

ICT-Usage among Transnational Social Movements in the Networked Society: to organise, to mediate & to influence

Key Deliverable
**The European Media and Technology in
Everyday Life Network, 2000-2003**

Dr. Bart Cammaerts (ASCoR – UvA)

Dr. Leo Van Audenhove (STB – TNO)

Table of contents

General preface	3
IPTS preface	4
Executive summary	5
Acknowledgements	10
1. Context of Research	11
2 Analytical Framework and Methodology	18
3 Empirical Findings	28
4 Conclusions	80
5 Policy Implications	89
References	
Appendix	

EMTEL - General preface

The European Media Technology and Everyday Life Network (EMTEL) was funded by the European Commission (grant number HPRN ET 2000 00063) under the 5th Framework Programme. It was constituted as a research and training network within the programme, Improving Knowledge Potential and oriented towards “creating a user friendly information society”.

EMTEL conducted interdisciplinary social scientific research and training between 2000 and 2003. This report is one of 12 submitted to the EU in September 2003 as final deliverables for the project. Copies are available on www.lse.ac.uk/collections/EMTEL and a full list of the publications can be found as an Appendix to this report. Contributing partners were as follows:

- ASCoR, The University of Amsterdam
- COMTEC, Dublin City University
- IPTS, Seville
- LENTIC, The University of Liège
- Media@lse, London School of Economics (co-ordinating centre)
- NTNU, University of Trondheim
- SMIT, Free University of Brussels
- TNO, Delft
- SINTEF, Trondheim.

EMTEL sought to bring together young and experienced researchers in a shared project to investigate the so-called information society from the perspective of everyday life. It undertook research under two broad headings: inclusion and exclusion, and living and working in the information society. It then sought to integrate empirical work and developing theory in such a way as to engage constructively with on-going policy debates on the present and future of information and communication technologies in Europe.

Roger Silverstone

EMTEL Co-ordinator

Centre Directors Preface

This EMTEL study focuses – within the overarching theme of inclusion and exclusion in the information society – on the use transnational social movements make of ICT. It articulates questions of access and participation with the political reality as seen within four social movements. Based on a multi-method approach, the study examines how the Internet is used within their organizational structure, to facilitate and mediate civic engagement, and to develop strategies to influence politics and policy.

The study was conducted by ‘young researcher’ dr. Bart Cammaerts, from Belgium, who should be especially commemorated and admired for his extensive work in a relatively short period. He had to take over from the original young researcher from the UK, who resigned after one year. Moreover, he actively and intelligently contributed – orally and in writing – to the final deliverable on in/exclusion in the information society. His collaboration with young researchers Dorothe Durieux (LENTIC) and Myria Georgiou (LSE) has had a synergetic effect on all three key deliverables.

This research project took shape in and was educationally and pedagogically supported by two Dutch institutions: ASCoR and TNO/STB. The ASCoR-research school at the University of Amsterdam focuses on a wide range of communication topics, but it particularly holds a strong contingency of researches and researchers in Internet and ICT-related research. TNO/STB in Delft is one of the largest research institutes on technological innovation. It focuses particularly on the social and economic consequences of ICT and strategic policy implications.

Prof. Kees Brants, ASCoR

Prof. Valerie Frissen, TNO/STB

Executive Summary

This EMTEL project and report deals with the usage of ICTs and more specifically the Internet among transnational social movements in terms of organisation, in terms of mediation of participation and in terms of influencing public opinion or other political actors.

1. Main Research Questions

- How do transnational social movement organisations use the Internet to organise themselves, both locally and transnationally?
- How do transnational social movement organisations use the Internet to facilitate or enable online civic engagement?
- How do transnational social movement organisations relate to policy and the political and in what way do ICTs play a role in this?

Based on a typology of “Virtual” Organisations four cases have been selected in order to answer these questions: APC (www.apc.org) as umbrella organisation, LabourStart (www.labourstart.org) as portal organisation, ATTAC (www.attac.org) as platform organisation and Indymedia (www.indymedia.org) as web organisation.

2. Most Important Findings

2.1 Organisational Use of ICTs

Different gradations exist between, at the one end of the spectrum organisations like APC with a formal membership structure and strong transnational ties, as well as organisations such as LabourStart, very decentralised and strong transnational ties, as there is no local organisation. But at the other end, organisations such as ATTAC and Indymedia with a strong local base and community of activists and sympathisers, independent, but at the same time loosely connected to a transnational frame of reference. The high degree of transnationalisation in all organisations also has to be shaded by observations that the poorest parts of the world are often absent, that there exist cultural and language barriers, and that resources are unevenly distributed. Also, not all organisations have, what one could call, goals of global reach. At this level, one could make a distinction between those

organisations whose main goal is primarily global, and those organisations whose main goal is local, but situated in a global problematique.

A strong degree of transnationalisation also relates to a strong degree of virtualisation. The online is very present and in most cases crucial at the intra-transnational level of organisation. In almost all cases, the virtualisation of activities at this level is very strong, whereas the real life activities are low. At this level, the Internet provides small organisations with new means of cheap, highly flexible and instantaneous communication. This enables organisational decentralisation and at the same time co-operation and integration possible. Without the Internet, it would be hard or even impossible for many of the organisations to organise and co-ordinate actions at the transnational level. At the local or national level, real-life becomes more important in terms of organising, except when the local context requires decentralisation, as in the case of Indymedia Germany. As such, it can be concluded that strong transnational ties in combination with decentralisation leads to a predominant role of the online in the communication and interaction within the organisation, between organisations and with the outside world.

2.2 Mediation of Participation

Besides the organisational use of ICTs this study also set out to assess new forms of ICT mediated civic engagement in the realm of broadening the public sphere. The Internet provides social movements with the possibility to construct public or semi-public spaces and to facilitate online civic engagement. This can take different forms: mailing lists, open web forums, semi-open web forums, closed web forums, spontaneous web forums, etc. The three cases of inter-active engagement that were examined, showed that forums and mailing lists can be very vibrant at times, but also that many constraints exist in this regard. The first constraint relates to access, in many countries only a minority of people have access, especially on a global scale, but also within developed countries. Organisations with a local base are more inclined to develop concrete strategies to counter this paradox (by diversifying their media-offer for example). The second constraint has to do with the homogeneous ideological framework and often-limited number of active participants in web forums or mailing lists (cf. ATTAC & LabourStart). The third constraint is the opposite of the second, namely that a strong diversity of opinions combined with a lack of moderation, can lead to flaming and insults, killing discussion (cf. Indymedia). Finally, it is also often

unclear where the discussion leads us, no conclusions are drawn and the participants are predominantly male.

Due to all these constraints, real interactive debate between participants is overall not very high. Many people only post one message, or register without being active. The spontaneous Indymedia forum is maybe the exception in this regard, as it was short and very intense and you could participate anonymously. Besides all this, it has to be noted that—notwithstanding these many constraints—forums and discussion mailing lists provide public or semi-public spaces where interactive debates are held. They are also used to diffuse opinions or information, which can stimulate or nourish debate. As such, the forum or mailing list represents a temporary community for those that interact and to a lesser extend for those who are passively following the discussions and receiving alternative opinions and information.

2.3. Policy and Politics

All cases adhere to the same broad goals and leftist ideologies. There are however certainly other civil society organisations promoting opposite ideologies at the transnational level, but we chose to limit ourselves to progressive social movements. To the extent that some of these transnational movements are slowly succeeding in getting recognised as advisory and negotiating organisations, both at big international for and in international institutions, their impact on international policy is probably growing. We, however, do not support the view that the Internet can be sufficient in driving this evolution. We believe that only those organisations with a real life component and a certain institutionalisation—often by means of choosing representatives and thus a certain hierarchy—can yield an impact at this level of governance. Indymedia might be important in terms of supporting an alternative transnational public sphere; it will have little direct impact on international governance and policy. Indymedia does not lobby or enter into dialogue with formal politics and concentrates on direct action as main strategy. An advocacy organisation such as APC is much more structured and is in the “business” of representing other organisations at the international level. ATTAC has a double strategy, by putting pressure on local governments through the local branches as well as on the international level through ATTAC-international, it hopes to achieve policy change. ATTAC combines lobbying with direct action. LabourStart does not directly influence policy, but the international labour movement, of which it is part, does have its lobby-structures in almost every country.

Different organisations adopt different strategies to achieve their political goals, both online and offline. But, what does this say about the role of ICTs in terms of the political and political action? Besides the conclusion that ICTs are deemed not to be very relevant in terms of lobbying, not much. The case of the battle for the preservation of the Lappersfort-forest frames the use of ICTs much better. The Internet played an important role in gaining initial support, in mobilising at very short notice, in organising the protests and demonstrations (amongst others by ATTAC), and in informing the general public independently (through Indymedia). On the other hand, formal politics came to engage with the issue because of the personal sympathy of the Green Minister for the Environment, the persistence of activists in occupying the site for more than a year and the positive image of the activists presented in the mainstream press. ICTs facilitate activists to have an independent voice and to organise themselves very fast and to link their struggle to similar struggles world-wide. But much more is needed to make an action successful, the action and its aims have to reach the public- as well as political agenda. The role of the mainstream press in amplifying the action and its aims is crucial in this regard! Sympathy and support from the local population for the action also plays an important role in the perception of the activists and their aims. Finally, the case of the Lappersfort-forest also shows that vested interests are difficult to beat, even if the press, a minister and the local population supports your aims.

Most Important Conclusions

Many social movement organisations operating at the transnational level show much resemblance to the characteristics of the new social movements in the 1960s and 1970s. The strength lies in their ability to link the local to the global and vice-versa, raising awareness at the local level of the impact of the global, but also raising awareness at the global level of the existence of the local.

The Internet is an opportunity structure; they represent for social movements a (cost-) efficient tool to organise transnationally and decentralised, to mobilise beyond its constituency, to network with other organisations and/or to inform independently. The Internet also provides the backbone by which direct action can be organised in a decentralised way. Another interesting “new” feature of the Internet is its interactive

potentials. The Internet facilitates interactive debate, which can be linked to a strengthening and/or broadening of the public sphere. As our empirical analysis pointed out there are major constraints in this regard.

The results of this research show that both techno-optimists, which see the Internet as a new Athenian forum, and techno-pessimists, which fear alienation and domination are wrong in that they both ignore one part of the equation. A more differentiated and shaded perspective is needed for an understanding of the impact of ICTs. This would be positioned between boom and doom, accepting both enabling and constraining factors, combining continuity with discontinuity, accepting the dangers of concentration and domination, but at the same time recognising that resistance movements are benefiting from the same technology. Technologies can strengthen existing hierarchical power structures as easily as they can subvert them.

Acknowledgements

This project was made possible thanks to the help of a number people.

First and foremost, I would like to thank Prof. Kees Brants and Dr. Valerie Frissen for their continuous efforts in shaping this project and making me feel welcome in the Netherlands. I also would like to thank them for their flexibility in allowing me to combine young fatherhood and writing this report.

Due to the fact that the junior fellow doing this project left early, we only had one year to do the research and make this report, it would therefore not have been possible without the valuable help of Dr. Leo Van Audenhove. I would like to thank him explicitly for this.

The EMTEL network has also been very useful. The numerous meetings we have had together with seniors or among the post-doctoral students were always very productive and inspirational. The constructive criticisms formulated by Prof. Roger Silverstone and Prof. Paschal Preston have also been very useful in better framing the research that has been carried out.

Furthermore, I would also like to thank the European Commission for funding the EMTEL-network and all the post-doctoral research that has been conducted within the network. It was a truly amazing experience to work together with different people and cultures.

Finally, I would also like to thank the different organisations and their representatives for their willingness to co-operate with this project.

1. Context of the Research

“Don’t hate the Media, be the Media” (Indymedia-slogan)

In recent years, it has become fashionable to stress the important role of Information and Communication Technologies¹ (ICTs) in terms of socio-economic development, fostering social inclusion, innovative cultural production, but also in terms of reviving democracy. There is however little empirical evidence to underpin these assumptions. Furthermore, most research being done on ICTs, democracy and politics concentrates on issues such as e-government, online voting or the use of ICTs in formal politics (Gore, 1994; Browning, 1996; Pouillet, 1998).

This is rather problematic from a critical democratic and participatory line of approach, as large parts of the population are excluded because access is not universal, nor are the capabilities to use the technology evenly distributed. The unequal distribution of access to ICTs, unadapted content, user-unfriendly interfaces and specific capabilities needed to use the Internet, are however serious constraints for using ICTs in terms of the formal democratic process (Feather, 1994; Schiller, 1996). When the focus changes from formal towards informal politics and political processes, the same constraints exist, but the contributions of these communicative technologies, in terms of politics, mobilising for political action, fostering networking and/or strengthening the public sphere, are becoming ever more significant. This perspective also raises the question as to how, or in what ways, can ICTs promote or facilitate political participation or civic engagement and contribute to the informal democratic process. Thus, the main research-question of this project can be formulated. That is, what is the role of the Internet in transnational social movements, in terms of mediating (online) civic engagement and in influencing the policy process?

Before specifying the research questions more in detail, it is necessary to frame the context of this research project by positioning in relation to the crisis of representative democracy, the declining sovereignty of the nation states, the emergence of a transnational civil society, the changing patterns of civic engagement and the roles of the Internet in these arenas.

1.1. The Crisis of Representative Democracy

Democracy is seen as a political system that is constantly in motion, never finished or fixed, always needing to transform, adapt and change itself (Enwezor, et al., 2002: 14). The context of this research can therefore not only be reduced to the possible usages of ICTs in terms of active citizenship, social movement organisations or public spheres, but should

also be related to the existentialist crisis that faces (formal) representative democracy in Europe. This crisis is exemplified amongst others by low voter turnout at elections, declining membership of political parties and old social movements, increasing number of protest voters, etc.

The crisis of representative democracy can also be seen in the partial withdrawal of the welfare state in many countries (Swann, 1988; Haque, 1996) and in long-term processes of globalisation and regionalisation (towards the European level of governance), which have undermined the sovereignty and power of the nation states (Rosenau, 1990/1992; Hirst & Thomson, 1995; Held et al., 1999). In addition, the fall of the Berlin Wall resulted in victorious claims about the end of history and the consolidation of the democratic capitalist model (Fukuyama, 1992). The slogan of the former British Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher, “There is no alternative”, stressed this dominant - and seemingly inescapable - view. Deregulation, privatisation and unlimited free-trade through a process of liberalisation, came to be the persuasive buzzwords of the 1990s, as unquestionable as was the welfare state and public service in the 1960s and 1970s.

The hegemonic ideological struggles and strategies that accompanied this radical shift in dominant discourses were, however, masked by statements that stressed inevitability, for example, blaming the EU or other international institutions for unpopular measures, or by political observations that “left” and “right” had become empty or obsolete categories, no longer applicable to the complex realities of everyday life in the new millennium (Hall & Jacques, 1989).

Some authors contend that this in turn led to a de-ideologisation of politics whereby left-wing forces partially adopted and transformed neo-liberal discourses, making them in a sense socially “acceptable” (Giddens, 1994/2000; Sassoon, 2000; Mouffe, 2002). This is relevant for the context of this research, because many civil society organisations - and more specifically social movement organisations - have positioned themselves in the political vacuum left open by formal (social-) democratic parties; questioning the unquestionable. Public services are defended again as crucial, demands for international regulation of capital markets emerge, international organisations or regional entities like the EU are put under pressure through direct actions, lowering the huge debts of developing countries is back on the agenda, etc.

1.2. Transnational Civil Society Movements

In addition to power shifting from the national political level towards regional and/or global levels of governance, there is another significant trend associated with the emergence of strong civil society movements. That is, many of these social movements have started to organise themselves on a transnational level (Florini, 2000; Guidry et al., 2000; Anheier et al., 2001).

This research-project will focus on this transnational level, not only because ICTs appear to play an important role in these transnationalisation processes, but also because other important civil society actors on the national level, such as political parties and media actors, are fairly absent on that transnational level. In the absence of a formal democracy at the international level, increasingly political scientists perceive the functioning of transnational social movements as a second best option for democracy at a global, regional or transnational level. Transnational social movements are being perceived as “globalisation from below”, counterbalancing the globalising economic, political and cultural spheres, which increasingly escape the sovereignty of the nation state. This could just as well apply to international institutions such as WTO, IMF/World Bank, OECD, as to transnational corporations, like Shell, Nike, Danone, etc. (Kellner, 1997; Falk, 1999). This rather normative stance apart, transnational civil society is also used as an analytical concept to describe a certain social and political reality at the international level (Colas, 1997; Keane, 2001; Anheier et al., 2001). As Anheier et al. (2001: 4) put it:

“What we can observe in the 1990s is the emergence of a supranational sphere of social and political participation in which citizens groups, social movements, and individuals engage in dialogue, debate, confrontation, and negotiation with each other and with various governmental actors - international, national and local - as well as the business world.”

As such this study also links with priority Seven of the EU 6th Framework Program, “Citizens and Governance in a knowledge-based society”. The crisis of formal representative politics, the power-shift from the nation-states towards regional or global political or indeed economic institutions and the lack or rather weak democratic control on these “higher” levels of governance make transnational social movements very interesting objects for research in terms of the strengthening of European democracy and the recognition of new, less formalised, forms of political participation. Concerning the latter, empirical research has shown that the crisis of formal representative democracy does not per se lead to a decline in civic engagement and participation at the level of civil society or social movements (Elchardus, et al., 2000; Frissen, et al., 2001). This contradicts claims by

other authors that social institutions are dissolving and that civic engagement in real life is declining (Putnam, 2000).

1.3. Changing Patterns of Civic Engagement

The nature and extent of civic engagement has however changed considerably over the last decades. Membership as no longer an adequate parameter to assess the degree of participation in a given civil society- or social movement organisation. Engagement and involvement are much less defined in terms of ideology and formal political processes. Furthermore, the big structural and emancipatory issues are no longer the sole triggers for engagement, but rather issues closer to home (local), single-issues (animal rights, ecology, child abuse, clean clothes, etc), or issues that relate to what Giddens (1991:214) and Bennet (1998) have called identity- or life-politics.

“... life politics concerns political issues which flow from processes of self-actualisation in post-traditional contexts, where globalising influences intrude deeply into the reflexive project of the self, and conversely where processes of self-realisation influence global strategies”.

Beck (1994), like Giddens, has argued that political participation and even the perception of what it means to be politically active is being reshaped and this manifests itself in more issue-related and short-term engagement through social movements and through civil society organisations in a broader context. Beck (1994: 23) called this “the non-institutional renaissance of the political” or sub-politics:

“Sub-politics means shaping society from below. Viewed from above, this results in the loss of implementation power, the shrinkage and minimisation of politics. In the wake of sub-politicisation, there are growing opportunities to have a voice and a share in the arrangement of society for groups hitherto uninvolved in the substantive technification and industrialisation process.”

From perspective of Giddens and Beck, individuals see direct action or their activism within social movement organisations as being much more satisfying and politically effective than being a member of a rather hierarchical political party. Civic engagement has in other words partly shifted from the formal democratic level towards a meso-level of analysis, in between the formal political level and the unorganised citizens.

Social movement organisations operate on this meso-level of analysis and allow individuals to engage and interact, particularly on issues or concrete actions that are result-oriented. Transnationally organised social movements can also potentially bypass the “powerless” national state and target international institutions or corporate actors directly. Beck attributes two main characteristics to sub-political actors: the voicing of issues and agenda

setting. This links up with a more culturalist inspired perspective on the relationship between social movements and social change, which argues that cultural innovations not only have an effect on the setting of political agendas. But they also provoke reactions from formal social and political organisations such as classic interest groups and political parties (Touraine, 1981: 24; Melucci, 1981: 179). As such, social movements do not aim to seize power in order to achieve their goals.

Some social movement organisations will of course explicitly want to influence policy through lobbying and engaging with formal political parties, but many other social movement organisations will disengage themselves from formal representative politics and prefer to be political through direct action, changing values, alternative lifestyles and/or developing counter-hegemonies. This also ties in with the work of Habermas and others on the public sphere, as a space in addition, but interlinked with, the realm of the private, government and market (Habermas, 1962; Calhoun, 1992; Janoski, 1998). In his later work, Habermas (1987, 1992) also incorporated social movements or “opinion-forming associations” into his conceptualisation of the public sphere as a discursive arena for debate, deliberation, consensus-building and social action. As such, social movements - being part of civil society and situated in the public sphere - play an increasingly important role in developing a more pluralistic democracy, beyond mere representation and opening up for new more fluid ways of engagement in the political. In this regard, Cohen (1988: 328) contends that:

“Both the complexity and the diversity within contemporary civil society call for the posing of the issues of democratisation in terms of a variety of differentiated processes, forms, loci depending on the axis of division considered. Indeed, there is an elective affinity between the discourse ethic and modern civil society as the terrain on which an institutionalised plurality of democracies can emerge.”

1.4. Internet, Civic Engagement and the Public Sphere

ICTs play an intriguingly schizophrenic role in these complex socio-political evolutions (Norris, 2001; Bimber, 2000; DiMaggio, et al., 2001). On the one hand ICTs could be seen as inclusive in that they facilitate the organisation of sub-political actors, enable new less formalised forms of civic engagement beyond membership and potentially extend the public sphere. But, on the other hand, these technologies are also exclusive in the sense that access is far from universal, nor are the capabilities and means evenly distributed to allow everybody to use and operate these communication-tools efficiently and effectively. Furthermore, this exclusiveness is not only relevant at an individual level (Lazarus & Lora, 2000), but also in terms of the differences between organisations, some disposing of many

resources others of very few, some situated in the more affluent North, others in the South (O'Donnel, 2001). From a participatory perspective, ICTs are therefore not seen as the instruments by which representative democracy will be saved, but rather as an opportunity-structure - opening-up potentialities and opportunities -in the realm of informal political processes and social movement organisations (Splichal, et al., 1994; Dahlgren, 2000).

