



CEST

Centro de Estudos Sociedade e Tecnologia



Universidade de São Paulo

Bulletin - Volume 4, Number 4, May/2019

Are the internet and its technologies drivers of violence and extremism?

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The year 2019 is being marked by several acts of violence around the world, including Brazil. The diversification and sadness that characterize such event, the internet is used to both coordinate and to find inspiration content to operation and construction of artifacts used to harm and shock people. The deep web is cited by many as the place where people who perform violent acts against society plan such actions and find inspiration. For many, the Internet and its dark side, the deep web, represent the evil itself, even if such a thing is not related to the technology.

The history of the internet, as well as its benefits and challenges, are quite well-known topics. The rise of a multitude of communication services, such as social media and messaging applications, give an opportunity to any individual, without barriers of any order, to present his ideas, which promotes a level of freedom still unknown in the society. Personal affinities and interests are drivers. They are in the core of the creation of virtual communities, among which there are extremist groups, Milgran in "The Small World Problem" (1967) found evidence that humans are bonded together and form cohesive groups popularly known as the "seven degrees of separation between any two people." Such evidence is prior to the advent of the primordial technologies that support the internet. Even if Milgran had not been able to explain the implications of his findings, he contributed to an essential idea to interpret virtual organizations and groups.

For many, the Deep Web represents the evil itself.

The deep web technology was created in the mid-1980s based on the US military work. It was certainly not developed to foment evil or to bring evil affairs together. The deep-web also does not have layers with distinct "depths" (an allusion to an iceberg), but in a simplistic way, such layers are peer-to-peer networks in which you need to know an encryption key code to get access to content and people participating in such a network. To keep up the current metaphor, in the "shallow" layers of the deep web, one can find from technical discussions on various subjects, such as cybersecurity, to content related to illegal actions. It is not the technology but the personal interests that make an individual find related groups. Therefore, not only bad people navigate in the deep web. On the so-

called conventional internet extremist groups of all kinds, such as recruitment groups for Nazi parties or even for the now little-spoken Islamic state groups can be found. In the same way, children are observed and can even be enticed by

sexual predators in various types of popular services on the internet. Several publications have been dealing with this subject this year.

The technology only makes evident of the human relations that already exist in our society. It does not potentiate, nor it induces a heinous act. The relationship between society and technology made us free. It allows an individual to speak his own thoughts, without filters of the institutions that usually regulate the civil and military society. The internet is not democratic precisely because of the lack of regulatory institutions, although the notable effort they have made to democratize the internet abuses repeatedly occur. Freedom without criterion can also be harmful, which does not justify dictatorial actions of no nuance or intensity. Internet relationships develop according to what is known in academic circles as "complex networks", with emphasis on the law of power or free



scale network, or in the Granovetter network. Milgran's work is one of the first to note the phenomenon of complex networks, which explains the construction of social networks. In all these models, there is no ideological bias of any kind, only findings that human relationships behave in a way that is described in complex models. Ideas and discussions can be induced in social media, which can also curiously be analyzed from the point of view of complex networks.

Therefore, it can be argued that the current discussion is not focused on the correct point, since the issue is not on the internet or the deep web, but rather on social networks, with their complexity characteristics, and on how affinities and personal interests create bonds between people, regardless of the communication mechanisms. If such argument is valid, it is up to us to ask how to reshape relations between people so that morbid interests or interests not aimed at the common good (based on Aristotle's definition) can be fought and or mitigated, assuming naturally that this is the interest of the community or represents the common good. It seems that the issue goes beyond the technological domain and stumbles upon discussions, such as those proposed by Viktor Frankl about the meaning of life of each individual. Note that this is not a common matter of self-help. For those interested check Frankl's study and intervention in San Quentin prison. For further reference, search the internet for "lecture from Viktor Frankl San Quentin" or the brief description in the book "Neurotisierung der Menschheit - oder Rehumanisierung der Psychotherapie?" by the same author.

From the view of the impaired lives, it is important to reflect on where the damage is consistently increasing in the recent morbid actions or in the attacks and harassments suffered daily by several people, always considering the internet communication, exclusively. No case can be ignored, but rather evaluated with due care and seriousness, applying its own concepts so that these phenomena are understood and treated to reduce the number of victims and prevent heinous acts. And from this perspective, the internet is not just part of the threat mechanism, but rather the mechanism for obtaining data and fighting against such evils. After all, internet technologies form what is

technically called the control plan, where all communication can be traced. Obviously, it is not a trivial task, and several privacy issues are part of this discussion. In spite of all the aphorisms and discourses, the question goes beyond the technical field to a transdisciplinary vision: how to deal with democratic rights and duties and their applications in virtual environments? How to guarantee civil liberties and democratic values in today's deregulated environments? Our society urgently needs to leave the passivity and discuss the relevant questions to first decide what is desired and what are the consequences of these desires the virtual communities and their interaction with the physical society.



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This article is a result of the author's ascertainment and analysis, without compulsorily reflecting CEST's opinion.