8 Striving behind the shadow – The dawn of Spanish politics 2.0

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8.1 Introduction

As in everywhere else in the World, the Spanish awakening to Politics 2.0 has been overwhelmingly influenced by US Politics. Spanish politics was awaken to we politics after Howard Dean's campaign to the 2004 presidential candidacy, where blogging and other online services like Meetup became important tools for campaigning. The US President Barack Obama's long path to the presidency – from February 2007 when he announced his candidacy for the presidency of the United States, until he assumed office in January 2009, after two years of primary and presidential elections – where the Internet was a crucial factor of success draw the blueprint that many are trying to understand and replicate.

At the domestic level, we would like to remind the reader that the government of the Spanish Prime Minister José María Aznar (1996-2004) is seen by many as a turning point in Spanish politics. On the one hand, his coming into power implied the end of the Spanish Transition, which many date from the death of the dictator Francisco Franco (1975) until the defeat of the Prime Minister Felipe Gonzalez's Socialist Party in 1996.[1] On the other hand, it is just after Mr. Aznar that the Internet – and Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) in general – comes under the spotlight of the political scenario: first, in the 2004 election that the Partido Popular lost in favor of Mr. Rodríguez Zaptero's socialist party and then in the 2008 election, where Rodríguez Zapatero was re-elected.

It is in this framework of international influence combined with an endogenous change that Politics 2.0 rise in Spain. The first decade of the 2000's is not only the one where ICTs see them being adopted massively, but also an age of political change at all levels after the political hinge of Mr. Aznar's mandate. But, despite the fact that the storm was perfect – or maybe just because of that – Spanish Politics 2.0 are way behind the forecasts of the Web 2.0 pundits and digerati. Spanish Politics

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[1] Though there are many opinions on when did the Spanish Transition end – the approval of the 1978 Constitution, the socialist party winning the 1982 elections, etc. – there is full acknowledgement in considering Mr. Aznar as the first president belonging to the new generation of politicians that were not part of the Dictator's governments or fought against them.

are nearer to being 1.5 than 2.0, seem to be reinforcing the status quo and the political parties' plutocracy and, at its best, are more focussed on a shallow debate about the forms rather than a deep wish to transform the agora.

In this chapter we will bring some evidence to back the previous statement. First, we will bring a rough picture of the state of adoption of ICTs and the Web 2.0 in Spain. Then, we will focus in what is happening at the debate – or the deliberation – level, especially in the Spanish political blogosphere – understanding political as professional politicians and non professionals talking about politics. Lastly, the focus will shift from the debate to campaigning and political elections. Some discussion and conclusions will close the chapter.

8.2 A definition of 'politics 2.0'

In 2005, Tim O'Reilly published a seminal article (O'Reilly, 2005) in which he provided a definition for the term Web 2.0, which had gained a huge momentum during the previous year since the first edition of the Web 2.0 Conference in October 2004.

The concept gathered both technological and philosophical (in the sense of behaviors and attitudes) issues. At the technological level, id dealt about the importance of the web as a delivery (of content and services) platform by excellence; data as the core component of all kind of communications and interchanges; software as a service and not a product, then becoming more important access to software than its "physical" purchase; predominance to RSS and associated procedures for the exchange of content; or (while keeping the importance of the web as a platform) the need to create technologies that were portable across devices. At the philosophical level, and both cause and consequence of the technological advances, the spread (and enabling) of a contribution and participation culture by the society at large (and not only by institutions or organized associations); the acknowledgement that anyone could actually contribute with their knowledge and opinion (the "wisdom of crowds"); the raise of a culture of mixing, assembling and aggregating content; and the will to have rich user experiences when interacting online (vs. A passive, unidirectional, monotonous approach which had been common ground in the previous years).

Besides the "formal" definition of the Web 2.0, it has more often been described through some tools and the new and characteristic ways of using them: the blog and the nanoblog, the wiki, social bookmarking, photo and video sharing websites, tagging and "folksonomies", syndication and aggregation, etc.

After this philosophical approach – boosted by the technological advancements – many have adapted some of the core definitions to many aspects of life. Thus, for instance, Education 2.0 often referred to as a shift from unidirectional lecturing towards a more participatory approach of learning, based in collaboratively creating learning materials, an intensive usage of web 2.0 tools, or openness and sharing of the process of learning, just to name a few. And along with Education, we can find

debates around Research 2.0, Culture 2.0, Government 2.0, Journalism 2.0, Enterprise 2.0. and Politics 2.0.

