

## Chapter 5 — All your base

Black and white and grey, all the colors of truth.

— George RR Martin, *A Game of Thrones* (1996: 464)

Jürgen Habermas's public sphere presents a tale of decline. In this story, the public sphere builds political legitimacy through fostering rational debate and the achievement of a degree of consensus based on the shared — if limited — agreed objectives of the bourgeois class. As a liberal idea, this includes a fear of unrestrained democratic practice associated with the growth of the mass enfranchisement: that majorities will suppress minority interests (Dryzek, 2002: 12). The problem of majority tyranny is countered by building process legitimacy through 'liberal constitutionalism': the protection of a set of individual rights via constitutional law and the focusing of political deliberation within institutions tasked for that purpose (courts, parliaments). Proponents of wider political deliberation remain concerned that constitutionalism undermines genuine political legitimacy through replacing the political objective of consensus-building with coalition-building (Dryzek, 2002: 18). This reflects a limited political pluralism (focusing on aggregation, rather than social and political diversification), which encourages the political calculus that, if you build a large enough faction to grab the spoils of the state, you need not engage in discursive practice.

This core debate has implications for individuals' relationship with political practice: hardening cynicism about the state as a site for 'transactional' politics, but also discouraging engagement in deliberative discussion as an *irrational* way to produce policy outcomes. Thus, there is a tension between those who like politics bottom-up and those who see it as top-down. This chapter examines the use of digital media by a variety of political elites to assess the top-down use of these channels in Australian politics: looking at mass mobilisation to achieve political objectives. The chapter draws upon the definition of elite provided by John Higley and Michael Burton: 'persons who are able, by virtue of their strategic positions in powerful organizations and movements, to affect political outcomes regularly and substantially' (2006: 7). This captures two elements: that elites are those whose power can be identified by a regularity of impact, and they achieve this through the control of organisational *and/or* social movement resources. To this end we examine the way digital media has been employed in social movements, as well as more conventional institutions with regular political impacts.

## The *new new* social movements

Possibly the most visible of all the digital-media politics in Australia has been the use of new political campaigning tactics employed by emerging online social movement organisations. The most prominent of these is the left-wing political organisation GetUp! that has become a significant new presence in the Australian political landscape through high visibility and fundraising success (Vromen & Coleman, 2011). Social movements exist in the space between the formal, institutional politics of elections (Chapter 2) and the diffused and disorganised discursive politics of the masses (Chapter 3). While a range of definitions exist, the most useful in this context is: ‘organized, collective efforts to achieve social change that use noninstitutionalized tactics at least part of the time’ (Burstein, et al. 1995: 137).<sup>1</sup> This definition captures their *liminal* nature. By nature they attempt to ‘herd cats’, using a range of resources and strategies without resort to the process of formally running as hierarchically structured political parties. This ‘outsider’ status allows them to promote specific policy issues without the need to compromise in the building of enduring political coalitions (Mansbridge, 2009: 161). Moreover, movements are more consistent in their political position over time than other organisations that have to make deals and build coalitions through compromise and mutual adjustment.

Because these are modernist political phenomena, the political role of social movements has a long history in Australian politics. The early workers movement challenged the authority of landowners and colonial parliaments and institutionalised the Australian Labor Party (ALP) and established a formal union structure around the time of Federation (Gauja, 2012: 171). The rise of non-class or industrially based movements (Huesca, 2000: 76), the ‘new social movements’ (NSM), was particularly visible in the 1960s and 1970s.<sup>2</sup> Their legacy is seen through a range of civil liberties laws (i.e. anti-discrimination) and institutions (i.e. the Family Court). Following Valdis Krebs’s (2005) arguments about the changing nature of voter’s electoral identification (from class to generational to ‘social’), the NSMs differed to their predecessors in that their objectives were less tied to economic interests. This represents a difference in focus, rather than a fundamental shift in the political logic that drives social movement forms of organisation: the mobilisation of large numbers of individuals through networks and sub-organisations, attempts to affect change through a variety of formal (legislative, litigation) and informal (education, direct action) strategies, and the role of meaning-making in binding these movements together and achieving social change through cultural and symbolic political practices (Eyerman

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1 Debates exist as to the appropriate definition for social movements, this is a function of their fluid structures and *ad hoc* governance (as discussed by Rucht, 2004: 216). It is easier to define them as what they are not: parties, pressure groups, and disorganised publics.

2 Though, with the rise of women’s liberation in the 19th century, clearly not a unique product of that era.

& Jamison, 1998: 7–8).<sup>3</sup> This allows us to investigate the status of these new forms of online social-movement organisation and ask in what way they are an extension of this tradition, where they differ and to what effect.

## OSMOs-is

Online social movement organisations (OSMOs) are a new form of political organisation. They have developed in response to the opportunities for political organisation afforded by digital media and the nature of political participation of the social voter. These organisations can be found in nations around the English-speaking world,<sup>4</sup> and the establishment of the international, issue-oriented Change.org and Avaaz ([www.avaaz.org](http://www.avaaz.org)) in 2007 added explicitly transnational versions to their ranks.

While there is a degree of variation to the approach and histories of these groups, they all have a number of similarities that relate to their shared genesis in the early work of the first of their kind: [moveon.org](http://moveon.org). Formed by two business people in the final days of the US administration of Bill Clinton, [moveon.org](http://moveon.org) demonstrated the power of digital media to bring together unorganised citizens around a common cause. Starting with the promotion of a basic petition to congress to ‘move on’ from the Clinton sex scandal of the late 1990s, the Democratic party-supporting founders quickly saw the potential of the internet to organise protests and raise money from individual donors. This developed during the Republican administration of George Bush at a time when the climate of war and terrorism helped to galvanise a protest community around the site (Rohlinger & Brown, 2009).

Through the transfer of lessons related to this new model of political activist organisation, we can see that OSMOs have the following characteristics:

- They are *lightweight*, having very small numbers of staff relative to the numbers of members and campaigns they run (Stauber, 2009).
- They are *agile*. Due to their emphasis on online campaigning, these organisations develop and deploy their resources quickly. Hannah Lownsbrough sees one of the core strengths of these organisations in their ability to respond rapidly to issues of the day (2010: 75–76). They are able to capitalise on pre-existing media interest and agendas and this maximises the value of their resources (they need not invest in agenda construction), and the perceived relevance of the organisation to the issue’s core audiences.

<sup>3</sup> Note: symbolic political practice is different to ‘symbolic policy’ (rhetorical over practical policy outputs because of causal ambiguity) discussed above.

<sup>4</sup> MoveOn.org in the United States (<http://moveon.org>), 38 Degrees in the United Kingdom ([www.38degrees.org.uk](http://www.38degrees.org.uk)), and ActionStation in New Zealand ([www.actionstation.org.nz](http://www.actionstation.org.nz)).

- OSMOs are noted for *innovation* and *creativity* in the design and implementation of their campaigns. This includes creative media messages to capture attention (see Illustration 14), as well as unusual strategies to achieve their objectives with an emphasis on the symbolic (i.e. raising funds to fly members of the stolen generation to hear the parliamentary apology in Canberra; Hill, 2010). Combined with their responsiveness this allows for rapid changes in their use of campaign tactics, increasing their effectiveness and unpredictability (Vromen & Coleman, 2011: 87).
- Participation is *low cost* or free for members. In this way these organisations employ nano-activism and paltry donation methods to provide easy ‘buy-in’ and sustain ongoing, low level participation over time (see Like my cause: Microactivism, Chapter 3). These organisations are inspired by new business models as much as conventional strategic repertoires of political action: such as ‘freemium’ pricing where the majority of participants are provided a basic service for no cost (e.g. petitioning in this case) with the minority opting in to pay for a more deluxe product (Heires, 2007).



