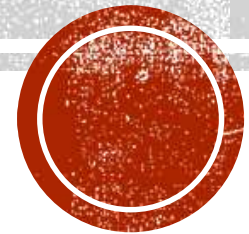


# ANALYSING DIGITAL @CTIVISM

the case of multi-layered digital ethnography in the social sciences

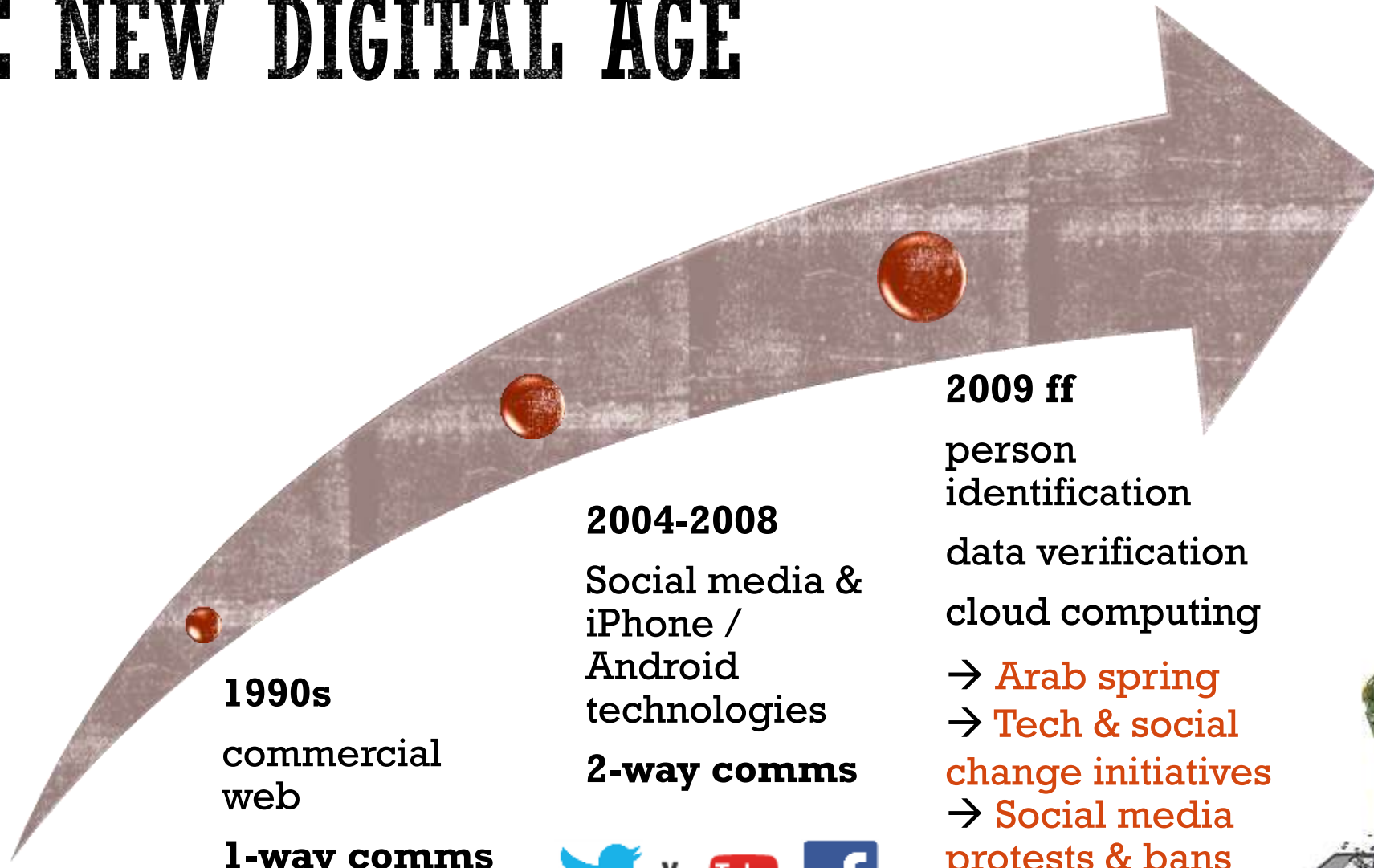


**Suay Ozkula**

**Social Media in Social Research**

**16.05.2014**

# THE NEW DIGITAL AGE



**1990s**  
commercial  
web  
**1-way comms**

**2004-2008**  
Social media &  
iPhone /  
Android  
technologies  
**2-way comms**



**2009 ff**  
person  
identification  
data verification  
cloud computing  
→ Arab spring  
→ Tech & social  
change initiatives  
→ Social media  
protests & bans



