Institutional Memory and ICT: Ingredients for Direct Democracy and Global Solidarity

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ABSTRACT

This paper presents an expansive view of the theory behind an emerging information communication technology that is being developed to provide marginalised populations with the tools they need to unify their voices. The system allows for the capture of their crowd-sourced artistic creativity and engineers an algorithm that makes the media retrievable as policy-supporting narrative threads. This ICT is seen as critically important because of how powerful lobbyists, funded by global elites and predatory capitalists, have consistently been successful in skewing the outcomes of policymaking decisions and elections. The system is firmly rooted in established governing narrative theory and is consistent with the small-group, consensus-building organisational theories that have been advocated by some of the most respected authors in the field since the 1970s.

Keywords: Crowd-Source, Discourse, Governing, Ideograph, Narrative, Protest Movement, Social Media, Socio-Technical System, Solidarity, Virtual Reality

INTRODUCTION

If nothing else, what engaged citizens should have learned from the global protests in 2011 is that young people are frustrated at their prospects for the future. Estimates are that on the weekend of November 12 and 13, “Occupy” protest actions, organized by groups that trace their origins to the “Occupy Wall Street” actions and the “we are the 99%” slogan, took place in 951 cities and 82 countries (Rogers, 2011). By then the Arab Revolution protests had subsided a bit, but the European austerity protest groups had willingly picked up the “Occupy” slogan. Nevertheless, very little structural change has taken place in the wake of the 2011 protests. The agenda setting and policy-making process, for the most part, still favors the wealthy and their powerful lobbyists because of how organizational elites and multinational corporations use the mechanism of hierarchical control to concentrate their power, and thereby manipulate the leaders of Western and emerging democracies to get the policy outcomes that they want. Recognizing this, organizational theory expert Gareth Morgan writes, “…we may be able to remove key problems [within our institutions] by changing the ‘rules of the game’ that produce them” (2006, 332-333). Morgan, like Frederick Thayer 33 years before him, was referring to
a complete restructuring of the hierarchical organization, and by extension, the bureaucracy that controls which policies are introduced, and which ones succeed (Thayer, 1973). This paper hopes to show that what past efforts to change the governing paradigm have failed to do is change the paradigm of hierarchy, in spite of numerous theorists who identified this as the problem. Arguably, their efforts all failed because the theorists failed to extract the institutional memory (specifically, the media material that is used to impact policymaking) and its custodians from the grasp of the hierarchy. This paper will demonstrate how current cloud technology not only makes this possible, but immediately upon investigating the available options, the possibility emerges whereby the algorithms that give the policymaking institutional memory its utility could also be engineered to provide a functional direct democracy system, not just for local community organizations, but just as easily, for global governance.

This paper will first describe a new kind of organizational model that circumvents hierarchy (and the lobbyists that leverage it to their advantage) and precludes its return. The paper will then describe the stakeholders for this new global (virtual) institution and explore their relationships with each other as populations that have traditionally been kept hopelessly fragmented, and thereby easily oppressed and marginalized by hegemony. With this foundation, the paper will describe how a reengineered institutional memory for the agenda setting process could be blended with information communication technology to unify all of these global populations and provide them with the tools for not only improving policymaking outcomes, but also for self-government.

Governance and the Organizational Elite

It was the famed sociologist Robert Michels who wrote in 1911 about the iron law of oligarchy. In that piece “...he developed the view that modern organizations typically end up under the control of narrow groups, even when this runs against the desires of the leaders as well as the led. [...] Despite the best intentions, these organizations seemed to develop tendencies that gave their leaders a near monopoly of power (Morgan, 2006, 296).” In similar ways, modern theories about these organisational elites continue to underscore why the problems with government and public administration are what they are today (Farazmand, 1999, 325; Chen, 2009, 451; Thayer, 2002, 107-115). In his review of the 2012 austerity crisis in Europe, Farazmand expresses his concern that the super-powers of Germany, France, Britain, and the United States have, through an allegiance with each other, created the largest Global Empire that the world has seen since the Fall of the Persian Empire 2300 years ago. Because the disproportionate burden of austerity is being imposed by these countries upon smaller, less powerful nations in an almost dictatorial manner, Farazmand sees this as creating points of bifurcation that will necessarily lead to the breakup of the European Union; a move that, in his view, would ultimately be beneficial to the smaller nations inasmuch as it will free them to begin a process of reclaiming their ability to determine their own futures (Farazmand, 2012a; Farazmand, 2012b).

Even if the future of the European Union is uncertain at this time, and they might very well pull through this crisis intact, what is vital is that the people in these less-powerful nations become as informed as possible, and that their participation in the process be as engaged and transparent as possible. Having said that, however, the theories that trace the extent of control held by the global elite continue to show that there is a lack of a clear, practical method whereby oppressed populations can effectively participate. Such a mechanism has to exist before equal and fair access to the democratic process can be restored for marginalized populations (El-Mahdi, 2009, 1011). Because it hopes to do this, the ICT introduced within this paper could be summarized as an effort to engineer a new paradigm for accessible democracy. For the sake of simplicity, the author has adopted the name MOCSIE Systems for his ICT.
MOCSIE is an acronym for Media Omniverse Collective for Social Initiative and Enterprise, and it is an information communication technology that has been six years in development by the author, first as a media technology project as the capstone project of his bachelor’s degree in multimedia journalism, and more recently as an integration of several technologies into a comprehensive ICT platform.

**Changing the Rules of the Game**

Morgan and Thayer are not the only ones who have tried to bring in a new paradigm for how our public institutions are constituted. In the preface to his current edition of *Public Organization*, Denhardt writes, “As a theory of organization, [the history of past efforts of the field has] limited itself to instrumental concerns expressed through hierarchical structures, failing to acknowledge or to promote the search for alternative organizational designs.” His tone is almost as serious as Thayer’s as he underscores how serious he is by adding, “If democracy is to survive in our society, it must not be over ridden by the false promises of hierarchy and authoritarian rule. Democratic outcomes require democratic processes” (Denhardt, 2011, x-xi; emphasis in original).

While Morgan and Denhardt are current in the field, Thayer’s views are almost 40 years old, but nevertheless, they have shaped the engineering of this proposed information system because he was one of the earliest, and arguably the most vocal, in strongly advocating for a new paradigm that abandoned hierarchy. Thayer’s suggestion was that society and its institutions be guided by an “almost infinite number of small groups” instead of a hierarchy (1973, 171). Being a visionary, Thayer did not concern himself with how these groups would be connected to each other because, like many of his era, he anticipated that the computer would soon make the impossible, possible, so he simply set out ideas for what “should be,” not what was practical at the time. As a starting point he set out to identify the ideal group size for consensus-building. As he traced the history of human civilization he found that most tasks seemed naturally suited for a small group process, and that the natural affinity was to gravitate into these small groups when work becomes especially challenging and the risk of an incorrect decision increases (1973, 8). He concludes on this topic by affirming that, “While common sense would seem to dictate that there can be no ‘magic’ number, five appears so often in so many environmental situations to carry persuasion with it” (Thayer, 1973, 8). In the references at the back of his book he cites over a dozen studies that support this number (199).