**Illustration 14: Still image from GetUp! election 2010 ‘enrol to vote’ ad (5 July 2010)**

Source: GetUp! Used with permission

Given the use of the term social movement organisation (SMO) (McCarthy & Zald, 1977), it is clear that this conception of OSMOs fits into the wider body of literature on NSM (Clark & Themudo, 2006: 50). SMOs represent formal organisations that act as ‘the mobilizing structures of a social movement’, and can be distinguished from other entities (such as supportive organisations, like churches and the media) by their focus on constituency mobilisation towards a collective objective (Kriesi, 1996: 152). OSMOs differ, however, from their direct predecessors in two ways. First, they are more expansive in the range of issues they advance. Under the traditional model, SMOs have a comparatively static

and homogeneous constituency, which they have gathered for the purposes of promoting or defending their particular political interests. A good example of this would be Right to Life Australia ([www.righttolife.com.au](http://www.righttolife.com.au)) an organisation that sits within the wider pro-life social movement, and works to mobilise this constituency towards a comparatively narrow set of subject areas (abortion, euthanasia). The wider focus of OSMOs means that these organisations are more likely to partner with traditional SMOs to undertake their campaigns, ‘selling’ their participation through their technical rather than subject-area expertise.

Second, it is not clear that OSMOs will be as likely to go through the social movement institutional life cycle (where SMOs bureaucratise and become ‘insider’ interest groups in the policy area over time). This is partially because of the lack of subject-specific expertise, but also the wide range of issues that they work on at any time.

Thus, the best way to consider them is as a hybrid between traditional SMOs and pure ‘social movement platform providers’. OSMOs come out of historically specific political circumstances and, while broad in their political foci, are limited in the range of issues they are willing to promote. Pure platform providers (such as iPetitions, [www.ipetitions.com](http://www.ipetitions.com)) are focused only on the provision of advocacy tools, and are agnostic in the political use to which they are put (beyond a general orientation towards increased civic participation).

Let us look at some of these OSMOs and their work in the Australian context.

## GetUp!

GetUp! was founded in 2005 by Jeremy Heimans and David Madden, two Australians with a background in policy scholarship through the Kennedy School of Government (a high-profile, North American ‘scientific management’ policy school) and with experience working with [moveon.org](http://moveon.org) (Dubecki, 2007). Today, the organisation claims over 600,000 members and has developed away from its roots in adjusting to local conditions.<sup>5</sup> Unlike the organic foundation of [moveon.org](http://moveon.org), GetUp! took a path, which has come to be typical of similar Australian movements, in getting initial financial support from the union movement. This is significant, not simply in that it reflects our orientation towards institutions as the basis for political action, it also demonstrates the willingness of organised labour in this country to experiment with new forms of political organisation in light of the seemingly entrenched position of the then Coalition government of John Howard and the disarray of the ALP opposition at the time (Labor lost ground to the Coalition in the 2004 federal election and looked set for a long

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<sup>5</sup> Ariadne Vromen and William Coleman note that GetUp! invests more effort in member retention whereas [moveon.org](http://moveon.org) tends to have a higher rate of ‘churn’ (2011). Additionally, some earlier US-style strategies that are effective in that country (such as candidate surveys) were quickly seen as unproductive on implementation.

period in opposition at this time; Cavalier, 2005). GetUp!'s effectiveness (high visibility at a low cost) was quickly demonstrated, particularly regarding issues with which the ALP opposition was less publicly engaged on (such as anti-terror legislation in 2005, and the neo-paternalism of the Northern Territory 'intervention' on Indigenous people). In the work of GetUp! we can see the genesis of the Your Rights At Work campaign run by the union movement in 2007 (as discussed in more detail in *Your Rights at Work: Success and failure?*, this chapter).

The main focus of the organisation is running high-visibility campaigns that connect individuals, organisations and policy elites (often unwillingly), with GetUp! as the conduit for action. This commonly takes the form of using direct-email campaigns and petitions aimed at policy-makers and other elites, and through fundraising to support the promotion of the views of GetUp! members in the mainstream media (Vromen, 2008). This strategy works as a virtuous circle: demonstrating the success of the organisation aids in drawing in participants who see efficacy in membership. Thus, while digital media is the core of the organisation, its resources are largely spent in the 'old media' space of print and TV. For Penny O'Donnell (2009: 511) this demonstrates a form of member engagement or 'listening in television'. This is achieved through the use of a rapid response campaign model: email call, which includes the proposed creative material for placement ('get this ad on TV tomorrow'); members' response; ad buy; email to participants showing placement. In this rapid cycle of action, the organisation reaffirms to participants that they are 'heard'. This core methodology has been accompanied by other forms of creative and innovative campaigns, including the unexpectedly successful High Court challenge in the lead up to the 2010 federal election. The result was that 100,000 people were enabled to legally cast their vote (*Lawyers Weekly*, 2010).

As discussed in the introduction, these organisations have an ambiguous relationship with democratic values. While they provide individuals with a 'voice', this is often more focused outside than in. The extent to which the membership has influence over the governance and direction of the organisation is limited. GetUp! uses a suggestion form and regular surveys of members to inform its strategy, but this is not binding on the organisation's management (Rodan & Balnaves, 2010).<sup>6</sup> Membership, in this case, is therefore 'thin' (see Benjamin Barber's (1999) notion of engagement, discussed in Chapter 2). The organisation defines its focus as the realisation of 'progressive' values, defined simply as 'social justice, economic fairness and environmental sustainability' (GetUp!, undated b), making the selection of campaigns a combination of factors including the likelihood of traction with their members and the fit within these

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<sup>6</sup> The organisation also permits comments on its official blog (<http://blog.getup.org.au>), which has a comparatively light moderation policy: critical views of the organisation and its campaign can be found here.

loose ideological boundaries. Members ‘opt in’ to campaigns they support, and this allows them to demonstrate their preferences to the organisation over its executive decision-making. Where members have failed to respond to campaigns, they have been quickly abandoned.

These two membership strategies (opt in and withholding support) allow the organisation to campaign across a wide range of issues, without threatening members who do not support any particular issue or cause. This does, however, imply that commitment to the organisation is not strongly held by members, and that GetUp! has fostered an instrumental view of citizenship. In addition, because of the limited control members have over the organisation’s direction, there are questions about the role of large donors in shaping the direction of the organisation: in the 2010 election cycle the organisation received over 60 per cent of its funding from large unit donors (Vromen & Coleman, 2011: 82). This questions the role that mass publics can have in an organisation where a small number of elite donors (institutions and individuals) make such a large financial contribution to the organisation.

