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**The European Social Forum and the Internet:
A Case Study of Communication Networks and
Collective Action**

Anastasia Kavada

A thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements
of the University of Westminster for the degree of Doctor of
Philosophy

March 2007

*I would like to dedicate this thesis to my parents, Eleni and Nikos,
whose unwavering support helped to make this PhD possible.*

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Abstract

Distinguished by its transnational scale, non-hierarchical organizing, and diverse composition, the 'movement for alternative globalization' is thought to partly derive this combination of characteristics from its use of the internet. My research is an attempt to explore this relationship by investigating the use of email lists for the preparation of the European Social Forum (ESF) in London in October 2004, one of the largest gatherings of the movement in Europe. Focusing on the processes of organizing, decision-making and collective identity formation, my study employed a combination of methods, including a preliminary survey, in-depth interviews, as well as content analysis of the main ESF email lists.

In terms of organizing, my thesis revealed that email lists are instrumental in constructing a flexible and polycentric organizing structure. They were also used extensively to widen up participation to the face-to-face organizing meetings, but also to legitimate the decision-making system and conceal its asymmetries of power. Furthermore, every list constituted a different 'site of identization' whose affordances for identity construction depended on its size, scale, and composition. In that respect, email lists constituted an infrastructure for the development of multiple identities within the movement. However, the lack of physical proximity and the limited capacity for conveying emotive content constrained the potential of email lists to foster relationships of trust and shared opinions which were instead facilitated by face-to-face communication.

Overall, my thesis has identified a series of mechanisms and dynamics whose point of equilibrium determines the state of the movement at any point in time. In that respect, email and email lists tend to foster opening, divergence, multiplicity, and individuality, while face-to-face communication tends to generate closing, convergence, unity, and collectiveness. It is therefore the combination of these two forms of communication that helps the movement to have seemingly contrasting characteristics: to be united in difference or to be a collective that affirms individual subjectivity. However, my study has further shown that the capacity of the internet to foster such dynamics also depends on the specific cultures of organizing, political priorities, and ideological backgrounds of the people using it.

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1. Introduction

Emerging in the seminal 'Battle of Seattle' in late 1999, the 'movement for alternative globalization' presented an inspiring vision for activists worldwide. Here was a movement that seemed able to unite disparate fragments of left-wing, single-issue, and trade union politics. A movement that was able to mobilize thousands of people across the world employing an organizing structure that was decentralized, non-hierarchical, light and flexible. A movement that was attempting to put in practice its ethic of inclusiveness and plurality by operating as a consensus-based, participatory democracy. The 'alter-globalization movement' was not only aiming to provide an alternative to neoliberal globalization, but to constitute itself an alternative, to be the change it was envisioning.

The extensive and innovative use of new communication technologies was also considered as a distinguishing feature of the movement. In fact, according to academics and commentators at the time, some of the movement's defining characteristics – its plural identity, global scale and decentralized structure – seemed to reflect those of the internet (Ayers 2001; Bennett 2004¹; Castells 2001; Cleaver 1999; Escobar 2000; Klein 2002; Smith 2001; Tarrow 2002). With both the 'alter-globalization movement' and the internet thought to operate as 'networks of networks' (Van Aelst 2004: 121), the parallels between them were almost unnerving.

These claims intrigued me both as an activist and as an academic. Having just finished an MA thesis on the use of the web by British political parties and non-governmental organizations, I was interested to examine whether the 'alter-globalization movement' was using the internet in a more innovatory and experimental way. My fascination also stemmed from the underlying philosophy of these claims which were placing mediated communication in a much more central position than the one it had hitherto assumed in social movement studies or political communication. Yet, these claims also struck me as overly simple, since academic writings at the time tended to describe the similarities between the 'alter-globalization movement' and the internet, rather than explain whether those similarities were actually a result of the interaction between the two. What is more, early academic texts were rarely supported by systematic empirical evidence, as research on the subject was still scarce.

¹ It is worth noting here that Bennett's book chapter was available on the internet as a working paper from late 2002.

I thus set out to explore the relationship between the 'alter-globalization movement' and the internet aiming to offer a more refined understanding of the link between new communication technologies and the movement's plural and diverse identity, non-hierarchical and decentralized structure, as well as global scale. However, as I explain in Chapter 5, my research stumbled on a number of theoretical gaps and methodological problems that complicated its design and conceptualization.

One of the main difficulties was the lack of similar research which could provide some pointers about how to approach the subject. And while I had initially anticipated a wave of academic publications to arrive a few years after the seminal 'Battle of Seattle', my expectations were not fully met. In that respect, despite early interest in the role of the internet, academic texts published in the ensuing years tended to focus either on the use of the internet in processes of mobilization or on the alternative media constructed by the movement. Nevertheless, research on the connection between the internet and the movement's plural identity or decentralized structure is still missing from the literature.

On a theoretical level, the scarcity of such research is indicative of the limited dialogue between social movement and internet studies. As I argue in Chapters 3 and 4, social movement theory is currently lacking a clear theorization of the role of mediated communication within the internal processes of social movements. This is possibly reflecting a more general disregard of such processes, which are often deemed too difficult to investigate (Klandermans 1997: 133). Internet studies, on the other hand, have tended to focus exclusively on online environments, neglecting their embeddedness in specific contexts, as well as their interplay with other media and forms of communication. Such studies can thus generate only a partial view of the role of new communication technologies within social movement activity.

What is more, the movement itself presented a challenging object of analysis. This was largely due to its fluid and diverse composition, which rendered the selection of a representative sample of groups or organizations an almost impossible task. I thus decided to focus on the case study of the European Social Forum (ESF), one of the main events organized regularly by the European branch of the 'alter-globalization movement'. Following in the footsteps of the World Social Forum (WSF), the ESF aims to foster solidarity among the various actors involved in the movement by bringing them together in an 'open space' to discuss actions, campaigns and alternatives. Therefore, compared to other 'alter-globalization' gatherings which refer to more specific issues, the ESF is

attracting a wider range of actors. What further made the ESF preparatory process a suitable case study was the fact that it is supposed to embody the beliefs of the movement in decentralized, non-hierarchical organizing and participatory, consensus-based democracy. My choice was also guided by practical reasons, as the next ESF was going to be held in London in October 2004 and predominantly organized by activists based in Britain.

Apart from providing my research with a much-needed focal point and a sense of cohesiveness, the case study approach also fitted the inevitably inductive character of my study. In that respect, the absence of a solid theoretical framework on which to anchor my research obliged me to proceed in an exploratory way, continuously refining my research questions based on the data emerging from the fieldwork. I was also constantly on the alert for new published research on the subject, which would further enhance my insight into the movement and its use of the internet. This meant that certain questions were gradually sidelined or entirely dropped in favour of other, more crucial themes that I did not anticipate before my foray in the field. Thus, while my initial focus rested on the web, it quickly became apparent that email and email lists were used much more extensively within the ESF preparatory process. What is more, in the course of my research, the link between the global scale of the movement and its use of the internet was consigned to a secondary role, becoming a dimension of the two other research questions. Therefore, in their refined version, the aims and objectives of my study refer to the following:

a. An exploration of the role of email and email lists in the process of constructing a plural collective identity among the actors involved in the preparation of the London 2004 ESF. On the individual level, I was interested in examining whether and how email lists played a role:

- in the development of multiple, tolerant identities;
- in the development of a cadre of activists that could switch easily between local and global identities and concerns.

On the collective level, I aimed to find out whether and how email lists played a role:

- in the constitution of an internally diverse but unified collective;
- in affirming the individual subjectivity of the activists involved in the movement.

b. An exploration of the role of email and email lists in the organizing and decision-making process of the London 2004 ESF. More particularly, I was interested in examining whether and how email lists contributed towards the establishment of:

- a flexible and decentralized organizing structure that avoided hierarchies and vertical control;
- a consensus-based decision-making system, that emphasized direct participation and the respect for individual subjectivity;
- an organizing and decision-making process that transcended geographical barriers.

The role and affordances of email lists were also examined in relation to face-to-face communication and particularly physical meetings, which constituted the main spaces of decision-making within the London ESF process.

I gathered my empirical evidence using a combination of qualitative and quantitative methods. In that respect, I began my research with a preliminary survey of participants in the Paris 2003 ESF. The survey explored the contexts through which they were mobilized to attend the event, as well as the media and forms of communication used within each context. This enabled me to gain a first insight into the workings of the 'alter-globalization movement' and to assess the extent of its internet use, particularly in relation to face-to-face communication. The results of my preliminary survey, which are presented in detail in Chapter 6, suggested that older activists or those already in contact with political or voluntary organizations were more likely to have used an internet application than those who were relatively new in the process. The survey has also shown that intra-group or interpersonal modes of communication were used much more extensively than mass or impersonal ones.

Based on the patterns gleaned through my preliminary analysis, I focused my lens on those participants who were more actively engaged in the organizing of the ESF. In this respect, I conducted in-depth interviews with twenty-four activists from different countries and political traditions, enquiring on their experiences and views of the ESF process and the movement in general, as well as on their use of the internet to organize the forum. I complemented the interviews with a content analysis of three of the main email lists associated with the London ESF, examining their functions for organizing and collective identity construction. I further archived and analysed all of the documents, minutes and statements produced and circulated within the ESF decision-making process. This

allowed me a more comprehensive view of the London preparatory process and constituted the basis of the historical account presented in Chapter 7.

Chapter 7 also includes an in-depth discussion on the conflict between the 'Horizontals' and the 'Verticals' which threatened to bring the ESF process to a standstill. Underlying this conflict were two opposing political cultures and understandings of the ESF, which, as I argue in Chapter 8, extended to the attitudes of the two camps towards new communication technologies. In that respect, the 'Horizontals' and the 'Verticals' produced two websites with very different characteristics, each reflecting the culture and political priorities of the camp who was responsible for them. It is worth noting here that even though my thesis has examined mainly the role of email and email lists, my initial focus rested on the use of the web. Therefore, my interviews included a number of questions on the official and unofficial websites of the ESF, generating some interesting data that I thought it was worth including in the thesis. In addition, this chapter clearly explains the reasons why I had to shift my attention from the web to email lists, since the conflict between the 'Horizontals' and the 'Verticals' seriously delayed the design of the official website, making email lists the main channel of internet communication.

Chapter 9 presents the profiles of the three analysed lists, in terms of their number of messages, number and type of authors, as well as type of message. Other categories included the length and language of the examined messages and their relevance to the ESF process. I further calculated the author and message overlaps between the three lists, as well as the flows of messages between them.

The next two chapters discuss the use of email lists in the processes of organizing and decision-making of the London ESF. As I show in Chapter 10, my research has explored not only what happened on the lists, but also the ways in which the lists were embedded within the broader context of organizing and decision-making. In that respect, my content analysis investigated the type and function of the organizing tasks undertaken on the lists, assessing whether they were referring to offline processes of organizing. This chapter further focuses on the role of email lists in the definition and operation of the ESF working groups, as well as on their relationship with processes of leadership. I also analyse the use of email lists in facilitating consensus and in opening-up participation to the face-to-face meetings, as well as their links with transparency and accountability.

Chapter 12 presents my findings with regard to the process of collective identity formation. In this line of enquiry, my content analysis has examined whether and to what extent the email lists constituted 'spaces of identization', comparing and contrasting them in terms of their affordances for identity construction. This chapter also explores more general attitudes towards online discussion, as well as the potential of email lists to foster interpersonal trust, create bonds between diverse individuals, and cultivate multiple and tolerant identities.

In my concluding chapter, I attempt to discern the overarching patterns emerging from my findings and to assess how well they fit with the claims made about the relationship between the 'alter-globalization movement' and the internet. I further outline my possible contributions to the theory of social movements and internet studies and discuss the limitations of my thesis.

2. The 'movement for alternative globalization' and the Internet

2.1. Introduction

The 'movement for alternative globalization' made its first impact on public consciousness during the Seattle meeting of Trade Ministers in late 1999. The 'Battle of Seattle', as it was later named, was followed by demonstrations at almost every summit of a transnational economic organization or major political power, including the International Monetary Fund (IMF), the World Bank, the FTAA, the EU or the G8.

The 'alter-globalization movement' is not opposed to globalization per se, but to the way it is shaped by neoliberal concerns, disregarding human rights and environmental issues. International economic institutions, such as the IMF or the World Bank, responsible for regulating the neoliberal globalization project, constitute the focal point of this fierce protest activity. Protestors challenge the form of these institutions, their internal structure and decision-making procedures, as well as the content of their policies, which are guided by the principles of free-market and world trade deregulation (van Aelst and Walgrave 2004: 99).

This explains the gradual drop of the 'anti-globalization' label which had been the cause of criticisms and misunderstandings (ibid: 100) in favour of the term 'movement for alternative globalization' or, more recently, 'global social justice movement'. These labels seem to convey more accurately the demands of this movement, which, apart from opposing neoliberal globalization, also puts forth global political solutions, such as the Tobin tax (Kolb 2003: 5). The movement has also been referred to as 'anti-capitalist', even though "the vast majority of organizations and individuals are not [anti-capitalist], or at least not explicitly, and therefore to name the whole movement anticapitalist (*sic*) is inaccurate" (ibid). Thus, within this thesis the terms 'movement for alternative globalization', 'global social justice movement', and 'alter-globalization movement' will be used interchangeably. The term 'alter-globalization' is actually a literal translation of the French name 'alter-globalist' that is widely used within the European part of the movement¹.

¹ However, it is worth noting here that the initial 'anti-globalization' label cannot be discarded that easily as it is still used to characterize the movement in news reports and magazine articles. According to Bennett, for instance, '[m]ost of that coverage makes little effort to describe the diversity of issues and demands in the movement – opting, instead, to lump them all together under the largely journalistic construction

2.2. Origins and History

"[B]uilt upon streams of activism that developed over the 1980s and 1990s" (Smith n.d.: 5), the 'movement for alternative globalization' represents the coming together of different activist networks working in areas affected by neoliberal globalization. Prior to Seattle, landmark campaigns such as the 'Zapatistas solidarity' or the 'anti-MAI' campaign had constituted vital points of convergence, creating bonds between different groups and organizations which were activated later on in the organizing of Seattle. In what follows, I will briefly explain the legacy of Zapatismo and the anti-MAI campaign and describe in greater detail the 'Battle of Seattle', the moment when the movement became famous worldwide. I will then trace the development of the movement after Seattle, particularly after the events of 9/11 and the emergence of the anti-war movement.

2.2.1. Origins: Zapatismo and the Anti-MAI Campaign

"The Zapatista Army for National Liberation burst on to the international stage when it seized several towns and villages in Mexico's poorest state of Chiapas on 1 January 1994." (Desai and Said 2001: 70). The causes for this uprising, which coincided with Mexico's signing of the North America Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) (ibid), can be traced in the extreme poverty conditions of the Mexican indigenous communities, as a result of years of economic and social deterioration and racial discrimination (Garrido and Halavais n.d.: 1). What kept this movement from becoming another failed and forgotten indigenous revolt was its support from a transnational network of activists which formed around the Zapatista cause and provided it with legitimacy, visibility and protection (Desai and Said 2001: 70). This transnational network was so important that some scholars tend to distinguish between the EZLN, the Chiapas indigenous organization which started the uprising, and what they term as neo-Zapatismo, "the political convergence between individuals, organizations and movements, which came together in political fronts, coordinating bodies, conventions, work groups, forums, assemblies, consultations, 'encounters' and collectives between 1994 and 2000" (Xochitl 2003: 1).

One of the secrets for this success lies in the effective use of communication media, and particularly the internet, to circulate ideas and to create bonds between the different

"antiglobalization" (2003: 18). As you will also notice, the term 'anti-globalization' will also crop up in this thesis in quotes from earlier academic writings on the subject.

parts of the movement (Garrido and Halavais n.d.: 4). Indeed, it seems that the Zapatistas went online just two days after the uprising, with Subcomandante Marcos, the figurehead of the movement, becoming an internet hero (ibid: 1). With at least 4,500 Zapatista websites spanning twenty-six countries, the "Zapatistas brought networking to a new level" (Desai and Said 2001: 70). These transnational networks of support were further solidified through face-to-face encounters at Zapatista gatherings, the Encuentros, taking place in Mexico or elsewhere in Latin America and attended by thousands of activists around the world (ibid).

What mobilized the worldwide support of thousands of activists and constitutes part of the Zapatismo legacy to the 'alter-globalization movement' is an imaginative conceptualization of power and the pursuit of a new way of politics. According to Klein, '[w]hat sets the Zapatistas apart from your average Marxist guerrilla insurgents is that their goal is not to win control but to seize and build autonomous spaces where "democracy, liberty and justice" can thrive' (2002: 220). This is supported by a non-hierarchical process of decision-making, decentralized organizing and community democracy (ibid). The Zapatista legacy is carried to the 'alter-globalization movement' by activists who once belonged to these transnational networks of support, as '[m]any who attended the first encuentros went on to play key roles in the protests against the World Trade Organization in Seattle and the World Bank and IMF in Washington DC' (ibid: 218).

Alter-globalization concerns further 'received a new, more international élan' (van Aelst and Walgrave 2004: 100) with the protest against the Multilateral Agreement on Investment (MAI) in 1998. MAI negotiations 'had been formally launched in May 1995 at the OECD ministerial meeting, largely as a result of a US-led, and business-supported, initiative' (Smith and Smythe 2001: 192). The main goal was to create a binding trade agreement between the wealthier economies, while entrance of non-OECD states would be decided on a case-by-case basis (ibid). Although not held in secret, the MAI negotiations did not receive extensive media coverage at the time. However, when a draft of the agreement was leaked through the websites of two US advocacy groups, the tide of criticism against the content and the secretive process of the agreement rose to an unexpected height. An anti-MAI campaign was set in motion, co-ordinated by several NGOs whose goal was 'to mobilize domestic opposition within the OECD countries and elsewhere' (ibid: 193). This marked the beginning of 'the real politicization of these

negotiations in a number of countries' (ibid) that would later become a common phenomenon with the rise of the 'alter-globalization movement'.

The effectiveness of the anti-MAI campaign and its legacy to the 'movement for alternative globalization' lies in its innovative use of the internet to mobilize domestic support in several countries. The campaign was mainly internet-based. It was spurred by the leak of the draft agreement on the internet and was sustained through online public debate and free circulation of relevant information. In that respect, the internet also served as a connecting mechanism between activists worldwide, as it 'provided the glue to bind the opposition that had begun simultaneously in a variety of developed countries' (Ayres quoted in van Aelst and Walgrave 2004: 100).

2.2.2. The "Battle of Seattle"

The success of the anti-MAI campaign was followed by fierce protest activity, culminating in the failure of the Trade Ministerial meeting in Seattle in 1999 (Smith n.d.: 2). The 'Battle of Seattle' 'involved around 3,000 official delegates and 2,000 journalists outnumbered by 50,000 demonstrators who, organized in over 500 protest groups, were responsible for a 4-day closure of the retail district in downtown Seattle, \$3 million in property damage, and a WTO meeting that broke up in failure' (Lichbach and Almeida 2001: 4). The 'Battle of Seattle' left an indelible mark on the anti-globalization movement, as its global scale, diversity of participants and non-hierarchical organization have come to define the character of the movement itself.

In that respect, the Seattle protestors belonged to a diverse array of groups and organizations which were involved in prior mobilizations against trade liberalization agreements, the World Bank and the IMF. Indeed, this mobilization included 'an extensive web of transnational associations and movement networks that facilitated cooperation and political exchange across national boundaries' (Smith n.d.: 5). The WTO opponents in Seattle comprised a surprising blend of organizations, including anarchists of the 'Black Block', the American organized labour and the Direct Action Network, a coalition of direct action groups, such as the Ruckus Society and the Rainforest Action Network (de Armond 2001: 203)

Equally impressive is the global scale of the protest. While it is true that the majority of activists in the streets of Seattle came from the affluent West, the protest had a relatively international composition. In addition, protests against the WTO and national

institutions were organized simultaneously in several countries, including the UK, Switzerland, Philippines and India (Lichbach and Almeida 2001: 19).

The mode of organizing and the tactics used by the protestors further contributed to making the 'Battle of Seattle' a seminal protest. According to de Armond, '[t]he WTO protests succeeded in the streets through a combination of strategic surprise and tactical openness' (2001: 232). The protestors organized as a swarm, adopting a decentralized and non-hierarchical decision-making process based on 'affinity groups', meaning small, self-organized groups of activists operating in an independent but co-ordinated way. These groups 'anchored the protests and provided a catalytic nucleus of blockades around which crowd actions were directed' (ibid: 204).

The use of the internet for networking and disseminating information was instrumental for the success of the protest. More specifically, the internet helped in co-ordinating the efforts of several NGOs around the world, contributing to an international division of labour both prior to and during the protests. For instance, '[w]hile groups with local ties concentrated on mobilization and direct action, more transnational-based groups provided information and frames to feed the action' (van Aelst and Walgrave 2004: 101). However, apart from a new communication medium, the internet also constituted a new site of struggle. In that respect, virtual 'sit-ins' and blockings of official websites were taken up by activists who could not participate physically in the streets of Seattle. It is worth noting, however, that 'these forms of electronic activism were not used massively and were far less important to the movement's success' (ibid: 102).

The Seattle protests also marked the birth of Indymedia, 'an increasingly global network of locally controlled websites (and in some cases, radio stations and video projects) which aims to offer "grassroots, non-corporate coverage" of events' (Kingsnorth 2003: 157). It was created during the WTO protests by a group of activists, journalists, film-makers and web-designers who decided to set up a website to offer information about the protests that would not appear in the mainstream media. The site was very successful as it 'received 1.5 million hits during the summit' (ibid).

2.2.3. After Seattle: 9/11 and the Anti-War Movement

Since the Seattle protests 'almost every summit of a transnational (economic) organization has led to street mobilizations' (van Aelst and Walgrave 2004: 102), attracting thousands of activists and extensive media coverage. Still, the success of

Seattle has yet to be repeated as the police and conference organizers have become better prepared to deal with the protesters (Rucht n.d.: 15). For instance, in the Genoa protests against the G8 in 2001, the protesters 'were physically kept out from the "red zone" that was reserved for the official conference' (ibid). In addition, transnational summits are increasingly held in remote and well-controlled locations, such as Qatar or Glenagles. According to Rucht, the movement's success was also limited by 'the absence of a specific institution that represents a clearly identifiable target', the fragility of the diverse coalitions organizing the protests, as well as the mostly unsympathetic portrayal of the protests in the mainstream media (ibid). The 9/11 attacks have also weakened the North American section of the movement, as many activists 'rushed to distance themselves from anything associated with political violence or "terrorism"' (Wood 2004: 70), while the stricter police controls of the 'war on terror' have further limited the scope for dissent (ibid).

However, the wars waged in Afghanistan and Iraq as part of the 'war on terror' have given rise to a 'far more pressing movement against war and military hegemony' (Tarrow 2005: 55) which has eclipsed the 'alter-globalization movement' in terms of numbers and public prominence. In that respect, the memory of the 'Battle of Seattle' seems to fade in the light of the global anti-war protest of the 15th of February 2003 which was also organized simultaneously around the globe but attracted a record number of protesters in most of the countries where it took place. However, the two movements are 'hard to separate' since 'the February 15th antiwar marchers came heavily out of the global justice movement' (ibid). The turn towards anti-war activities can also be attributed to the post-9/11 climate which saw 'alter-globalization' protesters retreating from the tactic of targeting corporations in an effort 'to distance themselves from any resemblance to the attackers of the similarly ambiguous target of the World Trade Center' (Wood 2004: 80). However, despite the movement's close connections to the anti-war protests, the decline of 'alter-globalization' politics may signal that 'we are at the end of a cycle dominated by opposition to international financial institutions, rather than at the beginning of a long wave' (Tarrow 2005: 55).

2.3. The World Social Forum and the European Social Forum

In recent years, the 'World Social Forum', as well as a number of regional and local social forums seem to 'have largely eclipsed mass protests as the primary vehicles

where diverse movement networks converge across urban space to make themselves visible, generate affective attachments, and communicate alternatives and critiques' (Juris 2005: 255). The World Social Forum (WSF) was founded as an alternative to the 'World Economic Forum' (WEF), an independent organization consisting of the 1,000 leading businesses in the world, meeting every year in Davos to discuss the global state of affairs. Initially set up to coincide with – and protest against – the WEF, the WSF quickly gained a life of its own and 'in each subsequent gathering there were fewer attempts to interact with the WEF' (Patomäki and Teivanen 2004: 145).

According to official accounts:

'the idea for the World Social Forum (WSF) as a space for reflection and debate about alternatives to neoliberal globalization originated with Oded Grajew, who, together with Brazilian compatriot Francisco Whitaker, presented the proposal to Bernard Cassen, President of ATTAC-France (Association for the Taxation of financial Transactions for the Aid of Citizens) and Director of the *Le Monde Diplomatique*, in February 2000' (Juris 2005: 258).

Cassen agreed with the idea and then proposed to organize the first WSF in Porto Alegre, which, apart from its location in the Global South, was renowned for its revolutionary model of participatory budgeting. The choice of Porto Alegre also meant that the forum could receive financial support by the ruling Workers Party (PT) (ibid). Hence, the first WSF was held in Porto Alegre in 2001 attracting 12,000 participants (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/World_Social_Forum). Since then, it has been organized annually in the same location, with the exception of WSF 2004 which took place in Mumbai (Patomäki and Teivanen 2004: 145) and the 'polycentric' WSF 2006 held in three different locations, Caracas (Venezuela), Bamako (Mali), and Karachi (Pakistan). Participation to the event has also increased exponentially with WSF 2005 attracting 155,000 registered participants (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/World_Social_Forum).

According to its Chapter of Principles, written after the first WSF in order 'to provide guidelines for a permanent process' (Juris 2005: 258-9)², the WSF constitutes:

'an open meeting place for reflective thinking, democratic debate of ideas, formulation of proposals, free exchange of experiences, and interlinking for effective action, by groups and movements of civil society that are opposed to neoliberalism and to domination of the world by capital and any form of imperialism' (WSF Charter of Principles 2001: n.p.).

² According to Patomäki and Teivanen, '[t]he Charter was drafted by the Brazilian Organizing Committee soon after the first WSF meeting and approved with modifications by the WSF International Council (IC) in June 2001 in São Paulo. It has achieved a quasi-constitutional status within the WSF process, even if its authority has occasionally been challenged' (2004: 145-6).

The 'open space' idea emphasizes the role of the WSF as a 'public square' (Whitaker 2004: 113) rather than a social movement. In other words, the WSF is not an actor but a space for actors to meet, discuss and network. In that respect, the Charter of Principles clearly states that:

'No-one, therefore, will be authorized, on behalf of any of the editions of the Forum, to express positions claiming to be those of all its participants. The participants in the Forum shall not be called on to take decisions as a body, whether by vote or acclamation, on declarations or proposals for action that would commit all, or the majority, of them and that propose to be taken as establishing positions of the Forum as a body. It thus does not constitute a locus of power to be disputed by the participants in its meetings, nor does it intend to constitute the only option for interrelation and action by the organizations and movements that participate in it.' (2001: n.p.).

Thus, by defining the WSF as an 'open space' the architects of the Charter were trying to prevent the WSF from becoming a site of contestation with various actors vying for its leadership.

The WSF idea was met with such success that since its inception regional or even national and local 'social forums' have swiftly started to crop up around the world, in Asia, Europe and the Americas. The first European Social Forum (ESF) took place in Florence in October 2002 and attracted around 50,000 (Chesters 2004: 332) or, according to other reports, 60,000 participants (Juris 2005: 265). Its meetings were instrumental for setting the date of 15 February 2003 as a Global Day of Action against the war in Iraq, leading to a globally coordinated collective action that was the biggest to have ever occurred (Chesters 2004: 332). The second ESF was held in Paris in November 2003 and was attended by around 40,000 participants, while the third ESF in London in October 2004 attracted only 20,000 people. However, attendance numbers have risen in the latest ESF, which took place in Athens in May 2006, whereby 35,000 registered participants attended over 500 seminars and workshops (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/European_Social_Forum).

2.4. Factors – Environment

This section will examine the sources of the protestor's grievances which compelled them to take action in the streets, as well as the broader societal contexts that are reflected in the characteristics and aspirations of the movement. In this regard, the

trptych of neoliberalism, capitalism and world trade deregulation seem to be the main source of new grievances for activists worldwide. More specifically, the push towards the deregulation of world trade and the elimination of local protectionism is perceived as a threat to national independence, self-sufficiency and the protection of the environment and human rights. And the more international trade infiltrates local economies, the more it is perceived to be affecting everything and everyone (Lichbach and Almeida 2001: 32). Hence, in recent years trade issues have been increasingly politicized by a diverse range of organizations worldwide (ibid). However, protests against free trade cannot be easily distinguished from protests against neoliberalism (ibid: 34). This is because complaints about trade issues belong to a wider historical context marked by 'the breakdown of the Bretton Woods System and the rise of neoliberalism' (ibid: 33). This has signaled 'the loss of national sovereignty over economic policy making' (ibid), challenging long-standing social contracts and communal local values. This critique is also wedded to the argument against capitalism, with 'alter-globalization' protestors contesting the activities of multinational corporations and the unequal distribution of wealth created by the capitalist system of production (ibid: 34).

Opposition to neoliberalism, deregulation and capitalism seems to be as wide-ranging as their perceived impact. According to Lichbach and Almeida, 'the enemies of free trade usually make strange bedfellows, and trade issues today beget even more heterogeneous coalitions than in the past' (ibid: 33) since they bring together groups and individuals whose ideological differences may have hitherto been considered irreconcilable.

Such heterogeneous coalitions also derive from the process of globalization which has highlighted the links between previously distinct campaigns and issue areas. In that respect, globalization has heightened the perception that '[o]ur world is now characterized by complexity (everything affects everything else) and chaos (small changes somewhere produces large effects somewhere else)' (ibid: 36). Thus, '[i]ssue areas are no longer separable and decomposable but interpenetrated and interdependent' (ibid). As a result, the global justice frame has been incredibly successful as 'it facilitates the condensation of distinct targets in the same protest campaign' (Tarrow 2002: 22), even though it may lack 'the definitional capacity to produce sustained mobilization around common collective identities' (ibid: 23). However,

globalization has also led to what Tarrow and other social movement scholars call a scale shift:

'implying both an increase in numbers of those with identifications and activities in transnational localities, and the emergence of a class of ordinary citizens who increasingly see the sites of their political action as ranging from local to global without necessarily passing through national institutions on the way' (Bennett 2003: 27).

But apart from pointing to the negative aspects of globalization, '[c]ritics of the globalizing neo-liberalism [...] also worry about the state of democracy in several regards' (Rucht n.d.: 10). First, as the control over economic decisions is slipping away from national governments, such decisions are increasingly left in the hands of the 'market' or major private players, such as multinational corporations. And since these actors are not democratically elected and accountable, there is no formal mechanism with which to contest and alter those decisions. In addition, 'even when national and international governments are included in economic decision-making processes, there exists an extreme asymmetry in the respective weight and influence of individual states and institutions' (Rucht n.d.: 10). In recent years, the post-communist transition has seen the USA as the only remaining superpower, wielding disproportionate influence within key international institutions such as the World Bank, the IMF, the NATO, the WTO, as well as the G8 and G7 summits (ibid). This crisis of governance allows corporations to escape regulation and win concessions from national governments (Bennett 2005: 127). According to Bennett, this means that corporations and trade regimes inhabit a political sphere 'beyond normal legislative, electoral, and regulatory processes – a sphere that Beck (2000) calls "subpolitics"' (ibid: 128).

The crisis of governance in world politics, combined with the crisis of representative democracy in the West and the political trajectory of the radical Left movements of the 1960s and 1970s have created demands for a redefinition of political participation. As della Porta argues, '[w]ith the development of "new" social movements, there was then a de facto acceptance of a division of labor – with movements "retreating" in the social sphere and political parties "representing" them in political institutions' (2005b: 191). By the 1990s this division had become so entrenched that movements seemed to have transformed themselves into lobby groups, voluntary organizations, countercultural communities, and neighbourhood associations, a transformation which had apparently cut them away from traditional forms of protest (ibid). What is more, 'the increasing

power of the market over the state, of the executive over the legislative, of global institutions over national ones' (ibid) made it almost impossible for social movements to find allies within the party system (ibid). As I will discuss in more detail in the next section, activists have reacted to these challenges

'via an attempt to redefine politics. The search for a "polis," which political parties and institutions are accused of betraying, is expressed as the need for a reappropriation of political activities by "the citizens" (versus professionals), the emphasis of participation (versus bureaucratization), the attempt to construct values and identities (versus managing existing ones)' (ibid).

This is also part of an effort to counter 'the failures of past movement eras – the fragmentation of the Left, the slowness and fragility of coalition building, the frequent inability to bridge collective identities meaningfully, and the leadership disputes and failures that led to factionalism, co-optation, and limited goal achievement' (Bennett 2005: 217).

What is more, global economic change and capitalism have transformed the processes of identity formation and identification as they have had a fragmenting effect on the traditional institutions of society (family, church, school, profession, community) (Bennett 2003: 26). They are also integral in the spreading of a culture that stresses the role of the individual, as they have brought profound transformations in its relationship with the state and social welfare structures. Discussing the structural roots of these changes, 'Ulrich Beck (2001) makes a distinction between the late-modern condition that he terms *individualization* and the older ideological concept of *individualism*' (Bennett 2003: 27, emphasis in original). The former refers to the partial replacement of certain social welfare structures with more direct dealings with work, health care, and other social needs, where the individual no longer feels the protection of the state (ibid). These processes of fragmentation and individualization have had a profound effect on individual identities, both positive and negative. Among the negative changes are the increasing stress and insecurity, the complexity of life decisions, as well as the attribution of the responsibility for structural problems to the individual (ibid: 26). There were, however, some positive effects as well, namely the increasing freedom with which individuals can identify with actors outside of dominant institutions and alter their identities (ibid). As Bennett argues, '[w]hat seems most important is that as identity bonds weaken from groups, people have less reason to create and maintain their identities through

conventional (partisan, national and ideological) forms of social conflict and exclusion' (ibid). Instead, identity seems to have become a journey of exploration, a self-reflexive project, as '[p]eople are more likely to discover the self as an active project involving re-invention, therapy, self-improvement, personal and planetary renewal, and spiritual quests' (ibid: 28). In addition, the deterioration of strong group identifications has paved the way for individuals to identify with others that do not necessarily share the same ideology, social position or geographical location (ibid). Therefore, the decline of strong partisan identifications means that current social movements need to accommodate the fluid, flexible and fragmented individual identities of their participants, providing a fertile ground for pursuing one's journey of self-exploration. As della Porta puts it, '[t]he challenge for contemporary movements is, then, to develop a model of internal democracy able to bring all the subjectivities together by valuing the role of individuals rather than sacrifice for the collective' (2005a: 90). This may signal the need for a redefinition of solidarity and collective identity formation to fit the shifts in the more general processes of identification.

2.5. Characteristics of the 'movement for alternative globalization'

2.5.1. Non-Hierarchical Structure – Decentralization - Horizontality

The 'movement for alternative globalization' is thought to be characterized by a flexible, non-hierarchical organizing structure, emphasizing direct participation and the absence of a recognizable central leadership. The stress on horizontality and participation is accompanied by a belief in deliberative methods of decision-making based on consensus rather than majority voting and characterized by inclusiveness and equality. Both a compelling vision and a demonstrable reality, albeit with its limitations, this mode of organizing and decision-making is discernible in all of events organized by the movement, from protests and demonstrations to social forums³.

³ It is worth noting here that decentralized forms of organizing are not necessarily a distinctive feature of the 'movement for alternative globalization' as social movement research is replete with examples of other movements organized in this way. Indeed, the claim that social movements are organized in a decentralized way was put forward by Gerlach and Hine as early as in 1970, emerging as a conclusion of their seminal ethnographic study of the Pentecostal movement and the Black Panthers. Flexible horizontal networks have also been a distinguishing characteristic of New Social Movements arising after the 1960s, such as feminist, ecological, or student movements, which defined themselves in contrast to the centralized working class movements of the first half of the 20th century (Juris 2005: 256). However, the features of decentralization and horizontality are much more pronounced in the 'movement for alternative globalization' and practised on a much larger geographical scale than in the movements of previous eras.

In that respect, the absence of central command is evident in protests and demonstrations, whose iconography is far away from that of 'an adoring crowd raising their fists in solidarity with an impassioned speaker on a podium' (Johnson 2001: 225). As Castells argues,

'[t]he anti-globalization movement does not have a permanent, professional organization, does not have a center, a command structure, or a common program. There are hundreds, thousands of organizations and individuals, around the world, converging in some symbolic protests, then dispersing to focus on their own specific issues – or just vanishing, to be replaced by new contingents of newly born activists' (2001: 142).

Decentralized organizing techniques are used both before and during major protests and events. For instance, the organization of activists in small 'affinity groups' is a technique which has survived the 'Battle of Seattle' to become one of the organizing modes employed in major protests. Thus, instead of building elaborate national or international bureaucracies, alter-globalization activists prefer to improvise temporary structures during demonstrations, with empty buildings being 'turned into "convergence centers", and independent media producers assembling 'improptu activist news centers' (Klein 2002: 18).

However, the aversion to centralized leadership and the adoption of flexible organizing models become even more apparent in the social forum process, where they are combined with the rhetoric of the 'open space' and a belief in participatory and consensual decision-making. According to Juris' ethnographic research, for instance, the social forums are inscribed with a culture of horizontal networking that entails a series of broad principles: '(1) forging horizontal ties and connections among diverse, autonomous elements; (2) the free and open circulation of information; (3) collaboration through decentralized coordination and consensus decision-making; and (4) self-directed networking' (2005: 256).

In a similar vein, and based on an in-depth study of the values and actual democratic practices of the Genoa Social Forum, della Porta and her partners identified four major aspects characterizing social forum politics:

'(1) internal differences are the driving force in the search for forms of participation that respect individual subjectivity and avoid exclusive commitments and vertical control; (2) consensus rules are privileged vis-à-vis majority rules; (3) direct participation is emphasized

over representative mechanisms; and (4) leaders are considered as “speakers” or “facilitators” (2005a: 89).

In what follows, I will explain these four principles in turn starting from consensus decision-making.

Requiring a higher degree of negotiation, consensus is thought to produce better solutions and decisions (ibid: 87). Deliberation is also perceived as capable of transforming individual identities, ‘developing the feeling of belonging to a community’ (ibid: 88). In statements reminiscent of the theory of the public sphere, social forum participants have expressed their trust towards a system of deliberative democracy ‘where individuals (rather than associations) bring their contributions to the *debate*, working toward the emergence of the common good’ (ibid: 89, emphasis in original).

The direct participation of individuals is central in that respect, constituting a reaction towards the bureaucratization and professionalisation of politics in Western representative democracies. In that respect, ‘[p]articipation is seen as an antidote to the “aridity” of politics in the 1980s and 1990s’ (2005: 197). Therefore, the emphasis on direct participation derives from an effort to ensure that individuals reap the full benefits of the decision-making system since they are directly included in it, rather than indirectly through their representatives.

As far as leadership is concerned, della Porta notes that even though social forums have adopted the models of direct democracy of previous movements, they have nevertheless attempted to address some of their problems and limitations. Several strategies are thus being employed in order to prevent leadership from becoming centralized or consolidated. Such strategies include the rotation of chairs of meetings, as well as the replacement of leaders by short-term spokespersons with a limited public mandate (ibid: 81).

Returning to the first point, this decentralized form of organizing is indispensable for the coordination of a wide variety of groups and individuals, characterized by different goals, aspirations and ideological positions. As della Porta puts it, ‘[m]obilizing heterogeneous groups in fact requires a network structure that respects their specific features by bringing them into contact’ (2005a: 80). In other words, this horizontal and flexible structure allows diverse participants to collaborate without having to subsume their goals or identity to those of the movement. It thus reduces the need for long-winding negotiations and compromises that such a diverse coalition would normally require. The

values of participation and respect for differences are closely linked with a respect for subjectivity, which is considered as one of the most positive aspects of this movement (ibid: 83). Activist writings on this subject seem to reflect these considerations. For instance, in an essay defending the value of the World Social Forum as an 'open space', Whitaker insists that it is exactly this idea of 'horizontal social articulation' that 'explains the success in Porto Alegre as well as Seattle, and of the February 15 demonstration against the war' (2004: 112).

The value of decentralized organizing has thus strong ideological connotations. According to Bennett, in this 'organization-based ethos of inclusiveness and diversity [...] we see something that might be termed "*organization as ideology*": a movement design code that is attempting to confront the failures of past movement eras' (2005: 216-17, emphasis added). The concept of 'organization as ideology' is also implicit in Juris' analysis of the 'horizontal networking logic of social movements'. As he puts it:

'Beyond social morphology, networks have more generally emerged as a broader cultural ideal, a model of and model for new forms of directly democratic politics at local, regional, and global scales. Moreover, such values are increasingly inscribed directly into emerging organizational architectures. [...] Indeed, activists increasingly express utopian political imaginaries directly through concrete political, organizational, and technological practice' (2005: 257).

Therefore, the ideas of horizontality, participation and decentralization have become a central part of the movement's ideology, constituting the basis for a collective identity that defines the movement in opposition to previous modes of collective action.

This is probably why the internal ideological debates of the movement are often expressed as conflicts over methods of organizing (ibid: 257-8). As Bennett argues, 'clashing organizational forms have become obstacles in the present era similar to movement ideology and collective identity conflicts in the past' (2005: 224). Indeed, one of the most central conflicts of this movement is the clash between the culture of horizontal networking, on which the social forums are based, with other, more command-driven logics characterizing the more traditional components of the Left, such as political parties or trade unions. This is because:

'While the command-oriented logic of parties and unions is based on recruiting new members, building unified strategies, political representation, and the struggle for hegemony, network politics involve the creation of broad umbrella spaces, where diverse movements and

collectives converge around common hallmarks, while preserving their autonomy and specificity. Rather than recruitment, the objective becomes horizontal expansion through articulating diverse movements within flexible structures that facilitate maximal coordination and communication' (ibid: 256-7).

For instance, the debate over the 'open space' idea of the social forums, hinted at earlier in this chapter, can be easily understood within this framework. In that respect, many actors would like the WSF to morph into a fully fledged political movement (Patomäki and Teivanen 2004: 146) with clear strategies, objectives, action programmes, and distribution of responsibilities (Whitaker 2004: 112)⁴. Such conflicts were also present within the European Social Forum process, often with crippling effects. The most prominent example in this regard is the clash between the 'Horizontals' and the 'Verticals' during the London 2004 ESF process which will be explained in great detail later on in this thesis.

However, the application of these principles within the actual organizing and decision-making process of the movement is rather limited in practice. Contrary to the vision of the social forums as spaces free from power play and manipulation, it seems that the forums suffer from some of the well-known problems of decentralized architectures, such as informality, hidden leadership and opaque structures. For many commentators, this was evident in the establishment and functioning of the main bodies organizing the WSF⁵. For instance, activists have criticized the 'top-down' manner in which the International Council (IC) was established, as its member organizations were invited to participate in it rather than elected (Waterman n.d.: n.p.). Others have argued that the organizational structure of the WSF is 'so opaque that it was nearly impossible to

⁴ In that respect, the Assembly of Social Movements, an assembly which takes place as part of the WSF allowing participants to produce political declarations and set global days of action, represents a compromise of some sort. But even though the impact of these declarations could have been considerable, if they were properly circulated and signed by everyone, their impact has been quite mediocre (Patomäki and Teivanen 2004: 147). Still such declarations constitute the object of internal controversy as 'open space' proponents fear 'that the media may consider them as semi-official conclusions' (ibid), meaning that groups whose concerns are expressed in the declarations gain more visibility and power over others (ibid).

⁵ The main decision-making organs of the WSF process are the Organizing Committee (OC) and the International Council (IC). The OC was set up in March 2000 in order to facilitate the organizing of the initial WSF in Porto Alegre. It consists of eight Brazilian trade unions and civil society organization and constitutes the locus of formal decision-making power within the process (Teivanen 2005: 123). The IC was created more than a year later, in June 2001, after the first WSF and comprises a large number of organizations that were invited to take part in its founding meeting (ibid). According to Teivanen, '[a]s of February 2003, the Council consisted of 113 organisations, though in practice many of them have not actively participated in the process' (ibid). However, '[t]he division of labour between the IC and the Brazilian Organising Committee has been ambiguous from the outset. The IC has gained increasing importance on paper and, to a lesser extent, in practice. It is fair to emphasise its role in giving international legitimacy to the Brazilian organizers, though this has not been its only role' (ibid: 124).

figure out how decisions were made' (Klein quoted in Teivanen 2004: 123). Transparency is also problematic as even though the WSF organizing process does not take place in secret, its 'proceedings are barely reported by its members to even the interested public' (Waterman n.d.: n.p.). This impedes the process of accountability since '[t]he nature and representativity of the members, and the extent to which they are answerable to any but themselves, remains obscure' (ibid).

And while such problems may seem unavoidable when trying to maintain a process of participatory democracy on such a large scale, it seems that even on a local level the functioning of social forums is not without its limitations. For instance, in della Porta's research of the Genoa Social Forum, participants admitted that there are 'concrete difficulties in implementing the horizontal model' (2005a: 82). They noted that decision-making is often informal and carried out in an elite fashion, while the representativeness of the assembly was questionable. Manipulation by the best organized was also felt as a risk. Participants further remarked that the 'capacity to develop inclusive and horizontal communication' (ibid) also depended on the organizational culture of each organization, as well as its previous organizational repertoires.

Thus, horizontality, decentralization, and participatory decision-making are not only features of the organizing process of the 'alter-globalization movement', but also an integral part of its identity, so much so that organizing seems to have acquired the status of a meta-ideology. There are, however, many practical limitations in the implementation of this organizing model that have attracted the criticism of academics and activists alike, making it rather unclear whether social forums do indeed employ 'a peculiar model of deliberative democratic politics' (ibid: 89).

2.5.2. Global Scale

The 'alter-globalization movement' is global in its scope and nature, as it has to match the scope and nature of its targets, international institutions and multinational corporations. Indeed, according to world-system theorists, the form of counterhegemonic or anti-systemic movements is always influenced by the form of hegemony they are opposed to (Lichbach and Almeida 2001: 18). Nevertheless, recent research has shown that the selection of global targets also depends on the goals of the specific groups or networks. In an investigation of the targets of 'alter-globalization' protest from 1998 to 2001, Wood has shown that '[a] slight majority of protests (52%), particularly those

associated with ICFTU [International Confederation of Free Trade Unions], ATTAC or Jubilee 2000 [Jubilee Debt Campaign] targeted the WTO, G8, IMF and World Bank explicitly or implicitly. In contrast, demonstrations affiliated with the PGA [People's Global Action] network, or its sub-networks like Reclaim the Streets were more likely to select a local target' (2004: 72).

The movement's rhetoric also seems to reflect its essentially global outlook. With slogans such as 'Globalise the resistance' and 'Another world is possible', the alter-globalization movement has taken on the concepts of 'one world' and 'global solutions' (Anheier, Glasius and Kaldor 2001: 16). However, the importance of locality has not been ignored. What the movement seems to be arguing for is a system of globally interconnected local communities, whereby democracy and policy implementation are shaped by global links but decided on a local, case-by-case basis.

The global scale of the movement is also evident in its variety of protest locations. In that respect, 'alter-globalization' protests have spanned the globe from Seattle, to Melbourne, to Prague, to Qatar, to Johannesburg, as they 'wander around the world... closely shadowing the periodic landing of global flows of wealth and power in their meeting places' (Castells 2001: 142). Even more impressive is the organization of simultaneous protests in different countries using the strategy of 'Global Days of Action' that has become increasingly popular (Wood 2004: 72). According to Wood:

'This strategy encourages local activists to protest in their own community on a day identified in a "call to action", distributed through social movement networks and the media. The dates are selected to correspond with summits of transnational institutions such as the IMF and World Bank, the Group of 8 or the World Trade Organization' (ibid).

The anti-war protests of the 15th of February 2003 show the effectiveness of this tactic in drawing the world's attention to a pressing issue. However, in the past years, 'Global Days of Action' have been called for a variety of issues, ranging from sweatshops to genetic engineering, from the plights of indigenous people to the situation in prisons (ibid)⁶.

Apart from demonstrating in their own localities, 'alter-globalization' participants also have the opportunity to travel to other countries where major protests or events are taking place. In fact, international events such as the World Social Forum were designed

⁶ It is worth noting here that 'Global Days of Action' are not a new phenomenon. In fact, the date of 1st May 1889 set by the Socialist International as a day for workers' demonstrations can be considered as the first time that this tactic was used (Wood 2004: 72).

specifically for building solidarity on a global level. In that respect, the Charter of Principles of the World Social Forum clearly states that:

'The World Social Forum is a process that encourages its participant organizations and movements to situate their actions, from the local level to the national level and seeking active participation in international contexts, as issues of planetary citizenship, and to introduce onto the global agenda the change-inducing practices that they are experimenting in building a new world in solidarity' (2001: n.p.).

However, a closer look at the demographic composition of these demonstrations and events, particularly of those held in Western countries, shows that activists from the affluent West far outnumber those from other countries. For instance, a survey of protesters during the 2001 alter-globalization demonstrations at an EU summit in Brussels showed that '[i]nternational participants in demonstrations abroad tend to be young, highly schooled males. They are experienced protesters, well organized and embedded in movement organizations' (Bedoyan et al. 2004: 49). This is because 'transnational mobilization is difficult and apparently only succeeds in attracting the stronger groups' (ibid). It is, however, indisputable that protests against neoliberal globalization have managed to mobilize a much larger constituency on a transnational scale than other waves of protest, even though transnational political institutions do not constitute a new phenomenon (ibid).

Thus, it seems that 'alter-globalization' protests and events have not managed (yet?) to create a cadre of international activists. Instead, according to Tarrow, '[i]n most activists' consciousness, supranational or global identities sit comfortably alongside traditional national and local identities' (Tarrow 2005: 57). Activists seem to be firmly rooted in their domestic politics, but also active on a larger geographical scale. In this sense, activists travelling to the large events or demonstrations 'may return to their domestic activism transformed by their transnational experience and will bring both transnational ties and global insights to their future activities' (ibid: 58). Tarrow and della Porta describe those activists as 'rooted cosmopolitans', meaning 'people and groups who are rooted in specific national contexts, but who engage in regular activities that require their involvement in transnational networks of contacts and conflicts' (2005: 237).

2.5.3. Diversity - Plurality

As it became evident in the section discussing the decentralized structure of the movement, diversity and plurality are fundamental to the 'movement for alternative globalization'. The movement is composed by a wide range of special interest groups and ideological orientations, while its campaigns do not fit neatly in the single-issue category but seem to push forward a multi-issue agenda. For instance, in the Genoa G8 summit in July 2001, 'an estimated 700 groups attended the Genoa Social Forum, ranging from traditional trade unions and charities like Oxfam and Christian Aid, as well as groups concerned with peaceful protests about globalization, the protection of human rights, environmentalism, the peace movement, poverty and debt relief for developing nations, to the more radical anarchists and anti-capitalist forces at the forefront of the "black block" (Norris 2002: 8). Focusing on the 'Battle of Seattle', Lichbach and Almeida provide a slightly different classification, identifying four broad categories of resistance: (a) material interests, including organized labour, rural peasantry and urban poor, (b) social identities, including nationalist/ indigenous/ ethnic identities, religious/ spirituality and gender, (c) global ideals, including environment, peace, human rights, economic justice and anarchic ideals, and finally (d) mixed, a broad category consisting mainly of students (2001: 26).

But how has the movement managed to connect such disparate groups? And how is this division of identity overcome in favour of co-ordinated action? On a broader level, the answer lies in the global political environment explained earlier in this chapter. On a more practical level, however, high profile meetings of international institutions are used 'as focal points [...] for sharpening the awareness of interconnections among seemingly unrelated global problems, thereby fostering a global protest coalition among groups with different agendas' (Lichbach and Almeida 2001: 39). As it was mentioned in the previous section, events like the World Social Forum were set up exactly for this reason.

Furthermore, the ability of the movement to hold together such diverse constituencies can be also attributed to the way it is structured and organized. The principles of horizontality, decentralization and direct participation facilitate actors to become involved in the movement since they ensure entry and participation without the need for commitment or serious compromise.

And as with the organizing model adopted by this movement, the values of diversity and plurality have acquired a strong symbolic status. According to della Porta, for

instance, activists from the Genoa Social Forum 'value inclusiveness as part of the movement's identity' (2005a: 80) and consider plurality as enriching for the movement. What is more, the principles of diversity and plurality seem to be reflected by the activists' individual identities. As della Porta argues, 'the identity shift from single-movement identity to multiple, *tolerant identities* has helped the movement in dealing with its heterogeneous identities' (2005b: 186). She defines tolerant identities as 'characterized by inclusiveness and positive emphasis upon diversity and cross-fertilization, with limited identification' (ibid). In a similar vein, Bennett has introduced the idea of 'purposeful misunderstandings', 'a trend towards relaxing the ideological framing commitments for common participation in many transnational protest activities' (2005: 204).

This emphasis on inclusiveness and diversity is related with the respect for subjectivity, which is perceived 'as a new and positive aspect of the movement' (della Porta 2005a: 83). Thus, '[i]n contrast with the totalizing model of militancy in past movements in which members were subject to group discipline, individual experiences and capacities are valued. The emphasis on the individual instead of the organization respects the subjects instead of 'annihilating them' in the community' (ibid). In that respect, Farro purports that participants in the movement:

'defend their specificity and singularity as individuals and groups, even if they define themselves simultaneously as an integral part of the common initiative. We can define this form of self-protection as the affirmation of subjectivity (in the sense of Touraine, 1992, 1997) that does not intend to become diluted in the collective, despite a commitment to common action' (2004: 636).

Therefore, the action of the 'alter-globalization movement' is neither collective, since 'it is not established in terms of an alternative to individualism', nor can it be understood 'in terms of the involvement of individuals due to a convergence of personal interests, who remain as individuals, in a common search to pursue these interests in a rational manner' (ibid). Instead, activists negotiate the tension between subjectivity and collectivity by referring to themselves as 'belonging to a network of relations between groups and individuals who maintain their own specificity while developing shared action' (ibid). Within such networks, solidarity develops through interaction around concrete objectives that enables activists to build a solid common basis (della Porta 2005b: 190) and to realize 'the strength to be found from unity in diversity' (Interviewee 2C quoted in

ibid: 191). This can be thought as 'a redefinition of political involvement in an era in which progressive politics emphasize diversity and subjectivity over ideology and conformity' (Bennett 2005: 204).

However, concepts such as 'unity in diversity' cannot take attention away from the fact that not all differences can be bridged. Burdened by internal tensions and conflicts the 'movement for alter-globalization' is always in danger of fracturing. In that respect, scholars suggest that the movement has to contend with four major splits. First of all, there is the tension between the old radical left and the new left or between command-type and horizontal politics, which was described earlier in this chapter. Secondly, tactics constitute another source of division within the movement since groups differ in the degree of violence and unconventionality they are prepared to accept. This division reflects the split between NGOs and civil society organizations who 'endorse legal, official, police-sanctioned and thus orderly parades' and the 'street warriors' who endorse unconventional protest in the form of often illegal direct action tactics (Lichbach and Almeida 2001: 45). A third possible split is that between North and South as activists from the South regard the North with suspicion, feeling 'vulnerable to international institutions and thus to states in the North and their civil societies' (ibid). Finally, trade unions and labour organizations may defect from the coalition as they disagree both with the environmentalists and with global justice activists. For instance, after the 'Battle of Seattle' the American organized labour has withdrawn from the movement (de Armond 2001: 217).

2.6. The 'alter-globalization movement' and the Internet

2.6.1. The Relationship between the 'alter-globalization movement' and the Internet

However, according to the literature on the subject, the decentralized organizing of such diverse participants on a global scale would not be possible without the employment of new communication technologies. In fact, the innovative use of the internet has been considered as a distinguishing feature of the movement since its very first occurrence. In this respect, the 'Battle of Seattle' is regarded as an internet-based victory, presumably 'won by a multifaceted and partly electronically organized coalition of social movements, some of them already of a predominantly virtual character themselves' (van de Donk et al. 2004: 5-6). Therefore, the movement is thought to

operate as an internet-based, electronic network (Castells 2001: 142) with the internet affecting all of its characteristics.

In this line of inquiry, the internet is thought to be magnifying the scale and scope of the movement as it facilitates cost-effective and swift communication on a global level. Thus, '[i]n the last few years, the use of CMC has been crucial in the organizational phases of very large, transnational demonstrations, that have been staged with a frequency and number of participants previously unheard of' (della Porta and Mosca 2005: 170). In that respect, the internet has facilitated the organizing of 'Global Days of Action', as well as the mobilization of activists for events and demonstrations taking place far from their country of residence.

But how is the Internet practically involved within this process of 'scale shifting'⁷? According to Tarrow and McAdam, the process of 'scale shift' consists of three routes or mechanisms through which information about protest can be diffused. The first mechanism, 'non-relational diffusion', refers to 'the transfer of information by means of impersonal carriers, such as the mass media' (2005: 127). The internet has the potential to magnify 'non-relational' diffusion as it allows the movement to produce and relay its own content and point-of-view to the public. At least for the most optimistic theorists, the internet holds the potential of levelling the playfield and facilitating a more 'comprehensive, pluralistic arena for political communication open to social actors whose access to the traditional media is not extensive or unfettered' (della Porta and Mosca 2005: 166). The meteoric rise and expansion of Indymedia, initially established by some technological-savvy activists during the 'Battle of Seattle', testifies to this phenomenon. The internet can further facilitate a process of 'hyperlinked diffusion' through 'news, icons, messages, and protest calendars that become densely linked across multiple activist sites and can be retrieved quickly through searches defined by individuals' (Bennett 2005: 206).

The second mechanism of scale shift identified by Tarrow and McAdam is 'relational diffusion' which denotes 'the transfer of information along established lines of interaction' (2005: 127). In that respect, the internet allows the personal forwarding of pleasing stories, images, and artefacts about protests and actions. This may facilitate what Bennett terms 'virtual emulation', with activists in different locales and from diverse

⁷ Tarrow and McAdam, define 'scale shift' as 'a change in the number and level of coordinated contentious actions leading to broader contention involving a wide range of actors and bridging their claims and identities' (2005: 125).

political traditions emulating the actions and protest repertoires of their counterparts (2005: 206).

Scale shift also occurs through the mechanism of 'brokerage', which refers to 'information transfers that depend on the linking of two or more previously unconnected social sites' (ibid). According to Bennett, the internet can contribute to this mechanism by allowing organizations and individuals to seek partners and connect with diverse protest networks around the globe (2005: 206). This happens through the preservation of rich information archives about past and current actions and their participants, which can serve as a database of potential allies (ibid). Organizations and individuals can also enter protest networks through a process of automated affiliation and membership, through, for instance, their subscription to open email lists devoted to the organizing of specific campaigns or events (ibid). Activists can further make 'affinity-based choices of action repertoires' (ibid), as information about the action repertoires adopted by partners and allies is widely available. This reduces the necessary transactions and interactions that a process of negotiation among such a wide range of participants would normally require. 'Alter-globalization' activists can thus more easily coordinate actions across large geographical areas and political divides.

In addition, by facilitating negotiations between activists the internet allows the movement to establish and maintain a plural and diverse collective identity. As Bennett puts it:

'the ease of linking to these digital networks (aided by activist preferences for an inclusive politics) also eases the demand to continually renegotiate collective identity frames as movements shift in scale. The idea here is not that communication networks replace social transactions or dispel the identity issues of collective action. Rather, the nature of social transactions, themselves, is changing due to the capacity of distributed communication networks to ease personal engagement with others' (2004: 129).

This means that activist networks can easily expand as new partners can become part of the network without necessarily having to ascribe to a specific ideology. As Bennett further notes,

'[t]he Internet happens to be a medium well suited for easily linking (and staying connected) with others in search for new collective actions that do not challenge individual identities. Hence global activist networks often become collectivities capable of directed action while respecting diverse identities' (2003: 28).

