ADAM FISH

TECHNOLIBERALISM

AND THE END OF PARTICIPATORY CULTURE IN THE UNITED STATES

Technoliberalism and the End of Participatory Culture in the United States

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To Io and Robin, creators.

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Introduction: Liberalism and Video Power

Buoyed by the marketing and academic hype surrounding Web 2.0, the trendiness of the term "democratization" peaked in 2005, according to Google Trends. Since then, the term has lost much of its original punch, as what was once radical about blogging, vlogging, tagging, commenting, and uploading has become mainstream and commodified. We are now quite familiar with the exaggerated claims of media democratization: amateurs aided by laptops, free time, cell phone cameras, and affordable internet connections would challenge politicians and professional journalists. Wikipedia, open-source software, Reddit, YouTube, and other instances of volunteered value creation illustrate this golden era of user-generated content. Books like Henry Jenkin's *Convergence Culture* (2008), Yochai Benkler's *The Wealth of Networks* (2006), and Clay Shirky's *Here Comes Everybody* (2006) offer quintessential celebrations of this emergent form of digital sharing, caring, and business "disruption." These authors were not responding to scholars such as Mark Andrejevic (2003) and Tiziana Terranova (2003), who earlier claimed that this volunteerism was a new form of "free labor" and worker exploitation. Regardless of the critique, the user-generated economy flourishes to this day. Networked amateurs are now taking on transportation (Uber) and lodging (Airbnb), as old industry figureheads like Kodak—destroyed by online photosharing and Facebook's Instagram—file for bankruptcy. The claim made by the chief executive officers (CEOs) of these companies is that the internet has manifested the values of Western liberalism—individualism, democracy, and a free market.

Sometimes it is difficult not to believe the hype. New technologies have the potential to animate political action. We have seen the political impacts of citizen-collected videos of police brutality that, once uploaded, have galvanized social movements. Footage of Eric Garner being choked to death by Daniel Pantaleo after selling cigarettes on a New York street was announced online in 2014. A video of Walter Scott being gunned down in the back by South Carolina police officer, Michael Slager, was released in April 2015 by *The New York Times*. The civil rights movement constellating around the Twitter hashtag #blacklivesmatter emerged online and in the streets, motivated in part by these deaths and the video evidence of police brutality. One need only consider the footage of Neda Salehi's blood pooling on the streets of Tehran in 2009 to understand how graphic video can motivate protest movements. But while the capacity for citizens to use internet video to bring transparency to corruption will continue, the industry of internet video has become less of a free-for-all since 2005. Major old and new media players—Netflix, Amazon, Apple, AT&T, Disney, Discovery, and Google—are consolidating their video power. It did not have to be like this.

Writing in *The Nation* in 1972, Ralph Lee Smith advocated that the USA should be committed to "an electronic highway system to facilitate the exchange of information and ideas." He continued, "[T]he stage is being set for a communications revolution … audio, video, and facsimile transmissions … will provide newspapers, mail service, banking and shopping facilities, data from libraries." He was inspired by the new networked technology of the time, cable television, which was supposed to empower the multitudes. While this type of utopianism could have been heard during the dotcom period of the late 1990s or the heyday of the Web 2.0 hype of 2005, it was being proclaimed in 1972. More circumspect than utopian, Smith also warned "short term commercial considerations will dictate the form of the network" (Smith 1972, 83). Monopolization, mediocrity, market fundamentalism, and other ills were possible with the new networked technology of cable. Local vigilance to keep cable in the hands of activists, educators, and the state was needed if the socially beneficial attributes of cable were to be realized. Similar cautions were uttered about the future of the internet.

J.C.R. Licklider, a psychologist who was in charge of the Information Processing Techniques Office at the Pentagon, foresaw what was to become the internet years before its arrival. An innovator of cybernetics, Licklider described in classics such as "Man-Computer Symbiosis" (1960)

how networked computers would, one day, supplement human cognition, memory, and mental work. In the 1967 essay "Televistas," commissioned by the Carnegie Commission on Educational Television, Licklider criticized existing television for not being participatory. He wrote, "From an educator's point of view, the main intrinsic defects of broadcasting television are that it offers everyone the same thing and does not give viewers a direct way of participating." Computer networks, cable television systems, data storage, and multiple cameras, he believed, would enable viewers to engage with programming, producing a more diverse and less hierarchical television system. In this world of narrowcasting, "Community theater would have a chance to compete, if not with Broadway, with Hollywood" (Licklider 1967, 215). The internet circa 2005 appeared to finally embody this uploading dream.