This tension between the core and membership has been visible in the way GetUp! continues to experiment with new ways to more directly engage its members. This has taken the form of physical protests and gatherings to support its online protests (such as large rallies to support the campaign on the carbon tax), and less-successful attempts to foster local ‘meet-up’ style gatherings (Chen, 2011a). More recently the organisation has expanded how individuals can engage in political activity, through the creation of CommunityRun ([www.communityrun.org](http://www.communityrun.org)). This platform site provides basic tools to build a localised campaign, allowing individuals to sign petitions and organisers to collect additional contact information for other forms of mobilisation. The success of this site is yet to be demonstrated, as it relies on considerably more effort from participants than other forms of activism. The organisation has been careful in ensuring the strategic direction of the service, with control over the tool through participant selection and the use of a Terms of Service ‘shrinkwrap’ licence that allows GetUp! to close accounts that are not used in line with the objectives of the organisation.<sup>7</sup> There is the potential that this could democratise the organisation, if the use of CommunityRun feeds into campaign choice made by the executive.

Similarly, the partnership model must be managed with caution. GetUp! offers considerable benefits to subject-expert SMOs looking to run campaigns, but carefully structures these agreements to ensure it does not lose its membership base to partner organisations. At its heart, GetUp!’s ‘secret sauce’ lies in its

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<sup>7</sup> The site forbids its use for campaigns that ‘promote hatred, violence, discrimination or stereotypes based on race, gender, ethnicity, sexuality or religion’ (GetUp!, undated a).

strategic repertoires and its large membership list, a list that it guards because it includes, not just email addresses, but data on policy interests, levels of participation, and — most importantly — members' tendency to respond to donation and participation requests. In partnering with interest groups, GetUp! provides a technology platform for running campaigns, considerable media expertise, and an existing constituency, but the intellectual property generated by the partnerships builds the organisation's database. This has led to tensions with partners who have seen their supporters being 'vacuumed' into GetUp!'s database (*Law Report*, 2008) and claims that short-term campaigns may not build partners' longer-term capacity. CommunityRun also adds petition signatories to GetUp!'s membership by default (with an opt-out option), another way that the organisation carefully develops its core political resource using a range of disaggregated strategies.

### The anti-GetUp!s

On the conservative side we have seen the formation of a number of online social movements in response to, or in direct opposition to, the work of GetUp!. The most visible current movement was started by the South Australian Liberal Senator Cory Bernardi as the Community Action Network<sup>8</sup> or CANdo ([www.cando.org.au](http://www.cando.org.au)). CANdo's formation was strongly influenced by the success of GetUp! in demonstrating the mobilising power of the internet for the political left. Where the organisation *initially* differed was in its emphasis on grassroots organisation through a more open and discursive mode of political activity (thus, the inclusion of CANdo's user base in discussions in Chapter 3). This was achieved through a turnkey social networking service (SNS) platform: Ning. Ning is a customisable SNS that can be rapidly set-up and deployed for a range of uses. The software provides for the creation and customisation of user profiles, personal blogging, and running discussion fora and online groups. The choice of Ning was, therefore, more ideologically attuned to Bernardi's preference for a decentralised network that would allow members to form subgroups and take action through these groups (*vis* the CommunityRun model), rather than the top-down model employed by GetUp! (personal interview: Senator Cory Bernardi, 23 June 2011).

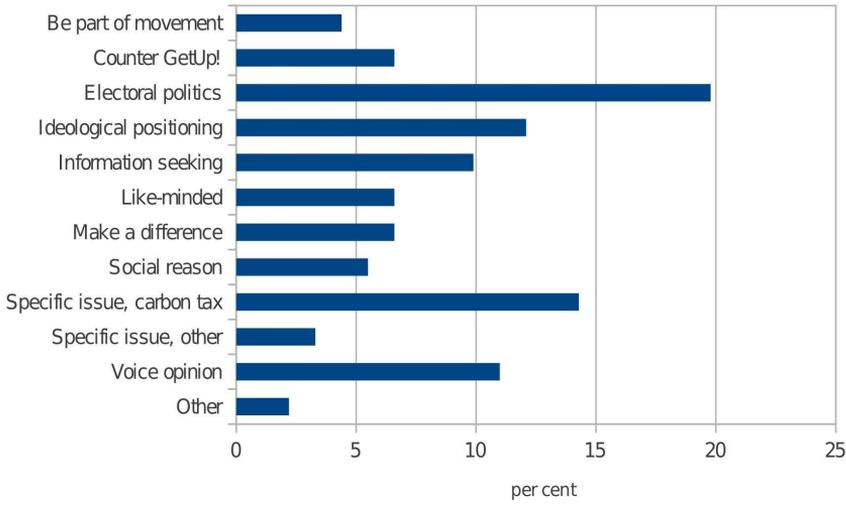
This approach has limitations in replicating the mobilisation success of its antithesis. While CANdo managed to attract several thousand members quickly, this plateaued and did not automatically translate into political mobilisation. Based on a survey of membership at this time,<sup>9</sup> this problem existed irrespective of the desire of members to engage more actively with politics, their comparatively

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8 Previously the Conservative Action Network.

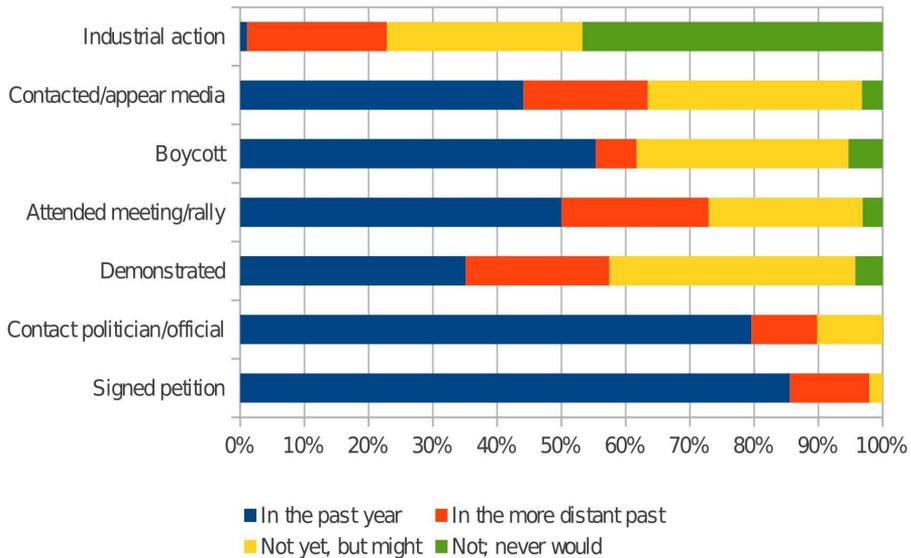
9 This research was undertaken between 27 September and 28 November 2011. Using a number of CANdo profiles, site members were approached directly and through general appeals to participate in the survey. At the time of the study, the site had approximately 1700 members, making the sample size for the survey approximately 5.7 per cent.

homogeneous policy concerns (carbon taxation and immigration), and given their previous level of political experience. As can be seen in Figure 30, ‘passive’ activities (information seeking, socialisation and opinion expression) remain comparatively minor motivators for group membership, while Figure 31 shows the membership has not been inactive in offline and online politics in the near past.



**Figure 30: Reason for joining CANdo, self-reported (n = 98)**

Source: Author’s research



**Figure 31: CANdo membership, political activity (n = 97)**

Source: Author’s research

The failure to thrive led to a significant redevelopment of the organisation at the end of 2011. Appointing an executive director with experience in online mobilisation in the Australian Monarchist League, the site was redesigned to more closely resemble that of the current configuration of GetUp!: focusing on a smaller number of key campaigns (an 'at a glance' or carousel site design), and pushing the discursive aspect of the original membership process further into the background. This format retains the use of members to indicate their interest in issues which can be then supported as featured campaigns, while maintaining the strategic focus of organisation through the use of a charter ([www.cando.org.au/about/the-charter](http://www.cando.org.au/about/the-charter)) that defines the range of political activities that fit within its rubric (personal interview: Jai Martinkovits, CANdo, 8 May 2012). Compared with GetUp!'s simple articulation of what it sees as progressiveness, the CANdo charter is an expansive document that includes general values statements (i.e. 'respect for the history of our great nation') and specific policy issues (i.e. low taxation, restored federalism). This makes CANdo a more focused organisation than GetUp!

