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« Digital Cultures: Alternatives »

## Neither Accomplices, nor Submissive: The Commitment of the “*Digital Natives*” in the Field of Digital Politics

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### Abstract

Facing numerous concerns in our society about freedom being challenged by the digital, and facing speeches that convey a passive and even submissive image of the “youth,” we tried to understand the relations between this youth and digital devices. The collection of speeches of young students that we investigated enables us to question this so-called submission of the youth to the economic logics spread out by digital device users. The young people we met are even resisting, until expressing and practicing a true commitment to digital politics. These speeches and practices lead us to think culture differently, as far as online information and communication are concerned.

Keywords: commitment, digital practices, information culture, internet, youth

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## Full text (PDF file)

### Introduction

For a few years already, the fears of a “society of control” depriving humanity of its freedoms<sup>1</sup>, together with the fears of an “era of vacuity,” characterized by disillusioned individualism<sup>2</sup>, have been emphasized by the booming of digital uses and importance of technical tools in our everyday life. To the point where some speak in favor of a right for “informational self-determination,” already recognized by the German Constitutional Court in 1983, which allows individuals to control how their personal information will be used by third parties.<sup>3</sup> Concern is growing in our society with regards to the individuals’ ability to act on data instead of systematically being subjected to it. This concern is even becoming an obsession among our youth, whom we have quickly called “digital natives”<sup>4</sup>, putting aside a wide variety of actors, whose complexity truly shows as soon as uses and practices are considered from another perspective.<sup>5</sup>

These “digital natives” are said to be subjected to, if not satisfied accomplices of, a seemingly limitless “informational capitalism”<sup>6</sup>. However, it seems to us that the social reality is altogether different and more complex than media and social representations suggest.

Over the course of a few months (from September 2013 to June 2014, then from February 2015 to April 2015), as part of a research in Information and Communication Sciences adopting a social and ecological approach to informational practices<sup>7</sup>, we have followed the curricula in information and communication of several adolescents, eight of them to be precise. This small group was selected among a class (36 students in upper sixth in literature) and followed throughout an entire school year as part of a digital travel journal project.<sup>8</sup> The 8 adolescents who interest us in this particular article correspond to “ideal types” defined in relation with the feeling of expertise and digital uses declared by the players themselves. In this way,

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1 Gilles Deleuze, *Pourparlers*, Paris, Minuit, 1990.

2 Gilles Lipovetsky, *L'Ère du vide: essai sur l'individualisme contemporain*, Paris, Gallimard, 1983.

3 Armand Mattelard and André Vitalis, *Le Profilage des populations: Du livre ouvrier au cybercontrôle*, Paris, La Découverte, 2014.

4 Marc Prensky, “Digital Natives, Digital Immigrants,” *On the Horizon*, no. 9.5, 2001, p. 1-6.

5 Anne Cordier, *Grandir connectés : Les adolescents et la recherche d'information*, Caen, C & F Éditions, 2015.

6 Serge Proulx, José Luis Garcia and Lorna Heaton (eds.), *La Contribution en ligne : pratiques participatives à l'ère du capitalisme informationnel*, Québec, Presses Universitaires du Québec, 2014.

7 The social and ecological approach to information, by focusing on the players’ “ways of doing” (Michel de Certeau) through qualitative investigation methods, allows one to embrace the links between the individual and social logics at stake, while taking into account the observed and experienced situations and contexts.

8 The first investigation phase falls within a collective research project ANR-TRANSLIT (Translittératies).

Anastasia, Armelle, Flavien, Guillaume, Morgan, Pierre, Reynald and Zoé<sup>9</sup>, coming from the working and middle classes, have told us about their relationship with information, the digital and the information and communication society, over the course of long interviews (from 1 hour to 1,5 hour), placed under the sign of narration, anecdote and explication of the practices observed in class.

**Summary table of the respondents' characteristics**

First name	Age	Curriculum	Declared feeling of expertise*	Preferential uses of the digital**
Anastasia	17	Student First year in an English degree (dropout) Planned reorientation in a Sales BTS	Strong	Playing video games Hacking
Armelle	18	Student First year in a Modern Literature degree	Very low	Chatting on social media Searching for information
Flavien	17	First year in a Political Sciences degree	Moderate	Searching for information Listening to music
Guillaume	17	First year in a Spanish degree	Very low	Searching for information Chatting on social media
Morgan	19	Upper sixth (repeated a year)	Strong	Downloading and watching movies Searching for information
Pierre	18	Student First year in a History degree	Moderate	Downloading and watching movies Chatting on social media
Reynald	18	Student Audiovisual BTS	Strong	Downloading and uploading movies "Regulation"
Zoé		Student First year in a Japanese degree (expected to repeat a year)	Moderate	Downloading Fansubbing

Date of data collection: April 2015 [during portrait-interviews]

\*\* The feelings of expertise in the field of the digital were studied based on the adolescents' declarations, as well as on a scale measure they were provided with (the researcher gave them a small ruler graduated from 0 to 10, so that everyone could mark their level of expertise on it).