Our own understanding of Politics 2.0, and the one that we will be using as a definition to frame this chapter, is composed by the following characteristics:

- Ideas: not closed and packaged propaganda. Ideas that can be spread, shared and transformed by members of the party and partisans, sympathizers and supporter, and the society at large;
- Open data: ideas are backed by incredible amounts of data and information made openly available to the general public, and most time provided with open licenses that allow their reuse and remix;
- Participation: of all and every kind of people and institutions, blurring the edges of the "structures" and permeating the walls of institutions, making communication more horizontal and plural;
- Loss of control of the emission of the message, that now can be transferred outside of mainstream media and diffused on a peer-to-peer and many-to-many basis by means of web 2.0 tools;
- Loss of control of the creation itself of the message: being data and participation available, web 2.0 tools at anyone's reach, and with minimum digital competences, the message can even be created and spread bottom up;
- Acknowledgement, hence, of the citizen as some who can be trusted (and used) as a one-man think-tank and a one-man communication-media;
- Reversely, possibility to reach each and every opinion, target personal individuals with customized messages, by means of rich data and web 2.0 tools, thus accessing a long tail of voters that are far from the median voter;
- Construction of an ideology, building of a discourse, setting up goals, campaigning and government become a continuum that feedbacks in real time.

We admit that this is neither a usual or a formal description, nor a comprehensive set of characteristics. We believe, though, that it will serve in providing a framework for what is intended to explain in this chapter.

8.3 The Spanish e-readiness level and web 2.0

Before speaking about the state of Spanish online politics, we thought we should bring a quick overview of the state of e-Readiness of Spain.

Concerning its stage of digital development, Spain is a digital striver (Peña-López, 2009b). This means that the economy is following the same path that the most digitally advanced economies are setting, but lags behind in the performance of most digital indicators: ICT infrastructures, the ICT sector, digital literacy and competences, the legal and regulatory framework, and the existence and usage of digital content and services.

Despite the fact that the pervasiveness of mobile phones, computers and Internet is near the European average in Spain (115.3% mobile penetration, 63.6% of homes having a computer, 51.0% with Internet access[2]), the effective usage of the Internet – arguably the main indicator to look at when talking about Politics 2.0 – is still low or, to say the least, suboptimal. 61.7% of the population answered in the third quarter of 2008 that they had "ever used the Internet" and just 46.3% of the total users were intensive users – that is 28.6% of the total population had used the Internet "the previous week".

The socioeconomic profile of the Internet users is similar to the one we find in higher income countries:

- Slight unbalance towards males, but decreasing;
- Higher ratio of users the younger the segment of the population, reaching really low rations amongst elderly people;
- Predominance of middle and high classes;
- Predominance of educated people, with secondary or higher education degrees;
- No formal training on Internet issues, but users are either self-taught or learnt with the help of family, friends and/or colleagues.

Concerning more "2.0" indicators, findings are quite self-explanatory.

On the one hand, 75% of Internet users accessed social networking sites and had profiles in them and participated – with different intensities – in these virtual spaces. On the other hand, just 21.4% of the intensive Internet users (people that used the internet in the previous week) read blogs and only 7.9% of the intensive Internet users wrote on their (or on third parties') blogs.

These two last indicators, along with others about usage (online shopping, access to e-Administration sites, e-learning activities, etc.) profile a Spanish Internet user that mainly access the Internet mainly for leisure and, on a second stage, for information gathering and learning activities. In general, it is a user that just seldom contributes or creates user generated content.

The Spanish Web 2.0 is populated by a smallest group of prosumers on the top of an iceberg. The greater mass of this group is invisible, accesses the Internet on a random basis or does it in the quest of leisure alternatives. In general, though, Spanish Internet users do not periodically participate in what it is at stake in this chapter: Politics.

So, what is really happening in online politics, both in terms of "Web 1.0" and Web 2.0?

[2] All data in this section, ift not stated otherwise, are from Observatorio Nacional de las Telecomunicaciones y la Sociedad de la Información (2009).

8.4 Spanish online politics

8.4.1 An introduction to online politics

Online politics have evolved in width and depth since Internet access was made public in late 1994 and early 1995.

The first years of the Internet can be described as an information and participation sandbox, where citizens checked whether this could be a new place where to get better and personalized information about politics and to interact amongst them (Jacobson, 1999; Katz et al, 2001, Sunstein, 2001).

