The Digital Industries: Transparency as Mass Deception

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Abstract

The anonymity afforded by early incarnations of the internet posed a substantial threat to conventional models of national sovereignty. Free from restrictions and laws, cyberspace allowed users to set political agendas and subvert government messages. Presently, the internet is a space that celebrates transparency as users are motivated to bask in the limelight of social media. This essay argues that transparency is the weapon of choice of governments looking to strip cyberspace of its freedom. Moreover, the essay maintains that in order to transform transparency into a virtue, governments themselves migrated online as part of "open government" initiatives. This has created the allure of transparent governance. Yet as we demonstrate, every act of transparency is actually an act of concealment meant to obscure the fact that governments now focus primarily on the accumulation of information and the concealment of such information from the public under the guise of national security. The open government is thus really the concealed government and transparency emerges as a form of mass deception.

Policy recommendations

- Governments and tech giants are unlikely to reveal the scope and nature of the information they now amass on users of cyberspace. It may therefore fall on civil society organization and non-governmental organizations to demand actual transparency from governments and tech giants and to promote public debates regrading governments' authority to amass information on citizens.
- Governments are unlikely to regulate tech giants so long as they share data with government agencies. Civil society organizations must therefore lead the struggle for algorithmic transparency which would enable users to become informed consumers fully aware of the data being gathered by tech giants and what information can be extrapolated from this data.
- Multi-lateral organizations can play an important role in promoting government transparency by adopting open covenants of diplomacy. Recent initiatives by the International Telecommunications Union suggest that Multi-lateral organizations can adopt norms and collaborative working routines that could force governments to follow suit.

Introduction

In its first act, the internet was designed as an inherently anonymous space. In *A Declaration of the Independence of Cyberspace*, John Perry Barlow's [1996 attempt](#) to define this new field, he separated the virtual and the real, warning governments that

We must declare our virtual selves immune to your sovereignty, even as we continue to consent to your rule over our bodies.

This separation between the online and offline personas was the greatest threat the internet posed to conventional models of national sovereignty. Although never truly absolute, as the occasional arrests of hackers demonstrated, the vast majority of users could choose to entirely isolate their online actions from offline consequences. Citizens could avoid laws and regulations by functioning as unknown actors. This remains the great threat of online activity.

Anonymity has both good and bad connotations - we praise whistleblowers who hide their identity to avoid reprisals, but fear the rise of trolls and their accompanying wave of vitriol. For governments, these are two sides of the same coin: the loss of state control. An anonymous person is unbound by laws, whether the Official Secrets Act or prohibitions on hate speech. Free of restrictions, cyberspace allows citizens to set the political agenda and direct attention in a highly unmanaged fashion. Attention shifts rapidly and unpredictably, often subverting the government's message.

Examples of how this threatens government control are easily found: in 2011, Chinese netizens [shared images](#) of a Party official's luxury watches, forcing the Party to begin internal disciplinary proceedings, a dangerous precedent in a nation where anti-corruption campaigns are fig-leaves for internal factional

purges. In Pakistan, Nawaz Sharif has been [forced from power](#) by revelations in the Panama Papers. Chelsea Manning and Edward Snowden have become household names in the West. All of these factors stem from the ability of actors to operate online in anonymity, free from repercussions unless (as in the case of Manning and Snowden) they are unmasked.

This threat emerged because, for a brief period, the internet was a zone given over the young. A wholly new technology, it was those with the time, energy and flexibility to learn who could define the emerging information superhighway. The threat was instantly parsed into pop culture, with films such as *War Games* and *Hackers* highlighted the supposed ability of young hackers to access the most secure servers. Compared to contemporary experiences in cyberspace, individuals with sufficient technical prowess could almost entirely mask their activities. Without a pool of experts, governments were unable to respond to this change, and lagged behind the trend. This created the unique culture of the early days of cyberspace, a William Gibson dream of a neon future in which new cultures would form from the erasure of distance and bloom in the white heat of technological progress.

In 2017, such visions seem - for all their dystopian character - idealistic. The internet has become a space given over to transparency, the weapon of choice for governments looking to strip the internet of its uncontrollable nature. Anonymity allowed online actors to expose the secrets of government, whether real or imagined. To combat this image of secretive governance, governments themselves migrated online. [The Swedish government](#) opened their very own embassy in the virtual world of *Second Life*, attempting to speak directly to users. Petitions were redesigned for an online era. Even *Hansard*, the august record of British

parliamentary proceedings, was reincarnated [online](#).