\* By "preferential uses of the digital," we refer to the two main uses that the respondents would make of the internet.

<sup>9</sup> Of course, the first names of the respondents have been modified.

The remarks of these high-school students, who became higher education students in the course of the portrait-interviews<sup>10</sup>, demonstrate a detachment from the economic strategies implemented by the owners of digital tools and other networks, and even a form of resistance that can go as far as the expression of and commitment to digital politics. Their words give the impression that they have to develop an alternative way of using the digital, and express a model, if not a societal ideal, which cannot but touch us and invite us to take a new perspective on digital practices and on the culture that is required today, with regards to information and communication on the internet.

## 1. The awareness of a dominant economic model

Throughout her researches conducted among the youth, French sociologist Anne Muxel shows that the youth is not depoliticized. According to her, they rather have a new relation to politics, in which they get involved through means of expression enabling them to partake in the public debate<sup>11</sup>.

The adolescents whom we have met, users of the digital in all of its forms (social networks, video games, information search...), demonstrate a real awareness of the dominant economic model on the internet. They strongly contest this model while still feeling that they have to “make do with” it, in order to “fit in”.

### 1.1. “It’s capitalism” (Pierre)

Declaring herself a “non expert,” Armelle has noticed that throughout her daily uses of the digital, she would often be driven to choose tools according to logics that are independent of her will. She also notes the limited compatibility of certain software she uses for schoolwork, as well as the “default” equipment of her computer station: “I don’t really know why that is, but on my computer, I got Windows, which means that a lot of the programs that were already installed on my computer are called Windows something.” That situation disturbs the young woman, who realizes the limited nature of her freedom of action on the digital tool, she who in addition does not have the necessary skills to divert the “ready-made path of the program” and resort to other tools.

The surveyed high-school students, become college students, are all aware of the commercial logics dominating the internet<sup>12</sup>. Giving more or

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<sup>10</sup>Bernard Lahire, *L’Homme pluriel: les ressorts de l’action*, Paris, Hachette, 2007.

<sup>11</sup>Anne Muxel, *Avoir vingt ans en politique: les enfants du désenchantement*, Paris, Seuil, 2010.

<sup>12</sup> We do insist on the age of the surveyed students, which explains their awareness of these logics, both through the informational experience gathered, but also through the inputs related to an awareness of digital issues, raised in the formal and non formal learning frameworks. The investigations that we have conducted among much younger adolescents, junior high school students, attest to a fragile, non-majority, awareness of the economic logics on the internet (Anne Cordier, *Imaginaires, représentations, pratiques formelles et non formelles de la recherche d’information sur internet: le cas d’élèves de 6<sup>e</sup> et de professeurs documentalistes*, doctoral dissertation in information and communication sciences, under the direction of Éric Delamotte and Vincent Liquète, Université Lille 3,

less precise grounds for this phenomenon, they feel the weight of this economic model in their daily practices. Many express their desire to resist these “industries of influence” that determine their browsing behaviors while deploying tracking processes in the networks.<sup>13</sup>

This is why Reynald and Pierre, confronted with the need to use video-editing software to produce a digital travel journal for their class, refuse at once to choose Windows Movie Maker, though already installed on the computers running Windows and used by several of their classmates—the same ones who declare themselves “non experts” like Armelle or Guillaume.

Reynald: – Using this means surrendering to the Windows empire in all its splendor! Do not look for anything efficient, Windows takes care of you!  
AC<sup>14</sup>: – And do you mind that?

Reynald: – I do indeed, it’s pure marketing. Anyway, you have to pay for all this software, we’re not naive, we know that already. But now, being limited in the use of software because the machine’s designer did everything he could to make it that way, yes, this bothers me.

Pierre [*with a disgusted pout*]: – It’s capitalism...