The problem of sustaining relationships and mobilizing support within such diffuse networks is further resolved by shifting 'the brokerage process in many cases from organizational leadership to dense interpersonal relationships' (Bennett 2005: 224). In other words, interpersonal relationships often serve to undercut ideological or practical differences, providing the movement with some coherence and consistency that seems to be lacking on other levels. The internet contributes directly to this process as it seems to be especially suited for creating and sustaining weak ties between individuals (della Porta and Mosca 2005: 186). In that respect, the internet enables individuals to:

'accumulate a stock of latent ties that can be rapidly transformed into qualitatively superior relationships producing a growth of the weak ties and of the social networks in which an individual is embedded. CMC multiplies the probabilities to keep this kind of tie active and, above all, to reactivate it with ease and rapidity' (ibid).

Online relationship-building is often combined with offline meetings helping to achieve 'trust, credibility, and commitment as defined at the individual rather than the collective level' (Bennett 2005: 205).

Loose connection also denotes a larger capability for tolerance towards individuals from different political traditions and cultures (della Porta and Mosca 2005: 179). The proliferation of weak ties with distant and diverse others can thus facilitate 'the construction of new, flexible *identities*' (ibid: 186, emphasis in original) with the Internet acting 'as an intervening variable extending individual social relationships by demolishing the space-time barriers' (ibid). Therefore, internet communication can facilitate processes of identification with a broad range of collective actors (della Porta and Mosca 2005: 180), serving as an infrastructure for the development of 'tolerant identities' and 'rooted cosmopolitans'.

The internet is also thought to play a central role in the organizing structure of the movement. In fact, this role is considered to be so important that current theory tends to consider the internet not only as a new form of communication, but also as an organizational process in itself (Tarrow 2002: 15). This is because the internet seems 'to constitute a social network (which is) remarkably similar to the reticular structure of social movements', so that 'it is only a short step to regarding the Internet itself as a form of organization' (ibid). In that respect, the internet is believed to drive the 'alter-globalization' movement towards looser and less hierarchical modes of organization, which reflect its own loose and non-hierarchical structure. According to Klein, for instance, '[w]hat

emerged on the streets of Seattle and Washington was an activist model that mirrors the organic, decentralized, interlinked pathways of the internet' (2002: 17).

Indeed, it seems that 'the advancement of communication and transportation technologies has made more decentralized organizational structures viable' (Smith quoted in della Porta and Mosca 2005: 169). This can be attributed to the low cost of the medium 'which simplifies mobilization and favors highly flexible, loose organizational structures' (ibid: 168). In addition, contrary to the more conventional means of communication which are relatively expensive and tend 'to foster just a few centres of communication (and often related to this, of power and decision making)', the internet does not 'demonstrate an inherent tendency to be concentrated and controlled in the hands of a few movement entrepreneurs' (van de Donk et al. 2004: 9). Instead, the internet facilitates horizontal, bi-directional and interactive communication and allows for the same message 'to be sent contemporarily to hundreds of addresses, overcoming barriers in space and time' (della Porta and Mosca 2005: 168). Thus, by intensifying communication among all parts of the organization, the internet has the potential to contest the prevailing model of top-down communication (van de Donk et al. 2004: 19) and to facilitate participatory organizational processes (della Porta and Mosca 2005: 168). In addition, the internet aids the movement to shift in scale without the need for a centralized authority overseeing the processes of mobilization and organization. By easing the affiliation of activists to the movement and allowing information about targets, protests and campaigns to be diffused in interpersonal and inter-organizational networks the internet allows the movement to expand in an organic way.

What this seems to suggest is that 'more than amplifying the mobilizing capacities of organizations, applications of social technologies are beginning to transform organizational forms' (Bennett 2005: 218). Bennett brings the example of the transnational protest network that coordinated the 'Battle of Seattle' noting that it lacked the conventional characteristics of an organization. Instead, '[i]t was more a meta-organization, or, better, a *hyper-organization* that existed mainly in the form of the website, e-mail traffic, and linked sites' (Bennett 2005: 218, emphasis in original). In that respect, the organization did not 'exist apart from the technology', but was constituted by it in conjunction with all the other modes of communication through which activists interacted (ibid: 219).

Nevertheless, these claims have yet to be expounded by empirical evidence on the actual organizing processes and collective identity negotiations of the 'movement for alternative globalization'. The gaps in the relevant research will be analysed in detail in the final section of this chapter. However, what I would like to draw attention to at this point is the underlying philosophy of these claims. This philosophy seems to go against the implicit assumptions of classic political communication and social movement theory which perceive social movements as already formed actors who communicate their ideas to an audience. Instead, this conceptualization views social movements as 'made up of different actors' whose interactions determine the organizing structure, scale and collective identity of the movement. This means that the communication between those actors, either mediated or unmediated, has a bearing on the characteristics and nature of the movement. Thus, the above claims seem to be placing communication in a much more central position than the one it has hitherto assumed in social movement theory. They invite us to consider not only how the characteristics of a social movement affect the way it communicates, but also how its means and modes of communication influence its character.

Obviously, theorists making these claims are quick to warn us against media determinism. As Bennett reminds us, '[d]igital media applications can take on a variety of forms, from closed and hierarchical to open and broadly distributed. Preferences for the latter pattern reflect the social, personal, and political contexts in which many global activists define their mutual relationships' (2004: 125-6). What is more, the focus of such inquiries should rest on social relationships and on how these relationships are constituted through the various media and modes of communication used in the movement. In fact, Bennett insists on calling these technologies 'social technologies' noting that 'it is not the technology alone that creates rapidly expanding action networks – it is the capacity to move easily between on- and offline relationships that makes the scale shift to transnational activism possible' (2005: 205-6).

However, and as I will show in the next section, studies on the use of the internet tend to consider the internet in isolation from other forms of communication, perceiving the online and the offline as two distinct realms.

2.6.2. Review of Research on the 'alter-globalization movement' and the Internet

The use of the internet in the processes of mobilization, participation or recruitment in the 'movement for alternative globalization' constitutes one of the main subjects of current research on the relationship between the movement and the internet. For instance, Cronauer (2004) has examined two email lists; one devoted to the mobilization for the APEC Economic Leaders' meeting in Vancouver in 1997, while the other concerned the mobilization for EU and G7/8 meetings in 1999. Her study included interviews with activists, distribution of questionnaires, as well as an analysis of the email lists in question. Adler and Mittelman (2004) have also looked at the use of the internet for networking with like-minded others and for obtaining information about protests. They have further investigated the influence of the internet on the activists' decision to participate in a specific protest. Their main findings in that respect 'derive from a survey conducted during one of many protests in Washington DC, during the weekend of 19-22 April 2002' (2004: 195). van Aelst and Walgrave (2004), on the other hand, have examined the websites of seventeen anti-globalization organizations (which were prominent in the news media at the time of the research) and how they were used as a means for 'real' and 'virtual' mobilization (2004: 114).

A much more wide-ranging study in terms of scale and scope was the one undertaken by several universities around the world focusing on the anti-war demonstration of the 15th of February 2003. The researchers disseminated an almost identical questionnaire to the demonstrators that took to the streets in eight countries: Italy, Belgium, Germany, Switzerland, The Netherlands, Spain, UK and the USA. The study examined the participants' identification with the 'alter-globalization movement', as well as their protest diversity, defined in terms of the number of protests they had been involved in in the last five years. It also attempted to chart the demonstrators' complex identities by observing their multiple belongings to a variety of organizations. In that respect, activists with a larger protest diversity and stronger identification with the movement were shown to be heavier users of the internet and accessed it more than the others for political information (Bennett, Givens and Whillnat 2004: 18-19). According to della Porta and Mosca, the data showed that 'the Internet has an influence in the identification process with a specific organization [...] and an organizational sector [...], but not in the identification process with the movement in general' (ibid: 180-1) suggesting that the Internet tends to strengthen identification in conditions of ideological

proximity (ibid: 181). It is worth noting here that both Bennett (2005) and della Porta and Mosca (2005), two sources that were cited extensively in the previous section, drew empirical evidence from this study in order to support some of their claims regarding the relationship between the movement and the internet. Nevertheless, more empirical evidence is needed in order to fully understand how the internet affects identification processes since the focus of this research is on the anti-war and not the 'alter-globalization movement'. In addition, this study focuses on the identities of individuals and is thus unable to provide an account of the collective identity formation and negotiation of the movement. If collective identity is a product of the interactions between different actors, then the modes and means of communication through which these interactions occur can have a bearing on the collective identity of the movement.

The only recent study that deals explicitly with the relationship between the internet and collective identity, albeit for a different movement, is Nip's research on the Queer Sisters, the oldest queer/lesbian group in Hong Kong (2004: 237). Her study looked 'at the Queer Sisters bulletin board to see if its participants bear a collective identity among themselves, and, if yes, whether the collective identity extends to the offline Queer Sisters group' (ibid: 239). However, Nip focuses on whether a collective identity exists online and not on how it is constructed through the respondents' online interactions. In addition, she is concerned with whether this collective identity extends from the online to the offline, thus treating the online and the offline as two distinct realms. Yet, the everyday life of social movements shows that this is often not the case, as the relationships between activists can be constituted through different media. I would therefore argue that a more productive point-of-view would be to consider the offline and the online in tandem, focusing on specific applications and their communicative affordances.

The spreading of information about the movement, its protests and targets, constitutes one of the main themes of mobilization studies. It is also a major concern of studies within a more classical political communication framework or those following an alternative media approach. In that respect, there is currently a wealth of research on the representation of the movement in the mainstream news media and particularly the press (see for instance Adler and Mittelman 2004, Almeida and Lichbach 2003, Beyeler and Hubscher 2003, Beyeler and Kriesi 2005, Kolb 2003, Rojecki 2002, Smith et al. 2001). Most of these studies focus on whether the movement is accurately or extensively

represented in the mainstream media. Almeida and Lichbach (2003) have slightly deviated from this rule as they have compared the reporting of the 'Battle of Seattle' in the mainstream media with the one on activist-based websites. Research in this line of enquiry operates on the underlying assumptions of political communication positing the movement in the role of a 'communicator' that relays its messages to an audience through the mainstream media aiming to influence public opinion and increase mobilization.

On the other hand, studies fitting an alternative media approach have examined media practices that challenge corporate-controlled communication. In that respect, much attention has been paid to the case of Indymedia which has grown exponentially since the 'Battle of Seattle', encompassing (at the time of writing in October 2006) more than 150 Independent Media Centers (Indymedia.org website). The network is organized in a non-hierarchical way enabling activists to create and publish their own news reports, while '[t]he use of open source software bypasses the need for an editor or webmaster to upload contributions' (Atton 2004: 33). However, it is worth noting that writings on Indymedia (Atton 2004, Carroll and Hackett 2006, Downing 2003, Stengrim 2005) often refer to it as a movement in its own right and not as part of the 'alter-globalization movement'. This is reflecting the views of IMC activists themselves who do not consider Indymedia as 'a conscious mouthpiece of any particular point of view' (Indymedia.org website), even though 'many Indymedia organizers and people who post to the Indymedia newswires are supporters of the 'anti-globalization' (alternative globalization, anti-corporatization) movement' (ibid).

Other writings have focused on the impact of the internet on information flows within social movement organizations. For instance, le Grignou and Patou have looked at 'how the internet eases the circulation of knowledge' (2004: 168) within the French ATTAC, as well as how it 'modifies (or does not modify) the knowledge gap between grassroots activists and experts' (ibid) and 'shapes expertise in a particular way' (ibid). This research is valuable for its insights on the role of the internet in democratizing knowledge and flattening knowledge hierarchies. Nevertheless, it does not extend this analysis to the more general power relations within the organization. For instance, are the most knowledgeable activists the ones who find themselves in positions of informal leadership?

Therefore, research on the 'alter-globalization movement' and its use of the internet has tended to focus on processes of mobilization and alternative news production or circulation of knowledge. Accounts of the role of the internet in the organizing and decision-making process of the movement, as well as collective identity-building are largely missing from the recent literature.

In addition, most of the surveyed research seems to be focusing on the level of either individual activists or specific social movement organizations and not on the movement itself, which is admittedly a much more difficult level of analysis. Therefore, more research is needed on the interactions between the different actors involved in the movement and on the role of the internet in supporting, relaying and structuring those interactions. From all of the surveyed studies, only van Aelst and Walgrave attempted to look at the relationships between the organizations comprising their sample. Their research examined the internal and external links of the analysed websites and produced a visualization of the network of websites. However, a link between two websites is not a guarantee that real contact exists between the two organizations. As they admit, '[a]t the moment we know little on the network value that can be attributed to the use of hyperlinks' (van Aelst and Walgrave 2004: 119).

This lack of research on the relational and interactive aspects of decision-making, organizing and identity formation can be partly explained by the fact that most Internet studies focus on the web and not email or email lists. Again this can be attributed to the difficulty of researching email in relation to websites. As van Aelst and Walgrave note, '[p]erhaps email or mobile phones are more important for activists and insight into their users would perhaps teach us more about transnational networks, but this type of research would cause problems even for Sherlock Holmes!' (ibid: 104). The exception here is mainly Cronauer's study (2004) on the use of two mobilization email lists, which however examined only the process of mobilization and not organizing or collective identity formation.

Cronauer's research is also distinctive in another respect, as it is the only study which has not considered the offline and the online as two distinct realms. For instance, her interviews with activists have suggested that offline involvement in mobilization activities leads activists to post more messages on the email lists (Cronauer 2004: 84). Indeed, while this interconnection is recognized by some theoretical sources, these

considerations are rarely incorporated in the research design of most of the studies that I have surveyed.

Therefore, my research is quite distinctive in its focus on the role of the media in the internal processes of social movements, as well as on the continuities and interplay between online and offline communication. As I will attempt to show in Chapters 3 and 4, the scarcity of such research also reflects the gaps in the relevant theory, both in terms of social movements and Internet studies. This is compounded by the limited dialogue between these two fields which does not provide a sound basis for conceptualizing the relationship between the movement and the internet. Yet, some of the theoretical concepts and approaches within these fields of enquiry, which I will explain in greater detail in the two following chapters, still offered some useful pointers for designing my research.

3. Theoretical Concepts: Mobilizing, Organizing, and Collective Identity

This chapter will review theories on social movement organizing, mobilizing, decision-making and collective identity, aiming to offer an adequate basis for conceptualizing these processes. However, as I will try to show, the role of mediated communication in the internal workings of social movements is currently under-theorized and under-researched even though many of the reviewed theories implicitly recognize the importance of interaction and communication.

3.1. Defining Social Movements

The study of social movements encompasses a wide range of approaches, operating on different definitions of social movements as they focus on different aspects of social movement activity. Divisions also tend to follow geographical lines since each strand theorizes social movements based on specific national experiences and academic styles. Thus, according to Diani, we are still lacking 'a social movements theory proper' meaning 'a set of propositions which explicitly address the analytical peculiarity of the concept of social movement vis-à-vis cognate concepts, and treat the concept as the building blocks of a distinctive theoretical argument' (Diani 2000: 5).

Traditional social movement theory comprises four major strands. Viewed against their historical backdrop, each strand seems to reflect a particular era of social movement activity and, consequently, academic scholarship. Popular in the late 1950s and early 1960s, the 'collective behavior' approach perceived social movements as a response to social disorder stemming more from psychological rather than political or economic motivations (McAdam 2003: 282). In that respect, various social or psychological 'deficits', such as social marginality or isolation, were held to dispose individuals toward movement participation (ibid)¹.

¹ McAdam attributes this view to 'the then-dominant pluralist model of America (*sic*) politics', whereby the USA was perceived 'as a broad, open, and at least minimally responsive political system, featuring bargaining and negotiation by a wide array of groups who shared relatively equally in power. The presence of social movements could be seen as inconsistent with the theory, unless those movements are seen, not as instrumental political efforts, but as therapeutic vehicles through which needy people cope with the ill effects of social and personal disorganization' (2003: 82, emphasis in original). Therefore, the emphasis lay on the irrational aspects of social movements, corresponding to the intellectual tools of social psychology, the main discipline charged with their research (2003: 282).

While the 'collective behavior' perspective responded well to the dominant worldview of the 1950s, the generalized social upheaval in 1960s America seemed to demand a change of attitude towards social movements. With American politics being increasingly viewed as 'less than an "open arena" and more as an entrenched "power structure"' (ibid), social movements suddenly seemed as a wholly rational response to the political system. Hence, a new generation of more structurally-oriented social movement scholars focused their attention on 'the study of organizations, networks, power, and politics' (ibid: 283)². The origins of both the 'resource mobilization' approach and the 'political process' strand can be traced back to this period. The former focuses on 'the conditions under which [...] beliefs are transformed into concrete action' (Diani 1992: 4). The 'political process' perspective, on the other hand, attempts to relate 'the emergence of social movements to a broader 'political process', where excluded interests try to get access to the established polity' (ibid: 5). The accent here is not on the resources available to collective action, but on the overall dynamics which define social unrest and its characteristics.

Finally, the 'new social movements' approach emerged in Europe as a response to the identity politics of the 1980s, with a particular emphasis on the core conflicts associated with post-industrial society (see for instance Touraine 1981) or 'on the conflictive production of the cultural models shaping social practice' (McDonald 2002: 110). European scholars were thus more concerned with the construction of a collective identity around a specific core conflict than with the specific strategies and operation of social movements. By the mid-1980s, this line of demarcation had become abundantly clear and the 'distinction between "European" and "American" approaches to social movements (Klandermans 1986) came to be understood as an opposition between an "identity" and a "strategy" paradigm (Cohen 1985)' (McDonald 2002: 110).

A significant attempt to highlight the shared assumptions of these different theoretical strands and piece them together in a new conceptualization of the notion of social movements was Diani's article 'The concept of social movement' (1992). There, Diani observed that all of the aforementioned strands share a common emphasis on four major aspects. First, they all acknowledge the importance of networks of informal interactions between a plurality of actors, including individuals, organizations and groups. These

² Apart from a fundamental theoretical shift, this change was also methodological, as, in contrast to the 'armchair theorizing' of their predecessors, younger scholars 'shared a general commitment to systematic empirical research' (McAdam 2003: 283).

networks may be loose and dispersed or extremely tight and closed. Secondly, they all recognize the necessity of a shared set of beliefs and bonds of solidarity in order for a collectivity to be considered as a social movement. In that respect, common beliefs allow social movement actors to 'assign a common meaning to specific collective events which otherwise could not be identified as part of a common process' (Diani 1992: 9). Thirdly, all of the above perspectives agree that '[s]ocial movement actors are engaged in political and/or cultural conflicts, meant to promote or oppose social change either at the systemic or non-systemic level' (ibid: 11). Finally, for all of the reviewed approaches, social movements demonstrate a non-institutional behaviour. This means that interactions are loose and informal, while movement participants may be drawn from a broad range of actors, including churches, trade unions and neighbourhood organizations (ibid: 12).

Therefore, a synthesis of the four strands renders the following definition of a social movement: 'a network of informal interactions between a plurality of individuals, groups and/or organizations, engaged in a political or cultural conflict, on the basis of a shared collective identity' (ibid: 13)³. Diani's definition of social movements as networks remains very popular as it corresponds more accurately to the reality of current social movements, such as the 'alter-globalization', which are often characterized as 'networks of networks'. This definition also constitutes a useful basis for the purposes of my study since, by conceiving social movements as 'networks of informal interactions', it implicitly recognizes the centrality of communication and interaction for the existence itself of a social movement. However, as I will repeatedly point out in the remainder of this chapter, the fundamental role of communication and interaction is very seldom explicitly addressed in social movement theory.

³ It is worth noting here that even though this definition is an attempt to synthesize different theoretical frameworks, the accent placed on networks is actually associated with a fifth strand of social movement theory that has become quite influential in recent years. This is an approach that is heavily influenced by social networks analysis, a paradigm for analysing social change that attempts to explain social behaviour and processes 'with reference to networks of social relations that link actors or "nodes"' (Emirbayer and Goodwin 1994: 1417). Network analysts contend that 'the structure of relations among actors and the location of individual actors in the network have important behavioral, perceptual, and attitudinal consequences both for the individual units and for the system as a whole' (Knoke and Kuklinski quoted in Emirbayer and Goodwin 1994: 1418). To uncover the patterning of relations and its enabling and constraining dimensions, network analysts rely extensively on the use of mathematics and graph theory. Yet, the social networks approach to social movements is only one of the recently emergent strands in social movement theory. Indeed, the tendency of social movement scholars to import concepts and tools from a wide array of fields has encouraged the proliferation of social movement approaches and perspectives.

3.2. Mobilizing

Mobilizing is an item of high priority in the agenda of social movement research. This is hardly surprising, as the capacity of a social movement to mobilize large numbers of participants is a strong indicator of its leverage in the political system⁴. Issues of mobilization have thus received far more attention in the relevant literature than the internal organizing structure of a movement or its decision-making practices⁵. One of the most systematic approaches to mobilization can be found in Klandermans' 'The Social Psychology of Protest' (1997). There, Klandermans identifies four major steps to movement participation: (a) becoming sympathetic to a social movement, (b) becoming the target of recruitment efforts, (c) becoming motivated to participate, (d) overcoming the barriers to participation. In what follows, I will discuss each of these four steps in turn, paying special attention to the role of media and communication.

Becoming sympathetic to a movement's goals and means includes coming in contact with a particular collective action frame and finding it appealing. According to Gamson, a collective action frame is 'a set of action-oriented beliefs and meanings that inspire and legitimate social movement activities and campaigns' (quoted in Klandermans 1997: 17)⁶. Collective action frames do not refer to objective phenomena but to beliefs and are thus socially constructed (ibid: 19). The role of communication is central here as the social construction of frames takes place through:

'(a) public discourse, that is the interface of media discourse and interpersonal interaction; (b) persuasive communication during mobilization campaigns by movement organizations, their opponents and countermovement organizations; and (c) consciousness raising during episodes of collective action' (ibid: 45, emphasis added).

⁴ Obviously, this also depends on your approach to social movements. Scholars like Melucci, focusing on the cultural aspects of social movements, would consider the contestation of dominant cultural codes as a measure of a movement's success.

⁵ While mobilizing and organizing are tightly intertwined, there are good reasons for considering them separately, as their conceptual differences 'may have consequences at the analytical level of operationalization' (Cheta 2004: 223). In that respect, '[m]obilizing refers to the process by which inspirational leaders or other persuaders can get large numbers of people to join an SM or engage in a particular SM action; organizing refers to a more sustained process whereby people come to understand an SM's goals deeply and empower themselves to continued action on behalf of those goals' (ibid). 'Continued action' on behalf of a social movement's goals includes but is not limited to efforts of mobilization. Therefore, organizing can be considered as much broader process of coordination taking place equally in periods of latency and in periods of intense movement activity.

⁶ Collective action frames include three components: (a) a sense of injustice which 'arises from moral indignation related to grievances' (Klandermans 1997: 17), (b) an element of identity consisting of the 'identification of a 'they' (authorities, elites) who are held responsible for a negative situation' and, consequently, the identification of 'an opposing "we"' (ibid), and (c) the factor of agency which 'refers to the belief that one can alter conditions or policies through collective action' (ibid: 18). As it becomes evident from this definition the process of mobilization is closely entangled with the process of constructing a collective identity.

The media play a crucial role in these processes as they are the conduits of public discourse, communicating opinions and supplying news and information. Research in that respect has developed along the established lines of inquiry into news-making and output, looking at news content, the portrayal of social movements and their demands, as well as the presence of bias. Persuasive communication also employs a wide range of media aiming to appeal not only to the general public but also to specific audiences such as sympathizers or target institutions (ibid: 50). Consciousness raising, on the other hand, takes place during episodes of collective action and can thus occur both in an unmediated and mediated context depending on where the episode of collective action takes place. However, the underlying assumption of the relevant literature is that consciousness raising is a feature of face-to-face collective action events, such as meetings or demonstrations.

Interpersonal communication is also crucial for the appropriation of collective beliefs. As Klandermans notes, '[s]uch interaction may involve friends or colleagues, or it may occur during encounters between people in buses, in trains, in pubs, at parties, and in today's world [...] over the telephone, by fax, and by electronic mail' (ibid: 20). In that respect, people discuss the information they get through different sources with members of their social networks, a process which produces 'collective definitions of a situation' (ibid). From a communication perspective this seems to pose the interesting question of whether and to what extent this collective definition of a situation changes according to the media and modes of communication used in interpersonal contact.

However, in order for people to become involved in a social movement, it is not enough just to share its beliefs. They should also happen to be the targets of mobilization attempts by the movement. Recruitment networks are fundamental in this respect since '[t]he broader the network, and the closer its ties to other organizations and networks, the greater the number of people that will fall within the scope of a mobilization attempt' (ibid: 24). Again, a movement organization has several communication channels at its disposal that can be used for recruitment purposes. Snow et al. classify those channels according to the dimensions of face-to-face versus mediated and public versus private communication (See Table 3.1).

Klandermans goes on to discuss the effectiveness of each category of communication channels noting that mediated communication, however attractive, has several disadvantages for social movement organizations. First of all, for most mass

media and direct-mail campaigns the organization has no way of knowing whether the message has reached its intended audience. The mass media are particularly problematic as they may also portray the activities of the movement in a biased way (ibid: 72). In addition, mass media campaigns tend to be more expensive than those employing other communication channels. Therefore, 'on quite a few occasions a movement organization will not be able to do without private face-to-face interaction, either because it lacks the means to use other channels or because the impact achieved through other channels is too weak' (ibid). The capacity of the movement to co-opt different interpersonal networks is vital in that respect (ibid: 72-3).

	Face-to-Face	Mediated
Public	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Face-to-face leafleting or petitioning on sidewalks ○ Participation in public events ○ Staging events for public consumption 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Radio ○ Television ○ Newspapers
Private	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Door-to-door leafleting or petitioning ○ Social networks 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Mail ○ Telephone

*Table 3.1: Communication channels employed by recruitment networks
(Source: Snow et al. cited in Klandermans 1997: 71)*

The third step to movement participation concerns the individual's motivation to participate, which is a function of the perceived costs and benefits of participation (ibid: 24). Expectations of success are crucial here, as an individual would be unwilling to engage in an action that seems fruitless. Yet, this motivation 'will lead to participation only to the extent that intentions can be acted upon' (ibid: 25). This includes the removal of barriers to participation which is the fourth and final step. However, empirical evidence concerning barriers to participation is scarce reflecting 'the lack of longitudinal studies on intended and actual participation' (Klandermans and Oegema 1987: 521). What the scant literature seems to suggest is that 'significant others play an important role in sustaining the motivation to participate: it is your friends who hold you to your promises' (Klandermans 1997: 25).

Indeed, current social movement literature has started to pay more attention to the informal networks of friends and relatives underlying the process of mobilization. The emergence of the social networks approach is partly responsible for this shift. In this line of enquiry, social networks have been treated as 'predictors of individual participation' (Diani 2004: 339). For instance, in a recent empirical study, Passy suggests that social

networks, formal and informal, are associated with three key mobilization mechanisms that refer to all of the aforementioned steps to participation: socialization (imbuing individuals with certain cognitive schemes and frames with which they interpret social reality), structural-connection (connecting potential activists with an opportunity to participate) and decision-shaping functions (helping individuals to assess the costs and benefits of their potential participation through contact with the actions of other participants) (2003: 24-5).

Nevertheless, the full range of communication channels that a movement has at its disposal are very seldom examined in contemporary mobilization research. Instead, most studies tend to be focusing on the mass media, thus on public communication, even though other channels may be more effective for mobilizing participants.

In addition, most of the literature discusses communication channels in mainly functional terms as its emphasis rests on whether the movement is using the media in an effective way, reaching all of the people it can potentially mobilize and doing it in a persuasive manner. Underlying this research is a perception of social movements as 'communicators', as unified actors and not as a spaces of interaction between different actors. This tends to disguise the complexity and plurality of this communication process as movements are based on a variety of recruitment networks, some of which are co-opted from other movements and organizations. And particularly for movements lacking a central leadership, the organizations and individuals forming their recruitment network may transmit different and often contrasting messages, using the media in distinctly different ways. This may affect the mobilization potential of the movement and, more importantly, its composition.

What is more, perceiving the communication process in a top-down way does not do justice to the complexity and interactive nature of mobilizing and recruitment. For instance, '[i]ndividuals who hold positions within recruitment networks are both object and subject of mobilization: object in that they themselves need to be mobilized in order to work in the mobilization campaign; subject because, once mobilized, they become active in mobilizing others' (Klandermans 1997: 24). This implies a much more complex communication model than a simple one-step or two-step flow of messages from the movement to potential participants.

In addition, the role of mediated communication within interpersonal networks, which are deemed so important for all the four steps towards movement participation, is

scarcely researched. This is despite the fact that whether participants in a movement communicate mainly over the telephone or over the internet may have an impact on the capacity of their social networks to act as agents of mobilization since different media afford different degrees of trust and sociability. This was acknowledged in a recent book chapter concerning networks and participation. There Diani suggested that 'the impact of virtual links, in particular those originating from computer mediated communication, on recruitment processes' should constitute an urgent direction for future research on the subject (2004: 352).

According to Diani, a central concern in this respect should be 'whether "virtual," computer-mediated ties may replace "real" in the generation not only of practical opportunities, but of the shared understandings and – most important – the mutual trust, which have consistently been identified as important facilitators of collective action' (ibid). However, what seems to underlie this suggestion is the assumption of a clear-cut distinction between real and virtual ties⁷ which is, in my view, a quite flawed conception.

Therefore, social movement theory perceives mobilization and participation as a complex psychological process including several stages that an individual should go through in order to take part in collective action. In that respect, communication plays an important role in all of the stages of mobilization. However, as I have attempted to show in this section, most mobilization accounts either overlook the role of communication or perceive it in very simple terms that do not do justice to the complex nature of this process.

3.3. Organizing

Social movements are thought to possess certain organizational peculiarities that set them apart from other political actors. Within the field of the sociology of social movements, the SPIN model, first proposed by Gerlach and Hine in the 1970s, has by now become the received wisdom. In this line of enquiry, social movements are considered to have a decentralized structure that serves their need for innovation, adaptation and expansion. A movement's organizing structure is also commonly thought

⁷ It is worth noting here that in other writings the same author shows awareness of the fact that social relations are constituted through various media. In a preceding book chapter he has noted, for instance, that '[a]ccounts of 'virtual communities' also suggest that most interactions taking place in the virtual sphere actually expand on and reinforce face-to-face acquaintances and exchanges, instead of creating new ones' (Diani 2001: 121).

to be oriented towards participatory democracy and internal solidarity (della Porta and Diani 1999: 141). However, 'research has shown that, in reality, a plurality of organizational models coexist within any social movement. The various organizations have different degrees of structuration, centralisation of power and grassroots participation' (ibid: 163). In what follows, I will first explain the model of decentralization as understood by Gerlach and Hine (1970) and Gerlach (2001). I will then go on to explain the different dimensions that need to be taken into account when determining the type of organization of a social movement. As I will try to show, these theories have three main limitations: firstly, they often conflate the organizing structure of social movements with that of social movement organizations (SMOs)⁸; secondly, they pay more attention to determining the type of structure instead of gaining a deeper understanding of the organizing process and the mechanisms through which this structure emerges and is constantly transformed; thirdly, and most importantly for my study, they lack a clear theorization of the role of communication and media within these processes. In that respect, Giddens' 'theory of structuration' can offer some useful pointers for conceptualizing the relationship between communication and organizing.

3.3.1. The Typical Form: Decentralization – Participation – Internal Solidarity

According to Gerlach and Hine, a decentralized structure is *polycephalous* or *polycentric*⁹ indicating the presence of many leaders, each one commanding a limited following (cited in della Porta and Diani 1999: 140). Leadership tends to be temporary, situational and charismatic, 'as leaders arise to cope with particular situations or episodic challenges in the life of a movement' (Gerlach 2001: 294). The absence of centralized leadership and its short-term nature also stems from the inability to track and document the membership of the movement. This is because processes of affiliating to the movement are quite flexible and informal, as there are no 'card-carrying' members (Gerlach and Hine 1970: 37). Indeed, the distinction between a 'participant' and a

⁸ According to McCarthy and Zald, 'an SMO is a complex organization whose goals coincide with the preferences of a social movement and which tries to realize those goals' (cited in della Porta and Diani 1999: 140).

⁹ The authors originally used the term *polycephalous* but then changed it to *polycentric*. According to Gerlach, '[i]nitially we termed these movements *polycephalous*, or 'many headed,' because the movements we studied in the 1960s had many leaders, and these were not organized in a hierarchical chain of command. We changed the term to *polycentric* because movement participants since the 1960s often claim to have no leaders and are dismayed when a situational leader appears to be translating inspiration and influence into command' (2001: 294).

'member' is rarely made, since being a member does not carry any obligation other than participating in the activities of the movement (ibid). In addition, leaders in such movements cannot:

'make decisions binding on all of the participants in the movement, and none can speak for the movement as a whole. They may articulate basic beliefs to which all members may subscribe, but they can direct actions only in that sector of the movement of which each happens to be the organizational as well as the ideological leader' (ibid: 36).

Nor can leaders act as representatives, as none of them has regulatory powers over the movement (ibid).

Decentralized structures are also *segmentary*, 'with numerous different groups or cells in continual rise and decline' (della Porta and Diani 1999: 140). Indeed, social movements consist of various 'organizationally distinct components that change through fission, fusion, and new creation' (Gerlach, 2001: 290). These segments are semiautonomous, while they 'overlap and intertwine complexly, so that many people are members of several segments at the same time. [...] New segments are created by splitting old ones, by appending new segments, or by splitting and adding new functions' (ibid). In that respect, groups tend to divide as a result of differences over ideologies and tactics. In addition, '[p]reexisting cleavages derived from socioeconomic differences, factionalism, and personal conflicts are often brought into a group and increase its fissiparous tendencies' (ibid: 292, emphasis in original). Divisions may also arise through the competition between movement members for access to rewards of a political, social, economic, or psychological nature (ibid). Finally, ideological differences are a major source of segmentation, since strong commitment to the movement also implies an intense concern with ideological purity (ibid). Segmentation is not necessarily weakening for social movements since 'having a variety of groups permits a social movement to do different things and reach out to different populations' (ibid: 293).

These different segments are not isolated from each other, but 'form an integrated network or *reticulate* structure through nonhierarchical social linkages among their participants and through the understandings, identities, and opponents these participants share' (ibid: 295). Indeed, this process of networking allows movement participants to exchange information, coordinate actions, recruit supporters and gain access to resources (ibid: 295-6). Such linkages are, first of all, created through personal relationships among participants that unify the movement in the absence of a central

authority. Relationships of marriage, kinship and friendship also maintain the movement in periods of latency or even when groups divide (ibid: 296). Movements also integrate through 'traveling evangelists and other visitors' who 'carry information across the network, from group to group, and build personal relationships with those they visit' (ibid). In addition, large gatherings, conferences, workshops and conventions provide the opportunity for movement participants to establish new relationships, re-affirm their commitment to the movement and learn about its goals and ideologies (ibid).

It is worth noting here that Gerlach considers communication technologies as an additional factor that aids the integration of movements as they 'allow individuals to extend their reach far beyond their own group' (ibid: 297). In that respect, email and the internet are two important communication tools that have been recently added to the communication repertoire of social movements, allowing the coordination of activities over much larger geographical distances (ibid).

However, viewing communication technologies as an integrative factor seems to over-simplify their role within the process of organizing. For instance, the introduction of a communication technology may create new cleavages and segments depending on the participants' access to and use of the new technology. In addition, communication technologies influence the types of interaction among movement participants, and thus the relationships that they establish and maintain. Therefore, a new technology may alter the configuration of the existing social networks and help to create new groups and segments. This may also affect the mechanisms through which individuals ascend to leadership positions or lead to re-distributions of power among the movement. For instance, activists with a greater access to the technology or expertise in its use may acquire a more central position. In other words, communication technologies affect not only the networked nature of decentralized systems, but also their segmentary and polycentric aspects.

According to della Porta and Diani, sociological research on forms of organization has also shown that social movements are characterized by an emphasis on participation (1999: 141). This is partly because such studies have primarily focused on movements of the libertarian left for which the practice of participatory democracy is a fundamental concern. This emphasis on participation translates into a predilection for direct democracy, wide distribution of power and consensual decision-making (ibid). I will

return to this point and review the theory on participatory democracy later on in this chapter.

A third characteristic of the organizing structure of social movements is their powerful internal solidarity. This because '[h]aving only limited access to material resources, unlike political parties or pressure groups, social movements substitute for this with symbolic resources. For the most part building incentives to solidarity, social movement organizations give particular importance to internal relations' (ibid). Again personal relationships are important here as they help to meet the needs for emotional support and integration (ibid: 142).

3.3.2. The Plurality of Organizational Forms

However, other sociological studies challenge 'the distinctiveness of the organizational structure of social movements compared with other complex organizations' (ibid: 143). Instead, they propose that social movements differ in their degree of organization, distribution of power, as well as the degree of commitment that they demand from their participants (ibid: 143-4). In that regard, Melucci dissuades us from thinking of types of organizations, proposing instead to 'use the dimensions relevant to the classification as *analytical tools* to make distinctions, to deconstruct empirical unities, and to account for their complexity' (1996: 326).

He distinguishes between five dimensions of organizing that 'can be combined to provide an articulated frame for the analysis of organizational forms' (ibid: 327). A first dimension refers to the *objectives* of the organization which can be either expressive or instrumental. Expressive goals 'are oriented towards the satisfaction of the social and psychological needs of the movement's members through participation and solidarity' (ibid: 326). Instrumental goals, on the other hand, refer to the 'attainment of specific goods external to the organization' (ibid). The *requirements for affiliation* constitute a second dimension. Such requirements can be either inclusive or exclusive depending on the rigidity of the mechanisms for selecting members, as well as the demands for commitment (ibid: 326-7). A further dimension concerns the *incentives* for participation which can be divided into material, solidarity, and value. The first refer to economic goods, the second derive from the sense of belonging and participation itself, the third from the realization of the aims of the organization (ibid: 327). The organization's *relationship with the environment* constitutes a fourth dimension. The relationship with

the external environment can be either one of isolation or integration, while internally the movement can be either homogeneous or heterogeneous (ibid). A final dimension refers to the *manner in which power is wielded* and to *styles of leadership*. In that respect, forms can be either authoritarian or participatory depending on 'the extent to which members are allowed to intervene in the fundamental decision-making processes' (ibid). Leadership, on the other hand, may be oriented towards either mobilization or articulation, aiming 'to establish relations with other organizations in society' (ibid).

Therefore, social movements are composed by groups and organizations with different organizational forms. This plurality is further characterized by 'the absence of any kind of linear logic or determinism in the development of organizations' (ibid: 328). Instead, organizations are constantly transformed in response to external stimuli as well as to problems and limitations arising both from the form itself and from the environment (ibid).

Nevertheless, most accounts of organizing tend to focus on specific movement organizations, disregarding the organizational forms adopted by the movement. This latter is a much more difficult level of analysis since it involves a mapping of the coordination and interactions of numerous actors. I would also argue that even though social movement organizations exhibit different degrees of formalization, the structures of social movements tend to be much more fluid and informal than those of their participant organizations.

Gerlach's model of decentralization, on the other hand, is referring to the level of the movement and not that of its participant organizations. It is however only one among a wide variety of organizing forms that a social movement can adopt. And while most social movements seem to be decentralized, this model does not seem to account for the mechanisms through which other structures are created and re-produced. In that respect, Giddens' theory of 'structuration' can help us perceive the production and re-production of structure in clearer terms.

3.3.3. 'Structure-as-process' and Communication

With the theory of 'structuration' Giddens attempted 'to transcend the division between "structure" and "action", or "agency"' (Moore 2005: 9) through the concept of the 'duality of structure'. He argued that structures are constituted through human action while at the same time serve to shape it, creating the conditions that enable and

constrain it (Orlikowski and Robey 1991: 147). According to Roberts and Scapens, '[t]hrough being drawn on by people, structures shape and pattern (i.e., structure) interaction. However, only through interaction are structures themselves reproduced' (quoted in *ibid*). In other words, 'the structural properties of social systems' can be perceived as 'both medium and outcome of the practices that they recursively organize' (Giddens quoted in Moores 2005: 9). Giddens prefers to speak of systems as exhibiting 'structural properties' rather than as actually having structures. This is because 'structure exists, as time-space presence, only in its instantiations in such practices and as memory traces orienting the conduct of knowledgeable human agents' (Giddens 1994: 80).

According to Giddens, the realms of human action and social structure are inextricably linked through three modalities: interpretive schemes, resources, and norms¹⁰. Thus, the 'process of structuration' refers to the connection between these two realms and the ways in which they are recursively constituted (Orlikowski and Robey 1991: 148). In this respect, society itself 'can be understood as a complex of recurrent practices which form institutions. [...] That is, society only has form and that form only has effects on people in so far as structure is produced and reproduced in what people do' (Giddens and Pierson quoted in Moores 2005: 10).

It is not my intention here to describe the 'theory of structuration' in great detail, since its tenets are not explicitly employed in my research. Nevertheless, its main ideas have provided an insight into the concept of 'structure-as-process', as well as the role of interaction in the production and transformation of structure. As such, they cast a different light on questions of structure, emphasizing its production through the everyday practices and routines of the organization. Therefore, the accent here is not on identifying the type of organizing structure of the movement on the basis of certain dimensions. And it is not on discovering these characteristics and practices that make a movement decentralized, as Gerlacht's analysis suggests. Instead, the emphasis lies on exploring the recurrent practices of organizing and the ways in which they are affected by and in turn shape the interpretive schemes, resources and norms of the movement. In

¹⁰ Orlikowski and Robey provide a succinct definition of these three modalities: '*Interpretive schemes* are standardized, shared stocks of knowledge that humans draw on to interpret behavior and events, hence achieving meaningful interaction. *Resources* are the means through which intentions are realized, goals are accomplished, and power is exercised. *Norms* are the rules governing sanctioned or appropriate conduct, and they define the legitimacy of interaction within a setting's moral order' (1991: 148, emphasis added).

other words, the concern is not with whether a movement has a centralized or decentralized structure, but with the ways in which centralization and decentralization is produced and sustained through the organizing practices of the movement. By examining the role of mediated communication or interaction in these practices, we can further understand the role of the media in the production of the organizing structure of the movement.

3.4. Decision-Making

Studies on the internal processes of social movements are conspicuously lacking within social movement research. As Klandermans argues, '[l]eadership and decision making are aspects of social movement organizations which are more often debated than studied empirically' (1997: 133). He attributes this gap to the fluid character of social movement organizations that complicates the research of such practices: '[h]ow can one study leadership and decision making in organizations that have no clear boundaries, that have distributed, rotating or multiple leadership or that claim they have no leadership at all?' (ibid).

However, for Polletta, the problem also rests on the predominant conception of social movements as rational and unified actors:

'sociologists have paid significantly little attention to the processes that take place within social movement organizations. Decisionmaking (*sic*) is an obvious one. Our failure to tackle these questions reflects our inclination to see organizations as actors rather than as *made up* of actors and their interactions. But it also reflects a tendency to substitute a classically rational calculus for empirical analysis of actual deliberative processes' (2002: 225, emphasis in original).

In what follows, I will review the somewhat limited number of sources that helped me to interpret my research in the internal processes of the 'movement for alternative globalization'. In that respect, I will focus on the empirical studies of Mansbridge (1980) and Polletta (2002) and complement this discussion with Melucci's analysis of the decision-making practices of 'new social movements'. I will also supplement this analysis with some insights on transparency and accountability derived from the field of governance and international relations. As I will try to show, the literature is currently missing a clear conceptualization of the connection between decision-making and mediated communication.

3.4.1. Unitary or Participatory Democracy and Modes of Deliberation

Focusing on what she terms as 'unitary' democracy, Mansbridge has attempted to examine its inner logic, as well as the conditions under which this logic ceases to apply. Her empirical data originates from her ethnographic study of a New England town meeting and of a small democratic workplace (Mansbridge 1980: 4). According to Mansbridge, friendship forms the basis and framework of unitary democracy. As she notes, '[t]he strength of unitary democracy derives partly from its simplicity: it makes formal and extends to the level of a polity the social relations of friendship' (Mansbridge 1980: 8). Therefore, contrary to adversary democracy, unitary democracy is based on the assumption of common interests between its participants¹¹. Thus, at the core of Mansbridge's argument is the proposition that '[t]he degree to which there are common interests in a democracy determines many of its other features: the kind of equality it seeks, its decision rule, and the intimacy of its relations' (ibid: 28).

Founded on the norms of friendship, unitary democracies understand equality in terms of 'equal status' or 'equal respect', assuming that '[o]ne group of people [...] can wield more power than others and still exercise that power in the interests of all' (ibid: 29). Adversary democracies, on the other hand, are based on a conflict of interests and thus define equality in terms of the equal protection of interests, instituting protective devices such as universal suffrage and 'one person/one vote' (ibid: 30). Unitary democracies also show a preference for decision rule by consensus, as in groups with common interests the implementation of consensus can 'maintain unity, encourage a search for the best solution, and nourish concern for the welfare of both the group as a whole and its individual members' (ibid: 268).

What is more, unitary democracies are characterized by a high level of intimacy which is sustained through face-to-face contact. Mansbridge argues in this respect that while:

'[t]here is no logical reason why individuals who meet face to face (sic) should not see most human relations in terms of conflict [...] Experience teaches us [...] that in practice face-to-

¹¹ Mansbridge defines interests as "enlightened" preferences among policy choices (that is, preferences based on full information), without insisting that this is the only defensible definition or claiming that it subsumes every legitimate use of the term' (1980: 24). Her concept of 'interest' is quite broad, covering 'a wide variety of choices, including those that involve altruistic motives, ideals, and even trivial matters of taste' (ibid: 25). Individual interests may converge for any of three reasons: (a) 'out of coincidence or because they arise from similar circumstances' (ibid), (b) out of empathy, (c) out of one's willingness to adopt as her/his own the interest not of another but of the whole polity (ibid).

face contact increases the perception of likeness, encourages decision making by consensus, and perhaps even enhances equality of status' (ibid: 33).

This is because face-to-face contact develops mutual knowledge and allows for a subtle communication to take place, increasing feelings of empathy (ibid: 271)¹². In addition, the speed and complexity of face-to-face contact is better suited for more difficult negotiations, while its greater persuasiveness allows 'participants to enter a negotiation expecting that their positions will change' (ibid: 272). What is more, face-to-face contact prompts 'citizens to take a degree of responsibility for their vote that they do not take if they are not physically present at the time of the decision' (ibid: 273). Face-to-face assemblies are also conducive to creating a feeling of community among the group (ibid).

Problems begin to emerge, however, once interests start to conflict, as in serious disagreements the principle of 'equal respect' cannot protect the weaker parties from the power of the stronger ones. Consensus¹³ similarly works better within a context of common interests, as it may otherwise result 'in impasse or in extreme social coercion' (ibid: 31). This is because '[i]n a consensual process [...] the determined opposition of one member can usually prevent collective action' (ibid: 32). What is more, in conditions of conflict face-to-face contact fosters the danger of 'conformity through intimidation, resulting in a false or managed consensus' (ibid: 33). This is because 'the greater publicity of one's own act and the greater sanction of one's neighbor's visible disapproval in a face-to-face situation can stimulate conformity to the majority against one's own real interests' (ibid: 273). In addition, mass meetings often fail to guarantee a citizen's individuality (ibid). Based on the assumption of conflicting interests, adversary democracies have more devices that prevent the suppression of conflict and ensure the equal protection of interests. Representation is one of them as '[i]n a representative democracy, citizens need not fight their battles themselves, they can send persons more temperamentally suited and trained for conflict out to fight for them' (ibid: 275). Hence, when interests tend to diverge, unitary democracy cannot adequately protect the interests of the weaker players. This means that unitary democracy is more suitable to

¹² However, Mansbridge admits that '[t]here is remarkably little evidence on the effect of face-to-face contact on feelings of empathy' (1980: 272).

¹³ Mansbridge defines consensus as 'a form of decision making in which, after discussion, one or more members of the assembly sum up prevailing sentiment, and if no objections are voiced, this becomes agreed-on policy' (1980: 32).

small-size and relatively homogeneous communities (ibid: 282). The table below summarizes the contrasting characteristics of unitary and adversary democracy.

	Unitary Democracy	Adversary Democracy
Assumption	Common interests	Conflicting interests
Central egalitarian ideal	Equal respect	Equal protection of interests
Decision rule	Consensus	Majority rule
Level of intimacy	Face-to-face contact	Secret ballot

Table 3.2: Models for the democratic polity (Source: Mansbridge 1980: 5)

For Polletta, however, this line of argument is based on a flawed conception of interests. As she puts it, '[t]he problem is that it is very difficult to determine what constitutes a conflicting set of underlying interests rather than a more superficial difference that can be resolved through the consensus process' (2002: 15). Instead, many groups practising consensus are indeed divided over such superficial differences which are often expressed as conflicts over the correct functioning of democratic procedures and decision-making. Therefore, according to Polletta, the most pertinent questions to ask are the ones concerning the relationships among participants in a decision-making system. This way we can understand whether 'some kinds of difference are more likely to produce deliberative standoffs than others' (ibid: 15), as well as whether we can trace these differences 'to characteristic features of the relationships among members of a participatory democracy' (ibid).

In this regard, Polletta argues that social relations influence the deliberative style of the group since they form the basis of the normative underpinnings of the system. Norms are fundamental to participatory democracy as they take care of all those exceptions and cases that are not covered by its formal regulations. Having a shared etiquette of deliberation is essential for the survival of the group as '[b]y routinizing interaction and domesticating attendant emotions, it [the etiquette of deliberation] generates trust in the process, its outcomes, and its participants' (ibid: 16). For instance, in her empirical research of 20th century US participatory politics, Polletta has identified three main deliberative styles derived from the norms of three distinct types of social relations: (a) religious fellowship, (b) tutelage, and (c) friendship. The relational underpinnings of each system in turn influenced the features of decision making, the ways in which groups mitigated ineffectiveness and inequality, as well as the potential sources and conditions of conflict (ibid: 18).

Therefore, contrary to Mansbridge who does not provide an adequate explanation concerning why and when interests start to diverge, Polletta traces conflict back to the relational roots of each decision making system. According to her, the main vulnerability of the system is not 'its inefficiency and its inability to resolve conflicting interests', but rather the fact that '[t]he same social relations that have sometimes made it easy to practice have also made it difficult to sustain' (ibid: 21). This is when the familiarity of the form actually conceals its (almost unavoidable) inequalities and exclusions (ibid).

Polletta also expertly highlights the link between strategy and culture arguing that social relationships, in terms of the activists' identification with certain social groups, also influence their assessments of decision making devices. In that respect, Polletta interrogates the clear cut distinction between participatory, prefigurative politics, pursued for ideological reasons and hierarchical, representative politics, pursued for strategic and instrumental reasons:

'might not hierarchical forms be adopted for ideological reasons: because they *connote* efficiency and seriousness [...]? Might not activists choose an option or a way of interacting because it is powerfully identified with another group viewed as especially effective, radical, or principled – independent of any proof of its capacity to effect change, its unconventionality, or its normative integrity?' (ibid: 5, emphasis in original).

In fact, participatory democracy presents a number of advantages that are able to justify its adoption on purely instrumental terms. According to Polletta, these benefits are (a) *solidary*, as deliberation and consensus decision making make people feel that they share the ownership of the decisions that are made, thus enhancing their solidarity and commitment to the group, (b) *innovatory*, as 'the flexibility of decentralized and informal organizations opens up room for multiple lines of input and communication', thus facilitating tactical experimentation, and (c) *developmental*, as people are trained in argumentation and negotiation, thus increasing their political efficacy (ibid: 10).

While Mansbridge and Polletta alert us to the potential limitations of participatory and unitary democracy, they both seem to be attributing these problems to the inherent characteristics of the form and the conditions under which it tends to fail. For Mansbridge, participatory democracy cannot function within a context of divergent interests, while for Polletta, the system becomes vulnerable when the participants' familiarity with the form blinds them to its exclusions and inequalities. Melucci, however, presents a more sceptical view. Focusing on the decision-making processes of 'new

social movements', Melucci proposes that participants are aware of the limitations of the form, but adopt it regardless, since it serves to conceal asymmetries of power that threaten the internal solidarity of the movement. As he puts it:

'Contemporary movements face a deep internal dilemma: the need to ensure the survival of the organization by means of asymmetry-producing functions is flanked by the impossibility of rendering this asymmetry explicit through its formalization, since, should this happen, the solidarity and the interpersonal relations are subjected to the threat of a breakdown' (Melucci 1996: 345).

In other words, for movements based on the social norms of friendship, the formalization of leadership threatens the solidarity of the group. In order to resolve this dilemma, 'new social movements' resort to diverse and often contrasting strategies that transform the classical model of decision-making (ibid).

Such strategies include, first of all, the minimizing and at the same time concealment of the decision-making and representation functions. In that respect:

'The decisional role of an individual or collective body is simply no longer formally recognized as such. Above all, it is no longer binding. [...]The nonideological nature and the organizational informality of the movements have largely neutralized the weapons previously wielded to ensure compliance with decisions taken by the centre (expulsion, doctrinal excommunication)' (ibid: 345-6).

Another strategy concerns the 'narrowing down' of 'decision-making occasions, while at the same time postponing *sine die* their implementation' (ibid: 346, emphasis in original). For instance, by pushing contentious issues at the end of agenda or by postponing their discussion, movements minimize internal tensions. Yet, at the same time, they facilitate the emergence of a concealed leadership, consisting of individuals with the time and willingness to participate in every decision (ibid).

In addition, such groups tend to continually redistribute the decision-making power to their participants, ensuring that '[t]he multiplication and overlapping of the functions [...] obstructs the centralization of the resources relevant to it, favoring instead the appearance of a rotating leadership' (ibid). This diffuse leadership also means that the leaders of specific segments can reciprocally control each other, again preventing power from becoming centralized.

A further strategy consists of denying the function of representation by limiting the power of formal representatives to that of simple coordinators (ibid). However, representation does exist informally, with specific individuals or organizing bodies

constituting 'symbolic referents' that are able 'to express the image of the movement or of the individual group towards the outside' (ibid: 346-7). These symbolic referents then tend to become the first port of call for groups and individuals wanting to join the movement.

Other ways to protect personal relations from asymmetries of power is to depersonalise the role of the leader by distinguishing 'sharply between the role and the persons occupying it' (ibid: 347). This allows for the role to be contested without necessarily putting a strain on interpersonal relations.

Thus for Melucci '[t]he present tendency seems to be a refusal of the formal legitimation of asymmetry, accompanied by acknowledgement of its relative inevitability' (ibid). He therefore thinks that the adoption of certain participatory decision making functions aim at concealing the asymmetries of power within the movement, rather than eradicating them completely, since this seems to be an unrealistic goal.

Nevertheless, all of the reviewed perspectives are limited in their treatment of communication since they tend to focus on face-to-face contact. This is because they either examine small groups located in the same geographical area and holding regular face-to-face meetings (e.g. Mansbridge) or analyze the deliberative styles employed in face-to-face meetings (e.g. Polletta). For instance, even though Polletta examines social movements spread all over America, she does not pay attention to the uses and affordances of mediated communication. However, the use of media for the internal communication of a social movement can affect both the formal rules of decision-making and its underlying norms and social relations. For instance, the dissemination of agendas or minutes on email lists and bulletin boards may become one of the formal rules of the decision-making process and a yardstick of its transparency and accountability. The media may be implicated in the practice of decision-making in other, more informal ways. They may be the vehicles for the discussion of strategies and the space of deliberation over means and goals. They can also influence social relationships as individuals establish and maintain their relations with others through both mediated and unmediated communication. Therefore, all of the reviewed accounts seem to be missing a serious consideration of mediated communication. This is particularly the case for Mansbridge

who tends to be so dismissive of the mediated aspects of unitary democracy that she considers face-to-face contact as a defining aspect of the form and its level of intimacy¹⁴.

3.4.2. Transparency and Accountability

Another possible blind spot of these otherwise excellent accounts is their focus on the actual 'moments' of decision-making, the meetings and group discussions where decisions are taken. As a result, they tend to disregard the more mundane, but nonetheless important, aspects of decision-making including the scheduling of meetings, the documentation of their decisions, as well as their wide dissemination. These are an integral part of the transparency and accountability of the decision-making system and thus its democratic character. And since, at their core, these aspects involve the creation and distribution of information, they serve as another link between mediated communication and democratic decision-making. In order to better conceptualize transparency and accountability, particularly within participatory and decentralized forms of decision-making, I turned to literature from the field of governance and international relations.

In general terms, transparency entails the publicizing of information about the private/internal operation of the decision-making system (Northrup and Thorson 2003: 1). As such, it constitutes an integral aspect of accountability. Focusing on global governance and world politics, Grant and Keohane provide a succinct and comprehensive definition of the term:

'Accountability, as we use the term, implies that some actors have the right to hold other actors to a set of standards, to judge whether they have fulfilled their responsibilities in light of these standards, and to impose sanctions if they determine that these responsibilities have not been met. Accountability presupposes a relationship between power-wielders and those holding them accountable where there is a general recognition of the legitimacy of (1) the operative standards for accountability and (2) the authority of the parties to the relationship (one to exercise particular powers and the other to hold them to account)' (2005: 29).

Therefore, a relationship of accountability is essentially a relationship of power as '[t]o be held accountable is to have one's autonomy, and one's power over others, constrained' (Keohane 2005: 7). Sanctions concern two types of abuses: firstly,

¹⁴ This is probably due to the selection of her case studies, which involved groups located in the same geographical area, as well as the period when she undertook her research (the book was published in 1980) when the media used for interpersonal communication did not seem to carry the promise and affordances of email.

transgressions of power, including the 'unauthorized or illegitimate exercise of power' (Grant and Keohane 2005: 30), and, secondly, unwise or mistaken decisions (ibid). However, different conceptions of the legitimacy of political authority are associated with different standards of accountability, as well as conceptions of who is authorized to wield power and who is entitled to hold power-wielders to account (ibid). Within a system of direct democracy, the one that most closely resembles the participatory decision-making system of the ESF process¹⁵, power-wielders are regarded as instrumental agents held to account by those who are affected by their actions (ibid). A defining principle of the system is that people should be treated equally, meaning that people should have an equal say within the decision-making process. Thus, '[l]egitimacy is based on full participation' (ibid: 30). In practice, however, 'no group makes every single decision by consensus, and no group offers equal power to *anyone* who wants it' (Polletta 2002: 8, emphasis in original). Therefore, activist groups often experiment with different decision-making devices, 'generating new bases for legitimate authority' (ibid). Hence, what is important here is not for the decision-making system to follow some pre-ordained rules of legitimacy according to the model of accountability it normatively belongs to. Rather, and as Polletta argues, '[t]he critical question is whether the grounds of authority are specified and, when appropriate, reformulated' (ibid).

Within world politics, Grant and Keohane identify seven mechanisms of accountability depending on the accountability holder, the power-wielder, as well as the sanctions imposed on the power-wielder. In that respect, the peer mechanism seems to be the most suitable to the characteristics of the ESF decision-making process. Within this mechanism, organizations and their leaders are the power-wielders held into account

¹⁵ Grant and Keohane distinguish between general models of accountability, each one consisting of two types of accountability, depending on the conception of the power-wielders either as instrumental agents or discretionary authorities. The table below presents the two general models:

Power-Wielders Regarded as	Who Is Entitled to Hold the Powerful Accountable?	
	<i>Those affected by their actions – Participation</i>	<i>Those entrusting them with powers – Delegation</i>
<i>Instrumental Agents</i>	Ia. <i>Direct democracy</i> : Actions of power-wielders are what those affected (the people) instructed them to do in this contingency.	IIa. <i>Principal – Agent</i> : Power-wielders act as faithful agents of principals who empower them.
<i>Discretionary Authorities</i>	Ib. <i>Populist</i> : Policies followed by the power-wielders lead to outcomes approved by those affected, which leads those affected to confer additional powers.	IIb. <i>Trustee</i> : Power-wielders perform the duties of their offices faithfully.

Table 3.3: Two general models of accountability (Source: Grant and Keohane 2005: 30)

by their peers (2005: 36). Costs to the power-wielders mainly concern negative '[e]ffects on network ties and therefore on others' support', while '[r]eputational effects are involved in all issues of accountability' (ibid).