This moment seems to have passed, however, as the internet is increasingly being designed around delivering not community theater but Hollywood. Control over expensive technical innovations such as server farms, colocation, IPTV, adaptive bitrate streaming, and edge caching has put major corporate forces in the driving seat. Focus is now on delivering professional content from the center of the once decentralized internet. This is big business. "Providing popular audiovisual content on the internet had quickly come to look more like a factory enterprise from the Industrial Revolution than the post-industrial future that had been promised," writes Christian Sandvig (2015, 232). "The internet," Sandvig continues, "is now, for the first time, centrally organized around serving video. [And] a particular kind of video from a very small number of providers to large numbers of consumers. The internet is now television, or it will be soon" (2015, 237). Netflix and Google account for more than half of the internet traffic in the USA at peak hour. While companies like Netflix may appear like newcomers in comparison to the major television networks, they exemplify the shift from a participatory, lean-forward, user-generated internet to a lean-back, spectator, professional internet. Lawyer Tim Wu (2010) calls "the Cycle" that historical process of media industries that begins with amateurism and ends in professionalization. Throughout the twentieth century, new communication technologies, media activists, and state regulation came together to create brief openings for amateur participation on television. While these moments of openness soon gave way to closure and capitalization, they offer insights into the struggle for democratic participation.

This book is the first cultural history and sociological study of how professional television broadcasting and amateur digital video met at the pressure points of new technology, regulation, and practice. Based on over 80 interviews collected within the television and internet industries in the United States between 2006 and 2012, this book critically examines the turbulent media culture of amateurs and activists using new video technologies and regulations in order to access an otherwise privatized television system. The book illustrates how the socially liberal ideals of equality and the neoliberal ideals of competition clash on the battlefield of participatory culture.[1]

Many of the project participants grew up in middle-class homes and were college-educated—many at top universities. While the majority is white, I endeavored to interview equal numbers of men and women. When I interviewed the project participants, they were employed in media industries. Although their work was precarious at times, most of the participants have become more successful since our experiences together, securing more prestigious and well-paid positions. Some made and sold video companies and became millionaires, and others joined major firms like Google and Twitter. The freedoms these privileged subjects experienced and were able to exercise in university manifests in the ideals of social media as a form of both public participation and economic prosperity. Doing well and doing good simultaneously, a concept that is inherent to some strands of West Coast liberalism, is not paradoxical for these subjects.

From its inception, liberalism has been rife with internal contradictions. A core premise that emphasizes individual freedom is bound to conflict with another core premise, that is, of social solidarity. No early liberal scholar better addresses these paradoxes than Scottish political philosopher Adam Smith. Taken together, his two primary treatises, *The Theory of Moral Sentiments* (1759) and *The Wealth of Nations* (1776), embody the intertwined concerns for social empathy and individual entitlement. In the first text, Smith designates the source of social solidarity as the "mutual sympathy of sentiments." Here Smith developed a theory in which individuals find positive confirmation in an internal voice, an "impartial spectator." Breaking with Thomas Hobbes and Jean-Jacques Rousseau, who saw humans as inherently selfish, Smith considered all people to have the capacity to sympathize and care for the other. This manifests, one could argue, in a sense of responsibility and a willingness to be charitable. He asks us to put ourselves in the shoes of the downcast and celebrates the humility and generosity that comes from that exercise in self-effacement

(Colato 2010). In short, the book is a study in the psychology of a prudent Christian welfare state guided by social liberalism and the idea that society should look after the less fortunate with whatever means necessary.

The Wealth of Nations presents a different vision of society, one ruled by self-interest and commerce. Economics underlies politics, justice, and morality. It is the classic text of economic liberalism, one in which freedom and individuality are indivisible from deregulated economics. Taken together, the two books provide a view of a non-contradictory synthesis of economics and moral philosophy. This approach would need both the "mutual sympathy of sentiments" and the "invisible hand" of the market, without one or the other dominating. Considering both texts, a "single axiom, broadly interpreted … is sufficient to characterize a major portion of the human social and cultural enterprise. It explains why human nature appears to be simultaneously self-regarding and other-regarding" (Smith. A. 1998, 3). To quote Isaiah Berlin (1969), true freedom for the majority of citizens requires both negative liberty—freedom from coercion—and positive liberty—social support—to maximize the freedom celebrated by both social and economic freedom.