## 1.2. “At the same time, we can’t live cut off from the world. But...” (Morgan)

While the ideological refusal of this economic model reaches consensus among the surveyed adolescents, they are still involved in and committed to this system. Regretting “permanent connectivity” and the proliferation of applications inducing constant soliciting, Reynald strives to regulate his uses of the digital, namely his consideration of the requests addressed to him and resulting from his uses of the digital. For him, the ability to escape the dominant model lies in the development of communication strategies relying on digital tools and their mode of operation. For example, he uses Facebook to create a buzz around the movies he directs: for his movies to best circulate on social media, thus ensuring “[his] self-promotion,” Reynald plans and targets his posts, first on Facebook and then YouTube, making the best of the existing economic model:

“We know how all of this works, I think we have to use it to our own advantage. [...] Once I have made a short, I post it once, I wait for a bit, post it once again so that it is at the top of the newsfeed, increasing the chances for it to be seen, a true communication strategy! [*laughter*].”

One might deem this dialectic contradictory, *i.e.* ideological rejection of the model *vs* support/utilization of the model for personal purposes. However, could we acknowledge that everyone does more or less the same and that it is indeed quite hard to exist, to find one’s place in the information and communication society, without being an integral part of it?

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2011. [Online] [http://tel.archives-ouvertes.fr/docs/00/73/76/37/PDF/THESE\\_Volume\\_1.pdf](http://tel.archives-ouvertes.fr/docs/00/73/76/37/PDF/THESE_Volume_1.pdf) [accessed 09/08/2015].

<sup>13</sup>Hervé Le Crosnier, « La documentarisation des humains », *Documentaliste-Sciences de l’Information*, vol. 47, no. 1, 2010, p. 34-35.

<sup>14</sup>The researcher’s initials indicate that she is speaking.

The surveyed high-school students are perfectly aware of the apparent contradiction between their ideological and practical positions with regards to the dominant economic model on the internet. All of them explain their practices in a similar way, like Zoé:

“We have to fit in, it’s not so much that we get used to it as we have to get used to it, otherwise we lag behind, we’re going to end up looking like an 80 year-old guy discovering the Minitel for the first time!”

Eventually, Morgan, who is President of the high school’s *Maison des lycéens* and has implemented a communication strategy to “touch” his classmates based on the various social networks they use, summarizes the surveyed students’ apprehensions of the digital and its underlying commercial and industrial logics: “That said, we can’t live cut off from the world. And since we have to cope with it, best we learn how to use these logics.”

## 2. A political view of the digital society

Aware of the internet’s dominant model, the adolescents make the best of it—which summarizes the expression they often use “to make do with it”—rather than they are happy with it. Quite the contrary, in fact. As we got used to knowing these adolescents better, we realized that they felt truly concerned with the way the digital, along with the society shaped by and with it, are considered nowadays. Being questioned on their informational “being in the world” gave them the opportunity to express a genuinely political vision of the digital society, a vision in which they want to be fully involved, refusing to be mere spectators, and expressing during the interviews their wish to develop their perspective on this world at the crossroads between economic, social and cultural logics. By the way, Reynald is categorical: “We have to further develop this vision of the internet to make it a genuine democratic tool.”

### 2.1. “The internet needs a truly democratic political program” (Reynald)

The free circulation of knowledge is central to the remarks of the adolescents whom we have met. They plead for a universal access to resources, confronted with the feeling that the internet is subjected to a strong contradiction: being an extremely powerful medium for the circulation of knowledge and being subjected to strong enclosures, preventing a universal access to the produced knowledge.

Reynald is particularly wordy and virulent when we tackle this issue together. The young audiovisual media enthusiast, who directs feature films and short films with his own equipment, is confronted on a daily basis to the paradox of a “medium which provides us with everything we need to do awesome things, yet is stranded in every way.” In order to create audiovisual products meeting his expectations, Reynald does not hesitate to resort to professional video-editing software, the cost of which is quite significant. He claims the right to use such software, for the sake of the

democratization of access and promotion of talents, beyond the economic capital held:

“Originally, it is designed for professionals, but you should never forget that there are talented people who can’t afford it. Depriving them from a tool that allows them to fully achieve their potential is anti-democratic, in my opinion, and the internet shouldn’t encourage this, no, on the contrary, the internet should help everyone achieve their goals, to the best of their abilities, without any economic constraints. This is my opinion. [...] In disadvantaged countries, it is said that school should be free for all children, so that they become emancipated and break their chains. We already have free education, but we can go even further, the technology of the internet allows us to become emancipated, provided that we are given free access to its contents. That’s it.”

