Punk, DIY, and Anarchy in Archaeological Thought and Practice

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Abstract:

Recent developments in archaeological thought and practice involve a seemingly disparate selection of ideas that can be collected and organized as contributing to an anti-authoritarian, "punk" archaeology. This includes the contemporary archaeology of punk rock, the DIY and punk ethos of archaeological labor practices and community involvement, and a growing interest in anarchist theory as a productive way to understand communities in the past. In this article I provide a greater context to contemporary punk, DIY, and anarchist thought in academia, unpack these elements in regard to punk archaeology, and propose a practice of punk archaeology as a provocative and productive counter to fast capitalism and structural violence.

Keywords: punk, archaeology, anarchy, archaeological theory, praxis

Introduction:

Punk rock is an anti-authoritarian movement that is structured around rock music but involves do-it-yourself (DIY) activities such as creating zines (informal, self-published magazines), and other media that contribute to a non-mainstream means of knowledge production and building mutual aid networks (Davies 1996; Downes 2012; Shank 2006). The origins of punk rock have been contested, but are probably distributed among several lo-fidelity, extemporaneous performances that broke down the formal barriers between performers and the audience among bands playing in United States and United Kingdom during the 1960s and 1970s (Moore 2004; Sabin 1999). Some musicians and fans of punk rock employed "shocking" cultural signifiers of body modification and outrageous clothing to identify fellow punk rockers and to exclude others (Hebdige 1979).

While punk has been stereotyped as a "self-marginalizing" white, heteronormative, teenaged, suburban and male subculture (for rebuttals, see Traber 2001; Ngô and Stinson 2012 and *White Riot: Punk Rock and the Politics of Race* among others), most visible in the United States and United Kingom (Sabin 1999), punk has been mobilized globally by a wide variety of populations. Russian art-activist group Pussy Riot's "punk prayer" denouncing Vladimir Putin (Steinholt 2013; Tolokonnikova and Žižek 2014) can be linked to the radical DIY feminism of the riot grrrl movement (Feigenbaum 2007; Hanna 1991; Marcus 2010; Rosenberg and Garofalo 1998). Queer punks used fanzines to problematize both the punk scene and dominant, adult gay and lesbian identities and cultural practices (Fenster 1993:77). Mexican punks fight globalization (O'Connor 2010) and Indonesian punks struggle against the Soeharto government (Wallach 2008). Klee Benally of the punk band *Blackfire* from Flagstaff, Arizona states:

> "we started our band because of the issues impacting our community as Diné people and indigenous people here in the United States were being completely ignored, from coal mining, forced relocation, and further environmental degradation. The corporate media wasn't telling that story so we took up arms through music" (Brown, K. and Brown R. 2011).

The diversity of these populations and the decades-long time span of punk defy simple classification and homogenization, yet discussion of this variety is necessarily limited within the confines of this article. While there is an immense and growing body of academic literature regarding these various aspects of punk rock, very little of this has made an impact in academic archaeological discourse until relatively recently. Interestingly, this belies the ongoing participation of punks in archaeological practice.

(Image 1: Radio Carbon cover; Image 2: Anti-Nazi League; reproduced with permission from the Hobley's Heroes website)

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Anecdotally, there have been an abundance of punks employed in contract archaeology in the last forty years. Field archaeology traditionally relies on highly-skilled workers who accept low wages, unreliable hours and marginal living conditions who can also live and work communally (Morgan and Eddisford in press). While not all field archaeologists are punks, there is a relatively high acceptance of non-conformist dress and behavior in the commercial archaeological community. One example of non-conformist, extemporaneous expression in commercial archaeology are the newsletters or "zines" put out in the 1970s, including *Hobley's Heroes, The Weekly Whisper, Underground* and *Radio Carbon* made by London archaeologists for London archaeologists. These zines were a mix of satire, helpful archaeological advice, reports from the field and comics. The zines are archived at Hobley's Heroes (http://www.hobleysheroes.org.uk/) and provide an entertaining, informal snapshot of archaeological practice in the 1970s in London. Similarly, Theresa Kintz's *The Underground*, a radical zine published in the 1990s identified key issues for archaeological excavators, particularly low pay and high turn-over, and the classification of archaeological field work as undisciplined, performed by an alcoholic, childlike, "field animal" (Underground 1995; McGuire and Walker 1999).

