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**Global Citizenships, the Internet and the Olympics:
The Free Tibet Cause**

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Global citizenship, the Internet and the Olympics: the Free Tibet cause

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Thesis submitted to the Faculty of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies
In partial fulfillment of the requirements
For the MA degree in Communication

Department of Communication
Faculty of Arts
University of Ottawa

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Your file *Votre référence*
ISBN: 978-0-494-65526-9
Our file *Notre référence*
ISBN: 978-0-494-65526-9

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Acknowledgments

When I started writing this thesis, I could not have imagined the winding journey that it would take me on. I would especially like to thank Professor Paré for keeping me on track, for his guidance, his support, and for his commitment to making this thesis the best that it could be.

I would like to thank Tommy - my inspiration - for believing in me, supporting me through all of the ups and downs, and for always pushing me to do better.

I would also like to thank my family for their unwavering support and in particular to my parents for helping me throughout my academic career.

This thesis is dedicated to Jo Kelcey, whose passion and dedication to Palestinian activism was the inspiration for this thesis.

ABSTRACT

The nature of citizenship has evolved considerably since ancient times. No longer content to leave participation to the few, new modes of political discourse are taking place through the use of Internet forums. Using a combination of critical discourse analysis and content analysis to examine the postings to the “Issues and Causes” forum on the *Phayul.com* Tibetan news site during the two-week period leading up to the 2008 Beijing Olympics, this thesis investigates how global citizen identity manifests itself online when the cause is state-building. Three key findings emerge from the study. First, the themes and values of global citizenship are present only to a very limited degree. Second, the users employed pronouns to discursively connect themselves to the Tibetan community, and disconnect themselves from outsiders. Third, the forum displayed a significant amount of “flaming” or disruptive discourse. Taken together these results suggest that in this case much of global citizenship theory does not appear to stand up to empirical scrutiny.

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CHAPTER ONE: Introduction

The nature of what it means to be a citizen is changing. As globalization increases and as the usage of information and communication technologies (ICTs) becomes more pervasive, the way in which people enact their responsibility as citizens is becoming increasingly interconnected with the rest of the world (Castells, 2004). In other words, the choices made on one side of the planet can profoundly affect people on the other side of the world. And, as national politics and economies become increasingly intertwined, the notion of “national citizen” becomes increasingly convoluted (Beck, 2006). This thesis focuses on the development of global citizenship and how this new form of citizen identity interacts with existing nationalist movements within the context of online forums.

1.1 Citizenship, ICTs and Globalization

There are many ways in which to define citizenship. Citizens classically are defined as legal members of a sovereign state that are guaranteed rights and freedoms (Marshall, 1952/1992). However, as the world becomes more and more globalized and as we become ever more connected to one another through the use of ICTs, this definition is being increasingly challenged. The form of citizenship set out by Marshall (1952/1992) is representative of the Westphalian conception of citizenship in which citizens enter into a social contract with the state. This ‘contract’ entails the preserving of certain rights and freedoms for some classes of citizens in exchange for them upholding citizen-duties (such as paying taxes) and state loyalty (Beiner & Kingston, 2005; Marshall, 1952/1992). This view describes a passive form of citizenship, in which the participation of citizens in decision-making is largely limited to the occasional vote, typically every several years. Indeed, most citizens *do not* participate in the decisions that are made at local, state/provincial, and federal levels. Instead, they elect

officials to make these judgments on their behalf and more often than not are removed from the process by which decisions that affect their everyday lives are made. Moreover, as citizens of a sovereign state, most people are even further removed from the political decisions of other countries.

With the introduction of ICTs and the increased use of the Internet, however, peoples' ability to be more aware of the what decisions are being made at the local, state/provincial, federal and international levels, to become more involved in these decisions, and to be more politically active has the potential to grow. Through the use of SMS text messaging, for instance, mobile phones can galvanize thousands of citizens into action in an extremely short amount of time, in a way that would not have been possible twenty years ago (Rheingold, 2003).¹ Likewise, the Internet can connect disparate and distant groups of like-minded individuals, provide access to information that previously would have been next to impossible to obtain, and provide spaces to hold relatively open political discussions (Hermes, 2007).

Most importantly, the use of ICTs affords individuals the possibility of taking a more actively global role in their citizenship – assuming that they have access to the requisite technology and choose to become engaged – by providing them with access to information from around the world, and a forum in which to connect with other like-minded people. This suggests that ICTs have the potential to alter the practice of citizenship from a passive role restricted to the nation-state, to an active role that entails both a degree of transnationalism and an ability to influence political decisions regardless of one's legal citizenship. This sense

¹ The most famous example of this kind of smart mob occurred in the Philippines in 2001. Using SMS messages to inform friends and activists of the ever-changing protest plans, thousands of citizens took to the street for a lengthy, but successful protests against then President Estrada (Rheingold, 2003). These protests ultimately led to his ousting from office (see Celdran, 2002; Pertierra, Ugarte, Pinggol, Hernandez, and Dacanay, 2002).

of transnationalism and active interest in global politics is the essence of global citizenship (Salter, 2003). Global citizens are, as Lagos (2002) notes, actively engaged citizens focused on lifestyle politics, for which citizenship is not granted by a central authority but is earned by active political participation in the global community. Such activities have the potential to reorient the perception of citizenship away from the nation-state toward a more interest-based community scale of citizenship (Purcell, 2003). This reorientation can have profound effects on the way in which people enact their citizenship at the national level as well as influencing how they perceive the nation-state.

1.2 Tibet-China Relations and the Movement for an Independent Tibet

The issue of Tibetan independence has been the focus of Tibetan activists and Tibet-China scholars for the past sixty years. A central issue in this context is the debate over the legitimacy of Tibet's claim for statehood. Sperling (2004, p. 35), for instance, points out that the issue of the status of Tibet is particularly important because "the positions of the parties to the Tibet issue are imbued with questions of political and national identity." In other words, the legal status of Tibet is considered deeply connected to the personal and political identities of the members of its diaspora as well as those of the people that currently live in the region. The discussion below provides a brief background to this contentious issue.

According to the Tibetan interpretation of China's take-over of the region, the Chinese Communist People's Liberation Army (PLA) invaded the Tibetan region for the first time in 1935. This invasion provoked retaliation from the Khampas, – a traditionally militaristic Tibetan group – who quickly drove out the PLA (Shakya, 1999). Despite this initial set-back, over the next few years the Chinese government continued its attempts to both woo and force Tibet joining the People's Republic of China (PRC) (Shakya, 1999). The

Tibetan leaders of the day, however, refused to submit to these demands. In response to this lack of compliance, in 1950, the Chinese government initiated a series of skirmishes that precipitated the eventual take-over of the Tibetan region (Shakya, 1999).

In the light of the increased militaristic and political pressure from the Chinese government, the Tibetan national assembly convinced the 14th Dalai Lama to assume his role as Tibet's religious and political leader at the age of 16 – two years younger than the norm. However, fearing for his safety, the leaders of the Tibetan National Assembly decided to move the Dalai Lama to India for his protection (Powers, 2000). One month after his induction ceremony, the Dalai Lama, dressed in plain clothes, was spirited out of Lhasa. Soon after, recognizing that the resistance movement was in decline and that there was little hope of defeating the PLA, elite members of the Tibetan community followed the Dalai Lama to India. Shortly thereafter, Tibet was consumed by China (Shakya, 1999).

In the decades that followed, the Dalai Lama and the Tibetan diaspora set up over fifty Tibetan communities in India and Nepal as well as in other parts of the world, including North America (Powers, 2004). Central to these diasporic communities – and most pronounced in India – is the maintenance of the Tibetan culture through the continued use of the Tibetan language and continued adherence to the various sects of Tibetan Buddhism (Dorjee and Giles, 2005). In these communities Tibetan language and culture is understandably difficult to maintain given the small population sizes and a lack of Buddhist centers. As such, a new generation of expatriate Tibetans is seen to be increasingly disconnected from the rest of the Tibetan diaspora – not least in terms of language and culture (Dorjee and Giles, 2005). That being said, the Tibetan diasporic communities around the world maintain a key connection to both the movement for independence and the return of the Tibetan exiles to the region.

To this end, the increasing presence of Tibetan immigrants combined with the global travels of the Dalai Lama have increased awareness of the Tibetan freedom movement in the West and elsewhere. In the decades since the exile of the Dalai Lama the movement for an independent Tibet has grown to include support from notable individuals and political activist groups around the world (Powers, 2000). These include:

- *International Campaign for Tibet;*
- *The Tibet House in New York;*
- Prominent American politicians and actors (such as Speaker of the U.S. House of Representatives Nancy Pelosi, Richard Gere, and Stephen Segal);
- *The Tibetan Youth Congress* and the *Tibetan People's Freedom Movement* in India; and perhaps most notably,
- the international organization *Students for a Free Tibet.*

As evidenced by the demonstrations that took place in North America, Europe and Asia in the lead-up to the 2008 Olympic Games in Beijing², the movement for a free Tibet has garnered active participation by international groups from across the globe.

This movement also has been active in online. Some prominent blogs focusing on this issue include, *High Peaks, Pure Earth*, the *Students for a Free Tibet* blog, and *Invisible Tibet* (a Chinese language blog by Woesser, a famous Chinese-Tibetan activist). Perhaps the most widely known web site related to Tibetan independence is the English language news site *Phayul.com*. The various forums hosted by this web site as well as numerous blogs provide a venue in which members of both the Tibetan diaspora and the movement for an independent Tibet can exchange ideas and express their political views with relative anonymity and in safety.

² For more information on the spring 2008 Olympic torch protests see, Lusetich (2008, April 10), Edwards (2008, April 6), and "Japan to allow peaceful pro-Tibet protests during torch relay" (2008, April 22).

This thesis investigates how the global citizenship component of the Tibetan independence movement is reconciled with the movement's nationalist goals. To this end, the thesis concentrates on how the values of a global citizen identity are manifested in the cause of promoting Tibetan statehood. In order to address this issue, the study is guided by the following research question: *How does global citizen identity manifest itself online when the cause is state-building?*

In tackling this issue, two related sub-questions are posed:

- *How is citizen identity manifested on the Phayul.com "Issues and Causes" forum?*
- *Is group membership a vital part of this discourse and, if so, how is membership achieved?*

1.3 Structure of the Thesis

This thesis is divided into five chapters. This introductory chapter has provided a brief summary of the key concepts and issues underpinning this study. The discussion in Chapter 2 provides an analysis of the literature regarding the evolution of citizenship as it relates to the emerging global network society and the increasing use of ICTs for political purposes. In Chapter 3, the methodology used to conduct the research and the data obtained from an analysis of the discussions hosted on the *Phayul.com* "Issues and Causes" forum is presented. Particular attention is given to the attitudes of the forum users vis-à-vis notions of citizenship, the global citizenship identity categorization, and Tibet.

The discussion in Chapter 4 sets out the findings of the research with regard to the presence of group membership on the *Phayul.com* forum, as well as the strategies of articulations and the argument schemes employed by the forum users with regard to their perceived sense of citizenship. The chapter ends with a discussion of online behavior,

including the high level of flaming on this particular site. Chapter 5 concludes the thesis by answering the central research question, discussing the limitations of this thesis, and by proposing directions for future research.

CHAPTER TWO: Literature Review

Our understanding of what it means to be a citizen and the political role citizens play in the decision making processes of communities, states, and international organization has changed significantly over the past few centuries. With the widespread diffusion and adoption of ICTs the ability to be politically active in many different ways and in many different locations has been dramatically extended. The discussion in this chapter examines the issues that have arisen as a result of these new ways of enacting citizenship. In the first two sections the concept of global citizenship and the evolution of citizen identity is analyzed. In sections 2.3 and 2.4 the role that citizenship may take in an increasingly networked society and the issues of citizen identity in the online political discourse are discussed respectively. Section 2.5 concludes with a presentation of the research questions guiding this study.

2.1 Introducing Global Citizenship

It can be argued that when Aristotle wrote that man was by nature a political being, he meant that as social beings living in communities, our identities as humans are inherently associated with how we interact with our political surroundings. In the Greek agora system, individuals were defined by their station in life (e.g. wife, slave, warrior, politician, etc), and by the positions they took in political debate (Sinclair, 1998). As citizens, nothing was more important than an individual's participation in political debate, and nothing was more important to one's identity than the causes for which one argued.

Citizen identity has evolved and taken on a variety of meanings since Aristotle's time. As Europe moved from the Middle Ages through to the Enlightenment, the emergence of the nation-state became essential to the ways in which citizenship was defined. As

geographical boundaries were drawn and 'states' created, citizen identity came to be associated with Westphalian sovereignty³ and Rousseau's "social contract."⁴ Each of these bound the citizen geographically and fostered the type of individualism that today is generally associated with liberal capitalist democracies. As national economies began to grow and become more important to civic life, citizenship in the welfare-state was characterized by a series of legal rights and freedoms⁵ that had been achieved through the Westphalian model. As such, definitions of citizenship became increasingly removed from notions of Aristotelian participation and came to be associated instead with a legal definition that is geographically bound to a sovereign state.

Citizenship, today, is most often equated with, and/or characterized as, a series of legal rights and freedoms set out in a national constitution and geographically bound to a sovereign state. T.H. Marshall (1952/1992) defines citizenship as a series of civil, political, and social rights. He states,

The civil element is composed of the rights necessary for personal freedom. (...) By the political element I mean the right to participate in the exercise of political power, as a member of a body invested with political power or as an elector of such a body. (...) By the social element I mean the whole range from the right to (...) economic welfare and security to the right to share to the full in the social heritage and to live the life of a civilized being according to the standards prevailing in the society. (Marshall, 1952/1992, pp.10-11).

³ Westphalian sovereignty refers to the first creation of sovereign states after the Peace of Westphalia in 1648. The Peace of Westphalia was a treaty signed at the end of the Thirty Years War, and led to the eventual dissolution of the Holy Roman Empire and the creation of several sovereign states in the European region (Westphalia, Peace of, 2009). The most important effect of Westphalian peace, Linklater (1996, p. 83) points out, is that Westphalian sovereignty had the effect of securing territories, defining rights and duties for its citizens, and importantly increased the state's "involvement in the direction of economic life with the result that powerful nationalist sentiments were easier to instill."

⁴ In political theory and philosophy, the social contract is defined as "the outcome of a covenant or agreement among men [in which] the purpose of the state was the protection of those people to which it owed its being" (Cranston 2006, p.26).

⁵ Marshall (1953/1992) defines freedom in the negative sense - that is *freedom from* government or, more specifically, freedom from bureaucratic control and intervention.

The Westphalian/welfare-state definitions of citizenship remain relevant to citizen identity today. Currently, individual citizens are still most frequently associated with national identities, political affiliation and increasingly, with gender, ethnicity and religion. However, as globalization proceeds apace and ICTs increasingly are adopted for social and political uses, time-space boundaries are diminishing, and a new form of citizenship that transcends the Westphalian/welfare-state definition seems to be emerging. This new form of citizenship – *global citizenship* – appears to shed the citizen of her/his geographical and national constraints allowing one to create a civic identity based on political interests.

Marshall also noted that “a direct sense of community membership *based on loyalty to a civilization which is a common possession*” was a necessary element of citizenship (Marshall 1963, p.26, *emphasis added*). The notion of global citizenship seems, however, to have moved away from Marshall’s political and location-based sense of rights and duties, toward encompassing a way of life that is not necessarily beholden to any one government, nation-state, or geographical delimitation. Global citizenship, as Schattle (2008) describes it, is a way of life that recognizes the impact that the daily activities of individuals may have on a global level, the interdependence of our political actions and the responsibility we each have to the peoples of the rest of the world.

In the mid-1990s and early 2000s, the focus of much of political theorizing about the relationship between globalization and citizenship centered upon the feasibility of establishing international bodies under which a ‘world citizenry’ could potentially exist (Falk, 1994/2008; Hudson, 2007; Lipschutz, 2004/2008). Over the last decade, however, the notion of global citizenship has taken on a much more nuanced meaning. For instance, a global citizen may be seen as:

- A transnational nomad that divides her or his time between several states without being particularly politically active in any one country (Carter, 2007; Habermas, 1993/2003; Hudson, 2007);
- A political activist that participates in transnational causes, such as environmental activism at either global or local levels, or both (Carter, 2007; De Costa, 2007; Schattle, 2008);
- An individual who is active in political causes in countries other than her or his own, to which s/he may or may not have any other familial, cultural or political affiliation (Carter, 2007; Delanty, 2007; Vandenberg, 2007); or
- Any combination of the above mentioned definitions.

For the purposes of this thesis, global citizens are defined as both political activists who participate in transnational causes, and as individuals who are politically active in countries other than those for which they possess legal citizenship or residency status.

Lagos (2002) similarly defines global citizenship as comprising a class of individuals who no longer identify themselves as citizens on a state level, but rather as citizens on a global level. In other words, instead of professing loyalty first and foremost to their respective nation-state or articulating a particular interest in domestic matters, global citizens are seen to be primarily concerned with lifestyle politics at international and local levels. He claims that the duality of global and local concerns may potentially have profound effects the position of citizenship in politics by noting that,

Many of newly emerging global citizens are actively engaged in global efforts – whether in business ventures, environmentalism, concern for nuclear weapons, health or immigration problems. Rather than citizenship, being the result of rights and obligations granted by a central authority, the lack of such authority gives primacy to the global citizens themselves: not a top-down but a down-up scenario. (Lagos 2002, n.p.)

This view suggests that ICT-mediated global citizenship potentially alters the citizen's role in society from something that has been understood as constrained to national borders and passive, to a new role that entails transnationalism and influencing which political issues are to be addressed regardless of the legal boundaries of citizenship. To this end, the use of ICTs

for the purposes of international political advocacy and activism – mainly through protest, blogs, and citizen journalism – is increasingly viewed as having the potential to transform the traditional state-bound understanding of citizenship (Salter 2003, Lagos 2002, Sassen 2002; Hermes 2007; De Costa 2007).

2.2 The Evolution of Citizen Identity

According to Aristotle, a citizen,

In an unqualified sense is defined by no other thing so much as by sharing in decision and office... Who ever is entitled to participate in an office involving deliberation or decision is ... a citizen in this city; and the city is the multitude of such persons that is adequate with a view to a self-sufficient life. (Aristotle 384-322 B.C.E., Pol. 3.1275a)

Put simply, Aristotle equates citizenship with the right to participate in one's governance⁶.

Although this view encompasses what is traditionally considered to be a necessary element of citizenship and, indeed, democracy, there are two key factors that distinguish the Aristotelian definition of citizenship from its contemporary counterparts. First, Aristotle's definition is limited to only a select few – e.g. it is only free Athenian men who are enabled to participate in the exercise of power. Women, slaves and outsiders are excluded from this process (Beiner & Kingston, 2005).

Second, many contemporary definitions of citizenship are rooted in the Westphalian notion of citizenship as something that is geographically bound and founded on a 'social contract' between citizens and the state (Beiner and Kingston, 2005). This social contract entails an exchange of privileges (usually in the form of the vote) and/or socio-economic protections for political loyalty to the state (Purcell, 2003). When Westphalian citizenship incorporated the secret ballot into political decision making the emphasis of citizenship

⁶ Beiner and Kingston (2005, p. 335) characterize Aristotle's definition of citizenship as "encapsulate[ing] an awesomely ambitious account of what is required in order for human nature to truly flourish."

shifted toward the individualist model of citizenship typical of late welfare states.

Commenting on this transformation, Schudson (2003, p. 53) states that citizen participation:

Changed from a social and public duty to a private right, from a social obligation to party, enforceable by social pressure, to a civic obligation or abstract loyalty, enforceable only by private conscience. The new ballot asked voters to make a choice among alternatives rather than to perform an act of affiliation with a group.

In essence, this shift further removed the citizen from the model of citizenship based on participation and deliberation envisioned by Aristotle.

One of the notable shortcomings of the Westphalian/welfare-state based conception of citizenship is that it overlooks the importance of the communal participation. In this model citizenship is depicted as being almost entirely passive, with certain classes of citizens given certain state-based rights in exchange for undertaking minimal duties (such as paying taxes) that more often than not are only vaguely associated with the Ancient tradition of citizenship (Delanty 2000/20002; Muetzelfeldt, 2000). As such, the Westphalian perspective seems to discount the immense reliance citizenship puts on the individual's sense of belonging to a community or society including, the rights and obligations associated toward the group's members - in concert with the opportunity for independent thought (Vandenberg, 2000a).

The issue here, according to Delanty (2000/20002, p. 19):

Is that citizenship as membership of a political community is more than a matter of rights; it also entails an identification and commitment to the community. (...) With respect to citizenship, what this means is that the marriage between citizenship and nationality is broken.