This struggle for democratic participation on television can be understood through the political philosophy of liberalism. In the 1970s, early video and cable television activists, driven by a socially liberal desire for participatory media to augment democracy, accessed the new networked technology of cable television. In the 1980s, corporate liberal approaches regulated television to create thriving private industries with a small and tokenistic public participation. In the 1990s, television networks eyed the camcorder-enabled citizen as both a consuming audience and a source of labor. By the 2000s, the economic liberalism of the free-market internet made the niche programming countercultural dreams of the 1970s a lucrative reality for a few. In the 2010s, the neoliberal absence of internet regulations created a winner-takes-all economy for those willing to brand themselves as self-entrepreneurs. This struggle can be articulated in terms of video power—the capacity to speak and be seen on the present cultural form of television. This book tells this history and elaborates upon a new iteration of liberalism, technoliberalism, which sees Silicon Valley technology and the free market of Hollywood end the need for a politics of participation.

When they emerge, networked visual technologies are often politicized. Video, cable, satellite, camcorders, and the internet were seen not only for their entrepreneurial potential but also for their political impact.

Various players vie for this video power. The resources to acquire video power are unequally distributed and shift between amateurs, activists, and professionals. New technologies, new uses of old technologies, new ideas about convergence and participatory media, and new regulations may create openings wherein new players may gain entry. In these instances of disruption, amateurs and activists may secure a modicum of video power. Through time, however, these amateurs may become professionals and their politics may be obstructed; the professionals may take over through various means; or the video power secured by the amateurs may be shown to be illusory and the professionals have always been in charge.

The eventual direction this video power takes depends upon the political orientation of those who acquire the power. The tenor of this politicization varies but can be discussed as influenced by variants of liberalism—a multifaceted political philosophy whose emphasis on equality and liberty develops through time into conflicting ideals. Equality is often expressed as human rights and social justice and linked to the broader concept of social liberalism that is expressed through pro-state reformist policies and citizen-driven populism. However, contrary to this notion, liberty is often interpreted as economic freedom, the ability to buy and sell unperturbed by the government. Negative liberty and *laissez-faire* capitalism are celebrations of singular independence or individualism and align with economic liberalism. In this way, liberalism includes the economic freedom for corporations (capitalism), the role of the state in securing and defending social equality (progressivism), the rugged individual unencumbered by the state (individualism), and the rights and responsibilities of citizens to collaborate (populism). Technoliberalism advances these versions of liberalism into an age of powerful technology companies and neoliberal deregulation.

I base my definitions of technoliberalism on ethnographic and empirical studies of the political values of digital media producers. Based on their ethnographic research with hackers, anthropologists E. Gabriella Coleman and Alex Golub (2008) take liberalism not as a monolithic concept but as a "cultural sensibility with diverse and sometimes conflicting genres" (2008, 256). Other empirical studies of networked communication technologies use liberalism as a rubric through which to interpret the political aspirations of digital media producers. Anthropologist Thomas Malaby conducted fieldwork in the offices of immersive virtual reality world *Second Life* at Linden Lab, and discusses the workers he encoutered in terms of "'technoliberalism,' which marks both its similarities to neoliberal thought but also its emphasis on contriving complex systems through manipulation of technology" (2009,

16). Technoliberals, like the workers at the San Francisco-based Linden Lab, engineered social interactions through the production of technological platforms. *Second Life* enables autonomous virtual individuals to explore a landscape and engage in libertine, collaborative, or economic pursuits. In this manner, technology generates the conditions for liberal subjectivity.

At Linden Lab, developers mix economic liberalism and "left-libertarian" values (Malaby 2010, 60). This confluence of left and right politics emerged in an earlier history of digital media production in California. Historian Fred Turner (2006) analyzed how the social liberal values of the counterculture in the 1960s evolved into the economic liberal impulses of the 1990s. These left-libertarian technologists believed that the conditions for equality and liberty could be engineered with the right tools, and eventually saw capitalism as another decentralized network capable of empowering individual liberties. They exhibit what Evgeny Morozov (2013) calls digital "solutionism" or a belief that social problems can be solved by technology. Technoliberalism contains within it a belief that technology can ameliorate the contradictions of social and economic liberalism. They believe that asocially-just and an economically profiable world is possible with the right tools.

