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The Satirists Formerly Known as the Audience: Citizen Satire, Global Landscapes and the Re-Orientation of Political Debate

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Abstract: *It has been said that in the digital era, "every citizen is a journalist". The influence of "citizen journalists" on political and journalistic discourse has been hotly debated by academics and public intellectuals alike. Acknowledging the contested nature of this term, I have modified it for a similar occurrence in contemporary satire — "citizen satirist" — to explore the practices of satirical content producers on social media websites such as YouTube and Twitter. Like many other online content creators, citizen satirists are re-orientating how they engage with politics. Citizen satire that goes viral, such as Hugh Atkin's political mash-ups, often escape the online environment, and are replayed, discussed and consumed in offline mainstream media contexts. Using Appadurai's concepts of global flows and landscapes, particularly "mediascape" and "ideoscape", this chapter argues that citizen satire may be distributed solely online, but the nature of our intersecting, dynamic and often fractured global landscapes allow for it to enter offline political debate.*

Mitt Romney: Mass Debater

On 19 March 2012, Hugh Atkin, an Australian law student and "off-hours satirist" (Bercovici, 2012), posted what would become one of the most infamous YouTube videos about the 2012 US presidential election. "Will the Real Mitt Romney Please Stand Up" was a parody of rapper Eminem's "Will the Real Slim Shady Please Stand Up". It was produced from a vast collection of media clips, cut up and pasted together so that President Obama and Mitt Romney's own words and media appearances

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were used to mock Romney's "flip-flopping" policy positions during his campaign to become the Republican nominee for US president. The quick succession of different clips spliced together sees Romney say things such as, "with regards to abortion, you can choose your own adventure", "my dog is on the roof",[1] "I'm going to get my lawn cut by illegals", and "I'm Mitt Romney, and I'm the real Romney, all the other Mitt Romneys are just mass debating" (2012c). The video received over 7.5 million views by the end of 2012 and was discussed and aired on mainstream broadcast news stations and websites in the US, UK and Australia. Atkin himself was interviewed on US and Australian news programs.

This kind of user-generated satirical content appears online every day and its presence in broader political debates is increasing. For some time now, we have heard that anyone with a smartphone or a blog can be considered a journalist, or what is known by the hotly contested term "citizen journalist". But what of online viral satirists like Atkin? In this chapter, I define and examine the citizen journalist's satirical companion: the *citizen satirist*. Citizen satire is political satire distributed online by private citizens who act autonomously from production companies and political parties. Citizen satire, as a term, offers a useful descriptor for examining the aesthetic, technical and political practices of these satire "produsers" (Bruns, 2008). Using Appadurai's notion of global flows and landscapes, particularly mediascape and ideoscape, I argue that citizen satire may be distributed solely online, but the nature of our intersecting, dynamic and often fractured global landscapes allow for it to enter public debate generally. Citizen satire is an example of online users participating in active citizenship, while this slippage between online and offline spaces demonstrates that such users are contributing to the re-orientation of political debate in contemporary media.

Defining Citizen Satire

Satire has become a major player in the mediation and performance of politics in the last two decades, particularly with popular television programs like *The Daily Show* and *Colbert Report* in the USA, and Australia's *The Chaser*. Politicians and journalists regularly appear on these satire programs, either willingly as guests or unwillingly through ambush. Some satirists have been endowed with a great deal of public trust, appearing on news programs to provide both playful and earnest political commentary. This interaction between politics, satire and journalism has extended into multiple online spaces. Individual online users contribute to this dynamic exchange of information and play in a way that is shaping both online and offline representations of contemporary politics.

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1 This references a widely discussed media report that Romney had once put his dog in a carrier and strapped it to the roof of his car.

Hugh Atkin's video is just one example of the kind of user-generated content that now dominates Web 2.0. According to Tim O'Reilly, "the Web of the 1990s had *content* as its defining characteristic. The new Web, Web 2.0, differs as its chief feature is *sociality*" (qtd. in Han, 2011: 4–5, emphasis added). This reflects the dominance of social media and the resultant blurring between who produces and who consumes media and information. In his work on blogs, *Wikipedia* and *Second Life*, Axel Bruns argues that consumers are "no longer just that, but active users and participants in the creation as well as the usage of media and culture" (2008: 16). He argues that traditional production chains, where information went from producer to distributor and then finally to a passive consumer, have changed. Now consumers take on:

> a hybrid user/producer role, which inextricably interweaves both forms of participation, and thereby become *produsers* ...[who] engage not in traditional forms of content production, but are instead involved in *produsage* — the collaborative and continuous building and extending of existing content in pursuit of further improvement (2008: 21).

