QUESTIONING HABERMAS' THEORY OF EXTENDED PUBLIC SPHERE: FACEBOOK GROUPS AS AGENCIES OF DELIBERATION IN FRAMING PUBLIC POLICY
by

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Abstract: *This research paper argues that social media, particularly Facebook Group conversations, comments, likes and page generation acts as an agent of interconnectedness between persons in the extended public sphere, and this networked dialogue form the basis of strategic deliberations to influence the prevalent system, and bring about effective changes in policymaking decisions. It considers the theoretical framework presented by Habermas and interrogates his public sphere etymology in the present day context of the social media. It seeks to extend the theory, suggesting that today, most advocacy groups operate within a virtual sphere, interact, share and exchange their thoughts, helping in the formation of social movements. These interactions, unlike during the time of Habermas is no longer direct, and influencing political authorities is no longer the physical confrontation between them in fixed geographical boundaries, but are indirect, mediated encounters in the arena of the mass media public sphere. In this paper, the Conversation Analysis technique has been adopted to find out how the different "contenders" interact on Facebook Groups, their likes and comments, and how these act as a virtual forum in channelizing various advocacy groups, and persuade the System to take a more sympathetic view about a movement, and even contemplate policy changes. The focus is the well known India against Corruption Movement led by Anna Hazare. The selection mechanisms in the Facebook groups have been on the basis of visibility (the number of times it appears on Facebook), resonance (the comments, reactions and likes that follow the Facebook pages) and legitimacy (the degree to which the reactions support the main cause). This paper undertakes an empirical study of the Facebook Group conversations, likes, comments and automatic page generations on the basis of those likes on the well known movement against corruption in India.*

Key words- *Conversation Analysis. Habermas and Public sphere, Facebook groups, India Against Corruption*

1.0 Introduction

The unprecedented effect of social media and virtual networking sites like Twitter has received renewed interest and fervour as print and electronic media across the world started beaming images of the Arab Spring and Occupy Wall Street. As early as 2011, communication scholars were on their toes, predicting how the Netizens have congregated in a virtual sphere and brought about a 'silent revolution', toppling the strongest of governments, their united protests leading to policy changes in the state administration. Time was ripe to welcome the new change in the communication spectrum- clicktivism, or activism by the click of a mouse (Whittle, 1997). Voices emanating from social media sites like Facebook and Twitter gave shapes to protests, congregations, and ultimately to a movement which was never witnessed before. Unarmed and largely peaceful uprisings in Tunisia and Egypt overthrew long-standing dictators, and unprecedented protests arose in most other Arab States. Violent protests erupted in Libya, sparking a civil war between the government and armed rebels. With the aid of an international coalition, the rebels overthrew long-time Libyan dictator Colonel Muammar Gaddafi in August 2011(Gillan, 2009). At the time of writing, the future of the uprisings in Yemen and Syria remains uncertain. Protests spread beyond the Arab world to States as diverse as Uganda, Israel, and Spain. On the other side of the globe, states like Bangladesh, Myanmar, India too saw various micro movements giving rise to greater movements, each gaining momentum by the day.

There are different types of social media: collaborative projects, virtual worlds, blogs, content communities, and social networking. Collaborative projects involve people working together to create content; Wikipedia is the most famous example of these (Kobayashi,2006). Wikipedia is an influential source of global information, partly because a Wikipedia entry will often be among the first retrieved by an Internet search. Online collaboration platforms can also allow people in different locations to share and edit documents together; these can be particularly useful for persons with similar political goals to collaborate on strategy documents(Kellner, 1998). For example, Google Docs were used to convey protest tactics and demands during the Egyptian uprising in early 2011. Blogs, the most rudimentary form of social media, involve the creation, by a person or group, of web-based content on any topic of the author's choice. Individuals may interact with a blog by commenting on its content. Originally, blogs were mainly text-based; now, many incorporate pictures and videos. Video blogs (vlogs) are also becoming more common(Lister,2003); Mohammad "Mo" Nabbous ran a "television station" in Benghazi—the rebel stronghold in Libya in early 2011—that could classify as a vlog through which Nabbous reported events in his city to the world via a live video stream. Blogs are key tools for dissident activities in states that control media (Livingstone, 2002).

Well-known examples of these communities include Flickr, for photos, and YouTube, for video. Sites like these are invaluable resources for exposing government brutality to the world. The video of the killing of Neda Agha-Soltan during the Iranian protests of 2009

(Genodimos,1992) is a particularly poignant example. The video "went viral" and drew widespread condemnation of the Iranian government's tactics. Finally, people share information on social networking sites, of which Facebook and Twitter are among the most popular. These sites are very versatile, enabling the sharing of text, pictures, videos, audio files, and applications. Facebook enables users to create a profile page and share information with an unlimited number of virtual "friends." These "friends" are usually known to the user in real life, but this connection is not essential. For groups, brands, or companies, it is more common to set up pages that attract an unlimited number of "fans" who do not have to be approved. The user chooses whether to limit access to their profile by adjusting an intricate series of privacy settings.