Figure 1 shows what might best be described as a community oversight organisation that brings together 18 individuals and gives them a mandate to unify all of the policymaking needs of any number of local nonprofits and government agencies. These people can be thought of as the street-level bureaucrats of today. These people also happen to be the bureaucrats that are furthest removed from the policymaking decisions that, nevertheless, impact their daily work the most. Experience has shown that even when those street-level bureaucrats furthest from the center attempt to effect policy change, their ideas carry little weight as they advocate for change to their superiors; a process that Hal Rainey calls “… information leakage as lower-level officials communicate up the hierarchy” (Rainey, 2009).

Figure 2 shows how this same “street-level” unit has been re-engineered to work as a unit within the MOCSIE Systems. It should be immediately evident that, even though every position is in an identical position to Figure 1 (remove all of the connecting lines), Figure 2 operates free of hierarchy. The goal of this redesign was to design new relationships between existing people at the community level so that they would satisfy Thayer’s small-group, consensus-building ideals. Figure 2 outlines four such groups, and each one serves a different purpose. A policy group (bottom right circle) would oversee six all-encompassing social justice campaigns, a media group (top right circle) would oversee six all-encompassing genres of artistic creativity, an operations group (the oval on the left) would make sure that each unit runs smoothly, and a
steering group of six that links the outer three groups (the black square) would “govern” the community. The single, over-arching goal of the four groups at the community level is to unify the discourse within the community that each unit represents.

Having said that, this paper is about much more than a re-configured community organization. It is about creating an institution without creating a hierarchy. In order to accomplish this within the MOCSIE Systems one simply stacks these community groups on top of each other, as represented by Figure 3. This, of course, is where the new paradigm can be imagined best if viewed through the lens of a virtual (cloud-based) institution. As a model for scalability, it is important to note that so long as the “institutional memory” is digital, and resident in the cloud, that same ICT that would serve a single organization with 18 individuals in it could be launched from enterprise-level platforms to serve thousands of face-to-face, city-based units. It would not be impeded by political or geographical boundaries, and it could not be co-opted by any institutional elites because, in this day and age, the model could be easily tweaked and re-launched under a different name, and from another server. In other words, a group that is displeased with its current associations would simply “vote with their feet” and find a new “stack” that better represents their political leanings. It is important to note, however, that the new stack would likely still be tapping into the same institutional memory. The data does not change; just the associations within the stack.

Figure 1. Traditional hierarchy at the street-level-bureaucrat level

Figure 2. MOCSIE Systems non-hierarchical unit of four linked groups
An important point that this paper hopes to make later on through a sampling of literature reviews on the global elite is that it is important to underscore how the MOCSIE Systems are not another social media site. As will be explained later, the fact that the media will be proactively and selectively solicited by politically motivated social entrepreneurs and community activists elevates this information communication technology from being a simple crowd-sourcing social site to the point that it can be seen as a tool of democracy, free speech, and representative governance. It is not a passive system; it is an activist-driven, grassroots system for making the governing process truly, in every way, a consensus-building direct-democracy system.

The Twin Hypotheses

We live in a political climate where it is dangerous for a population to expose where they are most vulnerable because vulnerabilities are routinely exploited by those in positions of power, and the phenomenon is not limited to tyrannical regimes. In many cases, the policies of Western democracies have been incredibly oppressive and damaging to minority populations, and even women, who make up half of the population!

In reviewing the book, *Globalization from Below*, Peter Evans wrote, “Preoccupation with movement democracy is complemented by a profound distrust of established governance organizations” (2007, 62). It is noteworthy that he wrote that more than a year before the global financial crisis, and the book certainly foreshadowed the protests of 2011.

This paper recognises that within this emerging information communication technology, at the nexus of organisational behaviour and policymaking, resides a paradox of vulnerability and trust. The importance of building in a mechanism to compensate for this was seen as critically important because the trust of the common person has routinely been violated; the most glaring example being the events of more than three decades that led up to the 2008 financial crisis, followed-up by a failure to prosecute a single elite individual for any kind of failing in what will likely go into the record books as the largest upward transfer of wealth in the history of humankind (Kolnick, 2012). Even beyond that, it has not seemed to matter whether a person lived in a democratic nation or one ruled by a dictator, because, in both cases, vulnerable people routinely have their trust in leadership violated. Mohamed Bouazizi, the individual credited with lighting the spark

![Figure 3. MOCSIE Systems model showing example of ten stacked units](image-url)
that fuelled all of the 2011 protests by setting himself on fire in a remote Tunisian city, should have been able to trust the police in his town to enforce the law equally. He was vulnerable to a corrupt system that was untrustworthy.

It is believed that the MOCSIE Systems can (and will) achieve wide-spread use, and the measures of this success will revolve around twin hypotheses, each in turn intended to mitigate the problems of vulnerability and trust. The central-figure hypothesis is proposed to test whether or not people can be motivated to contribute to the institutional memory, as well as to glean narrative content from it in supporting effective policy-proposals in the agenda setting process. This behavior will, of course, radiate out from those 18 individuals represented in Figure 2. There will, of course, be no organization if nobody steps up to organize them, and this is where the central figure comes in. There will need to be a person – a social entrepreneur – who is so driven by a passion for social justice that she or he will be willing to persist with dogged determination in the daunting task of bringing together a team of 17 existing (preferably recognized and respected) community leaders for a unified purpose of improving policymaking decisions on behalf of a population. This person will have to be a driven individual because, within marginalized populations, most will listen to the initial sales pitch for “yet another nonprofit advocacy group” under a cloud of pervasive skepticism (i.e. mistrust). At the root of the problem is hegemony, a topic that will be covered in detail further along in this paper, but for now, suffice it to say it is because of hegemony that there is so much distrust of “upstart” leaders who come into a community with grand promises. Hegemony essentially is what convinces people to just accept things the way they are because, even if things are bad, they might get worse if you “jerk on the chain” of the powerful and wake the sleeping tiger. The “central figure” will not only need to overcome this age-old tactic of fragmentation, but they will also have to be the kind of person that Al Sharpton is, who captured the spirit of this paper well by simply stating, “A lot of things were acceptable – until we stopped accepting it” (Sharpton, 2011).

While on the topic of hegemony, it needs to be pointed out that, for centuries now, philosophers and theorists have advocated that hegemonic narratives be deconstructed. While that might be one tactic of the proposed MOCSIE Systems, it will not be the main tactic. Hugh Miller suggests an approach that differs from most others in that he advocates for the displacement of harmful narratives like those advanced under the umbrella of hegemony. This displacement is accomplished by putting forth a new narrative that tells a more compelling story of how things should be different than they are (Miller, 2012). The tactics through which this will be done will be explained later in this paper.

The second hypothesis, referred to as the collective-thought hypothesis, supports two ideas. First, as noted above, most marginalized populations know that they are vulnerable in a hierarchy, so in constructing a new paradigm a convincing and easily demonstrated alternative must be put into place that they can trust will protect them from the charismatic central figure who will necessarily emerge as their spokesperson. Undeniably, charisma makes a person a natural at leading and organizing, but that charisma can be frightening to a person who has previously been sucked in by charisma and suffered as a result. The tactic is easily recognised as a proven tactic of organizational elites who swoop in and “capture” those charismatic leaders who rose to the top and, with the promise of money and/or power, turn them against the people that gave them their trust (Farazmand, 1999; Thayer, 2002). By making that central figure just another voice in a consensus-building group the MOCSIE Systems organisational model is designed to circumvent this.

