

Meta-stasis of the Internet*

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Abstract

This paper offers a brief history of the information age in order to demonstrate how the loss of user control and the increase in certain forms of automation have metastasized into imminent and ongoing threats to social order and the democratic way of life.

The internet was established after a number of developments which included the interconnection of computers without extensive need of action by the users. It led to the introduction of user communication sub-systems such as text, email, file sharing and systems for searching for files. The so called information age is said to be marked by the adaption of a hypertext transport protocol in the last decade of the twentieth century. The information age was marked by a number of meetings which included the first of the world wide web conference in April 1994 followed by the second (Oct. 1994) and the third (April 1995) in quick succession. Other, by invitation only, meetings which dealt with issue of this era were held in Denver, OH (Metadata) and (America in the Age of Information) Bethesda, MD.

However, in just under three decades this information age has *meta*-stasis-ed into a form that is a threat to our social order and democratic way of life while fostering division. Enormous wealth has been garnered by just a few corporations and individuals at the expense of the harm it is doing to people all over the globe. This is the result of the spreading of fake-news and favouring angry content that result in civil strife and loss of lives. It has led to divisiveness and autocratic governments. Some so called democracies are in name only with the same people continuing in their 'elected' position from term to term, ad infinitum. Just as in the metastasis of a cancer, until it is checked, this transformed internet will destroy some vital parts of our everyday existence: our privacy and liberty while promoting an inegalitarian spirit.

Keywords: Online Social Networks, personal data exploitation, privacy, security, smartphones, tracking, big tech, lack of legislative control, surveillance

*To appear

1 Introduction

Humans have evolved over the millenniums, however, it is only in the last few centuries that history has been recorded in a form that could be easily reproduced and transmitted from generation to generation. This was made possible with the invention of the printing press, widely considered to be a revolution. Humans have gone through a number of revolutions: roughly, the replacement of one type of social order by another.

Most revolutions are periods in a nation when one system is replaced with another: the replacement is to oust an autocratic government with something more representative[?]. Some are successful, others not so. The revolution of the North American British colony was replaced by a democratic federal system with a constitution whose interpretation and rigidity has and continues to create problems. The Chinese, French and Russian revolutions replaced one tyranny by another after wars, suffering, and tens of thousands of fatalities.

Here we are not discussing these revolutions but those which have been called industrial revolutions through multiple generations of digital computing devices, and development of the internet from connecting a number of computers with a small number of users to connecting millions of computers and billions of mobile devices as clients. We briefly talk about the first two and then turn to the subject of this paper namely the *metastasis* of the internet.

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