Under the relaunched version of CANdo, the costs of membership are significantly reduced. Campaigns follow the GetUp! model, with an emphasis on direct messaging towards elites. This, more anonymous, nature of individual participation in CANdo is valuable in realising wider participation. The original model that put individual's profiles and views upfront attracted individuals who were very comfortable in expressing their policy positions (85 per cent would talk in the 'stranger on a train' scenario introduced in Two-step flow, 2.0, Chapter 3). Thus, the role of these sites in providing 'security and strength in numbers' to a majority of the public in 'the whisper zone' (unable to express their political views because of political correctness; personal interview: Senator Cory Bernardi, 23 June 2011) is more likely under the revised model.

At the time of writing, however, the prospects of this type of model remain unclear. Unlike GetUp!, CANdo has not managed to capture corporate or major donor support. While this is surprising given that a number of key campaigns would appear attractive to corporate or large-unit donors (opposition to the carbon tax and controls on gambling, for example), the (re)launch of the organisation, given the Labor party appears likely to lose power at the 2013 election, may limit the interest of potential donors in third party organisations rather than the incoming governing parties.

In addition, CANdo faces competition (ideological and for resources) from the rise of other, similar campaigning organisations, like the Australian Taxpayers' Alliance (ATA; [www.taxpayers.org.au](http://www.taxpayers.org.au)). Unlike CANdo's adoption of a centralised campaigning approach, however, the ATA remains focused on the cultivation of local organisations with a high degree of autonomy. Using the development of US political conservatives' self-aware identity, the ATA's founder sees this use

of more active communication and physical networking as an effective longer-term strategy to develop activists from the conservative side of politics. In this way the rise of the Tea Party movement in the United States serves as a useful lesson that the development of movement culture can be more effective in mass mobilisation towards a shared objective that is sustainable over time. The ATA's avoidance of the GetUp!/CANdo approach is therefore a deliberate decision to stay away from clicktivism in an attempt to develop a self-sustaining political movement in Australia (personal interview: Tim Andrews, 22 May 2012).

Regardless of their differences, groups like GetUp!, CANdo and the ATA share their origins in developments in contemporary advocacy organisations in the United States. The strong focus on individual mobilisation, media management and agenda setting is combined with a more explicit view about the critical importance of fundraising as the basis for political success. While these organisations have a strong digital media focus, a difference lies in the role technology played in the genesis of the two groups. While GetUp! has its background in the work of moveon.org, CANdo and its related organisations in the new Australian conservative movement owe more to the strategies of 1980-era Republican party ginger groups like Grover Norquist's Americans for Tax Reform (Garnett & Lynch, 2003: 5). CANdo, Menzies House (discussed in Chapter 3) and the ATA all emerged from an explicit strategy of generating young conservative leaders and multiplying organisations that will cultivate a base of support and place pressure on existing institutions to adjust their policies accordingly.<sup>10</sup> This is a modification of an intermediating strategy through its explicit focus on cultivating a constituency ideationally. What this approach lacks — partially due to the funding difference — is the strong technological base of the original organisations, particularly in the establishment of good member management through well-developed (and expensive) organisational databases.

While the adoption of the moveon.org model could be read as that unholy beast of Australian cultural inferiority, the 'Americanisation' of our politics, the transfer of lessons from the United States to Australia has as much to do with the dynamism of that electoral system (in terms of the proliferation of elections, the resources that allow high-technology experimentation, and the social/regional/religious diversity of the United States) as the development of a similar political opportunity structure across English-speaking countries. The decline of strong party membership and voter identification does not simply increase the size and importance of 'swing' voters, it opens parties to influence by organised activist organisations who mobilise groups to place pressure on party policy.

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<sup>10</sup> Tim Andrews previously worked for Norquist (Hills, 2011).

This opportunity is more prominent in the Coalition parties because they lack Labor's institutionalised union presence and factional system that places a counterweight on the effectiveness of these groups.

### Strengths and weaknesses of the OSMOs

These new forms of political organisation demonstrate that there is something new under the sun. While interest groups and SMOs have existed for centuries, OSMOs are hybrids that are quantitatively and qualitatively different. There is a basic political logic that underpins their place in the social order. Social fragmentation and low levels of individual political efficacy create a type of citizen that Henrik Bang and Eva Sørensen call 'everyday makers' (1999): hit-and-run individuals who want to have a specific political impact without a commitment to long-term memberships or ongoing formal entities. In reaching out to these individuals — an unserved market segment — OSMOs sell activism to their members as an alternative to traditional party membership and politics (Marks, 2010).

As facilitative platforms they have to convince members that each campaign requires their attention and interest, and they employ creative marketing and knowledge of their membership to that effect. In this way, it is unsurprising that the original model for OSMOs came from individuals with business, rather than political backgrounds: the management of organisational 'publics' (stakeholders) is a core element of commercial marketing practice (Christopher, et al., 2002). This also explains their presence in English-speaking countries. OSMOs are a response to populations that have become fragmented and individualised by their immersion in neoliberalism.

OSMOs are therefore able to generate a considerable political impact through the rapid provision of a sense of solidarity in a fragmented social world. Their success lies in the ability to use modern, database-driven market segmentation tools to effectively match causes to particular constituencies. In doing so, they have to overcome a basic problem: how to create and sustain effective collective action. Employing [moveon.org](http://moveon.org) as a case study Marc Eaton (2010) has examined the way these organisations create communities 'top-down'. Whereas 'natural' communities are consumed and created simultaneously, this naturally limits the size to which these communities can grow before fragmentation. From an analysis of language, Eaton was able to demonstrate how OSMOs construct an 'imagined community' of progressive activists through its use of language and rhetoric. Noting that the most effective OSMOs to date do not foster 'horizontal' communication (between members), their use of top-down communication sells activist identities.

The future of these organisational structures is uncertain. Micah White (2011) sees the model of social change employed by OSMOs as inherently flawed: by embedding the logic of consumerism within the new activist model, the potential for this form of activity to deliver radical change is limited. This is because their notion of change is expressed outwards to institutional actors (governments, corporations), rather than including personal change by members. As has been observed, these politics are focused on self-gratification ('consummatory politics are profoundly conservative, emphasizing stasis') (Rosenberg, et al. 1988: 169). While this criticism has value, it does presume that OSMOs are interested in radical change.

This reflects the ongoing debate in social-movement literature about the tendency of researchers to disproportionately focus on radical causes. The consumerist basis of this activism has considerable advantages in dealing with the problem of collective action, but also presents the risk of comparatively weak attachment to the community 'sold' to members. Sensing this, these organisations have employed physical events to bolster member attachment, but their level of commitment to physical grassroots organising appears to decline after they have attempted to employ it. Australian OSMOs have recognised the need to develop more authentic opportunities for horizontal community building within their platforms. That both GetUp! and CANdo have had difficulty effectively employing more traditional types of member interaction may reflect less on a cynical application of imagined communities to achieve their broader objectives, as a low level of interest from members. The hollow rhetoric of community that Eaton saw employed top-down may just as readily be matched by limited real interest in the requirements of joining real political communities, from the bottom-up.