Second, in addition to placing the central figure into the steering group, rather than giving her or him a position in a hierarchy, the collective-thought hypothesis also relates to how the community-based governing unit is structured so as to germinate a consensus-building process for framing and contextualizing the growing repository of records in the institutional memory, enabling users from
within the community to effectively displace those harmful, socially constructed narratives that are rooted in, and defended by, hegemony.

Again, citing Peter Evans from 2007, he predicted that the globalisation movement that was started by capitalists would eventually divide the elite class and open a window of opportunity for global solidarity (2007, 64). It is the opinion of this paper that he was right, and the window is currently cracked, but the counter-hegemonic voices have yet to coalesce. Nowhere was this more evident than in the wake of the protest movements of 2011 when we, as researchers, found ourselves combing through hundreds of web pages simply to excavate any kind of a narrative thread that would support the kind of policy change that would satisfy the protestors. The material was there, of course. The protestors have been very faithful in holding their daily “circle time” (an Occupy Wall Street term) and drafting manifestos, so, in short, they had enormous amounts of “information,” but they had no “system.”

**Overcoming the Instability of Funding**

In the non-profit sector, grant making is just another institution of hierarchy. Even if this were not a problem unto itself, grant funding is notorious for its instability because, by its very nature, it lacks a guarantee that it will be there from one year to the next. In light of this, grant funding is currently only being pursued to fund the development of the MOCSIE Systems software (through 2013) and the start-up year of operations (through 2014). Beyond that, the MOCSIE Systems have been structured in such a way that they should be self-funded by traffic to the global domain. Even at that, a monetized web domain will be just one of four revenue streams designed into the model. Items that are expected to be for sale through an online store are things like limited edition art prints, books, CD’s, DVD’s, postcards, bumper stickers, mugs, t-shirts, other apparel, bookmarks, and other related items. Additionally, revenue streams will also be realized from symposia, exhibitions, tours, and public speaking engagements by members of the collective. Finally, tuition fees from a future online university will round out the income streams.

Although the ultimate self-funding model is still being engineered, it is the intent of the model that any profits be shared in similar ways to how the farmer’s cooperatives worked a century ago; specifically, that members of the collective who have converted their talent into revenue streams should be compensated relative to their contribution. With its own revenue streams, it is hoped that the institution will enjoy complete autonomy.

**The Stakeholders**

When it is proposed that this model be self-funding, most listeners interpret that to mean that it will look and “feel” like a business, and a business necessarily has stakeholders. From that perspective, then, the stakeholders of the MOCSIE Systems will be any marginalized or oppressed population, no matter where they might be located. If they are capable of generating a message in support of a desired policy change (i.e. media, in any of six genres), and they can somehow get that media into the institutional memory of the MOCSIE Systems, then they are, by definition, one of its stakeholders.

Further to that, if you are a member of an oppressed or marginalized population, then you are also a survivor of abuse. Continuing on in this vein, survivors of abuse will always benefit by belonging to a therapy group. In this regard, the MOCSIE Systems will be seen by its stakeholders as a kind of mental health organization, and that is a wonderful thing. For this reason, the ICT database, by itself, will be engineered so that it can be accessed by the most vulnerable and marginalized people who stand the most to gain by affiliating themselves with it.

As it relates to how crowd-sourcing of media might be considered an exercise of mental health therapy, research supports the fact that by simply having a validating outlet through which one can recount one’s abuse (i.e. their marginalization), a person begins the healing
process and ends the cycle of submitting to further abuse. Studies show that survivors of abuse who do not talk about it impair their recovery (Lepore, Ragan, & Jones, 2000; Hemenover, 2003; Ruggiero et al., 2004). One psychologist writes, “Those who have survived [traumatic events] learn that their sense of self, of worth, of humanity, depends upon a feeling of connection to others. The solidarity of a group provides the strongest protection against […] despair” (Herman, 1997). Countless web pages have already become invaluable as virtual support groups to meet the demand, but, similar to the narratives of the 2011 protest movements, as a system it is hopelessly fragmented. That kind of data is invaluable in the policymaking process, but again, the data, as currently constituted, does not lend itself for use within an ICT. It is part of the web, but it is not useable in the ways outlined for the institutional memory that this paper advocates.

Cast in this light, the amazing thing is that by its mere existence, the MOCSIE Systems could arguably qualify as a resounding success even if no data is ever retrieved from its database. Therefore, even though the topic of societal abuse will not come up again in this paper, it needs to be understood that from a mental health standpoint, anything that alters the discourse inside a person’s own head will be therapeutic, and the natural outcome of that is that those loved ones and acquaintances of that individual will begin to hear a new discourse as well. Also, by extension, when a victim of societal abuse is introduced to a fellow survivor with a similar story, they also start a conversation (in those vertical stacks shown in Figure 3). When provided with a safe, nurturing, and supportive environment, these conversations will build momentum. As new narratives for living emerge, a change within the community begins to evolve, even if the change is not immediately visible to outside observers. For the remainder of this paper, even though it will primarily discuss the institutionalized, proactive role that the MOCSIE Systems will assume in resisting some of the most powerful forces on the planet, the change that occurs in the hearts and minds of its individual participants should never be overlooked or underestimated for the degree of its impact.

**Collective Will and an End to Hierarchy**

It should now be apparent that every element of the MOCSIE Systems is connected in some way to its institutional memory through its information communication technology. That is because, as shown by Figure 3, with its ten layers and 18 individuals in each layer, the institution per se could not exist outside of the ICT. It is, in the purest sense, a virtual institution that is cloud-resident. While the 18 individuals at the community level might see each other on a daily basis, it is possible that most of the “work” that needs to be done is work that requires being engaged with those in the vertical stack (the virtual realm), not the horizontal layer (the real world). Regardless, in this model, a person’s entire work environment is contained by the technology, and therefore, so is the decision-making process that guides how its crowd-sourced content will be utilised, both as media, and as a policy-making tool.

Just to review then, when imagined as a matrix of 180 individuals, Figure 3 of the MOCSIE Systems socio-technical model cannot be construed in any way to show a hierarchy. This should serve to reinforce how every decision is derived as a product of a collective effort. Similarly, the natural outcome of the work of the 180 individuals represented in Figure 3 will be that the supporting information that is guiding the policymaking process in ten cities (and by extension at the state or provincial level, and possibly at the federal level) will now be remarkably similar in each of the respective communities, regardless of where that community might be on the planet. For the sake of clarity, the model in Figure 3 was limited to ten horizontal (stacked) units, but in practice each group, organisation, or institution will be very organic, where affiliates can come and go based upon where they find their best allies. The stack will, of course, become unwieldy if it grows too...
“tall,” and it is therefore anticipated that few groups will affiliate themselves formally with more than a dozen companion organisations. The benefit, of course, comes from the fact that every group will have access to the same narrative threads emerging from the institutional memory and ICT, regardless of who generates them. Therefore, a national policy that is being worked on by hundreds of inner-city groups simultaneously could, in truth, be considered the outgrowth of several smaller “stacked” groups with 10 to 12 layers in each.

