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Social Justice and Social Media

Jo Coghlan, Dr, Southern Cross University

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Can social media save the world? Probably not, but it is a powerful tool for social change. Images of the ‘Arab Spring’ and the ‘Occupy Movement’ now sit in our political and cultural memory courtesy of social media.

News reports site social media as a source. Politicians seek our votes via social media. Political and social events are dissected and disseminated in social media in seconds without regard for traditional news cycles and sometimes without critical reflection.

Any citizen can be a journalist – referred to as Journalism 2.0. Any and all opinions proliferate social media. More information than ever before is available in an environment with no boundaries.

Limitless news, opinion, evidence and analysis along with demands to buy, share, like and tweet pervade our workplaces and social lives.

It is a brave new world that is rapidly developing before our eyes, competing for our attention. The proliferation of the World Wide Web is likely one of the most remarkable features of the 21st century.

For Al Gore, the Web and its infrastructure has created a "planet-wide extension of the human nervous system that transmits information, thoughts and feelings to and from billions of people at the speed of light. We are connecting to vast global networks – and to one another – through email, text messaging [and] social networks at an unprecedented pace. This revolutionary and still accelerating shift in global communications is driving a tsunami of change".

The “change” argues Gore is both disruptive (consider print newspapers, book stores, travel agencies, video rental stores, mail services).

It is also creative (a dozen online businesses emerge every few minutes on the Web - driven by the connection of more than 2 billion people worldwide).

By 2020 there will be more than 50 million devices connected to the Internet.

Today there are more than one trillion web pages.

It is a limitless frontier.
Unlike other discussions in this seminar series, this paper celebrates the power of the social media to contribute to social change.

Ethical, moral, legal, financial, corporate and impact issues aside, social media today informs, inspires, outrages, and encourages collective social action in responses to local, national and global injustices.

The Obama 2008 presidential campaign celebrates the power of social media.

- Motivated more than 2 million social networking participants
- Over 3 million individual donors were mobilised through social media
- Created and promoted more than 200,000 offline events across the country
- 6.5 million donations online totaling $500 million
- More than 13 million people provided their email addresses to the campaign website over the course of the campaign, aides sent more than 7,000 types of messages
- More than 2 billion e-mails landed in inboxes
- The campaign website helped create over 2 million user profiles
- There were over 400,000 blog entries
- People spent more than 14 million hours watching over 1,000 Obama campaign-related videos on YouTube
- There were more than 50 million views of Obama Campaign YouTube Videos
- 1.2 billion minutes of YouTube view time.

While we may not think it possible to develop a website – and web presence – like that of the 2008 Obama campaign, the tools intrinsic to this Web 2.0 campaign are available to us all.

There is no ownership, authorship, or copyright on Web 2.0.

But what is Web 2.0? And how can Web 2.0 shape a small organisation’s successful development of a social media presence?

The first half of this presentation outlines some of the conceptual ways Web 2.0 can – and has – impacted on the public sphere.

In broad strokes it locates the shift from Web 1.0 to Web 2.0 and the Web 2.0 philosophies that are reclaiming and re-democratising the Web.

Following this are demonstrations of some of the international, national and local campaigns that have used Web 2.0 to challenge corporate and government interests that challenge the common good and seek social justice.

The second half of this paper considers the nexus between organisations, social media and social justice that is not focused on the technology of the Internet but on an understanding of social media ecosystems.

Social media ecosystems have two co-existing elements: the relationship between different types of social media platforms and the behaviour of social media users.
For any organisation, there needs to be an understanding of this nexus in order to clearly position themselves in the virtual world.

This discussion is overlaid with a brief outline of the growing but uneven Australian social media sector.

Joining us in this discussion today is Kelsey Cooke, a Senior Campaigner for GetUp! Kelsey has a background in cultural studies and sociology, taking a particular interest in how we can use online media to influence decision-makers and build a more progressive world. Kelsey started at GetUp in 2010, and has since worked in community management, social media management, and campaigning roles. She currently works in GetUp's rapid-response campaigning team.

This discussion aims to provide insight into the power of social media for social change and social justice.
Part One

From Web 1.0 to Web 2.0

While the terms ‘World Wide Web’ and the Internet are used interchangeably, the ‘Web’ is a set of documents and pages hyperlinked on the Internet that we intuitively understand via URLs (uniform resource locators) or web addresses.

More completely, the Web is a graphical interface that enables us to explore the Internet via browsers such Internet Explorer, Mozilla Firefox and Google Chrome.

