

Promoting Social Change and Democracy through Information Technology

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A volume in the Advances in Electronic
Government, Digital Divide, and Regional
Development (AEGDDRD) Book Series

Information Science
REFERENCE

An Imprint of IGI Global

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Managing Editor: Austin DeMarco
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Acquisitions Editor: Kayla Wolfe
Development Editor: Caitlyn Martin
Cover Design: Jason Mull

Published in the United States of America by
Information Science Reference (an imprint of IGI Global)
701 E. Chocolate Avenue
Hershey PA, USA 17033
Tel: 717-533-8845
Fax: 717-533-8661
E-mail: cust@igi-global.com
Web site: <http://www.igi-global.com>

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Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Promoting social change and democracy through information technology / Vikas Kumar and Jakob Svensson, editors.

pages cm

Includes bibliographical references and index.

ISBN 978-1-4666-8502-4 (hardcover) -- ISBN 978-1-4666-8503-1 (ebook) 1. Information technology--Political aspects. 2. Information technology--Social aspects. 3. Citizen participation--Technological innovations. 4. Social movements. I. Kumar, Vikas, 1979- II. Svensson, Jakob.

HM851.P766 2015

303.48'33--dc23

2015010630

This book is published in the IGI Global book series Advances in Electronic Government, Digital Divide, and Regional Development (AEGDDRD) (ISSN: 2326-9103; eISSN: 2326-9111)

British Cataloguing in Publication Data

A Cataloguing in Publication record for this book is available from the British Library.

All work contributed to this book is new, previously-unpublished material. The views expressed in this book are those of the authors, but not necessarily of the publisher.

For electronic access to this publication, please contact: eresources@igi-global.com.

Chapter 8

Grassroots Political Campaign in Russia: Alexey Navalny and Transmedia Strategies for Democratic Development

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ABSTRACT

This chapter analyzes the transmedia strategies of opposition candidate Alexey Navalny's campaign during the 2013 Moscow mayoral election. The goal is to highlight how the use of information and communication technology contributed to the development of democratic practices in Russia. His westernized, grassroots political campaign was a novelty in the country, involving online fundraising, door-to-door canvassing, engagement of volunteers, digital projects, and meetings with voters, for instance. The argument is that, although Navalny lost the election, his candidacy represented advancement in terms of both the use of new media and the promotion of democratic development in the midst of autocratic Russia. If the progress will be maintained, it remains to be seen. The theoretical framework includes the reality of the Russian political scenario and the conceptualization of transmedia storytelling strategies in the context of participatory politics. The methodological approach is based on the transmedia analytical model by Gambarato (2013).

INTRODUCTION

For a number of years, the mayoral elections in Moscow were deliberately cancelled, and the mayor was directly appointed by the Kremlin (Indina, 2014). However, the 2013 Moscow mayoral election was shaken by the opposition candidate Alexey Navalny and his westernized, grassroots political campaign. Navalny is a lawyer, whistle-blower, and staunch activist fighting against endemic corruption in Rus-

DOI: 10.4018/978-1-4666-8502-4.ch008

sia. In 2010, his anti-corruption blog posts (Navalny, n.d.) and website (RosPil, 2014) became digital phenomena. Since then, he has become a protagonist in Russian politics. His 2013 campaign was replete with innovations in the Russian context, such as online fundraising, door-to-door canvassing, engagement of volunteers, digital projects, and meetings with voters, for instance. Although he lost the election, his candidacy represented advancement in terms of both the use of new media and the promotion of democratic practices in the midst of autocratic Russia. Considering that Navalny almost succeeded in challenging the Kremlin candidate, the campaign destroyed the myth that the current government would always win, even in a fair election. The chapter's goal is to analyze the transmedia strategies of Navalny's campaign in order to highlight how the use of information and communication technology (ICT) concretely contributed to the democratic development in Russia.

The 2013 Moscow mayoral election was the very first social media election in Russia, and its roots can be traced to the 2011–2012 opposition movement. Navalny's campaign was an extension and consequence of this movement, which involved fundraising for rallies and the creation of Facebook groups aiming at gathering people offline during the opposition protests, among others. In the summer of 2013, Navalny started campaigning using techniques that were new and even unknown in Russia, including ICT solutions such as online fundraising. Online tools were primarily created to pave an easier path for Navalny's supporters to become volunteers and spread the word about his political proposals, democratizing access to information. As the opposition candidate, he had limited access to mainstream media, especially television; therefore, the online campaign and its consequent expansion into offline activities were the alternative channel to reach the public in a legitimate, democratic manner.

In the context of the 2013 Moscow mayoral election, Russian political landscape played a leading role. Thus, this chapter first briefly introduces the Russian electoral system and explains the rise of Navalny. The theoretical framework explores the conceptualization of transmedia storytelling in the context of participatory politics and the methodological approach, based on the transmedia analytical model by Gambarato (2013), is presented and applied to Navalny's grassroots campaign, demonstrating how it incorporates ICT solutions in a transmedial way. Later the chapter discusses the westernized political campaign and its implications for democratic development in Russia. In conclusion, the findings of the research indicate that: 1) the campaign concretely employed transmedia strategies; and 2) transmedia tools, together with the innovative digital technologies incorporated by Navalny's campaign, contributed to engage audiences, democratize information, democratize access to capital, and amplify freedom of expression, especially throughout participation. Participatory culture and politics lead to the possibility of individuals to exert their voice and democratically influence on the society.

CONSIDERATIONS ON RUSSIAN POLITICAL LANDSCAPE

Russian Federation Electoral System and Moscow Mayoral Election

According to the Constitution of the Russian Federation (Chapter 1, Article 3), citizens shall be the bearers of sovereignty and the only source of power in the country: "The supreme direct expression of the power of the people shall be referenda and free elections" (Government of the Russian Federation, 1993). Since the Russian Federation had been formed from the ruins of the Soviet Union in 1991, citizens could elect the president of the country, bicameral parliament members, governors of provinces, and mayors of cities.

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Nevertheless, during the first two mandates of Vladimir Putin as president (2000–2008), the number of elective offices started to be systematically reduced. In 2000, the direct elections for the Federation Council, the upper house of the Russian parliament, were repealed. Instead, Federation Council members were appointed by governors; in 2004, the gubernatorial direct elections were repealed as well. In 2005, the mixed-member proportional representation for the State Duma, the lower house of the Russian parliament, was replaced by proportional representation, which means that only the representatives of registered political parties were allowed to claim the seats in the lower house. Electoral districts were abolished. Thus, independent local representatives were expelled from both houses of the parliament. Although mayors are still elected by universal suffrage in the majority of Russian cities, since May 2014 city councils are authorized to revoke direct mayoral elections.

Chapter 3, Article 65 of the constitution states that Moscow and St. Petersburg are the “cities of federal importance” and have the status of provinces (Government of the Russian Federation, 1993). It means that the head of Moscow, who is still called mayor, is a governor in legal contemplation. Since the direct gubernatorial elections were repealed in Russia in 2004, Moscow and St. Petersburg became the only Russian cities where people could not elect mayors.

During the 2011 State Duma elections, multiple electoral violations were detected by independent observers. Consequently, Russia was shaken by waves of anti-government protests throughout the country. Around 100,000 Muscovites marched on the Moscow streets (“First We Take Sakharov Avenue,” 2011). The unexpected rise of the opposition movement forced the Kremlin to search for ways of compromising with the society. As a result, in 2012, President Dmitri Medvedev, Putin’s one-term heir, reinstated the direct gubernatorial elections (Roth, 2012). It was the first time in eight years that Moscow acquired the right to elect its head.

At that time, Sergei Sobyenin had been the assigned mayor of Moscow. On June 7, 2013, he announced his willingness to hold a snap mayoral election in the city. Although he technically vacated the seat to file his candidacy, he continued performing his mayoral duties until the day of the election on September 8, 2013 (Weaver & Clover, 2013). As Sobyenin publicly declared, his decision to hold the snap election was motivated by public demand (“Otvstavka Sobyenina,” 2013). However, as Russian political expert Dmitry Oreshkin noted, the Kremlin’s willingness to reassign Sobyenin as the mayor of Moscow as soon as possible might have been provoked by the government’s anticipation of the further decline of its popularity in the rebelling city (Krutov, 2013). Moreover, a substantial segment of Moscow citizens, especially the public sector workers, was still expected to vote for the current government as usual. Thus, Sobyenin was extremely confident that he would win the snap election in the first round. However, his certitude was challenged by the anti-corruption activist Alexey Navalny, who decided to run in the 2013 Moscow mayoral election as the opposition candidate. Analyst Denis Volkov commented that “authorities allowed Navalny to run against Putin-backed incumbent Sergei Sobyenin because he was not seen as a threat at the time” and “the authorities were not ready for him to be so effective” (Kovalyova & Smith, 2013, para. 7).