The Aristotelian view, by contrast, is not based on place, location, birth, ancestry, bloodline, or the capacity to sue or be sued (Frank, 2004). Instead, it emphasizes "collective activity" as the essence of citizenship (Aristotle, Pol. 3.1275b). This also is the essence of what is being referred to as 'global citizenship' in this thesis.

The emphasis on participation that is central to Aristotle's definition of citizenship resonates with contemporary debates about the potential for ICTs to facilitate and enhance citizen engagement with political discourses and, ultimately, with their potential to bring about improvements to modern democratic practices (Bosniak, 2000; Wilklund, 2005; Zuckerman June 20, 2007). More specifically, and as noted by Triadafilopoulos (1999, p. 748), the onus that Aristotle places on the participation of "all parties that might be affected" by the topic under deliberation parallels the Habermasian notions of the public sphere and communicative action.

Although he does not explicitly address the issue of the public sphere per se, Aristotle provides the philosophical foundations for the notion of a public sphere insofar as he proposes a political space – the agora - where political, societal and cultural norms can be addressed (Triadafilopoulos, 1999). Moreover, his version of the political sphere is normally envisioned as an arena in which affected individuals can debate and deliberate issues of concern. It is a place where, in theory, all voices are equal, although not each bears the same weight (Triadafilopoulos, 1999). In the Aristotelian public sphere problems of power and domination still exist, but the potential for rational deliberation by the many to prevail over the control of the few exists. This echoes Habermas' conception of the public sphere, insofar as Aristotle envisioned an arena formally open to all where "arguments stood or fell in accord with the power of the better argument rather than with the power of coercion" (Salter 2003, 121). As such, Aristotle's description of citizenship in the public sphere seems to allow for more democratic potential than contemporary formulations of citizenship because it relies on the active participation of its individuals.

To this end, Frank (2004, p. 94) describes the 'dynamic tension' between citizenship and the public sphere as necessary for democratic participation noting, as Aristotle did, that

“citizens are made citizens not only by their particular or individual activities but by sharing in a constitution, in other words, by their collective activity.” She argues that, because democratic politics is made up of both the bodies of government and the participation of citizens, a “dynamic tension” between institute and participant is created that is the key to democratic citizen identity. In Frank’s view (2004, p. 94):

Citizenship is a matter of individual self-determining activity and it is participatory. By acting in concert, sharing in their constitution, citizens make the institutions that, in turn, as institutions, guide, but do not fully determine, their individual activity.

In other words, it is the very act of participating that allows for democracy to work, and for individuals to carve out a civic identity for themselves.

Frank’s description of citizenship parallels Habermas’ concept of communicative action, which can be described as a kind of joint action undertaken by individual citizens based on self-reflexive deliberation and debate that is typical of public discourse (Calhoun, 1999). Further, communicative action is based on communicative rationality – or the use of reason based on rationality inherent language devices and communicative argumentation schemes (Lee, 1999). As such, communicative action seems to describe a type of citizen activity predicated on personal interest, and political rationality that is rooted in the communicative formation of opinion. Communicative action, thus positions the citizen as not only a client of governmental institutions and services, but also as an active participant in the political process (Habermas, 1999).

Habermas (1999) also points out that communicative action allows for citizen activity and citizen identity to be based on political interest instead of being defined by the prescribed activities and values of society. Using Rousseau’s vision of citizen activity as a “consensus of hearts”, Habermas (1999, p. 445) argues that communicative action rightly forces the

individual to use reason and judgment as a basis of action instead of societally prescribed morality. He states:

The morality with which Rousseau demands citizens to be imbued and that he places in the individual's motives and virtues must instead be anchored in the process of public communication itself. (...) Therewith the burden of proof shifts from the morality of citizens to the conduciveness of specific process of the democratic formation of opinion and will, presumed to have the potential for generating rational outcomes, of actually leading to such results. (Habermas, 1999, p. 446)

In other words, citizen activity that is based in communicative action has the potential to create rational outcomes that simply are not possible in political activity that is based purely on morality or which involve no deliberation between citizens. To that end, as ICTs become more commonly used for political purposes, the online public sphere is increasingly seen as a venue for the kind of communicative action Habermas is describing.

The 'dynamic tension' Frank (2004) describes is particularly salient for the online public sphere because it is precisely the 'sharing in constitution' and the sharing in debate within these online environments that constitutes what it is to be a citizen in the Aristotelian and Habermasian sense of the term. Echoing this view, Triadafilopoulos (1999, p.751) points out that the online public sphere:

Like the ancient Greek agora, (...) brings people together while preserving their unique identity. It creates a shared space where citizens gather to differentiate themselves through their words and deeds.

As such, the online public sphere can be seen as comprising a wide array of arenas that are ideal for the creation of individual interest based civic identities.

The notion of an online public sphere, however, is not without its critics. Dreyfus (2004), for instance, draws on Kierkegaard to show that the move toward an online public sphere is not necessarily the utopian realm of participatory citizenship that many initially predicted it might be (Bohman, 2004). He argues that while the Internet provides citizens

with more access to information and a forum in which to debate the merits of political courses of action, it also “promotes ubiquitous commentators who deliberately detach themselves from the local practices out of which specific issues grow and in terms of which these issues must be resolved through some sort of committed action” (Dreyfus 2004, p.71). To this end, he posits that the online public sphere will allow for everything to be debated endlessly and, thereby, allow for real political participation to “always be postponed. (...) [And] thus one need never act” (Dreyfus 2004, p. 72).

However, Dreyfus (2004, p.73) also points out that

The only alternative Kierkegaard saw to the Public’s leveling and paralyzing reflection was for one to plunge into some kind of activity – any activity – as long as one threw oneself into it with passionate commitment.

While Dreyfus’ statement parallels the kind of participation typical of the types of online activities most frequently associated with notions of global citizenship, the claim that the Internet and Internet communities are directly influencing commitment remains contentious.

On the one hand, it can be argued, for instance, that given the ease of access to political groups, increased wealth of information at one’s fingertips, and the relative sense of security and anonymity granted by the medium, the kind of passionate political activism espoused by Kierkegaard can truly be realized. On the other hand, however, online political groups may not produce as much meaningful deliberation as desired insofar as anonymity may provide a convenient excuse for disruptive or abuse behavior. Moreover, “nothing is too trivial to be included” with regard to the wealth of information available to citizens (Dreyfus 2004, p. 73).

2.3 Networked Society and the Citizen

Despite the concerns outlined above, it must be recognized that there are some aspects of networked communication that offer the potential to promote and facilitate committed, prolonged online activism. For instance, the adoption and diffusion of the Internet and other ICTs throughout the world is giving rise to the emergence of network societies. Castells (2004, p. 148), defines the network society as:

A society structured in its dominant functions and process around networks (...) [who's] architecture is particularly dynamic, open-ended, flexible, and potentially able to expand endlessly, without rupture, bypassing/disconnecting undesirable components following instructions of the network's dominant nodes.

According to this view, information is spread from one node to any other, linking information in ways that are inconceivable in classic hierarchical structures.

The central assumption underpinning Castells' view is that the widespread implementation of networking technologies will necessarily lead to the fostering of decentralized social, political and economic structures. According to this notion, network communication allows for the creation of alternative spaces where minority ideas can be expressed and widely disseminated in ways that previously were not possible (Garrido & Halavais, 2003). When applied to the context of political advocacy, this suggests that activists – and other interested actors – who are networked through the use of ICTs have the potential to affect political change in a manner that would simply be impossible for any one individual.

In line with this view, Castells (2001) asserts that the Internet is a communication tool that allows social movements to act in the same kinds of networks as those present in today's global networked society, which in turn, allows them to affect change more effectively. According to him, this is so for several reasons.

First, rather than focusing on state-bound political issues, social movements in the age of globalization frequently are centered on interest-based cultural issues and “struggle to change the codes of meaning in the institutions and practices of society” (Castells, 2001, p. 140). In other words, new social movements tend to focus upon changing perceptions and redefining social norms, regardless of the particular cause. Castells (2001, p. 140) claims that even movements based on older principals such as state-building fall under this rubric because they “take on new meaning when they become trenches of cultural identity to build on social autonomy in a world dominated by homogeneous, global information flows” and, as such, have the ability to potentially affect “the consciousness of society as a whole.”

Secondly, ICTs allow citizens to act in more loosely bound networks of activism than traditional organizations such as political parties. In being loosely connected, citizen activists have the ability to be members of more than one interest group simultaneously and to move freely between these groups. ICTs also facilitate the ability to mobilize people quickly and effectively in the face of global crises. In these instances, ICTs, and particularly the Internet, become mediums of expression aimed at making impact in the media world, potentially seizing “the power of the mind, not the power of the state” (Castells 2001, p. 141).

Third, these loose ICT mediated networks can also reach groups of people on a global level. It is the globalization of these groups or social movements that is the most important factor of network society activism in Castell’s view. It suggests that activists are bypassing the state in favor of more globally symbolic actions. This, in turn, implies the presence of some form of connection between individuals at a global level that is typical of global citizenship. Moreover, this interactive process has the potential to strengthen the commitment between individuals – regardless of their geographical locale – as information is passed through friends and peers. For example, as levels of participation on online forums

grow, a kind of informal etiquette and sense of membership is created, with ingroup status being gained by the credibility of individuals' postings (Kim, 2007).

Much like Aristotle's tautological definition of citizenship, online citizenship (or group membership) seems to be predicated on meaningful participation. In other words, "practicing citizenship is being a citizen" (Frank 2006, p.93). Furthermore, group members appear to create their own informal set of rights and obligations with regard to appropriate or expected behavior. It would appear that speech – or postings in the case of online communities – combining emotion and rationality, but "founded on reason and defended by rational argument" is the key to both persuasion and social success within certain communities (Triadafilopoulos 1999, p. 750; see also Fuchs, 2006; Tanner, 2001). As such, it may be argued that online communities appear to offer the potential to take on the norms of communication that parallel the Aristotelian *agora*.

When viewed as creating forums for global debate networked activism has a number of implications for the traditional state-bound understanding of citizenship. Specifically, it allows for increased participation by individuals and groups at local and global levels regardless of the status of their legal citizenship. This means that the ability to affect change can, in principle, occur anywhere in the world at any time. In addition, network communication allows for the kind of deliberative participation proposed by Aristotle that is not envisioned through traditional legally-focused notions of state-bound citizenship. This kind of deliberative, participatory mode of citizenship is essential to the functioning and emergence of global citizenship insofar as discussing issues among peers online and mobilizing and organizing through the use of ICTs creates a kind of informal political association that has the potential to affect change globally.

Pappacharissi (2004), however, challenges the idea that online political activity is not necessarily representative of real-life political behaviors. She argues that while proponents of the use of ICTs for political participation envision a *nouveau* online public sphere as being akin to the Greek agora, online political debate often merely takes the form of “emotional venting” and “hasty opinions, rather than rational and focused discourse” (Pappacharissi 2002, p.16).⁷ Moreover, given that the online environment allows for users to change their identity at will, compromise may become harder to achieve and dissent or ‘flaming’ may be too easy for some passionate commentators to avoid. Taken together, these factors raise the prospect of actually impeding open and coherent debate.

Elaborating on this view, Frost (2006, p.48) suggests that network communication may, in fact, loosen the ties that bind communities and national citizens together, noting that, “while it [networked communication] makes possible new modes of social and political relations, the Internet favors loosely bounded communities characterized by loosely democratic or non-democratic social relations.” This, she asserts, may have devastating consequences for the survival of causes online in a way that is less likely for real world activism where identities are verifiable, more civil communication is expected, and commitment can be ensured.

Dreyfus (2004) acknowledges that while the Internet does not necessarily rule out the kind of unconditional and passionate commitment that is necessary for meaningful political participation, it may nonetheless contribute to the weakening of global citizenship. The key

⁷ Both Urry (2000) and Vandenberg (2000b) agree that cybercitizens will not develop real alternatives outside the nation-state. Vandenberg (2000b) states that “cyber-citizens may well improve the quality and accessibility of debate among themselves, and perhaps within the wider public debate of nation-states”, but it is far less likely that the digital communities that currently exist ever truly bring about a change in the definition of citizenship. This is because, Urry (2000, p.76) argues, “citizens require societies and states, and the mutual antagonisms that they generate.”

issue here rests with the Internet's ability to only potentially capture one's attention in limited online spheres that are not necessarily transferable to the real world. Noting that the nature of the Internet's appeal and the kind of user it attracts necessarily impedes the crucial step toward 'real' political activism, he maintains that the only proof of whether an online activist has indeed truly committed to her or his cause is whether s/he is willing to transfer their knowledge commitment to 'real world' activism.

Essentially, Dreyfus seems to be implying that the Internet, as a medium, only attracts shy, conflict-avoiding, responsibility-avoiding activist – or pseudo-activists. However, this is not necessarily the case. For instance, according to Bennett (forthcoming) online global citizens are, in fact, simply using the tools at their disposal to enhance their political participation in ways that were not possible fifteen years ago. Furthermore, it seems plausible that what draws political activists to the Internet is not necessarily the anonymity and lack of tangible responsibility that it affords, but rather the medium's ability to link individuals together.

Etzioni (2004, p.225) defines communities as social entities comprising two key elements:

One, a web of affect-laden relationships among a group of individuals, relationships that often crisscross and reinforce one another (rather than merely one-on-one or chain-like individual relationships). The other, a measure of commitment to a set of shared values, norms, and meanings, and a shared history and identity – in short, to a particular culture.

Although he grants that communities *can* exist online, he insists that, for the most part, 'online communities' are merely interest-based groups with little else in common.

Furthermore, Etzioni excludes interest-based groups from his definition of community on the grounds that "they share no affective bonds nor a moral culture" (2004, p. 226). Johnson and Bimber (2003) also appear to adhere to this view of online groups. However they concede

that given the interdependency and the frequency of interaction that can exist in online groups it is at least possible for the Internet to foster the political interest communities that are the base for global citizenship (Johnson & Bimber, 2003). In their view:

Technology allows the development of community in spite of physical distance, and this facility exceeds what is possible by telephone in at least one way, namely allowing social bounding to occur asynchronously. Moreover, community-building through the Net is not bounded by political borders, identities, or appearance. (Johnson and Bimber, 2004, p. 249)

By contrast, Feenberg & Barkardjieva (2004), advance the view that the make-up and interactions of online⁸ political interest ‘communities’ are enough to satisfy the requirements for ‘community’ status established by Etzioni (2004). They also point out that online political interest communities *may* retain the elements necessary for a kind of civic identity formation that seems consistently present in offline communities. On this matter they write:

The identification with symbols requires *loyalty* and *respect* from community members. Obedience to common rules requires *self-control*. Mutual aid implies a world in which generosity is justified by a basic commitment to *fairness* on all sides. Mutual respect requires *civility*. And authentic communication can only take place where a certain degree of *sincerity*, *truthfulness*, and *tolerance* for others is present. We might call these eight ethical attributes “the virtues of community (Feenberg & Barkardjieva 2004, p. 4, *emphasis in original*).

All of these components, of course, are the outcomes of communication based on trust.

Remove the element of trust from any one of these attributes and they can no longer exist in any meaningful way. Fairness, civility, and particularly sincerity, truthfulness and tolerance all stem from a basic level of trust and solidarity between members. While it may not always be the case, trust is usually only achieved in communities with strong cultural, historical, or religious ties where membership is determined by easily verifiable means. In the physical

⁸ Feenberg and Bakardjieva (2004, p.2) define online communities as:

relatively stable, long-term, online group associations mediated by the Internet or a similar network. Because the concept of community is morally charged, the community model of the Internet holds a promise with profound ethical implications.

world, these kinds of associations often manifest themselves in the form of multicultural societies in which many cultural, religious or ethnic communities co-exist under the umbrella of an independent political state. As the formation of 'online communities' increases, it is not inconceivable that they may simply reflect the types of communities that already exist in the physical world.

Expounding on this view, Wellman and Gulia (1999, p.341) maintain that claims regarding pseudo-activism of online activities and/or claims about pseudo-community miss the point in that such arguments tend to envision activist communities as existing only online, as well as ignoring the "abundant accounts of community ties operating both on-line and off-line, with the net being just one of several ways to communicate." According to these authors it is the relationships that are being shared that are important, not the means of communication being used. That said, Wellman and Gulia do concede that the nature of the medium being used can encourage normally non-participating individuals to express themselves, provide a means of expressing one's identity, and potentially lead to enhanced "self-esteem, respect from others and status attainment" (Wellman and Gulia, 1999, p. 340). This kind of reaction is potentially very beneficial to online communities and potentially can create strong ties to the community.

Wellman and Gulia (1999, p. 340) also point out that, "people who have strong attachment to the [community] will be more likely to help others." While such sentiments have traditionally been associated with closely-knit communities of individuals in the off-line world, they are increasingly common online as users become more attached to specific groups. To that end, rather than relying solely on one's physical communities to build relationships and to seek help, individuals appear to be increasingly relying on social networks of diverse peoples from different backgrounds in order to meet their offline and

online needs (Boase and Wellman, 2006; Kazmer, 2005; Marin and Wellman, forthcoming; Miyata, and Kobayashi, 2008). Taking this into account, Boase, Horrigan, Wellman and Rainie (2006) state:

Yet the Internet surely has accelerated [this shift from solidarity communities to social networks]. It has made it easy for people to connect without living nearby and without knowing each other well. It has probably increased the variety of the kinds of people who are network members. Where once communication was confined to neighbors (usually similar in ethnicity and social status), it is now more diversified, bridging multiple social worlds.

This suggests, contrary to the perspective espoused by Dreyfus (2004) and Frost (2006), that relationships which exist online add to our existing social networks and expand people's capacity to connect with others. In terms of online citizenship, this understanding of community allows for online networks to be understood as playing just as important a role in citizen identity as offline networks. More importantly, it recognizes that on and offline communities are not mutually exclusive.

As the focus of citizenship shifts from the national or domestic level to a more interest-based orientation, commitment to the interest group becomes important to maintaining one's status in particular online environments. Mere participation is not necessarily sufficient to be considered a true community-member or 'citizen' by other group participants (Feenberg & Bakardjieva, 2004; Kim 2007; Williams, Cheung and Choi, 2000). It is active meaningful participation, not merely the occasional addition to online discourse that is required. In this way, global citizenship is hypothesized to come about through associational membership. That is, membership to a cause, instead of membership to a state.

2.4 Online Citizenship and Identity

In discussing criticisms levied against global citizenship Linklater (2002) avers that global citizenship does not meet the minimum requirement of a shared experience and defined sense

of belonging that is characteristic of nation-state based citizenship. This line of argument assumes that only historical experiences – such as those created during the formation of a nation-state – and legal rules for membership are capable of creating the ‘sense of belonging and shared experience’ integral to the practice of citizenship. It may be countered that the shared history of a community of interest (political or cultural) and the sense of belonging associated with membership in an interest group is sufficient to satisfy the requirements set out above (Isin and Turner, 2002). Moreover, it is possible that these feelings of belonging have the potential to be far more potent than any sense of national association because they are elements of civic identity that have been chosen and nurtured by the individual instead of being imposed by the state (Isin and Turner, 2002; Sen 2006).

As citizen identity increasingly becomes associated with lifestyle politics⁹ the issue of commitment to the state may become less important for individuals because one’s identity as a political citizen is more closely linked to the plurality of one’s identity as a human being (Sen, 2006). Seen in this light, citizens are likely more committed to their pet ‘causes’ despite the fluid nature of online political participation¹⁰, because these causes are representative of at least some aspect of one’s civic and personal identity. Furthermore, the anonymity provided by the Internet allows for citizens to choose which aspect of her/his identity to share with the public, as opposed to being forced to fit into what Sen (2006, p. 185) calls a ‘solitarist’ view of citizen identity (i.e. identity based on only one facet of personality or political interest).

To this end, much of the current theorizing about global citizenship challenges the state

⁹Lifestyle politics may be defined as political communication anchored in lifestyle vocabulary, “consumer choice, self-image, and personal displays of social responsibility” (Bennett, forthcoming, p 2).

¹⁰ By this I mean fluidity in terms of both movement within and between communities as well as the fluidity of online identity.

driven definition of citizenship (Bennett, forthcoming; Cammaerts, & Van Audenhove 2005; Coleman, 2001). Sassen (2002), for example, ‘reinvents’ citizens as inhabitants of ‘denationalized’ global cities.¹¹ She claims this,

reinvention takes the institution [of citizenship] away from questions of nationality narrowly defined and towards the enactment of a wide array of particular interests, from protests against police brutality and globalization to sexual preference politics and house-squatting by anarchists. (Sassen, 2002, p. 6).