The site has become phenomenally popular; as of September 2011, the company boasted 800 million active users16—more than ten percent of the world's population. The micro-blogging site Twitter allows users to "tweet" text-based content of up to 140 characters to a global audience. Users share a surprising amount of information in 140 characters by including links to articles, pictures, photos, videos, and audio streams (Bohman, 2004). A user's tweets are immediately visible to "followers," though a user can institute controls over the persons who can follow his or her feed; all users can "block" other users to deny them access to the feed. Ordinarily, though, a person can follow any other person such that, unlike a Facebook user's relationship with "friends," a Twitter user may know very few of his or her followers. Further, most tweets are public and searchable on the Internet, and are easily distributed via the "retweet" function. Twitter is an extraordinary source of information, partly because it links vast numbers of people otherwise unknown to one another. In this context, users often learn more from strangers than from friends. Twitter is also searchable by topic. Tweets can be organized by "hashtags," (Dutta-Bergman, 2005) which indicate that a particular tweet relates to a certain topic.

The role of social media in these uprisings has been lauded, and the term "Twitter Revolutions" has become ubiquitous. Do social media really deserve the plaudits it has received? After all, popular revolutions overthrew brutal governments long before the advent of Web 2.0 (Fraser, 1992): Iranians overthrew the Shah in 1979, Filipinos overthrew President Marcos in 1986, Communist bloc States in Eastern Europe crumbled one by one in 1989, and huge demonstrations precipitated the fall of Indonesia's President Suharto in 1998. Vast numbers of Westerners are engaged with social media; is it possible that we are narcissistically trying to inject ourselves into the picture?

1.1 Political Activism And Social Media: Extension of the Public Sphere

When a new mass wave of global activism breaks out, casual observers and reporters often wax eloquent remarks about the ways new media technologies are transforming social protest. During the actions against the WTO summit meeting in Seattle in 1999, for example, news reports fixated on the innovative use of Internet-based listservs, websites, and cell phones, which were said to provide unparalleled opportunities for mobilizing large numbers

of protesters in globally linked yet decentralized and largely leaderless networks of resistance (Kavanaugh,2008). More recently, the focus has shifted to how social networking tools such as Twitter and Facebook completely transform the way movements organize, whether the so-called Twitter revolutions in Egypt and Tunisia or the outburst of protests around the globe inspired by and modelled after #Occupy Wall Street (see, e.g., Waldram2011).

It is clear that new media influence how movements organize and that places, bodies, face-to-face networks, social histories, and the messiness of offline politics continue to matter, as exemplified by the resonance of the physical occupations themselves. The important questions, then, are precisely how new media matter; how particular new media tools affect emerging forms, patterns, and structures of organization; and how virtual and physical forms of protest and communication are mutually constitutive. In previous ethnographic works on the movements for global justice (Juris 2004, 2005, 2008a), it was pointed out that network-based forms of social movement organization are not new—networks, for example, also characterized he so-called New Social Movements of the 1970s (cf. Melucci 1989; Offe 1985), but digital tools such as listservs and websites facilitated the diffusion of global justice movements and enhanced their scale of operation by allowing activists to more effectively communicate and coordinate across geographic spaces without the need for vertical hierarchies.

Moreover, networking technologies did more than facilitate the expansion of network forms; they shaped new political subjectivities based on the network as an emerging political and cultural ideal—that is to say, there was a confluence between network norms, forms, and technologies. The point was not that everyone used new media or that digital technology completely transformed how social movements operate but that, as new media were incorporated into the ongoing practices of core groups of activists, they helped diffuse new dynamics of activism (Taylor,2001). Networking logics were shaped by particular cultural-political histories in concrete locales, they were always contested by competing verticality practices and ideas, and they were inscribed into physical spaces during mass actions. Nonetheless, the use of listservs, websites, and collaborative networking tools helped to facilitate new patterns of protest that resonated with and enhanced certain existing organizational forms and cultural ideals and that were widespread but differentially inflected across geographic contexts.

Habermas (1987) explored the importance of this universal communicative action, in which he suggested that speakers and listeners have the ability to speak truthfully and reach an agreement or an understanding. For this type of communication to function properly there must be an 'ideal speech situation' in which all participants have an equal opportunity to be involved in the debate. This foundation is very important for social movements to progress to their full potential. For Habermas this idea provides the notion that truth within communication becomes an integral element for democracy in the public sphere and its various branches of social movements. Habermas' rationalization concept develops his belief that new social movements are in a hegemonic struggle between the system and the lifeworld. The basis for communicative rationality is that all 'participants overcome their merely

subjective views and, owing to the mutuality of rationally motivated conviction, assure themselves of both the unity of the objective world and the inter-subjectivity of their lifeworld.' (Habermas, 1987: 10).

India against Corruption is an anti-corruption movement in India which was particularly prominent during the anti-corruption protests of 2011 and 2012, the central point of which was debate concerning the introduction of a Jan Lokpal bill. During that time it sought to mobilise the masses in support of their demands for a less corrupt society in India. Divisions samongst key members of the IAC's core committee eventually led to a split within the movement. Arvind Kejriwal left to form the Aam Aadmi Party, while Anna Hazare left to form Jantantra Morcha.

I have randomly selected a number of posts based on Anna Hazare and his protest movement based on the maximum number of likes and comments (Wellman, 2002). As said in a later section (Research Methodology), the Group names, chats, comments and likes are given in a chronological order. However, only certain excerpts are given due to lack of space.