But the then unidirectionality of the Internet made it to be conquered as a political tool by political parties (Bimber, Davis, 2003), being used for what still today is the king use of online politics: online campaigning. There is quite a major consensus that US Politics have been the laboratory where the Internet has been put into work for political campaigning. Howard Dean's campaign during the primary elections for the 2004 presidential candidacy is acknowledged to be the first one in which the Internet had an important role (Cornfield, 2005). Maturity – at least in today's standards – came during both primary and presidential elections by the then candidate Barack Obama in 2008 (Pew Research Center for The People & The Press, 2008; Smith, Rainie, 2008).

The lion's head of online politics, online campaigning has caught the attention of researchers to analyze both what happens during elections (Hillygus, Shields, 2007) or after them (Smith, 2008).

Related to campaigning, the implication of partisans and the citizenry at large has increasingly been put under the spotlight, especially due to the popularization of blogging in general and, specifically, for political issues (Elmer et al, 2009; Criado et al, 2009). Blogging has, of course, had also an impact in how people face mainstream media. Thus, the always difficult relationship between political parties (as message creators and senders), media (as mediators) and citizens (as receivers, but now also as senders and re-senders) has been also analyzed in parallel in and out of campaigns (Howard, 2005; Dutton, 2007; Gibson, 2009).

Besides campaigning, some incipient interest has been put too in e-democracy and the creation of debate and opinion, prior or collateral to campaigns (Noveck, 2005; Davies, Peña Gangadharan, 2009), citizen activism (Norris, Curtice, 2006) or even control and repression (Morozov, 2009).

In general, almost all – if not all – the aspects of politics, political engagement and citizen participation have been permeated by the Internet and life online (Chadwick, Howard, 2008; Oates et al, 2006), being the US usually at the head of experimentation and implementation, and the rest of the world at shorter or larger distances from these two countries.

In this landscape, where does Spain fit?

8.4.2 Spanish parties and online politics

In general, the statements made by Borge in 2005 still apply. Acknowledging that generalizations are also rough approximations to reality, and being aware that other behaviours exist and exceptions apply, in general political parties in Spain mainly use websites and the Internet at large to broadcast their own messages, and, as broadcasters, have little purpose in engaging in a two-way communication with their partisans or their (potential) voters. Hence, there is a lack of agora where to deliberate and usage of the Internet is at the lower steps of Arnstein's (1969) ladder of participation. The trend – over all triggered by the US politics example, an always present mirror for Spaniards in the matter – is to move beyond this ancient approach to online politics, and there already exists some momentum in this line, as we will be seeing later on.

When looking at the reasons behind this scenario, two major reasons seem to arise, the former quite naturally, the second one not that intuitive. On the one hand, we have already described the state of e-Readiness in Spain. Indeed, in relative terms Spain lags – and has always lagged – behind the US in matters of e-Readiness, as a quick comparison between Kirkman et al (2002) and Dutta and Mia (2009) will also clearly show. It is, thus, not bold to assume that this e-readiness lag has had a negative impact in Spanish online politics lag. On the other hand, it also seems (Jensen, 2009) that the low levels of political participation in Spain might also be caused because of high levels of Spaniards trust in institutions: hence, the Internet would still be used in a vertical, institutional way, despite its possibilities to be used otherwise, in more horizontal and participative way, as there would not be a need for it, being institutions (political parties, governments) regarded as trustful and convenient actors for politics.

This second reason would explain this lack of participation despite the fact that the Spanish web has been found to have a certain bias towards the left wing (Robles, 2008), which has historically been more participative-prone than the right wing.

In this sense, Batlle et al (2007) also found, when analyzing Catalan parties[3], that left-wing parties showed not higher degrees of participation or collective decision-taking online that their right-wing counterparts. Indeed, the typology of the party – catch-all vs. mass-party types – neither had any impact in a greater degree of participation in the online arena. What was found to determine the use of the political parties' websites was the size of the party, which we think translatable to their budget. Thus, it is not politics but economics what weights in Spanish online politics.

This digital divide is contributing to political inequality in online terms (Gonzalez-Bailon, 2008), as more resources allow for greater visibility, both in mainstream media as in the internet.

