



Ars Electronica Festival 2011

Public Square Squared – The Front Lines of the Info-War

Sunday, September 4 / 10:30 AM to 6 PM / Brucknerhaus, Mittlerer Saal

Opinions differ as to whether Facebook, Twitter & Co. play a positive or a negative role now. Some claim that social media lead to freedom and democracy, and cite the successful protest movements in Egypt and Tunisia to make their case. Totally wrong, say others, bringing up how rioting in the streets of London was organized via Twitter and Facebook.

Perhaps even more divisive than the question of the role social media play in society is that of how the authorities should deal with them. For example, when officials in San Francisco shut down cell phone transmission towers in order to, if not prevent the organization of violent protests, then at least to make it a lot more difficult, bloggers accused them of deploying tactics à la Mubarak, who terminated internet access as soon as Egyptians began taking it to the streets. Or how about the way British Prime Minister David Cameron reacted to the latest unrest in England by calling for extensive surveillance measures targeting Twitter & Co.–and promptly garnered expressions of support from China and Iran! Some see such proposals and discussions as the first shots in an impending info-war that will realign the relationship between a free Web and censorship & control by the authorities.

Public Square Squared / Speakers and Topics

Public Square Squared is investigating the opposing fronts in this info-war, and seeking the counsel of activists and analysts who have been right at the center of recent and ongoing rebellions and revolts. Tunisian blogger Lina Ben Mhenni and Turkish sociologist Zeynep Tufekci will shed light on the significance and consequences of the revolutions in Tunisia and Egypt; Spanish-Syrian blogger Leila Nachawati will compare the protest movements in those two countries and analyze the coverage of them in mainstream media worldwide; Hu Yong, author and university lecturer (new media), reports on the restrictions with which freelance journalists are confronted in China; filmmaker and blogger Tan Siok Siok will give an account of shooting her documentary film “Twittamentary”; and Markus Bechedahl will present “Digitale Gesellschaft,” a new, network-linked organization dedicated to expanding and defending the rights of internet users in Germany. Plus, prizewinners in the Prix Ars Electronica’s Digital Communities category will elaborate on their visions of a modern, open society and, thus, one in which people are interconnected online.

Ars Electronica Festival 2011: <http://www.aec.at/origin/en/category/blog/>

Public Square Squared: <http://www.aec.at/origin/en/2011/08/01/public-square-squared-how-social-fabric-is-weaving-a-new-era/>

With queries, please contact

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Public Square Squared / Schedule

After the Revolution	
10:30	David Sasaki (US)
10:50	Lina Ben Mhenni (TN)
11:10	Leila Nachawati (ES)
11:30	Zeynep Tufekic (TR)
11:40	Discussion
Prix Forum – Digital Communities	
14:00	Felipe Heusser (CL), Alexandra Jönsson (UK), Tim Causer (UK), Cliff Hammet (USA) Moderation: Beatrice Achaleke (AT)
Before the Revolution	
14:50	Hu Yong (CN)
15:10	Tan Siok Siok (SG)
15:30	Markus Bechedahl (DE)
15:50	Discussion
16:20	Round Table
17:30	Isaac Mao (CN)

Public Square Squared is curated by David Sasaki (US) and Isaac Mao (CN).

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