In this Essay, I have examined the phenomenon of social media and its role in promoting and prompting progressive policy wise political change, concentrating on the India Against Corruption Movement, henceforth to be abbreviated as IAC..

1.2 Theoretical Perspective of the Research

According to Habermas (Holub, 1991), there are three determining elements that distinguish a modern democracy; public who are entitled to live a life of their own, democratic citizenship, and lastly an independent public sphere, which acts as an intermediary between the state and the society. In fact, he envisioned a "political public sphere which will form considered public opinions through a separation of a…State from a market based society, a diverse and independent mass media along with the inclusion of the mass audiences." Describing the emergence of the Public Sphere in the 18th century, Habermas said that the public sphere is coextensive with public authority (Habermas,1991). He also differentiated between the public and the private sphere, as also between an authentic public sphere vs new public sphere. It is noteworthy to say that the interactions, discussions, information exchange that took place in the 18th century coffee houses and lounges and the German tischgesellschaften have today found its virtual avatar in the social media, where individuals create profiles and groups, post an issue, mostly political, and interact between themselves to create structured political opinion, and through discussion, influence governmental action and policymaking. In the words of Gerard Hauser, the public sphere can be "seen as a theatre in modern societies in which political participation is enacted through the medium of talk and a realm of social life in which public opinion can be formed."(Habermas, 1981)

With the advancement of society and a huge leap in technology, this concept of public sphere put forward by Habermas has undergone a structural as well as a connotative change. The differences are all too clear, particularly with the emergence of internet technology

which has redefined the paths in which communication flows (Monbiot,2000). The advent of social media like Facebook and Twitter has further transformed the communication process. Due to its virtual characteristic, the cultural dimension of communicative interaction has further amplified. In fact today, the entire gamut of interaction taking place on social media has an essential global character, with inputs from people from all over the globe. It has actually led to the mutualisation of news, where information exchange takes place, from the hyperlocal to the pan international (Pateman,1988).

Thus, social media on one hand becomes a forum for the interaction between likeminded people in the virtual sphere and on the other hand, it is also a powerful tool for advocacy to influence public opinion and government policymaking. However, the advancement in technology has transformed the space in the public sphere as reported by Habermas, and now transcends the public sphere. This will form the crux of the paper, an extension beyond the structured boundaries of the French Salons or coffee parlours, to a community interconnected virtually through a network that cannot be seen or defined.

Though the theoretical perspective of this paper is based on the theory of new public sphere as advocated by Habermas, it is noteworthy to say that the notion of the public sphere is not free of criticism. Contemporary social scientists have serious reservations about the character of the public sphere today. What was true during the 18th century has radically transformed due to the technological waves sweeping the continents. The character of the society we now live in is also more complex in character than what it was before. What Habermas called as the Public Sphere is actually an idealized version that has not been able to survive the penetration of the Industrial Society today (Habermas, 1981). The huge boom in mediated communication, technology, public opinion making, socio-political movements, and the very ethos of a globalized cultural environment has metamorphosed the way people connect. Communication itself has undergone a transformation. Multimedia and information superhighways have replaced coffee house conversations. The emergence of the Civil Society has further structured and channelized citizen debates over diverse ideas and conflicting interests (Ryan, 1992).

Contemporary Western societies display an impressive increase in the volume of political communication in social media (Van den Daele & Neidhardt, 1996), but the political public sphere is at the same time dominated by the kind of mediated communication that lacks the defining features of deliberation. Evident shortcomings in this regard are (a) the lack of face-to-face interaction between present participants in a shared practice of collective decision making and (b) the lack of reciprocity between the roles of speakers and addressees in an egalitarian exchange of claims and opinions (Papacharissi,2004). Moreover, the dynamics of mass communication are driven by the power of the media to select, and shape the presentation of, messages and by the strategic use of political and social power to influence the agendas as well as the triggering and framing of public issues (Poster, 1997).

1.3 Objectives of the Research

1. How did Facebook page interactions help to formalise Public Opinion in a virtual sphere and what pressure tactics do they employ towards the government regarding IAC so that their deliberations have the most impact.
2. What are the different issues and agenda that is foremost on the priority list of Facebook members as far as IAC agenda is concerned.
3. How is public support mobilised through social media in fostering and giving momentum to the IAC movement.
4. How do Facebook members engage in Political Socialisation process
5. How Public dialogue in Social Media provides a framework for looking at Government and Public Policy regarding IAC.

1.4 Research Methodology

As opposed to Noam Chomsky who says that "speech is a degraded form of idealized competence", Conversation Analysis has been used as a research tool in this paper to understand naturally occurring talks and spoke interactions systematically ordered, in all its facets (cf Sacks in Atkinson and Heritage 1984:21-27). A total number of 4 Facebook Groups were chosen randomly after typing Anna Hazare in the search button. They were then arranged according to the number of likes each group got. From each group the conversations were taken and analysed on the given parameters of Conversation Analysis Technique (Sacks, Schegloff and Jefferson), which are 1) Turn Taking, 2) Repair 3) Preference organization 4) Sequence Organization 5) Action Formation. The method applied in this paper to analyse the conversations made in the various groups is the Transcription System, which records all the conversations in the form of a transcript including errors. This methodology has 2 advantages.

1. **Helps to record every nuance of the conversation**
2. **Provides quick access to a wide range of interactional episodes**.

