The New Digital Media and Activist Networking within Anti–Corporate Globalization Movements

By
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This article examines how anti–corporate globalization activists have used new digital technologies to coordinate actions, build networks, practice media activism, and physically manifest their emerging political ideals. Since the World Trade Organization protests in Seattle, and through subsequent mobilizations against multilateral institutions and forums in Prague, Quebec, Genoa, Barcelona, and Porto Alegre, activists have used e-mail lists, Web pages, and open editing software to organize and coordinate actions, share information, and produce documents, reflecting a general growth in digital collaboration. Indymedia has provided an online forum for posting audio, video, and text files, while activists have also created temporary media hubs to generate alternative information, experiment with new technologies, and exchange ideas and resources. Influenced by anarchism and peer-to-peer networking logics, anti–corporate globalization activists have not only incorporated digital technologies as concrete tools, they have also used them to express alternative political imaginaries based on an emerging network ideal.

Keywords: transnational social movements; digital technologies; media activism; globalization; activist networking; cultural politics

Following a second day of street battles and police riots on July 21, 2001, at the anti-G8 protests in Genoa, I walked over to the media center at around 8 p.m. together with my Catalan friends to catch up on the latest news. The *Caribinieri* (Italian police) had just attacked a peaceful march of nearly three hundred thou-

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sand demonstrators who had come together to challenge corporate globalization and denounce the murder of a young Italian activist killed the previous day. The center was teaming with protesters when we arrived, writing e-mails, conducting interviews, and posting audio and video clips. Pau, from the Catalan Movement for Global Resistance (MRG),[1] was still connected to the Internet via laptop sending out real-time updates, as he had been the entire week. He told us the buses would be leaving for Barcelona shortly, but I had planned to stay in Genoa for a few more days to take part in antirepression actions together with the Pink & Silver Bloc. Indeed, we had spent much of our time during the past two days running from baton charges and tear gas. Fortunately, protesters shot reams of digital footage documenting police abuses, which were compiled, edited, and uploaded at the Independent Media Center (IMC) on the floor above.

After the meeting, I went back to the computer lab to inform my Catalan friends that I had decided to stay. All of a sudden, we heard a terrible commotion in the streets, followed by loud banging on the media center gate out front. Several activists charged into the main room screaming, "Police, police!" Concerned about my pictures and field notes, I immediately grabbed my backpack and dragged it up to the fourth floor, where people were frantically running back and forth. As I wandered the hallway, two American direct action veterans threw me a sleeping bag and led me up to an empty room, where we hid under a table. As we waited in the dark, helicopters flew overhead, while the police began smashing computers and accessories at the IMC below. An Italian officer eventually entered the room and brought us to a second-floor corridor where police held us with roughly thirty others for nearly half an hour. Although dozens of activists were viciously beaten at the Diaz School across the way, the police left the media center as soon as they had destroyed large quantities of hardware and documentation. I was still somewhat rattled, so I ultimately decided to head back to Barcelona, joining a group of Catalans who had called for a taxi to bring them to a meeting point on the outskirts of town.

This anecdote suggests that government and police officials view Indymedia as a major threat. Indeed, there have been other similar incidents, though perhaps none so extreme. During the anti–Free Trade Area of the Americas (FTAA) protest in Quebec City in April 2001, for example, FBI agents appeared at the Seattle IMC demanding names and e-mail addresses of everyone who had visited the site during the previous two days. The following year, Spanish authorities monitored and tried to shut down several activist Web sites, including Indymedia, prior to the mobilization against the European Union (EU) in Barcelona. Finally, during November 2002, the police broke into IMCs throughout Italy after the European Social Forum in Florence. Riot cops have also repeatedly attacked media activists during protests, often leading to wider crackdowns. For example, at the beginning of a mobile street theater action during the anti-EU mobilization in Barcelona in March 2002, the police charged a group of video activists and then unsuccessfully tried to surround the larger crowd. The French police used a similar strategy with greater success to break up an immigrant rights action during a European No Border camp the following July.

The question thus arises as to why the forces of law and order specifically target media activists before, during, and after mass mobilizations? More generally, why do they consider independent media so threatening? On one hand, over the past few years Indymedia and other digital networks have helped mobilize hundreds of thousands of anti–corporate globalization[2] protesters around the world, while creating radical social movement publics for the circulation of alternative news and information. Clamping down on grassroots forms of media production, communication, and coordination thus has a practical effect. On the other hand, media activism and digital networking more generally are among the most important features of contemporary anti–corporate globalization movements, generating what Waterman (1998) has referred to as a "communications internationalism." Police are not only interested in collecting information and destroying evidence. Such attacks are also meant to intimidate, sending real-time shock waves through global activist networks, while targeting their most important symbolic expressions.

By significantly enhancing the speed, flexibility, and global reach of information flows, allowing for communication at a distance in real time, digital networks provide the technological infrastructure for the emergence of contemporary network-based social movement forms (cf. Arquilla and Ronfeldt 2001; Bennett 2003a, 2003b; Castells 1997; Cleaver 1995, 1999; Escobar 2004; Lins Ribeiro 1998). Regarding social networks more generally, Barry Wellman (2001) has argued that "computer-supported social networks" (CSSN) are profoundly transforming the nature of communities, sociality, and interpersonal relations. Although the proliferation of increasingly individualized, loosely bounded, and fragmentary community networks predates cyberspace, computer-mediated communications have reinforced such trends, allowing communities to sustain interactions across vast distances.