2011–2012 Opposition Movement in Russia and the Rise of Alexey Navalny

Born in 1976, Alexey Navalny is also the founder of The Anti-Corruption Foundation. In 2010, he launched the anti-corruption website *RosPil* (2014) and became prominent as an opposition blogger. On the pages of his *LiveJournal* blog (Navalny, n.d.), websites (Navalny, 2014), and social media profiles, Navalny exposes corruption in the Russian government, parliament, and state-controlled corporations

(Yale World Fellows, n.d.). His foundation investigates parliament members' ownership of undeclared properties and assets in the US, as well as the illegal enrichment of President Putin's Ozero (Lake) cooperative friends. Navalny's incriminations were taken with great interest and supported by his Internet audience. Within a few months, Navalny's meme referring to the "party of crooks and thieves" became a common description of Putin's United Russia party. Nevertheless, it took some time before the popular blogger turned into a well-known Russian politician. Navalny took his first confident steps toward this status on the Moscow streets during the 2011–2012 anti-government protests.

The 2011–2012 protest movement began as a response to vote rigging during the 2011 Russian legislative election. The day after the election, on December 5, 2011, thousands of demonstrators, angry over ballot stuffing and falsifications, stood on Chistye Prudy Boulevard in protest against electoral fraud (Zotova & Feldman, 2011). Never before during Putin's era had thousands of people participated in anti-government demonstrations. Inspired by the success of the Chistye Prudy rally, people started self-organizing in social media networks, in which tens of thousands then demonstrated their willingness to attend the planned protest on December 10, 2011. Over 50,000 people participated in the rally, as claimed by the opposition on the day of the event. The rally targeted Prime Minister Vladimir Putin and his United Russia ruling party. During the demonstration, the crowd was chanting "Putin is a thief!", "No to police state!", "Russia without Putin!", "Freedom to political prisoners!", and "This is our city!" An even larger crowd of approximately 100,000 attended the For Fair Elections rally on December 24, 2011 ("First We Take Sakharov Avenue," 2011).

After the very first remarkable protest that occurred on Chistye Prudy Boulevard, Navalny was detained while he tried to walk along Moscow streets toward the Kremlin, followed by hundreds of protesters. Released on December 24, 2011, the blogger spoke on Sakharov Avenue, this time as a Protest Committee member and leader of the movement.

In order to legitimize the protest movement leaders, in June 2012, the Protest Committee decided to hold e-elections for the so-called Russian Opposition Coordination Council. The Central Electoral Committee of the Russian opposition was created specifically for that purpose. First, the protest movement supporters had to register on the website of the Central Electoral Committee (2012) to vote online. Then they were supposed to verify their identity with a small e-payment or passport number. Next, identification numbers were sent to the phones of the verified voters. Those who could not vote online had an opportunity to cast their votes at one of several locations (Gessen, 2012). The elections were held on October 20–22, 2012, after weeks of campaigning and multiple rounds of live debates on the Dozhd Internet TV channel. Alexey Navalny received the highest number of votes and became a legitimate leader of the Russian opposition. Leonid Volkov, head of the Central Electoral Committee and creator of its online voting system, was invited by Navalny to lead his Moscow mayoral campaign.

New ICT platforms had been actively introduced by the Russian opposition and its leaders since the beginning of the 2011–2012 rallies. Similar to the Arab Spring protests (Bodrunova, 2013), the self-organization of Russian protesters occurred mostly on Facebook. Bodrunova (2013) highlights that "social networks in their national making on the whole, like *Facebook* in Russia where a phenomenon of 'exodus from *Livejournal*' blog platform took place approximately a year before the outbreak of protests, making *Facebook* a new virtual milieu for 'Runet intelligentsia'" (p. 15). Nevertheless, VKontakte, the Russian equivalent of Facebook, also played a major role in this context: "While the Moscow protests that took place during the winter and spring of 2011/2012 were mostly organized via Facebook, it was VKontakte that served as a virtual meeting point for rallies outside the capital" (Kvasha, 2013, para. 6).

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For the first time, crowdfunding and online payment tools had been applied in Russia to stage anti-government actions. The Protest Committee raised around 4 million rubles (US\$ 114,000) to organize the rally on Sakharov Avenue (Smirnova & Surnacheva, 2012). It was also possible to watch the live streaming of the committee sessions, in which the dates, places, and programs of upcoming rallies were discussed.

Despite the Russian society being unprecedentedly active during the 2011–2012 period, its nonviolent resistance did not necessarily result in significant changes of Kremlin policies. On May 6, 2012, the day before Putin's presidential inauguration, the rally on Bolotnaya Square ended in carnage and mass detentions. On August 17, 2012, the three members of the Pussy Riot punk band were sentenced to two years in prison for their anti-Putin performance inside Moscow's Cathedral of Christ the Savior.

Moreover, in 2012, the Parliament passed several bills to suppress the enthusiasm of the Russian society. On June 8, 2012, administrative fines for violating protest regulations were increased to one million rubles (US\$ 28,500) from the previous 1,000 rubles (US\$ 28.50). The law prohibited protesters from covering their faces at demonstrations as well ("Federalny Zakon Rossiyskoy Federatsii," 2012). Since 2013, the Kremlin-controlled Parliament has: 1) labeled Russian, internationally financed nonprofit organizations as foreign agents; 2) authorized the government to block websites dedicated to extremism; 3) approved the anti-blasphemy law allowing jail sentences; 4) introduced fines for those who speak publicly about social equivalency for homosexual and heterosexual relations; and 5) banned the adoption of Russian orphans by US citizens (Barry, 2013).

The rise of conservative, isolationist, and authoritarian tendencies in Russia, along with the ineffectiveness of the nonviolent resistance, caused frustration in the society. As a result, the protest movement dissipated by 2013. Nevertheless, the 2011–2012 protests strengthened political participation at different levels. For instance, the Internet-active opposition supporters revealed new leaders in their midst, primarily Alexey Navalny, and learned how online technologies could be applied to offline civic engagement and the consequent democratic development. Navalny's 2013 Moscow mayoral election campaign reflected this experience, with its extensive use of ICT.

In May 2011, criminal proceedings were held against Navalny and his friend Ofitserov. Navalny and Ofitserov were accused of fraud and embezzlement of the corporate property of Kirov Forests, a state-owned timber company. In the trial, Russia's Investigative Committee stated that in 2009, Ofitserov established the Vyatskaya Lesnaya Kompaniya, which bought timber from Kirov Forests at a discounted price and sold it to private companies. According to the committee, Navalny, when serving as an advisor of Nikita Belykh, the governor of Kirov Oblast, had organized the scheme, which resulted in losses of US\$ 500,000 to the regional budget. Navalny denied the accusations, claiming that the prosecution was politically motivated (Barry, 2012).

On April 10, 2012, the charge was dismissed when the prosecutor failed to offer evidence proving any criminal elements. However, on May 29, 2012, the charge was reinstated upon the personal decision of the head of Russia's Investigative Committee, who was earlier charged with corruption due to one of Navalny's investigations ("Bastrykin Vzyalsya za Navalnogo," 2012).

On July 18, 2013, when the snap mayoral election in Moscow had already been announced and Navalny's campaign had started, Navalny and Ofitserov were sentenced to five years in prison (Clover & Weaver, 2013). The conviction resulted in a public outcry and triggered a mass unauthorized rally in Moscow. Thousands protested in front of the Russian State Duma building near the Kremlin. The protesters placed Navalny's campaign stickers on the windows of the building and scrawled anti-Putin graffiti on its walls. The very next day, Navalny was released on bail and could then resume his cam-

paign. Notwithstanding his release, Navalny's ordeal is still ongoing with new charges emerging, such as the libel conviction in April 2014 over his Twitter post calling a member of the ruling Russia Unity party a drug addict (Cassin, 2014). Currently, the anti-corruption crusader is under house arrest and barred from communicating on social media. Meanwhile, he is involved in one more trial, this time with his brother, accused of defrauding the Russian branch of the French cosmetic company Yves Rocher, although the company had withdrawn the charges ("Yves Rocher Withdraws Accusations," 2014). In conclusion, the Kirov Forest trial ignited Navalny's campaign and other accusations did not exclude him from the political scenario yet.