It was with social media and big data, however, that governments could truly entrench their mission of transparency. Social media encourages the merging of online and offline personas, particularly by establishing the primacy of the former. This creates a demand for transparency, as we will explore in this essay. At the same time, social media is designed for casual users rather than the tech savvy of the early internet days. This shifts the battle in favour of the government, who can throw vast resources at cultivating viral content and creating a consistent online message.

At the heart of this message is the virtue of transparency, the belief that all government actions are visible and subject to popular scrutiny. International treaties are published online, Prime Ministers and Presidents post videos of behind-the-scenes preparations and hashtags promote public information campaigns. Much of the popular perceptions of Brexit negotiations has been shaped by Twitter barrages from key actors, who use their online presence to bypass traditional covenants of diplomacy and engage directly with the public.

Behind these actions, however, lies the panoply of government tools. Spin doctors and public relations teams manage a carefully crafted message. Supposedly free-wheeling loose cannons - particularly right-wing demagogues such as Donald Trump and Nigel Farage - are, in reality, careful media productions supported by armies of bots and retweeters available both via government agencies - [China's notorious *wumaos*](#) - or through the private sector. Big data has allowed the targetting of the correct message to the correct consumers, ensuring that people see the right *sort* of transparency. Instagram stars and Twitter celebrities, as we will explain,

enforce the belief that the online is real, making this deception hard to spot.

This essay charts how we travelled from freewheeling anonymity to fully-disclosed stage management. The sharing of personal information has gone from a faux pas to a virtue, or even a requirement, of online participation. With it, the belief of the supremacy of transparency has grown to the extent that governments can encourage people to think that they can see the inner workings of power. But the trick is not simply that governments have found a way to fake transparency. It is that every act of transparency is, in fact, an act of concealment.

A new panopticon

Transparency is a shell game - periodically the cup is lifted and we are offered a glance at where the ball lies. But the trick is not that the ball moves unexpectedly. The trick is that we are playing the game at all. The very concept of transparency implies a kernel of truth at the heart of any issue, a kernel obscured by spin and media management. We all acknowledge the artifice of the internet, and we have come to expect the astro-turfing, misrepresentation and PR exercises which dominate the internet. We know that advertising comes not just as the obvious, but in the botnets of twitter and the like farms of Facebook. We may even be aware that we are trapped in a personalised algorithm bubble crafted by google. Nonetheless, we cannot tear ourselves away from the belief that the online world is a valid place to seek information. Major news organisations report on tweets, employers check Facebook and experts attempt to crowd their knowledge into 140 characters to compete with charlatans. This is because we are subject to an insatiable demand for information sharing.

The technologies of the digital age have transformed information sharing into a basic demand. One cannot consume news, watch television, shop or communicate with his friends without sharing information, ranging from his dinner plans to his location. Digital platforms also reward those who share the most information with likes and shares thus granting them a status of trend setters. Normative pressure on the one hand, and technological constraints on the other, create a mutually reinforcing effect that forces one to live a transparent life in which he shares his successes but also his failings, disappointments and marital crises location. Sharing this 'truth' implies that we are seeing an authentic inner life that others choose to obscure or lie about. Thus, the professor who shares a CV of his failures is celebrated more than a professor who publishes academic articles.

So the technologies of the digital age emerge as sinister. Under the guise of a public service they amass volumes of information about their users. Facebook is not a social network. Its ability to connect people is a byproduct of its core activity- surveilling users and profiling them. Similarly, Google is not a search engine but a data aggregator whose database can be accessed by the highest bidder, or certain governments. But in order to surveille, and gather data, digital companies first had to create among users an insatiable desire to share information.

Your average journey online is meticulously observed. Google and Facebook are engaged in a war for advertising money, and to gain an edge they harvest your data (depersonalised and securely stored, we are assured). The advertisements you see, not just on these websites, but on every website, are targeted specifically at you. This surveillance is so invasive, and the analysis so complete, that people have reported advertisements picking up on impending divorces, or adverts switching to another language after their phones were exposed to foreign television. As unsettling as this is, this is all undertaken with our express permission.