Until the mid-1990s, the Web or Web 1.0 was a mainly text only, scientific, pre-commercial, expert-authored space with limited access, only open to those with technical skills in computer code writing.

It was then - as it is now - aimed at driving consumption of products, goods, and information. Web 1.0 thinking however was to transpose printed material into electronic pages for mass consumption. While embedded in this was a sense of openness, it was not open-source content. This meant the Web was restricted to those with the very technical skills required to write computer code.

The development of Napstar in 1998 revolutionised the idea that individuals could engage in open-source person-to-person file sharing. The ‘spirit of collaboration’ in collective content generation began. The gate keeping of Web 1.0 was quickly radicalised by Wikipedia.

Started in 2001 by Jimmy Wales and Larry Sanger, it launched and consolidated open source content (a hallmark of Web 2.0).

By 2004, Tim O’Rielly articulated the ‘spirit of collaboration’ associated with open-sourcing as the ‘architecture of participation’.

Drawing on French media theorists Pierre Levy who imagined a vision of the Web as a ‘fusion of skills, imagination and intellectual activity’, O’Rielly labelled it ‘Web 2.0’.

Web 2.0 is a state of mind. Its philosophy is based on communication and participation, engagement, collaboration, contribution and recognition.

As a set of practices, Web 2.0 provides the user with a deep and rich experience of social, political and intellectual engagement, connection, collectivisation, and knowledge sharing.

The key characteristics of Web 2.0 are:

- Sharing of information and content without authorship
- Distribution is bottom-up, not top-down
- Content production and editing without technical expertise
- Interactivity encouraging debate, discussion and dissemination
- User-friendly interfaces to encourage intellectual development, creativity, sharing, virtual community building
- Network effects are encouraged. The more people who contribute, the better the content gets
User data to improve site, content, or organisation aims
Democratisation
Value lies in content, not the software used to display content
Fluid rather than static ensuring a rich user experience

Social media and social justice – From global to local

‘Think global – Act local’ paraphrases the interconnectivity between global justice issue and local activism and advocacy. Increasingly central to the dissemination of global-local justice issues is social media.

Most global social media campaigns have coalesced around environmental, health, trade, equity and human rights issues.

Citizen journalism or Web 2.0 journalism has also challenged traditional corporate media platforms in reporting global news.

A global social media campaign


While global in nature, the campaign contained aspects of Web 2.0 design. It asked for individuals and organisations to:

- Make a commitment to reduce their carbon footprint
- Assess where they stood on the issue
- Make plans to reduce energy use and de-carbon your life
- To get energy efficient and switch to low carbon energy
- To invest in cleaner energy alternatives
- To buy and sell local carbon-green products
- To work with local communities and debate the issues

While the main page (navigation page) is static it does have links factsheet information, inspiring examples, posters, a message page, multimedia sites, a photo gallery and social media sharing.

Nationalising a global social media campaign

World Suicide Prevention Day was utilised by Lifeline in the ‘Out of the Shadows and into the Light’ campaign. An event – a walk – was coupled with tools to arrange and register an event in a local community, a donations page and an information page.

The site has a ‘my story’ page with episodic (think about how a television episode works, with a central actor, telling a story with a start, middle, end) humanising experiences. It encourages social media sharing with links, a media kit (with feedback comments, editorial content for letters to the editor, how to engage with local media) and ‘press fillers’ (free advertising for local newspaper to fill content) as well as downloadable posters for use in organisations (printed at the users own cost and effort).
Localising an international social media campaign

As part of the global social movement responding to the threat of carbon-induced climate change (led by organisations such as Greenpeace), the Australian-based ‘Lock the Gate’ Alliance has developed a social media campaign with a specific, local focus.

Its site is both static (information, resources, media releases, philosophy and values) and fluid (petitions, lobbying, events, shop) with social media sharing (including email updates, video and photo gallery). It has a funding-donation option with one-off or monthly PayPal contributions.

And further localisation

‘Lock the Gate’ has a ‘regions’ site further localising the issues. The Northern Rivers (NSW) site links to local campaigns, in this case ‘Gasfield Free Northern Rivers’ and the ‘Bentley Blockade’.

From global, to national, to local issues - social media campaigning is shaped to issues, events, people, experiences and is reliant on an interactive user experience that engages action as much as informs about the issues.

Local single-issue social media campaign (static and fluid examples)

Chilout (Children Out of Immigration Detention) formed in 2001 in response to the ABC Four Corner’s program regarding Shayan Badraie who became mute while held in Villawood Detention Centre.