A current equivalent to these past zines is *The Diggers Forum*, a publication from a Special Interest Group of the Chartered Institute for Archaeologists with practical, yet political articles for "diggers" edited by London archaeologists. A recent issue of *The Diggers Forum* covered pay minimas for archaeologists (Harward 2014), how teeth are used in bioarchaeological analyses (Lanigan 2014), and the academic and professional divide and its impact on archaeological training (Everill 2014). While punks were generally accepted in developer-funded archaeology, a coherent, academic punk archaeology was not forthcoming until the 2013 "Punk Archaeology" conference organized by William Caraher in North Dakota. Even amidst other archaeologies of resistance and efforts to advance a

more activist archaeology, punk archaeology is underutilized as a productive structure for bringing together disparate communities of practice in archaeology.

In the *Punk Archaeology* publication following the conference, William Caraher defines punk archaeology as a reflective mode of organizing archaeological experiences, one that celebrates DIY practices, reveals a deep commitment to place, embraces destruction as a creative process and is a form of spontaneous expression (2014:101-102). My short essay in the same volume emphasizes punk as a form of fictive kinship, encouraging best practices such as membership in a community and participation in this community, building things together, and foregrounding political action and integrity in our work (Morgan 2014:67). Several of these characteristics can be found in other approaches to archaeological practice (see McGuire 2008; Conkey and Spector 1984; Franklin 2001; Battle-Baptiste 2011; Watkins 2001, among others) yet punk archaeology still resonates independently of what could be collected under various Marxist and post-processual approaches. While any definition of punk archaeology is necessarily personal, partial, and incomplete (see also Reinhard 2014, 2015; Richardson 2014; Mullins 2015), in this article I will employ it as Caraher's (2014) empty vessel—a catch-all for contemporary punk, DIY, and anarchist thought in archaeology. I situate punk archaeology within a wider academic movement toward punk as an organizing structure, then detail contemporary punk, DIY and anarchist thought within archaeology. Finally, I discuss the further implications of a punk archaeology.

Academic Punk

There are many biographies, histories and ethnographies of punk rock (for some of these, see Laing 1985; Sabin 1999; Shank 1994), but the cultural legacies of punk rock and the mobilization of

Caraher, W., K. Kourelis, and Reinhard, A. 2014. *Punk Archaeology*. The University of North Dakota: The Digital Press.

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participants to feel a sense of connection to their community and to the past, with especial attention to marginalized and disenfranchised peoples.

"Think about the kind of revolution you want to live and work in. What do you need to know to start that revolution? Demand that your teachers teach you that." -Big Daddy Soul

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punk as a means of knowledge production has come only as punks have infiltrated the upper echelons of academia. In *Punkademics*, Furness speaks of these "academic/punk border transgressions" as perpetuated by "professional nerds...who seemed as equally sure footed in zine columns and basement shows as they did in theory heavy journal publications, political organizing committees, or in front of podiums lecturing to graduate students at prestigious research universities" (2012:7). Other contributions to *Punkademics* note the friction of subscribing to an anti-authoritarian, punk ethos while operating within a hierarchical bureaucracy, yet also identify critical pedagogy as a means toward liberation from capitalism and corporate globalization (Miner and Torrez 2012; Haenfler 2012).

Beyond a critical pedagogical stance, the attitude and sensibility of punk can be productively used to regenerate and energize academic research (Beer 2014). In *Punk Sociology*, David Beer (2014) identifies the instability inherent in any definition of a "punk sensibility"--one of the defining characteristics of punk is a discomfort with categorization and definition. He identifies this as an inward facing iconoclasm. So—no Gods, no masters, no *punks*. This inner paradox is playful, complex, and resists simple classification, a slipperiness that should be familiar to archaeologists. Beer finds a punk ethos productive for sociology in that punk "seeks to foster its own discomfort and to find creative ways of expressing it" and removes the divide between performer and audience (2014:29).

