

Music for the Jilted Generation: Open-Source Public Diplomacy*

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Summary

The development of new technology has spawned different ideas and new approaches to engaging with people around the world. One such development is the ability to approach public diplomacy based on the methodology employed in the production of open-source software. This approach provides the means to engage with communities of other concerned actors, communicate through human voices, place emphasis on understanding lessons from previous initiatives, and vitally engage on the bases of the interests of those communities. Ideas can no longer be seen as owned by a country; mass communication provides the means to see beyond national claims of unity. Recognizing this and embracing the means to engage with communities that are defined by ideology rather than physical borders provides the potential to render public diplomacy initiatives more relevant to the target audience and ultimately more influential.

Keywords

Open source, online, internet, network, public diplomacy, technology, new information and communication methodologies, foreign policy.

Open-Source Public Diplomacy

The recent article by Eytan Gilboa discussed at length the conceptualization of public diplomacy in its many iterations and understandings.¹ At the core of these various definitions is that public diplomacy is about using available means to influence the actions of foreign populations. Nick Cull refers to this as 'an international actor's attempt to manage the international environment through engagement with a foreign public'.² While many may emphasize perceptions or understanding, it is *action* that has an impact on the international environment.³

*) The author would like to acknowledge the contribution of Aurélie Bröckerhoff in revising this paper, as well as the input of the anonymous referees, both of whose comments developed the article and its structure, as well as the author's thinking, thus greatly enriching the work.

¹) Eytan Gilboa, 'Searching for a Theory of Public Diplomacy', *The ANNALS of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 2008, vol. 616, see particularly pp. 55-58.

²) Nicholas Cull, *Public Diplomacy: Lessons from the Past* (Los Angeles CA: University of Southern California, 2007), p. 6.

³) See, for example, *Changing Perceptions: Review of Public Diplomacy (Wilton Review)*, 22 March 2002, online at http://www.fco.gov.uk/Files/kfile/PDWiltonReview_March2002.pdf. Equally, the mission statement

As the practice of public diplomacy develops and the barriers to entry become lower, there is an increasing need to consider new possibilities to add to the toolbox of existing methodologies. One such possibility is a shift in mindset that will enable adoption of an open-source approach. This has the potential to break down the hierarchical producer and recipient relationship, and creates a means for collective action.

David Rothkopf has already argued for a change in mindset to recognize the 'tectonic shifts that are transforming the very nature of global society' as a result of the 'information revolution'. He noted:

The realpolitik of the new era is cyberpolitik, in which the actors are no longer just states, and raw power can be countered or fortified by information power. The mighty will continue to prevail, but the sources, instruments and measures of that might are dramatically changed.⁴

This argument placed the ability to exert influence through information alongside economic, military and political power. To build on this argument, it is necessary not only to consider information alongside other pillars of power, but also to consider a shift in mindset in the development of public diplomacy initiatives.

The different mindsets for production have been characterized as the 'cathedral' and the 'bazaar' by Eric Raymond in his book *The Cathedral and the Bazaar*. He typified the cathedrals as, 'carefully crafted by individual wizards or small bands of mages working in splendid isolation', while describing the alternative as 'a great babbling bazaar of differing agendas and approaches'.⁵ Much of current public diplomacy practice can be characterized by Eric Raymond's 'cathedral'. They are typified by hierarchical structures, creating centralized networks that are intended to achieve goals determined by a traditionally defined elite.

Inside the Cathedral

R.S. Zaharna demonstrated the existence of this cathedral approach, while arguing for the benefits of networked communication.⁶ Many of the structures cur-

for DG Relex of the European Commission states: 'The Directorate-General for External Relations contributes to the formulation by the Commissioner for External Relations, together with her colleagues of an effective and coherent external relations policy for the European Union, so as to enable the EU to assert its identity on the international scene'; see http://ec.europa.eu/dgs/external_relations/general/mission_en.htm.

⁴ David J. Rothkopf, 'Cyberpolitik: The Changing Nature of Power in the Information Age', *Journal of International Affairs*, vol. 51, no. 2, spring 1998, p. 325-326. Also see Shaun Riordan, 'Reforming Foreign Services for the Twenty-First Century', *The Hague Journal of Diplomacy*, vol. 2, no. 2, September 2007, pp. 161-173.

⁵ Eric Steven Raymond, *The Cathedral and the Bazaar*, available online at <http://catb.org/~esr/writings/cathedral-bazaar/>.

⁶ R.S. Zaharna, 'The Soft Power Differential: Network Communication and Mass Communication in Public Diplomacy', *The Hague Journal of Diplomacy*, vol. 2, no. 3, 2007, pp. 213-228.

rently employed to conduct public diplomacy, particularly by governments, are also recognizable in George Dafermos' description of hierarchical bureaucracies.⁷ Under pressure, both within the international environment and from domestic demands for financial efficiency and valorization, many governments have sought to use public diplomacy to disseminate refined messages. In his first speech as UK Foreign Secretary, David Miliband argued that 'we need to think how we can deploy Britain's assets — both the soft power of ideas and influence, and the harder power of our economic and military incentives and interventions'.⁸ In addition, nation branding has become influential for the public diplomacy of a number of countries, with branding advisers holding key positions in the creation of strategy. These typify the cathedral mindset.

Soft power has become increasingly popular in political discussion, but as Joseph Nye notes, it 'is an analytical term, not a political slogan' and as such has a specific meaning:⁹

Soft power is the ability to get what you want by attracting and persuading others to adopt your goals. It differs from hard power, the ability to use the carrots and sticks of economic and military might to make others follow your will.¹⁰

In this expression of soft power, Nye reiterates the hierarchical position of the cathedral. The goals are created and then means are used to persuade others to enter into action in support of those goals. While public diplomacy organizations may align themselves with the language of dialogue, mutuality or two-way communication, the development of many strategies and programmes maintains a realist, state-based author-audience power relationship.

This conceptualization of programmes that create a dominant power relationship between a passive target audience and the international actor that is producing the message closely reflects Raymond's cathedral. As John Arquilla and David Ronfeldt have argued, 'some global actors are thus looking at the world more in terms of widespread networks than in terms of distinct groups and nations located in specific places'.¹¹ However, the attempt to deal with this *mêlée* of interests and what Giles Scott-Smith referred to as the 'crowded infosphere' have led some

⁷ George N. Dafermos, 'Management and Virtual Decentralized Networks: The Linux Project', *First Monday*, vol. 6, no. 11, November 2001, available online at http://firstmonday.org/issues/issue6_11/dafermos/index.html.

⁸ David Miliband, *New Diplomacy: Challenges for Foreign Policy*, speech at Chatham House, London, 19 July 2007, available online at <http://www.chathamhouse.org.uk/news/view/-/id/392/>.

⁹ Joseph S. Nye, 'Our Impoverished Discourse', *The Huffington Post*, 1 November 2006.

¹⁰ Joseph S. Nye, 'Propaganda Isn't the Way: Soft Power', *International Herald Tribune*, 10 January 2003.

¹¹ John Arquilla and David Ronfeldt, *The Emergence of Noopolitik: Toward An American Information Strategy*, (Santa Monica CA: RAND, 1999), p. 37.

countries to focus on nation branding instead of Noopolitik.¹² Wally Olins has argued that:

There are now three areas in which nations are in direct and overt competition with each other. In each there are winners and losers, and each nation depends to a very considerable extent for its success on the clarity, emphasis and enthusiasm with which it projects its nation brand.¹³

However, while a ‘telling and selling’ approach can prove to be important in tourism, trade and aid, it focuses almost entirely on economic benefit and has a number of detractors.¹⁴ Kathy Fitzpatrick’s emphasis on relationship management takes an important step in breaking down some of these traditional hierarchical positions, but further steps need to be considered and adopted in situations where they can have impact.¹⁵

George Dafermos has argued, that ‘the concept of hierarchy is built on three assumptions: the environment is stable; the processes are predictable; and the output is given. Obviously, these assumptions no longer apply to today’s business landscape’.¹⁶ While many might be uncomfortable with removing hierarchy in every situation, there have already been numerous moves to break down elements of cathedral-like hierarchical positions in concepts of public diplomacy.

