This is a point that will be discussed further in chapter 6. For the moment, what is important to note is that clarity becomes fundamental to understanding the complexity of issues related to GMOs and to be able, at a later point, to take from that conversation information that will be shared outside the R2R event page on Facebook. As a matter of fact, clarity is a factor that shapes credibility. Language carries meaning and power when the message created by these words is understood and perceived by the participant(s) in the conversation, especially in the context of Facebook when lack of nonverbal cues can alter the reception of the message. The need for clarity was evident in the case of Aristotle who was interested to learn more about OTA for her upcoming book that centers around cooking vegetarian organic meals on a budget and top contaminants in the food supply.

In addition to clarity and respect, external resources (e.g. links) used to back up one's claims become fundamental to construct credibility, necessary to distinguish Habermas's ideal speech from propaganda and commercial advertisements (Jacobson & Storey, 2004). For instance, when Alexander started a post claiming that GMOs address the issue of hunger in the world because of their cheap production costs, other respondents replied by taking the role of educators, pointing out ways Alexander's statement was incorrect. Cleo responds,

> http://panna.org/ There is nothing "niche" about the recent story on the economics of organic farming in the Agronomy Journal. The journal reports on an 18-year study demonstrating that organic crop rotation is consistently more profitable than conventional corn and soybean production, even when organic price primus are cut by half. That is very good news for both organic producers and the agricultural economies in which they operate. ("I'd just like to point," 2011, para. 82-89)

This quote shows that external links to journal articles, advocacy groups 'websites, and scientific websites serve to reinforce, add credibility, clarify, and add information about

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one's statement. In this scenario Facebook becomes a public sphere, a "cultural/informational repository of the ideas and projects that feed public debate" (Castells, 2008, p. 79). This is a point that came up with all interviewees. In particular, Hellen (2012) observes that Facebook and in general the web is like a "big library" with free access (personal communication, March 21, 2012), "I have access without having to go to an actual library or college to pick up a book and have to sit and read it. It is condensed, quick, and convenient. Now, it is immense" (Hellen, personal communication, March 21, 2012). But unlike a library, Facebook allows individuals to become producers of knowledge, using language, audio, or images to restore the lifeworld from the colonization of the system. Facebook also enables users to deconstruct the dominant discourse around genetically modified organism shaped by not only mainstream media, but by the government, conventional farmers, and corporations like Monsanto.

4.4.1 Limits of Facebook in regard to the concept of the public sphere

While Facebook can be used as an interactive library of knowledge and resources, it is also important to note the downside of sharing information pulled from external data. Three interviewees noted that external links can also hinder the cause of anti-GMOs movements by adding information not related to the mission of the event. As Agape (2012) notes,

> I had a couple of people posting some links very conspiracy theory [….] my stuff is based on facts. This is about GMOs. I don't want to overwhelmed people with something else [….]Sometimes people would say they would come and would post a link to something like info war or how crazy the world is or Chemtrail. and I am like, "No one is going to come if you post like that. (personal communication, March 16, 2012)

Kleon (2012) indicates that Facebook can foster a space where people can express their opinions freely and solve problems,

> as long as they have back up. I am also a lactvist and inactivist, and along with GMO, these issues have strong opinions on both sides…So if one dissident comments in a likeminded group, it can get ugly. It is amazing how cyber communication can get so heated. (personal communication, March 31, 2012)

From a Habermasian point of view, conversations not driven by well-reasoned arguments distract from achieving agreement and fully understanding a specific issue, resulting in

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belittling the cause of activists as pointed out from Agape's comment. While external resources can help validate people's arguments, if used improperly, they can damage the reputation of a cause and their activists, providing new outlets for criticism and pushing away persuadable bystanders. This is a point that came up with another interviewer, Adara (2012),

> One of the things I see and have issues with what happens with Facebook is the dissemination of disinformation. It happens all the times that some blogger will post a news article in regard to GMO's. The most recent one is on Monsanto. Someone or some blogger had posted something on Facebook saying that Monsanto had closed the operations in Britain. And that was totally not true. But so many people that are on Facebook don't really take the time to research further an article. They just stay on Facebook and if they see it they will like it and share without checking if it was true. (personal communication, March 19, 2012)

On one hand, the lack of facts supporting one's claim can determine the evolution and credibility of an argument as in the case of Archippos mentioned early. Beside the lack of different views on the problem (e.g. economic versus social) the debate lacked claims supported with external resources. Out of 15 responses to the post of Archippos, from which 11 were from other users and four from the initiator of the message, none of them had external links to support their claims. The lack of resources does not indicate that their points are not valid. However, this gap points to the issue of credibility and authenticity, affecting the degree of potential persuasion. As Archippos (2012) notes,

> The primary disadvantage of Facebook, the flip coin about being able to discuss with anyone, also means that you don't necessarily know who you are having the discussion with, which is, someone can present themselves as an authority. I mean, "having being a farmer for 20 years," I don't know if you are really a farmer or you are just saying that to boost your credibility online.

On the other hand, posting links to external sites is not sufficient to add credibility to one's claims. The nature of Facebook allows individuals to share information through a variety of virtual public spheres within Facebook immediately. This can result in an overabundance of information; a failure for an individual to sort through what information is relevant and accurate, relying on the assumption that if a friend posted it, it must be reliable, if it is about anti-GMOs it must be true. This point was reinforced by Kleon (2012) who adds that, "while Facebook is very useful and wide reaching, there is much redundancy (share) and I found myself overlooking some important info because

there was too much" (personal communication, April 1, 2012). With the flip of a coin comes open access to the virtual public sphere and the possibility of misinforming the public, creating uncertainty around GMO issues and the movement of the R2R. This problem leads to an interesting subsequential dilemma. For Facebook to function as a public sphere it must provide an opportunity for all to express their voices, but these voices also must engage with each other, meaning that Facebook does not guarantee that individuals will read all information posted online aimed at encouraging discussions. Many of the posts of the 42 event pages of the R2R, including those with questions or links to external resources did not have any responses, indicating that information is "lost in space." As Archippos (2012) observes:

> The other disadvantage (of Facebook) is that there are a lot of people who are hit and run posters. They will come in and make a comment. Maybe people would take the time to formulate a logical response to them but they never come back. They never defend their positions. Not that they have to, but it creates a dynamic where sometimes I am rewarding [sic] to put a lot of effort into producing a very logical response and somebody does not even bother to come back and continue the discussion. (personal communication, March 31, 2012)

This problem is fundamental for social movements like the R2R because they rely on Facebook to organize, disseminate, and recruit new members. Lack of participation from members of a group can hinder the overall cause of a movement, frustrating those individuals who might be the most persuadable and those who seek information and answers to questions. This becomes of course a problem of leadership that is addressed in the subsequent chapters. What is relevant for this discussion is that it becomes clear that for discussions to be constructive, meaning that they are constituted by language that prompts problem solving and engagement, they must incorporate a certain topic (e.g. GMOs and food labeling), and certain types of people, who are active participants in the virtual community. Hit and run posters are perceived as distractors of solving problems. An active debate among a variety of individuals online can possibly lead to some type of action whether online or offline (see chapter 6). This individual mobilization is accomplished through an open access to global resources shared via Facebook. Social networks become an essential element not only for the dissemination of an alternative discourse around GMOs, which is made available through the system in itself – Facebook, but also for the mobilization of individuals (see chapter 6).

4.5 Social Networks and Social Spheres

The nature of the system (Facebook) has led many scholars to question the effects of this new technology on political participation, focusing on the relation between the structure and people (Harlow, 2011, Lim, 2012). In the context of the R2R and Habermas's communicative action theory, the lifeworld includes Facebook, but more specifically social networks of heterogeneous people connected via a structure (Fb) that is part of the system (private company/corporation/capitalism) (Castells, 2006, 2009, McCormick, 2006). These people interact with others through groups of homogeneous interests (e.g. GMOs) as noted by several of the interviewees: "Over time I started adding activist pages and foodie pages. I have networked with many different groups. My Facebook page is tailored to my interests and is full of politics, food, activism and inspiration" (Gelsomina, personal communication, April 1, 2012). Anatolius (2012) notes that on Facebook, "I find like minded individuals on commonly liked pages stories and (so I) share, share share;)" (personal communication, April 2). Apollonia (2012) reinforces the same point, "it (Facebook) helped me to find some people with the same views" (personal communication, April 1).

Chapter 2 has highlighted how "the architecture of virtual spaces, much like the architecture of physical spaces, simultaneously suggest and enables particular modes of interaction" (Papacharissi, 2009, p. 200) as is the case of the R2R with the exchange of information and organization of rallies among online users who share common interests. However, at times the aggregation of heterogeneous individuals around a common goal or cause can produce stagnation of communicative action. This is one of the main arguments of this chapter. Yardi and Boyd (2010) studied the culture polarization on Twitter where users seek out information similar to their beliefs. They argue that although people "were more likely to interact with others who share the same point of views as they do…they are actively engaged with those with whom they disagree" (p. 325). This holds true for the R2R event pages and its users. One of the downsides of Facebook is the aggregation of similar people within a group or event page. This aggregation creates a polarization of problem-solving. Insofar as it can be ascertained, discussions on an issue from a similar point of view could limit problem-solving. As Adara (2012) notes:

the other things in regard to comments is that the way Facebook is oriented allows people to group with people like-minded so on a Facebook page say on the Organic Consumers Association for every piece of content they post, every single person on that, like 6200 comments are all going to be the same thing, Basically, saying the same thing in different words. You are not going to get someone like a biotech professor from Colorado State to come on there and make some challenging comments because he is not. No one is going to expect that and everyone is going to jump on him. And vice versa in communities of pro-GMO's they are going to have their Facebook pages and everything they post is going to be commenting on by people they agree with their opinions and you are not going to have non-GMO people commenting on these pages. What I am saying it is that conversations on Facebook are stagnant. (personal communication, March 19, 2012).

The communicative action stagnation Adara is observing on Facebook holds true when analyzing all the posts of the 42 pages of the R2R coded as 'Public Sphere.' Out of 16 initial posts, that generated a response of 90 messages by other users, categorized as 'public sphere,' seven (43%) messages were instigated by opponents of the rally. In these cases, the exchanges of different points of view led to a constructive conversation among users. In addition, as previously noted if disrespectful language was used, other participants served as facilitators and/or guards, refocusing the conversations to the initial question (also see chapter 5). However, a further look at this question of communication stagnation among micro and homogenized social spheres reveals a divergence from Adara's comment. Other respondents valued the commonality of specific social spheres like the R2R event page has created. More specifically, they found it to be helpful in organizing the rally in multiple cities at the same time. Apollonia (2012) observes that Facebook was helpful in informing people about permit and transportation issues. For example, 13 out of 74 (17%) messages posted on the Colorado Spring Right to Know rally page on Facebook were questions pertaining to the rally or GMO issues. Similarly, for the event held in Hawaii, out of 53 posts initiated by users, 10 (18.8%) were questions pertaining to sign, banners, location and permit. Securing a space devoted to the rally had several beneficial factors. First, the R2R event pages create a virtual community, serving as a support group for citizens who want to make a difference but at times feel 'alone' and disempowered, as noted by Agape (2012): "it is really comforting to have sort of this core group of friends who think and feel the way you do and they post about it and you post about it and it ends up becoming a support group" (personal communication, March

22, 2012). Similarly, Anatolius (2012) explains the utility of being part of a micro virtual sphere on Facebook "I do think Facebook fosters relationships where people can solve common problems. Perspective from others can be an asset. There are a few groups like Frugally Sustainable where questions are posted everyday and the fans answer with solutions, and really cool ideas for making things" (Personal communication, April 2, 2012).

Conversations were not stagnant as Adara's pointed out. They helped to accomplish tasks related to the rally. In other words, conversations on the R2R event pages aimed to resolve issues, to recruit attendees, to make sure people spread information offline and to build coalitions with other Facebook users. In addition, these exchange of messages helped informing those who did not directly belong to the GMOs movement to learn about the issue of the R2R. The food labeling community's goal is to support GMO food labeling laws; "Reasoned debate and argument, even though imperfect, are fundamental" (Jacobson & Storey, 2004, p. 104), because they stimulate new conversations among different micro public spheres (Keane, 1998). On the Washington, D.C. page of the R2R on Facebook two users expressed their ignorance on GMO issues, "I don't know what gmo is, but yall sure make me proud to be amirican [sic]. One of the only rights I respect in our land. The right to fight for a good [sic]." (Roberto, "I will be there in spirit – D.C.," 2011, para. 5-7), and "What is GMO?" (Simona, "What is GMO – D.C.," 2011, para. 1). Their messages led to a conversation among five different people, explaining what GMOs were, the problems associated to them, and the health complications. Some of these posts were supported by external links as the following message illustrates:

> G-genetically M-modified O-organics [sic].[16]Food sources they have genetically altered for profit-not what is best to eat now that we know we have prion like proteins infecting millions in all syndrome of unknown origin. And now the appearance of Morgellons in most syndromes of chronic illness…Many like me believe because of their hokus pokus we are now swapping genes with not only infectious organisms but organics as well…These people are most honorable on earth. www.youtubecom/watch?v=JDFOUQqIL34; http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=U3P53yGX_fU&feature=related; http://www.godsciencebook.com/; www.actionlyme.org/index.htm people think

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[16] It was noted by another users that it is not organics; rather O stands for organism.

Big Banks/Big Oil is the worst of our problems, but its [sic] not. (Melissa, "I will be there in spirit – D.C.," 2011, para. 8-21).

However it must be noted that in this particular message two out of four links were not credible or no content was found related to GMOs. The videos were specifically discussing a pathogen that evolved due to GMOs that has said to cause harms in humans. However, the author of the audio book is not a doctor and has no scientific experience. Religion is used to reinforce the argument that GMOs are harmful. Therefore, while the 'ignorant' user now knows what GMO stands for, he/she might have an incorrect overview of the issue. The other user who was asking similarly about GMOs was provided with a more useful link and explanation, "It's Genetically Modified Organism" (Achille, "What is GMO – D.C.," 2011, para. 2); "http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JAP6ZtfP9ZQ" (Cecilia, "What is GMO – D.C.," 2011, para. 4). This video concisely and clearly explains what GMOs are and how/why they were developed. Thus, Simona now has been informed and educated if she takes the initiative to check on the information.

Other messages on the R2R event pages on Facebook were based on logistics, asking whether the space where the rally took place had a tent, table, and/or banners. As Agape (2012) explains, "It (Facebook) was a way to network so that people could get where they needed to go" (personal communication, March 16). The discussion of using Facebook to organize the rally will be addressed in detail in chapter 5 and 6. What is important to observe is that Facebook facilitates socialization through its structure forming a snowball effect. Socrates (2012) observes that, "It's a snowball effect because once you join a group with similar interest, usually you stay connected to that group so you can stay inform either on information or events" (personal communication, March 22, 2012). Belonging to an event like R2R and connecting to people outside one's own private sphere facilitate communication and connection to other groups, spreading even more information. As Apollonia (2012) notes, "it was helpful for spreading the word about the event and reaching large number of people. It also helped answering questions" (personal communication, April 1, 2012). As Socrates notes, "I definitely use it (Facebook) to spread the word out to further groups in order to further my causes…and they can share it with their people" (personal communication, March 2, 2012). Among 15

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interviews, all perceived that the power of Facebook relies on the possibility and ability to disseminate information immediately at low cost through a wide range of people connected globally and virtually through direct and indirect nodes. This is much in alignment with Castells's (2006) concept of a complex global and virtual architectural network, which has allowed activists to engage in public participation globally. Three of the people interviewed mentioned that they have developed online relationships with individuals living in countries outside the United States. One of the interviewees who posted on the New York City R2R page was from Canada. Anatolius, (2012) despite being from Canada joined the R2R event on Facebook for New York City, because, "I like to see that recent articles world wide are shared as well as scientific data that has been released as well as other countries and their banning GMO's…I posted (on that page) requesting Canadian links because they are lots of crops being started here that are GMO" (personal communication, April 2). Gelsomina (2012) further reinforces the notion of using Facebook to create coalitions across Facebook individual's profiles and initiate new causes:

> Long before this GMO issue a small group of women in my city came together to effect change. A teenage boy died at a very busy intersection where my son walked to and from school. I organized a group of women to meet before the city hall meeting to let them know we were demanding a light for pedestrians at that cross walk. During the course of our research to obtain a traffic light, we discovered other problems in our city regarding contracting, engineering services, a wastewater facility etc. We used a Facebook page to keep people informed about what was going on. We launched a task force dedicated to improving the way our city did business. Our city, that was used to operating without anyone questioning, was now being held accountable. Since then, we completely overturned our city. We have a new Mayor and two new city council members. Most of the city staff has been replaced. I think most people in our city would agree that our group and our Facebook page is the reason or at least the catalyst.[17]

This is an important point the data indicated, which is applicable not only in regard to GMO issues but to any problems within a system. The R2R was one of the many pages on Facebook that people utilize to learn more about issues they cared for. Through these event pages ordinary citizens were able to connect to other relevant groups on Facebook, to connect to local and global individuals who share a common interest –

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[17] A more detailed discussion on the impact of Facebook in offline environments will be discussed in chapter 6.

whether the love of their children in regard to food issues, sustainability, gardening, and school lunches. In the case of Hermes, a retiree who used to work at a recycling facility in Maui, Hawaii and who organized the R2R in Hawaii on October 16 through Facebook, the experience of using social media had led him to expand his network and his causes. Hermes (2012) noted that the Maui United in Front of Monsanto on World Food Day (WFD) event page on Facebook resulted in another event at a later time, which was still organized on Facebook, Occupy Monsanto Maui. According to the info published online and Hermes, this page was "born out of interest expressed by some lingering after the protest against Monsanto on WFD, besides facilitating re-convergence(s), this page will also seek with signatures, call-ins, and/or emails etc, to perhaps influence legislation or what not" ("Occupy Monsanto Maui," 2011). The page in fact was created a day after the first rally on GMO issues. Using event pages like the R2R not only facilitates communication across a wide range of people, but it also fosters coalitions. Facebook event pages can lead to other events or group pages, shaping and reshaping social movements. The evolution of social movements like the R2R ones were evident when interviewing Hermes from the Maui movement and Chiara (2012) from the R2R movement based in Iowa. She extensively talked about the Occupy movement like it was the R2R movement. When asked to clarify exactly how the Occupy movement fell under the GMO movement she notes,

> The Food thing is one part of something that we work on. It is one of our working groups under this Occupy. People decided that that (food) was important to them. We are an agricultural state. Monsanto is big here. Basically, it is the idea that food is not safe…That's what Occupy does. It let's the larger population knows…What we do is talk to people in our community. (personal communication, April 6, 2012).

This quote illustrates that social media set an example for people to initiate events or groups based on common interests. These events then lead to discussions whether online or offline that stimulate individuals to begin new programs or movements (see chapter 5 and 6). Facebook opens doors to an immense library of resources. These resources are people who share a variety of interests. Chiara (2012) after her involvement with the different events against Monsanto founded a community garden for which a group page was created on Facebook. Again, one event leads to new information, new connections,

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new groups, new movements. The opportunities for participation become endless as well as possibilities for change in behavior (e.g., community garden).[18]

At the core of this linkage between individuals, groups, and events lies the individual profile on Facebook, which allows for the diffusion of information through a variety of micro spheres. This is fundamental to the reconfiguration of Habermas's concept of the public sphere. Hellen (2012), who participated in a conversation on one of the 42 pages of the R2R on Facebook referred to her Facebook profile as an ethos space. In her words, "Facebook profile is an ethos to your own newspaper of yourself and what is going on around you" (personal communication, March 28, 2012). Facebook is considered a news channel, in which each individual is his/her own editor, CEO, or reporter. By sharing information on the front page of one's own virtual media outlet, people are becoming part of a public sphere, the media public sphere. Moreover, individuals are creating micro social media public spheres and fusing them into macro public spheres. Social counter-spheres like the R2R have the ability to reach a wide and global audience than mainstream media, spreading information that come from alternative media that individuals would otherwise not seek or be exposed. As Caterina (2012) observes, "I have a lot of friends on Facebook and you know social media is a great way to get the message out and a lot of people use it. It is a great vehicle" (personal communication, March 26, 2012). In addition, Adara (2012), a web designer as well as host of Food Integrity Now explains that, "The major advantage of Facebook is that it gives you a life keeper to speak for many more people and there is a function of how many friends you have, how many friends see or listen to what you are saying and how well engaging you are in writing text or posts that encourage people to take the action offline" (personal communication, March 19).