## Digital media and movement (re)mobilisation

The rise of OSMOs does not mean that traditional social movements and SMOs have disappeared from the political landscape. Indeed, the social changes that focus politics on ideational and discursive practices, self-conscious political identity formation, and citizenship through social voting and the practices of the 'everyday maker' have far more in common with the politics of NSMs than other forms of political practice. So far we have seen examples of how SNSs have been quickly and readily adopted by organised and unorganised social-movement actors as a space for communication, solidarity and organisation (see Social media by the numbers, Chapter 3, for example). This reflects NSMs as early technology adopters of communications technology because their limited

resource base and asymmetrical power relationship with oppositional elite institutions encourages the adoption of new technologies to create political opportunities (van de Donk, et al., 2004: 16).

This opportunity structure is particularly relevant in the context of the digital-media environment, where the architecture of digital-media systems facilitates the formation of social networks based on similar interests (enduring or temporary). Indeed, the classic definition of NSMs focused largely on their loose, non-hierarchical network structures of organisation (della Porta, 2009: 190). While it could be argued that the times in many ways suit the NSMs,<sup>11</sup> we have already discounted the idea of a media environment automatically producing particular political arrangements (Lister, et al., 2003: 177). This is most clear when considering that exemplar of the NSM literature: the anti-war movement's inability to sustain initial protests against the war in Iraq, regardless of strong opposition to the invasions. In this example, Damian Trewhella (2005: 8–11) has argued that, while key SMOs in the peace movement have employed digital media to promote protests, the predominant use of one-to-many channels (websites, email lists) failed to build on initial participation, particularly in the face of sustained domestic and foreign military propaganda and following the invasion of Iraq.<sup>12</sup>

Fostering intra-group communication and the use of social media to preserve commitment to the group reflects recent academic and popular discussion of the importance of 'social capital'. This stems from a body of literature that emerged in the late 1990s and early 2000s, driven by influential books like Robert Putnam's *Bowling Alone* (2000). For authors like Putnam, active communities which provide mutual welfare through strong social ties — social capital — are significant in the realisation of bottom-up social action (political and non-political).<sup>13</sup> Social capital is particularly relevant in the mobilisation and operation of social movements (as communities of interest), because this capital represents a reservoir of good will and network connections that can be mobilised very quickly for a variety of purposes. This reflects how social movements are observed to 'lie fallow' for long periods of time and then remobilise in reaction to changing political situations (threats and opportunities). Looking at three recent social movements' use of digital media can give a sense of the way technology is employed by individuals and SMOs, but also the role of social capital and trust in mobilising and sustaining these movements (Hutton and Connors, 1999: 11).

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11 Particularly as the use of digital media has become less hierarchical in recent years: shifting away from centralised websites (Pickerill, 2001: 75) towards more fluid use of online media.

12 We should also add, however, in comparison with the 1960s and 1970s, that there is less support to the movement from the Opposition. Rick Kuhn (1997) points out that the support given to the fledgling anti-war movement in Australia was tied to long-standing opposition to conscription, an issue that is not present in recent conflicts.

13 In *Bowling Alone*, the focus of this interest is that the measure of social capital is a useful marker of civic decline and social alienation in contemporary American life (see Plug in your USB coffee warmers, Chapter 3).

## Occupy [your hometown here]

The Occupy movement captured considerable attention at the end of 2011 with a series of large protests and encampments around the world. The proximate causes for these mobilisations was the global financial crisis and perceived mismanagement of economic policy in response to the economic slump (industry bailouts in the United States, failure to introduce new financial industry regulation in the United Kingdom, austerity measures in Europe). This saw protesters mobilise to ‘perform’ their dissatisfaction with established elites, through the advocacy of direct action (occupations and other disruption) to highlight popular unrest in the economic status quo. Significantly, Occupy reflects the impressive ability for social movements to organise very quickly and broadly:<sup>14</sup> while SMOs have been important in focusing the movement and organising core protest infrastructure, the movement is significantly more than its vanguard organisers (Jackson & Chen, 2012) with 40 per cent of Australian participants considering Occupy the first movement they have taken part in.<sup>15</sup> This reflects the ability of Occupy to draw upon organisations, individuals and techniques that were active in the Global Justice protests of the 1990s.<sup>16</sup>

Occupy also presents an interesting case example in the use of technology by social movements. Australian participants used social media to discuss the Occupy movement and its political concerns (83.52 per cent).<sup>17</sup> From the outset, Occupy participants were conscious of the way in which digital media could be useful in spreading their messages and building solidarity. Most Occupy camps included activities and training aimed at increasing the reach and visibility of the movement, which served to hasten the transmission of key movement frames around the world, as well as develop a strong sense of activist solidarity. The use of social media distributed by protesters helps to sustain this togetherness, as channels like Twitter allow for the rapid distribution of real-time information about interactions with oppositional groups (normally police), and the visibility of protesters’ hashtags helps to increase the sense of community among supporters (Juris, 2012). Occupy demonstrates the power of framing in building coalitions of political interest. In this case example, the rhetorical use of a very simple characterisation of the movement and its opponents (the 99 per cent versus the 1 per cent) was powerful in aligning the viewpoint of protesters with the wider public through existing political issues (the Qantas dispute with

14 Occupy Adelaide, Armidale, Brisbane, Burnie-Devonport, Cairns, Canberra, Darwin, Gippsland, Gold Coast, Hobart, Melbourne, Perth, Sydney and Townsville.

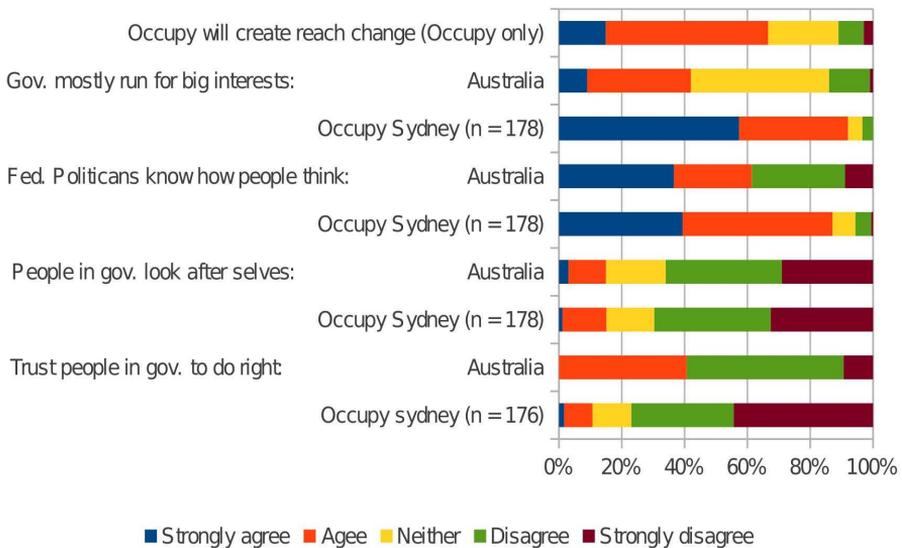
15 Source: Occupy Research Demographic and Political Participation Survey ([http://occupyresearch.net/archive/03192012\\_OR\\_data\\_download\\_clean7\\_answers-txt.xlsx](http://occupyresearch.net/archive/03192012_OR_data_download_clean7_answers-txt.xlsx)); n = 77.