**A NOD TO SOCIAL CONSTRUCTIONISM**

From a postmodern perspective it needs to be understood that what we think of as “truth” is a social construct. In keeping with this logic, the political “left” and the political “right” are also social constructs. We only know how to define “conservative” and “progressive,” or “liberal” and “libertarian,” based on narratives that have been handed down to us from our parents, grandparents, schoolteachers, and the media, to name just a few sources. In church, as illustrated so well by the character Tevye in *Fiddler on the Roof*, we are taught that the only “tradition” worth preserving is the one that relates to our own culture (Stein, 1964). Based on those narratives, a “progressive” ideology advocates change from the traditional by creating a climate where, for the conservative mind, change is something to be feared. After all, from a governing perspective, nothing propels a governing narrative within conservative crowds better than the fear that cherished traditions are being put at risk, a fact that is at the root of the “Take our Country Back” narrative used by conservatives to motivate their base of support in the United States. Given this understanding as a starting point we can better understand governing narratives as they are now constituted in many parts of the world. What we have in many countries is a dialectical discourse; dialectical inasmuch as there are primarily only two completely opposite narratives. For this paper, the dialectical nature of them can be thought of in terms of the viewpoints being 180° opposed to each other.

What is not implied with a vision of dialectical narratives is that there should be 178° of possible compromise between the two polar opposites; possibilities that will only be considered in a spirit of compromise, and which, in postmodernist terms, can only be realized by swaying public opinion. As shown in Figure 4, this principle might be more easily understood if the reader imagines a protractor laid on a dialectical line between the political foes of the left and right.

In spite of how dialectical American politics have been, prior to 2000 Congress was still able to push through major and significant legislation. As shown by Figure 4, log-rolling between left-leaning progressives and right-leaning conservatives allowed for legislation to be passed in the spirit of compromise (represented by the “viable” section between point 3 and point 7). However, with the election of George W. Bush in 2000, that log-rolling process began to unravel. By the time Barack Obama was elected president in 2008 log-rolling and compromise on the part of political conservatives had become impossible. By the 2010 midterm elections political extremism and a “do nothing Congress” had become a way of life in America.

Regardless of how similar or dissimilar other countries are to the United States, this information system could possibly provide the only way forward in countries where compromise has become impossible between political extremists who seem to think that politics is a zero-sum game. Going forward, when it comes to policymaking and the agenda setting process, it is becoming increasingly clear that we, as citizens of these countries, will have to define the new governing narratives on behalf of, and for the benefit of, our legislative bodies. This discussion therefore now returns us to what is viable and nonviable as a policy proposal.
The Zero Sum Game

The global elite in modern times have, for the most part, determined that it is better to win elections than it is to wage wars, but the tactics that they use to win these elections are the same tactics that helped them win the wars of past centuries. The tried-and-proven tactic is to create narratives that pit oppressed populations against each other. Those narratives generally can be described as “zero-sum” narratives because they typically were used to instill a fear and hatred of a particular “othered” class. In the past, this tactic incited “just wars,” but today this tactic wins elections. Narratives are the weapon of choice for a zero-sum game, and the ammunition for that weapon, for the purpose of this paper, will be referred to as ideographs; signifiers that are heavy with connotation. Hugh Miller has written extensively (in complex academic terms) about these ideographs, (2004; 2012) but for the purpose of this section we can think of ideographs as being used in the construction of narratives in the same way that we think of bricks as being used in the construction of barriers. What the counter-hegemonic forces have not figured out yet is how to use ideographs as tools to effectively fight back against the global elite. Progressive movements have been busy accumulating an arsenal of ideographs, and they already have them stored away as digital media throughout the web, but they are sadly lacking a single institutional memory that allows for the ideographs to be easily woven together into narrative threads. Once an algorithm has been engineered to accomplish this these narrative threads could quickly become powerful enough as an actual “governing narrative” (Miller, 2012), and thereby compete with the narratives generated by the lobbyists and organizational elite of the political right. In that moment, the MOCSIE Systems will become a powerful tool in improving how democracy works for marginalized populations.

As alluded to earlier, the global elite have figured out that if they share carefully measured amounts of power with a majority “favored” class, then they can get this group of people to align themselves with the elite at the polling booth (Farazmand, 1999, 325-326). It is because of this that we see so much of the current discourse being structured so that it effectively deflects the blame for the economic hardships of the elite’s “favored class” onto other segments of disfavored “others.” In the United States this was done by rhetoric in the 2012 presidential election that pitted the “takers” (those who benefit from government transfer payments) against the “makers” (the so-called ‘job-creating’ wealthy). This particular ideograph was advanced by vice-presidential candidate Paul Ryan, shortly after presidential candidate Mitt Romney’s now infamous “47 percent” comment hit the media in August 2012.
and instantly became the ideograph that many credit with him losing his bid for the White House (Barro, 2012). As mentioned above, the popular “Take our country back” phrase is another standard of the American right, and the unspoken context (the connotation of the ideograph) pines for a period when the white, Christian, heterosexual male faced little or no opposition from visible minorities, atheists, non-Christians, feminists, and gays. European nations are not immune to this tactic either, as this kind of “othering” tactic has now brought them to a situation where nations are “struggling greatly with inclusiveness and discrimination” (Stille, 2011). Stille also mentions how the United States has become “one of the most unequal democracies in the world.”

Equality, fairness, and diversity, as the hallmarks of America’s “Great Society” period, have been reduced to a forgotten ghost of a long-ago era nicknamed “Camelot.” All indicators point to the groundswell of support that resulted in the election of Richard Nixon in 1968 as the clear demarcation line for when that period officially ended. It was then when a drive toward restoring inequality began in earnest, and when diversity became a pejorative in the minds of many Americans. Joan Walsh writes about this in her book, What’s the Matter with White People: Why we long for a golden age that never was. The summary on the back cover of the book states it best.

Right-wing culture warriors blamed the decline on the moral shortcomings of “other” Americans—blacks, feminists, gays, immigrants, union members—to court a fearful white working and middle class base with ever more bitter “us” vs. “them” politics. Liberals tried but mostly failed to make the case that we’re all in this together (Walsh, 2012).

A “Consultable Record”

In the same year that Thayer published his book, back in a period when computer memory was still being loaded with punch cards, Clifford Geertz, one of the most influential cultural anthropologists of the 20th century (Shweder & Good, 2005), wrote about the importance of having a “consultable record of what man has said” (Geertz, 1973, 30). In 2000, Dvora Yanow elevated this thinking when she suggested that by, “Observing what people do and how they do it, listening to how they talk about the issue, reading what they read, and talking with them about their lives…” a person becomes more in tune with what the policymaking needs of a population are because they come to understand the true issues of concern. She continues by stating that, “Out of this growing familiarity, the researcher-analyst will be able to identify the overlappings and commonalities…” (Yanow, 2000, 37). Both of these academics were talking about the value of having access to qualitative information as “institutional memory” (Thayer, 1973, 171). To these three academics, and countless others, the idea of having a readily available, relevant, research-supported narrative that informs the pressing social issues of our time was (and is) of critical importance. This is because this kind of information is critical to any number of disciplines, but as it relates to governance, the thinking is that this kind of information should be at the very core of every policy decision. It is anticipated that this institutional memory will be full of compelling stories that not only outline the seriousness of societal problems, but also, by linking similar stories into narrative threads, and subsequently linking them to a viable policy proposal that will fix that problem, a new kind of governing narrative emerges.

At this point it might be helpful to think of this information communication technology in terms of a vehicle metaphor. As the fuel it has the crowd-sourced ideographs within its ICT database (the compelling stories), and as the engine at the core of the ICT system there will be a query language that is engineered to retrieve multiple ideographs that can be easily framed and contextualized into policy-supporting narratives. Altogether, by the time the final enterprise version of this project is ready to launch sometime in 2014, there will be a network of databases and systems that will...
work together, thus completing the metaphor with its vehicle. Just as with a real vehicle, if there is no fuel, the vehicle is useless, and without a powerful engine the vehicle’s utility will be adversely impacted.