Between Cathedral and Bazaar

Critics of direct messaging, nation branding and the cathedral approach highlight the need for ‘listening to others, recognizing the “value of other cultures”, showing a desire to learn from them, and conducting programs as a “two-way street”’.¹⁷ This has promoted a more complex conceptualization of ‘highly interdependent regions [...] multiple transnational relationships [...] and with a substantial degree of “interconnectedness” between their civil societies’.¹⁸ Shaun Riordan

¹² See Simon Anholt and Jeremy Hildreth, *Brand America* (London: Cyan, 2004).

¹³ Wally Olins, ‘Making a National Brand’, in Jan Melissen (ed.), *The New Public Diplomacy* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005), p. 172.

¹⁴ Jan Melissen, ‘How Has Place Branding Developed? Opinion Piece’, *Place Branding*, vol. 2, no. 1, 2006. Also see Jan Melissen, ‘Wielding Soft Power: The New Public Diplomacy’, *Clingendael Diplomacy Papers*, no. 2, May 2005, pp. 22-24.

¹⁵ Kathy Fitzpatrick, ‘Advancing the New Public Diplomacy: A Public Relations Perspective’, *The Hague Journal of Diplomacy*, vol. 2, no. 3, 2007, pp. 187-211.

¹⁶ Dafermos, ‘Management and Virtual Decentralized Networks’.

¹⁷ Bruce Gregory, ‘Public Diplomacy and Strategic Communication: Cultures, Firewalls, and Imported Norms’, presentation at the American Political Science Association Conference on International Communication and Conflict, 31 August 2005, p. 11, quoting *Cultural Diplomacy: Recommendations and Research*, a report of the Center for Arts and Culture, Washington DC, July 2004, pp. 8-9.

¹⁸ Jan Melissen, ‘The New Public Diplomacy: Between Theory and Practice’, in Jan Melissen (ed.), *The New Public Diplomacy* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005), p. 10. Also see Jessica Matthews, ‘Power Shift’, *Foreign Affairs*, January-February 1997; Brian Hocking (ed.), *Foreign Ministries: Change*

has expressed it as the 'multi-layered network of relations between postmodern states'.¹⁹

In response, Barry Fulton emphasized encouraging agitators who live within the target audience by supporting their attempts to have an impact on their own society. This begins to move public diplomacy closer to embracing the bazaar.²⁰ In addition, work on facilitative or niche diplomacy emphasizes that public diplomacy is not necessarily merely about persuading people to adopt *your* goals. It is about achieving your goals through helping others achieve theirs. Effectively, it is about realizing that an organization is part of a wider community.²¹

This is perhaps best demonstrated by, for example, Norway and Singapore or, while it was not articulated in these terms, the 1967 Malta initiative with regard to the seabed beyond national jurisdiction.²² These initiatives are focused predominantly on other nations. They realize national goals by engaging with other states to produce collective action. As Alan Henrikson put it, '[i]f a country carries out measures for the international good, even what might be deemed the "global public good", then it is seeking something that is "universalizable", extending well beyond national self-interest'.²³ Whether or not the goal is 'universalizable'

and Adaptation (London: Macmillan, 1999); and Jan Melissen (ed.), *Innovation in Diplomatic Practice* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1999).

¹⁹ Shaun Riordan, *The New Diplomacy* (Cambridge: Polity, 2003), p. 130. For further discussions of a two way, non-hierarchical approach, see Arquilla and Ronfeldt, *The Emergence of Noopolitik*; R.S. Zaharna, 'The Network Paradigm of Strategic Public Diplomacy,' *Foreign Policy in Focus*, Policy Brief, vol. 10, no. 1, April 2005, available online at www.fpif.org; Jamie Metzl, 'Network Diplomacy,' *Georgetown Journal of International Affairs*, winter/spring 2001, available online at <http://www.carnegieendowment.org/publications/index.cfm?fa=view&id=681>; Brian Hocking, 'Rethinking the "New" Public Diplomacy', in Jan Melissen (ed.), *The New Public Diplomacy* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005), p. 36; Ali Fisher, 'Public Diplomacy in the United Kingdom', *The Future of Public Diplomacy: A European Perspective*, working paper from the 2006 Madrid Conference on Public Diplomacy, Real Instituto Elcano, Madrid, November 2006, available online at <http://www.realinstitutoelcano.org/documentos/276.asp>.

²⁰ Barry Fulton, 'Geo-Social Mapping of the International Communications Environment or Why Abdul Isn't Listening', *The Hague Journal of Diplomacy*, vol. 2, no. 3, October 2007, pp. 307-315.

²¹ See Alan Henrikson, 'Niche Diplomacy in the Public Arena: Canada and Norway', in Jan Melissen (ed.), *The New Public Diplomacy* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005); Kishan S. Rana, 'Singapore's Diplomacy: Vulnerability into Strength', *The Hague Journal of Diplomacy*, vol. 1, no. 1, 2006, pp. 81-106; Tommy Koh's essay in Arun Mahizhnan and Lee Tsao Yuan (eds), *Singapore: Re-engineering Success* (Singapore: Singapore Institute of Policy Studies, 1999); Zaharna, 'The Network Paradigm of Strategic Public Diplomacy'; and Metzl, 'Network Diplomacy'.

²² See Henrikson, 'Niche Diplomacy in the Public Arena'; Rana, 'Singapore's Diplomacy', pp. 81-106; Tommy Koh's essay in Mahizhnan and Yuan (eds), *Singapore*; Zaharna, 'The Network Paradigm of Strategic Public Diplomacy'; Metzl, 'Network Diplomacy'; Arvid Pardo, 'The Origins of the 1967 Malta Initiative', *International Insights*, vol. 9, no. 2, Fall 1993, pp. 65-69; and Andrew Mack, *Trends in Global Violence and Norway's Peace Diplomacy*, Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, available online at <http://www.regjeringen.no/en/dep/ud/campaign/refleks/innsjill/mack.html?id=478951>.

²³ Henrikson, 'Niche Diplomacy in the Public Arena', p. 68. Also see Inge Kaul, Pedro Conceição Katell le Goulven and Ronald U. Mendoza (eds), *Providing Global Public Goods: Managing the Globalization* (New York: Oxford University Press, published for the United Nations Development Programme, 2003).

is a question of scale, the vital part of niche diplomacy is that it can be presented as 'beyond national self-interest'. This blurs the line between the cathedral and the bazaar. This ambiguity is reflected in Alan Henrikson's argument that the attraction of niche diplomacy for a country is the ability to 'punch above its weight', as it could refer to being part of a greater collective effort of the bazaar, but could equally emphasize individual rather than collective benefit and the hierarchical mindset of the cathedral builders.²⁴

Communication 'is not all about warfare, about winning "hearts and minds" for the sake of achieving military victory. It is, as Karl Deutsch long ago emphasized, the method of *community*'.²⁵ It is in this area of community where the potential for creativity exists in the adoption of new methods of working in public diplomacy; where the opportunity to achieve 'creative diplomacy' lies, as I recently heard it described. Tentative steps into the community have been taken through the creation of coordination networks between state-based organizations, such as EUNIC and The Hague Project, with the emphasis on the concept of European 'added value'.²⁶ However, experience to date still sees them building cathedrals into which to attract an audience.

These collective initiatives may be a move towards the bazaar but they still retain many of the approaches of the cathedral builders. The programmes are still developed internally and an audience is then attracted to them; external co-developers are not integral to the mindset. However, recognizing that this is no longer the only viable option, David Miliband argued:

[...] the power to coordinate at scale can be done without the hierarchies of bureaucracies or the price mechanism of markets — either the helping hand of the state or the invisible hand of the market. Technology is enabling networks to challenge the power of traditional incumbents, economically and politically.²⁷

Miliband also highlighted 'Linux challenging Microsoft Windows' and 'Wikipedia challenging Encyclopaedia Britannica or political campaigns such as Make Poverty History, Stop Climate Chaos, or Move On'.²⁸ It is in these developments that the concept of the bazaar becomes important to the future of public diplomacy.