The exposure to this type of information is of course linked to the circle of friends belonging to one of the many ethos spheres. These people circulate their news through their private channel through a web of connections that can potentially extend to the global level. Papacharissi (2009) explains, "social networking sites are structured initially around a niche audience, although their appeal frequently evolves beyond that target

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[18] More about change in behavior and effects of Facebook will be discussed in chapter 6.

market" (p.200). According to Facebook Data, (2012) each profile or public sphere is constituted by weak and strong ties. These relationships are formed through some sort of commonality whether in the form of workplace, GMO groups, or school. Data from Facebook (2012) suggests that whereas an individual will most likely share information from a strong tie (e.g. close friend within one's private profile), weak ties are "collectively responsible for the majority of information spread" ("Facebook Data," 2012, para. 95-96), information that individuals would not seek out by themselves. This is in alignment with one of the interviewees who noted that on Facebook one can "start a discussion about topics you might never hear about" (Archippos, personal communication, March 26, 2012), or be exposed to information that one would never search for (Socrates, personal communication, March 22, 2012). When asked how Archippos found out about the R2R event page he replied by saying that some of his friends, within his private profile, had sent him an invitation, so he joined the group, despite GMOs not being an issue of interest to him. Moreover, Archippos posted on the wall of the R2R event page on Facebook of Boise, Idaho, opposing the rally of GMOs food labeling. In regard to the discussion of free expression, as well as exposure of information through strong and weak ties, the example of Archippos illustrates the importance of different public spheres within Facebook in the divulgence of information and action to engage in civic conversations. In this regard, in this case, any of the 42 R2R event pages on Facebook constitute their own public sphere. Within these virtual communities, heterogeneous individuals who belong to their own private sphere (ethos sphere) or other group or event social spheres can share information obtained through the R2R page. That information is then shared on their private profile, which is seen by their immediate friends, these people do not necessarily belong to any of the R2R spheres. Sustein (2001) argues that the Internet threatens the preconditions for deliberative democracy (Downey & Fenton, 2003), because of the polarization of groups of people with similar beliefs. He also comments that for a constructive conversation to have political power, individuals "should be exposed to materials that they have not chosen in advance" (Downey & Fenton, 2003, p. 189). In so far as it can be ascertained, even if a friend on Facebook does not seek information about GMOs she/he might be unintentionally exposed to alternative news from one of her/his friend. An example from

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the case study that illustrates how Facebook facilitates a wide range of alternative views and the indirect exposure of information outside a specific sphere comes from Archippos[19] who ended up on the page of the Boise, Idaho's R2R event through an invitation from one of his friends connected to that page. Another example that indicates the domino effect of Facebook in the R2R case is explained by Agape (2012), "I can tell you that my friends on Facebook all heard of it (GMO's) 100 times. At first you think you are bothering them, but what shocked me is the people that stick around, which is almost all of them. It seems that sooner or later they start liking the comments on your posts and they start messaging you on the side" (personal communication, March 31, 2012). Agape was referring to the frequency of information of GMO issues she shares/posts on her wall. This perseverance of posting, reposting from the R2R pages, and commenting, has been successful in "planting the seed" into people's minds, into those friends of Agape who were not initially aware of the harms of GMOs. In this sense, the late 20th century model of the public sphere in which the corporate media had more leverage than citizens is here challenged by the utilization of Facebook by consumers. Thus, Facebook has the "ability to unite people for causes" (Apollonia, personal communication, April 1, 2012), presenting information that not only encourages political conversation, but Facebook enables the objectification of cultural junk (Habermas, 1981) and the creation of cultural meaning by the people, not corporations.

Here, then, it is important to draw some observations. Facebook through its structure invigorates established social networks, expands social networks across the globe, and potentially encourages civic debate, which can also lead to some sort of action (see chapter 6). Among 15 interviewees all observed the importance of social ties whether weak or strong, the role of groups (social spheres), and the possibility of the dissemination of information through a variety of virtual public spheres. More specifically, the R2R event pages empower citizens to be active participants of their life, of policy decisions. Apollonia (2012) explains that, "many people felt empowered as they decided to do local events. Many of them continue to be active, starting local gmo-free state pages and having regular educational events. It took one person –me- to stand up

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[19] Archippos was opposed to the rally and yet he decided to post on that page and engage in a discussion over the role of government and food.

and say "I can do this, so YOU can." And they did" (personal communication, April 1, 2012).

The discussion of social networks within Facebook and the R2R lead to a reconceptualization of the concept of the public sphere. The term ethos sphere delineates not only an environment for open and inclusive discussion, but also highlights the role of the individual in making the virtual open space functional for deliberative democracy. Insofar as it can be ascertained, the ethos sphere is an autonomous (trans)national media sphere. News is tailored to the individuals' interests and beliefs and serves to educate or entertain others, but this news also includes opportunities for new exposure of information that derives from friends. Socrates (2012) mentions, "most of my postings are pretty political" (personal communication, March 22, 2012), illustrating that Facebook's function of reconnecting with family and friends may also include a civic component. This news includes opportunities for new exposure of information that comes from friends within Facebook. Circulation of the information posted on one's 'front page' depends on the number of friends and groups/events one belongs to. Hence, the concept of the social sphere underlines the importance of social networks. On Facebook, strong and weak ties are mutually essential for the R2R event page, because these connections reflect potential recruits for other events, as well as the continuation of an anti-GMO discourse. As Clementina (2012) notes, "Facebook is an effective way to reach thousands of people who are not directly in your network" (personal communication, February 28, 2012).

4.6 Discussion and Conclusion

Yardi and Boyd (2010) contend that a democratic society, "requires freedom of speech, diversity of views, exchange of information, and active citizenship" (Yardi & Boyd, p.316). This chapter discussed how Facebook has the potential to reinforce democratic participation. Specific messages and interviews with selected users of the R2R event pages illustrated how Facebook fosters freedom of speech, diversity of views, exchange of information and overall active citizenship. In answering the first research question of this dissertation, which revolved around Habermas's concept of the public sphere in the world of social media, the findings suggested a complex dichotomy between virtual communication and political engagement, noting that Facebook both fosters and

challenges the traditional notion of the public sphere. Facebook challenges the concept of the public sphere by integrating new dimensions to Habermas's work. First, in the absence of the ability to attend a meeting or protest in a physical space, Facebook offers an inclusive and open access forum for constructive debate, which is open 24 hours. Second, Facebook enables the diffusion of messages through social networks that would be limited in a physical space.

In terms of limitations this chapter noted the downsides of using the social medium for activism from stagnation of communication to problems of privacy and misuse of language. For example, this chapter discussed group polarization, which can produce stagnation of communication. Research in this field has shown that the web, and in particular for example bloggers, tend to exchange information and bound with other users who share similar beliefs and interests (Hargittai et al., 2008; Kelly et al., 2005). However, other studies also suggest that with the advancement of more interactive communication technology like Facebook or Twitter, individuals are more likely to engage in a conversation with diverse points of views (Yardi & Boyd, 2010). While homophily is still present, "people are actively engaged with those with whom they disagree" (Yardi & Boyd, 2010, p. 325). In the R2R Archippos who opposed the rally took the time to explain his stance. Similarly, conventional farmers posted on the R2R pages to support Monsanto and genetically modified corn. These messages led to a debate among users of these pages, agreeing or disagreeing on a variety of issues. Moreover, a multitude of issues related to GMO food labeling emerged out of these conversations (e.g. revolving doors, hunger in the world, organic farming), thus suggesting that Facebook can serve as a space for deliberative democracy. Agreement on an issue did not emerge in the traditional context, where consensus is the process through which all parties, after having measured each other's arguments, come to a solution/agreement (Jacobson & Storey, 2004). Hellen (2012) observes that when she participated in a conversation on Facebook with a conventional farmer after a lengthy discussion, "he was still farming. He is still doing his things and I won't buy his corn…That's your choice" (personal communication, March 21, 2012). In this way, Facebook becomes a magnifying glass of one's ethos sphere, trying to assert one's own argument. In this regard, the findings suggest a differentiation from Habermas's ideal speech within the public sphere based on

Habermas's reliance on normative approach. On the contrary, the analysis of this study indicates that imposing a normative model limits the broader understanding of Facebook and social movements. Scholars must take in consideration when analyzing social media and social movements the external context in which these groups emerge and act (e.g. country, regime, culture). Applying the same set of normative rules to the use of Facebook in the Arab revolution will result in a bias and limited understanding of the subject matter. A lack of generalizable rules does not indicate a failure of political debate and possibly social change. This case study revealed that individuals are capable of monitoring, asserting, and challenging people's claims based on their own dynamic and interchangeable virtual rules for constructive debate.

Another point this analysis suggests that differs from the ideal speech is a tendency to agree on disagreeing. Aella's post supporting conventional farming led to anti-GMOs users to sympathize for Aella, understanding his point of view and the difficulties associated with being a farmer. The conversation among users might not have influenced the behavior of Aella, but in both cases of Hellen and Aella a point is clear – the seed is planted. Interviewees agreed that significant issue with the dissemination of information about GMOs and hence getting people involved is the biased mainstream media and lack of educational governmental initiatives aimed to inform the public. As a result, Facebook plays a crucial role in getting the message out, in getting people to talk about it whether from the point of view of a libertarian like Archippos, a conventional farmer like Aella, or a concerned mother. In respect to Habermas's (1981) ideal speech within a public sphere, the R2R event pages illustrate that while not all conversations have substance necessary to create civic participation and change, the ones that do, follow an adapted version of Habermas's principle of ideal speech. What is critical is that people have a clear idea of which presumptions these discussions must have. Profanity, name calling, unsorted claims are considered distractors and perceived as hindering the cause of the movement. Hence, users of the R2R took the initiative to moderate and tilt the conversation back to its initial matter.[20] The quality of messages has a direct correlation to one's credibility. Facebook facilitates building authenticity through claims

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[20] A deeper discussion on the role of moderators will be addressed in chapter 5 from a leadership point of view.

that are supported by external links (e.g. articles, videos), but as noted by Archippos and Adara, overabundance of messages and links shared does not automatically equal credibility. Language then becomes a key to the construction of credibility. Cleo's message can be used as an example of building credibility through the use of reiteration of external resources.

Another key point of this chapter is the function of social network in the diffusion of information that has potential for action whether online or offline. Thus, when answering the research question *How do social networks, understood here as relationships among individuals on Facebook belonging to different virtual spheres, affect the model of the public sphere and ideal speech* Castells's work was fundamental for a new reconceptualization of the public sphere and understanding of social movements. The data analyzed suggested refer to virtual spheres as ethos spheres. Deriving from social sphere, opinion sphere, and public sphere, the ethos sphere treats new media as interactive space for discussions with the potential of global dissemination of news. First, these spheres differ from social spheres because they focus on speech aimed to change attitudes or behaviors of audiences. Second, these spaces are also different from opinion spheres in that the structure that host these opinions or news channels have the ability to move outside virtual walls and hence have an impact on the bigger public sphere. Last, ethos spheres differ from Habermas's public sphere for the following main reasons. Habermas's (1981) considered media spheres the reflection of a consumerist society controlled by major corporations in which constructive debate cannot be achieved. This is due in part to the idea of a passive audience who absorbs silently what media gives to him/her. As noted by Habermas's (1989), "Inasmuch as the mass media today strip away the literacy husks from the kind of bourgeois self-integration and utilize them as marketable forms for the public services provided in a culture of consumers, the original meaning is reversed" (p. 171). With the advancement of interactive new media like Twitter or Facebook, Habermas's claims become outdated and need revaluation. Because of the engagement of the audience in the making of news, social network theories are fundamental to understand how the public sphere has shaped new dimensions. Social media provide consumers and activists new sites for contestation, expanding the political debate on the web. The public sphere is multiplied by micro

public spheres constituted by a single individual and their circle of friends and groups/events. Facebook becomes a place of flow of communication, in which,

> the power of public discourses that uncover(s) topics of relevance to all of society, interpret(s) values, contribute(s) to the resolution of problems, generate(s) good reasons, and debunk(s) bad ones….Discourses do not govern. They generate a communicative power that cannot take the place of administration but can only influence it (Habermas, 1992, p. 452).

Language becomes the fabric for action. Heng and Moor (2003) write in regard to discourse and public sphere, "the whole communicative exercise is transparent. Here the desirable features center on the strength of good, well-grounded argument provided in an open forum, rather than authority, tradition, ideology, power or prejudices" (p. 334). As a matter of fact, the concept of credibility attached to language remains to be crucial in the evolution of a movement within social media. In alignment also with Balkin (2004) new media are more and more used to develop new emerging forms of freedom of speech, which might at times encourage action. This is an important element that connects the concept of the public sphere of Facebook to mobilization offline. Chapter 6 will focus on this relation between online discourse and offline action, trying to determine whether Facebook has an impact offline. In answering the first research question of this dissertation, "How does Facebook challenge or reinforce the concept of the public sphere?" the analysis of the data reveals that the interactivity of the medium challenges and at the same time reinforce Habermas's concept of the public sphere. However, this chapter derived a new term, ethos sphere, which is more appropriate when discussing Facebook and the public sphere. In response to what this new space does for ordinary citizens, the answer lies in the interactivity of the tool. As Agape notes, "I use Facebook a lot as an activist, a tool for activism even when I am on my personal page" (personal communication, March 21, 2012), indicating that the social network is not used solely for personal uses. On the contrary, interviews expressed that Facebook is a comfort zone to express political opinions on controversial issues that in face-to-face interactions will be avoided.

Looking at the findings within the broader context of social movements and social media, one has to reinforce the need for scholars to continue studying social movements that utilize social media as strategic tools to advance their causes. In particular, it is

important to build a broader scholarship in the subject matter to understand the complexity of human communication related to new technology. What this means is that normative models cannot be applied because of the richness and magnitude of consumer-citizens' agency. The decentralization that Facebook offers in terms of who is speaking and diffusing news results in new ways of action and thus requires new modes of analyzing and applying the concept of the public sphere.

The upcoming chapter connects the concepts of credibility, social networks and limits of Facebook to the notion of leadership.

CHAPTER 5

LEADERSHIP ON FACEBOOK

5.1 Introduction

I think everybody can be a leader, but we have to have leaders and we have to have followers. Just like we have to have a queen bee and working bee. A leader got good communication skills, has got compassion, understanding, and empathy for other human beings, and has good organizational skills. They need to be able to organize. They also have vision…They are visionary. They are not just linear…A leader must think holistically, in a circle rather than just a line, in one direction. Every area has different needs of a leader. You have a military leader, a leader of a non-for-profit organization... Each person individually owns those skills. I could not see some CEOs of Monsanto be a leader of a local garden community group. (Hellen, personal communication March 31, 2012)

This chapter begins with the assumption that Facebook provides potentials for anyone to serve as a leader by utilizing the platform to execute a variety of tasks (Barnett, 1993, p. 70-71). Based on previous typologies of the roles of leaders and tasks performed by activists this chapter developed a new criterion to understand the role of social media leaders. Leaders of the R2R on Facebook possess a variety of skills not directly pertaining to the traditional prerequisite of a priori knowledge. Skills are constructed through the interaction of social networks via social media. This chapter, thus, explores actions of Facebook users of the R2R event pages to identify and discuss how leadership is manifested on the web and to address what challenges users may encounter online. Leadership is fragmented, vague, and yet complex and this chapter points at multiple factors that influence leadership online, with particular attention to two elements: (1) credibility; and (2) social networks. Within these categories the limits of Facebook in constructing Facebook leaders are discussed providing a broader understanding on the subject matter.

This chapter is structured in the following way. First, an overview of how posts selected from the 42 R2R event pages on Facebook illustrate the many tasks performed by 'social media leaders,' a term that connotes the relationship between leadership and social networks. This term is defined and coined in this chapter after an analysis of the data. Second, interviews with selected users of the R2R event pages on Facebook provide

for a reconfiguration of a leadership typology, focusing on qualities a leader must posses. This classification, in addition to the list of tasks performed by leaders, is fundamental to formulate an understanding of the role leaders play on Facebook. For this matter, all interviewees were asked to comment on their use of Facebook to perform leadership skills. Third, this chapter focuses on the concept of credibility, which is one of the main key concepts addressed in this dissertation. Credibility is connected to the notion of leadership. In this regard, leadership's credibility on Facebook is obtained by: (1) providing information to users; (2) the type of information offered (e.g. press releases, links); (3) feedback provided (e.g. active participation); and (4) choice of information delivery (e.g. clarity of language). This chapter argues that credibility is necessary for an individual to be regarded and to serve as a leader online. Next, this chapter argues through an analysis of social networks on the R2R event pages on Facebook that leadership on the web is a process of interactivity among different agents. What this means is that Facebook fosters the creation of partnerships, coalitions, and alliances through social ties. Social media leaders have the ability to connect Facebook users with the cause of a movement, providing tools to take action and perform leadership tasks, thus switching between being a leader and a follower. This chapter concludes by arguing that social media leaders have the opportunities to extend their leadership roles offline based on long term relationships built on the web; rather than acting as leaders on episodic events. This argument is important as it leads to the discussion of chapter 6 on Facebook and offline mobilization.

In terms of limitations of Facebook as it pertains to leadership, this chapter identifies three main obstacles due to the structure of the medium: (1) stagnation of communication; (2) emergence of authoritative figures; and (3) role of interactivity with other users. These elements are affected by the structure of the medium, but also from communication skills each individual posses (e.g. clarity of language). The issue of self-promotion was omitted from this study because only one case was observed during the collection of the data, thus not making the subject a point of interest or trend. What the data reveals is a complexity delineated by the use of new communication technology, consumer-citizens, and social movements. While Facebook provides individuals with a tool to act and serve

as leaders, individuals must operate the medium using selected human skills (e.g. organization, communication, devotion, passion).

The main sources of data for this chapter are the posts coded as "leadership" found on the R2R event pages on Facebook and the interviews conducted with selected online users (see chapter 3 for coding processes). These data are analyzed in conjunction to the themes of credibility and social networks, providing a wider understanding on how leadership is manifested on the R2R event pages on Facebook. The material presented in this chapter will also be linked to the concepts previously discussed with attention to Habermas's communicative theory and Castells's social network theory. Thus, the overall goal of this chapter is to answer the research questions: (1) *How is leadership manifested on the Right to Know rally event pages on Facebook?* (2) *What kinds of lead tasks do some Facebook users of the Right to Know rally event pages engage in? (3) How is credibility achieved on the R2R event pages on Facebook? (4) What prevents an individual to achieve credibility? (5) What role do social networks have on individuals who take the lead?*

5.2 Leadership in the R2R Movement

Even while not serving as volunteers or employees of the Organic Consumers Association or any major established anti-GMOs movements in the United States, many individuals who participated in discussions on any of the 42 R2R event pages were more than just followers or bystanders; many were leaders, and as leaders they shaped the GMOs food labeling movement and helped mobilizing online and offline. These people performed a variety of leadership tasks ranging from organizing a protest, recruiting members, disseminating information, answering questions, developing tactics and strategies, and importing new information to resolve problems as the following quotes suggest. Bettina (2011) says, "I'll be making some signs tomorrow for Sunday. Anyone have any ideas what to put on the signs? Should I focus on Monsanto or the labeling of GMO's?" ("I'll be making- San Diego," 2011, para. 1-2), to which GMO Free Southern California, the administrator of the event page responds, "No GMOs. Label GMOs. It's our right to know. ("I'll be making- San Diego," 2011, para. 5-6). These quotes illustrates that leaders on the R2R event pages on Facebook provide assistance to activists who have questions about the rally or GMOs.

Hey guys! We are not permitted to hold a marching rally at the farmers market. It is private property and anyone that shows up with a sign or disruptive intentions will be asked to leave. This is to be a peaceful gathering to spread awareness and collect petition signatures. (Silvia, "Hey guys! – Arizona," 2011, para. 1-4).

This statement informs users about problems in regard to permits and location in which the protest had been planned to take place. In this case, due to privacy laws the march must be moved to a new location.

I have an easy-up tent and will bring it to the event. Here is my cell# 541-729-6976. If someone can call me and let me know what time to arrive @ 7th and Pearl, that would be great. I will not have Internet access in the meantime (Alexandra, "consumers should demand-Eugene," para. 3-6).

The above quotes points at the role of leaders on Facebook in regard to organization, coordination, and initiation of action (Barnett, 1993; Earl, 2007). It also suggests cooperation among online users with the goal of 'getting the job done' (Earl, 2007).

These excerpts taken from selected R2R event pages on Facebook suggest that a new form of leader identity is shaped through social media. Moving away from traditional scholarship, which associated personal autobiography to the success and choice of a leader (Earl & Schussman, 2004; Oberschall, 1973; Rejai & Phillips, 1997), the leaders of the R2R event pages on Facebook come from a diverse background. From concerned mothers who run a child day care, to a retired worker from a recycling facility, to a radio talk host focusing on issues of the food system in the United States, to a horticulture woman with disabilities, to a recovered alcoholic who found in organic garden the medicine to her struggle, these individuals have engaged in the anti-GMOs movement becoming at times indirectly and independently leaders. Pushed by desire to change the system and stop oppression from the institutionalized and industrialized food system these people have utilized Facebook to pursue leader-tasks comparable to those of advocacy groups like the OCA as illustrated by this quote, "I have a big concern about the quality of the food supply…I don't want to be passive" (Caterina, personal communication, April 1, 2012).

The nontraditional leadership figure of any of the R2R users who has performed leading tasks during the organization of the rally is due in part to the structure of Facebook, which enables anyone to step up or down from leadership tasks. While traditionally social movements like the civic right movement had a distinct figure for leaders (Barnett, 1993) new social movements tend to favor a decentralization of

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leadership (Diani, 2004). The decentralization of leadership on the R2R even pages on Facebook is not associated to a predisposed ideology against structured organization. Insofar as it can be ascertained, the volatile leadership on Facebook is due in part to the structure of the medium. The anonymity, the convenience, and the fluid networks that the social medium offers allow an individual to perform leadership tasks from the comfort of his/her private sphere. As Agape (2012) notes, "I am a behind the scene leader. I am good at setting things up, everything from field trips to rallies…but if you were going to come (at the rally) you would probably never know I set it up…I am actually a little bit shy..not on the phone and not on the computer" (personal communication, March 26, 2012). She continues observing that Facebook requires less time to organize, allowing anybody to get involved in activism:

> In two minutes, I run downstairs, go to my profile, hit event, type the name of it, location, and time and I can set up a rally for next month..and hit send to all my friends and them boom it is done. It is no time consuming anymore" (Agape, personal communication, March 26, 2012).

In terms of networks, Agape (2012) notes that Facebook facilitates leadership by simply sharing information and events with "hitting a share button..instantly hitting 300 contacts" (personal communication, March 16, 2012). The comfort zone of Facebook encourages individuals to step up and make a difference at the local level, in their community, without having to be necessarily part of an organization or political background.

Before discussing in detail how selected participants took the role of leader in many of the R2R event pages on Facebook it is fundamental to define the role of a leader and the tasks attributed to a leader. To do so, this dissertation conducted a qualitative content analysis of all posts of the 42 R2R event pages on Facebook. Those messages indicating leadership were coded as "leadership." As previously mentioned in the methodology section of this dissertation, this category was drawn from McNair Barnett (1993)'s rank order of most important leadership roles and Earl's (2007) table of leadership task. However, to validate the criteria and expand on current typologies, especially in regard to Facebook, interviewees were asked to define in their own words the role, qualities, and tasks of a leader both outside and within Facebook. Their responses as well as an analysis of all posts coded "leadership" led to a new configuration of previous criteria of leadership, which is presented in the following table.