A true *political program* (Reynald) that also demonstrates the Western awareness of having opportunities to access knowledge in the so-called material society—the comparison with free education is particularly interesting—, and calls for the expansion of this emancipating accessibility across networks.

Consequently, we have much discussed about—illegal—downloading from the internet with these adolescents. All of them admit that they benefit from other’s uploads and most of them download illegally. However, they refute doing something bad: they do not download for “the love of transgression”. Once again, as demonstrated by other studies conducted among people aged 18 to 55 illegally downloading cultural goods<sup>15</sup>, this practice is linked to a cultural idea of culture and the circulation of knowledge, legal prohibition being largely lessened with regards to the search for intellectual emancipation, as evidenced by this conversation with Morgan, a cinema enthusiast:

Morgan: – I was reading a review in *Mad Movies*<sup>16</sup>, movies I didn’t know, I owe my entire culture to downloading! [...] I know it’s prohibited, I’m careful, because I don’t want my mother to pay for me, since I still live in her house. But I admit that once I get my own bandwidth in my flat in Lille, then I won’t have any moral dilemma. I don’t care. If that’s what it takes for me to improve my knowledge...

AC: – Is that what downloading is for you? A means to be educated?

Morgan: – Well yeah, sure! Like I told you, I owe my movie culture, my whole culture to illegal downloading! Of course I think it’s outrageous to make people pay to access cultural works on the internet.

Later during the interview, the young adult paid a vibrant tribute to the creators of American TV series *South Park*, who presumably do not partake in commercial logics and make their creations available to the greater number.

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<sup>15</sup>Karine Roudaut, “Je suis peut-être un pirate mais je ne me sens pas du tout délinquant !,” *Terminal*, no. 115, 2014. [Online] <http://terminal.revues.org/320> [accessed 09/08/2015].

<sup>16</sup> A French movie magazine specialized in fantastic, science-fiction and horror movies.

As one can see, far from being a simple transgression, illegal downloading is considered by these adolescents as a practice in keeping with their political idea of the digital society, which must favor the private appropriability of cultural goods as much as possible.

Zoé is convinced of that: this idea of the internet as a medium for cultural emancipation must not be limited to the sole digital space, but should be a political principle for society as a whole. The adolescent points out with great acuteness the contradiction between words and practices in politics, which according to her are detrimental to the universal access to cultural goods:

“Truth is that there’s also a financial market behind this, and that the government gets something out of it, I guess. I always find it a bit paradoxical, and... disgusting, yes, I find it disgusting to tell us ‘you have to educate yourself, the internet is great for that’ on the one hand, and on the other hand ‘you have to pay for culture, otherwise you get a fine.’ To me, networks also give this freedom: that of finding culture, information, which you couldn’t set your hands on without the internet. I believe that this is a privilege.”

## 2.2. “The internet is first and foremost an opportunity to share and exchange without restraint” (Zoé)

“A privilege,” Zoé affirms. This “privilege,” the surveyed adolescents fully exercise it, in order to promote the data-circulation tool that the internet represents for them, as well as to foster sharing at every level. These young people are often accused of heralding fanatical individualism. Yet, as we observe and question them about their digital practices, we realize that many of them make use of the network to share, and not necessarily for their personal interests. A genuine “sharing” culture is at work.

In this way, Zoé partakes in online communities of anime fans<sup>17</sup>. She enjoys sharing her passion with others on the web, in a totally “selfless” way:

“The benefit is that we’re all fans of the same thing, so our exchanges are very healthy. Providing that we have the same tastes in anime, we begin to talk, sometimes for hours, it’s interesting, it’s just for pleasure. [...] The community is just here to help each other, no one’s interested in anything other than sharing information.”

The adolescent recently integrated a *fansubs team*<sup>18</sup>, which proves her will to further support her idea of a decompartmentalized, liberating internet, which would stimulate the sharing of cultural goods.

Similarly, Reynald—along with Pierre and another classmate—recently created an association that aims to promote young moviemakers. Because

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17 An anime, also known as japanime or japanimation, is an animated movie or series coming from Japan.

18 Fansubbers are fans who translate—without financial compensation—videos (subtitles) in order to make them known to the greater number within a community. The subtitled videos (called fansubs), illegal copies of a movie, series or TV show, are then shared *via* peer-to-peer networks.

they also provide cultural works with great visibility, digital tools are largely used to structure this network.