This book is about political theory in action. Its key contribution is a critique of contemporary liberalism and how it works through the technological practices of video and television producers and regulators. Technoliberalism is a form of self- and social governance that is mediated through technologies and regulatory bodies. The variations of technoliberal practice in action include video power, and other terms I will discuss, such as proformations, silophication, and digital discourse. Throughout its history, amateurs and activists have attempted to access television. New technologies—video cameras in the 1960s, cable and satellite in the 1980s, and the internet in the 1990s—often provided brief openings for activists to gain access to television. These openings, however, were often short-lived, with the interests of profit and professionals soon taking precedence over the interests of amateurs and activists. Beginning in the 1940s and proceeding to 2005 and the era of social media convergence, Chapter 2 provides a historical overview of how new technologies galvanized amateurs' and activists' pursuance of video power and television access. This history of video power engages the early commodification of amateur filmmakers in the 1960s (Aufderheide 1994; Zimmerman 1988) and video activists and artists from the 1970s to the 1990s (Halleck 2002; Luca and Wallner 1993; Mellencamp 1990; Merrin 2012; Oullette 1995a, b; Pierce 2003). In addition to speaking to the recent past, this chapter investigates earlier phases of

computer-made and network-distributed amateur video from the 1990s to the 2010s (Boddy 2014; Christian 2014; Parks 2004; Turner 2006).

In the 1950s, 8mm cameras were marketed to lower social classes in such a way that precluded these amateurs using these cameras to challenge the hegemony of the film industry, while 16mm cameras were sold to higher social classes aspiring to professional projects. In the late 1960s, video challenged these earlier film standards and video activists emerged to exploit the new technology. Television networks adapted to exploit the new mode of production. For example, CBS hired Videofreex in 1969 to make a documentary on the counterculture and politics. Videofreex proceeded to interview Abbie Hoffman at the Chicago 8 trial, as well as Fred Hampton, a leading Black Panther member, just days before his murder, but CBS tabled the footage as being too "ahead of its time." Satellites too provided opportunities for activists. For instance, from its inception, Deep Dish TV used satellites to resist the Persian Gulf War. In 1989, the Nicaragua Network produced a live call-in show in Managua with the Nicaraguan president, Daniel Ortega, in order to counteract the US Administration's belief that the contras were "freedom fighters." In these instances, video and satellites provided opportunities for both activists and amateurs to reach television audiences. In the beginning of NBC's *I Witness Video* (1993), a program billed as an early installment in citizen video journalism, the camcorder was framed as a revolutionary tool. By the end of the first season, however, the radical potential of video-enabled amateurs had been severely curtailed and the program began to look more like *America's Funniest Home Videos*, a program featuring videos submitted by the American public. The early days of the internet saw a number of platforms for amateur video activists. Oxygen, the Digital Entertainment Network (DEN), and Pseudo.com created content with and for gender and racial minorities and were framed as empowering these underserved populations. In reality, however, this had little to do with diversifying the voices online, as it was more concerned with niche marketing in the age of diversified programming.

Claims for video power are enabled by the efforts of media reform organizations. Chapter 3 introduces the numerous models used by broadcasters and media reformers to articulate, motivate, and justify their media reform activism and broadcasting activities. Broadcasters' models are arrayed across the public sphere, guardianship, and commercial models. Guardianship and commercial broadcasting models are represented aesthetically through traditional news broadcasting featuring television

journalists. The public sphere model, requiring the transformation of the audience into media producers, is a less prevalent yet more radical broadcasting model. These practice reveals how broadcast models are cultural interventions, flexible in their application of liberalism.

Most media reformers want serious reform and believe that media systems are public resources that have been erroneously given to commercial interests. Their project is to mobilize a suite of models to challenge the privatization of public media resources and defend public control over the scarce examples that remain of public interest media. A range of models are used by media reformers with entry points beginning in anti-monopoly, public interest, free speech, access, public resources, emergent technology, and democracy. These models are linked to a variety of liberal manifestations.

In addition to three years of fieldwork and interviews with television and internet video producers, I worked as a paid, contract-by-contract, freelance citizen video journalist, or a viewer-created content (VC2) producer, beginning in 2006, and eventually I produced 16 documentaries for Current before the organization ceased the VC2 program in 2009. Current was a global television network founded by former US Vice President Al Gore in 2005 and purchased by Al Jazeera in 2012. They had deals with satellite and cable companies in the USA, the UK, Ireland, and Italy and reached between 30 million and 50 million homes. The professional experience of working with Current provided valuable opportunities to observe the workings of the company and generate the contacts necessary to conduct interviews with more than 30 Current employees throughout a range of corporate departments. In addition to broadcasting television programs, Current endeavored to "democratize" the production of voice within the hegemonic public sphere. Current's effort in democratization embodied a social liberal pursuit of equal representation on television, while their ultimate goal was profitable market liberalism.