This academic attention to punk is bolstered not only by the infiltration of academic punks but also recent political unrest such as the Occupy movement. David Graeber, the social anthropologist who coined "We are the 99 per cent," identified the ubiquitous participation of punks in social movements in his *Direct Action: An Ethnography* (2009), which scrutinized social protest movements in 2002-2003. He traces a genealogical connection between punk and the legacy of the Situationists, "a group of radical artists in

the 1950s and 1960s (who) transformed themselves into a political movement" that was founded in part by Guy Debord (2009:258). Malcolm Mclaren, the manager of the Sex Pistols participated in The Situationist movement in art school and lyrics from the Sex Pistols songs draw from their slogans (Notably: *A cheap holiday in other people's misery* and *No future*) and album artwork.

In the *Punk Archaeology* volume, Kostis Kourelis' (2014) briefly explored the connections between punk, archaeology and the Situationist movement, but I find it productive to elaborate on this point—especially in the digital age. David Graeber discusses Debord (2009:258):

> "(he) laid out an elaborate dialectical theory of "the society of the spectacle," arguing that under capitalism, the relentless logic of the commodity-which renders us passive consumers-gradually extends itself to every aspect of our existence. In the end, we are rendered a mere audience to our own lives. Mass media is just one technological embodiment of this process. The only remedy is to create "situations," improvised moments of spontaneous, unalienated creativity, largely by turning aside the imposed meanings of the spectacle, breaking apart the pieces and putting them together in subversive ways."

During the presentation of this paper at the 2015 Society for Historical Archaeology conference, I showed *Can Dialectics Break Bricks?* a 1973 film by René Viénet, who re-purposed *Crush* by Tu Guangqi, a Korean Kung Fu movie. This was a détournement or *hijacking* that was the main expression of Situationist art. With the digital age, détournement has become a dominant form of cultural expression in memes that remix media. See, for example, the "Hitler Reacts" video series[1], wherein the subtitles are changed from a clip of the 2004 film *Der Untergang* to show Hitler increas-

community engagement, and anarchist thought and practice under the "black flag" of punk archaeology provides a robust bastion for fomenting a multi-scalar critique of archaeology, suggesting a provocative and productive counter to fast capitalism (McGuire 2008; Agger 1989) that combats structural violence (Bernbeck 2008).

This article traces only a few of the contours of the punk archaeology horizon; there is abundant room for archaeologies of resistance that bring strategies from feminist, indigenous, black, emancipatory archaeologies, for remixes and reconfigurations that call on hip hop (Rowe 2015) and jazz (Mullins 2015) to break down the barriers between audience and performers, to remove artificial authority and to recognize ways that people in the past and present self-organize, resist and revolt. Though this article is indeed limited in purview, it attempts to exercise the creativity and energy that Beer (2014) found in a punk sociology—discussions of punk necessarily reference both "highbrow" and "lowbrow" resources, typifying the "collapse of hierarchies and boundaries" between, for example, Tim Ingold's *Making* and Youtube memes (Moore 2004).

The basic principles of punk archaeology reflect an anarchist ethos: voluntary membership in a community and participation in this community. Building things–interpretations, sites, bonfires, earth ovens, Harris Matrices–together. Foregrounding political action and integrity in our work. It is the work of the punk archaeologist to "expose, subvert, and undermine structures of domination...in a democratic fashion" (Graeber 2004:7). McGuire encourages us to "enter into the dialectic of praxis and build an archaeology of political action to transform the world" (2008:223). Punk archaeology is an enchantingly awkward, social, anti-social, personal, political, uncomfortable, uncompromising, anti-authoritarian, contrarian position that is constantly scrutinized and overthrown. To realize this praxis we must engage in what Orton-Johnson (2014) terms "small-citizenship"--small-scale, local projects and their accompanying online spaces that enable

These studies of stateless societies in the past are accompanied by resistance within the profession and a raised awareness of exploitative labor practices in heritage. Yannis Hamilakis calls for an "occupy archaeology" movement to contest "archaeological museums, archaeological sites/projects and other culture/heritage institutions that rely on cheap, un-insured, non-unionised labour, or on sponsorship from corrupt corporations" (2014:133). He asks, "where are the new creative, life-transforming and challenging ideas going to come from, if we dance to the tune of our sponsors, and design our research questions, our discussion frames and our rhetoric according to their profile and philosophy?" (2014:134). The question of exploitative labor practices was also raised in social media and became a discussion of volunteerism and non-alienated labor under the hashtag #freearchaeology (Johnson 2014; Hardy 2014). It is significant that both discussions employed hashtags, #occupyarchaeology and #freearchaeology; as Carole Crumley notes, "globalization has revitalized anarchist thought while chaos theory and the internet have facilitated anarchist practice" (2005:48).