The Internet is also being incorporated into more routine aspects of daily social life, as virtual and physical activities become increasingly integrated (Miller and Slater 2000; Wellman 2001; Wellman and Haythornthwaite 2002). Despite the shrinking yet still formidable digital divide, the Internet facilitates global connectedness, even as it strengthens local ties within neighborhoods and households, leading to increasing "Glocalization" (Wellman 2001, 236; cf. Robertson 1995). Similar trends can also be detected at the level of political activity, where Internet use—including e-mail lists, interactive Web pages, and chat rooms—has facilitated new patterns of social engagement. Anti–corporate globalization movements thus belong to a particular class of CSSN: *computer-supported social movements*. Using the Internet as technological architecture, such movements operate at local, regional, and global levels, while activists move back and forth between online and offline political activity.

The horizontal networking logic facilitated by new digital technologies not only provides an effective method of social movement organizing, it also represents a broader model for creating alternative forms of social, political, and economic organization. For example, many activists specifically view the open source development process—where geographically dispersed computer programmers freely improve, adapt, and distribute new versions of software code through global com-

munication networks—as potentially applicable within wider social spheres.[3] As Steven Weber (2004) suggests, open source could potentially revolutionize production within other information-based sectors, such as primary care medicine or genomics. Although Weber maintains a strict definition of open source as involving only those processes that entail a new conception of property as the right to distribute, not the right to exclude, many activists view open source as a broader metaphor (cf. Lovink 2003, 195), which might one day inspire postcapitalist forms of political and social organization at local, regional, and global scales.

The horizontal networking logic facilitated by new digital technologies not only provides an effective method of social movement organizing, it also represents a broader model for creating alternative forms of social, political, and economic organization.

This article examines the innovative ways that anti–corporate globalization activists have used new digital technologies to coordinate actions, build networks, practice media activism, and physically manifest their emerging political ideals. Since the protests against the World Trade Organization (WTO) in Seattle, and through subsequent mobilizations against multilateral institutions and forums in Prague, Quebec, Genoa, Barcelona, Porto Alegre, and other cities, activists have used e-mail lists, Web pages, and open editing software to organize actions, share information, collectively produce documents, and coordinate at a distance, reflecting a general growth in digital collaboration. Indymedia has provided an online forum for autonomously posting audio, video, and text files, while activists have also created temporary media hubs to generate alternative information, experiment with new technologies, and exchange ideas and resources. Influenced by anarchism and the logic of peer-to-peer networking, more radical anti–corporate globalization activists have thus not only incorporated new digital technologies as concrete networking tools, they have also used them to express alternative political imaginaries based on an emerging network ideal.

I have elsewhere explored the emergence of what I call the "cultural logic of networking" among anti–corporate globalization activists, or the broad guiding principles, shaped by the logic of informational capitalism, which are internalized by

activists and generate concrete networking practices (Juris 2004).[4] This cultural logic specifically entails a series of deeply embedded and embodied social and cultural dispositions that orient actors toward (1) building horizontal ties and connections among diverse, autonomous elements; (2) the free and open circulation of information; (3) collaboration through decentralized coordination and directly democratic decision making; and (4) self-directed networking. It thus not only reflects the values associated with open source development, incorporated within GNU/Linux or the World Wide Web, it also forms part of a broader "Hacker Ethic" identified by Himanen (2001).[5]

This article is based on fourteen months of ethnographic research among Barcelona-based anti–corporate globalization activists, within Catalonia and the broader circuits through which they travel.[6] Specifically, I conducted participant observation during mass actions and gatherings in cities such as Barcelona, Genoa, Brussels, Leiden, Strasbourg, and Porto Alegre, and within sustained networking processes as a member of MRG's international working group. My research strategy thus involved situating myself within a specific node and following the transnational connections outward through virtual and physical formations, including Peoples Global Action (PGA) and the World Social Forum (WSF) process.[7] I had also carried out prior ethnographic research in Prague, Seattle, and among U.S.-based activist networks. My fieldwork was thus multisited but also rooted within specific network locales, constituting an example of what Burawoy (2000) calls a "grounded globalization," while affording me a strategic position from which to observe local, regional, and global networking practices. Finally, I also conducted qualitative interviews, media, and textual analysis as a complement to participant observation.

This article begins with an introduction to anti–corporate globalization movements and then continues with an exploration of how contemporary activists are appropriating new digital technologies as concrete networking tools. Next, I turn to the relationship between the Internet, decentralized network forms, and the cultural logic and politics of activist networking, with a specific emphasis on Spain and Catalonia. I then examine the new media activism, including independent media, culture jamming, and electronic civil disobedience. Finally, I conclude with some reflections about how new digital technologies and horizontal networking practices are generating new models of horizontal production and globally networked democracy.

The Rise of Anti–Corporate Globalization Movements

Nearly fifty thousand people took to the streets to protest corporate globalization at the WTO meetings in Seattle on November 30, 1999. A diverse coalition of environmental, labor, and economic justice activists succeeded in shutting down the meetings and preventing another round of trade liberalization talks. Media images of giant puppets, tear gas, and street clashes between protesters and the

police were broadcast worldwide, bringing the WTO and a novel form of collective action into view. Seattle became a symbol and battle cry for a new generation of activists, as anti–globalization networks were energized around the globe.