TRANSMEDIA ANALYSIS OF NAVALNY'S GRASSROOTS CAMPAIGN

Methodology of Analysis

This chapter's theoretical background relies on the concept of transmedia storytelling (TS), a term coined by Jenkins (2003, 2006) that refers to the integrated media experiences that occur in a variety of media platforms and are able to attract audience engagement. Although Jenkins conceptualized TS in the early 2000s, the phenomenon of telling stories across different media is not new and even the word transmedia has been around at least for decades. In the 1970s, for instance, the journalist Bernard Levin already named *Transmedia and the Message* one chapter of his book *The Pendulum Years: Britain in the Sixties* (1970). Jansson (2013) considered transmedia narratives as "increasingly inter-connected and open-ended circulation of media content between various platforms, where the subjects previously known as 'the audience' are increasingly involved in the production of flows" (p. 287). The essence of TS is "not about offering the same content in different media platforms, but it is the worldbuilding experience, unfolding content and generating the possibilities for the story to evolve with new and pertinent content" (Gambarato, 2013, p. 82). Installments of the narrative are distributed across multiple platforms in order to engage the audience and offer a more meaningful experience. Therefore, besides its inherent characteristic of incorporating multiple media platforms, TS involves audience engagement. Engagement implies two dimensions: first, the aspect of attracting interest or attention and second, the moment of getting involved or participating in something. Interaction and participation are core aspects of TS in terms of both fictional and nonfictional stories (Gambarato, 2012).

With its potential to attract interest in order to generate involvement, audience engagement has not been restricted to the entertainment domain, but it is also applied to social and political initiatives. Some well-known examples of transmedia strategies applied in the political sphere are Barack Obama's 2008 and 2012 presidential campaigns. Jenkins (2008) presents his reflections on Obama's first campaign: "Obama has been the man for all platforms — a campaign which was as comfortable on YouTube or Second Life as it was on network television (...) and more importantly, understood the political process through a lens of media convergence, seeing old and new media, grassroots and corporate media working hand in hand to shape his public image and the campaign messages" (para. 2).

The opportunities for political engagement throughout new media and participatory culture are particularly pertinent for youth, who commonly are not primary players in formal institutions (Cohen et al., 2012, p. 4). Participatory politics could be defined as "interactive, peer-based acts through which individuals and groups seek to exert both voice and influence on issues of public concern" (Cohen et al., 2012, p. vi). This kind of participation in conjunction with ICTs includes being part of political groups/

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communities online and posting and sharing political content on social media networks. Participatory political acts can reach large audiences and mobilize networks, contribute to shaping the political agenda and providing feedback to political leaders, and enable the circulation of political information and the production of original user-generated content (UGC) (Cohen et al., 2012). Couldry (2010) argues that although the investment in so-called voice (of the producer, consumer, or *prosumer*) is crucial in the midst of participatory culture, it is often imbued with individualism, emphasizing the individual representation in detriment of the collectiveness. Therefore, the practices of listening in the social media context, could improve the awareness of political participation (Crawford, 2009).

Despite the fact that the theoretical and analytical implications of TS remain open, the analytical model developed by Gambarato (2013) is the method chosen to verify to which extent Navalny's grassroots campaign is transmediatic and how the campaign's ICT initiatives can lead to democratic improvement. The aim is to outline the campaign's essential features with regard to multiplatform media usage, audience participation, and transmedial strategies for democratic development. The relevance of the application of transmedia features in political campaigns refers to the potential that TS has to engage and motivate public participation and consequently to stimulate democratic practices. The analytical perspective is tailored for both fictional and nonfictional experiences. The model includes 10 distinctive topics guided by a series of questions. The work of Jenkins (2010), Long (2007), and Strickler (2012) are directly implicated in the analytical model. A brief description of it is provided in Table 1.

Transmedia Strategies in Navalny's Campaign

In the summer of 2013, Navalny started campaigning using innovative techniques, especially involving digital projects. The ICT solutions were utilized in two ways: 1) to promote the candidate among Internet users directly by means of advertisements, official websites, social media communities, etc. and 2) to endorse the candidate among non-Internet users indirectly by attracting actual supporters and directing them to offline activities, such as meetings with voters, metro and traffic campaigning, among others. Even without the victory, Navalny's campaign represented a step forward in the direction of democratic development in the country, giving voice to the citizens, offering them the opportunity to experience participatory politics and transparency in the political sphere. The campaign itself was more important than the results; the following transmedia analysis sheds light on how his achievements were designed.

Premise and Purpose

To win in the Moscow mayoral election, a candidate must garner over 50% of the votes. If no one attains an absolute majority in the first round of voting, the top two candidates advance to the second one. In this situation, a relative majority of the votes cast is enough to win. The ultimate purpose of any election campaign is to win the race, but in this particular case, the fact that Navalny almost reached the second round was already a victory that would shake the stability of the United Russia ruling party in Moscow and challenge the balance of power in the country's political scenario. Moreover, the number of votes cast for Navalny could also be a factor influencing the possibility of his imprisonment, which remains to be seen to this day.

To be successful in achieving its purpose, the campaign had to find an effective method of communicating with voters. Television was (and is still) the leading source of information for the majority of Russians (Khvostunova, 2013), with nearly 100% of households in the country owning television sets

Table 1. Concise description of the transmedia project design analytical model

| Topic | Practicable Questions |
|--|--|
| <p>1. Premise and purpose State clearly what the project is about and why it exists.</p> | <p>What is the project about? Is it a fiction, nonfiction, or mixed project? What is its fundamental purpose? Is it to entertain, to teach, or to inform? Is it to market a product?</p> |
| <p>2. Narrative It is the structure that storyworlds evoke in the transmedia milieu.</p> | <p>What are the narrative elements of the project? What is the summary of its storyline? What is the time frame of the story? What are the strategies for expanding the narrative? Are negative capability and migratory cues included? Is it possible to identify intermedial texts in the story?</p> |
| <p>3. Worldbuilding A storyworld or story universe should be robust enough to support expansions, going beyond a single story.</p> | <p>When does the story occur? Which is the central world where the project is set? Is it a fictional world, the real world, or a mixture of both? How is it presented geographically? Is the storyworld large enough to support expansions?</p> |
| <p>4. Characters The features of the characters and how they appear across all the platforms should be consistent.</p> | <p>Who are the primary and secondary characters of the story? Does the project have any spinoffs? Can the storyworld be considered a primary character on its own? Can the audience be considered a character as well?</p> |
| <p>5. Extensions Transmedia storytelling involves multiple media in which the storyworld will unfold and be experienced.</p> | <p>How many extensions does the project have? Are the extensions adaptations or expansions of the narrative through various media? Is each extension canonical? Does it enrich the story? Are the extensions able to spread the content and provide the possibility to explore the narrative in-depth?</p> |
| <p>6. Media platforms and genres A transmedia project necessarily involves more than one medium and can also embrace more than one genre (science fiction, action, comedy, etc.).</p> | <p>What kind of media platforms (film, book, comics, games, etc.) are involved in the project? Which devices (computer, game console, tablet, mobile phone, etc.) are required by the project? How does each platform participate and contribute to the whole project? What are their functions in the project? Is each medium really relevant to the project? What is the rollout strategy to release the platforms? Which genres (action, adventure, detective, science fiction, fantasy, etc.) are present in the project?</p> |
| <p>7. Audience and market Scoping the audience is fundamental for a more appropriate delivery of the transmedia experience. The TS involves some level of audience engagement.</p> | <p>Who is the target audience of the project? What kind of “viewers” (real-time, reflective, and navigational) does the project attract? Do similar projects exist? Do they succeed in achieving their purpose? What is the project’s business model? Was the project successful revenue-wise? Why?</p> |
| <p>8. Engagement All the dimensions of a transmedia project, at a lower or higher level, are drawn into the experience of people when engaging with the story.</p> | <p>Through what point of view (PoV) does the audience experience this world: first person, second person, third person, or a mixture of them? What role does the audience play in this project? What are the mechanisms of interaction in this project? Is there any participation involved in the project? Does the project work as a cultural attractor/activator? Is there UGC related to the story (parodies, recaps, mash-ups, fan communities, etc.)? Does the project offer the audience the possibility of immersion into the storyworld? Does the project offer the audience the possibility to take elements of the story and incorporate them into everyday life? Is there a system of rewards and penalties?</p> |
| <p>9. Structure The organization of a transmedia project, the arrangement of its constituent elements, and how they interrelate can offer concrete elements for analysis.</p> | <p>When did the transmediation begin? Is it a proactive or retroactive project? Is this project closer to a transmedia franchise, a portmanteau transmedia story, or a complex transmedia experience? Can each extension work as an independent entry point to the story? What are/were possible endpoints of the project? How is the project structured?</p> |
| <p>10. Aesthetics The visual and audio elements of a transmedia project should also contribute to the overall atmosphere and enhance the experience spread throughout multiple media platforms.</p> | <p>What kinds of visuals are used (animation, video, graphics, a mix) in the project? Is the overall appearance realistic or a fantasy environment? Is it possible to identify specific design styles in the project? How does audio work in this project? Are there ambient sounds (rain, wind, traffic noises, etc.), sound effects, music, and so forth?</p> |

(Gambarato, 2014, pp.96–97).

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(Dragomir & Thompson, 2011, p. 13). However, since major Russian news channels were (and remain) controlled by the government and enforced so-called stop-lists for opposition leaders, Navalny's team had to develop and implement an alternative communication strategy.