According to her, for the global citizen, political concerns on the national level merge with a concern for the global *and* the local. Given the organizing and mobilizing capabilities of ICTs, citizens protesting locally are now potentially based anywhere in the world and, as such, these acts of ‘citizenship’ are seen to exist on both levels.¹²

The kind of global-local practices Sassen describes fall, for the most part, under the umbrella of cosmopolitanism. According to Nussbaum (1996/2008), cosmopolitan citizenship was originally taken up by the Stoics who believed that citizens effectively worked simultaneously in two distinct but overlapping communities – their local communities and the community of human kind (Nussbaum, 1996/2008). In effect, they believed that as citizens individuals are responsible for their own communities, and for humanity writ large. Nussbaum stresses that while cosmopolitanism does have all human kind as its focus, this does not mean that the local should be ignored in favor of the global. Rather, cosmopolitanism forces people to recognize themselves as being surrounded by a

¹¹ Sassen’s (2002) interpretation of global cities elaborates on the interplay between local and global activism and suggests that national politics are increasingly becoming less and less important to the global activist. However, Delanty (2007) also points out that these kinds of global-local initiatives, in fact often take place simultaneously on all three levels of citizenship – the local, the national, and the global – as a means of garnering the most attention possible.

¹² Sassen (2002), Lagos (2002), and Bosniak (2000) all claim that the rise of global or transnational citizenship has the potential to create two tracks of citizens: a national – and less prestigious – citizenry and a global citizenry. While this discussion is important to debates about the future of citizenship, it extends beyond the scope of the present study and, therefore, is not discussed in detail here.

series of concentric circles ranging from the self at the center to human kind at the outer limit (with everything from the family, the city, the state and the region in between). Therefore it is incumbent upon people “to ‘draw the circles somehow towards the center’ (Stoic philosopher Hierocles, 1st-2nd CE), “making all human beings more like our fellow city dwellers, and so on” (Nussbaum 1996/2008, p.100). In other words, the primary task of citizens is to transform the politics of the world into the politics of the self.

Furthering this notion, Beck (2006) describes the cosmopolitan citizen’s outlook as requiring a sense of boundarylessness, of blurring cultural and political differentiations, and of reflexive awareness. By reflexive awareness, Beck is referring first and foremost to an awareness of one’s identity as a cosmopolitan citizen on the global scale. This is important because it reflects an understanding of citizen identity that is based on interest as opposed to distinguishing oneself from the “other”. It also suggests that cosmopolitan citizenship is not shaped primarily by conflict, but instead by a transnational higher level of values and collective empathy (Turner, 2002).

Silverstone (2006) argues that globalization has helped to legitimize both the notion of the cosmopolitan citizen and cosmopolitan empathy. Insofar as being increasingly mobile and connected at a global level, globalization enables people to be more open to difference. According to him, cosmopolitan citizens embody a dual identity exemplified by a commitment to recognizing “not just the stranger as the other, but the other in oneself” (Silverstone (2006, p. 14). In other words, cosmopolitan citizens use their sense of empathy in order to be more open and accepting of different cultures.

Collective empathy also is an important factor for international activism and global political movements. Beck (2006), for instance claims that such actions and movements are often fueled by cosmopolitan empathy – or what he calls the “globalization of emotions” (pp.

5-6). In other words, as people become increasingly aware of the political, economic and environmental crises around the world, this awareness engenders focusing one's sense of empathy and, indeed, responsibility toward the disparate peoples of the world. However, both Beck (2006) and Turner (2002) point out that the rise of cosmopolitan empathy does not replace state-bound and nationalist concerns. Instead it forces individuals to take what Turner (2002, p. 57) calls a "reflexive distance" from their homeland. In other words,

the cosmopolitan outlook means that, in a world of global crises and dangers produced by civilization, the old differentiations between internal and external, national and international, us and them, lose their validity and a new cosmopolitan realism becomes essential to survival. (Beck 2006, p. 14)

Beck furthers this position by maintaining that cosmopolitanism is the best, and perhaps the only, means of enacting one's citizenship in the increasingly globalized and networked world given that we are all inherently responsible for the well-being of others across the globe in a way that was not previously the case. This view is perhaps best articulated by Silverstone (2006, p.17) who points out that,

non-intervention in the crisis of the other is no longer possible because we are, in this new global era, intimately connected to each other as never before. (...) Cosmopolitan realism involves an affirmation of the other as at once both different and the same. (...) It requires an acknowledgement of our own vulnerability.

Several critics of cosmopolitanism have pointed out, however, that rather than drawing the politics of human kind closer to our hearts, in practice, it potentially promotes the implementation of Western values on the global level. This, it is claimed could, theoretically, encourage self-proclaiming global citizens to thrust their particular morals and politics on the world (Linklater, 2007; Slaughter, 2007; Zolo, 2007). Here, the fear is that cosmopolitan citizenship may result in widespread cultural, moral and religious imperialism reminiscent of the missionaries and imperial tactics of the late 19th century. The problem

with this critique is that it ignores what Carter (2007) identifies as one of cosmopolitanism's main tenets – i.e., tolerance and acceptance of other's cultures and religions. Indeed, the practice of cosmopolitan global citizenship seems far more in tune with the global campaigns and local work of international NGOs and legal institutions¹³ than with the global expansion of Western institutions and values. It does not assume that a final cultural authority exists. Rather, cosmopolitan citizenship is the result of blurring borders and self-reflection (Turner, 2002).

Another often-raised concern about cosmopolitan citizenship is that its global-local focus may reduce individual political participation at the domestic level and, as such, weaken the nationalist foundations of citizenship. The claim here is that as people increasingly identify with global causes and lifestyle politics, citizen identity will become increasingly rooted in the personal concerns of individuals. That is, citizen identity will focus on cause activism and the expression of personal opinions, thereby weakening individuals connections with their respective states. In countering such concerns, Ehrkamp and Leitner (2003) postulate that citizenship needs to be thought of as the combination of everyday 'social practices' in which individuals take part and which inherently situates political spaces outside of the state level. According to these authors,

the complexity of our social lives and identities involves participation in numerous activities and discourses of civil society including participation in civic associations such as cultural associations, religious organizations, trade unions and women's organizations at multiple geographic scales from the local to the national to the transnational. (Ehrkamp and Leitner 2003, p. 131)

¹³ For example, Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch, as well as such international legal institutions as the International Criminal Court.

In other words, a citizen's sense of identity is more likely to be associated with her or his (usually extranational) political ideology, and cultural and religious associations than with a sense of attachment to the nation state.

This perspective echoes Delanty's (2007) communitarian view of citizenship, which gives primacy the notion of participation in the political community as opposed to the rights and duties of the individual. Commenting on this tension Delanty (2000/2002, p.25) points out that communitarianism,

also had an impact on highlighting the problem of identity in citizenship. (...) Rejecting moral individualism for a collectivist conception of citizenship, liberal communitarianism seeks to anchor political community in a prior cultural community and it is in this that identity is to be found.

Mouffe (1993) offers a framework for reconciling the distinction between notions of global and state-bound citizenship. She argues that the modern interest-based political citizenship is only made possible by group membership because the latter creates a 'constitutive outside' that makes existence possible – something she sees as necessary for politics more generally.¹⁴ She suggests that interest-based political citizenship has the ability to combine the community/membership model associated with the participatory emphasis of Aristotelian citizenship on the one hand with the individualist characteristics of the liberal-democratic citizenship on the other hand.¹⁵ This, she claims, is achieved through the

¹⁴ According to Mouffe (1993), if an interest or cause comes to be universally accepted it ceases to be a forum for citizenship because it ceases to be political.

¹⁵ The individualist characteristics of the liberal-democratic citizenship refers to the emphasis on ideas of individual rights over that of a national collective, usually associated with liberalism and neo-liberalism (Beiner & Kingston, 2005).

assembly of individuals engaged by a common public concern that also allows for individual advancement as opposed to the common good of Aristotle's politics.¹⁶

Mouffe's interpretation of citizenship has potentially profound effects with regard to citizenship identity insofar as it suggests that emerging citizen identity is not fixed, but rather, is something that must be constructed at the level of the individual.¹⁷ Expounding on this notion, she argues that:

Citizenship is not just one identity among others, as in liberalism, or the dominant identity that overrides all others, as in civic republicanism, it is an articulating principle that affects the different subject positions of the social agent while allowing for a plurality of specific allegiances and for the respect of individual liberty (Mouffe, 1993, pp.69-70).

This interpretation of citizenship allows for the maintenance of national associations and, more importantly, suggests that by the act of choosing 'where' one participates, 'real' citizenship becomes what one makes it. What follows is the potential to shift away from a [forced] national citizenship that is rooted in the notion of national identity toward a type of group- or interest-based citizenship wherein citizenship is a product of personal choice, group acceptance and active engagement with particular causes. Or, as Delanty (2007, p. 26) puts it, as citizenship identity becomes increasingly spatially differentiated on local, regional, national and global playing fields, "this layered, or multi-leveled, sense of identity leads to a (...) [citizenship that] is becoming more and more flexible and relational."

Bennett (forthcoming) furthers this interpretation of citizenship identity by associating citizen activity with the many lifestyle changes that have been brought about by economic globalization, the growing reach of network communication, and most notably, the

¹⁶ Mouffe (1993) describes the public concern as a common interest in a particular cause that may or may not be beneficial to the community as a whole, whereas Aristotle defines the common good as a commitment to the betterment of the community.

¹⁷ See also, Sen (2006) who argues that much of the violence in the world today, and in the past, is a direct manifestation of the erroneous presumption of unique and choiceless identity.

Internet. He argues that once the state will no longer be able to meet citizens' lifestyle needs, citizens will cease to see the state as an integral component of their lives and "from that point, it is a short identity shift to detach from the activities of traditional citizenship, and embrace, instead the public identities and stances of critical, independent-minded consumers" (Bennett, forthcoming, p.5). This change in lifestyle, he maintains, has profound effects on how citizens interpret their position in traditional state societies and how they choose to participate politically. As he puts it,

Cosmopolitan citizens in global societies process their political choices increasingly in terms of how those choices affect their own lifestyles. As lifestyles become more diverse, they are poorly articulated with old categories such as class, party or religion. As a result, ideological messages – particularly about global justice issues – are less likely to be received positively by typical citizens (Bennett forthcoming, pg. 2).

Seen in this light, the understandings of civic identity associated with the traditional classifications of citizenship may no longer apply.

Lemire (2002), however, expresses caution about any move toward equating citizens with consumers à la Bennett. He claims that consumers, unlike citizens do not play an active role in the decision-making process because they are forced into a reactionary position against decisions that have already been made. Similarly, Muetzelfeldt (2000, p.90) argues that:

The political function of citizenship – the right to participate in the policy process and hold governments accountable for their decisions as well as for their service delivery performance – is systematically diminished through the client or customer focus[ed] approach.

While citizen consumers are not entirely without means of political expression, this role is largely linked to the ability to purchase. The concern with a client-focused approach to citizenship is its diminishing of the role of the citizen by reverting individuals to a weakened

non-political consumer position, instead of allowing people to play the role of the power wielding and active citizen.

Despite these concerns, Lemire (2002, p.311) also points out that globalization (both cultural and economic) can nonetheless stimulate one's sense of civic identity insofar as,

Identity is the result of tension between a learning process and an authoritative imposition process of an identity. When faced with an authoritative power, identity can be a cause for resistance, a desire for self-affirmation.

It is important to recognize that this view of civic identity also applies to group activism.

Although the concept of civic identity pushes citizenship further away from the passive formulation associated with state citizenship toward one premised on individual lifestyle-based interests, this does not mean that collective identity is disappearing (Harju, 2007).

Rather, civic identities may be transforming into something that is increasingly associated with communities of like-minded individuals. While the notion of a civic identity must contain at least some sense of 'belonging to a community' as part of its definition, the nature of this belonging need not necessarily be based on regional boundaries. As, Harju (2007, p.95) contends, community identity:

Is merely a system of relations and representations. A communal, cultural identity can be born for instance in a process where people engage in urban movements or other community organizations, through which common interests are discovered and defended.

In the network society – where national and time-space boundaries are eroding – the understanding of citizen identity and community is being reshaped. The emergence of the global citizenship phenomenon suggests a potential for returning to the Aristotelian notion of citizenship as something that is founded foremost on participation. However, instead of participating in actual political decision making processes emergent global citizenship appears to focus on influencing domestic and international decision-making outcomes

through advocacy and activism in areas such as the environment, human rights, and other domains such as national liberation struggles.

A central component of the notion of the global citizen is the blurring of national, temporal and spatial boundaries through the use of networked ICTs. Despite Aristotle's claim that "one cannot be a citizen in a vacuum – citizenship depends upon the regime in which it participates, which is necessarily a democracy or oligarchy" (Frank 2004, p.93) global citizenship seems to overcome this by operating extra-nationally. By participating in online interactions – e.g. on blogs and other online forums – a global citizen does not necessarily need to be perceived as 'Canadian', 'British', 'Chinese' citizen. Instead, s/he is free to decide upon the relative importance that s/he attaches to the various groups (e.g. national, religious) to which s/he belongs (Sen, 2006).

Global citizenship – or cause-based citizenship – encourages what Sen (2006) refers to as the 'plurality of civic identities'. Rather than focusing on the kind of singular identity associations usually connected with state or ethnic citizenship, global citizenship promotes a multiplicity of civic identities by allowing the citizen to choose which political interests with which to be associated, and it need not only be one.

2.5 Summary and Research Question

In the closing pages of *Identity and Violence*, Sen (2006, p. 182) warns of the possible pitfalls for the global citizenship movement by noting,

If a person can have only one identity, then the choice between the national and the global becomes an "all or nothing" contest. And so does the contest between any global sense of belonging we may have and the local loyalties that may also move us. But to see the problem in these stark and exclusive terms reflects a profound misunderstanding of the nature of human identity, in particular its inescapable plurality.

Global citizenship, however, need not be an all or nothing choice. In fact, the nature of global citizenship - and what Bennett (forthcoming) calls “life-style politics” – is inherently pluralistic. O’Byrne (2003), for instance, sees political identity as always being made up of the civic rituals present in everyday life. Political identity, he claims:

Is flexible and transient, and devised through a diverse range of strategies adopted by people. As such, the nation – state has *never* been the sole source of political identity. People draw from various levels to construct their sense of citizenship. (O’Byrne 2003, p. 19 [*emphasis added*])

It is entirely conceivable that one may be at once a ‘citizen for a free Tibet’, an ‘environmental citizen’, a woman’s rights activist and a fair trade consumer. These are not mutually exclusive categories but they do require self-awareness that is essential in “avoiding clipping one’s wings as well as remaining at ease in one’s own skin” (Schattle 2008, p. 29).

It seems unlikely that online global citizenship as manifested today is tantamount to a return to the Aristotelian vision of citizen identity, where meaningful participation is the determining factor for who is a ‘good’ citizen and who is not. The Internet is not yet built to sustain the levels of participation that would be necessary for everyone to participate in the manner Aristotle envisioned. Global citizenship does, however, act as an entry point for increased political activism by a multitude of actors from a variety of political backgrounds. The key premise underpinning this assertion and, indeed, the core research questions for this thesis is the notion that the use of ICTs enables greater participation in political discourses at the grass-roots level regardless of temporal and geographical distances.

The understanding of global citizenship as something that extends beyond political borders seems particularly relevant to the international interest in, and advocacy/activism relating to, the issue of Tibetan independence. In recent years a host of blogs, online-forums and electronic newsletters focusing on this issue have emerged (e.g. “Tibet People’s Uprising

Movement”, “Beijing Wide Open”). Moreover, in the light of the most recent protests in Tibet during the lead-up to the Beijing Olympics,¹⁸ SMS, electronic mailing lists and Facebook were being used to mobilize activists associated with the movement for the liberation of Tibet.¹⁹

What remains unclear, however, is how interest-based citizenship identity manifests itself when the cause is itself the creation of a state, as is the case of the liberation of Tibetan. This thesis seeks to examine how the ideals of global citizenship identity are manifested in situations where the primary cause is state-building. As such, it is guided by the following research question: *How does global citizen identity manifest itself online when the cause is state-building?* In order to tackle this issue, the two following sub-questions are posed:

- *How is citizen identity manifested on Phayul.com’s “Issues and Causes” forum? and;*
- *Is group membership a vital part of this discourse and, if so, how is membership achieved?*

The discussion presented in the next two chapters outlines the research methodology used to investigate the central research question and presents the evidence obtained from an empirical analysis of postings to one of the predominant online forums focusing on the cause of Tibetan liberation. In Chapter 3, particular attention is given to the language strategies and citizenship associations conveyed by the forum members. In Chapter 4, emphasis is placed on analyzing the strategies of articulation and the argumentation schemes used by forum members in relation to the ideals of global citizenship.

¹⁸ For more information on the recent protests, please see: “Olympic torch goes out, briefly, in Paris”, New York Times (2008), “Olympic torch arrives in Pakistan”, Globe and Mail (2008), and “Torch carries Tibet debate to UK” BBC News online (2008).

¹⁹ For example, *Students for a Free Tibet* recently mobilized protestors at various sites along the Olympic torch relay using SMS texting and an e-mailing campaign. See “Digital Activists Target Tibet” (2008) and on Facebook, “Candle in My Window - for Tibet” (<http://www.facebook.com/event.php?eid=26061226952>).

CHAPTER THREE: Global Citizen Attitudes

The discussion in this chapter is divided into two parts. The first sets out the methodology used to analyze the rhetorical and contextual techniques that free Tibet activists employ to portray their citizen identity in an online forum that focuses on Tibetan independence. In the second part of the chapter the discussion is structured around a presentation and analysis of the research findings in accordance with the subject attitude and social categorization components of Grad's (2008) framework for understanding the construction of transnational identity.

3.1 The Rationale for using CDA and Content Analysis

This thesis centers on the relationship between global citizen identity and a specific social movement whose primary cause is state-building. Investigating this phenomenon requires, among other things, an examination of:

- the constituent elements of global citizenship (i.e., commitment to grassroots activism, the weakening of ties to geographical boundaries, associational membership, and the creation of informal rights and obligations) as manifest by participants in online forum whose focus is the liberation of Tibet;
- who are the contributors to the online forum in question; and
- how group membership is created and maintained within this forum.

The methodological approach employed to address the above issues involves a combination of critical discourse analysis (CDA) and content analysis.

Critical discourse analysis is a qualitative research method typically used to analyze the role that language plays in the reproduction of, and resistance to, social power structures (van Dijk, 1998). This technique often is used to assess how individuals understand and interpret discourse structures in relation to societal contexts or macro-level structures (Merrigan and Huston, 2004). According to Van Dijk (1993, p. 258), such analyses are

important because they allow one “to link the personal with the social, and hence individual actions and (other) discourses, as well as their interpretations, with the social order, and personal opinions and experiences with group relations.”

To this end, CDA has been used to analyze issues of identity and citizenship in political discourses. For example, Liu (2008) used this technique to analyze the relationship between the text contained in history books approved by the Chinese government and its attempts at fostering a strong sense of national identity among elementary school children. His investigation centered upon examining the lexical and grammatical choices evident in the texts of these books and, more specifically, the use of pronouns that can be interpreted as promoting a sense of unity and national identity. In another study of a similar nature, Peled-Elhanan (2008) used CDA to investigate the denial of Palestinian national identity within Israeli textbooks. In identity studies CDA has frequently been employed as a means of exposing the relationship between external structures and personal agency in the construction and use of identity. Of particular interest in this context are the tools used by individuals to create, maintain and project the ‘self’ “through process[es] of imposition and resistance in discourse” (Grad and Martin Rojo 2008, p.4). Recent work in this area includes Padmos, Mazeland & te Molder’s (2006) study of the multiple scales of citizen identity enacted by speakers in various political settings.

Building on the finding that several identities often are found in citizenship-related discourses, Grad (2008, p. 111) probed the construction of extranational identities that are “developed in the complex context of existing state-related national identities.” His analysis of interview transcripts from four hundred young adults from Spain and the United Kingdom identified the use of four major components in the subjects’ construction of a European identity in parallel with their own respective national identities. These included:

- (i) *Subject attitude*: the interviewee's attitude toward the supra-national categorization. This is mainly reflected in the subject's use of possessive and inclusive pronouns and references to overarching territories or peoples;
- (ii) *Social categorization*: the building of "European" as a social category, mainly invoked by the internal creation of "us" and "them" groups;
- (iii) *Strategies of articulation*: the manner in which subjects construct the connection between supranational and national categories; and
- (iv) *Argumentation schemes*: the types of arguments subjects use regarding the legitimacy, or lack thereof, of their supranational identities versus their national identities.

In this thesis it is the above identity construction strategies that serve as a foundation for structuring a CDA-based investigation of the techniques used by activists for the Tibetan liberation to project the way in which they perceive their identities. In the pages that follow CDA is used to identify and analyze the rhetorical and linguistic content used by these individuals to promote global citizen identity and associational membership among participants in an online forum whose focus is Tibetan independence.

