

The Chinese bloggers revolution

Introduction

In the 90s when Internet was just created it displayed a simple page containing only text and sometimes an image. However having the ability to share content and receive it world wide without any sort of borders or restrictions was remarkable. Internet, thereafter, started to grow immensely over a short period of time becoming a very influential part of people's lives. The world had suddenly become very approachable and free. This changed when commercialization's, corporations and governments started to realize how important Internet was becoming and therefore deciding to take it into their own hands. Internet had suddenly become an entire world of its own which to some needed rules, regulations and borders to control the immense stream of information that was spreading worldwide. To what at first seemed, and to many still seems, to be a borderless, global, everybody connecting, democratic network has suddenly turned into a network controlled, censored, filtered and containing state borders. States such as Iran, Saudi Arabia, Syria, Vietnam, Tunisia and especially China do strict political Internet censorship by blocking IP addresses and by dynamic content filters. China, having a huge chunk of the worlds IP addresses, and being a communist country have been faced with a problem. They want self-expression to follow the party line. This has created the bases of a type of revolution that has started to rise in China with Chinese bloggers expressing their own thoughts and beliefs and posting that on the Internet for the entire world to see. Thereby completely going against Chinese laws.

The start of a new civilization

In 1996, the early years of Internet development, John Perry Barlow, wrote "A declaration of independence of cyberspace" in Davos Switzerland. It was a paper that concentrated on the fact that governments, laws and regulations were not welcome on the rapidly growing Internet. He wrote it as a response to the passing into law of the telecommunications Act of 1996 in the United States. When reading this paper it is very clear that it was written in the early years of Internet development, because it gives a clear sense of what Internet was suppose to be, and the fear he had to what it will become. It starts off by saying. "We have no elected government, nor are we likely to have one, so I address you with no greater authority than that with which liberty itself speaks. I declare the global social space we are building to be naturally independent of the tyrannies you seek to impose on us. You have no moral right to rule us nor do you possess any methods of enforcement we have true reason to fear." He continues by saying, "We are creating a world that all may enter without privilege or prejudice according by race, economic power, military force, or station of birth". This new world, according to John Barlow, has no borders, restrictions or is not connected to any type of government system. It is a new civilization based primarily on the mind where self-expression, and freedom is important. It is a place where information can be reproduced and distributed infinitely without any cost and without having to fear the consequences. He finished off by saying. "These increasingly hostile and colonial measures place us in the same position as those previous lovers of freedom and self-determination who had to reject the authorities of distant, uninformed powers. We must declare our virtual selves immune to your sovereignty, even as we continue to consent to your rule over our bodies.

We will spread ourselves across the planet so that no one can arrest our thoughts". After reading John Perry Barlow's declaration of independence it is clear that the Internet at first was created with a completely different intention than that what it developed into. In fact his greatest fear has finally become reality. The Internet has simply become an identical reflection of the real world. It not only contains laws and regulation but also real world borders (countries, continents, states) are also visible on the Internet.

Internet today

It is clear that Internet has changed and grown rapidly from what it was first intended to be and what it has formed into today. Paul Garrin a politically active video artist from the 1990s explains in his interview, Internet tyranny, what Internet eventually has turned into. In his interview he explains that as the Internet started to scale an inversion of the net came about. The Internet was created at first to be a decentralized peer-to-peer network but as its popularity increased it soon changed into a centralized one. He compares this new Internet with that of cable TV, where content on the edge of the world will not necessarily reach other people on the other edge of the world. At first commercialization was forbidden on the net, but this soon changed and started to become a threat to independent development, content and production distribution. It all became a money issue, and the only way in which one could assure the existence and the universal distribution of independent non-corporate, non-commercial art content and cultural content was to in fact buy brand width.

According to Paul Garrin there are three common myths about the Internet, the first myth is that the Internet is public, the second is that it has no borders and the third myth is that it has no center. All of these myths are false. The Internet is not public because it is a privately owned infrastructure in an unregulated environment. The Internet is not borderless. It may seem borderless because it may appear as if we can spread and receive information from all over the world without any censorship or restrictions, but this is not the case. What allows the Internet to send traffic back and forth is a protocol called border gateway protocol (BGP). It is a protocol that collects a table of IP networks or 'prefixes' which assign network reachability among autonomous systems (AS). It is designed to make routing decisions based on path, network policies and or rule sets. Firewalls can then be seen as the custom police that decide which traffic information may enter and which may not. BGP was created to replace the Exterior Gateway Protocol (EGP), which allowed fully decentralized routing, and made the Internet a completely decentralized system containing no center. This, however has changed, and the Internet does in fact have a center which is called the root domain, the starting point of the top level domain structure on the internet. It is essential to routing or directing traffic based on the use of domain name systems. And it is structured in a hierarchical delegation of authority. The Internet in fact has simply become a military model based on hierarchical delegations of authorities and a centralized, demand and control. So in fact the internet has turned into as a "big brother" monitoring your every move, every message, every picture that you have every done or put internet.