²⁴ Henrikson, 'Niche Diplomacy in the Public Arena', p. 82.

²⁵ Alan Henrikson, 'What can Public Diplomacy Achieve?', *Discussion Papers on Diplomacy*, 2006, p. 2.

²⁶ See, for example, the report on 'Diversity makes the Difference: European Foreign Policy and Culture', Peace Palace, The Hague, 9 March 2007. For non-state actors, see, for example, 'The Private Sector and Public Diplomacy: Corporate Strategies', and 'Public Diplomacy and Virtual Worlds', at the University of Southern California Center on Public Diplomacy.

²⁷ Miliband, *New Diplomacy*.

²⁸ Miliband, *New Diplomacy*. Also See Mitchell Baker, 'The Mozilla Project: Past and Future', in Chris DiBona, Mark Stone and Danese Cooper (eds), *Open Sources 2.0*, (Sebastopol CA: O'Reilly Media, 2005).

The Bazaar

There is the need for a mental shift in understanding the role of an actor within the international information environment. This goes beyond creating communities of chosen hierarchies, to engaging on a genuinely symmetrical, peer-to-peer engagement aimed at engaging in collective effort with groups that were previously largely only considered as part of the target audience.²⁹ Once public diplomacy organizations have made the mental shift to consider the possibilities of the bazaar, they can consider opportunities to add new approaches to their current toolbox.

The reasons for viewing public diplomacy through a bazaar mindset are two-fold. First, internal divisions within an organization, or nation, make insistence on an image of unity or universality in many cases redundant.³⁰ The proliferation of media sources makes these divisions ever more obvious. Second, the proliferation groups with overlapping agendas, creating enormous potential for cooperation and collective effort if an organization views the options through the bazaar mindset. As a result, in some instances an organization may be unsuccessful if it unveils a finished product — that is, the cathedral — and then invites people in the hope that they will accept a single and un-nuanced interpretation of a given issue. This is because while the cathedral was being built, numerous other groups were engaging in similar initiatives. The position can therefore be considered as congruous with the Gramscian conception that ‘in the market place of ideas [...] intellectuals enter as “salesmen” of contending cultures’.³¹

Daniel Drezner accurately warns against an assumption of the irrelevance of the nation-state in this new media environment. However, an argument about the importance of the nation-state, particularly through a focus on regulatory governance, should not be taken to demonstrate the equally inaccurate assertion that the state is dominant in all areas and specifically those relating to the flow of ideas online. As Daniel Drezner argued:

If a researcher is only interested in IGO or NGO activity, it is possible to show instances in which these actors are effective and instances in which they are not. This is also true of those trying to demonstrate the significance of great powers.³²

²⁹ There are exceptions in both theory and practice. See, for example, Fulton, ‘Geo-Social Mapping of the International Communications Environment or Why Abdul Isn’t Listening’, pp. 307-315.

³⁰ Geoff Miller, ‘Current and Emerging Challenges to the Practice of Australian Diplomacy’, *Australian Journal of International Affairs*, vol. 56, no. 2, 2002, pp. 197-206.

³¹ T. Bates, ‘Gramsci and the Theory of Hegemony’, *Journal of the History of Ideas*, vol. 36, no. 2, 1975, p. 353.

³² Daniel Drezner, ‘The Global Governance of the Internet: Bringing the State Back’, *Political Science Quarterly*, vol. 119, Fall 2004, p. 485. This point is echoed in the quote from David Rothkopf used earlier (Rothkopf, ‘Cyberpolitik’) and the 2007 postscript in David Ronfeldt and John Arquilla, ‘The Promise of Noöpolitik’ *First Monday*, vol. 12, no. 8, August 2007, available online at http://firstmonday.org/issues/issue12_8/ronfeldt/index.html.

The important factor in being able to make the mental shift between the cathedral and the bazaar is recognizing where an organization engaged in public diplomacy has a dominant position to construct a cathedral and where it is a peer in a 'great babbling bazaar of differing agendas and approaches'.³³

This power for the spreading of ideas from peer to peer, at low transactional cost, has been increased by blogging sites, thereby emphasizing the bazaar conception. More dramatic still is the new generation of social networking sites and virtual communities which cross-reference thousands of blogs while integrating RSS feeds from news sites around the world.³⁴ The website *Tailrank* describes itself as 'a memetracker which finds the hottest posts from millions of blogs so you don't have to'.³⁵ Meanwhile its competitor *Technorati* is 'currently tracking 93.9 million blogs and over 250 million pieces of tagged social media', and claims to be:

[...] the recognized authority on what's happening on the World Live Web, right now. The Live Web is the dynamic and always-updating portion of the Web. We search, surface, and organize blogs and the other forms of independent, user-generated content (photos, videos, voting, etc.) increasingly referred to as 'citizen media'.³⁶

In addition, the top blog listed on *Technorati* (at the time of writing) had been linked to 29,985 other blogs.³⁷ With this development in media resources comes the power to promote items that do not reach traditionally dominant media. For example, 775 people posted comments on a story entitled 'Austrians Not Amused' on *banderasnews.com* (which claims to be Puerto Vallarta's liveliest website) following a 'seed' on *Newsvine*.³⁸ The power of this type of networking site has been recognized by MSNBC, which acquired *Newsvine* in October 2007.³⁹

This surge of information and opinion, concomitant with the advent of the 'citizen media' concept, outstrips the expectations of information-sharing from when the Noosphere was first discussed.⁴⁰ *Youtube* and the next generation of live streaming sites such as *Selfcast*, *Splashcast* or *Operator11*, which 'gives you what is essentially a mini-TV studio right in your browser', will continue this rapid devel-

³³ Raymond, *The Cathedral and the Bazaar*.

³⁴ See, for example, www.newsvine.com; <http://www.netvibes.com>; <http://www.technorati.com>; with <http://www.digg.com>; <http://del.icio.us>; and <http://tailrank.com/> offering variations on the theme. Also see 'What is RSS?', at www.whatisRSS.com.

³⁵ 'What is Tailrank?', at <http://tailrank.com/about>.

³⁶ 'Welcome to Technorati', at <http://www.technorati.com/about/>.

³⁷ 'Most Popular Blogs', at <http://www.technorati.com/pop/blogs/> (accessed 31 July 2007).

³⁸ 'Austrians Not Amused', www.banderasnews.com, November 2006, available online at <http://www.banderasnews.com/0611/nw-fucking-austria.htm>.

³⁹ 'Msnbc.com Acquires Newsvine', *Newsvine* website, 7 October 2007, available online at http://blog.newsvine.com/_news/2007/10/07/1008889-msnbccom-acquires-newsvine.

⁴⁰ For a discussion of the Noosphere and Noopolitik, see Arquilla and Ronfeldt, *The Emergence of Noopolitik*, updated as Ronfeldt and Arquilla, 'The Promise of Noopolitik'.

opment of broadcasting at an individual level.⁴¹ This avalanche of opinion in this low transactional cost environment strips away many of the advantages that governments and large international actors have traditionally enjoyed.⁴²

In response, Giles Scott-Smith wrote in 2006 that:

In place of futile attempts to control all information outlets and non-state actors, the aim has shifted more towards proposals 'to create image and value platforms' and 'network relationships' around which state and non-state actors can congregate and mobilize.⁴³

While this accurately represents the approach that many international actors have taken, there is an opportunity to think beyond the *ex cathedra* approach to creating networks and platforms. There may be occasions when direct messaging is still appropriate. However, many situations create the potential for a mental shift from the traditional assumptions about power that are contained within messaging to an approach that conceives of actors as having an equal footing in the bazaar. If a public diplomacy organization considered a mental shift towards the bazaar that technical advances have created through challenging traditional markers of power and authority, it provides an environment in which new practical approaches to public diplomacy can be developed.

The Open-Source Approach

Once an international actor has made the mental shift to recognize the situations in which it may be effective to engage in the bazaar model of development rather than building a cathedral, it has the opportunity to add new ways of working alongside its traditional methodology. This opportunity to embrace a new methodology can be best characterized as adopting an 'open-source approach'.