It should be noted, however, that the methodological approach adopted in this thesis is not limited solely to CDA. Rather, CDA is combined with content analysis. The latter entails a systematic quantitative examination of texts with the goal of illuminating themes, patterns, and meanings of the communication symbols in order to draw inferences about their meaning or context (Berg, 2007; Frey, Botan, & Kreps, 2007). For example, in a study of the extent to which Internet use facilitates relationships between citizens and government, Sweeney (2007) used content analysis to quantitatively evaluate the perspectives expressed in interviews with 18 respondents. Gerodimos (2008), on the other hand, used content analysis to evaluate the efficacy of online non-governmental organization (NGO) websites, youth parliament sites, and youth portals in motivating young adults to engage in political participation. And, Insch (2008) conducted a content analysis of the websites of several

companies in New Zealand in order to evaluate how each firm communicated its sense of Environmental Citizenship to its target audience.

In this thesis content analysis is used for two purposes. Firstly, to examine the frequency with which specific rhetorical and linguistic terms are employed to promote group membership and global citizen identity. Second, to assess the ways in which global citizen identity is manifested in the rhetorical terms employed by free Tibet activists when communicating with other online forum participants.

3.2 How CDA and content analysis are applied

In 1950, the People's Republic of China invaded Tibet and the fourteenth Dalai Lama went into self-imposed exile in India. Since then the movement for an independent Tibet has gained global prominence (Hess 2006). Coinciding with the increased diffusion of, and access to, the Internet, many activists have created online groups and forums advocating for the liberation of Tibet. The identities manifested and opinions expressed in these online forums form a transnational political discourse.

In order to investigate how global citizen identity is manifested when the cause is state-building, postings to the *Phayul.com* "Issues and Causes" forum during a two week period spanning from July 23, 2008 to August 6, 2008 were analyzed. This online venue is an English Language web site operated by Tibetan exiles in India. It was chosen as the primary source for data collection because it is one of the most highly frequented online news and discussion forums for Tibetan-related activities (Namgyal, 2006). As for the two-week time-frame in question, it was selected because these dates coincided with a period of intense activity for Tibetan independence activists in the lead-up to the Beijing 2008 Olympic Games.

Table 3.1 The 20 Most Active Forum Users

Username	Number of Postings
Omahhum	71
Love Peace	50
Peta	50
Dorje65	41
Winona	35
Achinaman	24
Chandra	21
Margarita	20
Darjgooner	19
Amdoman	17
Born4freetibet	14
Dorjeeknows	14
Hqian	14
Theloneranger	13
Heartfortibet	11
Jamson	11
Vox Pop 75	8
Geezer	7
Bleedingtibet	6
Kunsung	6
All Others:	140
% of Total	76

A total of 592 messages posted by 85 participants were analyzed.²⁰ Of these 85 users,²¹ the 20 most active participants provided just over 76 percent of the total postings analyzed (see Table 3.1).²² The 592 messages were contained within 130 discussion threads that occurred during the two-week period in question. Each discussion thread, on average,

²⁰ Only postings containing linguistic content were analyzed. Postings containing only images or hyperlinks were omitted from the sample.

²¹ It must be noted that access to *Phayul.com* is either restricted or entirely blocked in the People's Republic of China. As such, residents of this country do not, by and large, have access to this site. Moreover, there is no way of formally ascertaining the national identities of those individuals posting messages to this site. One can only glean as much information as individual forum participants reveal in their messages, and even then there is no way of ensuring the veracity of the information provided. As such, one cannot, with any degree of certainty, determine the physical location and/or political status of the individual participants.

²² The user's actual identities never were revealed or otherwise identified to the author during the course of this study.

consisted of four responses to an initial posting. While each of these conversations dealt with the cause of Tibetan liberation in one way or another, seven identifiable sub-topics or themes dominated these exchanges (see Table 3.2).

Table 3.2 Discussion Sub-Topics²³

Discussion Topics	Threads	Number of Messages
Anti-Chinese Rhetoric	37	146
The Olympic Games	37	118
Tibetan Politics and Activism	35	210
Religious Sectarianism	11	123
Arts and Culture	10	43
Inter-User Flaming	5	54

In conducting the content and discourse analyses, the postings were analyzed by hand and with the textual analysis software *Concorder Pro*. The latter is a Mac compatible open-source textual analysis tool that is designed to display all occurrences of particular words within a given text (Forchini, 2005; Concorder Pro, n.d.). This software provides a list of every word present in a text and the number of times it is used; the word's location within a particular sentence; and the wider context of the word's usage within the full text.

Using the four components of Grad's (2008) framework of discursive identity construction as a guide, the *Concorder Pro* software was configured to identify and code for subject attitude and social categorization (i.e. the linguistic techniques that are compatible with the first two components of Grad's identity construction framework). This procedure identified the frequency with which particular forum users participated in online discussions during the two-week period being analyzed and the frequency with which particular words, metaphors and/or themes appeared. The postings also were individually color-coded by hand in order to identify themes and metaphors that were compatible with the third and fourth

²³ Some discussion threads contained more than one of the sub-topics listed above.

components of Grad's (2008) discursive identity construction framework – i.e. strategies of articulation and argumentation schemes.

The frequencies of each type of linguistic technique were subsequently tabulated in order to facilitate an analysis of identity construction within the postings to the *Phayul.com* forum. Once the quantitative aspect of the content analysis was completed, a discourse analysis was undertaken to interpret the underlying relationship between the construction of identity, global citizenship and the free Tibet movement.

3.3 Global Citizen Attitudes: *Phayul.com*'s Displaced National Center?

The discussion in this section concentrates on subject attitudes and social categorization – the first two components of Grad's (2008) framework – within the context of participant postings to the *Phayul.com* forum.²⁴ In his study of the discursive construction of a transnational identity by citizens of Spain and the United Kingdom Grad (2008) observed that his subject's attitudes toward the idea of European citizenship often was expressed of possessive and inclusive pronouns. Specifically, the nature of the respondents association with the concept of Europe tended to manifest itself through the use of possessive and inclusive pronouns when referring to the European territory and by voluntarily adopting the European identity in reference to both national and international political discussions.

Given that users of the *Phayul.com* forum frequently articulate their affiliation with Tibet and the Tibetan nation rather than the country in which they currently reside, it seems plausible that these individuals might associate themselves with some form of transnational

²⁴ The strategies of articulation used to connect supranational and national ideas and the argumentation schemes used by posters regarding the legitimacy of their potentially supranational identities are the subject of focus in Chapter 4.

or global citizenship.²⁵ As such, in the first stages of the empirical component of this thesis involves two dimensions. The first consists of analyzing the contents of the messages posted to the online forum in order to identify how possessive and inclusive pronouns are used by the forum participants. The second, centers on identifying instances of the articulation of transnational or global citizenship attitudes by the forum participants.

3.3.1 Yours, Mine, and Ours: The Use of Pronouns

The participants in Grad's (2008) study used either a combination of possessive and inclusive pronouns or exclusive pronouns to discursively create or break ties between themselves and their forms of citizenship. For instance, by using possessive and inclusive terms such as 'my', 'our', 'us' and 'we' his respondents were seen to be expressing and/or creating a sense of connection and membership to groups of people, geographical areas, and political associations. The use of exclusive pronouns such as 'his/hers', 'their(s)', and 'your(s)' on the other hand, was equated with these individuals distancing and/or disconnecting themselves from the people or places being discussed.

The first element of the online forum postings to be examined for this thesis was the use of these contrasting types of pronouns in relation to issues of international politics, transnational activism and ideals of global citizenship (e.g. human rights, freedom of expression, world peace). The frequency of the associations between these variables was calculated using the *Concorder Pro* software and subsequently manually coded to ensure the accuracy of the findings.

²⁵ This observation appears to be linked to a political affinity toward the nation, or potentially the result of a membership in the Tibetan diaspora. This matter is discussed in more detail in Chapter 4.

Table 3.3 Use of Pronouns in the *Phayul.com* "Issues and Causes" Forum

Pronouns	Frequency		Frequency in Activist / Global Citizen Context		Frequency in Forum Member Context		Frequency in Tibetan context		Frequency Across All Three Contexts	
	In Text	No. Messages	In Text	No. Messages	In Text	No. Messages	In Text	No. Messages	In Text	No. Messages
Possessive and Inclusive										
We	390	45	157	18	21	18	104	58	282	121
Our(s)	205	36	85	12	23	12	103	44	211	92
Mine/My	129	21	28	2	2	2	37	27	66	50
Us	95	2	2	9	10	9	19	18	31	29
Total:	819	104	272	41	56	41	263	147	590	292
Exclusive										
Their(s)	339	4	5	2	3	2	73	45	81	51
His/Hers	290	25	50	1	1	1	138	58	189	84
Your(s)	226	14	27	76	145	76	36	29	208	119
Total:	855	43	82	79	149	79	247	132	478	254
Combined Total:	1674	147	354	120	205	120	510	279	1068	546

Within the sample population for this thesis there were three major contexts within which the possessive and inclusive pronouns, and exclusive pronouns used by individual posters to the online forums were examined: (i) articulations of global activism / global citizenship; (ii) articulations of membership in the online forum; and (iii) articulations of affiliation with Tibetans.²⁶ The information presented in Table 3.3 sets out the frequency with which the posters to the online forum used possessive and inclusive pronouns such as ‘my’, ‘our’, ‘us’ and ‘we’, and exclusive pronouns such as ‘his/hers’, ‘their(s)’, ‘your(s)’. As shown in the table, possessive and inclusive pronouns were identified as being employed in association with one of the three above contexts in 819 instances, with the pronoun “we” being employed most often. By contrast, the use of exclusive pronouns was identified in 855 instances, with the most frequently used pronoun being ‘their’ (n=339).

The data obtained regarding frequency of pronoun usage reveals that possessive and inclusive pronouns were most often employed within articulations of global activism / global citizenship (n=272) and affiliations with Tibet (n=263). Furthermore, it must be noted that references to Tibet often were coupled with references to past instances of, and opportunities for, activism (hence the nearly equal frequency of appearance of these to types of articulation). For example, in a longer than average posting whose tone is exemplary of most of the postings found at *Phayul.com*, Rangzan (2008, August 1) uses connecting pronouns to describe both Tibetans and global activists. S/he writes:

I am sure that many of *our freedom fighters* are as always looking for something to do for *our country* on the eve or actual day of Olympic Opening Ceremony in Beijing. I have an idea which is peaceful but difficult and risky. The action will certainly distract the attention of the Chinese government when *they* are busy trying to legitimize the illegal occupation of Tibet

²⁶ The forum members on the *Phayul.com* “Issues and Causes” forum also used pronouns to discuss their personal lives, non-Tibet related political opinions, and while flaming other users. This observation is discussed in more detail in Chapter 4.

misusing the Olympic Games. It will also redraw worldwide media attention towards *our cause*. (...)The protesters should wear Tibetan dress and carry several items including Tibetan national flags, posters, banners, cell phones, cameras, food, water, etc. *They need a plan* to sneak rapidly back into India, Bhutan or Nepal safely after the protest rallies perhaps along with the international journalists. It becomes a very important responsibility for the organizers to contact as many of the world media as possible such as BBC, CNN, VOA, RFA, VOT, etc and make sure that *they will send their representatives* to cover the events so that the Chinese regime will not dare to massacre *our fellow compatriots* in front of the journalists [emphasis added].

In this posting, the pronouns used suggest several things. First, by using the terms “our freedom fighters” and “our country” in the same sentence, Rangzan seemingly presumes that the audience s/he is addressing comprises either citizens of Tibet or members of the Tibetan diaspora. Second, the statement “*They need a plan* to sneak rapidly back into India, Bhutan or Nepal safely after the protest rallies perhaps along with the international journalists” suggests that Rangzan implicitly considers international journalists to be members of, or at least have an important role to play in, the protest movement. When used in relation to the Chinese government the pronoun “they” clearly is employed to emphasize the disconnection between Chinese and Tibetan interests.

It also must be noted that those individuals posting to the “Issues and Causes” forum at *Phayul.com* during the two week period in question predominantly employed exclusive pronouns when referring to forum membership and associations with Tibetan (n=149 and n=247, respectively). In terms of forum membership the use of exclusive pronouns was linked foremost to postings that referred to the inappropriateness of messages posted by other forum participants or expressions of a desire to become fully-fledged forum members. For example, “yours” and “theirs” often were used to deride other users for bias, flaming, or supposed ignorance. In these instances, the forum users were not using “they”, “yours” and “his” or “hers” to disassociate themselves from the forum as a whole, but rather to

disassociate themselves from those who they considered to be “inappropriate” users of the forum. Examples of this phenomenon are provided below in Box 3.1.

Box 3.1 Use of Exclusive Pronouns in the Contexts of Forum Membership and Association with Tibet²⁷

Forum User	Extract
<p>Born4freetibet (2008, July 23b [Emphasis added])</p>	<p>“Now I think, it is my wish or suggestion to all Tibetan who are anti-Shugden, please be careful and act smart. Don’t ever show <i>your anger</i>, aggressiveness towards these protestors. It might spoil <i>our image</i> that H. Holiness has been working so hard all these years.”</p>
<p>Winona (2008, July 23 [Emphasis added])</p>	<p>“LOL!!! It must be so humiliating to find the people who hate you most are <i>your own robbed and grieving</i> [for their murdered children due to CCP negligence and greed] Chinese citizens. Typical PRC bull – smarmy and sleazy attempt to make Tibetans feel guilty for fighting for their independence – as if <i>we all</i> had to be harmless Buddhists who love those who have committed genocide against Tibetans – well think again.”</p>
<p>Omahhum (2008, July 26 [Emphasis added])</p>	<p>“Anyway in China they call <i>your confused type</i> with identity problems (that’s why you are here defending mass murderers) ‘the banana’ as you know. Let me explain for others: yellow on the outside skin, devilish white on the inside. In a way it would have been better if you were a lackey. As things stand, <i>you’re in deeper than them</i>. This <i>BS you’re parroting</i> is because you’re sinking into the mire you pathetic pen pusher.”</p>
<p>Love_peace (2008, August 5 [Emphasis added])</p>	<p>“When <i>our fellow posters</i> claimed “worldwide” support for <i>their hassling</i> during the global torch relay in last March, there was not even one single African supporter showing up for <i>their cause</i> during the torch relay in African cities.”</p>
<p>Theloneranger (2008, August 1 [Emphasis added])</p>	<p>“<i>Your mind</i> is obviously not capable of thinking in any logical way. <i>You and your friends posts</i> are all wrong and <i>your posts</i> are written out of overwhelming ignorance. (...) <i>There is no filter in your brain</i>, you just think and say whatever comes into your head. <i>Your posts make little sense</i> and look like they been written by a five year old. <i>In fact your posts are an insult to children</i> who obviously have a higher intellect [sic] than you.”</p>

²⁷ The use of Exclusive pronouns was identified total of 396 times in these two contexts.

In terms of associations with Tibet the posters to this online forum used the seven pronouns listed in Table 3.3 almost as frequently to disassociate themselves from Tibet and the Tibetan people as they did to connect with them. Indeed, there is no statistically significant difference in the use of possessive and inclusive pronouns versus exclusive pronouns by the forum users in association with the Tibet context ($\chi^2 = 1.32$, $df = 1$, $p > 0.05$). It seems plausible to conclude therefore that for some forum users the choice of whether to affiliate themselves with Tibet potentially was little more than a matter of convenience within the context of ongoing discussions.

In the case of the posters' comments that fall under the global activist / global citizenship context, exclusive pronouns seemed to be employed largely to refer to activities by other sets of global activist / global citizens engaged in the movement for the liberation of Tibet (See Box 3.2). When exclusive pronouns were used in political discussions not directly related to Tibet, the Olympics, or popular culture they often were employed to refer to other territories and peoples.²⁸

²⁸ This issue is discussed in more detail in Section 3.3.2.

Box. 3.2 Use of Exclusive Pronouns in the Global Activist / Global Citizenship Context²⁹

Forum User	Extract
<p>Yoda_la (2008, July 23 [emphasis added])</p>	<p>“We should never <i>give them chance</i> to spread <i>their propaganda</i>. If they come to protest near your cities, we should make as many copies of His Holiness statement about the ds as we can to distribute to people on the streets so that they can have better understanding about the issue. We don't have to confront <i>them</i>. Let <i>them</i> practice their freedom of expression.”</p>
<p>Born4freetibet (2008, July 23a [emphasis added])</p>	<p>“Sometimes, I am disturbed to see our people getting extreme and don't [sic] understand the real situation and even don't [sic] open <i>their mind</i> to all kinds of problems. They just keep <i>their heart and brain</i> [sic] to one side only and never like to explore which I think kukpa. <i>Open your eyes</i> does not [sic] mean you have to support that group or any problem but you educate yourself more in today's life. (...) So, in such a SUNNY DAY if we acted like the one in NEW YORK CITY, they will use this incident to prove their claim [sic] and that I was trying to put in your head.”</p>
<p>Achinaman (2008, July 24 [emphasis added])</p>	<p>“<i>They do know what they are protesting</i> i.e. the lack of religious freedom within the exiled Tibetan community.”</p>
<p>Darjgooner (2008, July 24 [emphasis added])</p>	<p>What comes around goes around. NKT/WSS have centers around the world so we can target these centers especially [sic] in the UK where they have <i>their headquarters</i>. And <i>they have a festival</i> coming up. So Tibetans and all ex NKT should protest and save others.</p>
<p>Bleedingtibet (2008, July 29a [emphasis added])</p>	<p>Woeser had committed no crimes and yet she had to undergo a hell lot mental suffering just because she exercised <i>her fundamental human rights</i> and freedom of expression. She did what a respected journalist is supposed to do. Yet, the totalitarian rulers could not tolerate <i>her truthful writings</i> and was <i>removed from her government job</i>. <i>Her personal blog</i> was over and again shut down by the regime. (...) <i>Her movement was restricted</i> for all practical means because she was put under severe surveillance and her apartment was constantly kept under police surveillance</p>

Overall, the data obtained with regard to the frequency of use of possessive and inclusive pronouns in the online postings suggests two things. Firstly, that the strength of

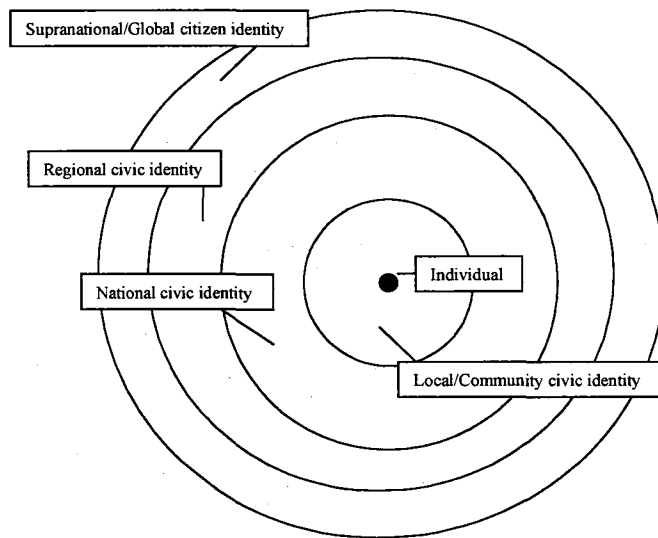
²⁹ Exclusive pronouns were used by forum posters a total of 82 times in the examined postings.

individual affiliations to Tibet and/or the Tibetan people differs among the forum participants. Second, that there is evidence to support the view that group-based segmentation processes are occurring with regard to issues of activism and forum membership.

3.3.2. Identification with Over-Arching Territories and Peoples

Grad (2008) reports that the participants in his study frequently adopted a supranational European citizen identity simultaneously with their national and local identities. According to him, identifying with over-arching territories and peoples as well as with one's own nation-state creates a nesting effect that reflects the multi-scalar nature of citizenship (see Figure 3.1). At issue here is the encompassing of regional, national, and community, and local citizenship under a supranational categorization of citizenship. According to Grad, the further removed a particular categorization of citizenship is from the individual, the less likely it is to act as the core source of an individual's identity. This leads him to posit that a sense of citizenship which focuses foremost on local level activities plays a more important role in identity formation than national citizenship, that a sense of regional citizenship plays a more important role in identity formation than national citizenship, and so on.

Figure 3.1 Traditional Nested Citizen Identities



Source: Adapted from Grad (2008).

The data obtained from the analysis of postings to the *Phayul.com* forum suggests that the identity formations constructed in this particular online environment conform to the model of citizen identity nesting advanced by Grad (2008) insofar as the attitudes expressed by only nine of the 20 most active forum members were found to be indicative of a close affiliation with supranational categories of citizenship.³⁰ Of the 592 postings gathered only 18 messages posted by these nine individuals reflected a sense of affiliation with peoples or over-arching territories.³¹ Within these messages the posters made identifications with three groups of people (Tibetan diaspora (n=4); Buddhist peoples (n=7); international activists (n=3)) and one over-arching territory (Asia (n=4)). Examples of these types of identifications are presented in Box 3.3.