In this sense the democratic relevance and potential of ICTs does not lie in formal representative politics, but rather in enabling informal political processes by which individuals can engage themselves short-term, issue-oriented, sometimes actively, sometimes passively. As such ICTs can play an important role in processes of social transformation, in mobilising for political action, in networking between social movement organisations, in strengthening the public sphere and/or in empowering disadvantaged communities. They enable social movement organisations to develop common “frames of meaning”, as well as actions, but not in a linear deterministic way. Scott and Street (2001: 46) enumerate four broad reasons why the Internet is attractive for social movements:

- (i) “The Internet allows for mesomobilisation² - co-ordination between movements’ networks across borders and without the need for a transcending hierarchical organisational form;
- (ii) “The Internet allows for a high impact without needing major resources;
- (iii) “The Internet allows the organisations to retain editorial control over content and external communication;
- (iv) “The Internet allows for organisations to bypass state control and communicate in a secure environment.”

In addition to the reasons put forward by Scott and Street, the Internet is also deemed to play an increasingly important role in strengthening the public sphere through the mediation of (political) debate and the expansion of the political sphere (Dahlgren & Sparks, 1991; Dahlberg, 2001; Kellner, 2001). This role is played out through interactive debates and forums, as well as mailing lists or web-actions. In other words, ICTs are relevant in two ways, on the one hand as a tool or instrument to organise social movement organisations locally, nationally, but especially transnationally, and on the other hand as a facilitator of interactive discussion and debate.

One of the main questions raised here is how and in what way ICTs can (potentially) contribute to more, or rather different forms of, political participation. Many authors argue that participating politically is about being active, making a difference, being able to change or influence matters and is therefore also about power-relations and structures within

society as well as within organisations (Pateman, 1972; Almond & Verba, 1980; Barnes & Kaase, 1979). These reductionist models of political participation define participation in terms of the (measurable) effect and are situated within a given political system. Melucci (1996: 307) on the other hand defines political participation from two separate perspectives and thus also includes collective action outside the dominant political system:

“From the perspective of the ruling groups, political participation serves to confirm the priorities of their own interests and to obtain the subordinated consensus of other social groups.... From the perspective of the subordinated groups, participation is a way to increase their influence in the decision-making process by altering institutional power relationships.”

Social movements and their use of ICTs for political action and participation may be considered within the latter perspective of non-institutional collective action. However, Melucci (1996: 307) also has reservations about the use of the concept of political participation for the rather particularistic aims and demands of subordinated groups in society and the mobilisation of individuals for these aims.

It makes more sense to speak of processes of civic engagement, understood here to mean the interaction of (organised) citizens with society and with local, national and international political actors. This allows for the inclusion of public sphere debates and even more passive forms of engagement with the political such as account-membership or receiving an e-mail newsletter. This paper argues that, given the crisis of representative democracy, passive civic engagement is a valuable, albeit slightly contradictory, concept. Passive engagement relates to people that adhere to the goals and strategies of a given social movement organisation, support it sometimes financially, but stop short of being active within that organisation because of time constraints and pressures in contemporary societies. A sensitising event or a specific mobilisation can, however, always change the passive actor into an active one (for instance, the major demonstrations against US policies concerning Iraq). Furthermore, as already pointed out, formal membership is inadequate concept for framing engagement and participation in social movement organisations. This is especially the case in the online-realm where new forms of both active and passive engagement emerge that are more fluid, less formalised, and often short-term.

Active engagement in the offline can be translated into attending protests, other forms of direct actions, doing voluntary work, participating in meetings or being actively involved in an organisation. Passive engagement in the offline relates to account-membership or being present at a meeting without really participating. Civic engagement online can also be more passive or more active. Posting messages or participating in online direct actions is thereby

seen as being active and receiving a newsletter, visiting a forum or subscribing to a mailing list without posting messages is seen as rather passive. The interactive multi-point to multi-point potentials of the Internet does allow both forms to co-exist next to each other. As such active and passive engagement should be seen as a continuum of engagement ranging from the most passive to the most active.

Table 1: Offline and online engagement

	Offline	Online
Active Engagement	Direct actions Participating in meetings Doing voluntary work	posting a message on a forum or mailing list, online direct actions
Passive Engagement	Account-membership, Being present at meetings without participating	receiving a newsletter, visiting a web forum, a website subscribing to mailing list

This study will address some specific questions about the complex context outlined above and more specifically to the role of ICTs in organising transnational social movements, in terms of mediating online civic engagement and in terms of political strategies. This will however be elaborated further in the next section.

2. Analytical Framework and Methodology

Drawing on the context outlined above, three main questions emerged at the forefront of issues to do with ICTs and sub-politics:

- How do transnational social movement organisations use the Internet to organise themselves, both locally and transnationally?
- How do transnational social movement organisations use the Internet to facilitate or mediate online civic engagement?
- How do transnational social movement organisations relate to policy and the political and in what way do ICTs play a role in this?

It is however not easy to translate these research-questions and the issues they touch upon into a sound research-design that can really inform an understanding of the impact of ICTs on informal and/or formal political processes and participation. Therefore an analytical framework has been drawn-up looking at specific issues related to the research questions.

2.1 Outline of the analytical framework

This analytical framework, which will also form the outline of the case studies, is structured as follows:

- (i) Introduction to the organisations
- (ii) Organisation³
 - Degree of Transnationalisation
 - Degree of online and/or offline Interaction
- (iii) Mediation
 - Web-forums and discussion-mailing lists
 - Digital Divide Strategies
- (iv) Political Strategies
 - Policy-influence & influencing the political
 - ICTs, mobilisation and activating engagement

2.1.1 Introduction

For each selected case a descriptive introduction will be provided explaining the aims, the nature of the social movement organisation, as well as the development of its on- as well as offline and its membership structure.

2.1.2. Organisation

The section on organisation will look at the transnational character of the organisation and the way ICTs are being used, both within the organisation and beyond, will be assessed. The degree of transnationalisation depends on the organisation on a local (national) or transnational (international) level. In addition, the degree of interaction, virtual and real-life, will be assessed both internally and externally.

In order to determine whether a given organisation is transnationally “strong” or “weak”, an assessment will be made of the geographical embedding of the different cases. However, the degree of transnationalisation also relates to the way the organisation is organised at a local-national level and/or international organisational level. A strong degree of transnationalisation could mean a presence in a large number of countries, but the organisation could be described as transnationally weak because local branches in all these countries have an own agenda.

Table 2: Degree of Transnationalism

Spread	Degree	Explanation
Geographical
Cultural-Linguistic
Organisational Level	Degree	Spread
Organisational level		
Intra (national)		
Intra (international)		
<i>Gradation: Absent, Weak, Medium, Strong, Not Known</i>		

As this study relates to social movements organised at a transnational level, it can be assumed that the degree of transnationalisation is overall rather strong. However, by taking into account geographical spread on the one hand and differences in terms of organisation at the national/local level and international level on the other hand, this study will attempt to qualify more general claims about transnationalisation.

In addition to a critical assessment of the degree of transnationalisation, this paper will also consider the degree of interaction between the organisation and its members/participants (both on a national and international level), with other organisations (inter) and with the outside world (extra), online as well as in the real world. Therefore, one of the main questions here is whether the organisation focuses more on the real world or whether its existence is rooted in and only present in the online world.

Table 3: Degree of Interaction

Organisational Level	Virtual Interaction	Real Life Interaction
Intra (national)
Intra (international)
Inter
Extra
<i>Gradation: Absent, Weak, Medium, Strong, Exclusive, Not Known</i>		

“Exclusive” means that communication and interaction is only done virtually or in real life at a given organisational level. “Strong” means that communication and interaction is mainly situated online or rather in real-life. “Medium” gives an equal importance to online and offline; “weak” means that communication, and interaction is rather low, be it online or offline.

2.1.3 Mediation

This analysis will consider interactive tools like *online forums* and *discussion mailing lists* as well as the strategies adopted by the different social movement organisations to deal with the paradox of inclusion/exclusion, or more specifically the *digital divide*.

2.1.3.1 Online Forums and Discussion Mailing Lists

These allow for both passive and active forms of inter-active civic engagement. They are also directed towards the outside world and thus open for anybody to follow, as well as join in, the discussions that are at hand. The focus in the analysis will be on the degree of *interactivity*, defined here as debate between members or participants; the degree of *lurking* or passive engagement, if it is possible to determine; the *diversity of issues* being addressed; as the different *opinions* being voiced; and finally the degree of *flaming*.

A strong *degree of interactivity* would mean that there is considerable debate within the forum and that the discussion is not monopolised by a select number of “opinion makers”. “Weak” interactivity would signify that discussion is monopolised by a limited number of participants or that the debate tends to be overshadowed by postings aiming to mobilise or inform. “Medium” relates to a balance between debate and information, or a presence of opinion-makers, but without any monopolising.

The *degree of lurking* is interesting it enables a framing of passive engagement, but it is often difficult to research. In some cases it will therefore be impossible to empirically determine if passive engagement, in the sense of following (part of) the discussion, but not participation in it, is “strong”, “medium” or “weak”.

The *diversity of issues*, relates partly to the nature of the organisation of issues being raised and discussed, this can be very diverse (“strong”), or single-issue (“weak”). “Medium” would refer to a cluster of interrelated issues that goes beyond single-issue, but could neither be called a big range of different issues.

The presence of a *diversity of opinions* also plays an important role in a healthy debate. If everybody has similar views, there is no discussion, no debate. A “strong” diversity of opinion would mean that many opposing views are present. A forum or discussion-list with a “weak” diversity of opinion would have relatively uniform views on the issues discussed and could, but not necessarily, also be intolerant of dissident views. “Medium” would refer

to a forum or list that has differences of opinion, but may, nevertheless, be situated in a certain ideological sphere.

Table 4: Online Forums and Discussion Mailing Lists

	Degree	Explanation
Degree of Interactivity
Degree of Lurking
Diversity of Issues
Diversity of Opinions
Degree of Flaming
<i>Gradation: Absent, Weak, Medium, Strong, Not Known</i>		

A “strong” diversity of opinions can be both positive and negative. When opinions are too antagonistic, the debate could derail into “flaming” which tends to put people off. Thus, a “strong2 degree of flaming would refer to serious insults going back and forth between participants of a given forum or discussion mailing list. A “weak” degree of flaming indicates that there are clashes between participants, but that it remains civilised. “Medium” does not apply in here!

2.1.3.2. Access to ICTs

As argued earlier, the unequal distribution of access to ICTs and in capabilities to use (or abuse) these communicative technologies is a constraining factor when looking at the democratic and participatory uses of ICT for civic engagement and/or participation. The digital divide questions the often inclusive and democratic nature of social movement organisations. On a transnational level this problematique is even more relevant as large parts of the world population, especially in the South, but also within the Western societies cannot access the Internet and many of these transnational social movement organisations exclusively use the Internet. The focus here will be on which strategies are being developed to overcome this inclusive/exclusive paradox.

A “strong” digital divide strategy would imply that the organisation is not only aware of this paradox, but also takes active steps to counter it. This would mean the development of concrete alternatives to include those who are not online. A good example of this is media-diversification. A “weak” strategy would mean that the organisation is conscious of the digital divide, but is unable to actively do something about it. A “medium” strategy points to active steps, but situated in the online.

Table 5: Digital Divide Strategies

Social Organisations	Movement	Degree	Explanation
...
...
...
...
<i>Gradation: Absent, Weak, Medium, Strong, Not Known</i>			

2.1.4 Influencing

The last section relates to the political or more specifically to the different political strategies social movement organisations adopt in order to achieve their often very political goals. As argued before, some organisations will try to explicitly influence the formal political process, while others will focus on changing life-styles or influencing the political agenda and public sphere. This also applies to different political strategies, mainly lobbying, direct action, or combinations of both.

Table 6: Political Strategies

	Virtual	Real Life
Policy-Influence (Lobbying)
Being Political (Direct Action)
<i>Gradation: Absent, Weak, Medium, Strong, Not Known</i>		

“Absent” usually means that the organisation does not lobby or seeks to reach their aims through the formal political process, but it can also mean that the organisation is not involved in direct actions. The gradation “weak”, “medium”, “strong” applies to the extent of linkage with formal politics or the degree of direct action the organisation is involved in. Strategies might also differ in real life and online. An organisation could be called “strong” in terms of direct actions online, but rather “weak” in real life.

This assessment of political strategies alone will however not be sufficient to determine what precise role ICTs have or not have in terms of “*the political*”. Therefore an additional case will be selected that brings together the use of ICTs, mobilisation, activating engagement, influencing the public sphere, direct action, as well as the involvement of formal politics and other interests. This case will serve to assess the specific role of ICTs in

this regard, as well as other issues being addressed in this research, such as the crisis of the classic representative “membership” model.

2.2. Selection of the Cases

Different types of social movements are using the Internet extensively as a means to extend their work geographically, organise internationally, build global or regional coalitions with like-minded organisations, mobilise beyond their own constituencies, spread information on a global scale and support global public spheres. Furthermore ICTs enable interactive collaboration over time and space (for example, Norris, 2002 - Warkentin & Mingst, 2000 - Calabrese, 1999 - Anheier et al., 2001: 6).

This study focuses primarily on organisations that use ICTs to achieve their goals and these ICT-based organisations have been described as “*Virtual Organisations*” (Zouridis et al., 2001: 42) This virtualisation of social movements manifests itself in the extensive use of digital networks to influence, shape or catalyse processes of social change. Four main ideal types of “virtual” organisation can be identified⁴:

(i) Umbrella organisation: is an overarching organisation that performs certain tasks in function of its autonomous contributors. It can have an advocacy task in function of its members

- It can facilitate the working of its members by pooling expertise and resources in certain fields

Within global civil society, there are not many organisations to be found that could be seen in this way.

(ii) Portal organisation: is an organisation that functions as a virtual store window in which users are directed towards other information, sites and organisations via links.

- The portal organisation as such does not provide information, although it is inevitable that it has a selection or editorial function.
- Although portals might be the initiative of a network of organisations, they can also be the initiative of individual organisations.

(iii) Platform organisation: is an organisation that provides a virtual platform for interaction, organisation and communication.

- Ideally the interaction is not mediated, nor is the accessible information edited or censored.

- It provides a platform for the development of alternative discourses, influence public opinion and shape policies
- (iv) Web organisation is a loose term that refers to the most interactive tools on the web such as forums, discussion lists, discussion groups and virtual communities.
- The interaction most often takes place between individuals, either as professionals, citizens or a mixture of both.
 - The examples are varied and often difficult to describe, due to the lack of structure and transparency.

This report takes the view that this typology provides a useful tool to select a diversity of cases that embody the multitude of issues being raised by transnational civil society organisations, the variety of organisational structures and the different levels of governance they address (Dahlgren, 2000).

In accordance with the main characteristics of each type, four cases have been selected:

Table 7: Case typology

Type	Characteristics	Selected Case	URL
Umbrella Organisation	advocacy, representative, promoting use of ICTs	APC	http://www.apc.org
Portal Organisation	intermediary, sometimes with editors, mostly issue-oriented.	LabourStart	http://www.LabourStart.org
Platform Organisation	not mediated, interactive, development of counter-discourses	ATTAC	http://www.attac.org
Web Organisation	forum, mailing-lists, networking, mobilisation, alternative source of information	Indymedia	http://www.Indymedia.org

Of course, it should be noted that—like every typology—this typology is an ideal type. In reality many virtual associations function as different types of virtual organisation. Website-based virtual organisations often perform different functions such as platform,

portal and web organisation. The problematic nature of typologies—as a construct—and the selection of only one case per type make it problematic to formulate generalising conclusions relating to the differentiated types of virtual organisations. Furthermore, it should be noted that the selection of specific cases, although being guided by the typology and with attention for diversity and the transnational character of the organisation, is necessarily subjective.

For mediation of participation an ATTAC discussion mailing list was selected, as well as web forums of LabourStart and Indymedia. In addition, another more specific case was selected in relation to what has been called “the political” in the analytical framework. The case of the battle for the preservation of the forest of Lappersfort in Bruges (Belgium) enabled the researchers to assess the impact of ICTs in terms of mobilisation, activating engagement and influencing the socio-political agenda. ATTAC, as well as Indymedia were active in this “battle”.

2.3. Methodologies

Instead of looking at a single issue in-depth, this project has used several methods to explore the triadic relation between transnational social movements, ICT-use and civic engagement.

Table 8: Methodologies

1. Organisation - Degree of transnationalisation -Degree of online and/or offline Interaction	Analysis of web presence In-depth Interviews Documentary desk-study
2, Mediation -Web-Forums and Mailing list -Digital Divide	Content analysis of web-forums and discussion mailing list Analysis of web presence In-depth Interviews
3 Influencing -Policy-influence versus influencing the political -ICTs, mobilisation and activating engagement	In-depth interviews Analysis of web presence Documentary desk-study

The analysis starts with a more descriptive analysis of the four case studies based on desk-study and secondary literature. After that the different cases will be comparatively analysed with in terms of organisation, civic engagement and the political. As was explained in the analytical framework different issues will be addressed on each of these three topics. This

also requires the adoption and use of different methodological designs for each topic. The techniques used comprise a mix of a documentary desk-study, a hermeneutic web-analysis, complemented with in-depth interviews of key people involved in the civil society organisations and a content analysis of two web forums and a discussion mailing list.

2.3.1 Analysing Organisation

The degree of transnationalisation and interaction will be determined through an analysis of the web presence⁵ of the different organisations, and its different functions, in terms of informing, mobilising, space for discussion, networking, etc. By analysing the publicly visible use of the Internet, one can get an indication of how the organisation works and how it uses the potentialities of the Internet in its working, its communication strategies, its mobilisation of members, etc. This is complemented with in-depth interviews of important people within the different organisations and the study of relevant documents produced by the organisation or others.

2.3.2 Analysing Mediation

In terms of the analysis of web forums and discussion mailing lists in view of inter-active engagement, a limited content analysis of several open or semi-open forums and discussion-mailing lists will be conducted. The analysis of the web presence as well as the in-depth interviews will provide a solid basis to describe the different strategies for dealing with the digital divide.

2.3.3. Analysing Political Strategies

The in-depth interviews are a valuable source of information were an invaluable source of information on the political strategies of the different organisations. The study of documents and the analysis of the web presence also helped. These two methods are also relevant for the case that brings together ICTs, activating engagement, direct action and formal politics.

Table 9 provides details of the people with whom in-depth interviews were conducted. The main drawback of this approach is the risk of failing to get an in-depth insight into specific issues. Its main advantage is possibility of avoiding seeing only one side and over-optimism about the selection of exceptional cases or looking into specific features.

Table 9: Key People

Organisation	Interview	Position	Date
APC	A.E.	Executive Director	24/05/2002
LabourStart	O.Van R.	Co-ordinator LabourStart.nl	15/04/2002
LabourStart	E.L.	Founder of LabourStart	17/06/2002
ATTAC	S.P.	Co-ordinator of ATTAC-Brussel	14/05/2002
ATTAC	E.G.	Elected spokesperson of ATTAC-Flanders	23/05/2002
ATTAC	F.J.	Webmaster of ATTAC-Flanders	25/05/2002
ATTAC	L.J.	Webmaster of ATTAC-France and ATTAC-international	13/06/2002
Indymedia	M.M.	Active member of Indymedia Belgium	10/09/2002
Indymedia	S.P.	Active member of Indymedia Netherlands	18/12/2002

3. Empirical Findings

A descriptive analysis of the four selected organisations will precede a more thorough analysis of the identified issues and topics dealing with *organisation*, *online civic engagement* and *the political*.

3.1. Descriptive Analysis of the four 4 cases

3.1.1 <http://www.apc.org> (umbrella)

The Association for Progressive Communications functions as a network of networks and has been active since 1990. It can be regarded as an international non-profit umbrella organisation linking 24 national or regional computer networks⁶ and serving the needs of the social change sector.

It was established to facilitate co-operation, information-sharing, and technical interoperability among its members. APC not only promotes the development of non-

commercial online spaces for and by NGOs, but also lobbies for the inclusion of the information and communication needs of civil society in telecommunication, donor and investment policy.

“The APC is a global network of civil society organisations dedicated to empowering and supporting groups and individuals working for peace, human rights, development and protection of the environment, through the strategic use of information and communication technologies (ICTs), including the Internet.”

Most APC networks provide a wide range of services, including dial-up access, e-mail, computer conferencing, online databases and website development and hosting. Furthermore, APC services also include in-house training sessions, training sessions in the user's workplace or at conferences, workshops for activists. According to Rory O'Brien and Andrew Clement (2000) APC played a vital role in the introduction of ICTs into civil society. The network of members and partners of APC spans the globe, with presence in Western, Central and Eastern Europe, Africa, Asia and the Pacific, Latin America and North America. APC has a rather small staff that runs the organisation from day-to-day. Each staff member lives in a different country and communicates daily via email.

APC pleads amongst other for Internet Rights guaranteeing the right of people to use the Internet in order to freely exchange information and opinions. In this regard APC gathers and disseminates information about telecommunications, Internet and freedom of information policies. It also creates awareness in civil society of communications policy issues. Furthermore, APC is also actively involved in ensuring that censored content (for political or economic reasons) is freely available on the net. APC also regularly organises online and face-to-face workshops directed at enhancing its members' professional development. Examples of this are: training opportunities for technicians, women and business planning. APC also co-ordinates regional workshops in Central and Eastern Europe, Europe and Latin America, capacity-building workshops on themes such as portal development, and collaborative evaluation methodology planning. Lastly, APC is also very active in voicing the needs and preoccupations of its members and the disadvantaged communities its members represent in international forums.

