

# **The Global Participant-Observer**

## **Emergence, Challenges and Opportunities**

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### **Abstract**

Information technology systems have transformed the citizen into a global participant-observer (GPO). The emerging GPO is innovative in networking, observation, and participation through autonomous, reflective, informative, inquisitive and self-organizing means of engagement. Classic citizenship is an ingredient of the nation-state. With globalization and the increased interconnectedness among people of various countries through the use of information and communication technology (ICT), the new citizen of the world is transcending traditional cultural, economic, and political barriers to demand openness, accountability, and fairness. This article contrasts between the classic citizen of the nation-state and the emerging GPO. It then outlines the characteristics of the new global participant-observers and the phenomenon's strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats.

**Keywords:** Participation, Observation, Citizenry, Information Technology, Self-Organization, Governance

### ***Introduction***

The discovery of tools had transformed *Homo sapiens* from hunter-gatherers into settled agrarian communities and caused the birth of civilization (Engels, 1986). With tools, human beings were able to discover themselves and transform history. The discoveries and transformations continued throughout the centuries, enabling mankind reach space, fight disease, introduce new instruments and technologies, and achieve great stride in peruse of better life. The discovery of print, for example, had transformed Europe to the Enlightenment Era and was a factor in the emergence of early modern capitalist enterprise (Benkler, 2006). Today, new discoveries in information and communication technology (ICT) systems are transforming mankind once more to a new type of citizen: a global participant-observer (GPO). This paper addresses the differences between the localized citizens of settled communities, known as citizens of the nation-state, and the emerging new global participant-observers. The paper discusses the characteristics of the new global citizen and the prospects and challenges it faces, including strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats (SWOT).

In order to have an accurate SWOT analysis, this paper will first underline the differences between traditional citizenry of nation-states and the new GPO. Then, it will contrast between the two types of citizenry in the area of active participation in public affairs. To do so the paper will look at a scenario that involves three historic examples demonstrate the metaphor of classic citizenry. Each example is an illustration of innovation in citizenship and participatory process that changed the course of history and human dynamics. The trajectory in this scenario, however, emphasizes slowness in momentum gathering and localized events that took long time for

maturation and having an impact. The paper will then look at contemporary scenario that involves four examples illustrate the metaphor of the newly emerging GPO. This scenario also illustrates innovation in citizens' participatory process and changing the course of history. The process of change, however, is global, spontaneous, and much faster than events in the first three examples. The central element in the contrast is the infusion of ICT into the process of change.

The contrast between the two types of citizenry will give us an introduction to the differences between the two types of citizenry. It will also allow us formulate specific particularities for comparative themes between previous and new civic actions. One of these themes is the manifestation that traditional civic actions are highly localized and do not mature beyond the local impact to a global dimension only after a long period of time. Another theme is the manifestation that localized events can become globalized and gathering momentum in much faster pace if infused with ICT through interconnected networks of participatory interactions. Let us look at the first scenario that involves three historic scenarios of innovative actions in citizens' participatory-observatory dynamic of pre-ICT era. Then, let us look at another scenario that involves events took place during the ICT era. The contrast will give us a window for comparative analysis between the two types of innovation in citizen participatory process.

### **Scenario One**

The first example in Scenario One dates back to the American Revolution that consequently engaged most citizens of the American colonies and produced the Declaration of Independence in 1776, the Articles of Confederation in 1777, and the United States of America in 1788 (McCullough, 2006; Ellis, 2004). The point of interest in civic participatory process was highlighted on the night of April 18, 1775 when Paul Revere, an American Patriot, traveled on a horse from Boston toward Concord, Massachusetts in order to warn the American militia of the advancing British Army. During his trip he was able to inform patriots in Somerville, Medford and Arlington of the British Army's movements and enabled those patriots spread the message of warning throughout Middlesex County. On the following day, the warning allowed the American militia repel British troops in Concord and ignite the American Revolution. Ralph Waldo Emerson later described the first shot fired by the militia as the "shot heard round the world" (1837). Despite Emerson's metaphor, the rest of the American colonies (or the world, for that matter) did not know of the battle in Concord until much later in time.

The next example in Scenario One takes place in British-occupied India that witnessed the birth of the non-violent movement in 1915 and the subsequent independence of India and Pakistan in 1947 (Gandhi, 2008). The point of interest in civic engagement and participatory process was highlighted on March 12, 1930 when the Mahatma Gandhi began a 240 mile march on foot from his ashram in Sabarmati to the small village of Dandi on the coast of the Arabian Sea, followed by nearly 100,000 people. The aim was to produce salt without paying tax to the colonial British authorities and using the movement as a symbolic nonviolent means in seeking India's independence. Seventeen years later the movement was able to succeed and India became independent (Wolpert, 2002). As in the previous example, the main point to illustrate in this example is the slowness in momentum gathering or having a global impact.

The final example in Scenario One takes place during the turbulence time of racial tensions in the southern states in America after a decision by the United States Supreme Court in *Brown v. Board of Education* of 1954 to end decades-long of racial segregation known as the practice of “separate but equal”. This practice was previously sanctioned by an earlier United States Supreme Court decision in *Plessy v. Ferguson* of 1896 and the change did not go well with advocates of racial segregation in the south. The tensions ultimately led to the birth of the Civil Rights Movement in 1955 and the subsequent passages of the Civil Rights Act in 1964 (Dierenfield, 2008).

The point of interest in civic participatory process was highlighted on December 1, 1955 in Montgomery, Alabama when a 42 years-old African-American woman named Rosa Parks refused giving up her seat on a bus to a white passenger. Four days later, Parks was tried and found guilty on charges of disorderly conduct and violating a local ordinance (Brinkley, 2005). She appealed her conviction and formally challenged the legality of racial segregation (Parks and Haskins, 1999). Her action became a catalyst to ignite the non-violent Civil Rights Movement, led by Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. (Williams and Bond, 1988). Nine years later the movement was able to win important legal and legislative actions geared toward ending racial segregation and discrimination in America (McWhorter, 2004). Yet, despite these legal successes, the practice of racism continued in the United States under different forms ranging from institutional discrimination to police brutality. This ugly factor continues to plague the America society, although in much lesser degree now than before, despite the election of the first African-American as president of the United States in 2008 some 43 years after Rosa Parks’ famous bus ride. The point of illustration in this third example is once again the slowness in response and momentum gathering, as well as in policy change and global impact.

These historic examples in Scenario One introduce players emerging to initiate a set of actions that forced changes in societal and government behavior (Weissberg, 2005). However, the changes were local and did not gather larger momentum for a considerable period of time. The main reason for the slowness in momentum gathering or the inability to link local initiatives with global dimensions is because of communication and information barriers. The introduction of ICT, however, changed this situation and enabled citizen have wider and unrestricted access to information. As a consequence, the dynamics of citizen participatory process has changed. What may have taken several months or years for an issue to gather momentum or solicit public support is now taking much less time. Also, what might have remained local in the past because of isolationism and lack of access to globally-interconnected information networks is now having more global dimensions. And, what might have gone unnoticed or concealed from the public before it is now very difficult to hide.