³⁰ Recall that 20 of the 85 forum members provided just over 76% of the posts.

³¹ This is a much lower frequency of presence than the 60 instances in which users expressed identification with or a desire for a national citizenship identity. This matter is discussed in more detail in Chapter 4

Box. 3.3 Examples of Identification with Over-Arching Territories or Peoples

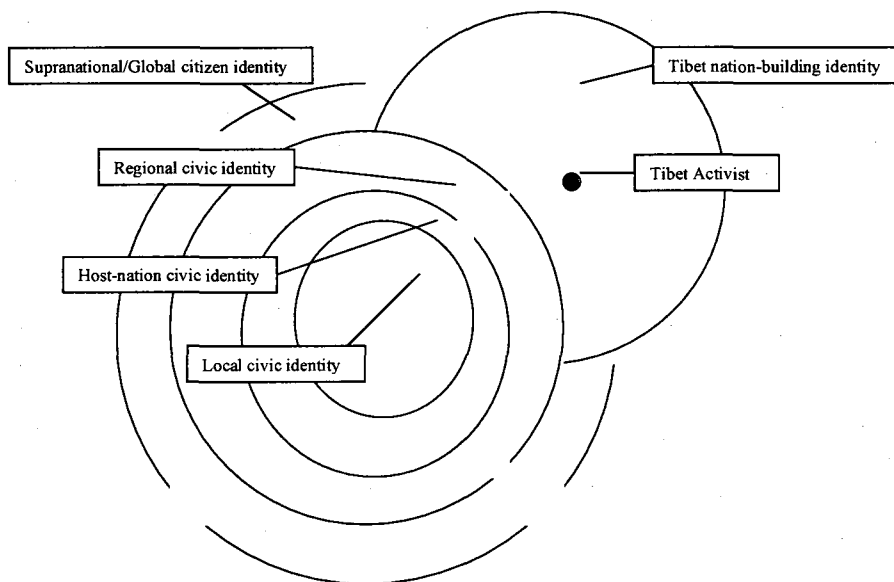
Forum User	Extract
<p>Achinaman (2008, July 26a [<i>Emphasis added</i>])</p>	<p>“We should adopt a system that is suitable <i>for our own cultures</i> which are very different from western culture. (...) I believe different forms of democracy will evolve <i>in Asia</i> in due time, but that will not be something that western countries like to see.”</p>
<p>Chandra (2008, July 29 [<i>Emphasis added</i>])</p>	<p>“Both sides actually don’t want to talk (...). <i>Diaspora Tibetans seem hardly to agree with each other either</i>. Strange, because it’s the western countries’ govts that pay lip-service with pushing talk after talk, probably to appease some voters, or to divert public attention from delicate domestic problems.”</p>
<p>Namchoela (2008, August 1 [<i>Emphasis added</i>])</p>	<p>“China man, it may be a big question in your [sic] eyes, but for me, its not that big at all. <i>We [Buddhists] are not ruled by Buddhas</i>. It is our own belief [sic] in Buddha and our faith in what it preach and its messages that have us unshaken even after so much torture (...) <i>we are not ruled by guns, tanks, troops and etc like your people. We are our own masters.</i>”</p>
<p>Mike282 (2008, July 31 [<i>Emphasis added</i>])</p>	<p>“Until this ban on Shugden, Dalai Lama was well loved and perceived as all compassionate and inclusive man. <i>Event Tibetans at large were [sic] seen as peace loving and tolerant people</i>. After this unwise ban (...) <i>I am now embarrassed [sic] to be called a Tibetan.</i>”</p>

While the low levels of identification with supranational or global forms of citizenship observed may be compatible with Grad’s (2008) interpretation of nesting citizenship, if one assumes that portions of the forum’s participants comprise part of the Tibetan diaspora,³² another aspect of the formation of citizen identity that is linked to notions

³² Many forum users described themselves as members of the Tibetan diaspora and residing outside of the Tibetan region. For instance, Dorjeeknows (2008, August 1), claims to be a Tibetan living in Toronto, “the hotbed of young Tibetan idealists”. Similarly, Oyap (2008, July 19) invites other Tibetans to join him in Toronto, while Achinaman (2008, July 25) purports to be second-generation Chinese living in Europe.

of supranational state building may be present (see Figure 3.2). Evidence of this can be seen in the messages of the nine individuals in question insofar as the driving force behind their 18 postings appeared to be an expressed a desire for a ‘free’ Tibet, for China to leave the Tibetan region, and/or for the Dalai Lama to return to the region.

Figure 3.2 Tibet Activist Citizen Identities on *Phayul.com*³³



Source: Author’s diagram.

Despite the apparent sense of supranational citizenship alluded to by these nine individuals, the lack of attention given to both global and local issues in their posts suggests a deviation away from the traditional global citizen focus, or what Sassen (2002) calls the “glo-cal”, or global-local politics³⁴. Indeed, of the 85 site participants whose comments were analyzed for this study only four advanced various comments pertaining directly to the fact

³³ Recall that access to *Phayul.com* is blocked in the People’s Republic of China. Therefore, it seems reasonable to conclude that the forum participants reside in other countries.

³⁴ According to Sassen (2002), “glo-cal”, or global-local politics entails the replacement of political concerns on the national level by concern for the global *and* the local. This means that global citizens may undertake initiatives to counter international problems at the local level as a means of attract support for a particular cause.

that the struggle for human rights is not merely a local issue affecting only Tibetans inside China, but rather that it is an issue that affects free Tibet activists around the globe. These four comments are presented in Box 3.4.

Box 3.4 Examples of Posting Suggesting Chinese Human Rights Abuses are a Global Issue

Forum User	Extract
Andree (2008, August 6)	<p>And why is most of the world so negligent to stand up for Tibet and all human rights? How many opportunities has the world missed to wake up... if we get Tibet we get the whole thing! Free Tibet Free World!</p>
Jamson (2008, July 28e)	<p>We Are All Human." Especially because of today's growing population, globalization matters: it means interdependency on each other. (...) We all have the desire for happiness, and the desire to overcome pain. (...) We must think more sincerely about basic humanity.</p>
Bleedingtibet (2008, July 29a)	<p>The world had enough of red regime's tyranny and brutalities against unarmed peaceful protesters and freedom and democracy activists. The humanity is not yet dead. The day will surely come, when the whole humanity will rise like one force to restore the long lost dignity and freedom to the people of Tibet and all those peoples who are forced to endure similar fate.</p>
Omahhum (2008, August 5)	<p>Learn from the Tibetan case Save the world from future enslavement</p>

Box. 3.5 Examples of Postings Concerning U.S. Relations with Tibet and China

Forum User	Extract
Omahhum (2008, July 31c)	<p>Obama's boss [<i>unclear to whom exactly Omahhum is referring</i>] (he's got control over McCain's foreign policy too) has drawn up plans: Secondary target: Russia to be weakened & absorbed. Primary target: China to be contained (classic containment by a geographical-economic belt), weakened in all aspects, surrounded & dismantled over a few decades by any means necessary.</p>
Achinaman (2008, July 26b)	<p>While these war-mongers regard themselves as champions of human rights, they are in fact the biggest abusers of human rights. These are also the same people who sent American troops into Iraq and murdered more than a million Iraqis in the name of defending of human rights. (...) So McCain probably thinks [<i>sic</i>] that meeting Dalai Lama is a good way to appeal to these hawks while Obama is trying to reconcile with "Old Europe" in order to appeal to the doves.</p>
Dorje65 (2008, July 31b)	<p>Make sure the US pays off its 10 trillion dollar debt first. With the way things are going, the US won't be able to keep its expensive military going much longer. Obama or McCain would need to be at their best behaviour, to ensure China continue to bail them out with loans. LOL!</p>
Omahhum (2008, July 28)	<p>We need to pressure Obama to make a stand against Beijing too. He can't appease these fascist concentration camp builders or ignore the issue any longer. We need solid manifesto commitments and detailed scheduled actionable policies NOW from BOTH candidates on Tibet and not just transient opportunistic electioneering photo opportunities</p>
Love_Peace (2008, July 30a)	<p>Senator Obama really looks like another President Clinton. Before they are elected, they blah blah blah about China. But after being elected, they are more pro-China than any predecessors.</p>

There was, however, some evidence of the indirect linking of global and local concerns in seven discussion threads dealing with foreign politics. In these instances the

comments of the message posters revolved around how their host country and its respective leaders might deal with the issue of Tibet.³⁵ This was particularly evident in 16 postings by 8 individuals regarding the then upcoming 2008 U.S. Presidential election. Ten of the 16 messages dealing with this particular topic explicitly focused on how then Senators Obama and McCain would address the legitimacy of the Dalai Lama and his government in exile, as well as how these presidential candidates might handle relations with China (see Box 3.5).

While it was not possible to identify the physical location from which individual participants were posting their messages, it nonetheless seems plausible that the locations in which they reside and from which they presumably were posting their messages may influence their outlook regarding the free Tibet movement and the manner in which they present themselves in the online forum.³⁶ For instance, the contents of the messages exchanged in one of the most active discussion threads observed, *How can we stop and educate westerners joining Sorkam Kelsang Gyatso' center*, entailed a broad discussion about the legitimacy of Western free Tibet activists who associate with fringe Tibetan religious groups participating in the free Tibet movement. This discussion involved nine³⁷ forum members and displayed a distinctly anti-Western tone that clearly distinguished between

³⁵ Overall, in the postings pertaining to foreign politics, little attention was paid to other ongoing international events (e.g. the invasion of Georgia by Russian forces, the delivery of Radovan Karadzic to the International Criminal Court in The Hague, the conflict in Darfur).

³⁶ Several studies have supported the notion that while the Internet can be used as a site of political resistance for diaspora groups, the extent to which this freedom can be used is largely contingent upon the political and cultural climate of the Internet user's nation of residence. Chan (2005, p. 361), for instance, found that although Chinese migrants to Singapore were freer to express political resistance to China than in their homeland, they remained subject to both the mores of their homeland and those of "regime of the host society towards the policing and disciplining of migrants". Similarly, Karimova (2008) found that the way in which Tatar expatriates residing in the US negotiate their ethnic identity online is founded equally in their complicated socio-historic pasts and their current position as American residents. She further adds that online diasporic identities may be better described as a multiplicity of identities; that is, "the social past-identity, the cultural identity of the host-nation, and the social future" of the diaspora community" (Karimova 2008, p. 23).

Western and so-called 'real' Tibetan activists.

A posting by Margarita, (2008, July 24) who asserts that perhaps the intentions of Western Tibet activists are not as pure as truly exiled Tibetans, is exemplary of this outlook.

S/he writes:

The Westerners(sic) hoping to learn Buddhism-NO-they want to LEAD Buddhism and they are obstacles for Buddhism.
 Their main "studies" is to "clean" the world-REAL DISASTERS (...)
 I was near enough (sic) to run away. They are the biggest liars!!! [*emphasis in original*]

Commenting along similar lines in the same discussion thread Born4freeTibet (2008, July 25a) notes that,

Well educating the westerners about this devil or deity [Kelsang Gyatso, leader of the New Kadampa school of Buddhism – a school that is actively discouraged by the current Dalai Lama] is good thing but stopping [them] is tough. One of most complex, critical and controversial and may be the most dangerous (sic) problem in this world is religion conflicts. Look at these Middle East (sic) countries, we can learn something from these situations. Moreover, educating oneself is the first thing than educating other people. If someone is well educated and broad minded then I (sic) think the problem will be less. If you are stubborn and one side minded and want others to run at your direction all the time, then may be it will never work even if you force people. So, educate first yourself.

Another participant, HeartforTibet, a self-proclaimed European and Westerner also expressed anti-Western sentiments in a posting that dealt mainly with the religious aspects of the free Tibet movement. According to this individual, the Tibetan movement needs to be led by people that are committed to the cause, and preferably by exiled Tibetans. S/he writes,

An even greater danger to Tibetan Buddhism are those westerners that call themselves "Buddhists" because they are frustrated with their lives! They are swamping centres and "using" Tibetan Buddhism, Lamas and even HHDL for some personal reasons and advantages.
 This is a big problem for the exiled-Tibetan-Community because they are also

³⁷ The nine forum members posting to the thread *How can we stop and educate westerners joining Sorkam Kelsang Gyatso's center* included, but were not limited to, the nine forum members who were found to identify with the supranational category of citizenship.

being used by many of these people.

I have always said that any organization (sic) that has " TIBET " in it's name should be TIBETAN LED and I know of many Tibetans that have tried to transform groups so that they can also have a say in what is to be done and what happens to the money that is made [*emphasis in original*] (2008, July 25)

While the above comments do not preclude the participation of Western activists in the free Tibet movement, they do call into question the commitment of those who are not Tibetan by birth or ancestry. Specifically, they suggest that the nine posters of anti-Western messages are inclined to favour limiting Western influence in the free Tibet movement while identifying foremost with the Tibetan people (i.e., those still within Tibet, and active members of the Tibetan diaspora).

3.4 Summary of Findings

The discussion in this chapter has focused on identifying instances of the discursive construction of transnational identity by focusing on the articulation of attitudes toward values generally associated with notions of global citizenship. The approach employed was twofold. First, the use of possessive and inclusive, and exclusive pronouns in messages posted to the "Issues and Causes" forum of the *Phayul.com* web site was examined. This was followed by a systematic examination of instances wherein forum participants expressed various facets of a supranational identity in terms of self-identifying with transnational and over-arching territories or peoples.

The findings suggest that the participants in this online forum use possessive and inclusive pronouns most frequently in relation to issues of global activism / global citizenship whereas the use of exclusive pronouns tended to be predominantly linked to group-based segmentation processes relating to group dynamics within the forum. However, in both cases the use of these pronouns always was closely tied to the issue of Tibet and its

people. The use of pronouns in this manner suggests that while forum members discursively associate themselves with the free Tibet movement, they also seek to dissociate themselves from those who they do not consider valid members of both the forum and the broader movement.

With regard to self-identification with transnational and over-arching territories or peoples, the evidence obtained suggest that only a very limited number of forum participants affiliate themselves more strongly with the Tibetan people and the potential of a Tibetan state than with their local communities or host nations. This finding appears to support Grad's (2008) assertions about the nested nature of citizenship. Specifically, given that some 89 percent of the forum members demonstrated no sense of supranational identity, it seems plausible to conclude that for most forum participants, supranational considerations play at best only a marginal role in the formation of their citizen identity. Of the eleven percent of forum members who articulated aspects of a supranational citizenship identity, most of these individuals appeared to be directly linked to the Tibetan diaspora.

Overall, the findings presented in this chapter suggest that while participants in this forum may be posting messages from various locations around the world, the most resilient citizen identity appears to be that of the exiled Tibetan. In the next chapter our attention turns to the extent to which social categorizations and group membership influence identification with Tibet within this online forum.

CHAPTER FOUR: Social Categorization, Argumentation Schemes and Flaming

The discussion in this chapter continues with the analysis of messages posted to the “Issues and Causes” forum of *Phayul.com* during a two week period in the lead-up to the Beijing 2008 Olympic Games. The first part of the discussion concentrates on the manner in which the forum participants employ social categorization themes, such as “us” and “them”, in defining their role as citizens. The discussion in the second part of the chapter examines the articulation strategies and association schemes used by these individuals with regard to themes of global citizenship (e.g. international peace, human rights, democracy, universal freedoms, justice, environmental sustainability and religious freedom).

4.1 Social Categorization: “Tibet for Tibetans and Nobody Else”

The creation of social categorizations is a key component of citizen identity building. It helps an individual to position her/himself within a set of political and social frameworks, and to define her/his role as a citizen. Grad (2008, p. 117), for instance, states that “social categorization implies building a field of a homogeneous ingroup (*us*) and a field of a differentiated outgroup (*them*) establishing an inclusive *us* from an exclusive *them*.” In his study he found that, by establishing *us* and *them* categorizations his subjects were, in turn, able to form associations that contributed to the formation of their sense of identity whether it be Spanish, British, European or some combination thereof.

In the postings to the *Phayul.com* forum, the categories of ‘us’ and ‘them’ manifest themselves in terms of forum member and the free Tibet activist categorizations (i.e., *us*) on the one hand, versus the China, the ‘West’, and the Shugden Buddhist religious sect categorizations (i.e., *them*) on the other hand.

4.1.1 Us: Users and Activists Unite

As was discussed in Chapter 2, the notion of group membership is central to notions of both global and national citizenship. In terms of global citizenship, the importance of individual association with a group is seen to parallel the notion of allegiance to the state (Mouffe, 1993; Linklater, 2002). Instead of associating themselves only with the state, global citizens are hypothesized as creating a sense of ‘global’ identity by committing themselves to one or more interest-based political groups in concert with – or without – their state-based legal citizenship (Bennett, forthcoming; Delanty, 2007; Frost, 2006; Harju, 2007). Consequently, the notion of global citizenship often is associated with membership in various political causes (Feenberg and Bakardjieva, 2004) while still allowing, as Mouffe (1993, p. 70) puts it, for individuals to maintain “a plurality of specific allegiances [as well as] the respect for individual liberty.”

Within the 592 postings to the “Issues and Causes” forum that were analyzed three manifestations of group membership appear to dominate:

- association with the online forum itself; and
- association with activism for the free Tibet movement.
- association with both the online forum and activism for the Tibet movement

The information presented in Table 4.1 lists these associations by forum participants.

A total of 88 messages posted by 24 individuals were identified in which expressions of a sense of ownership of the forum and of the content posted to the site were present. This sense of ownership was evidenced by the use of the pronouns “our” and “your”. The former was used 23 times in 12 postings by seven individuals while the latter was observed 145 times in 76 postings, by 23 individuals. Some examples of how these pronouns were used are presented in Box 4.1. Among the 20 most frequent posters to the forum this sense of

ownership appeared to be particularly strong insofar as 16 of these individuals accounted for 63 of these forum-ownership related postings.

Table 4.1 User Identification on *Phayul.com* (Total Forum Participants = 85)

Identification only with the Forum	Identification only with Activism for Tibet	Both	Other/None ³⁸
No. of Participants	No. of Participants	No. of Participants	No. of Participants
1	5	23	56

Box 4.1 Examples of Shared Sense of Ownership in the Postings to *Phayul.com*

Forum User	Extract
Love_Peace (2008, July 30b [<i>emphasis added</i>])	<i>Our fellow posters love to exaggerate whatever going on in the Tibet region of China. But is Tibet a colony as they said?</i>
Theloneranger (2008, August 1 [<i>emphasis added</i>])	There is no filter in your brain, you just think and say whatever comes into your head. <i>Your posts make little sense and look like they've [sic] been written by a five year old. In fact your posts are an insult to children who obviously have a higher intellect than you.</i>
Love_peace (2008, August 5 [<i>emphasis added</i>])	"When <i>our fellow posters</i> claimed "worldwide" support for <i>their hassling</i> during the global torch relay in last March, there was not even one single African supporter showing up for <i>their cause</i> during the torch relay in African cities."
Love_Peace (2008, July 30a [<i>emphasis added</i>])	Unlike <i>our fellow posters</i> who constantly rumor-monger that Chinese discriminate Black Africans, Senator Obama's brother and sister have Chinese girlfriend and husband. If Chinese are as racist as what <i>our fellow exile Tibetans</i> (IMO they are very racist) distorted, how would Obama's family have so many Chinese ties?

The analysis of the postings also suggests that new members have to establish their

³⁸ The category of 'other' refers to the forum users who appeared to identify with themes that did not fall into the other categories listed (e.g. other states or political parties) and who appeared not to identify with any categorization at all. Note that this category also includes those members that identified with Tibet and its people, but did not appear to identify with activism for the Tibetan movement or as members of the forum ingroup.

place or status within the forum. For example, individuals who had not firmly established their membership status in the forum through multiple postings or well-formulated responses to the postings of other forum participants seemed to be largely ignored or shunned by the main contributors to the forum. Indeed, of the 28 individuals who only posted one message during the two-week observation period 18 never received a response and four never had their comments addressed, despite being part of discussion threads consisting of multiple postings. This finding is in line with other studies of online group membership dynamics which also point to the presence of online cliques that require users to establish their membership status within online groups (e.g., Kim, 2007; Williams, Cheung and Choi, 2000).

Etzioni (2004) claims that in order for online groups to truly be an outlet for global citizenship they must also act as online virtual communities with a capacity to replace aspects of, or exist alongside of, their counterparts in the physical or real world. The first necessary element for an online 'community' as defined by Etzioni (2004, p. 225) is the presence of what he calls "a web of affect-laden relationships (...) that often crisscross and reinforce one another." The latter refers to the existence of sustained and meaningful relationship rather than "merely one-on-one or chainlike individual relationships" (Etzioni, 2004, p. 225).