This is not, however, a screed against foolishly accepting terms and conditions. Yes, a sufficiently tech-savvy person can, with enough time and money, hide almost all of their online activity. The average user, however, is very deliberately encouraged to share their information, shepherded down a path of least resistance. Our assumption that online and offline personas are as easily separated as in the early days of the internet, but now the boundaries between online and offline personas have blurred so far as to be almost meaningless, it is impossible to separate the two without substantial personal cost. When Google is so dominant as to have become a verb meaning 'to search online', is it really practical to expect people to use another service? Twitter is now essential to a range of careers - academics, comedians, journalists and advertisers all have to use Twitter as part of their work. As these tools have become essential, it has become impossible to evade their demands for information.

If information sharing were simply foisted upon us, it would be easy to resist. The reason it has become so pervasive is that transparency has been recast as a virtue. Those who share the most are judged to be the most truthful. Truthfulness implies dishonesty on the part of others, thus those who share are more admirable and respectable. Regardless of our personal attitude towards information sharing, we engage most with those who share the most online. This works across the spectrum of activity. Politicians use their activity online to present a forthright persona, engaging directly with voters. Celebrities use social media to invite their fans into their lives in a fashion previously saved for the paparazzi. The Arab Spring was successful, in part, because it invited Westerners to spectate on

revolutions and resistance. Even if we attempt to separate ourselves from these trends, it makes little difference - in the aggregate, regardless of our personal decisions, society rewards effective sharers by allowing them to shape trends.

Participation in the sharing of information is encouraged not only out of necessity, but out of desire. Instagram celebrities, wellness bloggers and YouTube stars all create the fantasy of escaping work and being paid simply to embrace a lifestyle. Success and wealth are, we feel, only a few shares away. In reality, the system is overwhelmingly managed by corporate interests to promote their products, but by randomly selecting a few individuals to represent successful internet personalities, they encourage the remaining users to participate more fully, in the hope that they too will be selected. The pace of internet culture is relentless, encouraging constant engagement - one of Twitter's most prevalent hashtags is #ICYMI (in case you missed it), dedicated to bringing people up to speed. Not only must we share, but we must *constantly* share, powered by the fear of missing the next viral trend or opportunity.

In this way, we have constructed a new panopticon. Partly by design, and partly by desire, we make our lives visible. This alone is not sufficient to create the behavioural reinforcement that the internet is driving. There is a level on which sharing creates reinforcement, by inviting our peers to critique and assess our actions - or, at least, their online representations. But what is unique about the digital panopticon is its prisoners' desire to be surveilled. Stranded in their cells they perform acrobatic feats to warrant attention from the warden - these include sharing a drunken selfie, announcing the breakup of a relationship, publishing a suicide note or accompanying one's rehab with a dedicated vlog.

More troublingly, however, this sharing is used to insulate and divide us, by granting a sinister level of power to the tech companies who increasingly filter our access to the world.

The tailored individual

The sheer volume of data generated each day is staggering. Thanks to our overwhelming obsession with the ideal of transparency, we have given over impossibly detailed sheafs of information to tech companies. The volume is so great that the challenge of our times is not what to do with this data, but simply how to parse it. Across Silicon Valley and its global campuses, data scientists and computer programmers are attempting to mobilise this data, revealing new and sometimes counter-intuitive patterns of human behaviour.

The short-term motivation is purely financial. The major tech firms earn the overwhelming share of their profit from activities other than their public image. The social networks of Facebook and Twitter, and the search engine/tech behemoth of Google are all funded by advertising streams. Amazon, although it barely makes a profit, is largely supported by selling cloud storage. Apple, admittedly, profit from their manufacturing, but nonetheless rely on the maintenance of their walled garden of products. Each company is driven by financial concerns to exploit their data resources to the utmost. Tailored ads are now the norm, with the ultimate intention that consumers are only exposed to products they have a reasonable chance of buying.

Tailored advertisements may seem a largely benign phenomenon, driven by financial motivations which, if not good, are at least pure. It is, however, problematic as it represents an incursion into the private sphere. Previously, consumers could be confident that their private lives were just that - private. Hidden from public gaze, individuals

could enjoy dissent and difference in an unmonitored, unregulated space. The importance of this cannot be underestimated, and at various points in history the existence of an unobserved space has allowed resistance, as well as a relief from the pressures of conformity within society. As discussed above, the new panopticon in the main relies upon the strongly encouraged, yet still voluntary, disclosure of private information. Tailored advertisements go one step further. Growing reports suggest that mobile phones capture audio to provide targetting data, let alone the well-known mining of e-mails, personal messages and photos. Driven by a market demand for better-tailored adverts, firms are crossing yet more lines between public and private, at most under the fig-leaf of miniscule sub-clauses in 40-page terms and conditions, forcing people to recognise that the mere presence of a mobile phone or computer is an intrusion of the public into the private.