In order to become a member of APC, the applicant (NGO) must comply with a few conditions. Firstly, they must *“agree with and work to further APCs mission”* and secondly it must *“primarily work with Civil Society Organisations and social movements”*, and lastly the applying organisation must be accepted for membership by the other members. In this sense membership of APC is much formalised. The member also has to pay a membership fee, which is dependent of the size and financial possibilities of the NGO (minimum 300\$).

Furthermore, the projects, the membership fees are the main source of income for APC. Five people are being paid by APC, mostly part-time and 27 organisations are formally members of APC. Each member-organisation has to designate two representatives, so that it is always possible to contact someone of the member-organisation.

3.1.2 <http://www.labourstart.org> (portal)

The LabourStart-page could be considered a very dynamic portal site towards the international labour movement and was originally developed by Eric Lee. It is supported by Labour and Society International (<http://www.lsi.org.uk/>), an independent organisation that aims:

"to link the trade union movement with other parts of civil society and to help unions to develop a wider agenda."

There are different versions of LabourStart with local labour news in the local language⁷. A network of 144 volunteer correspondents based in some 30 countries⁸ update the LabourStart-pages daily. According to LabourStart on average 50 or more news stories are submitted to the site every day. These news stories come from mainstream sources, from trade union websites, as well as from alternative media sources.

LSI also networks with international trade secretariats such as the International Transport Workers Federation (ITF), the International Federation of Chemical, Energy, Mines and General Workers Unions (ICEM), the International Union of Food Agricultural and Allied Workers (IUF), the International Textile, Garment and Leather Workers Federation (ITGLWF), Union Network International (UNI) and the International Metalworkers Federation. Furthermore, LabourStart also has contacts with other national and international labour organisations such as DFID, the ILO, the FNV (Netherlands), the DGB (Germany), and the Commonwealth TUC.

The activities of LabourStart principally relate to the diffusion of (local) news and information about the labour movement worldwide. As a virtual window to and for the local and international labour movement, it does not engage itself in real life activities. Individual correspondents are however active in their local labour organisation and beyond. In addition to the daily updated links to local labour news, LabourStart has developed several other services, which makes that it has transcended the typical portal site. A weekly newsletter, forums relating to labour-issues and directories of labour organisations are examples of this diversification. As a virtual window to and for the local and international labour movement, LabourStart itself normally does not engage in real life activities (though some of its correspondents might). LabourStart does however participate in online direct

action. An example of this is the ActNow-campaigns against aggression towards unions and individual union activists worldwide. By submitting a virtual protest letter individuals can put governments and/or companies under pressure to reconsider their actions.

The procedure for becoming a correspondent for LabourStart is very transparent. The correspondent applies and is being introduced to the network of correspondents, but there has never been a meeting or chat session about procedures. This is at odds with the more strictly procedural character of social movements like the labour union. The threshold is low and the necessary skills for uploading links is fairly easy and straightforward. Correspondents do this on a voluntary basis and are usually active in a local labour organisation.

3.1.3 <http://www.attac.org> (platform)

ATTAC was founded in 1998 by a group of French citizens, associations, trade unions and newspapers:

‘La première originalité d'ATTAC, à partir d'une proposition du Monde diplomatique, c'est précisément d'avoir, d'emblée, mis autour de la même table des composantes d'associations d'éducation populaire, d'organisations du mouvement social et des organisations syndicales, en y adjoignant des organes de presse, autour d'un objectif dans lequel elles pouvaient toutes se reconnaître: reconquérir les espaces perdus par la démocratie au profit de la sphère financière’ (ATTAC, 2001).

In first instance ATTAC, which stands for “*Action pour une taxe Tobin d'aide aux citoyens*”, —pleaded for the introduction of a Tobin-tax to counter speculation and re-regulate the financial markets. But as its platform text suggests ATTAC also pursues the much broader goal of altering the dominant global neo-liberal economic framework. That is,

“preventing international speculation, taxing capital revenue, punishing fiscal paradises, stopping the extension of pension funds and, more generally, recapturing the spaces of democracy lost to the financial sphere and to oppose any new abandonment of the sovereignty of states on the pretext of ensuring the "right" of investors and merchants. It is simply a question of taking back, together, the future of our world” (Website ATTAC, 2002).

By 2002 ATTAC had spread to 31 countries, with local activists developing activities⁹. Its international activities include: the co-organisation of international meetings where citizens, NGOs, social movements, trade unions and associations can link up and develop strategies for action and social change (“un autre davos: mondialisation des résistances et des luttes” in Zürich (27-31/01/1999), “Another world is possible”, an International Meeting in Paris (24-26/06/1999), “Paving the Way to a New World” in Geneva (22-25/06/2000).

ICT play a major role in mobilising for international and local protests, diffusion of information, reports and points of view, networking with other organisations, and the hosting of discussion forums. As stated by Summers of “Forum Internet Live” during the ATTAC Alter Davos – meeting in Zürich:

“There is now a global civil society who are able to 'talk' to each other via the Internet and achieve results in their co-operation. It has been done once with the MAI¹⁰ and it can be done again.”

ATTAC uses ICTs in order to mobilise for action, to connect people and to discuss issues. The site provides information about activities, publications and links to local affiliations. For debates, mailing lists are used. It serves as a platform for the development of alternative discourses and strategies by individuals, as well as like-minded civil society organisations.

The activities of ATTAC are diverse and relate mostly to “real life” activities. Normally a local branch meets once every month and these meetings often last much longer than intended and are animated with lively discussions. Apart from the meetings, there are all sorts of activities relating to specific demonstrations or concrete issues. For, example, training-weekends for the safety-team of the demonstration (dealing with police, with aggressive demonstrators); presentations about the Tobin-tax and the international financial architecture; a walk through Brussels passing by all the financially important buildings, such as Euronext. In Germany ATTAC was present at Documenta11 in Kassel where one of the main themes was “democracy unrealised”. In France ATTAC recently started a new campaign to protect public services and against liberalisation and privatisation and, through ATTAC international, this has resonated in other branches. The list activities associated with this campaign (cf. <http://www.attac.org>). The diversity of activities has led to the German ATTAC referring to itself a “Bildungsbewegung”, stressing the combination of action and expertise.

For an organisation such as ATTAC, ICTs have proven to be insufficient as the binding tool. The need for a structure is clearly emerging. ATTAC-Flanders was at the time of writing working on statutes and a more formal way for individuals to become a member. This is consistent with experiences in France, where individual members pay from 15 to 45 Euro's. There are however differences between an organisation with 30.000 members (France) and one with 400 (Flanders). In a sense the much smaller ATTAC-Flanders is reluctant to over-structure, which would kill its flexibility. Smaller branches such as ATTAC-Flanders favour active members who are involved and engaged, for bigger

branches such as ATTAC-France high involvement is less of an issue as they can rely on a large enough network of volunteers.

3.1.4 <http://www.indymedia.org> (web)

Indymedia is a worldwide network of independent media organisations through which several hundred dedicated journalists cover grassroots activities and actions and thereby distancing themselves explicitly of corporate interests. Indymedia considers itself:

“A collective of independent media organisations and hundreds of journalists offering grassroots, non-corporate coverage. Indymedia is a democratic media outlet for the creation of radical, accurate, and passionate tellings of truth”.

The Seattle “Independent Media Center”, the information-provider during the protests against the WTO-summit in December 1999, served as a model and its success led to a global network of similar initiatives, locally organised. IMCs are active in 41 countries¹¹ and combine a global view with news on local actions. They have been very active in mobilising for and informing on protests against summit-meetings of international organisations such as G8, WTO, EU, etc. In some of the bigger countries, like the United States or Canada, several local IMCs are active.

Although supported by organisations in civil society, Indymedia is largely a virtual platform bringing together both individuals and organisations. It uses new technologies to provide an alternative and organic public space that also functions as a space for steering and promoting civic action. In order to maximise exposure the independent media centres have recently also started to collaborate with local action radios. Radio Bruxxel, a collaboration between several Belgian action radios, Indymedia and other organisations provided four days of alternative information and coverage of the protests during the European Summit in Laken (Brussels) in December 2001. Joint teams of the radio’s and Indymedia produced the programs, which were then transmitted live on all the participating radios, but also through the Internet. This also allowed other radio station worldwide to re-transmit it. In other words by linking local traditional and global new media the organisation for an alternative globalisation combines the strong points of both media in an innovative way. ICTs and the possibilities they provide for live broadcasts through the net or for exchanging recorded programs, intensifies the scope and interaction between independent media centres and local action radio’s world-wide. The use of flyers and brochures also indicates that a ”multi”-media approach is being pursued.

The main activity of Indymedia consists of providing alternative information and opinions on a wide range of topics. Indymedia also democratises media as every individual can post

an article or react to an article, which sometimes leads to heated debates. The Indymedia format stimulates interactivity through an open publishing philosophy. However, this openness does not mean that no choices have to be made, concerning unwanted content (for example, on racism) or which stories get featured on the “front page”. The criteria used to determine this are however often unclear. Indymedia Germany has much internal information online, in particular, procedures and internal voting mechanisms but in contrast Indymedia Belgium is a much more closed organisation. When looking at different IMCs, some are also more open and transparent than others. This can be linked to tactical or rather strategic decisions, as the independent media centres are also targeted by security services. However, differences in culture and local contexts also play a considerable role in these differences.

Indymedia is an atypical social movement organisation, as formal membership does not really exist. The active engagement of people is very cyclical and dependent on big events, when the organisation can rely on a big network of volunteer journalists, people making photographs, technical support, dispatchers, etc. During such events Indymedia is regarded by many, also traditional media organisations, as a prime source of information. Furthermore, continuity is usually assured by a small core-group.

3.2. Organisation

3.2.1 Degree of Transnationalisation

One of the criteria for the selection of cases, was that the organisations should have a transnational character, so it should come as no surprise that the degree of transnationalisation at the international organisational level of the organisations is overall rather strong. More in-depth analysis does however qualify this general observation of strong transnationalisation. First an assessment will be made of the geographical spread of the different cases. This will be followed by an analysis of the degree of transnationalisation at the local and international levels of the organisation.

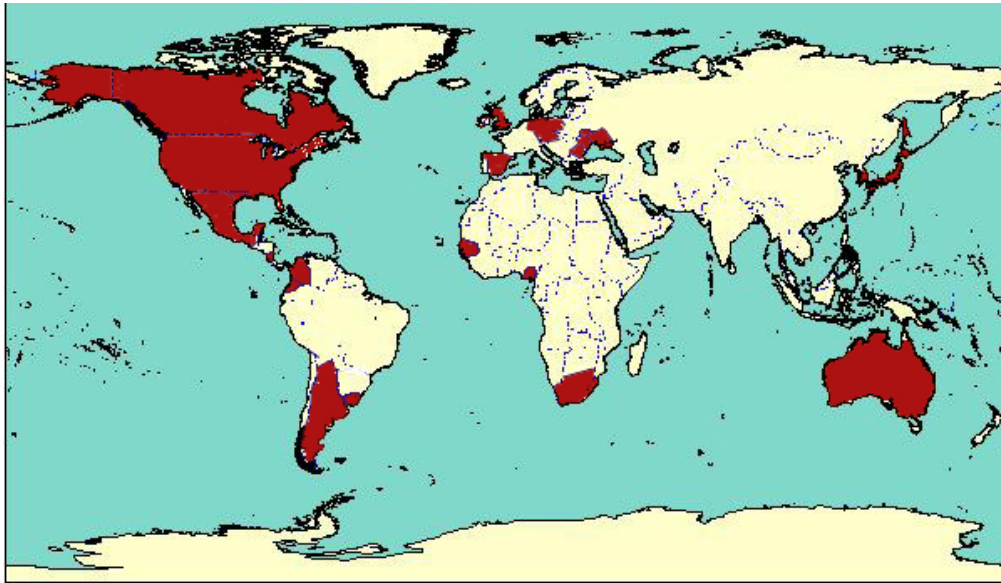
3.2.1.1 Geographical and cultural embedding

It is possible to assess the nature of transnationalisation by visualising the presence of the cases in different countries and relating this to cultural, linguistic and regional contexts.

APC:

APC is professionalised and could be described as a transnationalised forum for interaction between its dispersed members.

Fig.1: Geographical and Cultural Embedding of APC



As can be seen on the map above, as well as the table below, APC has members in almost all continents. It is especially strong in North and South America as well as (Eastern) Europe, but rather weak in Asia and Africa and there are no APC-members in the Middle East.

Although English and Spanish are rather dominant, other languages and cultures are also represented. The strong presence of APC in Eastern Europe does foster diversity at this level. It is however surprising, considering the attention for development issues, that only three members of APC are located in Africa. On the other hand English- as well as French-speaking Africa is represented.

Overall, it can be concluded that APC is embedded in a strong transnational context, linking different continents and cultures. The number of countries where APC-members are located is rather limited, and some parts of the world are underrepresented, but there is a balanced cultural spread.

Table 10: Dispersal of APC

Continent	Country	Main Language
Europe:	UK	English
	Spain	Spanish
	Germany	German
	Hungary	Hungarian

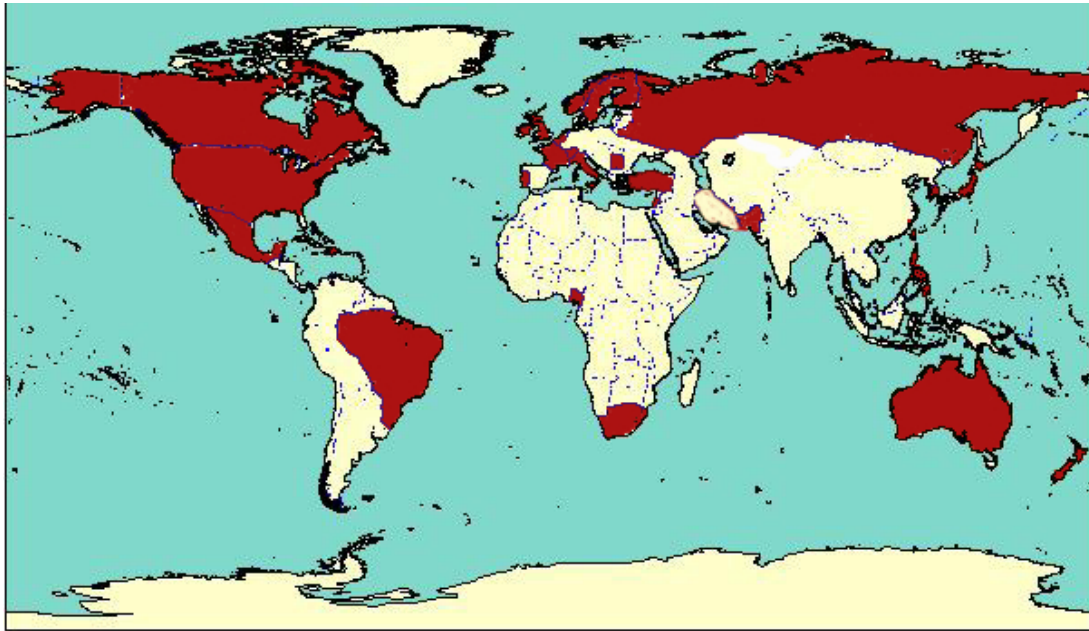
	Bulgaria Romania Slovakia Czech Rep Ukraine	Bulgarian Romanian Slovak Czech Ukrainian, Russian
North-America:	USA Canada Mexico	English English/French Spanish
South-America:	Uruguay Argentina Colombia Ecuador Nicaragua Curacao	Spanish Spanish Spanish Spanish Spanish Dutch
Asia-Pacific:	Japan S-Korea Australia	Japanese Korean English
Middle-East:	-	-
Africa:	Nigeria S-Africa Senegal	English English French

LabourStart:

The case of LabourStart illustrates that the Internet allows for widespread transnational activity with little or no resources.

LabourStart correspondents are located throughout the globe, covering all continents. But as the map above and the table below shows, they are especially strong in North America, (Western-)Europe and the Asia-Pacific region. In Africa and Latin-America LabourStart has much fewer correspondents.

Fig.2: Geographical and Cultural Embedding of LabourStart



This however does not mean that LabourStart fails to cover these regions in terms of Labour related news. It is not because there are no correspondents present in some countries that no news-stories are being gathered. In some countries, the climate for labour activists can be quite hostile. There is for example no LabourStart correspondent located in China, but China is covered through correspondents in Taiwan and Hong-Kong. One of the correspondents is physically located in the UK, but covers labour issues in Iran as part of the “Solidarity Campaign with Iranian Workers”. Indeed, some correspondents might be located in the West, but do cover labour issues in other continents through their own network of contacts in less accessible countries.

In terms of linguistic and cultural spreading it is fair to state that LabourStart is very diverse and covers all major languages of the world. This also shows in the different versions of the LabourStart website in Dutch, English, French, Norwegian, Portuguese, Spanish, Swedish, Turkish and Esperanto. Furthermore, versions in Japanese, Mandarin, Danish, Setswana and Urdu are under construction.

Overall, these results suggest LabourStart could be regarded as having a very strong transnational basis, as it is present in all continents and even more importantly offers content from all continents in different languages.

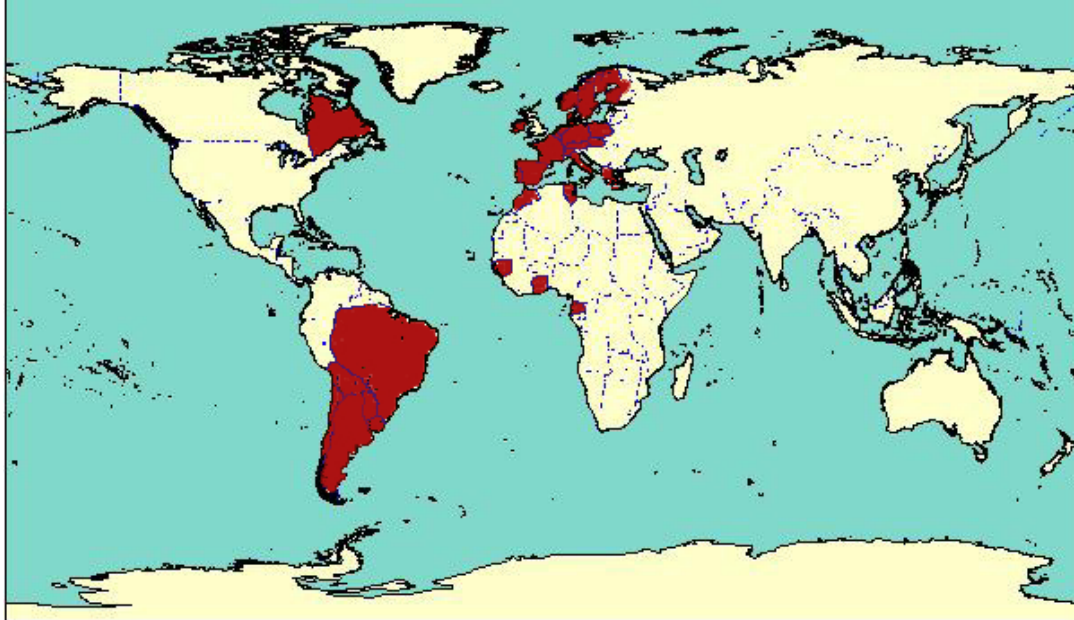
Table 11: Dispersal of LabourStart

Continent	Country	Main Language
Europe:	UK	English
	Ireland	English
	Belgium	Dutch/French
	Netherlands	Dutch
	Sweden	Swedish
	Norway	Norwegian
	Finland	Finnish
	Switzerland	German/French/Italian
	Italy	Italian
	France	French
	Portugal	Portuguese
	Yugoslavia	Serbian
	Russia	Russian
North & Central-America	USA	English
	Canada	English/French
	Mexico	Spanish
South-America & Caribbean:	Brazil	Portuguese
	Trinidad & Tobago	English
	Haiti	French
Asia-Pacific:	Japan	Japanese
	S-Korea	Korean
	Philippines	English/Filipino
	Taiwan	Mandarin
	Hong Kong	English/Cantonese
	Pakistan	English/Punjabi
	New-Zealand	English
	Australia	English
Middle-East:	Turkey	Turkish
	Israel	Hebrew/Arabic
Africa:	Nigeria	English
	S-Africa	English

ATTAC:

ATTAC is a transnational coalition of local entities acting upon a common agenda and developing alternative discourses. As this study only looks at the use of the Internet, only the ATTAC-branches with a web presence have been taken into account.

Fig.3: Geographical and Cultural Embedding of ATTAC



As such, the map above and the table below shows very clearly that ATTAC is mainly present in (Western-)Europe and Latin-America. In Africa and North America ATTAC is rather marginal and in Asia-Pacific as well as the Middle East it is even absent.

It is fair to say that ATTAC is foremost embedded in French, and to a lesser extent, Spanish cultural tradition. In Europe, its presence is strong in many countries with different languages, but the Africa or North America representation highlights the dominance of the “Roman” culture within ATTAC.

All African countries where ATTAC is present are former colonies of France and thus French-speaking and in North America the only ATTAC branch is located in Quebec, also French-speaking. This shows how persuasive cultural and linguistic ties can be in terms of the transnational links of organisations.