The evidence obtained from the analysis of the postings to the "Issues and Causes" forum suggests that the relationships present among the participants are based foremost on shared opinions, rather than affinity for one another or a shared experience. The 71 messages by the most frequent poster to the forum – an individual who uses the name Omahhum – during the two-week observation period is illustrative of this phenomenon. Her/his postings often contained inflammatory remarks and were, for the most part, either ignored (n=17) or

served to initiate arguments with other forum participants who took exception with her/his comments (n=23). However, when s/he expressed more popular opinion, many of the same forum users who so fervently disagreed with her/him on other issues and who sought to disassociate themselves from this individual, submitted postings supporting his/her statements (n=9). Such interactions between forum participants can hardly be considered affect-laden relationships that reinforce one another insofar as they do not appear to intersect in the multiple ways in which interactions between individuals might be expected to manifest themselves in offline communities. Moreover, the removal of this one voice (i.e., Omahhum) would appear, by and large, to have little effect on the dynamic of the group as a whole, with the exception of a small clique of extremely active forum participants.³⁹ Further, behavior of the forum participants in this regard seems to be predicated foremost on the opinions expressed in individual postings and, as such, do not appear to replicate the types relationship affinities that Etzioni claims can be found in off-line communities (e.g. families, friendships, co-worker relationships).

The second element that Etzioni (2004, p.225) claims is necessary for an online community to be the equivalent of a physical community is “a measure of commitment to a set of shared values, norms, and meanings, and a shared history and identity.” Evidence of this type of phenomenon does appear to be present in the “Issues and Causes” forum insofar as many of the postings analyzed appeared to share similar values and norms with regard to:

- the respect expressed for the Buddhist life style (n=14 by 9 individuals) and, in particular, the Middle Way⁴⁰ (n=7, by 4 individuals);

³⁹ Recall that only 20 of the total 85 forum users provided just over 76% of the postings during the two-week period of analysis.

⁴⁰ In Buddhist philosophy the Middle Way is the practice of non-extremism (Kohn, 1991). For the Tibetan independence movement, the Middle Way also represents a peaceful movement toward increasing Tibetan sovereignty in a manner that is mutually beneficial to Tibet and China (His Holiness the Dalai Lama, 2001; His Holiness the Dalai Lama, 1998).

- opposition to Chinese policies (n=225, by 31 individuals);
- support for Tibetan activism (n=60, by 28 individuals); or
- support for human rights and liberty (n=31, by 18 individuals)

Analysis of the 592 postings suggests that of the 85 posters to the forum, 41 demonstrated a measure of commitment to a set of shared activist values, norms, and meanings and a shared Tibetan activists history and identity. It also should be noted that 19 of the 20 most active posters to the forum were part of this larger group that appeared to identify with the values, norms and history of the Tibetan independence movement (e.g. Buddhism and the Middle Way, opposition to Chinese policies, support for Tibetan activism, and human rights).

Of the 44 posters who did not demonstrate any such commitment to Tibetan independence activist norms and values, 36 posted comments only twice or less. As such, these individuals cannot be considered to have demonstrated significant participation in the forum. Moreover, the 20 most active users all demonstrated a commitment to a set of shared values, norms and meanings and a shared history and identity in so far as they appeared to identify with the values, norms and history of the Tibetan independence movement.

While an active interest in the Tibetan independence movement seems to be an *a priori* condition for participation in the “Issues and Causes” forum, the engagement of almost half of the forum users appears to extend beyond a mere interest in Tibetan politics to something more akin to identification with free Tibet activists, and the Tibetan people themselves. This is particularly evident in the high frequency of usage of connecting pronouns – particularly “we” and “our” – in member postings discussing acts of protest and the Tibetan people in general (see Table 4.2).

Table 4.2 Use of Possessive and Inclusive Pronouns

Pronouns	Frequency	Frequency in Activist / Global Citizen Context		Frequency in Association with Tibet Context	
		In Text	No. of Messages	In Text	No. of Messages
We	390	157	45	104	58
Our(s)	205	85	36	103	44
Mine/My	129	28	21	37	27
Us	95	2	2	19	18
Total:	819	272	104	263	147

Membership in the Tibetan activist community primarily is expressed in one of three ways:

- by declaring oneself an activist or a Tibetan;
- by calling others to action; and/or
- by supporting or opposing the acts of others.

During the two-week period for which messages were collected few of the forum participants (n=2) directly stated that they were members of the Tibetan activist group. However, almost one third (n=28) associated themselves with an apparent activist ingroup on the forum by using the connecting pronouns listed in Table 4.2 when discussing the Tibetan liberation movement. This activist ingroup appeared to be made up of the most active posters who most frequently posted messages about and advocated for Tibetan acts of protest.

Evidence of this sort of activity was present in 16 discussion threads involving 23 members of the activist ingroup. One of the discussion threads entitled *Olympic coverage for T for Tibet!, Athletes urged to show hands for[sic] Tibet getting press coverage* that arose during the observation period is exemplary of this phenomenon. Consisting of six messages in which three posters used anti-China rhetoric when discussing the human rights abuses the Chinese government was claimed to have committed in the period leading up to the Olympic

Games, the focus of conversation in this discussion thread centered on how Tibetan activists should protest the Olympic games in Beijing, and how they might be able to promote their cause around the world.

In one of the messages, Omahhum alludes to his membership in the activist ingroup by suggesting that then Senators Obama and McCain openly commit themselves to the cause of liberating Tibet. S/h writes:

We need to pressure Obama to make a stand against Beijing too. He can't appease these fascist concentration camp builders or ignore the issue any longer. We need solid manifesto commitments and detailed scheduled actionable policies NOW from BOTH candidates on Tibet and not just transient opportunistic electioneering photo opportunities Omahhum (2008, July 28 [emphasis added]).

By using the term “we” in this context Omahhum is linking her/himself to the deeds of other activists and demonstrates an intention to be active in the Tibetan activist ingroup outside the forum. There also appears to be an implicit assumption on her/his part that the other forum users associate themselves with this particular ingroup, and that they too are committed to these ideas expressed in her/his message.

A similar post, Bleedingtibet in a thread entitled *No option left but rangsten!* reveals another facet of individual manifestations of activist ingroup membership insofar as its author expresses moral support for other Tibetan activists both on the forum and in the real world:

We must know that if we are to judge our actions in terms of showing instant or solid result, then we will have to forget taking on the mighty evil regime in Beijing because we are no comparison in any way. But this is not how revolutions and struggle for independence of a nation is judged and carried on. Our victory lies in keeping [sic] doing everything possible and never giving [sic] in (2008, July 29b [emphasis added]).

Each of the above messages suggest that their authors have an affinity toward the plight of the Tibetans as well as a connection with the cause of Tibetan liberation and, more

importantly, with the *acts* of protest being pursued by activists. When combined with the high use of connecting pronouns in both the global citizen activist context (n=104 messages) and Tibetan context (n=147 messages) by the forum members, these messages seem exemplary of the attitudes of the activist ingroup as a whole.

If the use of connecting pronouns, as Grad (2008) argues, can be seen as suggesting the presence of ingroup affiliations, it seems plausible that calls to action on the part of the free Tibet ingroup suggest, at minimum, at least a desire to be associated with the group and at most full-fledged ingroup member status. A total of 24 calls to action by 10 members of the ingroup were observed among all the posts analyzed. There was no evidence that any of the calls to action on this forum, or any of the support expressed for off-line action actually manifested themselves in the physical world, at least not on the basis of mass media reports coinciding with the lead up to the Beijing Olympics.

A long-winded call for activism on the opening day of the 2008 Olympic Games by one member of the ingroup implies an assumed membership as both a free Tibet activist and as a Tibet national:

ON 08.08.2008 WHEN DEVIL CHINA OPENS OLYMPICS GAMES,
 EVERY EXILE TIBETAN MUST TAKE A STRONGEST PLEDGE
 BECOME A VOLUNTARY SOLDIER OF FREE TIBET TO LIBERATE
 TIBET. EVEN IF OUR STRUGGLE FOR INDEPENDENCE WILL HAVE
 TO BE CONTINUED FOR CENTURIES, WE MUST REMAIN
 MENTALLY COMMITTED TO SUCH AN EVENTUALITY AND NEVER
 DOUBT OUR FINAL VICTORY. (...) EVERY TIBETAN COUPLE MUST
 PRODUCE AS MANY CHILDREN AS POSSIBLE. BEARING CHILD
 MUST BE REGARDED AS NATIONAL SERVICE! ALL THE TIBETAN
 MOTHERS MUST BE ENCOURAGED TO BEAR CHILD FOR THE
 SAKE OF TIBETAN NATION AND RACE! (...) THIS WILL BE THE
 BEST FOOL - PROOF SYSTEM AND STRATEGY TO PRESERVE AND
 PROTECT TIBETAN NATIONAL IDENTITY AND TIBETAN
 CULTURAL HERITAGE INCLUDING TIBETAN RACE AND TIBETAN
 INDEPENDENCE STRUGGLE. (...) WE MUST COMMIT OUR LIVES
 FOR THE LIBERATION AND EMANCIPATION OF OUR SIX MILLION
 FELLOW TIBETANS WHO ARE BEING SUBJECTED TO WORST

SUFFERING, PAINS, TRAUMA AND AGONY BY THESE DEVIL
CALLED RED CHINESE? (Bleedingtiber's (2008, August 3 [EMPHASIS IN
ORIGINAL])

The manner in which this individual addresses the forum users – all in capitalized letters – is tantamount to commanding readers of the post to take action insofar as the rules of online etiquette – or netiquette – make clear that the use of all capital letters in a message is equivalent to shouting at another person or persons (Scheuermann and Taylor, 1997).

Likewise, the repeated use of the term “must” is equivalent to commanding others on what needs to be done. In addition, the failure to inquire or make suggestions conveys the notion that the poster of this message has some confidence that her/his membership in the activist ingroup is secure enough to tell others what to do. It also seems plausible that s/he presumes the forum users are members of the activist ingroup as well insofar as s/he addresses the other forum members with the inclusive and connective pronouns ‘we’ and ‘our’. This in turn suggests equal membership in the Tibetan activist group. This is noteworthy because it potentially suggests that s/he believes s/he is participating in a community of sympathetic people, and that this online forum serves as more than simply a place to rant about politics.

The notion of membership in a shared community also is implied in the contents of the messages posted to the forum when individual participants declare their support – or in some cases their disdain – for the actions of other offline activists. For instance, when the forum user, Darjgooner, who is a member of the activist ingroup writes, “WELL DONE SFT. WE ARE WITH YOU” (2008, August 6)⁴¹ after images of a massive banner hung by the student group near the Beijing Olympic site are posted to the forum, s/he has taken it upon her/himself to offer the *Students for a Free Tibet* moral support on behalf of the entire

⁴¹ The acronym SFT refers to *Students for a Free Tibet*, an international student activist group that lobbies for an independent Tibet through street protests, on-campus activism, and network building. See, “Mission & Vision” (n.d.).

forum and other Tibetan activists by using the pronoun “we”. That said, Darjgooner’s statement appears to be keeping with the political messages typically posted by the activist ingroup and suggests that her/his status within this group is sufficiently high so as to enable her/him to speak on behalf of the group as a whole without being rebuked or ignored insofar as the above post generated no detractors. That said, Darjgooner’s message was the last post in the *Free Tibet banner outside the Olympic stadium in Beijing., Salute [sic] to the brave souls* discussion thread, and as such, also did not generate any replies in support of its contents.

Overall, the evidence obtained with regard to group membership suggests that the forum postings help to foster and potentially reinforce a sense of belonging among some forum users by creating and perpetuating an “other” that acts as an opposing outgroup. This sense of belonging among some forum users also seems to go against Etzioni’s (2004) claims that communities by and large cannot exist in the online environment. Rather, the presence of group membership and online social behavior that is reinforced by the members of the *Phayul.com* forum fulfill Etzioni’s first necessary element for community: a multiplicity of relationships that interweave and support one another. Further, Etzioni’s second necessary element – the presence of a shared history and set of values – also seems present based on the evidence presented in this chapter insofar as the forum members demonstrate a shared commitment to Tibetan activist values and *some* global citizenship themes. The forum users’ shared commitment to Tibetan activist values is particularly evident in their opposition to China and their creation of this group as an ‘other’ to be fought against. The presence of the “other” and its role in reinforcing group membership is taken up in detail in the next section.

4.1.2 *Them: Villains, Ignoramuses, and Devil Worshipers*

In the postings to the “Issues and Causes” forum, a number of outgroups were delineated as comprising an ‘other’. The forum participants made references to an ‘other’ more than any other theme found in the postings, with 342 such references being observed. This accounted for 189 more references than the second most frequent theme, group membership (see Table 4.3).

Table 4.3 Frequency of Themes in User Postings

Themes Present in User Postings	Frequency	No. of Messages	No. of Discussion Threads	No. of Forum Participants
Creating the other	342	171	63	41
Group Membership	153	70	30	28
Inter-user arguments	130	79	26	24
Associating with global citizenship themes	69	34	23	22
Nationalistic statements	60	49	25	27
Associating with over-arching territories and peoples	18	21	16	15
Arguing for global citizenship	3	1	1	1

Within this ‘other’, there were three distinct outgroups that predominated. Two of these outgroups were external to the forum, and one an internal outgroup that was made up of some of the forum participants. Agitating against these outgroups appeared to foster a collective bond among the activist ingroup as well as other forum participants. The three key outgroups are:

- China;
- the West; and
- the internal other, the Shugden Buddhists.

The most consistent feature of the postings dealing with the 'other' was expressions of condemnation, and downright abhorrence, of the People's Republic of China. This view was articulated in some 225 instances in 146 messages; making up roughly two-thirds of the 342 instances dealing with the 'other'. Of the 85 forum participants observed, some 31 posted messages of this nature to the forum, with five individuals (*Omahhum, Peta, Bleedingt Tibet, Amdoman and Winona*) accounting for over 50 percent of these types of messages. The six most common terms/phrases used to cast China in a negative light were:

- enemy and villain (n=68);
- perpetrator of human rights violations (n=38);
- an immovable force (n=8);
- evil overlord (n=22);
- Chinazis⁴² (n=7);
- monster (n=5)

Referring to China and or the Chinese people in these terms serves several purposes. First, referring to China as a monster, or as a perpetrator of human rights violations, offers the posters of such messages a justification for their actions against or critiques of the Chinese state. Second, the construction of China as an 'other' provides these individuals with a specific entity against which to direct their anger and, possibly, their offline activities. Third, the sharing of a mutual enemy offers some forum participants a common ground upon which to build potentially more meaningful relationships with one other. This is important because in building relationships with other forum participants, the message posters'

⁴² This term combines Chinese and Nazis in a manner that is meant to equate those Chinese people who are seen to be acting against the Tibetan independence movement with the German perpetrators of the Second World War and the Holocaust.

connection to this online community is concomitantly strengthened, as is their commitment to the cause of Tibetan liberation. It seems plausible that this, in turn, also potentially strengthens the association with the notion of participating in a global cause and/or commitment to the notion of global citizenship insofar as the forum users appear to be building relationships with activists from a many regions as well as a connection to global citizenship ideals, such as human rights.

The second most commonly observed “other” was the West. Some 18 forum participants posted 62 messages across 11 discussion threads focusing on this topic. The main concerns expressed about the West revolved around three issues:

- the West taking credit for Tibetan activist successes;
- Western ignorance of the Tibetan activist movement, Tibetan Buddhism, and the human rights atrocities of the Chinese government; and
- Western complicity with the Chinese government in constraining freedom for the Tibetan people

In a message posted to the forum on July 23, 2008 that exemplifies the views articulated by the 18 individuals who posted messages about this topic, a forum participant identified as Darjgooner notes that most Westerners involved in the Tibetan movement, “don’t know [Tibetan] Buddhism from a grapefruit.” The issue of Western ignorance about the Tibetan liberation movement seems to be linked with perceptions regarding the participation of Westerners in pro-Tibetan activist undertakings. As was demonstrated in the discussion regarding identifications with over-arching territories and peoples in Chapter 3, nine forum participants appeared to subscribe to the view that Westerners who engage with the Tibetan independence movement frequently do so without properly understanding the issues at hand, or for their own financial and social benefit.

Expounding on this notion, 12 forum participants were identified who claimed that Western activists do not meet the requirements necessary to be considered 'legitimate' free Tibet activists. For these individuals this perception was particularly applicable to Western activists who associate themselves with the Shugden Buddhists (i.e., the internal "other").⁴³ In the words of one participant in these discussions:

I get angry and frustrated to see these ignorant Westerners along [side] those uneducated Tibetan spirit worshippers [sic], who make those pathetic scenes either with the lack of basic common sense or (...) blind worshipping [sic]. SPIRIT WORSHIPPING...!!! Spirit worshipping is not a religion and to talk of religious freedom with regard to this cult like ignorant group is plain stupid. Kunsung (2008, July 24).

The problem with associating with these "spirit worshipers", according to these forum participants, is that it entails acting against the efforts of the Dalai Lama, thereby disrupting the potential progress made by mainstream Tibetan Buddhists. Moreover, by associating with Shugden Buddhists Westerners are perceived as bringing unwanted attention to the rifts in the independence movement that potentially could undermine further progress.

In 24 messages posted by eight individuals, concern was expressed about two issues that are viewed as impinging upon the commitment of the United States government to the cause of Tibetan independence. The first was the risk for potential embarrassment vis-à-vis the United States government's historical treatment of First Nations peoples. The second was tied to the large portion of the United States government's national debt that is owned by the Chinese government. Commenting on the first of these issues, an individual identified as Achinaman claimed that:

Among the western countries that are hostile to China, there is only one view, that is "Tibet is part of China". You know why? Because they want China and

⁴³ Perceptions about Shugden Buddhism and its adherents are discussed in more detail below.

the rest of the world to recognize their right to colonize the native Americans and Australians in the continents of North and South America and Australia. So there is absolutely no chance that they will ever recognize Tibet as an independent country. As for me, I will recognize your right for self-determination as long as you also recognize the right for self-determination of other colonized peoples, particularly the native peoples in the 3 continents (2008, July 26c).

In another equally critical message that touches upon the issue of the United States debt an individual identified as Dorje65 asserts that, before confronting the government of China, the United States will have to,

[pay] off its 10 trillion dollar debt [to China] first. With the [sic] way things are going, the US won't be able to keep its expensive military going much longer. Obama or McCain would need to be at their best behaviour, to ensure China [will] continue to bail them out with loans (2008, July 31a).

The underlying assumption in each of the above messages appears to be that the West is pursuing a course of action which suggests indifference to the plight of the Tibet peoples given China's financial clout.

These critiques of the West, however, are juxtaposed with what seems to be a concomitant yearning on the part of the eight individuals who engaged in the discussions of this topic for the West to recognize their cause and to act on their behalf. This was especially so to the United States and its political leaders.⁴⁴ To this end, four discussion threads consisting of 24 messages posted by these same eight forum participants centered on the positions of the then presidential candidates Senators John McCain and Barack Obama regarding China's policy toward Tibet and the legitimacy of the Dalai Lama as the political head of an independent Tibet.

The messages associated with these four discussion threads ranged from those

⁴⁴ During the period under analysis, the United States of America was four months away from the 2008 Presidential election. This opened many opportunities for forum participants to write about American politics, and for American politicians to interact with China and the Dalai Lama.

expressing satisfaction with the mere fact that either candidate had acknowledge Tibetan grievances (5 messages, from 3 individuals) to those explicitly calling upon the United States to do more for Tibet and to stand up to China (19 messages, from 5 individuals).

Collectively, these 24 messages suggests that the posters desire to have their cause recognized on a world stage. However, this does not necessarily imply that these individuals see their actions and views as part of a global cause. They may simply want the 'powerful' West to give the movement for a free Tibet more clout.

The third most commonly observed "other" is Shugden Buddhists, a Buddhist sect that has developed in opposition to the mainstream sect of Tibetan Buddhism advanced by his Holiness, the Dalai Lama.⁴⁵ The construction of this "other" appears to primarily act as a force for maintaining an ingroup of anti-Shugden participants as opposed to serving as means of building unifying relationships among the diverse users of the "Issues and Causes" forum.