The Facebook Group chosen at random is :-

India Against Corruption (Community) group having 1,374, 572 people liking this as on 26/2/2016.

Apart from Conversational Analysis, an Exploratory Analysis using Secondary data has been used for the paper, focussing mainly on print media news clippings. The print media reports offer primary linkage to virtual world opinion making considered here as the extended public sphere, and the influence it has on social movements and advocacy groups in the real world. Field experiments have also been done in different areas of Salt Lake City, situated in the eastern part of Kolkata, mainly inhabited by educated and upwardly mobile residents, to get their views on the use of social media networks in acting as a tool for exchange of information, comments, likes and knowledge about the IAC movement.

2.0 Citizens' participation in the IAC campaign via Facebook and Twitter: a Background Study

The electronic age that preceded the Information age according to Garnham (1992) though initially was successful in informing, educating and entertaining the masses, soon rampant consumerism and commoditisation drove television companies and other media to reinvent itself in a market driven consumerist avatar, promoting rampant commercialisation to an unsuspecting mass, who lay passive in front of this huge gush of advertisements. This created a dent in the public sphere, with more and more people becoming voyeurs of the TV programs than active participants. This necessitated a "new public sphere necessary for the democratic control of a global economy and polity"(Edwards, 2004). The advent of the Information Society probably gave an answer to this, with the emergence of the Internet. Xenos and Bennett (2007) have produced some interesting research concerning youths in the political public sphere. They have shown that younger individuals tend to go online to discover the relevant information, which has resulted in an increase in political actor's activities online.

The entry of the Internet in the 1990s has created a huge potential for the initiation of a cyberspace of political discourse. Social networking sites, especially Facebook have become a potent tool for democratic communicative action. The recent incident of Kanhaiya Kumar getting arrested on charges of Sedition in the JNU campus has started a fresh debate on the feasibility of the laws against sedition as well as the criminalisation of dissent. Keeping these changes in the backdrop, the role of Facebook has emerged as the new Public Sphere. According to Habermas' (1981, 1987) New Social Theory, it was the 1960s movements of women, students and environmentalists that triggered off the social movements, particularly when their aspirations and lifestyles wee threatened by State action. He also says that power and money were the main cause for the rift between the System and the society. In his theorization of the Internal Colonization process, new social movements emerged to counter attack the system by creating a space in which participants used for debates and communicative action in order to question the legitimacy of the state.

The year 2011-12 saw a number of popular social movements gaining momentum throughout the world. The Snow Revolution in Russia, the Occupy Wall Street Movement in the US was later on succeeded by many other micro movements, all of which had some characteristics in common. In India, the India Against Corruption Movement, from henceforth to be called IAC, mostly centred around the Jan Lokpal Bill, demanding a corruption free India. It was a campaign mainly spearheaded by the Indian middle class who were by now disillusioned with the corruptive practices of the Indian bureaucracy. Though during the later stages, the oft cited social movement assumed political colours, yet the very ethos this movement was embedded in vouchsafed the willing participation of the Indian middleclass, businessmen, house makers, students, service holders alike. The movement which started as a region based one soon flared up into a nationwide movement, with a veteran gandhivadi like Anna Hazare leading the movement in true Gandhian style, starvations, peaceful agitation, non cooperation, demonstration etc. The Ramlila Maidan became the venue for the protest movement; it was booked for 40 days to allow the protest to happen. Preparations included setting up toilet, drinking water and medical facilities, as well as a media centre (Wikipedia). Baba Ramdev, who had by no associated himself with the movement, claimed that more than

100 million people were directly involved with the Bharat Swabhiman Andolan. Almost 3.2 million "netizens" joined the campaign.

The campaign gained immense popularity in the Social Media, to the extent that Social Media like Facebook and Twitter became the catalyst in promoting the reach of the IAC movement. It created a virtual network of supporters running up to millions, even to the remotest corners of the country who circulated messages through Facebook. The supporters of the IAC Movement created Facebook Groups and pages to promote their demands further.

2.1 Detailed Overview of Facebook Group Chats, Comments, Likes: Conversation Analysis

Given below is only an excerpt from the Facebook Group chosen on the basis of maximum number of likes and comments it has got. The IAC Group was opened via Facebook on 12.2.2016, 14.2.2016, 24.3.2016, 25.4.2016, 30.4.2016, 15.5.2016, 20.5.2016. A total of 102 posts were analysed in terms of likes, comments and replies of the same group IAC. The posts were chosen on the basis of the number of likes and shares they got. Out of all the posts only an excerpt is given below for understanding the research methodology. However, the different aspects of Conversation Analysis were analyses from all the 102 posts based on Turn Taking, repair, preference organization, sequence organization, action formation.

The Post-Anna Hazare to protest against PM Modi on January 30

Post date- Jan 17, 2016-05-15

Shares- 161

Likes- 2400

X says- You have lost credibility Anna. You asked for money to visit a temple shilanyas in Pune. You didn't say a word against 400% salary hike of your student, you didn't say a word when he rewarded the murderer and rapist of Jyoti and when his party member fought for the culprit. You didn't even raise an eyebrow on his daily abuses and foul language which disrespects the stature of the post he holds. He travels with fleet of luxury cars and bought 10-odd cars even for his minister's convenience. And you sitting on dharna for what now? You self proclaim yourself as Mahatma Gandhi, and have such low and corrupt thinking! Sick it is. (436 likes).