Atkin's video is a fine example of produsage, where a consumer has taken existing content, developed and extended its semantic potential, and shared that remixed content with the world. In his work, Bruns is more focused on blogs and wikis where multiple produsers contribute, provide feedback and rewrite various forms of content. In a way, Atkin's video could be seen as a "self-contained, unified, finished entity" instead of a more prodused product that is "inherently incomplete, always evolving, modular, networked, and never finished" (2008: 22). Despite this, the concept of produsage usefully demonstrates how distinct categories of consumer and producer become problematic with much Web 2.0 content. Atkin "consumed" hours of news and press-conference footage, cut it up and then "produced" and shared a new piece of content. His video is a keen illustration of the Internet's predisposition for produsage and how a 21st century interplay between satire and politics is not just played out between the professional politician, professional satirist and professional journalist.

Web 2.0 technologies make it a great deal easier for the audience to participate directly with this interplay, whether it be through sharing satire videos and tweeting politicians, or the creation of satirical paratexts and original content. Even the ability to share satirical videos via social media illustrates a shift in how audiences consume and use media content. Facebook is designed so that users can embed or upload videos and photos onto their profile and other users' walls. Users are free to caption the video or photo however they like, and users regularly use pop-cultural images to ironically or humorously comment on politics. One can "like", "comment" and, perhaps more in the spirit of produsage, "share" another user's text either by sending it to another user privately or by reposting it on their wall. They can then re-caption the image or video

and, unless consciously selected otherwise, the original caption from the first user still remains.

Many papers could be written on the plethora of material that illustrates the various ways in which audiences consume and use satire online. To serve the purpose of this chapter, however, I shall focus on what I call the *citizen satirist*, a produser who significantly remixes existing content for satirical effect, or creates original satirical content. I will therefore not be including content that could be more easily identified as fan content, such as fan fiction, fan art, program archiving and the produsage of fan vids.

Citizen satirist is a modification of the term "citizen journalist", a title borne of the idea that in the digital era, where many first-world people have smartphones with cameras, video-recorders and Internet access, "every citizen is a journalist" (Oh qtd. in Bentley et al., 2007: 239). Citizen journalism has been identified in many different forms, for example, in citizens' blogs that provide both reportage (such as the insights of Iraqi citizens experiencing the Second Gulf War) and commentary (such as Greg Jericho's Australian politics blog *Grog's Gamut*). As a concept and practice, citizen journalism challenges the idea that news is the "exclusive domain of the professional" (Allan, 2009: 18). Traditional mainstream journalism is exemplified by "gatekeeping", where trained journalists select what is considered to be worth reporting. Alternatively, citizen journalism is known for "gatewatching", which relies on the "ability of users to decide for themselves what they find interesting and worth noting and sharing with their peers" (Bruns, 2008: 74). For Bruns, citizen journalism is an example of news produsage, where a community of users gatewatch and:

> Add further information, multiple points of view, and background detail to extend the initial coverage [of an event] — often to the point that the quality, detail and discussion of the story well outstrips what is possible in industrial journalism's limited coverage of the same news item (2008: 74).

According to Gillmor, who refers to citizen journalism as "grassroots journalism", this is news "by the people, for the people" (qtd. in Buckingham, 2009: 94). Jay Rosen famously described this more active role of citizens in journalistic discourse by referring to them as "the people formerly known as the audience" (qtd. in Bruns, 2008: 73). For Gillmor and many others, citizen journalism is the start of something bigger, where "news is no longer a lecture, but a conversation; and this 'open source journalism' is also leading to new forms of 'open source politics'" (qtd. in Buckingham, 2009: 94). Other theorists are much more cautious, noting that the lack of gatekeeping can result in inaccurate or poor quality journalism (Bruns, 2008: 70; Kaid and Postelnicu, 2007: 150), and that what does constitute citizen journalism is hardly challenging the power and dominance of mainstream media (Buckingham, 2009: 94). More and

more though, citizen journalism is viewed as a more or less useful "complement to traditional journalism, rather than a replacement" (Buckingham, 2009: 95). Many practitioners even advocate the development of a more hybrid model, also known as "pro-am journalism," where "pro journalists and the users [amateurs] work together in the production of high quality editorial goods" (Rosen qtd. in Jericho, 2012: 3).