Certainly, Leonid Volkov was not a surprise choice to head Navalny's campaign. A technology entrepreneur himself, Volkov concretely influenced the decision to develop ICT solutions for campaigning. Under the circumstances, he planned the campaign strategy toward building an army of online and offline volunteers. Therefore, various online tools were specially created to intensify the wave of civil activism. "At the beginning our main objective was to turn supporters into volunteers," Navalny said in his post-campaign report (2013, p. 43). The intention was for volunteers to form a connecting link between the candidate and those voters who could not be reached online. The ICT initiatives imply that the candidate's platform and criticism toward the ruling party can reach a greater number of citizens both directly by means of online solutions and indirectly by the volunteers' offline work.

Narrative

On June 4, 2013, a snap Moscow mayoral election was announced. Less than two weeks later, by June 16, Navalny's campaign team was already formed and started implementing its strategy. The campaign had less than three months to raise the candidate's rating for the election that would be held on September 8, 2013.

From the beginning, the campaign applied a set of online and offline extensions to inform the audience about the candidate's platform and to tell his story. However, extensions such as distribution of newspapers, traffic campaigning, distribution of political advertisement materials in the metro, etc., needed volunteers to be involved in the process of promoting the candidate. Consequently, several online extensions were created specifically to recruit volunteers and direct them to both offline and online activities. For instance, the campaign website *mosvpiska.navalny.ru* functioned as a kind of *couchsurfing*—an online service that connects travelers to find a place to stay or share their homes while traveling. This initiative offered people outside Moscow the opportunity to find places to stay in the city, in case they were willing to be campaign volunteers. According to Navalny (2013, p. 41), the service attracted 3,100 users, including foreigners. Extensions such as this one worked as migratory cues for those who wanted to support Navalny with volunteering, e-payments, and so forth. Thus, the campaign created a system that would grow organically, generating new actors internally, which configures a transmedial core feature. The more actors it would involve, the more effective the results would be. Soon the campaign turned into an extensive system, endorsing Navalny with tens of websites and thousands of volunteers. Those who were not involved in volunteering activities were reached by the campaign through newspapers, protest materials, radio, online outlets, among others, and could also participate in Navalny's daily election rallies across Moscow.

In terms of content, the narrative of the opposition candidate's campaign was built primarily around five major issues: healthcare, housing and communal services, migration, transport, and cost of living ("The Platform of Alexey Navalny," n.d.). These themes were chosen as probably the most relevant issues for the majority of the Moscow population. Concomitantly, Navalny's slogan "Change Russia, Start from Moscow" was actively circulated. The slogan appealed to politically engaged citizens and opposition supporters and implicitly directed the campaign beyond practical city issues.

The narrative incorporated gaming elements such as a progress bar on team.navalny.ru (for a graphic display of the volunteers' personal contributions to the campaign) and an online quest on popilili.com. The popilili.com online game was jointly designed by Navalny's team and the White & Fluffy agency. In Russian, *popilili* means "they have stolen (a budget)." In the game, players had to find out which government spending led to misappropriation of the Moscow funds. While playing, users learned more about Navalny's platform regarding the city's major issues.

Intermediality was highly present in the whole project, since it referred to the 2011–2012 Russian opposition movement and the US grassroots campaigns. Navalny's Western-style politicking was inspired by Obama's 2008 presidential campaign and meetings with American politicians when he was a fellow at Yale University in 2010; Navalny even mentioned the American TV series *The Wire*, *Homeland*, and *House of Cards* as other inspirations (Bershidsky, 2013). The characteristics of the narrative involving installments of the story spread across different media platforms, gaming elements, and intermediality, reinforce the transmedial nature of the campaign and help its content appeal to broader audiences.

Worldbuilding

The campaign took place in Moscow, the capital of the Russian Federation, in the summer of 2013. The cradle of contemporary Russian opposition, Moscow has been stirring the country with mass opposition rallies since 2011. The city is the wealthiest in Russia and differs from the rest of the country, with a relatively high number of people working in the private sector of the economy, who are financially independent from the government and prosperous enough to claim civil rights, particularly freedom. Internet penetration is at the highest level in Moscow (73%), compared to other Russian cities. The country's overall Internet penetration was 52% in 2013 (Yandex, 2013, p. 4). All these factors made it possible for the Russian opposition to operate a grassroots campaign in the Moscow mayoral election.

The project was planned to have a friendly expansion. Several of its online extensions did not produce any content by themselves. Instead, users utilized them to arrange their offline and online volunteering activities and thus expand the boundaries of the campaign and engage the public. For instance, the number of places for distribution of political advertisements or homes to be involved in the so-called *Navalny to every house* online project depended entirely on the initiative of Navalny enthusiasts, characterizing a transmedia strategy to engage audiences. Theoretically, the campaign spread over the whole city, yet the geographic boundaries of Navalny's campaign were set with every single action of its volunteers.

One of these actions was performed on July 18, 2013. The day Navalny and Ofitserov were sentenced to prison, a rally broke out in front of the State Duma building. The rally was unauthorized, spontaneous, and prepared solely by Navalny's supporters via Facebook. The action must be regarded as part of the campaign; after the protests, the oppositionist was released and could proceed with his election race.

The Navalny campaign rallies occurred mainly at the periphery of Moscow, where he was not particularly strong (Navalny, 2013, p. 14). The population in the outskirts of Moscow is not as friendly to the opposition as the residents in the prosperous areas around the city center. The former represents the older segment of Moscow citizens, who usually do not access the Internet as actively as the younger, white-collar workers downtown. Never before had the Russian opposition attempted to grab this older group's attention or really included them in its campaign actions. As a result, on the day of the election, almost equal numbers of votes cast for Navalny came from the Moscow periphery and the city center ("Kak Moskva Vibirala Mera," 2013).

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TS is not about a character-centered world, but about a story universe robust enough to be expanded across multiple media platforms. Navalny's campaign managed to develop above and beyond the candidate's personal story, creating a storyworld worth participating. This aspect contributed to participatory politics and democratization of information.

Characters

The story has Alexey Navalny as the protagonist and his main election opponent Sergei Sobyenin as the antagonist. As an anti-corruption activist, Navalny was nominally proposed as a Moscow mayoralty candidate by the Republican Party of Russia–People's Freedom Party (RPR–Parnas), a liberal opposition party that represented the entire opposition movement. Throughout the campaign, Navalny held meetings with more than 40,000 citizens in total; he was the only candidate to do so (Navalny, 2013, p. 13). Since the Russian political scenario does not have a tradition of election rallies, they aroused much interest among the citizens and received extensive media coverage.

Despite being his political opponent, Sobyenin facilitated Navalny's participation in the election. In order to legitimize his position as the mayor of all Muscovites, Sobyenin supplied Navalny with the signatures of the United Russia municipal deputies, which were essential for Navalny's registration as a candidate. Some experts, such as Stanislav Belkovsky, stated that it was Sobyenin who succeeded in persuading the Russian authorities to set Navalny free, when the Kremlin had to decide whether or not the oppositionist should be sentenced to prison (in the Kirov Forests case) (Vasilyeva & Isachenkov, 2013). "Sobyenin needs Navalny to make the mayoral elections look legitimate," Belkovsky argued. "He suffers from a provincial complex, and he wants to prove to Moscow's residents that his election victory is honest" (Vasilyeva & Isachenkov, 2013, para. 17). Illegal interference in Navalny's campaign process was minimal, compared with the usual Russian election practices. Sobyenin also significantly reduced the vote rigging on the day of the election. If he could easily win even in a relatively fair election, Sobyenin would probably prove himself to Vladimir Putin as a safe person to be the Kremlin's candidate for president of the Russian Federation in the 2018 election.

In the elections, Sobyenin adhered to the campaigning style commonly practiced in contemporary Russia. In contrast to Navalny's participatory-oriented campaign, Sobyenin's presence in online and offline activities was rather limited. His headquarters focused on promoting the candidate through traditional media, primarily television and newspapers. Altogether, the television reach of Sobyenin's campaign had exceeded 250 million contacts, while all the other candidates combined had managed to gain just as few as 1.5 million contacts ("Analiz Reklamnykh Kampaniy," 2013).

On August 7, 2013, more than 200 ICT entrepreneurs expressed their support for Navalny as a candidate in exchange for his willingness to fight against inappropriate government business regulations, corruption in the city, and so forth. It was the first time in Russian political history that businesspeople signed a social contract with a candidate. The action provided the signatories with the status of campaign actors, since the social contract was not an act of charity, as it usually happens with the obligation of Russian businesses to finance the United Russia ruling party. In this case, it was a win-win deal and a democratic improvement.