The open-source initiative states:

Open source is a development method for software that harnesses the power of distributed peer review and transparency of process. The promise of open source is better quality, higher reliability, more flexibility, lower cost, and an end to predatory vendor lock-in.⁴⁴

⁴¹ *Broadcast Yourself Live On The Web: Best Tools To Create Your Own Live Web TV — A Mini-Guide*, available online at http://www.masternewmedia.org/video_internet_television/live-video-streaming/broadcast-yourself-live-with-video-streaming-20070424.htm. See also <http://Operator11.com>.

⁴² For a further discussion of this point, see Ali Fisher, 'Gramsci and the New Intellectuals', *49th Parallel*, autumn 2003.

⁴³ Giles Scott-Smith, 'US Public Diplomacy and the New American Studies: No Logo', *49th Parallel*, summer 2006, at www.49thparallel.bham.ac.uk/back/special/ScottSmith_USPDNewAmStud.pdf.

⁴⁴ See <http://www.opensource.org/>. For a more detailed description of the open-source definition, see <http://www.opensource.org/docs/osd>.

Free software began more than twenty years ago with a movement for freedom in the form of Richard Stallman's GNU project. This movement:

[...] brought together the technological tools, the legal systems and the social structures to provide a foundation for collaboration on an unprecedented scale[...] It was in this context that *Open Source* was born, both as a term and as a new movement to promote these practical benefits of Free Software while obscuring what some thought was the disruptive talk of freedom.⁴⁵

Much of the development of the open-source movement, including the possibilities from economic models and problems and critique of certain aspects of open source, were examined in 2005's *First Monday*, special issue #2.⁴⁶ However, it warrants brief consideration here, particularly the experience of Linux, to demonstrate key attributes that are central to adopting an open-source approach to public diplomacy.

'Linux is a PC-based operating system (OS) that has been produced through a software development effort consisting of more than 3,000 developers and countless other contributors distributed over 90 countries on five continents.'⁴⁷ The project through which it has been developed 'is an example of this emerging paradigm, as it has defied the rules of geography and centralization and has been growing organically under no central planning for the last ten years'.⁴⁸ It is based on the Linux Kernel, which was initially created as 'a hobby by a young student, Linus Torvalds, at the University of Helsinki in Finland'.⁴⁹ The Linux 'kernel is the core or nucleus of an operating system. Basically, it provides a way for software and other parts of the operating system to communicate with a computer's hardware'.⁵⁰ In other words 'The Linux kernel distribution consists of files that are needed to compile the Linux operating system'.⁵¹ From this it has evolved:

Linux is now much more than an operating system. As the number of people interested in Linux grew, they formed user groups to share information and code in face-to-face meetings with local Linux users in addition to communicating through the Internet with any Linux user in the world. By July 2000, there were more than 400 Linux user groups in 71 countries.⁵²

⁴⁵ Benjamin Mako Hill, 'Reflections on Free Software Past and Future', *First Monday*, Special Issue #2: Open Source (October 2005), online at http://firstmonday.org/issues/special10_10/hill/index.html. Also see the section on Enabling Conditions: Open Source and Internet, in Jae Yun Moon and Lee Sproull, 'Essence of Distributed Work: The Case of the Linux Kernel' *First Monday*, vol. 5, no. 11, November 2000, at http://firstmonday.org/issues/issue5_11/moon/index.html.

⁴⁶ *First Monday*, special issue #2, 2005, online at http://www.firstmonday.org/issues/special10_10/.

⁴⁷ Moon and Sproull, 'Essence of Distributed Work'.

⁴⁸ Dafermos, 'Management and Virtual Decentralized Networks'.

⁴⁹ For a more detailed description, see 'What is Linux?', at <http://www.linux.org/info/index.html>.

⁵⁰ Getting Started with Linux section, 'Glossary', available online at <http://www.linux.org/lessons/beginner/11/glossary.html#kernel>.

⁵¹ Ilkka Tuomi, 'Evolution of the Linux Credits File: Methodological Challenges and Reference Data for Open Source Research', *First Monday*, vol. 9, no. 6, June 2004, available online at http://firstmonday.org/issues/issue9_6/tuomi/index.html.

⁵² Moon and Sproull, 'Essence of Distributed Work'.

While the individuals may have different specific uses, the community is linked through a shared interest in the development and application of the Linux.

There are two key points to consider when discussing open source and the Linux experience. First, 'one of the key characteristics of open-source software development is that usually it is done in the open'.⁵³ Second, it is based on a community, which is emphasized by the recent release of *Ubuntu*.⁵⁴ This gives the open-source approach some significant advantages, as Linus Torvalds highlighted from his own experience with Linux:

[...] it allows more developers to work on it, and extend it. However, even more important than that is the fact that in one fell swoop it also gave me a lot of people who *used* it and thus both tested it for bugs and tested it for usability. The 'usability' part comes from the fact that a single person (or even a group of persons sharing some technical goal) doesn't even think of all the uses a large user community would have for a general-purpose system.⁵⁵

Torvalds also argues that one of the big benefits of the Linux community is 'having a Network of people that know me and trust me, and that I can depend on in return. And that kind of network of trust comes in very handy not only in cyberspace'. This network also leads to a high return on individual effort because:

[...] everybody puts in effort into making Linux better, and everybody gets everybody else's effort back. And that's what makes Linux so good: you put in something, and that effort *multiplies*. [...] Imagine ten people putting in 1 hour each every day on the project. They put in one hour of work, but because they share the end results they get nine hours of 'other peoples work' for free. It sounds unfair: get nine hours of work for doing one hour. But it obviously is not.⁵⁶

Some of this will certainly benefit some users more than others, but this argument is supported by much of the analysis of virtual communities, which are sustained by the common interest of the community and the subsequent user-generated

⁵³ Stefan Koch and Jesus M. Gonzalez-Barahona, 'Open Source Software Engineering: The State of Research', *First Monday*, special issue #2 entitled Open Source, October 2005), available online at http://firstmonday.org/issues/special10_10/koch/index.htm.

⁵⁴ *Ubuntu* and its related release *Edubuntu*, or 'Linux for young human beings'. *Ubuntu-Hunhu*, from which the name derives, 'is a southern Africa philosophy which encompasses the values of humanity, community, dignity and respect'. Nelson Mandela and Archbishop Desmond Tutu have both referred to this emphasis on humanity and community within *Ubuntu*, which has been an influence on the South African constitution. Using the name *Ubuntu* reflects the central importance of community for the development of Linux. See the *Ubuntu* website, <http://www.ubuntu.com/>, and *Edubuntu* website, <http://www.edubuntu.org/>, as well as Caroline Brooks, 'Ubuntu-Hunhu', in *Monthly Counterpoint* 8 (London: Counterpoint, August 2007).

⁵⁵ Rishabh Aiyer Ghosh, 'FM Interview with Linus Torvalds: What Motivates Free Software Developers?', originally published in *First Monday*, vol. 3, no. 3, March 1998, but also in *First Monday*, special issue #2 entitled Open Source, October 2005, available online at http://www.firstmonday.org/issues/issue3_3/torvalds/index.html.

⁵⁶ Ghosh, 'FM Interview with Linus Torvalds'.

content.⁵⁷ Linus Torvalds' and Eric Raymond's statements have been seen as utopian by some. However, these critiques often highlight limitations in the concept rather than a rejection of it. For example, Nikolai Bezroukov in the *Critique of Vulgar Raymondism*, 'stresses the important advantage of OSS [open-source software] over commercial development'.⁵⁸

An Open-Source Approach to Public Diplomacy

This section discusses how public diplomacy can draw on the shift in mindset of the bazaar and the practical lessons of open source. Adopting an open-source approach to public diplomacy focuses on influencing the way that members of a foreign population act. It recognizes that in many instances a public diplomacy organization is unlikely to be unique in the direction in which it is working. Therefore, the open-source approach to public diplomacy engages in collective effort among peers (both foreign and domestic), whether they are governments, NGO, commercial enterprises, or members of a blogroll or *Facebook* group. In doing so it may seek to aid groups that lobby a foreign government for a change in policy but may equally aim to achieve the beneficial outcome by changing the behaviour of the population, directly irrespective of government policy or direction.