# CHANGING NGO CAMPAIGNING

## 20<sup>th</sup> century

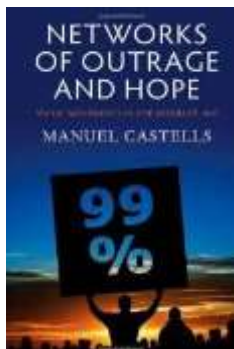


## 21<sup>st</sup> century



# EXISTING STUDIES

- There **is** a literature on digital media & social movements !
- However, ...
  - **Lack of comprehensive and long-term methodologies**
  - Available data & theory is found in journalistic, political and public relations works
  - **The social sciences are still reluctant to adopt digital methods**  
(exception: digital ethnography in anthropology)



# 'DIGITAL' IN THE SOCIAL SCIENCES



## ▪ **Mixed views**

- **Opportunities:** free, easily accessible & instantaneous data, new life worlds
- **Challenges:** constant change, easy manipulation, issues of reliability & verification, information overload

## ▪ **The digital sphere**

- Increasing internet access & usage (Seymour 2001; Dartnell 2010, UN 2013)
- Increasing proof that the internet provides representative data (Dartnell 2010)
- Much of the online world is still unknown or undiscovered (Coleman 2010)

## ▪ **Digital methods in the social sciences**

- Lack of internet research methods in the social sciences (Murthy 2008; Dartnell 2010)
- Sociologists & social scientists are reluctant to use new ICTs (Dartnell 2010)

## ▪ **Digital ethnography**

- Lack of digital ethnographies or studies of a similar kind (Sade-Beck 2004; Coleman 2010)



# METHODOLOGY: DIGITAL ETHNOGRAPHY

- **Case study Amnesty International (AI)**



- **Ethnographic immersion**

- *Offline* at AI Int. Sec. London (intern 1 day/week)
- *Digitally* through AI internal digital materials & networks
- *Online* through AI internal and external networks



- **Social Media Monitoring (SMM)**

- *Long-term one-off tools*
- *Short-term repetitive tools*
- *Short-term consistent*



- **Interviews (Snowball sampling)**

- *AI employees* (primarily Digital Communications Programme)
- *Digital activists* related to / focussing on AI (identified through SMM)



# REFLECTIONS ON THE METHOD



- **Methodological limitations of the study**
  - Snapshot: English-speaking, AI-related, coverage of different time periods
  - Limitations of commercial tools: keywords, coverage & bias
- **Working with the web**
  - Data changes, disappears and reappears
  - Slow & cumbersome data collection when using multiple methods
  - **Ethical issues:**
    - The web as an open data archive
    - Lurking' behaviour
- **Improving digital work**
  - Using downloadable software & points of reference
  - Documenting internet research with copies of links & screenshots
  - Combining online data with offline data



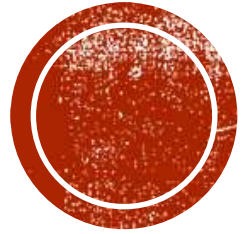
# FUTURE OUTLOOKS

'Sociologists must overcome their fear of participation in stigmatized Internet research and actively engage in the development of techniques and refinements that will increase the utility and validity of Internet-based data collection' (Dartnell 2010: 114)

- **More studies of online worlds are needed in the social sciences**
- **More comprehensive digital methodologies are needed**
- **More e-training is needed in the social sciences**







**THANK YOU FOR LISTENING**

Suay Ozkula

[smo22@kent.ac.uk](mailto:smo22@kent.ac.uk)

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