Moreover, the volunteers were also primary characters in Navalny's campaign. The structure of the campaign strongly relied on single volunteers' actions, which implied that they played a crucial role in influencing voters' decisions to cast their votes for Navalny. Although the number of volunteers could seem not necessarily impressive and the impact of each single volunteer must be limited, as a group they

significantly affected the campaign's momentum. The audience could also be considered a character of Navalny's campaign for two main reasons: they had every opportunity to be involved and to participate in the candidate's campaign, and they determined the election results. The power of the grassroots campaign favored political and social awareness.

Extensions

In terms of content, it is meaningful to extract single extensions from the whole transmedia project to classify multiple content types spread across its platforms. The campaign had 32 extensions overall: 1) Navalny's 89 meetings with 40,000 voters (Navalny, 2013, p. 13); 2) 2,756 so-called cubes (square tents with Navalny's image and campaign goals printed on the sides) on Moscow streets (Navalny, 2013, p. 21); 3) visual campaign advertising, using slogan stickers, banners on citizens' balconies, labeled T-shirts, and badges; 4) 15.95 million free campaign newspapers (Navalny, 2013, p. 33); 5) 3 million after-meeting, free campaign newspapers (Navalny, 2013, p. 34); 6) 4 million campaign leaflets (Navalny, 2013, p. 35); 7) 24 online videos and teasers; 8) navalny.ru website with the candidate's platform and campaign news; 9) pd4.navalny.ru campaign fundraising online service; 10) cube.navalny.ru with the information on Navalny's cubes; 11) mosvpiska.navalny.ru with the *couchsurfing* service for volunteers; 12) passport.navalny.ru website to aggregate information about the users of all of the campaign's online platforms and their activities; 13) v.navalny.ru campaign personal calendar-planner; 14) entrepreneurs.navalny.ru with Navalny's social contract to be signed; 15) dom.navalny.ru geo-targeted social network for campaign volunteers; 16) moskva.navalny.ru volunteers' online service for campaigning on social networks; 17) team.navalny.ru website to arrange for personal involvement in the campaign; 18) five.navalny.ru website with five key campaign issues; 19) popilili.com online game; 20) za.navalny.ru with speeches of famous personalities in support of Navalny; 21) vote.navalny.ru website with five reasons to vote in the Moscow mayoral elections; 22) Navalny's personal blog, navalny.livejournal.com; 23) communities on Facebook, VKontakte, Twitter, Odnoklassniki, and Instagram; 24) campaign e-mailing; 25) online commercials; 26) radio commercials; 27) political advertisements in newspapers; 28) political advertisements on route taxis; 29) mass rallies in Sokolniki Park and on Sakharov Avenue and the post-election rally on Bolotnaya Square; 30) online application for election observers; 31) Navalny to every house online interactive map in which people could register themselves by typing their e-mail and physical addresses; and 32) a detailed campaign report.

The process of campaigning in the metro and traffic areas consisted of distributing free campaign newspapers and thus functioned as the method of delivering the newspaper extension. In transmedia projects, the boundaries of single extensions may not replicate those of single platforms; they may extend beyond single platforms and simultaneously utilize the capabilities of several others. For instance, Navalny's cubes were not exclusively based on offline square tents, but also online on cube.navalny.ru and mosvpiska.navalny.ru.

All the extensions were canonical, which is a core principle of TS, and provided voters with a variety of consistent messages about the candidate's platform. Some extensions were created to inform, while others involved the audience in cooperating and volunteering activities, such as street and online protests, crowdfunding, and observing the election. Since political campaigns are based on promoting a candidate, the extensions of Navalny's campaign actively utilized the power of sharing, contributing to the democratization of information and participatory politics. Online extensions encouraged the dissemination of content on social networks and informed users, especially the young audience, on how they could help endorse the candidate offline.

Media Platforms and Genres

Navalny's campaign was opportunely planned to unfold both online and offline in order to embrace young and senior audiences, the city center and periphery, and digital natives and media illiterates. "A turn to new media is not a turn away from offline activity" (Cohen et al., 2012, p. xi). The integration between digital media platforms such as the Internet and mobile phones, traditional media such as radio and print media, and offline activities such as metro and traffic campaigning, perfectly characterized Navalny's strategy during the electoral process.

For instance, besides the numerous websites and social media networks involved in the campaign, its YouTube channel released more than 20 videos per month. A one-minute video released on September 1, 2013 went viral with over 2.8 million views ("Vremya Prishlo!," 2013). The video featured a guerrilla marketing campaign launched by Navalny's team at the end of August 2013. In the campaign, military shipping boxes were distributed on the streets with parachutes attached and "The time has come! Take up arms!" slogan written on them. When passers-by opened the boxes, they turned out to be filled with Navalny's campaign-branded pens, imprinted with the slogan "Your vote is your arms" ("Vremya Prishlo!," 2013).

As a novelty in the Russian political scenario, the online game popilili.com registered 43,300 users during the campaign (Navalny, 2013, p. 42). The use of the Internet as a platform to spark awareness and aggregate involvement was successfully implemented by Navalny's team, denoting both a transmedial feature and a democratic practice. The print media was extensively used as well, for instance, with a massive distribution of newspapers with the candidate's program for the city and stickers with slogans such as "Change Russia. Start with Moscow.", "Only Navalny. Only Hard Work.", and "Navalny my Mayor." This approach, especially with the distribution of newspapers in Moscow's metro stations, was very effective because people could read them during the ride. Volunteers went 3,662 times to share the newspapers in various metro stations; a total of 581,010 copies were delivered to the public (Navalny, 2013, p. 24). Navalny (2013, p. 22) was the only candidate who did it. Overall, the number of newspapers distributed during the campaign reached 15.95 million (Navalny, 2013, p. 33). According to the 2010 Census, Moscow's population is over 11 million (Russian Federal State Statistics Service, 2011). Printed materials, including leaflets, were also given to drivers during a two-week period in the so-called traffic campaign. However, this effort did not last longer due to insufficient funds (Navalny, 2013, p. 25). The stickers were displayed on doors/cars/windows and functioned as an alternative to the lack of opportunity to use TV and major radio broadcasts. The stickers were abundantly spread throughout the city.

Regarding the technological devices involved in the campaign, computers, mobile phones, and radios were required to gain full access to its contents. Since Navalny had restricted access to television, TV sets were less relevant to his campaign. Tablets were also used by Navalny's team, specifically to conduct opinion polls.

The documentary could be considered as the main media genre employed by the campaign, in the sense of depicting real-life situations, events, and characters. It could be argued that the action genre was also used by Navalny's team to portray an extremely dynamic candidate and his army of active volunteers. Action includes movement but more so, excitement. The campaign period was brief; therefore, the rollout strategy basically involved simultaneous actions because both online and offline extensions would not have much time to be experienced. Nevertheless, his team noticeably focused primarily on building the campaign's infrastructure in the beginning (June–July 2013) and on boosting both online and offline campaign activities toward the end of the electoral process in August–September 2013 (Na-

valny, 2013, pp. 5–6). Navalny's campaign used several media platforms to distribute the content in a transmedial manner, focusing on engaging ICT users and nonusers as well. This initiative contributed to promote social equality.

Audience and Market

The demographic segment of the campaign's target audience ranged from 18-year-old citizens to older ones, encompassing the voting-age population in Moscow. From youngsters to seniors, from students to professionals, from wealthy Muscovites to less fortunate ones—Navalny's campaign was designed to reach them all: "While Navalny's reliance on the Internet for his anti-corruption activities has earned him a loyal following of young people, his online initiatives have also appealed to older people who are fed up with corruption" (Kravtsova, 2013, para. 33). Besides all the digital initiatives, his team focused also on fostering the candidate's direct contact with voters by means of meetings. These meetings were held throughout the city, covering central and peripheral areas, and differentiated Navalny from other mayoral contenders, who preferred to interact with the population less directly. The opposition candidate held three meetings a day, and the ones near metro stations attracted larger audiences (Navalny, 2013, p. 16).

As Navalny's campaign chief Leonid Volkov explained, the campaign is absolutely new in terms of fundraising amounts, number of volunteers and digital projects, but the meetings with the public are what really make it innovative. The main aim of the election campaign, he said, was to reach those people who have not yet decided which candidate to vote for (Kravtsova, 2013, para. 12).

Navalny was interested in the support from society and therefore promoted meetings specifically with businesspeople, intellectuals, artists, poets, and musicians, congregating the financial and cultural sectors, that is, a more affluent crowd. Navalny's campaign gained momentum; toward the end of the electoral period, the number of visitors on his websites increased significantly (Navalny, 2013, p. 39). Navalny's report (2013) showed that the audience mainly accessed his major website when coming from social media, which demonstrated the power of social networks in redirecting the audience: 1) 53% of visitors came from Twitter, 2) 31% from VKontakte, 3) 14% from Facebook, and 4) 2% from Odnoklassniki (p. 44).