The Query Algorithms

As described earlier, the records within the MOCSIE Systems are called ideographs, and in their raw form they will exist in isolation from each other, like the bricks in a brick wall that arrived neatly stacked on pallets. Without the proper fields within these records, there could be no algorithm with which the necessary narrative threads could be invoked with the retrieval algorithm, and the goals of the emerging virtual governing institution could not be accomplished. The system will also somehow need to support those small-groups represented in Figure 2. As noted, one group (the policy group) is charged with putting forward policy proposals, and the other (the media group) is charged with framing the media so that it provides compelling narratives to propel each policy proposal through the agenda setting process. Beyond that, the entire team of 18 individuals is charged with altering the discourse within their communities. To do this manually would be an enormous task.

In order to computerize as much of this process as possible, carefully identified consensus-building fields have been defined in each ideographic record where users can rate each one for its political “tone” on a scale of zero to ten, with zero being defined as the extreme political left (or the progressive liberal ideology) and ten being defined as the extreme political right (or conservative libertarian ideology). Now, returning to Figure 4, it needs to be remembered that all of the media that will be contributed to this database as an ideograph will, in some way, frame a political message that will fall somewhere on this scale. This is where Figure 5 comes in, illustrating the mechanism through which users of the ICT system will participate in rating each ideograph to generate (through the system algorithm) the otherwise fluid placement of the heavy green “public opinion” needle shown in Figure 4. Through this scale it becomes evident that items rated from 0 to 3 can be seen as politically unviable because they will be seen as too extreme to garner any support from the moderate middle, and ideographs rated from 7 to 10 likewise become unviable because they will be seen as too far to the political right. Using this scale it is demonstrated how viable policy; policy that is capable of enjoying majority support from the public, falls in the range from 3 to 7. Using this scale, when decision-makers search for only those policies with a viable rating, they end up with a set of options that together might support a viable policy proposal.

As important as the query algorithm is, the person who stores the record (or provides the hyper-link) has to archive the record properly or it will be overlooked by the algorithm. To make this as easy as possible, pre-defined pull-down fields will obligate open-platform contributors to think through the process of what best describes their work, from both the media genre perspective, and the policy perspective. Once the record is uploaded or linked, other users will initiate the rating process by classifying, in their own opinion, where an ideograph lies on the political spectrum. If they are active as a contributor they will likely follow each of their ideographs to see how others are rating it. If the activist gave their own record a 5, but everybody else is rating it with a 3 after it has been up for a while, the activist will realize that his or her contributions will never percolate to the top as viable. This realization will alter the discourse in the activists head because, up until now, they thought they were providing viable ideas for the governing process. In this way, traditionally divisive issues slowly converge in the viable segment of the protractor and the odds of having a vast collection of media that support a policy-proposal capable of making it through Kingdon’s “policy window” is greatly improved (Anderson, 2011, 93). For those not familiar with Kingdon, the “policy window” is where the politics stream, the problems stream, and the policy-proposal stream converge at precisely the right moment...kind of like having the planets line up.
Having said that, if our activist in the above example is firm in her or his resolve to change public opinion so that an ideograph that is currently rated as a three is eventually seen as increasingly viable (similar to the marriage equality question over the past 10 years), then there will be mechanisms in the MOCSIE Systems that this activist can take advantage of in order to alter the discourse on their particular campaign.

By going through this process for each record or link, certain contributors themselves will have to face the truth that is easily overlooked; the truth that positions of “privilege” are typically inherited, not earned, and worse yet, that the “privilege” that certain classes of people inherently enjoy is more often than not socially constructed by hegemonic narratives. Many will also have to face the fact that they are posting an ideograph that advances a zero-sum narrative (a different mechanism that is not covered in this paper). What the algorithms will highlight, in cases of white privilege, and in cases similar to it, is how hegemony rewards complicity. Hegemony, by design, means that unless something disrupts habitual behaviour (Miller, 2012), then the “favoured class” will never be taught how to challenge their own harmful hegemonic views. Unless they do this, they will, by default, reap a benefit through simply staying complicit. That thought bears repeating: do nothing and nothing will change! In its simplest form, if you are a white, heterosexual, Christian male in almost any Western democracy, any kind of change can easily be painted as “undesirable” and “not in your best interest,” simply because you are already at the top of the ladder of privilege. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. famously wrote, “He who passively accepts evil is as much involved in it as he who helps to perpetrate it. He who accepts evil without protesting against it is really cooperating with it.”

The other thing that becomes critically important for the information system is that it will also have a mechanism to inspire a spirit of compromise during the actual media contribution (crowd sourcing) process. The single best opportunity to change minds and have people look at the situation from “outside the box,” so to speak, is to have them see the elements of the algorithms while they are online contributing their media. For this reason, each contributor will have to give their own ideograph a rating when they initially post it. Miller expressed the benefit of creating this kind of a “deciding moment” when he wrote that the goal is to get a person to think in their mind, “Most likely, I will do what I have done before, though maybe not this time” (Miller, 2012, 22, emphasis added).
Programming Platform and Language

Work to-date on the prototype of the MOC-SIEweb platform has been done in C# on a SQLServer platform. A pre-alpha version of the database storage and retrieval mechanism for the ideographs has been operational since mid-2012, and it also is providing an internal web page for selecting and viewing these ideographs. The official launch of a pre-beta release will not take place until mid- to late-2013 and an enterprise level platform for the fully functional beta release with multiple databases is expected to take place in mid- to late-2014, although this date could be advanced dramatically if approval is obtained to use overlays, whereby existing web pages could be rated using the MOCSIE Systems algorithms without actually having to manually embed hyperlinks into the ICT. Plans call for the MOCSIE Systems to be launched in conjunction with a language system that could make the ICT available in more than 11 languages on its launch date.

Solidarity Movements

When Time magazine honoured “The Protestor” as The Person of the Year for 2011 (Andersen, 2011), the article spoke of how the protests took place in hundreds of cities in dozens of countries. With this in mind, take another look at the 10 layers of city-based units that are represented in Figure 3. Now imagine over 900 layers represented in Figure 3 instead of just ten. It is useful to also imagine how each of the 180 individuals represented in Figure 3 will not only be a crowd-source contributor to the proposed ICT database, but each of them will also be a conduit and custodian for the content, naturally helping to frame and contextualize the consensus-building (discourse-altering) nature of the content that is brought into the database from the grassroots of a population. If expanded (in theory) to encompass the 951 cities that were engaged in the 2011 protests, this virtual institution would have boasted more than 17,000 individuals in its organisa-

ion. Furthermore, those individuals would have represented 82 countries. These 17,000 activists, each as a representative for their own community, would have provided outreach to build the database, thereby extending the reach of the database to literally hundreds of thousands of fellow activists. This kind of networking would organically provide for an almost infinite sprawl of crowd-sourced material as digital content begins to aggregate from activists and community workers around the world.