## **Scenario Two**

In order to examine the impact of ICT on citizen innovation in participatory and observatory process, let us look at a second scenario that illustrates other examples in citizen movements while utilizing ICT to imply social and political change. This scenario will introduce a new Network-Citizen (Netizen) (Hauben and Hauben, 1996). Because of the Netizen’s global orientation, continuous participation in civic engagements, and observing social changes while

impacting social movements through the utilization of ICT, let us identify it as the new Global Participant-Observer (GPO).

The first example in Scenario Two takes place in Iran after the presidential elections of 2009 in Iran. The point of interest in the locally initiated/globally engaged civic participatory process was highlighted on June 20, 2009 when a 26 years-old Iranian woman named Neda was shot by pro-regime forces and her image spontaneously broadcasted through a camera cell phone to major news networks in the world, igniting global public support for the reform movement in Iran and condemnation for the Iranian regime. Neda was participating along with her father in a peaceful demonstration in Tehran against the perceived fraud in the Iranian presidential elections of 2009. As a consequence of her participation, she was shot and killed by the *Basij*, a pro-Iranian government militia group (Kennedy, 2009).

Neda's image of being shot, and later dying on a street in Tehran, was captured by the camera of one of the demonstrators' cell phone and was immediately distributed around the world through Twitter (<http://twitter.com>), Facebook ([www.facebook.com](http://www.facebook.com)) and YouTube ([www.youtube.com](http://www.youtube.com)). Major news networks such as CNN and Frontline received the disturbing image and broadcasted it (CNN, 2009; PBS, 2009). The event made *Neda* a symbol for the reform movement in Iran and turned worldwide public opinion against the brutality of the Iranian regime (Fox News, 2009). Within the Islamic world the image of the Iranian regime was also damaged (Peterson, 2009; Pfaff, 2009) and its credibility as a pious Islamic republic was tarnished, appearing to be neither a republic nor an Islamic (Torfeh, 2009). Further images of abuse and mayhem from Iran were globally broadcasted through Facebook, YouTube and Twitter. They included savage beatings and attacks by the regime's security apparatus against peaceful demonstrators, torture, and murder (Fletcher, 2009).

The next example in Scenario Two is the story of Majid Tavakoli, an Iranian university student who was arrested and tortured by Iranian security apparatus for speaking out publically against the regime's brutality (Mackey, 2009a). Although the regime alleged that the student was arrested for dressing-up as a woman, an offense sanctioned by law, the arrest, however, sparked worldwide condemnation and furthered solidarity with the Iranian reform movement (Mackey, 2009b). Slogan such as "I am Majid" saturated Facebook and Youtube websites along with pictures of men and women of various nationalities dressing-up as an Iranian woman and holding-up signs such as "I am Majid." The e-campaign ultimately forced the Iranian regime free the detained student (Mackey, 2009c). Similar activities are continuing in linking the Iranian civic engagement with the world through ICT (Amira, 2009). They are incapacitating the Iranian regime from choking or isolating the reform movement (Radsch, 2009). Citizen voices in Iran are becoming louder, speaking out in conjunctions with other voices of freedom in the world through ICT to demand better governance (Macleod, 2009; Payvand, 2009).

Although the initial broadcasting of the "Neda" and "Majid" phenomenon did not change the outcome of the presidential elections in Iran (Boghrati, 2009), they, nevertheless, linked the Iranian citizens together through the utilization of ICT, an unprecedented form of innovation in communication (Burns, 2009). They also created worldwide support with the Iranian reform movement that was vase, rapid, spontaneous, and informed (Amnesty International, 2009).

Many nation-states issued statements of solidarity with the Iranian people and condemned the Iranian regime for its brutality. The City of Rome, for instance, named one of its streets after Neda, the slain symbol of Iran's reform movement (Messia, 2009). The United States' Congress unanimously passed a resolution on June 18, 2009 with total votes of 405-1 in condemning the Iranian regime's suppression of the protesters and in support of the reform movement (Herszenhorn, 2009). President Barack Obama warned the Iranian regime not to oppress its citizens and expressed his support for the reform movement (Obama, 2009). On July 25, 2009, thousands of people in more than 100 cities worldwide came together in a Global Day of Action (GDA) to condemn the range of human rights abuses perpetrated by the Iranian regime (Bashir, 2009).

The third example in Scenario Two takes place in the city of Sidi Bouzid in Tunisia in December 2010 and involves a 26-years old Tunisian street vendor named Mohamed Bouazizi. On December 17, 2010 a police officer confiscated Bouazizi's vegetable cart because he did not have a proper license to sell produce. The officer slapped Bouazizi to further humiliate him. Bouazizi went to the local police station to complain about the police officer, but he was ridiculed and sent back home. Rejecting what he perceived to be an injury to his dignity, and dissatisfied with the economic condition of his country, Bouazizi returned to the police station but soaked with gasoline and set himself on fire as a protest. He died due to his injuries on January 4, 2011 (Abouzeid, 2011).

The incident sparked public outrage and massive protests with people interconnected through ICT (mainly through Facebook and cell phones), asking for social change and an end to the police state and unemployment. The month-long cyber movement, known as the Jasmine Revolution (The Christian Science Monitor, 2011) was successful in toppling the Tunisian regime of President Zine el-Abidine Ben Ali despite massive crackdown by Tunisian security forces (Aljazeera-English a, 2011; CBS News, 2011). Tunisian military responded to public outcry and ended 23 years of tyranny under President Ben Ali (Eltahawy, 2011) who fled the country to Saudi Arabia on January 14, 2011 (Aljazeera-English b, 2011). Western media and most political leaders in the Western democracies ignored the Jasmine Revolution in Tunisia, including President Barack Obama. Eventually, however, they acknowledged their support once the revolution was successful (Harb, 2011).

The final example in Scenario Two takes place in Alexandria, Egypt in June 2010 and involves a young Egyptian blogger named Khalid Saied. On June 6, 2010 two Egyptian police officers arrested Saied and brutally beat and murdered him on a street in Alexandria in view of the public (6 April, 2011). His death sparked massive ICT-induced protests condemning police violence, government corruption, unemployment and lack of freedom (Human Rights Now, 2010). A group of young e-activists started an Internet campaign known as "6 April," calling for a "new concept of freedom" (6 April, 2011). Another Egyptian young man named Wael Ghanim started a page on Facebook called "We are all Khalid Saied," to engage people against torture and police state (Abdel Fattah, 2011).

Building on growing popular resentment to the Mubarak regime in Egypt (Giglio, 2011) and capitalizing on the success of the Jasmine Revolution in Tunisia (de Vasconcelos, 2011),

Egyptian e-activists called for an end to the Mubarak regime and for the establishment of democracy in Egypt (International Business Times, 2011). On January 25, 2011 and only 11 days after the success of the Jasmine Revolution in Tunisia, young Egyptians armed with cell phones gathered at Al-Tahrir Square in Cairo and other major cities in Egypt demanding an end to three decades of Mubarak's rule (Topol, 2011).