The 25 forum participants who posted a total of 55 messages that referenced Shugden Buddhists, often describe this 'other' as outsiders to the cause, despite the fact that many Shugden Buddhists are Tibetan exiles and share the political goal of the liberation for Tibet. In these postings, nine forum participants described Shugden Buddhists as Chinese puppets and devil worshippers. Another three forum participants referred to them as perverts, and

⁴⁵ Kay (1997) explains that the Shugden Buddhists are members of the exclusive and generally intolerant *dGe lug* tradition of Buddhism. The latter is one of the four main traditions of Tibetan Buddhism and is the sect from which the Dalai Lama tradition arose. In Buddhism, deities exist in one of two forms. The first form is considered a "supra-mundane" deity that exists on a higher plain than humans and animals and who holds great religious importance. The second, is a mundane deity, that exists on the same plain as human and animals, and who does not have a Buddha status. In other words, mundane deities are not believed hold as great an importance as Buddhas and are not followed closely religiously (Kay, 1997). Shugden followers are devotees of Dorje Shugden who they view as supra-mundane deity, or Buddha. Mainstream Buddhists who follow the Dalai Lama tradition, by contrast, view Dorje Shugden as a mundane deity and as such are not devoted to him. Fearing that they might create an irreparable rift in within the Buddhist tradition given their exclusive and sectarian activities, the current Dalai Lama has rejected the *dGe lugs* followers of the Dorje Shugden by placing restrictions on the practice of Shugden (Kay, 1997). He has since gone on to state that following Shugden privately is acceptable, but that it should not be promulgated. This rift/tension has allegedly resulted in the murder of three members of the Dalai Lama's staff (Wilson, 1999).

some 13 other individuals suggested that followers of this sect were somehow inferior to adherents of mainstream Tibetan Buddhism. An additional two message posters claimed that Shugden Buddhists comprised a group whom mainstream Tibet has tossed “into the gutter” (Tibet4tibetans, 2008, July 26).⁴⁶

Describing Shugden followers in this manner appears to serve two main purposes. First, and similar to the derogatory references to China and the Chinese people, these references seem to act as a mechanism that strengthens ties between those who are critical of Shugden Buddhism insofar as these individuals group together to insult and berate this particular ‘other’. For example, in a discussion thread titled *Fellow Tibetans! better BE SMART and ACT SMART.. Thank You* that consisted of 18 messages that were exchanged between eight forum participants over the course of a 24 hour period between July 23, 2008 and July 24, 2008, the message posters engaged in a debate about the relative ‘evilness’ of the Shugden sect. What is particularly noteworthy about this exchange and ten others of a similar nature is that the participants tended to side with those with whom they previously had agreed in other discussions of Shugden Buddhism and its adherents. Put simply, an echo chamber effect appeared to be manifesting itself in this context. This stands in stark contrast to the behavior of the forum participants vis-à-vis postings about other topics in which agreement appears to be based largely on the opinion of the moment and not previous statements.⁴⁷ It seems plausible to conclude, therefore, that the act of standing in solidarity with other anti-Shugden Buddhists who participate in this online forum strengthens the bonds between the participants in this particular discussion.

The second function of the derogatory references to Shugden Buddhism and its

⁴⁶ Note that some posts contained several of these designations used to describe Shugden Buddhists.

⁴⁷ Recall that in section 4.1.1, it was found that forum users tended to only post statements of agreement based on the content present in the current discussion thread and not on previous user statements.

adherents appears to be one of strengthening the resolve of certain forum users to be ‘good’ activists⁴⁸ in their own right. Evidence of this can be seen, for example, in the comments posted by one forum member who participated in the above mentioned discussion thread. In her/his message, Horseshoes, tells the other seven participants in the thread that:

We Tibetans don’t [sic] have to care what these people [Shugden Buddhists] do. I know we do care and we strongly condemn this. But making a scene out of these protests [sic] will even give more mileage to these protestors [sic]. They just want us to stand up and rise against them and then they want to make a point by indicating it to be backed by His Holiness. So we Tibetans should act in a more logical and reasonable way. Guys leave those out and participate in our own protest organized by any of our reliable NGOs (2008, July 23).

These comments suggest that the poster believes that her/his fellow discussion participants’ time would be better spent protesting for Tibet than railing against Shugden Buddhism and its adherents, lest the latter garners any more attention and thereby detracts attention away from the issue of Tibet liberation.

The identification of clearly delineated “us” and “them” groups within messages posted to the “Issues and Causes” forum seems to support Grad’s (2008) claim that the creation of ingroups and outgroups help to inform identity formations. However, given the nature of the information obtained from the content analysis of these messages it is not possible to ascertain the actual strength or veracity of the ingroups within the sample. Likewise, the seeming lack of continuity between the participants’ online and offline actions does have implications with regard to assessing the extent to which the various ingroups within the forum may be considered a ‘community’.

The interactions observed on this forum appears to only fulfill one facet of Etzioni’s

⁴⁸ Here, the notion of ‘good activist’ is defined as someone who participates in the movement frequently, maintains ties with other activists, and remains up-to-date on both the politics surrounding their movement and the progress of their activist group.

(2004) definition of what a community *should* entail – i.e., some forum users (n=41) appear to share *some* shared values and norms (i.e., the desire to see an independent Tibet), and *some* common history with the online forum itself. Rather than being a free-standing ‘community’ in the Etzionian sense, the “Issues and Causes” forum appears to be foremost an online space where individuals can go to interact with like- and unlike-minded people, state their opinions and potentially have them valued. This leaves open the possibility that for some individuals the forum might serve as a supplementary community. If this is indeed the case, it would offer support to Wellman’s (1999) assertion that Internet activity is most often an extension of off-line interests and another outlet for one’s personal and political interests.

In terms of manifesting global citizenship identity when the cause is state-building, the evidence in these instances suggests that while group membership may play an important role in the discussions that take place in the “Issues and Causes” forum, in this environment group membership is somewhat exclusive and seemingly wary of the “global” signification. While anyone can join the forum regardless of their nationality and or background, one’s membership status appears to be largely merit-based where the latter is defined in terms of sharing a commitment to the cause of Tibetan liberation and on not deviating from majority opinion.

4.2 Strategies of Articulation and Argumentation schemes

For the purposes of this thesis, the term *strategies of articulation* is defined as the set of linguistic techniques and expressions of language used to associate oneself with a particular group or concept. *Argumentation schemes*, on the other hand, are defined as overt statements or arguments for or against a particular idea or group (Grad, 2008). In the discussion below

these two terms are used in reference to the ways in which the forum participants discuss the concepts associated with global citizenship and global causes.

Grad (2008) notes that when it comes to discussing the compatibility of state-bound and European citizenship, his subjects often developed specific strategies for constructing relationships between these two categories. As was noted in Chapter 3, in most instances this involved two things. First, his respondents placing citizenship into a hierarchy of levels as a means of justifying how different levels of citizenship are personally compatible in terms of identity formation. And second, the respondents developing specific argumentation schemes when trying to persuade others about the legitimacy of the supranational categorization of citizenship.

Table 4.4 Frequency of Arguments and Association Schemes Concerning Global Citizenship and Overt Expressions of Nationalism (Total forum participants = 85)

	Frequency	No. of Messages	No. of Discussion Threads	No. of Participants Commenting
Overt expressions of nationalism	60	49	25	27
Association with Global values and ideals	53	32	18	24
Arguments for Global Citizenship	3	1	1	1

Box 4.2 Examples of Strategies of Articulation and Argumentation Schemes used by Phayul.com Forum Members

Expressions of identification with global norms, values, and ideals (n=53)	
Forum User	Extract
Heartfortibet (2008, July 24)	Love and respect to all
Amdoman (2008, July 26 [<i>emphasis added</i>])	Yes, the cultural revolution was a while ago, but the same people [sic] control China today. So go [sic] figure! Nobody wants to wait for <i>human dignity and rights</i> .
Margarita (2008, July 26 [<i>emphasis added</i>])	The judgment will come always, it can take 2000 years... or a moment! It is true that [the] cultural revolution was a while ago-but who told you it is the end of <i>revolutions</i> ? <i>I believe in human rights... sooner or later!!!</i>
Vox_Pop_75 (2008, July 26 [<i>emphasis added</i>])	I receive with respect and <i>genuine sense of human fellowship</i> the question asked by Achinaman. (...) <i>Democracy exists in many kinds – Tibetans aspire to adopt a democratic system that suits us.</i>

In 592 messages analyzed the issue of global citizenship or global causes was never directly broached by any of the forum participants. As can be seen from the information presented above in Table 4.4 discussions pertaining to such issues were very infrequent. When present, the strategies of articulation and argumentation schemes employed by the forum users took on an indirect form comprising either expressions of identification with global norms, values, and ideals (see Box 4.2) or arguments schemes concerning ideas that imply a global citizen outlook on the part of specific individuals who posted messages (see section 4.2.1). One strategy of articulation that manifested itself quite frequently was overt calls for state-building. Some 60 such instances were identified (see Table 4.4). The

discussion below examines, in more detail, the argument schemes used by the forum members' and individuals' association with "global" norms and ideals.

4.2.1 The Sound of One Hand Clapping: Arguing for Global Citizenship

In Grad's (2008) study, his respondents were asked specific questions about their identification with national and supranational citizenship and given an opportunity to both formulate responses to, as well as generate arguments regarding, the compatibility of state-bound and European identification schemes. Those who found national and European identification schemes compatible with their own world view tended to use arguments based on geographic citizenship nesting to justify their opinions. For example, one respondent noted that, "I was born in Bilbao, so I'm Basque, the Basque Country is within Spain, I'm Spanish, and Spain is within the European Union, well, within Europe, so I'm European" (Grad, 2008, p. 119). Other participants, however, argued that the two categories of identification were compatible based on feeling alone – i.e., one was European if they felt European.⁴⁹

As indicated above in Table 4.4, only three instances in which a single forum participant raised arguments concerning global citizenship (n=2) or global causes (n=1) were identified. Moreover, all three references to this topic were contained within a single message posted by one forum member who identified her/himself as Jamson. In this message, s/he expressed a desire to see the world and the people that inhabit it as one place and as one group with no distinctions between peoples.⁵⁰ In this post, s/he asked the other

⁴⁹ It is worth noting that Grad was able to elicit such responses precisely because he had the opportunity to pursue specific lines of questioning and to encourage respondents to take their arguments further. As was noted earlier, for this thesis, the no direct contact was established between the researcher and the participants in *Phayul.com*'s "Issues and Causes" forum.

⁵⁰ The arguments presented by this individual relay heavily on quotes taken directly from the Dalai Lama.

forum participants to “forget social distinctions: I’m talking here just as a human being – nothing special” (Jamson 2008, July 28) thereby implying that other participants should strive to see all people as requiring the same basic needs as well as being careful not to assign too much power to particular individuals and groups. This view of the world –seeing all humanity as one – is a key concept underpinning the notion of global citizenship (see, for example, Nussbaum 1996/2008; Schattle, 2008; Delanty, 2007).

In this particular message Jamson emphasizes the common needs and desires of people from different parts of the globe, paying particular attention to the growing inter-reliance of these needs. S/he states,

We are all human. Especially because of today’s growing population, globalization matters: it means interdependency on each other (Jamson 2008, July 28)

In this passage Jamson appears to be suggesting that globalization and global citizenship should be seen in a positive light because people’s interconnectedness may result in further understanding of each other. Expanding on this theme, s/he concludes the message by asking for mutual understanding and responsibility, stating,

Now we need that sense of global responsibility, economically, and environmentally. We have to look at it holistically. (...) One day we will not need a foreign ministry or a defense ministry, because we will realize we are all connected. (Jamson 2008, July 28)

The notion of global citizenship depicted in this post reflects a desire for global responsibility among Tibet activists, the forum participants reading her/his message, and all humankind.

The notion of responsibility is an important theme for global citizenship. It suggests that the global causes supported by global citizens are primarily directed toward betterment of the globe as their goal as opposed to merely benefiting one group. Essentially, s/he is arguing for

acknowledgement of other peoples as equally worthy, and for political, environmental and economic responsibility – i.e., a ‘holistic approach’ to political activism.

It is difficult to determine, however, whether these lofty ambitions are compatible with the politics of state building that, by definition, has the betterment of a particular group as its focus. These ambitions also appear to be at odds with the dominant views expressed by the other forum participants given that, more often than not they call for a place of their own, or a place for Tibetans, reject outsiders – especially the Chinese, and tend to see the plights of other peoples’ as somehow less important or significant than their own.

4.2.2. Association with Global Citizenship Norms and Values

Grad (2008) explains that many of his respondents used specific strategies of articulation to associate themselves with either their state-bound identity or a more international European identity. He maintains that in linking themselves with European features – such as the European government, and the Euro currency - his respondents found a means of justifying the compatibility (or incompatibility) of sharing both the nation-based and European forms of citizen identity.

For this thesis the forum discussions were analyzed with the aim of assessing the extent to which members of the online forum associated themselves with various aspects of global citizenship, including international peace, human rights, democracy, universal freedoms, justice, environmental sustainability and religious freedom. The evidence obtained from the analysis of messages posted to the forum during the two weeks period of assessment suggest that the ideals of global citizenship appear to be manifest only to a very limited degree. Such ideals were found to be present in only 53 messages posted by 24 forum members.

The three values most often associated with global citizenship that were identified were: (i) human rights and liberty, (ii) international peace, and (iii) democracy (see Table 4.5).

Table 4.5 Frequency of References to Global Citizenship Values Present in Forum Discussions (Total Forum Participants = 85)

	Frequency	No. of Messages	No. of Discussion Threads	No. of Participants Commenting
Human Rights and Liberty	31	30	22	18
Democracy	16	13	8	12
International Peace	12	9	7	7

As can be seen from the information presented in Table 4.5, the global citizenship value most frequently expressed in the forum postings was human rights and liberty (for Tibetans and other groups in the region). Unsurprisingly, the majority of the calls for human rights and liberty (n=25) were juxtaposed against the activities of the Chinese government and its policies against an independent Tibet. The six remaining calls for human rights consisted of expressions of hope for the future, or came in the form of support for the actions of protestors. In a posting that includes each of the three values identified in Table 4.5, a forum participant identified as Bleedingtibet uses these themes as a tool for saluting Woesser, a Chinese-Tibetan poet and political activist who has long called for democratic rights for Tibet and who had been imprisoned for speaking out against the Chinese government. S/he writes:

LONG LIVE HIS HOLINESS THE DALAI LAMA! LONG LIVE FREEDOM, LIBERTY & DEMOCRACY! LONG LIVE TIBETAN FREEDOM FIGHTERS! LONG LIVE COMPASSIONATE HUMAN WORLD! LONG LIVE TRUTH. JUSTICE & LIBERTY OF THE HUMANITY! LONG LIVE WOESER & HER CRUSADE AGAINST EVIL

REGIME IN CHINA! THE WORLD SALUTES YOU, WOESER LA, FOR
WHAT YOU ARE DOING! (Bleedingtibet 2008, July 29a)

This tribute to a champion of the Tibetan independence movement in China serves several purposes for the message author. First, it is a rallying cry to incite fellow forum participants to extend their support to the person being extolled. Second, by talking about the plight of Woeser in these terms in an online forum the author is seemingly trying to make information about human rights abuses against this individual Tibetan and all other Tibetans more accessible to people around the world.

While not necessarily linked to each other, the other two global citizenship ideals identified in postings to the forum – world peace and democracy – often appeared together in the same discussion threads. This is particularly so with regard to the longest discussion thread observed – *I have a big question for Tibetans*. This discussion thread was initiated by a posting in which a forum participant questioned whether Tibetans and the Tibetan government in exile really wanted to use a democratic system of government. The messages posted in response to this query and the ensuing exchanges comprise the only genuine discussions about the future of Tibet and its governance that was observed. The discussion itself was made up of 78 posts from 18 forum members.

One of the more vocal individuals engaged in this exchange, Vox_Pop_75 (2008, July 26), acknowledges that it may take time for Tibetans to move from a theocracy to another form of government, but that even though “democracy exists in many kinds--Tibetans aspire to adopt a democratic system that suits [them]”. S/he is suggesting that Tibetans have the right to self-determination. However, her/his statement is ambiguous example of a global outlook. On the one hand, this individual seems to be suggesting that Tibet should adopt a model of democracy that is in line with Tibetan traditions as opposed to

the Western-oriented model of democracy. On the other hand, her/his statement suggests an understanding of the international forms of democracy, but that Tibetans should adopt whichever model of democracy best suits them. This particular view seeming reflected a minority opinion among the participants in this discussion thread given that only 3 other individuals expressed agreement with this view. The other 15 participants favored various versions of North American democracy. Taken as a whole, the perspective expressed by Vox_Pop_75 and her/his supporters suggests that these four individuals possess a key element of the global citizenship outlook insofar as they seeming have an understanding of the interconnectedness of nation-states.

Linkages between the future of Tibet and its government, and notions of international peace also were apparent in six messages posted by 5 individuals who contributed to this discussion thread. In three instances, 3 of these individuals called for peace in the East Asian region and, in particular, between Tibet and China. In another instance, which entailed responding to a comment about environmental responsibility, one of these individuals seemed to be applying the idea of international peace to inform her/his own behavior by writing:

I just try to be a bit more balanced and rational, and hope for the best for the future peace of the world. *Pacem in terris*⁵¹ (Chandra 2008, August 6 [emphasis added]).

Three other forum members who are part of the above-mentioned 5, maintain that Tibet should be a global leader of peace and humanism, and serve as a model for the rest of the world to follow. This outlook reflects a global perspective associated more with the ideals of global citizenship than the other values more frequently expressed by individuals who participated in this discussion thread such as environmental responsibility.

⁵¹ "Pacem in terris" is the Latin term for the expression peace on Earth.

Overall, the limited number of postings regarding peace and humanism as a model for Tibet suggests that these kinds of peace-centered global citizenship principles did not play a major role in the discussions that took place on the forum during the period of observation. Indeed, most postings – including those associated with the above mentioned discussion thread – focused on articulations of the desire for an independent state. As such, more often than not the forum participants convey expressions of nationalism rather than a global outlook. It is to this issue that our attention now turns.

4.2.3. Imaginary Building Blocks: Associations to the Nation-State and Expressions of Nationalism

The messages posted to the “Issues and Causes” forum are peppered with discussions of nation-states, and nationalist sentiments. The former and the latter have two distinct meanings and implications. The phrase ‘discussions of nation-states’ is used here to refer to any reference to state-building in a political, geographical or tactical sense. By contrast, the phrase ‘nationalist sentiments’ is used to refer to the linkages or connections the forum participants make between themselves and a particular state or, as in the case of Tibet, the desire for a nation-state. The information provided in Table 4.6 sets out the frequency with which these phenomena manifest themselves in the 592 messages analyzed.

Table 4.6 Frequency of References to National-States and Expressions of Nationalist Sentiments (Total Forum Participants = 85)

	Frequency	No. of Messages	No. of Discussion Threads	No. of Participants Commenting
Mention of nation-states	1,116	246	84	54
Expressions of Nationalist Sentiments	60	49	25	27

When discussing the occupation of Tibet by China expressions of nationalist sentiment were observed in 42 instances, across 26 messages posted by 16 individuals. Discussions about the potential for an independent Tibet also were laden with nationalist sentiments. Some 18 instances, across 15 messages dealing with this issue posted by 11 individuals were observed. Typically, associations with Tibet as a nation-state manifested themselves in the form of a small number of individual forum participants linking themselves either with the Tibetan state or with the Tibetan people. For example, during the observation period three individuals made outright claims of being “Tibetan,” five called for the return of “our nation”, and 17 demanded “our independence.”⁵² By talking about Tibet in this way, these individuals who make up vocal minority consisting of 19 people in total essentially are linking themselves to one specific group, one specific people and one nation.

The individuals engaging in this type of activity may be linking themselves with the Tibetan nation to the exclusion of others. Although it is impossible to determine without more information, their statements may mean that they are associating themselves with Tibet to the exclusion of – or in combination with – their current legal citizenship. This is important because it raises the prospect that certain forum participants are not manifesting a supranational dimension of citizen identity, but rather rejecting one state-based notion of identity for another.

The limited presence of expressions of global citizenship and/or global citizenship values combined with comparatively higher presence of nation-state and nationalist expressions suggests a number of things about the nature of the discussions that take place in *Phayul.com*'s “Issues and Causes” forum. First, the high level of nationalist sentiment

⁵² Within this group 3 of the individuals who called for both the return of “our nation” and “our independence.

present in many of the exchanges that take place in this online forum may be accounted for, in large part, by the fact that the purpose of this particular forum is to provide a venue to discuss the “issues and causes” surrounding the politics of the Tibetan people and the Tibetan government in exile. Second, the presence of global citizenship themes in the discussions that take place suggests that a limited number of forum participants potentially identify with some aspects of global citizenship identity. These individuals, however, only occupy less than one third (n=24) of the total forum participants. For the most part, this online forum appears to serve as a venue for venting frustrations and laying blame, rather than a space for expanding the reach of the free Tibet movement to a global audience.

