Chapter 8

A Case Study of Citizen-to-Government Mobile Activism in Jamaica:
Protesting Violations of the Rule of Law with Smart Phones

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ABSTRACT

This chapter draws attention to the emergence of Mobile Activism (M-Activism) in small states. More specifically, the chapter presents the findings of a qualitative descriptive research project, which utilizes a combination of case study and discourse analysis methodologies to describe how mobile smart phones were used by a small group of activists in Jamaica to protest a violation of the Rule Of Law (ROL). The findings demonstrate that mobile smart phones can be used as an effective and efficient tool for activists to engage citizens, government agents, and government, and gain support for their cause. The findings indicate that these smart phones can be used to access and convey messages to a wide audience of e-citizens and thus have the potential for encouraging support as well as interest in a cause. The findings have wide implications with respect to: 1) how mobile technology provides opportunities to transform the relationship between governments and citizens and 2) the possible future of protests and activism in small states. The findings also have wider implications for new and emerging innovative ways of achieving good governance not only in Jamaica but also in other parts of the world.

INTRODUCTION

There has been much discussion regarding the ways in which citizens engage with their governments. More recently, this discussion has centered on how governments use Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) to facilitate citizen engagement (Government to Citizen, G2C). However, little attention has been focused on how and in what ways citizens have used these ICTs to engage with their governments (Citizen to Government, C2G), even though the most recent trend of activists are using ICTs, particularly smart phones, to protest violations of the Rule Of Law (ROL). Civil society groups protesting violations of the rule of law is not unusual in democratic states. Over the years, social movements, whether in permanently structured civil society groups or in temporary unstructured groupings, have engaged various projects at different levels to protest violations of the rule of law: as well as, to protect, monitor and/or preserve, and correct these violations. Traditionally, such projects have been executed by one or a combination of a menu of activities, which have included, *inter alia,* petitioning, placard waving, sit-ins, or even riots. These were referred to collectively as 'brick and mortar' protesting techniques. In the last decade, many civil society groups have been using ICTs such as the Internet, slate and tablet (hand-held) computers, as well as desktop and laptop computers. Most recently, the mobile phones, specifically mobile *smart phones* such as the iPhone, Android, and Blackberry have increasingly become new tools of expression for civil society groups protesting ROL violations. For some time, cases of such mobile movements have been observed and documented in the Ukraine, Indonesia, Belarus, Sierra Leone, Kenya, Burmaand, and more recently in Libya, Syria, Yemen, Egypt, and Tunisia (Stein, 2006; Fahamu, 2007; Schuler, 2008; SIDA, 2009; Ghannam, 2011).

In this chapter, we draw attention specifically to the Jamaican context, in which mobile smart phones were used in order to protest violations of the rule of law. In addition, this chapter seeks to expand the global discourse on this aspect of governance, as well as the larger debates surrounding electronic governance. This is accomplished by describing how mobile smart phones were used by a small number of activists in Jamaica to protest the violation of the principle that *"everyone is equal under the law"*. This research was guided by the following research question – How do Jamaican e-activists who have used the mobile phone to uphold the principle that everyone is equal under the law describe their experiences? Yin's (2009) Case Study Methodology, as well as, Discourse Analysis were integrated to analyze and describe the experiences of one civil society group that utilized mobile smart phones to protest violations of the rule of law.

PROTESTING RULE OF LAW (ROL) VIOLATIONS

Making Connections between Civil Society and Activism

Historically, the inter-discursive and inter-textual connection between civil society, the role of government and citizens in maintaining the ROL, has been well established in the global academic and policy literature (Foley & Edwards, 1996; Edwards & Foley, 1998; Kim, 1998, 1999; Hefner, 2000; Nakamura, Siddique & Bajunid, 2001; Carino, 2002). Civil society groups, whether formal or informal, have used various strategies and tools to protest such violations. More recently, in tandem with the popularization of the term 'civil society', there has been growing interest in the increasing role it plays in many aspects of social and political life including protesting violations of numerous aspects of the rule of law (Hodgkinson & Foley, 2003; Pietrzyk, 2003; Peterson & Til, 2004; Edwards, 2009; Fukuyama, 2010). This 'interest' converges with perceptions regarding the seeming

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