3 And the structure of Catalan politics is very similar to that of Spanish politics.

So, late development of the Internet (compared to more advanced countries), trust in institutions and need for a critical mass or high budget seem to be the reason while online politics in Spain seem to still be, and in general terms, on a pre-Web 2.0 era. Findings by Borge et al (2009) when analyzing local participation in Catalan municipalities can easily be extrapolated to the whole political Spanish landscape:

- In general, lack of infrastructure is a serious barrier for developing online strategies;
- When these strategies are at last developed, they are usually constrained to informative websites that have no place for deliberation tools;
- The population size seems again to be playing an important role in the presence of online politics at the local level, a conclusion that we feel quite related to budget rather than critical mass in terms of population;
- Indeed, it is the abstention rate the one that increases the probability of undertaking one or more participation initiatives;
- Unlike at higher government levels, left-wing mayors and independent candidatures tend to carry out more participatory processes, thus indicating that as the political machinery grows, usual rules (e.g. left-wingers are more participative) tend to apply less.

Some of the former points listed above – the role of abstention and the proximity of local politics being drivers of participation – provide us with a first idea on how the demand side of politics, the citizen, can look like.

A research carried on by Marta Cantijoch (2009) showed that it is critical citizens the ones who use the Internet more frequently for political issues, the reason being that they find in the online agora a place (still) not controlled by political, economical or media elites. This is not a contradiction with Jensen's findings (2009)[4], but a complementary approach: citizens do not usually participate because they trust institutions, and it is the ones that do not the ones that are active on the Net. Adding to this, there is a pre-existing proclivity to use extra-representational modes of participation that is in fact reinforced by these people going online to bypass political elites.

On the other hand, she also saw that partisans and institution-believers would use the web more in 1.0 ways rather than 2.0 ways, or try and use 2.0 tools but with a central, coordinated, top-down approach, very far from the original nature of the Web 2.0. Extra-representational forms of participation have hence to be carefully analyzed as the purposes, goals and final uses of them might differ, even if the tools used might be similar between institutionalized individuals and critical citizens.

Besides these two groups, a third one, the disaffected, would be using the Internet for many other purposes but politics. And the Internet would just not make a difference in their engagement.

4 In fact, both authors shared most of their datasets.

The “knowledge gap” (Tichenor et al, 1970) in the political system, where the more educated people would increase their information level on topics that where debated in relationship with their less educated peers, does not only decrease but is increased due a higher exposure to online information, becoming the Internet a gap increaser and not a knowledge leveler, as intuition might lead to think (Anduiza et al, 2009).

Notwithstanding, it is also possible that higher exposure to political information, found serendipitously on the Internet, can end up bringing the less interested in politics to higher levels of political knowledge.

To add up to the possible explanations of the low level or participation in Spain in politics online, we would like to go back again to the matters of e-Readiness. Taking data from several sources, we recently showed (Peña-López, 2008) that there is a strong relationship between e-Readiness, political rights or political freedom and participation. Though no relationships of causality or determinants were calculated, there were clear correlations between the level of development of the Information Society, education (which might also be related with Anduiza et al’s findings), political rights or freedom and what kind and at which intensity citizens would participate.

It would then be plausible to state that Spanish online politics are quite passive – quite 1.0-ish – part because of lag in digital development, part due to its inner political and institutional structure. On the other hand, when engaged online, activity is frantic and concentrated in educated, tech savvy and politically critical citizens.

In the following two sections we will analyze the two main activities by politicians and citizens in Spain, but in reverse order: firstly, the unripe state of political blogging; secondly the aspiring to lead online political campaigning.

8.5 Political blogging

The ultimate sense of political blogging is to act as a counterweight of both the political power and the media power, many times the former determining the discourse of the later, and the rest of the times the latter lobbying the former for their own interests.

If blogging has then to become a Fifth Estate (Dutton, 2007), blogging has to be influent on the political agenda. Just after the first Internet-intensive US presidential campaign, the Institute for Politics, Democracy & the Internet (2004) identified and analyzed the political “influentials” of that campaign and depicted their behavior online. Their main findings can be summarized as follows:

- Offline influentials are online influentials too; just rarely online influentials come out of the blue and pop up on the Internet;

- People – non influentials – look for them and value their opinions, which is what makes of them influential;
- Influentials are engaged people and are already very active within their communities;
- They are at the cutting edge of events, 2 to 5 years ahead the rest of the world in terms of what is going to come;
- They are deeply interested in politics and, if do not pretend to make a change, at least they want to be aware of the changes;
- Poli-Influentials are people that are influential in many contexts and ways; they have usually (and significantly) reached a higher education level, being 60% of them post-graduates;
- The more educated citizens are, the more influential activities people engage in, but in just the same proportion (online and offline, e.g. imparting a conference and writing an article) that other people not as much engaged;
- As expected, passive activities get the lion's share vs. proactive activities in the ladder of engagement or activism.