Conclusions

When we take up the safety pins and leather jackets of a punk ethos in archaeology, we are mobilizing a tradition of anti-authoritarian discourse, one that uses humor and parody (Matthews 2015), to call for radical change. As Graeber's anonymous friend states, "the reason Situationism can't be integrated in the academy is simply because 'it cannot be read as anything but a call to action'" (2008:260). In his letter to Nadya Tolokonnikova of Pussy Riot, Slavoj Žižek writes, "From my own past in Slovenia, I am well aware of how punk performances are much more effective than liberal-humanitarian protests" (2014:54). Bringing together the contemporary archaeology of punk, a punk ethos in DIY and

ingly distraught over incongruous modern news such as Manchester United coach Sir Alex Ferguson's retirement or upon hearing Rebecca Black's song, "Friday."

A less controversial manifestation of the intertwining of DIY, digitality and Situationist "remixing" within academic discourse is "edupunk." Jim Groom, frustrated by the limited capabilities of educational and professional software content management systems coined the term edupunk in May 2008 to encompass an alternative methodology of using social networking sites and other internet resources to build a distributed, interactive and flexible platform for teaching, research, and collaboration. Yet these engagements are limited—edupunk specifically addresses digital technology within a higher education classroom. In previous work (Morgan 2012), I extended Groom's definition of edupunk to involve a research stance of overt public engagement, an interventionist ethic to disrupt and interfere with a consensus view of the past.

Punk Archaeology

Sparks of punk archaeology have been ricocheting around the discipline in the US and UK, manifest in attention to the contemporary archaeology of punk rock (Graves-Brown and Schofield 2011; Caraher et al 2014; Kiddey 2014), the DIY and punk ethos of archaeological labor practices and community involvement (Morgan and Eve 2012; Morgan 2012; Caraher et al. 2014), and a growing interest in anarchist theory as a productive way to understand communities in the past (Angelbeck and Grier 2012; Bettinger 2015; Flexner 2014). Collectively, these multiple approaches can show the flexibility and strength of punk archaeology, especially within the greater context of anti-authoritarian thinking.

The contemporary archaeology of punk, pioneered on Bill Caraher and Kostis Kourelis's "Punk Archaeology" blog, discussed several punk locations such as The House of the Rising Sun,

MC5 in Detroit, The Clash's squat, and Iggy Pop's trailer home in Ypsilanti. Their discussions included more traditional modes of archaeological investigation, including spatial analyses of artifacts and tombs, personal histories and historical narratives, and "raw, garage-band quality thought (that) seeks to question the relationship between nostalgia, archaeology, and the punk aesthetic" (Caraher 2009). Many of these discussions were brought together in the *Punk Archaeology* volume, and in the spirit of zines and DIY culture, are short, usually under 1,000 words and without formal citations.

In the United Kingdom there was also a growing attention to the contemporary archaeology of punk. As part of an investigation of "anti-heritage," Paul Graves-Brown and John Schofield recorded the graffiti left behind by the members of the Sex Pistols at their rehearsal/living space in London (2011). Most of the graffiti was drawn by John Lydon (Johnny Rotten) in the summer/autumn of 1977, and depicted members of the band and their friends alongside choice slogans such as "God is a Cunt." Their analysis of the graffiti "reveals feelings and relationships, personal and political" and they argue that the "anti-heritage" of punk rock, the marginal graffiti rather than the official narratives contained in mainstream heritage should be taken as a direct expression of "a radical and dramatic mo[ve]ment of rebellion" (Graves-Brown and Schofield 2011:1399). Relatedly, Shannon Dawdy's work regarding the ruins of New Orleans also identifies steampunk and cyberpunk as particular expressions of an "antimodern temporal imagination" (2010:766) that problematize the divide between modernity and antiquity through "temporal folding." She suggests that "clockpunk," in incorporating reimagined historical elements, reveals a tangled timeline of material and human life, one that defies a strict temporal ideology (2010:778).