Obviously, the provision of accurate information on the internal processes of organizations is integral to accountability. As Keohane notes, '[a]ccountability is only possible with information, much of which has to be provided by the organization in question. [...] It is not a trivial standard, therefore, to demand truth-telling and transparency as a condition of legitimacy' (2005: 16). However, the epistemic understanding of this information is equally important to transparency. This is because '[t]oo much information, without coherent interpretation, is merely confusing noise. We also need the capacity to interpret information intelligently, which entails the ability to ask pointed questions of power-holders and to demand answers' (ibid: 17). Therefore, the ways in which information is disseminated within a social movement are integral to its transparency and accountability. The role of the media is very important here as they are the conduits of this information determining the speed, accuracy and cost of its dissemination, as well as the audiences that are being reached. Thus, by influencing the politics of information within the movement, the media are directly involved in the process of internal accountability.

3.5. Collective Identity, Trust and Solidarity

Collective identity has become an increasingly influential concept within social movement theory, marking a shift from rationalist to more cultural perspectives of social movements. Within the US the emphasis on collective identity emerged 'as a response to gaps in dominant resource mobilization and political process models' (Polletta and Jasper 2001: 283). Focusing on the how of mobilization and not on the reasons behind it, these models could provide only a limited understanding of the people's motivations to participate in collective action, as well as of the cultural effects of social movements (ibid: 284). Within Europe, the new social movements approach, as exemplified by Alberto Melucci, was also marked by a strong concern with the collective identity of social movements.

However, as Polletta and Jasper argue, the concept of:

'collective identity has been forced to do too much analytically. The term has been used to describe many different dimensions and dynamics of social protest: the social categories

predominating among activists (say “women” or “animal rights activists”), public representations of social categories (what Johnston et al 1994 refer to as “public identities”), activists’ shared definition of their situation, the expressive character of all action, the affective bonds that motivate participation, the experience of solidarity within movements, and others’ (ibid: 284-5).

This ‘definitional catholicity’ (ibid: 285) has made difficult to distinguish collective identity from the related concepts of solidarity, trust, interest, ideology, or commitment. It is therefore my intention in this section to clarify the distinctions between the concept of collective identity and its related terms. I will then evaluate the different approaches to collective identity, arguing that all of them lack a clear conceptualization of the role of media and communication in collective identity formation.

3.5.1. Defining Collective Identity

In the introductory chapter of a seminal book on identity and social movements, Johnston, Larana and Gusfield distinguish between three dimensions of identity: individual, public, and collective (1994: 11-12). In that respect, collective identity is defined as:

‘the (often implicitly) agreed upon definition of membership, boundaries, and activities for the group [...] It is built through shared definitions of the situation by its members, and it is a result of a process of negotiation and “laborious adjustment” of different elements relating to the ends and means of collective action and its relation to the environment’ (ibid: 15).

Individual identity, on the other hand, ‘relates to the wholly personal traits that, although constructed through the interaction of biological inheritance and social life, are internalized and imported to social movement participation as idiosyncratic biographies’ (ibid: 12). In this process, individual identities do not remain intact but are altered through the individual’s participation in social movements and group membership (ibid).

Finally, public identity ‘captures the influences that the external public have on the way social movement adherents think about themselves’ (ibid: 18-19). This external public consists of non-members, state agencies, counter-movements and the media, whose definitions of the movement and interactions with its participants shape both its collective identity and the individual identities of its members (ibid).

These three types of identity imply different levels of analysis and research. While individual identity focuses attention on the micro-social level, public identity is more

concerned with a macro-social level of analysis, examining the relations of the movement with other actors, as well as the public discourse generated by or for it. Collective identity, on the other hand, deals with the self-reflection of the collectivity, placing more emphasis on an intermediate level of analysis, that of the interaction between members of the movement.

However, in other perspectives these dimensions are not so analytically distinct. For instance, while Johnston et al. define collective identity on the level of the movement, as the shared definitions of the membership, boundaries, and activities of the group, other scholars consider the individual as the locus of collective identity. In that respect, Polletta and Jasper perceive collective identity as 'an *individual's* cognitive, moral, and emotional connections with a broader community, category, practice, or institution' (2001: 285, emphasis added). They further define collective identity as:

'a perception of a shared status or relation, which may be imagined rather than experienced directly, and it is distinct from personal identities, although it may form part of a personal identity. A collective identity may have been first constructed by outsiders (for example, as in the case of "Hispanics" in this country), who may still enforce it, but it depends on some acceptance by those to whom it is applied' (ibid).

Polletta and Jasper then trace the ways in which the concept has been used in current social theory to explain the emergence of social movements, recruitment and commitment, strategy and tactics, as well as movement success¹⁶.

¹⁶ In terms of the emergence of social movements, scholars have attempted to explain the creation of mobilizing identities through network theories, proposing that it is the position of an individual within a network of relationships that influences his or her self-understanding (Polletta and Jasper 2001: 288). Others have focused on the institutional contexts where new identities are being developed, aiming to understand the conditions and sites able to foster counterhegemonic ideas and oppositional identities. Identity has also been linked with questions of individual recruitment and commitment. A central concern here is whether collective identities are a pre-requisite or outcome of participation. Such studies also focus on framing and interpretive schemes for the mobilization of participants (ibid: 290-1). Questions of identity are also related to strategy and tactical choices in a twofold way. First, identity claims or the recognition of certain identities can constitute a protest strategy or tactic. Second, the instrumental calculations associated with strategy are never completely disentangled from identity as '[c]ollective identities are already embedded in strategies, tactics, claims, organizational forms, and deliberative styles, and they influence how such options can be used' (ibid: 295). Finally, studies in the field have connected identity with the outcomes of social movements since changing or legitimating a specific identity can be an explicit movement goal. In addition, participation in social movements almost always results in the transformation of individual identities and personal trajectories (ibid: 296).

3.5.2. Collective Identity as Outcome and as Process

However, such definitions tend to provide a quite static view of collective identity. For instance, while Johnston, Larana and Gusfield note that collective identity is the product of negotiation and 'laborious adjustments', their focus still rests on identity as the 'agreed upon definition of membership, boundaries and activities of the group' (1994: 15). This is even more the case for Polletta and Jasper's definition where no mention to this 'laborious process' is ever made.

As Melucci argues, a common flaw in this line of thought is that the collective phenomenon is treated as:

'a unified empirical datum, which, supposedly, can be perceived and interpreted by observers. It is supposed that, first, individuals' behaviour forms a unitary character or gestalt. Second, this assumption is then transferred from the phenomenological to the conceptual level and acquires ontological consistency: the collective reality is seen to exist as a thing' (quoted in Mueller 1994: 235).

Thus, instead of assuming the existence of a collective, Melucci is more interested in exploring the interactive process through which a collective becomes a collective (1996: 84). He therefore defines collective identity as the process of:

'constructing an action system [...] Collective identity is an interactive and shared definition produced by a number of individuals (or groups at a more complex level) concerning the orientations of their action and the field of opportunities and constraints in which such action is to take place' (ibid: 70).

By 'interactive and shared', Melucci means that 'these elements are constructed and negotiated through a recurrent process of activation of the relations that bind actors together.' (ibid).

This is why Melucci prefers to use the term 'identization' which expresses more accurately the 'increasingly self-reflexive and constructed manner in which contemporary collective actors tend to define themselves' (ibid: 77). The term also conveys the dynamic character of this process, viewing collective identity as a constantly changing and interactive formation. In that respect, the concept of collective identity 'can precisely help to understand that what appears as a given reality, something more or less permanent, is always the result, at least to a certain extent, of an active process which is not immediately visible' (ibid: 72).

This process consists of a cognitive and an emotional dimension, both framed through a network of active relationships between movement participants (ibid: 71). In that respect, the process of collective identity always involves a set of 'cognitive definitions concerning the ends, means, and the field of action' (ibid: 70). As Melucci argues, this 'level does not necessarily imply unified and coherent frameworks [...]; rather, it is constructed through interaction and comprises different and sometimes contradictory definitions' (ibid: 71). Therefore, the focus lies on the ways in which different groups of the movement interpret its means and ends, resources and constraints, as well as relationship with the environment.

It is worth noting here that the cognitive bases for creating a collective identity can range from common goals or ideologies to shared models of organization. As Clemens argues, '[t]he answer to "Who are we?" need not be a quality or a noun; "We are people who do these sorts of things in this particular way" can be equally compelling' (1996: 211). This highlights the link between organizing and collective identity since a model of organizing can be adopted for ideological reasons (because for instance it connotes openness and cooperation) (Polletta 2004: 5) and/or serve as the focal point around which a collective identity is being developed.

These common elements are also 'defined within a language that is shared by a portion or the whole of society, or within one that is specific to a group' (ibid: 70). This aspect is often addressed by frames analysis, which attempts to discover whether participants share the same frames of reference when it comes to the terms used by the movement.

Shared definitions are further objectified in rituals, practices and cultural artifacts (ibid). Della Porta and Diani offer the following categorization of such 'objects': (a) identifiers 'which enable supporters of a particular cause to be instantly recognizable', (b) characters 'who have played an important role in the action of a movement or in the development of its ideology', (c) artifacts 'including books or visual documents which help people to reconstruct the history of the movement and its origins in time, or to identify its stakes', (d) events or places 'of a particular symbolic significance', (e) stories 'which circulate among members of a movement, reflecting their vision of the world and reinforcing solidarity' (1999: 97-8).

However, this cognitive dimension of collective identity cannot exist without the emotional level since '[t]here is no cognition without feeling and no meaning without

emotion' (Melucci 1996: 71). Therefore, collective identity always involves a certain degree of emotional investment in its definition that 'enables individuals to feel themselves part of a common unity' (ibid). As such, collective identity 'cannot be reduced to cost-benefit calculation and always mobilizes emotions as well' (ibid) or, as Polletta and Jasper put it, the concept 'does not imply the rational calculus for evaluating choices that "interest" does' (2001: 284). In fact, it is exactly this emotional dimension that distinguishes the concept from that of ideology, as 'unlike ideology, collective identity carries with it positive feelings for other members of the group' (ibid). Emotional intensity may also serve as an indication of the 'strength' of a collective identity (Goodwin, Jasper and Polletta 2001: 9).

Yet, it is at this point that the concept of collective identity can be easily conflated with solidarity. Indeed, as Hunt and Benford argue, the field is characterized by 'conceptual haziness' as we are still lacking a comprehensive and systematic theory of collective identity (2004: 450). Nevertheless, the two terms are distinguishable from each other. It is worth quoting them at length here:

'solidarity calls attention to the degree to which social cohesion exists within and between groups. Collective identity suggests that a group of individuals with common interests, values, feelings, and goals exist in time and space beyond the here and now. Collective identity therefore includes [...] solidarity's accent on collectivities, as well as highlighting broader, macrosocial structures and dynamics that go beyond movement collectivities, including those that help shape and/or provide interests, political contexts, cultural symbols, goals and so forth' (ibid).

However, the two concepts are tightly intertwined, since 'solidarity requires the *identification of* and *identification with*: the identification of a collective entity and participant's identification with a body of affiliated actors' (ibid: 439, emphasis in original). In addition, solidarity can be both internal and external with internal solidarity focusing on the group to which one belongs and external to groups one does not participate in (ibid).

However, compared to the cognitive aspects of collective identity, empirical research on its emotional dimensions is relatively scarce. Goodwin, Jasper and Polletta attribute this to the tendency of social scientists to 'portray humans as rational and instrumental, traits which are oddly assumed to preclude any emotions' (2001: 1). In that respect, even the recent 'cultural turn' in sociology seems to perceive culture in cognitive rather than emotional terms (ibid). As they further note 'the sociology of culture [...] has proliferated

terms and concepts for understanding meanings and boundaries and the more cognitive aspects of culture – frames, schemata, codes, tool kits, narratives, discourses – but has offered little that would help us grapple with feelings' (ibid: 6).

What is more, the cognitive and emotional dimensions of collective identity are framed by 'a network of active relationships between actors who interact, communicate, influence each other, negotiate and make decisions' (Melucci 1996: 71). This network is constituted by '[f]orms of organization and models of leadership, communicative channels and technologies of communication' (ibid). Therefore, the relationship between collective identity and forms of organization is quite complex. Not only are organizational forms a potentially shared value around which a collective identity may be developed, they also affect the process of collective identity formation by structuring the interactions among movement participants.

It is worth noting here that this is the only point where Melucci makes explicit reference to the media and technologies of communication. However, as with other social movement theories, this point is not elaborated on or further elucidated. In what ways do the media structure interactions and thus affect social relationships? In what ways do they afford solidarity and integration?

3.5.3. Trust

The concept of trust seems to enter the discourse of social movement theory in many occasions and under different guises. For Polletta, trust is vital for decision-making and for the survival of institutions and can be activated through a clear set of rules and code of conduct. Klandermas and Diani, on the other hand, note the importance of mutual trust for recruitment, commitment and participation. In addition, many of the theories that I have reviewed, including Gerlach's model of decentralization and Melucci's conception of collective identity as 'identization', refer to actors engaged in networks of relationships. In that respect, both structure and collective identity emerge as a result of the interactions between those actors. Therefore, the degree of trust characterizing these relationships may have a bearing in the process of organizing and collective identity formation. Della Porta and Diani note, for instance, that mutual trust may constitute the breeding ground for new networks of active relationships and thus collective identities (ibid: 86-8). Most crucially, trust has also been mentioned as an ingredient or element of a collective identity (see for instance Andretta and Mosca 2004). However, social movement theory

does not offer an explicit and detailed theorization of processes of trust-building. I thus turned to organizational theory and human resources management which provide a better conceptualization of trust, even though they focus on types of organizations that are distinctly different from social movements.

According to Mayer, Davis and Schoorman trust can be defined as 'the willingness of a party to be vulnerable to the actions of another party based on the expectation that the other will perform a particular action important to the trustor irrespective of the ability to monitor or control that other party' (1995: 712). In other words, trust connotes the willingness to be vulnerable, while the act of making oneself vulnerable to another can be termed as 'behavioral trust' (ibid: 724).

Interpersonal trust is based both on affect and cognition. In other words, trust is founded 'on what we take to be "good reasons," constituting evidence of trust-worthiness' (Lewis and Wiegert quoted in McAllister 1995: 25-6), as well as on the emotional bonds between individuals (McAllister 1995: 26). The amount of knowledge required for trust to flourish is somewhere between total knowledge and total ignorance. As McAllister notes, '[g]iven total knowledge, there is no need to trust, and given total ignorance there is no basis upon which to rationally trust. Available knowledge and 'good reasons' serve as foundations for trust decisions, the platform from which people make leaps of faith' (ibid).

Cognitive-based trust is influenced by the success of past interactions between individuals, as well as their degree of social similarity, since people tend to trust others with similar characteristics (ibid: 28). It is also affected by the organizational context and its degree of formality, since in organizations with a clearer definition of roles and a greater transparency over professional credentials the boundaries of trust are traced more easily (ibid). There is, however, a paradox here as it is exactly in such organizational environments where interpersonal trust becomes indispensable for effective coordination. As Mayer, Davis and Schoorman argue, '[t]he emergence of self-directed teams and a reliance on empowered workers greatly increase the importance of the concept of trust [...] as control mechanisms are reduced or removed and interaction increases' (1995: 710). In addition, trust is important in diverse work environments, where effective coordination cannot be based on interpersonal similarity and common backgrounds (ibid).

Affect-based trust, on the other hand, is founded on insights of the motives of the relationship. In that respect, 'behavior recognized as personally chosen rather than role-

prescribed, serving to meet legitimate needs, and demonstrating interpersonal care and concern rather than enlightened self-interest may be critical for the development of affect-based trust' (ibid: 29). This is often described as 'organizational citizenship behavior' indicating the offer of assistance without the expectation of direct reward, as well as a more general concern with the welfare of the organization (Organ cited in McAllister 1995: 29).

The two types of trust are tightly intertwined, as affect-based trust most often needs a cognitive base to be built on. On the other hand, trust based solely on cognition is seen as more superficial than the one based on affect, as the latter requires a greater degree of investment in order to flourish. However, once affect-based trust is in place this causation can be reversed, as having a deep emotional bond enhances cognitive trust. As McAllister notes, '[i]n time, ascribed motives are taken as permanent and left unquestioned [...] Transgressions are discounted in advance or explained away. Thus, once a high level of affect based trust has developed, a foundation of cognition-based trust may no longer be needed' (ibid: 30).

But how is the decision to trust taken in the first place? And how does this process develop since the first instance of 'behavioral trust'? Mayer, Davis, and Schoorman's model of trust is useful here as it attempts to trace the personal characteristics, as well as the conditions that increase interpersonal trust. In this model, the trustee's perceived trustworthiness, the trustor's propensity to trust, as well as the seriousness of the perceived risk if the trustor's trust is betrayed are all factors that determine whether the trustor will actually show trust to the trustee. In that respect, an actor's trustworthiness depends on its perceived ability, integrity and benevolence. *Ability* 'is that group of skills, competencies, and characteristics that enable a party to have influence within some specific domain' (Mayer, Davis and Schoorman 1995: 717). *Integrity*, on the other hand, 'involves the trustor's perception that the trustee adheres to a set of principles that the trustor finds acceptable' (ibid: 719). Finally, *benevolence* is a factor most closely related to affect-based trust, as it denotes 'the extent to which a trustee is believed to want to do good to the trustor aside from an egocentric profit motive' (ibid: 718). If the trustor does not know the trustee personally, benevolence is the hardest factor to estimate, as information about the ability and integrity of an actor can be more easily transmitted indirectly, through common acquaintances (ibid: 722). Therefore, Mayer, Davis and Schoorman suggest that 'integrity will be important to the formation of trust early in the

relationship. As the relationship develops, interactions with the trustee allow the trustor to gain insights about the trustee's benevolence, and the relative impact of benevolence on trust will grow' (ibid). The outcome and evaluation of this process feeds into the perceived trustworthiness of the trustee and may transform it if the trustor's expectations were not met. The diagram below presents a summary of this model.

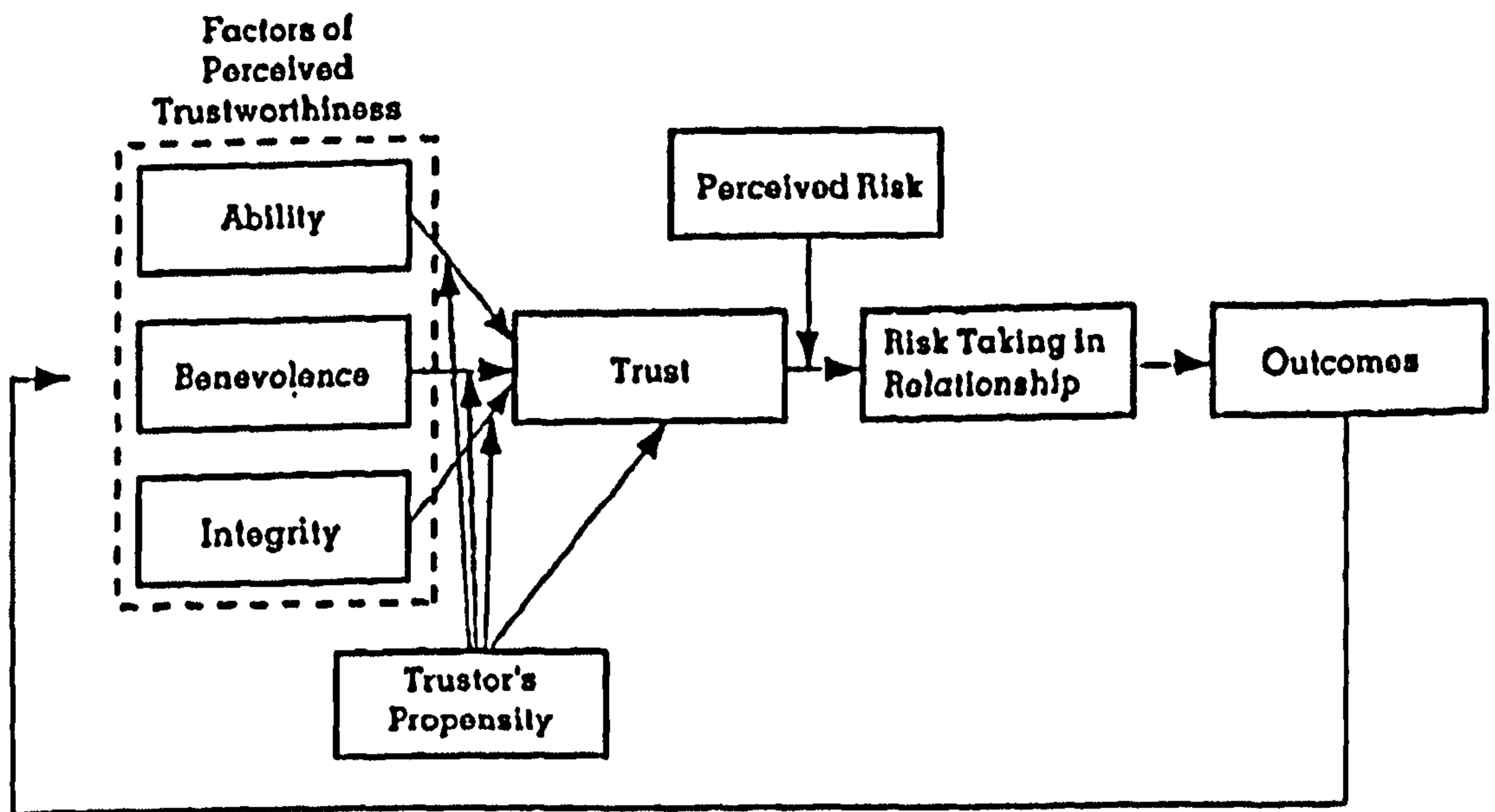


Figure 3.1: Model of trust (Mayer, Davis and Schoorman 1995: 717)

Therefore, this chapter presented the major social movement concepts on which my research is anchored. Constituting an exploration of processes of mobilization, organization, decision-making, and collective identity formation, the relevant social movement theories provided some useful pointers for conceptualizing my research. In terms of the notions of trust and 'structure-as-process', additional insights were offered by theories of participatory democracy, as well as human resources management and organizational theory. Yet, this chapter also clearly showed that social movement literature is currently missing a clear theorization of the role of communication media within such processes. Thus, in order to arrive at a more thorough conceptualization of the role of the internet within the 'movement for alternative globalization', I had to combine social movement theory with insights currently emerging from the field of internet studies.

4. The Internet

In this chapter, I will attempt to survey the literature of internet studies in order to generate a more thorough conceptualization of internet applications and their role in processes of organizing and decision-making, as well as in building trust, solidarity, and a sense of community. The discussion will be predominantly based on the emerging field of internet studies, but I will draw additional insights from management, information systems, and organizational theory. However, as I will try to show, current internet research tends to perceive online communication in a vacuum, without examining its articulation with other technologies and modes of communication. Instead, the online and the offline are often conceptualized as two distinct realms, with little connection between them.

4.1. Internet Studies and Communicative Affordances

Echoing the changing attitudes towards new communication technologies, internet studies went from an initial period of hype to one of documentation and analysis. According to Wellman, the 'first age' of internet studies was a time of 'rampant punditry' (2004:124) and polarization between utopian and dystopian visions. Academic writings were either taken up with the internet euphoria or vehemently countering it. Yet, neither side accompanied its claims with valid empirical evidence.

From 1998 onwards, the 'first age' was succeeded by a period of detailed documentation of internet users and uses (ibid). Empirical evidence provided by market-driven research was soon followed by large-scale surveys undertaken by governments and universities. For instance, longitudinal studies such as the Pew Internet and American Life Project, as well as the World Internet Project have recorded changing patterns of internet use as the technology becomes increasingly diffused (ibid: 125).

However, as Wellman argues, we are currently at the dawning of the 'third age' which marks a shift from documentation to analysis, employing more focused, theoretically-driven approaches than the standard social scientific methods used in studies of the previous era (ibid: 127). The 'third age' has also ushered in a more sophisticated conception of the internet and its relation with social change. Instead of attempting to determine its intrinsic characteristics and trace their impact on society, current research

has adopted a 'soft-determinist' approach (Livingstone 2005: 23). As Livingstone puts it, this period is characterized by a move:

'from strong determinism's language of impact, effect and transformation, positioning the technology as outside society and impacting upon it, to soft determinism's language of reconfiguring, establishing, affording, positioning the technology as precisely part of society, and, by encoding its meanings and practices, in turn contributing to it' (ibid).

This is part of an effort to avoid technological determinism and steer clear from the pitfalls of the social constructivist approach 'with its single-minded view that the discourses surrounding technologies are the only phenomena with any possible sociological (and social) relevance' (Hutchby 2001: 33). The concept of 'communicative affordances' holds an integral place within this new understanding of communication technologies. Following Gibson, Hutchby defines affordances as the possibilities that different technological artifacts offer for action (ibid: 26). In this sense,

'the uses and the 'values' of things are not attached to them by interpretive procedures or internal representations, but are a material aspect of the thing as it is encountered in the course of action. We are able to perceive things in terms of their affordances, which in turn are properties of things; yet those properties are not determinate or even finite, since they only emerge in the context of material encounters between actors and objects' (ibid: 27).

Therefore, we can think of the media as having certain communicative affordances, as enabling and constraining communication in specific ways. These affordances become perceptible when people use the media. In other words, they are not properties inherent to the media, but emerge in the context and practices associated with their use. In what follows, I will first attempt to define the internet as a medium, tracing the affordances of different internet services along several dimensions.

4.2. Defining the Internet

Any attempt to define the internet as a communication technology is bound to be simplistic if it does not make distinctions between its numerous services and applications. However, swift technological progress and the growing convergence between the internet and other media are rendering this task increasingly difficult. Therefore, instead of describing in detail the various internet applications and their proposed affordances, this section will focus on different models of classification based on Burnett and Marshall (2003). Table 4.1 in the end of this section shows how four of

the main services, email, listservs or email lists, Internet Relay Chat (IRC), and the web, fare in each of the described dimensions.

First of all, we can think of internet applications along the lines of classical models of communication that usually 'define four aspects of communication – a sender, a message, a channel and a receiver' (Burnett and Marshall 2003: 47). Senders and receivers can be one or many, while the channel of communication may vary from speech in a face-to-face context to any sort of medium.

Internet services can also be distinguished according to whether they facilitate interpersonal, group, organizational, or mass communication. Interpersonal communication is private and one-to-one, while organizational communication 'occurs in large networks with definable structure and function' (Littlejohn cited in Burnett and Marshall 2003: 48). Mass communication, on the other hand, 'involves a complex institutional organization sending a message from a source to a large audience' (ibid).

Internet applications can further be categorized according to the type of conversation that they can afford. According to Shank, conversations range from dialogue to monologue to multilogue. This last category is exclusive to the internet as it denotes an 'internet conversation with an initial sender, multiple receivers who take turns as senders, but with loss of control of the conversation' (Shank cited in ibid: 49).

We can also classify internet services according to the time/place taxonomy developed by Ellis et al. (ibid: 49). In this model, a message is distributed when senders and receivers are located in different places. In addition, a message is synchronous when it is received at the time when it is sent and asynchronous when it is received at a later time (ibid).

Internet applications can also be understood using Paterson's socio-visibility taxonomy which examines the number of senders and receivers, as well as whether the interaction is public or private. In that respect, *dialogue* concerns one-to-one communication, *broadcast* one-to-many, and *multicast* many-to-many (cited in ibid: 50). In addition, a message is considered as private when it is received by only one person²⁵ and public when it is 'displayed or made available to an audience other than the sender and receiver' (ibid).

²⁵ However, I would argue that this is a quite problematic view of private communication. Can a message that reaches a person other than its intended audience be considered as private?

A more technical model, developed specifically for the internet, classifies applications according to protocol, time, distribution scheme and media type. In that respect, the distribution scheme is point to point when 'a single sender transmits a message to a single receiver' (December cited in *ibid*: 51) and point to multipoint when the message is transmitted from a single sender to multiple receivers. Point to server broadcasts occur when 'a single sender or server transmits a message to a server which makes the message available to other servers or to receivers with the appropriate client software' (*ibid*). Media types, on the other hand, include 'text, sound, graphics, images, video, executable files, hypertext and hypermedia' (*ibid*).

What is more, internet applications can be distinguished according to their degree of interactivity. In this regard, Rafaeli and Sudweeks propose three categories of interactivity: *one-way declarative* communication that includes 'unrelated messages relayed from a source to an audience', *two-way reactive* communication where the sender and receiver speak in turns as in a dialogue 'but the new message is in response to the previous one', *fully interactive* communication when 'later messages in any sequence not only take into account the previous messages but also the reactive manner of the previous messages' (cited in *ibid*: 52).

A final model developed by Paterson (1996) argues that in order to thoroughly capture the complexity of internet-based communication, three dimensions need to be taken into account: the form of message, the level of skill with the technology that is required for full participation, as well as the environment and metaphors used in the interaction. In that respect, a message can be encapsulated, fragmentary or operative in form:

'An *encapsulated* message resembles a letter or traditional written communication, is asynchronous and uses contextual support mechanisms such as address spaces and subject line. A *fragmentary* message is delivered in pieces, resembles traditional spoken communication, is synchronous and has no contextual support other than the screen display. An *operative* message is a message that carries out some action and is accomplished via a programme' (Paterson cited in *ibid*: 52, emphasis added).

Skill levels may range from low to high, while the underlying metaphors of the interaction can vary widely (*ibid*: 54).

	email	listserv	IRC	WWW
Level	Interpersonal	Group	Group	Hybrid
Conversation	Usually dialogue	Monologue, discussion	Multilogue	Multilogue
Source	One	Many	Many	Many
Receiver	One	Many	Many	Many
Channel	Computer	Computer	Computer	Computer
Distribution	Point to point	Point to point, multipoint	Point to server broadcast	Point to server broadcast
Media Type	Text	Text	Text	Multi-media
Message	Encapsulated	Encapsulated	Fragmentary	Encapsulated
Temporal	Asynchronous	Asynchronous	Synchronous	Asynchronous
Spatial	Distributed	Distributed	Distributed	Distributed
Sociality	Dialogue	Multicast, can be broadcast	Multicast	Multicast
Visibility	Private	Private	Public	Public
Interactive	Usually reactive	Ranges	Usually reactive	Ranges
Skill	Low	Low	Low to moderate	Low
Environment	Existing	Existing	Existing	Existing
Metaphor	Postal	Postal	Room	Town square/ shopping mall

*Table 4.1: Characteristics of internet communication services
(Adapted from Burnett and Marshall 2003: 56)*

But to what extent are these affordances unique to the internet? According to some media scholars, not at all. Silverstone notes, for instance, that 'digital convergence; many-to-many communication; interactivity; globalization; virtuality, are arguably, with the possible exception of the specifically technical, not new at all' (quoted in Atton 2004: x). However, one could argue that it is the combination of these characteristics that makes the internet unique and new (Livingstone 2005: 12).

Or, as Atton proposes, it is the structure of the medium that sets it apart from other communication technologies (2004: xi). This is because contrary to other communication media, the internet operates as a decentralized network. The reasons for this can be traced back to its inception during the Cold War era as 'a communication system that would survive a nuclear attack' (Barabasi 2002: 143). In 1964, research conducted by

the RAND Corporation, a Californian think-tank set up to assist the military's nuclear build-up, suggested that a more horizontal or distributed architecture would increase the system's resilience to attacks. Following RAND's suggestions, the internet was not designed to be centrally controlled. It is in fact structurally 'closer to an ecosystem than to a Swiss watch' (ibid: 145-6). Its topology 'evolves based on local, distributed decisions on an "as needed basis"' (ibid: 148). This means that everyone can add a node to the network, from corporations and universities to individuals, without having to ask permission from a central authority. It also means that nobody can shut down the whole network. Indeed, for many scholars the internet is governed by the same rules of self-organization found in natural systems. This gives rise to metaphors of the internet as a natural organism that 'now lives a life of its own' (ibid 2002: 149-50), even though it is entirely the product of human design. What is more, 'the point-to-point "network" has become accepted as the archetypal form of contemporary social and technical organization' (Lievrouw and Livingstone quoted in Livingstone 2005: 12), with writings such as Castells' 'The Network Society' (1996) capturing public imagination.

According to Livingstone, the ubiquity and interactivity of the internet also argue for its unique character (ibid). In that respect, ubiquity does not allude to universal accessibility but to the fact that ICTs 'affect everyone in the societies where they are employed' (Lievrouw and Livingstone quoted in ibid). However, Livingstone refers here to the full spectrum of new communication technologies which is not restricted to the internet. What is more, her definition of interactivity is slightly different from the one proposed by Sudweeks and Rafaeli. In that respect, Livingstone considers new media as interactive since they provide their users with 'the means to generate, seek and share content selectively, and to interact with other individuals and groups, on a scale that was impractical with traditional mass media' (Lievrouw and Livingstone quoted in ibid: 13).

Comprising a set of applications with diverse affordances, the internet is thought to be offering new opportunities for cultural production, community and social bonding, as well as organizing and decision-making. In what follows, I will review research in those areas, focusing mainly in the latter two since they are more directly linked with the purposes of my study.

4.3. Information and Cultural Production

Since my thesis focuses mainly on the internal communication of a social movement and not its representation in the media, I will not explain the potential of the internet for information and cultural production in detail. As it was mentioned in the second chapter, this is an aspect that has received much attention within the relevant literature, with studies discussing the communication model of Indymedia, often using an 'alternative media' framework. However, the importance of this perspective is undeniable, as even within a social movement, actors have differing communication resources that influence the movement's internal power relations.

As it was hinted in the previous section, the lack of central control and the low cost of content production constitute the internet as an open communication system that does not require 'large scales of expert systems for the production of content' (Slevin quoted in Holmes 2005: 163). This means that '[t]he domination of social communication by those with the resources necessary to operate a newspaper or television station is negated in favor of drastically reduced entry barriers' (Sparks 2001: 80). Not only does this put receivers on an equal footing with producers, it also seems to altogether 'blur the dichotomy between the two' (Holmes 2005: 163), even though this 'may vary from encounter to encounter, from application to application' (Slevin quoted in Holmes 2005: 163-4). Therefore, the internet posits:

'the subject in a machinic network that enables the creation and recreation of cultural objects through this mechanism. The potential of the internet thus lies in the capacity of the subject to go beyond the confines of the established few-to-many modes of communication (newspapers, radio, television) and to realize both itself and the cultural objects it encounters through this network' (Atton 2004: xi).

The newly emergent rhetoric of 'Web 2.0', envisioning audiences as active producers of internet content, is the latest development in that respect.

The internet thus 'remains an invitation to a new imaginary' (Poster quoted in Atton 2004: xiii) as it constitutes a space for the creation of subcultural activity (ibid) and for the production of information and media that challenge the status quo. What is more, alternative viewpoints can now be produced by a handful of individuals and broadcasted to large audiences. The proliferation of blogs and their increasing influence on the mainstream news agenda provides testament to this phenomenon.

However, other 'observers suggest that economic imperatives will keep the internet from realizing its technical potential' (DiMaggio et al. 2004: 57), while some are even more pessimistic, holding that corporate power will hamper the liberating potential of the internet through its drive for ever greater market segmentation and product customization (ibid). In addition, users' attention is a scarce commodity and the producers' access to it is highly unequal. For instance, according to an article published in 2000, 0.5% of websites accounted for 80% of internet traffic (Waxman cited in ibid: 42). This explains the increasing power of portals and search engines since they play a fundamental role in channelling the attention of users to specific websites.

4.4. Community, Trust and Solidarity

Trust, solidarity and a sense of collective identity are most often examined within the field of internet studies under the rubric of community. Indeed, a quick scan of the relevant literature can easily reveal that while studies on online or virtual communities have tended to proliferate, the impact of new technologies on social bonding and integration is rarely considered outside this domain. In what follows, I will present insights from such studies and complement my analysis with some more general texts on the internet and communication. And even though 'community' and 'social movement' are distinct social phenomena, these insights can nonetheless serve as a useful basis for an inquiry into the role of the internet within the processes of trust-building and collective identity formation of the 'movement for alternative globalization'.

In an exploratory article discussing face-to-face, online, and hybrid communities, Etzioni and Etzioni define 'community' as consisting of two main attributes: bonding and a shared culture. Bonding refers to 'a web of affect-laden relationships that encompasses a group of individuals – relationships that crisscross and reinforce one another, rather than simply a chain of one-on-one relationships' (Etzioni and Etzioni 1999: 241). Culture, on the other hand, denotes 'a measure of commitment to a set of shared values, mores, meanings, and a shared historical identity' (ibid). It is worth noting here the parallels with Gerlach's account of reticulation in decentralized systems which is also produced by a set of crisscross relationships based on shared values or identity. With that definition in mind, Etzioni and Etzioni then outline the requirements of community-building, examining whether and to what extent these are afforded by face-to-face and internet communication.

In this respect, bonding demands a high level of encompassing knowledge of others. This requires for members of a community to 'be able to compose broad and inclusive images of others' (ibid: 143). It also entails a degree of trust in the communication with others, which means that community members need to authenticate the information transmitted by other members. In addition, individuals need to feel that others are responsible and can thus be held accountable for their actions (ibid). While face-to-face interaction seems able to fulfil all of those conditions, internet communication is not conducive to promoting interpersonal knowledge. In that respect, online anonymity and the potential to experiment with different personas are obstacles to authentication and identification. This is what Nissenbaum terms 'missing identities', meaning the lack of access and verification of identity-related information characterizing online environments (cited in Kramer and Cook 2004: 10). 'Missing personal characteristics' is another problem here, since online environments are lacking 'the differentiating cues that influence our judgments about trustworthiness' (ibid).

According to Etzioni and Etzioni, community-building also requires a degree of 'interactive broadcasting'. As they note:

'To form and sustain shared bonds and values, communities need to be able to (1) broadcast, that is, send messages that reach many people simultaneously, rather than point-cast to one person at a time [...] (2) provide for feedback from those who are addressed by the said broadcast, including that from many recipients of the broadcast to many other recipients (communal feedback) and not merely from one participant to another' (1999: 243).

Therefore, the ability to reach many people simultaneously is necessary for the development of the reticular bonding on which communities are based. If only point-to-point communication is available, then the bonding will be interpersonal rather than crisscross. Communal feedback, on the other hand, is central for 'mutual persuasion', the process through which people with divergent opinions come to develop a shared position (ibid: 244). In that regard, town hall meetings best exemplify interactive broadcasting within a face-to-face context²⁶. Internet communication, on the other hand, is better suited to broadcasting since it can reach a larger number of participants. However, online media do not fare equally well in communal feedback as they are not inherently interactive. Thus, in many cases 'a person "addressing" a CMC-based community will

²⁶ It is worth noting here the parallels of these statements with Mansbridge's (1980) analysis of town hall meetings.

have no information while he or she “speaks” about the reaction of the members of the community (especially in real time), and the members who receive the broadcast will have no knowledge about how others react to the same broadcast’ (ibid). This means that applications able to transmit data, audio or video in real-time may be more suitable for communal feedback.

Holmes makes a similar argument concerning the effects of broadcast and interactive communication on social bonding and solidarity (2005: 98). Quoting Austin, Holmes notes that each ‘speech act’ is constitutive of a specific audience:

‘The important thing to stress here is the degree of mutuality, or how many other people are *simultaneously being acknowledged* as hearing a speech act. [...] one characteristic is common to all speech events – the fact that a given speech act is constitutive, regardless of the content, of an audience’ (Austin quoted in Holmes 2005: 108, emphasis in original).

Therefore, broadcast and network forms of communication are ontologically distinct. This in turn has an influence on the types of communities they are able to constitute. In this sense, while both broadcast and network architectures produce individuation, ‘only broadcast enables a mass *conscience collective*’ (Holmes 2005: 110). This is because ‘broadcast facilitates mass recognition’ (ibid), engendering forms of solidarity based on an ‘imagined community’.

Yet, for Holmes, a conscience collective is constituted not only through shared beliefs and interests, but also through the practice of interaction. This is because routinized interactions create a world that is knowable and familiar regardless of the content of these interactions (ibid: 175-6). As Baym argues in a point reminiscent of Giddens’ ‘theory of structuration’, ‘[a]t the center of the practice approach is the assumption that a community’s structures are instantiated and recreated in habitual and recurrent ways of acting and practices’ (quoted in Holmes 2005: 176). And since space and place are the sites of practice, the media are directly involved in the production of community, as they provide new spaces for community to flourish. In fact, ‘as local worlds become subject to accelerating flows of messages, bodies, styles and commodities which course through them, attachment to electronic global spaces can become more attractive to the extent that they offer a *stable uniformity* that can no longer be found on a local basis’ (ibid: 177, emphasis added).

However, other authors note that ‘community’ may no longer be the right term to describe contemporary forms of human association, even though recent years have

marked a resurgence of the concept. The disintegration of stable social arrangements characterizing late modernity is to be found at the source of this longing for 'community'. Paradoxically, it is precisely this uncertainty that obstructs the return to traditional forms of community. In the words of Bauman, community today is:

'thought of as the uncanny (and in the end incongruous and unviable) mixture of difference and company: as uniqueness that is not paid for with loneliness, as contingency with roots, as freedom with certainty; its image, its allurements are incongruous as that world of universal ambivalence from which – one hopes – it would provide a shelter' (quoted in Slevin 2000: 95).

Indeed, current research on new communication technologies and community has started to identify forms of social bonding that are radically different from the traditional conception of community. The work of Barry Wellman and his colleagues has been seminal in that respect. Wellman's research traces the 'transformation of community from solidary groups to individualized networks' (2001: 228), arguing that while this transformation 'happened well before the development of cyberspace' (ibid), it has nonetheless become 'a dominant form of social organization' (ibid) as a result of recent technological developments.

In that respect, Wellman has identified a transition from door-to-door communities to place-to-place and currently person-to-person or even role-to-role. Door-to-door refers to the traditional notion of a geographically bounded community, 'so that most relationships happened within their gates rather than across them' (ibid: 232). However, from the mid-nineteenth century onwards, the development of railroad transportation and technologies of communication led the transition to place-independent forms of community (ibid). In such place-to-place communities, 'people usually obtain support, companionship, information and a sense of belonging from those who do not live within the same neighbourhood or even within the same metropolitan area' (ibid: 233). Freed from the confines of place and group, relationships become domesticated and privatized as '[t]he domesticated community ties interact in small groups in private homes rather than in large groups in public places' (ibid: 235). Constituting one of the major points of access to the internet, particularly for communication not related to the professional life, the home becomes 'the base for relationships that are more voluntary and selective than the public communities of the past' (ibid: 234). In that respect, the internet affords 'glocalization', allowing users to contact people in different geographical locales without leaving the comfort of their home or office (ibid: 236).

Wellman further notes that this shift has profound implications for processes of identity and community. First of all, this increases people's 'ability to connect with multiple social milieus, with limited involvement in each milieu' (ibid: 234). While this reduces the pressures exerted from the group and the locale, it also makes it hard for the individual to develop a sense of belonging. Limited involvement also means that people are less interested in the well-being of the inhabitants of their milieu (ibid). The focus lies instead on one's structural position within a variety of networks, rather than strict group membership. Networking with others should be actively pursued, since 'sparsely-knit ties and fragmented networks' are more difficult to sustain than face-to-face groups where one can 'sit back and let group dynamics and densely-knit structures do the work' (ibid). This also means that such networking engenders "cross-cutting" ties that link and integrate social milieus, instead of such groups being isolated and tightly bound' (ibid). What is more, interactions are based less on 'ascriptive' characteristics and more on 'achieved' characteristics, such as interests or lifestyles (ibid).

However, recent technological innovations may be pushing towards another form of community characterized by person-to-person associations. Such technological developments include the capacity for *broader bandwidth* that has increased the speed of communication, as well as the ability for feedback and instant messaging. It also affords more complex and varied communication, as messages increasingly include photographs, video and audio features. Coupled with flat computer rates, broader bandwidth contributes to a perception of the internet as an always available and 'convenient place to find quick information and makes email a handy way to share quick thoughts' (ibid: 229). On the other hand, *wireless portability* is leading us 'to a world of both ubiquitous and portable computing' (ibid: 230). Computers will not only be widely available, but individuals will be able to use their own portable equipment to connect to the internet anytime and anywhere. New communication technologies are also characterized by an increasing *personalization*. While this has always been a distinguishing feature of applications facilitating one-to-one communication, it is gradually becoming a reality in applications such as web portals, which are nowadays 'more tailorable to individual preferences' (ibid: 231).

According to Wellman, these technological developments are starting to place the individual at the centre of social relationships. He describes this shift as the 'rise of networked individualism', noting that the transition 'to a personalized, wireless world

affords truly *personal communities* that supply support, sociability, information and a sense of belonging separately to each individual. It is the individual, and not the household or the group, that is the primary unit of connectivity' (ibid: 238). This also means that '[t]he importance of a communication site as a meaningful place will diminish even more' (ibid: 230), since mobility and ubiquitous computing will make the internet available 'everywhere, but because it is independent of place, it will be situated nowhere' (ibid).

This may signal a transition to even more specialized relationships, based on the roles that people play, on fragments of the self and not on the whole person (ibid: 244). Wellman brings the example of scholarly networks, whereby 'shifting from face-to-face contact to disembodied email contact is a possible means of obtaining autonomy: isolation is achieved without effort' (ibid: 245). Scholars can thus 'interact role-to-role without being constrained to deal with the whole person' (ibid). By participating in various email lists, discussing different issues, people can vary their involvement and compartmentalize their interests. The danger of alienation is however lurking there since '[w]here person-to-person community is individualizing, role-to-role community deconstructs a holistic individual identity' (ibid: 246).

Wellman's bold and intriguing account of community in late modernity is currently very influential within the field of sociology²⁷. According to Holmes, however, this approach is rather limited in its conception of the media, since it views communication within the 'interactive paradigm', considering only those features of mediated communication that constitute an extension of face-to-face contact (ibid: 195). As such, it disregards forms of solidarity and belonging that are not created through direct interaction but through mediation by different agents. In this sense, 'audience communities' also qualify as 'virtual communities' since their participants feel a sense of belonging together even though they are not communicating directly with each other (ibid).

In addition, all of the reviewed theories are lacking 'a basic but important understanding of the fact that 'virtual community' can seldom be separated from physical community' (Holmes 2005: 204). What is missing, therefore, is a systematic focus on the context of online communication and its articulation with other modes of interaction. As

²⁷ It is worth noting here that Wellman's work is frequently cited by scholars writing on the relationship between in the internet and the 'movement for alternative globalization' [see, for instance, Bennett (2004) and, della Porta and Mosca (2005)].

Wellman asks, '[i]s the online-offline dichotomy overdone?' (2001: 242). His answer is positive, reminding us that social relations are constituted through various media and forms of communication. Under this light, some of the key assumptions of 'virtual community' studies do not stand up to scrutiny. For instance, online anonymity and its proposed effects on behavior and trust-building can only take place in communities with no physical contact among their participants. I would argue, therefore, that it is exactly this articulation between online and offline communication sites that merits our attention, since it seems to correspond more accurately to current forms of human association.

4.5. Organizing and Decision-Making

New communication technologies seem to have alerted us to the possibilities of mediated communication for the internal workings of social movements and political organizations. However, most studies on the internet and political decision-making examine the subject using the framework of the public sphere, which may not be the most suitable concept for an empirical investigation of the decision-making process. In what follows, I will briefly refer to some studies on the internet as a public sphere and then turn to some more grounded views of decision-making and organizing that derive from the field of information systems research and organizational theory.

The public sphere framework seems to be incredibly popular in studies of the internet, deliberation and democracy. This can be partly attributed to the technical characteristics of the medium which are particularly conducive to the public sphere. In that respect, online communication is interactive, anonymous, and essentially global (Sparks 2001: 80). It is also mainly text-based, while '[t]he searchable architecture of the system makes it easy to distribute and organize the information necessary to reach informed decisions on any matter' (ibid). It is therefore a medium especially suited to the conditions of rational discourse and universal access as online anonymity 'serves to disguise many of those social markers [...] that in practice serve to either validate or disqualify the opinions of speakers in direct social interaction' (ibid).

Nevertheless, research in this line of enquiry has often disproved the potential of the internet to constitute an ideal-type public sphere, since the reality of online deliberation is often far away from the normative conditions of the model. In that respect, studies have pointed to a number of limitations including the digital divide, the fragmentation of political discourse, the differences in new media literacy, the practice of 'flaming' in online

discussions, as well as the increasing commercialization of online content (Dahlberg 2001, Papacharissi 2002, Sparks 2001).

Yet, despite its popularity, I would argue that the public sphere model is a rather restrictive theory when it comes to the study of the everyday process of decision making. This is because it places disproportionate emphasis on deliberation, disregarding some central aspects of decision-making, such as the documentation of decisions. In addition, real-life deliberation is often far from rational-critical discourse and closer to ordinary talk. According to Scannell, a basic limitation of rational discourse is the rule that the best argument wins, the basis for determining the 'best' resting upon not only evidence but also rhetorical competence. On the contrary, ordinary talk points to the value of listening as opposed to debating and to a 'willingness to leave aside what may be the best argument [...] in consideration of the most appropriate decisions in relation to the particular circumstances and the particular persons involved' (Scannell 1992: 341). Indeed, the reality of decision-making often involves the negotiation between diverse parties operating on the basis of different goals and aiming to arrive at a decision that is mutually acceptable.

While Scannell contests the public sphere model from the perspective of 'ordinary' versus 'rational' consensus, scholars have also criticised the concept for underestimating the inevitability of conflict. Considering exclusion and antagonism as an integral and inescapable aspect of any political system, Mouffe argues that the achievement of consensus is always based on exclusions. As she puts it, 'the impediments to Habermas' ideal speech situation are not empirical but ontological. The rational consensus that he presents as a regulative idea is indeed a conceptual impossibility, since it would require the availability of a consensus without exclusion' (2005: 806). Instead, Mouffe proposes that, even within the same political association, there are conflicts that cannot be solved rationally since they derive from different identities whose survival depends on preserving the opposition between 'we' and 'they' (ibid: 805). Indeed, internal conflicts and factionalism are regularly occurring phenomena in social movements. According to Mouffe, this means that decision-making is often characterized by 'a real confrontation but one that is played out under conditions regulated by a set of democratic procedures accepted by the adversaries' (ibid).

Compared to the concept of the public sphere, studies from the field of information systems, management and organizational research seem to offer a more grounded view

of the use of technology in decision-making and its influence on organizing structures and hierarchies. Research within this line of enquiry seems to be moving towards the direction of 'soft-determinism' as in a recent review of the literature on email and organizations, Ducheneaut and Watts note a shift in the perception of email from a medium with specific, pre-defined properties to a malleable and flexible medium (2005: 30). This marks a decline in the popularity of theories such as the Media Richness or Information Richness Theory for explaining media choice within organizations. Therefore, while it was initially 'assumed that inherent properties of media lent themselves to certain kinds of organizational function and that the goal of research was to show which media went with which organizational tasks', attention is currently focused on 'the influence of organizational power, group perceptions, and social network relations on media adoption' (ibid). In this respect, the richness or leanness of media technologies is not considered as an inherent property but as a characteristic emerging from the medium's incorporation and interaction within a specific organizational context (Lee cited in Ducheneaut and Watts 2005: 31). It is this context and its organizational norms that regulate the social acts within the organization and shape the meaning of communication (Ducheneaut and Watts 2005: 31). Therefore, as individuals communicate over email 'they simultaneously enact existing and new relationships with one another' (ibid). As Ducheneaut and Watts argue, decision-making is always socially loaded and email is used to support this process by conveying authority, autonomy and accountability (ibid).

The potential of the internet to alter the traditional pyramidal relationships constitutes one of the main concerns in this field of enquiry. This stems from the observation that by allowing 'various strategic and political manipulations of information in organizations' (ibid: 33), the internet is capable of 'affecting the organization's structure in terms of power and control' (ibid). Information abundance is always threatening to authority. However, it is not only the quantity of information but also the change in its patterns of circulation that may prompt the dissolution of traditional boundaries. Fostering cross-functional and cross-organizational relationships, email permits individuals to acquire information that would be previously inaccessible. It also allows them to sustain informal relationships with a variety of individuals, broadening the process of socialization within the organization. This also 'reinforces the linkages between core and periphery in organizations' (ibid: 34), aiding low status individuals to gain more information and power. Email can also break down monopolies of expertise since it 'can support in-

groups without out-groups: Expertise in-groups can form via one-to-one computer mail but that expertise can be shared via all-group mail' (Finholt et al. cited in Ducheneaut and Watts 2005: 34)²⁸.

Organizational literature has also tackled the question of email and decision-making, albeit from a different angle than studies of political deliberation. In that respect, the possibility of 'status equalization' in online discussions is considered in terms of its potential to enhance innovation rather than democracy. Thus, for scholars in this line of enquiry, online discussions 'tend to produce more diverse opinions and better decisions' (Garton and Wellman 1993: abstract), as by obscuring markers of status, they allow individuals to be more uninhibited and non-conformist. However, in a meta-analysis of research comparing online to face-to-face decision making, Baltes et al. found that email is characterized by 'status equalization' and thus greater 'communication openness' only in conditions of anonymity and when the necessary steps are taken in order to protect the participants' identities (2002: 172).

Yet, it is exactly for the same reasons that misunderstandings seem to arise more easily on email. In that respect, '[e]-mail groups tend to be more polarized and are slower to develop leaders and reach consensus' (Ducheneaut and Watts 2005: 32). Nevertheless, such behaviour is not a regular occurrence within organizations and is shown to gradually 'decrease with time, group history, and anticipated future interaction' (Walther cited in Ducheneaut and Watts 2005: 32). This is because even when interaction takes place mainly online, individuals communicate within a specific organizational context that permeates and regulates their behaviour and responsibilities to one another (Ducheneaut and Watts 2005: 33).

Baltes et al. have further compared online and face-to-face decision making in relation to the effectiveness of the group, the time required to complete tasks, as well as member satisfaction with the process. Their meta-analysis showed that group effectiveness tends to decrease on email unless discussions are anonymous and there is unlimited time to complete tasks, conditions that are rarely met within organizational decision making (2002: 175). Instead, '[m]ore common is the situation in which time pressure is high and the individuals are selected for the decision making-group based on their expertise and thus their identities are quite salient to other members' (ibid). What is

²⁸ It is worth noting here that these results are also supported by an earlier review of such research undertaken by Garton and Wellman (1993).

more, anonymity is negatively associated with members' satisfaction with the decision-making process, as participants seemed to derive more satisfaction from face-to-face discussion (ibid: 174).

However, they also note that member satisfaction, group effectiveness and the time required to take decisions varies according to the degree of synchronization, as well as the extent to which different communication technologies are able to convey nonverbal and paraverbal cues (ibid). Face-to-face communication scores high on both those aspects, while 'chat', the focus of most of their reviewed studies, is moderate on both those dimensions. This seems to suggest that email, an application facilitating asynchronous communication with no paraverbal or nonverbal cues 'may be an even less effective method for reaching group decisions than chat' (ibid).

Nevertheless, the studies reviewed both by Baltes et al. and Ducheneaut and Watts assume a clear-cut distinction between online and face-to-face groups, disregarding the fact that interpersonal relationships tend to be constituted through a variety of media and forms of communication. Instead, and as Ducheneaut and Watts argue, '[i]t is very difficult to draw conclusions about communications shared between people who have no relationships outside the medium and then to apply these conclusions to those whose relationships span media and map onto identified, persistent, organizational roles' (2005: 32). In other words, such studies often tend to ignore the social and organizational context of online communication, as well as the ways in which communication norms and behaviours are shaped by past interactions (ibid: 35).

Orlikowski's work on technology and organizational change seems to be an exception to this rule. With Giddens' 'theory of structuration' as a point of departure, Orlikowski has focused on 'the situated micro-level changes that actors enact over time as they make sense of and act in the world' (1995: 40). For instance, in a case study of the introduction of a new software package within the Customer Services department of Zeta Corporation, Orlikowski showed how organizational transformations:

'were grounded in members' daily actions and interactions as they responded to the expected and unexpected outcomes, breakdowns, and opportunities that their technological sensemaking and appropriation afforded. While some of the changes were deliberate and intended, others were emergent and unanticipated' (ibid: 37).

Her perspective is therefore useful in understanding the mechanisms of ongoing, local and improvised organizational change and the role of technology within such mechanisms.

However, while studies from the field of the sociology of organizations can aid our understanding of the organizational structures of social movements, their conceptual frameworks cannot be readily applied within social movement research. This is because organizational theory tends to derive its results from case studies of large corporations, whose goals and roles within society are distinctly different from those of social movements. As Melucci argues:

'A social movement is an actor engaged in a conflict directly or indirectly affecting the distribution of power within a society. In this sense, movements are firmly committed to the building of their conflictual collective identities and cannot be simply defined by a system of roles and a network of exchanges. Moreover, they have to deal with the resistance, and often the repression, by adversaries possessing the monopoly over the instruments of social control' (1996: 314-15).

Therefore, the organizing structure of a social movement takes shape in very specific conditions that require it to be internally unified and integrated. At the same time, a social movement should successfully meet the challenges of its external environment and legitimize itself within society (ibid). Any attempt to use the conceptual frameworks developed within the sociology of organizations in social movement research should keep in mind the nature of social movements and adapt these frameworks accordingly. For instance, they should be combined with conceptualizations of participatory democracy, transparency and accountability, since these are central aspects of the internal workings of social movements that are not adequately theorized in organizational research.

The same can be said for the literature on virtual community. While communities are similar to social movements in terms of their orientation towards internal solidarity and shared values, they are nonetheless not constituted around a specific conflict and thus, for them, resistance to adversaries is not an imperative. Therefore, the application of 'community' concepts to social movement research should always take into account that for social movements internal solidarity is developed as a response to a broader societal struggle and as a tool that ensures the existence, survival, and success of a movement in the face of external challenges.

5. Methods

As noted in the Introduction, my doctorate research attempted to expand on my MA thesis which focused on the use of the web by three NGOs and three political parties in the UK. Convinced that social movements may display a more innovative use of new communication technologies, I decided to extend my research to the 'movement for alternative globalization' whose main characteristics were thought to be influenced by its use of the internet. However, and as I will try to explain in this chapter, designing and conducting my research presented several methodological problems that called for constant revisions of its methods and conceptualization. Most of these problems originated from the difficulty to capture the impact of such a flexible, fluid and mutable communication medium as the Internet on an equally flexible, fluid and mutable social movement such as the 'movement for alternative globalization'.

5.1. Induction and Reflexivity

As it became evident from my literature review, the role of communication technologies in the internal processes of social movements has been scarcely researched and theorized. Taking into account that many of the key sources referred to in the literature review were published from 2003 onwards, it is obvious that during the first year of my research (2002-2003), a time devoted entirely to reading and becoming acquainted with the literature, there was little available that could provide a solid theoretical basis for a deductive methodology. Therefore, my approach to the subject was necessarily inductive, attempting to generate theory rather than test an existing one. However, this is not to say that theory was not important for my research, since the distinction between inductive and deductive research is not very clear-cut. As Glaser argues, '[t]he whole notion of inductive vs deductive studies is an over simplification of [...] very complex thinking patterns' (1998: 43) since an inductive approach always contains some deduction and vice versa.

Yet, it is not only the distinction between induction and deduction that may be problematic, but also the epistemological premises on which they are based. This is because they are both built on the assumption 'that we can derive theories of the social world independent of our preconceptions or values' since they adhere 'to a particularly

limited idea of scientific method' (May 2001: 34). This is particularly the case for inductive studies whereby the absence of a theoretical framework prior to the fieldwork 'means that our presuppositions about social life remain more hidden' (ibid: 31). Reflexivity constitutes an antidote to this situation as it allows the researcher to reflect on her/his position within the social milieu in which her/his research is embedded. According to Delanty and Strydom, reflexivity 'suggests self-implication or the application of something to itself, and thus in social scientific methodology it indicates an epistemological position in which the researcher questions his/her own role in the research process' (2003: 370). In more concrete terms, reflexivity entails 'a consideration of the practice of research, our place within it and the construction of our fields of enquiry themselves' (May 2001: 44). Reflexivity is thus a continuous practice that underlies all the stages of the research from its initial conception to the writing-up and dissemination of the results¹.