Citizen journalism, despite debates over its subversive potential, is a useful paradigm to start from when considering the emergence of various satirical activities online. They involve similar processes of produsage where "the people formerly known as the audience" take a more active role in the production of political satire. Furthermore, it is the political implication behind the word "citizen" that helps inform my coining of citizen satire. Jessica Ainley argues that the very term citizen journalism "fundamentally misrepresents the motivations and intentions of people who are using such new media tools" (Buckingham, 2009: 110). She focuses exclusively on those users who share their experiences and photos of newsworthy events through social media, suggesting that people who are often called citizen journalists are actually eyewitnesses (Ainley, 2007). As Buckingham observes, Ainley "argues that the term 'citizen' mistakenly frames participants as having political motivations, while the term 'journalist' implies that they are gathering material with the primary intention of reporting news" (2009: 110).

It is this very understanding of the word citizen — where the user can be seen creating texts imbued with political purpose — that, while inappropriate for everything classed as citizen journalism, informs my definition of citizen satire. Though I suspect the word citizen in *citizen journalist* represents the idea that the journalist in question tends to be a non-industry produser, Ainley's point does reflect the widely-held association of citizenship with voting, an inherently political act. This understanding, where the user is seen as political and not just consuming and/or producing, is well suited to how I define citizen satire.

Citizen satire is therefore user-generated satire that not only mocks and plays, but also makes a strong political critique. In using the word "political" here, I am focusing on critiques of political figures, parties, events and movements. This focus excludes user-generated content that could be classed as political in the sense that it engages with broader power relations. I am interested in texts that make bold satirical statements about contemporary politics and mainstream journalism, often in ways that hijack or complement political commentary in mainstream mass media. The definition is narrower than the politics of Jenkins's "participatory culture" and Hartley's "media citizenship" and "DIY culture". Citizen satire is certainly a practice within these broad cultural movements, which involve "the use of popular media by lay audiences for identity-formation, associative relations, and even for periodic actions that reverse 'consumer demand' from a corporate strategy to a popular movement" (Hartley, 2010: 239). Hartley addresses the value of satire and spoofs in his study of

"silly citizenship", which involves a performance and engagement with citizenship through the act of play. His definition of citizenship is far broader and more detailed than the definition here, and keenly acknowledges the ability of new media to provide spaces for those who are often excluded from citizenship, especially children. Silly citizenship addresses important aspects of civil society like marriage, relationships and family in "a form that priorities *jokes* over *journalism*, *moves* over *motives* and *steps* over *statements*" (Hartley, 2010: 243).

Citizen satire, as a category of this type of silly citizenship, is an attempt to classify satirical new media practices where users take the baton from Stewart and Colbert by attacking the politics and journalism of the time. Just as satirical fake news programs are often seen as ironic yet engaged alternative journalism for the youth of today, citizen satire is the ironic and playful equivalent of citizen journalism. It comes in many formats depending on the user's chosen medium (e.g. audio-visual on YouTube or text-based on Twitter) and their skill with technology. Audio-visual citizen satire may be filmed on shaky hand-held camera phones, or be the product of high production values, skilful editing and multi-user collaboration. Some users may even form small independent communities that seek donations to produce their content. Citizen satirists are not marked by training or production quality, but the political imperative of their work and their autonomy from industry producers.

The issue of autonomy is an important yet problematic one. In defining citizen satirists as independent or autonomous, I am referring to those whose work and public personas are created without any connection to industry or mainstream producers. Clearly, citizen satirists often rely on the mainstream media for content; Atkin's video would certainly not be possible without the footage from multiple mass media news networks. However, their acts of produsage and the persona that they embody both online and offline (should their texts escape the online environment) are separate from any industry producers and organisations. For example, Atkin was formerly an intern on the satirical series *The Chaser's War on Everything*, putting a question-mark over his autonomy from industry producers; coverage of his Mitt Romney video through the Australian Broadcasting Corporation (which airs *The Chaser* team's multiple programs) was no doubt influenced by Atkin's association with the satirists. In some ways, Atkin could be a case for a different category of online satirical content: pro-am satire. However, I argue that his work fits more in line with citizen satire, as his public persona has been cultivated through his own independent online production and the only source even to allude to his internship was the ABC news and entertainment program *Planet America*. In fact, Atkin won his internship on *The War* with his early YouTube video "Kevin Rudd — Chinese Propaganda", a satire of the then Australian Prime Minister Kevin Rudd that worked through a parody of Maoist propaganda (2011a). If a more established satirist like former *Daily Show* correspondent and *Last Week Tonight* host John Oliver produced and distributed

similar videos online, this would be a different matter. His public persona has been constructed through the mainstream media, not online, and his association with these programs would no doubt influence the reading and success of his texts, even if they were produced independently. Atkin's success and public persona, however, were cultivated purely by his own online activity, not by his association with *The Chaser*.