On one hand, the "Battle of Seattle," packaged as a prime-time image event (Deluca 1999), cascaded through global mediascapes (Appadurai 1996), capturing the imagination of long-time activists and would-be postmodern revolutionaries alike. On the other hand, activists followed the events in Seattle and beyond through Internet-based distribution lists, Web sites, and the newly created IMC. New networks quickly emerged, such as the Continental Direct Action Network (DAN) in North America,[8] or MRG in Catalonia, while already existing global networks such as PGA, ATTAC, or Via Campesina also played crucial roles during these early formative stages. Although more diffuse, decentralized all-channel formations (Arquilla and Ronfeldt 2001), such as DAN or MRG, proved difficult to sustain over time, they provided concrete mechanisms for generating physical and virtual communication and coordination in real time among diverse movements, groups, and collectives.

Anti–corporate globalization movements have largely grown and expanded through the organization of mass mobilizations, including highly confrontational direct actions and countersummit forums against multilateral institutions. The anti-WTO protests were a huge success, and everywhere activists wanted to create the "next Seattle." Mass mobilizations offer concrete goals around which to organize, while they also provide physical spaces where activists meet, virtual networks are embodied, meanings and representations are produced and contested, and political values are ritually enacted. Public events can broadly be seen as "culturally constituted foci for information-processing" (Handelman 1990, 16), while direct actions, in particular, generate intense emotional energy (Collins 2001), stimulating ongoing networking within public and submerged spheres. Activists organized a second mass protest against the World Bank and International Monetary Fund (IMF) in Washington, D.C., on April 16, 2000, and went truly global during the subsequent mobilization against the World Bank/IMF in Prague on September 26, 2000. Protesters came from countries around Europe, such as Spain, Italy, Germany, and Britain, and other parts of the world, including the United States, Latin America, and South Asia. Solidarity actions were held in cities throughout Europe, North and South America, and parts of Asia and Africa.

The first WSF, organized in Porto Alegre, Brazil, in late January 2001, represented an important turning point, as activists began to more clearly emphasize specific alternatives. The success of the first WSF was magnified during the next two editions, which drew seventy thousand and one hundred thousand people, respectively. More than a conference, the WSF constitutes a dynamic process involving the convergence of multiple networks, movements, and organizations. Whereas PGA remains more radical, horizontal, and broadly libertarian,[9] the WSF is a wider political space, including both newer decentralized network-based movements and more hierarchical forces of the traditional Left. Meanwhile, mass actions continued to intensify and expand during spring and summer 2001, includ-

ing the anti-FTAA protests in Quebec City and increasingly militant actions against the EU in Gothenburg, the World Bank in Barcelona, and the G8 in Genoa.

U.S.-based anti–corporate globalization movements, which were severely shaken by the September 11 attacks, reemerged when activists shifted their attention from the war in Iraq back toward corporate globalization, leading to mass mobilizations against the WTO in Cancun and the FTAA summit in Miami during fall 2003. In the rest of the world, mobilizations continued to grow after 9/11, including a half-million-person march against the EU in Barcelona in March 2002. Anti–globalization and anti–war in Iraq movements soon converged, leading to an antiwar protest of more than a million people during the European Social Forum in Florence in November. Meanwhile, the third edition of the WSF in Porto Alegre drew nearly one hundred thousand participants during January 2003. The following June, hundreds of thousands of anti–corporate globalization and antiwar activists descended on the border of France and Switzerland to protest the G8 summit in Evian, while the most recent World and European Social Forums were successfully organized in Paris in November 2003 and Mumbai, India, in January 2004.

Three broad features thus characterize anti–corporate globalization movements. First, although movement networks are locally rooted, they are *global* in scope. Coordinating and communicating through transnational networks, activists have engaged in institutional politics, such as global campaigns to defeat the Multilateral Agreement on Investments or abolish the foreign debt, and extrainstitutional strategies, including coordinated global days of action, international forums, and cross-border information sharing. Perhaps most important, activists *think* of themselves as belonging to global movements, discursively linking local activities to diverse struggles elsewhere. Second, anti–corporate globalization movements are *informational*. The various protest tactics employed by activists, despite emerging in different cultural contexts, all produce highly visible, theatrical images for mass mediated consumption. Finally, anti–corporate globalization movements are organized around a multiplicity of virtual and physical network forms.[10]

Computer-Supported Social Movements

Inspired by the pioneering use of the Internet by the Zapatistas (Castells 1997; Cleaver 1995, 1999; Olesen 2004; Ronfeldt et al. 1998) and early free trade campaigns (Ayres 1999; Smith and Smythe 2001), anti–corporate globalization activists have employed digital networks to organize direct actions, share information and resources, and coordinate activities. Activists have made particularly effective use of e-mail and electronic listservs, which facilitate open participation and horizontal communication. On one hand, given their speed, low cost, and geographic reach, e-mail lists have facilitated the organization of globally coordinated protests, such as the global days of action inspired by PGA. For example, the second PGA global day of action on June 18, 1999, involved demonstrations in more than forty countries around the world against the anti-G8 Summit in Cologne, while hundreds of

thousands mobilized globally during the WTO Summit in Seattle the following November. On the other hand, the worldwide circulation of discourses, strategies, and tactics signals the emergence of a global web of alternative transnational counterpublics (Olesen 2004; cf. Fraser 1992).

Although anti–corporate globalization activists primarily use e-mail lists to facilitate planning and coordination, they also create temporary Web pages during mobilizations to provide information, resources, and contact lists; post documents and calls to action (cf. Van Aelst and Walgrave 2002); and sometimes house real-time discussion forums and Internet relay chat rooms. Indeed, interactive Web sites offering multiple tools for coordination are becoming increasingly popular. These include open publishing projects like Indymedia or sites that incorporate collaborative production software, such as the Infospace in Barcelona (see below). Moreover, particular movement networks and processes—such as PGA, the WSF, or ATTAC—have their own, more narrowly focused Web pages, where activists post reflections, analyses, updates, calls to action, and links along with more logistical information.