With that in mind we can take this example even further. This ICT is intended to embrace media of all kinds, and would provide for visual art, photojournalism, blogs, novels, non-fiction books, podcasts, YouTube videos, and any number of hyperlinks to other content already on the web. It could also be something as simple as a cell phone image that was uploaded with a text message caption. It is important to note that the content is being generated already, and whether or not this database exists will neither accelerate nor diminish the rate at which this data is posted to the Internet. The only thing that this database will do is allow it to be accessed through the query language of an information system, thus weaving it together into usable narrative. It will also allow the media to be evaluated by fellow contributors and the general public; a point that was already expanded above.

Protestors and Their Media

A few examples might serve to demonstrate how deeply mobile technology has penetrated third-world countries and emerging democracies. A 2011 news story related how, in one African nation, more than half of the population did not have access to a bank facility, but over half of the adults had cell phones. In response to this, rather than build more branches, the banking industry has decided to move to mobile banking instead (Ghosh, 2011). In August 2011 cell phones and SMS technology allowed Kenyans to raise more than $200,000 from fellow Kenyans in the first 12 hours of a famine relief campaign. Of particular interest was the fact that, in the appeal to have citizens send a text as a way of
donating money, the public was encouraged to donate what they could, even if it was as little as ten cents (BBC, 2011). Development has now reached the point where technology is truly global, and in 2011 cell phones were being offered in India, Turkey, and several African nations for under $15 (Fox, 2011).

As for tablets and laptops, in October 2011 India launched a $35 Android tablet to reduce the digital divide between rich and poor in that country. The first 100,000 units were distributed to college students for free (Fox, 2011). In early 2012 the One Laptop Per Child charity introduced their $100 solar-powered XO 3.0 tablet at the Consumer Electronics Show in Las Vegas. Shipments of 75,000 units to Uruguay and Nicaragua were to be made in March 2012 (Fox, 2012).

Advances such as these are important because, for the developing world, it is becoming more and more apparent that the future of equal rights for oppressed and marginalized classes is going to be dramatically accelerated if they have access to the Internet, whether through a cell phone, tablet, or laptop computer. As noted earlier in this paper, artistic creativity and personal expression is what will comprise the records in this all-important institutional memory, and the easier it is to upload those records, the more likely it will be that there will be valuable content for policymaking that will support the needs of any given population, even if much of the “housekeeping” for that data is done by expatriates that are doing their social justice advocacy from outside of the country itself. Returning again to 2011, one event, in December 2010, figures prominently in how the events of the year unfurled. Even though some of the details have now been embellished to the point of folklore (citing accurate sources is difficult in this instance), the ideograph of the self-immolation of Mohamed Bouazizi is representative of how powerful an ideograph can become. Bouazizi will forever be remembered as someone far more significant than a penniless fruit vendor from a remote town in Tunisia. Because of how that image became framed in the weeks after his death, it is now a signifier of something far greater. The context of that ideograph; the connotation that now comes with it, is one that allows it to serve as proxy for every young Arab who has done everything that they were told they should do in order to be a contributing member of society, and then through oppression was subsequently denied that dignity. Standing up to your oppressors, in the face of death, became a noble act (Thorne, 2011). Bouazizi’s death propelled a protest movement forward so rapidly in Tunisia that, within ten days, a dictator who had ruled for 23 years was forced to step down, flee the country with his family, and spend the rest of his life in exile.

The MOCSIE Systems recognise and leverage the undeniable fact that, in all likelihood, if someone had not found a way to take and distribute that picture of Bouazizi in flames, there would have been no Mohamed Bouazizi ideograph. By the quality of the picture, it would seem that it was originally captured by a cell phone, not a journalist. Therefore, were it not for the technology that captured an event that lasted for mere seconds, and were it not for the technology that allowed that image to spread across the planet in mere hours, and then go viral, there might not have been a Tunisian revolution. Now, as an enduring ideograph, it continues to resonate in the minds of millions (Miller, 2004, 469). The institutional memory and ICT that is envisioned for the MOCSIE Systems promises to not only make what happened in Tunisia into something routine and organic (not the self-immolation, but rather the spontaneous news-of-the-moment), but also take it to the next step and allow the ensuing protest narratives to become governing narratives. In the case of a revolution, past experience has indicated that a new government framework that will represent the protestors almost has to be waiting in the wings for when a government is toppled or a marginalising policy is struck down by the courts. If not, other oppressive regimes that had
been suppressed by a deposed tyrant (in the case of Egypt, the Islamists) quickly dominate the landscape. The MOCSIE Systems, as a narrative generator, promise to quickly convert the protest narratives into usable governing narratives that will develop organically almost as fast as the crowd-sourced records are uploaded.

Discourse Structuration and Hegemony

With the above detailed description of both the institutional memory and the ideographs that are archived there, we can now move on to how ideographs and narratives will be utilized as media tools. To do this, this paper will now delve deeper into the process of discourse structuration. The term was used by Hajer (1993) in Discourse Theory in European Politics: Identity, Policy and Governance. Miller, in 2012, quotes Hajer as well, writing, “discourse-coalition is not so much connected to a particular person, but is related to practices in the context in which actors employ story lines and (re)produce and transform a particular discourse” (Miller, 2012). Discourse structuration has never been a problem for the global elite, and it was Antonio Gramsci, the Italian political activist, who first described how power is retained by the ruling class by the way they structure the governing narratives to marginalize others, and therefore benefit themselves (Bates, 1975, 351).

Returning to the idea above about the “othering” tactic of hegemony, it needs to be underscored that those carefully structured narratives not only tell a population who they should hate (a process called framing), but also, embedded in that narrative, is a cleverly engineered narrative that instructs the oppressed to consent to their own marginalization. That insidious narrative typically outlines the conditions under which certain benefits will inure to the submissive population so long as they cooperate with the elites (structuration). In many cases the only “benefit” promised is that, as bad as things might be, they at least will not get “worse.” This is also known as the process of contextualizing a highly specific message within a larger governing narrative. What the MOCSIE Systems recognize is that, while the elite are already very good at doing this, there is nothing that stops the oppressed from doing the same thing to change the discourse so that a new narrative emerges that favors them instead of the elite. Unfortunately, this will only happen if they can reach consensus on the topics that they want to be advanced. This is why the institutional memory and ICT cannot be under custodianship of a hierarchy, and it is also why these decisions are all placed into the hands of small groups instead of larger committees. The way the process is designed to work is that, once consensus on the best narratives for the new solidarity movement is reached, those communities that are represented by each city-based group, will, themselves, elevate this narrative to the forefront through a framing and contextualizing process of their own. Returning to Figure 2, the six leaders in the media group take on the framing process, and the six leaders in the policy group take on the contextualizing process. After that, dissemination happens in every layer of every stack, and thus a new narrative has a good chance at displacing an older, marginalizing narrative that was only still surviving because hegemony protected itself. Hegemony, like a virus that adapts to antibiotics, will adapt in an effort to survive.

Hegemonic narratives are really hard to kill.

If it would help to provide an example of when the global population consented to their own oppression, a good case study would be the case of “trickle-down economics.” With some powerful academics taking the helm, the idea of supply-side economics was pushed throughout Western democracies with religious-like zeal. As an ideology, or new paradigm, if you will, it was pitched in the 1980s and 1990s by the likes of Ronald Reagan, Margaret Thatcher, Brian Mulroney, and the leaders of almost every other Western superpower. What this discourse told citizens is that if they would allow the super-rich to become obscenely-rich, then everybody would be better off. After all, these are the “job creators.” In hindsight we can see that what many (arguably wiser) academics warned us

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about was exactly what happened. Statistics on wealth accumulation show that the top 5 percent of the US population retained 81.7 percent of all new wealth in the period from 1983 to 2009 while the bottom 60 percent lost a 7.5 percent share of the total wealth gain in the same period (Mishel, 2011; Allegretto, 2011). As bad as it was, it got worse after the 2008 collapse of the global economy when the top 1 percent now found themselves in a position where they accrued 93 percent of all new wealth, with the bottom 99 percent experiencing growth of 0.2 percent (Saez, 2012, 7).