Despite police brutality and attacks on peaceful demonstrators by pro-Mubarak thugs (Kristof, 2011) the demonstrations continued. People's resolve in toppling the Mubarak regime strengthened each day with millions of Egyptians joining the uprising. This continued regardless of the killing of nearly 300 demonstrators by the security apparatus (Human Rights Watch, 2011), the arrest of many Egyptian bloggers and e-activists (Abdel Fattah, 2011), the detention of many national and international media correspondents (Calderone, 2011), the beating of journalists, including CNN anchor Anderson Cooper (Mirkinson, 2011), and the shutting down of internet services (Rhoads and Folwer, 2011). On February 11, 2011 and in just 18 days the cyber revolution in Egypt was successful in toppling the Mubarak regime and forcing Mubarak to resign (Kirkpatrick, 2011). The Egyptian Revolution, designated as the Tahrir (Arabic for Liberation) Revolution, was heralded by masses of people in the Middle East and many world leaders, including President Barack Obama who shifted from his earlier position in focusing on stability in the region of the Middle East (Gray, 2011) to supporting revolution. In his February 11, 2011 address, the President stated "The people of Egypt have spoken, their voices have been heard, and Egypt will never be the same" (White House, 2011). Right-wing politicians and pundits in the United States, however, continued denouncing the Egyptian Revolution fearing a repeat of the Islamic Revolution in Iran that ousted the Shah in 1979 and established an anti-Western tyrannical theocracy (Zogby, 2011).

It is here in the examples illustrated in the Second Scenario that we are witnessing the emergence of the GPO and the transformation of civic participatory process. The GPO is a manifestation of innovative engagement in public affairs that is locally active and globally interrelated through ICT. It represents an evolution in citizenry toward global interconnectedness made possible through the infusion of technology into civic engagement. This technology is forcing citizens of various countries share common goals and responds to local initiatives on global stage through rapid and spontaneous movements (Bimber, 1998).

The phenomenon of the GPO, as such, is made possible by ICT (Uslaner, 2004) whereby consumer-citizens around the world are engaged through the using the latest inventions of capitalism in ICT to force new dynamics in civic movements, citizen demands, and improved performance in governance. Examples of these networks are the World Wide Web (www.), search engines, Twitter, Facebook, YouTube, blogs, electronic journals and newspapers, cable, satellite networking, and cell phone text-messaging and video recording (Lowen, 2009). These mediums draw from vast interconnected information systems (Hui Kyong Chun and Keenan, 2005) that bridge between citizens from all parts of the world to bring to focus issues that require attention and rapid response. The smuggled video recording by a cell-phone of the death of Neda in Tehran on June 20, 2009, for example, became a catalyst not only for the anti-regime movement in Iran (Wright, 2009) but also for global citizens connected electronically to demand change in governance around the world. The suicide of Mohamed Bouazizi that ignited the

Jasmine's cyber Revolution in Tunisia and subsequent global support (Abouzeid, 2011), and the murdering of Khalid Said by police that initiated the "6 April" and "We are all Khalid Said" cyber movement that ignited the Tahrir Revolution in Egypt and worldwide support (Abdel Fattah, 2011) are other examples.

The historic examples in Scenario One of citizens responses illustrated in Paul Revere's voyage, Gandhi's salt march, and Rosa Parks' bus ride were innovative measures in civic actions and participatory process. The difference with the GPO's operational dynamics, however, is that today's innovation in civic action is utilizing information and communication technology (ICT) that enables civic response to any issue become more rapid, interconnected, and global. The new global citizenry is transforming civic activist engaged in global dynamics through local particularities by utilizing word, pictures, and sounds (Davis, Elin and Reeher, 2002). Consequently, the GPO is becoming more effective in the dissipation of older structures and forcing random restructuring and self-organization in social capital, including changes in governance. A new global e-republic is waiting on the horizon (Grossman, 1995), with the GPO as its philosopher-king (Waterfield, 2008).

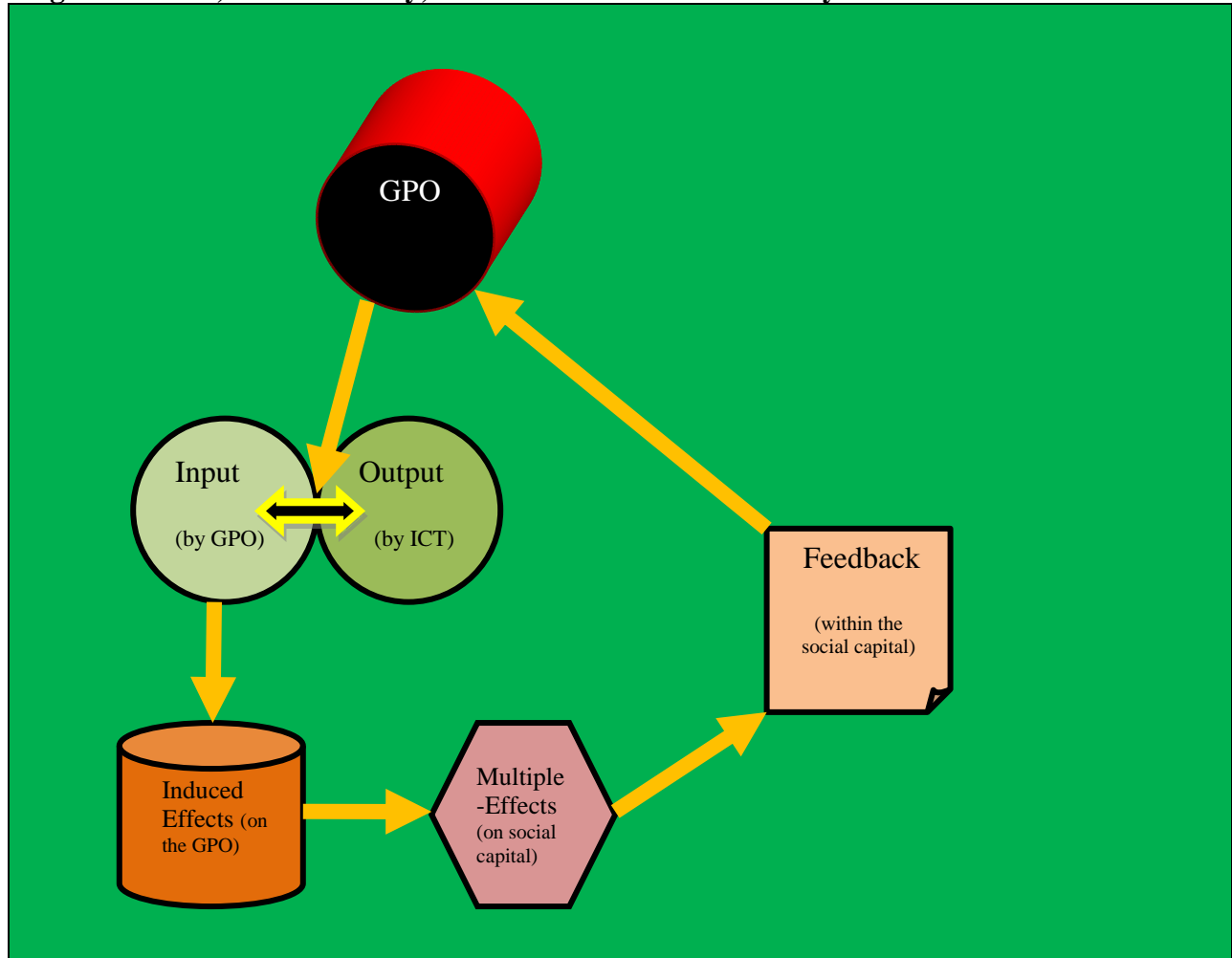
### ***Characteristics of the Global Participant-Observer***