Atkin's work is therefore a prime example of citizen satire. It critiques the media as obsessed with trivia ("the dog is on the roof") and presents election coverage as never-ending and bland by opening and closing the video with a television set full of static and a sea of Romneys multiplying on the screen. It also highlights Romney's staged public persona by heightening his already awkward comments and movements by cutting them up and mashing them together in what Michael Serazio calls "Romney's jerky mash-up flow" (2012). Serazio goes on to argue that "The Real Mitt Romney" and Atkin's other videos are not just funny, but they are art, for they "cleverly satirize not only politicians, but the state of public discourse" (2012).

Atkin produced another video in September 2012, this time with Obama's words spliced together into "U Didn't Build That", a parody version of MC Hammer's "U Can't Touch This". This video satirises the media's coverage of his comment that:"somebody invested in roads and bridges, if you've got a business, that, you didn't build that." Clips of Obama's words are spliced together to say "out of context, those words aren't mine", but also "Osama Bin Laden, I killed, and that was a mission you didn't build", highlighting the Democrats' representation of Obama as the person responsible for Bin Laden's death. Another sentence produced from Obama quotations — "if you've given three dollars before, I'm asking again for a few dollars more" — makes fun of Obama's infamously unrelenting fundraising efforts (2012b). Obama's remixed words are spliced between numerous clips of conservative and liberal pundits arguing over the meaning of the "you didn't build that" comment, alongside footage of Michelle Obama dancing. While this video received fewer hits, it still garnered 1.2 million in less than two months. Serazio calls Atkin's videos "pitch-perfect meta-commentary on the state of politics and media in America today", and argues that the audience also gets critiqued, with "Atkin's rat-tat-tat pastiche expertly satiriz[ing] our collective lack of political patience and our unfortunate willingness to evaluate candidates using the language of theatre: performance, optics, choreography, and so on" (2012).

Global Flows: Online Social Media, Offline Political Debate

Online texts, like Atkin's video, are increasingly escaping their online environments, replayed, discussed and consumed in local mainstream media contexts. This is where I turn to the work of Arjun Appadurai, to examine the interaction between these two media environments. Cultural phenomena have never been static. More recently,

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though, their construction, consumption and very fluidity occur in rapid global networks. In his book *Modernity at Large*, Appadurai examines this "new global cultural economy" (1996: 32), observing that human experience in globalisation exists within a variety of imagined, though very real, global landscapes that are transnationally constructed and locally indigenised. Appadurai's observations are remarkably apt for today's world, dominated by global communication networks and social media. As a way of exploring these landscapes, particularly the impact that their "complex, overlapping, disjunctive" (1996: 32) natures have on the world, he proposes an elementary framework that looks at the relationships between "five dimensions of global cultural flows:" ethnoscapes, financescapes, technoscapes, mediascapes and ideoscapes (1996: 33).

By ethnoscapes, Appadurai is referring to the diverse and always shifting landscape of movers and travellers:"tourists, immigrants, refugees, exiles, guest workers, and other moving groups and individuals" (1996: 33). The prevalence of temporary and permanent travel, or, in his words, "the woof of human motion" (1996: 33–34), has not completely eroded community and family networks, nor has it dissolved national or ethnic divides. Rather, it now contributes substantially to their construction and instability. Financescapes refer to the flow of global capital, where "currency markets, national stock exchanges, and commodity speculations move megamonies through national turnstiles at blinding speed" (1996: 34–35), while technoscapes are the similarly rapid flows of "mechanical and informational" (1996: 34) technologies. The global flows between these three landscapes are unpredictable and potentially volatile given that each landscape has its own internal logic.

Though I acknowledge the significant importance of ethnoscapes, financescapes and technoscapes in the conduct of and access to politics, it is Appadurai's two "landscapes of images" (1996: 35) — mediascape and ideoscape — that I want to focus on here. Mediascapes refer to:

> the distribution of the electronic capabilities to produce and disseminate information (newspapers, magazines, television stations, and film-production studios), which are now available to a growing number of private and public interests throughout the world, and to the image of the world created by these media (1996: 35).