The Great Firewall of China

The Peoples Republic of China has become an expert in Internet censorship. With its

communist regime it is important for everyone within China to follow the parties line and not openly insult or offend it. One may ask why, if China is so focused and obsessed about keeping the outside out and keeping self-expression under control, have they ever agreed to welcoming the internet into their country in the first place. This too, is a money issue. China needs the Internet in order to be connected to the globe and in order to be an international trading power. Internet censorship in the PRC is conducted under a wide variety of administrative regulations. More than sixty Internet regulations have been made in accordance to those laws by the government. The main reason why the PRC suddenly started to implement Internet laws, and censorship was due to the escalation of protests on anti-Japanese, anti-pollution, and anti-corruption that were openly publicized using instant messenger services, chat rooms, and text messengers. The government saw how fast and efficiently information was being spread through the use of the Internet and decided to take matters into their own hands before it was too late. Today there are over 30,000 Internet police in the PRC, erasing within minutes all critical comments appearing on Internet forums, blogs and major portals. The equipment used by the PRC for censorship is more widespread and advanced than in any other country in the world. It not only blocks websites that go against the regime but also monitors the Internet access of individuals. In 1998 the Ministry of Public Security (MPS) created "The Golden Shield Project" it began its process in 2003 and in 2006 the first part of the project passed the national inspection. It is a project that has created a new communication network and computer information system that is designed to monitor Internet activity more closely and improve their capability and efficiency. Many refer to this project as The Great Firewall of China. The manner in which it works is that it prevents IP addresses from being routed through, and consists of firewalls and proxy servers at the Internet gateways. These huge surveillance measurements have made life very difficult for the Chinese people who already are caged in and detached from the rest of the world. Internet was supposed to create this opening for the Chinese people to reconnect and finally truly find out what is happening in the world around them, and express who they are and where their opinions lie. Just like John Perry Barlow said, it should have been a place where "Anyone anywhere can express his or her beliefs, no matter how singular, without fear of being coerced into silence or conformity".

Chinese bloggers revolution

The Internet's biggest form of self-expression is most likely blogging. Even though China's network is being censored so severely and monitored constantly, it has become the world's second largest blogging country in the world after the United States, with 160 million users. The blogs have various characters, some are political, some are unusual but most of the Chinese blogs on the Internet are simply about expressing oneself: me, myself and my life. Some people wonder if this huge flow of personal expression can change the country. The blogs are so accessible and it has become so extremely easy to publish one's thoughts on the Internet that it is nearly revolutionary. It may be revolutionary but the government has still not lost any grip on power. As long as the blogger stays away from the forbidden words / terms such as Chinese political terms, Terms related to the banned Falun Gong spiritual movement, Specific overseas Web Sites, Publications and Dissident Groups etc. then their blogs will be left alone. As soon as one of the forbidden terms are found on a blog an alert is called to an editor to examine

the messages that contain them and possibly take action to remove the blog.

Bloggers that concentrate on politics have gotten to the point where they are openly being sarcastic about governmental movements, and at the same time are writing about things that the mainstream press won't write about, for example rural unrest. There is a very big down side however to blogging about these issues, because by posting this information onto the net the central government is a lot more informed about, for example, corruption in provincial cities, and because these blogs are helping in that sense the borders are slowly being pushed forward. One of the most famous political bloggers in the People Republic of China is Michael Anti, a Chinese journalist. The main reason why he became very famous was that Microsoft (a western company) deleted his blog at the end of 2005. This became a very big issue around the world and contributed to ongoing debates about the role of Western Companies in China's censorship program. Other western companies that have complied to Chinese laws are yahoo.cn and google.cn, meaning that not everything you search for within google.cn is available. The argument that these companies are giving to the rest of the world is that if one wishes to do business in a particular country, than they must obey their rules. According to Michael Anti, with even Western companies bowing to China's senses the situation, referring to the Chinese bloggers, is deteriorating. However the Chinese people have no choice then to keep on going. This is the only way in which they can express themselves, The media is controlled and public forums are controlled, the only thing they have is blogs that in some small way they are able to use that to express who they are.

There are also Chinese bloggers that have no political intentions what so ever. In early 2004 several sexual oriented blogs began appearing on the web. The most popular bloggers, in this area of interest where, Muzi Mei and Zhyying Qingtong. They where known for sharing their personal sex stories online, and this eventually made them minor celebrities within China. Many people disapproved of this and these blogs where widely reported and criticized upon in mainland Chinese news media, which eventually resulted in blocking several of these blogs even till this day on. However due to these blogs a new movement had started to emerge in China. Artistic nude photography became a new trend and started to appear in a few magazines. Even a few Mainland Chinese newspapers started to show a couple of barely clothed photographs of women some of whom where even topless. This shows how blogs, even if they are censored and blocked can still have an impact on people.

Have to register to be able to blog

Bloggers that just talk about their normal everyday lives. Have the feeling you are connected to the outside world, a way to challenge their frustration out.

ENFORCEMENTS/IMPRISONMENT
WAYS TO GET AROUND THE SYSTEM
CONCLUSION FIREFOX PLUGIN PROJECTS