Looking at the modern (2012) reincarnation of this trickle-down narrative it once again illustrates how marginalized populations are not monolithic (Wilkes, 2006, 510), and how the forces of hegemony can still advance their “divide and rule” tactic (Riggs, 1997, 354). This is why the ability to generate viable governing narratives is so critically important. If the proverbial “99 percent” of the “Occupy” narrative could just frame and contextualize an alternative (better) taxation narrative so that it provided a compelling reason for a more equitable tax structure, (or in the case of Europe, for softer austerity measures), then the “Occupy” policy proposals would have a chance at becoming actual governing narratives. A “governing narrative,” in the context of this paper is determined by whether or not the new policy-proposals of the counter-elite become viable (majority-supported) alternatives to the ideas being pushed by the global elite and their powerful lobbyists.

Another example might help clarify how the narrative threads are organic to the institutional memory. In this example the issue of marriage equality will be utilized to demonstrate a point. For a topic that is as controversial as “gay marriage,” records will not be sorted topically at the top levels of the database, but will rather exist only in the third or fourth tier of a four-tiered drill-down mechanism. It is through this process that those wanting to upload crowd-sourced media become exposed to the inner-workings of the algorithm. In drilling down to the fourth level, one would start at the Living Diverse gateway (which is a title that is being used as a pseudonym for all campaigns aimed at ending religious-based bigotry). The user will then drill down through LGBT issues (lesbian-gay-bisexual-transgender), and through gay marriage, before encountering the final sorting parameters. At this final record level all but one choice will highlight consensus-building ideals for the topic of gay marriage. For example, sorting options would include topics such as the “separation of church and state,” the “financial burdens” that gay marriage bans impose upon same-sex couples, and the “advantages to society” that full marriage equality will bring to a community when elderly gay couples are given the same incentives as heterosexual couples to care for one another in their twilight years. These are just a sampling of the possibilities. Fostering a narrative of marriage as a social contract is at the root of this kind of discourse structuration. Opposing views against gay marriage will have a place, but they will not be so narrowly defined, thereby not “structuring” (or contextualizing) the same kind of organic consumable narrative that is directed at fostering increasing tolerance for diversity.

A similar approach will be made for all such divisive issues, thus giving consensus-building narratives a distinct advantage over narratives that would perpetuate the historical fragmentation of the counter-hegemonic, counter-elite, and progressive discourse.

Systemic Gap vs. Policy Gap

We now turn our attention temporarily to the idea that governing and policymaking are both performative practices that came about as a result of personal interpretations of language, or in other words, narrative. With this perspective it becomes possible to deconstruct a few other notions that have become obstacles to radical policy change. These obstacles fall into what can be referred to as either a systemic gap or a policy gap. Perhaps the best way to illustrate this point is by using Miller’s contrast between what is an ostensive view and a performative view (Miller, 2012, 122).
Since this paper is specifically about marginalized populations we can use an example of a school district that the author has previously studied and its board of trustees. In 2008 there were 52 Florida schools that were designated for special attention by virtue of their position in the bottom 5%. Miami-Dade Public Schools had to claim 19 of these. Put another way, two-out-of-five of the worst schools in Florida were in Miami, but this is not news. Because this has been the case for years now, an ostensive view of this problem would be that there is a structural problem with the schools or the school board. It has not mattered who made up the school board, who the administrators were, or how good the teachers were, the problem was still there. This particular research even showed that from 2003 to 2008 Miami-Dade students had enjoyed a financial premium that was 57% to 81% above the Florida per-student mean. The ostensive view would be to simply state that the problem is with the institution, not the actors. Just as if you set the table and everybody leaves the room, the cups, plates, and silverware are still there, waiting for you to return.

If something is performative, on the other hand, it will stop being there if the actors stop performing the routines that create it. In other words, if we can stop the behaviors that create the failing performances within (and on-behalf-of) Miami’s most problematic schools, then there will no longer be failing schools in the Miami-Dade Public School District. From the author’s point of view, this is what can be referred to as a systemic gap. Because of habituated performative behavior we now have a situation where the same Florida-wide regulations are producing disparate outcomes. Most would then conclude that the problem is not with the policy regulations, but rather is an outcome of how the actors perform under those regulations.

Speaking of habituated (performative) behavior, as noted above, an inherent problem of bureaucracy is the flow of information from the bottom to the top. This further underscores how hierarchy contributes to systemic gaps and therefore should be replaced by a new paradigm. The challenge now is to identify which actors are creating the problem. To be fair, the problem may not be within the Miami-Dade school administration or its staff, but rather within the students. It could also be a problem with the cultural environment of the inner-city. One thing is for sure; the problem is performative, not ostensive. In all likelihood, the problem, once discovered, will prove to be the outcome of unintentional actions, which would only underscore the importance of using discourse structuration to fix it. Miller wrote about habituated (systemic) behavior problems by stating that “…habitus requires little in the way of intentionality but it does require performance” (2012, 124). Again, this underscores the importance of using discourse structuration to fix these kinds of problems.

If it is determined that the problem (i.e. performative behavior) is so deeply entrenched that it can only be fixed by mandating a change through regulations, then it becomes a policy gap that would dictate institutional changes in addition to changes in narratives. Discourse structuration will apply equally to both. The difference is that if it is a systemic gap, a new governing narrative can fix the problem by simply altering the performance of policy implementation. If it is a policy gap then the new governing narrative will have to find a way to effect change in the policy-making agenda. Both tactics borrow from the same playbook, and the game pieces that have to be manipulated in order to win the game are these ideographs that will begin to accumulate in the MOCSIE Systems ICT database.

**Blogs as Ideographs**

In addition to focusing on providing simple .jpg images as ideographs during the beta launch of this information system, the rudimentary system will also accommodate hyperlinks, primarily focusing on blogs. Even though an image (or rather a postcard, as they will be known within the database) can be heavily laden with connotation by the time it becomes an ideograph (Miller, 2012), it still only allows for a rather
subjective policy message. Because of this, for the purpose of this paper it becomes useful to think of a .jpg image ideograph as something that is sometimes better at applying social pressure (in an attempt to move the needle of public opinion as shown in Figure 4) than it is at defining a good policy-proposal. For example, the image of the self-immolation of Mohamed Bouazizi did not define a new policy in and of itself. Instead, it applied pressure on the needle and moved it in the direction of progressive (radical) change. Now, in describing a few more of the details within the beta version of the MOCSIE Systems, we turn our attention to how actual policy proposals can be advanced through the agenda-setting process by this ICT database. It is here where blogs become the perfect tool, and a blog post on the RH Reality Check web domain becomes an excellent example of how this happens (Garrison, 2012).