16 Another social movement with a strong record of using new media for organising (Capling & Nossal, 2001: 443).

17 Source: Occupy Research Demographic and Political Participation Survey; n = 85.

management being a local example) and shifting away from the language of class warfare that is the stock-in-trade of many of the core SMOs that came from the socialist movement.

What NSMs like Occupy demonstrate is how willing individuals and small groups can combine resources towards a shared objective. This type of collective action rests on the ability of social networks to identify supporters and co-ordinate their resource base. At the core of the concept of social capital theory we can see that *trust* is relational in character. This makes trust situational and contextual. We see this in the research on Occupy Sydney. While participants had low levels of trust in political institutions and processes, they invested considerable trust in the movement itself (Figure 32).<sup>18</sup> For political campaigners, the interest in community also points to opportunities to engage in a new language of authenticity and mobilise political resources other than money (Rasmussen, 2007: 81).



**Figure 32: Occupy Sydney participants’ levels of political trust, compared with Australian population**

Source: Author’s research, with Stewart Jackson

18 The research was conducted at the 5 November ‘Rally to Re-occupy Sydney’ event using a team of eight field interviewers who conducted the structured interviews face-to-face. The size of the rally has been estimated at between 400 (NSW Police Force, 2011) and 1500 (Smith, 2011) participants, making the sample size between 12 and 45 per cent of participants. A more detailed report on this research can be found in Stewart Jackson and Peter John Chen (2012).

The Occupy movement's use of technology to organise protest action is an example of the natural fit between network technologies and social movements as network organisations. Looking at the 5 November protest in Sydney, Table 10 shows how offline and online social networking represent the most significant form of promotional channel for the event. This is also generational in character. Table 11 illustrates SNS's role as a key promotional channel is negatively correlated with the age of participants.

Channel	Heard via*
Interpersonal	31%
Social networking service	30%
Group/organisational contact	26%
Mass media	24%
Website	21%
Poster/flyer/street	12%
Select/specialist media	4%
At another event	2%

\* Respondents could suggest a variety of methods, therefore total will not add to 100 per cent

**Table 10: Mobilisation channel (n = 180)**

Source: Author's research, with Stewart Jackson

Age	14–30	31–45	46–60	61–83
Heard via SNS%	53	32	9	6
n	71	48	30	26

**Table 11: Heard about protest via SNS, by age**

Source: Author's research, with Stewart Jackson

By early 2012 participation in Occupy had declined to a number of small groups of encamped protesters around Australia. Unlike in Spain, where ongoing economic decline and government austerity has sustained popular protests (Associated Press, 2012), Occupy has returned to largely a dormant state. During late 2011 the movement experimented with new frames to revitalise participation (empty building seizures to protest cost-of-living issues, alignment with other industrial disputes). This demonstrates the limits of the movement in raising popular concern about social disadvantage when the relative deprecation<sup>19</sup> of the wider public was less significant than in the United Kingdom, United States

<sup>19</sup> Social movements can be driven by the perception of deprivation by participating groups (Blumberg, 2009: 17). This need not be absolute, but relative to other groups in society. In this way, motivation for participation may not come from the most disadvantaged. This concept would appear most relevant in the framing of the Occupy movement, where the idea of the 99 per cent aims to highlight the economic distance between the public and elites.

and Europe as communicated in the mass media that Australia was experiencing an economic 'miracle'. The ability to quickly reform, adjust their issues frames, and mobilise large numbers of people demonstrates the value of the 'cultural turn' in the study of social movements (Collins, 2004: 31): through the creation of cultural artefacts, movements preserve their ideology and identity over time. As Graham Meikle has observed in discussion of activist groups' use of the internet in the early 2000s, these techniques and cultural products are often picked up by movement pedagogues and shared in more general cultural events (conferences, festivals and 'tactical media labs'), demonstrating a tendency for new methods to 'leak out' of specific movements into the wider activist community over time (2004: 84).

## Online anarchists and the democratisation of hacking

While Occupy can be seen in a long tradition of economic protest over the distribution of societal resources, the rise of digital media has generated its own, very specific policy issues, interest groups and movements. Examples include the rise of an online libertarian community opposed to the regulation of internet content that was active in the 1990s (Chen, 2003), movements aimed at increasing personal privacy that have been effective in getting these issues into the institutional policy-making process (Greenleaf, 1988: 7; 2008: 172) and, more recently, the formation of computer gamers as a coherent community of interest that has successfully argued for the introduction of an R18+ classification for games through a process of framing the use of computer games from the domain of children to an adult form of entertainment. Groups like Grow up Australia ([www.growupaaustralia.com](http://www.growupaaustralia.com)) and gamers4croydon ([www.gamers4croydon.org](http://www.gamers4croydon.org)) have been able to use general social media and gamer-specific channels<sup>20</sup> to create a political identity around gamers, and mobilise action aimed at supporting regulatory reform and attacking opponents of change (LeMay, 2010).<sup>21</sup> The rapidity with which gamers have been able to undertake loosely coordinated action at different levels of the federal system is markedly different to the inability of previous fantasy ('pen and paper') role-playing gamer cultures to organise prior to the introduction of the internet (Larme, 2000). As with other recreational activities (e.g. fishing), these groups employ arguments about the economic size of their hobby to legitimise their community with policy makers. In doing so they were able to mobilise economic interests to support their campaign.<sup>22</sup>

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20 Steam discussion fora. Steam is a game distribution service run by the Valve gaming company in the United States.

21 Gamers4croydon ran six candidates in the 2010 South Australian election in response to the Attorney-General's opposition to the R18+ classification proposal.

22 EB Games assisted Grow up Australia to collect 16,000 signatures on a pro-R18+ petition (Grow up Australia, 2010).

To date the most visible of these online social movements has been the rise of high-profile ‘hackers’. In popular use, this term represents a vague set of activities that centre on the use of information and communications technologies for illegal activities. The political use of hacking is not a new practice. A high-profile Australian example dates to the 1980s in the effective use of the ‘Wank’ (Worms Against Nuclear Killers) attack on the US Department of Energy and NASA (Dreyfus, 1997).<sup>23</sup> While the methods may be identical to non-political hacking activity, these types of political activities are generally referred to as ‘hacktivism’. Hacktivism is defined by Lincoln Dahlberg as direct action that aims to:

... bring excluded discourse to attention in the ‘mainstream’ public sphere, methods that include email spamming, denial-of-service attacks on internet servers, site defacements that leave behind protest messages and parody sites diverting attention to counter-discursive spaces. (2007: 841)

The use of these disruptive activities is in line with the logic of radical political organisations that are less powerful than their adversaries. This pattern of adoption conforms to the view that social movements look for political opportunities that fit their particular interests and capacity to act. In addition, the use of illegal forms of protest and direct action has been seen as more likely to occur in repressive environments where social movements have a tendency to see the political in more conspiratorial terms (Heberle, 1951: 386). In the context of hacktivism, therefore, it is relevant that these actions have focused on protests against entrenched policy positions where there has been a high level of elite consensus (globalisation and deregulation, and the War on Terror). In reviewing the longer history of radical politics online, Jenny Pickerill (2006: 268) sees the choice of online activism as a response to the shift in power away from ‘the street’ and towards sites of elite presence and value. Protests therefore move to the online sphere as political institutions become less responsive to older forms of protest action.