The second major fieldsite is Free Speech TV (FSTV). Artist and curator Jon Stout and radio spectrum entrepreneur John Schwartz founded FSTV in 1995 with the goal of providing progressive and independent news and documentaries via satellite, cable, and the internet. Receiving no money from advertising or the federal government, FSTV is a not-for-profit organization and finances its operations through viewer support and foundation grants. Workers at FSTV tend to be politically progressive, seeing media systems as public resources, and therefore they oppose the corporate control of media systems. From a small office in Denver, Colorado, FSTV

broadcasts to potentially 30 million viewers on the DISH and DirecTV satellite platforms. FSTV produces live television coverage from progressive political events such as the National NAACP Convention, Netroots Nation, the National Conference for Media Reform, and Take Back the American Dream—the conferences I attended with FSTV in 2011. Attendance at these conferences allowed me to observe FSTV's television production and intersectional practices, as well as other partners in the field of media reform broadcasting. Preparing for these experiences, I participated in FSTV's office and television production practices in Denver for two weeks where I interviewed most of the non-profit television network personnel.

Throughout their history, media reform broadcasters have modified their broadcasting approaches, regarding how they address the public, and from which reformist model they draw. Their mission is to improve democratic dialogue on private media systems. Their broadcasting models oscillate through time from public sphere and guardianship to commercial broadcasting models as they address the public as participants, informed citizens, or consumers. FSTV follows the reformist models of free-speech, anti-monopoly, and public access. These models are most prevalent in FSTV. At Current, the dominant discourses are centered on how television and the internet can best be mobilized to increase democratic participation. As part of this technodemocratic modeling, the producers at Current also dialogue in utopian fashion on the positive role of technology in contemporary life more generally. In these manners, media reform broadcasters' models, frames and discourses are mobilized to articulate approaches to accessing and contributing to the hegemonic public sphere.

Chapter 4 introduces the media activist practice of proformation—a portmanteau of *pro*duction/re*formation*. It is technological and political action to gain public access to the means of production on information infrastructures, be they satellite television systems or the internet. The concept addresses the hybrid culture of information reform and information production at the interface of private information and media reform, infrastructural praxis, and communications rights. The theory of proformation developed from an analysis of qualitative material collected from FSTV. This network's job is made possible by corporate liberal policies that allocate the majority of media resources to private firms and the minority for public use. In this way, proformers reify and depend upon the pro-corporate policies they seek to transform. FSTV produces progressive content, has petitioned for "set-asides" for public media, and has modified its identity to secure access to a range of private information infrastructures,

such as cable, satellite, and internet communication systems. During the course of my 2010–2012 participant research with FSTV, the company shifted their resources from regulated television to the deregulated internet, and entered a world where the policy protections afforded to them by corporate liberalism no longer existed.

Corporate liberalism is a form of governmentality by which corporate agendas are masked as social policies creating consenting subjects. Politicians enacting corporate liberal policies provision public media resources to corporations that are required to provide few channels for public use (Streeter 1996). Under corporate liberalism, the state performs a waning obligation to the "public interest." Increments of pro-public interventions into media monopolies are allowed under corporate liberalism, such as the small amounts of public media "set-asides" enjoyed by public television stations (Sterne 1999, 507). In this process, proformers become embedded within the capitalist world system, which the socially liberal content they produce often critiques. Put bluntly, within corporate liberalism, televised progressivism becomes complicit in its own domination. From this perspective, FSTV is an actor within corporate liberalism, allowing major cable and satellite companies like TCI, DISH, and DirecTV to comply with federal regulations, which profit from the privatization of public media resources. The internet era and its absent regulatory assistance for public media can be more accurately correlated not with corporate liberalism but with neoliberalism, which with its market fundamentalism denies statutory obligations to public media.