Improvements in the tailoring of adverts are, however, only part of the platform that tech companies can offer advertisers. Links between consumption and social media have been strengthened, on the principle that word-of-mouth is the best advertising possible. Companies unwilling to wait for satisfied customers can, of course, pay for fake promoted posts and tweets, designed to mimic the real thing so closely as to be almost indistinguishable. These posts are minimally differentiated, usually by a small, off-set grey logo. The effect is that, to normal consumer of social media, these posts are at least initially afforded the same credence as those of their fellow users. By providing these adverts, companies are fulfilling their goal of generating profit from users, but there is a more sinister implication to their strategies.

With advertising the key profit driver of social media firms, their scope for productivity is overwhelmingly limited by the hours each user spends in their ecosystem. More time spent on Facebook translates directly to more advertisements viewed and clicked on, creating revenue. To keep users engaged, social media companies are increasingly attempting to show users what they want - fulfilling desires that are not even explicitly stated, but simply gathered from an analysis of user behaviour. If Facebook deems that you are a healthy, outdoorsy person, you will see more stories relating to this, and fewer about video games or fine dining, or whatever else it deems to be of no interest to you. Increasingly, Facebook is also a publisher, filtering access to news on a similar basis. Similarly, Google uses a range of factors to determine which results you can view. Under the guise of public service, tech companies are creating a profoundly tailored internet experience, in which you only ever see things that will please you. In this way, Google's promise of 'unlimited information' is nothing but a mask for data collection, which requires that they insert you into a web ecosystem with limited information.

Tailored news is deeply problematic. The value of news is precisely that it exposes us to a common source of information about the world. By forcing political discourse to conform to this limited range of shared information, traditional news requires engagement and debate with others. Tailored news, however, allows for complete disengagement, with opponents no longer guilty of poor analysis, but of simply not knowing the facts. For Benedict Anderson, newspapers were the key to creating an imagined community through which the nation could come into existence. Without this imagined community, we are instead trapped in a tailored bubble, creating ignorant consumers of news who disengage from civic participation.

This alone is cause for concern. The increasing intellectual isolation of individuals breaks down communities and discourages

tangible activism. It also discourages personal growth. If you will only ever be presented with information that supports your algorithmically-determined worldview, you will rarely be exposed to competing ideas and values which may encourage the changing of your opinions. Political positions will become less informed and more entrenched, debilitating the crucial arena of public debate.

The real concern, however, goes beyond civic concerns. Tech companies, through their design choices, are tailoring not just our inputs (news stories, advertisements), but also the ways in which we can express ourselves.

Technologies of transparency and technologies of control

The culture of transparency is, at its root, driven by sharing. Content created by the individual is only valued in the context of its reach. If nobody likes your photo, you might as well not have taken it, and its impact on the grand tech project of data mining will be almost unnoticeable. Online significance is thus measured in your ability to draw reactions to your content, most notably encouraging others to share. Popular ideas and formats are mimicked by others, piggy-backing off successful concepts through the process of mimesis.

This creates tension between the ideological concept of sharing - 'Information wants to be free' - and the reality - sharing is mediated into a handful of successful forms. After all, if mimesis is the path to online success, then you can only mimic that which already exists. Even the channels for communication are set, as there is no point sharing on unused platforms such as MySpace or Google Plus. The imperative is speed - share now, share through mimesis, and share where you can reach the greatest audience.

Even without any control by tech companies, this process guarantees a certain sameness across the internet. Jokes, responses to questions, styles of photography - all have achieved the status of cliche faster than ever before. Fads and trends emerge and spread, driven by their ability to bring about online engagement. Every new meme, every aspirational shot of a living space, every photo of avocado toast reaches a certain level of sameness, shot through the same half-a-dozen instagram filters or hashtagged with the same phrases.

This alone, however, is no real cause for alarm. Originality itself is somewhat mythical, and mimesis is often simply the natural spread of successful, or at the least popular, ideas. If anything, the shorter lifespan forced on these ideas by the internet encourages a much faster cycle of change and renewal. The problems that arise are not due to the human nature of users, but to the attempts of tech companies to control this sharing.