The problem with the blogosphere is, nevertheless, the mere nature of the Internet, different from face-to-face relationships. If the IPDI already depicted a strong dependency of online engagement or influence from "real life" or offline activities, Jacobson (1999) lists a wide range of reasons and variables why the same message could be understood in radically different ways when communicated by online means.

Because of this, because of affinity and birds of a same feather flocking together more easily on the Net, because of a combination of both, there is a risk of people systematically flocking together to avoid misunderstandings and reinforce their own messages and points of view. Sunstein (2001) thus warns against the tendency that instead of being exposed to more and more plural information about politics, people will end up choosing only the information that represents their ideological views, creating a sort of "daily me" and diffusing on and on the messages of the same kind. The addition of such individual behaviors in a friendly online community with end up creating echo chambers (Kelly et al 1005; Kelly, 2008) where just a few political messages will resonate: the ones with which we are comfortable and agree with.

Well, this is, more or less, what Criado and Martínez (2009) seem to have found about the Spanish blogosphere during the Spanish local elections in 2007:
- The inexistence of the profile of a leader-blogger, as most bloggers have been emerged online without an offline authority, and offline influentials are not online;
- Parties still are the main broadcasters of information and communication, and have found no counter-power in the blogosphere;
- Indeed, when political blogging happens is mainly personal, not mainstreamed, and depends a lot on the candidate's personality;
- Thus, blogs are but another campaign tool, not a "blog" (in the sense of emergent participation of the Web 2.0) at all: they are unidirectional and highly mediatized.

This is most in the line of what was found by Elmer et al. (2009) for Canadian politics and the Canadian blogosphere, which conclude that the political blogosphere is mainly made up of political acolytes that redistribute and echo the centralized messages of the party.

This is not to say that there is no dissent or that the online political landscape is monochromatic: actually, "the structural affordances of the Internet are enabling political communication flows within and outside the liberal democratic institutions of interest aggregation" (Jensen, 2009), but it definitely is not related with trust in institutions, partisan identification, and belief in political authorities. Disagreeing with Jensen, we believe then that the Web 2.0 might actually provide a counterpoint in form, but most probably not in content and hence unlikely have an impact.

8.6 Campaigning

It is absolutely beyond any shade of doubt that campaigning has been reshaped because of the pervasiveness of the new digital media. In Howard's (2005) own words "established political elites use database and Internet technologies to raise money, organize volunteers, gather intelligence on voters, and do opposition research". In this sense, parties have increasingly entered and mastered – and even conquered, many would say – online platforms to make their discourse and propaganda in both quantitative and qualitative ways: more available to more people, more focused and personalized for more specific profiles.

This is a "more of the same" outcome of online politics, that is, reinforcing the voice of the ones that already had it: parties and political mainstream structures in general. Was the web 2.0 not said to be a participative, horizontal, plural platform and philosophy? If true, there are two possibilities for participation that could be happening. On the one hand, the possibility for politicians to have their own voice sent out of the party and the party's discipline (Hara, 2008). On the other hand, the possibility for citizens to set up their own campaigns based on the possibility to individually broadcast and engage in a conversation (Castells, 2007).

But the reality, at least in Spain, looks much more like the former – i.e. political institutions settling in the new virtual territories – than like the latter – individuals raising their own voice above the white noise of spin doctors' babbling.

According to Franco Álvarez and García Martul (2008), and based on their research of the Spanish presidential elections in 2008 and the role of citizen networks, the promise of a digital agora where plural voices can find a place and be heard is far from being true. Far from being a place for discussion and debate, the Internet is seen by political parties as yet another place where to harvest voters. Of course, being it a new media, new(-ish) strategies are put to work so that their campaigns penetrate in each and every multimedia and online platform. But the result of it all is that the digital sphere is conquered with yet the same message, making all media converge in the same, single message.

Indeed, what we here find is two types of athletes: the long distance runner, here represented by the apparatus of the party, and the speed racers and sprinters, which feature the activists and political critics. Amongst the latter, there might well be citizens that express out loud their political beliefs but without a real, deep, substantive engagement (Howard, 2005), and the ones that engage in short run, cause-oriented forms of political participation (Norris, Curtice, 2006) which fade out or shift towards other causes once the former has been achieved or its time has expired. And politics, if anything, is more of a marathon than a 100 meters race.