Because Navalny could not count on television to reach the majority of Moscow population, the campaign invested in the Internet and radio advertising, taking advantage of the lower costs and huge penetration. The major system of Internet advertisement used by the campaign was Google AdWords. This online advertising service places advertisements at the top, the bottom, or beside the list of results Google displays after a specific search query. In fact, 70% of people who were not interested in politics clicked more on Navalny's Internet advertisements than others did. The campaign report suggested that the probable reason was that they did not know about the candidate and were interested to obtain more information (Navalny, 2013, p. 46). It seemed that the campaign was able to congregate different kinds of users, who could be involved at varying levels. To paraphrase Murray (1997, p. 257), the campaign embraced real-time, reflective long-term, and navigational viewers, who eventually accessed the content, followed the whole campaign development, and explored all the connections among different parts of the campaign.

Navalny's team claimed that only 55% of the adults in Moscow listened to the radio. For instance, Auto Radio 90.3 FM, which had the highest reach among Moscow's radio stations during the election period ("Dannyepo Auditorii," 2013), refused to broadcast Navalny's advertisements for fear of punishment by the government. Most of the radio spots were aired on Echo of Moscow, which is recognized as "the last

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bastion of free media in Russia” and is “the most popular independent station” in Russia (Panibratov, 2012, p. 49). On the radio, the advertisements targeted audiences of different ages and income levels, reaching 5.457 million people, according to the campaign’s report (Navalny, 2013, pp. 49–50).

A few days prior to the election, *The New Yorker* mentioned remarkable achievements performed by Navalny’s campaign. Among them, the highlights were: 1) the fact that Navalny was able to run at all, considering all his criticisms of the government and the allegedly false and politically motivated criminal charges against him; 2) the unprecedented campaign techniques, which managed to congregate over 15,000 volunteers; and 3) despite Russia’s pervasive political cynicism, the campaign’s drawing on private fundraising (Lipman, 2013).

Although in Western countries, political fundraising is common, Navalny’s was exceptional in terms of being a novelty in Russia and the amount of money raised. The total fundraising amount collected during the campaign exceeded 103.4 million rubles (nearly US\$ 3 million). Such a huge amount of money raised from small donations of ordinary people had never happened before, according to Navalny (2013, p. 71). Crowdfunding, a grassroots initiative, characterizes TS and democratizes access to capital. However, in May 2014, the Moscow City Elections Commission investigated the offices of the Internet company Yandex and the homes of opposition members suspected of “pocketing funds designated for opposition leader Alexei Navalny’s mayoral campaign last year” (Brennan, 2014a, para. 1). Moreover, his campaign had been accused of using Yandex’s payment service *Yandex. Money* “to receive illegal funds from abroad” (Brennan, 2014a, para. 5). No irregularities were proven. Navalny claimed once more that these searches constituted an attempt by authorities to limit the opposition’s ability to raise money through the Internet and to discredit opposition members who are (at the time of this writing) candidates for the 2014 Moscow City Duma (Brennan, 2014a).

In an effort at public transparency about the administration and spending of the campaign funds, Navalny’s report presented the following numbers: 1) 40% of the money was spent in campaign production; 2) 27% in advertisement (Internet, radio, and newspapers); 3) 26% in street campaigning (cubes, traffic, metro, etc.); and 4) 7% in other expenses (office supplies, office rent, surveys, etc.) (Navalny, 2013, p. 75).

Engagement

Engaging the audience in Navalny’s campaign did not simply focus on drawing people’s attention to the candidate and urging them to vote for him. The goal was to raise awareness about Navalny himself and his program for the city, as well as to involve the audience as volunteers who could spark enthusiasm for the candidate, aggregate more people, and then vote for him. In this context, the campaign functioned both as a cultural attractor (connecting a community around common interests) and a cultural activator (giving them something to do), improving democratic practices.

Navalny (2013) said: “We destroyed the stereotype that for a politician it is useless to have volunteers”(p. 4). Common community participation was the campaign’s strategic move toward real results at the polls. However, it was not simple to achieve in Moscow. Difficulties were encountered in obtaining permission for the meetings, for instance. To bypass the government regulations and restrictions imposed on public political events, such as marches, demonstrations, and rallies, Navalny’s team decided to use the law of elections and follow the procedures designed for the campaign process. The meetings were scheduled at 4:00, 6:00, and 8:00 p.m. to accommodate different audiences. The structure of the meetings involved cubes, a stage, chairs for elderly people, umbrellas as protection from either the sun or the rain, and the sound system. After the meetings, newspapers were published, incorporating the information discussed.

Overall, during the campaign, 32 editors produced 68 newspapers, which reached a circulation of 3 million copies (Navalny, 2013, pp. 15–16). Navalny's team invited people to participate by means of letters and posters placed in the residential buildings' mailboxes. Generally, from one to several hundred people attended the ordinary daily meetings with the candidate. The election attracted 2.3 million voters, the total number of the turnout in Moscow (33.23%) ("Pri Luzhkovye Takogo Ne Bylo," 2013).

Besides the meetings with voters, Navalny also held meetings with volunteers, aimed to create horizontal connections. For offline activities, volunteers could distribute printed materials such as newspapers, leaflets, and stickers; participate in the campaign cubes by talking to the public about the candidate's ideas; or simply wear t-shirts and support Navalny, among other tasks. Regarding online activities, they could spread the word about the campaign on social networks; through a special service (ICT solution), they could send up to 20 emails a day to random users of VKontakte who were Moscow residents, or they could place over their avatar the virtual "white Navalny on red circle" (Suleymanov, 2013, para. 3).

On the one hand, offline activities characterized the possibility for the audience to (physically) be immersed in the campaign. On the other hand, the arsenal of campaign memorabilia (pens, stickers, bags, t-shirts, banners, bracelets, flags, balloons, among others) represented opportunities for the audience to extract elements that were part of the campaign universe and to incorporate these into their daily lives. Both immersion and extractability are core principles of TS.

Navalny's supporters were also poll watchers during the election, which was another method of engagement and a crucial way to improve democratic development in the country. In his *LiveJournal* blog (Navalny, n.d.), the candidate encouraged his supporters to participate in the process of monitoring the election. The campaign actively collaborated with Russian independent, nonprofit organizations (e.g., Golos Association) specialized in training election observers. Consequently, around 80% of voting places were monitored by independent observers, including those assigned by Navalny's team. Half of the polling stations had at least two independent watchers monitoring the process (Navalny, 2013, p. 70).

Concerning different viewpoints, the campaign could be experienced from all the perspectives. For example, the volunteers' activities were experienced in the first person, the meetings and oral communication could involve a second-person perspective, and significant aspects of the extensions were experienced in the third person.

UGC, such as memes, parodies, and mash-ups were vastly available during the campaign process. Among the most popular were memes such as "Keep calm and vote for Navalny," "Yes we cat" (in reference to Obama's slogan "Yes we can"), and parodies featuring Navalny, Sobyenin, and Putin.

As discussed earlier in the chapter, interaction and above all, participation contributed to the transmedial development of the campaign and directly influenced the election results and arguably, the democratic processes in Russia.

Structure

The Navalny campaign's transmedial approach was planned from the beginning, which characterized a proactive transmedia project. "The two [Navalny and Volkov] set up a headquarters and a bank account and started accepting donations and signing up volunteers. By early August, according to Volkov and Navalny, the campaign had more than \$1 million and 14,000 volunteers" (Bershidsky, 2013, para. 4). Due to Volkov participation, the organization of the campaign resembled an ICT company. The campaign started with eight people; at the end, there were 300 (60 of them coordinating the campaign) (Navalny, 2013, pp. 7–8).

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The series of extensions incorporated in the process functioned as independent entry points to Navalny's story universe, corresponding to the way a transmedia franchise operates. Within this structure, each extension, spread across multiple media platforms, could work as a door opened for the audience to be acquainted with the candidate and be inspired to engage in the campaign. The organization of the campaign comprised the following areas: 1) street campaigning; 2) ICT and the Internet; 3) financial security; 4) sociology; 5) creation of materials; 6) law; 7) support for street campaigning; 8) office support; 9) press services; and 10) poll watchers (Navalny, 2013, p. 9). Navalny's transmedia franchise offered alternatives, especially the ICT ones, to attract the audience engagement, amplifying the access to information.

Aesthetics

The design of Navalny's campaign was remarkably simple yet efficient. It incorporated various graphic elements, videos, photographs, light projections, printed materials, and so forth. Both the websites and the offline materials presented clean, clear, subtle, minimalist, and sophisticated designs. The overall aesthetics, characterized by the predominance of white and light blue colors, as well as by elegant fonts and clean layouts, corroborates the message conveyed by the candidate: young and fresh change for Russia to the detriment of the current populist and autocratic government.