It is in the spirit of self-reflexivity that I decided to structure this chapter in a chronological order, tracing the way in which my study developed, along with the conception of what it was about and the methods that were being employed. I believe that this is a more accurate and honest depiction of the research process, particularly for an inductive and explorative study as my own.

5.2. Initial Steps

As already mentioned, when I started my PhD research, published sources on my subject were in short supply. There were, however, a few unpublished working papers floating in the web that proved instrumental for the initial conceptualization of my study². Based mainly on individual assumptions, descriptive case studies or purely theoretical work, these papers were suggesting that the structure, scale, and pluralism of the 'alter-globalization movement' were influenced and afforded by the use of new communication technologies. What also seemed to be the unifying theme in almost all of this literature was the use of the network metaphor to bind the 'alter-globalization movement' and the internet into the same theoretical argument, as it seemed to be 'no coincidence that both

¹ It is worth noting here that in my own study the practice of keeping a research diary helped me to reflect on the goals and findings of my research, to record any thoughts or changes of perception deriving from my reading or fieldwork and to identify the assumptions and limitations of my approach. The formal documents that I had to produce for my registration and transfer process, as well as a number of written reports for my supervisor, further aided this process of reflecting, clarifying and documenting my project.

² Most of these papers later found their way to publication almost untouched – two of them as chapters in the edited book 'Cyberprotest: New media, citizens, and social movements' (van de Donk et al. 2004).

can be labelled as a “network of networks” (van Aelst 2004: 121). While I found these claims thought-provoking and inspiring, I also felt that they should be made with caution since the internet and the movement appeared to have so much in common that patterning the one onto the other could be deceptively easy.

Based on this literature, the initial aims and objectives of my study were, first, to understand how this movement operated as a ‘network of networks’ and, second, to gauge the ways in which the internet affected its scale, pluralist ideology, and organizing structure. My research strategy for answering these questions was an expanded version of the one I had employed in my Master's thesis. More concretely, I was planning to do in-depth interviews with the campaigners and web coordinators of a representative sample of organizations involved in the movement. I was also going to undertake a content analysis of the websites of the selected organizations, paying particular attention to their hyperlinks.

5.3. Network Theories

The remainder of my first year was spent in pursuit of theory that could help me develop a clearer understanding of the internet and the ‘alter-globalization’ movement as ‘networks of networks’ and a better conceptualization of the relationship between the internal workings of social movements and their use of communication media. However, as regards to the latter goal, my scan of the relevant social movements’ literature did not yield many helpful suggestions. As I have pointed out in my literature review, while many of the studies that I have looked at implicitly recognized the role of communication in the formation of the organizing structure or collective identity of a social movement, they nonetheless failed to provide a clear conceptualization of this relationship.

My investigation of the networks’ concept, on the other hand, revealed a wealth of research spanning disparate academic fields, from studies in national policy and foreign affairs to biology and physics. Evidenced by the proliferation of books and journals on the subject, network thinking and complexity theories possibly represent a paradigm shift in the way we perceive how living beings, from organisms to corporations, are structured³. As outlined in my literature review, network thinking is also at the core of a quite influential strand of social movement research that is employing the tools of social

³ Recent sociological work, for instance, has attempted to translate complexity theories from the field of evolutionary biology into ways of thinking about society, business or globalization (see for instance Axelrod and Cohen 2000; Urry 2002).

networks research, graphs and mathematics, to depict and understand social movements as 'networks of informal interactions' (Diani 1992: 13). In addition, social networks analysis is increasingly used to study the hyperlinks of websites, producing a visualization of the network in which the website belongs to.

However, again, the role of communication media was not explicitly theorized within this strand, while its preferred methods further dissuaded me from adopting it as a general approach to my subject. What I also found perplexing was the tendency of such studies to conflate the notion of 'network' as a form of organization with networks analysis as a research tool. In other words, while in social network analysis networks may range from hierarchical to horizontal depending on the ties between their members, in other disciplines the word 'network' is used to connote a horizontal and lateral structure.

Hence, lacking an integrated theoretical framework and even a common definition of the term 'network', network thinking could not offer a solid theoretical basis for designing my research. Still, its underlying philosophy proved quite influential for the conception of my study as writings on complexity and actor-network theory seemed to provide some useful pointers for perceiving the structure and identity of a social movement. In this respect, what all of these writings have in common is their recognition that order is not created solely through top-down design, but also through the unplanned local interactions of multiple agents. The outlook of such theories is explicitly anti-reductionist and anti-essentialist, insisting that 'things are not reducible to the sum of their parts' (Byrne 1998: 14). Instead, the notions of power, role or character are understood in relational terms, assuming that it is the position of an actor within a web of relationships that determines its major characteristics. Thus, the focus of such theories lies in relations, interactions and links. This means that notions such as organizing structure and collective identity can be conceptualized in relational terms, in terms of the relations between different actors and of the communication between them. In addition, they can be perceived as verbs and not as nouns, as fluid processes and not as easily determinable outcomes, a conceptualization which recognizes their dynamic and mutable nature (Law 1992: n.p.). This puts an emphasis on communication and media, as they can deeply affect the relationships between the actors of a network. Hence, network and complexity theories can be very interesting for media scholars, as they seem to assign communication and interaction to a central position.

Such theories also propose a different conceptualization of the micro and the macro, of the global and the local. In that respect, the global is conceptualized not as universal or overarching but as a pattern of interactions, as an entity of connected local actors. As Byrne argues, complexity theory 'provides a way of relating the macro and the micro which is not inherently aggregative and reductionist' (1998: 35). Instead, network and complexity theories focus equally on the everyday and its underlying structures and can thus constitute a bridge between theories concerned with how everyday experiences and practices render the world ordinary and comprehensible and those that are preoccupied with the structures and power relations affecting the everyday.

It is notable here that the circular relationship between everyday experience and social structure is a view that also characterizes the soft-determinist approach to new media. In this respect, and as I explained in the literature review, the strong language of impacts and effects has given way to the more nuanced term of 'communicative affordances' that seems to avoid the pitfalls of both social constructivism and technological determinism. Further reading of social movement theory also uncovered certain theorists that shared this dynamic and processual view of collective identity and scale. For instance, and as it was noted in my literature review, Melucci has preferred to use the term 'identization' instead of collective identity since it more accurately conveys the open-ended character of collective identity construction. The term 'scale shifting' developed by Tarrow and McAdam is also indicative of this tendency.

Therefore, even though network and complexity theories did not supply a clear operationalization for my research, they nonetheless helped me to perceive structure and collective identity as processes and not as outcomes and to orient me towards literature sources sharing this view. This change of perception was inevitably reflected in the aims and objectives of my study. Hence, I was no longer interested in understanding how and to what extent the internet affected the organizing structure, scale or collective identity of the movement but in exploring its role in the processes with which the movement was forming an organizing structure, negotiating a collective identity and shifting in scale.

5.4. Case Study Research

Moving into the fieldwork stage, my first step was to become familiar with the internal workings of the movement in Europe and of the actors involved in it. To this end, I subscribed to the email list of the European Social Forum and started to follow some of

the face-to-face meetings of British organizations involved in the movement. I also attended the ESF in Paris in November 2003, where I conducted a preliminary survey examining the use of communication media in the process of mobilization. I then settled on a proposed sample of British and Greek organizations from diverse political cultures that would also allow me to compare the movement's use of the internet in two countries with different patterns of internet access.

However, as I started to become better acquainted with the operation of the movement, I also began to question the representativeness of my sample. This is because the 'alter-globalization' movement tends to operate as a process through which different actors (organizations, groups and even individual activists) are brought together to co-operate, network and co-ordinate some common actions. This means that membership in the movement is not stable or fixed nor is it formally understood. There is no exhaustive list of the groups or organizations involved in the movement and even if there was, such a list would quickly become obsolete, as the movement is always in a state of flux, with existing actors withdrawing in order to focus on their specific campaigns and interests while new actors take their place. This also means that determining which actors are involved in the movement depends on the specific campaign, demonstration or event one is examining. Therefore, the fluid membership of the 'alter-globalization movement', as well as the changing composition of its participants were seriously undermining any attempts to decide on a representative sample.

My growing experience in the field also suggested that taking the 'organization' as a unit of analysis would be a potentially deceptive operationalization of my research questions. First of all, organizations were involved in the movement through their delegates or representatives. This meant that while the delegate or representative was knowledgeable about the internal processes of the movement, this knowledge was not necessarily shared by other members of the organization or reflected on its website⁴. Secondly, my observation of face-to-face gatherings made me realize that apart from representatives of organizations, the meetings were also attracting activists participating

⁴ This became apparent at the outset of the in-depth interview process which began with the World Development Movement, a relatively small NGO based in London and quite active in Global Social Justice debates and the World Social Forum. Following my initial research strategy, I interviewed the WDM web coordinator, as well as its press officer, the person who represented WDM both on the email lists and the various British meetings. But while the press officer was perfectly knowledgeable about the movement and WDM's involvement in it, the web coordinator was not at all informed. This was reflected on the organization's website which at the time made little reference to the 'alter-globalization movement'.

on their personal capacity, as well as delegates of more informal structures. In addition, many activists were linked with a variety of organizations, making it impossible to associate them with a specific group or even ideological position. The difficulty of studying the internal processes of such an inherently chaotic and mutable actor as a social movement was suddenly becoming very apparent.

To resolve these problems, I decided to focus my research on the European Social Forum which constitutes one of the most significant annual events for the European part of the movement. As I explained in the literature review, the ESF acts as a space to bring different actors, organizations and individuals together to discuss about the state of the world, to network and to form useful relationships. In other words, it is an event which helps this movement to define itself and what it is for, to attract new participants and also to identify, loosely and informally, its 'membership'. Compared to other campaigns, demonstrations or events organized by the movement, the ESF encompasses a wider range of actors, since it is not dedicated to a specific issue. It is also exceptional in its conceptualization of organizing and democratic procedures, which are considered to be exemplary of this movement's belief in horizontality and leaderless resistance.

Adopting a specific case study thus rendered my research more coherent and well-defined. It helped me to clearly identify a sample of actors to be interviewed and to explore in a more holistic way some of the organizing practices and collective identity exchanges of the movement and the role of the internet within such processes. My decision to focus on the ESF organizing process was also aided by the fact that the next ESF was going to be held in London in October 2004 and thus predominantly organized by British groups and organizations. This provided an excellent opportunity for me to be involved in this process, to gain an insight in its organizing mechanisms, and to make contacts for interviews.

In more general terms, the research strategy of the case study also seemed to fit the underlying conception of my research, as well as its inductive character. This is because case studies perceive social actions, events and processes as embedded in a specific social context (Snow and Trom 2002: 149) since they involve the analysis of a 'cultural system of action'. This signifies a set 'of interrelated activities and routines engaged in by one or more networks of actors within a social context that is bounded in time and space' (Snow and Anderson quoted in *ibid*). Thus, the case study aims to produce rich, detailed and holistic understandings of these 'cultural systems of action', illuminating how the

focal actions 'are produced and reproduced or changed by examining their ongoing interactions with other elements within the particular context' (Snow and Anderson quoted in *ibid*: 150). This approach requires researchers to '*immerse* themselves in their data and emergently *induct* sociological propositions' (Lofland 1996: 63, emphasis in original) and is thus appropriate for research subjects lacking a pre-existing theoretical framework.

5.5. Choice of Methods and Triangulation

The selection of methods evolved as a result of my immersion in the field and of the opportunities and limitations of the data gathering process. This is a common feature of the case study approach which tends 'to start with broad questions or understandings that get more fine-tuned as the research progresses' (Snow and Anderson quoted in Snow and Trom: 153). In fact, Lofland advises researchers to first collect as much data as possible on the selected case and then formulate specific questions (cited in *ibid*: 152). Therefore, case study research should be open-ended and flexible, ready 'to adapt the methodology to the exigencies in the field, that is to new data sources and data-gathering opportunities as they arise' (Snow and Trom: 153).

It was my intention from the outset to employ more than one research method and, if possible, triangulate, hoping that the advantages of one method would counterweight the limitations of the other (Sudweeks and Simoff 1999: 37). The use of multiple methods is a recommended strategy both for studying new media and for investigating social movements. For instance, Williams et al. 'propose that the new media researcher should consider alternative methods, or even multiple methods, and [...] attempt a triangulation of methods' (quoted in Jones 1999: 25), while Klandermans and Staggenborg 'encourage students of social movements to approach their research questions from various angles and to employ multiple methods' (2002: xv). Triangulation also constitutes a defining aspect of the case study, whose 'multiperspectival orientation' attempts 'to access, secure and link together analytically the perspectives or voices of the range of relevant actors' (Snow and Trom 2002: 155). Further considerations that informed my choice of methods concerned, first of all, the value of combining qualitative with more quantitative techniques. In addition, keeping in mind that social relations are constituted through a variety of media and modes of communication, my selection of methods also

aimed to combine a focus on online processes with an understanding of their offline context⁵.

With these considerations in mind, my inquiry into the subject started with a preliminary survey of participants in the European Social Forum held in Paris in November 2003. The aim of the survey was to discover the extent to which the internet was used in the process of mobilization for the Paris ESF in comparison with other media and modes of communication. In that respect, the survey suggested that movement participants were engaging in a combination of face-to-face and internet communication in order to obtain information about the ESF. It thus seemed to confirm the need to research the use of new communication technologies in conjunction with other modes of communication, and particularly face-to-face.

Keeping in mind the results emerging from my preliminary analysis, I then focused my attention on the organizing process of the next ESF in London. My aim was to explore the role of the internet within the organizing process of the ESF, as well as the collective identity negotiations that were surrounding this process. The relationship between the internet and the scale of the movement was still a major concern of my study, but in the course of my research it started to become sidelined by the two other aims. I thus decided to conduct in-depth interviews with the activists involved in the organizing process of the ESF, a method that suited the inductive and exploratory character of my research. In that respect, in-depth interviewing is very useful in studies 'where the goals are exploration, discovery, and interpretation of complex social events and processes' (Blee and Taylor 2002: 93), since it permits the emergence of themes and meanings that were not anticipated by the researcher. It is also 'particularly helpful for understanding little-studied aspects of social movement dynamics and for studying social movements that are difficult to locate, generate few documents, or have unclear or changing memberships' (ibid: 94). The qualitative and open-ended nature of in-depth

⁵ It is worth noting here that the choice of methods was not particularly constrained by the fields in which my research was situated. In that respect, both social movements' research and internet studies are quite open to the import and development of different methods, a feature that probably derives from their newness as fields of inquiry. Emerging in the 1960s, the success of social movements' theory is often attributed to 'the rich variety of methods employed in the endeavour of developing theory with empirical evidence' (Klandermans and Staggenborg 2002: xiii), while avoiding 'methodological dogmatism' (ibid: xii). Similarly, dealing with a new object of study, internet researchers have had to plunder pre-existing research for methodological ideas, deciding whether any of these methods could be used or adapted to the study of the internet (Wakeford 2001: 31). I therefore felt quite free to adapt existing methods, such as content analysis, to the needs of my study. In fact, the scarcity of research on the subject rendered this resourcefulness and experimentation an absolute necessity.

interviewing can provide a better insight into the cultural understandings of the internet and the perceptions of its advantages and disadvantages for political organizing, discussion, and decision-making. This is because interviews make 'it possible to scrutinize the semantic *context* of statements' (ibid: 95) and to form a better understanding of their meaning. It is also for the same reasons that interviews are better suited for illuminating 'the construction of collective and individual identities' (ibid), as well as the emotional aspects of solidarity, trust and commitment.

To complement the interview process, I attended all of the major organizing meetings in the UK and the rest of Europe and subscribed to most of the ESF email lists. I also collected and studied the documents, statements, and minutes generated by the ESF organizing process both online and offline. This allowed me to gain a more in-depth understanding of the internal workings of the movement and to witness the online and offline context of my interviewees and the events that they were referring to (May 2002: 144). I was thus able to fill in the blanks of the in-depth interviews and to form more confident interpretations of the interview data. Participating as an observer in the various meetings and email lists also aided the process of contacting people for interviews, as well as selecting the sample of interviewees.

As the in-depth interviews were progressing and with two thirds of them already conducted, I felt that in order to paint a more complete picture of the use of the internet, I needed to combine the opinions and understandings expressed in the interviews with an analysis of what was actually happening in the online spaces of the movement. As mentioned earlier, I was initially planning to do a content analysis of the websites of a representative sample of organizations. However, my participant observation in the ESF process suggested that email lists were used much more extensively than the web for internal organizing. This can be attributed not only to the communicative affordances of this application, which allows a greater degree of interaction, but also to the problematic development of the London ESF website which hindered its use for organizing. Thus, I decided to conduct a content analysis of three different ESF email lists, aiming to explore the ways in which they were involved in the process of organizing and collective identity formation.

It is worth noting here that even though the employment of multiple methods constitutes a recommended research strategy, synthesizing the data collected through different methods can be quite challenging. In that respect, the researcher should be

conscious of the level of analysis that each method focuses on, as well as of the type of data that it generates. Therefore, my preliminary survey concentrated on the individual level, examining the range of media used by individuals in the process of mobilizing for the Paris ESF. While respondents to my survey questionnaire varied in their experience and degree of identification with the movement, as well as the extent of their involvement in the ESF and its organizing process, the rest of my research focused on actors more explicitly involved in the internal workings of the ESF. In-depth interviews examined the opinions and understandings of individual activists, some of them representing the organizations they belonged to, others speaking on their personal capacity. Participant observation, document analysis, and the content analysis of email lists all focused on the exchanges between the actors involved in the movement and the role of media within the processes of organizing and collective identity formation. In what follows, I will explain in greater detail the design, execution, and analysis of each of the employed methods.

5.6. Preliminary Survey

5.6.1. Design and Piloting

The survey questionnaire was designed to be easily filled on the spot by respondents of different nationalities and with varying degrees of familiarity with English. I thus opted for a short questionnaire with closed, factual questions, worded as simply as possible. Following the suggestion of my supervisor, I decided to distinguish between four mobilization contexts: political and/or voluntary organizations, friends and/or relatives, workplace and/or university, and the mass media. I then asked my respondents to select which from a range of media were used in each mobilization context in order to obtain information about the ESF and to organize attendance. The questions concerning the demographic characteristics of the sample were taken from the American version of an international survey on the anti-war movement, conducted by a group of universities from different countries. (Bennett and Walgrave n.d.: n.p.). According to Hansen, building a questionnaire based on prior research constitutes a 'way of ensuring that the questions "make sense"' (1998: 247). However, the questions concerning the media used in each mobilization context were entirely of my own design.

I piloted the questionnaire at the event, distributing it to a sub-sample of twenty participants and asking their opinions on the wording and order of the questions. The

comments I received in the piloting stage led me to remove one of the demographic questions, the one regarding race, which was perceived as offensive by some French respondents. I also clarified the question concerning mobilization through organizations by adding a parenthesis explaining the types of organizations that should be considered when answering this question. For the final version of the questionnaire, see Appendix I.

5.6.2. Sampling

I distributed 300 questionnaires in the coffee shops and streets where the Paris 2003 ESF was taking place and received 257 questionnaires on the spot. However, with the ESF unfolding in four different locations across Paris and attended by reportedly 40,000 participants, it was difficult for a sole researcher to obtain a random sample. A scan of the relevant literature showed that attaining a random sample in such events is quite problematic even for surveys undertaken by groups of researchers. For instance, this was the case in a survey examining the mobilization for an 'alter-globalization' rally held in Washington in 2001 which was unable to generate a sampling frame or obtain a random sample since the rally was dispersed in different locations (Adler 2004: 196)⁶.

To date, the only published survey concerning the ESF is the one undertaken in Florence in November 2002 by a group of Italian universities. The researchers selected a number of seminars, workshops, and plenary meetings according to the nationality and the type of the proponent organization (e.g. environmental, religion-based etc.) (della Porta and Mosca 2005: 167). Interviewers then randomly distributed a semi-structured questionnaire to participants attending the selected seminars and workshops, with the final sample reaching 2,581 respondents from different countries (ibid: 168). Yet, for events of the size of the ESF such a sampling strategy can be only carried out by groups of researchers.

I would therefore argue that in an event like the ESF, it is impossible for a sole researcher to obtain a random or representative sample. However, 257 questionnaires is

⁶ It is worth noting here that such problems were claimed to have been overcome in an international survey of the anti-war demonstrators on 15 February 2003. In this survey, 'fieldwork supervisors counted the rows of participants, selecting every Nth row, to ensure that the same number of rows was skipped throughout. Then a dozen interviewers selected every Nth person in that row and distributed questionnaires to these individuals during the actual protest march' (Walgrave and Verhulst quoted in Bennett, Givens and Willnat 2004: 11). Participants were asked to post back their completed surveys and the overall response rate was 51% (ibid). But even though this is probably as close to a random sample as one could attain in this type of event, the final sample is still composed by the participants willing to respond to the survey. In addition, demonstrations are rarely as well-ordered as parades, so counting rows and then the number of participants in each row appears to be a very difficult, almost impossible, task.

still a sizeable sample that enabled me to glean some interesting patterns concerning the use of the media during the ESF mobilization. It is worth noting that the demographic characteristics of my sample seem to match those of the Florence survey, even though the published results refer to the Italian participants in that ESF (della Porta 2005b: 182). Unfortunately, there are currently no published results of a similar survey undertaken in the 2003 Paris ESF that would provide a much more accurate basis of comparison.

5.6.3. Analysis

I entered the data in SPSS, assigning a unique case number to each questionnaire and coding the variables in numerical form. The statistical analysis was simple and straightforward, generating the frequencies of each category and examining their overlaps through cross-tabulations. I also created some aggregate variables in order to compare respondents who have used an internet application versus those who have not, as well as those who have used interpersonal/intra-group modes of communication versus those who relied on impersonal/mass media. The results of the preliminary survey are reported in Chapter 6.

5.6.4. Limitations

Even though modest in its aspirations, this survey was original in its examination of media use by informal recruitment networks, such as friends and relatives, which is rarely an issue in social movement research.

However, this survey has limited generalizability since it is based on a convenience and not random sample. In addition, the distinction between the four mobilization contexts is not as clear cut as the survey questionnaire seems to suggest. For instance, a respondent may have been mobilized by friends who are also university colleagues. What is more, the questionnaire cannot account for the diverse flows of communication that take place in a process of mobilization. In that respect, an individual may have been both a target and an instigator of mobilization attempts, an issue that was not addressed in the survey. However, I would argue that this is largely due to the limitations of the method itself, rather than the design of the questionnaire since survey questionnaires are not well-suited to capturing the complexities of social interactions (Klandermans and Smith 1998: 27).

5.7. In-depth Interviews

5.7.1. Access and the Interviewer/Interviewee Relationship

Gaining access to the groups and processes under study is often mentioned as one of the main challenges in participant observation and in-depth interviews (Lichterman 2002: 125). This was not however true in my case, where the inclusive character of the 'alter-globalization movement' meant that meetings were open to everyone willing to attend. The email lists of the movement were also publicly accessible and anyone could subscribe to them⁷. The open character of the movement extends to a tolerant, even appreciative, attitude towards researchers. Owing perhaps to the more 'self-reflective' nature of current activism (Melucci 1996: 331) or to the growing recognition of the importance of information, 'alter-globalization' participants are quite comfortable with having researchers attending their meetings⁸. The establishment of the working group on 'Memory and Systematization' in June 2004, a group dedicated to the systematization of the information emerging from the ESF process and composed almost entirely by researchers and technologically adept activists, testifies to this phenomenon.

Therefore, even though I did not have any contact with movement participants prior to my research, my status in the group was not that of the 'outsider', since the norm of inclusiveness governing this movement did not permit for anyone to be treated as such. However, I was not an insider either, even though my involvement gradually increased to the point of becoming a member of the aforementioned group on 'Memory and Systematization'. Yet, the group I chose to participate in was not directly implicated in the organizing of the London forum. What is more, my participation in this group benefited my research since it brought me in contact with other researchers interested in the movement and provided me with a better understanding of the information generated by the ESF process. Although at times difficult to manage, this insider/outsider status aided me in developing trust and rapport with my interviewees without hindering my ability to challenge their underlying assumptions and recognize the beliefs that were taken for granted (Blee and Taylor 2002: 97).

⁷ As I will show in Chapter 9, there are indeed hidden barriers to participation which include the time and cost of attending meetings, as well as the ways of obtaining information about them that often depend on the activists' involvement in informal networks.

⁸ It is worth noting here that some of the activists are also involved in academia which increases their tolerance towards research.

Yet, in order for this status to work without compromising my research, I needed to be continuously self-reflexive and honest in my intentions. The practice of keeping a research diary, as well as my contact with other people studying the movement helped me to sharpen my awareness about my own biases. And with the movement being appreciative of researchers, I did not find it challenging to be truthful from the beginning about my research intentions. In this sense, I agree with Lichterman that '[r]arely can covert research be justified ethically' (2002: 125). Instead, the relationship between observer and observed, interviewer and interviewee can be perceived as 'an arena of responsibility' (Melucci 1996: 396) and as being contractual in nature. At the heart of this contract lies 'the assumption that analysts and "actors" are mutually and irreducibly different social actors and that they must reach an agreement on the relationship' (ibid: 390). In that respect, what makes the exchange possible is the temporary convergence of '[t]wo interests – the researcher's interest in gathering information, the actor's interest in increasing her/his capacity for action' (ibid: 391-2) by achieving a greater transparency of their ideas and interests. This does not mean, however, that the researcher should play 'the role of *deus ex machina*, providing the actors with a consciousness which they are apparently not able to produce for themselves' (ibid: 388, emphasis in original). Instead, the researcher should recognize that actors have the capacity to generate meaning from their actions and that they have already done so before s/he arrived on the scene. In this sense, research 'involves the *interpretation* of social settings, events or processes by taking account of the meanings which people have already given to those settings or processes' (May 2002: 38, emphasis added). Particularly within an interview situation, this signifies that '[w]hat the informant believes is indeed a *fact* (that is, the *fact* that he or she believes it) just as much as what "really" happened' (Thompson quoted in Blee and Taylor 2002: 95, emphasis in original).

Indeed, most of my interviewees seemed to relish the opportunity to air their views and to be engaged in a self-reflexive process where they could ponder on their motivations, identities and experiences in the movement. As I will explain in greater detail in Chapter 7, the London ESF process was plagued by an intense conflict between two camps which became known as the 'Horizontals' and the 'Verticals'. Public assemblies often degenerated into a slanging match between the two sides and the tension was palpable throughout the organizing year of the London ESF. Although very frustrating, this conflict nonetheless forced activists to be more aware of their opinions and

perceptions of the ESF process and of their place within it. The interviews thus offered activists a space for calm reflection away from the conflict of the ESF, a space where they could present their opinions to someone who was willing to listen rather than dispute. I think that this partly accounts for the often surprising degree of self-reflexivity characterizing my interview data. It is also worth noting here that nearly a quarter of my interviewees were involved in academia, either as researchers and PhD students or as lecturers and professors. They could thus more easily understand the process of research and engage more comfortably in a self-reflective interview.

Securing the necessary trust and rapport was also facilitated by my personal characteristics and activist past. In that respect, my status as a foreigner to British politics, hinted at by my Greek nationality and accent, made it impossible for my interviewees to associate me with a specific British group or faction. Nevertheless, my activist past in Athens, consisting of my participation in Greenpeace and Amnesty International, served as proof of my activist credentials, thus assuring my interviewees that my interest in the movement was genuine. In addition, being a young woman interviewing activists either in the same age as me or older and with two thirds of them being men rendered my position as a 'listener' much more natural since 'men tend to dominate discussions' (May 2002: 136). Most importantly, my status as a novice in British politics led many of my interviewees to provide detailed accounts of the British context and the place of the ESF within it and to talk more freely about the different groups involved in it.

However, the management of my field relationships was not without its problems as in a process fraught with conflict it was often difficult to maintain a neutral position. According to Blee and Taylor, '[o]ne way to handle situations where complete neutrality is not possible is for the researcher to align with a single faction or group and be open about being "on your group's side" in any conflicts' (2002: 98). Yet, I felt that such a strategy would place me into a cycle of conflict and frustration that would compromise my analytic abilities as a researcher. In addition, although I sympathized more with the 'Horizontals', I was not entirely on their side. In that respect, I often found myself siding more with the NGOs who were, like me, leaning more towards the 'Horizontals' but avoiding to be entirely consumed by the conflict. Thus, my strategy for dealing with this situation was to be honest about my opinions, but air them only when asked. Of course this did not necessarily resolve some petty, but nonetheless crucial, questions, such as

'where should I sit in a public assembly meeting?' or 'who do I go out to the pub with after a meeting?'. In that respect, I chose to align myself more clearly with the Greek delegation and later on with the group on 'Memory and Systematization' and to be seated with them in most of the meetings. This helped me to maintain some distance, both physical and mental, from the 'Horizontal' and 'Vertical' camps, and to temper my sympathies for the 'Horizontal' side.

What is more, my interaction with my supervisor, an old member and ex-organiser of the SWP, further aided me to critically reflect on my biases and to keep my 'Horizontal' inclination in check. Our conversations provided valuable insights into the culture of organizing of the SWP and of their point-of-view in the process. The name of my supervisor also helped in the recruitment of SWP members for interviews, since it acted as a sort of guarantee that their opinions would not be misrepresented or unfairly criticized.

5.7.2. Interview Sample

As is often the case in open-ended interviews, my sample was chosen in a deliberate rather than random way (Blee and Taylor 2002: 100). My sampling frame consisted of activists participating in the organizing process of the London ESF. In that respect, participation in the process meant attendance in more than one of the European or British organizing meetings. Participants could also belong to one or more of the ESF working groups, even though active participation in the group was not a prerequisite for their inclusion in the sampling frame.

The sampling process of open-ended interviews is rarely governed by representativeness (ibid). Instead, 'individuals are selected because they have particular experiences in social movements [...] rather than because their experiences are representative of the larger population' (ibid). In that respect, my criteria of sample selection involved my interviewees' positions within factions of the movement, their political background, their roles in the ESF organizing process, as well as their country of residence⁹, age and gender.

As Blee and Taylor argue, within open-ended interviewing '[s]ampling may proceed in stages as a researcher's increasing insight into the group or activist network under study

⁹ Country of residence was more important than nationality since I was interested more in my interviewees' embeddedness in a particular political context rather than their country of origin.

raises new questions and requires additional or different types of respondents' (ibid: 100). Therefore, my sampling was initially guided by the principle of diversity, aiming to garner the opinions of as diverse participants as possible. However, after the first interviews and as I increasingly gained an insider's knowledge of the movement, my sampling choices started to be influenced by the emergent patterns and understandings of the study. In that stage, belonging to a particular faction, i.e. the 'Horizontalists' or the 'Verticals', was strengthened as a sampling criterion since my interviewees' attitudes towards communication technologies seemed to be influenced by their political backgrounds and factional belongings. In addition, the interviewees' role within the process was further affecting their insights into the role of the internet in the organizing of the forum. I therefore became particularly interested in recording the opinions of the activists involved in the management of the ESF websites and email lists, as well as those who were members of working-groups or the coordinating committee¹⁰. Therefore, in later stages of the study my sampling choices were dictated by the principle of 'similarity and dissimilarity', with interviewees 'chosen to see how the interpretations or accounts of similarly situated respondents compare, as well as to ascertain how those respondents with very different characteristics or in different circumstances differ' (ibid).

In that respect, my first interview was with the press officer of the World Development Movement, a small British NGO that was quite active within the World Social Forum. I then approached two important members of the Greek delegation to the ESF meetings, Natasa Theodwrakopoulou and Panayotis Yulis. This was still in the beginning of the interview process, when I was aiming to compare British and Greek organizations in terms of their use of the internet. The two Greek activists came from different political backgrounds, one from a left-wing political party, Synaspismos, and the other from a radical autonomist network. I then turned to Globalise Resistance, for many a front organization of the SWP, which was one of the major actors within the British process. I first interviewed Guy Taylor, who was the only employee of Globalise Resistance at the time of the interview, and then approached Chris Nineham, one of the most prominent 'Verticals' and one of the people who instigated the London bid. It is worth noting that

¹⁰ On the other hand, the participants' age or gender was, perhaps surprisingly, less important. There is obviously a degree of overlap between the different categories. For instance, activists who were more adept with new technologies may have been relatively younger. However, what determined more their opinions was not their age, but their degree of technological knowledge and concurrently their socialization within a specific culture of 'open-source' or 'cyber-autonomy'.

both Chris Nineham and Guy Taylor were members of the SWP. I also made sure to record the views of one of the most influential trade unionists in the process, Alex Gordon from RMT, as well as the chair of CND, Kate Hudson, whose role was instrumental in the ESF office and in practical organizational work. Alex Callinicos, from SWP and Project K was also an obvious choice, since his academic background meant that he could easily provide a more philosophical and theoretical take on the subject. On the 'Horizontal' side, I first approached Massimo d'Angelis, also an academic and a person who could provide a theoretically informed view from the opposite side of the spectrum to Alex Callinicos'. I also made sure I interviewed Stuart Hodgkinson, who was responsible for setting up the democratisESF list, as well as Javier Ruiz, a Spanish Indymedia activist living in London who was also quite involved in the ESF website. Oscar Reyes, from Red Pepper, was another prominent 'Horizontal', whose familiarity with new communication technologies could offer important insights into their use in the ESF preparatory process. Helena Kotkowska from ATTAC Britain, Hannah Griffiths from Friends of the Earth, Tina Becker from the Communist Party of Great Britain were also selected not only because of their strong involvement in the process, but also because of their different political backgrounds which placed them closer to the 'Horizontals' but not entirely aligned with them. In terms of non-British based activists, I made sure that I included people who were influential in their national delegations. Marco Berlinguer and Pierro Bernochi from the Italian coordination played a key role in the ESF process, while Simo Endre from Hungary provided a point-of-view from a more marginal country within the ESF. The sample also included certain activists who were engaged in developing the necessary technologies for the ESF. It is worth noting here that only one activist declined my request for an interview due to lack of time, while another two initially accepted but then dodged my calls and emails. For a complete list of my interviewees, see Appendix II.

The overarching aim of my sampling process, and one I think that I have achieved, was to reach completeness. In that respect, my final interviews showed that the topic was saturated as new interviewees were providing 'the same kinds of narratives and interpretations' (ibid) as the previous ones.

5.7.3. Interview Design

My first interviews were semi-structured, loosely following an interview guide, but allowing my interviewees to elaborate on certain points or to bring a new idea into the discussion. In that stage, I had constructed two interview guides, one for activists participating in the process on their personal capacity and another for those acting as representatives of organizations. While both of them focused on the interviewee's use and perceptions of the internet, the latter guide also included some questions concerning the use of the internet by her/his organization (see Appendix III for the two interview guides). I would then tailor the guide prior to each interview according to the characteristics of the interviewee or the organization s/he was representing. However, the guide itself was not very detailed, constituting a list of topics rather than an actual questionnaire. As my fieldwork was progressing, the guide was enriched with questions relating to the themes and patterns emerging from the previous interviews. Yet at this point, and as I was becoming more confident and skilled in letting the discussion develop naturally, I started not to have the guide in front of me during the interview, but just consult it prior to the meeting. I believe that this gave the interview process a more informal air, helping my interviewees feel more at ease in expressing their opinions. There were still some general areas or specific questions that I always made sure to address, but the time I dropped them in the conversation did not follow a pre-ordained sequence.

Nevertheless, my interviews followed the same general structure that, after an initial period of trial and error, seemed to facilitate the establishment of trust and rapport. I would always start my interviews with a brief explanation concerning the subject of my study, as well as the purpose of the interview and the topics that I was interested in. Interviewees were then free to inquire on my project and my motivation for undertaking it. Some of them would also ask me more personal questions regarding my nationality or my time in London. The conversation would then flow naturally to my interviewee's role in the ESF process, their activist past, their involvement in politics apart from the ESF, as well as their history of participation in the 'alter-globalization movement'. For instance, I would ask them to recall the time when they first heard about the movement or their first experience of an 'alter-globalization' event. Again, this sequence of questions often invited my interviewees to inquire on my participation in the movement. I would always answer truthfully to such questions as I felt that this was absolutely necessary for the

establishment of rapport with my interviewees. In that respect, I share Oakley's view that '[a] refusal to answer, or an evasive answer, is not a genuine reciprocation of information. To expect someone to reveal important and personal information without entering into a dialogue is untenable' (cited in May 2002: 135).

The establishment of rapport would help me to move to more contentious issues, such as my interviewee's opinions on the conflict within the ESF process and of its successes and failings thus far. This would then give way to some questions concerning their use of the internet for the organizing of the ESF: Were they members of any email lists? Did they read all these messages? Did they think email lists were effective for political discussion? Were they suitable to decision-making? How did they compare with face-to-face meetings? What was their opinion of the ESF website?

Interviews ranged from forty-five minutes to almost two hours and were conducted face-to-face. The choice of venue was left to my interviewees, since I wished for the interviews to be held in a space where the interviewees felt at ease. Therefore, some interviews took place in bars and coffee shops, others in the offices of the interviewee's organization or in the place where other activist meetings were held. Almost all of the interviews with non-British activists took place at the venues of the ESF preparatory meetings.

I tape recorded all of my interviews, asking first for permission. In that respect, all of my interviewees felt comfortable to go on record, particularly when they heard that the results of my study were going to be published after the London ESF. I tried to make my equipment as unobtrusive as possible, just leaving it on the table and avoiding fiddling with it. This made transcription a bit more difficult, particularly for interviews held in noisy venues, but I believed that the naturalness of the discussion compensated for the additional effort required in the transcription stage.

It is for this reason that I opted not to have my interviewees fill in a small questionnaire with their demographic characteristics as I felt that this would jeopardize the rapport established through the interview, as well as the informality of the discussion.

I conducted my interviews all through the organizing year of London 2004 ESF, mindful that some of the expressed opinions may have referred to events or debates that were unfolding in the period of the interview. I also made sure to schedule some of the interviews after the London ESF as this would allow the interviewees to also reflect on the outcomes of this process.

5.7.4. Interpreting and Analyzing the Interview Data

As Blee and Taylor argue, '[i]n semi-structured interviewing, *analysis and interpretation are ongoing processes*' (2002: 110, emphasis in original). Researchers are required 'to begin analyzing data as it is being collected, and these initial analyses may provoke changes in the study' (ibid). In my case, this ongoing analysis was carried out through the research diaries, where I would note down any new ideas emerging from my interviews and reflect on possible patterns that were beginning to appear.

I transcribed my interviews in Microsoft Word, making a different Word file for every interview. I then analysed each interview, categorizing and coding its themes and central ideas, also paying attention to the specific words that were used in describing internet applications and what they meant in the context of what was coming before and after. I subsequently copied and pasted all of my interview data in one Word file structuring them according to theme.

I then wrote up a first draft of my interviews results taking care to anchor my interpretations in the everyday understandings and language of my interviewees (ibid: 112). To this end, I have included as many direct quotes as possible, demonstrating the ways in which my interviewees talked about the issues at hand. Keeping in mind that a goal of the case study approach is to 'link together analytically the perspectives or voices of the range of relevant actors' (Snow and Trom 2002: 155), I was careful not to over-use quotes by the more articulate interviewees. I also attempted to account for any inconsistencies in the data and inquire on their presence.

5.8. Email Lists Analysis

5.8.1. Selection of Email Lists

Based on my experience as a participant observer both in the offline meetings and in the various ESF email lists, I settled on a sample of three email lists devoted to the organizing of the London 2004 ESF. These represent only a fraction of ESF-related lists, since, as I will explain in Chapter 10, new lists are continually set up along with the establishment of new functions and organizing tasks.

The choice of email lists was based on their size, geographical scale, as well as social relationships between their members. In that respect, my sample included the general email list of the ESF (FSE-ESF), which operates on the European level and

encompasses a wide range of individuals and organizations active in the movement. The scale of the list and the geographical area it refers to means that not all members of the list are well-acquainted with each other or speak the same language. The second email list included in my sample is the list of the British coordination (esf-uk-info), used intensively during the organizing of the London ESF, since British activists were responsible for the everyday organizing work. The third list, called democratisESF, is a factional one, as it was set up by a group of activists who were dissatisfied with the UK organizing process considering it undemocratic and controlled by certain players. Although not exclusively British, the most active members on this list were British residents and active within British politics. It was thus a smaller and more specific list than the other two, allowing more informal discussion. In addition, its role was integral in the construction of the identity of this faction, since, as I will explain in Chapter 12, it constituted a space where these activists could meet up, identify the problems of the ESF process and put together proposals for its improvement. Due to time constraints I decided not to analyse the email lists of the working groups or those of related campaign networks, since they were more specific and small scale.

My assumption was therefore that the differences in the membership and geographical scale of these lists would affect their functions for organizing and collective identity formation, as well as their degree of interactivity. The content analysis also attempted to highlight the similarities of these lists in terms of their functions within the ESF organizing process. Comparing these functions with the official minutes of offline organizing meetings, as well as with my own notes as a participant observer further provided an insight into the articulation of the online and the offline in the ESF organizing process.

5.8.2. Unit of Analysis

I opted for individual messages and not conversation threads as my unit of analysis, even though most of the content analysis studies that I had reviewed tended to adopt the latter. This is because most of these studies focused on the patterns of conversation and interactivity on the list, and thus needed to analyse every message within the context of the conversation. However, if discussion norms do not constitute the primary focus of the research, then adopting individual messages as the unit of analysis can be an equally valid methodological choice. What is more, for the email lists that I had decided to study,

discussion threads appeared as an inconsistent unit of analysis. In that respect, threads included messages which were not directly related to each other or to the subject of the starting message of the thread. On the other hand, not all replies to a specific message belonged to the same thread with the starting message¹¹.

Hence, I decided that individual messages would be a more reliable unit of analysis. In cases where it was not obvious what the message was referring to (for instance, it was a reply saying 'I agree with Tom') then I coded it with reference to the message it was a reply to. However, such cases were very few and almost negligible. Furthermore, I attempted to limit the loss of data on interactivity by coding for the 'type of message'. This category was used to show whether a message was a reply to a discussion or a request for information, thus providing a measure of the degree of interactivity on each list.

In the course of developing the codebook, I also defined a second unit of analysis, 'organizing tasks', pertaining only to the messages with an organizing function. In that respect, an 'organizing' message could fulfil one or more tasks, such as disseminate information and engage in collaboration online. Therefore, the number of tasks is higher than that of organizing messages.

5.8.3. Designing the Codebook and Coding Schedule and Piloting

Designing the codebook was a quite challenging task, involving many false starts and extensive piloting. The difficulty stemmed from the originality of the research, as content analysis studies on the organizing or collective identity functions of email lists are very scarce. In that respect, my review of the relevant literature revealed a few studies on the norms of deliberation on email lists and issues of 'flaming' (McLaughlin, Osborne and Smith 1995; Sudweeks, McLaughlin and Rafaeli 1997; Mabry 1998), on gender and cultural differences in the use of Listservs (Stewart, Shields and Sen 2001), as well as on the interactivity of group Computer-Mediated Communication (Rafaeli and Sudweeks 1998) and online collaboration (Sudweeks and Rafaeli 1996). In terms of content analysis of email lists belonging to political groups, Hill and Hughes studied the content

¹¹ This was due to purely technical issues concerning the ways in which the software recognizes messages as belonging to the same thread. If a member replied to a message hitting the 'Reply All' button, then the message would be included in the same thread as the message it was a reply to. If the member sent her/his reply as an individual message, then s/he would start a new thread, even though the starting message was actually a reply to a message in another thread.

of a random sample of Usenet discussion threads investigating their political leanings and government stance, as well as their degree of 'flaming'. They also examined whether the threads were used for recruiting participants in political action, as well as whether they referred to a then current event (1998: 57). Focusing more on the civility and politeness of online deliberation, Papacharissi examined 287 discussion threads in political newsgroups and their potential for civil discourse (2004: 259). Nevertheless, the survey of the relevant literature revealed only one email content analysis study focusing specifically on social movements. The study examined processes of identity formation on the electronic board of the Queer Sisters, the oldest queer/lesbian group in Hong Kong. Nip analysed 603 messages posted during 1-28 September 1999 and 1-28 July 2000, using a very simple 10-category content analysis scheme. Messages were categorized according to their function: information, relational, task, expression, sharing, advice, discussion, management, intrusion, and others (Nip 2004: 239). However, Nip did not analyse the organizing functions, if any, of these lists. Instead, she used her content analysis to complement her findings from a survey of users of the board which inquired on the collective identity functions of the email list.

Therefore, most of the studies that I have reviewed focused exclusively on the patterns of discussion online disregarding the offline context of the groups that they were researching. Admittedly, this was often because their selected case studies featured groups that only met online. In addition, the focus of most of these studies rested on the patterns of discussion and issues of flaming and not on issues relating to the functions of these lists for organizing and coordination, if any.

I thus had to construct the coding schedule and codebook almost entirely from scratch, deriving my categories from social movement theory, as well as from the themes that were starting to emerge from my interviews and participant observation. This incurred further complications in the design of the study since, as I noted in the literature review, the field of social movement research is lacking a single theory on organizing and collective identity and is instead characterized by various approaches. Thus, attempting to identify some common categories, tasks or functions to be included in the content analysis was quite challenging. Melucci's writings on collective identity were helpful in that respect since they perceived collective identity as an interactive process. Therefore, many of the categories in that section of the coding schedule are based on his theory. On the other hand, the organizing section is based on a set of simple and pragmatic

observations regarding organizing work. In this regard, I coded messages according to the type of tasks that they were trying to achieve: Were they disseminating information? Deciding who is in charge of specific tasks? Reporting back on the undertaking of specific tasks? Obviously, one message could include more than one type of tasks. I further kept a note of the activities each task referred to, attempting to gauge the areas of organizing (e.g. outreach, offline decision-making, management of the website etc.) that were addressed on the email lists. Therefore, my coding schedule was mostly functional, attempting to capture the purpose of a message rather than the content of the discussion¹². Still, I included certain categories regarding themes of discussion that were a regular occurrence within the ESF process aiming to examine whether these issues were also addressed on the email lists. Such issues included the control of the ESF process by certain groups, the transparency of the process, the time and place of meetings, the code of conduct in offline decision-making, as well as the value of consensus.

Evidently, the effort to create a coding schedule and codebook almost entirely from scratch required an extensive period of piloting and several revisions of the initial codebook. I piloted the first schedule on 100 messages belonging to the democratisESF list which was the most varied and difficult list to analyse. I then revised the coding schedule and piloted it again on fifteen messages of each list. Final revisions were made after a meeting with my supervisor, where we used the schedule to analyse individually ten emails from each list, attempting to ensure that the study would be replicable by other researchers.

The successive revisions of the initial coding schedule whittled down the items of analysis to fifty-six, as categories with limited reliability were removed from the final version. The resulting coding schedule is quite simple to use as most of its items are dichotomous (1=yes, 2=no). In addition, the schedule was designed in a modular and flexible way that facilitated the analysis of results since items could be grouped into larger categories and the level of detail could be easily varied or altered. For a more detailed outline of the different items, coding and definitions please consult the Codebook in Appendix IV. (The coding schedule is available in electronic form, as an SPSS file.)

¹² It is worth noting here that the philosophy of this approach is reminiscent of the Interaction Process Analysis (IPA) model which is often used in the study of group communication (see for instance Poole, Keyton and Frey 1999)

5.8.4. Sampling

I decided to analyse a 10% random sample of all the messages posted on the selected lists between the 10th of November 2003, when an assembly at the Paris 2003 ESF took the decision to host the 2004 ESF in London, and the 31st of October 2004. I deliberately did not set the ending date to coincide with that of the London ESF (the 19th of October) since I also wanted to explore the functions of the lists in the immediate aftermath of the event, especially in terms of reflection on the ESF. The resulting sample is 415 messages.

Most of my content analysis categories are dichotomous or items can be recoded so that they are dichotomous. Keeping in mind that for a sample of 415 messages and dichotomous variables the expected margin of error would be a bit less than 5% at a 95% confidence level, a random 10% sample was considered adequate for that level of analysis. Admittedly, the margin of error increases to 10% if we consider the sample of each list independently (Garson 2006: n.p., *Sampling*: n.p.). However, taking into account that in order to retain a 5% margin of error at a 95% confidence level I would have to sample 40% of each list, increasing the overall sample to 1,659 messages, the additional effort was not considered worthwhile.

Yet, in order to provide a more in-depth understanding of the characteristics and overlaps of the different lists, the date, number of authors and subject of message were also analysed for the total number of messages in the sample period.

5.8.5. Ethical Issues

Analysing the messages posted on publicly archived email lists can raise a number of ethical questions concerning the privacy of list subscribers and the confidentiality of their emails. Nevertheless, as Rafaeli et al. argue, '[a] quantitative analysis of the aggregate of publicly available, archived content of large group discussions that occurred voluntarily is subject to fewer ethical concerns than other types of analyses' (1994: n.p.). The main question that I had to decide on was whether I had an ethical obligation to inform the members of the sampled email lists of my research intentions. Taking into account that lists were public and that my study would not quote specific authors or disclose their names, I decided that seeking the informed consent of list members was unnecessary. This ethical stance concurs with that of Project H, a study of electronic discussions undertaken by a group of researchers from different universities who

decided that 'the issue of informed consent of authors, moderators and/or archiving institutions does not apply to a quantitative content analysis in which only publicly available text is analysed' (ibid). However, in the few cases where I had to quote directly from an email, I decided not to reveal the name of the sender.

Nevertheless, I did test this ethical decision in my in-depth interviews where I would always state my intention to analyse the ESF email lists when introducing my study. In that respect, it is notable that none of my interviewees felt uncomfortable with this prospect, particularly when they heard that I did not intend to reveal the identities of authors.

5.9. Additional Methods: Informal Participant Observation and Documents Analysis

As noted earlier, the purpose of my participant observation was to familiarize myself with the movement and its operation and to obtain contacts for interviews. Becoming better acquainted with the context and the processes that I was researching required my participation both in the online and the offline spaces of the movement. However, this 'multi-site' participant observation can be quite challenging for researchers as '[i]n most disciplines, combining online and offline data collection will challenge the boundaries of traditional fieldwork, which is located in a particular *place*.' (Wakeford 2001: 38). While this inevitably complicated my research, it nonetheless helped me to paint a more complete picture of the ESF organizing process and of the different interactive spaces, either online or offline, where movement participants gathered to discuss, coordinate and make political decisions. Indeed, the differences and similarities between these spaces, as well as the relationships between them actually constituted one of the main themes of my study. Still, within my research, participant observation had a complementary role to other methods. As such, the method was used more informally since I did not keep detailed field notes, but just scribbled ideas and impressions in my research diaries after attending meetings or when interesting issues were arising in the email lists.

In addition to my participant observation, I collected all of the main documents, statements and proposals concerning the decision-making and organizing process of the London ESF. I also archived all of the minutes of meetings, as well as emails that I considered interesting for my research. These notes, minutes, emails and documents, along with the transcribed interviews formed the basis of my historical account of the

ESF process, and underpinned the discussion of the results. It is worth noting here that the analysis of documents took into account the different conditions of their production, as well as their function within the ESF process. For instance, the purpose of minutes is to record the decisions rather than document the full spectrum of opinions that are expressed in meetings. In addition, with minutes being approved before circulation, the version that is finally disseminated is most often sterilized from conflict and contentious issues. On the other hand, proposals represent the views of the specific groups or factions that put them together, while emails most often correspond to the opinions of the sender. However, this does not necessarily mean that official documents have more historical value than other types of accounts. Instead, different types of documents show different facets of what actually happened and any attempt to reconstruct this kaleidoscope of views and versions of events should be conscious of the purpose and function of each text, as well as of its authors' intentions.

6. Preliminary Survey: Mobilization and Communication

This chapter will present the findings from my preliminary survey undertaken in the Paris ESF in November 2003. As discussed in the previous chapter, this survey constituted my entry point into the fieldwork, helping me to become more familiar with the 'movement for alternative globalization' and the European Social Forum. It also allowed me to form a better understanding of the use of communication technologies, and particularly internet applications, within the ESF mobilization process.

The survey questionnaire was short and simply designed. It included some questions regarding the respondents' demographic characteristics, as well as the contexts through which they were mobilized to attend the ESF. In that respect, I distinguished between four mobilization contexts: political or voluntary organizations, friends and/or relatives, workplace and/or university, and the mass media. Respondents were also asked to indicate the media and forms of communication used within each mobilization context. I distributed the questionnaire in the different locations where the ESF was taking place and received 257 questionnaires on the spot. Although the sample was not random or representative, its size still allowed me to make some inferences concerning the use of the internet in the process of mobilizing for the ESF. In turn, these inferences served as helpful pointers when designing the rest of my study.

6.1. The Sample

The sample consisted of 257 respondents, with women accounting for 46% and men 54% of the sample. Respondents were also predominantly young as 64% of the sample were 30 or less than 30 years old. Table 6.1 presents in more detail the valid percentages for each age category.

Age	Per cent
less than 20	15%
21-30	49%
31-40	14%
41-50	9%
51-60	6%
over 60	7%

Table 6.1: Age (% of total)

The majority of respondents were also fairly well-educated as 32% of the sample were university graduates. However, 17% were high school graduates, while 5% had not finished high school and 1% had not had a high school education. These figures can be explained by the young age of the sample (15% were less than 20 years old), which implies that some of the respondents may not have finished high school at the time of the survey.

Education	Per cent
None	1%
High school incomplete	5%
High school graduate	17%
Business, technical, school after high school	4%
Some university, but no 3 or 4 year degree	17%
University Graduate	32%
Masters graduate	17%
PhD degree	6%
Don't know	1%

Table 6.2: Educational level (% of total)

In terms of profession, an overwhelming per cent of the sample (46%) were students, a figure which is again partly explained by the respondents' young age. Professional workers (e.g. doctors, lawyers, academics) came second accounting for 17% of the sample.

Profession	Per cent
Skilled Manual Worker	2%
Non-manual – office worker non-supervisory	7%
Supervisory – office worker: supervises others	5%
Professional worker (doctor, lawyer...)	17%
Employer/manager of less than 10 employees	3%
Employer/manager of more than 10 employees	2%
Unemployed/looking for a job	5%
Retired/early retirement	3%
Student	46%
Working for a political or voluntary organization or NGO	2%
Researchers	2%
Other	6%

Table 6.3: Profession (% of total)

Finally, in terms of nationality, and as it was expected, the highest per cent of participants (30%) came from France, the host country of the 2003 ESF. In addition, 17% of the sample originated from Spain and 15% from Italy. Overall, the sample included

respondents from twenty-four different countries. Table 6.4 presents some of the countries with the largest per cents.

Nationality	Per cent
France	30%
Spain	17%
Italy	15%
Britain	5%
Germany	4%
Greece	3.5%
USA	3%
Belgium	3%
Sweden	3%
Switzerland	2%
Finland	2%
Tunisia	1%
Ireland	1%

Table 6.4: Nationality (% of total)

6.2. Mobilization Contexts and their Overlaps

The survey further asked respondents about the contexts that mobilized them to participate in the Paris 2003 European Social Forum. 'Mobilization' was defined in terms of obtaining information about the ESF and organizing attendance. The questionnaire distinguished between four mobilization contexts, political or voluntary organizations, friends or relatives, the workplace or the university, and the news media. The survey also included some questions about the means of communication that were used in each mobilization context. For instance, did the communication with the political or voluntary organization take place through the telephone, an email list, face-to-face, or the organization's website? Did respondents talk to friends or relatives face-to-face, on the phone, or via email? The respondents could select one or more means of communication, which provided an insight into the range of media used in each context.

Mobilization Context	Per cent
Political or Voluntary Organization	74%
Friends or Relatives	65%
Workplace or University	34%
News Media	36%

Table 6.5: Mobilization contexts (% of total)

An initial breakdown of results, presented in Table 6.5, showed that 74% of the respondents were mobilized by a political or voluntary organization, 65% through friends

or relatives, 34% through the workplace or the university and 36% through the news media.

These mobilization contexts are not distinct but have significant overlaps between them since respondents may have been mobilized by more than one context. As Table 6.6 shows, participants mobilized solely through the workplace/university or through the news media account for only 1% and 4% of the sample respectively. However, respondents mobilized only through friends or relatives account for 9% of the sample, while those mobilized through political or voluntary organizations represent 16% of the sample. Overall, participants mobilized through only one context account for 30% of the sample. In terms of overlapping contexts, people mobilized through organizations, the workplace or the university and friends or relatives represent 18% of the sample, while 12% of the sample were mobilized through only organizations and friends or relatives. Thus, the combination of organizations with friends or relatives, either on their own or in conjunction with the other contexts, is the one occurring most frequently since it appears in 46% of the total number of cases.

	Frequency	Per cent
no mobilization context	3	1%
work/uni	3	1%
organization & work/uni & media	3	1%
friends & work/uni & media	3	1%
friends & work/uni	7	3%
organization & work/uni	10	4%
media	10	4%
all contexts	16	6%
friends & media	17	7%
organization & media	18	7%
friends	23	9%
organization & friends & media	25	10%
organization & friends	30	12%
organization	42	16%
organization & friends & work/uni	45	18%
Total	255	100%

Table 6.6: Overlaps of mobilization contexts (% of total)

6.3. Mobilization Through Political or Voluntary Organizations

As Table 6.7 reveals, out of the 190 respondents who were mobilized through a political or voluntary organization, 62% communicated with the organization face-to-face,

51% through email lists and 34% through the organization's website. Leaflets, posters and mailings account for lower per cents of the respondents mobilized through this context.

Face-to-face	62%
Email list(s)	51%
Website	34%
Posters	27%
Leaflets	20%
Mailings	19%

Table 6.7: Mobilized through a political or voluntary organization (% of participants mobilized through this context)

I also examined the interplay between these modes of communication, by looking at the frequencies and per cents of respondents that used more than one of these modes of communication. As Table 6.8 shows, 38% of the respondents mobilized through political or voluntary organizations found information about the ESF through only one communication mode. Face-to-face communication accounts for 44% of those cases, while email lists come second with 26%. On the other hand, 31% of the respondents mobilized through these contexts used a combination of two communication modes, while for combinations of more than three modes the per cents are much lower.

No of communication modes	Per cent
n/a	3%
1	38%
2	31%
3	13%
4	5%
5	5%
6	5%

Table 6.8: Number of communication modes used within the 'organization' context (% of respondents mobilized through this context)

Respondents were also asked to indicate whether they were members or supporters of the organizations that informed them about the ESF. The number of supporters was 116, accounting for 61% of the sample mobilized through organizations and 45% of the total number of respondents. In that respect, a comparison between supporters and non-supporters, shows that the former were mobilized significantly more through email lists and mailings. As Table 6.9 shows, 63% of supporters were informed through the organization's email list, while this figure is only 32% for non-supporters. Similarly, 27% of supporters learned about the ESF through mailings versus 7% of non-supporters.

	Supporters	Non-Supporters
Face-to-Face	64%	58%
Email list(s)	63%	32%
Website	36%	31%
Posters	25%	31%
Leaflets	22%	18%
Mailings	27%	7%

Table 6.9: Supporters versus non-supporters (% of supporters and % of non-supporters)

In addition, and as it was expected, a larger per cent of supporters engaged with their organization(s) through multiple communication modes. According to Table 6.10, 34.5% of supporters communicated with the organization through a single method and 26% through a combination of two methods, compared to 45% and 38% of non-supporters respectively. However, when it comes to combinations of more than two methods, supporters garner higher per cents than non-supporters.

No of modes	Supporters	Non-Supporters
1	34.5%	45%
2	26%	38%
3	16%	7%
4	6%	4%
5	6%	4%
6	8%	0%

Table 6.10: Supporters versus non-supporters and number of communication methods (% of supporters and % of non supporters)

In terms of demographic characteristics, age seems to play a role in whether respondents were mobilized through the context of political or voluntary organizations, as well as in the media and modes of communication that were used. As Table 6.11 shows, participants mobilized through a political or voluntary organization represent more substantial per cents of those under 20 and over 40, with 100% of the over 60 participants being mobilized through this context.

Age	Per cent
under 20	84%
21 - 30	64%
31 - 40	69%
41 - 50	91%
51 - 60	93%
over 60	100%

Table 6.11: Age and mobilization through a political or voluntary organization (% of each age category)

In addition, older participants were mobilized more through the email list of the organization in comparison with younger respondents, while the opposite is true for face-to-face communication.