These positions resonate with the researchers' concern about the strong link between the young people's use of social media and their political commitment, more precisely about the potential ability of the players to regulate political disparities through the networks.<sup>19</sup>

### 3. Counter-culture in actions

By meeting these young people on the verge of adulthood and by discussing about their view of the digital information and communication society, we can detect, both in their words and their underlying fantasies, elements that are inherent to the “culture of pioneers” of the internet: for these activists from the outset of networks, freedom of speech is an essential claim, and the right to access resources, as well as the promotion of all forms of sharing are hobby horses on which no concession is to be made.<sup>20</sup> Confronted with the dominant economic model and in relation with a political view of the digital society, a counter-culture is organizing itself into actions.

#### 3.1. “We are all responsible for the use we make of it” (Guillaume)

Once again, action is considered from a collective perspective, with a view to improve the conditions of living and sharing on the internet for the community.

Guillaume intends to play a role in this action process for a controlled network: “The internet is just a tool. We are all responsible for the use we make of it”. The young student explains that he pays more and more attention to the collective actions taken on the internet, so as to prevent the businesses and “undesirable uses” of the network from ruling it. By “undesirable uses,” Guillaume indiscriminately refers to rumors, disinformation phenomena, but also to the challenges that are regularly posted on Facebook users' walls (he denounces the Ice Bucket Challenge<sup>21</sup>, but also the Underboob challenge<sup>22</sup>, which he finds “degrading” for the female participants).

This use of the network, with an aim to share what they consider as “ridiculous challenges” (Armelle) or “inaneities bringing nothing to the community” (Anastasia), is condemned by the surveyed youths, who affirm that they do not take any part in it. Besides, some of them set themselves as

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19 Michael Xenos, Ariadne Vromenet Brian D. Loader, “The great equalizer? Patterns of social media use and youth political engagement in three advanced democracies,” *Information, Communication & Society*, n° 17.2, 2014, p.151-167.

20 Dominique Cardon, “Préface. Les utopies hippies de la révolution digitale,” in Fred Turner, *Aux sources de l'utopie numérique: de la contre-culture à la cyberculture*, Stewart Brand, un homme d'influence, Caen, C&F Éditions, 2012, p. 11-32.

21 The IceBucket Challenge was launched on social media in the summer of 2014.

22 The UnderboobSelfie challenge consisted in taking pictures from under one's breasts. Many female adolescents and young women have taken up this challenge and posted the pictures on their Facebook walls.

regulators of this sharing space which is the internet, a space that follows one rule only, as expressed by Morgan: “I don’t want the internet to become a town square”.

Consequently, along with three of his classmates who are convinced that internet users should be made aware of their responsibilities with regards to their use of the digital, Reynald exercises a power of regulation on the exchanges taking place across the social networks. He tells how, irritated by “people who post pictures of themselves in a ridiculous pose or close to hyper-pornography too, or those who use the internet to spew out their hatred of others, the racists, homophobes, things like that,” his classmates and himself have created a *fake* Facebook account. The members of this account are responsible for directly alerting the users of the social network who make remarks breaking the law, or post pictures likely to stain their e-reputation. Reynald’s words reveal an acute sense of responsibility in this regulation of contents and exchanges, which does not so much aim to muzzle internet users, as to make them realize that the internet is “a chance, for every one of us, to educate ourselves, to inform ourselves without being slaves to the television industries, as well as to develop ways of thinking and think together.” To quote the adolescent’s own terms, the aim is to “do Facebook justice” through this act of regulation and empowerment.

### 3.2. “I’ve got the power!” (Anastasia)

In concrete actions, counter-culture follows a horizontal logic of regulation within the internet users’ community. However, for others, counter-culture in actions directly tackles the vertical—one could say pyramidal—organization. For some of the surveyed youths, reversing the domination relationships they observe and experience on the internet, through their daily use of this tool, has become an act of political activism of the utmost importance.

To do so, one must have a strong power of action, namely the power to act on computer systems beyond function creep. Anastasia, whose passion for video games has led her to take a specific interest in the technical resources of networks, is fully aware of the power that lies in her hands:

Anastasia: – I didn’t just learn things about Japan. And that’s all thanks to games!  
 AC: – What do you mean exactly?  
 Anastasia: – Well, one thing leading to another, I did some research on operating systems, the most efficient equipments, and I even learned how to hack websites! Of course, don’t shout it from the rooftops, but since I am good at that, I’ve got the power [*sic*]! [*laughter*]  
 AC: – You’ve got the power! Power on what exactly?  
 Anastasia: – Well, on the internet first, and on others too.  
 AC: – “On others”?  
 Anastasia: – Those who block websites, who design closed systems, the kind which you have to pay to access, or be a member of the Society, all that. So yes, I’ve got the power in a way, because since I know how to hack, well, I can somewhat rule this whole system.