The Progress Party, Navalny's center-right political party, propagated a platform that stood for conservative economic measures and a liberal social approach, as opposed to that of President Putin and his United Russia party. While Putin's party logo highlighted the Russian flag and its three colors (white, blue, and red), the colors of Navalny's party logo were turquoise and white. In a country profoundly marked by the red hues of the Communist era, turquoise and white played a more neutral role in the Russian political spectrum. These colors figured predominantly in Navalny's campaign, from the websites to the cubes, from the printed materials to the campaign's report. Moreover, the prevalent use of white can be traced back to the 2011–2012 opposition movement. During those protests, white stripes were actively utilized and became the symbol of the opposition. Describing the rally in Moscow on December 9, 2011, an anonymous participant stated: "Some came with signs, flags, white flowers. Many had white stripes - symbol of the opposition" (Russialize, 2011, para. 6). White could also be interpreted as an allusion to snow (a constant presence in Russian winters) and a symbolism of virtue, purity, and peace. The color white was so massively used that Putin was asked whether the white stripes-wave during the protests could become the symbol of a color revolution. He answered,

Talking about color revolutions... It is a practiced scheme. We know well how it worked in Ukraine. Now this scheme is being imposed on Russia. When I saw people with these white stripes on their chests I thought they had hanged some contraceptives on themselves ("Putin says Opposition White Stripes," 2011, para. 2).

Although red is the color that provokes the most response among humans (DeLong & Martinson, 2012), it was hardly seen in Navalny's campaign. Its distance from the Communist past and the urge for change are probably two of the underlying motivations. Overall, the campaign portrayed a realistic environment and only in a few occasions opted for a more playful design, as could be found in the popilili.com online game, which presented a cartoonish look. The visual elements of the transmedia campaign enhanced the overall experience spread throughout multiple media platforms and collaborated to unify the campaign.

DISCUSSION

Grassroots Political Campaign and Democratic Development in Russia

In the snap Moscow mayoral election in 2013, officially, Sergei Sobyenin won in the first round, with 51.37% of the votes, while Alexey Navalny garnered 27.24%. The oppositionist did not acknowledge the election results. He claimed the results from the second-round ballot, insisting that his opponent received only 49% by an independent vote count. In any case, the outcome was considered a huge victory, since Navalny's ratings managed to increase from 4–6% in the first official survey in the beginning of the electoral process to more than 27% at the polls. The elections demonstrated the usefulness of grassroots transmedia campaign strategies in overcoming the state propaganda machine, improving democratic practices and strengthening the opposition movement. From the beginning, it was a crucial challenge to involve enough people who were ready to volunteer. Russian society is relatively inert and basically does not have a tradition of peaceful mass actions. However, Navalny's team successfully developed a political campaign with the core elements that characterize TS: multiple media platforms, expansion of content, and audience engagement. The campaign took advantage of gaming elements, UGC, and ICT solutions, such as online interactive communications and networking, to generate interest from the Internet audience and to spark political and social equality. From the perspective of verbal communication, the campaign found a common language with volunteers, especially the youth, offering opportunities for participatory politics to grow. Since the younger generation constituted the vast majority of volunteers, the campaign addressed them in an informal style, including jokes in operational recommendations for the distribution of political advertisements. The campaign conveyed the impression of volunteering as a responsibility that could eventually be fun and amusing as well. With regular trainings and celebrations held in the campaign headquarters, a team of associates was ultimately consolidated.

Navalny's team supplied users with comprehensive information on campaign activities, so everyone could find an appropriate format for personal involvement, raising the democratization of information and offering concrete steps toward political participation. Depending on their individual capabilities, Muscovites could distribute campaign advertisement materials at their own homes or anywhere in the city, display a campaign poster from a balcony, or donate money to the campaign, among other types of support. With the help of volunteers, free campaign newspapers had been delivered to almost every mailbox in Moscow, and political advertisements were disseminated in the most crowded city places, such as metro stations and surrounding areas, shopping malls, and crossroads. Transmedia strategies within Navalny's campaign embraced a variety of online and offline media platforms and played a relevant role in the development of participatory culture and politics in the country.

This election campaign demonstrated that enough people in Russia were ready to invest their money in political changes. Citizens from all the 82 regions in Russia donated money to Navalny's race. Male donors comprised the majority (85%), with an average donation amount of approximately 1,000 rubles (US\$ 28.50) overall in Russia and 2,000 rubles (US\$ 57) in Moscow. The donors' average age was 36 years old (Navalny, 2013, p. 72); 16,694 payments were transferred during the campaign, and this was the first time that a candidate undertook this initiative in Russia (Navalny, 2013, p. 3). The number of donations increased each time Navalny posted on his blog, calling for support (Navalny, 2013, p. 73). This fact illustrates the power of blogging and sharing across social media networks and demonstrates the effectiveness of ICT solutions in democratic practices. According to Navalny (2013), the crowdfunding strategy resulted in approximately 97.3 million rubles (US\$ 2.78 million) received from private donors

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(ordinary citizens), accounting for 94% of the campaign's total budget and making this a record for crowdfunding in the country (p.72). Navalny (2013) released a post-campaign report with a breakdown of all the expenditures.

As mentioned, 200 entrepreneurs signed a social contract with Navalny during the campaign. Despite the possibility of reprisal, these entrepreneurs expressed their position openly and thus shook the Russian political system. If a citizen disagrees with the government's official position, in contemporary Russia, such an individual is considered a traitor by the Kremlin. Expressions such as "fifth column" and "national traitors" have entered the current political discourse of the country (Yoffa, 2014). With their signatures, the entrepreneurs declared that society still had the right to an independent view on Russian politics, favoring the freedom of expression.

Nevertheless, in February 2014, Navalny was accused of bail violation and placed under house arrest. "The fact that Navalny was not taken into custody during the investigation is unusual in terms of Russian judicial practice, and experts theorize that this move is part of a campaign to discredit him" (Rozanov, 2014, para. 11). He was prohibited from using the Internet. Once, when the oppositionist tried to update his blog through his wife's and colleagues' access, one of the posts was called extremist by the state prosecutor, and the blog was then blocked. The effort to discredit Navalny does not imply that his campaign did not succeed in contributing to improve democracy in the country. On the contrary, it is exactly because he managed to involve the public in his campaign that the government seems to invest in injuring his reputation. TS features and ICT initiatives collaborated together to raise awareness of the importance of public transparency, freedom of speech, and participatory politics.

'The Hand of the West'

Alexey Navalny is primarily a blogger. In contrast to politically oriented bloggers in the US, who usually have clear positions and place themselves on one side or the other of the ideological divide, the majority of Russian bloggers probably write from a more independent perspective (Etlung et al., 2010, p. 19). In Navalny's case, the anti-corruption crusade seems to be his side in the Russian political spectrum. Consequently, it seems that his political adversaries try to destabilize him precisely with corruption allegations.

Despite the different realities and contexts between Russia and the West, Navalny evidently followed the Western-style campaigning. Navalny openly stated that many of his ideas were copied from the American television drama *The Wire*, such as installing street podiums for meetings with voters, with chairs and umbrellas (in case of rain or intense sunlight) for elderly people. He considered this kind of meetings as the best way to increase participation in elections, based on foreign experience, and believed that this action distinguished his campaign (Navalny, 2013, p. 14). "A charismatic 37-year-old lawyer in jeans and a white shirt with rolled-up sleeves, Mr Navalny acts like an American politician. In a country where politics takes place behind the high Kremlin walls, this is new" ("Inspired by 'The Wire'," 2013, para. 3).

Nevertheless, the westernized approach was not restricted to the opposition candidate. Sobyenin, in 2013, also favored subtle details to gain the middle-class respect "by creating perks and promoting the illusion that Moscow is a typical European city. Ranks of shiny red city bicycles sprang up, parking meters were put in place, city parks and playgrounds revamped" ("Inspired by 'The Wire,'" 2013, para. 8). Navalny's speech was marked by an intimate tone conveying the message: "I know what you need, because I need the same things" (Kravtsova, 2013, para. 17). His opponents recognized the similarities between his campaign and that of Obama in 2008, especially in the change-oriented slogans, an allusion

to Obama's "Change we can believe in" and "Yes we can," and the poses in official photographs with head and arm raised. Other similitudes between Navalny and the West that reflected novelties in Russia included fundraising, which was so new in the country that the campaign just used the English word for lack of an equivalent Russian term, transmedia strategies, ICT initiatives, and the distribution of stickers bearing the candidate's slogans, as Bershidsky pointed out: "Moscow is full of cars with Navalny bumper stickers, hardly ever used in previous Russian campaigns" (2013, para. 5).

Navalny incorporated traditional American campaign techniques, such as canvassing for votes and fundraising dinners, which may have changed the political scenario in Russia even without the victory. However, the opposition movement that he represents has been suffering from drawbacks since the end of the 2013 elections. "'The opposition is not doing so well right now,' says Boris Nemtsov, one of the liberal left-wing leaders. 'A lot of our comrades are behind bars, some people are wanted by the authorities, and some have emigrated'" (Rozanov, 2014, para. 20).