Internet use has complemented and facilitated face-to-face coordination and interaction, rather than replacing them. During my fieldwork in Barcelona, activists used listservs—both within broad convergence spaces (Routledge 2004), such as the campaigns against the World Bank and EU and within specific networks like MRG or the Citizens Network to Abolish the External Debt (XCADE)—to stay informed about activities and events and to perform concrete logistical tasks. However, complex planning, political discussions, and relationship building often took place within physical settings. My own time thus largely involved attending meetings nearly every evening, followed by long hours of online work late into the night. At the same time, the phone remained an important tool of communication. For example, after sending various e-mails back and forth between MRG International and activists from a Dutch collective during planning for a European PGA meeting, we had to pick up the phone on several occasions to work out disagreements, which were impossible to solve without interactive communication.

Despite these cautionary remarks, the Internet has proven absolutely crucial, allowing key "activist-hackers" (cf. Nelson 1996) to carry out relay and exchange operations, receiving, interpreting, and distributing information out to diverse network hubs and nodes.[11] For example, when an MRG-based activist developed a system for instantly sending messages out to hundreds of listservs around the world, he turned to me and exclaimed, "Now I can reach thousands of activists at the touch of a button every time we want to communicate something important!" Activist interviews further illustrated how the Internet has facilitated long-distance coordination and horizontal collaboration, as Joseba, from Indymedia-Barcelona, recalled:

> I learned how a group of people, some in the U.S., others in London, and others, who knows where, coordinated through a global listserv. Suddenly someone would send an e-mail saying, "I think this story is important, what do you think?" In less than a week, ten people had answered, one or two saying it wasn't clear; but most feeling it was important,

> so we distributed the tasks: "I'll reduce it to so many characters," "I'll translate it into German," and "I'll do Italian." The next day we started working, and the messages began arriving: "Spanish translation done," "Italian done," "French done." Then someone sent a photo, "What do you think about this picture?" The comments went around, and then someone sent another picture, and suddenly we had created an article![12]

Digital Technologies and the Cultural Politics of Activist Networking

The Internet does not simply provide the technological infrastructure for computer-supported social movements; its reticulate network structure reinforces their organizational logic (Arquilla and Ronfeldt 2001; Bennett 2003a; Castells 1997; Cleaver 1995, 1999; Escobar 2004; Juris 2004). Decentralized, flexible local/global networks constitute the dominant organizational forms within anti–corporate globalization movements. The absence of organizational centers within distributed networks makes them extremely adaptive, allowing activists to simply route around nodes that are no longer useful. Moreover, the introduction of new digital technologies significantly enhances the most radically decentralized all-channel network formations, facilitating transnational coordination and communication among contemporary movements.

For example, MRG-Catalonia, which grew up around the World Bank/IMF protests in Prague, was conceived as "a network of people and collectives against economic globalization and unitary thinking . . . a tool for providing local struggles with global content and extension."[13] Activists wanted to create a flexible mechanism for communication and coordination among diverse local struggles, including environmentalists, squatters, Zapatista supporters, solidarity and antidebt activists, and EU opponents. Rather than top-down command, activists preferred loose, flexible coordination among autonomous groups within a minimal structure involving periodic assemblies, logistical commissions surrounding concrete tasks, and several project areas, including a social movement observatory and resource exchange. In contrast to traditional leftist organizations, open participation was favored over representation: "MRG is a movement 'without members;' membership . . . leads to static, non-dynamic structures and to a clear and distinct, rather than a more diffuse sense of belonging."[14]

MRG activists also took part in broader regional and global networks, including PGA, which itself represents a diffuse all-channel network involving communication and coordination among diverse local movements around the world. Like MRG, PGA has no formal members but rather seeks to provide an instrument for coordination to help "the greatest number of persons and organizations to act against corporate domination through civil disobedience and people-oriented constructive actions."[15] Any person or collective can participate as long as they agree with the network hallmarks, which include a clear rejection of capitalism and all systems of domination, a confrontational attitude, a call to direct action and civil

disobedience, and an organizational philosophy "based on decentralization and autonomy."[16]

Within movements such as MRG or PGA, networking logics have given rise to what many grassroots activists in Barcelona call a "new way of doing politics." While the command-oriented logic of leftist parties and unions is based on recruiting new members, developing unified strategies, political representation through vertical structures, and the pursuit of political hegemony, network-based politics involve the creation of broad umbrella spaces, where diverse organizations, collectives, and networks converge around common hallmarks while preserving their autonomy and specificity. Rather than recruitment, the objective becomes horizontal expansion and enhanced "connectivity" through articulating diverse movements within flexible, decentralized information structures allowing for maximal coordination and communication.

For example, when the Barcelona campaign against the World Bank was formed in early 2001, MRG-based activists brought their horizontal networking praxis to bear within this broader political space. Leftist parties and larger NGOs initially wanted their institutions to figure prominently within the campaign, which more grassroots activists interpreted as a strategy for gaining members or increasing electoral support. Formal organizations also favored structures based on representative voting, where influence would be determined by membership size rather than actual contribution. On the other hand, activists from MRG, XCADE, and other grassroots groups felt the best way to encourage broader and more active participation was to create open, assembly-based structures where everyone would have an equal say through consensus decision making, while establishing a rotating group of spokespersons to issue public declarations. This open networking model ultimately won out, but it did not lead to an absence of conflict. Rather, collective decisions would be restricted as much as possible to technical coordination as opposed to abstract political debates, allowing diverse actors to organize within a common platform.