The global participant-observer (GPO) is the expression of a universal and autonomous citizen capable of changing the observation-participation dynamics into a new form of interconnected global information network. As the GPO interacts with the information and communication technology (ICT) systems, not only it infuses changes in social capital and forces governmental response, but will also change itself. Social capital can facilitate information routing by helping the GPO provide emotional support for others in the network (Resnick, 2000). The cyberspace, the GPO's main operational forum, acts as a social Petri dish (Grant, 2006) in inventing interconnected networks through input-output dynamics. These dynamics, although purposeful, are often accidental, unplanned, unpredictable, uncontrollable, and unmapped. The trajectory of the process is raw, deterministic, and actualized through circular loops of autonomously connected agents of observation-participation.

The central element in the process is the exchange dynamic between the GPO and ICT. Such dynamic constitutes phase one in the circular process of self-discovery. Phase two in the processes is the induce-effect of the GPO-ICT interchange on the epistemological and emotional state of the global citizen. Such an induce-effect alters the nature of civic dynamic and upgrades localized events to global dimensions. The consequence of change in epistemological and emotional state leads the GPO toward to another shift in the trajectory process, morphing from an individual observation-participation to proper public sphere. The shift has multiple effects on social and governmental behavior and is capable of filtering and synthesizing information within specific opinion bundles (Benkler, 2006). Changing in these opinions leads to feedback mechanism in the overall social capital network. As the trajectory reconnects with the principle agent (the GPO), the acquired knowledge, identity, and associations lead the GPO to have an immediate impact on civic engagement and participatory process by continually reinventing itself throughout the process. The process, as such, is circulatory, resulting in continuous self-organizing. Figure 1 illustrates this dynamic.



**Figure 1: GPO, Self-Discovery, and the Process of Circular Dynamics**



It is worth mentioning, however, that the public sphere does not relate to a particular form of public discourse. Rather, it is a forum for civic gathering defined by the fluctuating function of the GPO's complex social capital network (Benkler, 2006). The process of self-discovery is irreversible in all its phases, except for phase one during the GPO/ICT input-output exchange. With the exception of phase one, these steps in the self-discover process are forward-moving trajectories incapable of reversing backward. Feedback learned and accumulated cannot regress backward toward implementing lessons learned in an earlier stage in order to correct an error in the overall movement or counter an offensive measure. The trajectory can only move forward toward reconnecting with the starting point in the process: the initiating principle agent (the GPO).

The purpose of this forward-moving is to acquire knowledge in the self-discovery process for the individual GPO, instead of applying such knowledge into social capital or induced-effect through a reversible process. The exchange between the Iranian citizens and ICT through Twitter and Facebook, for example, was forward moving toward acquiring knowledge in a self-discovery process for the individual GPO in Iran, instead of inserting lesson learned through the self-

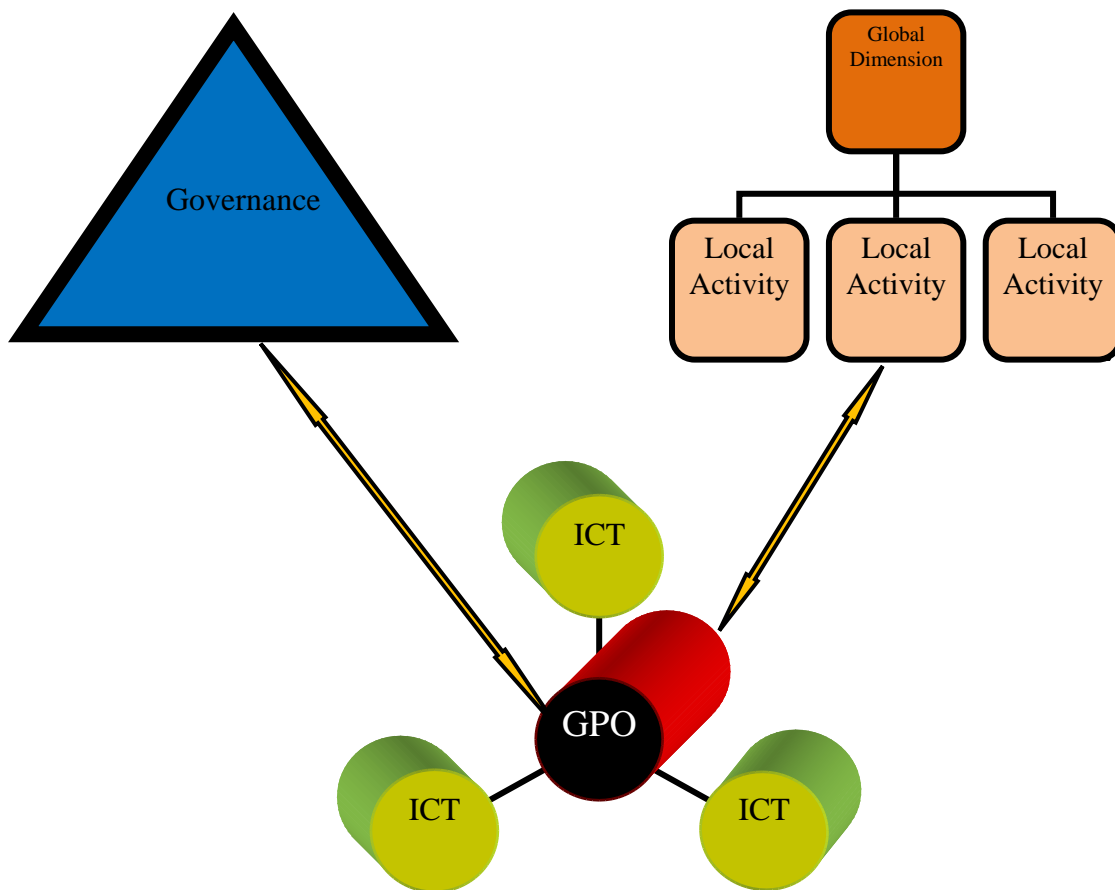
discovery process toward retooling the reform movement itself or countering offenses by the regime. The process of self-discovery in Iran's GPO's movement, as a result, was forward moving only toward the principle initiating agent (the GPO) so such an agent can rediscover itself through new acquiring knowledge and information without necessarily applying this knowledge in social capital of the reform movement. The outcome was an informed GPO in Iran at the expense of failed reform movement. The reform movement in Iran, as such, may have optimized innovation in citizenry and participatory process that has produced the GPO in Iran. The forward-leaning trajectory of the GPO's circular dynamics in self-discovery, however, was incapable of morphing social capital toward new state of transformable change in socio-political dynamics. This defect threatens the GPO as a highly individualistic character incapable of applying acquired knowledge in the self-discovery process toward implementing real changes on societal level. While self-discovery enables the GPO to remain unpredictable, accidental, and uncontrollable, it also exposes it as incapable of applying lessons learned in the self-discovery process into social capital and the larger social movement. This perceived weakness can be manipulated by tyrannical regimes in order to render the GPO as ineffective.