The recent leak of [Facebook's criteria for post removal](#) were highly instructive. Violence is almost universally allowed, particularly if it is in the form of comics. Hate speech also benefits from a minimalist approach to intervention. The one area, in fact, in which Facebook has a hard moderation policy, is sexuality. Other platforms take more or less active stances on policing sexual expression, but all bar the most libertine place restrictions, particularly on nudity. The detail of these restrictions is staggering, particularly in comparison to the vague and indirect instructions regarding violence.

Not only is content policed carefully, but reactions are also controlled. Facebook in particular is notorious for offering up only six possible emotional responses to any post. Complexity is sacrificed in the drive to categorise human emotion into groups which simplify analysis. One cannot, for example, react to the success of a friend with that

measure of bittersweet happiness and disappointment we all know - instead, one has to pour expression into simply 'happy' or 'angry'. Because the boundary between online and offline personas has broken down, this feeds back into the offline. As the two personas are treated as being the same, users cannot justify being 'happy' on Facebook and 'unhappy' elsewhere.

By both our natural instincts and, more insidiously, the efforts of tech companies, the internet has become infected with sameness. How can change be possible, or protest effective, when mimicry is the order of the day? Whether or not by design, the internet works to stultify expression, forcing it into narrow channels which limit effective resistance and shape debate into carefully controlled areas. Such sameness is one of the paradoxes of the digital age for this is the age of imagination and metaphors. Words such as cyberspace, networks, big data and internet are all abstract and lack physical representation. Yet at the same time, the digital age is one that stifles imagination and self expression. One can only react to events with a predefined set of emotions and one can only take a selfie using predefined templates - the duck face, the late night club and the graduation cap.

The purpose of this process of sameness is to create perfect replaceable parts. Each meme flows into the next, and ideas or individuals deemed outside the pale can be quickly discarded in favour of their next, more acceptable version. Everyone is unique, but everyone is expendable.

The expendable individual

The heart of the corporate online mission is to create a feeling of being unique among perfectly substitutable consumers. Each pound spent, after all, is identical to every other pound. Nonetheless, were the inherent sameness of consumers to be realised openly, it would reveal the sinister nature of modern observational technologies. It would be beyond the realms of a science fiction dystopia to accurately reveal the similarities between online consumers and the relentless generation of identically meaningless content. Instead, by cultivating the facade of the unique, we are encouraging to think of sharing not as replication, but as disruption - the creation of new and inherently valuable ideas and information. This, in turn, hides the unpleasant truth. Each transparent online individual is expendable.

The ultimate expression of the modern cult of transparency is not, in fact, found online. The reality TV show is in many ways the forerunner of social media, featuring allegedly randomly-chosen participants in a show which supposedly reflects their true personality. Behind the scenes, however, producers are carefully selecting personalities to create compelling viewing and, when that fails to emerge, carefully knitting together camera angles and shots to tell the story they wish to. The impact is huge - millions of fans desire to be watched in this way, having their intimate lives revealed by persistent surveillance. Yet the very thing that makes reality TV enjoyable is its concealment, which obscures the artifice which imposes a narrative onto the content.

In reality TV, we celebrate the individual relentlessly, ascribing huge value to their unique abilities and talents. Any talent, no matter how banal, is drummed up for the parade of variety shows now on offer. Every contestant, of course, must be unique. Every segment begins with videos showing the personality and background of the participant, designed mostly to elicit sympathy. We delight when unlikely characters demonstrate a talent for opera, or an aptitude for magic. Underneath it all, however, lies the powerful levelling tool of similarity.

After all, on these shows, the format is the same. A panel of identikit judges - one mean, one supportive, one in-between - working in tandem to toy with the audience. The contestants, almost exclusively performing the same range of talents (with one unusual act thrown in every once in a while for variety). The background stories, featuring their own mini-tragedies, supportive families and cheering friends, offering a snapshot - carefully managed, of course - of their lives. In slightly sinister fashion, the socio-economic background of the contestants is firmly lower-middle, allowing the predominantly middle-class viewers a thrill of feeling their prejudices overturned: "Not that there's any reason why a postman *wouldn't* be interested in opera, but he was so very good." A few predictably unlikely characters are thrown in - the ugly person with the voice of an angel, the jolly fat one. These shows are essentially all-in wrestling for the chattering classes, relying on the same willingness of viewers to dupe themselves into thinking they are watching something real.