Age	Email List(s)	Face-to-Face
under 20	31%	66%
21 – 30	49%	67%
31 – 40	42%	58%
41 – 50	71%	58%
51 – 60	79%	50%
over 60	61%	50%

Table 6.12: Age and mobilization through the email list(s) or face-to-face communication with a political or voluntary organization (% of each age category)

6.4. Mobilization Through Friends or Relatives

Face-to-face contact was the main communication method for the 167 respondents who were mobilized through friends or relatives, as it accounts for an overwhelming 73% of respondents mobilized through this context. In addition, 40% used email and 30.5% used the telephone.

Face-to-face	73%
Email	40%
Telephone	30.5%

Table 6.13: Mobilized through friends or relatives (% of respondents mobilized through this context)

In terms of the number of communication modes and as Table 6.14 reveals, an overwhelming 67% of participants mobilized through this context were informed through a sole method of communication. Again face-to-face is the mode of communication most often used on its own, as it accounts for 66% of respondents mobilized through a single communication method in this context. Email accounts for 22% and the telephone for 12%.

No of modes	Per cent
n/a	1%
1	67%
2	19%
3	13%

Table 6.14: Number of communication modes used within the 'friends' context (% of respondents mobilized through this context)

6.5. Mobilization Through the Workplace or the University

When it comes to participants mobilized through their workplace or the university, 71% had face-to-face contact, while email was used by 38% of the respondents mobilized through this context. This is closely followed by leaflets and posters (33%), while the web (18%) and the telephone (17%) feature quite lower.

Face-to-face	71%
Email	38%
Leaflets/Posters	33%
Website	18%
Telephone	17%

*Table 6.15: Mobilized through the workplace or the university
(% of respondents mobilized through this context)*

In addition, 52% of the participants mobilized through this context were informed about the ESF through one communication method. For 61% of them this method was again face-to-face communication, while 20% were mobilized solely through email.

No of modes	Per cent
n/a	2%
1	52%
2	28%
3	6%
4	7%
5	5%

Table 6.16: Number of communication modes used within the 'workplace/ university context (% of respondents mobilized through this context)

It is notable here that the context of the workplace/university was responsible for the mobilization of a larger per cent of the youngest participants as 50% of the respondents under 20 were mobilized through the workplace or the university. This figure is 35% for the 21 to 30 and only 20% for the 51 to 60.

Age	Per cent
under 20	50%
21 – 30	35%
31 – 40	29%
41 – 50	26%
51 – 60	20%
over 60	23.5%

*Table 6.17: Age and mobilization through the workplace/university
(% of respondents mobilized through this context)*

6.6. Mobilization Through the News Media

As for the news media, the highest per cent (66%) of respondents mobilized through this context were informed about the ESF through newspapers. The web comes second with 52%, while radio and television feature much lower, with 27% and 20% respectively.

Newspapers	66%
Web	52%
Radio	27%
Television	20%

*Table 6.18: Mobilized through the news media
(% of respondents mobilized through this context)*

In addition, 49% of the respondents mobilized through this context used only one type of news media, while 34% used two. Of the former, 44% were informed about the ESF solely through newspapers and another 44% solely through news websites.

No of modes	Per cent
n/a	2%
1	49%
2	34%
3	12%
4	3%

*Table 6.19: Number of news media used
(% of respondents mobilized through this context)*

In terms of demographic characteristics, respondents over 30 years old seem to have used the mass media more than younger participants. As Table 6.20 shows, 49% of respondents within the 31 to 40 age category were mobilized through the news media versus just 29% of those between 21 and 30 years of age.

Age	Per cent
under 20	34%
21 – 30	29%
31 – 40	49%
41 – 50	43.5%
51 – 60	53%
over 60	41%

*Table 6.20: Age and Mobilization through the news media
(% of respondents within each age category)*

In addition, a larger per cent of respondents from France and Italy were mobilized from the news media than those coming from other countries. In that respect, 51% of the French respondents and 45% of the Italians were informed about the ESF through the news media compared to only 12% of the Spanish participants. With the ESF taking

place in France, it seems reasonable that the French media reported on the event more than the media in other countries. The same can be said for Italy, the country where the previous ESF was held in October 2002.

6.7. Interpersonal and Intra-Group Modes of Communication Versus the Mass Media

As it became evident through the analysis of the communication modes used in each context, respondents tended to engage more in interpersonal or intra-group types of communication rather than obtain information about the ESF through the mass media. For instance, in the case of respondents mobilized through a political or voluntary organization, 62% were contacted face-to-face and 51% through email. More impersonal modes of communication, such as posters, leaflets or the web feature much lower. This tendency is also apparent in the workplace/university, the other context where a combination of personal and impersonal media has been used and where an overriding per cent of respondents has been mobilized through face-to-face communication. Additional evidence corroborating this assumption is provided by the relatively low per cent (36%) of respondents mobilized through the news media, compared to respondents mobilized through an organization or through friends or relatives.

In order to make this comparison clearer, I have calculated the number of respondents mobilized through interpersonal or intra-group communication and compared it with those mobilized through more impersonal modes of communication or the mass media. The interpersonal/intra-group category includes face-to-face communication, telephone, mailings, email, and email lists, while the impersonal/mass one encompasses leaflets, posters, websites, newspapers, the radio, and television.

	Interpersonal/intra-group		
Impersonal/mass	No	Yes	Total
No	6 2.3%	85 33.1%	91 35.4%
Yes	19 7.4%	147 57.2%	166 64.6%
Total	25 9.8%	232 90.2%	257 100.0%

Table 6.21: Interpersonall/intra-group modes of communication versus imporsonall/mass (% of total)

As Table 6.21 shows, 90.2% of the respondents used at least one method of interpersonal or intra-group communication, while this figure is only 64.6% for impersonal or mass communication. Participants mobilized solely through interpersonal or intra-group communication represent 33.1% of the total number of respondents, while only 7.4% were mobilized solely through impersonal or mass modes of communication.

6.8. E-Media Versus Face-to-Face Communication

In order to compare users with non-users of the internet, a new variable was constructed by grouping together respondents who have used an Internet application (email, web or email lists) in any mobilization context and controlling for differences from respondents who have not used the internet at all. Overall, eighty-eight respondents have not used the internet in their mobilization for the 2003 European Social Forum, representing 34.2% of the sample, while 169 have, accounting for 65.8% of the sample.

I further examined whether the use of the internet was related with any of the contexts that mobilized respondents to participate in the European Social Forum. In that respect, 76.8% of the respondents who were mobilized through an organization have used one or more internet applications in one or more of the mobilization contexts, representing 86.4% of the internet-users category. This figure is a bit higher for the supporters of organizations, whereby 79.3% were mobilized by at least one internet application.

In order to compare internet use with face-to-face contact I constructed a similar variable for face-to-face communication, grouping together the respondents who were mobilized through face-to-face contact in any mobilization context against those who were not contacted face-to-face. The frequencies for this variable showed that 183 respondents were mobilized through face-to-face communication, representing 71.2% of the sample, while 28.8% have not. As it would be expected, respondents mobilized through friends or relatives represent 76% of the respondents who were contacted face-to-face.

The crosstabulation of the two variables showed that respondents mobilized solely through face-to-face communication represent 26% of the sample, while those mobilized solely through the e-media account for 20.6%. However, participants mobilized through both face-to-face contact and the e-media represent 45.1% of the sample, indicating that non-use of the internet does not necessarily mean reliance on face-to-face

communication or the reverse. Instead, the internet and face-to-face contact seem to have a more complicated symbiotic relationship.

	E-Media		
Face-to-Face	No	Yes	Total
No	21 8.2%	53 20.6%	74 28.8%
Yes	67 26.0%	116 45.1%	183 71.1%
Total	88 34.2%	169 65.8%	257 100.0%

Table 6.22: E-media versus face-to-face communication (% of total)

In terms of demographic characteristics, age seems to be important as the per cent of older participants who have used at least one internet application to obtain information about the ESF exceeds those of their younger counterparts. As Table 6.22 reveals, 78% of the respondents between 41 and 50 years of age have used the internet, while this figure is 87% for those between 51 and 60 and 78% for the over 60s. On the other hand, the per cent of participants mobilized through at least one internet application is 60.5% for those under 20 and 60% for participants between 21 and 30. The opposite is true for face-to-face communication where 79% of the participants under 20 and 77% of those between 21-30 were mobilized through face-to-face communication. This figure is lower for participants belonging to the other age categories.

Age	E-Media	Face-to-Face
under 20	60.5%	79%
21 – 30	60%	77%
31 – 40	71%	60%
41 – 50	78%	65%
51 – 60	87%	60%
over 60	78%	56%

Table 6.23: Age and mobilization through the internet and face-to-face communication (% of each age category)

6.9. Discussion of Results and Conclusions

What the preceding analysis effectively demonstrated is that within every mobilization context a wide range of media and modes of communication have been used in order to bolster participation in the Paris 2003 European Social Forum. In that respect, the context of political or voluntary organizations has garnered the largest per cent of participants using more than one communication methods as 59% of the respondents

mobilized through this context were informed about the ESF through several modes of communication. This figure is slightly larger for supporters of such organizations, reaching 62%. However, within the other mobilization contexts, more than half of respondents tended to be mobilized through a sole communication method. This is the case for 52% of the participants mobilized through the workplace or the university, while for those informed through friends and relatives the figure reaches 67%.

The initial breakdown of results further demonstrated that mobilization through political or voluntary organizations, friends or relatives, and the workplace or the university takes place predominantly through face-to-face contact. What is more, 44% of the respondents mobilized by organizations were solely engaged in face-to-face communication within this context. This figure is 66% for those mobilized by friends or relatives and 61% for those mobilized by the workplace or the university. Thus, rather than being replaced by mediated communication, face-to-face contact seems to be the prevailing form of communication in every context.

This ubiquitous presence of face-to-face contact urges us to rethink and clarify our notion of the 'alter-globalization movement' as an internet-based movement. In this respect, the fact that internet communication is not dominant among participants in the European Social Forum does not necessarily entail a rejection of these claims. Rather, it may be an indication that the changes brought by the internet are qualitative, not quantitative. Therefore, far from disproving these claims, the survey results call for a more in-depth understanding of possible qualitative changes and for a clearer definition of what we mean by 'internet-based movement'. Does 'internet-based' signify a movement communicating predominantly through the internet? Or is it more the case of a movement with an electronic spine – in terms of the connections among key activists across different countries – but whose day-to-day organizing and mobilization takes place locally and through face-to-face communication? In any case it is worth keeping in mind that email comes second to face-to-face contact in all of the mobilization contexts where they were used in tandem.

The overwhelming figures associated with face-to-face contact also point to another tendency, the predominance of interpersonal or intra-group modes of communication over the more impersonal ones, as an overwhelming 90.2% of the sample engaged in at least one mode of interpersonal or intra-group communication within any of the examined contexts. This figure is 64.6% for the more impersonal or mass media. The prevalence of

more personal modes of communication is hardly surprising. Studies in mobilization and movement participation have repeatedly demonstrated that interpersonal networks and direct or indirect ties to a social movement increase the possibility of an individual's participation. It is thus rather astonishing that social movements' studies have focused so extensively on the impact of the mass media, disregarding the affordances and patterns of interpersonal communication.

In terms of social movement research, this also highlights the necessity to distinguish between the different internet applications and examine their effects separately, as they favour different modes of communication. Thus, email tends to foster interpersonal communication, while the web adheres more to a broadcast model of communication. Email lists fall somewhere in-between, facilitating the narrowcasting of messages and information. Therefore, bundling up all these applications under the category 'Internet' cannot adequately capture the role of new communication technologies in social movement activity.

Another major inference provided by this survey concerns the possible relationship between internet use and the respondents' political experience or degree of involvement in politics. The basis for this assumption is supplied by the relationship between internet use and the respondents' age, as well as the context through which they were mobilized. In that respect, the survey results showed that older participants tend more than the younger ones to be mobilized through the email lists of political or voluntary organizations. On the other hand, younger participants tend to be mobilized more through face-to-face contact with friends or relatives. To an extent, this seems as a counter-intuitive result. It can however be explained, if we consider that older activists attending the ESF, whose number is much lower than that of their younger counterparts, may represent the more dedicated and experienced members of the organizations they support. Taking into account that supporters and members of organizations were more prone to have used an internet application, then the tendency of older respondents to be mobilized by the email lists of political or voluntary organizations seems entirely reasonable.

The interpretation of these results would be aided significantly, if information about the respondents' political experience and prior participation in the 'alter-globalization' or other movements was available. For instance, a study of participants in the anti-war demonstration of the 15th of February 2003 both in Europe and in the USA has revealed

that more experienced activists tended to obtain their political information online, contrary to first-time demonstrators (Bennett, Givens and Willnat 2004: n.p.).

As for the relationship between internet use and mobilization context, the results have revealed that respondents who have used at least one internet application in any mobilization context tend to be mobilized more through political or voluntary organizations than non-users of the internet. On the other hand, respondents who were mobilized by face-to-face contact in at least one mobilization context, tended to be mobilized more through friends or relatives.

This may be suggesting that respondents already in contact with a political or voluntary organization use the internet more than respondents who are not as involved in politics. Still, such an interpretation should be made with caution as it ultimately questions the much-celebrated potential of the internet to revive democracy by facilitating and encouraging the participation of previously indifferent or marginalized individuals. Therefore, this assumption needs to be corroborated with additional empirical data, as the evidence supplied by this survey is just indicative.

7. Background and Context

In this chapter, I will first present a historical account of the London ESF process, providing a necessary context for understanding the role of new communication technologies in the processes of organizing, decision-making and collective identity formation relating to the preparation of ESF. This historical account will be complemented with an in-depth discussion of the conflict between the 'Horizontals' and the 'Verticals' which constituted one of the defining aspects of the London ESF. This discussion will also serve as a basis for delineating two different understandings of the internet deriving from two opposing political backgrounds and their attendant cultures of organizing.

7.1. The Preparatory Process of the London 2004 ESF: A Historical Account

There is currently little information available concerning the state of the British movement during the first two ESFs in Florence in 2002 and in Paris in 2003. Yet, the evidence I have managed to gather from my in-depth interviews and the ESF email lists suggests that until the Paris 2003 ESF the British mobilization network was small but relatively harmonious. According to one of my interviewees, the network involved:

'a few SWP [Socialist Workers' Party], GR [Globalise Resistance], some trade unions' branches, a few NGOs but mainly activists, not people officially representing an NGO, and a few very random individuals and it was a very small network, there was an email list that had about 240 people on it and that was the main communication' (Hodkinson, S., Personal Interview, 2004).¹

It is also worth noting here that in its initial stages, the British mobilization network was marked by the strong involvement of the SWP.

Thus, it was after the Paris 2003 ESF that the first major fissures in the British mobilization network started to appear. What prompted the conflict was the decision of certain actors to put together a bid for London to host the next ESF in 2004. According to Kate Hudson, the then chair of CND, the idea was initially conceived in a meeting of the

¹ The email list referred to in the quote is the esf-uk-info list, which was included in my content analysis.

European Preparatory Assembly (EPA)² in Genoa in the summer of 2003, where she, together with Chris Nineham, member of Globalise Resistance and the SWP, consulted informally with some of the European delegations about this possibility (Personal Interview, 2004).

However, back in Britain the bid for London was met with resistance and suspicion. Criticism focused on what was deemed as the secretive and undemocratic way in which the bid was put together, without prior consultation of the British mobilization network. Some activists were also apprehensive of the involvement of the SWP, fearing that it would try to hijack the event in order to serve its own political agenda. They warned that the British anti-globalisation movement was still in a very premature stage and that an event controlled by the big players would thwart its development and alienate potential participants. One of the main poles of this opposition was the then newly established London Social Forum which circulated a petition protesting about the non-inclusive and undemocratic character of the bid (*Re: URGENT: ESF in the UK? Sign the statement*, 2003). In addition, in the end of November 2003 an email list called democratisESF was set up with the purpose of informing as many people as possible about the bid for London and of ensuring the democratic character of the process.

Despite these objections, the bid was provisionally accepted by the European Assembly which took place during the Paris ESF on the 10th of November 2003. There was however one condition: that in the next EPA on the 13th and 14th of December 2003 in London, where the final decision was going to be made, the British would have to guarantee, with the help of their European counterparts, that the ESF was going to be organised in a democratic way (*ESF 2004 'UK'*, 2003).

However, prior to the EPA, on the 3rd of December 2003, the British groups responsible for the bid called a meeting at City Hall to discuss the proposal with the rest of the British movement. The meeting was also attended by staff of the Greater London Authority (GLA), whose support was considered essential for hosting the ESF in London. Again criticisms were heard about the way in which the meeting was organized with no publicized and open agenda and no commonly agreed venue. Additional problems concerned the lack of clarity about who was actually calling the meeting, as well as the fact that it was taking place in the afternoon of a work day, which limited its accessibility

² The European Preparatory Assembly (EPA) is the main decision-making body of the ESF organizing process. The EPAs are essentially open face-to-face meetings attended by delegates and representatives of all of the groups, networks and organizations involved in the process.

(*Re: European assembly, 2003*). These kinds of criticisms would become a very familiar and recurrent feature of the London ESF organizing process.

The unofficial minutes of that meeting (Bressan 2003) reveal the outlines of a conflict that was to dominate the ESF organizing process in Britain. While the groups supporting the bid were trying to press on with practical issues, warning that time is limited and proposing to establish an organizing committee, the other activists were refusing to set up organizing structures in a meeting that was not properly open and representative. The language of organizing and efficiency versus that of democracy and inclusiveness were drawing a line of demarcation that would be visible throughout the organizing process of the London ESF. The only proposal that the meeting could agree on was to set up a temporary working group that would be responsible for the practicalities of organizing the next EPA in London.

The conflict escalated at the EPA ten days later, which, as a result, could not take a binding decision about London hosting the next ESF. However, the EPA established four working groups (Practicalities, Programme, Structure, Culture) to begin the process of organizing the ESF. Participation to the working groups was open and any of the activists attending the meeting could provide their email addresses in order to be subscribed to its email list. All of the working groups apart from 'Structure' started meeting shortly after the December EPA with announcements and minutes of their meetings appearing on the FSE-ESF and esf-uk-info email lists.

In January 2004, two competing proposals concerning the organizing structure of the London ESF started circulating on the lists. The first was put together by the 'democratizers' and was calling for a horizontal, open and inclusive method of organization. The second was a proposal signed by Alex Gordon from the National Union of Rail, Maritime & Transport Workers (RMT) and disseminated by an employee of the GLA. The statement called for the establishment of a UK Organizing Committee which would meet on a monthly basis and consist of groups and organizations affiliated to the process. The statement was also proposing a sliding scale of affiliation fees based on the size of the organization.

After much debate and conflict, the first, open and properly advertised, meeting of the UK Assembly, which took place at City Hall on the 24th of January 2004, agreed to accept the second proposal with a series of amendments. Shortly after the UK Assembly, on the 29th of January, the UK Organizing Committee held its first meeting and with a

highly controversial decision disbanded the four working groups which were already in operation. The minutes from that meeting stated that instead '[t]he UK ESF Org Cttee would establish all of the working groups necessary to develop the process in Britain and ensure continuity with the work done so far' (Gordon 2004: n.p.). This was the point when some autonomist parts of the movement, such as the WOMBLES, declared the ESF 'dead' and withdrew from the process (*The UK ESF is dead*, 2004).

The next meeting of the Organizing Committee on the 5th of February 2004 agreed to set up a 'Co-ordinating Committee' which would be responsible for the day-to-day organizing of the London ESF. This new committee would be composed of one delegate from each affiliated organization. However the existence, meetings and minutes of this committee were not widely publicised, at least not through the formal channels of communication. The committee had no founding statement and no published guidelines, while minutes of its meetings started to be uploaded on the official website in the end of May 2004, more than three months after its establishment. In addition, all of its meetings were held on workdays at City Hall, which limited their accessibility.

The camp of the 'democratic opposition' reacted quickly. In the end of February 2004, they circulated a petition on the various email lists (see 'A Call for Democracy in the ESF Process' in Appendix V) 'asking for the decision-making process to be made more transparent and less London-centric. They were also demanding for a clarification of the role of political parties and the GLA and for ways to be devised to allow loose networks to participate in the process. In that respect, the organizing structure was deemed too closed and hierarchical to be able to accommodate groups with diverse organizational models. Looser networks in particular, with no defined number of members and no belief in representation, had difficulty in affiliating formally to the process.

The discussion about process constituted the main focal point of the next EPA which was held in London on the 6th and 7th of March 2004. This document was discussed in a 'Process Workshop', convened for exactly that reason, and, after much debate and negotiation, the different parties agreed on some amendments of the founding statement of the Organizing Committee. The most prominent one concerned the inclusion of 'networks and local social forums' in the list of actors invited to affiliate to the Organizing Committee, while an added emphasis was placed on transparency and the timely publication of minutes and agendas (for the amended document see Appendix V). The

Assembly ended in a celebratory mood the next day, with the opposing parties showing signs of reconciliation and agreeing to cooperate for the organization of the next ESF in London.

Spirits were running high in the next few weeks. Shortly after the London EPA, some activists from the 'democratizers' camp circulated a document, 'ESF in London: a celebration for all and an invitation from few horizontals' (see Appendix V), stating that 'the attempts to silence our demands for democracy and inclusion did not succeed' and thanking their European counterparts for supporting their efforts. This was also the first time that the label 'Horizontals' was used, denoting a belief in 'the principles of non-hierarchical, open, democratic organizing', as opposed to the 'vertical', i.e. hierarchical, ways adopted by the more traditional components of the forum. This polarization between 'Horizontal' and 'Vertical', explained in more detail in the next section, would become one of the defining aspects of the British ESF process.

With the events described above the main decision-making bodies of the British process (Organizing Committee and Co-ordinating Committee) were properly installed. However, this did not put an end to the conflict, but shifted it towards issues concerning the programme of the ESF, as well as the practicalities of organizing. In addition, complaints about the transparency and openness of the decision-making process remained a common occurrence until the end.

In the next EPA, held in Istanbul on the 16-18 April 2004, the discussion focused on the procedures for proposing speakers, workshops and seminars and for putting together the programme of the ESF. Deciding the quota of speakers from each country, as well as the axes of the programme (e.g. peace and anti-war, environment etc.) actually defines the content of the ESF itself, its goals, campaigns and purpose. Discussion at this point concerned the ways in which the programme could be constructed in a more bottom-up rather than top-down way. Despite the high number of sessions hosted by the ESF, the proposals for sessions always exceed capacity. Putting together the programme of the ESF thus necessitates a process of selecting workshops and seminars, as well as merging similar proposals in order to whittle down the number of sessions. Hence, deciding who should be responsible for the selection or merging of sessions and with which criteria is of crucial importance. Following the example of the World Social Forum, the Istanbul EPA reflected on the necessary technological and communication tools to facilitate the networking and self-organizing of the groups proposing sessions instead of

assigning these tasks to a Programme committee. The main tool would be the official ESF website that could be developed to enable such collaboration. However, for reasons that will be explained in Chapter 8, these plans failed to materialize.

The conflict within the British organizing process continued unabated. The Organizing Committee meeting which took place in mid-May 2004 was one of the worst in terms of heckling and inefficiency. In the debates held afterwards on the email lists, the 'Horizontals' accused the 'Verticals' for intentionally pushing issues of practicalities to the bottom of the agenda, impeding their proper discussion. Instead, deliberation focused on the ESF programme with conflict centring on the axes of the programme, as well as the selection of six representatives who would participate in the newly formed European Programme Working Group. The saga continued with forty-four individuals signing a proposal to hold a UK meeting before the next EPA in Berlin in order to discuss issues of practicalities, such as the official website of the ESF or the recruitment of paid staff for the ESF office. The unofficial meeting took place on the 13th of June 2004 to the dismay of the 'Vertical' camp.

Hence, in Berlin tempers were seething. The atmosphere was further inflamed by the leaking of report of the European Programme Working Group meeting written by the Italian delegation for circulation only in the Italian movement. However, the report was lifted from the Italian mobilization email list, translated into English and then disseminated widely on the other ESF lists. In the document, the Italians were criticizing the British delegation for closed-mindedness, inability to collaborate and provincialism. The Italians attempted to temper the blow a few days afterwards by sending an official letter of apology to the British movement, but still expressing their concern about the problems of democracy characterizing the process and their effect on the European movement.

Nevertheless, the Berlin EPA, held on the 19th and 20th of June 2004, managed to arrive at some decisions that partly alleviated these conflicts. Firstly, it passed a proposal for the organization of 'autonomous spaces' in connection with the London ESF in October. Sessions in the 'autonomous spaces' would be self-organized and run in parallel with the main event, but their activities would still be listed in the official programme. Therefore, this allowed the activists who were unsatisfied with the ESF process to organize their own events while retaining a loose relationship with the main event. In addition, the Berlin EPA established a new European working group, called

'Memory and Systematization', which would be responsible for the communication tools of the ESF, as well as the databases and information generated by the process.

Conflict seemed to subside after the Berlin EPA. With little time left to prepare for the event and with the advent of the summer holidays, debates on the lists were not as ferocious as before, even though they did not stop altogether. The next and final EPA of the London ESF was held in Brussels on the 4th and 5th of September 2004, while in the run-up to the event, debates and discussions focused on the publicity of the event and particularly that of the demonstration (for a timeline of the London ESF preparatory process see Appendix VI).

What becomes apparent from this historical account is that establishing the decision-making bodies of the British process and deciding their mandate and responsibilities was not an easy task. Rather, it was the product of a long and arduous process where competing proposals about structure were put forward, debated and amended. Implementing these proposals was equally difficult, as the functioning of these bodies was constantly evaluated and criticized either formally or informally. In that respect, the pattern was for conflicts to emerge within the British process and be resolved, at least temporarily, in the EPAs, with European activists urging their British partners to cooperate and preserve the democratic character of the process. However, whether on British or continental soil, the defining moments of these conflicts, their concerted expression and (temporary) resolution would take place in offline meetings which formed the locus of decision-making. This is not to say that the role of the internet was not important. Instead, this historical account hints at the complementary but vital role of email lists in preparing for these decisions, circulating the documents that would be discussed face-to-face and informing about the times and dates of meetings. However, before I move on to a more detailed discussion of these functions, I would first like to explain the origins of the conflict between the 'Horizontals' and the 'Verticals' that threatened to bring the ESF process to a standstill.

7.2. The 'Horizontals' and the 'Verticals'

The division between the 'Horizontals' and the 'Verticals' partly reflected the fragmented nature of the Left³ in Britain, as well as the difficulty of actors with different conceptions of the ESF to reach a common ground. As I will show in Chapters 8 and 12, these perceptions also influenced the use of new communication technologies and they are thus worthy of a more detailed discussion.

In terms of the origins of the conflict, or at least its intensity, many of my interviewees referred to the fragmentation of the British Left and its lack of experience in negotiation and collaboration. According, to an RMT representative, this is largely due to Thatcherism and neoliberal policies that seem to have demolished the necessary political structures 'which gave people an education about how to meet each other, how to respect each other's right to speak, how to behave to each other' (Gordon, A., Personal Interview, 2004). According to a Spanish Indymedia activist living in London, British activists lack political imagination:

'you're talking to a left-wing British person and they're just like very, like on a straight line maybe, they have like this dual mentality [...] and you're either with us or against us [...] so I think that there is a big lack of political imagination here, it's not people's fault, I mean if you don't have the school to learn it, you don't learn it' (Ruiz, J., Personal Interview, 2004).

The British Left is also quite distinctive in its balance of forces, where the SWP holds a particularly powerful position in relation to other countries. This has led to a deeply entrenched suspicion towards the SWP, which is often accused for control-freakery, "slash and burn" strategies' (ibid), as well as for lacking a spirit of goodwill and cooperation⁴. And for many participants in the forum, the behaviour of the SWP in the ESF process did nothing to dispel these suspicions. Obviously, SWP members proffer a different interpretation of this tension, attributing it to the nervousness of the autonomist circle when engaging with more powerful actors. For instance, according to an SWP member and representative of Globalise Resistance, 'the autonomist movement in Britain is tiny, it doesn't really exist, I mean it's just a handful of, of mainly individuals and

³ The term 'Left' is used here in the widest possible sense, including political parties of the traditional radical left, NGOs, autonomist groups, direct action groups, as well as trade unions.

⁴ For instance, in my interview with a French activist living in London she described how when she first moved to Britain and started attending left-wing meetings she was struck by the hatred expressed towards the SWP. Recounting her experience of the 'Marxism' conference, she noted that 'people were coming to us, you know, some, some members of this very tiny left-wing groups, Marxist group and the only thing that they were speaking about is how evil the SWP has been, instead of speaking about your own policy, you define yourself by opposition to another party' (Bouteldja, N., Personal Interview, 2004).

some very very small networks and I think in a funny sense this has made them more... more nervous about their position in the process' (Nineham, C., Personal Interview, 2004). In that respect, 'they have to be very very in a sense very aggressive in order to have any space at all' (ibid). In addition, the British Left was lacking a strong moderate organization, like the French ATTAC, which could mediate between the two camps and ease the tension (ibid).

However, I would argue that casting the conflict between the Horizontals and the Verticals along the lines of the longstanding clash between Socialism and Autonomy would be too dismissive of its complex character. Instead, a cursory look at the camp of the 'democratic opposition' reveals an odd coalition of forces that went far beyond the confines of Autonomy. As one of the 'democratizers' noted, this faction:

'included people who are anarchists and autonomists on one side, included many people from NGOs, it included also communists and it included independent left and people from very, it was very odd coalition of people, I mean also, you know, people from workers' movement, anti-racist groups, community groups' (Reyes, O., Personal Interview, 2004).

This is because the 'Horizontals' identity emerged from the '*battlefield*' of the British process (de Angelis, M., Personal Interview, 2004), bringing together activists who felt marginalized by the most influential players. As another member of the 'democratizers' put it:

'it's also about people coming together because they have no power, it wasn't just, it wasn't just we coming together because we, we shared the same politics with organizations, we actually had no power in the process and we didn't want power in the process, we wanted to stop the power in the process, that was the issue, right?, and in order to stop power you have to have counter-power and we had no counter-power on ourselves so we had to apply and enquire it and enquiring it meant going towards people who you would not necessarily, you would possibly think twice about getting involved in a political process with because you're not pretty convinced that their politics are right' (Hodkinson, S., Personal Interview, 2004).

Instead, this polarization between the 'Horizontals' and the 'Verticals' reflected their different understandings of social forums, of what the movement is for and how it should progress, as well as of democracy in general. In terms of the goals and purpose of the forum, the division between the 'Horizontals' and the 'Verticals' seemed to follow the classic distinction between 'prefigurative' and 'strategic' politics⁵. In this respect, the

⁵ I am using this terminology since it is the most popular within social movement theory. It is however quite problematic as the label 'strategic' gives the impression that 'strategic' politics have a clearer strategy than

politics of the 'Horizontals' can be labelled 'prefigurative' as they were focusing on the organizing process of the forum itself insisting that it should embody the beliefs of the movement. For instance, according to Massimo de Angelis, a prominent voice of the 'Horizontals' camp, 'the end coincides with the organizational means, [...] so the way we organize is not different from the way we conceptualize and feel the relation to a different world' (Personal Interview, 2004). Another 'Horizontal' put it this way:

'for a long time a lot of people seemed to be merging and coalescing around a hostility towards political parties, a hostility towards hierarchical organizations and a kind of a shared consensus there that how you relate to each other in the organizing of a political process or an event is just as important as the event itself and what you're trying to achieve because I think the philosophy was be the change you want to see' (Hodkinson, S., Personal Interview, 2004).

This philosophy also stemmed from the awareness:

'that we didn't actually have the answers, we didn't know what the solutions were and therefore we weren't trying to impose our view on anyone else, we were trying to work out, we were trying to find out what it was everyone for and that, for, to do that you have to create a space where all views are equal and that means that have to become, hold the flag, not the flag, the torch of sort of democratic process' (ibid).

What becomes evident from the above is that the 'Horizontal' identity was based on a way of doing, a way of organizing, and not on a common ideology. As the same activist noted:

'the common philosophical bond was the idea that we were horizontal, i.e. we believe in face-to-face relations, participation, democracy, horizontality and the play, the people who are trying to a) bring the forum to Britain without any consultation and then try to impose a very undemocratic process on us were Verticals in the sense that they were doing from the top-down and we wanted to do from the bottom-up' (ibid).

In that respect, organizing acquires the status of a meta-ideology that can bring together and unify people from different ideological traditions. In the words of another 'Horizontal':

'when you say "the horizontals are everywhere" you're really putting it not in ideological terms, you're not saying anarchist, communist, priest, Christians, Jews, whatever, you talk about

'prefigurative' ones. Instead, and as I will argue later on in this section, the distinction rests on the different ways in which strategy is conceived. In that respect, while the politics of prefiguration try to effect change by "prefiguring" within the current practices of the movement the values of freedom, equality, and community that they want to see on a grand scale' (Polletta 2002: 6), 'strategic' politics focus on '[c]hanging laws, policies, and political structures' (ibid: 7). In other words, the difference between 'prefigurative' and 'strategic' politics is not that 'strategic' politics are more, well, strategic, but that they employ different strategies for effecting change.

horizontals and they are everywhere... and you are emphasizing a mode of doing, ok, it's not an ideology, it's a mode of doing, but that is why it's so powerful and in my opinion we just have scratched the surface of the potentiality of this way of representing ourselves and first of all we can even say ourselves, we can say a "we"...' (de Angelis, M., Personal Interview, 2004).

Instead, the 'Vertical' side insisted on the primacy of 'strategic goals' over modes of organizing. As an employee of Globalise Resistance (and member of the SWP) put it, 'organizing has to be a reflection of the political organizing of the situation rather than [...] and I think that's the problem at the moment, people say this is how we organize and let's see what happens' (Taylor, G., Personal Interview, 2004). He also remarked that this placed the ESF at risk of becoming a talking shop as people lose sight of the strategic goals they should be fighting for, since 'saying let's investigate things to campaign around, that's wanting a social forum for the sake of a social forum not wanting a social forum for the sake of doing something [...], and it's just about theory, you turn it into an academic club and it's not an activist network at all' (ibid). Another 'Vertical' reiterated this point:

'when people say the reason why I'm involved in the ESF is because of the process understood in that sense, I just, I just can't agree because, you know, the reason I'm involved in the ESF process and the WSF and everything else is, you know, because 18 million people are killed by poverty every year, because the Americans are being mad, you know, those sorts of substantive reasons' (Callinicos, A., Personal Interview, 2005).

Alex Gordon from RMT also attributed this preoccupation with organizing to a lack of strategic focus as 'one of the reasons there's so much discussion about process, obsessive discussion about process is that there's so little clarity about content' (Personal Interview, 2004). Therefore, while the 'Horizontals' perceived the social forum as a space where goals are defined, emerging out of the deliberations of the multitude, the 'Verticals' viewed the social forum as an event that could contribute in achieving certain substantive and already determined goals.

In that respect, the overarching goal for the 'Vertical' side was to create a mass movement out of the social forum process. In the words of Alex Callinicos, the view was 'that to go further it was necessary, while not losing what was distinctive about the movement and about the forums, to draw in more of the mainstream of the organized working class' (Personal Interview, 2005). Another prominent SWP member and also representative of Globalise Resistance concurred:

'you have people, you know, in the, in the sort of mainstream organizations of the movement who see the priority as being engaging with the widest numbers of people through greatest number as possible of networks and campaigning groups, as a way of giving more coherence and more energy and more power to the struggles against neoliberalism and war' (Nineham, C., Personal Interview, 2004).

This strategy was translated in an effort to increase the involvement of the trade unions within the organizing of the forum. As the same interviewee put it, the trade unions are the:

'biggest organizations of ordinary people in society [...] and so, you know I welcome the involvement of trade unions very very much and I personally and some of the other people in GR, I, some of the other people in GR would do a lot to try and make it easy for the trade unions, to feel as if they're part of it' (ibid).

Yet, known for their isolationism, even within international trade union events, British trade unions had difficulty in understanding the politics of the ESF (Gordon, A., Personal Interview, 2004). They were, however, willing to participate in the ESF process, a willingness that, according to Alex Gordon from RMT, should be understood as part of their effort to work out their role in the post-Cold War, globalized era.

Thus, for the 'Vertical' camp, this 'obsession with process' was hampering the efforts to generate a mass movement as it was too inward looking. In the words of one of my interviewees, 'I know the way you do is important but we have to be quite sure to be looking at the outside world rather than having an argument within ourselves' (Taylor, G., Personal Interview, 2004). Another one reiterated this point saying that:

'I think it's a mistake to say that the event is less important because at the event, at all the ESFs, and I'm sure all the WSFs as well, there are tens of thousands of people, almost all of them have never been to a social forum, so for them it's a radically new, enormously transformative experience and you, you kind of have to say, what is more important, kind of, how we conduct ourselves in the kind of meetings, the kind of process meetings, and what the event, the event because for the most participants it is the event that is significant' (Callinicos, A., Personal Interview, 2005).

However, what becomes apparent here is that the distinction is not so much between groups oriented towards creating a mass movement and groups oriented inwardly, but between different understandings of outreach and mobilization. Therefore, while for the 'Verticals', mobilization meant 'motivating large numbers of people to participate in the event', the 'Horizontals' felt that enlarging participation in the organizing process of the

event was equally, if not more, important. This is because allowing newcomers to have their input in shaping the event itself would provide a stronger motive for participation and a more effective way for becoming integrated in the movement by forging bonds of trust and solidarity through common work. In that respect, the 'Horizontals' were afraid that if the ESF organizing process was perceived to be dominated by the big players, then that would alienate potential participants.

The ambivalent attitude of the NGOs towards the ESF process seems to lend support to this view. In that respect, most of the British NGOs, were quite reticent in becoming involved in the ESF organizing process as they felt that it was being controlled by components of the traditional Left whose ways of organizing did not match their own. In the words of the representative of Friends of the Earth:

'I'm all the time frustrated and angry about these sort of traditional left-wing groups and the way they want to dominate and control everything and I find that, I think that completely is against the spirit of what the European social forum should be about and I think that is a reflection of the, of the British political scene and in some ways going back to the NGOs that's why they don't want to engage any more than they already are because they don't want to engage with the Socialist Workers' Party, they, they've got, you know they don't, they, they have made up their mind about how people like that go about organizing things and they don't see them as people who are really genuinely interested in forming true partnership' (Griffiths, H., Personal Interview, 2004).

However, the NGOs refrained from explicitly taking sides and were rather caught in the middle of the conflict. Thus, most of them opted to be loosely involved in the process by holding regular meetings with Friends of the Earth and the World Development Movement, two of the NGOs that participated fully, in order to ensure that their issues and concerns would be represented in the ESF programme. Minutes and statements from these meetings were dutifully circulated on the various email lists.

A further distinction that seemed to underline this conflict was the attitude towards the GLA. While the organization of previous ESFs also depended on the support of left-wing local authorities, this support was largely expressed with the provision of funds and spaces, allowing the forum to maintain its self-organised character. The lack of public spaces in London meant that the support of the local authority was crucial for the hosting of the forum. However, the GLA seemed to be governed by a different logic from the local authorities of Paris or Florence. According to Wainwright, the origins of this culture

could be traced to the political background of certain key employees of the GLA who belonged to a rather conservative faction of the Fourth International, the Socialist Alliance. Underlying their way of functioning was 'an explicit managerial philosophy and interpretation of democracy which is in many ways quite the opposite of the participatory democracy of Porto Alegre' (Wainwright 2004: n.p.). Oriented towards professionalism, effectiveness and central control, the staff of the GLA needed to secure their investment in the forum by attempting to manage its organization. Their political culture thus made it easier to engage with the trade unions or traditional components of the Left who better understood or shared its logic.

This seems to explain the radically different attitudes of my interviewees towards the involvement of the GLA in the London ESF. While no one doubted that it was essential for the GLA to pledge funds to the forum, people of a more 'Horizontal' disposition remarked that the funds provided by the GLA was coming with strings attached (Becker, T., Personal Interview, 2004). They also accused the GLA of attempting to run the organization of the forum behind closed doors and with secret deals (Reyes, O., Personal Interview, 2004). On the other hand, interviewees aligned with the 'Vertical' camp stressed the important role of the GLA, noting that 'it [the ESF] was only possible to do it by getting on board things like the GLA' (Hudson, K., Personal Interview, 2004). Some of them also accused the 'Horizontals' for attempting to prevent the GLA from becoming involved in the process (Taylor, G., Personal Interview, 2004).

However, the chasm between the 'Horizontals' and the 'Verticals' ran even deeper than their different perceptions of the forum or attitudes towards the GLA, as it also rested on two opposing understandings of democracy. In the words of Alex Callinicos:

'part of the reason that London was so conflictual or the build-up to London has been so conflictual was because there were different understandings of democracy in that, on the one hand you have the form of democracy which has become distinctive of the movement, open meetings, direct democracy, decision-making by consensus and so on and on the other hand you have a majoritarian representative democracy which is very strong in, for example, the unions and one of the problems of the meetings before London it's just the kind of culture clash' (Personal Interview, 2005).

In that respect, the 'Horizontals' shared a view of democracy that emphasized participation and was averse to representation and representative structures. For instance, some of my interviewees from that camp noted that representation can become

an empty token, when the members of the organization that are being represented are not properly informed or consulted with. For instance, one of them remarked that 'the union organization doesn't represent seven million people, it represents the leadership of an organization that has seven million members' (Hodkinson, S., Personal Interview, 2004). In that respect, some of them regarded representation as a tool that was used by certain groups in order to gain power in the process. In the words of one of my interviewees, 'implicitly that's how certain people view the process "I represent this" and they used that as a way to bargain their power, they didn't actually have a mandate to do that in the process, not from that they were accountable to the organizations that they were representing' (Reyes, O., Personal Interview, 2004). This meant that the 'Horizontals' tended to participate in the ESF process either as individuals or as members of networks and collectives, but not as representatives.

Trade unions and political parties, on the other hand, shared a very different view of representative politics. For instance, according to a representative of the Greek Left-wing party 'Synaspismos', political party members found it difficult to accept that within the ESF organizing process their representative had the same status as an individual activist (Theodwrakopoulou, N., Personal Interview, 2004). Trade unions seemed to regard the practice of direct, consensual politics equally baffling. In the words of Alex Gordon from RMT:

'I don't understand what somebody means when they say "I'm speaking as an individual or as part of a network but I'm not representative of that network" because ok, why did you mention that you were part of that network, it's, in one sense maybe there is something very very profound, some philosophical profound point that I don't appreciate and that somebody needs to explain to me about what non-representative democracy is supposed to be but I'm very suspicious of it because one of the battles trade unionists often have to fight within their own organizations is to make sure that their organizations are being representative, very very often the problem is that they're not representative, that you have people speaking for workers rather than actually workers mandating and delegating people to speak on their behalf, so I'm always very very suspicious, I find it, it reminds me of actually not a different kind of democracy but actually a lack of democracy' (Gordon, A., Personal Interview, 2004).

Another activist from the 'Vertical' camp talked about the 'tyranny of structurelessness' and lack of accountability that is often associated with such politics:

'I think electing people is good because unless you elect people and you know what their responsibilities are how can they be held accountable to the members if they don't do what

they say they're doing or if they're take you down the wrong track, you can't get rid of them unless they have been elected [...] some people would describe that as vertical and think it's a problem' (Hudson, K., Personal Interview, 2004).

Obviously, these different understandings of democracy and representation were so deeply ingrained in the actors participating in the forum that could not be altered through a one-year deliberation over the organizing of the ESF. And since the support of the trade unions and the GLA was deemed indispensable for hosting the forum in London, the 'Vertical' camp opted for a sort of compromise between participatory and representative democracy in order to secure the involvement of the trade unions and the GLA. As one of my interviewees put it:

'what we've tried to do in London is to kind of compromise between the two conceptions of democracy, to follow the kind of consensus-based decision making but on the basis of representatives and organizations participating and for that kind of process it's hard not to try for that kind of compromise, because, because ultimately you do have to organize the event, you do have to get things done' (Callinicos, A., Personal Interview, 2005).

This compromise was embodied in the establishment of the Co-ordinating Committee, which, as I noted in the previous section, admitted as full members only one representative from each group or organization affiliated to the process. As another interviewee from the 'Vertical' camp noted, issues of representation are inescapable since, at least informally, the opinions of those representing larger organizations carry more weight. In the words of Chris Nineham from SWP and Globalise Resistance:

'trust depends on a mutual recognition of a certain balance of forces in the movement and if one group feels that, you know, they have been under-represented, I mean, you know, in a sense representation comes through the back door, do you see my point? In the sense that, you know, in a decision making process people have to agree who has what kind of weight, it's impossible, it would be absurd to think that, you know, one individual who is a part of a network could have the same, in the end of the day could have the same ability to make decisions as someone who is from say Friends of the Earth, you know, it's impossible for that to happen because if that did happen then Friends of the Earth would never be involved, so, so you know... at some level there has to be a concept of representativeness, even if it's not formal, not quantifiable' (Personal Interview, 2004).

However, with the Charter of Principles stating explicitly that the forum 'does not constitute a locus of power to be disputed by the participants in its meeting' and that '[i]t upholds respect for Human Rights, the practices of real democracy, participatory

democracy, peaceful relations, in equality and solidarity' (2001: n.p.), this view seems to contravene the founding principles of the forum. It is thus little surprise that this compromise between participatory and representative democracy enraged the 'Horizontalists' who accused the 'Verticals' for attempting to turn the ESF into some sort of top-down, Marxist conference (Ruiz, J., Personal Interview, 2004; Hodgkinson, S., Personal Interview, 2004). Responding to these accusations, activists from the 'Vertical' side noted that the Charter of Principles was not written in stone and that the organizing principles should spring organically from the movement. According to Nineham, 'those principles will be tested by what people in the movement do, if people in the movement think that's sensible can them up then fine but if people in the movement reject them then, then, you know, they're history, I don't think we should see them as sacred texts' (Personal Interview, 2004). The same activist also remarked that while the open space idea had been quite successful in bringing together groups who do not normally work together, 'maybe it will evolve in a different way now, I'm not saying that it will but it's possible that it will and I don't think we should be afraid of change' (ibid).

Therefore, originating from opposing understandings of the goals and politics of social forums, as well as of democracy itself, the conflict between the Horizontalists and the Verticals was never resolved. Instead, this polarization seemed to have demolished any sense of unity between the two factions. As one of the 'Horizontal' interviewees put it:

'one of the conceptions of the forum is that it will provide, it's supposed to provide us a space of interaction and potentially networking between people working from, in slightly different areas, working out of different political and movement traditions and so they, in that way, trying to articulate new movement subjectivities, something like that, I mean and it singularly failed to do that in London in a way, I mean it is very clear there is no communal subjectivity' (Reyes, O., Personal Interview, 2004).

According to an interviewee from the 'Vertical' side, the London ESF organizing process 'led to a total breakdown of trust' (Callinicos, A., Personal Interview, 2004).

However, the British ESF organizing process was not a total failure. As the same 'Horizontal' interviewee noted:

'it wasn't a complete dispersal or breakdown but it was a kind of polarization, which meant that you had a very clear [...] line of demarcation and division and actually most people actively involved in the process could be put more or less, more or less comfortably in one or the other of those two camps and I don't think that's particularly productive from it, but however there are things that can potentially grow out of that, for example, in the kind of

'democratic opposition' camp [...] through being involved that generated a certain amount of sort of personal respect and trust and [...] there is a set of working relationships (which) didn't exist previously, couldn't exist without the forum' (Reyes, O., Personal Interview, 2004).

An activist belonging to the 'Verticals' made a similar remark about the other camp saying that:

'it has had a positive effect in terms of two, two components of the Left that I'm referring to, the labour movement and the peace movement which are internally quite diverse because they stretch from the farmlands to quite mainstream labour people, I think it's, I mean, it's had a visibly marked positive effect in that respect' (Callinicos, A., Personal Interview, 2004).

Therefore, the ESF organizing process rendered the British Left more united and more fragmented at the same time. While it deepened the chasm between the 'Horizontals' and the 'Verticals', it also consolidated the relations within each faction.

As I will show in the next Chapter, the line of demarcation between the 'Horizontals' and the 'Verticals' extended to their use and understanding of new communication technologies. What is more, the power play between the two camps was translated in a conflict over the management and control of the official ESF website, which seriously delayed its development.

8. Use of the Web in the Preparatory Process of the London 2004 ESF

8.1. The Process of Developing the Official Website and its Problems

The process of developing the official website for the London 2004 ESF encountered a series of problems that limited its use for the organizing of the forum. One of the initial problems was the late handover of the web domain from the French to the British organizers. According to an interviewee from SWP and Globalise Resistance, the French were partly to blame since 'the handover was very bumpy, it was just to do with broader political problems, but not, essentially not technical problems as far as I understand it' (Nineham, C., Personal Interview, 2004). However, for the French activists who were responsible for the Paris ESF website, the problem of the handover originated from the miscommunication between the two sides, as well as the unwillingness of their British counterparts to take advantage of the software that had already been created and used for Paris (Jesover, L., Personal Interview, 2004; Ben Youssef, A., Personal Interview, 2004; Vannini, L., Personal Interview, 2004).

The British movement also seemed unwilling to use the skills and knowledge of activists in the movement who were offering to work voluntarily for the development of the website. As an interviewee belonging to the 'Horizontalists' noted, there was no deliberation or even consultation about the website which:

'would have been much more, much more efficient, simply because there was a lot of knowledge in the ESF process of how the previous process had worked since then and then some sort of learning that has gone through that, all of which was disregarded because there was no attempt to do, to construct the website in that way and in fact it wasn't even a consultation, it was, you know, at that stage it was a non-consultation, basically some people at the GLA, I don't know who they asked, they didn't ask very many people, they didn't ask in any serious way people who have previously done the website, people who have a lot of computer skills, have a lot of practical skills around social forum organizing' (Reyes, Personal Interview, 2004).

Indeed, the minutes of the Organizing Committee held on the 5th of February 2004 clearly state its decision to 'ask the GLA to procure the website'. This provided the GLA with a degree of leverage over the content of the website and its process of development. Governed by a managerial logic favouring centralisation and control, the GLA was not prepared to delegate the website to the technical activists of the movement.

As an interviewee from CPGB put, 'we never decided it that a company would do it, it was just been done, it was announced "well that's where GLA is going to spend its so called donation on", take or leave it' (Becker, T., Personal Interview, 2004). In an article published on the website of the Transnational Institute, Wainwright reiterated this point noting that '[t]he overly bureaucratic control of the web-site is symbolic of a wider problem of mistrust of the capacity of the self-organised new movements' (2004: n.p.). An activist from the SWP and Globalise Resistance, on the other hand, viewed this situation under a much more positive light:

'I think some of the major players were very worried about the possibility that groups might try and, you know, might try and use the web as a way of pushing particular political agendas and so, so in that sense it's always a very very slow process of trying to find a way of having a website that everyone feels secure and comfortable with but I think we've done it' (Nineham, C., Personal Interview, 2004).

The website was thus contracted out to a company, Green Net, without any prior consultation of the movement. Inevitably, the decision was criticized for its lack of transparency and disregard of the existing skills and knowledge of 'alter-globalization' activists. Indeed, the decision to employ Green Net was not publicly recorded, as it is not included in any of the minutes of meetings held at the time.

The high cost of the website constituted a source of further tension for the movement. The figure reportedly reached £40,000, even though, again, the costs and budget of the website were not publicized. Given the limited funds of the ESF, as well as the fact that the website could have been procured by expert volunteers for a fraction of the price, the cost of the website was deemed exuberant. The GLA attributed this figure to the 'pay section' of the website that had to be made as secure as possible, even though the 'pay section' of the French website, based entirely on software created by volunteers, had worked well. In addition, when the final version of the website went online, many activists remarked that there were hardly any differences with the temporary one that was operating until then. According to the representative of Friends of the Earth, for instance:

'it's outrageous that we spent all this money on a contractor that just didn't... when the new website came up I was shocked that it looked the same as the other, you know, there's no changes, I couldn't see any changes between the two and we've got so many people with

internet web skills within the ESF process that could've, would've done it much cheaper or for free, I find it shocking actually and appalling' (Hannah Griffiths, Personal Interview, 2004).

It is worth noting here that the technical activists attempted to become involved in the development of the website by pressing for the establishment of a Communications Working Group that was finally set up in the meeting of the Organizing Committee on the 29th of March 2004. According to an unofficial email sent shortly afterwards, the group would 'deal with general communications needs, which could range from providing ICT to looking at info-flow bottlenecks' (*communications working group meeting, 2004*). It would also include a Web sub-group which would be responsible for liaising with the company about the official website. However, members of this sub-group would have to be members of the Co-ordinating Committee. According to the same unofficial email '[t]his stems from the need to make sure that the information on the official site is accurate and approved by the official ESF bodies. This item is the only one that is not up for discussion' (*ibid*). This was understandably a point of contention and led to vigorous discussion on the ESF email lists. Responding to this debate, the author of the unofficial email who had a central role in setting up the Communications group explained:

'[t]he devil in detail is that the people from the old guard already tried to pass a list of names to be approved BEFORE any CWG [Communications Working Group] was formed. The proposal was to have that group as a subcommittee of the Co-ordinating Committee, independent from any working group. We managed to temporarily block such a clumsy attempt to politically control the communications process. However, the issue remains that the website will need a dedicated group liaising with the company, and that this is obviously perceived as something that needs to be controlled' (Re: [democratisESF] communications working group meeting, 2004).

Nevertheless, these attempts to decentralize the responsibility for the website did not succeed and the Communications group became slowly defunct. In a personal interview two months later, the same activist remarked: 'at the moment we have a communication group... we worked really hard to get it through and it's been emptied of meaning' (Ruiz, J., Personal Interview, 2004).

Recognizing that the official website of what was ultimately a European event should not be entirely controlled by the organizing committee of the host country, the European Preparatory Assembly in Berlin on the 16-18 June 2004 ratified a proposal to create a European working group for 'Memory and Systematization' that would oversee the communications, technology, and knowledge generated by the ESF process. The group

would be generally responsible for maintaining and updating the ESF domain (<http://www.esf-fse.org>) and installing a consistent process for managing the ESF website that made full use of the movement's communication skills and expertise.

8.2. The Official Website: Advantages and Disadvantages

The final version of the website finally went live on the 7th of July 2004, while the option of advance registration and payment started functioning in the end of that month, on the 26th of July. The official website of the London ESF (which was 'frozen' after the event and remains accessible at <http://www.ukesf.net/> as part of the history of the movement) was simply designed and oriented towards the provision of information concerning the purpose of the forum, as well as transport, accommodation, and registration for the event. The website also had a separate page with the programme of the ESF and another one for the press. An additional section was devoted to the minutes and meetings of the ESF organizing process, while there was also a page, added after the event, concerning the memory of the forum, including reports from seminars and workshops that took place at the time. The website was available in five languages (English, French, Spanish, Italian and German).

Positive views about the official website centred on its accessibility and secure online registration. For instance, one of my interviewees mentioned that 'online registration worked well, we had something like 12,000 advance online registrations which was massively much more huge than the previous two things' (Hudson, K., Personal Interview, 2004). However, negative views far outweighed the positive ones, as even some of its defenders admitted that the official website was not perfect (Nineham, C., Personal Interview, 2004). The problem derived from the specific goals set by the Coordinating Committee and its underlying communicative logic. In that respect, and as one of my interviewees noted, the official website:

'was more of an event-driven website, rather than a process-driven website, [...] in other words the conception of the forum that people, particularly the GLA wasn't just them but, have that the social forum was an event, was a big show or exhibition in October in London and we need a website that met the needs of that which meant that you can buy your tickets online and that was the key aspect, that's why it became a political issue, you can buy your tickets online, it was integral to the GLA sort of funding plan and that you could find out basically, and

more than that, it was just finding out basic information, I mean that kind of website works for certain things, it doesn't work for a social forum' (Reyes, O., Personal Interview, 2004).

Indeed, the priority of the online registration function is evident in the minutes of the Organizing Committee on the 29th of January 2004 which stated that:

'the financial constraints on a UK hosting of the ESF would make it very important that registration was efficient and as far as possible carried out in advance. This in turn requires a well functioning web-site able to cope securely with thousands of financial transactions from registrations from all over Europe as well as the development of the programme and organization of the Forum'.

What seems to be at play here is the distinction between two different conceptions of the ESF: one that viewed it as an event and another that emphasized its process aspect. As I explained in detail in the previous chapter, this distinction constituted one of the main lines of demarcation between the 'Horizontals' and the 'Verticals'. The interesting point to note here is that each conception generated a different understanding of the purpose and functions of the official website.

Other criticisms of the official website mentioned that it was too text-based and dull. For instance, according to the representative of Friends of the Earth, the website 'doesn't grab your attention, it's just text', while 'the information about what the ESF is is not that motivating, it's not that inspiring, if I was an outsider, it wouldn't really, you know, it wouldn't be, I wouldn't see it and think "wow I got to be involved in that"' (Griffiths, H., Personal Interview, 2004). An activist from CPGB concurred: 'it's an official website with no debates, no, no, nothing lively about it, nothing that's, nothing that's vibrant, it's all controlled, very controlled information, so that's, that's very boring' (Becker, T., Personal Interview, 2004).

And it was exactly because of this control aspect that the uploading of information on the website was relatively slow as everything had to be approved by the Co-ordinating Committee. Evidence for this can be found in the minutes of the Co-ordinating Committee where, on the 12th of August 2004, '[i]t was agreed that alterations /amendments/ corrections to the website should be proposed to the cttee for discussion and agreement'. As an activist from CND noted, the delay in updating the website 'wasn't a problem with the internet, that was a problem with us getting all the material ready and agreed to put on, you know, take it to the Co-ordinating committee for approval and all that' (Hudson, K., Personal Interview, 2004).

This slow process of uploading content limited the use of the official website for the organization of the forum. As the representative of Friends of the Earth noted, 'the information that's on there is incomplete, the minutes, the meetings that are on there, the notices of when the next meeting is are not on there' (Griffiths, H., Personal Interview, 2004). This was noted by other interviewees as well and was a source of complaints and contention on the lists. Indeed, a cursory look at the London website seems to verify this as minutes of the meetings of the Co-ordinating Committee, which was founded in the beginning of February 2004, started to be uploaded from the 20th of May onwards, a full three and a half months into the process¹. With minutes of meetings or announcements posted late or missing altogether, most of the information about the organizing process was distributed through other channels, formal or informal.

Activists belonging to the 'Horizontal' side were very critical of the strict control exercised on the official website by the 'Vertical' camp. According to a Spanish Indymedia activist:

'the only things that are on the official website are the things that are approved by the central committee, Co-ordinating committee but the, I mean in a way I could understand that part of the website has to be like that, you know, that you just have to make very clear, you know, what is already approved but I think there is this lack of understanding of communication as a two-way process' (Ruiz, J., Personal Interview, 2004).

This lack of two-way communication was also mentioned by the Friends of the Earth representative who remarked that the official website 'is very one-way, it's not interactive at all, it's just, you know, things appear on it' (Griffiths, H., Personal Interview, 2004).

In other words, the official website seemed to follow a rather broadcasting logic, placing its emphasis on the provision of information and disregarding the more interactive aspects of the technology. In the words of Massimo de Angelis, 'you can use the internet as a big book, as a big megaphone, you know, like the GLA want to use the ESF or website with pages which have been approved by committees' (Personal Interview, 2004), while Hannah Griffiths concurred: 'the official process is using it [the internet] in its most basic "here's some information" form' (Personal Interview, 2004). These two opposing views on the use of the web, one following a broadcast logic

¹ The problem was also raised in the meetings of the Co-ordinating Committee. For instance, somewhat comically, with only six weeks to go for the event to take place, the minutes of the Co-ordinating Committee in the beginning of September, stated that '[a]ll meetings being organised need to be noted on the website to encourage as broad participation as possible' (2 September 2004).

emphasizing the wide dissemination of information from a centre to an audience, the other following a more interactive logic emphasizing the use of the web for collaboration, seem to map onto the distinction between the 'Horizontals' and the 'Verticals'. Again the conception of the ESF as an event versus its perception as a process is an important line of demarcation.

