



ICSW | PEOPLE POWER 2020/2021

RETHINKING DIGITAL SPACE AS A TOOL FOR ENABLING AND AMPLIFYING CIVIC SPACE

The digital world has provided new platforms to come together, build momentum and change the world. By enabling, amplifying, and helping regain civic spaces, the digital space sets the stage for new forms of support, resistance, organisation and **#peoplepower**.

Moreover, the current COVID-19 crisis has turned technology and the digital space into a lifeline for many activists, human rights defenders and everyday citizens. Despite its immense potential, it can also pose serious threats to the same spaces and fundamental rights it empowers.



THE GOOD



Technology and what goes on in the digital space can:

Help communities organise and build momentum around social justice and any of today's big issues

Facilitate the exercise of fundamental rights

Improve legal empowerment by gathering evidence that supports legal complaints leading to remedies

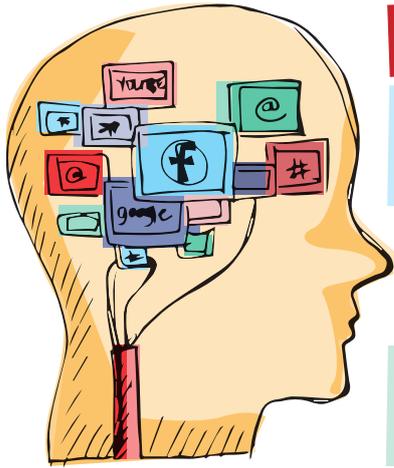
Help advance and advocate for the protection of changemakers

Allow us to connect with others to breathe with, get help from and find inspiration again (we are human, not a cyborg!)

Have a positive impact on policy and decision-making

Contribute to democratic societies

Be poetical, political and practical!



THE BAD Nevertheless, there is a dark side:

It lacks human touch, doesn't allow to read body language, takes a lot of energy

ELECTRICITY + ELECTRONICS + KNOW-HOW = PRIVILEGE (..and that's not the reality for most)

It is a reflection of a click-obsessed, white, patriarchal, capitalist, yet-colonial world!

Blocked from a Facebook or WhatsApp group? There goes your social capital!

#dependence

Anti-rights groups (and their understanding of "freedom of expression") also have access to these spaces

It can actually disempower us: surveillance, censorship and internet shutdowns can threaten those same fundamental rights that it also allows to thrive

It is used for harassment and smear campaigns! **#backlash**

It is not safe, inclusive nor transparent enough!

SO, TO MAKE THE MOST OUT OF TECHNOLOGY AND THE DIGITAL SPACE, WE NEED TO MAKE SURE MORE PEOPLE HAVE ACCESS TO IT, MAKE IT EASIER TO USE, UNDERSTAND IT, ADVOCATE FOR IT, EXPAND IT!

THINGS WE SHOULD BE WORKING ON

- Basic digital security for activists, human rights defenders, journalists and citizens should be a must **#digitalresilience**
- Promoting anti-surveillance and the use of VPNs and encryption as they are key to digital safety! **#leavenotrack**
- Civil society and computer experts sharing the know-how!
- Reinventing the space to a more independent, open-source digital infrastructure!
- Going beyond the mainstream, connecting (with) the voiceless **#inclusivity**
- Sharing WiFi **#sharetheprivilege**
- Investing more in interpretation during virtual events and translating content into more languages **#inclusion**
- Finding a way to get to people's hearts (online hug anyone?) **#solidarity**



**INCLUSIVE AND SAFE DIGITAL SPACES >
ALLOW FOR THE EXERCISE OF FUNDAMENTAL RIGHTS**