Its’ site comprises information, media kits, a blog (with hyperlinks to research, policy and submissions), a donations link, and event information for local and national organising. This is an example of a more static webpage.

Its current social justice campaign in conjunction with the Australian Coalition to End Immigration Detention of Children is ‘free the children’.

They commissioned award winning artist, Benjamin Giblert to create a cage installation. Inside this ‘cage’ will be 1023 dolls symobilsing the 1023 children held in Australian controlled immigration detention centres.

They are asking the public to come and ‘free a child’ - an action that involves entering the cage, completing an action card to their local MP (and Immigration Minister). The aim is to engage with the issue in a direct and positive way. This is an example of a more fluid webpage. These distinctions are returned to later in this discussion.

Global single-issue campaign (viral with no static site)

Social media does not solely rely on an organisation have a fixed site with a domain or URL. Single-issues can be promoted on the Web via blogs, online news sites, Facebook and twitter. A good example of this is the ‘Bring Back Our Girls’ issue involving the Nigerian kidnapped schoolgirls.
Mashable is an online news source, with 34 million monthly visitors and 14 million social media followers, has regularly reported on this story. As an online format it can embed hyperlinks to primary and secondary sources allowing the reader to pursue the story in various other social and traditional media sources. Its 6 May 2014 story ‘Bring Back Our Girls: Why the World is Finally Talking about Nigeria’s Kidnapped Students’ has more than 18 000 ‘shares’ on social media.

Further, #BringBackOurGirls has had more than 1 million tweets.

BringBackOurGirls on Facebook has 207 000 ‘likes’ and has national Facebook sites in Australia and elsewhere.

And there exists an endless number of blogs

Social media and social justice – From local to global

GetUp! is an independent community advocacy organisation, which aims to build a more progressive Australia by giving everyday Australians the opportunity to get involved and hold politicians accountable on important issues.

The organisation aims to build an accountable and progressive Australia, based on economic fairness, social justice and environmental sustainability. GetUp’s objectives are ultimately for growth and impact.

From its local beginnings it is now affiliated with several international organisations including:

**Avaaz – The World in Action**

Previous international citizens’ groups and social movements have had to build a constituency for each separate issue, year by year and country by country, in order to reach a scale that could make a difference.

Today, because of new technology and a rising ethic of global interdependence, that constraint no longer applies. Where other global civil society groups are composed of issue-specific networks of national chapters, each with its own staff, budget, and decision-making structure, Avaaz has mandate to work on any issue of public – global concern, allowing campaigns of extraordinary nimbleness, flexibility, focus, and scale.

Avaaz has more than 35 million global members in 194 countries. It does not accept government or corporate sponsorship and relies entirely on crowd funding.

**38 Degrees – People, Power, Change (UK)**

38 Degrees is one of the UK’s biggest campaigning communities, with over 2.5 million members. They share a desire for a more progressive, fairer, better society united by a set of shared values; to defend fairness, protect rights, promote peace, preserve the planet and deepen democracy.

Through the power of the internet, 38 Degrees members link up, discuss and vote to decide which issues we campaign on together. 38 Degrees relies on petitions, snap events, lobbying all reliant on crowd source funding. 38 degrees helped stop the government’s plans to sell
off our ancient national forests.

**Lead Now – People Powered Change (Canada)**

*Leadnow* formed in the lead up to the 2011 Canadian election to build a ‘campaing community’ to ‘hold governments accountable’ and to build a fair economy that reverses the trends of growing inequality. To date they have taken on crime and budget bills and Canada-Chine trade deals.

They have a membership of 300,000 and also rely on crowd source funding. Their social media site features a ‘community report’ with YouTube links to action, as well as event information, social media sharing, donations page, and downloads.

**GetUp! 2014**

Returning to *GetUp*, the Australian organisation was established in 2005 and since its inception nine years ago the organisation has grown to include over 677,500 members.

GetUp is a not-for-profit organisation, which relies on crowd source funding. Over 50,000 Australians have donated to fund GetUp’s campaigns - with the average donation around $40 from each contributor.

The interactive features of GetUp include a ‘what’s happening’ scroll which provides a minute by minute update of member activity. Its ‘current campaign action’ page has information on current issues – The ABC, asylum seekers, the Great Barrier Reef and Marriage Equality with actionable responses.