From a geographical perspective the transnationalisation of ATTAC can be qualified as “medium” because it is mainly focussed on Europe and Latin-America and embedded in a the French cultural sphere.

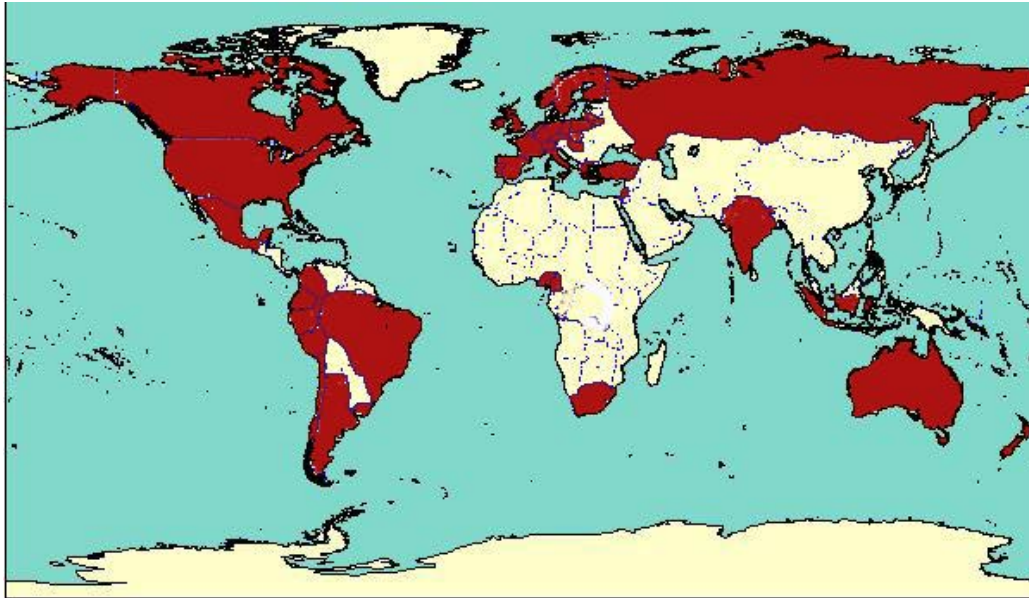
Table 11: Dispersal of LabourStart

Continent	Country	Main Language
Europe:	Ireland	English
	Belgium	Dutch/French
	Luxembourg	French
	Netherlands	Dutch
	Sweden	Swedish
	Norway	Norwegian
	Finland	Finnish
	Denmark	Danish
	Switzerland	German/French/Italian
	Italy	Italian
	France	French
	Portugal	Portuguese
	Spain	Spanish
	Andorra	Catalan/French
	Greece	Greek
	Austria	German
	Germany	German
	Poland	Polish
	Hungary	Hungarian
North & Central-America	Quebec (Canada)	French
South-America & Caribbean:	Brazil	Portuguese
	Bolivia	Spanish
	Uruguay	Spanish
	Paraguay	Spanish
	Chile	Spanish
	Argentina	Spanish
Asia-Pacific:	-	-
Middle-East:	-	-
Africa:	Morocco	French
	Tunisia	French
	Sénégal	French
	Côte d'Ivoire	French
	Cameroon	French

Indymedia:

Indymedia is a transnational coalition of independent local initiatives with a common aim to provide alternative news and support direct actions.

Fig.4: Geographical and Cultural Embedding of Indymedia



As the map and the table below suggests the geographical spread of Indymedia is quite extensive. Europe and the America's are especially well represented, but Africa and Asia are less so. The number of IMCs has also increased steadily. In the course of this study, the number of countries where Indymedia is present went from 24 to 41!

Table 12: Dispersal of Indymedia

Continent	Country	Main Language
Europe:	UK (2)	English
	Germany	German
	Austria	German
	Belgium (2)	Dutch/French
	Netherlands	Dutch
	Sweden	Swedish
	Norway	Norwegian
	Finland	Finnish
	Spain	Spanish
	Portugal	Portuguese
	Italy	Italian
	France (3)	French
	Switzerland	French/German/Italian

	Greece (2) Cyprus Turkey Czech Rep. Russia Poland Hungary	Greek Greek/Turkish Turkish Czech Russian Polish Hungarian
North & Central-America:	USA (45) Canada (11) Mexico (4)	English English/French Spanish
South-America & Caribbean::	Argentina (2) Colombia Bolivia (2) Ecuador Chile Peru Uruguay Brazil	Spanish Spanish Spanish Spanish Spanish Spanish Spanish Portuguese
Asia-Pacific:	Australia (4) New Zealand Indonesia India (2)	English English Bahasa/English English
Middle-East:	Israel Palestine	Hebrew/Arabic Arabic
Africa:	Ambazonia (Ex-British Southern Cameroon) Nigeria South Africa	English English English

Although Indymedia is present in many countries and in all continents, it is foremost embedded in the Anglo-Saxon cultural sphere. Most sites are in English and there are no IMCs in French-speaking Africa. This does however not mean that French is absent.

Overall, it can be concluded that the geographical spread is Indymedia “strong”, as it is present in all continents, but the cultural spread can be qualified as medium, as Indymedia is to some extent dominated by the Anglo-Saxon culture.

3.1.1.2 Differences between National and International level of the organisation

The distinction between national and international has been introduced for two reasons. First, because of the differences between the organisational structure of the different organisations and second, because of the different strategies being pursued on the local/national level and the international level of the organisations. In terms of the former, APC and LabourStart do not have “local” branches. APC has members in different countries, as LabourStart has correspondents in different countries, but the organisations as such are transnationally organised. Indymedia and ATTAC on the other hand are transnational organisations that are made up of many national branches. Moreover, national organisations or entities are subdivided even more into local cells. This makes them organisationally very different.

a) Transnationalisation at the local-national organisational level:

APC = Absent. As stated before APC does not have a local or national organisational level, its core staff is dispersed.

LS = Absent.

As with APC, LabourStart does not have local branches, as it is based in London.

ATTAC = Weak.

The degree of transnationalisation at the local level is rather weak in the case of ATTAC. Local cells are totally decentralised and have their own structures and procedures. Apart from links to the national intra-organisational structures, local members are not necessarily active at the transnational level. Furthermore, the national level is an intermediary between the local cells and the ATTAC International, which makes that only a limited number of local activists are active on a transnational level. It is therefore even questionable whether all activists share a common ideology.

IMC = Weak. Transnationalisation at the local level is also rather “weak” in the Indymedia case. Local IMCs are totally decentralised and have their own structures and procedures. Apart from one or two representatives in the international intra-organisational structures, local members are not necessarily active at the transnational level. Individuals might share a joined view on participatory non-commercial communication, they do not necessarily share the same political or cultural background.

b) Transnationalisation at the international organisational level:

APC = Strong.

At an international level, the degree of transnationalisation within APC can be considered “strong”. The APC staff is in daily contact with each other through e-mail. Furthermore, a closed newsgroup, in essence a relatively “outdated” Internet-format, is used as a tool to have online-meetings between the dispersed members. The hierarchical structure of a newsgroup allows members to put forward proposals as well as to react to the proposals of other members. APC is only present in a relatively limited number of countries. Nevertheless, its members are present on the different continents and encompass different cultural spheres, therefore it might be even more transnational than other organisations.

LS = Strong.

The transnationalisation within LabourStart is very “strong” at the international level. Its correspondents across the world upload links in the LabourStart database on a daily basis. A user-friendly tool resulted furthermore in a low threshold for correspondents to update local and international labour news. LabourStart exists in nine languages and is being fed by almost 150 correspondents worldwide. Correspondents also communicate with each other through e-mail and a mailing list. This exchange of labour related information from across the world works very well.

ATTAC = Medium.

ATTAC has branches in 48 countries and a web-presence in 33 countries. However, major differences exist between local branches. In France, for example, the organisation has over 30.000 members, it is well structured and has broad support of the whole population. This is in sharp contrast with ATTAC-Flanders who has 400 individual members and 30 organisational members, the organisation is a loose coalition of activists and does not have the same impact. This also represents a substantial difference in resources, volunteers and popular support. As already noted in the previous section language and cultural ties also play an important role in the constitution of the transnational organisation.

IMC = Strong.

At the international level Indymedia is strong, not only because it is present in about 40 countries, but also because all local organisations have at least one representative in the most important organisational mailing-lists. This means that management and decision-making structures are potentially transnational. It should be noted though that although Indymedia has a considerable amount of IMCs in different nations, the divide between North and South remains painfully visible. In Africa only three countries figure on the list of national IMCs, in the Middle East only two, being Israel and Palestine. This divide is

crossed by a language divide, as at the international intra-organisational level English is the main working language of the organisation.

3.1.1.3. Summary & Analysis:

Table 13.1 Degree of Transnationalism – Geographical and Cultural Embedding

Spread	Degree	Explanation
APC:		
Geographical	Medium	Present in a relatively limited number of countries, not in middle-east
Cultural-Linguistic	Strong	But never-the-less a balanced cultural and linguistic spreading
LabourStart		
Geographical	Strong	Present in a lot of countries and all continents, also attention for countries without physical presence of correspondents
Cultural-Linguistic	Strong	News stories in many languages and a balanced spreading of different cultures
ATTAC		
Geographical	Medium	Strong presence in Europe and Latin-America, but absent in Asia-Pacific and Middle-East
Cultural-Linguistic	Weak	Dominance of Roman culture within the organisation
IMC		
Geographical	Strong	Present in many countries and in all continents, in big countries often several local branches
Cultural-Linguistic	Medium	Although many languages and cultures are represented, a dominance of English and Anglo-Saxon culture can be observed
Gradation: Absent, Weak, Medium, Strong		

Table 13.2. Degree of Transnationalism – National versus International Balance

Spread	Organisational Level	Degree	Explanation
APC:	Intra (national)	Absent	No Local branches or national organisational branches
	Intra (international)	Strong	APC-members come from different continents, bringing together different organisations and in daily contact with each other
LabourStart	Intra (national)	Absent	No Local branches or national organisational branches
	Intra (international)	Strong	LabourStart has correspondents all over the world and works in different languages
ATTAC	Intra (national)	Weak	Strong localised actions, but often with an international outlook
	Intra (international)	Medium	The transnational character of ATTAC shows only in its website, where a common frame as well as spaces to discuss the organisation is provided
IMC	Intra (national)	Weak	The local organisations are especially geared at the local level and the development of the local IMC, only a very limited number of people has links to the transnational level
	Intra (international)	Strong	On the international level transnationalisation is strong as at least one member of the local IMCs is represented in the organisational mailing lists, there is a “common frame”.
Gradation: Absent, Weak, Medium, Strong			

The two tables above provide an overview of the main results that emerged from the analysis of the geographical and cultural embedding of the different cases (Table 13.1), as well as the analysis of the balance between national and international levels of the organisation (Table 13.2).

All the organisations studied can be defined as transnationally organised, but in different ways. The results of this analysis show that a distinction can be made between APC and LabourStart on the one hand and the ATTAC and Indymedia on the other hand. APC and LabourStart do not have local autonomous branches, like ATTAC and Indymedia, but the transnationalisation is more integrated and stronger. ATTAC and Indymedia are more embedded in the local context and see the transnational as linking up different local initiatives into a common frame of meaning and at times action. The overall degree of transnationalisation for ATTAC and Indymedia is therefore qualified as medium.

Based on this research, there are, however, some remarks that have to be made about transnationalisation:

- Organisations like Indymedia and ATTAC have a considerable international presence, but developing countries are often under-represented in them. Indymedia is active in most Western countries, but is only present in three African countries (English speaking Cameroon, South Africa and Nigeria), two Middle-Eastern countries (Israel and Palestine) and two South Asias (India and Indonesia). ATTAC has an important presence in Europe, covers five African countries and six Latin American countries but is absent in Asia and the Middle East.
- Organisations such as LabourStart, Indymedia, ATTAC and APC provide information in multiple languages and often have a considerable number of volunteer translators at their disposal, however, language barriers remain an important problem. The dominant language is often English, or in the case of ATTAC, French. The absence of an IMC in French Africa is telling for the influence of language on transnationalisation. The same applies to ATTAC, which is present in four African countries, but all are French speaking. Its presence in English-speaking countries on the other hand is very weak.
- National boundaries still play an astonishingly important role in the demarcation of *local* activities within the so-called global civil society. Most branches of ATTAC and Indymedia are nationally based. There are notable exceptions, most often linked to nationalist or cultural struggles. This also relates to the importance of geographic, cultural and geo-political proximity in the transnationalisation of organisations.
- The size and wealth of nations plays an important role in the size and professionalism of initiatives. Reliance on national or local resources for funding (via donations or other means) and for individual spare time and capital (in terms of Bourdieu), means that the classical divides in terms of class, income, infrastructure and knowledge are mirrored in the transnationalisation of these organisations. This also raises questions about power within the local as well as transnational organisations.

- Within local branches of organisations like ATTAC or Indymedia, only a limited number of people are active at the transnational level. Often the transnational level is also an empty box, a virtual space where local branches can exchange discourses and strategies, but not an organisational structure as such.

These observations pose questions as to the nature of the global or transnational civil society. One might say that organisations like ATTAC and Indymedia, start from the local and link local issues to global transnational causes. APC is also made-up of local independent organisations, but is organised transnationally. An organisation such as LabourStart starts from a transnational level and brings in the local, bottom-up perspective.

3.1.2 Degree of Online and Offline Interaction

The degree of interaction relates not only to ICT usage by the different social movement organisations, but foremost to the relationship between online and offline communication and interaction. Communication and interaction have been examined on different organisational levels: internally (intra), with other organisations (inter) and with the outside world (extra).

3.1.2.1 Intra (National/International)

At the internal level of the organisation, a distinction has to be made between communication taking place in a national or even local context and the more dispersed transnational context. For example, LabourStart and APC do not have local branches and so interaction is solely taking place at the international level. Furthermore, another distinction has to be adopted, between on- and offline. An organisation can have a virtual internal organisation on the transnational level, but be embedded in real life at the local level.

a) Offline:

APC = Absent/Medium.

APC strives to meet at least every 18 months in real life, in order to evaluate the past and discuss the future. The preparations for this real-life meeting happen online. It is however not enough to speak of a strong presence of the real world in organising the organisation.

LS = Absent/Weak.

LabourStart, although based in London, is a very virtualised organisation. Internal organisation takes place over the Internet. Nevertheless, LabourStart did organise a first real-life meeting in the fall of 2002, four years after it started, mainly for social reasons, so

that correspondents get to know each other face-to face. However, it is fair to say that the internal organisation of LabourStart is rather weak in terms of the real world.

ATTAC = Strong/Weak.

At the national and even more so at the local level, the real world plays an important role within ATTAC. Regular organisational meetings, as well as discussion evenings and local actions are being organised. The national ATTAC is often governed by a general assembly, made up of members and local activists. At the international organisational level on the contrary the real is rather weak, as communication and interaction is being organised through the Internet.

IMC = Medium/Weak.

At a local level real-life meetings are also important for a web organisation like Indymedia. In Belgium, for example, Indymedia organises a monthly open meeting where policies and activities are discussed. Similarly, in the Netherlands regular meetings are held. Nevertheless, the Internet remains a powerful tool when it comes to the internal organisation of Indymedia even on a local level. At the international level, the communication and interaction offline is rather limited. As already stated representatives of the different IMCs meet and collaborate at events such as the World Social Forum in Porto Allegre or before and during big demonstrations, such as those against the EU-summits.

b) Online:

APC = Absent/Strong. At the internal level there is only communication and interaction between the members and between the dispersed core-staff of APC and the members. This communication is situated at the international level of the organisation and takes place predominately online. The organisation does not have a central office, nor has it a physical address.

LS = Absent/Strong.

As a virtual network of correspondents, locally active in the labour movement, involvement and interaction within LabourStart takes place almost exclusively through the Internet. Although LabourStart is situated in London, the Internet allows correspondents to be part of a transnational network.

ATTAC = Medium/Strong. At a local level communication and interaction does not solely rely on the Internet in the case of ATTAC (compared to offline). Nevertheless, the Internet remains important for the functioning of the local branches. At the International level the

Internet is crucial as it allows members of local cells or national branches to link up and interact. There the degree of virtualisation is strong.

IMC = Medium/Strong.

As a web-organisation Indymedia is of course very much a virtualised organisation, but at the local level, not only the Internet is used to organise internally. This applies especially to “smaller” Indymedia-branches, such as Belgium or the Netherlands. In Indymedia-Germany virtualisation of the internal organisation is much stronger due to larger distances and more participants. At the international level the communication and interaction is predominately online, although representatives from different IMC also meet at big events and protests.

Table 14: Summary – Degrees of Interaction (Intra)

Intra (National)	Virtual Interaction	Real life interaction
APC	Absent	Absent
LabourStart	Absent	Absent
ATTAC	Medium	Strong
IMC	Medium	Medium
Intra (International)		
APC	Strong	Medium
LabourStart	Strong	Weak
ATTAC	Strong	Weak
IMC	Strong	Weak
Gradation: Absent, Weak, Medium, Strong, Exclusive, Not Known		

3.1.2.2 Inter (Networking and Hyperlinks)

When analysing communication and interaction between the selected organisation and other organisations, the distinction online/offline emerges again. The offline relates to efforts by the organisation to communicate and interact with other organisations in the real world. The degree of interaction between the organisation and others through the Internet, is however not easily determined. For example, much of the communication and exchange between organisations happens through e-mail. An analysis of the hyperlinks does give an indication as to the degree of the virtual linkages with other organisations, but it should be taken into account that hyperlinks do not give the whole picture.

a) Offline

APC = Medium.

As stated before APC has a high degree of virtualisation at all organisational levels. APC staff and members do however have their own network and attend conferences and meetings of international bodies. The organisation has, for example, a general consultative status with the United Nations Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC). At these occasions real-life contacts with other organisations are made or consolidated. This is only logical in terms of the advocacy function APC has.

LS = Medium.

LabourStart has, even more so than APC, an overall high degree of virtualisation. Eric Lee, founder of LabourStart, and LabourStart international have however also an extensive network of contacts with other labour-organisations in the real world, as will have most of the correspondents.

ATTAC = Strong.

ATTAC strongly interacts and communicates with other organisations offline, be it in public debates, through platforms or in preparation to demonstrations. This is also evident in the many real-life activities local cells or national branches organise and instigate. Very often partners are being sought and found to co-organise events or campaigns.

IMCs = Weak. Indymedia communicates and interacts mainly online with other organisations, which can be explained by the virtual character of the (web-)organisation. In smaller countries however, such as Belgium and the Netherlands, the “real” is stronger than in big countries such as Germany. Indymedia is also weary of forging structural links with other organisations. Communication and interaction with other organisations is therefore often functional in terms of reporting a given event or demonstration.

b) Online

APC = Strong.

APC does not have many hyperlinks to other organisations, other than its members. They in turn have extensive networks and hyperlink to other like-minded organisations. The external hyperlinks on the APC-website are to be found in the articles APC and/or its members produce on the different issues APC addresses (for example open source software). Other sources of hyperlinks are the news-links that most often relate to Internet rights and to the monitoring of policies in Africa, Europe and Latin America. Nevertheless, one of the objectives of APC relating to inter-organisational use of ICTs is linking APC

members and partner portal websites. The aim is to create a strong flow of civil society driven information content on the Internet. The Internet is also crucial in its South-South networking, over 60% of APC members are located in the *global South*. E-mail is also very important in this regard, as it is a cheap way of communication. This is a case where the hyperlinks on the site of the organisation do not present the whole on the degree of virtualisation of inter-organisational communication and interaction.

LS = Strong.

In addition the hyperlinks LabourStart provides to news stories and other local content about the labour movement, the English version also has an extensive list of links to websites of trade unions (structured by continent and by country). LabourStart.org also features '*the labour site of the week*'- where a specific site is put in the spotlight. An archive of previous winners is also accessible. Links to governments or small-scale labour oriented civil society organisations are however lacking. In the case of LabourStart its hyperlink-pattern is representative for the strong degree of virtualisation in the communication and interaction between LabourStart and the international labour movement.

ATTAC = Strong.

In order to characterise the nature of ATTACs virtual network, the hyperlinking patterns of ATTAC-Belgium and ATTAC-International are compared. Both ATTAC-Belgium and ATTAC-International only exist virtually. ATTAC-Belgium is split into ATTAC-Flanders and ATTAC-Brussels/Wallonia, the website of ATTAC-international functions mainly as the gateway to the different national ATTACs with web presence. On the general site of ATTAC-Belgium, there is no link-category present. Only in the framework of the ATTAC-campaign "*Face au marché, le service public !*", a list of relevant links is being provided. On the regional sites, a difference can be observed between Flanders and Brussels/Wallonia. At the time of this analysis (Autumn 2002) the site of ATTAC-Flanders did not have any links. The Brussels/Wallonia branch on the other hand, has a structured list of some 50 hyperlinks that direct you toward sites of ATTAC, sites on the Tobin-tax, sites of resistance movements (Indymedia, Oxfam, Act Now to Stop War & End Racism, etc.), site of reflection (The International Forum on Globalisation, SOS Faim, Politicsinfo.net, etc.) and sites of the powers that be (European Council, European Union, WTO, Worldbank, etc.).

The links on the ATTAC.org site are also very varied. In addition to the links towards the 33 national branches with a virtual presence, the ATTAC.org site also has a separate link-page with hyperlinks to 165 organisations, subdivided in three sections: first section links to *founding members* of ATTAC. A second section refers to *campaign partners* of ATTAC

and the last section directs you towards *interesting sites*. The virtual network of ATTAC in terms of hyperlinks is quite extensive. ATTAC.org links to associated organisations active in the labour movement, environmental movement, the anti-racist-movement and NGOs developing alternative strategies to social and economic development. A wide range of different kind of organisations including institutions, civil society organisations, web pages of activists, etc. is represented¹².