FSTV engineered and used access points provided by corporate liberal policy to expand its audience across a number of information infrastructures. In the form of The 90's, it was on seven cable networks (1989–1995) before being ejected by John Malone, an anti-public-interest telecommunication conglomerate CEO. For the next five years (1995–2000) FSTV was a "program service," packaging content that it "bicycled" to any public interest channel that would air it. Throughout, FSTV petitioned the US Congress and adapted itself to new policies regulating emergent information infrastructures. Under pressure to provide public access to its satellites, DISH gave FSTV a deal on an out-of-the-way channel, and the network was on its first satellite. Through the same process, a decade later, FSTV was on its second satellite, DirecTV.

FSTV's political identity is expressed through its programmatic choices. It reported critically on the lead-up to the 1990 Gulf War, the 1999 World Trade Organization (WTO) protests, the 2000 Democratic

National Convention, the 2003 Iraq War, and the 2011 Arab Spring and the Occupy Movements. FSTV's technological identity is also observable in the savvy ways it used amateur technologies in professional ways, such as being a pioneer in the use of online video in the mid-1990s and using MPEG-2 video compression and a T1 internet line for a daily television news production. It was also an innovator in citizen video journalism, beginning with the 1999 WTO protests and the 2000 Democratic National Convention.

During the 2008 global financial crisis, FSTV hired new management, rebranded itself, reformed its use of internet video and social media, began anew with in-house and live production, and orchestrated new partnerships with progressive media groups. The period of my fieldwork (2010–2012) represented a culmination of these efforts as I observed a two-pronged campaign, consisting of new studio news and live political event programming paired with efforts to maximize audience engagement through social media.

For FSTV, Current, and other discussed in this book, the internet is a key symbol in the discourse of contemporary liberalism. It stands for individual innovation, economic freedom, civic collaboration, and political potential. In political rituals on the campaign trail, the internet's symbols are mythologized and fetishized by many including politicians such as former US Vice President Al Gore and former US President Barack Obama, both claiming for themselves or their party a hand in inventing the internet. Chapter 5 focuses on technoliberalism as a digital discourse that attempts to mitigate the contradictions of liberalism through a discussion on technology. Four genres of digital discourse emerge: (1) technoindividualism; (2) technocapitalism; (3) technoprogressivism; and (4) technopopulism. The chapter concludes by considering the contemporary domination of technocapitalism and its eventual demise.

During the 2000 and 2012 US Presidential campaign trail, Gore and Obama, respectively, prominently celebrated how the US government had financed the development of the internet. In discussing the internet on the campaign trail, Obama defended the role of government against neoliberal anti-statism, Gore defined himself as a politician with visionary acumen. In associating themselves with the technology of immense economic, scientific, political, and social significance, politicians hoped to elevate themselves to higher political office. And yet, summoning the internet on the campaign trail produced two of the most catastrophic gaffes for both of these politicians as journalists willfully misinterpreted these claims. This

chapter makes two points. First, these campaign trail events exhibit the rituals, myths, and fetishes of digital discourse. Second, this richly discursive field defines technoliberalism, a term that designates how digital discourses are mobilized to mitigate the contradictions of liberalism.

The battle over who made the constitutive elements that became the internet—the Pentagon with ARPA; Xerox and Apple; the volunteer bevy of open-source coders; the "founding father" network engineers Paul Baran at RAND, visualizing packet switching, Vint Cerf at ARPA, engineering TCP/IP, Tim Berners-Lee at CERN, developing HTML, or Marc Andreessen at the University of Illinois, creating Mosaic—spread across four camps, each with their own classically liberal belief system regarding internet freedom, the role of the state, the legitimacy of business, the collective vibrancy of organizing without organizations, the sheer wit of gifted individuals, or the ideal confluence of state/business/citizenry/scientists.

Soon after the ruthless edits hit internet video sites, four arguments emerged about who really made the internet. L. Gordon Crovitz at *The Wall Street Journal* started the polemic by going against the accepted wisdom and saying that Obama was wrong, it was Xerox PARC, and therefore corporations made the internet. Farhad Manjoo of *Slate* rebutted that the President was correct, Crovitz's facts were not facts at all, and the state did fund and support what became the internet. Harry McCracken of *Time* added to the debate by bringing back an old idea that never gets old in technology journalism, that it was not the state or corporations, but brilliant individuals who should be thanked for the internet. Finally, Steven Johnson, writing in *The New York Times*, said it was not states, corporations, or smart individuals but a public of open-source coders who should be thanked for building the software with which states, corporations, and individuals access the internet.