This weakness, however, was able to be marginalized through opportunities provided for the GPOs' 2011 movements in Tunisia and Egypt. Unlike Iran, the GPO in Tunisia and Egypt did not rely solely on ICT to continue with its movements despite the initial utilization of electronic medium. When governmental apparatus in both Tunisia and Egypt shut down Internet services during the Jasmine and Tahrir Revolutions, the GPO converted its activities from solely relying on the cyber public forum to the traditional public forum in claiming the street through continuous mass demonstration and refusing abandoning its visibility on the street. The interconnectedness of these demonstrations through direct face-to-face human contacts enabled the GPO maintain continuous voice. The GPO in both Tunisia and Egypt was also successful in utilizing limited innovative measures in remaining connected with the world through non-locally registered Internet and cell phone services and benefiting from news coverage provided by international journalists and television networks. In essence, the GPO in Tunisia and Egypt had transformed the streets into parallel forums of engagement similar to the cyber space. This was particularly important to maintain visibility and influence once the tyrannical regimes in Tunisia and Egypt shut down Internet services and responded with crackdown and oppressive measures against the demonstrators. Such continuum in visibility placed pressure on Western democracies to change their positions from supporting the Mubarak regime under the guise of stability to supporting people's cry for freedom. Tunisian and Egyptian tyrannical regimes responded to Western pressure and scaling down on violence since their military and economy relied heavily on Western democracies. This type of pressure, however, was not effective in Iran because of the Iranian regime's independence from such associations with Western democracies.

It is worth mentioning that not all GPOs operate in the same cycle of self-discovery and self-reinvention as illustrated in Figure 1. Some GPOs are not complex and may even be linear in their operational dynamics, without subscribing to the "accidental" characteristics of the complex GPO. As a consequence, the linear participant-observer (LPO) is removed from the deterministic self-discovery process and locked in minuscule response to socio-political issues and events.

To avoid such limitations, the LPO has to be more effective by benefiting from complexity and moving beyond the Newtonian paradigms of local causality, predictability, gravitation, and objective reality in order to transform to a complex GPO (Wheatley, 2006). A complex GPO observes the world subjectively while interconnecting with other complex, global participant-observers around the world through circular and autonomous operational networks and by utilizing ICT through processes of fusion and corresponding effects. Despite the GPO's weakness caused by the irreversible nature of its circular dynamic in self-discovery, the complex nature of the phenomenon is far more effective than its linear counter-part, particularly because of the qualitative capacity of self-discovery and self-reinvention of the GPO. In utilizing ICT in the input-output exchange and influencing social capital on local levels, the complex GPO, through its interconnected global network, is injecting local initiatives into the global arena and impacting governmental response. The resulting *triangulated* association between the GPO, governance, and local/global orientation, while utilizing ICT, is becoming an innovative measure in citizen activities and a new archetype in global participatory process. Figure 2 illustrates this triangulating association.

**Figure 2: The Triangulating Association of the Complex Global Participant-Observer**



This type of innovation is emerging everywhere in the world with productive resource in communication paths, shared knowledge, collective identity, and values (Resnick, 2000). We witnessed this phenomenon after September 11, 2001 when citizens from around the world came together through information-sharing technology in order to show solidarity with the American people (United Nations, 2001; September 11 News). The interconnectedness of the GPOs and their collective response to 9/11 enabled the transformation of not only the world through defensive measures against terrorism but also in exposing the political manipulation of the tragic event (Tyler, 2003). We also witnessed the GPO emerging along the continuum between remotest villages in Kenya and metropolitan cities such as Berlin and Chicago to celebrate the election of the first African-American as President of the United States (Associated Press, 2008; Naughton, Coghlan, and Owen, 2008).

Other examples can be witnessed in political campaigns, grass-root e-networks, criminal justice e-networks, and polling networks. In political campaigns we can see the GPO emerging when we look at the presidential campaign launched by then Senator Barack Obama (*accessible. ie*, 2009). Through his e-interconnectedness with voters, Senator Obama was able to overcome and marginalize his short political experience as a first term junior senator from Illinois with minimum legislative record and win the nomination of his political party by defeating career politicians with long track record and name reorganization, and ultimately defeating his Republican opponent to be elected president of the United States in November 2008 (Newsweek, 2008). Another example is the use of the Internet in 2004 by former Vermont Governor Howard Dean to connect with voters. Governor Dean was a pioneer in using the Internet as an effective medium to become the front runner in his party to be nominated for president of the United States (Wolf, 2004). His website, *Dean for America*, began an unconventional method in fundraising and political campaigning that had no precedence before (Rainie, Cornfield and Horrigan, 2005). Unfortunately for Dean, it was television, another e-network that Dean under-utilized that caused him his defeat (Noonan, 2004). The repeated image on TV of Dean yelling hysterically to generate enthusiasm among his supporters in Des Moines (Suellentrop, 2004) after he came third in the Iowa Caucus (CNN, 2004) did not resonate well with voters elsewhere in the nation who knew little about him (Trippi, 2004).

An example of a grassroots interest group e-network is MoveOn.com. The network emerged during President Clinton's impeachment episode as a form of frustration with partisan warfare in Washington, D.C., waste of taxpayers' money and governmental focus on what some citizens preserved as minor infidelity issue. The group utilized the Internet as a forum for political discourse (*moveon.org*, 2009; Shaw, 2004). The emerging website, *MoveOne.org* became a key-player in impacting political agenda and pushing the trends in favor of liberal policies (*truthdig.com*, 2008). Another example is the *Tea Party* movement, a conservative group created in 2009 in response to President Obama's healthcare reform (*teapartypatriots.org*, 2009). The movement grew to include millions of Americans who were dissatisfied with governmental performance and was responsible for the Republican Party taking control of Congress after the Midterm elections in November 2010 (Grinberg, McLaughlin and Simon, 2010). The *Tea Party* also produced its own candidates in local, regional and national elections, forced a shift in the Republican Party's ideological orientation toward a conservative base, and is morphing steadily toward presenting itself as a possible third party alternative (Zeleny, 2010).