Thus, Jensen (2009) believes that "political support and political participation are uncoupled: political support has little bearing on whether members of the political system participate". In other words, the political system has not changed its own strategy, which is more related with winning elections than with promoting a deliberative democracy where building ideology and solutions is more important than staying in power.

Left with little room for participation, the politically engaged use the Internet to get their information about politics but outside of the political apparatus, thus leaving aside the political party or governments as a conduit for political information, and instead looking for propaganda-less information and, presumably, more objective one. The problem with this behavior is that instead of leading towards a democratization of politics, it counter intuitively feeds the informational divide or the knowledge gap (Anduiza et al, 2009) and unbinds political activism with political support. The promise of the universal agora becomes the nightmare of a political Babel Tower, where debate is replace by a bedlam where the powerful wants to keep, as always was, his voice heard over the herd.

In general, we see in Padró-Solanet (2009)[5] that the online strategy of parties when campaigning – and that can be extended to their online presence in general – varies depending on them being on the government and the consequent electoral pressure, their political color and the ideological coherence, or the organizational weight. Notwithstanding, and in line with aspects we have already talked about, it looks like participatory tools are more used to create buzz against the government rather than build a (new) political project, and that the recognition and promotion of cyberactivism are more in the line of extending the party's tentacles rather than bringing in plurality and debate.

In their analysis of the Spanish presidential elections in 2008 – arguably the first ones in Spain where the Internet played an important role – Peytibí et al (2008) just reinforce what has been said so far: parties, partisans and citizens got into online politics as if pushed by an invisible hand, but the overall result was unchanged politics – in form and in depth – and, in the worst cases, a static political scene where the promise of the Web 2.0 had burned out.

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5 I here ask my colleague for forgiveness as he explicitly demands his paper not to be quoted. In my opinion, though, quality research should not be stopped from diffusion because of excessive humbleness of the researcher.

In this sense, all actors worked their hearts out on the Internet. Almost all tools at reach were used by parties, partisans and citizens: blogs, nanoblogs, "crowdsourcing", social networking sites, live video streaming, photo and video sharing sites, viral online strategies – and many of them fostered by parties themselves. The major change was the enablement of "i-Campaigns", where everyone connected had the capacity and opportunity to generate content for a party/candidate, without their intervention or even approval. Surprisingly, these i-campaigns often showed dissent with the party apparatus, especially when parties had or had recently had internal crisis. This dissent, though, would only be channelled into better propositions when the dissident blogs had not a strong lobbying component or bloggers were not organized or near a political ideology. Again, the usual structure of inside-outside (of politics, of political parties) or the concurring monologues instead of the desired dialogues.

8.7 Some practical examples to pave future ways

If the landscape we have depicted so far is not very promising, there are several isolated – but increasingly intertwined – initiatives that make us feel optimistic and confident – or obstinate and stubborn about our own beliefs – about real Politics 2.0 gradually entering a territory now exclusively inhabited by the great mainstream parties (and their ideas) and the media corporations (and their interests).

We have picked up some experiences that we will very briefly describe below. There are many more, and the ones presented here have been chosen on a very personal and subjective way. Their inclusion here is to show some counterpoints to what has been stated so far in this chapter, leaving to the reader the exercise to make abstraction of them, compared with the current mainstream situation, and guess and wonder whether these are the first stages of a trend, or just sympathetic but early to fade initiatives.

8.7.1 The power of cyberactivism

In March 11th, 2004, just three days before the presidential elections, Spain suffered the so far worst terrorist attack of its history. 191 people were killed and hundreds were hurt in bombings to commuter trains in the heart of Madrid, the Spanish capital.

Though the debate around the attacks is yet to be settled, there is common agreement that they were planned by an al-Qaeda terrorist cell and most probably as a revenge for the endorsement of the Spanish government to the invasion of Iraq in 2003.

Nevertheless, and due to lack of data at that time or due the pressure of the upcoming election, the Spanish government would report during the following days that it had been ETA, the Basque terrorist organization, the one behind the attacks.

And it would be keeping reporting it despite the agreement of foreign media on the al-Qaeda hypothesis, foreign media that were accessed through the Internet by Spaniards and its information translated and diffused within the country and circumventing mainstream media.