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TABLE 3: Leadership Role as Perceived by R2R Activists Interviewed and Based on Qualitative Content Analysis of Posts

Order	Leadership Role	Example from Research
1.	Provide assistance to activists who have questions	Permit, transportation, volunteer
2.	Teach/Educate/Train followers and leaders	Links to videos, articles, petitions
3.	Organize/Coordinate/Initiate action	Call for meetings, volunteer, seeking permit, location
4.	Control group interaction (mediator)	Use of respectful language, deleting derogatory messages
5.	Making strategic and tactical decisions	Setting up tables to collect petitions, promoting rally on mainstream media
6.	Importing new information to solve problems through networks	sharing information about meetings, flyers distribution
7.	Importing new ideas through networks	Suggesting articles to read

As indicating in Table 3, a leader must perform a variety of activities to be regarded a leading figure. On Facebook, these responsibilities where expressed through posts. For example, Enrico (2011) encourages users to physically meet to discuss strategy and tactical decisions for the rally, as he noted, "We are having a meeting at our office this Saturday the 15th of October to make signs and talk strategy. The meeting is from 1pm to 3 pm at 2325 Lime Kiln lane. Send me an e-mail for more info and let me know if you can make it to the march on Sunday. Contact Enrico at Enrico@gmail.com " ("I'm attending in spirit-Kentucky," 2011, para. 2-7). In regard to importing new tactics to advance the cause through online social networks, Margherita (2011) writes, "Diego, I'm doing a food demo there at 2:30 as Raw Fusion Living ~ and we will have a table there if you want to drop off a petition at our table we can help gather signatures for you. AM so behind this!" ("Michelle-Tampa," 2011, para. 1-3), to which Diego responds, "That's awesome! I will definitely stop by!" (para. 7).

The use of Facebook to perform leading tasks highlighted in Table 3 was reinforced by the interviews conducted with some of the users who participated in

discussions on the R2R event pages on Facebook. In this regard, Gelsomina (2012) observes that:

> Facebook allows you to perform leadership tasks by starting pages, outreach, events and causes. I have rallied people to meet up for city issues. I am currently administrator of pages for our city issues, our home owners association, PTA, a levy committee for property tax, and of course GMO Free Idaho. (personal communication, April 11)

Social networks are also recognized to be fundamental to enable an individual to switch back and forth from a leader to a follower, as noted by Hellen (2012),

> I actively pursued friending up with people I did not even know. But we had some of the same interests and I managed to connect with other people I look at as leaders. Their information has helped me to also be a leader….I do consider myself a leader in that area (GMOs). There are some many areas I am not a leader on Facebook. (personal communication, March 21, 2012)

This quote emphasizes the role of networks formed due to commonality, which results in an exchange of information enabling individuals to serve as mentors and students and vice versa, advancing the cause. This duality promotes a diffusion of information that can invigorate the movement. For example, Caterina, the radio talk host, recognizes that as a leader she is "very active in spreading the words and getting people out" (personal communication, March 5, 2012). As she notes, "I am very active on Facebook and my opinions are well known" because "I post on Facebook probably everyday" (Caterina, personal communication, March 5, 2012).

While Table 3 recognizes activities that individuals on Facebook can initiate as part of their leadership role, interviewees observed that it is not solely by writing a post on Facebook or starting an event page that an ordinary citizen can become a leader and perceived so by the rest of the online community. There are certain qualities that contribute to the effectiveness of these tasks. For example, Apollonia (2012) notes that a leader is, "Someone who believes in something so much they are willing to reach out and inform and unite others to take action to change things. Leading by example, simply walking the walk I think is the way to lead people" (personal communication, March 31, 2012). Aristotle (2012) believes that a leader is, "one who respects and recognizes the strengths and weaknesses of the individual team members to encourage a dedication to team concept to get the job done on time and under budget" (personal communication,

March 2, 2012), while Kleon (2012) describes a leader as a person who, "proceeds ahead with passion and purpose" (personal communication, April 1, 2012). These qualities are listed in Table 4 and will be discussed in conjunction with particular tasks mentioned in Table 3. They will be also addressed in line with Habermas's concept of credibility and social network theory in social movements. Figure 4 summarizes activists' perceptions of qualities a leader should possess.[21]

TABLE 4: Leadership Qualities as Perceived by R2R Activists Interviewed Necessary for the GMO's movement on Facebook

Order	Leadership Quality	Example from Research
1.	Credibility	Claims made using external links, frequent feedback among users
2.	Communication Skills	Proper use of language (e.g. grammar, syntax)
3.	Compassion/Respect	Solidarity despite different views
4.	Organizational Skills	Planning permit, calling news media
5.	Passion/Influential Skills	Motivating others to act
6.	Effective	Number of people who showed up at the rally, coalitions made
7.	Understanding	Knowledge of the problem
8.	Visionary	Future directions for the movement

5.3 Credibility

The concept of credibility has been discussed extensively in Chapter 4 in conjunction with Habermas's notion of communicative action theory. The idea of credibility associated to leadership relies on qualities Table 4 indicated. For example, language (communication skills) can hinder or reinforce an individual's trustworthiness. Respect is achieved through language as well as organizational skills. This section of the manuscript considers the intricacy of discussing credibility and leadership within Facebook. In general, a leader whether on Facebook or offline is someone who has built

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[21] The analysis of the data also points out that to perform leadership tasks one does not have to initiate or take part in all activities.

credibility through recognition. According to Hermes (2012) a leader must not only have an "understanding of the problem but this person must also be credible" (personal communication, April 6, 2012). Credibility can be achieved through professional experience as in the case of Chiara, who was appointed leader of a community garden n her town because of her horticulture degree. As she clarifies, "I was a leader in the garden thing because of my knowledge. After I left that kind of fell apart. He (the new leader) is not well respected in the larger community…I have a lot of knowledge on the horticulture" (personal communication, April 4, 2012). Nonetheless, the Facebook page for the community garden was established by a third party who had technological background, as she notes, "Somebody else created the group (on Facebook) that was part of the garden project" (personal communication, April 4, 2012).

These findings are in alignment with previous research on e-activism and leadership. Schussman and Earl (2004) argued that while activists' background "played such a crucial role in e-movements" (p. 448), the case study of the Strategic Voting Movement online illustrated that other online leaders lacked political experience. Thus, the presumption that a leader must have relevant past experience in the area of a movement (e.g. GMO's) cannot be generalized, especially in the online context. This line of thought is in contrast with more traditional approaches to leadership and social movements where "the art of 'constructing' a social movement is something that requires considerable skill and experience" (Freeman, 1975, p. 33). While experience can be helpful it is not a prerequisite to serve as an effective leader. The majority of the people interviewed for this dissertation were ordinary citizens with jobs not pertaining to GMO issues. Skills are learned through the interactions with other users. Experience is not measured on background autobiographies; rather knowledge is constructed based on how these users utilize the web to create online credibility. This research then adds a new component to Schussman and Earl's (2004) study, by focusing on the element of credibility. *How does one attain leadership's credibility on Facebook, perceived necessary to advance a cause?*

This is a complex issue. Data of this dissertation revealed that many factors can enhance or hinder a person's trustworthiness. While Facebook allows anyone to perform leadership tasks, it can also affect negatively the authenticity of an individual, thus

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impacting their performance. Archippos (2012) recounts in his interview that anyone can claim to be an expert, making it difficult to assess who has real credentials. When one of the interviewees was asked to develop how an individual can achieve the status of authenticity on Facebook Clementina, one of the organizers of the R2R in March in Washington (2012) observes:

> You can gain credibility by having your "friend" "like" or comment positively on your page/status/updates/events/photos. If your staff/group is shy or does not easily network well with others, they may find some comfort in FB's anonymity. (personal communication, March 31)

In addition, Hermes (2012) explains:

> What I did is that I did a lot of publicity. That page with Kleon got circulated a lot of Facebook. I sent a lot of press releases, contacted a lot of newspapers, referring that page and the global Millions Against Monsanto. That is what I did. I made a nice press release with the Millions Against Monsanto logo on the top of the page and had all their information, a list of things that we were demanding" (personal communication, April 11, 2012).

There were two instances Hermes recounts which helped him realize that he had achieved credibility, hence leadership status. The first incident was when the Organic Consumer Association (OCA) created the Millions Against Monsanto page of Hawaii[22] (Millions Against Monsanto Hawaii), prior to the R2R event page of October. Hermes was one of the first people to join the page. As a result he was made an administrator of that page. In this situation, credibility did not come to be an essential element for leadership, neither it was the result of professional or personal experience with the cause. Hermes is a retiree worker from a recycling facility. On the contrary, the episode suggests that initially what attracted advocacy groups like the OCA to pursue him as a possible leader for its mission in Hermes's geographical location was the personal interest and initial devotion Hermes had to the cause. Credibility was based on a simple matter – Hermes had a priori knowledge of the landscape of Hawaii as he explains,

> They made me the administrator of the Facebook cause. I don't know if people became familiar with me through that. Maybe. We started to get big numbers on that page so the Organic Consumers Association took notice of us. They said,

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[22] The page can be found at the following URL https://www.facebook.com/pages/Millions-Against-Monsanto-Hawaii/230242707024697. It was created on September 2011. Age group ranges from 25-44. October 2, 2011 was the most popular day.

"You are the biggest page so far" and they really wanted to support our effort during the food day. But they were not very familiar with the landscape here. They thought that Monsanto big headquarter was on the big island because of the pine situation over year, but actually Monsanto is not even on the big island. (personal communication, April 11, 2012)

It is important to note that selecting administrators randomly might have been an episodic moment much frequent when social movements were starting to test Facebook as a possible tool for activism. As Honor Schauland (2011), Web Editor and Campaign Assistant at OCA, explains in regard of setting up social media for the organization, "there seemed to be a lot of organic activists and people interest on organics on Facebook. And that maybe we are at the very least set something up on there….Just to kind of test it out and it sort of evolved from there (personal communication, August 3, 2011). The OCA has embraced new media features such as social networking and websites since 1998, recognizing the importance of these tools for social and political impact, in an effort to create and consolidate collective awareness and identity (Eyerman, 2002; Polletta & Jasper, 2001; Reed, 2005), while creating "windows of opportunity to affect political change" (Rohlinger, 2011, p. 9).

The initial page set up by the Organic Consumer Association led Hermes to create the R2R event page in Maui, Hawaii as Hermes (2012) recounts,

I really wanted to do something on World Food Day on Maui. I went head and started planning the event. I did not want to do it all by myself so I asked Kleon[23] if she would co-host the Facebook page with me for that event. So then we had the Facebook page and a specific event page for October 16. (personal communication, April 11, 2012)

Similarly when Kleon was interviewed she confirmed that she had co-created the page with Hermes as well as initiating other similar types of events on Facebook.

Those who were initially followers became leaders by appropriating resources from organizations like the OCA (e.g. logo) and expanding the cause with their own input. This type of activism reinvigorates social movements, creating solidarity and coalitions in geographical communities not physically adjunct to headquarters of a particular organization like the OCA. Event pages on Facebook are used as a strategy to mobilize

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[23] Kleon was chosen for her previous experiences in organizing local rallies against GMOs. She organized a protest in March 2012, in alignment with the first march for GMO food labeling.

people, to convert online information taken from pages like the Millions Against Monsanto Hawaii into offline action. In terms of leadership, the individual in the absence of anyone "picking up the slack or taking the lead" (Hermes, personal communication, April 6, 2012) becomes to perform tasks of leadership on Facebook that range from creating the page, asking support from other local organizers, and disseminating information as illustrating by this quote posted by Hermes on the R2R event page of Maui on Facebook:

> Excellent press coverage again this week, Maui Time putting the 'Monsanto Mash' in This Week"s Picks, plus this story in Maui Weekly, and an article coming out in Lahaina News (followed by link to the site of the press article). ("Excellent press-Maui," 2011, para. 1-3)

This quote highlights the role of online leaders by sharing information about GMO issues.

> Both at the County Council and our action on the 16th, it went well on Maui this month. Participants on WFD numbered around 100 by one head count at around 11am, and coverage by Akaku is also expected. Afterward several expressed interest in a repeat performance. a page for the purpose of formulating this convergence, or (s), as well as perhaps to try to reach out to influence legislation or what not, is underway at: https://www.facebook.com/pages/Occupy-Monsanto-Maui-from-now-on/245528162161139?sk=wall. So please like and share. It appears Monsanto's corporate hqs for HI is none other that their offices in Kihei. ("Both at the County Council," 2011, para. 2-14)

This comment illustrates that leadership is manifested by providing information about the rally after the event took place to those who could not attend or attended. This quote also points at how leaders after having listened to ralliers' opinions and ideas, advance the movement by initiating other actions (e.g. the new Facebook page).

The second episode that helped attained credibility was indeed Hermes's devotion and involvement with the Facebook page of the R2R event in Maui, Hawaii. Out of 53 posts that were initiated online, 12 were by Hermes. These posts ranged from news coverage of the event, to motivational messages, to external links to websites like the Organic Consumers Association. More interesting though is the interactivity Hermes had with other users who posted questions about the rally or GMOs. Out of 127 messages posted on the wall of the Maui event page, Hermes had a total of 44 messages. These responses to other users ranged from providing information about the location of the rally, to bringing signs and banner to the rally, as indicated by the following, "I'll have extra

sign-making materials, if not signs, available for those not bringing any. I've made a few and probably can't carry them all" ("I have a banner," 2011, para. 9-11); or "MAM has logos for web use here: http://www.organicconsumers.org/monsanto/materials.cfm" ("Where do I," 2011, para. 2-3), responding to a user who asked about banner ads. In this respect, credibility is achieved through multiple tasks individuals decide to perform online. As Illustrating in Table 4, one of the roles of leaders of the R2R event pages on Facebook is to provide assistance to activists or citizens who have questions. There is an immediate need to resolve problems and those who have the information can pitch in at any time and fill the shoes of a leader. For example, when Gregorio (2011) asked, "Can anyone tell me what is going to be happening at this event?" ("Can anyone tell me - Cleveland, Oh," 2011, para. 1-2); Rachele responded, "We will be handling out leaflets with information on GMOs and collecting signatures for the petition. If a few more people get involved I will contact the media. I will have signs but please bring your own if you can" ("Can anyone tell me - Cleveland, Oh," 2011, para. 3-6). Similarly, during the Colorado event an issue of transportation surfaced, "I would love to attend by my car radiator just went out. Is there anyone going from the area of Peterson Rd. and Galley that I could ride with?" ("I would love to-Colorado," 2011, para. 1-2) to which Agape answered, "I live nearby but was supposed to be bringing my friend and her family…If you message me your number I could call you tomorrow?" ("I would love to-Colorado," 2011, para. 3-5).[24]

Solidarity with the continuous feedback provided by those who take the lead on the R2R event pages increase and shape an individual credibility. But credibility as discussed in Chapter 4 follows particular criterion. Claims to be reliable should be supported by external links and absent of derogatory language. They also need to be leverage of all other arguments; the strongest will be regarded as the most credible. Similarly, for an individual to be regarded as a credible authority he/she needs to posses communication skills and respect (Table 3). Chiara (2012) explains which qualities leaders should posses on Facebook, "The ones that can write well. I can't write well because I have dyslexia. A lot of times I would have someone rewrite it" (personal

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[24] The author of this dissertation wants to point out that chapter 6 will discuss whether the exchange of messages, hence offering a car ride, result in offline mobilization.

communication, April 11, 2012) and the ones that, "Someone who knows how to carry out ideas. Someone who can delegate and express an idea in exciting enough fashion to get others involved" (Clementina, personal communication, April 1, 2012). Language becomes a powerful tool especially online, but the exchange of information among users and web leaders on the R2R event pages also involves serving as a moderator, especially in situations when conflicts arise due to emotions and derogatory speech. In this regard, language is used to restore respect and solidarity among online users. According to Chiara (2012) a leader, "Can moderate and have good ideas. Will lead in a certain direction, especially on Facebook" (personal communication, March 31, 2012). This point is further explained by Socrates (2012):

> In other groups that I am in that are not closed, but opened, there are administrators that if a thread start getting out of control they will step in and try to regroup it so that people stay on topic and they might point out a reminder not to use name calling or whatever, reverting to that kind of childish behavior versus educational discussion and then if it gets really bad, because sometimes there are patrols out there that they just want to come in a and hijack a thread and so I have seen administrators having to really keep track of that and sometimes deleted entire threads. I don't know how you could control it better than that. If you are going to have a group you put some rules out there or maybe you have to be invited. There are couples of ways to do it. I find that having a good administrator is probably the best you can do. Someone who is paying attention all the times and trying to mediate that in a way that it is fair. (personal communication, March 22, 2012)

This quote is important because it illustrates individuals' expectations of a leader on Facebook. This quote also highlights sentiment shared during some of the interviews conducted. There was agreement among the people interviewed that a moderator can facilitate conversations by looking at "all different sources of information that is being presented to them and convey some decisions based on the information they have to make quality decision about whatever product or how things are being done" (Hellen, personal communication, March 21, 2012); and/or by reintegrating peace during conflicts on discussions. When discussing the role of leaders as moderator on the R2R event pages, Agape (2012) admits of deleting some of the posts because of the nature of the messages. She says, "I deleted some…I usually just delete the message and I message those people personally" (personal communication, March 16, 2012) to explain the reasons of her actions. Clementina (2012) also deletes unflavored posts when necessary,

the best way to handle negative comments is to politely address the poster's concerns with real, researched information. We know with absolute certainty that labeling GMOs is the ethical, safe thing to do. The second best way is to delete – I would only delete if the poster was behaving in a hostile or inflammatory way. (personal communication, March 31)

Out of 42 R2R event pages on Facebook only one administrator from the San Francisco page clearly stated that he/she would remove nonrelated messages:

Folks, there are legitimate places to debate issues of food production that concern all of us, no matter what our positions on the issues are. This *event* page is not that place. The purpose of this event page is to facilitate people's participation in the San Francisco World Food Day Rally, or to find alternatives. Off topic posts will be removed, so that guests of the rally are not deterred from locating the information they need about the event. The organizers of this event understand there are strong feelings on both sides of this issue, and we thank you in advance for your consideration of our guests. ("Folks, there are legitimate – SF," para. 1-8)

This quote shows that the administrator of this page, Right to Know GMOs (San Francisco Bay Area), has set very specific parameters for the page, serving as a moderator to facilitate the dissemination of information pertaining to the rally only.

In other circumstances the messages were not deleted but users stepped in to revert the discussions back to its natural stage. Chapter 4 mentioned the case of Aella, a conventional farmer who relies on Monsanto to produce corn. He was confronted by another respondent. Other participants equalized the conversation by offering solidarity to Aella and punishing derogatory language as unconstructive and inclusive. Similarly, in the R2R event page of Ocala, FL, Gordias (2011) promotes Monsanto as, "They help farmers!" ("They help Ocala-FL," 2011, para, 1), continuing with inappropriate language toward many of the participants. As he writes, "I hope I offended you" ("They help Ocala-FL," 2011, para, 8) and "grow your armpit hair and use your menstrual sponges but don't push your agenda on me sister" (They help Ocala-FL," 2011, para, 74-76). These are few of the many expressions Gordias used. His post generated 21 replies, for a total of 112 lines. Contrary to Agape, the administrators of this page did not delete the comments, but there were two responses by the same user that were recorded during the collection of these data between October and December 2011, that disappeared after January 2012. As a matter of fact the only proof of such comments relies on a hard copy

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kept in my office. [The person who had originally posted the messages could not be located on Facebook].

Moderating conversations on Facebook becomes problematic for several reasons. First, Facebook allows anyone to hide comments appearing on event or group pages. The social network provides the following options, "This comment has been hidden as spam. You can Undo this action, Report it as abusive, or Block Gordias" ("Removing posts," 2012, n.p.). The implications of such freedom are severe. While Facebook offers anyone to be a catalyst agent, this unlimited power can also result in chaos, demeaning constructive conversations to stagnation of communication and biased information. The lack of rules, the lack of a leading voice do not necessary equalize to a greater problem solving. Moreover, other users' messages that have been removed by third parties can only be reintroduced by the individual who initially 'hid' the messages. Posts that were deleted by those who wrote these messages cannot be reinstated. This was not a recurrent episode as I was collecting data, yet it must be noted. As in the case of the administrator, Right to Know GMOs (San Francisco Bay Area) who specifically places boundaries to the open and inclusive public sphere. Moreover, interviewees expressed their support in allocating an individual to monitor conversations and delete messages not appropriate for the cause. Nevertheless, this function of Facebook affects not only the role of leaders on the virtual world, but also the concept of the public sphere manifested on social media. To this regard, these floating and episodic online leaders ultimately have a direct impact on the democratic functions of the ethos sphere, limiting or expanding its boundaries. Reverting to the discussion of Chapter 4, for Facebook to function for deliberative democracy people must adhere to a certain set of rules, however the nature of the social medium while it fosters collective participation, cannot guarantee everyone will follow rules imposed by certain individuals.

Second, the nature of hiding and deleting messages posits a revaluation of previous research on leadership, legitimacy, and domination reshaping the ways in which volatile leaders go about their work and objectives. According to Diani, (2003) current leadership roles do not necessary entail domination as previously observed in more traditional hierarchical social movements. He defines domination as an actor's "capacity to impose sanctions over others in order to control their behaviour" (p. 106), suggesting

that new social movements' leaders influence other members but do not control them. The case of the R2R event page on Facebook is not simply about control over others or a certain degree of influence. The data revealed a problematic dilemma in regard to leadership and domination due to the structure of the medium. On one hand, users like Socrates praises the need for moderation persistent with study by Melucci (1996) who states that individuals seek directions from those willing to take the lead. In this way, comments like "I think it's really important to have a good administrator running that page or sort of mediate responses on some level" (Socrates, personal communication, March 22, 2012) indicate that virtual volatile and fragmented social movements require some type of structure to be effective generating constructive debates. Hence, these groups/events require some degree of structured leadership. On the other hand, the premise of using Facebook as a public forum to discuss freely ideas, strategies and opinions can be fragmented if certain individuals take the lead to alter the conversations by deleting certain messages even if these posts contain derogatory text or non-relevant topics. It becomes clear that online leaders have the potentials to become authoritative figures.