Networking logics are thus unevenly distributed, as more established organizations tend to incorporate new digital technologies into existing communication routines, while smaller, resource-poor organizations often use technologies more innovatively, taking advantage of their low cost to forge horizontal linkages (Bennett 2003a). What many observers view as a single anti–corporate globalization movement is actually a congeries of competing, yet sometimes overlapping, social movement networks that differ according to issue addressed, political subjectivity, ideological framework, political culture, and organizational logic. Struggles within and among different networks, which I call the "cultural politics of networking," largely shape the way specific networks are produced, how they develop, and how they relate to one another within broader social movement fields.

For example, following the mobilization against the World Bank in Barcelona, the more institutional sectors created their own representative structure called the Barcelona Social Forum. Meanwhile, many traditional Marxists wanted the broader campaign to become a permanent statewide platform. Activists associated with MRG and XCADE opposed this idea, arguing against what they considered a

return to more traditional organizational forms. They felt it was important to maintain open spaces for communication and coordination but that such spaces should facilitate the continual reconfiguration of fluid ties. The assembly finally agreed to bring the World Bank campaign to a close in September 2001, giving rise to a new coordinating space later that fall to plan for the upcoming mobilization against the EU. Moreover, militant squatters, who had created an anticapitalist platform against the World Bank, would take part within the wider campaign this time around, as parties and unions had forged a space of their own.

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Radical anticapitalists thus face a continual dilemma about whether to operate within more strictly defined political formations, at the risk of being marginalized, or participate within broader spaces involving more reformist and traditional actors. Complex patterns of shifting alliances also operate at the transnational scale. For example, activists associated with PGA and other radical grassroots networks often create "autonomous spaces" during the world and regional social forums, conceived as "separate, yet connected" to official events. However, specific networks will move between the larger forums, autonomous spaces, or not participating at all, depending on the political context. Digitally powered social movement networks are thus "rhizomatic" (Cleaver 1999; cf. Deleuze and Guatarri 1987)—constantly emerging, fusing together, and hiving off—yet it is important to consider how such contradictory processes are actually generated in practice through concrete networking politics, which are always entangled within complex relationships of power rendered visible through long-term ethnographic research.

W. Lance Bennett (2003a, 154) has argued that contemporary Internet-driven campaigns are not only flexible and diverse, they are also "ideologically thin," allowing "different political perspectives to co-exist without the conflicts that such differences might create in more centralized coalitions." Although Bennett is right to highlight diversity within such campaigns, he may overstate their internal cohesion and ideological thinness. At the very least, these features will vary according to

political culture and context. For example, his case studies involve U.S.-based corporate campaigns against Microsoft and Nike. My own research among broader anti–corporate globalization spaces revealed somewhat different dynamics. For example, activists generated a great deal of ideological discourse within the Barcelona campaigns against the World Bank and EU, or the world and regional social forums more generally, but decision making tended to involve practical matters, while political debates were often coded as conflicts over organizational form. Indeed, activists increasingly express their utopian imaginaries directly through concrete political, organizational, and technological practice, as Geert Lovink (2002, 34) suggests: "Ideas that matter are hardwired into software and network architectures."

The New Digital Media Activism

Contemporary independent media activists have made particularly effective use of new technologies through alternative and tactical forms of digital media production (cf. Meikle 2002). Alternative media constitute independent sources of news and information beyond the corporate logic of the mainstream press. John Downing (2003, v) defined what he called "radical media" as diverse small-scale outlets that "express an alternative vision to hegemonic policies, priorities, and perspectives." Such alternative or radical media also tend to be independently operated and self-managed through horizontal participation rather than top-down command. Not only do they incorporate a broader networking logic, they are also increasingly Internet based.

Alternative media. Indymedia is perhaps the most emblematic of the new alternative digital media projects (Downing 2003; Halleck 2002; Kidd 2003; Meikle 2002). Using open publishing software developed by Australian programmer Mathew Arnison, the first IMC was established during the anti-WTO mobilization in Seattle. Indymedia journalists reported directly from the streets, while activists uploaded their own text, audio, video, and image files. Indymedia sites would soon be up and running in Philadelphia, Portland, Vancouver, Boston, and Washington, D.C., while the network quickly expanded on a global scale to places like Prague, Barcelona, Amsterdam, Sao Paolo, and Buenos Aires. There are now more than 120 local sites around the world, while the global network receives up to 2 million page views per day.[17]

During mass actions and gatherings, Indymedia centers become dynamic communication hubs, particularly among more radical sectors. During the December 2001 mobilization against the EU in Brussels, for example, the official convergence center was situated in a large open-air tent, which principally housed NGO information tables, generating an institutional feel. The IMC, on the other hand, was organized in an old squatted theater in the center of town. The main computer lab buzzed with activity as media activists and protesters uploaded images and

audio files, swapped reports and information online, and edited video files. Meanwhile, the entire floor below was transformed into a project called Radio Bruxxel, which featured 24-hour programming about the EU, immigration, economic exclusion, war, and self-management.