## WikiLeaks

Hacktivism in Australia has had its largest impacts in two areas: discursive and direct. The discursive has been achieved largely through the work of the organisation WikiLeaks, run by the Australian Julian Assange. Not a domestically focused organisation, WikiLeaks operates on a principle of radical openness (Flew & Wilson, 2012: 173): providing a hosting service for leaked material from a wide variety of sources. In many ways, WikiLeaks operates as

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<sup>23</sup> A worm is a computer program that moves through a network with the aim of creating disruption or damage. Worms are similar to computer viruses, but rather than ‘infecting’ another program, they are stand-alone programs. Worms and viruses are software commonly classified under the title of ‘malware’.

an intermediary between whistleblowers and journalists as the organisation releases material unedited and in its raw form (see New audiences, new partners, Chapter 6). But seeing the organisation as purely a content host and platform for third parties (such as, for example, Pastebin; <http://pastebin.com>) is incorrect. In recent years the organisation has moved from the periphery of political discourse to direct conflict with the most realist of policy domains: international policy making and the US security state. The most significant of challenges was the staggered (to maximise the length of time these documents received media coverage)<sup>24</sup> release, beginning in 2010, of hundreds of thousands of pages of classified documents that are believed to have been provided by a low-ranking, US military-intelligence analyst (Poulsen & Zetter, 2010).<sup>25</sup> WikiLeaks' high-profile interventions have been focused on maximising its impact on issues surrounding the war, through the timing and framing of the release of its material (significantly, the 'Collateral murder' video showing US military firing on civilians and journalists in 2007; BBC, 2010). These releases have had an incidental impact on Australia, through attacking the conduct of military and intelligence operations that successive Australian governments support.

## Anonymous

The second area has been active in the realm of Australian politics and the mobilisation of opposition to proposed regulation of internet content by the Labor government. Using hacktivist techniques of disruption and high-visibility protest, 'Operation titstorm' in early 2010 had a significant, if temporary, impact in taking down key Australian Government websites (including Parliament) using distributed denial-of-service attacks (DDOS) (Hardy, 2010: 474–75).<sup>26</sup> These attacks were proposed and managed through the loose hacker collective called Anonymous, which organises around particular operations based on the interest of participants. Through the development of tools for the formation of ad hoc networks participating in DDOS attacks (e.g. software programs like the Low Orbit Ion Cannon (LOIC)), these tactics have been increasingly common in recent years and groups like Anonymous have refined their attack strategies and the related promotion of them within the media. The drama and 'high-tech' nature of these direct actions are still novel enough to attract strong media coverage of successful actions. In this way, these actions retain the dramaturgical character of street protests.<sup>27</sup>

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24 A learned strategy by the organisation following earlier tendencies to simply 'dump' complete sets of records in one release.

25 The prosecution of whom has become a *cause célèbre* in parts of the online community.

26 'Flooding' websites with access requests to reduce their performance or 'crash' the servers and prevent legitimate access to them.

27 Dramaturgy, in this context, picks up on the way that protests are 'staged' or performed for their audiences (be that in the street, or through media).

The social meaning of these tactics remains unclear and is in flux, both inside and outside of the 'hacker community' (see below). While there are increasing moves to securitise issues of computer intrusion and misuse (the creation of an interpretive frame which sees the threat as requiring an extraordinary response; Vultee, 2007; Pauli, 2011), it is clear that some (but certainly not all) perpetrators may not understand the significance of their crime in the eyes of the law. While Australian law tends to tolerate temporary disruption to physical infrastructure for the purposes of public protest (e.g. marches and rallies; NSW Council for Civil Liberties, 2010), participation in a DDOS has been classified as a form of terrorism. Here we see the logic behind the shift from 'the street' to cyberspace as a response to elite signalling of the significance of the virtual over the physical realm. But this signalling is not universal. Unlike the comparatively harsh treatment of direct-action protesters (particularly in the environmental and animal-rights policy areas) in the United States in recent years (Potter, 2011), members of the Australian judiciary remain cautious about excessive regulation in this area. An Australasian sentenced for participation in Titstorm was given a comparatively mild sentence by the magistrate on the basis of his ignorance of the significance of his participation (Ryan, 2010). The implication, as with the prosecution of online piracy, is that increasing the punitive nature of penalties may be ineffective in preventing these attacks in the medium term (Doloswala & Dadich, 2011), particularly where participation is facilitated through easy-to-use tools like the LOIC.

The value of direct action remains in relationship with its impact and visibility. The most significant opportunity for impact will be the disruption of key infrastructure and time-sensitive events. Participation in these types of actions may become more potentially significant if initial moves to online voting by New South Wales in the most recent state election are expanded. There is little evidence, however, that these attacks have influenced the outcome of any election to date (political party sites have been defaced during election periods). The use of these attacks, given the negative message they send about those who employ them, are likely to be counterproductive as a political strategy. Additionally, it should be noted that the majority of (known) politically motivated computer intrusions fall outside of election periods.<sup>28</sup> This is for a range of reasons, including the tendency for these to be motivated by a comparatively small set of policy issues (such as computer-content regulation in recent years), but also the relatively short window of time that election campaigns present to design and undertake a co-ordinated attack on websites. While the number of incidents may be small, however, preventing access to online political information during election campaigning is clearly an assault on the basic tenets of the electoral

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28 An incident was reported in 1997 against the Liberal Party website, while another report in 2007 appears to have been a photoshopped version of the site and therefore a hoax (<http://news.com.au>, 2007).

process,<sup>29</sup> denying candidates from engaging in free speech, and voters from accessing this information (an interference with political liberty<sup>30</sup>). Another, just as rarely occurring, form of computer misuse has been illegal access to politicians' email. To date these incidences have been largely<sup>31</sup> restricted to within parliamentary settings (Tucker, 2004; Jenkins, 2010), and have been addressed by internal review and discipline.

### 'You weary giants of flesh and steel'

In the case of WikiLeaks and Anonymous we can see both similarity of purpose and a diversity of political perspectives and concerns. While the work of WikiLeaks and Anonymous have roots in the individualism and meritocratic nature of the computer programming culture of the Californian university scene of the 1970s (Castells, 2001: 60; Coyer, et al., 2007: 164), the political directions in which these two groups have moved is quite different. WikiLeaks seeks to directly challenge the authority of governments and corporations on a supranational level, seeing the ability of online organisations and publics to rise above restraints over global issues within jurisdictions. Anonymous, on the other hand 'comes from cyberspace'<sup>32</sup> to tell everyone to just piss the hell off. The majority of its major campaigns have focused on targets (corporate, religious and government) that have attempted to place regulations of the free action of individuals online. This represents a form of 'cyber-separatism', which seeks, not a new approach to resolving political problems, but a withdrawal from conventional forms of political community (Mayer-Schönberger, 2003). This is a new form of the classical approach to utopian thought that looks for escape from rather than reform of existing political problems; it also sits squarely within the meritocratic perspective that others are not fit to judge the behaviour of the online community aside from their own (in regulating the behaviour of individuals online, two 'Operation Darknets' have been conducted by Anonymous to attack online paedophilia networks; Gallagher, 2011).