5.4 Social Networks and Leadership on the R2R Event Pages on Facebook

So far, while this chapter has discussed the notion of credibility and the way in which individuals can become leaders, it is necessary to address how social networks shape leadership of the R2R event pages on Facebook. In this regard, Diani's (2003) quote on networks' dynamics lies the foundation for a discussion of the influence of virtual social ties. As he observes, discussing leadership in new social movements in Italy, "their members not only tend to be either weakly related to specific organizations (in the case of individuals) or formally independent from each other (in the case of organizations), but often reject authoritative leadership figures as a matter of principle (Diani, 2003, p. 105-106; Brown, 1989; Diani & Donati, 1984). These findings apply to the case of the R2R event pages' members on Facebook in which individuals who took leadership positions on the social network don't necessarily belong to an organization like the OCA that initially launched the Millions Against Monsanto campaign. Out of 15 people interviewed 3 indicated that they worked or volunteered to some degree for the OCA. For example, Anatolius (2012) observes, "I volunteer for the organic consumer

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association by reposting great links on other pages and my own" (personal communication, April 3, 2012), while Apollonia (2012) volunteers for the OCA by organizing and training others to initiate action across the country. Apollonia had planned the R2R march at the White House and had helped Agape with some logistics for the event in Colorado Spring.

This number does not indicate that users were not aware or cooperating with the OCA's personnel; rather they operated locally and independently from the organization. Working independently should not rest on the idea that users of the R2R event pages on Facebook non-affiliated directly to the OCA did not utilize resources available online posted by the organization (see Hermes's case). Working informally and independently from a specific organization means taking the initiative to create a page, organize a rally, disseminate information via a variety of media outlets independently from being assisted by the OCA. The example of Agape (2012) illustrates this point.

Agape organized the R2R event in Colorado Spring. Previously, independently from the OCA she had organized smaller local protests with some of her friends. Images of these rallies were shared on the main page of the OCA's Millions Against Monsanto on Facebook in sign of solidarity. As a result one of the volunteers for the organization, Apollonia, who organized the national march to the White House contacted Agape on Facebook to share strategies and encourage future demonstrations. Because of this virtual connection Agape agreed to change the date of her protest to October 16, World Food Day, in conjunction with the march in Washington D.C. and all the other rallies across the nation. In addition, the OCA helped advertising Agape's event on multiple media platforms, resulting in attendance of 75 people. As Agape further explained,

> I was organizing the event here for Colorado Spring. The lady I actually became friend with [sic] her on Facebook, but the lady, that organized the entire Right to Know rally nationwide was actually in Washington. We became friends and actually she had said she had seen I had posted pictures of a little rally we had done a few rallies actually, and we had posted pictures which made her think that we should do it and then she did it nationwide….Her name is Apollonia" (personal communication, March 16, 2012).

This story illustrates the dynamics of Facebook leaders who act independently from well-established organization. It also highlights the fragmentation of the anti-GMO movement across the country, pointing however at how Facebook decreases this disintegration by

forming coalitions through social networks. In this regard, work on social movements and social networks return to be vital in understanding how leadership is shaped and reshaped online through social media.

Research on networks dynamics has suggested that social ties have an impact on individual participation in social movements because they generate coalition and alliance through solidarity (Diani, 2003; Diani, 2004; Diani & McAdam, 2004; Passy, 2003; Schurman & Munro, 2010). Diani (2003) observes that building coalitions among heterogeneous SMOs is crucial to the success of a cause. However, these new alliances might be the result of social brokers, rather than traditional leaders. As mentioned in Chapter 2, a social broker is defined as, "an actor connecting other actors who are not directly related to each other" (Diani, 2004, p. 107; Boissevain, 1974; Burt, 1992). The role of leaders on the R2R event pages is to connect people in their local community, to provide assistance and influence their behavior. The goal is to convince them to protest offline on October 16. This is done by creating national and global alliances with other leaders of the other R2R event pages as in the case of Agape who was contacted by Apollonia. The latter offered suggestions on strategies, and promoting the cause on the Facebook page of the OCA. In addition, for the Colorado Spring event, Agape had been in contact with Caterina, host of a radio show called Food Integrity Now, which "discusses everything that compromise the integrity of (our) food supply" (Caterina, 2012, personal communication, March 16, 2012). Caterina (2012) had sponsored the rally, providing a 10 foot banner for the event and assuring the media would show up at the rally as Caterina observes, "we brought (to the event) the banner…they (the media) interviewed me and Carlo" (personal communication). Agape (2012) further explains, "I know they had sponsored some of the rallies so they have a really nice 10 foot banner…She (Caterina) is very active…I wanted them in case the media wanted to speak with anybody. They are way more outspoken in front of cameras than me" (personal communication, March 16, 2012).

This case suggests that Facebook facilitates the creation of alliance and coalitions through social networks. This is an important concept because the dynamics of these networks enable the importation of new ideas, importing new information that is relevant to decision making to solve a problem, formulate, developing, and deciding tactics and

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strategies, teach and educate followers, and organize, coordinate and initiate action (See Table 4). For example, Dimitra used the wall of one of the R2R event pages on Facebook to advertise that she was visiting one of the local co-ops to spread the word about the rally and possibly getting donations. As she states, "I will be going to the Boise Co-Op in the next day or so. Anyone want to join me, or just do it yourself, maybe at Alberstons and/or Fred Myers?" ("The 2 links-Boise," 2011, para. 1-3). Her post received a reply from the administrator of the page who wrote, "I am glad you found us Dimitra! We have visited with the Co-op. They have agreed to co-sponsor our event along with North End Organic Nursery. The co-op is allowing us to collect signatures in front of their store" (GMO Free Idaho, "The 2 links-Boise," 2011, para. 5-8). This exchange of information illustrates that Facebook enables the importation of new information relevant to the success of the rally and cause. In this case, Dimitra's efforts to inform local businesses about the protest are reinforced by GMO Free Idaho, who had already been in contact with local co-opts. Through virtual social networks individuals learn to work together, improving organizational skills and they also learn how to switch between leaders and followers' positions.

While Dimitra and GMO Free Idaho would have benefited from knowing in advance about their independent plans to market local co-opts, one point remains vital to this discussion: Facebook has brought heterogeneous groups together, who share similar strategies. It is precisely "this heterogeneity of the actors that mobilize(s) on certain issues" (Diani, 2003, p. 107). In regard to the role of social brokers on the R2R event pages on Facebook, individuals are more than social brokers, they are *social media leaders*, term that fuses the concept of social brokers with the infrastructure of social media. This means that leaders of the R2R event pages on Facebook have the ability to connect individuals with the cause, to build new alliances, and importantly to provide the tools to switch between being follower and leaders.

Social media leaders, on Facebook are influential in a variety of ways and they do so by utilizing and expanding social bonds across the virtual world. According to Apollonia (2012):

> I was a leader for the GMO rallies in the US. It just took one person to get the ball rolling and show others that they too can make a difference. Empowering others is the greatest outcome from my small effort. It has snowballed into action all across

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the country and that makes me very happy. Facebook has allowed me to remain in contact with and available to people. I still receive many questions from people. I also share information about what other people are doing to motivate others. Seeing what they are doing also motivates me" (personal communication, March 31, 2012).

In regard to understanding the role of social ties in the R2R event pages on Facebook, this quote highlights how the structure of the medium facilitates solidarity, coalitions, empowerment and long lasting relationships. All interviews have expressed that they have bonded with strangers through the R2R event pages and that they consider these strangers some of their "best friends" even if they never met them and probably never will (Socrates, personal communication, March 22, 2012). As a matter of fact Hellen (2012) says that she has met "a spiritual sister down to Florida…since 2006 and (she) I never met her" (personal communication, March 21, 2012).

The above statement also points at another social consequence of these types of networks - long-term relationship. Facebook generates bonds that are not volatile, but that they expand beyond the GMOs rally. Connecting this idea of social bonds with the concept of credibility, one can say that Facebook fosters credibility through the establishment of bonds. As Hermes (2012) points out, "I think there was a point where I was (a leader) during the food rally because people would go around and say, "you know Hermes?" or "did you meet Hermes, or where is Hermes?" and so yes I was a leader that day" (Hermes, April 11, 2012). The overlap between brokerage positions and other R2R users on Facebook may enable some individuals to assume the role of leadership under specific circumstances (e.g. the rally), but this intersection also may convert social brokers into more traditional leaders. According to Diani (2003) traditional social brokers in environmental groups were scientists regarded as authoritative and credible figures. In the case of the R2R event pages on Facebook, leaders do not necessarily possess a political or scientific background. Their credibility is achieved by engaging in conversations with other users and by taking the initiative to organize protests and inform others, as in the case of Apollonia or Hermes. As Langman (2005) notes, "the rise of the Internet, as new communication media, has enabled new means of transmitting information and communication that has in turn enabled new kinds of communities and identities to develop" (Langman, 2005, p. 44). These identities have manifested on the

R2R event pages in the form of social leaders, who at times have developed into long lasting legitimate figures, who perform new leadership tasks. For instance, Anatolious writes, "Knowledge is power and I share a lot of stuff I believe in, I am finding posting and sharing interests locally as well am I getting results….I have been asked to grow food for other families...still I don't know if I want to do that as I don't want to turn a hobby into more work that its worth" (Anatolius, personal communication, April 1, 2012). Anatolious's statement entails the effects of performing leadership tasks on Facebook. Even the simple act of importing new information to solve issues, by sharing links, articles, and videos can be regarded as a leading actor, placing Anatolius as a social media leader. Moreover, the role of these catalyst agents does not stop on the web. Their credibility makes them experts in a variety of issues that go beyond an episodic event such as a rally. Hermes was recognized at the R2R protest while Anatolius has been asked to help families grow community gardens. The shaping of leadership from online to offline was evident when interviewing other people of the R2R event pages. Apollonia (2012) continues to receive questions in regard to GMOs as well as Socrates who gets approached via private email from Facebook by friends in her circle who initially were not concerned about GMOs. But this is much a discussion about action that will be discussed in details in Chapter 6. What must be noted which is relevant to the analysis of leadership on Facebook is the nature of social media leading agents.

This chapter argues that Facebook through its social networks enables certain individuals to step up and perform leadership tasks. While these people might have the intention of only taking leadership roles under certain circumstances (e.g. R2R) the reality is that other users perceive them as permanent leaders, who can help in a variety of offline causes not necessarily related to a single episode of GMO issues. At this point, it is up to the individual to continue performing leadership tasks once credibility has been established through the web. But what it is important to note is the potentials of such proliferation of leaders for the advancement of social movements and their goals.

5.5 Leadership Fails, Rally Fails

This chapter has discussed the concept of credibility within social brokers who through social networks perform a variety of leadership tasks. However, not in all cases these individuals have been perceived as leaders by other users. In some cases leadership

has failed to make an impact in the anti-GMOs cause. Out of 42 pages, there are five events that did not generate any constructive discussions or any discussions at all. Among these five, three can be used to point at how leadership has failed to promote the rally and mobilize online users. The other two were omitted from this study because they had no posts pertaining to leadership. One had no messages on the wall. The first episode can be found on the Oklahoma page of the R2R on Facebook. The administrator of the page employed similar tactics from other pages, including sharing location and flyers for the event, calling for volunteers and answering some questions from concerned citizens. The rally was cancelled because "I could not find anyone to help with the event. If you would like to help World Food Day and Millions Against Monsanto, please send people to the World Food Day website to sign the petition, or BETTER YET, print out some petition pages and bring them with you to an event you are going to. Good Luck Everyone (Melpomeni, "Cancelled-Oklahoma," 2011, para. 5). While other researchers including McAdmas and Palusen (1993) and Passy (2003) have studied the role of social networks in the process of individual participation, underscoring their importance, there is still limited knowledge on the failure of social ties in the process of individual mobilization. While these scholars and for the most part the data of this dissertation suggest that social networks foster collective action, this chapter also argues that certain dimensions[25] of social ties do not result in any type of participation, resulting as in selected cases of the R2R event pages on Facebook in the cancellation of a protest.

The Oklahoma R2R event page on Facebook had originally 148 invitees, 25 indicating that they were going to attend the rally, 33 specifying maybe. It must be noted an important fact that is vital to this discussion. During the collection of the data between October and December 2011 this page had a total of 30 messages, most of them posted by Melpomeni, who created the page. As of April 16, 2012, the posts dropped to 13, Melpomeni's messages had disappeared and her name did not appear as the creator of the page anymore. [Melpomeni could not be contacted for interview and does not appear on Facebook anymore]. To understand whether another user had deleted her posts,

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[25] Creating an event and connecting with other users does not guarantee the success of demonstration or the establishment of meaningful friendships on Facebook. These dimensions (e.g. credibility, feedback) of connection are further analyzed in this section of the chapter.

Apollonia who had posted on that specific wall was asked to explain what had happened with the Oklahoma event on Facebook. She comments, "it appears Melpomeni's Facebook account has been cancelled. I don't know if it's her choice or Facebook. She was going to do the event, then was moving and didn't think she could, then she said she'd do it. I'm not sure it ever happened. I don't think it did" (personal communication, April 17, 2012). With this information in mind, an analysis of Melpomeni illustrates that when a leader does not posses certain qualities he/she fails to generate participation for an event, regardless of social networks. The event was announced to be cancelled on October 13. An analysis of all posts by Melpomeni illustrates that she was an active participant on the page posting a total of nine messages out of 30, including responses to other users. Her messages ranged from, "I would like to hit up several locations around Norman" ("I would like to," 2011, para. 1), to, "Is any of you …interested in helping with the planning of this event? ("anyone helping," 2011, para. 1). Out of 9 posts, she received only two replies from other users.[26] The low number while not indicative of her efforts in organizing the rally does posit questions on her credibility as an organizer. This concept is further revealed when analyzing some of the posts by other users who engaged in conversation with Melpomeni. One of the posters, Poplia, is confused based on the limited description of the rally. She asks Melpomeni to clarify what exactly she is planning to do and suggest merging with the Occupy OKC movement that has already a permit to hold a protest starting October 15th. She provides the link to the Facebook page of the OKC who has an enrollment of 3,436 people. Melpomeni does not publicly respond to any of the suggestions. She relied on motivational statements, lacking external links or constructive arguments on the issue at stake. Discussions on permit, location, transportation or banners are absent or vague. The last comment left on the wall of the R2R event page announces the cancellation of the event. That message is not present on the page as of April 16, 2012. To confirm the lack of credibility due to poor communication and organizational skills, one of the users who posted on the R2R event page of Oklahoma commented on Melpomeni. As she recounts, "she was pretty flighty, I wouldn't give it too much thought. Really disappointed in her. I need to unfriend her" (Apollonia, personal communication, April 17, 2012). Her statement reinforces the role

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[26] There was a total of 13 different users on that page who engaged in online conversations.

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and importance of authenticity when using Facebook to perform leadership tasks as well as the dynamics of social networks. It also illustrates the importance of 'bonding' with other users online. Individuals who fail to create personal connections with other members of the R2R on Facebook through answering questions and providing information are regarded as ineffective and 'enemies' that must be unfriended.

The analysis of this particular R2R event page serves to illustrate that while Facebook can be an effective tool for activism, its impact is determined by the social media leaders who take the initiative to serve as leaders connecting and encouraging others to take part in the rally. In this particular context, credibility, which has been assessed to be a fundamental quality for leading agents on Facebook, was never achieved by Melpomeni. This lack of authenticity was due in part to her chosen language, which revealed vagueness, uncertainty, and disorganization as this quote illustrates, "Sure. No problem….I will most likely postpone it…but maybe not. Who knows. I will let you know" ("Good Morning," 2011, para. 6-8). As discussed in previous chapters, clarity is fundamental to add credibility, but also to engage people, to motivate individuals. When Apollonia stepped in to provide some assistance, hence to fill leading tasks, she received responses from other users, deconstructing in a systematic way the issue; the steps needed to make the event happening. Cooperation through the use of social networks results in exchange of conversations that are constructive to resolving problems. Vagueness and online isolation by not building through social ties relationship may result in lack of participation or unwillingness to become a follower.

The Oklahoma R2R event page's case even if extreme share similarities with other event pages of the R2R. During the San Diego event, one of the attendees complained on Facebook about the lack of clarity for directions. As she stated:

> Went to find event, Sunday, but could not find it. Let's be more specific in future when we say "4th and Boadway." Drove around whole Horton Plaze around 2:45 after Hillcrest FM. Very supportive of this. Be in touch with me, please for future planning. Mentioned Right2Know at Occupy San Diego in a talk. (Francesca, "Went to find event-San Diego," 2011, para. 1-4)

Another user from the R2R event in Grand Rapids commented, "I came to participate with a sign at 1pm, but I could not find you anywhere downtown. Streets were blocked off and traffic was bottle-necked because of the GR marathon. Did you do this today?"

(Corinna, "I came-Grand Rapids," 2011, para. 1-3), to which one of the administrators of the page responded, "Yes we did Corinna! We were in the courtyard of Pew Campus downtown til about 1:30 because we waited for people because of the traffic. That's shame that you could not find us~next time! I am glad you support us!:) (para. 4-7). Yet again from the event held in Austin, Texas another user complained about lack of clear directions:

> I was there at 11:30 AM until 12:30 and NO ONE was there so we left, where was everyone??? We walked around the whole capital building…I'm a bit upset I drive an hour and a half and there was no one there!" ("Wow…- Austin," 2011, para. 4-7).

Research on failure of certain movements suggests that leadership is a determinant factor. Zald and Ash (1966) conducted an analysis of leadership within movement organizations (MO) arguing that the success of a movement whether in its early or later phase of establishment is due to quality and tactics employed by leaders. In the case of the R2R event pages mentioned above, the administrators of the pages failed to provide clear directions to the location of the protest, resulting in followers' frustration. The case of Oklahoma illustrated that Facebook can hinder the legitimacy of a leader leading to a discreditation. According to Zald and Ash (1966), "central to the discreditation process is the MO's inability to maintain legitimacy even in the eyes of its supporters. Discreditation comes because of organizational tactics employed in the pursuit of goals" (Zald & Ash, 1966, p. 335-336). Hence, leaders' inability to utilize organizational tactics to assure followers' support has consequences not only on their credibility as leading figure, but also they have an impact on offline action (see chapter 6).

5.6 Discussion and Conclusion

This chapter has attempted to reveal what and how leaders on the R2R event pages on Facebook utilize the web to perform leading tasks. In particular this chapter focused on two main aspects of leadership: (1) credibility; (2) social network. In addition limits of Facebook in regard to leadership were analyzed to understand how leadership fails to mobilize. A qualitative analysis of both messages posted on the R2R event pages on Facebook and interviews conducted with selected users indicated that for an individual to be regarded as a leader, he/she must possess certain qualities, one being a credible figure. Credibility on Facebook is achieved through sharing information useful to the

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rally, providing external links relevant to the protest, responding to questions from online users, and building alliance through the exchange of messages with other users. According to Zald and Ash (1966), "More interesting are the creation of coalitions and mergers, for here the interaction may lead to new organizational identities, changes in the membership base, and changes in goals. The coalition pools resources and coordinates plans, while keeping distinct organizational identities" (p. 336). In the context of the R2R event pages on Facebook, coalitions are created through the exchange of posts among users, especially if questions have been posed about directions on how to get to the location of the protest, permit's problems, and transportation issues. These bonds shape users' perception on who is the leader of a particular page. This chapter recounted the case of Hermes who was chosen initially by the Organic Consumers Association for his interest in the cause and later for his knowledge of the landscape in Hawaii. Subsequently, when he created the R2R event page his devotion to posting press releases, videos of the rally, and/or websites for banners, made him an icon, not only within the virtual world, but also in the physical arena.

This chapter has pointed out that virtual leaders who take the lead during temporary events have the opportunity to maintain their status, becoming permanent leaders in a variety of causes and for an extensive period of time. The literature review of this dissertation has emphasized the role of social brokers, who have the abilities through networks to connect heterogeneous individuals under one common cause. The data led to a new definition, *social media leaders* that connote the interdependence between individuals who take leading tasks within the virtual world but might not be interested in stepping outside the web and social media. Anatolious recounted that due to her active role on Facebook she was asked to help families start community gardens, while Agape stressed the convenience of utilizing Facebook to organize rallies compared to more traditional tools. It is important to observe that Facebook allows a new set of individuals to serve as leaders that would not be otherwise possible. Anatolious, Kleon, and Agape are busy mothers; Chiara has movement impairment, which prevents her from attending rallies, and Hellen has money issue, which restrains her from attending long distance protests. As Hellen (2012) says, "If I had the ability I would jump in my car and drive down to see what you are doing…hat is the other great thing about Facebook that you get

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to know people that you feel you have known forever but you have not met them on face. I have met so many people on Facebook that I would have not normally being able to meet in my life time" (personal communication, March 31, 2012). In this way, Facebook can provide the tools to be an active participant and leader to those underprivileged groups.

Another theme that emerged out of this analysis is the concept of failure of leadership, which can possibly lead to failure of the rally. In this regard, under certain circumstances few 'leading leaders' failed to be effective as leaders. Insofar as it can be ascertained, certain conditions must be met to be regarded as a leader and have an impact on other users and the overall virtual community. First, an individual must use proper language. For example, the Oklahoma case illustrates that vague statements using words such as, "maybe," "who knows," "I'll let you know," do not provide constructive information to other users pushing them away from the cause. Apollonia recounts the Oklahoma case, referring to the organizer as flighty. Language then remains to be fundamental to bond with other users and create motivation and coalition. As a matter of fact, Agape and Apollonia became correspondents helping each other to advance the cause across the state through sharing information on the Millions Against Monsanto main page on Facebook. In this regard, Agape (2012) recounts, "I was sharing an album, with a bunch of us holding signs, and some videos and stuff. And Apollonia contacted me and we had sort of became friends talking about it. She would always let me know when things would go on" (personal communication, March 16, 2012). This quote reinforces the argument that through the exchange of information via language (e.g. audio/text/image) social networks are established and nurtured energizing the movement and expanding it through the web and the country. When language lacks or is impeded, the movement suffers (e.g. relationships are not built, those who attempt to lead are not regarded as credible figures).