Y says- this guy has lost my respect. He is just like the award wapasi gang. Silent on some issues, and vocal on some. If you have the guts Mr. Hazare stage a protest against Mr. Universal liar Arvind kejriwal. I challenge you to speak on what he has done for Delhi. (186 likes)

Z says- Ha ha this guy is a real joker and no.1 traitor. Why does he not utter a word against the national Herald scam? He wants to protest against Modi government for what? Does he

hate development? Is he against farm insurance scheme? Is Anna Hazare against development? (96 likes)

The Post-Canada based businessman threatens to kill Anna

Post date- Mar 4, 2015

Shares- 41

Likes- 509

X says- Now every patriotic citizen of India has realised the fact that Anna Hazare has been playing in the hands of such persons, organisations, foreign elements etc. who do not want peace, prosperity and development in India. Sri Hazare has himself lost his relevance in the present scenario. In the recently concluded dharna where some congress party businessman not only arranged chartered plane for him but also arranged farmers crowd from Haryana. (8 likes)dharna. Its nautanki only (7likes)

Z says- this guy thinks he worked hard to be respected and remembered… most take him to be a shrill voiced joker… he will never achieve respect he claimed.. cant say if he will be successful in being remembered even after real or staged threats (32 likes)

The Post-Loan waivers to farmers a waste of Public money says Anna

Post date- Sep 18,2015

Shares- 33

Likes- 633

X says – what does he want the govt to do? Is he expecting govt to spray water from sky all over India? (22 likes)

Y says- Loan waivers were congress tricks for vote's n keeping farmers poor nd uneducated. Instead, money should have been spent to check dams cleaning village ponds and maintaining canals (3 likes)

Z says- itna public money waste hota hai, to kisano ko kyo nahi waive kiya jaye. Aap ek saal kheti kar lo fir baat karna is topic par uncle ji. Jab barish rulayegi to paisa dubta nazar aayga (4 likes)

The Post-Anna with Kejriwal at Jantar Mantar Today

Post date- Feb 24, 2015

Shares- 1700

Likes- 51000

X says-Bharat me Newton ke 1500 varsh pehle hi Newton ke kiye huye zyadatar khoj purna ho chukey the. Agar who Bharat mein janma hota to kisi guru ke shishya hota aur uski utni aukaat nah hoti (15 likes)

Y says- Anna said he will not share stage with any corrupt politician, I am sure you better about Mr. Kejriwal (10 likes)

Z says- Mr. Anna you have forgotten your promise and political leaders. Have you become weak and you want to take advantage of govt of Delhi. It is not for you it is for the service of the Delhi people. (20 likes)

The Post-Reservation poses threat to country

Post date- Feb 24, 2015

Shares- 679

Likes- 5.3 k

X says- also lalu, nitish, and mulayam possess threat to India (185 likes)

Z says- why I am upset with this opportunist Anna is that we supported him for anti corruption movement- at Tihar ,when he was arrested, then at Ramleela with whole family carrying a 18 month old from India Gate- all for a cause. But now realized he is a big crook than political parties/leaders when he was arrested. (123 likes)

2.2 Research Findings- How did Facebook page interactions help to formalise Public Opinion in a virtual sphere (Conversation Analysis)

 1) Turn Taking- from the 102 posts that were analysed, the turn taking process was quite interesting. In most of the cases, the number of respondents were limited., though the number of likes and shares were high. The respondents put forth their comments and waited for other people to reply, and the turn taking was mostly alternately. Though with some exceptions, when the respondents answered after a number of comments were put forth. However, on an average, turn taking in comments followed a definite path, either alternately or after a consecutive number of comments. Some of the comments were constructive criticism, whereas some were brash. Most of the people however adhered to the basic principles of constructive criticism. Some comments were funny.

 2) Repair- A very interesting phenomenon was derived from all the conversations analysed for the post on IAC (total 102 posts). Keeping in mind the theory of Spiral of Silence by Noelle Newmann, often the respondents when pressurised by many to put forth a particular point of view actually recoiled their own comments and either welcomed the majority comment or simply logged off from the post. This goes to prove once again that though each individual had their own opinion, when cornered by peer pressure on some other point of view, either they reconciliated to the dominant thought or simply logged off.

3) Preference organization- There was no preference organization as such found from the comments and likes made in the posts. Only one variant was that nearly 95% of the respondents were Hindus and a very negligible part of the conversation was carried out by Muslim or minority community.

4) **Sequence Organization**- Although social networking tools allow activists to rapidly circulate information and to coordinate physical movements across space, they are perhaps most effective at getting large numbers of individuals to converge in protest at particular physical locations. Rather than generating organizational networks, these tools primarily link and help to stitch together interpersonal networks, facilitating the mass aggregation of individuals within concrete locales through viral communication flows. In this sense, rather than mobilizing "networks of networks" the use of Twitter and Facebook within social movements tends to generate "crowds of individuals."24 At the same time, as commercial platforms that link individuals with friends and colleagues from multiple socialmilieus, social networking sites, compared to the listservs and autonomous media platforms, such as Indymedia, that were prevalent at the height of the global justice movements, are more widely used, have lower barriers to access and participation, and thus penetrate wider social networks, helping to explain the broader degree of participation in the other movements beyond the traditional activist communities involved in movements of the recent past.