The concept draws on the mindset of the bazaar to acknowledge internal divisions and the large degrees of overlap with other groups' goals. It also recognizes the growth in information sources that have potential for both persuasion and collaboration. The concept benefits from the lessons of open-source software development, emphasizing the importance of community and transparency in achieving greater efficiency and creating the potential for mass collaboration. In doing so, it draws this mindset and learning into the field of public diplomacy, which has already acknowledged the high degree of 'interconnectedness' between civil societies, and the demands for greater 'openness and transnational cooperation'.⁵⁹

In practice this fuses the Canadian and Norwegian engagement of domestic partners with Barry Fulton's concept of supporting influential individuals within the target audience, and it does so on the basis of transparent peer collaboration.⁶⁰

⁵⁷ 'Edge Perspectives with John Hagel', available online at http://edgeperspectives.typepad.com/edge_perspectives/2007/03/community_20.html. See also J. Hagel and A.G. Armstrong, *Net Gain: Expanding Markets Through Virtual Communities* (Boston MA: Harvard Business School Press, 1997); and J. Hagel and M. Singer, *Net Worth* (Boston MA: Harvard Business School Press, 1999).

⁵⁸ Nikolai Bezroukov, 'Open Source Software Development as a Special Type of Academic Research: A Critique of Vulgar Raymondism', *First Monday*, vol. 4, no. 10, October 1999, available online at http://firstmonday.org/issues/issue4_10/bezroukov/index.html.

⁵⁹ Melissen, 'The New Public Diplomacy', p. 10; and Robert Cooper, *The Breaking of Nations: Order and Chaos in the Twenty-First Century* (London: Atlantic Books, 2003), p. 76.

⁶⁰ Fulton, 'Geo-Social Mapping of the International Communications Environment or Why Abdul Isn't Listening', pp. 307-315.

Each group is working towards their own end, but they do so by taking part in other initiatives and programmes where they overlap. This rejects the 'build it and they will come' mentality, based on an *ex cathedra* power dynamic that places the public diplomacy organization at the top of the hierarchy. Instead, this approach focuses both on engaging in pre-existing initiatives and helping or facilitating others (who are working in the same direction) to achieve their goals, as these will inevitably also achieve yours. So while Karen Hughes argued that 'we cannot expect people to give a fair hearing to our ideas if we don't advocate them', an effective open-source approach will mean that you can expect others to advocate your ideas (not because they are yours, but because they are also their ideas).⁶¹ This adopts the mental shift of the bazaar and looks for peers with which to engage in decentralized networks that can be organized around four principles.⁶²

First, the open-source approach depends on direct involvement by other concerned actors. In software terms, 'treating your users as co-developers is your least-hassle route to rapid code improvement and effective debugging'. Since public diplomacy is a negotiation, any help in the refining process should be welcomed, even if these comments are negative.⁶³ Since constructive criticism is likely to help the efficiency and effectiveness of diplomatic processes, working with an interested community can therefore help a public diplomacy organization to increase both efficiency and impact.⁶⁴ This type of engagement with individuals who can aid in promotion is already accepted within a commercial environment. The reintroduction of the chocolate bar Wispa in the UK, for example, was announced after a successful campaign that was mounted by enthusiasts. The community of fans have used *Myspace* and *bebo* to campaign, along with *Youtube* to show old adverts and their own 'campaign' clips. The *bebo* site also includes a video of group members unfurling a banner on stage with Iggy Pop at Glastonbury.⁶⁵

⁶¹ Karen Hughes, Nominee for US Under-Secretary for Public Diplomacy and Public Affairs, testimony at confirmation hearing before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, Washington DC, 22 July 2005, available online at <http://www.state.gov/r/us/2005/49967.htm>.

⁶² For decentralized networks, see Dafermos, 'Management and Virtual Decentralized Networks. See also John Hagel, 'Keynote', *Community 2.0*, available online at http://outsideinnovation.blogs.com/pseybold/2007/03/community_20_co.html.

⁶³ Does this mean that all comments should be incorporated? No! Nor should sleep be lost over what to do about two diametrically opposing comments. Nuances can be added without accepting everyone's position, but constant review may provide a stronger position.

⁶⁴ In the open-source community, 'this can be tremendously useful for shortening debugging time. Given a bit of encouragement, your users will diagnose problems, suggest fixes, and help improve the code far more quickly than you could unaided'; see Raymond, *The Cathedral and the Bazaar*.

⁶⁵ 'Bring Back Wispa', at <http://www.bebo.com/welikewispa>; see also 'Iggy Pop Stage Invasion at Glastonbury 2007', at <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vcWMuH9wW68>; 'Web Campaign Prompts Wispa Return', *BBC News*, 18 August 2007, at <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/business/6952362.stm>; Harry Wallop, 'Cadbury Plans Wispa Revival', *Telegraph*, 20 August 2007, available online at <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/main.jhtml?xml=/news/2007/08/18/nwispa118.xml>.

Treating individuals who were previously considered part of the target audience as co-developers may appear to have a high degree of risk. Yet projects that involve the prospective audience at an early stage have the potential to be geared more effectively to issues that concern that audience, and are therefore more likely to resonate with the community. Furthermore, they provide the target audience with a degree of ownership over the concept that the international actor is seeking to encourage. After all, success in public diplomacy is not about demonstrating ownership over an idea, but rather about getting results by influencing the way that people act.

Second, an open-source approach needs to communicate in a manner that resonates with those who the organization seeks to work with or to influence. This article's title will have had instant resonance with those who grew up with similar cultural markers as the author; it will have had a resonance that communicated vastly more to the 'insiders' than to those for whom the title lacked resonance.⁶⁶ To achieve this on a large scale, public diplomacy needs to avoid some of the limitations of messaging, as highlighted by *The Cluetrain Manifesto*. The authors argue that '[m]arkets are conversations':

Most corporations, on the other hand, only know how to talk in the soothing, humorless monotone of the mission statement, marketing brochure, and your-call-is-important-to-us busy signal. *Same old tone, same old lies*. No wonder networked markets have no respect for companies unable or unwilling to speak as they do.⁶⁷

This does not mean that messaging is redundant, but highlights a growing community that refuses to be the recipient of direct messaging. A different approach needs to be adopted for this audience. Rather than messaging, the *Manifesto* argues that to be successful in a networked world, companies — and by implication an international actor engaged in public diplomacy — must speak with a human voice. It highlights that 'the human voice is unmistakably genuine. It can't be faked'. The authors go on to argue in their 95 theses:

34. To speak with a human voice, companies must share the concerns of their communities.
35. But first, they must belong to a community.⁶⁸

This represents not just an opportunity but an invitation to engage with these communities. This is central to the open-source approach to public diplomacy. Organizations must be seen as peers rather than outsiders projecting onto the

⁶⁶ The title is a corruption of the title of the 1995 album by The Prodigy.

⁶⁷ Christopher Locke, Rick Levine, Doc Searles and David Weinberger, *The Cluetrain Manifesto: The End of Business as Usual* (New York: Perseus, 2001); also see the 95 theses of *The Cluetrain Manifesto* at <http://www.cluetrain.com/book/95-theses.html>.

⁶⁸ 95 theses, *The Cluetrain Manifesto*, at <http://www.cluetrain.com/book/95-theses.html>.

community. Emphasizing the power of this message, Eric S. Raymond argued that this community-based approach is 'anarchic, messy, rude, and vastly more powerful than the doomed bullshit that conventionally passes for wisdom'.⁶⁹ To be successful, a public diplomacy organization — like any other actor — must recognize the particular social and cultural barriers to entry and conform to the expectations of the community. This may not be palatable, but it is a clear message from one group of potential co-developers. This can be effectively achieved through engaging with co-developers from within these communities, as discussed in the first principle.