Revaluating scholarly discussion on leadership and social movement it is clear that understanding the role of social media in the shaping of a leader is complex and contingent. The posts of the R2R event pages and interviews recognize that there is a connection between technology and leadership, pointing at ways in which Facebook facilitates leading the way. However, the analysis also revealed that certain conditions

must be met for social media to have a positive impact on leadership and mobilization. Hence, linking Chapter 4 to this discussion it is important to highlight the strong relation between social networks and language/information chosen to share with the rest of the virtual community. It is clear so far that the power of Facebook in allowing certain individuals to perform leadership tasks rely on the people in itself. The medium is the infrastructure or the engine at work, but it must be operated in a certain manner to be able to produce. As more research is needed in this field of leadership in social movements and social media, one can say that the rise of communication technology has redefined the notion of leaders in social movements. The traditional idea of a single person leader had already being challenged by scholars who analyzed social movements from a new social movements' perspective. In this view, leadership was viewed as decentralized, fragmented and flexible networks (Barker et al., 2001; Robnett, 1997). Leadership is now emphasized in the tasks that can help a movement succeeds and at times that result in "thousand of unsung local leaders" (Barker et al., 2001). However, attention must be paid to the interactivity of social media users who carry with them agency to affect both negatively and positive a movement's cause. The dimensions of communication, social network and tasks are closely interdependent, pushing scholars to redefine research parameters. This discussion will take more shape in the following chapter, which will focus on whether Facebook mobilizes offline. This section will bring together both Chapter 4 and 5, leading to an overall understanding of how Habermas's concept of the public sphere, Castells's network analysis, and literature on leadership have been helpful in understanding the world of Facebook and precisely the life of those who use it for activism.

CHAPTER VI

MOBILIZING WITHIN AND OUTSIDE FACEBOOK

6.1 Introduction

I have seen so many wonderful things happening socially on Facebook. There have been revolutions that have manifested on Facebook, so I thought what a great tool instead of using emails or writing letters. It's a very quick way to send a message out in regard to any type of activism. I heard there was going to be a Millions Against Monsanto march and there hadn't been anything in the area of Milwaukee…I wanted to make sure something was available for other like-minded people…With the luxury of Facebook and having this march against Monsanto I made new friendships with people who have the same knowledge and understanding that I have and we sort of created a group through Facebook by just using a Facebook page to call in those who are like-minded, to participate in the march. (Vittoria, personal communication, May 1, 2012)

This is one of the quotes from an interviewee who used Facebook to create an event page for the Right to Know Rally, which took place in Milwaukee, Wisconsin on October 16, 2011. The quote epitomizes the predominant role of the social medium among activists who participated in this study. While tension still remains among scholars who deem social media as yet another capitalistic tool to expropriate individual privacy's rights, this chapter, in particular, argues that the Right to Know Rally organized via Facebook by ordinary citizens is an example of civic engagement (Lim, 2011). What this means is that Facebook serves as a public sphere to form and exchange opinions, organize rallies, recruits participants. Particularly Facebook is a tool used to mobilize offline. The medium creates opportunities to express political views, challenging the system. In this way, this chapter adds to the ongoing polarized debate over the role of the Internet for mobilization and participatory democracy, suggesting scholars study social media beyond the obsolete dichotomy of 'threat,' and/or 'expansion' of democracy (Harlow, 2011; Hassid, 2011; Rich, 2011; York, 2011). In so doing, one of the focuses of this section of the dissertation is to show that Facebook, under particular circumstances, has an impact on offline mobilization and human relations.

To understand the complexity of studying the role of Facebook and offline participation, one has to note that there are two types of action derived from new communications technology: (1) online action; and (2) offline action. This chapter provides an overview on how offline mobilization is generated from Facebook. Another

distinction necessary to fully understand the phenomenon under study is a differentiation between individual versus collective action mentioned in chapter 2. The former embodies actions such as shopping at the grocery store or reading an article on one's private Facebook profile and then talking about it with friends and families. The latter epitomizes marching in front of the capital with more than two people, collecting signatures for petitions, etc. During this chapter, examples will be provided to reflect both types of action whether online and/or offline. Otherwise the general term action or mobilization will be used entailing all type of participation.

There are three main arguments this chapter makes in relation to using Facebook to encourage participation offline. First, Facebook creates new dimensions or/and opportunities of offline action. What this means is that Facebook serves as a place for discussions, which generates some sort of action offline. Offline mobilization can occur individually and collectively. Even those people who encounter limitations in pursuing collective action (e.g. marching) can incrementally and gradually participate through Facebook. Second, action on Facebook can leak out to the real world and vice versa, meaning that online participation encourages offline action (e.g. demonstration), but also offline action encourages citizens to use the web for action. Third, the structure of the medium, which enables sharing of information among weak and strong ties[27], allows users not associated to the movement or/and a specific event to become 'temporary activists,' supporting friends' causes. This type of action, which is reinforced by individual credibility and leadership, maintains and fosters the movement.

The first section of this chapter provides a brief overview on how and why the R2R event pages started. This is fundamental to place the phenomenon within the context of offline mobilization. Second, the notion of individual versus collective action, discussing how non-attendees were still able to 'pitch in' and participate is addressed. The concept of consumer-citizen to users of Facebook who belong to the R2R event pages is applied to reinforce the argument that individuals feel the need to engage in socially responsible activities. Third, Castells's social network analysis is examined and

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[27] Strong and weak ties are defined as Facebook friends that are connected with each other through groups, events or due to familiarity with each other. Strong bonds are those immediate friends, while weak ties are those belonging to group pages or an event pages. For more clarification refer to Figure 1 on chapter 4.

applied to this case study. The data of this dissertation suggests that social networks built online extend offline, thus creating strong and possibly long term relationships. Fourth, limits of Facebook are discussed in relation to offline mobilization. Last, an overview of the impact of Facebook in offline action is analyzed and summarized, concluding with the overall argument that in the case of the R2R, Facebook was perceived to be an effective tool and space to encourage action and mobilization. This section is followed by a discussion that briefly recaps the main points of the chapter as well as previous chapters.

This chapter is predominantly based on data extracted from interviews. This choice was made because of the limitations of Facebook in determining whether the medium had impact offline. Limitations of analyzing qualitative or quantitative content on Facebook included frequency of users who indicated they were going to attend the rally, or/and messages on the wall expressing that they were planning to participate in the rally. These data did not guarantee that individuals really went to the demonstration, as it will be suggested further in the section of limitations. Only by talking to users can one confirm this type of information. Choosing to focus on interviews suggests new modes for conducting qualitative research on offline mobilization and social media, due to limitations of Facebook. Hence, an additional contribution derived from this chapter deals with how to approach future studies on social media and social movements. The research questions for this chapter are the following: (1) *Does Facebook facilitate or hinder offline participation? How?* (2) *How does Facebook affect social networks necessary to civic engagement?* (3) *Do users of the R2R event pages on Facebook believe that Facebook can have an impact in offline mobilization? If so, how? (4) What are the limits of Facebook in measuring effectiveness of offline mobilization? (5) How does the structure of Facebook affect research in social media movements?*

6.2 How to use Facebook to promote action among users

Previous chapters have focused on the role of Facebook in fostering a space for open discussion, organizing protests, disseminating information, and consolidating a movement through social networks. Chapter 5, in particular, has suggested that Facebook allows ordinary citizens (e.g. mothers, retirees, radio hosts) to quickly and efficiently step in the shoes of a leader. These new leading figures do not necessarily possess skills or/and attributes associated to traditional leaders. However, they have in common a

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passion for anti-GMOs discourse and informing others, which pushed them to either create the event page for the Right to Know in their local community or participate in online conversations on these event pages on Facebook as noted by Clementina (2012), "In order to promote the R2K March, I created a profile (event) called GMO March" (personal communication, April 1, 2012). Hence, the starting point for a discussion on offline mobilization in relation to Facebook must start with an understanding of how Facebook facilitates or hinders collective action online. Only after understanding how users take action online can one move to a discussion of offline mobilization. Thus, this chapter discusses offline mobilization in relation to online action.

In terms of taking the initiative to plan a protest, those people who were interviewed and indicated they had organized the R2R on Facebook and offline stated the following about using Facebook to encourage mobilization.

> I actually did create a page. Just among my own friends every time I set up a rally. Because I did participate at that one, but I try to do once at least one every two - three months in my community somewhere between Denver and Colorado Spring, just because it makes me feel better (Agape, March 16, 2012).

Initially, individual action is taken online to reflect a need to fill the gaps in local communities at the collective level. Hence, consumers feel socially responsible to gather like-minded people to protest collectively outside the realm of Facebook as reinforced by the following quote,

> I was the organizer and had the permit so had to attend. I also wanted to be present to assure our message was delivered in a peaceful, respectable way…
> I was already using Facebook and was a volunteer administrator on the "Millions Against Monsanto by Organic Consumers's Facebook page. Many people there wanted to "protest" GMOs but nothing was actually getting organized. Some people were wanting to be more aggressive which wouldn't have been good PR for our cause. So I decided to organize an event to give people the opportunity to voice their concerns in a peaceful way and to motivate them to become more active and do things locally (Apollonia, personal communication, April 1, 2012).

Users who performed leading tasks on the R2R event page on Facebook took their role as leaders outside the realm of the web, as indicated by Apollonia, who took charge of the permit for the location of the march. This is a point that has been discussed in chapter 5 pointing at how Facebook can foster leadership online, which can lead to offline leadership roles.

The use of Facebook to encourage mobilization was also present during rallies as web users posted pictures on the wall of the R2R event page on Facebook, in this way, sharing information among those who could not attend, as shown by Figure 5 posted on the R2R event page of Milwaukee.

A snapshot from our Milwaukee Rally!

Millions Against Monsanto Right2Know rally, World Food Day, Milwaukee, WI

Figure 7 Millions Against Monsanto Right2Know Rally

Similarly, Clementina (2012) explained how Facebook was used during the march as a tool for activism:

> While our group was marching, we used Facebook to post photos, status updates, and sent/received messages. We referred people to our website and urged them to sign up. We created events for each of our 20 or so events along the way. We associated every presenter we had along the way with our campaign and gave them easy tools (Facebook posts, tweets, and events) to help them promote for the events that they would appear at. I am convinced that we would not have reached nearly as many people had we not used Facebook (personal communication, April 1)

The first argument this chapter makes is that social media provide channels of interactions among consumers who cannot physically attend protests, but that still want to

be engaged in the political debate. Consequently, while Facebook initially fosters individual action (e.g. those who initiated the R2R event pages), the dynamics of social networks inherent in the structure of the medium enable collective action offline. This offline mobilization through smart phones connected to Facebook is then mirrored back in the virtual world, fostering once again action from the part of those who could not attend the rally. These users are now informed and encouraged to take action in their local community, either by choosing to shop organics, attending future events, or sharing the information on their Facebook wall, or simply sharing the information verbally with others (e.g. "water cooler talk" offline).

Through pictures attendees were able to document the success of the demonstration as observed by Agape (2012):

> We had set up a few rallies and we had taken some really good pictures of the rally. 15 and 20 people looked like a lot of people and we really got a lot of honks and a lot of attention and I was so proud of the pictures and I went on any GMOs website I could find and I made the album public and I shared the photos so that people could be like: "Oh why that's neat. (Agape, personal communication, March 16)

Taking pictures during rallies, which is a form of offline action, takes shape in the form of online mobilization when these photos are shared on Facebook on any of the R2R or Millions Against Monsanto or GMOs' pages. The dissemination of information is an incentive for people to feel empowered. It is the realization that any type of action whether online or offline matters. This form of image politics has been noted by DeLuca (1999) who believes that utilizing images, not only text, can dismount established identities, beliefs, norms and values, and also form new ones, moving into a new direction of civilization. The case of the R2R moves DeLuca's (1999) argument even further, observing that Facebook is used to distribute images; rather than relying on main stream media to divulge information. Chapter 5 recounts the case of Agape who shared the pictures from her previous rally on GMOs on the Millions Against Monsanto's main page, which lead Apollonia to contact her to strategize about future demonstrations. As a result, Facebook creates a space for discussion and exchange of ideas, in which information is then materialized in offline action and back to online. Facebook amplifies traditional models of social action, while creating new dimensions of mobilization.

6.3 People not able to attend but still participated

This chapter points to ways in which attendees of demonstrations are able to inform those who could not attend events. Among the people interviewed for this study nine (9) indicated that they had attended the rally, while five (5) could not make it due to personal, economic, or transportation issues as Chiara (2012) expressed, "I did not go to the rally. I had to take care of my elderly mother and I don't have much gas money" (personal communication, April 6). One did not indicate whether he went or did not go to the rally. However, even those who did not physically march took types of action online that facilitated offline mobilization. When Socrates (2012) asked, "Does anyone have an easy-setup tent and some tables for the rally @ 7th & Pearl that could bring them in a vehicle????" ("Does anyone have," para. 1-2, 2011), Teresa responded by confirming that she had "an easy-up and a vehicle, but no tables" (Does anyone have," para. 3, 2011), to which Socrates (2012) replied, "can you connect w/ Melissa or Carlos (above on the like) to coordinate that? THANKS A BUNCH!" (Does anyone have," para. 4-5, 2011). Socrates was furthered contacted to comment on her online involvement. One discovers at this point that Socrates did not attend the rally, but felt the need to help in assuring the march still occurred:

> Even though I was not going to attend the rally…I wanted to attend the rally but sometimes you can't make it, either I was sick or my child. It just did not work out. I still wanted to help facilitate the tabling for the event. And I am pretty sure that was for the GMO free Eugene. I did get a response from some random person I never met before or that was going to attend the rally and did have a table. A table was brought and that way GMO Free was able to table that event and spread more education. I never met her (Socrates, personal communication, March 22, 2012).

This quote illustrates that through networks' interactions made possible because of the structure of Facebook, tasks related to an offline event were initiated and accomplished. In this case, a simple question about a table made it possible to resolve problems of rain and collection of signatures for the Millions Against Monsanto's petition. Personal connections (physically knowing people) are not fundamental. What is important is to communicate what needs to be done offline through the event page's wall. The idea of mobilizing online resources to enable action offline is further reinforced by Socrates as she keeps recounting her experience (2012):

Because Facebook can be used as a tool to organize events like that and even if I could not attend I just wanted to still participate in some way even if that meant just in a very small capacity trying to help, get the tables for the organization or whatever it needed to happen. It was supposed to rain that day at the rally. GMO Free wanted the table and they did not have the easy tent and tables permanently because at that time they were not even a non-for-profit. I don't even think they are non-for-profit. They are two moms, trying to organize all this information, trying to get people to come to this event. *I was just pitching in because through Facebook it allows people, even really small people who can't participate in a larger scale to still participate in small incremental ways just like helping to organize, pulling calls out to a larger number* **(**emphasis by researcher, personal communication, March 23).

This quote highlights the emergence of grassroots campaigns built from the ground up. This particular group of the two mothers is not a well-established organization, neither it follows a traditional hierarchical structure. Facebook seems to be a structure as well as tool allowing this movement to be organized in informing and mobilizing others. In addition, as suggested by Socrates's early quote, the structure of Facebook, which is made out of nodes interconnected among each other, opens doors for exchanging in online discussions that ultimately lead to offline action. More important, Facebook has the ability to foster activism even for those who cannot physically attend offline events. These non-attendees can still mobilize by taking leadership roles. In this sense, the discussion from Chapter 5, which emphasized how Facebook fosters leadership tasks is here linked to the notion of online and offline participation. Online leaders are essential to get tasks done that are fundamental for the success of an offline event. Online action can migrate outside the context of Facebook. An example of the migration of online action into offline action is explained by Hellen (2012):

I fully believe that Twitter and Facebook really helped give the information out there and it was happening faster than you could see it on TV and newspaper and radio. I see that here when we have this locally…We have the flooding issue up here…Everyone who had their telephone connected to Facebook or Twitter they could sit there and be in one spot and they would gradually move to the next place. They would go help over here because that is where the information was disseminated…It was phenomenal how quickly they could disseminate the information because everyone is connected to Facebook…Because my brother…was not connected to Facebook, but those who had the mobile phones, all he had to do was to follow them and ask them, "so where do we go next?" Now people are becoming more aware of information out there and they are able

to connect…People are able to connect again and communicate through Facebook (personal communication, March 21)

Even though the example she recounted was not directly linked to the R2R it reflects the growing dependence on mobile's social media applications to disseminate information necessary for collective mobilization, whether one has access to social media or not, as in the case of Hellen's brother. Particular to the case of the R2R and the notion of sharing online information among people, which can then generate offline action and again online action (e.g. retweeting from the location of the offline event), Kleon (2012) observes that,

> Even when I could not attend events, I shared the info on my personal and my no gmo pages, so I know I passed it along, and others tell me they learned about this situation because of me. I am in communication with people all over the world and right here at Monsanto's door. Responsible technology is great! (Kleon, personal communication, April 1, 2012)

While one cannot assess whether Kleon's Facebook friends will start buying organic products as a form of offline action, individual online actions have an impact on learning about issues and local events not covered in mainstream media. This is especially true if considering the global network of Facebook's personal profiles, consisting of weak and strong ties among friends living across the globe. While local events like the R2R might specifically target users who are geographically located in the area where the rally takes place, the reality is that the social structure of Facebook alters the dimensions of offline mobilization as it pertains to the R2R. This example helps support the above concept:

> I have seen a transformation among my friends (on Facebook) who knew nothing about GMOs previously. I have had friends call me from the grocery store to ask me if something was safe from GMOs. I have had people bringing me articles at home because they know I would be interested due to my posts. (Gelsomina, personal, communication, April 1, 2012)

The expansion of offline action among Facebook users who were not direct participants of the R2R event page on Facebook indicates that sharing information and/or participating in discussions on groups and event pages in addition to posting on one's personal page can lead to individual offline action. In this case, Gelsomina's friends called her with questions pertaining to what she posts/had posted and when faced with GMO topics on different media they were able to recognize the issue and collect

information for and from Gelsomina. This type of individual offline action reflects a new dimension of traditional event-collective offline mobilization like the R2R, because it indicates that Castells's social network analysis manifested through the infrastructure of Facebook expands to Facebook users with weak ties in new offline settings not particularly focused on one specific event (e.g. R2R). This is extremely important because it suggests that Facebook has the ability for social change among users with both strong and weak ties, among a greater and wider circle of networks, whether globally or locally. The new dimension of Facebook in relation to social change contends that through social ties, information about societal issues is disseminated both online and offline among networks of different ethos spheres, belonging to a variety of interconnected micro public spheres. As a result even citizens who are not concerned about GMO issues can find themselves exposed to anti-GMOs information. Not only news about GMOs is presented to users, now these citizens have the option to act in support of their friends' causes as in the case of Gelsomina's friends.

Gelsomina's comment about friendship on Facebook also points at the concept of credibility and leadership that has been at the core of both chapters 4 and 5. By assuming the role of a leading representative of GMOs issues, by not only organizing events like the R2R, but also by persistently posting on other groups' pages and her own profile, Gelsomina had acquired a status of credibility among her Facebook friends. Thus, when needing clarifications these friends had phoned her when shopping at the supermarket. Similarly, while long in length this quote reinforces and introduces new dimensions to the above discussion on manifestations of offline action through Facebook.

> Some people have never been active before and they don't have a way to plug in. I see that Facebook allows them to participate in discussions. You have to make really interesting rallies, actions, and workshops available to get people offline. Put invitations out there and hope that something is so amazing to them that they want to step out and take it to the next level. I find that even people who can't participate in a greater level like an event, that they can at least make changes in their lives. For instance I have a lot of friends in the Midwest who know nothing about GMOs…even though it is changing a lot these days because of Facebook I think. Even if I can show them some small things they can do in their homes, it is sort of giving them a tiny bit of empowerment and just make a penny change in their personal life. How do we get them out? I guess, we have to spark the passion somehow by feeding them more information. (Socrates, personal communication, March 22, 2012)

The quote reassesses previous interviewees' statements on the ability of Facebook to involve non-traditional activists. Individuals who do not feel comfortable or just don't know how to take action, can learn through interactions on Facebook what issues are relevant to their Facebook friends and what to do to change their own lives. In this way, collective action sponsored through an event such as the R2R on Facebook reaches those who will not physically attend, but that can take individual action in the comfort of their private sphere. As Socrates continues to explain,

> I live in a kind of unusual community because in Eugene we have a food community based type of place and there is so much organic food and so much local food, so much food being grown and people who own personal gardens, that you can just walk down the street and there are free boxes of organic vegetables sitting out there, because people have so much…When I see my family who does not live here or if I am out of the community with actually my friends who are farmers who don't spend much time on the computer I try to educate them on some updated stuff like what's going on with legislations. Especially if there is a victory. For instance, there is a big conference here, PIELC, it is a big environmental law conference…so I do definitely go out and especially if I am tabling an event I have a lot of face-to-face contact with people in my community or people who are visiting from out of town. I still use traditional method of education face-to-face out there in my community and when I travel…so I am already rooted in that community I don't have much educating to do in my immediate circle. (Socrates, personal communication, March 22, 2012)

This quote illustrates the importance of communication channels and mobilization under certain circumstances. Traditional methods of communications are still vital and essential for a movement when there is an established physical network and opportunities to get involved face-to-face. In the absence of physical and geographical proximity individuals tend to rely on social media to influence others, as Socrates (2012) further explains:

> I really am relying on it [Facebook] to educate my greater circle of friends with whom I grew up that don't live here, especially my family. It is really hard to get your family to change lifestyle who grew up mainstream. I am the oldest of all my cousins and they are all young and impressionable and I definitely put the information out there constantly. I feel it makes a difference. I feel this is an amazing way for me to educate people who are constantly there, especially the new generation. It also allows me to get really good articles from my older friends who just sit around, read and write all this stuff. They are really educated. I have some friends who are doctors in other countries who are huge workers of this

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issue. I get their perspective, of professional and what is going on in their country, what their issues are. I am particularly talking about GMOs right now. India, Canada and England and Sweden. I had friended this person from Sweden who saw my response on some other thread somewhere. She liked my response and friended me (Socrates, personal communication, March 22, 2012)

Another point raised by the interview with Socrates relates to the global impact Facebook can have. Whereas locally it is possible to gather individuals collectively and physically to march for social change, other social networks might be excluded due to proximity. In this scenario, having the R2R event page on Facebook with users who interact by posting and sharing information on their profile has the potential to encourage individual action outside the boundaries of the event geographical location. Not only does Socrates live in a community that is progressive in terms of anti-GMOs, but her family is also spread throughout the country. As a result, Facebook comes to play an important role in advocating both online and offline individual action. Thus, once again an individual's action can manifest offline through the use of online event and personal profiles' pages. Last, the quote reinforces the capabilities of online action to spread globally through the open interactions of users who shared similar interests and are active online advocates as in the case of Socrates who has connected with experts of GMOs issues around the globe.