Each makes impressive claims, but my point is to consider these statements as discourses that reveal at the same time as they attempt to conceal political persuasions in historical revisions. These four internet historiographical ideologies can be traced back to classical Western liberalism and its emphasis on freedom of the corporation (technocapitalism), to the state in securing and defending freedom and citizen responsibility (technoprogressivism), to the rugged individual unencumbered by tradition (technoindividualism), and to the collaborative citizen public (technopopulism).

Chapter 6 examines Current, the for-profit television network founded in 2005 by former US Vice President Al Gore and lawyer entrepreneur Joel Hyatt with the expressed goal of "democratizing television." By being a platform on which amateurs and activists could air their content on television, Current attempted to converge the participatory possibilities of internet-based affordances with the broadcasting power of television. A specific discourse manifests through the myth that internet and television convergence can solve democracy. In a study of the discourse on how technology is going to improve the life of the post-Fordist worker, Eran Fisher (2010) coined the term "digital discourse." According to this theory, worker subjectivity is empowered by networked technologies. Digital workers are not exploited by capitalists; their work is more creative, communal, and pleasurable. This post-alienation empowerment is the result of the flexibility and mobility of contract-based digital work. This is a discourse that mitigates through talk the social dysfunctions of technocapitalism. Current and its workers hoped to be associated with the positive qualities related to the internet (e.g. the creative economy, social media, open source, crowdsourcing, "sharing economies," "internet freedom" and the Arab Spring, Google, iPad, and Skype), while ignoring what might be suspect (e.g. surveillance, free and outsourcing labor, networked authoritarianism, cyberbullying, actual and virtual sweatshops, monopolies, offshore banking, and Wall Street algorithmic crime). Their moral technical imaginaries are examples of digital discourses that mitigate less favorable perspectives of the past through obfuscating and elevated talk on technologies. Digital discourses foreclose important issues such as user-generated and below-the-line labor. They relegate difficult and pragmatic work to other people or networked computers, believing that technology alone will fix problems that are social in origin. In technoliberal fashion, Current attempted to merge both progressive social liberalism and financially profitable economic liberalism. The digital discourse of convergence attempts to mitigate these contradictions of liberalism through talk on technology.

Within this broad mitigating digital discourse exists a convergence myth that the workers who are making the internet and television come together are improving democracy through bringing internet-enabled citizen voices into elite television production. As myths do, the convergence myth both obscures and reveals economic and political power. Current's convergence myth obscures the difficulties of digital labor and digital democracy with a digital discourse. In the end, Current reveals not

only the difficulty of converging the internet and television into a political and profitable project but also the difficulties of operating pro-democratic projects within a milieu of global technocapitalism. The failures of the convergence myth are exposed through an analysis of the following: Current's programming schedule, freelance contracts, studio aesthetics, departmental competitions, commercialization of user-generated content, employee life histories, initial public offering (IPO), and its final sale to Al Jazeera. Idealistically, Current thought that convergence would solve the problems plaguing democracy by bringing diverse voices to television. This, however, was a digital discourse that claimed that democracy could be solved via the application of citizen video power.

Chapter 7 consists of a series of interrogations of media reform broadcasters' efforts to diversify voice within the American public sphere (Couldry 2010). One problem independent television producers attempt to overcome through "intersecting" with partner organizations is "silophication." Partnering practices reveal the precarious situation of media workers and media activists in an increasingly consolidated media environment. This analysis of the strategies of independent television networks exposes the contradictions within capitalist information work, namely the tensions between fluidity and fixity in employment and collaboration. Tensions between silophication and fragmentation are a metaphor for the desire and difficulties of convergence. The analysis of the challenges of diversifying voice with these practices reveals the frustrations of pro-democracy media activists working within a capitalist world system.

As illustrated with the evidence from Current, structural silophication is a synonym for corporate departmental balkanization. The data from Current illustrates the challenges of bringing together the affordances of the internet and television. This results in different "moral technical imaginaries" (Kelty 2008) associated with each technology. While Current illustrates structural silos, FSTV illustrates the economic potential and political risk associated with mental silos. Both Current and FSTV seek to address the problem of silophication. Anthropologist and journalist Gillian Tett suggests solving the issue through silo-busting, or what the media reform broadcasters call intersectionality.

Based on interviews with those leading the explosive internet video industry, Chapter 8 investigates the liberal politics—or the lack thereof—of several multichannel internet video networks and examines the practices of self-branding executed by video entrepreneurs. In 2011, Google