It is also worth noting that the broadcasting logic governing the website did not leave much space for a more creative use of the website in the process of putting together the programme of the ESF. While the website was effectively used for the proposal of seminars and workshops, it did not allow for these groups and organizations to network with each other and self-organize. Instead, the merging process had to be undertaken by a European Programme Committee which then imposed its decisions in top-down way. According to an SWP and Globalise Resistance activist, the ideas to use the official website in that way were raised too late for them to be effectively applied (Nineham, C., Personal Interview, 2004). However, for one of my interviewees belonging to the 'Horizontal' camp the problem was not the timing, but rather the fact that 'those aspects weren't considered to be fundamental' (Reyes, C., Personal Interview, 2004). The Friends of the Earth representative reiterated this point, saying that the website could have at least been used for consultation: 'the whole thing about using it in the seminars and workshop proposals to connect people up and again to change consultation that was completely missed opportunity that could have been done weeks and weeks and weeks ago' (Griffiths, H., Personal Interview, 2004).

8.3. The esf2004.net Website

In the meantime, an alternative website to the official one had already started operating since January 2004. Set up by a British activist living in France, the goal of the website was to provide an open space where people could organize according to the Charter of Principles and to serve as a 'focal point' for the discussions on the ESF lists (Johnson, H., Personal Interview, 2004). After its creator's considerable effort to promote the website, both online and offline, and to persuade people to contribute content (ibid), the esf2004.net website gradually became a hub of activity for the camp of the 'democratic opposition'.

Based on tiki-wiki technology, the esf2004.net website exhibited a very different communicative logic than the one governing the official website. Tiki-wiki allowed

registered users to create their own pages and to upload a wide range of content, including information on the working groups, announcements and minutes of meetings, as well as online consultations. The website was also used for the co-writing of petitions and proposals, as well as the collection of signatures for these proposals. What is more, the esf2004.net website contained several discussion fora, as well as pages with detailed information concerning the organizing structure of the London ESF and a list of all the available email lists that one could subscribe to. The website was overseen by some technologically adept activists who had an 'editor account' and who were responsible for 'tidying up' the website – in terms of restructuring but not erasing content –, as well as maintaining its front page.

Hence, according to the representative from Friends of the Earth, the spirit of the esf2004.net website was much closer to that of the social forum (Griffiths, H., Personal Interview, 2004), as it was sufficiently interactive and informative, providing some of the necessary tools for bottom-up organizing. According to some of my interviewees, the advantages of the tiki-wiki referred to its potential for web collaboration (Reyes, O., Personal Interview, 2004; de Angelis, M., Personal Interview, 2004), as well as its effectiveness for running online consultations (Griffiths, H., Personal Interview, 2004).

However, the quality of esf2004.net website was ultimately dependent on the willingness of activists to contribute information. In the words of the Spanish Indymedia activist who had an 'editor' account 'it's gonna be as good as people who come in and make it basically' (Ruiz, J., Personal Interview, 2004). With the number of people uploading content constantly increasing, the website started sprawling into different directions in a rather chaotic way. As the Friends of Earth representative noted, 'I don't think it is that well-structured, it's a bit, you know, it's quite representative of the ESF in a way, it's a kind of a big mess, "here it is", "here we are in all our glory"' (Griffiths, H., Personal Interview, 2004). According to a 'Horizontal' activist, the website was not user-friendly:

'the menu structure I didn't like basically, I thought it was quite difficult, [...] it's a bit of a danger if you do stuff where people who've got a quite high aptitude with the web, [...] I mean there's a tendency to forget that there are a lot of people who don't have that aptitude [...] I think it could have been done a bit better in that respect' (Reyes, O., Personal Interview, 2004).

Thus, for the uninitiated to the ESF organizing process or the ones lacking the necessary technical skills, the esf2004.net was a difficult website to navigate and comprehend. In addition, with its extensive criticism of the London process, the alternative website could not exactly inspire newcomers to become involved in the organizing process. As one of my interviewees put it:

'it's a bit too specialized, I mean you need to know really what is going on, it's not like it's very easy three-step you know entry point into the ESF process even for an alternative, there are just lots of things, it's really detailed these working groups are making a lot of information, it explains what it is but very quickly it gets into like these complicated, you know, constellation of groups and politics' (Ruiz, J., Personal Interview, 2004).

In a sense, the two websites, the official and the alternative one, were actually complementary. Oriented towards the needs of the event, the official website provided all of the information required by new participants to attend the event. However, the uploading of information was slow, as it had to be approved by the Co-ordinating Committee, and the website could not be sufficiently used for organizing as it was lacking the necessary information and interactive tools. The alternative website, on the other hand, could be used as a resource by activists already involved in the organizing process and familiar with the forum and its structure. It was however too confusing for the uninitiated who were looking for simple, pared-down information about the event.

Therefore, it would have been a wise decision to link-up the two websites and devote each one to a different function. To an extent, this seems to have been pursued by the 'editors' of the unofficial website but to no avail. As one of the 'editors' noted, 'we've been trying to have more connections between the official site and the different alternatives but it's really difficult, I mean there is like total refusal, you know, to link, who links to whom, that is the big politics of linking' (Ruiz, J., Personal Interview, 2004). In addition, constituting a hub of activity for the 'Horizontal' camp, the esf2004.net website was shunned by the activists belonging to the other side. When asked about their views on the alternative website, some of my interviewees from that camp said that they had never used or even accessed this website (Callinicos, A., Personal Interview, 2005; Nineham, C., Personal Interview, 2004).

It is worth noting here, that many of the activists who were intimately involved in the organizing process did not use either of the two websites, as they were receiving the necessary information through other sources, mainly email lists and face-to-face

meetings. For instance, speaking about the esf2004.net website, an activist from ATTAC UK remarked: 'I haven't used that very much, I think that's partly because I'm involved in the process anyway, I know what's happening anyway [...] And a lot of the information is repetitive' (Kotkowska, H., Personal Interview, 2004). Another activist concurred: 'I guess because I go to most of the meetings myself, I know most of this stuff that's going on' (Becker, T., Personal Interview, 2004).

Therefore, lacking a single website that could serve as the focal point for the organizing process of the London ESF and with activists using different websites according to their political allegiances, email lists were used much more extensively for the organizing of the forum. The delays and conflicts of the ESF process also contributed to this event. This is why, even though my initial research plan was to examine the function of the web, I have decided to focus instead on the use of email lists. This decision was also based on the results of my preliminary survey which suggested that email and email lists, on which the following results chapters will be focusing, played a more crucial role than websites in the mobilization for the Paris ESF.

9. Profiles of the Analysed Email Lists

9.1. Brief Description of Each Email List

The FSE-ESF email list was created on the 15th of March 2002 by the French web team of the Paris 2003 ESF organizing process (Jesover 2005). The list, which is still in operation, is open to subscription through the website of the ESF (<http://www.fse-esf.org>), but it is not publicly archived.

The *esf-uk-info* list was set up in order to facilitate the mobilization of British activists for the Paris 2003 ESF. The date of its establishment, as well as the identity of the activists who created it, remain obscure. At first, activists could join the list through the website of the British mobilization for Paris. However, after Paris, when that website became defunct, it was rather unclear how someone could subscribe. The list was publicly archived at <http://lists.southspace.net>. It is worth noting that after the London 2004 ESF, the list ceased to exist and its archives disappeared from the server. The reasons for this have yet to be specified as even its webmaster could not shed any light on the issue.

The *democratisESF* list was founded in November 2003 by Stuart Hodkinson, a writer for Red Pepper and member of the British mobilization network. According to my interview with Hodkinson, the list was created in order to spread information about the London bid and to alert as many activists as possible about the lack of transparency in the process. Its setting up was simple: Hodkinson selected a number of activists from his contact list whom he thought would be sympathetic to the cause and signed them up on the email list without their permission. He then sent the first email informing them about the purpose of the list, apologizing for the unorthodox way in which it was set up and giving members the opportunity to unsubscribe, if they so wished. And despite some complaints from apprehensive activists, most of them decided to remain subscribed (Hodkinson, S., Personal Interview, 2004). Therefore, the initial members of the *democratisESF* list were all Hodkinsons' contacts, pre-selected for their potential support to the cause of 'democratizing the ESF'. This meant that the *democratisESF* list was much more homogenous than the other two lists. The *democratisESF* is publicly archived

at <http://lists-riseup.net> and is still in operation even though postings are currently sparse¹.

9.2. Total Number of Messages and Sample

As I explained in the 'Methods' chapter, I have decided to examine the three email lists in the time period starting from the 10th of November 2003 and ending on the 31st of October 2004, which was roughly the 'organizing year' of the London 2004 ESF. The table below presents the total number of messages in the sample period, as well as the number of sampled messages from each list. The third column displays the number of sampled messages from each list as a per cent of the total sample.

List	Total Number of Messages	Number of Sampled Messages	% of Total Sample
FSE-ESF	1591	159	38.3%
esf-uk-info	1068	107	25.8%
democratisESF	1487	149	35.9%
Total	4146	415	100.0%

Table 9.1: Total number of messages and sample

As it is obvious from Table 9.1, the FSE-ESF list has the highest total number of messages with this figure reaching 1,591. The democratisESF is a close second with 1,487, while the esf-uk-info list comes third with 1,068 messages. In turn, this is reflected in the sample composition, where messages from the FSE-ESF list represent 38.3% of the sample, while 35.9% is taken up by the democratisESF. The remaining 25.8% of the sample consists of messages from the esf-uk-info list.

In the analyses that follow, the total number of authors, the estimates of author and message overlap, as well as the timeline of messages were calculated based on the total number of messages posted on each list in the sample period. The remainder of the results refers to the 10% random sample.

9.3. Total Number of Authors

Table 9.2 presents the total number of authors who have posted on each list in the sample period. As it is evident from the table, the FSE-ESF list has by far the highest number of authors compared to the other two lists whose figures are comparable.

¹ It is worth noting here that the number of subscribers on each list was never made publicly available.

List	Total Number of Authors
FSE-ESF	390
esf-uk-info	204
democratisESF	192

Table 9.2: Total number of authors

9.4. Overlaps Between the Three Lists

9.4.1. Author Overlaps

Author overlaps reveal the degree to which the same voices were heard in all of the examined lists. The tables that follow display the number of authors in each list who posted solely to the list in question, as well as the number of those who also sent messages to the other two lists. The third column of each table presents these figures as a percent of the total number of authors in every list.

As it is obvious from the tables below, the FSE-ESF has the highest per cent of authors posting only on this list (78.7%), while the esf-uk-info list has the lowest per cent (42.6%). The democratisESF comes second, with 58.3% of its authors sending messages only to this list. Therefore, the esf-uk-info list is the one with the highest author overlap with the other two lists. According to Table 9.4, 20.1% of the authors on the esf-uk-info list also post on the FSE-ESF, 18.6% also post on the democratisESF, while another 18.6% send messages to both these lists. On the other hand, the author overlap between the FSE-ESF and democratisESF lists is minimal, as only four authors have posted on both these two lists without also sending messages to the esf-uk-info list.

FSE-ESF	number	% of authors
Only FSE-ESF	307	78.7%
& democratisESF	4	1.0%
& esf-uk-info	41	10.5%
All 3 Lists	38	9.7%
Total	390	100.0%

Table 9.3: Author overlaps for the FSE-ESF list (% of total number of authors on the FSE-ESF list)

esf-uk-info	number	% of authors
Only esf-uk-info	87	42.6%
& democratisESF	38	18.6%
& FSE-ESF	41	20.1%
All 3 Lists	38	18.6%
Total	204	100.0%

Table 9.4: Author overlaps for the esf-uk-info list (% of total number of authors on the esf-uk-info list)

democratisESF	number	% of authors
Only democratisESF	112	58.3%
& esf-uk-info	38	19.8%
& FSE-ESF	4	2.1%
All 3 Lists	38	19.8%
Total	192	100.0%

Table 9.5: Author overlaps for the democratisESF list (% of total number of authors on the democratisESF list)

9.4.2. Message Overlaps

In terms of message overlaps, the three lists share a relatively similar per cent of their messages with other lists. As the following three tables reveal, with 17.2% of its messages appearing also on other lists, FSE-ESF has a slightly highest per cent of overlapping messages. This figure is 15.2% for the esf-uk-info list, while the democratisESF comes third with 14.5%. The tables in the following page present the frequencies and per cents of overlapping messages for each of the analysed email lists².

As it is obvious from Table 9.6, the FSE-ESF list has its largest overlap with the esf-uk-info list, accounting for 27.7% of the overlapping messages and 4.8% of the total number messages on the FSE-ESF list. The second largest overlap is with the lists of European Networks or Working Groups, such as the European Network of Medical Workers or the European Programme list. It is also notable that the overlap with the

² I estimated message overlaps based on the subject line of the message. In that respect, if the subject line included an indication that this message was also sent to another list or was forwarded to/from another list or was a reply from a message to another list, then it was counted in the overlapping messages. For instance, the subject line '[esf-uk-info] [FSE-ESF] A reply to Javier' shows that the message was sent to both the FSE-ESF and esf-uk-info lists, while the subject line '[esf-uk-info] Fwd: [FSE-ESF] About the European Assembly' means that this message was initially forwarded to the FSE-ESF list and then sent to the esf-uk-info. However, if a subscriber sends an identical message to two lists separately, then the subject line of the message will not indicate that this message was sent to both lists. Therefore, these figures may be actually underestimating the degree of message overlaps.

democratisESF list is quite insignificant representing just 7.3% of the overlapping messages and 1.3% of the total number of messages. The per cent of overlapping messages with either or both of the esf-uk-info and democratisESF lists accounts for 35% of the total number of overlapping messages on the FSE-ESF list or 6.1% of the total number of messages.

FSE-ESF	Frequency	% of Overlapping	% of Total
esf-uk-info	76	27.7%	4.8%
democratisESF	20	7.3%	1.3%
ESF working group	38	13.9%	2.4%
European network	55	20.1%	3.5%
WSF network	10	3.6%	0.6%
Group/Organization	17	6.2%	1.1%
National Social Forum	29	10.6%	1.8%
Other	4	1.5%	0.3%
Unknown	19	6.9%	1.2%
Total	274	100.0%	17.2%

Table 9.6: Overlapping messages between the FSE-ESF list and other lists

esf-uk-Info	Frequency	% of Overlapping	% of Total
FSE-ESF	79	48.8%	7.4%
democratisESF	31	19.1%	2.9%
FSE-ESF & democratisESF	15	9.3%	1.4%
ESF working group	7	4.3%	0.7%
FSE-ESF & working group	1	0.6%	0.1%
Local Social Forum	4	2.5%	0.4%
Group/Organization	4	2.5%	0.4%
Alternative Space	9	5.6%	0.8%
WSF Bulletin	3	1.9%	0.3%
Other	9	5.6%	0.8%
Total	162	100.0%	15.2%

Table 9.7: Overlapping messages between the esf-uk-info list and other lists

As Table 9.7 shows, the picture is quite different for the esf-uk-info list. While most of the overlapping messages of this list are with the FSE-ESF, representing 48.8% of overlapping messages and 7.4% of the total number of messages, the esf-uk-info list has

a quite significant overlap with the democratisESF. Common messages with the latter account for 19.1% of the overlapping messages and 2.9% of the total number of messages on the esf-uk-info list. In addition, overlaps with both of the FSE-ESF and democratisESF lists account for 9.3% of the overlapping messages, raising the per cent of overlapping messages with either or both of these lists to 77.2% or 11.7% of the total number of messages.

democratisESF	Frequency	% of Overlapping	% of Total
FSE-ESF	37	17.1%	2.5%
esf-uk-info	102	47.2%	6.9%
ESF working group	16	7.4%	1.1%
European working group/network	13	6.0%	0.9%
Local Social Forum	18	8.3%	1.2%
Group/Organization	8	3.7%	0.5%
Alternative Space	14	6.5%	0.9%
Other	8	3.7%	0.5%
Total	216	100.0%	14.5%

Table 9.8: Overlapping messages between the democratisESF list and other lists

The democratisESF list, on the other hand, has the largest per cent of overlapping messages with the esf-uk-info list, with such messages representing 47.2% of overlapping messages on this list or 6.9% of the total number of messages. The second largest overlap is with the FSE-ESF list, accounting for 17.1% of overlapping messages or 2.5% of the total number of messages. Therefore, the degree of overlap with either or both the FSE-ESF and esf-uk-info lists represents 64.3% of the overlapping messages or 9.4% of the total number of messages.

Hence, as with the author overlaps, the esf-uk-info list seems to 'mediate' between the FSE-ESF and democratisESF lists. In that respect, while the FSE-ESF and democratisESF lists have a low degree of message overlap, they seem share to the highest per cent of their overlapping messages with the esf-uk-info list. Thus, to an extent, the online space seems to mirror the geographical distinctions of the offline, with the national mediating between the international and the specific space of the national faction.

This assumption is strengthened when we examine the flow of messages between the three lists. Table 9.9 displays the frequencies and per cents of messages from each list that were either forwarded from or appeared first in one of the other two. Please note that the figures are lower than the ones of overlapping messages, as here I examine the messages that flow only between the FSE-ESF, esf-uk-info, and democratisESF lists. In addition, messages posted to two or three lists simultaneously were not counted as they did not move from one list to the other.

	from FSE-ESF	from esf-uk-Info	from democratisESF	Total
FSE-ESF				
Frequency	-	78	19	97
% of Overlapping	-	28.5%	6.9%	35.4%
% of Total	-	4.9%	1.2%	6.1%
esf-uk-info				
Frequency	57	-	40	97
% of Overlapping	35.2%	-	24.7%	59.9%
% of Total	5.3%	-	3.7%	9.0%
democratisESF				
Frequency	29	106	-	135
% of Overlapping	13.4%	49.1%	-	62.5%
% of Total	2.0%	7.1%	-	9.1%

Table 9.9: Flows of messages between the three lists

As Table 9.9 shows, the per cent of messages travelling from the FSE-ESF list to the other two is higher than the per cent of those with the reverse journey. In terms of the esf-uk-info and democratisESF lists, messages tend to flow from the esf-uk-info to the democratisESF list rather than vice versa. Therefore, messages seem to travel from the European level down to the specific level of the national faction, while counter-flows are less significant. This possibly indicates that information appearing on the European list is more valuable to the national or faction levels than vice versa. It is also worth noting here that the per cents of messages flowing to the FSE-ESF list from national lists other than the British were very low. The esf-uk-info list constituted an exception as it was the national list of the host-country of the ESF. It is also the national list experiencing less language barriers than the rest. Since most of the messages on the European list are

written in English, information appearing there can be easily forwarded to the esf-uk-info list without the need for translation. Obviously, this is not the case for other European countries. For instance, one of my Greek interviewees noted that important documents posted on the FSE-ESF list have first to be translated in Greek in order to be circulated in the Greek national email list (Yulis, P., Personal Interview, 2004).

However, a point to note here is that if we take into account the per cents of total messages, then these differences seem nearly negligible. Lacking any other similar research, there is some difficulty to interpret these figures with certainty and to evaluate their significance.

9.5. Timeline

I have further examined the distribution of messages across time in order to discover whether the three lists shared similar traffic patterns. I also investigated the events that prompted traffic to peak as I was interested in finding out whether these peaks were related to offline rather than online events. Charts 9.1-9.3 present the timeline of messages for each of the analysed lists.

As it is obvious from the chart in the following page, the FSE-ESF list has a relatively regular distribution of messages, with a slump in April and May and a much higher peak after the London ESF in October 2004. The peaks in November 2003 are created by a large number of messages reflecting on the Paris 2003 ESF that had just taken place and disseminating reports and statements produced in the various seminars, workshops and plenary meetings. There were also numerous messages with authors asking to be unsubscribed from the list, possibly because, following the end of the Paris ESF, they were no longer interested in participating in the ESF preparatory process.

Around the 13th and 14th of December 2003 the number of messages mildly increased as the European networks and organizations prepared for the EPA in London. At this time there was also a number of messages posted on the list reflecting on the first meeting of the British mobilization that took place on the 3rd of December 2003, as well as some debates on the organizational and legal structure of the ESF preparatory process in the UK which was then at the centre of much conflict and tension within the British movement.

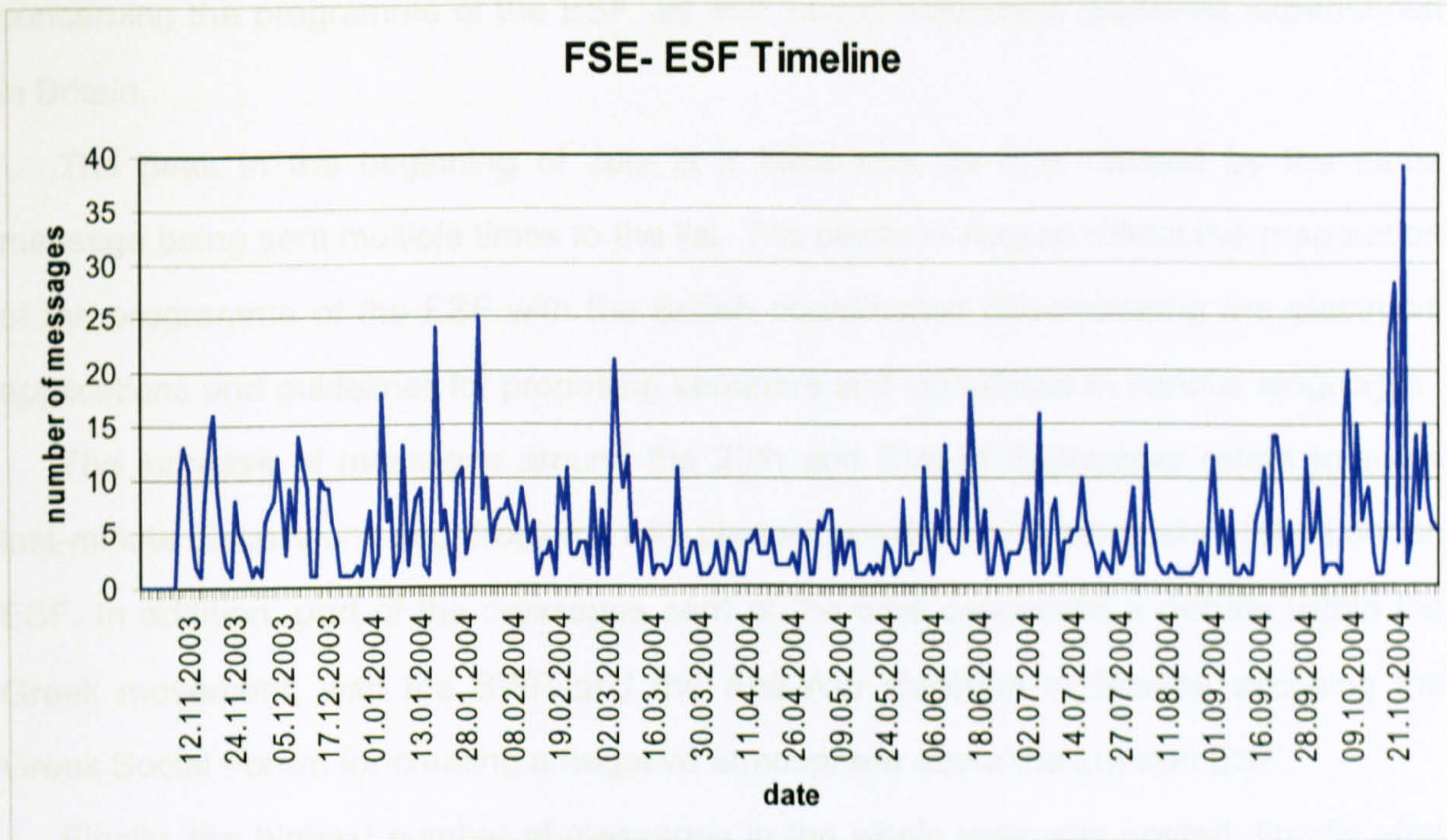


Figure 9.1: Timeline of messages posted on the FSE-ESF list

The peaks in the end of January 2004 represent certain debates within the French movement concerning the headscarf ban in France, as well as a demonstration against nuclear energy. It is worth noting here that since the FSE-ESF list was set up by the French web team in order to facilitate the European coordination for the Paris 2003 ESF, it had until then been used more extensively by the French movement which was more intimately involved in the Paris organizing process. This may explain why French activists may have felt more at ease to monopolize the list with debates internal to the French movement which would have been more suitably placed in the national list. This gradually ceased to be the case as the British movement took over the responsibility for organizing the next ESF in London.

The EPA in the beginning of March was partly responsible for the peak of messages at that time. The rest of the messages referred to an incident that will be discussed in greater detail in Chapter 11. This incident concerned the exclusion from the meetings of the UK Co-ordinating Committee of an activist working for the Weekly Worker. This caused an outrage in the British movement, while the activist in question circulated a document about the acceptable code of conduct in ESF meetings asking members of the list to pledge their support.

The increase of messages around the 16th of June 2004 is also a result of the impending EPA in Berlin and refers to the circulation of documents and statements

concerning the programme of the ESF, as well as the organizing problems experienced in Britain.

The peak in the beginning of July is a false one, as it is caused by the same message being sent multiple times to the list. The peaks in August reflect the preparation of the programme of the ESF with the British coordination disseminating the electronic applications and guidelines for proposing seminars and workshops in various languages.

The increase of messages around the 20th and 21st of September refers to some last-minute discussions and problems with plenary speakers and seminars at the London ESF. In addition, part of the messages sent at the time concerned a debate within the Greek movement, with the SWP and the Anti-War Coalition in Greece accusing the Greek Social Forum for creating a negative atmosphere about the London ESF.

Finally, the highest number of messages in the whole year was posted directly after the London ESF with activists debating about certain incidents and disruptions that occurred during the event. These referred to the interruption of a plenary meeting by certain activists objecting to one of the speakers, as well as the arrest of an Indymedia activist during the rally in Trafalgar Square after the demonstration. Other messages posted at the time disseminated reports and statements produced in seminars and workshops held at the ESF, as well as reflections and evaluations on the event.

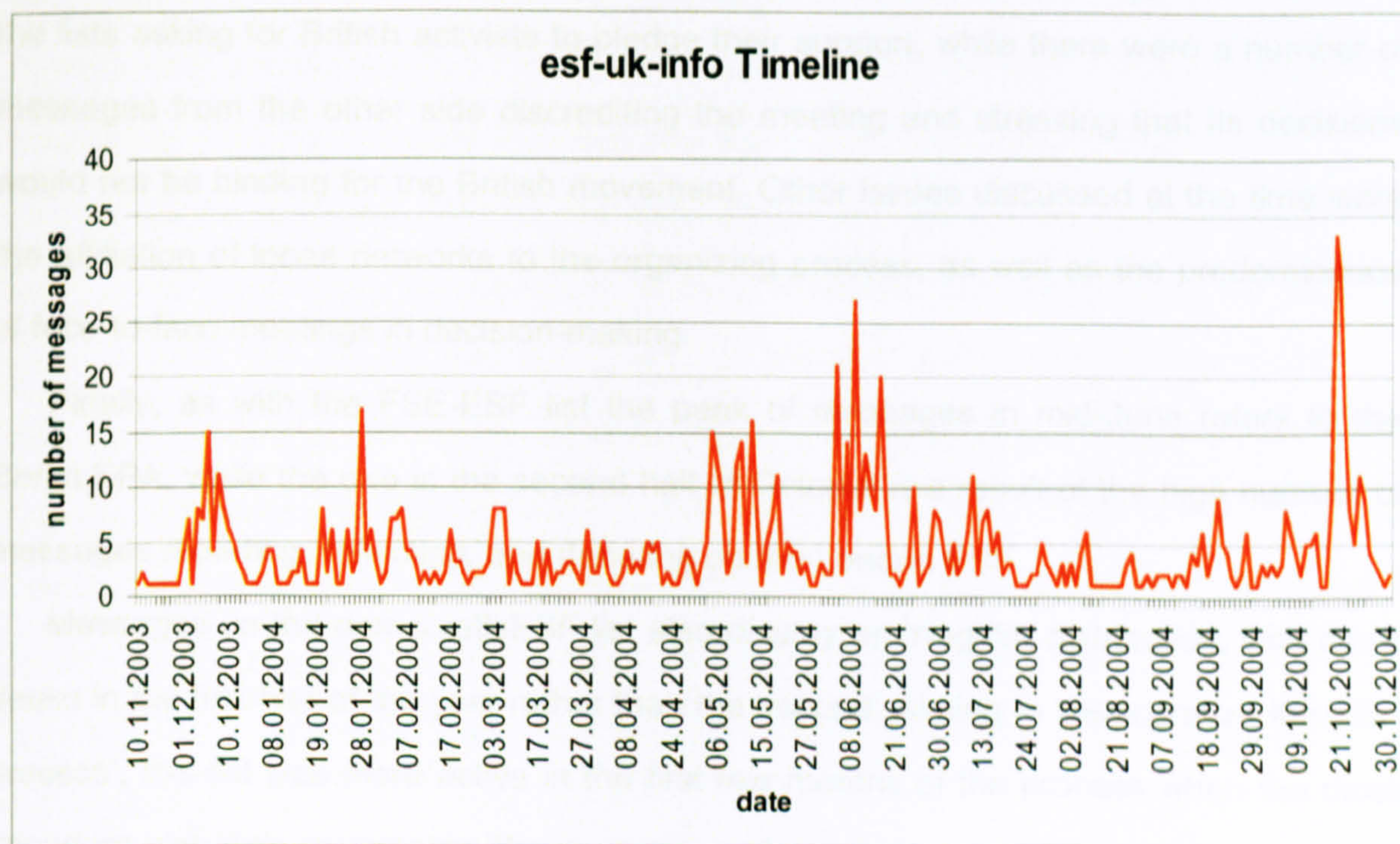


Figure 9.2: Timeline of messages posted on the esf-uk-info list

As for the esf-uk-info list and as the above chart shows, the distribution of messages across time is less regular. Similarly to the FSE-ESF list, the peak in the beginning of

December refers to the first meeting of the British coordination on the 3rd of December 2003 as well as the preparation of the EPA in London in mid-December.

The increase of messages in the end of January is caused by the first UK Assembly meeting on the 29th of January in London and concerns debates on the identity of the groups organizing the meeting, as well as the agenda. There is also a mild peak of messages in the beginning of March, around the EPA that was held in London on the 3rd and 4th of March. As with the FSE-ESF list, part of the messages at the time referred to the exclusion of the Weekly Worker activist from the UK Co-ordinating Committee meetings.

The two peaks in May are distinctive to the esf-uk-info list. The first one concerns an incident in the beginning of May when the URL of the official website was mistakenly leading to the website of the GLA. The second peak refers to a debate in mid-May on whether some websites calling themselves 'anti-globalisation' were part of the movement or not. Some messages in May also referred to the process of compiling and organizing the programme of the London ESF.

The peaks in the beginning of June, until the 11th, mostly refer to a controversial issue specific to the British coordination. As was described in Chapter 7, prior to the Berlin EPA there was a collective decision instigated from the 'Horizontal' camp to hold an unofficial UK Organizing Committee meeting. The groups circulated a statement on the lists asking for British activists to pledge their support, while there were a number of messages from the other side discrediting the meeting and stressing that its decisions would not be binding for the British movement. Other issues discussed at the time were the affiliation of loose networks to the organizing process, as well as the predominance of face-to-face meetings in decision-making.

Finally, as with the FSE-ESF list the peak of messages in mid-June refers to the Berlin EPA, while the one in the second half of October is a result of the high number of messages reporting, reflecting, and debating on the London ESF.

Messages on the democratisESF list also display an irregular distribution, with more peaks in the first half of the year rather than the second. Aiming to 'democratize the ESF process', this list was more active in the first few months of the process when the most important debates concerning the purpose and transparency of the decision-making bodies were taking place.

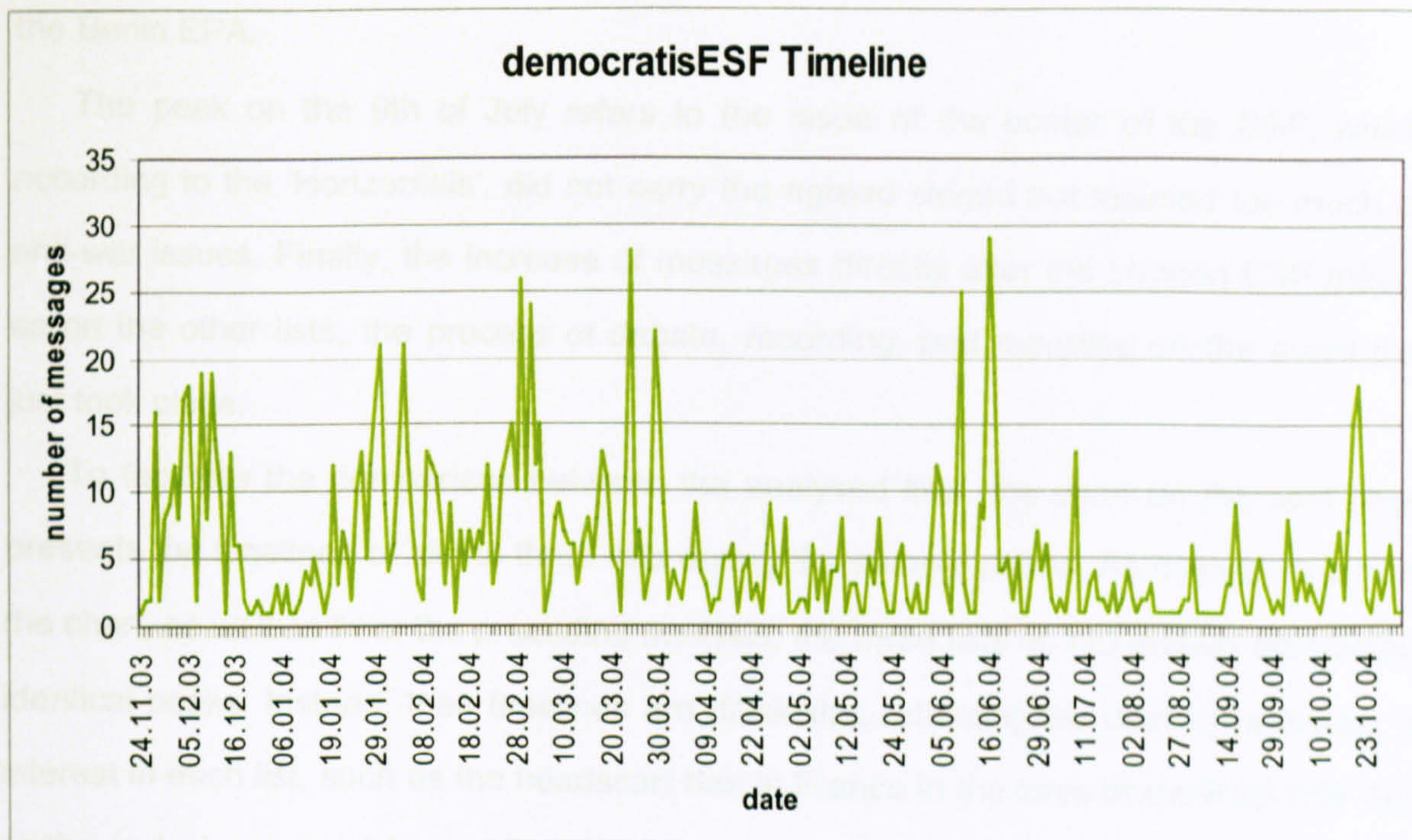


Figure 9.3: Timeline of messages posted on the democratisESF list

As with the other two lists, the peaks in the beginning of December refer to the first meeting of the UK coordination, as well as the EPA in London. On the other hand, the increased messages in February and in the beginning of March, until the EPA on the 6th and 7th of March, mostly concern the process of co-writing the 'Call of Democracy in the ESF process', a key statement that was circulated by the Horizontals as a petition and presented in the March EPA. Other messages referred to the practical matters of transport and accommodation for the EPA, as well as the issue of the 'code of conduct' in meetings that also occupied the other two lists in the beginning of March.

The peaks from the 18th to the 24th of March refer to the preparation for the Birmingham Organizing Committee in terms of transport, accommodation, the selection of facilitators, as well as the discussion of possible strategies and demands. The increased messages directly afterwards mainly belong to a discussion thread called 'Failure and Dejection' where certain activists expressed their disappointment with the Committee's decisions on the legal structure of the ESF in Britain. Other messages at the time referred to the re-designing of the esf2004.net website, as well as a letter of thanks to European activists for their support to the 'Horizontal' camp during the EPA in the beginning of March.

As in the [esf-uk-info](#) list, the peaks of messages in the first half of June refer to the unofficial UK Organizing Committee meeting prior to the Berlin EPA, while some of them concerned the issue of affiliation of loose networks to the organizing process. In addition,

and similarly to the other two lists, the increase of messages in mid-June is caused by the Berlin EPA.

The peak on the 9th of July refers to the issue of the poster of the ESF, which, according to the 'Horizontalists', did not carry the agreed slogan but focused too much on anti-war issues. Finally, the increase of messages directly after the London ESF reflect, as on the other lists, the process of debate, recording, and reporting on the event that just took place.

To facilitate the comparison between the analysed lists, the chart on the next page presents the timelines of all the three lists during the sample period. As it is obvious from the chart, as well as from the preceding analysis, the three lists do not display completely identical peaks. Instead, their timelines are dissimilar, reflecting the distinctive issues of interest in each list, such as the headscarf ban in France in the case of the FSE-ESF list, or the inclusiveness of face-to-face meetings in the case of the esf-uk-info list. In that respect, each list seems to possess its own rhythm in terms of the number of messages posted within each time-period.

However, the three lists are not entirely dissimilar since they share more than half of their peaks with either or both of the other two lists. For instance, all of the lists have peaks in the beginning of December as a result of both the first UK Coordination meeting and the first European Preparatory Assembly. There is also an increase of messages in all the lists just before the March EPA and around the time of the debate on the 'code of conduct' in the UK Co-ordinating Committee meetings. Furthermore, in every list messages have a peak just before the Berlin EPA in mid-June and directly after the London ESF in October. The esf-uk-info and democratisESF lists share two additional peaks, the one just before the UK Organizing committee in Birmingham in the end of January and the one in the beginning of June relating to the unofficial Organizing Committee meeting prior to Berlin.

What becomes apparent is that this set of offline meetings, both on a national and on a European level, constitute points of convergence of the movement, setting the pace of the messages posted on the lists. And while there are certainly divergences, with a specific set of issues being more of interest to one list rather than the others,

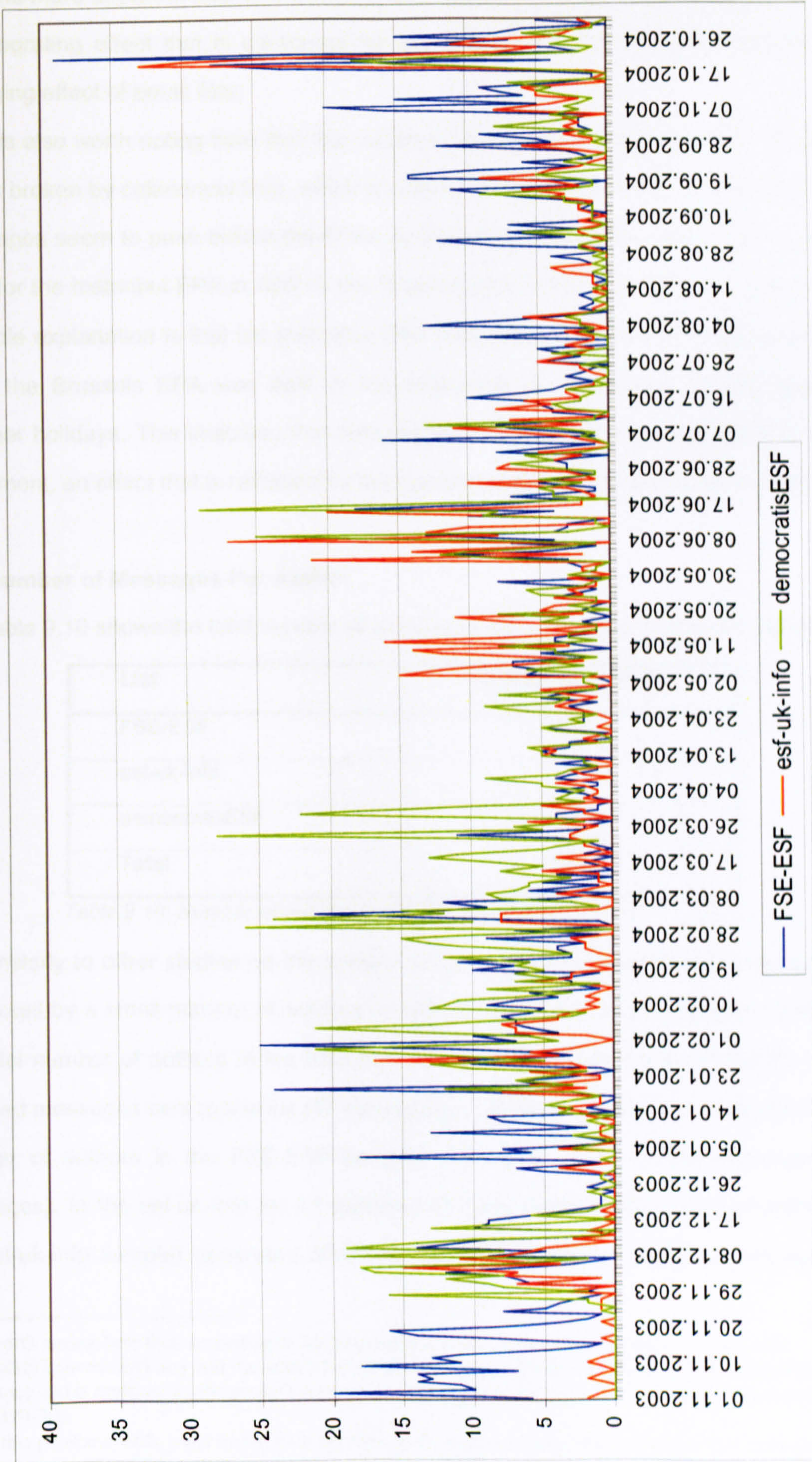


Figure 9.4: Combined timelines of messages posted on the three lists

the time schedule of offline meetings seems to serve as a unifying time structure that creates a degree of synchronization between the different lists. In a pattern that will become more apparent later in the thesis, face-to-face meetings seem to have a unifying or integrating effect that is contrasted by and complemented with the fragmenting or diverging effect of email lists.

It is also worth noting here that this continuity between the online and the offline is at points broken by calendrical time, which is external to the movement. For instance, while messages seem to peak before the EPAs in December, March and June, this is not the case for the Istanbul EPA in April or the Brussels one in the beginning of September. A possible explanation is that the Istanbul EPA took place directly after Easter that year, while the Brussels EPA was held in the beginning of September, directly after the summer holidays. This indicates that calendrical time influences the internal time of the movement, an effect that is reflected by the number of messages posted on the list¹.

9.6. Number of Messages Per Author

Table 9.10 shows the total number of authors in the 10% content analysis sample.²

List	Number of Authors
FSE-ESF	105
esf-uk-info	64
democratisESF	59
Total	188

Table 9.10: Number of authors in the sample of each list

Similarly to other studies on the subject, in every list a high number of messages is generated by a small number of authors. In the FSE-ESF list eleven authors (10.48% of the total number of authors in the FSE-ESF sample) were responsible for 29.5% of the sampled messages sent to this list (47 messages), with only 4 authors (3.81% of the total number of authors in the FSE-ESF sample) producing 16.3% of the messages (26 messages). In the esf-uk-info list 11 authors (17.19% of the total number of authors in the esf-uk-info sample) generated 36.4% of the total number of sampled messages of

¹ It is worth noting here that, according to Melucci, in self-reflective movements there is 'a specific relationship between efficacy and the search for satisfactory internal relations. External time diminishes in importance and is replaced by the group's own internal time, according to which its action is measured' (1996: 329-30).

² From this point onwards, most of the findings refer to the results of the content analysis that examined a 10% random sample of the each list in the selected time period.

this list (39 messages), with only 5 authors (7.8% of the total number of authors in the esf-uk-info sample) being responsible for the 19.6% of messages (21 messages). In the democratisESF list 7 authors (11.86% of the total number of authors in the democratisESF sample) were responsible for 39% of the sampled messages posted on this list (58 messages).

Therefore, on the democratisESF list fewer authors were responsible for a higher per cent of messages, meaning that authors on this list tended to send more messages, than those on the other two lists. This also becomes apparent if we calculate the average number of messages per author for the total number of messages posted on each list in the sample period. As it is evident in Table 9.11, the average number of messages posted by authors on the FSE-ESF list is 4.08, while this figure is 5.24 for the esf-uk-info list and 7.74 for the democratisESF list.

List	Messages per Author
FSE-ESF	4.08
esf-uk-info	5.24
democratisESF	7.74

Table 9.11: Average Number of Messages per Author in each list (calculated for the total number of messages)

9.7. Type of Author

Authors were further categorized according to their signature in the end of the message. In that respect, I have distinguished between four types of authors. Firstly, authors could send a message to the list as individuals writing on their personal capacity or as individuals writing on behalf of a specific group or organization. In the latter case they would sign the message with their name followed by their organizational affiliation. In addition, messages could be sent by working groups, decision-making bodies or the office of the ESF or by specific groups, organizations or political parties with no individual names appearing in the email. It is worth noting here that the same author could belong to more than one of these categories as an activist could post one email as an individual and another as an individual but as a part of a specific organization. Table 9.12 in the following page shows the number of messages sent by each type of author in each list.

As it is obvious from the table, in every list the highest number of messages is sent by authors writing on their personal capacity. There are, however, significant differences between the three lists, as in the democratisESF individual authors are responsible for

87.9% of the sampled messages, while this percent is 61.7% for the esf-uk-info and only 40.3% for the FSE-ESF list.

In terms of individual authors posting on behalf of a specific group or organization, the esf-uk-info list has the highest per cent of messages sent by this type of author with this figure reaching 20.6%. The FSE-ESF list is a close second with 18.9%, while this figure is only 5.4% for the democratisESF list.

Furthermore, working groups, decision-making bodies or the office of the ESF account for 13.2% of the sampled messages sent on the FSE-ESF list and 8.4% of the ones posted on the esf-uk-info list. Again, this figure is much lower for the democratisESF list, whereby only 0.7% of the messages sent to this list were posted by this type of author. A possible explanation points to the unofficial status of the democratisESF list, which, at least in the beginning, was not regarded as an email list formally associated with the official ESF organizing process. Therefore, official documents or statements were not sent directly to the democratisESF list, but forwarded to it from other lists. This situation seemed to shift only in the last couple of months of the London ESF organizing process.

Finally, the FSE-ESF list has a much higher per cent of messages sent by groups, organizations or political parties than the other two lists. This figure is 22% for the FSE-ESF list, 9.3% for the esf-uk-info list and only 6% for the democratisESF list.

Type of Author	FSE-ESF		esf-uk-info		democratisESF	
Individual	64	40.3%	66	61.7%	131	87.9%
Individual as part of group	30	18.9%	22	20.6%	8	5.4%
ESF working group/ office/decision-making body	21	13.2%	9	8.4%	1	0.7%
Organization/political party	35	22.0%	10	9.3%	9	6.0%
Other	9	5.7%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%
Total	159	100.0%	107	100.0%	149	100.0%

Table 9.12: Messages sent by each type of author in each list (% of the sample from each list)

9.8. Type of Message

Messages were also categorized according to type. I have distinguished ten types of messages and then grouped each type into the higher order category of non-interactive

versus interactive messages. The purpose of the former is to disseminate information with no interest in soliciting replies. Statements or announcements belong to this category, which also includes messages circulating a document or forwarding the message of another person or group. The interactive category consists of replies to debates, to requests for information, as well as to proposals and petitions or even statements and announcements. It also comprises probes for discussion, questions and requests for information, as well as petitions and proposals circulated in the lists for activists to pledge their support. Table 9.13 presents the type of messages sent to each list as a per cent of the total number of sampled messages for each list. Messages whose type was considered unclear were omitted from the table.

	FSE-ESF	esf-uk-info	democratisESF
Non-Interactive			
statement/announcement	39.6%	33.6%	15.4%
circulating a document	9.4%	3.7%	9.4%
forwarding the message of another	3.1%	1.9%	0.7%
Total	52.2%	39.3%	25.5%
Interactive			
Introducing a new topic for discussion	3.8%	3.7%	4.7%
reply to a discussion/debate	18.9%	32.7%	37.6%
Question/request for information	8.8%	4.7%	6.7%
reply to a request for information	2.5%	4.7%	4.0%
call for action/petition/proposal	4.4%	3.7%	6.0%
reply/endorsement of an online proposal/petition	3.1%	4.7%	10.1%
comments/replies to statements/announcements	2.5%	5.6%	3.4%
Total	44.0%	59.8%	72.5%

Table 9.13: Type of Message (% of sample from each list)

As Table 9.13 shows, the democratisESF list is the most interactive with 72.5% of its sampled messages belonging to the interactive category. This figure is 60% for the esf-uk-info list and 44% for the FSE-ESF list. More specifically, the democratisESF list is used more than the other two for discussion and debate, as 4.7% of its messages introduce a new topic for discussion, while 37.6% constitute replies to a discussion or debate. The esf-uk-info list comes second in that respect with 3.7% of messages

instigating debates and 32.7% replying to a discussion. The figure of replies to discussions is much lower for the FSE-ESF list reaching only 18.9%. In addition, the democratisESF list is used more for online activism, as 6% of its sampled messages circulate a proposal or petition, while 10% pledge support to such proposals. These figures are 4.4% and 3.1% for the FSE-ESF list and 3.7% and 4.7% for the esf-uk-info list. The FSE-ESF list, on the other hand, is used more than the other two for the circulation of statements or announcements, as 39.6% of its sampled messages belong to this category. This figure is 33.6% for the esf-uk-info list and only 15.4% for the democratisESF list.

As the next table reveals, in every email list individuals, writing either on their personal capacity or on behalf of an organization, tend to send more interactive rather than non-interactive messages.

	Individual – personal capacity	Individual – as part of organization	ESF working group/office	organization/ political party
non-interactive				
FSE-ESF	25%	33%	86%	86%
esf-uk-info	20%	45%	100%	100%
democratisESF	24%	13%	100%	56%
Interactive				
FSE-ESF	70%	63%	10%	11%
esf-uk-info	80%	50%	0%	0%
democratisESF	74%	88%	0%	44%

Table 9.14: Type of message per type of author (% of messages sent by each type of author in each list)

More precisely, 70% of messages sent by individuals to the FSE-ESF list are interactive, while this figure is 63% for individuals posting on behalf of a specific group or organization. On the contrary, 86% of the messages sent by either working groups/offices/decision-making bodies of the ESF or groups/organizations/political parties are non-interactive.

The picture is similar for the esf-uk-info list, whereby 80% of messages sent by individuals and 50% of messages sent by individuals as part of an organization are interactive. On the other hand, all of the messages sent by working

groups/offices/decision-making bodies of the ESF and groups/organizations/political parties are non-interactive.

These figures are slightly different for the democratisESF list, whereby whilst 74% of messages sent by individuals and 88% of messages posted by individuals on behalf of an organization are interactive, the same is true for 44% of the messages posted by groups and organizations. This latter figure is probably distorted by the very low number of messages sent by groups and organizations to this list.

9.9. Language

As it was expected, the esf-uk-info and democratisESF lists are predominantly in English. More specifically, 95% of the sampled messages from the esf-uk-info list and 96% from the democratisESF list were written in English. The picture is different for the FSE-ESF list, whereby 65% of messages are in English, 19% in French, 5% in Spanish, 1% in Italian and 9% in other languages, while for 1% of messages the language was not clear (this includes one empty message). However, despite the wider range of languages present in this list, English is still the dominant language.

9.10. Length of Message

The length of message was determined according to the number of sentences in the main body of the email without taking into account the signature or salutation. Messages with less than five sentences were considered short, while those with five to fifteen sentences were categorized as medium. Messages with more than fifteen sentences were counted as long.

	FSE-ESF	esf-uk-info	democratisESF
Long	39%	28%	31%
Medium	31%	39%	40%
Short	30%	33%	29%

Table 9.15: Length of messages (% of sample from each list)

As the above table shows, in all of the analysed lists messages are almost equally distributed among the different categories. The FSE-ESF list contains the highest number of long messages, while messages of medium length garner the highest per cents in the esf-uk-info and democratisESF lists.

It is also worth noting that in the FSE-ESF list messages sent by working groups or decision-making bodies of the ESF, as well as messages sent by groups/organizations/political parties tend to be longer than those sent by individuals or individuals as part of an organization. Furthermore, in all of the analysed lists non-interactive messages tend to be longer than interactive messages.

9.11. Relation to the ESF Preparatory Process

Messages were also categorized according to whether they were directly related to the ESF preparatory process. As it was expected, the FSE-ESF list has the highest per cent of unrelated messages, while this figure is much lower for the esf-uk-info list. The democratisESF list scores the lowest per cent in that respect as only 10.1% of its sampled messages do not bear a direct relation to the ESF organizing process.

	FSE-ESF	esf-uk-info	democratisESF
% of messages not related to the ESF preparatory process	41.5%	18.7%	10.1%

Table 9.16: Messages not related to the ESF preparatory process (% of sample from each list)

I have further examined the subject of unrelated messages and classified them into six distinct categories. Table 9.17 presents the number of unrelated messages per category, also as a per cent of the total number of unrelated messages in each list. As it becomes apparent from the table, the majority of unrelated messages concern announcements, petitions or calls for action about specific campaigns or causes. This category has garnered the highest per cents in the FSE-ESF and democratisESF lists, 74% and 53% respectively, and the second highest in the esf-uk-info list, 45%. Such messages concerned a wide array of issues ranging from campaigns against racism, fascism or the war, to demonstrations against Bush or the headscarf ban in France, as well as solidarity campaigns with Chiapas and the Zapatistas.

On the other hand, messages concerning the World Social Forum or Regional and Local Social Fora drew the highest per cent of unrelated messages in the esf-uk-info list (55%), but represented only 20% of the unrelated messages on the democratisESF list and only 5% of the ones on the FSE-ESF list. A possible explanation points to the status of the esf-uk-info list as the national-level list. As with the author and message overlaps discussed earlier, the esf-uk-info list seems to constitute a mediating space between the

local and the global as information emanating from these two levels seems to always travel to, and at times traverse, the national email space.

It is also worth noting that spam, unclear or technical messages constitute a very low per cent of unrelated messages in all of the analysed lists.

	FSE-ESF		esf-uk-Info		democratisESF	
Announcements/ Petitions/ Calls for Action/ Press Releases for campaigns and causes	49	74%	9	45%	8	53%
Messages about the World Social Forum or Regional/ Local social for a	3	5%	11	55%	3	20%
Political debates (general)	2	3%	-	-	2	13%
Spam	3	5%	-	-	-	-
Technical issues	7	11%	-	-	1	7%
Empty/Unclear messages	2	3%	-	-	1	7%
Total	66	100%	20	100%	15	100%

Table 9.17: Subjects of messages not directly related to the ESF process (% of unrelated messages of each list)

I have further calculated the per cents of unrelated messages per type of message. The crosstabulations showed that in every list statements or calls for participation in offline events tend to fall within the 'unrelated category' more than other types of messages. This is the case for 58.7% of statements sent to the FSE-ESF list, while this figure is 41.7% for the esf-uk-info list and 21.7% of the democratisESF list. Taking into account that statements or calls for action are the main component of non-interactive messages, it is not surprising that in all of the analysed lists, unrelated messages tend to be non-interactive rather than interactive. The table in the following page presents the distribution of unrelated messages between interactive and non-interactive categories as a per cent of the total number of either interactive or non-interactive messages in each list. For the FSE-ESF list, four of the unrelated messages that fall within the 'other' category do not appear in the table.

As Table 9.18 shows, more than half of the non-interactive messages on the FSE-ESF list are not directly related to the ESF preparatory process. This figure is 38.1% for the esf-uk-info list and 21.1% for the democratisESF list. Interactive messages, on the other hand, present a much lower per cent of unrelated messages in all of the analysed

lists. These figures are 22.9% for the FSE-ESF list and only 6.3% and 6.5% for the esf-uk-info and democratisESF lists respectively.

	FSE-ESF		esf-uk-info		democratisESF	
non-interactive	46	55.4%	16	38.1%	8	21.1%
Interactive	16	22.9%	4	6.3%	7	6.5%

Table 9.18: Unrelated messages and degree of interactivity (% of interactive or non-interactive messages in each list)

Unrelated messages were further examined in relation to the type of author. The crosstabulations showed that in every email list groups, organizations, and/or political parties tended to send more unrelated messages than other types of author. This is the case for 74.3% and 80% of the messages sent by groups/organizations/political parties to the FSE-ESF and esf-uk-info lists respectively. This figure is only 22.2% for the democratisESF list. However, again the figure is probably distorted by the low number of messages sent to this list by this type of author.

	FSE-ESF		esf-uk-info		democratisESF	
individual/personal capacity	20	31.3%	9	13.6%	13	9.9%
individual but as part of group	9	30.0%	3	13.6%	-	-
ESF working group/office/ decision-making body	2	9.5%	-	-	-	-
group/organization/political party	26	74.3%	8	80.0%	2	22.2%

Table 9.19: Unrelated messages per type of author (% of total number messages sent by each type of author to each list)

9.12. Links – Relationship with the Web

The number of messages containing links to websites is relatively low in all of the analysed lists. In that respect, the democratisESF list comes first, with 23% of the sampled messages including links, followed by the esf-uk-info list with 20%, while the FSE-ESF list comes third with 14%.

In terms of the types of websites that these links refer to, 9% of the messages on the democratisESF list link to the esf2004.net website, 3% to the website of a group or organization, 3% to Indymedia and 8% to websites helpful or indirectly related to the movement. On the esf-uk-info list, 5% of messages contain links to websites related to the ESF, 6% to the website of a group or organization and another 6% to websites

indirectly related to the movement. Finally, on the FSE-ESF list 2% of messages link to websites related to the ESF, 1% to Indymedia and 6% to websites of other groups or organizations. In addition 2% of messages include links that are indirectly related to the movement.

Therefore, the democratisESF list is the only one containing messages with links to the alternative ESF website, while the other two link only to the official website. The section detailing the use of the web in the ESF presented earlier seems to support this finding. According to that analysis, the unofficial website was shunned by the 'Vertical' side, as it constituted an organizing hub for the 'Horizontals', who were in turn very critical of the official website and its lack of transparency and interactivity.

As I will show in the chapters that follow, the profile of each list is indicative of its affordances for organizing, decision-making, and particularly collective identity formation. In turn, this can provide a more nuanced understanding of email lists, as it helps to uncover the internal diversity of this category of internet applications.

10. Organizing

Drawing on the results of my content analysis, as well as data from the in-depth interviews and documents analysis, this chapter will discuss the role of email lists in the organizing process of the London 2004 ESF. Apart from simply describing what happens on the lists, this discussion will also take into account the overall context of organizing, examining the functions of email lists in relation to other media and modes of communication and particularly face-to-face meetings. I will first focus on the type of organizing tasks undertaken on the three analysed email lists. I will then explore the role of email lists in defining the main units of the organizing structure, as well as their links with processes of emergent leadership.

10.1. Organizing Messages and Organizing Tasks

Overall, the democratisESF list has the highest per cent of messages with an organizing function, as such messages represent 55% of the sample from this list. The esf-uk-info list comes second with 42.1%, while only 25.8% of the messages sampled from the FSE-ESF list have an organizing function. Table 10.1 presents the frequencies and per cents of 'organizing' messages for each of the analysed lists.