4.3 Flaming and Online Social Behavior

The presentation of the findings from this study would not be complete without some mention being made about a phenomenon that was rampant in the “Issues and Causes” forum – flaming. Lange (2006, n.p.) describes flaming as a range of online “phenomena including things like hostility, increased emotionalism, profanity, and criticism” that has been the subject of an exhaustive amount of computer-mediated communication research (see, for example, Kiesler, et al., 1984; Lin and Huff, 1990; Thompsen, 1996; Tannen, 1999; O’Sullivan and Flanagan, 2003). Of the 592 messages analyzed, 130 were flames, making this the third most common theme observed. On this forum flaming most often takes the form of insults and profanity being directed at other forum participants and most frequently is associated with differences of opinion about the Chinese occupation of the Tibetan region and the legitimacy of the Shugden Buddhist sect.

The high level of flaming on the “Issues and Causes” forum adds support to Kim’s (2007) and Lange’s (2006) assertion that the combined online social behavior of the common

user can result in a kind of online etiquette and informal moral code. For example, the reaction of forum users to the abusive and profane flames of others most often is to ignore the offending user, choosing instead to respond only to reasonable comments.

That being said, “flaming wars” between users do occasionally occur – although they are mostly limited to a few call and response exchanges (see for instance Darjgooner, 2008, July 23; Born4freetibet, 2008, July 23b; Born4freetibet, 2008, July 23c; Omahhum, 2008, July 23). In these cases, the flammers are eventually ignored or rebuked in a manner that discourages them from continuing to post in the particular discussion thread. In either situation, the conversations either continue without the input from flammers or the other participants move their discussion to another string of discussions. As such, the forum users seem to have developed an unwritten code of behavior that determines what is acceptable and what is not, which corresponds with Lang (2006) and Kim’s (2007) claims and as well as the notion of community and membership discussed in section 3.3.1.

4.4 Summary of Findings

The information presented in this chapter suggests that the participants in *Phayul.com*’s “Issues and Causes” forum have created distinct ingroups and outgroups. Membership in the ingroups appears to consist of participation in the forum and participation in activist undertakings. Membership in the forum is dictated by sustained and intelligent, or intelligible, posting to the forum. Membership as an activist is achieved mainly by calling others into action, and by supporting the activism of others. In so doing, the forum posters declare their intention to participate in the cause of liberating Tibet, and lend moral support to those who already are active. On the forum, membership in both ingroups is important because it determines the extent to which - and manner in which - the other forum

participants acknowledge a presence and interact with one another. Forum users not considered to be members of the forum ingroups are most often ignored when posting new material. Similarly, those forum users who have not proved themselves as activists are either rebuked or ignored by the activist ingroup.

The out-group consists of the Chinese people and government, the West, and adherents of Shugden Buddhism. The forum members use these outgroup as a source of common ground and a means of forging connections between one another by creating distinct “us” and “them” categorizations on the site. The use of ingroups and outgroups suggest that group membership is important to the forum users and a means of self-identification and identification with others.

Only a very limited number of individual users of the “Issues and Causes” forum were identified as advancing arguments relating to global citizenship or associating themselves with global citizenship ideals. Indeed, the focus of many forum users attention appears to be fixated on the notion of nations, and state building. To that end, when more global outlooks were presented, they were predominantly used as a suggestion for gathering increasing support and furthering the cause of the Tibetan activists.

Overall, the analysis of *Phayul.com*'s “Issues and Causes” forum found that the forum participants seemed to identify with global citizenship only in a very limited way. While the forum participants did use possessive pronouns and group membership in order to identify themselves with aspects of global activism, the focus of their attention was largely directed at the nation and people of Tibet.

CHAPTER FIVE: Conclusion

The use of emergent media technologies is changing the way in which people interact with one another and with governments. As access to the Internet and other ICTs increases, citizens are better able to follow events in other countries, to remain connected to their homelands, to interact with other members of a diaspora, and in some instances, to create communities of like-minded individuals from around the world. Central to this phenomenon is the potential for online spaces to become sites of resistance in which citizens have increased opportunity and safety to express political dissent in ways that previously were not possible in off-line communities (Chan, 2008).

The goal of this thesis has been to examine whether and how the ideals of global citizenship is manifested when the cause being advocated is state building. Upon first reflection, it would appear that these ideals are at odds with one another. Global citizenship proposes a linking of citizens beyond the nation-state. It also represents one level of an individual's citizen identity that does not necessitate the abandonment of one's legal national citizenship. Rather, it reflects a desire for such idealistic goals as international brotherhood, peace, and the communitarian ideal of combined global responsibility. State-building, on the other hand, seeks to increase and strengthen the boundaries and borders that divide the world's populations.

By examining the discussions within an online forum dedicated to a cause that has traditionally garnered international attention and support (i.e., the liberation of Tibet), and that also is centered on the rebuilding of a nation-state, this thesis has investigated the interplay in the discourses of relating to global citizenship and state-building. The analysis of the data found some evidence of the presence of global citizenship themes and ideals within the discourse, however it was by no means overwhelming. Rather, the discourse was

dominated by a presence of nationalist sentiment and group membership. This is not particularly surprising given that the online forum that was investigated is a Tibetan news website. Nonetheless, the clear presence of group membership suggests a kind of community of activists that is not based on place, but rather on meaningful interest and participation in a specific topic.

The central research question this thesis sought to address is: *How does global citizen identity manifest itself online when the cause is state-building?* In order to do so, this question was divided into two sub-questions:

- *How is citizen identity manifested on the Phayul.com “Issues and Causes” forum?*
- *Is group membership a vital part of this discourse and, if so, how is membership achieved?*

The central question guiding this thesis sought to examine how the users of the *Phayul.com* “Issues and Causes” forum articulated their identities as citizens in relation to the cause of Tibet state-building. In other words, how do the forum participants express their identity as active citizens participating an international movement focusing on state-building?

For the purposes of this thesis, the notion of global citizenship was linked to Aristotle’s notion of ‘collective activity’ wherein the emphasis in citizenship is placed on meaningful participation. In the case of global citizenship, this often takes the form of attempting to influence both domestic and international decision-making through advocacy and activism. To this end, a central component of global citizenship is the blurring of national, temporal and spatial boundaries through the use of networked ICTs. Salter (2003), Lagos (2002), and Sassen (2002), for example, see ICTs as having the potential to transform

traditional state-bound notion of citizenship into a more participatory and global concept given that these technologies offer the potential for users to communicate with one another across vast distances. In so doing, ICTs have the potential to create an informed and deeply connected citizenry that potentially transcends national boundaries.

Bennett (forthcoming), likewise, suggests that the understanding of civic identity as something that is based on traditional legal categorizations no longer applies among today's globally informed citizenry. Instead, global citizens are seen to embody what Sen (2006) refers to as the plurality of civic identities. Rather than focusing on the kind of singular identity associations usually connected with state or ethnic citizenship, global citizenship promotes the notion of a multiplicity of civic identities by recognizing that citizens can choose which political interests with which to associate themselves as opposed to having one inescapable identity thrust upon them.

In order to assess how the users of *Phayul.com*'s "Issues and Causes" forum express their identities as citizens and whether this conformed to the ideals of global citizenship, 592 messages posted to the forum over a two-week period were analyzed and classified using Grad's (2008) four categories of citizen identity analysis: subject attitude, social categorization, strategies of articulation, and argumentation schemes. Two additional categories, 'nationalism' and 'inter-user flaming', also were examined.

5.1 Global Citizenship and the Phayul.com Forum Discussions

The analysis of the data identified the ideals and values of global citizenship as well as the goal of Tibetan independence as themes that frame of citizen identities in the online forum discussions. This was particularly evident in the manner in which the forum participants used possessive and inclusive and exclusive pronouns in their messages. Overall, the forum

participants employed possessive and inclusive pronouns most when associating with the categories of “global citizenship” and “association with the Tibetan community.” In so doing, some individuals seemed to be linking themselves to a desire to be politically active within the global Tibetan independence community as well as with the Tibetan community at large. By contrast, the forum participants employed exclusive pronouns most often in relation to issues pertaining to forum membership. Here, the forum participants employed exclusive pronouns to disassociate themselves from behaviors they deemed inappropriate and/or users whom they viewed as not meriting recognition as fully-fledged members of the ‘community’. By using pronouns in this manner, the forum participants appeared to be ensuring that their political opinions are made clear. While this may not necessarily mean that all forum participants equate their political stance with a deep connection to Tibet, it does imply, at least nominally, a connection with other like-minded individuals.

The evidence also suggests that a majority of forum members display citizen identity nesting as described by Grad (2008). That is, these individuals appear to associate themselves firstly with their local community, then the state, followed by the region and finishing with a supra-national categorization. Only very limited evidence of identification with overarching territories and peoples, was observed. Indeed, the focus of a large number of the forum participants’ discussion centered almost exclusively on Tibetan politics – even when discussing the politics of other nations, or international causes. In other words, a number of forum participants seemed to centralize their identifications within the dream of a Tibetan state, with all other types of citizen identities being influenced by this central association.

In addition, few argumentation schemes relating to global citizenship were identified. In fact, within the 592 messages analyzed, only three such instances all contained within a

single message by one person were identified. This suggests that the ideals of global citizenship are not strongly manifest in the discussions of the forum participants. Rather, attention tended to be fixated on the notion of nations, and state-building. The forum participants' associations with the nation-state most often came in form of linking themselves either with the Tibetan state or with the Tibetan people. This raises the prospect that these individuals may be affiliating themselves with the Tibetan nation to the exclusion of other nationalities or, possibly, their own current legal citizenship. If such a process is indeed occurring it implies a rejection of one state for another, which is not characteristic of the notion of global citizenship.

In the few cases for which global outlooks were observed, these tended to be used predominantly as a suggestion for garnering increased support and furthering the cause of the Tibetan activists. Moreover, the small number of forum participants who associated themselves with this outlook appeared to be on the periphery of the forum.

In answer to the first sub-question posed by this thesis - *How is citizen identity manifested on the "Issues and Causes" forum of Phayul.com?* – it may be argued that citizen identity is manifested as active membership in the Tibet activist community as well as the Tibetan community at large. Given that this online forum is frequented by people from outside of the Tibetan region, on the one hand the citizen identities of the participants seem to be centered at the local and supranational levels. However, the limited presence of global outlooks, on the other hand, suggests that the notion of global citizenship is not particularly salient in the forum participants' manifestations of citizen identity. Put simply, citizen identity appears to be manifested on *Phayul.com's* "Issues and Causes" forum in the form of primacy being given to the Tibet activist and Tibetan communities over any other source of identification.

5.1.2. *Global citizenship and group membership on Phayul.com*

The second sub-question that this thesis sought to answer focuses on the importance of group membership in global citizenship discourse and, how this membership is achieved. Mouffe (1993) argues global citizenship is only made possible by group membership because this element creates a 'constitutive outside', or an "us" and "them" relationship that makes its existence possible. Harju (2007), however, points out that this does not mean that collective identity is disappearing, but rather that these identities may be increasingly associated with communities of like-minded individuals rather than state-driven ones. She argues that while the notion of civic identity must at least contain some sense of belonging to a community, the nature of that belonging need not necessarily be based on politico-regional boundaries.

Both Mouffe's (1993) and Harju's (2007) interpretations of citizenship allow the individual to maintain their national associations, but more importantly suggest that by the act of choosing 'where' one participates, 'real' citizenship is a matter of choice. This view of citizenship engenders the capacity within the individual to move from a national citizenship based on legal premises toward a group or interest-based civic identity wherein citizenship is a product of personal choice, group acceptance and active engagement with particular causes.

To that end, the participants in the *Phayul.com* "Issues and Causes" forum members demonstrated two types of ingroup categorization: the forum member group, and the Tibetan activist group. Membership in both groups was predominantly predicated on participation in the forum discussions. For the forum participants, membership in these groups appears to be dictated by how often and how intelligibly the participants post messages to the forum.

Membership appears to be conferred by other highly active users, who engage in conversation with them. However, participants can be 'rejected' from or by the ingroup by

being ignored or “flamed”. That being said, membership in the group seems fairly fluid, with individuals often moving from popularity to disgrace and back extremely frequently.

Membership in the activist group, however, appears to be more stable and is achieved by vocally supporting the achievements and actions of other online and offline activists, as well as by calling others into action, and by discussing one’s own acts of resistance against China. Until forum participants become fully-fledged members of the activist group they tend to be excluded from the activist discussion. This is usually executed by calling into question the non-member’s knowledge of the issues under discussion, and by flaming or ignoring their posts.

There are three clearly defined outgroups depicted in the “Issues and Causes” forum: Chinese people and government, the West, and adherents of Shugden Buddhism. These outgroups are most often used as rationales for exiling individuals from the two ingroups. In order to do so, the “ingroup” members flame their fellow forum users by referring to them either as a “Chinese Spy” or a “Shugden Pervert”. By so doing, the rejected individual is forcibly disassociated from the in-group, thus creating distinct “us” and “them” categorizations.

The presence of outgroups also is used as a source of common ground and a means of forging connections between the forum participants. By having an “other” against which to focus their attention, the forum participants are able to forge connections that potentially are stronger than those based purely on shared interest in a particular topic. As such, the presence of ingroups and outgroups suggests that group membership is important to the forum users and provides a means of self-identification and identification with others. Further, once membership is achieved, the ingroups potentially play an important role for the forum participants. Membership in the ingroup provides individuals with an important source

of support. This may be especially true for those who are politically active outside of the forum, and for whom the forum may act as a concentrated network of support that may not exist in the offline world. Moreover, unlike the ingroups and outgroups of state-bound citizenship, the categorizations on this forum are not based on geography – with the exception of China – or party association.

The manner in which group membership is employed in this forum seems to fall in line with both Mouffe's (1993) and Harju's (2007) description of the role group membership plays in global citizenship. By creating ingroups and outgroups the subjects are positioning themselves as members of the Tibetan activist community, while simultaneously delineating a group against whom they can effectively work against as a collective. Further, some forum participants seem to be using group membership as a means of limiting who can participate to only those truly committed to the cause, and thereby protecting themselves from Chinese influence.

In answer to the second sub-question posed by this thesis, – *is group membership a vital part of this discourse and, if so, how is membership achieved?* – it may be argued that group membership is a vital part of the discourse presented on the forum. Over the course of the two-week period analyzed the one third forum participants frequently associated themselves with the activist and Tibetan ingroups while disassociating themselves from the Chinese and Shugden Buddhist outgroups. Membership in these ingroups is usually conferred by the most active members of the forum, who do so by acknowledging and commenting on the 'new member's' posts in the discussion thread. For the most part, acceptance by one's peer is usually only achieved through persistent posting in the forum and by displaying at least a cursory knowledge of the affairs at hand. To that end, forum participants that do not play by these rules are associated with outgroups and in effect

shunned from the forum community until they contribute more popular opinions. Group membership plays a vital role in this online forum by providing individual participants with a source of support and a means of validating their citizen identity. And in so doing, *Phayul.com*'s ingroups seem to conform to the notion that 'real' citizenship is what one makes it.

5.1.3 Global citizenship and nationalist movements

Having determined how the citizen identity is manifested on the *Phayul.com* "Issues and Causes" forum and the role played by group membership, it is now possible to answer the central research question.

Sassen's (2002) description of global citizens as inhabitants of 'denationalized' global cities removed from the narrowly defined notion of national citizenship and possessing a wide array of interest-based citizenship identities, implies both a global outlook and local venue in which individuals can enact these identities. Furthering this notion, Ehrkamp and Leitner (2003) see global citizenship as the combination of everyday social practices. In this perspective, political ideology is as influential on a citizen's sense of identity as her/his cultural, religious and social associations. Put simply, citizenship is an ever-evolving individual construction (Mouffe 1993).

The key underlying notion in these descriptions of global citizenship is that of sustained and meaningful civic participation. It seems clear that without meaningful participation, citizenship of any kind, let alone global citizenship, cannot exist in any meaningful way. The data obtained from this study seems to confirm that sustained and meaningful participation is a key concept in the online forum participants' presentation of citizen identity. However, the extent to which this process manifests itself seems to vary

tremendously across individual members. This focus on meaningful participation, specifically in terms of group membership, seems to support Aristotle's (Pol. 3.1275b) notion of citizenship as practice and "collective activity."

More importantly the presence of group membership seems to also support Delanty's (2000/2002) understanding of global citizenship as a right based on identification with a community – in this case, a community based on shared interests that happens to also be a state-building cause. Following his reasoning, Sen's (2006) theory of global citizenship suggests that by participating in online interaction, global citizens do not necessarily need to be perceived as Tibetan or Chinese or any other nationality for that matter. Instead, global citizens are free to choose the relative importance they attach to their various identity groups. This suggests a fluidity of civic identity that can be made to suit one's particular needs at any given moment. This certainly appears to be the case for "Issues and Causes" forum participants insofar as they have the ability to remain anonymous and their postings are subject to virtually no political accountability.

That being said, a key component of global citizenship is its adherence to values such as global responsibility and communal action. The most important of these values, seems to be what Nussbaum (1996/2008, p. 100) calls the cosmopolitan notion that our job as citizens is to draw all human kind closer to the center of our political focus, and to make humanity at large more like "our fellow city dwellers." By this, she means that global citizens have the responsibility to treat the problems of humanity as if they were the problems of their neighbors, their friends, or their community. However, the evidence obtained from this study suggests that the "Issues and Causes" forum participants seemed to identify with global citizenship only in a very limited way. While some individuals did identify themselves with some aspects of global activism, the focus of their attention was almost always directed at the

nation and people of Tibet. This nationalist perspective limits their ability to 'make humanity at large more like our fellow city dwellers' because it necessarily excludes anyone outside the Tibetan group.

In answering the question of how global citizen identity is manifested online in state-building causes, the evidence from this study suggests that the global citizen identity manifests itself in a nuanced and limited way. The focus on state-building in this particular online venue – and in this case, state-building based on ethnic lines – is for the most part an entirely too strong identification theme for online users to put aside.

5.2 Limitations and Strengths of the Research

This thesis is not without its limitations. First, the results of this study cannot be generalized to other Tibetan nation-building groups, or the online global citizen community at large. Part of the issue here is that only one site of analysis was used from which to gather data. While gathering data from other online forums may have expanded the types of perspectives observed, the volume of data that such a process would entail would exceed the normal expectation of a Master's thesis.

The research conducted for this study also was constrained by the content of the postings. Put simply, the analysis was dependent on quality of discussion in the forum. Unfortunately, there was no ability to move beyond the content of the postings using the method of analysis selected for this study. Ideally, in-depth interviews with the forum participants would have been conducted in order to allow the researcher to get a more accurate reflection of how these individuals perceived their own citizenship. However, given that the users of this forum are anonymous and the problems associated with the conducting of email-based interviews it was decided early on not to pursue this option.

The findings of this thesis were also potentially affected by the fever and passions of the forum users. The high presence of flaming and in some cases malicious and occasionally nonsensical postings created an antagonistic atmosphere that potentially could have limited the content posted by some forum users. Had this kind of behavior been absent or if the forum was moderated, there may have been more of an opportunity for open and unfiltered discussion between participants.

Despite these minor shortcomings, the work presented here does advance our current understanding of the nature of global citizenship by clarifying how international activists present their sense of citizenship in online forums as well as how it manifests itself in state-building causes such as the free Tibet movement.

5.3 Directions for Further Research

In the future, it would be beneficial to conduct a broader study that would examine more online forums, blogs and websites discussing the Tibetan independence movement. This would allow for analysis of a wider group of individuals and contexts, and as such the results of analysis could be applied more easily to the overall Tibetan independence movement. Similarly, future studies might examine global citizenship themes in more than one type of nationalist forum. For example Palestinian and Armenian sites would provide interesting comparative case studies.

It also would be beneficial to investigate in more depth the extent to which global activists feel a connection to the values of global citizenship. Does their connection to the ideals that seem to coincide with global citizenship (i.e. global responsibility) go beyond the cause in which they are active, or are they limited to these specific contexts? This could be achieved through a combination of discourse analysis and interviews with activists.

5.4 Concluding Remarks

The analysis of the data emerging from this thesis suggests that while global citizenship is at best only an emerging theme for state-building causes, the key asset that it brings to these types of situations is its ability to draw citizens together in ‘collective activity’ that has the betterment of human-kind as its ultimate goal. Importantly, this implies both an awareness of self and one’s role in the outside world (Schattle, 2008). Taken together, these two ideas suggest that citizenship – especially global citizenship – is the result of meaningful political involvement in a manner that espouses a commitment to community, whatever form it may take. This kind of citizenship is perhaps best described by Sen (2006, p. 185) when he notes that:

There is a compelling need in the contemporary world to ask questions not only about the economics and politics of globalization, but also about the values, ethics, and sense of belonging that shape our conception of the global world. In a nonsolitarist understanding of human identity, involvement with such issues need not demand that our national allegiances and local loyalties be altogether *replaced* by a global sense of belonging, to be reflected in the working of a colossal ‘world state.’ In fact, global identity can begin to receive its due without eliminating our other loyalties.

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