**ABC**
- Link to sign the petition to save the ABC
- Invitation to a ‘snap event’ – Protect the ABC
- Delivery of Save the ABC petitions to local MPs in your area
- Submit your images and messages to support the ABC

**Asylum seekers**
- Links to write a letter to an asylum seeker

**Great Barrier Reef**
- A citizen funded legal fight to stop dreddging
- Link to sign a petition

**Marriage Equality**
- Watch and share the ‘Marriage Equality Lovestory’

GetUp also has a ‘CommunityRun’ site which allows any individual to start a campaign.

**Localising GetUp!**

GetUp has just released its *Vision 2014* site. Drawing on member survey data, GetUp’s 2014 vision site develops its crowd sourcing aspects to include: ‘local’ activity and membership; its
top campaign issues and what they are doing about it; how survey responses will shape 2014 activity; and crowd sourcing.

Part Two

As we have seen in some of the Web 2.0 examples already examined there exists a virtual world within which community, social and political organisations are agitating for progressive change and justice.

The nexus between organisations, social media, and social justice relies not entirely on the technology of the Internet but on an understanding of social media ecosystems and how your organisations can position itself within these ecosystems.

This requires an understanding of the nature of the social media ecosystem and the social behavior that typifies its users.

Firstly, a brief look at the Australian social media sector.

The Australian social media sector

In 2011-12, the Australian Bureau of Statistics first measured the use of social media in the corporate sector. The ABS found that 18% of all Australian business organisations had a social media presence.

A social media presence included ‘web and mobile-based technologies which are used to turn communication into interactive dialogue among organisations, communities and individuals’, such as Twitter, YouTube and Facebook.

Of small organisations (less than four employees) 12% had a social media presence. Organisations with 5-19 employees had a social media presence of 24%. More than 50% of large organisations (over 200 employees) had a social media presence.

By sector, 58% of the information media and technology sector had a social media presence as did 56% of the financial and insurance sector and 65% of arts and recreational services.

Conversely, only 39% of administrative and support services and 36% of health care and social assistance had a social media presence, among the lowest in all sectors.

Given that 83% of all Australian households have Internet access via a broadband connection, that there are more than 12 million Internet subscribers in Australia and the proportion of Australian businesses with Internet access was 91% in 2009-10, it is unsurprising that Australian organisations are developing a social media footprint.

Social media has transformed the Internet from a platform for information, to a platform for influence. Because of the dramatic growth of social media such as Facebook (550 million users) and Twitter (100+ million users), companies of all sizes from different industries now view social media as mandatory.

The social media ecosystem

The challenge facing many organisations today is that we recognise the need to be active in social media, but how can it be done effectively?
Social media strategies often begin with platforms such as Facebook and Twitter as stand-alone elements rather than seeing them as part of an integrated, interactive and influential ecosystem.

Social media technologies have engendered radically new ways of interacting. There are literally hundreds of different social media platforms (e.g., social networking, text messaging, shared photos, podcasts, streaming videos, wikis, blogs, discussion groups).

It is clear that interactive digital media platforms are changing the landscape, and the nature and sources of information and connectivity are vast, in effect creating a 24/7 collaborative world.

These platforms have empowered organisations to connect, share, and collaborate, creating spheres of influence.

Sphere of influence in Web 2.0 thinking is a bottom-up process that occurs because people create trillions of connections through social media each day. These connections build relationships that result in vast social networks.

Once the domain of traditional media was its ability to reach global audiences. For example, the 2010 Super Bowl reached an average of 106.5 million passive viewers.

Web 2.0 social media has the potential to not only reach international, global and local audiences but the audience becomes users who are active.

Social media predicated on viral activity can attract active participants in similar if not larger numbers for a fraction of the cost.

Digital technology enables passive bystanders to become active participants. But it is also a cluttered media environment where attention and interactivity can’t be assumed.

As a sphere of influence, the social media ecosystem centers on the user experience. Social media networks aren’t about Web sites. They’re about experiences.

These experiences arise via reach, intimacy and engagement through the interconnectedness of online social media.

Organisations make the mistake of treating these individual social media as silos that operate independently of each other. Instead, organisations should view their approach to social media as an integrated strategy of awareness, engagement and advocacy.

Organisations hence need both people and community platforms in order to create experiences that achieve the overarching goal of attention and influence.

To do this consider were do you want to land your organisation on social media?

What do you know about user behavior and how can this build your social media presence?

Do you want to have a static web presence, a fluid web presence, or both?

What content do you want, thematic or episodic, or both?

These are good conceptual places to begin thinking about when developing your social media strategy.
A social media strategy begins with

#1 locating your organisation

Social media ecosystems are divided into three categories: owned media (organisation websites); paid media (advertising); and earned media (viral, free, shared).