Such temporary spaces of digital production provide a crucial terrain where activists carry out several concrete tasks. First, they send e-mails to each other and to their friends and families, facilitating action coordination, while rapidly circulating information about events on the ground. Second, activists generate formal updates, which are instantly posted and distributed through global distribution lists. Third, protesters can also immediately upload and disseminate video and image files. Fourth, IMCs also provide workshops for carrying out more complex operations, including live video and audio streaming as well as documentary film editing. While in the past activists had to rely on experts and the mass media to circulate their messages, largely due to high transaction costs and time constraints, they can now use new digital technologies to take on much of this work themselves, assuming greater control over the media production process, while enhancing the speed of information flow. Finally, such temporary media labs have also facilitated the exchange of information, ideas, and resources, as well as experimentation with new digital technologies through which media activists inscribe their emerging political ideals within new forms of networked space, a practice I call "informational utopics."[18]

During mass actions, hundreds of media activists thus take to the streets to record video footage, snap digital photos, and conduct interviews. At the mobilization against the EU in Barcelona during March 2002, for example, Meri, from MRG, exclaimed, "Everyone is filming everyone else!" Indeed, contemporary social movements are uniquely self-reflexive (Giddens 1991), as activists circulate their own texts and images through global networks in real time. Moreover, activists have also used digital technologies to help plan and organize mass direct actions themselves. Beyond e-mail lists, protesters have also made innovative use of cell phone technology to coordinate tactical positions, report on police activities, and provide real-time updates. However, the use of cell phones should not be exaggerated. For example, even though organizers created an intricate communications structure in Prague, the system broke down when the Czech police blocked cellular transmissions. Activists have certainly used mobile phones, but not with the "military-like" tactical precision often suggested in more popular accounts.

Beyond specific mobilizations, Indymedia also incorporates a broader networking logic, as open publishing software allows activists to independently create, post, and distribute their own news stories regarding concrete actions, ongoing campaigns, and thematic issues. Open publishing reverses the implicit hierarchy dividing author and consumer, empowering grassroots users to freely participate in the production process, as programmer Evan Henshaw-Plath pointed out: "It's all about using technology to disintermediate the authority and power structure of the editor."[19] The refusal of editorial control allows users to draw their own conclusions about the veracity and relevance of particular posts. Moreover, the open publish-

ing process facilitates active participation through the provision of concrete networking tools and nonhierarchical infrastructures, as Henshaw-Plath explained: "I see my task as building technological systems where people can exert power through egalitarian systems that will reproduce horizontal cooperative social relations and institutions."[20] Open editing thus represents an important example of informational utopics, as broader values related to horizontal collaboration, open access, and direct democracy are physically inscribed into Indymedia's network architecture.

Tactical media. Rather than creating alternative counterpublics, tactical media aim to creatively intervene along dominant media terrains (Lovink 2002, 254-75; Meikle 2002, 113-72). This can involve either the juxtaposition of incommensurate elements to generate subversive meanings, as in "guerrilla communication" (Grupo Autónomo A.f.r.i.k.a. et al. 2000), or the playful parodying of corporate advertisements and logos to produce critical messages, which activists call "culture jamming" (cf. Klein 2000, 279-310; Lasn 2000). First theorized and put into practice during the "Next 5 Minutes" festivals in the Netherlands (Meikle 2002, 119), tactical media emphasize the use of new technologies, mobility, and flexibility. Geert Lovink (2002, 265), activist and Internet critic, put it in the following terms: "It is above all mobility that most characterizes the tactical practitioner. . . . To cross borders, connecting and re-wiring a variety of disciplines and always taking full advantage of the free spaces in the media."

Tactical media interventions do not necessarily take place in cyberspace, but new digital technologies are almost always crucial. For example, the Canadian-based Adbusters, founded by Kalle Lasn, provides multimedia culture jamming resources online, allowing local participants to download materials and participate in global campaigns, including Buy Nothing Day. Anti–corporate globalization activists have built clone sites like the "World Trade Organization/GATT Home Page" during the anti-WTO protests in Seattle. After the WTO secretary general publicly denounced the clone site, the story was picked up by CNN (Meikle 2002, 118), involving what Bennett (2003a, 161) called "micro-to-mass media crossover."

Within Catalan anti–corporate globalization movements, the "Agencies," a Barcelona-based political art and media collective, has developed numerous tactical media projects using digital technologies to produce and distribute physical and virtual materials, including posters, flyers, stickers, and videos. Its latest project, called "YOMANGO," combines guerrilla communication, culture jamming, civil disobedience, and sabotage. "Mango" is a Spanish-owned multinational clothing chain, while the slang "Yo Mango" also means "I steal." The campaign provides materials and information encouraging people to steal clothing and other items from transnational corporations. YOMANGO also involves public events including collective shoplifts and banquets featuring stolen food. Reflecting an open networking logic, the project aims to create "tools and dynamics that flow and proliferate, in order to be re-appropriated and circulate,"[21] Moreover, the project ironically promotes, "the free circulation of goods!"[22]

"Hacktivism" or "electronic civil disobedience" constitutes a final dimension of tactical media (Meikle 2002, 140-72; Wray 1998). Just as power moves through nomadic electronic circuits, Critical Art Ensemble (CAE; 1996) argued that activists should also operate along virtual terrains, using digital trespass and blockade tactics. Whereas CAE insisted that electronic civil disobedience should remain underground, Electronic Disturbance Theater (EDT) and its principal theorist Stefan Wray have promoted a more public approach to digital protest (Meikle 2002, 141). During the "virtual sit-in," for example, activists gather at a preannounced Web site and are automatically transferred en masse via FloodNet software to a target site, overwhelming its server. EDT has staged successful sit-ins against the Mexican government in support of the Zapatistas, while the "Electrohippies" flooded the WTO Web site during the protests in Seattle. Other digital tactics include the "e-mail bomb" and the "hijack," where surfers are automatically redirected from one Web site to another. Virtual actions rarely succeed in completely shutting down their targets, but they often generate significant media attention (Meikle 2002, 154-55).