In the days that followed March 11th, and until Election Day in March 14th, the discontent and loss of trust in the official (and presumably interested) version by the government led the citizens to mobilization in many ways (Traficantes de Sueños, 2004), the most important one the demonstration on March 13th, Reflection Day[6], a grassroots demonstration summoned anonymously through a chain of mobile phone text messages that spread like gunpowder in hours.

Anonymous or triggered by the opposition to the government, the fact is that it reached huge momentum and caused invaluable damage to the government's public image. The demonstration, the terrorist attacks, or both make the government lose the re-election, when previous days' polls took it for granted.

8.7.2 The acknowledgement and naturalization of cyberactivism

The 37th National Congress of the Spanish Socialist Party (PSOE) in 2008 will be remembered by many because of the "Facebook Amendment"[7]. Fostered by left-wing and sympathizers and PSOE partisans and supporters, the "amendment" wanted to amend the clause that gave the right to vote in party congresses, committees and conferences through membership or delegation, and give this right to a broad base of cybermilitants. The amend was presented on many blogs and received important endorsement on the Facebook platform.

Though the amend did not pass, and most cyberactivists saw the decision as the old guard not understanding what the Internet was about, in many senses we believe it was just about the contrary.

On the one hand, it was explicitly acknowledging that the distinction between offline and online made no sense in politics (an in life in general), and that activism had to use all the tools at hand: there was just one activism, and different tools, and not many activisms depending on the tools.

On the other hand, the Facebook Amend made it clear that there was a big group of militants and members of the party that were concerned about Politics 2.0 and, more important, that had already engaged in their own crusade through blogs, nanoblogs, social networking sites. Thus, the debate around cyberactivism was formally open and structures to deal about the issue were committed within the party.

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6 In Spain, it is absolutely forbidden to perform any kind of political act or declaration the previous day of Election Day.

7 Some information about this process here: <http://delicious.com/ictlogist/enmienda_facebook>.

8.7.3 Blogging to build and weaved blogging

"Las Ideas" (The Ideas) is a Spanish association created in March 2003 to promote culture, freedom, progress, constitutional values, human rights or equality. In fact, it is a left-wing think-tank that fosters political debate in an open and plural way[8], being digital participation, e-democracy or e-government amongst the most dealt with topics.

Beside the content and level of reflection of Las Ideas – which might equally be the likes and dislikes of many – what cannot be denied is that they have brought the intersection of Information and Communication Technologies and Politics under the spotlight and in a non-scholar and, especially, non-arcane way. Indeed, they have been able to deploy online and offline tools to promote online politics and politics 2.0:

A website[9], which actually is an aggregator of political blogs, featuring almost all of the most influent left-wing and political centre blogs;
iCities, one of the more relevant conferences on Open Government, e-Administration and Digital Participation for non-scholars and non-professionals;
and the "Enrique Padrós" prize for the best political blog, with two categories: best professional politician blog, and best non-professional blog about politics.

Though an enormous echo chamber where ideas of the same colour resonate on an on, Las Ideas certainly aims at bridging the spheres of professional politicians with supporters, and the offline sphere with the online one.

8.7.4 Open government, open parliaments

In early 2009, the Catalan Parliament issued their Parlament 2.0 (Parliament 2.0) project, in which they had been working the previous year. Boosted by the President of the Parliament himself, Parliament 2.0 had two main branches. On the one hand, it would collect all the 2.0-ish initiatives of the members of the parliament.

First, along with their online profiles, the members of the parliament would see listed their digital profiles in whatever services 2.0 they wanted, including their own personal pages and blogs. Not only that, their updates (in the case of blogs and nanoblogs) would also be aggregated on a dedicated page within Parlament 2.0.

Second, the Parliament would have its own present on the most important Web 2.0 sites, and be using them according to their own particular norms of netiquette and usage. The Parliament has accounts on YouTube, Facebook and Twitter, uses Netvibes to gather all its online activity and even provides widgets so that the society

8 Though increasingly less and less plural, in our very personal opinion, as they tend to close the circle of people and topics with which they relate with in their activities.
9 See <http://lasideas.es>.

at large can follow the activities of the members of the parliament or the parliament as institution.

The acceptance of the initiative was terrific. Actually, some members of the parliament were already been using Web 2.0 tools to prepare proposals or during sessions. Parlament 2.0 was an explicit endorsement to these behaviors, that have nevertheless been banned in other parliaments around Europe.