The discussion about individual action versus collective action within the context of Facebook can be placed within the notion of the consumer-citizen, which revolves around the idea that individuals have political power when they shop, thus their individual actions have a collective impact (Johnston, 2008; Livingstone et al., 2007; Sassatelli, 2006; Scamell, 2000). This dissertation reaffirms that consumers have agency, but it adds to the existing literature by suggesting that in the absence of physical collective demonstrations, citizens can utilize Facebook to deepen their democratic participation. This is done by joining groups or events pages like the R2R event page on Facebook, which informs individuals and encourages them to act offline. As Hellen (2012) explains:

> That's a type of action. You have more action with your dollar. If you commit to not buying things made out genetically modified corn or genetically modified seeds, or anything that has been used or touched by Monsanto you will be voting or protesting with your dollar. You gather all little clusters. You can sit and protest like crazy, but what does that do? Takes your time away, it costs money to drive there, to get to this protest place. Then you are down there for how long for

the protest. Who is at home taking care of the garden? When you are out protesting it kind of becomes selfish. Yes, I have not gone to protest publicly because I cannot afford it. Financially I cannot afford it. (Hellen, personal communication, March 21)

This quotes illustrates the role of individual action within the spectrum of Facebook and offline. Hellen (2012) observes that consumers have political power by choosing to buy products that are not genetically modified. In this respect, she favors product boycotts rather than physical demonstrations, which are limited to those who have time and money. Facebook fills in the inherent disadvantages of protesting in public urban spaces, while individual participation in the comfort of one's grocery store fulfills an individual social responsibility. Hellen would have attended the rally if she had economic resources. However, she was still able to participate by following the discussions occurring on the wall of the R2R event page on Facebook and by shopping reflecting her concerns, as reinforced by the following:

> It was too far! If I was living in Fargo, I know there are things happening in Fargo, but a lot of people saliently protest…They just don't buy stuff that has been touched by Monsanto…A big hardship that played on everyone is the fuel price because people can't just be driving all over the places anymore. So we have to find other ways to communicate and connect and save our dollars for when we need to drive some places. That is my biggest hardship. It is being able to drive. I would have loved to have driven to Ohio for something that was going on in Ohio, but I cannot afford to, but I can still be connected with what is going on there. (Hellen, personal communication, March 21, 2012)

The concept of consumer agency through the motto "vote with your dollar" was brought up by Adara, when asked whether people do something with the information they are exposed to on Facebook.

> I think the majority of people are not going to do something: They are not going to attend a rally, they are not going to write a letter to the senator or something like that, but what I think they can reconsider is whether they want to support these companies in their buying habits. I would say that I have seen a lot in the way my friends, whom I do see offline often, I started seeing a very big change in how they, not all of them, but in how they decide to eat and what they purchase in their lives (personal communication, March 19, 2012).

Regardless Adara's pessimistic approach to collective mobilization reflected in demonstrations against GMOs, he believes that individuals have agency and control of how they live their lives. The change in attitudes and behavior, which push people to act

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toward a cause, is done both through conventional channels like hanging out with friends and families and through the web. Adara's posts on Facebook on GMOs provoked discussions offline with strong ties (e.g. Adara's friends). This type of action can lead to a democratic citizenry informed about issues on GMOs and faced with choices when grocery shopping. The seed has been planted and dialogue is taking place both online and offline. This form of civic engagement is possible through social networks, thus the following section addresses the topic of mobilizing through virtual social ties.

6.4 Building social networks offline through Facebook

Castells's (1997) work on social movements and social networks highlights how the web has provided a transformation of democracy, which resulted in the creation of new identities whether in the form of legitimation or resistance to the dominant system. The way the Internet has reconfigured civic engagement is by connecting multiple ties around the world, leading to suggest that "mobilization is simultaneously affected by more than one network" (Swain, 2002, p. 16). In the case of the R2R event pages on Facebook, Castells's observation holds true. Facebook fosters a multiplicity of social ties, weather weak or strong that extends outside the realm of the web, thus the diffusion of social movements can potentially reach a wide range of the population unaware of the dangers of GMOs. In regard to the study of this dissertation and social network analysis, this chapter is interested in understanding the relation among social media users in offline settings. More specifically, one of the research questions of this chapter is whether online users get to meet in offline settings, such as the rally in question. Among 15 interviewees, two (2) indicated they did not meet people offline. Additionally, two people could not recount whether they had met individuals during the protest they had conversations with on the R2R event page on Facebook. For those who indicated that they had met people from the R2R event page offline, they treated these new relations as friendships and coalitions as noted by Agape (2012):

> I have kept friendships with these people I met and I think if nothing else when you see all these articles about judges ruling against farmers and the insanity of the whole thing it is really comforting to have sort of this core group of friends who think and feel the way you do and they post about it and you post about it and it ends up becoming a support group. (Agape, March 22)

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This quote illustrates the role of Facebook in fostering a place in which individuals feel free to express their opinions among like-minded people. It also shows the homogeneity of groups made out of heterogeneous people spread across global and local communities. In respect to the rally, Facebook represents a sphere in which networks are formed and developed within and outside the web. Similarly, Gelsomina (2012) recounts having met people at the R2R's demonstration who came to be 'online buddies,'

> I have met several people in person that began online. During this rally I met a great number of people in person after meeting them online. Some of the people came to the rally. We initially met our food vendors online and people volunteered to help online. (Gelsomina, personal communication, April 1)

The coalitions made on Facebook assure the evolution and diffusion of the movement. In this way, the virtual space, used by individuals to initiate a debate over GMOs move to the public space, to then move back to the web, in this way keeping the debate alive,

> We did meet in person. There were several of us that exchanged personal information: phone numbers and addresses that we could contact each other personally instead of the Facebook page. We met, made personal connections, and formed new friendships based on similar interests. I am still in touch with them, mostly online, email, exchanging articles, expressing opinions more so online, mostly communicating through emails. (Vittoria, personal communication, May 1, 2012)

This quote points at the communication modes employed by activists to keep in touch, plan, and organize before, during and after demonstrations. Interesting is the fact that initial contact was made through Facebook, which attracted a wide range of audience (e.g. strong and weak ties). Afterward, those who actively participated in the wall of the R2R event pages on Facebook moved to a more personal channel of communication, hence the phone, e-mail, or home address. This choice of communication can be associated with a problem of access to smart phones, convenience, and type of tasks to be accomplished (e.g. picking up somebody at his/her house). The selection of communication channels indicates that Facebook cannot be the sole tool for activism; rather it serves as a supplemental tool for recruitment, diffusion of information, and in this case, coalition among attendees. It remains clear that Facebook does not foster attention to details pertaining to those who are involved in conversations (e.g. names of those posting) as this quote highlights:

It is so hard to identify people that I specifically met on this page. I am now active in person with lots of people that I met online. However, I revisited the link you provided and discovered that a person I went and interviewed today clicked that he was attending this rally. I will have to ask him if he really did come. I did not know he has been following our page for that long. (Gelsomina, personal communication, April 1, 2012)

This is an example of impersonal connection among users of event pages. Indicating that one is attending the protest does not assure direct and implicit coalition building and connection with offline demonstrators. This is a limitation of the functions offered by Facebook. Nevertheless, while Facebook fosters multiple connections among different networks it does not necessarily promote personal identification. Personal identification is important for a movement because it helps foster collective identity (Diani, 2000).

There are cases, in which identification of online users was revealed during the R2R as Clementina (2012) recounts in two instances,

One person who met up with us is named Lynette Pate. She wrote a book called *Fuel for the Body,* and she was biking across the country to promote it. She came to some of our events and we mutually helped each other with promotion…(Clementina, personal communication, April 1)

Another person Clementina met through the R2R event page on Facebook and whom she met offline and still keeps in touch, which is "David Piller. He took a leadership role on the march and has been a tireless crusader for GMO labeling (Clementina, personal communication, April 1, 2012). Thus, linking social network to the notion of leadership discussed in the previous chapter, one can say that the structure of Facebook exemplifies how social networks not only move offline but also develop new leaders who maintain and shape the debate over GMOs. The type of the medium then affects the nature of the protest, by initiating coalitions among social ties. These bonds emerge in offline settings, floating back and forth between the virtual and real world, at times, developing and shaping an individual's identity (e.g. leader) and the overall movement. The active engagement of multiple networks is also evident through the following quote, "Some (people) have passed through town and we met for dinner. Others, I have only seen at the rally but continue to have a very active Facebook friendship with" (Apollonia, April 1, 2012, personal communication).

While it is important to point out that these cases are not to be generalized and that they only pertain to those who actively attended rallies and sought out to meet online users offline, these examples are still important to expand upon the current research of social movements, social networks, and social media. The analysis of online and offline interactions brings a new component to understanding digital activism that has yet to be fully explored. Castells's (1997) previous work on social network analysis has suggested a relation between web structure and solidarity as well as friendship, arguing that the Internet breaks geographical boundaries imposed by physical space. While the web does supplement social movements by connecting people across the globe, the analysis of this research has pointed at ways, in which virtual networks manifested outside the realm of the web, deepen the notion of solidarity, coalition, and friendship. Apollonia (2012) comments on this assessment,

> I met several of my existing Facebook "friends" and many people that weren't Facebook "friends" but now are at the rally. There are a lot of wonderful people in this movement and I feel privileged to know many of them. I consider them friends!! (Apollonia, personal communication, April 1).

Apollonia's observation supports how the dynamics of Facebook operate within the context of friendship, pointing at the advantages of initiating relationships online, deepening them offline, and vice versa. Similarly, Kleon (2012) finds the relation between online and offline mobilization beneficial both personally and socially,

> Yes, both people I knew prior to the event, as well as many new faces… Who doesn't like to communicate with those who are like-minded? Also, I know that when my life becomes too hectic to be as active as I would like in this cause, others are still plugging away and I can jump back in anytime. (Kleon, personal communication, March 31)

Another observation from the data collected revealed that people, provided the circumstances and resources, were willing to meet in offline settings for the cause, "If I meet somebody on Facebook I meet them offline and choose to become friends. They are many that I have met only on Facebook and they know me as well" (Hellen, personal communication, march 21). As noted earlier the choice of meeting individuals' offline is dependent on external personal factors. Hellen could not financially afford to drive to the demonstration; hence she relied on Facebook to be informed by exchanging messages through an online social network. It becomes clear that there is a delicate line between

online and offline networks and online and offline action. This dividing line is malleable and can be stretched out under circumstances that are personal to each individual. Facebook comes to play a fundamental role when citizens cannot attend protests, as well as offline demonstrations, which are fundamental to reinvigorating and creating new social ties, "Many people who are friends with our profile or 'like' our cause on FB came to the march. Many people who marched with us befriended us on FB and continue to stay in touch" (Clementina, personal communication, February 28, 2012). On one hand, online action is fundamental because it fills the gaps activist encounter when faced with the opportunity of attending a protest. One the other hand, offline demonstrations are still fundamental and the ultimate goal of online activism. After all the R2R event pages on Facebook were initiated to encourage people to protest in their local community. However, the reality is that both online and offline action are needed to compliment each other. Social ties are now becoming an even more important role in the evolution of a movement.

As briefly mentioned early, Facebook carries limitations in understanding whether it has impact in offline settings. To this regard, the next section discusses these drawbacks.

6.5 Limits of Facebook in getting people involved and assessing their involvement offline

A main issue that arose from the qualitative content analysis of posts of the R2R event pages on Facebook as well as selected interviews was transportation. Either due to financial problems or schedule conflicts some activists did not have a vehicle to get to the demonstration. In this case, the wall of the R2R event page was used to look for a ride, making connections with those willing to provide assistance. While the qualitative content analysis suggested that individuals use Facebook to seek help, it does not provide an account of whether these people were able to get a ride or/and solve their issues that prevented them from attending. For this reason interviews were useful to understand whether certain issues were resolved. In the case of the R2R in Colorado Spring, Colorado, Melissa (2011) said, "We only have one car and my husband might have to work but if not there with bells on! ("we have one car – CO," para. 1-2, 2011), to which Agape promptly responds, "I have a nine seater suburban!!! I would be happy to have

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you and your family come with us! My kids are coming with me with their home made shirts and signs.and…hummm bells..I like it! ("We have one car – CO," para. 3-6, 2011). At this point, Melissa replies, "oh ok that would be great!" ("We have one car – CO," para. 7, 2011). On the surface, Facebook seemed to facilitate discussion and resolution of problems. Agape steps in as a leading figure to assure the presence of activists at the rally she organized. Based on the conversation one could speculate that Melissa would indeed have attended the demonstration. To confirm the absence or presence of Melissa and her family, Agape was asked to comment on the web conversation. Did Melissa indeed get a ride?

> No, they never actually contacted me. I gave them a couple of opportunities. I contacted them and they never actually answered their phone or call me back. I think that as a society we are really into convenience and we tend to be pretty passive. I think sometimes saying what we would do the right thing or good thing make us feel better and make us sound good…But actions always speak louder than words and I just think sometimes people who support the cause enough but they don't support it quite to come out and be active about it but it is sort out of a lot of people's comfort zone. (Agape, personal communication, March 12, 2012)

Agape explains that she had privately contacted Melissa. Both parties exchanged phone numbers but Agape was the only who attempted repeatedly to connect with Melissa. While Facebook can initially create a space in which problems are brought up and discussed, additional communication channels are needed to encourage offline mobilization. Even these supplemental channels at times are not sufficient to incite mobilization, no matter how devoted and willing an individual is. According to Apollonia (2012) these types of problems can emerge because, "Some people don't use Facebook or don't know how to use it well. Some people will say they will attend events but don't, so you can't rely on the numbers who say they are attending events" (Apollonia, personal communication, April 1, 2012), which also highlights limitations to understanding social movements relying exclusively on quantitative data.

Facebook provides few options to those who create events to track attendance. On the left side of an event page there are three indicators: (1) going; (2) maybe; and (3) invited. However, one has to note, that once an individual accepts an invitation to an event and hence she/he joins the event page, Facebook automatically counts this person as an 'attendee.' The user must then go on the upper right corner of an event page and

select the appropriate category (e.g. going, maybe, not going). Thus, if one person is not familiar with these functions, she/he might deflect the numbers of attendees versus not going. Agape (2012) discusses this point in the following quote:

> For the rally for the right to know, the news did come out and there were even they said 75 people showed up. It was a good turn out. One of my other ones, which went along with World Food Day, like 50 people RSVP to it and really maybe only 30 people showed up and most people came from anywhere from 45 minutes to 2 hours…At some point we were only 12. And it was really disappointing and it was during the same day of a football game, which a couple of people said, "You know it is the same day of the football game," which does not matter to me but to some people it did, but it is true people can RSVP and totally don't show up or just show up and have no RSVP at all. But that is really fine to me. (Personal communication, March 21)

This quote exemplifies the inaccuracy and unreliability of Facebook's function to track attendees, speculating about the impact of social media in offline mobilization. This inaccuracy can also be due, as Agape mentioned, to the fact that people might change their plans at the last minute, without going back to the event wall and changing their status. People who indicated they would attend might not go and people who expressed they would not go might end up attending the rally. According to Lim (2011) a "large online presence…did not translate into offline political action" (p. 240) when referring to the Egyptian revolution. Interviewing people from the R2R event page and eventually those who physically protested offline can be more accurate in assessing the results of offline demonstrations. Thus, this analysis suggests that new modes of research methodology must be considered when studying social media movements in offline settings.

6.6 Assessing effectiveness of Facebook through perceptions of interviews

Lim (2011) argues that in the April 6th Movement of Egypt, Facebook "had failed to reach more audiences beyond its Facebook page" (p. 240), suggesting that a movement to be successful, must reach a wider audience beyond the virtual walls of a group or event page on Facebook. This chapter, as well as previous chapters, has reinforced to some degree Lim's (2011) claim, by addressing the failure of functions present on Facebook to track attendees as well as mentioning the digital divide inherent in new technology due to individual concerns over privacy issues. However, this chapter has also diverged from Lim's belief, in that activists of the R2R with their constant devotion to food issues have

influenced their weak and strong friends outside the circle of the R2R event pages to act. This type of mobilization has been associated with individual actions in the form of shopping or gathering material pertaining to GMO issues. Aside from the limitations that Facebook poses, all of the interviewees expressed that Facebook had played a fundamental role in mobilization, whether at the online or offline level. In this regard, the last section of this chapter addresses the question of the potential 'effectiveness' of Facebook in encouraging offline participation. *Do users of the R2R event pages on Facebook believe that Facebook can have an impact in offline mobilization? If so, how?*

According to Clementina (2012), an advantage of using Facebook is the number of audience the medium can reach within and outside one's circle of immediate friends:

> Facebook is an effective way to reach thousands of people who are not directly in your network. It was helpful to get on Facebook every day or so and add friends, like pages, and post pictures and comments on GMO-related issues to increase our exposure. Creating events is easy, and participants can find these events either on their own event invites page or in their calendar notifications. The search function allows the average Facebook user to find our GMO-labeling content without knowing the R2K March existed. Furthermore, toward the end of our campaign, Facebook ads helped us reach targeted participants. The ads cost us money, but we reached an audience we had not yet explored. (Clementina, personal communication, March 30)

This quote highlights the advantages of the social medium reinforcing previous literature on the web and activism. The convenience in terms of time and global reach, the function of 'search,' and even monetizing marketing tools represents for Clementina instruments that strategically encourage mobilization and help the cause. She continues by adding how the medium facilitates offline mobilization, "I would say that the most effective way Facebook has encouraged action offline is by showing what events are available on your calendar, telling you where, when, and who else is going" (Clementina, personal communication, March 30). Thus, dissemination of information about local and global events with detailed directions, such as maps, addresses, contact info, time, and date, make no excuses for citizens to not attend while building credibility and popularity of the cause and organizers of the rally as Clementina (2012) explains:

> Our appearance on Facebook made our movement seem large enough that companies were more willing to provide us material support as long as they thought their products would get more exposure. The company Beanitos planned a Right2Know rally in Austin, TX, and asked us if they could associate with our

mobilization. This exposure by brands was great for gathering support, but it also slowed us down as we evaluated what each company would bring to the march and passed their affiliation through the steering committee we had formed. Some companies wanted an ROI, which is not a goal of R2K and ran counter-productive to our short (6 mos) planning time frame. (personal communication, March 30)

There are a few points relevant to address as they pertain to Clementina's statement. First, it must be noted that Clementina is part of a non-for-profit organization that is completely devoted to influencing legislatures in the state of California in regard to food-labeling for GMOs. Unlike the rest of the people interviewed, except for Apollonia, Clementina's event was organized following a business-oriented model. For example, sponsorship helped to expose the cause locally and globally, with the attempt to recruit more supporters who had a niche audience in their local communities (e.g. organic grocery stores or restaurants). Other organizers had used Facebook for the first time without having prior experience in setting up GMOs demonstration, which at times was considered a set back to the success of the demonstration:

> I think it (Facebook) can be very effective. Have I organized my rally earlier…I was tentative with my own busy life to striking that balance. I was hoping somebody would have started the Monsanto rally, and I was realizing nothing was happing in Milwaukee, so I did start the Facebook page and I think it was effective. Not nearly as effective as I had hoped, but if I had organized it much sooner. So really if someone had organized it much sooner in our area it would have been much bigger but the turn out I was pleased. (Vittoria, personal communication, May 1, 2012)

This quote highlights the difference between veteran organizers such as Clementina and new incoming leaders such as Vittoria. Nevertheless, both protests had a successful turn out, as stated by the organizers, informing consumers about the dangers of GMOs and getting signatures for the petition to label GMO products. Chapter 4 has discussed that leaders of the R2R event pages on Facebook do not necessarily have to possess experience in the sector of social movements. While knowledge can facilitate the process, Vittoria is an example of the agency individuals can exercise through a medium such as Facebook. As Vittoria (2012) continued her recount she observed,

> In a short amount of time, there were more than a dozen people present. The basis was for people to be signing the petition. We had our location at the Lakefront. We settled in a populated area with a lot of people riding their bikes and taking

walks, across one of the most popular coffee shops café in Milwaukee. We gathered many signatures. I was surprised that some even though they did not attend the rally, they came and dropped off the petitions. They found me on Facebook and then they went into the website that I suggested, The Millions Against Monsanto, printed it off petitions and then in their circle of friend or neighbors or whatever, had petitions signed and then just drove up to the corner and handed me the petitions. I think in a short amount of time I think it was a great success. It did not get much attention for many bodies there but for people who take the time, print off petitions, have them signed and drive to the location of where we were, not drop them in the mail. We were thrilled. I know in the future to just go head and doing it instead of waiting for someone else to do it. If I give people enough time I think this could have been a huge event. (Vittoria, personal communication, May 1, 2012)

The case of Vittoria illustrates that in the absence of an organization promoting GMOs in the vicinity, Facebook can function as a medium, demonstrating that social networks are useful for offline mobilization. Facebook was also a key for encouraging offline participation for those individuals who were too busy to attend. Vittoria had posted on the R2R event page on Facebook links to petitions' forms that people could print and distribute to friends and family. Online information was then used in offline settings on multiple occasions. First, among friends and family, then the petitions once printed out were gathered and dropped off at the event. This is a fundamental point that positions Facebook to be a facilitator of offline action, whether individual or collective. More importantly, this offline action extends to social networks that do not necessarily belong to the R2R event page or any of the GMO groups' pages on Facebook. These offline networks can potentially have an impact on the movement in itself, by spreading information among groups.