The analysis of the hyper-link patterns used by ATTAC-Brussels/Wallonia and ATTAC-International indicates that ATTAC has a strong degree of virtualisation in terms of inter-organisational communication and interaction. The links are not only large in number the are also diverse in terms of issues and relate to partners in specific campaigns.

IMC = Strong. Differences can be identified between the linking patterns of different Indymedia-branches. Indymedia-Belgium for example only links to other IMC-sites worldwide and IMC-related sites. The website of Indymedia.nl on the other hand offers several permanent hyperlinks to alternative radio and television channels (for example, Koekoeroe Radio, Radio Tonka, Drop Radio, Radio De Vrije Keyser, Radio 100, De Hoeksteen Live, Media.Live.Nu). But also the links of Indymedia Netherlands are rather limited.

The Indymedia.org site also has the most external hyperlinks, well structured according to the following categories: Activist Groups, Art, Music, Media (critique, video, radio), News, Politics, Resources (general, environmental and indigenous resources), Technology (techno-politics, OS, Security, technology for activists, Free Software), Unions and Humour. The site links to a whole range of issue and different kind of organisations. Clearly, the environmental and labour movement are well represented as well as independent media organisations dealing with radio, video or opinion formation. Another important element of the Indymedia-links applies to technology, among others the use of ICTs for activist purposes, security issues and open source software¹³.

If the linking-pattern of the organisation can indicated the degree of virtual interaction and communication between organisations, Indymedia International can be considered strong in this regard. It forms a nodal point from which visitors to the site can reach other activist sites or sites with alternative information. The local branches are however weaker on linking, but this does not mean that interaction through ICTs is therefore weak. E-mail plays a very important role, both in the internal communication and the communication with other organisations.

Table 15: Summary of Interaction (Inter)

	Virtual Interaction	Real life interaction
APC	Strong	Medium
LabourStart	Strong	Medium
ATTAC	Strong	Strong
IMC	Strong	Weak
Gradation: Absent, Weak, Medium, Strong, Exclusive, Not Known		

3.1.2.3 Extra (Outside world)

This section is concerned with the communication and interaction of the organisations with the outside world or the services and activities it develops for the wider public. These services or activities can be situated in the real world and/or online.

a) Offline

APC = Medium.

APC organises activities, such as workshops and training sessions for NGOs and is at that stage in contact with the civil society movements that it wants to represent. Examples of this are: training opportunities for (Internet) technicians or women and business planning. APC also co-ordinates regional workshops in Central and Eastern Europe, Europe and Latin America, capacity-building workshops on themes such as portal development, and collaborative evaluation, methodology planning. However, these workshops do not happen on a regular basis, but rather in terms of specific projects.

LS = Absent.

LabourStart only interacts and communicates with its users through the Internet.

ATTAC = Strong. As stated before, ATTAC organises many real-life activities like discussion evenings, meetings, direct actions, and unconventional ideas such as a walk through Brussels passing all the major international financial centres like the EU, Euronext, etc. or training-weekends for the safety-team of demonstration (dealing with police, with aggressive demonstrators). In addition, the Internet ATTAC in France and Belgium also communicate with the outside world through print, which can also be considered an offline means of communication.

IMCs = Medium.

Indymedia as such communicates and interacts mainly through the Internet, however during demonstrations collaborators of Indymedia also interact with the protesters. Indymedia-journalists have a policy of stimulating people who have witnessed certain events to write-up their own story, their personal account and recently ATTAC-Belgium produced a colour-printed leaflet containing photographs of demonstrations and a summary of a selection of their online articles.

b) Online

APC= Strong. In addition to the workshops and training sessions, most of the services APC provides to the wider civil society community, are situated online. APC has developed a tool that allows NGOs to publish news, resources, events, etc. This web-publishing tool is freely available for non-profit use. In terms of capabilities APC teamed up with other organisations to develop the ItrainOnline-site, “a one-stop source of ICTs training materials for people who want to learn how to use the Internet effectively for social justice and sustainable development” (cf. <http://www.apc.org>). In terms of Internet rights, APC also has a rapid response network, set-up to inform about action alerts relating to sites that are being closed down. Content is often mirrored in order to protect Internet freedom. Lastly, APC also monitors policies and regulations regarding the Internet, privacy, censorship and free speech in Latin America, Africa and Europe. Furthermore, APC is actively involved in ensuring that censored content (for political or economic reasons) is freely available on the net.

LS= Exclusively. As stated before, the communication and interaction with the outside world happens exclusively through the Internet in the case of LabourStart. This occurs through the provision of up-to-date localised labour news and being a gateway to the wider international labour movement. In addition to the daily updated links to local labour news, LabourStart has developed several other services, which means that it has transcended the typical portal site. A weekly newsletter, forums relating to labour-issues and directories of labour organisations are examples of this diversification. The newsletter has some 2500 subscribers. The use of the forums on the LabourStart pages is rather low with only six of the 30 forums having more than 50 postings and even on the relatively popular forums, the activity is not high and certainly not continuous.

Visitors to the LabourStart page are also encouraged to put a newswire-JavaScript on their own site that produces a box with the latest top stories from LabourStart. In addition, LabourStart has services for WAP, SMS and PDA and hosts the “Ultimate Directory of Trade Unions Online” and the “Global Labour Radio and TV Directory”. The LabourStart

visitor can also download LabourStart/Opera, a freeware web browser adapted to trade unions. Furthermore LabourStart has recently added a new feature to their site, namely the Labour News Network, allowing non-correspondents to post news stories, of which some are also reproduced on the main page.

ATTAC= Medium. In assessing the degree of online communication and interaction of ATTAC with the outside world, a distinction has to be made between the local and the international level. The quality of local sites is very dependent on the local capabilities and resources to design a dynamic website and the willingness to invest the needed time and energy. Within ATTAC, both local and international, mailing lists are also an important tool for the dissemination of information, e-mail discussions, but also for networking and mobilisation. ATTAC international urges local branches to look for people who are capable of and prepared to translate texts. This makes that each branch usually has a pool of translators who regularly translate interesting contributions in the local language. This is not co-ordinated at or directed from the international level, but each local section decides what is interesting for them to translate and put on their site. The website of ATTAC international only provides information on its (international) actions, some relevant publications, a newsletter, some mailing lists and links to its local cells. Thus, virtualisation of communication and interaction with individuals can be characterised as “medium” and the real has as much importance to ATTAC as the virtual, if not slightly more.

IMCs = Strong. Much like LabourStart, Indymedia has a relatively uniform format that is being used by many of the independent local centres (see: <http://www.opencontent.org>). This interface allows correspondents and visitors to post stories and comments in a user-friendly manner, resulting in a nice layout and very interactive. It is also flexible in the sense that the format can be adapted to local needs, but there is always a basis from which local branches can start. Interaction and communication between Indymedia and the outside world is strong as the threshold for participation and posting a story or reacting to the stories of others is very low.

Table 15: Degree of Interaction (Extra)

	Virtual Interaction	Real life interaction
APC:	Strong	Medium
LabourStart:	Exclusively	Absent
ATTAC:	Medium	Strong
IMC:	Strong	Medium
Gradation: Absent, Weak, Medium, Strong, Exclusive, Not Known		

3.1.2.4 Summary and Analysis

An integration of the findings on the three different levels (Intra, Inter and Extra) provided the following results

The most important conclusion emerging from the comparative analysis is that organisations are rarely entirely virtual. Their activities might, at an extra-organisational level, only become visible through their web-presence. However, the underlying organisation often operates, at least partly, in real life. The study of Indymedia and LabourStart are examples of organisations that mainly or exclusively communicate with the public by means of the Internet. Although, it has to be noted that in the case of Indymedia differences occur between branches situated in small or big countries. The “real” is more important in small organisations. In the case of Indymedia Germany and Indymedia International, they function solely by means of computer-mediated communication and this on all organisational levels.

The conclusion that almost no organisations is truly *virtual* raises the question as to what levels are virtual, what levels are less virtual and why? At the intra-organisational level, Indymedia Germany, Indymedia International, LabourStart, and to a lesser extent ATTAC International, might provide a clue. In all these initiatives, one of the main goals has been the provision of information by means of the Internet. Furthermore, in all of these cases the websites were maintained and updated in a decentralised way. This makes it possible for people living and working over large distances to *virtually* contribute to a centralised project (the website). Probably one of the most revolutionary potentials of the Internet is exactly its ability to decentralise work, through cheap means of interactive communication, bridging time and space. It allows organisations, especially those with a strong information component, to rely on the voluntary work of up to thousands of dispersed people. In the cases of Indymedia and LabourStart, this means that people from different countries, with different backgrounds, could contribute to what could be called a *virtual and transnational public sphere*.

However, the Belgian Indymedia case seems to indicate that *virtualisation* of interaction at the intra-organisational level only takes place when time and space pose considerable restraints on the organisation. Although it is not possible to substantiate this fully in terms of this research, people seem to prefer real life interaction when possible, even when the goal is the dissemination of information through a *virtual web-presence*. Furthermore, when the activities of the organisations at the local level are geared more towards real life

activities, the organisational necessity to organise in real life is even bigger. So for example, although ATTAC had an important web-presence, it also had many other informational activities in real life, organised at local or national level. An interesting case in this respect is APC, which had an important real life activity at the international level. Although APC functioned virtually at the international intra-organisational level, the representation of the staff towards political structures at the international level was high as well.

Table 16: Degree of Interaction

	Organisational level	Virtual Interaction	Real life interaction
APC:	Intra (national)	Absent	Absent
	Intra (international)	Strong	Medium
	Inter	Strong	Medium
	Extra	Strong	Medium
LS:	Intra (national)	Absent	Absent
	Intra (international)	Strong	Weak
	Inter	Strong	Medium
	Extra	Exclusively	Absent
ATTAC:	Intra (national)	Medium	Strong
	Intra (international)	Strong	Weak
	Inter	Strong	Strong
	Extra	Medium	Strong
IMC:	Intra (national)	Medium	Medium
	Intra (international)	Strong	Weak
	Inter	Strong	Weak
	Extra	Strong	Medium
Gradation: Absent, Weak, Medium, Strong, Very Strong, Exclusive, Not Known			

What becomes more obvious from the summaries is that the Internet plays an extremely important role at the international intra-organisational level. In almost all cases the virtualisation of activities at this level was very strong, whereas the real life activities were rather low. This is where the Internet provides small organisations with new means of cheap, highly flexible and instantaneous communication, making organisational decentralisation and at the same time co-operation and integration possible. Without the Internet, it would be hard for many of the organisations to organise and co-ordinate actions at the transnational level. As the Indymedia & APC cases prove, it is even possible to organise transnationally in a totally decentralised way. These organisations even show that

complex decision-making procedures, inspired by a participatory democratic philosophy, are feasible at this level.

Many of the organisational advantages the Internet offers on the international intra-organisational level also hold for the inter-organisational level. The Internet provides national and international civic society organisations with new means for information exchange, co-operation, co-ordination and the organisation of instantaneous and other actions. The *International Campaign to Ban Landmines*, a coalition of more than 300 NGOs, which started many years before the Internet became a common infrastructure, indicates that the Internet is not a necessity for transnational coalition building. However, the fast, cheap, flexible and often decentralised ways in which the Internet is used to mobilise seems to add new and formally unknown possibilities.

This research shows that those organisations that are typically seen as examples of the virtualisation of civil society, mainly because of their innovative use of the Internet, only lead to *virtual social relations* in specific circumstances. Organisations such as ATTAC and Indymedia, even when using the Internet extensively, have local branches where members participate and socialise in real life. Even APC as a decentralised organisation has meetings and real life activities. Often individuals who are active at the transnational level in organisations such as Indymedia, ATTAC, LabourStart and APC are also actively engaged in both local branches of the organisation or in other civil society or political organisations. The need to meet face-to-face in order to build confidence and togetherness is always present in a social movement organisation even when it is organised virtually. Also, LabourStart organised a real time meeting for the different correspondents, be it foremost for social reasons. This is in line with recent research suggesting that the most successful virtual communities seem to be those where a core group is willing to interact not only virtually, but also in real life (Diani, 2001: 121).

3.3 Mediation of Online Civic Engagement

In this section, the focus shifts from the organisational use of ICTs towards its role in terms of mediation and civic engagement. The Internet enables and mediates new forms of interactive engagement by the public, such as public forums and discussion-mailing lists. Three examples will be analysed in order to assess the degree of interactivity, the degree of lurkers, the diversity of issues and opinions and the degree of flaming.

Notwithstanding the enabling role ICTs play, there are also constraints, which have to be taken into account. As transnationalisation and virtualisation becomes rather high overall, it

becomes problematic if a large part of the population, both globally and within Europe, do not have access to the site and services of the organisations. This is problematic from a participatory perspective, but also in terms of the interests the social movement organisations defend, the socially weak, the South, often those parts of the world population that are situated at the wrong end of the so-called digital divide. It is therefore important to assess the strategies of the different case vis-à-vis the digital divide.

3.3.1 Content Analysis of Three Distinct Examples of Online Civic Engagement

Interactive tools mediating engagement have been selected in three cases. APC does not have an interactive service with the outside world. It does use interactive instruments, but only for its internal organisation (for instance, Intranet, closed newsgroups for meetings). This also explains why no case for this organisation was selected. LabourStart has semi-public forums. Everybody can read the forums, but in order to participate you have to go through a registering process. One example was the forum *“Terror and the War on Terror: An Open Discussion Forum for Trade Unionists”*. ATTAC uses mailing lists a lot, also as a discussion-platform. Several local branches have discussion mailing lists, where members and non-members can discuss current issues. An example of this is the *discussion mailing list of ATTAC-Belgium*. Lastly, one might say that almost each article published by Indymedia is potentially a forum, as it is possible to react to the posting, as well as to reactions of others. An example of such a spontaneous forum was the *postings relating to the murder on Pim Fortuyn*, a populist leader in the Netherlands.

3.3.1.1 An Open Discussion Forum for Trade Unionists: Terror and the War on Terror

The Forums Section of the LabourStart website highlights their most interesting way of interactive Internet. Any registered user can post and react on postings in any of the forums and its topics. Interestingly, some forums also discuss the way the forums and the website should work. In these discussions, also Eric Lee, the founder of LabourStart, participates. This might indicate that participants could have some influence on the way the website of LabourStart functions. The LabourStart Web forum has some 1400 registered users with six forums run by LabourStart and 29 forums created by members. Of 35 forums, only nine have more than 50 postings and 15 more than 20 postings. It is fair to say that most forums are not used at all. There are however a few exceptions, a discussion forum of the Australian Teachers Union that underpins their campaigns (416 postings) or a forum of the American Federation of State, County And Municipal Employees, which is being used often (916 postings). *“Terror and the War on Terror: An Open Discussion Forum for Trade*

Unionists” is an example of a popular forum created by LabourStart itself (454 postings) (Analysis August 2002).

Although it has been inactive for several months now, this latter forum offered a lively and often interesting debate about the origins of terrorism, the war in Afghanistan, the position of the UK Labour government, etc. Of the more than 450 postings, some 210 were actual contributions, the rest were reactions to articles or opinions. As the figure below shows, the forum was very active at a certain moment in time. However, as public and media attention for Afghanistan and the (on-going) war is waning, so is the activity in the forum.

Furthermore, it has to be noted that only a rather small group people engage in discussions with each other, about 40 people posted contributions and some 70% of the posted contributions (reactions not counted) came from 5 very active members of the forum. The same phenomenon can be seen in other forums that are actually being used. The discussions are often of a high level and can be induced by a reproduced article in the press, press releases from organisations such as the Afghan women movement RAWA or debate amongst the participants.

The nature of the contributing articles on the “Terror and the War on Terror” forum is diverse (cf. Fig. 6). Most are informational which means a reproduction of an article from the mainstream or alternative press, be it printed, Internet or radio. A large proportion of contributions, more than 30%, are engaging and relate directly to a debate between participants within the forum. Another 30% are related to more opinion forming articles, often reproduced from “known” critical authors such as Robert Fisk, Noam Chomsky, John Pilger or Leo Panitch, but also by some members of the forum. A lot of debate has taken place in this forum, especially if taken into account the idea that opinion-forming articles often provoke reactions from other members and thus debate. Most of the debate has however taken place in the first phase of the forum; towards the end debate is less intense. Much less frequent are the published press releases from other organisations and mobilisations for online or offline actions. It seems that this web forum is not being used for mobilisation purposes or as a propaganda tool by other organisations.

If opinions fostering discussion are included in the analysis, then a high level of debate can be evidenced in this forum. Although the reproduction of articles from the press or opinion makers represents a large section of the contributions, debate between members of the forum has been intense and outspoken. However, the analysis of this discussion forum also indicates the cyclical character of online engagement and points to the fact that debate

is led by a rather limited number of people (or should we say opinion makers?). The confrontations and arguments were sometimes heated, but never derailed into flaming. This latter observation refers to a common ideological framework from which most participants develop their analyses and opinions.

Table 17: Analysis of LabourStart Web Forum

	Degree	Explanation
Degree of Interactivity	Medium	High intensity of debate (at a certain time), but also used to inform and opine, debate is also led by a limited number of participants, who are responsible for a large amount of postings
Degree of Lurking	Strong	As there are 1400 registered users of the Forums, and the forum is also accessible for non-registered visitors, it can be assumed that the degree of lurking is rather strong
Diversity of Issues	Medium	The issues being raised are linked to the war on terror and related issues, such as the stance of the UK government
Diversity of Opinions	Medium	As debate was rather strong, opinions did differ, but as most participants come from the labour movement their ideological framework is often the same
Degree of Flaming	Weak	Debate was hefty, but not to say that flaming did occur
Gradation: Absent, Weak, Medium, Strong, Not Known		

3.3.1.2 Discussion mailing list of ATTAC-Belgium

In order to subscribe to one of the many mailing lists of ATTAC, users have to register with an e-mail address. On some the process requires individuals to provide personal details, others are more open. Each mail a member sends to the list-address is sent to all other members. The discussion mailing list of ATTAC-Belgium was analysed during a period of three months¹⁴. Some 40 active members - about the same number of subscribers is “passive” (86 subscribers in total) – posted 410 messages,, Most active participants are male and the working-language is mainly French. What passive members or so-called lurkers do with the messages they receive is in a sense a blind spot, requiring additional research. Some might trash them or read selectively, others might forward some messages to their own networks or even to other mailing lists.

Content-wise, all the messages were coded by type and by issue. Five types of messages were identified (cf. Fig. 7) and a short typology of messages was drawn up. This comprises (i). Informational and this is usually in the form of a forwarded news-item from mainstream media or specific information on something without the expression of any opinion about it. (ii) Activism, define in terms of actions through the web or in real life, mobilisation for a demonstration for example. (iii) A (real-life) activity scheduled to take place, a lecture for example. (iv) Voicing of opinions by members, but also by critical authors, this in turn often leads to more debates among the members. (v) Debate between the members of the list on a specific subject.

Of the 400-plus messages, almost a third are discussion and debate among the members of the list. The category opinion, more then 10% of messages, can also be related to an interactive use in that it nourishes debate by provoking reactions and comments. The high percentage of messages, about 25%, relating to mobilisation (for actions or for an activity) is also noteworthy. The third big category relates of course to (alternative) information.

Issues raised by the members of the mailing list were also diverse, albeit heavily influenced by what happens in the world. However, little was said about Africa and Asia (cf. Table 18).

Table 18: Typology of Messages

Issue	No	Type of Message				
		information	(net)action	activity	debate	opinion
Palestine/ Israel	124	38	29	-	47	10
Globalisation	33	7	2	3	9	12
EU + Summits	32	19	3	-	8	2
Anti-Fascism	27	10	7	-	4	6
Latin-America	26	9	6	6	1	4
ATTAC	24	11	-	4	6	3
ICTs/privacy	17	5	2	1	9	-
USA/War on Terror	17	5	4	-	3	5
Repression	16	2	2	-	12	-
Asylum- seekers	11	2	8	-	-	1
Free Trade	10	4	3	-	2	1
Fiscal Fraud	9	6	-	-	1	2
Iraq	9	3	-	-	6	-
Local politics	9	3	-	1	5	-
Public Services	9	2	4	-	1	2
Syndicalism	9	3	2	4	-	-
Cuba	7	4	-	-	3	-
Ecology	4	4	-	-	-	-
Peace	4	1	3	-	-	-
Social Forum	3	2	-	1	-	-
Squatting	3	-	1	2	-	-
Tobin	3	3	-	-	-	-
Italy	2	2	-	-	-	-
France	1	1	-	-	-	-
NGOs	1	-	-	-	-	1
TOTAL	410	146	76	22	117	49
%	100%	35%	19%	5%	29%	12%

The most favoured topic during the period of analysis was definitely the conflict between Palestine and Israel, which led to heated debates and outspoken opinions. That was followed by topics raised by ATTAC as an organisation, such as criticisms of the EU and

the mobilisation of protests against the EU Summits, questioning globalisation and the neo-liberal free-trade agenda, fiscal fraud and the fight against extreme-right and fascist movements¹⁵. Other topics covered were: ATTAC itself, protection of public services, police or state repression of demonstrations, events in Latin-America¹⁶ and protests against the policies of the USA and above all against its war against terrorism. Discussion between participants on the mailing list only occurred in relations to a limited number of issues. The table also illustrates which subjects most of the discussion centred on, namely the conflict between Israel and Palestine, globalisation, the repression of police forces and privacy.