Beyond specific tactical objectives, alternative and tactical media both involve ongoing experimentation with new technologies, forming part of an emerging digital activist networking culture. Moreover, grassroots media activists increasingly express their broader political values by projecting them onto both physical and virtual terrains through horizontal forms of digital collaboration. Contemporary activist gatherings, including No Border camps, PGA conferences, or the world and regional social forums, thus also provide concrete spaces for the practice of informational utopics. For example, the July 2002 Strasbourg No Border camp was specifically designed to challenge the nearby Schengen Information System (SIS), which tracks movement across EU space, but the camp was also conceived as a broader experiment in collective living and grassroots self-management. Activists transformed an empty swath of parkland along the Rhine River into a bustling two-thousand-person tent city, involving mobile kitchens; makeshift showers and latrines; video zones; dance spaces; and domes for logistical, first-aid, legal, security, and action planning. Organizers also devised a directly democratic decision-making structure based on autonomous neighborhoods that coordinated through larger assemblies. The scheme often broke down in practice, yet it represented an attempt to manifest a horizontal networking logic in the design and management of social space.

The alternative media center, ironically called "Silicon Valley," was among the most vibrant zones in the camp, housing an IMC, an Internet café running open source software, a radio tent, Web-based news and radio, and a double-decker tactical media bus from Vienna called the Publix Theater Caravan, which itself featured video screening, Internet access and streaming, and a bar and lounge. Pau and I first visited the media space on the second day of the camp and immediately ran into Karl, a friend from Indymedia-Berlin, who was typing something on his laptop outside the Internet café. He explained the entire zone was equipped with WiFi (wireless) connection and that he was sending e-mail. He then took us over to

the radio tent, which was equipped with a fifty-watt transmitter and produced 24-hour simultaneous Web and broadcasts.

There were also numerous workshops within a project called d.sec (database systems to enforce control), which explored links between freedom of movement and communication, as well as physical and virtual struggles against growing mechanisms of control. Specific themes included open source, guerrilla communication, technology and the body, and media activism. More generally, d.sec was conceived as a space for experimentation with open networking, self-organization, and horizontal collaboration, as the project flyer explained:

> d.sec is . . . an open structure where activists, anti-racists, migrants, hackers, techs, artists and many more put their knowledge and practices into self-organized interaction: a space to discuss and network, skill share, and produce collaborative knowledge. A laboratory to try out ways to hack the streets and reclaim cyberspace with crowds in pink and silver; experiment with virtual identities, Linux, and open source . . . explore the embodiment of technology, learn about the meanings of physical and virtual border crossing.

d.sec was a platform for generating new ideas and practices that physically embodied an emerging network ideal. Moreover, together with the broader media zone, which featured always-ready Internet connection, live audio and video streaming, and interactive peer-to-peer file sharing, activists had created an innovative, networked terrain fusing the "space of flows" and the "space of places" (cf. Castells 1996). If revolutions are characterized by their production of new spatial forms (Lefebvre 1991), then informational utopics also constitute a concrete mechanism for imagining and experimenting with alternative digital age geographies.

Conclusion: Digitally Networking Democracy?

Anti–corporate globalization movements have not only generated widespread visibility surrounding issues related to global economic justice and democracy, they have also pioneered in the use of new digital technologies. On one hand, grassroots activists have developed highly advanced forms of computer-mediated alternative and tactical media, including Indymedia, culture jamming, hacktivism, and electronic civil disobedience. These practices have facilitated the emergence of globally coordinated transnational counterpublics while providing creative mechanisms for flexibly intervening within dominant communication circuits. On the other hand, activists have appropriated the Internet into their everyday routines, largely through e-mail lists and Web sites, favoring the rise of highly flexible and decentralized network forms. At the same time, the network has also emerged as a broader cultural ideal, as digital technologies generate new political values and vocabularies (cf. Wilson and Peterson 2002, 453), which are often directly inscribed into organizational and technological network architectures, suggesting a powerful dialectic among technology, norm, and form, mediated by human prac-

tice. Finally, activists are building a new digital media culture through the practice of informational utopics, involving experimentation with new technologies and the projection of utopian ideals regarding open participation and horizontal collaboration onto emerging forms of networked space.

Beyond specific tactical objectives, alternative and tactical media both involve ongoing experimentation with new technologies, forming part of an emerging digital activist networking culture.

Although the use of new digital technologies has helped mobilize hundreds of thousands of people around the world in opposition to corporate globalization, it remains to be seen whether new horizontal networking practices can be incorporated into more everyday forms of social, economic, and political life. This was precisely the motivation behind the development of a new media project by anti–corporate globalization activists in Barcelona called the "Infospace," which combines virtual tools, including an Internet server and social movement directory, with physical tools, including publishing and editing services; activist research and documentation; a solidarity economy project; and a physical storefront housing reception, meeting, and digital workspace. The physical and virtual are thus completely intertwined. For example, activists use Internet-based collaborative software (twiki) to collectively produce documents regarding real-world initiatives, while virtual projects are coordinated through both online and offline interaction.[23] Regarding the project's long-term goal, Pau had this to say: "We are building autonomous counterpower . . . by networking movements . . . and creating our own alternatives without waiting for the government . . . and helping others to achieve them as well."