In other words, mediascapes are typified by the growing number of people who have the ability to produce and distribute information and the vast array of images and narratives that this creates. One's media landscape is no longer dominated by a single state-controlled or commercial entity; it now includes vast multinational media conglomerates, narratives and texts from foreign nations, even individual, small group and Internet-based publishing. Appadurai argues that the most significant effect of these competing mediascapes is that they provide "large and complex repertoires of images,

narratives, and ethnoscapes to viewers throughout the world, in which the world of commodities and the world of news and politics are profoundly mixed" (1996: 35). These images contribute to how one comes to see their world and the world of others. They provide "image-centered, narrative-based accounts of strips of reality ... out of which scripts can be formed of imagined lives, their own as well as those of others living in other places" (1996: 35).

Ideoscapes also contribute to this world building. Much like mediascapes, ideoscapes are "concatenations of images, but they are often directly political and frequently have to do with the ideologies of states and the counter ideologies of movements explicitly orientated to capturing state power or a piece of it" (1996: 36). Given the numerous mediascapes that have global reach, our ideoscapes have become similarly abundant and fractured where political narratives "require careful translation from context to context in their global movements" (1996: 36). This feat is virtually impossible, as certain elements will always be lost (or, rather, transformed) in translation when the global or the foreign go through a level of indigenisation, simultaneously influencing what is part of the local ideoscape itself. When "political actors" invoke these narratives, they "may be subject to very different sets of contextual conventions that mediate their translation into public politics" (1996: 36). Appadurai argues that Enlightenment ideals — *"freedom, welfare, rights, sovereignty, representation*, and the master term *democracy"* (1996: 36) — compose these ideoscapes and that they are mediated differently in and through various mediascapes in different local and global contexts. For example, a piece of satire, accessed globally through a transnational mediascape like YouTube, may go viral online and spread to local mainstream mediascapes, thereby becoming a talking point in the local ideoscape. It may work to reinforce or challenge local ideoscapes, or it may contribute to transnational community building, uniting people who are spatially disconnected. The possibilities are endless, with the only certainty being that "disjunctures have become central to the politics of global culture" (1996: 37).

Appadurai argues that habitus breaks down in a world occupied by so many disjunctures, that culture becomes an "arena for conscious choice, justification, and representation" where multiple, conflicting narratives or "imagined worlds" are offered to "multiple and spatially dislocated audiences" (1996: 44). As he goes on to say, "more persons in more parts of the world consider a wider set of possible lives than they ever did before" (1996: 53). Appadurai argues that the effect of global flows is that our lives are "more often powered not by the givenness of things" — habitus — "but by the possibilities that the media (either directly or indirectly) suggest are available" (1996: 55), opening up more possibilities for these "improvisations".

Despite Appadurai's stress on the multitude of imagined worlds offered by globalisation, even he admits that habitus, while changed, has not been entirely replaced. He stresses that Bourdieu's idea of improvisation is important here.

Improvisation has always been possible within habitus, but it "no longer occurs within a relatively bounded set of thinkable postures but is always skidding and taking off, powered by the imagined vistas of mass-mediated master narratives" (1996: 55–56). Lee Edwards, in exploring the global flow of public relations, sees Appadurai's "imagination" as "reminiscent of Bourdieu's notion of 'the field of the possibles' — the range of social trajectories and positions perceived by individuals as available to them, and defined by their habitus" (2011: 32). Global flows expose one to more social trajectories, transforming habitus, but habitus still continues to regulate those trajectories. I am, therefore, not suggesting that the level of fluctuations within global landscapes correlate to dramatic sudden shifts in habitus or discourse. This change was and continues to be gradual.

Journalism and satire, operating through various mediascapes, are increasingly occupying the same spaces in highly blurred or ambiguous ways. Politics has always used media to exert ideological power. Today there are numerous, complex mediascapes that possess vast cultural capital, illustrated by the trust given to Jon Stewart alongside, and often above, actual journalists. Political actors must now engage with multiple mediascapes to exert ideological influence; hence we see politicians engaging in satiric performances on *The Chaser*, holding debates on YouTube and tweeting jokes with online users, alongside participation in more traditional print or broadcast interviews. In Appadurai's words, "habitus now have to be painstakingly reinforced in the face of life-worlds that are frequently in flux" (1996: 56). Ideoscapes constantly try to capitalise and regulate the mediascapes that talk about them, something which is much harder to do globally and online.