Not only politicians and political groups are using ICT to connect with citizens but also law enforcement agencies. For example, the United States Department of Justice has developed a network known as Amber Alert (*amberalert.org*, 2009) in order to engage citizens to partner with law enforcement agencies and help in the search and safe recovery of a missing child. Many organizations also use electronic medium in order to measure public opinion during an election or voters' response toward specific public policy issue. Examples of such organizations are the Gallup Poll, ABC News, Associated Press, CNN, Fox News, New York Times, Washington Post, CBS News, Zogby International, and Time (Best and Radcliff, 2005).

These illustrations demonstrate that the complex GPO is benefiting from mutual causality (Milsum, 1968) in order to activate positive and negative feedback (Eden, Landshoff, Olive and Polkinghorne, 2002). Within such feedback the complex GPO is acting as a "strange attractor" in order to self-organize (Feltz, 2006) through randomized, unpredictable chaotic processes of change (Gleick, 1988) both within its own operational dynamics as well as within social capital. Self-organizing systems produce and change their structures and components (Little, 1999).

Can the GPO force change in governance through mutual causality (Milsum, 1968) and cause variations through the interconnected global ICT systems to produce phase shifts through disequilibrium-equilibrium- disequilibrium around the world? In other words, can the ecology and evolution of the GPO's operational dynamics be predicted to yield a promising success? The answer to these questions is difficult especially when complexity teaches us that prediction is useless since there are many forces interplay in the making of future events (Gleick, 1988). Yet, complexity also teaches us that for any initial condition, regardless of how small, there are larger corresponding reactions on the longer trajectory (Lewin, 2000). Based on this, one can anticipate that the new GPO can indeed cause initial variations that will have greater consequences on the global political, social and economic conditions.

### ***Contrasting between the Global Participant-Observer and E-Governance***

The utility of ICT in citizenry is voluntary and proactive. It is also forcing governance adopt the same medium in the process of innovation in public service and responding to citizen demands. This adoption resulted in the formation of a new phenomenon in public service known as e-governance. E-Governance, however, is different from the GPO. To begin with, e-governance is compulsory and reactive in its nature. It is a process of reform in the way Government works and engages public agencies with citizens and businesses through the use of information technologies, such as Wide Area Networks (WAN), the Internet, the World Wide Web, and mobile computing to improve service delivery (Bhatnagar, 2009; West, 2004). The aim is to make government more efficient and effective.

The process of e-governance is organized, planned, regulated, formative, official, coordinated, hierarchical, and take place within traditional organizational settings with assigned tasks and delegated staff. The operation dynamics of the GPO, on the other hand, is unplanned, often uncoordinated, informative, unofficial, spontaneous, flat, horizontal, non-hierarchical, seeking loops and networks, and lacks traditional organizational settings.

GPO's operations are not geared toward improving efficiency and are not engaged in a service delivery model. Rather, they are oriented toward demanding better services from government, more openness, more transparency, and more accountability. The GPO, as such, is an activist utilizing ICT in order to seek favorable responses from governments to its aspirations. E-Governance, on the other hand, is a response measure by government utilizing ICT to seek its own effectiveness and efficiency. Table 1 illustrates these differences.

**Table 1: Differences between E-Governance and the Global Participant Observer**

<b>N</b>	<b>E-Governance</b>	<b>The Global Participant Observer</b>
<b>1</b>	Structured	Non-structured
<b>2</b>	Highly bureaucratic	Highly personal
<b>3</b>	Planned	Spontaneous
<b>4</b>	Requires traditional organizational setting	Does not require organizational setting
<b>5</b>	Rigid	Fluid
<b>6</b>	Formative	Non-formative
<b>7</b>	Efficiency oriented	Demand oriented
<b>8</b>	Service delivery network	Advocacy network
<b>9</b>	Allopoietic and top-down driven	Autopoietic and bottom-up driven
<b>10</b>	Knowledge-management oriented	Knowledge-development oriented
<b>11</b>	Citizen as a listener	Citizen as a speaker

An importance difference between the GPO and e-governance is that the GPO is autopoietic in its operational dynamics. E-governance, on the other hand, is allopoietic. The autopoietic operation of the GPO is able to self-organize while maintaining its own boundaries. It is bottom-up, fueled by the GPO-provided content and participation in the production and transformation of the operation's components. Thus, the GPO's operational dynamic is continually remaking itself through the ability to generate its own components (Grant, 2006). For example, the GPO in Iran used Facebook as a medium of communication and interactions between Iranian citizens and the world while confronting the regime. The utility of Facebook to transmit information was self-organizing and constantly changing through a process that was bottom-up and taking place within the GPO's own self-transformative components. Allopoietic in e-governance, on the other hand, is a top-down process that procedures something different from itself. The boundaries of an allopoietic e-governance are defined by the citizen-observer, not by government itself (Grant, 2006). So, while the GPO self-organizes and continually reinvents itself within its own boundaries in a bottom-up dynamic, e-governance, on the other hand, is a top-down process of creating something other than itself within boundaries defined by outside customers.

E-governance is also knowledge management oriented, while the GPO focuses on knowledge development. Knowledge, for the GPO is a component of self-production and a representation of pre-given reality based on observation and context development (Pamkowska, 2008). Knowledge in e-governance, on the other hand, is input orientation of managerial process designed to maximize efficiency instead of self-production through observation and context development. In e-governance, citizens are treated as listeners to governmental inputs. The GPO, however, in utilizing ICT is expressing its opinions on issues of interest to itself (Benkler, 2006).

## ***Challenges to the Global Participant-Observer***

ICT has transformed the citizen into a GPO. With that, public affairs and civic engagements are transformed into a global e-network platform of participatory process (Garson, 2006). This process operates locally while orients globally. The rapid morphing and interconnectedness of the world through information technology at the hands of engaged citizen activists is bridging citizens around the world within virtual communities (Rheingold, 2000). These communities are social aggregations emerged through information technology and human relationships (Pankowska, 2008) to form new mantras in human consciousness and in shifting issue-oriented networks from localized concentration toward globalized dimensions (Archer and Cameron, 2009). Yet, there are several weaknesses and threats facing the new global citizen (Oliver and Sanders, 2004). Table 2 represents some of them, along with strengths and opportunities.