#2 Knowing user behavior

Within the social media ecosystem there are five different types of social user behaviours:

Creators (publish, maintain, upload)
Critics (comment, rate)
Collectors (save, share)
Joiners (connect, unite)
and Spectators (read).

Who do you want to appeal to? Knowing your target audience is an advantage.

#3 content

Content can be static, fluid or both. Deciding about your content helps in determining what social media you will adopt.

Justine Elliott – static example

For example, do you want information about your organisation and its aims – then you need a static web page. A static web page can be free, easy to establish (it takes about 30 minutes) and can be updated or changed when you have time.

Cathy McGowan – fluid example

Cathy McGowan – fluid example 2

If you want a web presence that has a web page that is interactive, with events, people, images, that encourages sharing, content contributions or feedback, crowd sourcing or surveys – then you need a fluid webpage as well as twitter and other sharing devices.

As with any communications strategy, every organisation needs to be clear about the story it wants to share.

Thematic concepts need to be embedded in static social media whereas episodic concepts ideally sit in fluid social media spaces.

City of Gold Coast – thematic example

Thematic content is information that is static - such as organisation aims, mission statements, organisation history, future directions.

Generation One – episodic example

Generation One – episodic example 2

Episodic content is more fluid content – telling an ongoing story of development and
successes, which is constantly changing and responsive.

In either model – and as with Web 2.0 you can have both - element of uniqueness and authenticity will give consumers a reason for engaging electronically and be a great weapon against boredom: for which there is no forgiveness online.

The customisation of social media for any organisation is only limited by imagination and time, with cost determined by decisions about what to pay for or what to earn.

Social media is about users and being connected to other users. It is not about significant investments in expensive production and media. This is particularly the case for Web 2.0.

Application of social media for social justice – establishing a social media presence

Planning a social media strategy #1

- What do you/your organisation want to achieve?
- Time and commitment
- Skills
- Ethical considerations (virtual association)
- Staff and management use of social media (social media policy)
- Cost

Developing a social media strategy #2

- Inform (static webpage with philosophy, aims, mission, services, contact information) and engage (fluid webpage)
- Network (Twitter, Facebook)
- Engagement and relationship building (linking, friending, sharing)
- Single issue events and campaigns (using your own pages with RSS feeds, posting on other sites)
- Advocacy and public policy debates (dedicated pages to share with a single issue focus, submissions to online news debate blogs)
- Seek people with time, expertise, resources for individual projects, events, issues (crowdsourcing and crowdfunding via your own site, Youtube, DesignCrowd)

Web 2.0 applications

Web 2.0 applications for your organisation might like to incorporate a mix of social media. A good place to begin is a web page, blog contributions, crowd sourcing, and Twitter.

In this workshop section developing a free static webpage is examined, and a brief discussion of crowd sourcing is introduced.

Wordpress is a web page or weblog – referred to generically as a blog. It contains a static page which chronicles information and commentary with links to articles on other websites (in a comment as a hyperlink) or has links to other websites (other organisations, government services, news reports, parliamentary reports, ABS statistics – or any other electronic page you choose to link to – there is no limit on the amount of links).
There is an archive to previous information and commentary and it has a RSS feed (a syndication of content including data such as news feeds, events listings, news stories, headlines, project updates, excerpts from discussion forums etc.

**Blogs – Advantages and disadvantages**

**How to wordpress – Workshop one**
**Crowd Sourcing**
**Crowd design**

**Conclusion**

The Web has revolutionised how we communicate, engage, inform and become informed. It is limitless. Its boundaries only exist because we have not yet imagined its potential.

A virtual world of boundless information exists within seconds of our inquiry and responses are immediate. The technology of the Web is rapidly – if not already – becoming entrenched in how we live and how we work.

Its reach is limitless in how we as social citizens – as individuals and as members of community organisations – experience and engage in the public sphere of social and political advocacy.

Technology has transformed the traditional model of marketing communications. The rise in interactive digital media has catapulted contact from a Web 1.0 passive model, to a Web 2.0 interactive model where users are simultaneously the initiators and recipients of information exchanges.

The challenge for organisations today is to develop a social media strategy that delivers both short and long-term aims, which include progressive social change and the delivery of social justice.

This paper has outlined some of the successes of social media and the profound shift that Web 2.0 thinking has for progressive community organisations. While there are ethical and legal contexts that are yet to be explored, the aim has been to provide a space to consider what role social media can play for your organisation in seeking its social justice aims.