The Russian Opposition Coordination Council, established in 2012, fell apart already in 2013. According to sociologist Lev Gudkov:

The ideas put forth by the opposition – honest elections, anti-corruption, and electoral reforms – were supported by about half the population at first. The numbers dropped off as the Kremlin launched a propaganda rhetoric campaign that stressed concepts such as 'the hand of the West' and 'foreign agents' [non-profit organizations receiving funding from abroad were required to register as foreign agents] (Rozanov, 2014, para. 23).

The Kremlin propaganda seemed to have influenced the population, although in Moscow, the situation is slightly different. For instance, on "March 15, 2014, an anti-war rally against Russian military intervention in Ukraine drew 50,000 people, according to the organizers" (Rozanov, 2014, para. 26). Indeed, the annexation of Crimea can be considered another factor in the decline of public support for opposition groups. The Russian population (in general) strongly supports the government's attitude toward Ukraine, and Putin's popularity significantly increased because of it (Taylor, 2014).

The Levada Center, an independent research organization, found that a record high 85 percent of Russians would likely not take part in political protests. The poll, which was based on the opinions of a representative sample of 1,602 adults across 45 Russian regions, also revealed that 95 percent of Russians had not participated in protests in the past year (Tétrault-Farber, 2014, para. 2).

Additionally, the Russian policy on Ukraine seems to play a major role in distracting domestic eyes and minds. The State Duma's opposition deputy Dmitry Gudkov stated, "The population's reluctance to protest does not mean that it is necessarily happier or more satisfied. Citizens are just being distracted from domestic problems by state authorities' insistence on the presence of foreign enemies in Ukraine and the West" (Tétrault-Farber, 2014, para. 6). In contrast to Dmitry Gudkov's positive prediction that "there will come a time when authorities will no longer be able to distract Russians from the problems at home" (Tétrault-Farber, 2014, para. 8), the sociologist Lev Gudkov declared that "by winter of this year [2014], willingness to support or participate in protests had sunk to an all-time low since the collapse of the Soviet Union" (Rozanov, 2014, para. 2).

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Moreover, concrete factors involving the recent Russian legislation could have contributed to the decline in the protest sentiment, such as the imposition of “criminal sanctions on repeat offenders of Russia’s laws against unsanctioned public gatherings” (Tétrault-Farber, 2014, para. 10) and the so-called blogger law that is regarded as Putin’s attempt to silence opponents. The law imposes tighter control on Russian blogs and websites that attract more than 3,000 daily visits. “The new rules will require popular bloggers to register by name with Russia’s communications oversight agency and conform to regulations on the mass media” (Prentice, 2014, para. 8).

As a consequence of all government measures, laws, and policies, and especially the accusations against Navalny, his popularity dropped, according to a poll conducted in April 2014. “Once the darling of Russia’s opposition movement, Alexei Navalny has seen his reputation fall in recent months as he has made more headlines for the criminal cases launched against him than for his political activities” (Brennan, 2014b, para. 1). As demonstrated by the analysis, the implementation of ICT in Navalny’s campaign concretely influenced participatory practices in Russia. However, it is too soon to evaluate the permanence of democratic exercise in the country.

CONCLUSION

Post-Soviet Russia has consistently suppressed political freedom over the past decades. The need for change urged by the oppositionists was the primary incentive for Navalny’s supporters. He surprisingly had good numbers in the 2013 Moscow mayoral election. The opposition movement in the city’s central Bolotnaya Square reached its peak in 2011–2012 and culminated in the unprecedented, westernized transmedia campaign developed by Navalny’s team.

Two years ago, Russia’s opposition movement was in full swing as a series of street protests across the country drew huge crowds of people dissatisfied with the rule of Vladimir Putin. But amid infighting among opposition factions and a state crackdown on public protests, the group appeared to lose its way. And as public backing for Putin’s stance on Ukraine has swelled, the opposition has become increasingly marginalized (Rozanov, 2014, para. 1).

Nevertheless, Navalny’s campaign set the example for the other regions of the country. His techniques, “seem surreal in contrast with the top-down, financially murky way Russia has conducted its political business until now” (Trudolyubov, 2013, para. 3). Indeed, his transmedia strategies can be replicated by everyone in Russia, as observed in Murmansk (Navalny, 2013, p. 4) and in the 2014 Moscow City Duma elections with the presence of cubes, for instance. However, the number of citizens who are prepared for radical political action is rather limited.

The most relevant criticisms hurled at Navalny relate to his style of nationalism, abundance of finding fault with authorities, and lack of elaborate plans on how to improve the current situation. Notwithstanding these shortcomings, it proved impossible for authorities to ignore him as part of today’s political scenario. A day before the 2013 Moscow mayoral election, *The Economist* predicted that:

Mr Navalny knows he will not win this election, but his goal is to create a base and turn thousands of volunteers into a political force. The Kremlin may decide to abort its experiment and put Mr Navalny back in jail, or it could give him a suspended sentence, barring him from future elections. Whatever it does, it cannot kill the demand for political change, which has produced Mr Navalny (“Inspired by ‘The Wire,’” 2013, para. 11).

In 2008, the comprehensive study *The Web that Failed: How Opposition Politics and Independent Initiatives are Failing on the Internet in Russia* by Fossato, Lloyd, and Verkhovsky pointed to the following trends: 1) the qualitative level of Internet discussion seemed low; 2) the lack of trust was widespread and on occasion, skillfully manipulated by the authorities; 3) online networks generally appeared rather closed and tended to be intolerant; 4) it seemed that leaders of Internet sites could often be co-opted, compromised, or frightened; and 5) Russian Internet users appeared not to respond actively to political campaigning on the Web (2008, p. 51). As Navalny’s achievements discussed in this chapter show, the situation has considerably improved.

In 2010, Navalny participated in the presentation of the Russian blogosphere report *Public Discourse in the Russian Blogosphere: Mapping RuNet Politics and Mobilization* (Etling et al., 2010) published by Harvard University. At that occasion, Navalny pondered that the “blogosphere is actually very political, and (...) the bloggers who write about politics are mainstream and not marginal” (Asmolov, 2010, para. 3). Moreover, he commented that “online and offline are connected through the blog” (Asmolov, 2010, para. 23). His mindset at the time, before the 2011–2012 opposition movement, configured the innovations experienced in the 2013 mayoral elections. He added: “I just think that there’s no strict division between online and offline anymore. What I organize online has consequences offline. We organize a campaign online – a real official gets fired or a criminal case starts. There are no parallel worlds” (Asmolov, 2010, para. 12).

TS strategies directly contribute to attract interest and attention, and to get people involved in something by means of interaction and participation. Participation leads to the possibility of individuals to exert their voice and influence on the results of the transmedial experience. Moreover, participatory politics constitute a vital strategy in leading the population to increase their levels of voice and control and change the political landscape (Cohen et al., 2012, p. x). In this sense, we highlight that Leonid Volkov has started commercializing in 2014 an e-voting platform system based on the cloud democracy concept developed by him and Krashennnikov, in which the population’s expression can be taken into account. The electronic voting platform is the same system used during the 2012 election to the Russian Opposition Coordination Council and in small elections in Yekaterinburg, Voronezh and Zhukovsky (“Russian Software Designer,” 2014, para. 3). It could demonstrate advancement toward democratic practices as well.

However, the political scientist Ekaterina Schulmann reminds us that hybrid regimes, and Russia could be an example of it,

...fear any type of mobilization because they don’t have the institutions to utilize active civilian participation. Western researchers who have called hybrid regimes illiberal democracies or electoral authoritarian states focus on one element: the decorative nature of their democratic institutions. Hybrid regimes hold elections, but the government doesn’t change (Schulmann, 2014, para. 8).

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Notwithstanding the findings of the research indicate that “Navalny’s novel tactics have encouraged Russians in the street to speak candidly with his campaign workers, giving the feel of a genuine democratic contest” (Trudolyubov, 2013, para. 3). His transmedia campaign attracted and activated democratic development. Indeed, the commotion generated by the campaign was extended beyond Navalny’s profile and turned into a hint of hope for democratic development in Russia. To reiterate, the campaign itself was far more important than the results. Russian society gained in strength. If this strength will be maintained, it remains to be seen.

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KEY TERMS AND DEFINITIONS

Grassroots: Pertaining to ordinary people, especially contrasted with an elite.

Migratory Cues: Story bridges, signals that can motivate the audience to migrate from one medium to another within the same story universe.

Oblast: A type of administrative division such as a province or region.

Poll Watcher: A representative appointed by a candidate, a political party, or an institution to observe the election day and look for any violations of the law.

State Duma: The legislative lower house of the Federal Assembly of Russia.

The Wire: HBO television series (2002–2008) about the city of Baltimore in Maryland, USA, with deep discussions of social and political themes.

Transmedia Franchise: A series of independent media outlets, which function as entry points to a common story universe.