The blog was authored by a user named Melissa, who had been raised in the Southern United States. In that environment she experienced the challenges of having no health care in the way that only a person familiar with the toxic soup of religious fundamentalism and severe Southern poverty might understand. The narrowness of that world-view is what shaped Melissa’s life until she was married and had children of her own. All she knew was what she had been told by her culture, and as bad as it was being poor and having no health insurance in a Southern state (which are notorious for having the lowest health outcome scores of all fifty states), she had been told, and she thoroughly believed, that universal healthcare would be far worse! Nevertheless, her husband took a job in Canada and they moved. She braced herself for what Canada’s awful healthcare system was going to force her to accept by government mandate. Her blog post, which artfully explained how Canada’s healthcare system won her over, will be summarized, linked to, and become searchable through the MOCSIE Systems database. By itself, with no additional narrative on the part of a database custodian, it provides an excellent policy-proposal framework that is ready-made for legislative action in the United States and elsewhere.

As noted earlier, in Figure 5 above we outlined a media survey question that was aimed at measuring whether an ideograph moved a figurative “public opinion needle” either to the left or the right. As noted, this measure is primarily (but not exclusively) suited for use with .jpg images within the ICT database, but when it comes to identifying something like Melissa’s blog post we would be better served by a second kind of survey question. Figure 6 illustrates what is being utilised in the pre-alpha version as a tool to identify those ideographs that, by themselves, prescribe an idea that has the potential of helping legislators write new, viable, policy-proposals. It asks the question, “Do you see this ideograph as something that: a) focuses attention on the problem and sways opinion toward supporting conservative or traditional views; b) focuses attention on the problem and sways opinion toward progressive or liberal views; c) clearly states a compelling argument for a specific policy proposal that legislators could start working with immediately to solve a problem in society; or d) none of the above. Because blog posts like the one by Melissa can be as detailed as they are, these are the kinds of ideographs that are expected to accrue a high number of responses in category c), as illustrated by the bar chart shown in Figure 7. As such, all ideographs with high scores in category c) will be highly coveted by the MOCSIE Systems administrators.

CONCLUSION

As difficult as it was to keep the disparate parts of this paper aligned, the one thing that should have been clear throughout is that the media that the counter-hegemonic forces need in order to support all of their policymaking endeavors is already out there, on the web, but it is simply too difficult to navigate to it. Every person who seeks to create a narrative thread for a policy endeavor is forced to start from scratch, and it is incredibly time consuming. To make matters worse, once the research is done there is no media channel through which one’s finished product can be effectively dis-
semained in a way that it will have any impact on the agenda setting process of a government, whether local, state or provincial, or federal. Global endeavors in this climate all require the resources of a benefactor like the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation.

Beyond the difficulty in creating a compelling policy proposal, there is the problem of fragmentation. The gay community, relatively speaking, is tiny, but they are well funded, and they are very active. They would make an excellent ally in any campaign for policy change that is aimed at expanding diversity issues, and yet the Black Church is one of the most homophobic institutions in America. This is the kind of “divide and conquer” tactic that keeps minorities oppressed. Feminists are likewise marginalized by the narratives of the Black Church because of their pro-choice views, and thus the counter-hegemonic voice is discordant and fails to gain any traction. It is in this arena where discourse structuration needs to be taught at the grassroots level.

Outside of localized and highly targeted campaigns, until there is a single institutional memory there will be no unifying force for global solidarity, but once every social justice community begins drinking from the same

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**Figure 6. Media survey question on policy-proposal readiness**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Media Survey Question #2</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Do you see this ideograph as something that:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a) Focuses attention on the problem and sways opinion toward supporting <strong>conservative</strong> or <strong>traditional</strong> views?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b) Focuses attention on the problem and sways opinion toward supporting <strong>progressive</strong> or <strong>liberal</strong> views?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c) Clearly states a compelling argument for a specific policy proposal that legislators could <strong>start working with immediately</strong> to solve a problem of society?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>d) None of the above.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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**Figure 7. Graphical representation of media survey results**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Media Survey #2 Results</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>a) Sways opinion to conservative or traditional views.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b) Sways opinion to progressive or liberal views.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c) Compelling argument for a viable policy proposal.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>d) None of the above.</td>
<td></td>
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</table>
well, we will all have occasion to meet and collaborate in our work. Only then will there be spokespeople (the central figures) who are speaking with a clear, cohesive voice that the counter-hegemonic forces will rally behind. In spite of enormous efforts by nonprofit organizations with enormous budgets and a global reach, many attempts to inspire the activist communities to be better at collaborating seem to have little effect. The nonprofit response to the Haiti earthquake is a good example of how this plays out. A suitable metaphor might be to liken the activity to a bumper car arena in which every car has its steering wheel disconnected from the front wheel but the gas pedal is held all the way to the floor. It is for this reason that the issue of trust comes into play. New nonprofits, with almost identical mission statements to an existing nonprofit, are incorporated every day, simply because the founders did not have the confidence that somebody else could do the job as effectively as they themselves could do it. In other instances it comes down to trust because much of the competition in the “third sector” is over who gets to stand at the microphone; an inherent flaw that is rooted in the hierarchical design of both large and small nonprofits.

Instead of allowing the above scenario to play out time and time again, imagine instead the collective thought of a community as it comes together in small, consensus-building groups. All it would take is to find that central figure; that one community leader able to bridge the gap between vulnerability and trust so that the paradox can be reconciled. This will be the voice that actually “speaks,” but the words invoked by that voice will be the words of “the people,” as a collective. The narrative will be one that was gleaned from the real-life experiences of a population that took the time to deposit their singular “voices” into an ICT database over which they held a measure of control.

Looking back in history, the consensus seems to be that it was the printing press that ushered in the Age of Enlightenment and broke the strangle-hold that the absolute monarchs held over the merchant and peasant classes, but who’s to say that the Internet today does not offer us a similar opportunity for a Second Age of Enlightenment? As Argyriades wrote, in speaking of this comparison,

*Debureauration, the Reformation movement of our times, confronts us with this challenge: it could compound the symptoms of disorganization, indeed ungovernability, passivity, exclusion, marginalization, alienation, and anomie, which can be found all around us—or it could pave the way for a more democratic, more open, self-directed, and self-governed human society* (Argyriades, 2010, 293).

To achieve this “self-directed, and self-governed human society” would be an ideal outcome for the MOCSIE Systems, and if one takes the time to read Frederick Thayer’s book (1973), they might capture this vision and see how the technology of today makes possible what was then impossible. In this revolution that, through intellectual development, will seek to discredit old paradigms and displace them with new ones, the challenge will be to not repeat the mistakes of the peasant revolutions of the 18th century. In the long history of humanity it has never been enough to simply topple a government, because a new oppressor always seems to be at the ready to jump into the vacancies of the old hierarchy and simply fill the voids with a different face; one that is equally willing to oppress and marginalize the “othered” people. In those instances, for those who seek power, the old axiom of hierarchy still applies: “When you are climbing a ladder, every kick is a step up.”

If the marginalized and oppressed are to undertake a new kind of revolution, the new weapon that will allow the “peasants,” to pull off a definitive and permanent victory will be narrative, because only narrative will elevate a new governing capability as an organic part of any protest movement. And yet, there will
be no uniform governing narrative until there is solidarity among the counter-hegemonic voices. And so, under a new paradigm, when a protest movement next emerges and begins to find traction, it must first make peace with the allies that it will need at the end of the day when the task of governing has been earned. In the history of humanity, that is the one ingredient that always seems to be missing, and so history continues to repeat itself. When the counter-hegemonic forces find a way to do this, then history might call that moment the dawn of the Second Age of Enlightenment.

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