Reality television is also characterized by rituals of transparency. This is the five minute monologue before the American Idol performance, the act of revealing one's troubled past, personal turmoil and mental disabilities. The songs do not matter as much as these moments of revelation. Yet these are actually moments of concealment for they hide the truth - that the motive of the show is to elicit a desire to be watched at all times, to have viewers crave the attention of Big Brother. Indeed, 'authenticity' is a weapon to demonstrate how 'real' they are. The more we look, the more genuine they become. This *is* the power of transparency as mass deception, that we recognize the horror of the Big Brother metaphor, and yet we crave his gaze nonetheless.

Governments now also stage rituals of transparency. This is the live video of a UN summit, a picture of Macron and Merkel exchanging whispers at a summit or the publication of government white papers online as part of "Open Governments" initiatives. Yet these are all actually acts of concealment meant to obscure the fact that governments now focus primarily on the accumulation of information and the concealment of such information from the public under the guise of national security. The open government is really the concealed government.

In this way, the vision of transparency has instead served to mask a revolution in concealment. When everything is visible, then even carefully edited highlights take on the air of verisimilitude. On the internet, it takes on a more extreme character. The desire to be seen to be transparent means that those willing to expose their most unpleasant side win, by virtue of 'saying what they think' and 'telling hard truths'. So much of what drives Trump in the US, or Pegida in Germany, or Farage and Johnson in the UK, is the assumption that, by saying deeply racist and impolite things, they are somehow more transparent than those who choose their words more carefully. In the race to the most base and primitive attitudes, replaceability is reconfirmed. The online supporters of UKIP or Trump are indistinguishable from their Russian botnet colleagues, all apparently equally real and active.

Thus, as transparency becomes a synonym for concealment, and as the online world slides into demagoguery, we are forced to acknowledge that sharing has not set information free. Instead, it has given governments and corporations a hugely powerful tool to conduct surveillance and data-gathering exercises, while encouraging its users to feel unique and forget that they are inherently replaceable. Now, we contend,

every act of transparency is an act of concealment.

Transparency as mass deception

At the end, the industries of digital culture are all about control. Tech companies control your algorithmic bubble, restraining what you see and read to match your assessed interests. The government is free to surveil you, at the same time discouraging dissent by cloaking itself in the aura of transparency. The new culture of transparency serves to undermine individuality by demonstrating how banal and replaceable it is.

Within this, the great fishbowl of social media encourages people to police their own behaviour, only offering outward expressions that already conform to existing standards of what has happened. The demand for mimicry ensures that no new expression emerges which is not already cliched, regulating behaviour more effectively than any law or censor. Those who wish to avoid this culture by remaining anonymous are seen as inherently shady, with something to hide.

Gore Vidal claimed that a ruling class does not need to meet and conspire in order to maintain control. They all think the same way as they are products of the same environment and same institutions. The ruled class does not need to meet or conspire in order to be kept in chains. It has simply migrated online.

Conclusion

As this essay has argued, that open government is actually the concealed government, one whose greatest task is to accumulate mass amounts of information on citizens. Government's task has become easier as social media, and cultural products,

have transformed information sharing into a virtue. The prisoners in the digital pantopticon are clamoring to be surveilled. The collapse in the distance between online and offline personas extends this behavior into the offline world. It is therefore unlikely that governments will reveal the nature, and quantity, of information they amass on citizens. Similarly, it is unlikely that governments will regulate tech giants so long as these share the data they accumulate with government agencies.

True government transparency will thus have to be fought for. This charge could be led by civil society organizations and NGOs who could facilitate public debates on government's authority to amass online information and the limits of government's reach into the digital realm. Civil society organizations may also help shed light on the relationship between government agencies and tech giants and the manner in which personal information makes its way from one's social media account to government databases. Lastly, it may fall on civil society organizations to promote algorithmic transparency through which the users of Goggle or Facebook will know what data is being collected by each platform and what information can be extrapolated from this data.

Multi-lateral organizations may also play a crucial role in forcing real transparency on governments and tech giants. This may take the form of adopting new practices. For instance, the ITU (International Telecommunications Union) now crowed sources policy papers with online publics. It also allows online publics to edit white papers and partake in online conversations before policy recommendations are made. Such forms of open collaboration stand in stark contrast to government transparency and may, over time, force governments to follow suit or face growing resentment from their online citizenry.

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