5) **Action Formation-** As understood from the conversations, there was a strong inclination of the people to congregate at different places to address the evils of corruption from the grassroot level (conversations on 30.2.2016 in IAC group by Dilip Channa, Arun Pandit, Sita Jaiswal, Tarun Neogi and Rockboy Asim) . One of the innovative approaches in this regard was stress on Jan Sunwayi, or public hearing- held through a careful process of identifying people's problems, gathering relevant information, accessing and scrutinizing documents (as per conversation on post regarding congregation of Anna loyalists in front of Parliament on 3.3. 2015 by Narayan Rai, Shruti Biswas, Anil Kalla, Dipankar Mukherjee). After having ascertained prima facie cases of corruption and obtaining relevant document, a date for public meeting would be fixed, and mobilization begin by sharing information with affected people at public work sites, wall writings (interview of Bharat Dogra taken on 21.9.2015) and pamphlets. Discrepancies in wages, corruption cases then would be brought to the fore and discussed at the Jun Sunwayi. Innovative usage of cultural medium was also used such as folk theatre, puppet shows, songs and music, for awareness building and mobilizing (as per conversations on the post in IAC regarding Mobilization on IAC dated 23.3.2016 by RAna bej, Kamaal Tandon, Avinash Wadhekar, Nalini Jaya) . Youth camps, Majdoor – Kisan Mela was also used effectively to create solidarity among workers, and peasants. As the IAC movement began to gain momentum, the approach became to use different channels - administrative, legislative, media, public spaces (suggestion given in post on Policy implementation on 25.4.2016 by Rishikesh Meena, Rising Sunshine Angel, Bina agarwal, Khsitij Madhe). Different methods included nation-wide campaign, dharnas (sit-down protest) held near the Parliament, lobbying with Political Parties, media campaign, bringing in 'eminent' individuals into the struggle; use of Social/Alternative media, street plays songs and dances, puppet shows. Other typical protest strategies methods like signature campaigns,

rallies by students, and candlelight vigils were also used. For awareness rising, film screenings, live radio, as well as seminars, workshops, exhibitions and lectures were organized in various urban centers. Among the less conventional methods were rock concerts, kite flying events etc.

2.3 Research Findings- What pressure tactics do they employ towards the government regarding IAC.

When there is a favourable political environment push for the bill to become an act that was the main learning. At the time Jan Lokpal was getting discussed civil society as a unit was still coming into terms unlike today's time where network society works a lot more in an organized way. By forming networks both outside the government as well within the bureaucracy and judiciary left to no place but opening of new spaces for civil society to negotiate the enactment of policies and acts. The reason Jan Lokpal was formed was because there was pressure from all sides and it stands as a premiere example of Para institution which is formed by members of civil society, bureaucracy and government. The informal contacts, ex-bureaucrats, retired judges, members from academia all were worked with bureaucracy & government in some form or the other starting from consulting in policy making to heading different committees to writing reports for the government. So while the negotiations with the government was taking place for the Jan Lokpal bill, , it was done more on an equal level along with using innovative strategies involving all stakeholders like political parties, bureaucracy and Government (Fernbach, 2007).

2.4 Research Findings-What are the different issues and agenda that is foremost on the priority list of Facebook members .

As observed from the posts mentioned in the Facebook Group IAC, the issues mostly centred around the credibility of Anna Hazare and his impeccable character, how the educated Indians were vocal in ending corruption totally, the involvement of stalwarts like Kejriwal with a degree from IIT triggering hopes of a new sentiment rising to free India of corruptive practices, the practical deification of Anna Hazare etc.

2.5 Research Findings-How is public support mobilised through social media

During the first phase of IAC, however, it has been characterized by higher levels of public mobilization (e.g., mass marches, rallies, direct actions, and solidarity events) and more-submerged forms of decentralized networking, digital communication had increasingly shifted to a proliferating nexus of listservs used by particular working groups (e.g., media, ideas, logistics, facilitation, etc.), suggesting the rise of a fragmented mode of interaction and the logics of aggregation. The rise of what has been called "a logic of aggregation" (Interview with Veena Panoocha, 18th July,2015 in The Hindu) presents a more serious problem of sustainability than that posed by the diffuse networks of a prior generation. Indeed, whereas global justice networks often lasted a few years— although world and regional social forum networks have been longer lived, around since 2001—social networking tools have been most effective at generating protests organized as temporary "smart mobs" (Rheingold 2003),

which disaggregate as easily as they aggregate. It is only with the long-term occupation of public space that such "mobs" (used precisely this term to dismiss IAC protesters) are transformed from "crowds" of individuals into an organized movement" with a collective subjectivity. This suggests another important difference between logics of networking and logics of aggregation: the relationship between the virtual and the physical, between the online world and the square.