Just some months after Parlament 2.0 going public, the then new Basque Government (that took power in May 2009) appointed two renowned Spanish bloggers as director of the Office for the Modernization of the Administration and director of Citizen Service, respectively. These two bloggers, public servants of the Basque Administration, had won good reputation in matters of e-Administration and e-Government through their collaborative blog which they began in October 2005 and by taking part in debates on these topics at the national level.

These appointments were reinforced by the creation of the figure of the Chief Internet Officer of the Basque Government, whose main goal would be to initiate and build the Open Government during the new mandate.

Again, acceptance, acknowledgement and recognition of the digital debate on politics and politics (and administration and government) 2.0.

8.8 Conclusion

We have been seeing that there is an increasing will to engage online, from all sides of the political spectrum and for many reasons.

In general, politicians and parties see the Internet not as a new platform where new things can happen and old procedures can be reframed and reshaped: they see the Internet and ICTs in global as new communication media to be conquered. The party agenda to control the message, lack of digital tradition, lack of (real) participative tradition or lack of digital literacy are amongst the main reasons of this philosophical approach. Of course, the Spanish political system does not incentivize going online for fundraising reasons – quite a powerful reason – so only creating a discourse and engagement remain as the main driver to go online, and they do not seem to be a priority beyond controlling this discourse and appropriating dissent.

We have also seen that there are not many differences amongst the behavior of the different parties, online or offline media and communication practices. Differences, as in “real life” come more with capability (budget) rather than ideology, or come from specific persons acting as individuals rather than party or collective strategies.

We are nevertheless witnessing how shy, new initiatives struggle to break the status quo, most of the times against the political apparatus and mainstream media. The

wish of renewal still is in the hands of tech savvy partisans and "goverati"[10] that have yet to succeed in gathering a critical mass of followers, in gaining momentum, in performing a non-disruptive transition that scares not convinced but still reluctant politicians and citizens. Indeed, these tech savvy individuals have also to fight the fact of low levels of Internet intensive usage, which is especially in higher age segments, which are the ones that do rule the country.

We would like to end this chapter with some lessons learned and some recommendations. Though grounded in literature and direct experience, these are personal opinions and, as such, should be taken with a grain of salt:

First, the debate about offline vs. online is, we believe, artificial and counterproductive. The mere idea that there might be "web users" vs. "normal/real people" seems to us outrageous, as there is nothing behind "web users" but "real people". That said, if there is to be a change in online politics it can only come through a change in "real" politics. We have already mentioned the Spanish political system and how it is funded. We could add to that how candidates are elected (primaries, open vs. Closed lists) or how party-centered (vs. Candidate-centered) are politics in Spain, with its biases towards party discipline (in all senses, including thinking and having an opinion or one's own) in detriment of genuine debate. Changes in this sense will find in the Web 2.0 and Politics 2.0 perfect tools to leverage new strategies. But these tools, without the prior changes, is like having hammers to unscrew nuts.

Second, e-Readiness and digital literacy and competences are, definitively, a major barrier. Simply enough, online politics require digital access. But beyond physical access, complex digital competences are a must for serious online engagement, especially when the pace of technological change is so quick and stressing. We should by all means learn to read statistics on the Information Society, and tell Internet users from people that are able to use the Internet to achieve their own personal and professional goals, which take the most benefit from digital tools.

Third, the former two points can be added up in this third one: online politics and Politics 2.0 is not about a revolution, but about an evolution. Disruptions cause uneasiness in people and hence resistance, resistance to change. Evolutions are often seen as improvements of actual situations, while revolutions have historically had collateral damages and direct casualties, which is always frightening. Only by agreement and guidance can the benefits o the evolution be clear. Which leads us to the last point.

Fourth, the Web 2.0 offers us a change towards Politics 2.0. Change is usually an investment, which is almost surely a cost. The cost of Politics 2.0 is, above all, that, somehow, we go our way back from representative democracy to a more direct or deliberative democracy. Criticized as it is for its inefficiencies, inefficacies, corruption and personal interests biases, representative democracy is though a comfortable,

[10] For a brief explanation of the concept *goverati* please see Drapeau, M. (2009). For a longer reflection about the topic, Peña-López, I. (2010)

cozy, cheap (in terms of personal time and resources), even lazy framework where to be a citizen. Engagement consumes energy, personal energy, and we have yet to find the Energy 2.0 to feed it.

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