Third, the open-source approach relies on a strong sense of history and transparency. This applies to concepts and programmes that were previously promoted by the organization, but also previous encounters between the audience and the government or country. This is important in terms of honing programmes and learning from experience. Rather than reinventing programmes every few years, a strong understanding of previous approaches from within the organization and comparable organizations would provide a fertile source of ideas for the future: '[G]ood programmers know what to write. Great ones know what to rewrite (and reuse)'.⁷⁰ Although personnel changes may mean that project managers move on and unpopular programmes are hastily cancelled, it is likely that someone within the target audience will remember. Being aware of previous encounters and acknowledging them helps a public diplomacy organization to demonstrate that it is ready to listen to grievances or to learn from past experiences.

Fourth, individuals in online communities, as in the physical world, engage with those things that are of interest to them. The merits of using enthusiasts have been discussed at length by both Linus Torvalds and Eric Raymond. The success and durability of many charitable or volunteer organizations provides further evidence of the potential of an open-source approach that is based on interest rather than financial reward, in the physical as well as virtual environments. In addition, this approach inserts a relevance test. If no one is willing to engage with an idea, the concept or the presentation may need reworking or altering to an extent that *will* engage a co-developer community.

Many public diplomacy organizations may feel that they already adopt this type of co-developer relationship. However, inviting the usual suspects or inviting 'partners' who are trapped in an employee/employer power dynamic does not equate to the mass availability of a core code that is developed in the open. To achieve that, project planning needs to be public; it needs to be transparent. Planning must be in the bazaar, the organization must be as willing to join other people's initiatives as they are to encourage the organizations to join theirs.

⁶⁹ Eric Steven Raymond, at <http://www.cluetrain.com/book.html>.

⁷⁰ Eric Steven Raymond, 'The Mail Must Get Through', in *The Cathedral and the Bazaar*, at <http://www.catb.org/~esr/writings/cathedral-bazaar/cathedral-bazaar/ar01s02.html>.

Potential partners cannot receive an invitation *ex cathedra* when the planning process for a project or strategy is completed. Inviting contributions may appear to be embracing the open-source approach, as with the current engagement by Foreign Affairs and International Trade Canada (DFAIT).⁷¹ Some elements of this represented the attempt to embrace a more open approach, as argued by Jozef Bátora.⁷² However, predefining questions and the method of response — as DFAIT puts it, ‘We request that your responses to the eDiscussion be directly related to these questions’ — still demonstrates an attempt to maintain an asymmetry within the engagement, which is a feature of the cathedral mindset.⁷³

The Challenge of Targeting

While the open-source approach has many benefits, there are challenges associated with its practical application, not least of which is how to identify the communities with which to engage, particularly online. First, an online audience must be recognized as on an equal level with physical world counterparts rather than as an additional audience to be accessed when an organization wants to demonstrate that it can deal with new technology. Second, new markers of power and influence need to be understood. In the physical world, employment status or physical position in society can be used as markers, with programmes usually demonstrating a bias towards traditional markers of power. Producing an analysis of potential partners for online communities is difficult. It starts with the question of whether people are important because of who they are in the physical world or in the online community? The only viable answer is both. Some people must be engaged online because of the impact that they can have in the physical world. Others must be engaged online because of the impact that they have in that environment. For example, to think of the influence of the most popular bloggers in relation to who they are in the physical world would be to miss the point. Seeing a blogger as a part-time shop assistant in a rural community would completely underestimate his/her influence as a writer with an online readership of thousands.

In one sense, open networks, blogs and ‘citizen media’ make this task easier. Were communities to be regulated by email groups, it would be vastly harder, as

⁷¹ See <http://geo.international.gc.ca/cip-pic/ediscussion08a/resources-en.aspx>.

⁷² See Jozef Bátora, ‘Public Diplomacy in Small and Medium-sized States: Norway and Canada’, Clingendael Discussion Papers, 2005. See also Jozef Bátora, ‘Multistakeholder Public Diplomacy of Small and Medium-Sized States: Norway and Canada Compared’, paper presented to the International Conference on Multistakeholder Diplomacy, Mediterranean Diplomatic Academy, Malta, 11-13 February 2005; and Henrikson, ‘Niche Diplomacy in the Public Arena’.

⁷³ This is not a criticism of the Canadian approach to eDiscussion; it is merely to highlight the distinction between the hierarchical cathedral mindset and the open-source approach.

information would be less likely to be publicly available.⁷⁴ For example, *New Generation Network* represents an online community that combines the physical and online worlds.⁷⁵ It has a manifesto for a ‘new approach to tackle discrimination and prejudice and forge a fresh approach to building a modern Britain’. Its first principle — that ‘[a]s Britons we want to be treated not as homogenous blocks but as free-thinking citizens with diverse views’ — highlights the need to engage in an ongoing negotiation.⁷⁶ If an international actor sought a similar goal to *New Generation Network*, the open-source approach would argue for an attempt to engage with them as a peer, or co-developer. This is in contrast to the cathedral mindset, which might attempt to engage in a hierarchical relationship or, worse, attempt to recreate a rival network centred on the international actor.

Open-source public diplomacy is not about finding people to project your message, whether paying people to run stories or providing covert support to groups with similar goals.⁷⁷ Instead, it requires the mindset of a genuine partnership rather than an attempt to replicate the power relationship with a client. The open-source approach emphasizes cooperating and co-developing with a dispersed network of individuals and organizations (both foreign and domestic) that are heading in the same direction as you.

Why it Matters: Potential Advantages

Writing about Noopolitik, John Arquilla and David Ronfeldt argued that ‘inter-connecting the world may be the most forward-looking “game” in the decades ahead’.⁷⁸ However, while connecting is an important part, engaging with the interconnected civil societies and online communities is a vital role for public diplomacy.⁷⁹ These connections, networks, platforms and communities may be short-lived, but the individuals will likely move on to the next space or platform

⁷⁴ See, for example, Fisher, ‘Gramsci and the New Intellectuals’.

⁷⁵ See the *New Generation Network*, at <http://www.new-gen.org/>.

⁷⁶ See *New Generation Network’s* ‘Manifesto’, at <http://www.new-gen.org/manifesto>.

⁷⁷ James Dao and Eric Schmitt, ‘A Nation Challenged: Hearts and Minds — Pentagon Readies Efforts to Sway Sentiment Abroad’, *New York Times*, 19 February 2002; Jeff Gerth, ‘Military’s Information War is Vast and Often Secretive’, *New York Times*, 11 December, 2005; W.S. Lucas, *Freedom’s War: The American Crusade Against the Soviet Union* (New York: New York University Press, 1999); H. Laville, *Cold War Women: The International Activities of American Women’s Organizations* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2002); F. Stonor Saunders, *Who Paid the Piper?: The CIA and the Cultural Cold War* (London: Granta Books, 1999); G. Scott-Smith, *The Politics of Apolitical Culture: The Congress for Cultural Freedom, the CIA, and Post-War American Hegemony* (London: Routledge, 2002); and H. Wilford, *The CIA, the British Left, and the Cold War: Calling the Tune?* (London: Frank Cass, 2003). Also see W.S. Lucas, ‘Campaigns of Truth: The Psychological Strategy Board and American Ideology, 1951-1953’, *International History Review*, May 1996, pp. 279-298.

⁷⁸ Arquilla and Ronfeldt, *The Emergence of Noopolitik*, p. 37.

⁷⁹ Melissen, ‘The New Public Diplomacy’, p. 10.

for engagement. This requires public diplomacy organizations to be increasingly fleet of foot. An article in *The Economist* noted that 'older people in particular are often taken aback by the speed with which the internet's "next big thing" can cease being that'.⁸⁰ In this environment it is easy for one platform for engagement to be replaced by the next. Public diplomacy organizations must be able to navigate between and to engage on these different platforms.