Hacktivist groups like Anonymous are often referred to as 'e-movements' because their activities are restricted to the electronic media environment (Friedland & Rogerson, 2009). This type of distinction, however, may be problematic. While Anonymous is most famous for its online attacks, like most social movements it is hard to unambiguously define. The cultural aspects of the movement make it hard for a core group to hold control of its social definition. This is most obvious

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29 In mid 2011, Anonymous claimed to have leaked detailed count data from the NSW state election. The NSW electoral commission responded that the data was from a public server and therefore not secret (Hopewell, 2011).

30 A light version of which is recognised in s327 of the Act.

31 Though malicious editing of wiki content is sometimes reported as 'hacking' (see, for example, Keane, 2010).

32 Borrowing John Barlow's 1996 evocative opening phrase from his *Declaration of Independence of Cyberspace*.

in the expansive use of the *V for Vendetta* (Guy Fawkes)<sup>33</sup> masks in a range of physical protests across an increasing political sphere. To some extent this has been the result of encouragement by Anonymous to supporters to undertake physical events in support of its operations (such as anti-Scientology protests in 2008; Ramadge, 2008). Over time, the use of the mask has gained wider association with anti-establishment politics that reflects a generational change in both the focus of political action and its organisation.

This demonstrates how social movements demonstrate the difficulty of controlling ideas and tactics. As hacktivist methods become more visible in the public arena, there has been a shift away from separatist ideological homogeneity among their practitioners. Governments have been increasingly employing these techniques as part of their active intelligence-gathering, cyber-warfare strategies, and general harassment against political opponents.<sup>34</sup> Additionally, 'patriotic' hacking against perceived national enemies has been popular in countries like China and Russia in recent years (Muncaster, 2012).

In response to hacks against national security interests by Anonymous and associated groups in the United States, a range of other hackers announced their intention to identify members of these groups (Mills, 2012). This demonstrates how movement tactics can quickly spread to other organisations in the digital environment, particularly where organisations have the resources to rapidly acquire technologies they may lack. In the case of governmental response to the rise of independent cyber-attacks, the United States has been active in using law enforcement to coopt members of the movement, particularly given the tendency for cyberactivism to face legal sanctions (Hardy, 2010). Thus, while we will continue to see hacktivist politics come from the cyber-separatists, these tactics will be increasingly employed by a range of political actors (Stephey, 2008), including governments and corporations.<sup>35</sup>

## Your Rights at Work: Success and failure?

While Occupy and Anonymous represent anarchic social movements of the NSM generation, the use of digital media campaigning by traditional, institutionalised social movements may represent the most effective examples of online campaign organisation to date in Australia. The Your Rights at Work

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33 As popularised by the graphic novel and film. This bears little (if any) relationship with the original sectarian political motivation of Fawkes and his co-conspirators.

34 Of particular note would be the use of DDOS by supporters of the Russian regime against political opponents within the country (Roberts & Etling, 2011), and as part of military actions against Georgia in 2008 (Danchev, 2008).

35 As can be seen recently emerging in the UK scandal over telephone message interception by employees of News Corporation, including accessing messages of key cabinet ministers during a time of war (Whittaker, 2011).

(YRaW) campaign played a notable role in the 2007 federal election through the mobilisation of resources in support of the election of the ALP, as well as framing debates around issues that favoured the then Opposition. While much of the \$30 million campaign focused on traditional use of media and physical events, there was promotion of the online aspect of strategy. Through e-petitions and email lists, the official campaign site ([www.rightsatwork.com.au](http://www.rightsatwork.com.au)) generated over 600,000 unique visits, built a mailing list of 190,000 people and collected nearly 90,000 signatures on a petition against the Government's laws. The GetUp! style of targeted and time-limited fundraising strategy was also employed, successfully raising money for billboards and print advertising purchases during the campaign (Muir 2008: 77–79). This demonstrated how the union movement had carefully studied the lessons of the OSMOs to integrate into their wider campaign strategy.

While, on the surface, this campaign was about achieving the policy objectives of the Labour movement through a change of government, it also served to reinforce in the eyes of the ALP that their union base had power outside of their political wing. This was important as the Opposition were not initially opposed to the reforms (Bramble & Kuhn, 2011: 137). YRaW demonstrated that unions mobilise citizens in a way that parties no longer can. Shaun Wilson's and Benjamin Spies-Butcher's analysis of the 2007 election campaign demonstrated how the issue of industrial relations was of increased salience for electors,<sup>36</sup> and that increased activity in protests and rallies (up from 3 to 8 percent of the 12-million-strong membership base) (2011: s317–19). This latter approach increased physical participation in the campaign to vote out the incumbent government by just under one million people.

Outside of the role of the campaign in changing government, YRaW's impact was more modest: in government Labor did not 'rip up' the WorkChoices legislation, but introduced a series of amendments to moderate the legislation (Barnes & Lafferty, 2010: 4–5). While the Australian union movement had little choice but to campaign hard against WorkChoices because of the impact of the legislation on the union movement overall, its considerable investment in this campaign achieved limited policy benefits. The institutionalised campaign of the union movement serves as a good example of how social movements can employ digital media to achieve brute-force success. The combination of considerable economic resources and institutionalised access to power through the union movements' ties with the ALP appears to provide a more significant set of resources than that provided by diffused social networks and political capital.

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<sup>36</sup> Barbara Pocock and Karen Brown highlight the role of framing the impacts on individuals, and particularly women and families, in this process of framing the salience of the dispute (2009: 168).

The campaign also demonstrates that it is easier to ‘push a falling fence’ than achieve a lasting influence. The union movement in Australia is not well positioned to be able to halt the more general trend towards considerable liberalisation of labour laws in this country in the future. This is significant with regard to how effective SMOs are at mobilising members of the public into action, but also the responsiveness of political elites to more radical calls for change. Gabriel Almond and Sidney Verba described this in terms of the nation’s ‘civic culture’ or its underlying working principles that shaped political practice and the formal institutional containers it works through:

... the ways in which political elites make decisions, their norms and attitudes, as well as the norms and attitudes of the ordinary citizen, his relations to government and to his fellow citizens — are subtler cultural components. [sic] (1963: 3)

That Australian elites respond in a limited transactional way to the mobilisation by social movement organisations demonstrates that they have little faith in their ability to deliver a lasting ideational change in the populous. While the modest impacts of Occupy point to some truth in this elite perspective, the inability of the Labor government to sustain its support base following the 2007 election also indicates that the public places some stock in trust, authenticity and honesty over simple majoritarianism.

## Rise of the I337s

The digital-media environment resents challenges to existing elites in society, public and private. The opportunities afforded by new technology to develop new political and media organisations has broken down some of the barriers to entry into the political environment, with a range of young, hungry, political entrepreneurs clambering through the breach to launch online campaigning organisations and digital media ventures. The success of these new actors has been varied, but, at times, the NSMs have demonstrated how to revitalise individual participation in a way many had thought impossible. These organisations have liberated political resources and influenced the outcome of policy debates through a canny use of mass membership, money and old-fashioned political propaganda. In doing so they have encouraged counter-mobilisation and the spread of new movement tactics to their political opponents. The ‘corporatisation’ of social movement politics may blunt the radical edge of the new OSMOs, but this vacuum has been quickly filled by new, radical groups who have taken direct action to a new level of sophistication and, in doing so, challenged some of the most powerful military-intelligence institutions in the world, while partnering with other centres of power to get their message across to the public. In Chapter 6 we look at the shape of the media industry under the radical digital media political economy.