Table 19: Mailing List ATTAC-be

	Degree	Explanation
Degree of Interactivity	Medium	Debate and discussion is taking place, but discussion mailing lists are mainly used to forward opinions, mobilise and inform. In this sense the discussion mailing lists allow both point to multi-point communication and interactive debate.
Degree of Lurking	<i>Medium</i>	Half of the members of the mailing list are passive. But it is unknown what passive members do with their mails.
Diversity of Issues	Medium	Even with an open platform, some issues tend to dominate the debate. The diversity of issues being addressed is high, but in terms of debate they are not.
Diversity of Opinions	Medium	Debate is rather sterile, as it often only takes place between a limited number of very active members of the list and within an ideologically homogeneous framework of reference.
Degree of Flaming	Weak	Although points of view, especially about the Middle East, were sometimes opposed, flaming did not occur.

3.3.1.3 Spontaneous Pim Fortuyn Forum on Indymedia.nl website

The websites of Indymedia were based on the “bottom up” principle, only slightly moderated by a small volunteer staff that works mainly “behind the screen” responsible for the technical infrastructure and layout of the website. Therefore, the heart or identity of Indymedia was rooted in the totality of contributions made by virtually anyone. The websites of Indymedia could be considered as a virtual space to be used for expression by people. By posting “alternative” news stories or commenting on other peoples’ postings, people construct and reconstruct a “sense of belonging” or community. The content was delivered by anyone else who invested the time to do so. In essence, the staff of Indymedia facilitated news-production on their website. However, there was a certain degree of moderation. Illegal copies of software, mp3-files, pornographic images, spam, or sexist, racist, fascist, homophobic, and very long stories, were *not* be published. Also, stories had to be *news* stories, concerning *social and/or political activism*, and they have to be written *by the posters themselves*. In addition, each article on a website of Indymedia could be considered as a forum, as anyone could react to it, even anonymously. This way of integrating interactivity within an alternative news site has a relatively low threshold and can be considered as stimulating debate and participatory communication. It can however also go sour leading to flaming between participants.

Some articles get a huge number of reactions and developed into a fierce debate among the “readers”. A short article on the Dutch site of Indymedia about the murder of the Dutch right-wing populist leader Pim Fortuyn provoked some 270 messages during one week, posted by about 110 participants¹⁷.

The original Indymedia-article (06/05/2002) said:

Pim Fortuyn shot dead

"On May 6, Dutch popular right wing politician Pim Fortuyn was shot dead after a radio interview. This was just 9 days before general elections where Fortuyn was expected to cause an upheaval. All political parties have now ceased their campaigns."

<[Give a short reaction to this article](#)> (link)

Some reactions were no more than a few lines, others were longer and argumentative; most were anonymous and used a nickname and withheld the e-mail address. Only three participants posted their e-mail address and some 20 reactions were even posted without a

nickname. Two-thirds of the participants posted only one message, in response to the article or to a posting by someone else; 25 participants posted between two and five messages; while only nine participants posted more than five messages. The maximum posted by one individual was 25.

The way this spontaneous forum unfolded shows very clearly the fluid character of ICT-mediated participation. During the whole timeframe of this analysis new participants kept on coming in, most of them only to post one message, but some stayed on and threw themselves into the ongoing debate. Most postings were in Dutch, but some were also in English and Spanish. This however did not prompt the Dutch-speakers to switch into another language and engage with the “foreign” comments.

Debate between participants was hefty and at times very argumentative. Very active participants started addressing each other personally, stating why they disagree or agree with someone’s positions. Surprisingly, one of the main discussion-lines related to the comparison between the Flemish Fascist party Vlaams Blok and Pim Fortuyn. This discussion confronted Dutch-speaking Belgians and Dutch participants on the forum and was at times very lively and heated.

Another and perhaps more interesting discussion-line was related to democracy and violence. Most comments condemned the murder and commented on the personality of Fortuyn and the ideology he personified. However, some participants went so far as to justify the murder by stating, *"a good fascist is a dead fascist"* or *"who's next?"*. Such strong views were however countered by other participants, which led to severe insults: *"you are a short sighted ASSHOLE"* or *"Be careful, doomsday will come!!! All left-wing activists must fear for their life"*¹⁸. A few participants complained about the level of the discussion. What was also remarkable was that the self-emerged Indymedia forum on the murder of Pim Fortuyn attracted people from distinct political persuasions, mostly oriented on the left, but also adherents of Fortuyn or other rightwing parties, which partly explains the flaming that took place.

In contrast to the two other cases, this rather spontaneous forum attracted many participants within a short timeframe. Most of these participants only posted one message but this forum was not dominated by a limited number of participants. This shows a relatively low threshold required before people choose to participate. Another remarkable difference with the ATTAC-mailing list and the LS-Forum was the polarisation and subsequent clash between ideologically opposed participants. Problematic in this regard is, however, the

anonymity of most participants and the flaming which tends to put people off and might explain the large amount of people that only posted one message.

In a sense this specific case also points towards the potential problematic nature of openness in posting articles and reactions. This may manifest itself in the form of flaming, but also in racist or anti-Semitic opinions being voiced through the Indymedia sites.

This paradox is of course not limited to the case analysed above, but also touches on an ongoing debate within many local Indymedia branches. In a recent newsletter, ChuckO, a former member of the IMC Global Newswire collective, warns that (political) choices will have to be made in order to address these issues:

“The IMC Network has a statement of principles and so do most local IMCs. However, the political orientation of the IMC has never been firmly established. ... The problem with the IMCs vague politics is not so much what ideology it should embrace, rather what ideologies and content the IMC Network rejects and opposes. This vagueness on politics has allowed an international network of right wingers and racists to abuse and disrupt the IMC websites, which has harmed the IMCs functionality and reputation in ways that may not be fixable without stepping on lots of toes” (ChuckO, 2002).

Moderation of the content to determine what content or opinions are intolerable seems to be essential to preserving and fostering the open and free character of the Indymedia sites. If not Indymedia will alienate it's chief stakeholders, the activist community (and movements).

Table 20: Summary – Spontaneous IMC Forum

	Degree	Explanation
Degree of Interactivity	Strong	Debate and discussion is high and intense. The number of participants is also very high, compared to the other examples. The lack of moderation results in a flood of messages, but also in problems (cf. flaming)
Degree of Lurking	<i>Strong</i>	Given the high number of participants that have only posted one message and the media event, concerning the murder of Pim Fortuyn, it can be assumed that many people have read these postings, without however participating, or only through one posting, expressing their outrage.
Diversity of Issues	Weak	The number of issues being addressed was rather low. A few discussion lines could be identified but they remain linked to the person Pim Fortuyn and the strategies to fight extreme-right , populism and fascism.
Diversity of Opinions	Strong	A high diversity of opinions could be heard in the debate, from very moderate, to very extreme, both leftwing and rightwing.
Degree of Flaming	Strong	Antagonistic opinions did however lead to a high degree of flaming between several participants.
Gradation: Absent, Weak, Medium, Strong, Not Known <i>Italic means that we have indications but can not fully substantiate</i>		

3.3.1.4 Summary and Analysis:

Table 21: Online Civic Engagement

	LS-forum	ATTAC-list	IMC-spontaneous forum
Degree of Interactivity	Medium	Medium	Strong
Degree of Lurking	<i>Strong</i>	<i>Medium</i>	<i>Strong</i>
Diversity of Issues	Medium	Medium	Weak
Diversity of Opinions	Medium	Medium	Strong
Degree of Flaming	Weak	Weak	Strong
Gradation: Absent, Weak, Medium, Strong, Not Known <i>Italic means that we have indications but can not fully substantiate</i>			

It has to be noted that the use of the Internet for debate is hampered by constraints. The degree of interactivity or real debate can be rated “medium” in the case of the LS-forum and the ATTAC mailing list, as they were also used to inform or to mobilise and often only a limited number of participants really discussed issues. Furthermore, the LS-forum also shows that engagement is very cyclical. It is assumed that the number of lurkers is quite high in the case of a web forum, contrary to a mailing list that requires people to subscribe. The number of issues that were discussed in the cases of ATTAC and LS were limited in number, but still diverse. Diversity of opinions can also be graded “medium”, as differences are present, but within a similar broad ideological framework. Flaming as such, did not occur in the LS and ATTAC mailing lists, fierce discussion was, however, present. The analysis of the ATTAC mailing list as well as the LS-forum confirms other studies that concluded that online engagement in forums is cyclical, tends to be dominated by those already politically active in the offline world and functions within a homogeneous ideological framework (see Hill and Hughes 1998; Wilhelm, 2000).

The spontaneous Indymedia-forum differs from the two other examples in many ways. It shows that one sensitising issue can attract a diversity of participants and opinions over a short period. The diversity of opinions and participants is therefore considered strong, but the diversity of issues weak. The degree of interactivity was strong, due to the many participants and intense discussions. However, this also led to insulting postings and rows within the spontaneously emerged forum. Without moderation, there is clearly a danger of polarisation and flaming, which tends to put people off. In line with this, it also has to be noted that when moderation is taking place, participants often do not know which criteria are being used to moderate the online discussions in forums or mailing lists. It is also

unclear what impact interactive engagement in virtual spaces means in terms of power relations and decision-making within an organisation and beyond. A debate or discussion on a certain issue is also rarely concluded.

It is however fair to say that people engaging in a forum or discussion list do contribute to ongoing debates within the public sphere on a whole range of local as well as international issues. This in itself is meaningful where even the lurkers, or the passive audience, are relevant in this context. ICTs will not save democracy, but they do facilitate short-term as well as long-term interactive civic engagement, which can be rather passive (receiving mails from a mailing list) or more active (posting messages on a web forum).

3.3.2 Digital Divide Strategies

A major factor constraining online participation is the unequal distribution of technologies and capabilities. Firstly, there are discrepancies between and even within transnational social movements. Some organisations have considerably more human and financial resources, which allows them to develop more dynamic and interactive services. As already indicated, such differences also occur within a transnational organisation, where some local branches can rely on much more resources, both human and financial, than other local branches. Secondly, the unequal distribution of technologies and capabilities is also problematic for many transnational social movements as they often exclusively use the Internet to communicate with the outside world. Thirdly, the socio-economic issues tackled by social movements often relate to communities affected by the digital divide, the South, migrants, the socially weak in the Western world. All four cases are very conscious of the constraints to access and capabilities, nevertheless they do develop quite different strategies to counter that.

3.3.2.1 APC =Medium.

APC recognises the inclusion/exclusion paradox in its advocacy of a regulatory and policy environment that ensures “effective and affordable access to poor and oppressed communities throughout the world” (www.apc.org). The organisation is particularly active in areas like the so-called global digital divide and the gender-gap. One of the slogans that APC frequently uses goes as follows: “The Internet is a world of ‘haves’ and ‘have nots’, and the APC exists to fight this inequality.” APC also teamed up with Bellanet, IICD, IISD, INASP and OneWorld to create ItrainOnline¹⁹, a site dedicated to online training sessions in the use of ICTs.

3.3.2.2 LS (=Weak).

LS as such has no particular stance on the digital divide but . representatives of LabourStart personally stressed that it is important to develop policies in order to fight the digital divide, locally and globally. LabourStart as a virtual organisation is however unable to develop concrete strategies about the digital divide. The organisation focuses on new mobile services such as SMS messages and WAP content in order to diversify its media-offer, but these services are not being used, which possibly relates to the early stages of mobile content provision and the failure of WAP.

3.3.2.3 ATTAC (=Strong)

The digital divide is also problematic for an organisation like ATTAC, in the sense that information and informing is crucial and this is provided mainly through the Internet. The organisation organises activities but members or would-be members can only find out about them through the Internet. ATTAC-Flanders for example has started-up a limited printed version of the information and distribute it through the post, because they know that many paying members do not have internet-access. ATTAC-France also has a printed version of its newsletter. This is however not easy, because a printed version requires much more resources than maintaining a website. This also explains why within ATTAC a discussion is going on whether they should introduce redistributive mechanisms from “rich” branches toward “poorer” branches.

3.3.2.4 Indymedia (=Strong)

Indymedia is also very conscious of the digital divide and the possibility that many people who might respond to the Indymedia agenda often do not have access to the Internet. That is why Indymedia tries to adopt a multi-media approach in order to reach more people. In Belgium Indymedia has experimented with radio during the protests in Brussels²⁰. The organisation also uses flyers, stickers and brochures extensively. Indymedia-Belgium recently published a brochure with abstracts of online articles as well as photographs that can also be found on the site. The London branch placed public terminals in demonstrations, so that people can upload their own stories or consult the site in order to know what is happening in other parts of the demonstration.

3.3.2.5 Summary and Analysis

Table 22: Digital Divide Strategy

Organisation	Rating/Grade	Strategy
APC	Medium	In terms of advocacy, the digital divide, especially in the South, is a major issue. Furthermore APC has developed together with other organisations ItrainOnline, a site dedicated to online training sessions in the use of ICTs.
LS	Weak	LabourStart also acknowledges the problem of the digital divide, but are unable to develop own strategies, other than diversifying its new-media offer, towards mobile technology, unsuccessful up until now.
ATTAC	Strong	The digital divide is problematic for an organisation as ATTAC, because they have paying members who do not have access, this and also the aim to reach more people leads towards the publication of some of the online-content in printed versions
IMC	Strong	Indymedia also diversifies its media-offer in order to reach more people, beyond the Internet. Examples of this strategy include collaborations with local radio's, the use of flyers, brochures and terminals during big events.
Gradation: Absent, Weak, Medium, Strong, Not Known		

The digital divide, both within and between countries, considerably hinders access and participation. This results in a paradox. On the one hand, the Internet provides civil society

organisations with new possibilities for transnationalisation, decentralisation and participation bridging time and space. On the other hand, those organisations solely relying on the Internet for their communication, such as Indymedia and LabourStart, risk excluding large segments of the world population.

Organisations with a local base, such as Indymedia and ATTAC, are developing concrete strategies to overcome these problems of access. APC and LabourStart lobby and stress the importance of democratising access, but they are themselves unable to take steps in order to facilitate access or diversify their media-offer. APC has co-developed a training-site, but this only useful for those already online. Indymedia and ATTAC need a local base and diversify their media-offer towards print and radio so that they can also reach people that are not online, but might be sympathetic towards the aims and goals of their organisation.

3.4 Influencing Public Opinion and/or Politics

3.4.1 Political Strategies?

The main issue here is what political strategies are adopted by transnationalised social movement organisations to achieve their political goals. Three main strategies have been identified. (i) They engage with formal political actors. (ii) They disengage and pursue their aims through direct action, public opinion formation and/or changing life-styles. (iii) They combine lobbying, with direct action and opinion formation. However, differences might occur between the strategies being developed online and offline.

3.4.1.1 APC

APC as an organisation and its members deal actively with policy and less with direct action. As an advocacy organisation APC voices the interests of its members, as a project organisation it engages with international governmental organisations and as an activist organisation it aims to influence policies with regard to civil liberties and the Internet. It has a general consultative status with the United Nations Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) and voices the interests of civil society and developing countries within ICANN (Internet Corporation for Assigning Names and Numbers). The organisation is also involved in several broader advocacy campaigns such as CRIS geared at influencing the 2003 World Summit on the Information Society.

'CRIS is a campaign to ensure that communications rights are central to the information society. Part of its work will be to lobby for civil society participation and recognition at the upcoming World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS). The campaign is sponsored and supported by the Platform for

Communications Rights, a group of NGOs involved in media and communication projects around the world, including APC' (www.apc.org).

As a decentralised transnational organisation, with members dispersed all over the world, it is impossible for APC to engage in real life direct action. Its members, however, having a local base, do take part in local direct actions. Online direct actions could also not be found on the APC website.

3.4.1.2 LabourStart:

LabourStart as such is not actively involved in influencing policy, with the possible exception of mobilising (online) actions in support of labour unionists in danger. The labour union movement however also has their own offline lobby structures to do this, and uses contacts between the labour union and political parties to achieve its aims. This falls within the “old” way of exerting influencing and shaping policies. On the other hand, the political influence and actions of labour unions are decreasing rapidly because of de-ideologisation. In terms of direct action LabourStart is only active online through its ACTnow-campaigns. It is however unclear what the real impact is of such online petition-campaigns.

3.4.1.3 ATTAC

ATTAC combines attempts to explicitly influence policy by introducing its ideas within traditional political parties and social organisations with direct action initiatives. While the organisation is very conscious that part of the solution for the existing inequalities lie at an international level, it does acknowledge the relative power of nation states. That is why members of national or regional parliaments and other allies are being sought to convert ideas into legislation and regulation. An example of this is the development of the spahn-tax, an updated tobin-tax. ATTAC worked together with Oxfam, Netwerk Vlaanderen, Broederlijk Delen, and 11.11.11, the big Belgian NGOs, in regular sessions to design a legal framework that links the Spahn-tax to VAT. Another example is the introduction of a red label, referring to products that are being produced in acceptable social conditions. As stated before, in addition to its lobby activities, ATTAC is also very active with direct action particularly in real life. ATTAC's organisational structure, at transnational, national and local levels allows the organisation to be present at local protest events, as well as at the big international events. Furthermore, ATTAC organises activities that aim to make people think about the reasons for protesting.

3.4.1.4 Indymedia

Indymedia clearly places itself outside the formal political process. It focuses on opinion formation and developing alternative discourses without engaging with formal politics as such. Independent Media Centres can be considered as anti-establishment and very sensitive for attempts of political recuperation. An example is the refusal of Indymedia-Belgium to join the Belgian Social Forum. In a press release Han Soete of Indymedia-Belgium states:

“It has been decided that Indymedia will not join the BSF and will not sign its platform-text. The most important reasons were (...): a lack of radicalism in the basic text and (...) the absence within the Belgian Social Forum of concrete actions and aims” (e-diogenes 16, 18/08/2002)²¹.

This reluctance to join a structural network and open a dialogue with formal politics can be explained in terms of the radical views held by representatives of IMCs. They do not believe in social change within the system, but change of the system, which of course makes dialogue very difficult or even impossible. Social change has to come from changing values and life-styles and from direct action. Indymedia can in itself be regarded as a form of online direct action. In addition,, it provides an informational space for real life direct actions, by being present at the protest with journalists, video- and photographers, but also by allowing others to report their personal account of the events.

3.4.1.5 Summary & Analysis:

Table 23: Political Strategies

	Strategy	Virtual	Real-life
APC	Lobby	Strong	Strong
	Direct Action	Absent	Weak
LS	Lobby	Weak	Strong
	Direct Action	Medium	Weak
ATTAC	Lobby	Weak	Strong
	Direct Action	Medium	Strong
IMC	Lobby	Absent	Absent
	Direct Action	Strong	Strong
Gradation: Absent, Weak, Medium, Strong, Very Strong, Not Known			

It does not come as a surprise that transnational social movements pursue diverse strategies. These strategies towards formal politics and being active politically become even more complex if the distinction between online and offline, as can be observed in table 23 is taken into account. APC, ATTAC and LabourStart lobby extensively. There is a difference though, in that APC is strong in this regard, both in the real world and in the virtual. As an

organisation LabourStart is not very active politically, but it does point to the (local and international) lobby-structures of the labour movement in the real world and the networks they have. ATTAC also prefers the real world when it comes to lobbying, mainly together with other organisations in a platform. Indymedia on the contrary disengages itself from formal politics.

When it comes to direct action, it is evident that ATTAC follows a double strategy, being strong in lobbying but also in direct action, particularly offline. Furthermore, Indymedia can be considered strong in terms of direct action, online of course, but also by being present and visual at demonstrations and actions. Direct action is of course one of its hallmarks. LabourStart does not engage in direct action in the real world, but does have action alerts through the Internet. APC is not involved in direct action, but focuses on lobbying, both online and offline.

For an advocacy organisation, it makes sense to be active in lobbying and influencing politics. It is also interesting in this regard to see that international bodies, such as the UN, do give such organisation a voice. For those organisations that do engage, the online does not seem an efficient realm to lobby. Here, the real world and face-to-face contacts are preferred. Furthermore, it is easier for organisations with a local base to be involved in real-time direct action, then for dispersed organisations. This is also one of their main strengths. It is however possible to develop alternatives through online direct actions, such as LabourStart does, but it remains to be seen what the real political impact is of online petitions or protest letters. Another strategy consists in disengaging from formal politics and lobby-networks and aim to change public opinion and lifestyles through direct actions, be online or offline.

3.4.2 Direct Action, the Internet and Formal Politics

The analytical framework provided some space for a specific case where ICTs, direct action, mobilisation, activating engagement as well as formal politics would come together into one cocktail. This is all the more relevant in view of the minimal role that ICTs play in terms of lobbying. The occupation of a Forest very close to the Belgian city Bruges was chosen as it illustrates the organisational use of ICTs in pursuit of a single-issue political goal, namely the preservation of the forest. It was also a long-running direct action protest with political implications.

3.4.2.1 The battle for the Lappersfort-forest: context

In August 2001 activists occupied the threatened Lappersfort-Forest in Bruges with the aim of saving the forest from being chopped down for industry, a road and a bus station. In September 2002, after one year of occupation, Fabricom, the owner of the forest and part of the multinational Tractebel, summoned the activists to court. The judge held that they must leave the forest immediately. The activists also had to pay an “occupying fee” of one Euro per person per day if they did not comply. In the meantime, a coalition of 76 organisations – ranging from political parties, labour organisations, activist organisations to conservation organisations - joined forces in support of the Lappersforest. As the green party was part of that coalition, the Flemish green minister for environment started negotiations with the owner Fabricom to buy and save the forest.