The commentary provided by citizen satire is therefore made all the more potent by global flows, transcending the number of views a text may garner online. Atkin's videos, for instance, featured globally in many online blogs and newspapers, television news broadcasts in Australia and the US, and were subject to thoughtful analysis in a number of online magazines during the election. Just as US mediascapes were mined for the production of the videos themselves, so too were they picked up and used in various online and offline local mainstream mediascapes. Some media outlets broadcasted the video as "mere fun" or "the newest viral hit" to complement their election footage. In various other news broadcasts, the video provided a focal point for discussions about Romney's willingness to change his policy stances in an attempt to sell himself as a staunch conservative during the Republican primaries, among many other election issues and debates. Atkin was also interviewed on some of these Australian and US programs, with *Planet America* (2012a) and the US's American Broadcasting Company program *Power Players with Jake Tapper* (Trapper et al., 2012) featuring extensive, analytical discussions with Atkin himself.

Atkin's piece of user-generated satire entered discussions within multiple ideoscapes, a feat virtually impossible for individually-produced content prior to the emergence of social media. Views and traffic are still relevant, hence their mention in this chapter, but must be understood as just one indicator of a text's reception, consumption and influence in a single space. Seeing these online texts (or, indeed, any text) as operating within a myriad of global flows opens up our understanding of how texts contribute to the unevenly evolving nature of discourse and public debate. Hugh Atkin's videos show citizen satire at its best, where an individual's satirical refashioning of news footage provides commentary on politics and the news itself far beyond the online mediascape where it was initially distributed.

Rap News and the Future of Citizen Satire

Citizen satirists display a range of evolving practices in their online engagement with politics through satire. By exposure to rapid global flows, online users are changing the way they make political statements. They form communities and projects that transcend ethnicity and geography, and create content that, at its most successful, breaks out of its online distribution point and enters local and foreign mediascapes and ideoscapes in varying ways. Of course, citizen satire is as varied in its potential to promote political debate as it is in form. Of the many parody accounts on *Twitter* or satirical mash-ups on *YouTube*, only a few contribute to discussions offline to the same extent as users like Hugh Atkin. Social media do, however, allow for this potential in ways that were previously unavailable to individual content creators. Even at the less active end of the social media spectrum, audiences of this online activity can comment, share, re-tweet, reply, quote and re-caption all of this online material. Through hashtags, users can even group their individual bite-sized satire into a collective body of mischief, critique and play (See Higgie, 2013: Chapter 5 on #tweetliketonyburke and @andrewbolt).

To make any conclusive statement about the actual influence of social media, user content and satire on political discourse would be misleading and impossible, especially given the multitude and changeability of global flows. We can, however, return to observations about the relationship between Appadurai's global flows and Bourdieu's habitus. Edwards argues that Appadurai's work "adds more depth to our understanding of how change emerges by explicitly moving away from traditional formulations of dominance and, instead, focusing on the new global cultural economy" (2011: 33). The fractured and dynamic nature of global flows exposes citizens to various possibilities and ways of imagining and interacting with the world. This multitude of imaginings opens up possibilities for change in the habitus; in other words, "imagination is an important locus of resistance to symbolic power" (Edwards, 2011: 43). Edwards goes on to acknowledge that "the imaginaries of dominant groups are more deeply embedded in the global order" (2011: 43) and I do largely agree with this sentiment. I would only add that social media enables

users more scope to access and envisage different political "imaginaries" because, as Jericho says of Twitter, "the message now arrives through a medium not controlled by anyone" (2012: 27). Social media websites may be owned by large, profit-driven companies, some of which have intrusive advertising (YouTube and Facebook), but the manner of discussion or conduct is not directed by a top-down structure but by individually-driven interactions among users. Habitus is an "*open system of dispositions* that is constantly subjected to experiences, and therefore constantly affected by them in a way that either reinforces or modifies its structures" (Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992: 133). Active online users exist within social conditions that are global and ever-modulating, opening up the variety of experiences and imaginings that can destabilise habitus.