Greenpeace, both officially and through its member community, has been successful in negotiating many different methods of engagement. From its official website to *Myspace*, *Youtube* and *Facebook*, Greenpeace has maintained a presence and been given credibility because posts come from within the community that is using each site or platform. As such, the content conforms to the social or cultural expectations of the community and comes with a human voice.⁸¹

Virtual worlds, such as *Second Life*, provide additional potential (limitations of this potential are discussed later). David de Rothschild, founder of Adventure Ecology, staged a flood to highlight climate change, while George Irish highlighted further possibilities of 'Camp Darfur'. Other means for engagement, such as the interactive Anne Frank Tree, where 157,820 people so far have created a leaf with a message, demonstrate the possibilities of getting in contact with individuals online.⁸²

Many of these ideas are not built by traditional public diplomacy organizations. Furthermore, many of them echo what Raymond refers to when stating: 'every good work of software starts by scratching a developer's personal itch'.⁸³ Large public diplomacy organizations with global or regional strategies tend to struggle with projects that appeal to individual staff members, yet it is this flexibility that provides open-source software production with the ability to rival the large commercial producers. To create a dynamic public diplomacy organization, the bureaucracy must adapt to provide the means for enthusiasts on the inside to follow their particular interests, as long as these intersect with the organization's strategy.

The communities and networks with which an open-source approach to public diplomacy programmes engages may be huge, they may be ephemeral, but they

⁸⁰ 'Face Book / Book Value', *The Economist*, 21 July 2007, p. 72.

⁸¹ Two different approaches to video on *Youtube* are direct action and campaigning. For direct action, see 'G8 — Bundespolizei vs. Greenpeace 2' at <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6ZG54Gsf1LQ&mode=related&search>; and 'Video of Greenpeace Action' at <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Jupk773Ye0Y&mode=related&search>. For campaigns, see 'Shaping Environmental Change in China' at <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AgzKGv9tUFA&mode=user&search>; and 'The Sea of Lebanon' at <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GrrtufPhHzA&mode=user&search>.

⁸² 'Swim for your (Second) Life', at <http://hugg.com/story/Global-Warming-Floods-London-In-Second-Life>; George Irish, 'Second Life Activism: A Video Report from the Field', *Shake the Pillars*, 31 May 2007, available online at <http://www.shakethepillars.com/?p=62>; and 'The Ann Frank Tree: A Community' at <http://www.annefranktree.com>.

⁸³ See Raymond, *The Cathedral and the Bazaar*.

have incredible potential. In the open-source way of thinking, this ephemeral nature should not be thought of as a negative element (assuming that public diplomacy organizations can move quickly enough to engage with it). Influencing a network that disbands or loses touch with a public diplomacy initiative may mean that individuals, or the community as a whole, have moved to a different form of engagement: 'the next big thing'. If the group is supporting similar ideas but in a different format, this should be seen as a positive development, as there are now effectively two operations running. While this could be left to chance, a clear strategic decision about whether to attempt to build a long-term relationship or to influence a community through short-term contact would be preferable.

As demonstrated by *The Cluetrain Manifesto*, online communities feel ownership over the virtual space that they occupy. As such, social and cultural barriers to entry have developed, and these barriers include expectations about language and the tone of material. To engage in a manner that will be useful to a public diplomacy programme, the material must meet those expectations. The 'dynamite surfing' video on *Youtube* that carried the Quicksilver logo demonstrates the success that something that conforms to expectations can achieve. It has been posted on *Youtube* numerous times, with the top three postings having been watched over two million times.⁸⁴ A single posting of an amateur safari video entitled 'Battle at Kruger' has been viewed over 18.6 million times and listed as a favourite video over 75,000 times.⁸⁵ *Youtube* is only one potential outlet; video tracking across the web is conducted by the Viral Video Chart, and at the time of writing the top video had been viewed 5.5 million in 30 days.⁸⁶

The reach offered by engaging online is enormous, but there is a risk of being seduced by what appears to be the 'potential'. An international actor must be realistic about that potential. *Second Life* has 9,814,914 residents,⁸⁷ yet to construct a programme with the hope of reaching a global audience of almost ten million would be to misunderstand the environment. These residents are the number of avatars created, not the number of users, as numerous avatars could be created by one individual. For example, were five avatars controlled by the same person to experience your initiative, it would be tempting to think that it had reached five people, but the reality would be that you have reached the same person five times. Repeated contact with a few people or single contact with five

⁸⁴ Survey of three views conducted on 18 October 2007; views of posts by 'chokemout', 'ettf' and 'chompchomp' totalled 2,023,278.

⁸⁵ 'Battle at Kruger', posted by Jason275, had been viewed 18,635,961 times and listed as a favourite 75,121,850 times (figures accurate on 26 October 2007); see <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LU8DDYz68kM>.

⁸⁶ Charts for 24 hours, 7 days and 30 days are available at <http://www.viralvideochart.com/>. The current top video is 'UF Police Taser Student During Kerry Forum', at http://www.viralvideochart.com/youtube/uf_police_taser_student_during_kerry_forum?id=SaiWCS10C5s.

⁸⁷ Figures are accurate as of 30 September 2007. See the *Second Life* website at http://secondlife.com/whatis/economy_stats.php.

times as many are different measures of success that require clarity about the intended outcome. Furthermore, at the time of writing, in the previous thirty days less than one million avatars had logged on to *Second Life*, vastly reducing the potential to reach the nearly ten million people that it first appeared. The 'global' reach is also undermined, as over the same period users clustered in five countries, with 58 per cent of avatars logged on from the United States, Brazil, Japan, Germany or the United Kingdom.

Having material on *Youtube* is equally open to misunderstanding. While it is easy to make material available, it is harder when trying to acquire an audience and even more difficult to make the material remembered. A survey conducted by Mashable Labs of 41,000 *Youtube* users demonstrated that the average number of videos watched in a day was 39.⁸⁸ This equates to over 1,000 per month! The key here is how likely an individual is to remember one particular video over 38 others on the day, let alone the 1,000 others in a month. Unless you can create a video as memorable as 'Dynamite Surfing', the message will require help to be remembered.⁸⁹

One way that an organization can increase the likelihood of being remembered is through the power of the community; if the community identifies with the video, people will promote it among their community. This would reach the level of viral marketing, as people are more likely to follow a recommendation from a trusted member of their own community. However, open source has further potential, because engaging with a community is about ideas, not image. As such, if an international actor can engage with and energize a community to make their own material that expresses the same idea, the multiplier effect is immense. Furthermore, as people are making videos about the same idea, it can be assumed that they have remembered and understand the issue on which the initiative was focused.

Furthermore, the international actor must not just see the web as a tool for dissemination; open-source public diplomacy is also about learning from the online environment. The potential of the open-source approach comes from understanding how a community works and how to harness that power to develop different functions, like software developers who worked with the Linux core-code.

The potential for learning from the online environment was highlighted by an article in the journal *Lancet Infectious Diseases*. The online game *World of Warcraft* (WOW) provided the context to a study of how individuals might react to a physical world viral threat.⁹⁰ Eric Lofgren and Nina Fefferman studied the way

⁸⁸ 'Are You an Average Youtube User?', *Mashable Labs*, at <http://mashable.com/?p=1224>. Note that because of the methodology of the survey, this number may be biased towards heavy users.

⁸⁹ 'Dynamite Surfing' has been posted numerous times by numerous members; because of the turnover rate, links may be broken quickly, but it can easily be found through a basic search on *Youtube*. Through the power of the networks, this video has been viewed millions of times, despite its obscure name.