However, mid-October the patience of the mayor of Bruges ran out and he ordered the eviction the activists from the forest by force. A few hours after the police started their action, a spontaneous demonstration of sympathisers mobilised near the forest and almost everybody was arrested. Implementation of the policy was very aggressive and even people arriving at the train station were arrested. In the afternoon, some 150 sympathisers held noisy demonstration in front of the city hall and many of these were arrested too. In the evening yet another demonstration started in the city centre of Bruges, which some 500 people attended but no arrest were made. The activists and the demonstrations got a lot of support from the local population, a significant proportion of whom favoured saving the forest. All this culminated in yet another demonstration the next weekend, which more than 4.000 people attended.

3.4.2.2 The Role of the Internet in the Lappersfort-case

Why is this case relevant for this research project? The case of the Lappersfort-Forest is a good example of how ICTs can foster and sustain real-life direct action, networking and mobilisation. The activists did put up their own site²² where interested people could find information, a petition, contact-information, new actions, etc. Also, on the site of Indymedia-Belgium a lot of information could be found on the occupation, the rulings of the judge and the violent eviction from the forest. One of the interesting articles on the Indymedia-site was an urgent call from the activists for research on the owner of the forest.

“Fabricom is for 98% owned by Tractebel. If people want to start digging into this companies, and send useful results to us, we would be very thankful.”²³

The Internet also played an important role in mobilising people when the evictions started. This was prepared well in advance. When the judge ruled that protestors had to leave the forest, this message appeared on the site of Indymedia.Belgium:

“Sympathisers that want to help, are being asked to communicate their e-mail or telephone number. You can do this on mA.f@pandora.be or on 0497/99-03-58. People wanting to support the Lappersfront don’t need to enter the forest, but can build a buffer surrounding the forest.”

When the police actually started their action, almost simultaneously a mobilisation call was sent out through mobile communication and the Internet. A few hours later ATTAC-Flanders distributed a call for a demonstration in front of the offices of Tractebel in Brussels under the heading "our world is not for sale", some 100 people showed-up.

3.4.2.3 The Political

This case is also relevant because of the involvement of formal politics. During the summer of 2002 the Flemish green minister for the environment visited the activists in the Lappersfort-forest. On the same day that the eviction took place, she issued a press-release (14/10/2002) stating:

“The Minister would like to point out that an encounter was planned this week between the Minister and Fabricom about the possible purchase of the Lappersfort-forest. The Minister had therefore urged, Fabricom as well as the municipal authorities in Bruges, to wait for the outcome of these negotiations. The Minister is appalled that this did not happen. ‘Apparently there are people who don’t want a fair solution’, the Minister concluded. ‘We want to buy the forest and give Bruges a city-forest like no other Flemish city has. We want to do this, but only against a reasonable price’.”²³

Thus, the case of the Lappersfort-Forest shows how social and ecological struggles by a relatively marginal group of young activists can generate considerable passive engagement or sympathy. This can even transform into active civic engagement and policy-influence at a certain moment (cf. the demonstration of 4.000 people, the involvement of formal politics). However, it is important to note that this protest centred on a single issue with a sympathetic goal. This helps to explain why the long struggle of the Lappersfronters got a lot of support from the local population and was able to influence public opinion in favour of their cause, through opening up the forest for visits, cultural activities and also through reports in the mainstream press. The latter has also been very important in terms of influencing the public- and political agenda, more so than ICTs.

However, reality is messy and despite the support from the local population, the mainstream and alternative media as well as formal political actors, it looks like corporate interests will win in the end. The forest is still owned by Fabricom, who is still refusing to sell the forest to the Flemish government, officially because the offer of the minister is too low. It is

unclear what will happen now with the forest. At the time of writing, three months after the eviction, the negotiations between Fabricom and the green minister for the environment were still ongoing.

3.4.2.4 Summary and Analysis

ICTs have not been crucial in this action. The attention the activists got from the mainstream press has probably been much more important. But in terms of mobilising for action it has played an important role in getting the point of view of the activists across, in mobilising and in providing a cheap and fast means to disseminate up-to-date news about the police actions. Indymedia, for example, played an important role in providing the space where activists could inform the wider public about what was happening on the ground. ATTAC also used the Internet in order to mobilise for direct action. The Internet as a medium did not play a role in the involvement of formal politics. This was due to the fact that the action got a lot of popular and local support and because the Flemish Minister for the Environment is from the green party. The preservation of forests is typically a green issue. Nevertheless, this is an example of how ICT can facilitate direct action, which in turn can influence the public debate, as well as the political agenda, but mainly through mass media.

This case also shows that ICTs are more relevant for mobilisation and up-to-date information, than for lobbying or influencing the public agenda. Last but not least it is also an example of how organisations like Indymedia and ATTAC are embedded in a local context, but at the same time touching upon transnational issues and strategies, like that of forest conservation and -occupation.

4. CONCLUSIONS

At this stage, it might be useful to have another look at the main research questions and formulate tentative answers. This paper will then assess the implications of the empirical conclusions for the theoretical framework that was adopted in the section entitled, “context”.

4.1 Empirical Conclusions

The initial main research questions:

- (i) How do transnational social movement organisations use the Internet to organise themselves, both locally and transnationally? (5.1.1)
- (ii) How do transnational social movement organisations use the Internet to facilitate or mediate online civic engagement? (5.1.2)
- (iii) How do transnational social movement organisations relate to policy and the political and in what way do ICTs play a role in this? (5.1.3)

4.1.1 First Research Question

This research has shown that transnational social movements are never truly transnational, nor virtual. Different gradations exist between, at the one end, organisations like APC, with a formal membership structure and strong transnational ties, as well as organisations such as LabourStart, without local organisations, very decentralised and strong transnational ties. But at the other end, organisations such as ATTAC and Indymedia with a strong local base and community of activists and sympathisers, that are independent but at the same time loosely connected to a transnational frame of reference. The high degree of transnationalisation in all organisations also has to be qualified by observations that the poorest parts of the world are often absent, that there exist cultural and language barriers and that resources are unevenly distributed. Furthermore, not all organisations have, what one could call, goals of global reach. At this level, it is possible to distinguish between those organisations whose main goal is primarily global, and those organisations whose main goal is local, but situated in a global problematic. All organisations realise however that in a globalised world, structures, processes and rules at the international level set the preconditions for the realisation of their local goals. As such, the degree of transnationalisation at the international organisational level is overall rather strong.

A strong degree of transnationalisation also relates to a strong degree of virtualisation. The online is very present and in most cases crucial at the intra-transnational level. In almost all the cases studied, the virtualisation of activities at this level is very strong, whereas the real life activities are low. The Internet provides small organisations with new means of cheap, highly flexible and instantaneous communication, and at the same time making organisational decentralisation possible.. Without the Internet, it would be hard or even impossible for many of the organisations to organise and co-ordinate actions at the transnational level. At the local or national level, real life becomes more important in terms of organising, except when the local context requires decentralisation, as in the case of Indymedia Germany. As such it can be concluded that strong transnational ties in combination with decentralisation leads to a predominant role of the online in the communication and interaction within the organisation, between organisations and with the

outside world. This does however not mean that strong transnational and decentralised organisations do not need the real or face-to-face contacts.

During this study, it has become clear that probably one of the most revolutionary potentials of the Internet is its ability to decentralise work, through cheap means of interactive communication, bridging time and space. It allows organisations to rely on the voluntary work of dispersed activists and sympathisers. Furthermore, the Internet provides relatively small organisations with new means of cheap, highly flexible and instantaneous communication, making organisational decentralisation and at the same time co-operation and integration possible. It is likely then that the transnationalisation of civil society is an evolution that will be sustained in the future and that the Internet will play an important role in this.

4.1.2 Second Research Question

In addition to the organisational use of ICTs, this study also set out to assess new forms of ICT-mediated civic engagement in the realm of broadening the public sphere. The Internet provides social movements with the possibility to construct public or semi-public spaces in order to facilitate online civic engagement by taking advantage of the interactive potentials of the Internet. This can take different forms: mailing lists, open web-forums, semi-open web-forums, closed web-forums, spontaneous web-forums, etc. Some forums allow anonymous postings, most however require you to give an e-mail address or to register. When it comes to access to the public, some forums are open to the surfing public, but others are only accessible for registered users. The three cases of inter-active engagement that were examined, showed that forums and mailing lists can be very vibrant at times, but also that many constraints exist in this regard. These include:

- In many countries, only a relatively few people have access. This applies not only globally but also within developed countries. Organisations with a local base are more inclined to develop concrete strategies to counter this paradox as they are confronted with members and sympathisers who are not online.
- Then there are the issues of a homogeneous ideological framework and an often-limited number of active participants in web forums or mailing lists (cf. ATTAC mailing list & LabourStart forum).
- Conversely, there may also be a strong diversity of opinions expressed and when this is combined with a lack of moderation, can lead to flaming and insults, killing discussion (cf. Indymedia forum).
- It is also often unclear where the discussion is leading, no conclusions are drawn and the participants are predominantly male.

These constraints result in relatively low levels of real interactive debate between participants. Many people only post one message, or register without being active. The spontaneous Indymedia forum is possibly the exception in this regard, as it was short and very intense and respondents could participate anonymously.

—Notwithstanding these many constraints, forums and discussion mailing lists provide public or semi-public spaces where interactive debates can and are held. They are also used to diffuse opinions or information, which can stimulate or nourish debate. As such, the forum or mailing list represents a temporary community for those that interact and to a lesser extent for those who are passively following the discussions and receiving alternative opinions and information. This also explains this paper has sought to get to grips with the phenomenon of lurking. This is in a sense a blind spot, as it is not known what the passive audience does with the information or postings they read or receive in their mailbox. Nevertheless, it can be assumed that the degree of lurking is lower for a mailing list where people have to register and provide an e-mail address than for an open forum where anyone can read the postings without registration. Lurking is important as it can be linked to the contradictory concept of passive online engagement. This however, should not be interpreted as fixed. An active participant can become passive in the forum or mailing list, but still follow it or receive the mailings and become active again because a certain issue interests him or her and the other way round.

This study has shown how transnational social movement organisations use the Internet in order to create spaces for discussion and debate for their members, but as much for sympathisers and visitors to their sites. In this sense, the Internet potentially contributes to the construction of a transnational public sphere. This should however not be exaggerated, as the many constraints have shown. Nevertheless, forums and mailing lists do allow citizens to engage politically and voice their opinions. Passive as well as active participants receive multiple perspectives and alternative information on specific issues.

4.1.3 Third Research Question

All cases studied adhere to broad goals, but share a *leftist ideology*. However, other civic organisations promote opposite ideologies at the transnational level. This project was limited to progressive social movements. To the extent that some of these organisations are slowly succeeding in getting recognised as advisory and negotiating organisations, both at big international forums and in international institutions, their impact on international policy is probably growing. However, this report does not support the view that the Internet can be sufficient in driving this evolution. Only those organisations with a *real life* component and

a certain degree of institutionalisation, often by means of choosing representatives and thus a certain hierarchy, can yield an impact at this level of governance. Indymedia might be important in terms of supporting an alternative transnational public sphere, but it will have little direct impact on international governance and policy.

Indymedia does not lobby or engage in dialogue with formal politics and concentrates on direct action as main strategy. An advocacy organisation such as APC is much more structured and is in the “business” of representing other organisations at the international level. ATTAC has developed a double strategy, by putting pressure on local governments through the local branches as well as on the international level through ATTAC-international, it hopes to achieve policy change. It also combines lobbying with direct action. LabourStart does not directly influence policy, but the international labour movement, of which it is part, does have its (real-life) lobby-structures in almost every country.

Different organisations adopt different strategies to achieve their political goals, both online and offline. But, what does this say about the role of ICTs in terms of the political and political action? In terms of the conclusion that ICTs are deemed not to be very relevant for, not much. The case of the battle of Lappersfort frames the use of ICTs much better. The Internet played an important role in gaining initial support, in mobilising at very short notice, in organising the protests and demonstrations (amongst others by ATTAC), and in independently informing the general public (through Indymedia). However, there are other factors to take into consideration, such as the personal sympathy of the Minister of the environment, the persistence of the activists by occupying the site for more than a year, and last but not least the rather positive image of the activists in the mainstream press. ICTs provide activists with an independent voice and enable them to organise themselves quickly and to link their struggle to similar struggles worldwide.

However, much more is needed to make an action successful, the action and its aims have to reach the public as well as political agenda. The role of the mainstream press in amplifying the action and its aims is essential in this regard. Sympathy and support from the local population for the action also plays an important role in the perception of the activists and their aims. Finally, the case of the Lappersfort-forest also shows that vested interests are difficult to beat, even if the press, a minister and the local population supports your action and aims.

Nevertheless, what is clear is that individuals and organisations are starting to question processes of globalisation and the lack of democratic control. People feel they have lost their sovereignty to abstract levels of global and corporate governance or the absence thereof. By way of participating in transnational civil society or the transnational public sphere, they are starting to *reclaim* their lives by opposing dominant discourses. The Internet plays an important enabling role in this regard, but should not be seen as the driver of political and social change, people and their (collective) actions are.

All social movement organisations aim to influence the political, be it through lobbying, through changing values and lifestyles, through direct action or through combining the different strategies. Lobbying requires a willingness to engage with formal politics, a structured organisation, and a realist approach to the issues being addressed. Some organisations focus on the international level of governance, others try to influence the international from below, from the national or local. ICTs are not very important in this negotiating process, face-to-face interaction on the other hand is crucial. Also, the role of the “old” media in this regard should not be under-estimated.

Also with regard to direct action different strategies emerge, from organisations who do not take part in protests or demonstrations, over organisations that only develop direct actions online, to organisations who are active in both online and offline direct actions. In terms of direct action, ICTs are relevant in terms of raising awareness and voicing concern by way of online actions, as well as in mobilising for and organising offline protests or events.

Nevertheless, it can be concluded that lobbying as well as direct action needs *the real* in order to be effective. Furthermore, it is important to note that traditional media are still very relevant in terms of the political!

4.2 Theoretical Conclusions

The theoretical conclusions are based upon the empirical findings and relate to the theories being adopted throughout the section “context of research”. It deals with consequences for democracy and governance, the complexity of sub-politics, the role of ICTs in social change and the delicate nature of online civic engagement.

Whereas it is arguable from a normative point of view that transnationalisation social movements can potentially bridge the transnational democratic deficit and provide a link between local and international global issues, potentials however do not always materialise. The strange mixture of very diverse organisations, pursuing different strategies, addressing

a multiplicity of issues, is very fragmented, divided, but nevertheless at some times united in action. As such it remains difficult to assess its impact on politics and democracy at national and/or international level. The reluctance of part of the movement to engage with formal democratic political actors, as well as with economic actors, complicates this even more. However, existing and structural power-relationships between rich and poor nations, between national states and international bodies, between nation states and the world economy, also make that many of the issues transnational social movements address are often dismissed by the powers that be (cf. Held et al, 1999). The elimination of the debt of the Third World, international regulation and taxation of capital flows, ecological norms, more democratic control on international bodies, revaluating public services, etc. would radically alter current regimes between market and state, between nations and international organisation and last but not least between those who have and those who have not.

This in turn also explains why some organisations disengage and refuse to be “encapsulated” when they believe no dialogue is possible. As Beck (1994) suggested, one of the main goals of social movements is voicing issues and agenda setting. From this perspective both groups engaging with formal politics and disengaging are necessary in order to come to a lively public sphere (cf. Mouffe, 2002). But there also exists a danger of closure and extreme radicalism in this regard. Political actors also have to develop strategies to restore legitimisation of and trust in democracy and the democratic process in order to avoid closure and/or auto-exclusion.

Sub-politics, as Beck argues, grows from below and can be a valid partner in co-shaping the “arrangement of society”. The field of social movement organisations and more specifically (virtualised) transnational civil society movements is however very complex and diverse, both in terms of organisation and strategies. An organisation like APC, a transnational membership-group of bottom-up NGOs, focuses on the international level of governance in order to advocate their interests. LabourStart, a network of decentralised correspondents, focuses on labour-issues, local as well as international. ATTAC, a transnational coalition of relatively independent local cells, focuses on local consolidation and provides a platform for lobbying and direct action at the local and international level. Indymedia, a transnational community of independent journalists and media-centres, links news about local struggles with likeminded struggles at a global level.

All very different in one way, but also similar in that they represent what Beck called the renaissance of non-institutional politics. Renaissance is an appropriate term, as many social movement organisations operating at the transnational level do show much resemblance to the characteristics of the new social movements in the 1960s and 1970s. They are also

placed within civil society, bypassing the state, aiming to innovate civil society action, enlarge its scope, developing alternative life-styles and changing values (cf. Habermas, 1987; Melucci, 1981: 179). The difference lies in the multiplicity of issues being addressed and strategies pursued. A part of the green movement chose, at a certain moment in time, the route of formal politics and was able to influence other political parties, raise awareness concerning ecology and change policies. But this is difficult to achieve, and maybe even undesirable, in terms of the current transnational social movements, the global issues at hand and its consequences for the local. Sub-politics, represented here by transnational social movement organisations, has a pivotal role to play as it can act both locally and internationally. That represents its strength, linking the local to the global and vice-versa, raising awareness at the local level of the impact of the global, but also raising awareness at the global level of the existence of the local.

When considering ICTs and their impact on this sub-political democratic equation, it has to be pointed out that this report does not argue that the Internet or indeed other technologies will lead to more or better participation, nor to more or a better democracy for that matter. It is important to say this because when studying the impact of ICTs on society there always is a danger of being too media- or technology-centred, as the usages of these interactive technologies are the starting point of the research.

However, claims about the impact of the Internet on democracy are also untenable. When Beck (1994) and Giddens (1991) speak of changes in politics, political participation and being politically active are being perceived by people, ICTs have to be seen as tools enabling or facilitating these less institutionalised forms of participation, through their mobilising and networking potentials, but also through their interactive potentials. In terms of the former, ICTs represent for social movements a (cost-) efficient tool to organise transnationally, to decentralise, to mobilise beyond its constituency, to network with other organisations and/or to inform independently. They also provide the backbone by which direct action can be organised in a decentralised way. (Cf. Scott and Street, 2001)

In terms of civic engagement, this opens opportunities for individuals and local organisations to become politically active at the local, national or international level, by doing volunteer work within the organisation or by attending demonstrations, meetings, lectures, etc. A strong virtualisation is often a necessary means to bridge space and time. But virtualisation is never complete, the real, face-to-face meetings and attention from traditional media remain important, especially within organisations with a local base (cf. Diani, 2001). This calls into question the work of social scientists, such as Putnam (2000),

that fear for a certain “cyberbalkanization” of society. These authors like to stress the dissolution of social institutions and the decline of civic engagement in real life due to a shift towards online social ties. The results of this study shows that both techno-optimists, who see the Internet as a new Athenian forum, and techno-pessimists, who fear alienation and domination are wrong in that they both ignore one part of the equation. To understand the impact of ICTs on society a more differentiated and graded perspective is needed, positioned in-between boom and doom, accepting both enabling and constraining factors, combining continuity with discontinuity, accepting the dangers of concentration and domination, but at the same time recognising that resistance movements are benefiting from the same technology. This research has argued that many uses of ICTs by transnational social movements can be seen as a continuation of what social movements have always done, but more efficiently, faster, more direct, cheaper.

The argument can also be made that ICTs do bring something “new”. Without ICTs it would be difficult to achieve the radical decentralisation across borders that many of the cases studied here have managed. The Internet also facilitates the convergence of divergent organisations with different goals and strategies. But above all the Internet allows small organisations to have a national, regional or global reach and impact. The importance of the Internet in terms of organising social movement organisations is rising, especially so at the international level of organisation, but it can also be described as rather instrumental, to achieve political goals, to broaden its reach and struggle, or to influence public opinion. But this should not be exaggerated.. Throughout this study, the importance of traditional media emerged, for example concerning media-diversification in terms of the digital divide strategies, the copying of articles from printed press in the forums or the important role of the mainstream press in the Lappersfort-case. In a sense, this confirms what Jane Keys (1996) from Greenpeace International said some years ago about the Brent Spar-case:

“The Brent Spar page was also interesting as it showed the strong link with traditional media. The number of people logging into the Brent Spar page was directly related to when the story was covered in newspapers and on TV.”

Another interesting “new” feature is the interactive potential of the Internet for organising and mobilising. The Internet facilitates interactive debate and this can be linked to a strengthening and/or broadening of the public sphere. However, as this empirical analysis and Dahlberg (2001) pointed out, there exist major constraints in this regard. The unequal distribution of access and the capabilities to use the communicative technologies is the most striking example, but also the crucial importance of the real in terms of political action and influence. Domination by a limited number of participants, the relative absence of women in forums, or flaming among participants also show that online debate as such are not

unproblematic either. Nevertheless, forums and discussion lists are growing and more and more people voice their opinions. This in itself is relevant in terms of a lively public sphere, new forms of civic engagement, and facilitating issue-oriented participation. In this regard, engagement is more short-term, cyclical, à la carte involvement, from rather passive and receptive to very (inter-) active. As Kellner (2001) observes:

“...the development of new global public spheres with the Internet and new multimedia technology require further development of the concept of the public sphere today and reflection on the emerging importance of new technologies within democracy.”