In considering future manifestations and complications with these global flows, I turn to The Juice Media's *Rap News*, self-described as "the Internet nation's off-beat musical, current-affairs programme, responsible for turning bollocks-news into socio-poetic/comedic analyses which everyone can relate to and understand" ("About"). Its Melbourne-based creators, Hugo Farrant and Giordano Nanni, have produced *Rap News* since 2009, and have featured cameos from high-profile public figures such as Julian Assange (2010b, 2013h),[1] and Noam Chomsky (2011b). All the videos feature a news anchor character named Robert Foster (played by Farrant), who raps social commentary and interviews outrageous characters that satirise both politicians and political ideologies more generally, particularly in the form of General Baxter, an American general who stands in for American imperialism, and Terence Moonseed, a neo-hippy conspiracy theorist. Foster is frequently the voice of reason against his guests' excessively ridiculous claims and behaviours, much in the same way that Jon Stewart, as observed by Gettings, frequently corrects or calls out his satirically ignorant and unethical correspondents on *The Daily Show* (2007: 20–22).

Rap News regularly promotes pro-environmental, anti-war and anti-censorship narratives. Like many of its television satire equivalents, *Rap News* is left-leaning but also attacks those who identify with the left but are deemed to be betraying its values. The videos are hosted exclusively on YouTube, even to the extent that the videos are embedded on their independent website from YouTube. Yet *Rap News* is another example of citizen satire truly transgressing its online distribution point. The duo have been interviewed by Montreal print and online magazine *The Link* (Pool, 2012), the Portland "artisan collective and interview series" *The Art of Dismantling* (Richards, 2011) and San Francisco-based citizen journalism project *Media Roots* (Martin and

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1 Julian Assange made contact with Farrant and Nanni after seeing their first video and invited them to visit him in London for a sneak peak of the Iraqi War Logs before they were released by WikiLeaks. This experience shaped the subsequent Rap News 5, which featured Assange himself (Martin and Roldan, 2010, 2010b).

Roldan, 2010) among numerous other online publications. The raps have featured on television via the global satellite television network Al Jazeera English (2010a) and the pair have been interviewed by the American bureau of global television network Russia Today (RT) (2010c). RT have aired many of their episodes, even featuring an appearance from RT journalist Abby Martin where she openly criticised Russian President Vladamir Putin for his annexation of Crimea (2014).

Rap News 20 garnered the most press attention for notable reasons. In this episode, Foster interviews satirical doubles of successive Australian prime ministers Kevin Rudd, Julia Gillard and Tony Abbott, in an attempt to learn more about their policies for the 2013 Australian Federal Election. The video uses parodic scenes, references and even music from the popular fantasy series *Game of Thrones*, in a ruthless satire of the Rudd-Gillard coups, current Australian refugee policy, Abbott's history of sexist and homophobic statements, and the general negativity of the politicians' "violent campaign" (Farrant and Nanni, 2013, 2013h). Ken Oathcarn, a character who represents bogan Australia,[1] as played by Nanni in numerous episodes, visits the real Julian Assange in London's Ecuadorian Embassy.[2] Oathcarn convinces Assange that if he is to be successful in his election bid for a Senate seat, he is in need of a make-over. Assange dons a flannel shirt, a blonde mullet wig and a fake Australian flag tattoo, and proceeds to sing a parody of John Farnham's "You're The Voice". The video went viral soon after being posted online. It featured in numerous high-profile websites and online publications such as *Buzzfeed* (Hall, 2013), *Salon* (Gupta, 2013), *The Huffington Post* (2013e) and the online versions of *Esquire* (Hepburn, 2013), *The New Yorker* (Coscarelli, 2013) and *The Guardian* (2013d). It featured on Australian television on *The Chaser*'s 2013 Federal Election coverage (2013c, 2013b) and commercial station Ten's primetime infotainment program *The Project* (2013f, 2013g). Farrant and Nanni were also interviewed on ABC Radio (Young, 2013).

Rap News 20 was criticised and praised, with most of the commentary focused on Assange's appearance instead of the election satire. In a keen illustration of *Rap News* transcending its online mediascape, Ecuador's President Rafael Correa publically chastised Assange for his appearance in the video, telling a press conference:"we have sent him a letter: he can campaign politically [from the Embassy], but without making fun of Australian politicians. We are not going to allow that" (2013a). Additionally, many major media outlets failed to recognise the video as satire, calling *Rap News 20* a "campaign video", in what Farrant and Nanni described as "true to form". They added:

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1 "Bogan" is Australian slang for "an uncouth and unsophisticated person Oxford English Dictionary".
2 In 2012, Assange successfully sought diplomatic asylum from Ecuador to avoid extradition from the UK to Sweden. He has been in London's Ecuadorian embassy since.