Rachel Kiddey and John Schofield's (2014) investigation of marginal places associated with homelessness in Bristol and York took up the DIY ethic and community building aspects of punk

control. Archaeologists may have "access to the majority of examples of non-state societies, that is, those societies without the entrenched inequalities, bureaucracy, and ruling class that are integral to everyday life in states" (Flexner 2014:82). James Flexner posits that "anarchist approaches to the archaeology of social complexity might turn the statist model on its head" by querying a "statist" approach, focusing on spaces where states did not emerge and the ways people who live in states undermine the emergence of hierarchies (83). Flexner specifically targets historical archaeology—does colonial violence tend to be more dramatic when the colonizers come into contact with anarchic societies (85)?

In this vein, in his study of small-group behaviors in Northwest California, Bettinger moves away from recent scholarship that emphasizes "sociopolitical behaviors reflecting a more forward stance and appetite for expansion, power, and control" for their antithesis, a "sociopolitical downsizing and evolution" that he terms *orderly anarchy* (2015:2). Similarly, Angelbeck and Grier use an anarchist framework to interpret cultures in the Northwest coast of North America, with a particular focus on how the "groups self-organize, resist, and revolt against those who attempt to centralize and institutionalize sociopolitical inequalities" (2012:548). For small scale, decentralized groups that lack centralized political authority, anarchist theory has a great advantage over Marxist theory that was developed for the analysis of state societies (549). In the ensuing discussion of the article, Randall McGuire contrasts the postprocessual view, that "archaeologists embrace a radical multivocality and give up their authority to interpret the past" with the anarchist view of authority. This view differentiates between "natural authority (those sought for their knowledge, skill or experience) and artificial authorities (those imposed by institutions)" and suggests that a radical practice of archaeology might be best served by giving up the artificial but not the natural" (2012:575).

tion platforms is troubling. Yet navigating mass media and mobilizing it for critique is a well-established dissonance in punk, through the contradictory modes of parody and nihilism and the search for authenticity and independence (Moore 2004). Davies ties punk to a profoundly postmodernist position, incorporating both "critical rejections of mass-disseminated material which sustains a naturalised appeal to good faith and identification" and "vulgar and ludic celebrations of groups such as Splodgenessabounds and The Snivelling Suits, which stand equally in the traditions of countercultural play, music hall, and schoolboy humour" (1996:5). Attention to parody of this type is fleetingly rare in archaeological practice, though Tringham (2009) identifies Jesse Lerner's *Ruins: a Fake Documentary* as a particularly adept erosion of the authority of archaeological and historical objectivity.

Anarchy and Archaeology

Even with long-term archaeological investigations of statelessness and egalitarian societies and contemporary archaeologies of homelessness (Zimmerman et al 2010; Kiddey and Schofield 2010; Kiddey 2014), there have been very few attempts to form an integrated archaeological investigation of anarchy. As Alfredo Gonzalez-Ruibal notes, "there is no archaeology of resistance in the same way that there is an anthropology of resistance" yet archaeologists have studied "a bewildering variety of anarchic societies in the past" (2014:11). Still, there are a handful of archaeologies of resistance wherein archaeologists invoke anarchist theory to understand the past, and a growing awareness of resistance strategies, including a call to "occupy archaeology" (Hamilakis 2014; Nida and Atkins 2010).

A broader discussion of the varieties and nuances of anarchism is outside the bounds of this article. Still, archaeology has much to contribute to thought about stateless societies and political

archaeology and directly involved the homeless in their research (see also Zimmerman et al. 2010). During excavations of Bristol's Turbo Island, a marginal triangle of turf in the junction between two roads and infamous homeless hangout, Kiddey involved homeless participants in the excavation, breaking down social distance and othering of the homeless (Graves-Brown 2011; Kiddey and Schofield 2010). These participants provided meaningful feedback regarding the identification of artifacts, the use and re-purposing of these artifacts, and over the week of investigation at the site, remains were recovered that showed a long-term use of this site as a marginal space. Punk Paul, one of the individuals involved in the excavation, stated: "I love you for being interested...the truth is if you dig deep enough you uncover the truth... The week we spent together was power, truth and hope. You have this big heart in a bigger community and it was good to think that we might actually change the world we live in. Inshallah" (Kiddey and Schofield 2010). The investigation of punk spaces as anti-heritage, sites of rebellion, ruin, of temporal remixing and nostalgia reveals the productive, provocative, instability of a punk archaeology.