**Table 2: SWOT Analysis of the Global Participant-Observer**

<b>N</b>	<b>Strength</b>	<b>Weaknesses</b>	<b>Opportunities</b>	<b>Threats</b>
1	The effective utility of information system technology	The reliance on ICT as the main avenue for operation	Can influence a shift in governance from Hobbesian paranoia to Kantian enlightenment	Use of information system technology by tyrannical governments
2	Global and supportive of large groups	Leaderless	Tyrannical regimes have to morph or collapse	Tyrannical regimes buying time through suppression
3	Interconnected and larger social network	Uncoordinated and unstructured	Utilizes democratic means to give voice to suppressed causes	Censorship
4	Engaging and enhances self-awareness	Demands or goals can vary	Operates locally and thinks/engages globally	Tyrannical governments chocking of the GPO within restrictive norms
5	Can form rapid response to boycott organizations that cooperate with tyrannical	Difficult to satisfy all needs	Emerging	Access to remote areas in the world that lack information technology
6	Spontaneous	Lack of common ground for interpreting different values and needs	Allows people to transcend stereotypes	Saturation of information and difficulty in determining accuracy
7	Personal	Lacks strategy and organization	Maintaining history	Information overload, digital divide, and fragmentation of attention/discourse
8	Fluid	Relies on ICT updates by designers, technicians and administrators	Can marginalize reliance on traditional media sources	May reduce social capital and face to face interactions
9	Self-organizing	Cost	Can influence traditional news sources	May marginalize population that do not adopt ICT
10	Flat and horizontal	Relies on separate legal status applicable to ICT	Renewable energy	Machiavellian use of filtration
11	Autonomous	Inability to reverse trajectory of learning curve	Continuous dynamics	Manipulation of inability to reverse learning curve

As Table 2 demonstrates, one of the threats to the GPO is the use of the same ICT by governmental apparatus to control, suppress, and sensor information. For example, after the worldwide attention to Iran's reform movement in 2009 as a response to the GPO's activities, the Iranian regime hired the Swedish telecommunication company Siemens-Nokia to install new surveillance devices in all cell phones sold in Iran. The devices enabled the Iranian regime monitor the GPO's activities in Iran and prevent it from communicating anti-regime information to the outside world (Rhoads and Chao, 2009). In Egypt and as a remedy to government's shut-down of Egyptian-registered Internet providers, the GPO was innovative in remaining connected by utilizing other service providers registered outside Egypt or through hacking (Mail Online, 2011). In doing so, the GPO in Egypt was able to learn from the limitations suffered by the e-movement in Iran due governmental censorship.

The GPO's uncensored use of ICT is vital for its operations and constitutes its blood-life. Without free access to information the GPO is paralyzed. This dependence on ICT is both a source of effectiveness and weakness. It is a source of effectiveness because it allows the GPO to remain informed, engaged, interconnected, global, and spontaneous. Yet, it is a source of weakness because ICT can be manipulated by various governmental apparatus in order to render the GPO ineffective (Coleman and Blumler, 2009).

A particular point of strength that the GPO possesses is its capacity to offset offenses through immediate counter-measures, such as forcing boycotts or sanctions. In the past, for example, citizens engaged in similar measures in response to a repressive policy or regime, such as boycotting the Apartheid regime in South Africa during the 1980s (Martin, 2006). Yet, the time it took for the world to come together and expose Apartheid in South Africa and ultimately cause its demise was long and exhaustive. ICT enables citizens around the world expose a repressive policy and regimes in much shorter time and through rapid global response. Companies such as Nokia and their businesses with tyrannical regimes might have gone unnoticed or ignored in the past. Today, however, and due to the interconnectedness of the GPO's operational dynamics, these types of businesses suffer from poor public relations through boycotts (Zetter, 2009) which force stakeholders rethink such endeavors in the future. Therefore, what might have gone unnoticed in the past is now exposed by the GPO. Globalization and the global e-interconnectedness are forcing a change that is moving rapidly toward an open theater.

The GPO is also forcing governmental shift from the Hobbesian notion of the savage state of nature (Hobbes, 1651/2008) and Machiavellian policies of the end justifying the means (Machiavelli, 1513/1995) to more of a Kantian type of an enlightened governance (Balibar, 2004). Although Hobbesian regimes may continue in their attempts to prolong their repressive forms of governance, they cannot do so for long (Havel, 2009). They must either morph into open and transparent political systems or collapse from within under the weight of their outdated political structures (Berman and Waller, 2005). This provides an opportunity for the GPO to demand governance with more transparency and openness (Eaton, 2009). It also provides a threat since Hobbesian governments will continue in their attempt to drain the GPO from its energy by chocking it within repressive and outdated socio-political structures in order to prolong the lives of their regimes (Linz, 2000).



Democracy, therefore, is an important ingredient for the proper function of the GPO. A democratic system possesses the legal mechanisms and instruments that can act as a guardian for civil liberties and free expression of thoughts, ideas, and opinions (Brooks and Manza, 2007). Because of the constitutionally-protected rights in a democratic system, the need for the protection of free speech is vital (Oliver and Sanders, 2004). In today's political interconnectedness (Archer and Cameron, 2009), this need is more important than ever before.

By utilizing democratically protected rights the GPO can operate autonomously on local levels while connecting with other citizens in the world in common issues of interest and giving voice to the oppressed. In doing so, democratic systems can enable the GPO give voice to suppressed issues around the world and reach out to those who are unable to speak out for themselves. The examples of Tunisia and Egypt are clear illustrations of the importance of democratic societies in connecting with social movements under tyranny and magnifying these movements' voices. Without these democracies, the voices of freedom under tyranny are silenced and there will be no one to hear them. To build on the philosophical riddle "If a tree falls in a forest and no one is around to hear it, does it make a sound?" (Mann and Twiss, 2010), one can also ask: "If a voice cried out for freedom under tyranny and there was no one in democratic societies to hear it, would it make a sound?"

Some of other challenges facing the GPO are external, such as deliberate governmental maneuvers to circumvent public demands through restrictive measures. Examples of such measures are avoidance of issues posed by the GPO, the marginalization of governmental response to pressing issues, or the slowness in answering demands (Margolis and Resnick, 2000). Other challenges are internal, such as the saturation of information in ICT that may cause confusion for the GPO (Norris, 2001) and difficulty in establishing accuracy. Internal challenges can also include problems of information overload, digital divide, fragmentation of attention and discourse (Benkler, 2006), the marginalization of populations that do not utilize ICT, the disadvantage of societies such as Sudan and Afghanistan that are incapable of emulating the GPO models in Tunisia and Egypt due to inadequacy in utilizing ICT, and the reduction in traditional social interactions of face-to-face communication and contacts by heavily relying on the cyber space (Resnick, 2000).

ICT has enabled new social capital and knowledge production to emerge. Liberation from past barriers provided the GPO with opportunities to engage in wider range of information gathering and exchange in order to bring forth richer diversity in social capital through globally-interconnected digital environment (Benker, 2006). These opportunities had enabled the GPO retain history, maintain renewable energy, transcend stereotype (Resnick, 2000), and force traditional information networks reach out to areas that often were ignored by mainstream media. The interchange between ICT and GPO is forcing what once was considered to be mainstream media to relinquish its stranglehold on information access and allowed for new systems of information emerge through wider and more open accessibility. Today if the mainstream media refuses to cover critical issues in public policy or expose corruption due to political influence, the ICT/GPO interchange can force it change its position under public pressure and cover these critical issues. For example, when the mainstream media's initial response to the social revolutions in Tunisia and Egypt was inadequate, marginalized or even wrong in its analysis, the

GPO's persistence in continuing with its social revolutions ultimately forced the mainstream media (both nationally and internationally) to shift gear and engage in support of its revolutions (AP, 2011; Lalami, 2011). Also, when the mainstream media refused the coverage of the anti-war protest during the Bush administration, or when it refused to expose the Monica Lewinsky scandal during the Clinton administration, websites such as *MoveOn.org* and the *Drudge Report* forced it pay attention under public pressure and cover these events (MoveOn.org, 2009; Drudge and Goldberg, 2003).