The Internet is a medium with strong potentials and not only for political participation, but also for economic development, social policies, cultural production, etc. But it cannot be seen as separate from the real world or as a solution to all societal problems, especially in terms of democracy and participation. Technologies can strengthen existing hierarchical power structures as easily as they can subvert them. The underlying power and class relations within organisations, in society and in the world at large should therefore be kept in mind when studying the social impact of technologies. Reforming democracy and social change has always been a slow process, especially at an international or transnational level, with many conflicting interests and powerful actors. This is no different in the “living in the fast lane” Internet-age.

5. POLICY IMPLICATIONS

The implications for policy can be subdivided into three. (i) The implications for further research. (ii) The implications for ICT-policies. (iii) The implications for democracy and participation.

5.1 Implications for further research:

As already argued, one of the main disadvantages of the adopted analytical framework is that it is quite broad and examines many issues, so fails to get an in-depth insight into specific issues. Hence, the identifying in this of the need for additional research.

- The tensions between the local context and the transnational project within transnational organisations could be examined further. Further comparative research could shed new light on the relation between local context and culture, and the adoption of the Internet within social movement organisations.
- In decentralised and transnationalised organisations internal decision-making is often situated online. This in itself, provider the researcher is given permission to monitor

this process, is an interesting subject for further research. Questions about differences with offline decision or power relations could then be answered.

- Another area for further research relates to the inter-organisational use of ICT. Here, it would be useful to develop tools to map networks and links between civil society actors in the real world as well as online.
- A comparative analysis of rules and criteria for moderating online discussions could result in some kind of best practices or recommendations for the adoption of transparent criteria and procedures that can be consulted by participants and used by webmasters.
- The intriguing phenomenon of lurking also deserves further research. It is unclear what passive audiences or receivers do with the information they read or receive or what could make them become active.
- The importance of the mainstream press mainstream press - print and audio-visual -in amplifying or muting the message of (transnational) social movements or specific events such as the world social forum is considered big. It would therefore be useful to do a content analysis of how big protest events and specific social movement organisations are portrayed in the mainstream press and how the issues they address are being translated to the wider public.
- In terms of policy and democracy, it would be very interesting to monitor a consultation-process by international institutions or national governments and the role of ICTs in this process. This could be complemented by in-depth interviews with the different actors, policy makers as well as social movement organisations, concerning their evaluation of such consultations in terms of impact.

5.2 Implications for ICT-policies

It is difficult to determine which implications this study has for ICT policies because they often are reduced to regulation. But what should be regulated in the use of ICTs in terms of the organisation of social movements or the interactive public sphere? It is a dangerous route, which leads directly towards censorship and privacy-issues. The open network philosophy, which has been adopted by most countries, is doing fine. Radical views and opinions, within the legal framework of the freedom of expression, is no reason for content-regulation. Furthermore, the freedom to assemble and to organise protests is also embedded in a democratic society.

If however ICT-policy is defined in a broader sense and digital divide policies are included, this study shows that social movement organisations are very concerned about this. Some develop own strategies to reach people who have no access, but also governments and

international organisations have a responsibility in this regard. The digital divide is not only problematic in terms of engagement in informal online politics, but as much in formal online politics, as the contact between citizen and state is becoming increasingly digitised. It might also be relevant to see to which extent universal service policies or indeed social policies have to be adapted in order to be more inclusive. Education, vocational training, ethnicity, but also structural inequalities on a global and local scale, play an important role in this regard²⁴. Attention should therefore not only be on facilitating access to ICTs, but also on reducing the structural (socio-economic, political and cultural) exclusion mechanisms, whereby access can be a result, rather than a necessity to belong.

5.3 Implications for democracy and participation

As stated before, ICTs will not cure the crisis of representative democracy, but they do enable civil society actors to organise themselves more efficiently, to network and to mobilise. This is in itself relevant for reviving democracy, as civil society organisations allow individuals to become politically active, within the organisation, but also in terms of direct actions. Other studies also point to a rise in political engagement in less-formal civil society organisations. It is therefore important to perceive civil society movements not as a threat to the present order, but as a democratic enrichment.

Furthermore, the use of ICTs in facilitating debate and discussion has its democratic merit in that it represents an open forum for individuals to voice their concerns and opinions. Although many constraints exist in this regard, forums and discussion mailing lists are new instruments that can potentially foster engagement into political debates and thus democratise the public sphere.

The growth of informal engagement in civil society organisations, the extensive use of ICTs by these organisations in order to facilitate engagement, active as well as passive, and the rising popular support for the protest against international institutions, is a challenge for formal representative democracies, faced with a decline in participation, and for international institutions, whose legitimacy is questioned even further. From this point of view it would be in the interest of the representative democracies, as well as international bodies to be receptive and open to dialogue with those (bottom-up) organisations that want to engage with policy and voice the concerns of hitherto silent communities.

Notes

- 1 Although the term ICTs implies more than the Internet (cf. mobile technologies, etc), this study will focus foremost on the Internet and its uses as an information and communication medium!
- 2 The concept of meso-mobilisation refers to networking between organisations and was introduced by Gerhards & Rucht, 1992
- 3 The part on organisation is mainly based on joint research with Leo Van Audenhove, see (Van Audenhove, et.al, 2002)
- 4 This typology is partly based on: (Bekkers, 2000)
- 5 With regard to the web-analysis we would like to stress that websites often change over short periods of time. Our analysis was carried out between January 2002 and August 2002. Changes might have occurred in the meantime, so our analysis is only indicative of the websites under study.
- 6 Argentina, Australia, Bulgaria, Colombia, Canada, Czech Rep., Curacao, Hungary, Ecuador, Germany, Japan, Mexico, Nigeria, Nicaragua, Romania, Senegal, Slovakia, S-Africa, S-Korea, Spain, Ukraine, UK, USA, Uruguay
- 7 Dutch, English, Esperanto, French, Norwegian, Portuguese, Spanish, Swedish and Turkish (Versions in Japanese, Mandarin, Danish, Setswana and Urdu are under construction)
- 8 USA, Australia, South Africa, Finland, Russia, Trinidad & Tobago, S-Korea, Canada, Switzerland, Ireland, UK, New Zealand, Mexico, Netherlands, Brasil, France, Portugal, Nigeria, Norway, Sweden, Turkey, Philipines, Japan, Italy, Belgium, Taiwan, Haiti, Israel, Pakistan, Hong Kong, Yugoslavia
- 9 Web presence: Andorra, Argentina, Austria, Belgium, Bolivia, Brasil, Cameroun, Chile, Côte d'Ivoire, Denmark, Deutschland, España, France, Greece, Hungary, Ireland, Italia, Luxembourg, Maroc, Nederland, Norge, Paraguay, Polska, Portugal, Québec, Suisse, Sénégal, Suomi Finland, Sweden, Tunisi, Uruguay - No Web presence: Burkina Faso, Colombia, Costa Rica, Dominican Rep., Ecuador, Japan, Madagaskar, Mali, Roemenia, Russia, Serbia, Slovenia, Swasiland, & Venezuela
- 10 Multilateral Agreement on Investments (OECD)
- 11 Australia, New Zealand, India, Indonesia, South Africa, Nigeria, Ambazonia, Austria, Spain, Belgium, Netherlands, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Cyprus, Turkey, Poland, Hungary, Czech Republic, Italy, Ireland, India, Norway, Portugal, Russia, Sweden, Switzerland, United Kingdom, Canada, Argentina, Brazil, Colombia, Chile, Ecuador, Bolivia, Peru, Israel, Palestine, Mexico, United States.
- 12 For example, Bretton Woods Project, Clean Clothes Campaign, Ejercito Zapatista de Liberacion Nacional, Globalise Resistance, Le Monde diplomatique, IndyMedia, LabourStart, IMF-FMI, Oneworld, WTO, etc.
- 13 For instance, Greenpeace, EZLN Zapatistas, Human Rights Watch, direct action media network, fairness and accuracy in reporting, Radio 4 All, labornotes.org, labornet.org, Americans United for Separation of Church and State, Z-magazine, 2600.org (Hacking), ziplit secure email, free software foundation, opensource.org, slashdot, etc.
- 14 9th of March till the 6th of June 2002

- 15 The category “Anti-Fascism” relates foremost to the victory of J-M Le Pen in the first round of the French presidential elections in April.
- 16 The category ‘Latin America’ relates to messages on Bolivia, Venezuela, Colombia, Argentina and Chile.
- 17 Analysis from 6/05/2002. the day of the murder, until 15/05/2002
- 18 Own translations
- 19 <http://www.itrainonline.org/itrainonline/english/about.shtml>
- 20 Radio Bruxxel—a collaboration between several Belgian (local) action radios, Indymedia and other organisations — provided 4 days of alternative information and coverage of the protests during the European Summit in Laken (Brussels) in December 2001.
- 21 Own translation
- 22 <http://www.lappersfront.tk>
- 23 Translations by the author
24. Cf. Georgiou, M. (2003): 'Mapping Diasporic Media across the EU: Addressing Cultural Exclusion', EMTEL2 Key Deliverable - unpublished report. London: LSE & Durieux, D. (2003): 'ICT and social inclusion in the everyday life of less abled people', EMTEL2 Key Deliverable - unpublished report. Amsterdam: UvA

References

- Almond, G. & Verba, S. (eds): (1980) *'The Civic Culture Revisited'*, Boston: Little Brown & Co
- Anheier, H., Glasius, M. & Kaldor, M. (ed.): (2001) *Global Civil Society 2001*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Barnes, S, Kaase, M. et al.: (1979) *'Political Action: Mass Participation in Five Western Democracies'*, London: Sage
- Beck, U. (1994) 'The reinvention of politics: Towards a theory of reflexive modernisation'. In: Beck, U., Giddens, A. & Lasch, S.: *Reflexive Modernization: Politics, tradition and aesthetics in the modern social order.*, Cambridge: Polity Press, pp.1-55
- Bekkers, V. (2000) *Voorbij de Virtuele Organisatie? Over de bestuurskundige betekenis van virtuele variëteit, contingentie en parallel organiseren*. Oratie, Erasmus Universiteit Rotterdam. (Beyond Virtual Organisation)
- Bennett, W.L.: (1998) 'The Uncivic Culture: communication, identity and the rise of lifestyle politics', *Political Science & Politics*, 31(4), pp. 741-761
- Bimber, B: (2000) 'The Study of Information Technology and Civic Engagement', *Political Communication* 17:4 (Oct.-Dec.)
- Browning, G. (1996) *Electronic Democracy: Using the Internet to Influence American Politics*, Wilton CT: Pemberton
- Calabrese, A. (1999) 'Communication and the end of sovereignty', *info*, 1(4), 313-326.
- Calhoun, C. (ed): (1992) *'Habermas and the Public Sphere'*, Cambridge MA: MIT-press
- Castells, M. (2001) *The Internet Galaxy. Reflections on the Internet, Business, and Society*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Castells, M.: (1999) 'The Informational City is a Dual City', in D. Schön, B. Sanyal & W. Mitchell, *High Technology and Low-Income Communities*, MIT press: Cambridge MA.

- ChuckO: (2002) 'The Sad Decline of Indymedia', Infoshop news, 08/12, URL: <http://www.infoshop.org/inews/stories.php?story=02/12/08/2553147>
- Cohen, J. (1988) 'Discourse Ethics and Civil Society', *Philosophy and Social Criticism*, 14(3/4).
- Colas, A. (1997) 'The Promises of International Civil Society', *Global Society*, 11(3), 261-277.
- Dahlberg, L.: (2001) 'The Internet and Democratic Discourse: Exploring the prospects of online deliberative forums extending the public sphere', *Information, Communication & Society*, 4(4), 613-633
- Dahlgren, P. & Sparks, C. (eds): (1991) '*Communication and Citizenship: Journalism and the Public Sphere in the New Media Age*', London: Routledge
- Dahlgren, P.: (2000) 'The Internet and the Democratization of Civic Culture', *Political Communication*, 17(4), 335-340
- Diani, M.: (2001) 'Social Movement Networks: Virtual and Real', in: F. Webster: (ed) '*Culture and Politics in the Information Age, A New Politics?*', London: Routledge
- DiMaggio, P., Hargittai, E., Neuman, R. W., & Robinson, J. P., (2001) 'Social Implications of the Internet', *Annual Review of Sociology*, 27, 307-327
- Elchardus, M., Huyse, L. & Hooghe, M. (2000) *Het maatschappelijk middenveld in Vlaanderen. Een onderzoek naar de sociale constructie van democratisch burgerschap*. Brussel: VUBPress. (Civil Society in Flanders: a study into the social construction of democratic citizenship)
- Enwezor, O., et.al.: (2002) '*Democracy Unrealized*', Documenta11_Platform1, Kassel: Hatje Cantz
- Falk, R. (1999) '*Predatory Globalization: A Critique*', Oxford: Blackwell Publishers
- Feather, J. (1994) '*The Information Society: A Study of Continuity and Change*', London: Library Association Publishing
- Florini, A. M. (ed.)(2000) *The Third Force: the rise of transnational civil society*. Washington: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace.

- Frissen, V., Van Lieshout, M., Van Staden, M. & Pensioen, A.: (2001) *De schaduwdemocratie. ICT en maatschappelijke participatie*. Den Haag: Ministerie van BZK. (The Shadowdemocracy: ICT and societal participation)
- Gerhards, J. & Rucht, D.: (1992) 'Mesomobilisation contexts: organizing and framing two protest campaigns in West-Germany', *American Journal of Sociology*, n°98, pp.555-596
- Giddens, A. (1991) *'Modernity and Self-identity. Self and Society in the Late Modern Age'*. Cambridge: Polity Press
- Giddens, A.: (1994) *'Beyond Left and Right: The Future of Radical Politics'*, Cambridge: Polity Press
- Giddens, A.: (2000) *'The Third Way and its Critics'*, Cambridge: Polity Press
- Gore, A., (1994) Forging a New Athenian Age of Democracy, *Intermedia*, Vol.22, pp.4-7
- Guidry, J.A, Kennedy, M.D & Zald, M.N.: (2000) *'Globalizations and Social Movements: Culture, power, and the transnational public sphere'*, Ann Arbor (Mich.): University of Michigan Press
- Habermas, J.: (1962) *'Strukturwandel der Öffentlichkeit'*, Luchterland: Darmstadt und Neuweede
- Habermas, J.: (1987) *'The Theory of Communicative Action'*, vol.2, Cambridge: Polity Press
- Habermas, J.: (1992) 'Further Reflections on the Public Sphere'. In Craig Calhoun, (ed.) *'Habermas and the Public Sphere'*, Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.
- Hall, S. & Jacques, M. (eds): (1989) *'New Times: The changing face of Politics in the 1990s'*, London: Lawrence and Wishart
- Haque, M.S.: (1996) 'Public Service Under Challenge in the Age of Privatisation', *Governance* 9(2), pp.186-216
- Held, D., McGrew, A., Goldblatt, D. & Perraton, J.: (1999) *'Global Transformations: Politics, Economics and Culture'*, Cambridge: Polity Press

- Hill, K.A. & Hughes, J.E.: (1998) '*Cyberpolitics: Citizen Activism in the Age of the Internet*', Lanham: Rowman and Littlefield
- Hirst, P. & Thomson, G.: (1995) 'Globalisation and the Future of the Nation State', in *Economy and Society* 24(3), pp.408-442
- Janoski, Th.: (1998) '*Citizenship & Civil Society: a framework of rights and obligations in liberal, traditional, and social democratic regimes*', Cambridge: Cambridge University Press
- Keane, J. (2001) 'Global Civil Society?', in Anheier, H., Glasius, M. & Kaldor, M. (eds.) *Global Civil Society 2001*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, pp.23-47.
- Kellner, D.: (1997) 'New Technologies, the Welfare State and the Prospects for Democratization', paper presented at the EURICOM/SMIT Conference; '*Communication, Citizenship & Social Policy: Rethinking the limits of the Welfare State*'. Boulder (Colorado), 2-4 November
- Kellner, D.: (2001) 'Habermas, the Public Sphere, and Democracy: A Critical Intervention', URL: <http://www.gseis.ucla.edu/faculty/kellner/papers/habermas.htm>
- Keys, J. (1996) 'Environmental Internet Campaigning of NGOs', ISEP Workshop 'Internet for Environmental Communication', Vienna, Austria, May 30-31, URL: http://www.isep.at/internet_ws/keys.html
- Lazarus, W. & Lora, F. (2000) *Online content for low-income and underserved Americans: The digital divide's new frontier*. Santa Monica: The Children's Partnership.
- Melucci, A.: (1981) 'Ten hypotheses for the analysis of new social movements', in D.Pinto, (ed), '*Contemporary Italian Sociology*', Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Melucci, A.: (1996) '*Challenging Codes: Collective action in the information age*', Cambridge: Cambridge University Press
- Mouffe, C.: (2002) 'For an Agonistic Public Sphere', in: Enwezor, et.al.: '*Democracy Unrealized*', Documenta11_Platform1', Kassel: Hatje Cantz
- Norris, P. (2001) *Digital Divide? Civic engagement, information poverty and the Internet in democratic societies*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, URL: <http://www.pippanorris.com/>

- Norris, P.: (2002) *Democratic Phoenix: Political Activism Worldwide*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, URL: <http://www.pippanorris.com/>
- O'Donnell, S. (2001) *Towards an Inclusive Information Society in Europe. The role of voluntary organisations*. IST Study Report, Information Society Technologies Research Programme: European Commission.
- Pateman, C.: (1972) *'Participation and Democratic Theory'*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press
- Pouillet Y.,(1998) 'Freedom and information highways or how to ensure electronic democracy ', *Telematics and Informatics*, n° 15, pp. 163-180.
- Putnam, R.D.: (2000) 'Bowling alone: the collapse and revival of American community', New York (N.Y.): Simon & Schuster.
- Rosenau , J. (1992) *'Governance without Government, Order & Change in World Politics'*. Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press.
- Rosenau, J., (1990) *'Turbulence in World Politics, a Theory of Change and Continuity'*, Princeton UP: Princeton
- Sanyal, B.& Schön, D.: (1999) 'Information Technology and Urban Poverty', in Schön, D., Sanyal, B. & Mitchell, W., *High Technology and Low-Income Communities*, Cambridge (MA): MIT press
- Schiller, H.: (1996) *'Information inequality: the deepening social crisis in America'*, London: Routledge
- Scott, A. & Street, J.: (2001) 'From media politics to e-protest? The use of popular culture and new media in parties and social movements', in: F. Webster: (ed) *'Culture and Politics in the Information Age, A New Politics?'*, London: Routledge
- Splichal, S., Calabrese, A. & Sparks, C. (ed.)(1994) *Information Society and Civil Society. Contemporary Perspectives on the Changing World Order*. West Lafayette: Purdue University Press.
- Swann, D.: (1988) *'The Retreat of the State, Deregulation and Privatisation in the UK and the US'*, Harvester-Wheatsheaf: Hertfordshire.
- Touraine, A.: (1981) *'The Voice and the Eye: an analysis of Social Movements'*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

- Van Audenhove, L., Cammaerts, B., Frissen, V., Engels, L. & Ponsioen, A. (2002) 'Transnational Civil Society in the Networked Society: A study on the relation between ICTs and the rise of a transnational civil society', Study in the framework of TERRA 2000, EU Project under IST 2000 for Institute of Infonomics
- Warkentin, C. & Mingst, K. (2000) 'International Institutions, the State, and Global Civil Society in the Age of the World Wide Web.', *Global Governance*, (6), pp.237-257.
- Wilhelm, A.: (2000) '*Democracy in the Digital Age: Challenges to Political Life in Cyberspace*', London: Routledge
- Zouridis, S., Thaens, M., De Meulder, A. & Cornelissen, M.: (2001) *ICT, en het ministerie van VROM*. Den Haag: Ministerie van BZK.

Appendix 1: EMTEL Deliverables

Final Deliverables

- Brants, K. and Frissen, V. (2003) 'Inclusion and Exclusion in the Information Society', University of Amsterdam (ASCoR) and (TNO Strategy, Technology and Policy)
- Pichault, F. and Durieux, D. (2003) 'The Information Society in Europe: Methods and Methodologies', LENTIC, University of Liege and ASCoR, University of Amsterdam.
- Preston, P. (2003) 'ICTs in Everyday Life: Public Policy Implications for Europe's Way to the Information Society.
- Punie, Y., Bogdanowicz, M., Berg, Anne-Jorunn., Pauwels C. and Burgelman, J-C. 'Living and Working in the Information Society: Quality of Life in a digital world', IPTS-JRC, European Commission, Sevilla; Centre for Technology & Society, Norwegian University of Science and Technology, Trondheim; SMIT, Free University of Brussels
- Silverstone, R. (2003) 'Media and Technology in the Everyday Life of European Societies', Media@lse, London School of Economics and Political Science.

Key Deliverables

- Berker, T. (2003) 'Boundaries in a space of flows: the case of migrant researchers' use of ICTs', NTNU, University of Trondheim.
- Cammaerts, B. and Van Audenhove, L. (2003) 'ICT usage among transnational social movements in the networked society', ASCoR/TNO, University of Amsterdam.
- Durieux, D. (2003) 'ICT and social inclusion in the everyday life of less abled people', LENTIC, University of Liege and ASCoR, University of Amsterdam.
- Georgiou, M. (2003) 'Mapping diasporic media across the EU; addressing cultural exclusion', Media@lse, London School of Economics and Political Science.
- Hartmann, M. (2003) 'The Web Generation: the (de)construction of users, morals and consumption', SMIT-VUB, Free University of Brussels.
- Punie, Y. (2003) 'A social and technological view of Ambient Intelligence in everyday life', IPTS (JCR-EC), Seville.
- Ward, K. (2003) 'An ethnographic study of internet consumption in Ireland: between domesticity and public participation', COMTEC, Dublin City University.