

Editorial: On IRIE Vol. 18

The internet is a revolution – there is no doubt and no discussion about it anymore. But is it also a revolution of a second order: a (digital) revolution that causes or at least fuels a (real world) revolution? Gutenberg's technique newly invented in the beginning of the 15th century did so. The revolutionary ability to print books instead of copying them by hand potentiated about a hundred years later one of Martin Luther's revolutionary basic ideas: the concept of 'sola scriptura' – superordinating the (personal) reading of the fundamental texts of Christianity over the magisterium ecclesiae exclusively executed by the Christian authorities of these days. In fact, the driving idea of this issue in a nutshell was and is the question: What could be the revolutionary concept in analogy to the sola scriptura that might be propelled to a breakthrough by the revolutionary abilities of the internet (in probably less than a hundred years though).

This issue does not give a simple and ultimate answer to this question (like we can do with Gutenberg in retrospect). But it gives some very appropriate suggestions and inspiring approaches. ICTs appear to enable or at least support certain new forms of political organizations (thematically oriented, loosely coupled, quickly gathered, and allowing for anonymous affiliation). They appear to be very different to "classical" forms of political organization and are used for actions targeted not only at national and international but also at local levels. Do ICTs therefore facilitate an increase in revolutionary acts, revolts or acts of resistance as political measures? On the other hand, does this ease of use in activist contexts deprave the revolutionary act to clicking an 'I like it' button? Is cursoriness the prize political movements heavily relying on the internet have to pay for their speed of constitution in and through the net?

Against the backdrop of the discussions that have taken place since the 1990s, the impacts, shortcomings and potentials of the use of new ICTs and social media by political activists must be further scrutinized. Besides a variety of political uses in Africa, Arabia, Asia and Latin America, the recent developments in Europe and North America also justify a closer look at the role of ICTs in movements aimed at bringing about radical social change. The revolts in Greece, the indignant movement in Spain and Occupy Wall Street all developed as a reaction to political and economic measures and policies that were more typical of developing countries in previous decades; this allows for interesting comparisons, for example with regard to differences between movements which claim and those which defend rights.

One if not ground yet record breaking implication we can state unerringly: These relevant and seminal questions have provoked and gathered more articles in a single IRIE issue than any other subject before. Or maybe it was the phenomenal work of our guest editors, their passion for the subject, their expertise in the field and/or their scientific network they contributed to this outstanding issue.

We would like to express our deepest gratitude to Christopher Coenen, Wolfgang Hofkirchner and José María Díaz Nafría for making this distinguished edition possible and hope that it will tie in with your scientific work to provide more advanced answers to the questions driving their promising research regarding the relationship of ICTs, revolution, counter-revolution and social change.

Sincerely yours,

the editors.