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> In the world of the Internet parody culture, what we're doing is accepted and most people and most of the comments on the video and on *Twitter* and *Facebook* are overwhelmingly positive. It's no surprise that once things are taken out of context and brought into the world, of, you know, the considerably more sober world of the mainstream media, these out of context quotes can be portrayed as offensive ... We don't really engage with that audience. Our audience is on the Internet. We really pride ourselves on making an internet show and we're trying to get people away from the more conventional, centralised, one-way media model, such as, basically, the traditional media. We love the fact that people can watch the video, post comments, we reply to comments, it's a two way dialogue, it's a totally different culture (qtd. in Young, 2013).

Clearly, *Rap News* is an example of citizen satire transcending online mediascapes to contribute to debates that occur in global and local ideoscapes. Even its very production is indicative of the global flow of technology, communication and community. While based in Melbourne, *Rap News* involves the volunteer collaboration of multiple online users all over the world, including users who translate the raps into 11 different languages, an animator and visual effects artist in Germany and an MC from Greece. Transcripts and MP3s are freely available to anyone who visits their website.

Up until 2013, *Rap News* only sought public donations to help pay for the show. In 2013, they received some funding from Kindle Project, but this was an arts grant, so production was still independent of any industry body or group. In 2014, they announced that they were trialling a collaboration with Russia Today, which saw them licensing 10 episodes to the TV network. They continue to broadcast their episodes on their own YouTube channel, but they also now appear on Russia Today's television and online broadcasts. The income from this arrangement means they can produce more impressive videos much more regularly, but they are no longer financially independent from the mainstream media.

While many may see this arrangement as problematic for *Rap News*' editorial independence, the real problem is in the potential for co-option. In light of the significant cultural capital of high-profile satirists like Jon Stewart and Stephen Colbert, politicians, journalists and other public figures have increasingly sought to engage and play with satire that traditionally savages them (Higgie, 2013, Higgie, 2014). By laughing at and even participating in their own ridicule, public figures attempt, with varying success, to communicate that they too have the sense of humour and self-aware irony that has afforded the likes of Stewart so much trust and respect from voters. By openly supporting and broadcasting this form of user-generated alternative satire, even those episodes that brutally criticise and mock Russian politicians and policy, RT may gain some of Rap News' cultural capital. It offers the network a useful device to point at and say that it too has an ironic awareness about its own style of reporting.

Some satire producers have sought alternative funding models such as crowdsourcing, where they ask for seed funding contributions from the public, or volunteer subscriptions, where consumers are asked to contribute what they can, if they can, often with the promise of exclusive subscription-only content. All of these dynamics offer increasing possibilities and "imaginings" in user contribution to political discussions, but also offer avenues for co-option by politicians and mainstream news organisation. Citizen satire warrants further study, particularly as manifestations of how social media is changing the way many people partake in active citizenship, and for the way they can re-orientate public debate and political discourse on and offline.

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A Democratization of Access: From Clinical to Consumer Models of Communication for People with Disabilities

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In the past few years, communications, media and cultural studies scholars (Hartley, 2010; Jenkins, 2013; Ellis and Kent, 2011; Leaver, 2013; Jenkins, 2006; Goggin, 2006, 2011; Shirky, 2008; Lovink, 2008) have been exploring how digital technologies can shape and are shaped by new forms of communication. These scholars have interrogated how digital communications have re-oriented communication itself and opened up new areas of study that did not exist a generation ago. The mobile phone for example has shaped new forms of communication and become integrated into our daily lives from shopping to education to communicating with friends, lovers and children (Goggin, 2006; 2011). With three quarters of the population possessing a mobile phone (World Bank, 2012), it is a cultural phenomenon, significant both for its integration into our daily lives and also for what it represents as a status symbol (Ling and Yttri, 2002). Researchers have considered the ways diverse groups of people, from teenagers, parents and residents of a number of different countries, use their phones to communicate in daily life (Katz and Aakhus, 2002). Variation in the affordances of mobile phone communication, for example text messaging vs voice vs video-calling, has also been explored (Judge and Neustaedter, 2010, Lenhart et al., 2010). However, research around a significant group, identified in early telecommunications research (Power et al., 2006; Tetzchner, 1992; Goggin, 2006), and by tech companies such as Apple and Google as an important market, are under researched in the current smartphone environment — people with disabilities.

In this chapter I use the example of mobile communications to expose the social