	Frequency	% of sample
FSE-ESF	41	25.8%
esf-uk-info	45	42.1%
democratisESF	82	55.0%

Table 10.1: Frequency and per cents of 'organizing' messages

As it was noted in the Methods chapter, the content analysis codebook included an additional unit of analysis for 'organizing' messages: organizing tasks. The table below presents the number of tasks undertaken in the messages sampled from each list, as well as the average number of tasks per 'organizing' message, which provides an indication of the degree of 'multi-tasking' undertaken in each list. As it is obvious from Table 10.2, the three lists display a similar degree of 'multi-tasking', as the average number of tasks per 'organizing' message is 1.6 for the FSE-ESF and democratisESF lists and 1.7 for the esf-uk-info list. This indicates that most messages fulfil either one or

two tasks, meaning that the degree of 'multi-tasking' is relatively low¹. This seems to be consistent with the nature of email as a communication medium, as the ability to post short messages at low cost enables activists to send messages frequently about any task that concerns them at the time. Thus, authors do not need to gather all of their ideas and contributions in one and only message, since they can easily send separate messages in the moment that ideas, information or questions occur.

	Frequency	Multi-tasking
FSE-ESF	66	1.6
esf-uk-info	75	1.7
democratisESF	134	1.6

Table 10.2: Frequency of tasks and degree of multi-tasking (tasks per 'organizing' message)

10.2. Type of Task

Based on the notes for each task, as well as the categories of tasks already specified in the content analysis codebook (see Appendix IV), I was able to identify five types of tasks according to the part of the organizing process they were referring to: decision-making, practicalities, programme, website, outreach. I have also added an 'other' category for tasks that were deemed unclassifiable. It is notable that, apart from 'decision-making', these categories loosely correspond to the themes of the main ESF working-groups. The table below presents the number of tasks per type also as a per cent of the total number of organizing tasks in each list.

	FSE-ESF		esf-uk-info		democratisESF	
Decision-making	31	47.0%	33	44.0%	69	51.5%
Practicalities	12	18.2%	13	17.3%	21	15.7%
Programme	16	24.2%	19	25.3%	10	7.5%
Web	0	0.0%	5	6.7%	22	16.4%
Outreach	5	7.6%	4	5.3%	6	4.5%
Other	2	3.0%	1	1.3%	6	4.5%
Total	66	100.0%	75	100.0%	134	100.0%

Table 10.3: Type of organizing tasks (% of organizing tasks)

Decision-making tasks tended to revolve around the face-to-face meetings. In that respect, tasks referred to circulating, debating, co-writing or translating the agenda,

¹ Again, it is worth noting that for most of these analyses I could not find a similar research to compare my results with. Therefore, my interpretations will have to be compounded by further research on this subject.

minutes, and official or unofficial reports of the face-to-face meetings, as well proposals and statements intended for circulation offline. For the democratisESF list in particular, some of the organizing tasks also concerned the collection of signatures for proposals and petitions which were again aimed for offline circulation. As it is obvious from Table 10.3, the tasks referring to decision-making garner the highest per cents in all of the analysed lists. The democratisESF list comes first with 51.5%, followed by the FSE-ESF list with 47%, while this figure is 44% for the esf-uk-info list. It is worth noting here that if we compare the three lists in terms of the absolute number of decision-making tasks, then the democratisESF list is by far the first, as the number of decision-making tasks on that list is more than double than the one on the other two lists. Decision-making tasks are going to be analysed in greater detail in Chapter 11.

Practicalities tasks included organizing the transport and accommodation of activists wishing to attend the face-to-face meetings. They also referred to booking venues for meetings, as well as making arrangements for translation services in terms of volunteers and equipment. A fraction of the practicalities tasks was devoted to the process of putting together and allocating the solidarity fund to activists in need of financial help for attending the EPAs. Some tasks also referred to recruiting volunteers and setting up stalls at the London ESF. According to Table 10.3, practicalities tasks garner similar per cents in all of the examined lists. The figures range from 18.2% for the FSE-ESF list to 15.7% for the democratisESF list, while the esf-uk-info list comes second with 17.3%.

Tasks concerning the *programme* included seeking, proposing, and/or choosing plenary speakers and facilitators for the London ESF. They also referred to the processes of proposing, aggregating and submitting seminars and workshops to the Programme Working Group. Other tasks consisted of compiling and printing the ESF programme, as well as organizing online consultations concerning the issues that should be incorporated in the programme. As Table 10.3 shows, the per cents of programme tasks undertaken on the FSE-ESF and esf-uk-info lists are almost equal, with such tasks representing 24.2% of the total number of tasks on the FSE-ESF list and 25.3% of those on the esf-uk-info list. This figure is much lower for the democratisESF list, whereby only 10 tasks or 7.5% of the total number of organizing tasks were devoted to the programme.

This can be explained by the unofficial status of the democratisESF list, which precluded its involvement and use in the formal process of programme construction².

On the other hand, a much higher per cent of organizing tasks on the democratisESF list were devoted to the management of the *web*. Such tasks included seeking and recruiting volunteers to develop the database, information and communication systems of the ESF, as well as translating webpages in languages other than English. They also referred to updating and uploading content, moderating discussion forums, and creating wiki pages. Most of these tasks concerned the unofficial *esf2004.net* website, which explains the high number of web tasks on the democratisESF list. More precisely, 22 tasks refer to the website, representing 16.4% of the total number of organizing tasks on democratisESF list. On the contrary, and as it was noted in Chapter 8, the management of the official website was not carried out in a voluntary or collaborative way, which accounts for the low number of 'web' tasks on both the FSE-ESF and *esf-uk-info* lists.

Finally, tasks relating to *outreach* included circulating and distributing outreach infopacks, as well as seeking and recruiting volunteers for outreach activities. They also involved reporting on outreach efforts undertaken during previous ESFs, as well as compiling an online directory of groups and organizations that could be the targets of outreach efforts. As it is evident from Table 10.3, the number of 'outreach' tasks is very low in all of the analysed lists, which possibly reflects the way in which such activities were organised in the ESF process. In that respect, and as it became apparent in the mobilization survey presented in Chapter 6, outreach efforts tend to be carried out in a decentralized way, depending on the separate initiatives of the various groups and organizations involved in the ESF. And even though the London ESF process comprised a working group devoted to outreach, it seems that email lists were not actually used to coordinate activities or spread material. Conversely, the limited number of outreach tasks may also be an indication of the failure of the London ESF process to mount a more centralized and systematic outreach effort. In that respect, the organisers were criticized

² Within the London ESF preparatory process, the collectively agreed procedure for putting together the programme of the ESF consisted of groups and activists submitting an application to the Programme Working Group, which was then responsible for aggregating and merging similar sessions in order to reach the required number. The day-to-day coordination and organizing of this process was left to the working group of the host country, while the European programme group had the wider responsibility of taking the final decisions for merging or rejecting proposals. Information and guidelines were circulated in the various email lists, which were also used by groups and activists to submit their applications. However, since the democratisESF list was not recognized as an official ESF list, it was minimally used in the formal process of proposals and applications.

for a lack of interest in outreach which, according to their critics, curtailed the potential of the London ESF to attract a wider public.

10.3. Organizing Function

Organizing tasks were further coded according to the organizing function they were referring to. Based on my notes for each task and my observations during the content analysis pilot, I have identified six organizing functions:

(a) *Disseminating information about organizing*: This function refers to the circulation of minutes, agendas, as well as announcements of meetings. It also concerns the dissemination of information about practicalities, such as the transport and accommodation for those wishing to attend the offline meetings. In that respect, the term 'information' denotes the official information generated in the process and not, for instance, the informal minutes or reports.

(b) *Identifying roles and tasks*: This category concerns determining the organizing roles and tasks that need to be undertaken.

(c) *Allocating or assuming responsibility for organizing tasks*: This category relates to proposals and decisions concerning who should be in charge of specific tasks. In a decentralized and bottom-up organizing process, this function is integral to processes of leadership. This is because in such systems leadership tends to emerge informally from the deliberations of the base. Allocating or assuming responsibility is therefore one of the main mechanisms through which groups or individuals can install themselves in positions of leadership.

(d) *Reporting on the progress of tasks*: This function includes updates and informal reports concerning the progress of tasks and is closely related to feedback mechanisms.

(e) *Seeking help/advice/feedback on tasks*: This category assesses the extent to which email lists are used to seek help with organizing tasks, either formally or informally. It is also closely related to feedback processes, giving the opportunity to evaluate and improve the execution of specific tasks.

(f) *Online collaboration*: This category refers to the process of carrying out tasks collaboratively on the email list. Online collaboration could take place either within the framework of a formal process, such as the process of putting together the programme of the ESF, or informally. An example of informal collaboration refers to the co-writing of proposals and petitions carried out on the democratisESF list.

	FSE-ESF		esf-uk-info		democratisESF	
circulating information	28	42.4%	26	34.7%	33	24.6%
Identifying roles and tasks	6	9.1%	11	14.7%	22	16.4%
leadership/responsibility	2	3.0%	8	10.7%	14	10.4%
reporting on tasks	8	12.1%	6	8.0%	16	11.9%
seeking help/feedback	9	13.6%	6	8.0%	18	13.4%
online collaboration	13	19.7%	18	24.0%	31	23.1%

Table 10.4: Organizing functions (% of the total number of organizing tasks in each list)

Table 10.4 presents the number of tasks belonging to each function, also as a per cent of the total number of tasks undertaken in the specific list. As it is obvious from the table, disseminating information is by far the predominant function in all of the analysed lists. In what follows, I will attempt to explain each of these functions in turn comparing how they fare in each list. I will further compare the organizing activities that take place online and offline based on my in-depth interviews with organizers, minutes from the meetings, as well as observations from the meetings that I have personally attended. Apart from discussing the communicative affordances of email lists for organizing, in terms of both the perceptions of the people who use them and their actual use, I also aim to explore the ways in which email lists are embedded within the broader organizing context of the ESF.

10.3.1. Dissemination of Information

disseminating information		
	Frequency of tasks	% of tasks
FSE-ESF	28	42.4%
esf-uk-info	26	34.7%
democratisESF	33	24.6%

Table 10.5: Dissemination of Information (% of organizing tasks in each list)

As it is evident from Tables 10.4 and 10.5, the FSE-ESF list has the highest per cent of tasks disseminating information since 42.4% of the organizing tasks undertaken on that list refer to this function. The esf-uk-info list comes second with 34.7%, while this figure is 24.6% for the democratisESF list, only 1.5% higher than the per cent of tasks devoted to online collaboration.

The differences between the three lists can also be interpreted in relation to the use of the web for disseminating information. As I showed in Chapter 8, the problematic process of creating and managing the official website limited its use as an information point for those involved in the ESF. In addition, the process of uploading content, and particularly the minutes of meetings, was very slow, as all the information had first to be approved by Co-ordinating Committee. On the other hand, the *esf2004.net* website started operating nearly from the outset of the ESF process with the explicit aim to aid activists in organizing the ESF. And while it took some time for the 'Horizontal' camp to learn how to use the wiki and upload content, the website came in full swing towards May, constituting a hub of information about the ESF process. This may explain the lower per cent of tasks devoted to the circulation of information on the *democratisESF* list, as activists gradually turned to the web to fulfil this function. Indeed, 'informational' messages seem to disappear from the sample of the *democratisESF* list after June, which is not the case for the other two lists.

It is also worth noting here that many of my interviewees who were intimately involved in the ESF process remarked that they rarely accessed the ESF websites since they were receiving all of the essential information through the email lists and the face-to-face meetings.

In terms of the information circulated on the three lists, the table below presents a breakdown according to type, displaying the frequency of tasks for each type also as a per cent of the total number of 'informational' tasks in each list.

	FSE-ESF		esf-uk-info		democratisESF	
practicalities	7	25%	5	19%	3	9%
announcing meetings	11	39%	9	35%	14	42%
circulating minutes	5	18%	7	27%	9	27%
circulating the agenda	5	18%	5	19%	7	21%
Total	28	100%	26	100%	33	100%

Table 10.6: Type of information (% of 'informational' tasks)

According to Table 10.6, most of the 'informational' tasks in every list refer to the announcement of offline meetings, either European Preparatory Assemblies or meetings of working groups. What also becomes apparent is that such tasks tend to concern aspects of offline decision making rather than issues of practicalities.

As noted earlier, the circulation of information is the predominant function in all of the analysed lists. This seems to agree with the data emerging from the in-depth interviews, as my interviewees were unanimous in their appreciation of email lists as an information tool for organizing issues. In that respect, many of them noted that email is effective for practical arrangements and for distributing practical information (Bouteldja, N., Personal Interview 2004; Griffiths, H., Personal Interview 2004). In the words of an activist from Hungary: 'the internet is good for tasks of information immediate and concrete, information about meetings, projects, mobilizations' (Endre, S., Personal Interview 2004). Another one concurred: 'their [email lists]' main value is as an information tool, both information strictly relevant to the ESF process, but also learning about other things' (Callinicos, A., Personal Interview, 2005). In that respect, and according to a Greek activist, email is particularly useful for circulating information about mobilizations and events happening in other countries. Indeed, one of the prime uses of the list of the Greek Social Forum is to forward information from the FSE-ESF list, often with some explanations about its relevance to the situation in Greece (Yulis, P., Personal Interview, 2004).

The interviewees often contrasted the 'informational' aspects of the internet to the primacy of face-to-face communication for political discussion and decision-making which are going to be discussed in greater detail in Chapters 11 and 12. However, it is worth noting here the distinction between organizing and coordination made by one of my interviewees. Talking about the effectiveness of email for organizing, he mentioned that email is useful for coordination but not organization. This is because organization also involves decision-making which is better done in a face-to-face context as it requires complex interactions that cannot take place on email. On the other hand, email is a very useful tool for coordination, as it enables the dissemination of information about these decisions to a large number of recipients at a very low cost (Nineham, C., Personal Interview, 2004).

10.3.2. Reporting on the Progress of Tasks and Seeking Help or Feedback

The functions of reporting on the progress of tasks and seeking help or feedback are important aspects of any system of bottom-up organizing. In that respect, informal reports ensure that everyone has access to information about the state of the organizing process. On the other hand, seeking help or feedback enables the activists to either

evaluate progress through feedback or acknowledge the difficulties that they are encountering with the accomplishment of certain tasks and ask others for help. In other words, these two functions render a system of self-organization more responsive to the needs and problems that arise.

According to Table 10.7, tasks referring to informal reports or help and feedback garner relatively low per cents in all of the analysed lists. In terms of informal reports, the FSE-ESF list is marginally first with 12.1%, only 0.2% higher than the per cent of 'reporting' tasks on the democratisESF list. The esf-uk-info list comes third with 8%. Again, if we take into account the absolute number of tasks, then the democratisESF list garners by far the highest number.

We can compare these figures with the ones concerning the circulation of official reports or minutes presented in the previous section. The frequencies of such tasks are 5 for the FSE-ESF list, 7 for the esf-uk-info, and only 9 for the democratisESF list. This means that the ESF lists are utilized more for reporting informally on the progress of tasks rather than for circulating formal reports. This is more the case for the democratisESF list which was initially excluded from receiving information from the official ESF bodies.

reporting on tasks		
	Frequency of tasks	% of tasks
FSE-ESF	8	12.1%
esf-uk-info	6	8.0%
democratisESF	16	11.9%
seeking help/feedback		
	Frequency of tasks	% of tasks
FSE-ESF	9	13.6%
esf-uk-info	6	8.0%
democratisESF	18	13.4%

Table 10.7: Reporting on the progress of tasks and seeking help/feedback (% of organizing tasks in each list)

The figures for seeking help or feedback are similar to those for informal reporting. The FSE-ESF list is again first with 13.6%, while the democratisESF list is a close second with 13.4%. This figure is much lower for the esf-uk-info list, whereby tasks

referring to seeking help or feedback represent 8% of the total number of organizing tasks.

10.3.3. Online Collaboration

Tasks referring to online collaboration are particularly important as they reveal the extent to which cooperative work takes place within the online environment. As Table 10.8 shows, the esf-uk-info list comes marginally first in terms of online collaboration, with 24% of its organizing tasks devoted to this function. The democratisESF list follows closely with 23.1%, while the FSE-ESF list comes third with 19.7%. However, the absolute numbers of tasks devoted to online collaboration reveal a different story, as the democratisESF is the list with by far the highest number of tasks.

online collaboration		
	Frequency of tasks	% of tasks
FSE-ESF	13	19.7%
esf-uk-info	18	24.0%
democratisESF	31	23.1%

Table 10.8: Online collaboration (% of organizing tasks in each list)

	FSE-ESF		esf-uk-info		democratisESF	
Decision-making	2	15.4%	2	11.1%	16	51.6%
Practicalities	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	2	6.5%
Programme	8	61.5%	14	77.8%	7	22.6%
Outreach	2	15.4%	1	5.6%	4	12.9%
Other	1	7.7%	1	5.6%	2	6.5%
Total	13	100.0%	18	100.0%	31	100.0%

Table 10.9: Online collaboration and type of task (% of 'online collaboration' tasks)

I have further examined the type of tasks that online collaboration refers to. As Table 10.9 reveals, most of the 'online collaboration' tasks on the FSE-ESF and esf-uk-info lists concern the formal process of proposing speakers, seminars and workshops for the programme of the London ESF. On the other hand, and as it was mentioned previously, the unofficial status of the democratisESF list meant that it was excluded from the programme process. Instead, most of the 'online collaboration' tasks on this list refer to decision-making, reflecting the greater use of the democratisESF list for co-writing

statements and proposals. In other words, while online collaboration on the FSE-ESF and esf-uk-info lists was undertaken within the framework of formally laid out processes, collaboration on the democratisESF list was much more informal.

10.3.4. Roles and Division of Labour and Leadership

As it is obvious from Table 10.10, the democratisESF list has the highest per cent of tasks referring to the identification of organizing roles and tasks that need to be undertaken and accomplished. This figure is 14.7% for the esf-uk-info list, while the FSE-ESF list comes third with 9.1%. However, if we compare the absolute number of tasks, then the democratisESF list has by far the highest number.

Assuming or allocating responsibility for tasks garners a very low per cent in the FSE-ESF list, possibly mirroring the limited use of this list for the day-to-day organizing of the ESF since it is mostly composed by activists who do not reside in the host country of the ESF. On the other hand, 'leadership and responsibility' tasks garner an almost equal per cent on the esf-uk-info and democratisESF lists, with 10.7% and 10.4% respectively. Yet, contrary to the esf-uk-info list, for the democratisESF this is the function with the lowest per cent.

roles and division of labour		
	Frequency of tasks	% of tasks
FSE-ESF	6	9.1%
esf-uk-info	11	14.7%
democratisESF	22	16.4%
leadership/responsibility		
	Frequency of tasks	% of tasks
FSE-ESF	2	3.0%
esf-uk-info	8	10.7%
democratisESF	14	10.4%

Table 10.10: Division of labour and leadership

Furthermore, a closer examination of the tasks referring to these functions reveals that the lists are used to support and facilitate processes such as decision-making that take place predominantly offline. In that respect, many tasks concerned the practicalities of offline meetings or the preparation and circulation of statements and proposals for offline decision-making. What is more, tasks relating to the programme of the ESF

involved proposals or consultations for speakers and seminars for which the final decision was going to be made offline. A possible exception here is the tasks concerning the management of the alternative website, which are present mainly on the democratisESF list.

Therefore, the low number of tasks devoted to either division of labour or the allocation of responsibility, as well as their mainly supportive function can easily lead us to dismiss the importance of email lists in these respects. However, I would argue that in order to fully comprehend the role of email lists in the process of organizing we should examine not only what happens on the list, but also how the lists are embedded in the broader process of dividing labour and allocating responsibilities. Based on the minutes and reports from offline meetings, as well as emails sent on the email lists, I will go on to discuss email lists in relation to the establishment and operation of the ESF working groups, which are the main task-related bodies of the ESF organizing process. I will also explore email lists as sources of power and leadership within the ESF organizing process, arguing that while assuming control of a list can bring activists into positions of leadership, email lists discourage the centralization of power.

10.4. Email Lists and Working Groups

The ESF working groups reflect the more general areas of organizing that need to be addressed. They thus constitute the first and most basic level of division of labour. As I showed in the historical account, working groups tend to emerge offline, in the EPAs or Organizing Committee meetings. In that respect, the major working groups of the London ESF process were created in the December 2003 EPA. And despite the decision of the Organizing Committee in the end of January to disband them and install new groups under its control, the working groups continued to operate in more or less the same way as they had already started meeting and discussing the issues at hand. An additional European-level working group, called 'Memory and Systematization', was created in the Berlin EPA in June 2004 with the responsibility of managing the ESF website and of developing tools for the systematization of the knowledge generated by the ESF.

In the overwhelming majority of cases, the establishment of a working group at an offline meeting is accompanied by the setting up of an email list devoted to the group. Activists showing interest in the group can thus provide their email address in order to become subscribed to its email list. For working groups that were formed in the

preparatory process of previous ESFs, the email list is updated with the addresses of those wishing to take part in the activities of the group. This is particularly the case at the start of a new ESF organizing process, when novice activists from the host country become involved in the preparation of the ESF. The minutes of the various working groups illustrate this point. For instance, the minutes of the first meeting of the Practicalities working group stated that:

'We collected everybody's email which is to be put on a practicalities mailing list which was set up by the Paris group last year. Everyone on the old list will be un-subscribed & asked to re-subscribe if they are still interested. The list will be open and public, and only to discuss practicalities' (Practicalities Working Group, 2003).

Another example is provided by the minutes of the inaugurating meeting of the British program group which was held in the December 2003 EPA: 'The British program working group will report its thinking and meetings on the European ESF list. We will also make another list for discussing the program' (*program working group report*, 2003).

The email list of the working group serves a twofold function. First, it defines a space where the working group can exist independently of the physical meetings. Second, it identifies, at any point in time, the membership of the group. Therefore, email lists provide working groups with a constant or permanent space where all of their members, active or inactive, are potentially present since they are subscribed to the list and receive the relevant information. They thus allow the movement a degree of continuity and coherence in-between meetings and across large geographical distances. The perception of email lists as a more constant space was also reflected in the way some of my interviewees talked about them. For instance, an activist from ATTAC Britain noted that 'email lists are like a permanent space outside mainstream society' (Kotkowska, H., Personal Interview, 2004), while another one remarked that 'communication technologies create spaces that are not somewhere else in reality' (Ruiz, J., Personal Interview, 2004). In addition, commenting on her use of the FSE-ESF list a Spanish activist noted: 'it is not that I use it but I have the feeling that I feel more safe, that if I have an urgency, you know, something happened in the 11th of March in Barcelona, I feel like that there is something like, that the media, that the official media is not arriving, I can use the list if I have an urgency' (Fuster y Morel, M., Personal Interview, 2004).

The ease of setting up an email list or, else, the facility with which a working group can define itself and create a permanent space for its operation renders the process of

dividing labour and allocating responsibilities much more flexible. This means that the organizing structure of the movement is free to sprawl into different directions, spawning new task-related working groups easily and at no extra cost when the need arises. As one of my interviewees put it, 'it's like creating this space where things get discussed and then this space keeps shifting and moving and getting divided in different rooms' (Ruiz, J., Personal Interview, 2004). Therefore, the facility of creating and changing the shape of the online communication space increases the adaptability and flexibility of the organizing structure of the movement, as it can easily respond to new needs or problems. This further encourages the segmentary nature of the movement, as working groups, each one responsible for specific tasks, tend to proliferate.

Furthermore, the email list serves to define the membership of the group, as subscription to the list ensures automatic membership to the group. This eliminates the need for a more formal and hierarchical process of allocating tasks and responsibilities, as activists can voluntarily become part of a working group without the need for a central authority overseeing this process and regulating admission to the group. In addition, since the email list defines the membership of the working group at any point in time, the organizing process can do without official lists of participants. Again, this allows working groups a degree of flexibility as the membership of the working group is not written in stone but can shift and change as activists subscribe and unsubscribe from the list.

Furthermore, email lists enable activists to manage their degree of involvement to the group according to their own time or needs. In that respect, activists can be loosely connected to the working group by subscribing to its email list and following its activities without the need of attending the offline meetings. If they so wish, they can then choose to increase their involvement in the group by participating in the face-to-face meetings where they can undertake more responsibilities. As one of my interviewees put it:

'one of the great advantages of email lists that when, I mean it depends on people being relatively scrupulous in putting stuff on, circulating stuff quite regularly but when people do that, it's, it's really good in as much as it allows you to sort of dip in, follow what's going on, decide whether you want to go to a meeting' (Callinicos, A., Personal Interview, 2005).

This also means that commitment to the activities of the group is not a pre-requisite for admitting an activist to the group, since anyone can become a member by subscribing to the email list. Instead, commitment is built through direct participation in the offline

meetings of the group, whereby activists assume more responsibilities and become more intimately related with the rest of the members.

It is worth noting however that, even though entry or exit from the working group email lists is not formally regulated, informal restrictions to participation are always in operation. Apart from the obvious barriers concerning the time and technological skills required for participating in the email lists, additional barriers to entry concern the difficulty of learning about the existence of these lists and of the ways in which someone can subscribe. First of all, since the groups and their email lists are mainly set up in the offline meetings, activists unable to attend the meetings are inevitably left out from this process. They can of course join the list later on, provided that they have the requisite information about how and where to subscribe. In the case of the London ESF organizing process, this information, as well as a complete list of the working groups in operation was not available on the official website³. An informal list could be accessed only on the esf2004.net website. This meant that newcomers would have found it difficult to subscribe to the lists of the working groups, unless they had been able to obtain this information through their own networks of personal contacts or through the maze of the alternative website. Therefore, activists unable to attend the meetings or not involved in the necessary personal networks faced greater restrictions in participating to the working groups.

While this inevitably puts a question mark on the openness and accessibility of the ESF process, it is not an altogether negative point. This is because email lists devoted to organizing tend to function in a more efficient way when they correspond to a physical structure with the members of the list also meeting face-to-face. In the words of one of my interviewees, an email list devoted to organizing work 'needs to co-exist with those sorts of physical structures', (Reyes, O., Personal Interview, 2004). As I will explain in Chapter 12, face-to-face contact accelerates the process of trust-building. And since cooperation happens more quickly and efficiently when the different parties have a minimum of trust for each other, face-to-face meetings allow activists to cooperate more easily on the email lists. Therefore, these barriers to entry seem to make sense in terms of the effectiveness of organizing as they constitute an informal screening of suitable participants. This becomes more apparent if we consider again the characteristics of the

³ It is worth noting here that this omission was rectified during the organizing process of the following ESF in Athens, with the official website offering more comprehensive information about the working groups and their email lists.

activists who find it easier to hear about the lists. Firstly, they are either activists attending the meetings or, in other words, activists that can more easily become part of the physical structure of the group. Secondly, they are activists already involved in some of the ESF networks which provides some guarantee of their trustworthiness or at least a record of past behaviour which can be used to assess their trustworthiness.

In addition, email lists with a small number of members seem to function more effectively in terms of organizing as interaction and negotiation takes place among a limited number of parties. As the same activist noted, 'on the whole the email lists I'm on they're more effective as I say once they're based on working stuff and tend to have maybe twenty, fifteen people on them' (ibid). In that respect, the informal barriers to entry help to reduce the number of members which in turn increases the effectiveness of the working groups in terms of organizing.

10.5. Email Lists as a Source of Power and Leadership

I will further attempt to explain the ways in which email lists can constitute sources of power or leadership for groups and activists. My main theoretical premise derives from Gerlach and Hine (1970) and their theory of decentralization that was presented in Chapter 3. According to Gerlach and Hine, one of the main aspects of decentralized systems is their polycephalous or polycentric nature. In that respect, they have identified a series of constraints to the centralization of power that ensure the polycentric character of social movements. The constraints that I am going to focus here are: (a) the absence of a complete roster of the membership of the movement, (b) the inability to make any binding decisions or speak for the movement, (c) the absence of regulatory powers over the movement, and (d) the lack of control over who exits or enters the movement. I will attempt to reflect on these constraints in relation to the use of email lists, not only on the level of the whole movement, but also on the level of specific working groups. My main point here is that email lists can constitute sources of power only on the level of a working group or the email list itself but not on the level of the whole movement. They thus drive the movement towards forms of polycentric rather than centralized leadership.

10.5.1. The Power of the Spokesperson

While the 'movement for alternative globalization' does not embrace the idea of spokespersons, as there is no central leadership and no one can claim to speak for the

movement, spokespersons for specific issues or working groups can emerge spontaneously from the email lists. For working groups in particular, the activists assigned to answer the emails on behalf of the group can find themselves in leadership positions since they assume the responsibility of speaking for the group. This responsibility may extend from online to offline activities, with the 'email spokespersons' becoming the general spokespersons of the working group. They may, for instance, be the ones who represent the group and report on its progress in the face-to-face meetings. One of my interviewees who acted as a contact person for the Programme Working Group explained how this process unfolded:

'anyway I got dragged into the Programme group, partly, I went to a few meetings and then, I mean the way these things happen is kind of instructive, cause I've followed the process previously I kind of knew the way it would go which was the, I mean there was a meeting and we were talking about the structure, the working structure of the programme and initially, I mean someone suggested, I can't believe it, how about Jonathan Neale, Sarah Colborne and myself be the email, people who answer the emails for the programme group [...] and so I sort of said "yes, I would like to be involved in that" [...] and I knew it would pan out the way it did because from that initial "yes, we're going to temporarily just answer the emails", you know, it then became the people who answer the emails, it then became contacts for the programme group, we then, I mean as it escalated, it became "well, who's gonna do the timetabling?", "well how about the three of us take responsibility for the timetabling [...]" which was basically how it developed, I mean out of that initial three people volunteering answering some emails' (Reyes, O., Personal Interview, 2004).

The rise of activists responsible for answering the emails to the position of spokesperson is hardly surprising if we take into account that in-between physical meetings communication takes place extensively through email. And since large ESF meetings take place sparsely and infrequently, the time period of 'in-between' meetings tends to mean 'almost always'. Therefore, being the face of the working group in its email communication can be the source of considerable power.

10.5.2. The Power of the 'Broadcaster'

Activists can also install themselves in positions of leadership through speaking not only *for* the group but also *to* the group. In other words, they can attempt to control the communication on the email list, turning it from a space of interaction, where information and ideas are exchanged laterally among the participants, to a broadcasting space,

where information is transmitted from a centre to the rest of the group with limited scope for feedback or response.

The email list of the British Programme Working Group constitutes an example of this practice. Problems with this list started early on as some activists from the group were resistant to setting up an email list saying that open lists are often misused by their participants. As my interviewee from Friends of the Earth noted, 'some people have been very resistant to even having an email list for the Programme group because, well, they claim, I mean I don't know whether what they say is what they're really thinking or not but because they say it's open to abuse by people' (Griffiths, H., Personal Interview, 2004). Another one reiterated this point noting that 'we had to have a series of pointless discussions about whether or not we needed an email list which is something that's very basic kind of tool' (Reyes, O., Personal Interview, 2004).

Furthermore, the email list was used in a very formal, one-sided way, mainly for circulating announcements or the minutes of meetings. In that respect, the Friends of the Earth representative complained that she:

'would like to see some discussion at least , at the minimum about what should be on the agenda of meetings, not to finalize the agenda in advance but to have a discussion about it because at the moment the discussion takes place amongst a small group of people and then it's presented to the meeting as this is the proposed agenda, I would, I think it would be much more democratic and transparent if that discussion happened on the email and then not to finalize it, so not to exclude those people that don't have access to email but to do that discussion' (Griffiths, H., Personal Interview, 2004).

In addition, statements and minutes tended to be circulated by specific activists who in that way seemed to have seized control of the email space. As another interviewee noted, 'now the programme working group, you know, started a list, which started unofficially almost... there were all these discussions, one person holding control of all the emails and communicating you know like a broadcast from one email address' (Ruiz, J., Personal Interview, 2004).

Therefore, by capturing the space of the email list and turning its participants from a group of interactants to a captive audience email lists can constitute a source of power for the activists who install themselves in the position of the 'broadcaster'. Nevertheless, a point for consideration here is whether and to what extent 'broadcasters' can maintain

control of the communication process in an application that is more suitable for lateral rather than hierarchical communication.

10.5.3. The Power of the Collector of the Email Addresses

The person responsible for collecting the email addresses and setting up the list also has the power to control the list, albeit temporarily. This is because the email register constitutes the only 'membership list' of the group. Hence, the activist who collects the email addresses has access to privileged information in relation to the rest of the group as s/he is the only one with a complete roster of the group's participants. This provides the opportunity for the collector of the email addresses to become a 'broadcaster' and to attempt, either formally or informally, to regulate the entry or exit of activists from the email list that is set up.

The first meeting of the UK Organizing Assembly, held at City Hall in the end of January 2004, offers a good example of this practice. Activists in that meeting were asked to provide their email addresses in order to obtain further information about the ESF. Yet, the meeting did not clarify who would be responsible for collecting the email addresses and setting up the email list. What probably happened is that the email register was given to a GLA employee, who, instead of setting up a proper interactive email list, used the register to send information about the next meeting of the UK and European Assemblies. This was a cause for major concern in the movement, as the GLA, who was supposed to serve only as a donor for the event and not as an organizer, had suddenly acquired the power to circulate information and call a meeting without consulting with the actors involved in the process. As one email put it: 'David Holland has no mandate or authority to organise an ESF meeting. Who gave him the authority? This means that this meeting cannot be seen within the sphere of the UK ESF' (*No Subject*, 2004). This also meant that activists who were not present in the meeting and whose addresses did not appear in the register were excluded from that initial loop of information. Still, the email of the GLA employee was circulated on the ESF email lists on the initiative of individual activists and gathered angered responses such as the following:

'Can I ask you how you received the message below? Why was it left up to you to forward – why wasn't it simply sent to the esf-uk-info list for everyone to see? I'm getting really tired of getting things second-hand – the only reason I signed up to the esf-uk-info list was to receive

information like this – as well as agendas + minutes, none of which have happened.’ (RE: [esf-uk-info] Fwd: UK Organizing Ctee – ESF, 2004).

For one of my interviewees, this was indicative of a more general attitude of the GLA towards email communication. As he put it:

‘a lot of stuff was just circulated from people, you know, the approach of the people at the GLA because they want, you know it’s a kind of controlling tendency, you know, which is counter to the way that internet is structured, it’s not structured in a controlled and centralized way and it was to kind of say “we’ll gather the addresses, we’ll send out” and it’s un-interactive format’ (Reyes, O., Personal Interview, 2004).

Again, this seems to map onto the distinction between ‘broadcasting’ and ‘interactive’ logics of communication that was noted in the discussion of the ESF website.

Therefore, email lists can constitute sources of power for activists who serve as the email contacts of the group or for those who are responsible for setting up the list. They are thus an integral component of a process of bottom-up leadership through which individuals ascend, temporarily and informally, in positions of power. Clearly, the informal character of this process casts doubt on the transparency and accountability of the organizing structures created in this way. This is because it may allow groups and individuals to exert power informally without the requisite accountability that should be demanded from anyone in a leadership position. In that respect, acknowledging the power of spokespeople, ‘broadcasters’ and ‘email collectors’ and understanding the process through which they emerge may assist in building a better system of accountability. It may also help to create mechanisms that distribute this power more equally and prevent it from becoming consolidated. For instance, the rotation of activists in key positions would be such a mechanism.

Yet, the power derived from these positions refers to the particular list or working group and not to the whole movement. This is because with new email lists cropping up easily and at very low cost it is very difficult to keep a tag on every working group and to compile a definitive list of their members and participants. Instead, and as it was mentioned earlier, email lists tend to enhance the flexibility and adaptability of the movement by enabling the organizing structure to grow and shift towards new directions in response to emerging needs. This makes it almost impossible to establish a central control of this process and to concentrate power in the hands of the few. Email lists thus

tend to facilitate the polycentric character of the movement as they do not support long-term, unitary and centralized leadership.

11. Decision-Making, Transparency and Accountability

11.1. Decision-Making Online and Offline

As it was noted in Chapter 9, tasks referring to decision-making garner the highest per cents in all of the analysed lists. In addition, tasks undertaken online tend to revolve around the organization of offline meetings and activities. In that respect, most of the tasks referred to announcements, agendas, and the minutes of offline meetings, as well as proposals, statements, and petitions written for circulation in face-to-face meetings. If we also take into account that the lists are used to divide labour and allocate responsibility for only minor tasks, it becomes apparent that decision-making takes place predominantly offline.

For a movement organizing an event on a European scale, maintaining a process of decision-making based on face-to-face meetings seems oddly ineffective. It is, however, explainable from the views and opinions expressed in the in-depth interviews. In that respect and according to most of my interviewees, online decision-making is more tiresome and time-consuming. This is particularly the case for complex decisions which involve difficult negotiations between numerous parties. As one of my interviewees put it:

'the dynamics of decision making are very complex, how do you deal with it? A debate that has four different positions in it? You know, I think it's a very inefficient way [decisions through email] because OK someone puts a proposal, someone puts a counter-proposal, someone puts a counter proposal, you have to put a counter-proposal to that counter-proposal, it's not a useful way, it's not a good way of coming to consensus decisions or compromises, if you're in a room communication is multi-faceted at any one time, you know what I mean? The dynamics are complex and because the dynamics in a room are much more complex, they lead to resolution much quick, much more quickly, so I think the resolution is much more nuanced and much more sophisticated than through email' (Nineham, C., Personal Interview, 2004).

This is why most of my interviewees remarked that email lists can be used to make decisions only for very minor issues. For instance, one of them noted that '[r]eally simple decisions or relatively simple decisions, like when are we gonna hold the next meeting and you have a choice between Monday, Tuesday or Wednesday, that sort of thing, for that sort of thing it's quite easy to take decisions via email' (Callinicos, A., Personal Interview, 2005). Furthermore, such decision-making can be done more effectively when

activists have a history of past interactions and common work. For instance, an activist from CND noted that in her organization:

'in-between the officers' meetings we communicate many times a day by email, you know, because we know how we work together and we understand each other, that's OK but ongoing carrying out of things but if there's a decision to be made, to be made about something which is politically sensitive that we may need to think about it in detail or one of us has a different view, then we'll meet together, it's much easier face-to-face' (Hudson, K., Personal Interview, 2004).

Face-to-face communication is more suited to decision-making also for reasons concerning civility. In that respect, and in a point that I will discuss in greater detail in the following chapter, most of my interviewees felt that activists tend to be more confrontational and uncivil online rather than offline. Physical proximity seems to play a decisive role here, as activists are more prone, and perhaps more obliged, to attend to the feelings of others within a face-to-face context. For instance, according to one of my interviewees:

'when you're on your own with other people, interacting with them, that, that imposes a certain minimum of civility, I'm not saying that that minimum can't be breached, but it, you know, I have a policy when I'm angry never to write anything until I calm down or certainly never to send anything until I come down, but you know clearly for lots of people, lots of people kind of feel less constrained about being confrontational when using email which you can argue in some ways it's, it's quite sort of healthy for them [...] but for a meeting to function, for decision-making to function I think in general there must be a minimum of civility, which I think when you're in physical proximity to other people, it's easier to, em, easier to sustain' (Callinicos, A., Personal Interview, 2005)¹.

Some of my interviewees also questioned the democratic character of online decision-making. For instance, an activist from the SWP and Globalise Resistance noted that:

'[online] you don't know who's listening you don't know how democratic you're being, when you send out an email, even if it's a group email, you send out an email, you don't know how many people have read it, at what point do you decide "OK, we have enough answers to come back to make a decision"' (Nineham, C., Personal Interview, 2004).

¹ However, it is worth noting here that the border between civility and suppression of conflict is hard to draw as in a face-to-face context individuals have a tendency to agree. Again this is a point that will be discussed in more detail in Chapter 12.

Another one concurred: 'the decisions should be taken by all of us in assembly, all of us together, not through the internet' (Endre, S., Personal Interview, 2005).

However, this raises some interesting questions on the issue of democracy and inclusiveness: Why is it more democratic to exclude from decision-making a person who has missed a meeting, rather than a person who has missed an email? And also, to what extent can 'all of us together' take decisions offline when face-to-face meetings are not accessible to everyone? Indeed, as many of my interviewees noted, open meetings are not necessarily inclusive. In the words of the CND activist:

'the European Assembly for example, it's, although anyone can go in a sense it's exclusive because only certain people can afford to, only certain people got the time to do that, the people who've got childcare, they don't necessarily take a long weekend off and go to Istanbul or Berlin or something like that, you know, or their organization can't afford to send them, you know what I mean? There are all kinds of ways in which it's not an inclusive process although it's open' (Hudson, K., Personal Interview, 2004).

Another activist reiterated this point noting that 'the European Assembly meetings are accessible to on the whole to a set of political cast [...] who are relatively time-rich for this process, like have a certain amount of time they can dedicate and also be dedicated to the process, which is clearly not everyone' (Reyes, O., Personal Interview, 2004). Therefore, taking some of the major decisions by email could actually render the decision-making process more inclusive as it would make it more accessible to activists unable to attend the offline meetings.

This issue has also constituted a point of contention within the *esf-uk-info* list. The discussion was instigated by an email complaining about the re-scheduling of a meeting on the email list without first consulting the participants face-to-face. As its author remarked: 'Settling dates by e-mail is **not** an inclusive process. Some have enough time on their hands to deal with all this, and most don't. If you clog up the e-mails with process discussion, you exclude most of us from the process' (*email-ocracy*, 2004). He continued: 'if we don't exercise a bit of self-control we will get government by people with time for e-mails' (*ibid*). This yielded the following reply:

'It takes a lot more time to go to a meeting than to answer an email, even if you live close to the location of the meeting (which many people don't). Moreover, you can read emails whenever it's convenient for you, rather than having to rearrange your schedule to attend a meeting. Therefore, the number of people with time for emails is surely much larger than the number of people with time for meetings' (*Re: [esf-uk-info] email-ocracy*, 2004).

What the above debate demonstrates is that the degree to which a decision-making system based on offline meetings is considered democratic depends on your understanding of democracy and inclusiveness. Or, to put it rather more accurately, it depends on your opinion of who you can more justifiably exclude. In that respect, opting to exclude people who cannot attend the offline meetings instead of those who can makes sense for several reasons. Firstly, it locates decision-making within a face-to-face context that is better suited for complex decisions and negotiations. Secondly, this face-to-face context is also more effective for arriving at agreements since activists tend to be more civil to each other when they are physically close. Thirdly, and as I will try to explain in more detail in Chapter 12, offline meetings are necessary for the development of interpersonal trust that requires face-to-face communication in order to thrive. Face-to-face meetings also give rise to feelings of unity and togetherness, which again flourish within a context of co-presence and particularly physical proximity. In this sense, the remark that 'decisions should be taken by all of us in assembly, all of us together' (Endro, S., Personal Interview, 2005) could perhaps be interpreted more accurately if the accent is not on the phrase 'all of us' but on the word 'together'. In that respect, decisions should be taken in assembly not because 'all of us' are there, but because all of us are there together.

Thus, the primacy of face-to-face meetings in the decision-making process is justifiable in terms of effectiveness, civility and trust-building. However, I would argue that problems start to arise once we begin to attach democratic legitimacy to a choice that was not made on that basis. In other words, characterizing as more democratic a decision-making process that was ultimately chosen for reasons of effectiveness, civility and trust-building is a misguided and potentially harmful claim. Harmful because it carries with it positive connotations that raise the decision-making process to a status of unquestionable democratic value. It thus makes it more difficult not only to fight the unavoidable exclusions of this process, but also to alter and adapt it once the conditions that made it flourish change.

It is also worth noting here that people with an experience of online decision-making had understandably a more open attitude towards the benefits of online decision-making. For instance, one of my interviewees who belonged to Indymedia made the following comment:

'actually in Indymedia we organize a lot of things and we have meetings in chat and we have facilitation in the meetings and proposals and objections and then go to the next question and they're actually strictly organized and the decisions made there, you know, are all recorded and it's like, it can be a really really good way of making decisions, you know, when you are in different cities' (Ruiz, J., Personal Interview, 2004).

In addition, and as another activist noted, reducing the number of physical meetings can improve the ecological footprint of the organizing process, as it cuts down the air miles needed for people scattered around Europe to physically meet on a regular basis (Reyes, O., Personal Interview, 2004). However, for activists unfamiliar with the practice of internet decision-making, proposals to hold meetings online seemed far-fetched and unfeasible. For instance, commenting on his discussions with trade unionists about these issues, the Indymedia activist observed that online decision-making was for them 'totally inconceivable, as if I was talking about Mars' (Ruiz, J., Personal Interview, 2004).

A further point that needs to be highlighted here is that the aptness of the internet for decision-making varies from application to application. In that respect, applications facilitating real-time communication, such as chat, are better suited to decision-making, since they allow for complex negotiations to take place more quickly and efficiently. Email and email lists, on the other hand, are more cumbersome applications in terms of decision-making as they foster asynchronous communication. As one of my interviewees noted: 'at the moment, I don't think you can take decisions by email, I think you take decisions online but not by emails, I've not seen a way which has worked' (Reyes, O., Personal Interview, 2004).

11.2. Email Lists and Consensus Decision-Making

As the analysis of organizing tasks has shown, email lists are widely used to prepare for the face-to-face meetings. In that respect, they are considered invaluable. As one of my interviewees noted: 'a meeting prepared by email and internet is the best meeting you'll get' (Becker, T., Personal Interview, 2004). In fact, the role of email lists seems integral in sustaining a consensus-based decision-making process on a European scale. Most of the literature on social movements and participatory democracy refer to the employment of the consensus method by relatively small groups, located in a specific geographical area and holding regular face-to-face meetings (e.g. Mansbridge 1980). In other words, the European Social Forum process is quite distinct in its insistence to

practice consensus in large meetings² on a continental level. I would argue that such a decision-making process would not be possible without the use of email and email lists.

The main problem of consensus decision-making is that it is a very time-consuming method as it necessitates for all parties to agree on a decision. Therefore, discussions are at best lengthy and at worst, in times of ferocious conflict, endless. This is because by providing individual participants with the power to veto a decision, the process may arrive to a deadlock if none of the opposing parties is willing to compromise. It is worth noting here that in my in-depth interviews nearly all of the activists complained about this problem of consensus, often attributing it not to the limitations of the system itself, but to the improper use of the practice by their opponents.

Therefore, while consensus can more easily function in a small and homogenous group, problems start to arise once the size of the group increases along with its plurality. Hence, in the case of the EPA meetings, attended by activists from various countries, speaking different languages and coming from diverse political contexts and traditions, the practice of consensus decision-making would be impossible, or at best extremely ineffective, if the ground for the discussion was not previously prepared by the debates and circulation of information taking place online. In that respect, by disseminating the agenda and minutes of meetings, as well as proposals and statements, activists can prepare for the meetings by reading the necessary documents and consulting with their organizations and peers. For instance, according to a Greek activist: 'The ESF list is used to prepare for meetings or prepare the ground for discussion by making the positions or opinions of certain delegations known' (Yulis, P., Personal Interview, 2004). In addition, the minutes of meetings can spark further consultation and deliberation. For example, in an email complaining about the missing the minutes of a meeting, an activist from ATTAC Denmark complained that the late circulation of minutes 'makes it hard for the rest of us to discuss our position with our national organizations prior to the assembly meetings' (*Missing minutes from Paris*, 2004). Therefore, the timely circulation of information, which on a European scale could happen only through the email lists, was crucial for preparing the face-to-face assemblies, enabling delegates and participants to focus discussion on the core decisions and debates.

² Although I could not find any numbers of the activists attending the EPAs, my own observation of these meetings suggests that EPAs attract routinely more than one hundred activists.

Furthermore, email lists were used in order to regulate the discussion in face-to-face meetings and ensure that it complies with the principles of consensus decision-making. In that respect, email lists contributed towards the selection of chairs for the meetings or the voicing of complaints if there was not adequate rotation. They were also important for recording abuses of power by the chair and laying out the rules or code of conduct that should be followed by the chairs of meetings.

The regulation of consensus in face-to-face meetings is also based on an unofficial etiquette of deliberation that is shaped by the culture, experiences and history of the actors involved in the process, as well as their past interactions. Norms of deliberation constitute the informal guidelines about how to behave in meetings, including the kinds of issues that can be brought up, the way they should be talked about, as well as the degree of emotion that is acceptable (Polletta 2002: 16). In that respect, email lists were used to discuss about the etiquette of deliberation in offline meetings and to debate on the correct practices of consensus. They were also used in order to record perceived abuses of the consensus process.

The table below presents the number of messages in each of the analysed lists discussing either the etiquette of deliberation or consensus decision-making.

	FSE-ESF		esf-uk-info		democratisESF	
discussing the etiquette of deliberation/code of conduct in offline meetings	7	4.4%	8	7.5%	12	8.1%
discussing consensus decision-making	1	0.6%	3	2.8%	9	6.0%

Table 11.1: Referring to or discussing the etiquette of deliberation and consensus decision-making (% of sampled messages)

According to the table, the democratisESF list hosted more discussions about the etiquette of deliberation or consensus decision-making than the other two lists. This possibly reflects the more polemic character of this list which included a higher number of messages criticizing the decision-making process and complaining about breaches of consensus rules perpetrated by the other side.

11.3. The Potential of Email Lists to 'Open Up' the Face-to-Face Meetings

Apart from facilitating the achievement of consensus in the face-to-face meetings, email lists also help to 'open up' these meetings to the participation of a variety of actors. They also aid activists who cannot attend the meetings to have a degree of influence on the decisions taken face-to-face. And since face-to-face meetings are the locus of power in this decision making process, email lists help to distribute this power a bit more equally as they facilitate the 'opening up' of these meetings to a variety of actors.

Firstly, email lists helped to lower the costs of attending the face-to-face meetings. In this respect, the lists were used to organize the transport and accommodation of activists travelling to the offline meetings by distributing information about cheaper tickets and accommodation. In addition, activists living in the city where the meeting would be held could offer their hospitality to participants who could not afford a hotel. Furthermore, email lists were used in the process of collecting and distributing the solidarity fund, put together to support the travel costs of activists from poorer countries.

Secondly, email lists were the main space for the announcement of meetings, helping to distribute this information as quickly and widely as possible. With more people learning about the meetings, email lists aided in broadening participation and increasing the plurality of the actors involved. For instance, one of the first 'successes' of the democratisESF list was exactly to enlarge participation in the first British meeting of the London process held at City Hall on the 3rd of December 2003 (Hodkinson, S., Personal Interview, 2004). The lists were also used to express indignation about the late or no announcement of meetings or their re-scheduling without prior consultation of the members of the list or the working group the meeting was referring to. Thus, the prompt and wide circulation of information about meetings constituted a measure of the degree of democracy and transparency of the decision-making process and a basis for conflict and negotiation.

Thirdly, email lists were used to deliberate on the most suitable time and place of meetings that would ensure broad and wide participation. In that respect, holding meetings on weekdays or during working hours would effectively exclude non-professional activists from the decision-making process. This was a major point of contention in the case of the Co-ordinating Committee meetings which were routinely held on Thursday afternoons at City Hall. Email lists were thus employed in order to press for the rescheduling of important meetings. Such efforts were however

unsuccessful in the case of the Co-ordinating Committee meetings which continued to take place at an inconvenient time for most activists.

Fourthly, email lists were also utilized for the circulation of the agenda prior to the face-to-face meetings. Timely circulation of the agenda would allow participants to prepare for the items that would be discussed. It would also provide the opportunity to activists unable to attend the meetings to consult with those aiming to attend in order to make their ideas and opinions heard. In other words, timely circulation of the agenda contributes towards the emergence of an informal system of representation with activists participating in the meetings acting as the unofficial representatives of those who could not attend. The email lists were also used to contest the agenda of meetings, as well as the process through which it was set up and to demand for alterations or for new items to be inserted. Yet, if we take a closer look at the content analysis results, it quickly becomes apparent that the lists were mainly employed to circulate the agenda rather than co-write or debate it.

Fifthly, email lists were also used to co-write and circulate proposals and statements that would be presented as position papers in the face-to-face meetings. However, the only list used in that respect was the democratisESF, which constituted an organizing hub for the 'Horizontal' camp. Again, this allowed activists who could not attend the meetings to input their ideas into these proposals and thus indirectly shape the decisions taken face-to-face.

Sixthly, email lists were also used to run online consultations that also have the potential of enhancing the system of informal representation. Nevertheless, email lists were employed for this type of consultation only informally and on the initiative of specific activists, as no consultation was ever launched by the official process. The most prominent case of this sort concerned a consultation about the 'environment' axis of the ESF programme launched by the representative of Friends of the Earth. As she noted:

'that environmental plenaries thing was kind of one of my attempts to try and improve the participation in what, cause the other plenaries, the other people's approach in the UK was to say "alright, we'll call a meeting on racism and in that meeting we will propose the plenaries", I think that's great to have meeting but I think other things need to happen in addition to that, you need to find as many different ways of letting people input their views as possible' (Griffiths, H., Personal Interview, 2004).

She also remarked that there was considerable resistance to setting up an official consultation process and that the option was voted out in one of the meetings.

Seventhly, the email lists were employed in order to fight against the exclusion of specific activists from the process. The most infamous incident of this sort occurred when a representative from the Communist Party of Great Britain (CPGB) and reporter for the *Weekly Worker* was excluded twice from the Co-ordinating Committee meetings during a discussion of financial issues. According to an unofficial report circulated on the email lists:

'[r]easons given for her exclusion have been that unions will not participate in the process if the sums of money they talk about in meetings then find their way into the WW [*Weekly Worker*] [...]; another reason is the fear of GLA officers of the backlash that will follow if confidential figures that they reveal in meetings find their way into the WW' (*Ra: [osf-uk-info] code of conduct, 2004*).

The activist reacted by notifying the email lists about this incident, which sparked a debate on the legitimacy of such exclusions. She then drew up a proposal for a 'Code of Conduct' for offline meetings, detailing possible violations that could lead to the exclusion of an activist from a meeting. The proposal was circulated on the email lists as a petition and activists pledged their support by signing their name. According to her own testimony, 'email has been very important to for example send out my appeal, you know, against my exclusion, you know that's, replying back half an hour after I sent it, twenty messages came in and stuff which you never get if you phone people' (Becker, T., *Personal Interview, 2004*).

Finally, email lists were used to circulate the official minutes of meetings, as well as unofficial reports and testimonies. This provided the opportunity to activists absent from the meeting not only to be informed about the decisions, but also to question and criticize them. In that respect, speaking about her exclusion from some of the offline meetings, the CPGB activist noted that trying to withhold information is a pointless strategy in the age of the internet. As she put it:

'it's just rubbish firstly to say, you know, "oh, we'll throw Tina out of the room and none of this information will, you know, will leak to the public" which is rubbish, cause they're people there who will put it on the email lists, put it on the website [...] trying to prevent information leaking out, leaks out, you know, so it has the opposite effect, so, that's totally wrong to presume that you can, you can prevent it' (Becker, T., *Personal Interview, 2004*).

Therefore, by increasing the circulation of information, email lists played a central role in ensuring the transparency and openness of the decision-making process with varying success.

However, apart from constituting spaces for the circulation of information, the email lists were also used to criticize the ESF process in terms of its transparency through, for instance, voicing complaints about missing minutes and announcements. As Table 11.2 shows, many of the messages on the esf-uk-info and democratisESF lists made references to or discussed the problems with transparency. The FSE-ESF list had much fewer messages referring to these issues, as such problems concerned mainly the British organizing process.

	Number of Msgs	% of total
FSE-ESF	11	6.9%
esf-uk-info	16	15.0%
democratisESF	23	15.4%

Table 11.2: Referring to or discussing transparency (% of sampled messages)

Yet, what this also suggests is that the prompt circulation of the official minutes, as well as of the announcements of meetings and their agendas further became a yardstick of the transparency and accountability of the decision-making process. In other words, email lists were implicated in the transparency debates not only practically, being the main spaces for the circulation of this information, but also symbolically, constituting a measure of the democratic legitimacy of the system.

Therefore, email lists help to 'open up', to an extent, the offline meetings to the direct or indirect participation of activists who would otherwise be excluded from decision-making. Obviously, this enhances the democratic character of the process, as it allows more actors to have an equal say in the decision-making. It also aids in sustaining this system of 'informal representation' as those who are being represented do not feel entirely excluded from the process. If they did, then they would pressure for a more formal system of representation which would ensure that their ideas and opinions are taken into account by their representatives. What is more, all of this information and debate may actually serve to gloss over the fact that it is always the same actors who have the power to participate in the face-to-face meetings and take decisions. In turn, this reduces demands to institute formal mechanisms for enlarging participation in the

offline meetings. In other words, this informal system of representation may actually help not only to conceal, but also to consolidate, asymmetries of power within the movement.

The next section will attempt to elaborate on the relationship between email lists and transparency in more general terms, focusing on the affordances of email that render it a suitable application for increasing transparency. I will then go on to consider the role of email lists in the process of accountability, arguing that too much information may actually hinder the process of holding those responsible to account.

11.4. Email and Transparency

Email possesses a combination of characteristics that make it particularly apt for enhancing transparency. Firstly, email has the tendency to blur the border between the private and the public, as an email that might be intended for and received by only one person, constituting a private interaction, can then be forwarded by the initial receiver to multiple users, being thus transformed into a public multicast. Secondly, email constitutes a written form of communication, which means that online discussions leave an electronic trace and a record of the interaction and can be archived and re-visited. Therefore, email communication has the potential to not only expose the inner workings of the movement, but also to leave a record of this expose that can then be widely circulated and archived. In that respect, one of my interviewees remarked that:

'you can write what you think is a private email and then someone might send it round to everyone else, or you might press the wrong button and then accidentally send it to loads of people, so there are, there is potential for things to go wrong, communication to go wrong in a negative way with the email, you know, but that's, people have to be aware of making short responses' (Hudson, K., Personal Interview, 2004).

An interviewee from Greece also observed that if she needs to communicate with another alter-globalization group without everyone knowing, then she would prefer to use the telephone rather than email (Theodwrakopoulou, N., Personal Interview, 2004).

The potential for 'private' conversations to leak into the public domain is present not only on the level of interpersonal communication between activists, but also on the level of national movements and delegations. An example that illustrates this point is the leaking of the Italian report described in Chapter 7. In this case, an Italian activist living in London, who was closely associated with the 'Horizontalists', took the initiative of translating and circulating a report of the meeting of the European Programme Group in

Paris in the end of May 2004. The report was written by the Italian delegation to the meeting and was intended for circulation only on the Italian national email list. Included in the report were some very unfavourable remarks about the behaviour of the British delegation in the meeting (who mostly belonged to the 'Vertical' camp), as British delegates were accused of closed-mindedness, unwillingness to collaborate and provincialism. The circulation of this report, a few days before the Berlin EPA in mid-June, sparked a vigorous debate within the British movement concerning the validity of these accusations. The Italians attempted to rectify the situation by sending a letter to the British movement where they apologized for this incident. It is interesting to note that the letter started with the following paragraph:

'First of all, we would like to say that we are sorry about the fact that an internal report became public. We wrote our report exclusively for the Italian working group preparing for the European Social Forum. We apologise for the incident and for the discussion that it gave rise to' (The Italian Working Group Towards the London ESF, 2004: n.p.).

Hence, one could argue that email can bring about an unintended and often unwanted transparency. This transparency may challenge in a fundamental way the prevailing notions of what constitutes or should constitute a private or public interaction. However, it is worth noticing here that private and public can be variably defined according to the context of the interaction. In that respect, an interpersonal exchange of emails may be considered as a private interaction which is then made public when it is forwarded to a national email list. Similarly, a letter circulated on a national email list can be considered as a private national interaction which is then made public when it is forwarded to a European list. In both cases, a message remains 'private' when it reaches only the audience it is intended for, regardless of whether this is an audience of one or many. A message becomes 'public' when it reaches a different, and often larger, audience than the one it was intended for. It would thus be more accurate to talk about degrees of publicness or privacy according to the scale of the audience an email is intended for.

However, despite the propensity of email lists to bring to the fore the inner workings of the movement, there were also cases where email lists were used to close down, rather than open up communication. According to the creator of the democratisESF list and one of the most prominent 'Horizontalists', a core group of 'democratizers', which had

emerged through its committed participation in the offline meetings, also communicated through a secret list. In his interview he maintained that:

'the reason why we did that was because what was happening was that some people were so open about what they were going to do, what they were going to argue and what strategy they were going to employ that the SWP and the trade unions, they knew exactly what we were going to do, they knew exactly when we were going to a meeting what we were going to argue collectively for a document or even we were going to make sure that this agenda item goes first' (Hodkinson, S., Personal Interview, 2004).