2.6 Research Findings-How do Facebook members engage in Political Socialisation process

The Net savvy population of India, which was now quite huge, contacted each other through these Group chats. These were mostly in short, crisp sentences (as found from the Conversation in the posts mentioned above), asking friends, friends of friends and others to join the venue of protest, whether it was in colleges in Kolkata or Delhi or Mumbai. Mobilization on social Media happened via various mediums - Like via Twitter groups which mobilized include - #theekhai ,#stopthishame, Anonymous India, Centre of Right, India against Corruption, AamAdmi Party to name a few. These bodies organized protests regularly. Interestingly in the current protests, media presence did not ensure coverage of everything that happened rather it was the social media which acted as an organism with a million tongues and twice as many eyes; the accounts we heard on social media about police brutality and the arrest of some young protestors was largely missed by traditional media.

Sunil Abraham, executive director of the Bangalore-based Centre for Internet and Society, cautions against being overly technologically deterministic. "While the anti-corruption movement ran on a sophisticated social media strategy and campaign, the ongoing anti-rape protests have no single organizer or banner, just a message that resonates" says Abraham. He further points out there are close linkages between internet, text messages, social media and mainstream media. "These channels leak into each other and the causal connection becomes unclear," he says (Indian Express, 2002).

2.7 Research Findings-How Public dialogue in Social Media provides a framework for looking at Government.

The very essence of the India against Corruption Movement that rocked social networking sites was that it did not rely on any particular leader to carry forward the campaigns in different cities. Different posts published on Facebook and Twitter generated comments to the extent that posts shared in a single day at times crossed 2000. The absence of an individual leadership in the urban areas actually helped to decentralise the issue to the extent that they turned viral. The involvement of the common masses, particularly the educated middle class was unprecedented. It struck a chord in their hearts for a very genuine reason, since every Indian had been victim to the administrations corruptive practices at least once in their lives. The chant against corruption, the body language of Anna Hazare, and his way of dressing all had an uncanny resemblance to Mahatma Gandhi. This very strong emotional connect actually invoked a strong sense of nationalism among the educated middle class. India Against Corruption stood for a transparent system, no bribery, responsible

administration. For once people showed total solidarity with the movement and flooded the social networking sites with fan pages of Anna Hazare, community sites, Facebook Groups to create a frenzy never seen before. The thrust of the virtual movement lay in likes and comments, sharing of posts, all of which laid a tremendous pressure on the policy making agents of the system, propelling them to pass the Jan Lokpal Bill. Apart from its main protagonist Anna Hazare, there was no other prominent leader to carry forward the social media movement, had no organised structure, and no pre determined plan to channelize their opinions.

Pamela Philipose in her article "Anxieties in the Republic Media Metamorphosis and Popular Protest" writes that the public rage following the IAC movement was a transformative moment for the media. The mainstream or Old Media of print and television blended with New Media (predominantly the social networking sites) to determine the agenda as the government tried clumsily to deal with the public outcry.

To consider this, we need to recognize that the mainstream media – sometimes termed as the corporate media given their close proximity to market forces – do not generally by themselves actually threaten the status quo. This is primarily because they perceive their own survival as crucially hinged to the stability of existing systems and unless the ruling class is actually undermining that status quo, they see no reason to shake unduly the pillars of society.

2.8 Research Findings-Graphical and Illustrated Analysis

Table 2.8.1 shows how the different Social Media (Facebook) reacted to the India Against Corruption Movement.

Anna India Against Corruption Movement	Likes	Launch Date August 2011	Discussion	Members/ followers >2.5 lakhs
Facebook.com/ Anna Hazare	454000	Aug 2011		>3.2 lakhs
Facebook.com Indiacor		Sept 2011		46458 members
India Against Corruption Movement	31,389	December 2011		1376889 members
Join Anna Hazare fast to Bring jan Lokpal Bill	67982	December 2011		2156735 members

Table 2.8.2 shows how Twitter reacted to the India Against Corruption Movement

Blogging Sites	Joined	Tweets	Following	Followers	Likes	List
Voice of the people@ janlokpal	Dec 2011	32300	646	2,38000	3456	1
@ janlokpal bill	April 2012	3757	61	858	119	3
@ support annahazare	April 2012	36	77	1522	376	
@annna hazare8	August 2012	1372	237	2000	521	1

Table 2.8.3 shows the reactions and followers of Awaaz.org

Stand with Anna Hazare	Sign the Petition
Campaign: Indians for a strong Jan Lokpal	628104
Twitter share	34000
Facebook Share	473000
Email share	68000

Table 2.8.4 shows the reactions and followers of Youtube.com

	Uploaded Date	Read	Likes
Anna Hazare indefinite fast against corruption	Feb 28, 2011	211475	1586
Anna Hazare, India Against Corruption	Aug 11, 2011	5470	30

2.9 Research Findings- Decentralisation in the Terrain of Policy Making: Social Activism Shift from State Centric to Policy Centric

If one examines policy making process in India, post-Independence to late eighties, policy making centred around the state as the 'maker' of policy, with limited participation from non -state actors. The state, in its maximalist avatar, sought to resolve societal problems/public issues through 'scientific decision making', adopting a top down approach and relying on its institutions. The focus here was less on policy scrutiny, and more on policy implementation and public administration. This was possible as long as there prevailed an acceptance of a centralized planned strategy based on a political consensus. However, once this political consensus broke down with the onset of globalization/liberalization- two processes unfolded. One, the role of the state began to change and get more complex, and two, there began far greater scrutiny of public policy from the ground – with attention now shifting to questions of appropriate policies, appropriate structures and process for policy formulation, of improving the competence of policy makers, and evaluation of policy outcomes.