Do-It-Yourself and Making in Archaeology

"The best way to complain is to make things." - James Murphy, of LCD Soundsystem

While experimental archaeology has long been a method of investigating the materiality of the remains of the past, it is rarely tied to a political archaeology. The more radical experiments, including James Deetz's re-envisioning of living history museum Plimoth Plantation as an archaeological laboratory, hinted at this potential—there were complaints of the barefoot hippies that replaced the prim pilgrim ladies surrounded by antiques (Snow 1993). Tim Ingold's *Making* (2013) explores knowledge production and creativity through making, but does not reference

the larger history and political context of DIY, nor the more recent manifestation of making in hackerspaces/makerspaces.

DIY practices as currently conceived are tied to emerging countercultural critiques of the formal education system and advocates for experiential modes of learning (Gauntlett 2011). Ratto and Boler (2014) mark the publication of Stewart Brand's DIY magazine the *Whole Earth Catalog* in 1968 as a key touchstone for the formation of DIY. DIY was rapidly taken up by punk and third-wave feminism/Riot Grrrl. Both relied on inexpensive recording, distribution, and publication strategies that circumvented mass media outlets. V. Vale, the creator of *Search & Destroy*, the first punk rock zine in San Francisco, and later *RE/Search*, defines DIY as incorporating mutual aid, financial minimalism, anti-authoritarianism, and black humor (Vale 2012). I add to this definition of DIY to include an invitation to participate, refine, and deconstruct.

Author and former editor of WIRED magazine Chris Anderson (2012) argues that the Information Age is the third Industrial Revolution, marked by digital and personal manufacturing. Makers identify niche markets and "make a virtue of their small-batch status, emphasizing handcrafted or artisanal qualities" and create these items with computer desktop design tools (Anderson 2012:50). Creativity is fostered in nearly a thousand "makerspaces" (or hackerspaces) all over the world, places created by communities where people can access the space and tools needed to realize their designs. One example of this is the emergence of consumer 3D printers that allow users to directly translate their designs to material goods without being beholden to large manufacturing companies. 3D printers have been used by archaeologists to reproduce artifacts (Karasika and Smilansky 2008; Grosman 2008), landscapes, and skeletal materials (Niven et al. 2009), yet these uses remain undertheorized and tied to commercial and institutional accessibility.

Beyond this nascent movement of personal manufacture, Matt Ratto calls for "critical making," to use material forms of engage-

ment with technologies to supplement and extend critical reflection...to reconnect our lived experiences with technologies to social and conceptual critique" (2011:253). Critical making in archaeology is a mode of engagement that can overcome what Ratto characterizes as a separation between the technical and the social in disciplinary practice. Steve Mann discusses maktivism, or making things for social change, and relies on the "DIT (do-it-together) ethos of GNU Linux and the Free Software movement" (2014:30). Mann specifically ties maktivism to praxis, a specific approach to the materially physical practice of action. To explore critical making and maktivism in archaeology, digital archaeologists at the University of York have been holding workshops and events, including the 2014 Heritage Jam, a hack-a-thon that brought together heritage professionals for a one-day making session (Perry 2014). During this session a team that included Stuart Eve, Colleen Morgan, Alexis Pantos, Sam Kinchin-Smith and Kerrie Hoff created the prototype for *Voices Re/Cognition*, an aural augmented reality mobile application. *Voices Re/Cognition* aurally emphasized visibly "empty" spaces in York Cemetery, showing them to be full of unmarked graves, and also gave "voices" and stories to individual tombstones. Making this eerie digital intervention brought together a team of archaeologists, to do-it-together and bring archaeological interpretations to a wider audience.

Yet maktivism is not immune to significant critique. While DIY culture sought to create media outside of corporate structures, makers that use digital media rely on corporate infrastructure and interests. There has been a discussion of the benefits and risks of using "free" services hosted by corporations for hosting archaeological information (Law and Morgan 2014) but there are deeper structural issues surrounding *making*, wherein other roles such as moderating, repairing or supporting are devalued (Chachra 2015). While digital media has been used in emancipatory roles by women and disempowered groups (Joyce and Tringham 2007; Morgan 2012; Nakamura 2008), the corporate ownership of digital communica-