Facebook can also promote leadership skills by encouraging users who participated online and offline in demonstrations to get involved in other organizations as Gelsomina (2012) explains:

Facebook has increased my ability to take action offline. I am now an executive member of my local Democratic Party. I participated in a recall effort for the Superintendent of Public Instruction for the State of Idaho. I have responded to the call to action to show up at legislative hearings, rallies and meetings being posted of Facebook. (Gelsomina, personal, communication, April 1, 2012)

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Not only are leadership roles enhanced and expanded offline settings, but also are fostered in new movements both online and offline. The connection of relations among non-related groups is essential to the development and potential recruitment of the GMOs movement. By belonging to multiple groups and attending a variety of events covering different issues, new coalitions are made, which may come to play a significant role in the support of GMO food labeling. As a matter of fact the ongoing utilization of Facebook to promote events offline can result in more attendees as Kleon (2012) observes, "Apparently it was (effective), because each successive rally had more participants and more police. However, some organizers planned events for weekday afternoons rather than weekend mornings, and that reduced attendance" (personal communication, March 31). This quote illustrates that while Facebook can potentially generate more participants in offline demonstrations if used repetitively, activists must still strategically plan according to dates, times, and accessibility of location. Facebook cannot be associated as the sole factor that increases or hinders action offline. The case of Vittoria mentioned early demonstrates the importance of choosing a strategic location that will attract both online participants who attended and those bystanders walking in the park. Thus, offline events may attract new recruits who may join the cause online and at future events. Vittoria (2012) recounts the R2R held in Milwaukee on October 16, 2011:

> The majority of people stopped. There are always those who don't want to be bothered. They don't want to know. They don't want to be informed…I said more than 50 of those who stopped, more than 90% signed the petition. More than half had no idea what GMOs meant. My sister told me that you think they know what you are talking about, but the don't. More than 50% was, "What is GMOs?" "Where is it in our food?" [After I explained to them they signed the petition.] That's planting seeds. That conversation ended up happening (in friends, family). "Oh I saw this rally. It was on GMOs. And GMOs are…" In one afternoon how many eyes I opened to this reality of what GMOs mean. So that was very exciting (Vittoria, personal communication, May 1)

It is important to analyze how Facebook can have an impact in offline social networks, shaping the movement of the GMOs, therefore, Vittoria was asked to explain, in general, how the event went and what was the reaction of bystanders who did not participate in the R2R event page on Facebook. According to her, when individuals were educated on the dangers of GMOs they were willing to sign the petitions. Hence, despite the low

number of attendees (12), what was relevant especially for this dissertation was the connection among online activism and offline activism. This means that digital mobilization helps foster offline action through networks of homogeneous groups. Events such as the R2R held in local cities facilitated the creation of new connections with citizens that did not belong to anti-GMO groups. Hence, social networks are expanded. These new and offline ties have the possibility of joining online groups, disseminating information among friends and families, adding numbers to the movements. Communication through Facebook is not unidimensional; rather it is circular, floating among worlds (e.g. real and virtual). It is easy, quick, and global, "Facebook has improved my ability to take action offline and online (petitions, etc.). Offline organizing was very tedious before Facebook, now I just click an event (Kleon, personal communication, March 31, 2012).

In terms of reaching a wider audience across geographical boundaries Facebook can potentially encourage offline mobilization in different territories close to each other. Thus, people living in Kentucky can attend rallies in Ohio and so on, as in the case of Hawaii:

> Without Facebook we would not know. It is especially important here (in Hawaii)…I know that here in Hawaii is very important because if you are not here you probably can't understand that there is a kind of isolation between the different islands. There is a news, news channel, all the news channels..news papers, but before this event in October…there was really no interaction between the different islands about all these things going on. I remember back in 2005, 2006, I knew about the protests in Honolulu, but there was a distance. Now with these groups coming to Facebook, there is really an interaction. They know about it, we know about it. They create an incentive to go over there. I know some people who went over (Hermes, personal communication, April 6)

Isolation among geographical territories, especially in a country like the United States can hinder movements, as they rely on local information and support to advance their goals. With the advancement of technology, especially the web, coalitions can be made that revamp movements and organizations in such a way to create a global awareness. GMO issues are discussed on Facebook among users from different countries. The exchange of information helps activists to understand the issue from a variety of points of views, strengthening their arguments and strategy to advance social change. The spread

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of online information also encourages new coalitions to join events nearby as in the case of Hermes (2012),

> For the people who are on Facebook is definitely an advantage to get the word out ahead of time if something is happening or if there is a petition that needs to be signed or circulated or specially here in Hawaii it is a tremendous advantage because we are so scattered in four, five islands over here. (personal communication, April 6)

The multi dimensions of Facebook, based on the structure of the medium, make it clear that understanding social movements through social media is complex and requires both new modes of research methods and an intricate evaluation of connections among social networks, both online and offline. The social medium has several advantages offline, breaking geographical boundaries that are pertaining to a specific physical location. In addition, Facebook fosters social networks offline with heterogeneous individuals who are not affiliated to the movement.

6.7 Discussion and Conclusion

> I read about Facebook and Google and there is no doubt that they track too much stuff. It is a major privacy violation. And there is no doubt in my mind that the government has their fingers in it to sort of keep track of who is doing what. I think that if the government or anyone wants to know enough about me it would have not been that hard to find it anyway. So this way, I am taking it and using it for what I want. And the reason I know it works it's because I have a lot of family members who have switched to organics to switching using natural pads, who messaged me on the side and ask me why I am against this or why about that. I saw that and that. And you are totally right. The people I have attracted in my life and whom I have turned on to be aware of GMOs food and the dangers of vaccine and stuff like … that I feel for me I made it so the good outweighs the bad and I am not that kind of person who can be silent. (Agape, personal communication, March 31)

The role of social media in the R2R can be understood in relation to social networks that are formed both offline and online. In the R2R, the online involvement on the event page of Facebook built alliances that extended outside the realm of the web. Users met offline, exchanged personal information, and switched to more personal modes of communication such as phones, e-mails, and face-to-face meetings. Participants of the R2R events indicated that Facebook fosters mobilization online and offline by creating coalitions online that move outside the virtual world. These ties become long-term

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relations, which provide new incentives for more events. In addition, offline events that were initiated on Facebook provide outlets to recruit new followers; bystanders who are not part of any particular GMO event page on Facebook. Events organized on the web that merged offline were incentives for new recruits. These new social ties can branch out both online and offline, by joining Facebook groups on GMO's or talking to their personal circle of friends in geographical proximity about societal issues. Social networks become a fundamental element for shaping and advancing the cause of the movement. Social ties deepen both in weak and strong circle of ties. The immediacy of socialization and communication via Facebook with those individuals met at the R2R was also evident when conducting research:

> I told my friend I had an interview, "you should talk to her." Oh Ginger? I already talked to her. Socrates is one of the people who contacted me and we really became good friends. We ended up meeting at each other houses. We connected. We send book letters to each other about our experience on how we got into this. You just do become friends with these people. I think it is definitely for the good to find spirits who are like you. So you don't feel you are wasting your time. (Agape, personal communication, March 31)

The quote points at ways in which Facebook promotes the creation of bonds and dissemination of information. At the research level, it was helpful for recruitment purposes to have Agape mentioning the researcher name to Socrates who then confirmed she had already engaged with the researcher. Their exchange of information helped build credibility, providing a friendly environment for interviews and possible new participants within their circle of friends on Facebook. The establishment of bonds through Facebook also facilitates solidarity and understanding of the issue:

> When I first started putting this stuff together and I tried desperately to prove this stuff wrong I went through a really serious depression. I had to call some of my friends that I didn't know very well but were into this stuff and they seemed to be handling it much better than me…This is why I set up a rally every few months, is by doing that. It is like a drug. I set up a rally. Ten to 20 people show up. Sometimes more. I feel that with all these honks, all these people think," what would make people sit up in a curb and tell you about it." It has to be good. I hand out flyers, I had friends asking if I think this makes a difference and I am like, "hell yeah it is making a difference." Can you see it? Can you count it? And even if it makes no difference at all. I feel amazing during and after those things. (Agape, personal communication, March 31).

The example of Agape and Socrates also highlights the need for solidarity, which is fostered by the medium and ongoing interaction online and offline. In this regard, Facebook functions as a space for support, coalition building, exchange of opinion and strategic planning. The data in this chapter reveled that Facebook was initially used to encourage offline mobilization. In this way, social media created incentive to take action both collectively and individually. However, while Facebook was utilized to create offline participation, more traditional modes of communication were also integrated among those who participated in the rally. For these reasons, the social medium generates two types of action: (1) online and (2) offline, targeting different audiences from a wide range of weak and strong ties within individuals' Facebook profiles as well as the R2R event page. Facebook provides new outlets to take action.

In response to the research question on *how does Facebook affect social networks necessary to civic engagement?* one can say that the structure of Facebook facilitates coalitions among strong and weak ties. Social media like Facebook provide channels of interaction among people who are like-minded and/or are willing to take some sort of action whether collectively or individually. The R2R case suggested that Facebook enables both attendees and non-attendees to participate, to be involved, and act toward a common cause. As noted during the analysis, it is not fundamental to have a priori relationship with activists in order to accomplish tasks related to a rally. Facebook serves as a platform to execute what needs to be done, by engaging with users. Social networks are fundamental both in online and offline settings. During the Robert Kennedy workshop on social media and the Arab revolution held in Florence in 2012, activists noted how Facebook was a supplemental tool to increase recruits, pointing at how face-to-face networks were still at the base of the revolution. The R2R case illustrates a divergent point. While it is still necessary to establish social networks both online and offline, Facebook was used in response to an absence of physical local networks. The case of Vittoria highlights the fact that certain issues like GMOs that do not generate a mass appeal in certain communities, require citizens to employ communication strategies to find like-minded people (e.g. use of social media). Thus, initially social ties are built online, floating between two worlds.

The R2R event page was not a rally organized offline. On the contrary, it initiated on the web. The Millions Against campaign was originally launched by the Organic Consumers Association, which is a virtual not-for-profit association. Citizens then used social media to pitch in, to fill the gaps in their local communities, thus, Facebook was utilized to find like-minded people initially in a specific geographical area. However, information posted on the R2R event pages attracted users who belonged to different cities and countries who joined conversations around GMO issues. Thus, generating credibility for the event and expanding the movement globally.

The three main arguments of this chapter revolved around the impact of Facebook on offline mobilization. In this regard, it was found that Facebook creates online participation by allowing non-attendees to still be involved with planning of the protests. Subsequentially, those who attended the demonstration were able to connect with individuals outside the spectrum of the R2R event page on Facebook, informing them on the issues and encouraging them to visit the web for additional information. Despite the limitations of Facebook, which consists of the inaccuracy of tracking functions, the advantages of the social medium outweigh the disadvantages. The nature of the medium, which operates through social networks allow the movement to expand both online and offline within strong and weak ties, within activists and bystanders. 'Temporary activists,' can support friends' causes, by calling them to ask for clarification on GMO issues, or by shopping consciously. This type of action maintains and flourishes the movement. In this regard, online action flourishes offline participation both at the individual and collective level.

In terms of limitations, the options Facebook offers to track attendees are not reliable as invitees to an event are automatically considered attendees. In addition, certain individuals who posted on the R2R event pages, asking for transportation and expressing their willingness to join the cause did not always follow what they had initially indicated. Agape's case illustrates that despite her effort to contact a user who needed a ride, the individual did not manage to connect with Agape. The lack of tracking functions and the unreliability to base understanding of social media and social movements solely on qualitative content analysis of posts suggest a need to develop new modes of research. Thus, in answering the last research question, *How does the structure of Facebook affect*

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research in social media movements?, this chapter argues to utilize a triangulation of research methodology, specifically focusing on a combination of qualitative content analysis and in-depth interviews. This chapter recommends scholars to consider how social media affect research approaches and vice versa. As a matter of fact, during the Robert Kennedy workshop, Dina Matar, Chair of Center and Media Film Studies for SOAS, University of London, argues that scholars are limited in their understanding of social movements and social media and that scholars need to develop new empirical research methods.

This chapter concludes the analysis of the data collected through the R2R event pages on Facebook as well as interviews conducted with selected participants. Through the application of Habermas' s concept of the public sphere, Castells's network analysis, and literature on leadership in social movements, these chapters attempted to understand the delicate relationship between online activism and offline mobilization. The last chapter has consolidated the concept of credibility, leadership, and inclusive discussion, discussing how these factors influence action both at the online and offline level. What follows in the conclusion of this dissertation is an epilogue of the analysis as well literature review suggesting where to take research on social media movements next.

CHAPTER VII

CONCLUSION

7.1 Introduction

"The opportunity for media access and the ability to control some aspect of media content translates to political power" (Alexander, Ball-Rokeach, and Cantor, 1986, p. 18).

As this research comes to an end it must be noted that the fight in requiring the government to impose food labeling on GMOs products is continuing. Advocates from the state of California have successfully collected more than half million signatures through rallies and campaigns allowing the issue of labeling to be included in the November ballot. According to Burke (2012), "If the measure passes, it will be the first law nationwide to require labeling of such a wide range of GMO foods. It would require most processed foods by 2014 to bear a label informing consumers that they contain ingredients derived from plants whose DNA was manipulated" (para, 6-8). If the measure passes it will also set a precedent in the legal apparatus that could facilitate labeling in other states across the United States.

Through an aggressive campaign against GMOs, consumer-citizens are expressing and exercising their political agency. Activists' operations are implemented utilizing a variety of strategies, including social media, which allow ordinary citizens to contest mainstream practices imposed by corporations or the government. As noted by Langman (2005), "Today, the significant political struggles that resist and contest neoliberal globalization are mediated across electronic networks that allow unprecedented opportunities for the exchange of information outside of the control of the dominant media corporations" (Langman, 2005, p. 44; Kellner, 2004). In response to the commercialization of mainstream media, consumers rely on alternative forms of communication to receive or/and share information relevant to a cause/issue. Social media are unique in the way they facilitate flow of information because they rely on a web of networks made out of individuals across the globe. Individuals become their own anchormen. Langman (2005) notes, "Information can now flow across communication

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networks to allow broad exchanges between large numbers of actors, creating rich possibilities for democratic interaction" (Langman, 2005, p. 44; Rheingold, 2002). Social media are quick, convenient, easy to operate, and have the potential to reach a wide range of audiences. They represent the potential to express freedom of speech, fundamental for democracy.

In the context of the R2R, Facebook has provided the infrastructure for people to practice democracy. Applying Habermas and Castells' work on the public sphere and network analysis, as well as selected scholarship on leadership and social movements, this dissertation explored how ordinary citizens utilize Facebook to mobilize online and offline. Selecting the case study was vital for the understanding of social media and social movements because of the fast pace growth of GMO movements online and offline. As data was collected during a period of 6 months between 2011 and 2012, more GMO groups on Facebook had emerged. In addition, the following states, "New York, Oregon, Maryland, Vermont and Washington (are) considering legislation that supports labeling of GMO foods" (McCamy, 2012, para. 5-7). As the Occupy Wall Street movement took shape in the United States, new forms of discourse around GMOs emerged now linked to a discussion of economy and consolidation of food industry. The proliferation of GMO movements is important because it can lead to a change in policy and opportunities for citizens to exercise their political rights. These days more than ever Americans are concerned with what they eat. Consequently, they are more active in being part of the processes of policy of productions, distribution, and consumption. This is evident by the fact that 95% of Americans expressed the desire to have GMOs food labeling. What makes this percentage even more relevant is the fact that multiple surveys were conducted by different entities (e.g. newspapers, consumers' agencies) all reporting similar findings. With a growing interest for food and social movements, the case of the R2R is vital in understanding how social media impact the way citizens engage in political participation.

This study focused on the role of new communication technology in providing an alternative tool to mobilize. Given that currently there are "901 million monthly active users" ("Facebook traffic," 2012) on Facebook, in general, this dissertation explored the role of Facebook in fostering or challenging Habermas's concept of the public sphere.

Then, this manuscript provided a new understanding of social movements' leaders. Last, this research illuminated readers by explaining how Facebook was utilized to mobilize online and offline. This study is significant because it illustrated the adaptation of new technology to advance democracy, to foster a space in which individuals can engage in civic discussions. This study also showed a need for scholars to study social media as they pertain to social movements to understand the evolution of these movements, providing insights on how past theories must be updated. It is through the exploration of current use of social media and social movements that progress can be made at the theoretical, methodological, and practical level, both for the evolvement of scholarship and activists.

To provide an overview of the major findings, this chapter first offers a discussion on the significance of the study within the context of the R2R and within a broader context of social movements. The section is divided based on theoretical, methodological, and practical implications of the study. Each category offers an explanation of the major contributions of the research for scholarship in the field of communication and collective action. Next, a discussion on limitations and future research is addressed pointing at obstacles during the collection of the data. Last, a special note is included to dwell on the experience of writing this dissertation.

7.2 Significance and Implications of this Study

On October 16, 2011, ordinary citizens protested on the streets of their local communities, demanding the government to introduce GMOs food labeling. A look into the R2R illustrated that these rallies were initiated and organized on the web, months prior to the actual offline demonstration. Facebook was used as a platform to: (1) find people like-minded; (2) diffuse information about GMOs; (3) discuss issues; and (4) sort out the logistics for the rally. This dissertation, however, revealed that Facebook's functions go beyond the above four elements. The social medium offers new opportunities for individuals to perform leadership roles. All of this is important because it presents the complexity of using Facebook to mobilize. Understanding the impact of Facebook in mobilizing an audience requires the exploration of many factors that incise on the success or failure of social media as tools for activism. What follows is a

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description of the theoretical, methodological, and practical implications of this research on the understanding of social media and social movements.

7.2.1 Theoretical Implications

This dissertation employed Habermas's notion of the public sphere, Castells's social network analysis, and literature review on leadership in social movements. Each theory was applied to answer the research questions posed at the beginning of this manuscript. Based on this theoretical framework and the analysis of the data two terms were introduced: (1) ethos sphere; and (2) social media leaders. The latter revolves around the notion that individuals who have a profile on Facebook have the opportunities to use it as a media outlet to circulate information through their existing network. Each ethos sphere belongs to multiple public spheres, whether in the form of a group or event page. Social media leaders are leading figures that emerge on Facebook via event or group pages. These leaders connect users to the cause of a movement through a process of social network interactivity, building coalitions among weak and strong ties.

To derive to these terms the work of Habermas, Castells, and existing scholarship on leadership was used. This broader context within the literature helped illustrating gaps in the existing research on social movements and mass media, as well as it helped providing new directions for theoretical approaches. One of the major contributions of this dissertation lies in getting scholars to offer new theorizing for understanding social movements and social media. In fact, an adjacent contribution to the scholarship is having combined theories among different disciplines into new communication technology- social media. Langman (2005) notes, "These new kinds of Internet-based social movements are fundamentally new and require new kinds of theorizing" (Langman, p. 44), continuing:

> These movements cannot easily be understood within existing frameworks. The new realities of "network society" mandate rethinking social mobilization…Computer-proficient organizers have become highly skilled in the use of the Internet to enable new forms of "internetworking." New forms of fluid "mobilizing structures" enable various moments of "cyberactivism": mobilization and political actions such as consumer boycott" (Langman, 2005, p. 45).

It was 2005 when Langman stated the need to develop new theories that would understand the relation of Internet communication and social movements. At that moment,

Facebook had just emerged (2004) and access was restricted to American college students. Twitter did not exist, and MySpace was slowly becoming less popular. His observations were correct and applicable to social media. Facebook, based on networks, has created a new society, in which heterogeneous people can gather together around a common cause to discuss issues, learn, exchange ideas, and implement strategies. Forms of online coalitions offer new incentives for activism. Anyone who is passionate about a cause can participate. Thus, one can say that social media provide opportunities for citizens to be active in political participation, because it alters human communication. For this reason, new theories must be developed to consider parameters and conditions that did not exist prior to social media.

With the introduction of ethos sphere, this dissertation provided an emerging perspective in the development and evolution of scholarship that relates to social media and social movements. Habermas's (1981) work on the public sphere and ideal speech served as background to reveal whether new communication technology posits challenges to the normative approach of Habermas; or whether social media reinforce the notion of a public sphere. This study makes it clear that the fluidity of Facebook and it users cannot follow the rigid parameters set by Habermas. Verma and Shin (2004) argued that Castells's less rigid approach to understanding cultures and societies can replace Habermas' s normative model when studying new phenomena, in this case Facebook and the R2R. The nature of Facebook and the analysis of the data collected in this case study point at a refiguration of the definition of public sphere. In the context of the R2R, language is fundamental and constructive debate becomes an important tool to understand issues, challenge dominant discourse, and encourage offline participation. Users of the R2R circulate GMO news through their private channels through a web of connections that can potentially extend to the global level. These profiles are nonetheless that ethos spheres. Individuals are their own editors and gatekeepers. They post information to share with their audiences. Circulation is based on their networks. If an individual belongs to multiple micro-spheres (groups, events), their posts could potentially reach outside their ethos spheres. Thus, ethos spheres are connected to micro and global spheres within Facebook. Ethos spheres allow the creation of new bonds, identities, and political participation, which can result in mobilization. This new

dimension of the public sphere comes during a growing period of food uncertainty as well economic instability in the United States. Social media have become to play a fundamental role during this time of turmoil because they allow citizens to express their opinions and take some type of action. Chapter 4 argued that new modes of human communication have emerged due to the structure of Facebook. Social media can serve as supplemental tools for activists to diffuse information, recruit, or/and organize demonstrations offline. These types of media serve as modern forum to encourage civic engagement through messages, audios, videos, and pictures.

