SOCIAL MEDIA AND REVOLUTIONS
IMAGINED COMMUNITIES AND POLITICAL ACTION
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ARAB SPRING, OCCUPY MOVEMENTS, FERGUSON

CAN SOCIAL MEDIA CAUSE REVOLUTIONS?
SLACTIVISM, CLICTIVISM, "FEEL GOOD" ACTIVISM, IGNORES SURVEILLANCE

NO?

CLICK HERE TO SAVE THE WORLD!
MEDIA AND CREATING COMMUNITIES
IMAGINED COMMUNITIES

• Benedict Anderson’s Imagined Communities

• Critics of social media have paid insufficient attention to the affordances of a community created by the medium

• Networked public sphere = next battleground
IMAGINED COMMUNITY & THE NETWORKED PUBLIC SPHERE

- The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere
  - Jürgen Habermas
- Imagined Communities
  - Benedict Anderson
- Feminism Without Borders
  - Chandra Talpade Mohanty

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ANDERSON

- print capitalism -> nationalism
- Walter Benjamin’s “homogenous, empty time” vs. “simultaneous, messianic time”
- Prior to print capitalism—anachronism irrelevant
- Anderson: “…the medieval Christian mind had no conception of history as an endless cause and effect or of separations between past and present.”

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NOLI ME TANGERE

- José Rizal, Father of Filipino nationalism
- “a dinner party being discussed by hundreds of unnamed people, who do not know each other, in quite different parts of Manila, in a particular month of a particular decade”

STORY OF FLORANTE & LAURA IN THE KINGDOM OF ALBANIA

- Francisco Balagtas
- Does not follow chronological order, begins in medias res
- simultaneous pasts created through covering voices of characters

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PRINT-CAPITALISM TIME

• Imagined Community: “hypnotic confirmation of a single community, embracing authors and readers, moving onwards through calendrical time”

• “…the idea of a sociological organism moving calendrically through homogenous, empty time is a precise analogue of the idea of a nation, which is conceived of a solid community moving steadily down (or up) history.”
THE NETWORKED PUBLIC SPHERE

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FOCUS ON PRODUCERS NOT CONSUMERS

NETWORKED COMMUNITY

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NEW CONNECTIONS

IMAGINED COMMONALITY

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NEW 'mediascapes' / 'ideoscapes' (Appadurai)

Asynchronous communities

New modes and node for identification and community
SOCIAL MEDIA AS SPECTACLE: A RETURN TO MARX
CRITIQUES OF SOCIAL MEDIA

• Focus on tools & the discursive sphere

• Brea / White “clictivism” ; Morozov, “slactivism”
PARALLELS IN THE HISTORY OF MARXISM

- Counterinformation conference, Amsterdam 1999
- Eastern European movements—"changing the system"
- Western Europe—"media tactics"
- Roots in Debord; media as Spectacle

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MARX

- “material” over “ideological”

- even found in Marx’s notion of commodity fetishism
YET

• The importance of who controls information is as important as who controls the mode of production

• “manufacture of consent” —> Chomsky

• Said: “from travelers’ tales… colonies were created”
WESTERN MARXISM

• Focus on "alienation"

• Adorno & Horkheimer’s "Culture Industry"

• oppositional forms of cinema: Third Cinema vs. First Cinema
SOCIAL MEDIA/CINEMA

• Some uses of social media = some uses of Third Cinema?

• Different media to break through different types of alienation
CAVEATS

• Cooptation of activist platforms beyond the state, e.g. “Operation Lollipop”
• misinformation
• Data-mining by the state/surveillance
FINALLY:

• Social media does not cause revolutions.
• It affords us a political space from which potentially revolutionary communities can come into being.
• We need to pay attention to social media & the community beyond the nation
• The battleground for hearts and minds—no longer print, but the networked public sphere.

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