Activists in Barcelona and elsewhere are thus increasingly turning to technological paradigms as a way to promote social transformation. Many specifically view open source as a harbinger of new self-organized forms of horizontal collaboration coordinated at multiple scales. For example, theorists associated with the German-based Oekonux project have debated how open software principles might potentially "migrate" into other contexts, perhaps leading to postcapitalist forms of economic production (cf. Lovink 2003, 194-223).[24] At the political level, electronic democracy advocates are interested in how "the technical possibilities of

cyberspace make innovative forms of large-scale direct democracy practical," not via Internet alone, but rather through "collective and continuous elaboration of problems and their cooperative, concrete resolution by those affected" (Lévy 2001, 176). Anti–corporate globalization activists have similarly developed the European Social Consulta as a way to build political alternatives and exchange resources among local assemblies coordinated regionally through digital networks.[25]

Although such long-term networking projects, and the practice of informational utopics more generally, may not produce immediate results, they should be seen in another light. Indeed, as Alberto Melucci (1989, 75) once argued, new social movements are cultural innovators that challenge dominant cultural codes while also developing new "models of behavior and social relationships that enter into everyday life." Beyond the production of alternative values, discourses, and identities, however, contemporary anti–corporate globalization movements are perhaps best understood as social laboratories, generating new cultural practices and political imaginaries for a digital age.

Notes

1. The Catalan Movement for Global Resistance (MRG) was ultimately "self-dissolved" in January 2003 as a response to declining participation and a broader political statement against the reproduction of rigid structures. Pseudonyms have been used throughout to hide activist identities.

2. I use "anti–corporate globalization" here to emphasize that most activists do not oppose globalization per se but rather those forms of economic globalization viewed as benefiting transnational corporations. "Global justice" is increasingly preferred by English-speaking activists but is not common elsewhere.

3. Open software is based on the "copyleft" principle, requiring that original source code be released and distributed with new program versions (cf. Himanen 2001; Raymond 1999; Lovink 2003, 194-223).

4. I adapt this term from Jameson (1991), who refers to postmodernism as the cultural logic of late capitalism; and Ong (1999), who explores a specific type of late capitalist cultural logic-transnationality.

5. Citing the hackers' jargon file, Himanen (2001, vii-viii) defined hackers as "people who 'program enthusiastically' and who believe that 'information-sharing is a powerful positive good.' "

6. Barcelona-based fieldwork was carried out from June 2001 to August 2002 for my doctoral dissertation titled "The Cultural Logic of Networking: Transational Activism and the Movement for Global Resistance in Barcelona," supported by the Wenner-Gren Foundation for Anthropological Research and the Social Science Research Council (with Andrew W. Mellon funding).

7. MRG was a co-convener of Peoples Global Action (PGA) Europe, while MRG-based activists also took part in the social forums.

8. The Continental Direct Action Network (DAN) process came to a standstill during the year after Seattle.

9. This brand of left-wing "libertarianism" should be distinguished from the variety prevalent in the United States. The former involves a radical critique of both the market and the state, while the latter is oriented toward limiting the role of the state in order to unleash the dynamic potential of the free market.

10. These include hierarchical circle patterns, intermediate wheel formations, and the most decentralized all-channel configurations (Kapferer 1973, 87), which refer to those where every node is connected to every other (Arquilla and Ronfeldt 2001). Networks can be defined more generally as sets of "interconnected nodes" (Castells 1996, 469).

11. Diane Nelson (1996) employed the term "Maya-Hacker" to characterize Mayan activists engaged in cultural activism and transnational networking.

12. Unless otherwise stated, quotations are from personal interviews.

13. Cited from "La Organización del MRG" in *EIMA* (February-March 2001), a Catalan activist journal.

14. Cited from a document sent to the global@ldist.ct.upc.es listserv on October 18, 2000.

15. See PGA Network Organizational Principles (www.nadir.org/nadir/initiativ/agp/cocha/principles.htm).

16. See PGA Hallmarks (www.nadir.org/nadir/initiativ/agp/gender/desire/nutshell.htm).

17. See Indymedia FAQ page, retrieved from http://process.indymedia.org/faq.php3 on March 14, 2004.

18. With regard to radical activism more generally, Hetherington (1998, 123) refers to the spatial practice of "utopics," whereby "a utopian outlook on society and the moral order that it wishes to project, are translated into practice through the attachment of ideas about the good society onto particular places."

19. Interview with Evan Henshaw-Plath: http://lists.indymedia.org/mailman/public/mediapolitics/2001-November/000041.html, retrieved on March 18, 2004.

20. Ibid.

21. Cited from http://www.sindominio.net/lasagencias/yomango/ES/textos/10sugerencias.html, retrieved on March 15, 2004.

22. Cited from www.sindominio.net/lasagencias/yomango/ES/acciones/presentacion_1.html, retrieved on March 15, 2004.

23. "Tiki Wiki" is an open source content management system based on Wiki technology, which allows users to collaboratively create and edit content using any Web browser (http://tikiwiki.org).

24. See http://www.oekonux.org/. Also, see King (2004) for a critical perspective regarding the idea of openness as an organizing principle for social movements and other aspects of society.

25. This more ambitious version of the European Social Consulta has not yet generated widespread support around Europe, but Spanish and Catalan activists decided to move forward with a statewide referendum during the 2004 European parliamentary elections. See www.consultaeuropea.org.

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