

Social media & Social Movements



Scott Geiser, Advisors: Dr.Tina Lee, Dr.Chris Ferguson University of Wisconsin-Stout



Research Findings

Goal

- Is there was a positive relationship between technological innovations, and the uprising and success of social movements?
- I focused on the uprising in Ukraine (Euromaidan), and Anonymous, and their use of social media.

Lit Review

- Findings on how important Social media has been to the success of contemporary social movements are inconsistent. For good or for bad, social media has played at least some role in the Arab Spring (DeVriese, 2013), Occupy movement (Juris, 2013), and Anonymous.
- Anonymous is a social movement that is most active when defending values associated with free speech and censorship (Coleman, 2013).

Methods

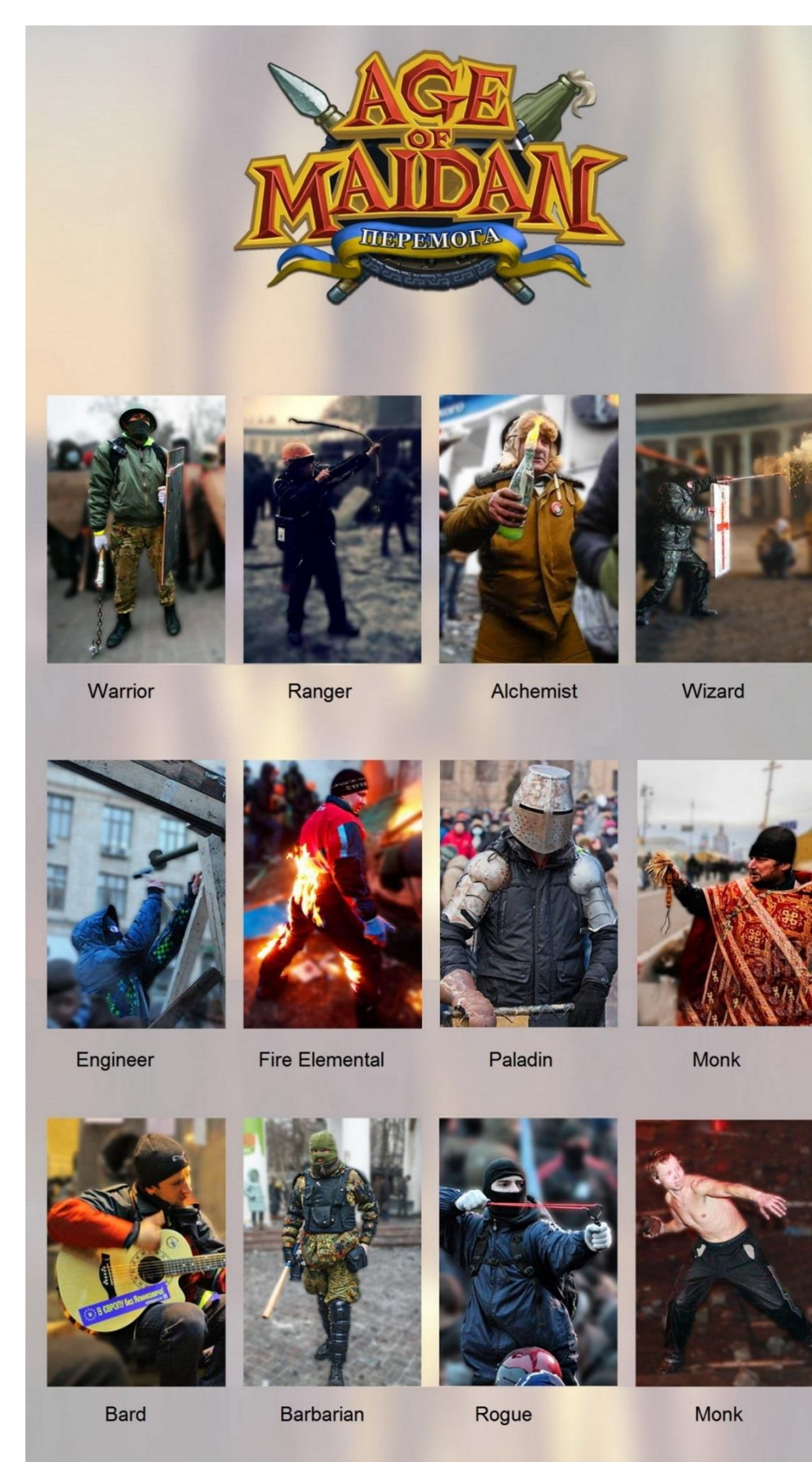
- Participant observation online.
- Interviews with several members of Anonymous.



Chat room watching UN meeting on Ukraine

Initial Findings

- Information disseminated from twitter and Facebook, onto various chats.
- To the right you can see a "meme" (comical widespread image) of protestors in Ukraine.
- This meme started on an image board (4chan), and spread throughout pro Euromaidan forums and sites.



Anonymous

- Internet is intrinsic to what Anonymous is today.
- However, some form of Anonymous would likely exist without the internet.
- "I think that it [technology] didn't give birth to it but merely accelerated its coalescence. To take a page from history, the founding fathers of the USA didn't have the same technology, yet they were still able to discuss (without 'moral' fetters) the issues relative to their timeframe in "speakeasy" taverns."
- Technology can be detrimental, specifically FBI turning Anonymous members into informants.
- Anonymous is seen as more of an idea or culture by its members, regardless of the technology some form will remain.
- "As far as the future of technology, and how it relates to Anonymous and anonymity, transparency in some forms is inevitable. However there are still ways around that, such as the solidifying concepts like the TOR network or VPNs."



Advocate of Anonymous at Occupy Wall street

Ukraine Uprising - Euromaidan

- Social media as a means for dissemination of information.
- Social media used for coordination.
- Facebook and twitter were cited as very helpful in keeping up to date on what is happening and as faster than formal news.
- "Social media provided live updates for everyone - faster than news. Especially on twitter. It also helped in getting people TO maiden as quickly as possible if it was in danger." - Member of Euromaidan
- Politicians had a presence on social media.

Ukraine Uprising – Euromaidan Cont.

- Some Euromaidan activists lived in the US, but still contributed. "I'm from Ukraine, live in U.S., would consider myself pretty active in protest movement."
- The impact of social media was seen as positive.
- "I think it has been positive. People feel more connected and feel like they are part of revolution without being on Maidan."
- Uprising in Ukraine would of happened regardless.
- "W/o internet, I think uprising would still happen, but I do not know if all of the events would have turned out as they have. The protest started with a tweet from a journalist calling for a protest!"



Members of Euromaidan stand off against riot police

Conclusion

- Social media has helped these movements succeed in reaching their goals. Anonymous uses social media as a means to advance anonymity, as well as performing activism. Members of Euromaidan use technology to coordinate and disseminate information.
- Members of both Anonymous and Euromaidan believe their social movement would exist without the use of modern technology, however they would look vastly different.
- The access a social movement has to technology can have a great impact on its success.

References

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- Coleman, G. (2013). Anonymous in context: The politics and power behind the mask. Informally published manuscript, Internet Governance Papers NO.3, The Centre for International Governance Innovation.