Of course, the adolescent’s words show subversion of technical order, which consists in breaking into blocked resources through specific

configurations. However, throughout the long interviews that we have conducted, it has appeared to us that subversion includes another, more essential facet: its political dimension. By hacking, the adolescent wants to reverse the power relationship. She objects to the impact of this relationship on her digital info-communicational practices and mentions her will to fight against a “system” whose machinations she denounces.

Without a doubt, Anastasia inherited the “hacker spirit”<sup>23</sup> of the technical, cultural and economic pioneers of the internet. In this way, she explains that she has that sense of belonging to a community “giving its best for the internet, because I follow through with my ideas, I take risks too, and I do this so that one day, somewhere, we don’t need hackers anymore.” One can see how much the awareness of her own practices is effective here, through sentiments that are somewhat reminiscent of the founding principles of this “sub-culture of the sixties [...], the most innovative, the most powerful—and the most suspicious of power.”<sup>24</sup>

This act of political activism in the networks falls within a large movement protesting the established political order, which some of the surveyed adolescents embrace with conviction and enthusiasm. Let us take the case of Flavien, who blames his group partner for choosing the word processing software Word for a school work that they have done together. The adolescent’s remarks are worthy of the knowledge commons supporters’.<sup>25</sup>

Flavien: – I never use Word. I’m an Open Office user for life!

AC: – Is this a claim?

Flavien: – Sure it is!

AC: – Why?

Flavien: – Word, it’s the Windows empire, the markets developing on the users’ backs, you, me, everybody, while there are free tools that are at least as well made, or even better! Did you know for example that Open Office improves according to the users’ actions and needs? So yes, I’m all for using this rather than Word.

AC: – You make it sound like militancy.

Flavien: – Yes, I have to admit it’s somewhat true. Well, you know, for me it’s quite like people who defend biological agriculture because it’s good for society. I believe in that.

## Conclusion

So are the “digital natives” the slaves and accomplices of an economic, industrial model dominating the internet? Not at all!

The actual updating of the digital-related rationale and practices developed by the adolescents whom we have met and followed over several months shows another reality. Aware of the commercial logics underlying the operation of the network, these young adults not only shape a societal ideal, at the service of the community and the sharing of goods—including

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23 Pekka Himanen, *L'éthique hacker et l'esprit de l'information*, Paris, Exils, 2001.

24 Fred Turner, *Aux sources de l'utopie numérique: de la contre-culture à la cyberculture*, Stewart Brand, un homme d'influence, Caen, C&F Éditions, 2012, p. 223.

25Hervé Le Crosnier, *Une introduction aux communs de la connaissance*, Caen, C&F Éditions, 2015.

cultural ones—but also take concrete actions to flesh out their digital society counter-model. It seems to us that the concept of “participative politics” takes on its full meaning when defined as an interactive commitment approach, according which actions are determined by peers in order to influence issues of public interest, far from deference to the elites or formal institutions.<sup>26</sup>

Do not misjudge though: those who take actions to express themselves, beyond words, are those who have the power to act, and therefore those who, in addition to possessing the keys to understand the system, have the keys to affect it. Armelle or Guillaume, both declaring to be non-experts, are aware of the limits of their power to act: their mastery of the tool is not sufficient to assert themselves in the digital society. They are reduced to silence, all the more so than our society grants paramount importance to those who express or show themselves, or in short, to those who take action.

Therefore, one must think—both in the formal and non formal areas of learning—the modalities facilitating the transition from the status of *user* of the digital, of passive user, to that of *manipulator*, of *do-it-yourselfer*, capable of modifying one’s digital environment. We cannot but agree with Milad Doueihi’s point of view: only the internet user who has become a *manipulator* is likely to “play a more significant role in orienting technological evolution, but also social and political action.”<sup>27</sup>

The challenge is clear: for information and communication technologies to keep “their counter-cultural promise”<sup>28</sup>, the community of internet users must be equipped with powerful intellectual tools. To do so, everyone must possess an information culture<sup>29</sup> designed as a lever of resistance against a dominant model and dominant cultures.

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