The shift in the role of the state was away from "doing to ensuring", of redefining its role/responsibilities away from provision of public goods/redistribution to seeking collaborations with non-state actors to "do" public issues. This had direct impact on "opening up" of policy making to non- state actors, for it entailed re-conceptualization of governance- away from a centralized, hierarchical and top down traditional model of 'government', to a more collaborative, horizontal structure and non-hierarchical steering that had to be now based on networking, negotiation, lobbying. This was the coming of age of model of partnerships or networked governance wherein the network relationship between the government and the non-government (market and civil society) became the core thrust is making of policies and delivery of public goods. Hence, this shift from 'government' to 'governance as a network' played a significant factors in 'opening up' of policy making to partnerships, influences form non state actors, including influences of global institution.

Given that decentralization overlapped with the first moves towards liberalization in India (as in many other countries), there has been a debate as to whether the trigger for decentralization came from concerns about deepening grassroots decision making and participation, or from neo liberal policy framework that would eventually need public service contractors7. However, what is significant for this paper is to highlight the fact that the impulse for 'opening up' of policy making to civil society emerged at the cusp of two (somewhat opposing) tendencies- One, as a narrative of a neo-liberal state. For, even as the neo liberal state began abdicating its redistributive role, it founds itself in a peculiar bind-unable to meet the challenges of equity and distributive justice, in a context where political/social issues tended to be far more contested than ever before. The State thereby sought to implicate civil society in governance/adopt a "participative" approach to resolve the "wicked problems" that it faced. Second, the space for civil society also emerged from a counter narrative- from

movements, from demands on the ground that people/communities must have a greater say in policies that were about them- that policy making ought to be more democratic, more deliberative, more participatory; from the Gandhian tradition of 'Gram Swarajya". Here a 'bottom up' approach to policy making was conceptualized as an alternative path to development, which would ameliorate some of the ill effects of neo-liberal policies. This dual impulse or state imperatives is critical in understanding not just the shifting terrain of policy making in India, but also the dynamics of civil society space.

3.0 Summary of Findings

Whether such protest movements as IAC can be maintained only via social media remains to be seen, as does the ability of Anna Hazare to reproduce his former visibility through periodic public actions and events. Multiple meetings and gatherings on most nights of the week are surely unsustainable, particularly if social media netizens want to reach out more broadly, for instance, to marginalized communities whose residents possess neither the time nor the resources to attend so many activities. Moreover, it is also exceedingly difficult, even for seasoned activists, to keep up with the sheer number and diversity of communication channels, including myriad Twitter feeds, working-group listservs and forums, and IAC related websites and wikis, a drawback of organizing in a social media age that mirrors the proliferation and fragmentation of IAC's physical gatherings. Indeed, addressing policy changes through social media activism is a complex, rhizomatic, self-organizing machine par excellence.

Despite such challenges, as public utilization of the public sphere have pointed out, the very newness of this form of protest was an opportunity for the movement to renew itself, and it has started to do so in a way that—in my view—begins to integrate logics of aggregation and networking, potentially setting the stage for a broader, more diverse, and more sustainable struggle in an era of worldwide protest movements in the public sphere. India now seems to be building a more decentralized community based networked infrastructure rooted in directly democratic neighbourhood, city, and state-wide (and, perhaps someday, regional and national) assemblies. However, movements like IAC will also have to find new ways of achieving public visibility involving creative combinations of direct actions, marches, large-scale public assemblies, and even periodic physical occupations and encampments.

Of course, specific strategic shifts and their effectiveness, as well as the longer-term trajectory of IAC, will have to be empirically assessed through ongoing comparative ethnographic research. Another particularly important concern going forward for online protest is the strategic need to reach out to working-class people and people who are disproportionately affected by issues such as inequality, unemployment, and the mortgage crisis. After some initial missteps in communicating with a coalition of community groups, the IAC movement has taken some positive steps in this direction. These include holding an anti bribery workshop focusing on racism, communalism and white privilege and public support for subsequent anti bribery protests

IAC participants have also supported the efforts of other micro organizers organizers to mobilize area divergent communities under one umbrella. In addition, meetings have continued between representatives of community-based organizations and members of IAC's outreach committee regarding how to more effectively reach out to people irrespective of caste and creed, build more sustainable relationships of trust and solidarity. These and additional future efforts will be necessary if IAC is to more closely reflect the 99%. Another major challenge confronting IAC involves the contentious issue of goals. Many observers commenting in the Group Chats feel anxious that IAC cannot seem to come up with a clear and concise list of demands, and ongoing debates rage within various other IAC sites. To grasp these dynamics, it is important to consider broader cultural logics. The logics of networking compel diverse collective actors to come together across their differences without losing their autonomy and specificity. Within the global justice movements, networking logics meant specific networks and groups could develop discrete goals and demands, such as an end to the policies of structural adjustment, the imposition of a small tax on global financial transactions (Tobin Tax), the putting into effect of fair trade practices, or the end of global capitalism itself, among others, but larger spaces of convergence such as world and regional social forums were characterized by broader statements of principles providing umbrella spaces as wide as possible for diverse movements and networks to communicate and coordinate across their differences.

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