⁹⁰ Eric T. Lofgren and Nina H. Fefferman, 'The Untapped Potential of Virtual Game Worlds to Shed Light on Real World Epidemics', *The Lancet Infectious Diseases*, vol. 7, no. 9, September 2007, pp. 625-629;

that players reacted to the outbreak of the disease known as ‘corrupted blood’. While it might be tempting to dismiss this as ‘just a game’, the players are enthusiasts who have made large time commitments to develop their characters and powers. As the authors argue, ‘future experiments could easily tailor the parameters controlling disease transmission and mortality to more accurately reflect a wide variety of pathogens’. As such, the key to the study was to recognize the importance of conceiving online communities and enthusiasts as having an impact on the understanding of the physical world:

Researchers will have to allow players to feel not as if they are in a deliberate epidemiological simulation where they may die based on statistical whims, but rather that they are immersed in a coherent, logical setting where death is a major risk — essentially unifying epidemiological experimentation with game design and development.⁹¹

Making participants into co-developers is the basis of open-source public diplomacy. For this to work it requires partnership during the planning process. Eric Lofgren and Nina Fefferman make a similar point. They argue that developing further online epidemiological studies:

[...] will likely involve careful consideration and partnership with the gaming industry, mirroring the outreach, partnering, and involvement of community representatives often needed to make traditional epidemiological studies palatable to real-world populations being studied.⁹²

Edward Castronova has also demonstrated the research potential of online games through his work on *Everquest* and *The Dark Age of Camelot*.⁹³

Each different online community will have its own cultural or social expectations. This is because the platforms that these communities use are regarded by their users as a space ‘owned’ by them. These spaces were not ceded to them as part of a hierarchical system. The platform suits their needs, potentially because it was developed by someone inside the community — although this is not always the case — and the community uses it in its specific way. An organization seeking to engage must seek to be part of the community, including recognizing the cultural and social expectations. Take the community-following thinking similar to that expressed in *The Cluetrain Manifesto*: they emphasize speaking with human voices

‘Virtual Game is a “Disease Model”’, *BBC News Online*, available online at <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/health/6951918.stm> (accessed 23 August 2007); and see http://www.nzherald.co.nz/section/story.cfm?c_id=5&objectid=10459021 (accessed 23 August 2007).

⁹¹ Lofgren and Fefferman, ‘The Untapped Potential of Virtual Game Worlds to Shed Light on Real World Epidemics’, p. 628.

⁹² Lofgren and Fefferman, ‘The Untapped Potential of Virtual Game Worlds to Shed Light on Real World Epidemics’, p. 628.

⁹³ Edward Castronova, ‘On the Research Value of Large Games: Natural Experiments in Norrath and Camelot’, CESifo Working Paper Series no. 1621, December 2005, available online at <http://ssrn.com/abstract=875571>.

rather than corporate monotone. The bad news for senior representatives of many large international actors is that it will be a daunting task to understand these communities. However, the good news is that for many of the younger members of the organization, these platforms and communities will be part of their everyday social experience. The ability to unlock this understanding will be central to the success of engaging in this approach to public diplomacy.

This type of engagement has a fivefold benefit. First, it involves a community of concerned actors. Second, it allows an international actor to speak not in the corporate monotone but a human voice. Third, it provides the opportunity to learn from historical examples and online engagement. Fourth, planning is transparent and as such engages what would traditionally be defined as the target audience at an early stage, ensuring relevance to the community. Finally, it not only creates the potential that the community will develop its own products along similar lines, but that the reciprocal may also be true.

Application

This section briefly highlights three possible uses of open-source public diplomacy. To clarify application of the concept and demonstrate the difference between engaging online and the open-source approach, this section focuses specifically on: the building of the Swedish virtual embassy in *Second Life*; 'Reinventing Public Diplomacy through Games Competition', part of the Public Diplomacy and Virtual Worlds project at the University of Southern California (USC); and discusses a possible approach to climate change in sub-Saharan Africa.

The building of the Swedish embassy in *Second Life* engages in new technology, but through the cathedral mindset.⁹⁴ The project was organized by the Swedish Institute, and despite the technology the 'Houses of Sweden' vary little in nature from the *Amerika Häuser* built in post-war Germany. When the virtual embassy opened, the building displayed:

[...] a photography exhibit with images from Sweden; an exhibit about the life of Raoul Wallenberg, arranged in cooperation with OSA Archivum, the Open Society's archives in Budapest; and an art exhibit curated by the National Museum.⁹⁵

The opening was the unveiling of the 'virtual' cathedral. However, this project can also serve an open-source purpose. As the director-general of the Swedish Insti-

⁹⁴ Cari Simmons, 'Sweden Opens Virtual Embassy 3D-Style', sweden.se (Sweden's official website), 30 May 2007, at http://www.sweden.se/templates/cs/Article____16345.aspx; and David Wiles, 'House of Sweden: A New Meeting Place in Washington DC', Sweden.se, 20 October 2006, at http://www.sweden.se/templates/cs/Article____15544.aspx.

⁹⁵ Simmons, 'Sweden Opens Virtual Embassy 3D-Style'.

tute, Olle Wästberg, noted, 'Social media, such as Second Life, offer new opportunities for dialogue, spreading information and *creating the conditions for us to reach the important early-adopters group in different parts of the world*'.⁹⁶ As such, these virtual buildings serve as a means to engage in a virtual world and in the open-source manner, as there is now a platform through which to engage with the creative potential of the early adopters.

The 'Reinventing Public Diplomacy through Games Competition' at USC engaged with the world of software development.⁹⁷ However, as it was a competition, it was both centralized and hierarchical. Furthermore, it was not a community effort but a number of disparate initiatives that were brought together for judging. In contrast, were it not a competition but an opportunity for people to work collaboratively on the various games, to improve them, take parts from one and insert into another, because the core of the project was to change the way that people act through the games, then it would have been closer to the open-source approach. Currently, both the project and the games are products of the cathedral mindset.⁹⁸

A recent meeting held in Dar es Salaam to discuss climate change in sub-Saharan Africa in relation to British objectives highlighted the potential of an open-source approach.⁹⁹ Emphasizing the importance of a low-carbon economy to a population already living a largely low-carbon lifestyle would fail a relevance test. Equally, trying to get the population to pressure the government to act on a post-Kyoto deal is unlikely to resonate with the majority of the population. An alternative, open-source approach would be to find local grass roots' organizations and businesses, along with foreign and domestic NGOs already working towards sustainable development, and ask what they need to increase the impact of their work. This may be increased capacity, bandwidth, money or help in organizing social enterprises that make money from recognizing that some products that are

⁹⁶ Simmons, 'Sweden Opens Virtual Embassy 3D-Style' (emphasis added).

⁹⁷ 'Reinventing Public Diplomacy through Games Competition', available online at <http://uscpublic-diplomacy.org/index.php/virtualworlds/contest>. Also see 'USC's Virtual World: Annenberg Island', at <http://lavoice.org/article1777.html>; 'Contest Held for Peaceful Video Games', *New York Times*, 8 May 2006, online at <http://www.nytimes.com/reuters/technology/tech-expo-peace.html>; 'Real Diplomacy from the Virtual World', *CNet News*, 3 May 2006, available online at http://news.com.com/Real+diplomacy+from+the+virtual+world/2100-1043_3-6067673.html?tag=nefd.lede; 'Playing Along for Global Understanding', 18 October 2005, at <http://www.usc.edu/uscnews/stories/11718.html>; 'Video Game World Gives Peace a Chance', *Washington Post*, 16 October 2005, online at http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2005/10/15/AR2005101500218_pf.html.

⁹⁸ I would like to emphasize that this is not a critique of the work at USC. The article highlights different mindsets and the possibility of the open-source approach, while this competition was run under a different mindset for a different purpose. It is highlighted to demonstrate the difference, not to identify a dichotomy of good and bad.

⁹⁹ My thanks to all who attended the Climate Change Meeting in Dar es Salaam, Tanzania, on 26-27 February 2008, and who stimulated my thinking in this area.

usually considered as waste can actually be a resource in another context.¹⁰⁰ It may be or the ability to share knowledge between various communities, effectively a means of sharing that is not dissimilar from the ability to access different Linux kernels: 'I don't know, you'd have to ask them'. However, the bazaar mentality and open-source approach would allow the public diplomacy organization to contribute to the communities that are working in the same direction as its priorities, in a manner that resonates with the local communities (as the initiatives were built from within those communities).

Conclusions

Public diplomacy is about influencing the way that foreign populations act. This can be done by promoting certain ideas yourself, or employing people to do it for you. However, the open-source approach argues for working as a genuine partner with groups that seek to achieve similar goals, or through empowering groups that seek to achieve congruous ends through providing them with what they need in an open and transparent manner. The key is control; support cannot be used for coercion. This approach is a community that is based on common interest and ability — not a hierarchy that is based on power.

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¹⁰⁰ Recycled plastic and glass bottles being examples that are used both in sub-Saharan Africa and the US.