In regard to social media leaders, the R2R case illustrated the importance of social networks in defining new leaders. Through interactions on Facebook with other users, individuals have the opportunities to perform leading tasks and build credibility, necessary to be regarded as a leader and gain followers. Much of the discussion of chapter 4 and 5 revolved around this notion of authenticity/credibility, which is dependable on respect, clarity of communication, and channel used to communicate (e.g. audio, link, pictures). Claims are considered reliable if they prove to be deriving from true facts. Leaders are perceived credible if they provide useful and reliable information, immediately.

Another point discussed in chapter 5 relied on a link between online and offline leaders. Those who took the initiative to perform leading tasks online carry their duties offline, even if the intention was to remain exclusively a web leader. The volatility of serving as a leading figure for movements that are based online is complex. On one hand, the heterogeneity of these individuals (e.g. mothers, web designers, retirees) can be beneficial to legitimate problem-solving, for the "organization of politically-oriented activity, and for understanding the role of technology and the capacities that technology can offer" (Schussman & Earl, 2004; p. 458). On the other hand, busy mothers can provide help sporadically. This dissertation has contributed to the ongoing leadership scholarship by showing that despite the decentralization of leadership online, individuals are prompted to take leading roles, even if they can't attend physically a demonstration. The utility of social media leaders is that it addresses the potential for anybody to serve as a leader through the interactivity of networks, meaning that Facebook facilitates the creation of a leading society. However, it was observed that individuals to be perceived

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as frontrunners must possess certain qualities, including communication skills and immediacy in responding to users' demands. A major contribution of this dissertation is the expansion of the scattered literature on leadership and social movements. In particular, this dissertation adds to the current scholarship focusing on the role of social media in fostering frontrunners. The typology of chapter 5 offers scholars a new way of looking at leadership in today dynamic social movements.

The last chapter of this chapter focused on understanding the relation between online activism and offline mobilization. The chapter argued that Facebook impacts offline action under certain circumstances. These conditions are contingent to previous discussions on leadership and the role of the social medium as a public sphere. First, Facebook provides for an inclusive and open space in which individuals can come together to discuss issues and find solutions to a problem. In the case of the R2R, people expressed their discontent on the current regulatory apparatus, seeking to protest in their local communities on October 16, 2011. Given a forum for civic engagement, it is up to the individual to step up as leader or follower, building alliance and partnership among other users. These online ties are important because they can result in offline participation or as Castells (2001) calls it, 'networked social movement.' Individuals who met online for the first time, met offline, strengthening their relations and invigorating the movement. In addition, offline demonstrations attracted new recruits, bystanders who walked by the rally, curious to be informed. These new offline followers added to the social network of the R2R, because they were encouraged to go online to learn more about the cause. In this way, action floats between the virtual and physical world, expanding the already established network of activists. Facebook facilitates the expansion of the movement both online and offline. As Harlow (2011) observes in his essay, "Rather than simply using Facebook as a forum for talking about justice or criticizing the government, users instead posted comments to mobilize an online and offline movement, organize protests, showcase photos of protests, and actively show their support for the movement" (p. 15). Second, for Facebook to encourage offline action, individuals must step in as leading figures, but they need to use clear communication, providing immediate feedback. In the absence of these conditions, offline protests can fail to take place.

Interactivity among social ties remains fundamental for the success of a movement's rally.

The significance of these findings is that it addresses the question scholars pose about the impact of social media for offline mobilization. It is clear that Facebook affects mobilization online and offline. In regard to offline action, the social medium creates new incentives to participate, helping sorting through the logistics of planning a rally, but also establishing coalitions among users and possibly attendees. While Facebook should not be used as the only tool to incite action offline, one can say that it is a supplemental instrument that increases the number of attendees both at the local and global level. In this way, the role of social media is fundamental because it allows "Social movements (to) escape(d) their confinement in the fragmented space of places and seize(d) the global space of flows, while not virtualizing themselves to death, keeping their local experience and the landing sites of their struggle as the material foundation of their ultimate goal: the restoration of meaning in the new space/time of our existence, made of both flows, places and their interaction" (Castells, 2007, p. 250). Social media invigorates movements and keep them alive by the meaningful interactivity of its users.

7.2.2 Methodological Implications

The second major contribution of this dissertation is contingent to the lack of current literature on the role of social media and social movements and focuses specifically on methodology. As I was writing this dissertation and attending workshops on social media and activism in the United States and Europe it was apparent the gap between scholars and activists and the need for professors to devote more attention to understanding social media activism. In this regard, there are two points this dissertation wanted to make. First, this dissertation argued the need to develop new research methods for studying new communication technology and social movements. Chapter 6 particularly contended that to provide a broader understanding of the subject matter, multiple research methods must be applied. Hence, it is not enough to rely on qualitative or quantitative content analysis of posts appearing on Facebook. The reason is because posts do not guarantee the participation of citizens to offline demonstrations. Thus, scholars cannot assess the impact of Facebook on offline mobilization accurately. For example, Harlow (2011) explored the role of Facebook in offline protests during the

Guatemala justice movement based on the posts. Interactivity between the virtual and offline world "were determined by whether the comment was a 'response' to another comment, whether other users 'liked' the comment, and whether the user acted as a citizen journalist, such as by posting eye-witness accounts" (p. 13). As the findings of this dissertation revealed, relying solely on messages posits limitations to the understanding of the impacts of Facebook on offline mobilization. The tracking function of Facebook is limited, given that when an individual joins an event, he/she is automatically considered an 'attendee.' To fully understand the relation between social media and mobilization, scholars must interview members of a movement who use Facebook as a tool to advance their causes. They also need to engage with those people who utilize social media and attend protests offline. After all, much of the success of social media for social movements relies on individuals' use of communication technology. Thus, there is a need to understand from the perspective of the user why Facebook fosters or hinders action. The second point, which is contingent to the latter argument, stresses the need to establish a relation between activists and scholars. Chapter 6 emphasized the importance of social networks in building alliances, but it also mentioned how these bonds among users can facilitate scholars' recruitment of participants, while building trust. The necessity to establish a relationship between activists and scholars was also evident outside the context of the R2R. During the Robert Kennedy Foundation's workshop on social media and the Arab revolution held in Florence on June 2012, the gap between professors and activists was blatant. Scholars were criticized for theorizing digital activism; while activists were confined by their unidimensional use of social media pertaining to one case.

7.2.3 Practical Implications

Studying social media and social movements offers practical implications both for activists and scholars. Embedded in the idea that research aims to fuse theory into practice, this dissertation offers to the understanding of ordinary citizens who engage in activism. First, this dissertation can be constructive for activists. Social movements' organizers can use this study as a resource to learn and advance strategy for mobilization. As Clementina (2012) noted during the interview, "it was helpful (when talking to the researcher) to think about our strategy once again as we launch the Occupy Monsanto

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campaign" (personal communication, March 30, 2012). This study becomes to be a measure of assessment of social media within social movements organizations. With the lack of financial resources many activists are faced with challenges when understanding the impact of campaigns. Scholars can help fill the gap by providing information that is applicable to the world of activism and social change. In this way, scholarship, which carries knowledge, becomes a catalyst in the evolution of social change, as Coopman (2008) says, "all scholarship serves some purpose to further knowledge," which can be used to lead social change (p. 174). Many of the people interviewed expressed interest in reading the dissertation as it might illustrate them what needs to be improved for future demonstrations. The Organic Consumers Association can utilize this study to have a better understanding on non-members who still take part of campaigns launched by the organization. The study is also practical as it provides an identity-kit of who is concerned and willing to take action at the online and offline level. In addition, this dissertation is significant for social movements because it offers a discussion on the limitations of Facebook in mobilizing. These obstacles can be taken in consideration to develop and implement new strategies more efficient and effective.

A last contribution of the practicality of this research lies on strengthening the relation between scholars and activists. Based on Coopman (2008) and personal observation from the Robert Kennedy foundation workshop (2012) there still a gap between theory (academia) and practicality (activists). Coopman (2008) mentioned that it is even more problematic to the existing tension the dual role scholars play, meaning that being a participant of a movement can affect credibility and trust among members of that organization or movement. This dissertation is a honest attempt to provide a meaningful and practical resource for citizens who are taking their first steps as activists, as well as well established organizations like the OCA that might be overwhelmed by the work and hence might benefit from independent research on the impact of Facebook on their campaigns.

Second, for those who have been looking to further the scholarship on social change due to new media, this research has provided new perspectives, opening opportunities for scholars. By relying on the notion of fusing theory into practice, scholars have now opportunities to carry their knowledge outside the realm of academia.

These specialists can become consultants for companies or organizations that strive to make a difference in the world. But they can also provide their services to corporations who are seeking experts in the sector of new communication technology. All of this is significant. Habermas's concept of the public sphere and Castells's social network analysis become part of a system that drives the economy and social change. Linking both bridges together offers hope to ameliorate the world in which we live by infiltrating the system with scholarly work that is usually limited to the walls of academia.

7.3 Limitations of Study and Future Research

While this dissertation provides scholars with a new perspective on how to approach studying social media and social movements, this study also faced challenges at the methodological level. First, Facebook was used to recruit possible participants. Selected individuals were contacted via Facebook e-mail. What I did not know until I talked to few respondents is that if one is not a direct 'friend,' e-mails are sent to a subcategory under 'messages,' called 'other.' This section groups conversations that range from invitations to events to e-mails from unknown people. As of today, July 6, 2012, I received responses from users who just now read my invitation to participate in the study. This is a problem with the way Facebook categorizes correspondence.

Second, among 200 individuals contacted for possibly participating in the study, 30 (15%) responded and 15 (7.5%) were interviewed. The low response number could be associated to the problem of e-mail distribution mentioned above. Other reasons merged by talking to participants included skepticism, conflict of schedule, no interest, and low use of social media. One person was initially reluctance in taking part of the study, because she believed I was funded by Monsanto. In particular, she thought that the department of communication was financially dependable on Monsanto and hence I was hired to monitor activists' moves against the company. For future studies, I suggest to include in the letter of invitation a clause stipulating that there are no connections between the researcher and Monsanto or any other biotechnology companies. The implications of such low response is directly related to the representativeness of the phenomenon. As Coopman (2008) notes, "when researching highly distributed networks, that sampling may not yield an accurate picture of the phenomenon. A more time and resource-intensive analysis is needed in order to obtain an accurate view of the

characteristics of the network's nodes and to make generalizations about the data." (p. 173). In the case of the R2R, more time would have possibly generated a higher response rate. However, it was never my intention to generalize the findings for the following reason. Social media are complex to analyze in relation to social movements because they are dynamic. They are based on social bonds among heterogonous individuals who are fluid in the ways they use and operate social media. Each individual utilize the medium without a set of rules and/or skills. Movements can emerge and die quickly; event or group pages can attract a wide range of people with different backgrounds (e.g. culture, status, gender). To attempt to generalize findings to the concept of social media and mobilization would require placing the subject within a specific context. The context of the virtual world is dynamic and in an ongoing evolution. It is unlikable that I would get the same exact findings if my case study was different (e.g. green movement, the Tea Party movement). However, the contribution of my case study illustrates the complexity of understanding Facebook and social movements, pushing scholars to continuing studying single case study in relation to social media. This is how a new solid theoretical framework adaptable to new media can be generated. At the Robert Kennedy Foundation workshop on social media and the Arab revolution, while exchanging my findings with activists, a divergence of results was noted based on case studies. While the Egyptian revolution was mostly based on face-to-face interactions, the case of the R2R illustrated that technology was used not only to build new partnerships, but to move these new networks offline. Facebook provided the ability for individuals to take action both from the comfort of their homes, or on the streets of their local community. As Coopman (2008) notes, "Rather than simple hyperbole or utopian technology fetishism, the ability of people to participate in the broader issues of the world with relative ease from their own homes, work, or increasingly on the street provides the opportunity and means for a fundamental shift away from business as usual" (p. 171). The need for more scholars to study the role of social media in social movements remains fundamental to understand the practicality of research on collective action and new media.

7.4 Final Note

We live during complex times, during which technological advancement in communication has created a new society, made out of networks that travel across the

world. The phenomenon of social media illustrates that we cannot obscure the impact these new media have on both the younger and older generations. Our children learn to communicate through iPads with their numerous applications including Facebook, Instagram, or Twitter. At the same time, businesses have adapted to these new trends, influencing what it means for example to conduct journalism, or public relations. In the same way, this new communication technology have allowed ordinary citizens to be frontrunners despite their busy schedules or timid personalities, because the virtual world offers the perception of being a protected world. As Alexander, Ball-Rokeach, & Cantor, (1986) noted, "all individuals or groups seeking to maintain or to acquire power in modern society must concern themselves with media relations" (p. 19). With this dissertation I do not claim that Facebook is a direct positive catalyst for social change and democracy. I am not naïve to omit an understanding of how new media have limited our privacy. We have allowed technology to be more open, to give access to who we are in our homes and homes, including our political views. This openness is subject to marketing tracking, which can at the end hinder our citizens' rights. However, we have this technology and we are using it. The question then revolves about how can citizens utilize new communication technology to their advantage. This research has shown that alternative media offer new outlets for anyone to assure democracy will always remain in the United States, specifically they provide tools to become active producers of social change.

APPENDIX A

Human Subjects Approval

Florida State
U N I V E R S I T Y

Office of the Vice President for Research
Human Subjects Committee
Tallahassee, Florida 32306-2742
(850) 644-8673 · FAX (850) 644-4392

APPROVAL MEMORANDUM

Date: 02/28/2012

To: Ginevra Adamoli <ga04e@my.fsu.edu>

Address: 2664 (mail code) or 3122 UCC Communication 32306

Dept.:   COMMUNICATION

From: Thomas L. Jacobson, Chair

Re: Use of Human Subjects in Research
    Social Media and Social Movements: A critical analysis of audience's use of Facebook to advocate food activism
    offline

The application that you submitted to this office in regard to the use of human subjects in the proposal
referenced above have been reviewed by the Secretary, the Chair, and two members of the Human Subjects
Committee. Your project is determined to be Expedited per 45 CFR § 46.110(7)   and has been approved
by an expedited review process.

The Human Subjects Committee has not evaluated your proposal for scientific merit, except to weigh the risk to
the human participants and the aspects of the proposal related to potential risk and benefit. This approval does
not replace any departmental or other approvals, which may be required.

If you submitted a proposed consent form with your application, the approved stamped consent form is attached
to this approval notice. Only the stamped version of the consent form may be used in recruiting research
subjects.

If the project has not been completed by 02/25/2013   you must request a renewal of approval for continuation of
the project. As a courtesy, a renewal notice will be sent to you prior to your expiration date; however, it is your
responsibility as the Principal Investigator to timely request renewal of your approval from the Committee.

You are advised that any change in protocol for this project must be reviewed and approved by the Committee
prior to implementation of the proposed change in the protocol. A protocol change/amendment form is required
to be submitted for approval by the Committee. In addition, federal regulations require that the Principal
Investigator promptly report, in writing any unanticipated problems or adverse events involving risks to
research subjects or others.

By copy of this memorandum, the chairman of your department and/or your major professor is reminded that
he/she is responsible for being informed concerning research projects involving human subjects in the
department, and should review protocols as often as needed to insure that the project is being conducted in
compliance with our institution and with DHHS regulations.

This institution has an Assurance on file with the Office for Human Research Protection. The Assurance
Number is IRB00000446.

Cc: Andrew Opel <aopel@fsu.edu>, Advisor
HSC No. 2012.7702

Study Information Sheet for contacting possible Recruits on Facebook

Table 1: Introduction Page
Greetings, I am a communication graduate student from Florida State University and am asking for your help. I am conducting a study on the role of Facebook in increasing online and offline mobilization for social causes that revolve around food issues. I would like to include you. If you are passionate about food issues and you participated in any of the Right to Know rally online or offline consider being part of my study. Interviews will be conducted over the phone or by e-mail if preferred. Interviews over the phone can range from 45 minutes to 60 minutes. Participation is voluntary, and all results are confidential to the extent allowed by the law. Completion of the interview is implied consent to use the data you have provided. You must be at least 18 years of age to participate. The data will be stored under lock and key on file on campus until one year after the study has been completed. All e-mail correspondence will be kept confidential and will be destroyed one year after the study has been completed. If you have any questions, please contact The Florida State University IRB at (850) 644-7900 (humansubjects@magnet.fsu.edu) located at 2010 Levy Avenue Suite 276-C, Tallahassee, FL 32306-2743. So we can contact you online at a later date, could you give me your email address? Your email address will NOT be given, sold or otherwise made available to anyone else, or used for any reason except to contact you for a public opinion survey. Thank you.

Study Information Sheet for Interview

[Social Media and Social Movements: A critical analysis of audience's use of

Facebook to advocate food activism offline]

You have been contacted to participate in a research study. The purpose of the study is to gather information about how Facebook is used in regards to food movements. You have been selected because you have expressed interest to be furthered interviewed.

INFORMATION
You participation in the study consists of participating in a phone conversation or email interview via Facebook for the duration of 45 minutes up to 60 minutes. You will be asked questions about your experience and perspectives about using Facebook in the context of the "Right to Know" rally launched by the Organic Consumers Association. The interview will be transcribed verbatim for analytical purposes. The transcriptions will be destroyed by August 2014.

BENEFITS
This is an opportunity for you to voice your perspectives on the use of social media to mobilize food movements, with specific regards to GMOs issues. This research hopes to produce output that can be used to improve current activists' strategies and tactics in changing social and political reform.

CONFIDENTIALITY
To respect and protect participants' privacy, real names, as well as Facebook names will not be used in any of the reports resulting from this study. Instead, pseudonyms will replaced real names. In addition, when collecting and recording data, coding will be used to refer to real names. These data will be kept locked in the researcher's office. Furthermore, data will be destroyed August 2014.

CONTACT
If you have any questions, please contact the researcher. You may also contact The Florida State University IRB at (850) 644-7900 (humansubjects@magnet.fsu.edu) located at 2010 Levy Avenue Suite 276-C, Tallahassee, FL 32306-2743.

PARTICIPATION
You are volunteering to participate in this study. If at any time, you feel you want to terminate the interview, please let the researcher know. No penalties will be attributed.

CONSENT OF RECORDING FOR PHONE INTERVIEW ONLY
By accepting to participate in the study you are consenting to the recording of the phone interview for collecting/research purposes. If you do not accept these terms please tell the researcher in advance and other arrangements can be discussed.

Information Sheet Date: October 12, 2011

Interview questions

Hello. I want to start thanking for your participation in this study. The interview can take from 45 minutes to 60 minutes. I will be asking you questions about your use and perspectives on Facebook as it pertains to the "Right to Know" rally. If you can't understand a question please let me know so that I can clarify any confusion.

A. Questions Regarding Involvement with the Right to Know rally

1. Please tell me which Right to Know rally event page(s) you are a friend or 'like.'

2. Did you indicate on Facebook that you were attending the Right to Know rally?

3. Did you attend the rally? If 'yes,' why? If 'no,' why?

4. If answer is yes: Did you use Facebook to get directions to attend the rally? If 'yes,' how did you get this information? Posting on the wall? Were they already on the page?

B. Questions Regarding use of Facebook to engage in discussion about the Right to Know rally or food issues

1. How did you find out about the rally in the first place? (e.g. face-to-face, phone, e-mail)
2. What did you do after you find out about the rally? (e.g. talked to a friend about it, share information via e-mail, Facebook).
3. How did you use Facebook in regards to the Right to Know rally?
4. Did you post a message on Facebook?
5. Did you respond to any of the posts on Facebook? If 'yes', do you remember the topic? If 'no,' why not?
6. Did you engage in multiple discussions online with a specific person? Why 'yes,' why 'no'
7. Did you have problems finding the location of the rally?
8. Was the event well promoted on Facebook?
9. Could have been improved? How?
10. In your opinion, was Facebook helpful in any way for the promotion of the rally?

C. Questions Regarding Leadership Role on Facebook

1. Do you consider yourself a leader? If 'yes' why, if 'no' why?
2. How did you help with the organization of the Right to Know rally?
3. Did you provide directions online on how to get there?
4. Did you offer a car ride to somebody who did not have a car communicating on Facebook?

5. Did you print flyers from Facebook?
6. Did you encourage online users to attend?
7. Other?

D. Questions Regarding Facebook as a Public Sphere

1. Did you feel you could freely discuss food issues on the Facebook pages of the Right to Know rally? If 'yes,' why; if 'no,' why
2. Did you reply to comments with other users that you do not personally and physically know?
3. Did you feel the conversations on the Right to Know rally pages on Facebook helped understanding the issues around GMOs and possible solutions to these issues? If 'yes,' why; if 'no,' why?
4. Did you keep in touch with any of the users you met online? If 'yes,' how did you keep in touch (e.g. via Facebook, phone, face-to-face)

E. Questions Regarding Use of Facebook as an Empowering Tool for Civic Engagement

1. Do you think Facebook has facilitated your involvement with the rally? If 'yes,' in your opinion how has Facebook impacted the Right to Know rally? If 'no,' why?
2. Do you think Facebook has empowered your ability to be more involved with issues that are important to you? If 'yes,' how and why? If 'no,' why?
3. Has Facebook impacted you ability to take action offline? If 'yes' how, if 'no,' why?
4. What online action on Facebook do you usually participate in (e.g. e-lobbying, e-petition, e-discussion)
5. Next, please give me a specific example of how you used any online resources present on the Right to Know rally on Facebook in an offline setting.
6. How do you think online action mobilization influences offline action mobilization?

F. Questions Regarding Using Online Resources for Mobilization

1. Describe two major advantages of using Facebook pages in offline settings when discussing food issues?
2. Describe two major disadvantages of using Facebook pages in offline settings when discussing food issues?
3. Do you have anything else to say?

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BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Ginevra Corinna Elvira was born in Milan, Italy, but grew up most of her childhood in Egypt, Jamaica, and the United States. She has earned a Master of Arts in Italian Studies at Florida State University as well as a Master of Arts in Media Studies. Her academic and professional passions are social media and food. She is currently working as a social media analyst for Synthesio, monitoring conversations around the Olympics in London, UK.