Other points of challenge include the lack strategy, organization, and common ground to interpret conflicting values by the GPO. They also include reliance on technological updates by designers, technicians and web administrators, as well as on the legal status for these technologies' applications (Pamkoowska, 2008). The GPO, nevertheless, can offset some of these weaknesses through its ability to self-organizing and remaining fluid, flat, horizontal, autonomous, spontaneous, uncontrolled and personal. Such an assurance is a manifestation that despite continuous threats to each developing phase in the GPO's self-organization and self-discovery process, the GPO can act on potentials and opportunities in order to neutralize these threats. For example, reactions to Mubarak's regime by the globally interconnected GPO forced Mubarak's own allies, such as the United States, demand an immediate and nonreversible transition toward democracy and cheered his resignation (White House, 2011). In another example when Iran misused ICT after the 2009 presidential elections we can witness global reaction resulting in larger attention to Iran's nuclear program that led to tougher UN-imposed economic sanctions (MacFarquhar, 2010). These sanctions can weaken the Iranian regime and provide opportunities for the GPO in Iran remain viable and influence future changes

Other examples include reaction to US attempts to silence WikiLeaks resulting in diplomatic embarrassment for the United States and further call for openness in foreign policy, as well as nominating WikiLeaks' founder for the 2011 Nobel Peace Prize (Cockburn, 2010; Dwyer, 2011; Lloyd, 2010; Markey, Boot, Campbell, Danin, Lippman, and Snyder, 2010); reaction to Myanmar government's crackdown on pro-democracy movement resulting in the lifting of house-arrest on Nobel Peace Prize winner Daw Aung San Suu Kyi (*NY Times*, 2010); and, reaction to President Bush's unilateral war on Iraq and the manipulation of mainstream media to promote the war efforts resulting in the pre-mature awarding of his successor, President Obama, with the 2009 Nobel Peace Prize (*NY Times* Editors, 2010). With such enactments on opportunities, the GPO can assess its weaknesses by building on its strengths in the process of creating its own future.

## ***Conclusion***

The ICT-induced social revolutions that engaged citizens in Tunisia (Crook, 2011), Egypt (Smith, 2011), and Iran (Morozov, 2009) with the world are unprecedented innovation in social activism (Gladwell, 2010). This new phenomenon is led by the global participant-observer (GPO). The GPO is responsible for the manifestation of continuous turbulences in global socio-political and economic equilibrium and leading the world to reorganize public affairs through random processes of change. Traditional policies of artificial engineering in sustaining the status quo can no longer operate in the dark and go unexamined or unchallenged, such as bailing-out

troubled financial institutions through tax dollar, over-regulating or de-regulating businesses, conducting wars, military buildups, censoring information, secrecy, intimidation of critical voices, and suppressing freedoms. The information revolution is penetrating all aspects of life and demanding an end to these types of practices through transparency, accountability, and openness.

The removal of physical constraints from the information networks has enabled human creativity form new type of social capital. We are now engaged both instrumentally and non-instrumentally in actions for material gains, psychological well-being, gratification, and social connectedness (Benker, 2006). The time it takes for us achieve our goals and aspiration today is shorter than the time it took for the previous generations to achieve similar goals and aspirations. ICT is infusing innovation to our response to social and political issues and fostering new changes on much faster scale. Existentialist identities of past decades are giving birth to new archetypes of interdependence, interconnectedness, self-organization, and openness. This new archetype is replacing the previous vertically-integrated hierarchies with new networks of horizontal social associations (Castells, 2009).

Older structures are collapsing or on their way to collapse. Newer dynamics are emerging randomly and without control, censorship, prediction, or artificial engineering. Humanity is transforming its social affiliations toward new forms of collaborative networks. Within these networks the new global philosopher-king is rediscovering itself and bringing forth to the light all those who are trapped in the dark.

From Tunisia's 2011 Jasmine Revolution (Alhomayed, 2011), to Egypt's 18 Days Tahrir Revolution of January 25, 2011 (Huffington Post, 2011), to Moldova's 2009 Twitter Revolution (Gladwell, 2010), to Iran's 2009 Green Movement ([www.robtex.com/dns/www.rahesabz.net.html](http://www.robtex.com/dns/www.rahesabz.net.html)), to the 2004 Orange Revolution in Ukraine ([www.infoukes.com/orange\\_revolution/](http://www.infoukes.com/orange_revolution/)), to Myanmar's pro-democracy movement that produced the Nobel Peace Prize winner Aung San Suu Kyi ([www.dassk.org](http://www.dassk.org) & [www.burmacampaign.org.uk](http://www.burmacampaign.org.uk)), to WikiLeaks' exposure of classified documents of various governments in the world in order to keep governance open and transparent (<http://213.251.145.96/>), to thousands of electronic sources for democratizing information such as the National Endowment for Democracy ([www.ned.org](http://www.ned.org)), Ushahidi in Africa ([www.ushahidi.com](http://www.ushahidi.com)), Harvard University's Berkman Center for Internet & Society (<http://cyber.law.harvard.edu>), Link TV ([linktv.com](http://linktv.com)), and Democracy Now ([www.democracynow.org](http://www.democracynow.org)): These are testimonies for the irreversible path toward openness and freedom launched by the infusion of ICT into global civic actions and the consequence emergence of the GPO as a new archetype in citizenry that is energetic, autonomous, informed, active, and engaging.

Activities by the GPOs may vary from one location to another. From one situation, event, or issue to another. Some of these activities may involve concerns regarding issues in an electoral process. Some may involve challenging issues to democracy. Others may expose corruption, fraud, or abuse of power by politicians and administrators. Some may involve environmental protection issuers, or concerns for consumer safety. The level of engagement may also vary. Some engagement may focus on building grass-roots networks. Others may focus on clashing with security apparatus. And, some may focus on a simply writing a comment in a blog.

Regardless of the particularities of these activities, the operational dynamics of the GPO are spontaneous, raw, leaderless, lacking traditional organizational settings, and interconnected. They are also highly individualistic, affirming personal core values and beliefs that are innovative in the creation of continuous cycles of phase shifts and random change. During each of these phases the GPO emerges as a “strange attractor” and as an agent of change that infuses ICT into civic participatory process in order to cause dissipation of older structures and give birth to new social capital.

On their own, Information and Communication Technology systems (ICT) do not create revolutions and social movements. People do. ICT, however, can act as a catalyst for social change and transform the classic citizen of traditional nation-states from a stagnant, local, fragmented, isolated, and slow-action citizen into a new, vibrant, engaged, informed, autonomous, and innovative citizen. This new Netizen is operating locally while connected globally to force social change. It is the new Global Participant-Observer. Despite the limitations of this new leaderless citizenry, it is highly effective in continually developing toward forcing openness, awareness, and accountability in the globally interconnected human society.

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