And while, as he claimed, the information from the other side started to disappear³, the strategies of the 'Horizontalists' remained in full view on the democratisESF list. A further problem with openly circulating all of the available information on the democratisESF list was that there were activists who were 'going on organizing the forum with the rules set out by the SWP and then giving us the information back but then they found out information that wasn't public, we couldn't put it out on the democratize because that would then show them up to be playing both sides' (ibid).

Thus, creating a closed email list was the next logical step in this respect. According to the same activist:

'obviously, we also decided that "look if we're going to talk closed we might as well set up a closed list where people who are genuinely democratizers, who go to the meetings and who work hard on the process should talk to each other" so we did that and set up a strategy list and that list, so we then started to using the internet again' (ibid).

The rules of the list were very clear: 'no one talks about this list, this list does not exist, alright? This list does not exist, you must never email anyone from this list who is not on this list, you must never send an email from this list, you must never quote this email list' (ibid). For a group whose identity was based on openness and participation and whose main concern with the process was precisely the lack of openness and participation, ensuring that the list remained secret was of paramount importance. As the same activist noted, 'if they could prove that we were doing it and we're talking about openness cause

³ It is worth noting here that the other side also operated a sort of secret list. In my interview with a prominent member of the 'Vertical' camp, he noted that 'there was also a kind of, there was a more, it wasn't exactly official, but there was one [email list] specifically for those who were involved in some of the organization of the ESF which must have been moderated by the ESF office, but that one seems to have died' (Callinicos, A., Personal Interview, 2005). However, when I pressed him for more details about this list he backtracked, saying that he did not know how one could subscribe to it and that it was anyway a 'short-lived list' (ibid).

that was our mantra, that was our public thing, that was it, then of course they would destroy us with that" (ibid).

The interesting point to note here is that despite the care that was taken to conceal the existence of this list, mistakes and transgressions were unavoidable. More precisely, 'three transgressions were made and like a number of us were like immediately email "what the fuck are you doing, you should not do this, you're putting us all at risk here" and it was especially putting people's organizations at risk' (ibid). In that respect, transgressions were unintentional and seemed to arise from the facility with which a private email can be accidentally made public. According to the same activist:

'a number of us, no names, were not convinced that some people would be able to, not, we didn't care about their views, we just did not, we trusted them as people, we did not trust their ability to make, not make the most basic errors and send an email from the list to the whole ESF process because people have done it before, they were very casual with hitting the reply all button and some people just stuck every email list they've ever been on every email they sent' (ibid).

The caution with which email should be used in order not to divulge vital information to opponents shows how the communicative affordances of email lists are better suited to increasing rather than reducing transparency. However, the existence of the secret list also suggests that people are willing to use a medium for functions that it is generally unfit for, when a pressing need arises. In this sense, the 'Horizontals' were compelled to create a secret email list because communicating face-to-face just before the major ESF meetings was not sufficient, even though the list risked the legitimacy of the group. It is also worth noting here that it is not only the characteristics of the medium itself but also the culture of the people using it and their aptitude with the technology that determines the way it functions. In that respect, when people 'casually hit the reply all button' or 'stick every email list they've ever been on' to the message they are sending, the propensity of email lists to increase transparency is reinforced.

11.5. Email Lists and Accountability

Transparency is integral to accountability, as the people responsible cannot be held to account for abuses of power or erroneous decisions, if information about these decisions or abuses, as well as the functioning of the process, is not publicly available. Therefore, by playing a central role in the circulation of information, email lists constitute

a vital part of the system of accountability. In addition, email lists document both the official and the unofficial discussions enlarging the breadth of the available information and providing a more comprehensive, albeit more chaotic, record of the process. For instance, according to one of my interviewees:

'the minutes of the meetings of the ESF have never been particularly good, [...] the way they've been done is sort of decision minutes, you can see from that, I mean if you've been to a meeting and then read back that it never quite corresponds, of course if you look at your own stuff and you think "oh that wasn't, that didn't clearly capture all of my point", [...] if you have a written documentation on email obviously that captures a lot more of the sense and gives you chance to revisit it' (Reyes, O., Personal Interview, 2004).

The electronic traces left by email list communication are of particular importance here. As the same interviewee noted, 'it [the internet] puts things in a public or semi-public domain and it provides a record that you can revisit' (ibid). This record can then be used to seek responsibility for abuses, mistakes or omissions. According to the same activist, 'if you've got something online, then you've got something as a permanent that can also be used against, against you, against other people' (ibid). Deliberately creating a record of the interaction can also constitute a strategy for obliging your partners to assume responsibility for their duties or actions. For instance, according to a Spanish activist 'the email is better, I know what I have asked you and you cannot throw it and not answer me, so in this case I prefer email to face-to-face, I sometimes do that with the people who are inside the Infospace⁴, we are in the same space but I send an email' (Fuster y Morel, M., Personal Interview, 2004).

There are, however, instances, whereby the circulation of too much information may have an adverse effect on accountability. With the proliferation of official and unofficial accounts, reports, and discussions, email lists may result in a cacophony, making it difficult to decide whose voice or opinion should prevail. In other words, information overload may limit our epistemic understanding and interpretation of that information, rendering the process more opaque rather than more transparent. In that respect, a well-functioning process of accountability entails a clear and shared understanding of who should be held accountable, for what and to whom. It also requires a set of common

⁴ 'Infospace' is the name of the collective that the interviewee belonged to. The Infospace was housed in a squat in Barcelona, so when she says that she sends messages to people in the 'Infospace' she means people who are physically in the same space as her.

standards by which to judge the performance and behaviour of those in power, as well as a system of sanctions to be imposed in the case of abuses and mistakes.

I would argue that email lists often tend to obscure rather than clarify these components. Firstly, and as I have already shown in the section relating to responsibility and leadership, email lists enable a more informal and flexible division of labour and allocation of responsibilities that makes it difficult to identify who is to blame when there is a mistake or transgression. For instance, with activists joining and dropping out of working groups by subscribing and unsubscribing from the email lists, it is almost impossible to locate responsibility on the level of individual activists but solely on the level of specific bodies and working groups whose membership is always in flux.

Secondly, the circulation of formal and unofficial reports and minutes on the lists makes it difficult to form a common understanding about the kinds of information that constitute evidence of abuse of power. For instance, prior to the March EPA activists from the 'Horizontal' camp had circulated on the lists a rather lengthy 'Log of Abuses' perpetrated by the other side. Whether this constituted evidence of abuse depended on which camp one belonged to.

Thirdly, the same can be said about the process of creating a shared set of standards with which to judge the performance and behaviour of those in power. In the case of the London 2004 ESF and as I showed in the historical account of the process, the 'Horizontals' and the 'Verticals' operated on two different understandings of democracy and the nature of the ESF which were in turn related to a different set of standards. For instance, the 'Verticals' viewed the ESF as an event and therefore their standards of performance referred to the efficiency of organizing an event that would attract as many participants as possible. The 'Horizontals', on the other hand, perceived the ESF as a process and therefore their standards related more to the democratic functioning of the organizing process of the forum. What is important here is not the existence of these deeply entrenched differences but rather the fact that until the end there was no real mechanism through which these two parties could come to some compromise and develop a set of common standards of behaviour and performance.

Fourthly, the sanctions imposed in the case of abuses or transgressions mainly belong to the peer mechanism (see literature review). According to Grant and Keohane, within such a mechanism, peer organizations constitute the accountability holders and the costs or sanctions in case of abuse include '[e]ffects on network ties and therefore on

others' support' (2005: 36). In addition, reputation is key within every system of accountability. However, this means that the process of punishing abuses of power is again quite informal, depending on the negotiations and relationships among the actors involved in the forum. Obviously, the circulation of information, of unofficial and official reports, as well as slanders is very important within this system of peer accountability, as it may tarnish the reputation of power-wielders. However, with no clear and shared standards and with a chaotic system of providing evidence, the decision about whether someone should be held accountable and about what may ultimately rest in the hands of the most influential peers, since it is their interpretation of the situation, and not one derived from commonly shared standards, that has the most currency.

Therefore, the circulation of too much information may be detrimental for the process of accountability. This is because it may confuse rather than clarify whether there was a mistake or transgression, who should be held to account and what kinds of sanctions should be imposed. In that respect, merely disseminating the information is no guarantee that those responsible will receive the necessary sanctions. Email lists are directly implicated in this process as they accelerate the circulation of information in the movement. In addition, and as I will discuss in the following chapter, email lists do not necessarily foster a shared understanding or the reconciliation between opposing views. Instead, coping with information overload often implies that activists read only messages from people they already know and trust or regarding issues they are already involved in. What is more, email lists relax the obligation to respond to all of the messages that are being sent. Thus, activists can easily disregard messages that they consider offensive or that do not agree with their own views. In other words, the circulation of information on the list does not ensure that activists will arrive at a shared understanding of standards of performance or definitions about what constitutes a transgression of power. In turn, this allows influential actors more leverage within the system of accountability as their evidence may carry more weight and the loss of their trust constitutes a heavier sanction. Therefore, too much transparency may actually blind us to the asymmetries of power characterizing the system of accountability and conceal its weaknesses and limitations.

12. Collective Identity

As noted in Chapter 3, the notion of collective identity is currently characterized by a 'definitional catholicity' (Polletta and Jasper 2001: 285) which often blends its boundaries with the allied concepts of trust or solidarity. In addition, and as Melucci argues, collective identity should be perceived as an interactive and dynamic process, as an effort of movement participants to negotiate the means and ends of their action, its resources and constraints, as well as the relationship of the movement with its environment (1996: 70). This process is closely related to the building of interpersonal trust, as well as feelings of belonging and solidarity. Based on data emerging from the content analysis and the in-depth interviews, I will discuss the communicative affordances of email lists as 'sites of identization'. I will further consider the role of email in fostering trust and solidarity and in consolidating relationships among ideological and geographical divides, comparing its affordances with those of face-to-face communication.

12.1. 'Identity' Messages

Messages fulfilling an identity function constitute 40.3% of the sampled messages on the FSE-ESF list, 61.7% of the esf-uk-info and 59.1% of the democratisESF list. It is worth noting here that 'identity' messages do not necessarily refer to the ESF process as 'organizing' messages did. In that respect, I considered messages referring to the 'movement for alternative globalization' in general or to the World Social Forum to play an equally important role in the collective identity process of the movement.

	frequency	per cent
FSE-ESF	64	40.3%
esf-uk-info	66	61.7%
democratisESF	88	59.1%

Table 12.1: Total number of 'identity' messages (% of sample from each list)

This possibly explains the higher per cents garnered by 'identity' messages in all of the analysed lists. Table 12.2 presents the distribution of messages between those fulfilling only an identity function, those referring only to organizing, those having both an identity and organizing function, and those fulfilling neither function. This last category

includes spam, messages relating to the management of the email list, or messages from specific organizations announcing actions and events with no reference to the movement.

	only organizing	only identity	both	other
FSE-ESF	11.3%	25.2%	13.2%	8.8%
esf-uk-info	22.4%	34.6%	19.6%	4.7%
democratisESF	24.8%	26.8%	30.2%	8.7%

Table 12.2: Distribution of messages between the 'identity' and 'organizing' functions (% of sampled messages from each list)

As the above table shows, the democratisESF list has the highest number of messages referring solely to organizing, as well as messages with both an organizing and identity function. More generally, when messages relate exclusively to one function, either 'identity' or 'organizing', the per cents for 'identity' messages are higher than the ones for 'organizing'. This is particularly the case for the FSE-ESF and esf-uk-info lists, while in the democratisESF list messages are more equally distributed.

12.2. 'Identity' Messages Relevant to the ESF

The picture slightly changes once we consider only the 'identity' messages which are relevant to the ESF preparatory process. In that respect, the democratisESF list has the highest per cent of 'identity' messages referring specifically to the ESF process, followed by the FSE-ESF, while the esf-uk-info list comes third. However, if we compare the total number of messages in each list, the esf-uk-info list is a close second to the democratisESF.

	number	% of 'identity'	% of total
FSE-ESF	58	90.6%	36.5%
esf-uk-info	58	87.9%	54.2%
democratisESF	84	95.5%	56.4%

Table 12.3: 'Identity' messages relevant to the ESF process (% of sample from each list)

Therefore, all of the analysed lists encompass more 'identity' messages than 'organizing' ones, while the democratisESF list contains the highest number of 'identity' messages referring particularly to the ESF process. This is an indication of the greater degree of specificity of this list. In addition, the democratisESF list has the highest per

cent of messages fulfilling both an 'organizing' and 'identity' function, or in other words, messages where identity issues are interweaved with organizing ones.

12.4. Referring to and Discussing Identity Online

I have further calculated the number of messages discussing or referring to key aspects of collective identity, as identified by Melucci (1996). These features concern the 'action system' of the movement and comprise its means and ends of action, its resources and constraints, as well as its relationship with the environment. I have also measured the number of messages discussing the plurality or inclusiveness of the movement which is considered to be an integral component of its collective identity.

	FSE-ESF		esf-uk-info		democratisESF	
means and ends	40	25.2%	23	21.5%	44	29.5%
resources and constraints	15	9.4%	7	6.5%	24	16.1%
Relationship with the environment	13	8.2%	12	11.2%	19	12.8%
inclusiveness/plurality	17	10.7%	17	15.9%	19	12.8%

Table 12.4: Referring to or discussing identity (% of 'identity' messages from each list)

As it is obvious from Table 12.4, messages referring to or discussing means and ends of action garner much higher per cents than those regarding resources and constraints of action or the movement's relationship with its environment. The esf-uk-info list is a slight exception here, as messages referring to or discussing means and ends of action represent a much lower per cent of 'identity' messages than the ones in the other two lists.

Discussing Means/Ends Relevant to the ESF	
FSE-ESF	85.1%
esf-uk-info	74.0%
democratisESF	95.5%

Table 12.5: Messages discussing means/ends that are relevant to the ESF (% of 'identity' discussing means and ends of action)

Means and ends of action may refer particularly to the ESF or to the movement in general. As it is evident from the table below, most of such messages on the democratisESF concern specifically the ESF organizing process (95.5%). The FSE-ESF list comes second with 85.1%, while the esf-uk-info list is third with 74%. Therefore,

again, the democratisESF list emerges as the list with a more explicit focus on the ESF process.

Messages referring to or discussing resources or constraints of action represented a lower per cent of 'identity' messages in all of the analysed lists. According to Table 12.3, such messages constitute 23% of the 'identity' messages on the FSE-ESF list and 27% of the ones on the democratisESF. The esf-uk-info list again comes third with 11%. However, and as Table 12.5 shows, compared to the other two lists, messages on the esf-uk-info list referred almost exclusively to the funds, logistics and resources of the ESF. Yet, in terms of absolute numbers, the frequency of messages referring to ESF resources and constraints is almost equal for the esf-uk-info and FSE-ESF lists and more than double for the democratisESF list.

Discussing Resources/Constraints Relevant to the ESF	
FSE-ESF	53.3%
esf-uk-info	85.7%
democratisESF	70.8%

Table 12.6: Messages referring to resources, funds and logistics of the ESF (% of 'identity' messages discussing resources and constraints of action)

Discussion concerning the relationship of the movement with its environment refers to the process of setting and negotiating the boundaries of the movement, as well as figuring out its relationship with a variety of actors, both allies and enemies. Messages of this sort garner almost equal per cents of 'identity' messages in all of the analysed lists ranging from 22% for the democratisESF to 27% for the FSE-ESF, while the esf-uk-info list is a close second with 26%. According to the table below, in the democratisESF list such messages focused on the relationship between the ESF preparatory process and the GLA.

Discussing the Relationship with the GLA	
FSE-ESF	53.8%
esf-uk-info	75.0%
democratisESF	84.2%

Table 12.7: Messages referring to the relationship of the ESF process with the GLA (% of messages discussing the relationship with the environment)

Table 12.3 in the beginning of this section also reveals that plurality and inclusiveness constitute a central aspect of the movement's identity since all of the analysed lists contain numerous messages with references to these issues. Indeed, such

messages garner almost equal per cents with the ones discussing resources and constraints of action or the relationship with the environment.

Discussing the Accessibility of ESF Meetings	
FSE-ESF	11.8%
esf-uk-info	29.4%
democratisESF	42.1%

Table 12.8: Messages referring to the inclusiveness or accessibility of the ESF meetings (% of messages discussing inclusiveness or plurality)

In terms of messages referring specifically to the inclusiveness or accessibility of the ESF meetings and as it would be expected, the democratisESF list comes first, while this per cent is much lower for the esf-uk-info list and almost negligible for the FSE-ESF list. Again this constitutes evidence of the more polemic character of the democratisESF list, where breaches to the open and inclusive character of the ESF process and tended to be furiously discussed and lengthily documented.

12.3. 'Identity' Messages and Interactivity

Another point of interest in this analysis was whether 'identity' messages were mostly interactive or non-interactive. In that respect, interactive messages denoted a greater degree of discussion and debate concerning aspects of collective identity and, possibly engagement and interaction between different views. On the other hand, non-interactive messages point to a different process of collective identity, whereby positions are clarified but engagement between list participants is limited. Table 12.9 presents the distribution of 'identity' messages in each list according to their interactivity.

	non-interactive		interactive	
	% of 'identity'	% of total	% of 'identity'	% of total
FSE-ESF	45.3%	18.2%	53.1%	21.4%
esf-uk-info	24.2%	15.0%	74.2%	45.8%
democratisESF	18.2%	10.7%	80.7%	47.7%

Table 12.9: 'Identity' messages and interactivity¹

As the above table shows, 'identity' messages tended to be mostly interactive. This is especially pronounced in the democratisESF list, whereby interactive messages represent 80.7% of the 'identity' messages on this list. In the FSE-ESF list, on the other

¹ Messages that were neither interactive nor non-interactive were omitted from the table.

hand, the difference between interactive and non-interactive messages is quite small, as the former constitute only 53.1% of the 'identity' messages. The esf-uk-info list is again located between the other two, but is impressively interactive, with 74.2% of 'identity' messages falling within this category. The picture becomes even clearer once we examine 'identity' messages in relation to type of message.

	FSE-ESF	esf-uk-info	democratisESF
Statements/Announcements	31.3%	21.2%	10.2%
Circulating documents	10.9%	3.0%	6.8%
Discussion/Debate	34.4%	47.0%	61.4%
Questions/Answers	7.9%	10.6%	4.5%
Petitions	3.1%	10.6%	11.3%
Comments to statements	4.7%	6.1%	3.4%
Other	7.7%	1.5%	2.4%

Table 12.10: Type of 'identity' messages (% of 'identity' messages from each list)

According to Table 12.10, messages belonging to the non-interactive category of 'statements or announcements' represent 31.3% of the 'identity' messages on the FSE-ESF list and only 10.2% of the ones on the democratisESF list. The esf-uk-info list is positioned exactly in the middle with 21.2% of its 'identity' messages fitting in this category. In terms of the 'circulation of documents', another non-interactive type of message, the FSE-ESF list again comes first with 10.9%, while the democratisESF list is second with 6.8%. The esf-uk-info list garners by far the lowest per cent.

As for 'discussion or debate', the democratisESF list contains by far the highest per cent of 'identity' messages of this type. This figure is 61.4% for the democratisESF, 47% for the esf-uk-info and only 34.4% for the FSE-ESF list. However, 'questions and requests for information' garner the lowest per cent on the democratisESF list the highest on the esf-uk-info list. This suggests that in terms of interactive 'identity' messages, the democratisESF list is home to more debate and discussion, while the other two lists fare better in questions and requests for information. This is possibly explained by the more formal and institutionalized nature of the esf-uk-info and FSE-ESF lists, which made them better sources of official information concerning the ESF preparatory process. Finally, the esf-uk-info and democratisESF lists are used much more than the FSE-ESF list to circulate or endorse petitions that also concern 'identity' issues.

In terms of the type of author and interactivity and as the following table reveals, individuals writing either on their personal capacity or on behalf of organizations tend to send more interactive 'identity' messages than non-interactive ones. On the other hand, groups, organizations and political parties or groups and decision-making bodies of the ESF process tend, almost unequivocally, to send non-interactive messages. This suggests that discrete types of authors are differently engaged in the process of collective identity formation. While individuals tend to participate more in discussion and debate, groups, organizations, and bodies of the ESF tend to express identity issues in a non-interactive format. The table below presents the per cents of interactive 'identity' messages for each type of author.

	FSE-ESF	esf-uk-info	democratisESF
Individual	76.7%	86.7%	82.9%
Individual as part of Organization	64.3%	62.5%	100.0%
Working Group/Office/Decision-making body of the ESF	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
Organization/Group/Political Party	18.2%	0.0%	40.0%

Table 12.11: Interactive 'identity' messages and type of author (% of 'identity' messages)

12.4. Political Discussion Online and Face-to-Face

Despite the mostly interactive character of 'identity' messages sent to the ESF lists, the in-depth interviews showed that activists prefer to hold political discussions offline rather than on the internet. Support for this view was overwhelming, cutting across ideological and national differences. As my interviews revealed, the reasons for this unequivocal preference of face-to-face communication related to issues of interactivity, information overload, and conflict.

In terms of interactivity, some of my interviewees remarked that email cannot afford real dialogue. As the Friends of the Earth representative noted:

'people have this perception and I'm guilty of it as well, you send an email to whoever set of people you need to communicate with and then you think OK I communicated with them now, that's it, job done, you know, you don't check to see if they read the email, you don't follow it up to see if they've got questions, you just kind of, it's a very one-sided, lazy way of communicating with people really, actually, 'cause you just assume that they've read and understood everything that you've said' (Griffiths, H., Personal Interview, 2004).

Therefore, email is not suitable to political discussion as, according to the same activist, 'it's just so easy just to "this is what I wanna say" and then you don't respond, you don't have a dialogue with people, and political discussions need dialogue and email isn't good in dialogue' (ibid). In other words, while email can facilitate two-way communication, it does not necessarily create an obligation to respond to the messages that are received. This is probably due to the asynchronous character of email that relaxes such responsibilities. Media affording synchronous or real-time communication, on the other hand, are subject to more restrictions of politeness. Nevertheless, email can create an illusion of two-way communication, concealing possible misunderstandings or disagreements.

An additional problem of online political discussion, according to the in-depth interviews, is the danger of information overload. In that respect, holding a conversation on an email list that is of interest to only a minority of its subscribers is often considered a transgression of the rules of the list. This is particularly the case for email lists dedicated to the preparatory process of the ESF. As one of my interviewees put it: '[email] breaks down when, you know, two people having a political discussion or four people having an argument and there's a hundred people on the email list and that's, that's a very bad use of email in my, in my view' (ibid). Indeed, the examined email lists offer plenty of examples whereby activists are chastised for occupying the list with discussions of little relevance to the ESF organizing process. For instance, in the *esf-uk-info* list, in an email titled 'improper use of this list' the author remarked: 'this an inappropriate debate to carry out on lists designed for organizing the ESF. I, like everybody else, find it very difficult to keep up with my emails on the ESF without having the lists clogged up with issues not directly related' (*Red Star case: Inappropriate use of this list*, 2004). As a solution, some of my interviewees noted that it would be best to set up email lists devoted solely to political discussion.

However, the most commonly cited reason concerning the unsuitability of the email for political discussion regarded the tendency for conflicts to escalate when carried out by email. According to many of my interviewees, it is very easy for people to get the tone wrong on email, resulting in more frequent, and at times ferocious, misunderstandings. This tendency is heightened by language barriers, which tend to be more pronounced in written communication, thus increasing the possibility for people to misread the tone. For instance, in the words of a French-speaking interviewee:

'for a lot of people it's not their own language, so when I write I may sound more rude, I may sound more rude in English than in French because I don't have the sensibility of the language which allows me to kind of play with the words and being able to balance as well what's that meaning of the word and so on, so forth, so people, it's very easy to get confused and it's very easy to get misrepresented' (Bouteldja, N., Personal Interview, 2004).

Furthermore, it seems that people tend to be harsher towards others when they are not in physical proximity. As the same interviewee noted, 'you let yourself, I know that myself I do it, you can be more, much more rude [...] when you don't have a human being in front of you and you don't see how, for example, upset you're making these people by saying or writing these things' (ibid). An interviewee from ATTAC Britain concurred: 'I think there is an immunity about email which gives people license and they can, yeah I've been surprised by the viciousness of some emails' (Kotkowska, H., Personal Interview, 2004). Some located the problem to specific individuals who do not dare to instigate conflict face-to-face and instead hide behind emails: 'you find a few people who are willing to make attacks on people or come out on the email or the message boards but when it comes to face-to-face meetings things are very different [...] I think people hide behind email a lot, so I'm not much in favour of it personally' (Taylor, G., Personal Interview, 2004). According to another interviewee, this is even the case 'when people know who you are, there is still anonymity there that still makes you feel you have the license to be quite rude' (Kotkowska, H., Personal Interview, 2004). What is more, conflict on email can become more generalized as 'it's something that happens with emailing and if you see one person getting a kind of bullshit about something, it can actually spur other people on to do the same' (ibid). This can be very damaging to the atmosphere of the list, as well as to the activists' morale, since, according to an Italian interviewee, email tends to give the impression that conflict is much more widespread than it actually is (Pierro Bernochi, Personal Interview, 2004).

In that respect, face-to-face contact serves as an antidote to email conflict, since online disputes tend to be settled when activists meet face-to-face. For instance, as the interviewee from ATTAC Britain noted, 'after a very hostile spout of emailing, I've noticed that when we do meet up again, it blows over, [...] people don't necessarily want to carry on that hostility into everyday life' (Kotkowska, H., Personal Interview, 2004). This is because:

'a meeting is kind of easier to be more human and to, to, to cover over any disagreements is just like being human, you know, [...] somehow because you're seeing the person it becomes easier to make up and to realize that although, it's not a personal thing, it's just that different people happen to believe in different things, it's not a personal thing' (ibid).

In other words, face-to-face meetings tend to repair the fabric of personal relations that frays with email conflict and restore the sense of unity and belonging; where email segments, face-to-face integrates.

However, considering that such internal conflicts are almost unavoidable, online clashes can in fact be beneficial for the process. This is because they constitute a way of letting off some steam which may prevent conflict from developing face-to-face where it is much more hurtful. As one of my interviewees noted, 'email does have the effect of making conflicts less intense because it's all, you know, it's all virtual that however rude people are it's less kind of intense or confrontational' (Callinicos, A., Personal Interview, 2005). Another one concurred:

'I've had some clashes with people through email and I didn't feel particularly damaged or hurt [...] The email is like the sparing or can be, even if it gets quite heated, there is a sparing element to it, if the hostility happens face-to-face I think it can be very very difficult and harder to forget' (Kotkowska, H., Personal Interview, 2004).

Therefore, email can serve to air conflicts and disputes that would be very damaging to hold in a face-to-face context. It may also function as a space where activists work out their differences or at least become aware of their differences, preparing the ground for offline negotiations. In addition, email helps to escape the often oppressive nature of face-to-face communication, as people exhibit a tendency to agree when they are physically present. This is a phenomenon that has been well-documented in the relevant literature (e.g. Mansbridge 1980) and is particularly the case in face-to-face meetings or assemblies where peer-pressure prevents people from standing out from the crowd or voicing an opposing view. Therefore, in many ways, email allows activists to air concerns that they wouldn't be willing to voice within a face-to-face context. It also helps them to release the frustration experienced in face-to-face meetings, and, ultimately, to preserve their individual subjectivity. In other words, where face-to-face induces unity through conformity, email allows digression and revolt.

However, it is worth noting here that the suitability of email lists to voicing divergent opinions depends on the size of the list. For instance, commenting on the FSE-ESF list,

the interviewee from ATTAC Britain noted that the large size of the list rendered it quite intimidating for airing criticisms and engaging in discussion (ibid).

12.5. Building Interpersonal Trust

As I discussed in Chapter 3, trust is based both on cognition and affect. In that respect, assessing another's ability, integrity and benevolence, the main elements of trustworthiness, can be based both on good reasons or evidence and on the emotional bonds between individuals (Mayer, Davis and Schoorman 1995: 717-19). My aim in this section is to explore the role of email and email lists in fostering trust, also in relation to other media and modes of communication and particularly face-to-face. As I have already established, interpersonal relationships among the ESF organizers are constituted through a variety of media, while a mix of internet applications and face-to-face meetings is used for collectively organizing the ESF. However, my in-depth interviews show that in order for trust to flourish, face-to-face communication is indispensable, even when people already know each other online. As I will attempt to show, reasons for this relate both to the cognitive and affective bases of trust.

In terms of cognitive-based trust, the key question concerns the believability of evidence of trustworthiness. Is the evidence provided by email less believable than that expressed in a face-to-face context? This addresses one of the most central concerns of intellectual pursuit since the rise of new communication technologies. Is mediated communication a form of true, real and authentic communication? Is it believable and to what extent? According to my in-depth interviews, interaction within a context of co-presence constitutes a better premise for assessing the believability of evidence of trustworthiness². As one of my interviewees put it:

'personal contact is fundamental, you need to meet people, it's so fundamental, it changes your entire thing, the entire thing about trust and the way you can count on people, the feeling you can count on people that gives your self-assurance and all that, that's to do with face-to-

² It is worth noting here that the theory of witnessing has provided a quite sophisticated account of the relationship between physical presence and claims of knowing. According to Scannell, '[t]he ontology of witnessing is knowing-ness (OE witan: to know), being (in a position) to know' (2004: 96). A witness is someone with a privileged access to truth and with a responsibility or obligation to provide testimony of this truth. In addition, witnessing is intimately connected to seeing, as evidenced by the primary place of eye-witnesses within the hierarchy of witnessing (Peters 2001). As Peters argues, within the confines of law '[h]earsay is quotation, testimony at second-hand. Each sentence is supposed to be funded by direct sensation' (emphasis added) (2001: 716). This means that direct experience, or in other words presence guarantees privileged access to knowledge and truth (Scannell 2004: 96). In that respect, 'Distance is a ground of distrust and doubt. [...] reports from distant personae are more dubious than those from people we know and trust' (Peters 2001: 171).

face, there's no way out, you, you don't trust an electronic text' (Massimo d'Angelis, Personal Interview, 2004).

This is because an electronic text does not provide concrete evidence of the identity of its author. People can easily lie on email and not only in conditions of anonymity. In addition, it is difficult to be entirely certain whether the author means what s/he says on email or whether one has correctly understood what is meant. The absence of physical cues makes this knowledge precarious. Instead, being able to 'look each other in the eyes' constitutes the most solid basis of believability. For instance, according to the same activist:

'I met people on the internet but then learned about them in the face-to-face, it's different, so you meet them on the internet, "wo that's a good position" but still you do not build trust on the internet, that's the point, you do not, you have to *see people in the eyes* when you talk to them on a particular issue in order to trust them' (ibid).

This theme of 'looking each other in the eyes' came up in other in-depth interviews as well. For instance, the representative of Friends of the Earth noted:

'[on email] it's easier to jump to conclusions that are maybe related to your preconceptions about what that person really wants and it's, it's much easier when you're face-to-face with somebody to trust, to take them at their word because *you can see*, you know, you can see them, you can like check them' (Griffiths, H., Personal Interview, 2004).

An activist from Hungary mentioned it as a pre-requisite for political discussion: 'It [email] is not a medium that could replace in-depth political discussion because I think that in order to have an in-depth political discussion we should be able *to look each other in the eyes*' (Endre, S., Personal Interview, 2005). On the other hand, an organizer from Globalise Resistance considered face-to-face communication as more reliable in assessing the political climate and understanding whether mobilization efforts have been successful:

'this Saturday, we're going to the anti-war demonstration, in London you don't know how it's gonna go, you just don't even if you give out leaflets but that's better than sitting behind a computer screen, you can give a leaflet and see into someone's eye and you can tell whether they're gonna come or not, that's one step towards telling it' (Taylor, G., Personal Interview, 2004).

Resonating the commonsense notion of 'seeing is believing', these quotes consider face-to-face contact as offering a sounder basis for judging the trustworthiness of others: of their statements during a political discussion, of their assurances that they are going to

attend a demonstration, or simply of the evidence that they provide in terms of their ability, integrity and benevolence. Although not directly referring to seeing and 'looking each other in the eyes', comments such as 'people don't seem to trust people who don't come to the meetings' (Griffiths, H., Personal Interview, 2004) or that 'you need to have this face-to-face contact and you need to know the people behind the emails' (Ruiz, J., Personal Interview, 2004) may also be indicative of the limited capacity to judge people's trustworthiness based solely on email contact.

Therefore, even when there is common work online, activists still need to 'authenticate' these relationships offline. And in case of a disparity between online and offline behaviour, face-to-face contact can damage the foundations of trust built online, if someone shows a negative side in a face-to-face meeting. One of my interviewees recounted one such incident:

'I think that people got quite a shock when this guy who was contributing kind of didn't behave that well in a meeting and he was, I don't know if he was a "Horizontal" and I've spoken to people since and quite a few people feel that they could be variously sabotaged, that's a problem [...] Face-to-face is, how do you, how do you spread your nets, you have to meet people face-to-face in order to be able to, in the list it's very difficult' (Kotkowska, H., Personal Interview, 2004).

In other words, face-to-face contact seems to have a much higher position in the hierarchy of truth and authenticity than email communication.

What is more, face-to-face communication is also considered indispensable for affect-based trust. This is because it is more effective in transmitting emotive content as it appeals more fully to the senses. In the words of an activist from Red Pepper:

'mostly my experience is that particularly, and with just email things can go the other way, I mean partly 'cause it's difficult, it's difficult to get the tone right on emails basically, it's one thing, I mean, so, you know, face-to-face is, I mean there's a whole series of, a whole range of human expression that is not captured by, by email basically and the people, I mean even if you do show emotion, people haven't found ways of, of gathering those non-verbal forms of communication in email form' (Reyes, O., Personal Interview, 2004).

Furthermore, and as it was mentioned in the previous section, within an online environment activists are more prone to conflicts and misunderstandings which are not conducive to the development of trust. As the same activist noted:

'most political mailing lists I've been on at some point erupt into a huge argument [...], I mean often it's just a question of over-analyze a set of bad comments because they kind of typed

them hurriedly or at the spur of the moment and it's ended up damaging relationships of trust, so I think there are serious restrictions to do with the lack of, basically the lack of emotive content and lack of, you know, non-verbal communicative sort of skills on email, so email can't capture those things, which I think is why face-to-face is important' (ibid).

However, the ability of people to judge the others' trustworthiness or to convey emotive content online may also depend on their aptitude with the technology. In that respect, activists who are more technologically adept may be more skilled in expressing their emotions via email by using the full range of available tools, such as emoticons. In addition, activists with more experience in collaborating with others online may have more confidence in judging the others' ability, integrity and benevolence through email contact.

Furthermore, different internet applications can afford different degrees of trust-building. It is worth quoting the same interviewee at length here:

'aside of email, other forms of communication using the internet that can be maybe sort of more trustworthy and particularly the ones that actually give some allowance for sort of trust-building, I mean one of the things is, you take for example the IRC meetings which is, you know, you go to a chatroom, you have a meeting there and I mean that is more, it's better than email in some ways for that kind of, particularly for trust-building because you actually engage in more active dialogue and one of the things about email is that, you know, it's a series of correspondences, letters from one person to another, whereas, you know, a chat is, a chat is a dialogue, it's a reproduction of that, I mean still without a lot of the emotive qualities or the emotional and non-verbal qualities but it's approximating that in a closer way and so those can be more effective as a sort of trust-building' (Reyes, O., Personal Interview, 2004).

Therefore, applications allowing synchronous communication seem to be better suited to trust-building, as they allow for a more vivid and emotive dialogue to take place. In addition, real-time, 'live' communication tends to be considered more authentic and believable as it is connected with a greater degree of spontaneity, and consequently a lower degree of premeditation. Thus, real-time communication seems to be more effective for trust-building both for affective and cognitive reasons.

In terms of emotive communication, a further distinction that needs to be made is between applications suitable to public or many-to-many communication and those fostering more private or one-to-one communication. This is because affective-based trust thrives in intimate spaces, away from the gaze of the many. Although culturally-dependent, showing one's emotions in public is invariably regulated, sanctioned, or

simply frowned upon. In that respect, communicating affect in a one-to-one email may be easier than expressing one's feelings in an email list. Nevertheless, the intimacy afforded by one-to-one emails is tempered by the 'unintended transparency of email' that was discussed in the previous chapter. The facility with which an email intended for one specific recipient can be accidentally sent to people it was not meant for or even forwarded by its initial recipient to numerous others places intimate communication in a precarious position. People may be less willing to disclose their emotions in an email that they are not entirely sure is going to reach only its intended recipient and no one else.

However, even the same type of application can foster varying degrees of trust depending on its individual characteristics. In the case of email lists, their size, interactivity, openness, and types of author influence the degree to which they are conducive to trust-building. In that respect, open email lists, where anyone can subscribe and where no one has complete knowledge of the list's membership, may be a hostile habitat for trust. The same is true for lists with a large number of participants, where one cannot possibly know all of the other subscribers and where expressing one's opinions and emotions may be very intimidating. For instance, talking about the FSE-ESF list, the interviewee from ATTAC Britain noted:

'certainly on the European one who is reading that?, it's kind of and it is, it's like, you know, you touch on certain things and it's like where is it going? [...] are they going to pass it on to somebody else? And you suddenly realize, you know, you can't criticize somebody on there because they'll pass it to somebody and you suddenly realize that this is not a private conversation it's quite public, that can make you sort of slightly paranoid' (Kotkowska, H., Personal Interview, 2004).

Furthermore, in the bigger lists one may be reluctant to send an email that is not absolutely relevant in case it is considered as information overload. In this respect, one of my interviewees mentioned: 'I try to be very, only send them when I think there's a need to send them to the bigger lists and very rarely get a response anyway' (Griffiths, H., Personal Interview, 2004). In terms of interpersonal trust, the degree to which the authors on an email list speak on their personal capacity can have a bearing on the potential of the list for developing trust. In addition, since affect-based trust is based on a reciprocal relationship, the extent to which a list is used for two-way communication influences its trust-building capacity.

Data emerging from the content analysis seems to reiterate this point. Table 12.12 presents the number of messages in each list where the author engages in 'identity talk'. This is a term borrowed from Hunt and Benford whose ethnographic research in the peace and justice movement suggested that 'in movement contexts personal identity talk by activists revolves around four moments of identity construction: becoming aware, active, committed, and weary' (1994: 492). These moments are not part of a sequential model where an activist passes from one stage to another but rather four distinct themes of 'identity talk'.

	frequency	% of total
FSE-ESF	5	3.1%
esf-uk-info	3	2.8%
democratisESF	12	8.1%

Table 12.12: 'Identity talk' (% of total number of messages)

As Table 12.12 shows, and as it was expected, the democratisESF list has the highest number of messages containing personal 'identity' talk. Such messages represent 8.1% of the total number of messages on this list, while the per cents for the FSE-ESF and esf-uk-info lists are 3.1% and 2.8% respectively. However, it is worth noting here that the number of 'identity talk' messages is still relatively low, possibly pointing to the difficulty in reflecting on one's personal identity within the context of an open and public email list.

Furthermore, and as I showed in previous sections, the content analysis results prove that the FSE-ESF is the least interactive email list of the three with the highest number of authors belonging to the group/organization/political party category. The democratisESF list on the other hand is populated mainly by individual authors and has the highest number of interactive messages. In one of the last sections of this chapter I will reflect on these differences also in connection with the fact that most of the core activists belong to many email lists at once.

Therefore, most of my interviewees note that face-to-face contact is necessary for the development of trust for both cognitive and affective reasons. Evidently there are exceptions to this rule. For instance, one of my interviewees noted that, although in most cases face-to-face contact is indispensable, he had nonetheless developed relationships of trust with some people solely online through a process of working together (Royes, O., Personal Interview, 2004). However, as others also remarked, such relationships take

much longer to develop if email communication is not complemented with face-to-face contact. Furthermore, email cannot on its own sustain contact and cooperation over a longer period of time. As one of my interviewees put it, 'face-to-face over a long time is probably necessary for trust-building' (Hudson, K., Personal Interview, 2004).

A pattern that seems to develop is that email communication can help to lay the foundations of a relationship of trust by bringing people together and allowing them to exchange evidence of cognitive-based trust. It is however lacking in terms of affective communication, as well as in the believability of the cognitive evidence that is relayed. Face-to-face communication, on the other hand, is unrivalled in its ability to convey emotive content and is also more believable since physical proximity is perceived to allow a better access to truth. Thus, face-to-face communication helps to accelerate the process of trust-building and to consolidate relationships that have been formed online.

12.6. Bridging Diversity

As many of my interviewees noted and as I explained in Chapter 2, this movement was born through the consolidation of existing issue networks and their increasing cooperation. In that respect, most of my interviewees became interested in the ESF process through organizations they were already a member of or through personal activist networks developed from previous actions and campaigns. On the organizational level, most my interviewees³ mentioned that their organizations became aware of the ESF through groups that they already knew and/or have cooperated with in the past. For instance, CND first participated in the 2003 Paris ESF through its links with a French organization belonging to the peace movement (ibid) or RMT learned about the ESF through its contact with SUD, a French radical trade union (Gordon, A., Personal Interview, 2004). As an interviewee from Globalise Resistance noted:

'I don't think the global justice movement is specifically a new thing, it is coming together through different ideologies and movements, ideas and activist networks as well, so I think it's a big coming together of all these different things and I don't think, we can't say it started in Seattle or the G8, it started way before that, it is a coming together, so everyone uses their older networks' (Taylor, G., Personal Interview, 2004).

³ Here I am referring to interviewees who acted as representatives of their organisations within the ESF process.

Therefore, a key question that arises is whether the 'alter-globalization movement' follows the structure of older connections and networks or whether it also generates new relationships across different beliefs and ideologies. In other words, is this a plural movement that remains fragmented or does it also bridge the divides between diverse participants? And if it does help in fostering new links, then how is this done and through which media or modes of communication?

Answers to these questions are important since creating solidarity among diverse groups is one of the explicit goals of the ESF process. What is more, organizing just with your friends, either on an organizational or individual level, can make for a very inward-looking and ineffective activism. It is worth quoting one of my interviewees at length here:

'it's the same as in any walk of life, you know, when you go to the pub you don't sit with people who aren't your friends, you don't sit with people who you don't like and the problem with this kind of activism is very very clear, it's become far too much based on friendships and who's in, who's out, who's trustworthy, who's not, who's a friend, who's not a friend [...] and sometimes you've got to be careful [...] you're not organizing with your friends as opposed to organize with people who genuinely have a need for solidarity' (Hodkinson, S., Personal Interview, 2004).

Evidence from my in-depth interviews suggests that the ESF serves indeed as a space where relationships between diverse participants are being formed. For most of my interviewees, this is actually the main benefit of participating in the ESF and its organizing process. Furthermore, as many of them note, such relationships are predominantly built through common work. For instance, according to an activist from the SWP and Globalise Resistance:

'I'm in touch with different networks and individuals from around the world that I never would have, you know, never would have had the chance to work with on a whole number of different things, on Palestine, on issues around democracy and, you know, it's opened my eyes to things that I've never even thought about really' (Nineham, C., Personal Interview, 2004).

An activist from CND concurred: 'it's quite amazing really the way I got to know so many people, it's really brought people together 'cause obviously I've heard of the Tobin Tax Network I know the TNG obviously but we've never worked together in any way before so it was very positive really in that sense' (Hudson, K., Personal Interview, 2004). Or, as the representative of CPGB put it:

'for me personally from a political point-of-view has been meeting people I've never talked to before or never reached out to or you never communicated, you know, I think talking to anarchists and people always thought, you know, communism that's Stalinism I suppose but you do actually come to know each other and that's breaking down barriers, that's from a smaller point-of-view, that's been very, very useful and that's I guess the best, the best outcome of the ESF' (Becker, T., Personal Interview, 2004).

An activist from ATTAC Britain emphasized that it was common work that led to the establishment of links: 'you know, just actually working together, I got to know people [...] there's more of a link there now, I got to know people much better' (Kotkowska, H., Personal Interview, 2004). In a movement with diverse participants, where the lack of common values and beliefs can make cooperation difficult, the imperative of co-organizing an event can form some sort of, albeit temporary, unity. For the 'alter-globalization movement' the ESF is one such event. As one of my interviewees mentioned:

'if you've got an event or something to organize around which forces that unity because let's face it if it wasn't for the European social forum happening in October or November or whenever it is gonna be those people at the European Social Forum would not get together, you can't force that kind of unity it has to be, has to be demanded by social stance' (Taylor, G., Personal Interview, 2004).

What is more, relationships across ideological divides tend to be built on the interpersonal rather than the inter-organizational level. As one of my interviewees noted:

'it's highly personalized trust relationships, it's basically through [...] the process you learn that whatever people's political backgrounds are, there are certain people who, yeah, they've got a certain philosophy in politics but also they're personally trustworthy, they're nice people, they're not going to fuck up people, they're not going to screw you up' (Hodkinson, S., Personal Interview, 2004).

In that respect, espousing the same ideology is not necessarily a solid basis of trustworthiness. As one of my interviewees put it:

'I never trusted anybody for the state of their belief, never, I can't remember anybody trusting because "I believe in this, I believe in that", yeah maybe I'm interested, yeah, that's very [...] you don't trust without reason [...] it's a question of what is the, how, what is the link? That's the reason what is the link between the political belief and the relations here, what is the link, what is the gap, what is the articulation between their belief, you know, and how they act upon, that's, that relation is very important, so you build trust on the basis of that' (Massimo d'Angelis, Personal Interview, 2004).

In other words, it is the activists' integrity, ability and benevolence towards others that foster trust, rather than their ideological beliefs.

As I have already shown in the previous chapters, face-to-face meetings constitute the main hub of decision-making and co-operation within the ESF organizing process, even though in all of the examined email lists there is a degree of online collaboration. Furthermore, taking into account that trust needs face-to-face contact in order to flourish, it becomes evident that participating in the offline organizing meetings is one of the main ways for creating new links with diverse others. But what about the online meeting spaces? The large email lists, either European like the FSE-ESF or national like the esf-uk-info, have a considerably diverse subscription base making them a space where one can encounter different ideas and engage with a wide range of authors. Can email lists foster relationships across ideological and social divides?

At a first glance the answer to this question would be yes. The messages posted on the FSE-ESF and esf-uk-info lists come from a quite heterogeneous constituency brandishing different and often opposing ideas⁴. However, sparking up a relationship requires a degree of reciprocity or, at the minimum, it demands for messages to be read by their intended recipients. As I have shown in previous sections, email lists are not inherently interactive. Rather, their degree of interactivity varies according to the number and heterogeneity of their participants.

However, even without discussion, the seeds of a relationship can still be sown by coming across the emails of strangers on an email list and becoming acquainted with their ideas. Nevertheless, the mere fact that a message is posted on an email list constitutes no guarantee that it is going to be read by everyone, or even read at all. The subscribers of an email list are not a captive audience. Engaged in a mode of asynchronous communication, they are not bound by the norms of politeness that permeate synchronous and especially embodied communication. Thus, email list subscribers are under no obligation to respond to messages posted on the list. Most crucially, they do not even have to read them.

In fact, with email lists often suffering from information overload, reading all of the messages that one receives is almost impossible. In the case of the ESF email lists,

⁴ Having a more limited and homogeneous base, the democratisESF list is an exception to this rule. Therefore, this part refers mainly to the FSE-ESF and esf-uk-info lists. The effects of the homogeneity of the democratisESF list in the process of creating the 'Horizontal' identity will be analysed in a later section of this chapter.

most of my interviewees complained about the number of emails they receive each day. For instance, the activist from Friends of the Earth noted:

'I keep meaning to count approximately how many ESF emails I get every day but I know that it's a lot and it's, I think email also for me adds to the, I've got this constant feeling about the ESF that I'm not keeping up with it, there's all these things happening and I've got no idea what's going on and it's constantly, you know, I'm constantly playing the game of catch up and I think that emails add to that sense because there's emails coming about everything' (Griffiths, H., Personal Interview, 2004).

This information overload is partly a result of unsophisticated use of the internet with activists circulating the same message in every list they are subscribed to. Indeed, being careful not to cram the list with irrelevant messages was considered by many of my interviewees as a mark of politeness and an indication of people's experience with the technology. This is also reflected in current norms of email lists where activists regularly offer their 'apologies for cross-posting' when the same email is sent to many lists.

In order to cope with this information overload, most of my interviewees employ a series of criteria in order to judge whether a message is worth reading. Those criteria include the subject of the message, its author, the country that the message comes from or it refers to, as well as its relevance to the ESF process. For instance, according to one of my interviewees: 'the subject is really important, if you put a proper subject line you know and then, then it's, it evolves from that, and sometimes it's who posted it, if I know the person writes interesting things then I read it sometimes' (Becker, T., Personal Interview, 2004). Having a preference for certain authors, most often people that someone already knows, is a criterion that cropped up in many accounts of coping with information overload. In the words of one of my interviewees:

'if on the European list there's an email from the Belgian trade unions about something that's happening in Congo I delete that because I can't help anyone in Congo, I can't help myself at the moment, so I erase that, yeah?, I delete that but if it's an email that's coming from people that I now know in the process to always send good emails or very relevant to the process, then I read them' (Hodkinson, S., Personal Interview, 2004).

For others, particular authors can be a deterrent from reading the email: 'I judge them from the titles and there are some people for example who send emails, I don't open the email' (Bouteldja, N., Personal Interview, 2004). Relevance to the ESF process and specifically to practical and organizational issues is another major criterion. For instance,

one of my interviewees mentioned that she read most of the messages on the Programme email list:

'because I know that they're very specifically, I mean they're very specific and it's not people who post on programme [...] it's always relevant information while for example in ESF UK [esf-uk-info] or ESF European [FSE-ESF] some advertise their own events or they speak about the different theories of Marxism or whatever' (Bouteldja, N., Personal Interview, 2004).

Another one noted that: 'it actually depends on how important a particular subject is, for instance because I went to Berlin, I was very interested in the reports, I didn't go to Istanbul but I went through the reports and everything' (Kotkowska, H., Personal Interview, 2004). The same activist almost always read the practical announcements, even though she also engaged with some of the political discussions on the list: 'I definitely read announcements but not all of them, if it's about a meeting that's coming up and the time, yes I'm gonna read it' (Kotkowska, H., Personal Interview, 2004). Another one summed it up perfectly: 'you start with the things you're most directly involved in' (Nineham, C., Personal Interview, 2004). In addition, the country that the message originates from was important for a Spanish interviewee: 'I just open the messages from the ESF list when they are sent from a Spanish person because then I can know how is the coordination of Barcelona, Catalonia and the Spanish one' (Fuster y Morrel, M., Personal Interview, 2004). Finally, one of my interviewees adopted a far more radical strategy for coping with information overload: she did not subscribe to any of the email lists, opting instead to use email on a one-to-one basis (Hudson, K., Personal Interview, 2004).

Therefore, the fact that email lists are open to a variety of subscribers posting messages about diverse issues does not necessarily mean that all of those voices are heard. Instead, activists seem to prefer messages coming from authors that they are already familiar with or concerning issues that they are already involved in. Thus, rather than bridging ideological divides or bringing activists in contact with completely new people or ideas, email lists may actually reinforce pre-existing ideological and social cleavages. This may also signify that while the use of email lists can deepen the bonds among similar or already familiar actors, it does not necessarily help to establish relationships with actors who are unfamiliar, distant or simply concerned with issues that are considered uninteresting. Evidently, this is much more the case for the large ESF lists which suffer from information overload much more than the smaller ones.

We can compare this with the experience of attending an ESF preparatory meeting, where the nature of the occasion does not provide its participants with such freedom to decide who they are going to listen to. In the ESF meetings everyone has a right to speak and when they do, they are heard by everyone in the room. Synchronous embodied communication limits our freedom of choice when it comes to listening, as it is only through getting absorbed in our thoughts that we can politely block out irritating or boring speakers. Thus, face-to-face communication carries with it certain obligations that seem to loosen or simply vanish within the context of email interaction.

Again we can discern the contours of a pattern where face-to-face communication encourages reticulation against the tendency of email lists to bear segmentation. While face-to-face meetings can help in building relationships among diverse actors engaged in common work, communication on the email lists tends to follow the already established personal and ideological cleavages. While email lists help to deepen the bonds *within* already existing segments of the movement, face-to-face communication aids in the formation of relationships *between* different segments.

12.7. Scale and Proximity

When asked whether the 'alter-globalization movement' would be the same without the internet, most of my interviewees referred to issues of scale, noting that now communication technologies enable efficient coordination on a regional or global level. As one of my interviewees noted, 'I think what it's [the internet] allowed is for organizations and movements to be very very light infrastructures to be able to mobilize, to be able to mobilize at a massive scale' (Nineham, C., Personal Interview, 2004). Another one concurred: 'the internet has been a key tool in our movement, it's obviously a very international movement, so I think probably two main tools that have been used in our movement are the internet and cheap European flights' (Taylor, G., Personal Interview, 2004). Comparing the 'movement for alternative globalization' with the ones of the 1960s and the 1970s an Italian trade unionist remarked: '[i]n the decades of the 1960s and the 1970s, when there was a developed movement, not even in May 1968 did anything pan-European happen, because without the internet, dialogue, contact and communication were much more complicated' (Bernochi, P., Personal Interview, 2004).

However, the potential of the internet for organizing events and demonstrations on a much greater scale is not only located in its low cost, but also in its suitability to

interpersonal communication. In that respect, the capacity of activists to communicate with their distant counterparts at such a low cost has brought an explosion of the activists' own interpersonal networks. It is worth quoting one of my interviewees at length here:

'it [the internet] can be a metaphor for an infrastructure which is really developing in the new kind of relationships which is really difficult to be managed by a classical organization and which is freeing, making free many kinds of relationships that before weren't possible, not only they had to be lived in different organizations and different channels but they weren't possible at all, for example, the international relationships now you can very easily create by yourself as an individual, it's an enormous revolution in the kind of relationship that you are building through the internet and it is changing radically your way of doing things' (Berlinguer, M., Personal Interview, 2004).

Relationships that had to be developed within the confines of formal organizational channels simply because communicating with others on such a scale was too expensive to be done individually and without organizational support can now flourish within channels of informal, personal communication. Underneath the impressive scale of the ESF coordination lays an equally impressive grid of interpersonal contact that holds this process more tightly together.

Evidence from my interviews suggests that for such relationships of cooperation, common work or even friendship, email tends to reconfigure our sense of distance and proximity by rendering geographical location almost irrelevant. Since it costs the same to send an email to someone sitting next to us as to someone on the other side of the world, the recipient's location is no longer an issue. It is also no longer noticeable. This is something that became very evident in my in-depth interviews. When asked whether they send more emails to people they see regularly face-to-face or those living far away, my interviewees had trouble answering. Most of them had to think about it for a couple of minutes, while others had to look through their email outbox to provide an estimate. The general consensus was that they were sending more emails to the people with whom they were working most closely with irrespective of their geographical location. This often meant that the bulk of email communication was directed to people they were seeing regularly face-to-face. For instance, one of my interviewees, who was chair of CND at the time of the interview, noted:

'[t]hat's a very difficult question, I don't know really [...] I communicate most by email with the CND treasurer and people in the CND office, you know, she lives in Horsham, which is in the

south of London, you know, the CND office is Holloway Road, you see what I mean?, I don't think it's to do with the distance so much, I think it has to do with how much you need to be in communication in any given moment really' (Hudson, K., Personal Interview, 2004).

Another interviewee was initially at a loss: 'I don't know actually, I send, I send a lot of emails to people who live in London, I also send a lot of emails to people who live thousands of miles away, I think I don't have a good answer to that question' (Reyes, O., Personal Interview, 2004). However, he continued: 'it depends on the context of the work that I'm doing, I think, which is to say in other words that it's not, it's not technology, but rather the kind of work [...] I don't think the answer lies in the email form, I think it lies in the nature of the work I'm doing basically' (ibid). Finally, in the words of a third interviewee:

'it's not something you think about [...] I mean, I mean it's quite tough, because as you know I teach in Europe but a lot of my communication when I'm in Europe or when I'm not in Europe a lot of my communication with colleagues is by email even though someone is two doors away, you know, you do it because it's easy, you do it to lots of people at the same time' (Callinicos, A., Personal Interview, 2005).

Therefore, when physical distance is no longer an issue, it is rather the closeness of the relationship or the nature of the work that needs to be done that dictates the amount and pace of email interaction.

What the above analysis suggests is that when it comes to the scale of the 'alter-globalization movement', email communication is related to two important shifts. Firstly, the capacity of individuals to establish and maintain relationships on an international scale without relying on formal organizational channels. Secondly, the fact that in the context of online communication, geographical location is hardly noticeable.

12.8. Feelings of Belonging

A routine question that I asked in the beginning of my in-depth interviews concerned the initiation of my interviewees within the 'alter-globalization movement': When did they first hear about the movement, the World Social Forum or the European Social Forum? When did they start considering themselves as part of the movement? In answering this question, some of my interviewees recounted the specific moment when they first felt part of the collectivity. This moment most often coincided with their participation in a major 'alter-globalization' event such as the ESF and the WSF or in seminal

demonstrations such as the anti-G8 protest in Genoa in 2001. For instance, one of my interviewees noted:

'I've decided this was a very interesting development, social forums cause I went to the world social forum and then it sort of became, I've felt that I've become part of the general sort of movement to organize social forums [...] you sort of felt that you belonged to this movement so when I immediately came back from there and working in helping the ESF in Paris' (Hodkinson, S., Personal Interview, 2004).

For another one, it was Genoa that truly made a difference:

'I was already someone really kind of into alternative economics and alternative policies and yeah Genoa was a kind of big turn up to me because it was the first time where I was kind of, the unity and the convergence and the unity of the movement and people who were like kind of working together on a lot of issues, debt issues, Palestine, imperialism in Africa, the fight against poverty, culture [...] there were all these people campaigning for various issues but which were campaigning together and the feeling were kind of really made a big big impact on me and I was thinking for the first time in my life I know that I'm in the right place, I know that's where I want to be' (Bouteldja, N., Personal Interview, 2004).

It is interesting to note here that none of my interviewees mentioned such a revelatory moment to take place within an online environment. For instance, no one talked about feeling part of the movement when first encountering an ESF email list or the official website. At a first glance, this seems quite self-evident. Yet, I would like to question the reasons why this may be the case, as I think that they are indicative of a fundamental difference between face-to-face and internet communication. A valuable insight in this respect came from a Spanish Indymedia activist:

'going to Seattle or Genoa or these big demos, you know, they do something to you, something strange, they affect you on a different level, there is like non-verbal, non-discursive, there is something about being surrounded by lots of people [...] I mean this sense of collectiveness [...] that cannot be generated online basically, that is the, you know, there is something, the collective transcendence, you know, it's one of the few moments in contemporary life of total atomization when you can truly feel in the flesh part of something big and that is the need for having big demonstrations and social forum and things like that, there is no, I mean there's no such thing for that' (Ruiz, J., Personal Interview, 2004).

Why can't online communication generate this feeling of collectiveness? First of all, in order to feel that you are part of a collective, this collective should be perceptible. Being in the presence of many people attending the same event at the same time makes the existence of a collective a tangible reality. Mutual presence and synchronicity are key

aspects contributing to this perception. While the former can only be simulated in any form of mediated communication, the latter varies from application to application. In that respect, email and the web foster asynchronous communication, while chatrooms allow for real-time interaction to take place. However, interaction in chatrooms may become unmanageable or impossible once the number of people increases. In addition, online others become perceptible when they speak, when they are an active part of the conversation, and when they become perceptible, we are aware of them as individuals. Therefore, even on chat one does not necessarily feel as part of a crowd, of a collective, but of a group of distinct individuals. This is a vital feature that affects the sense of collectiveness or togetherness that a specific application can afford.⁵

On the other hand, face-to-face gatherings constitute an intense form of integration, as mutual presence and physicality accentuate the sense of being part of something bigger. We are all here, at the same time, in the same place, attending the same event – this when a collective becomes a tangible and even overwhelming reality.

Again the same pattern seems to emerge. While face-to-face communication can foster feelings of belonging and togetherness, the internet emphasizes independence and difference, even within the context of a real-time group interaction. While face-to-face communication helps to generate unity and integration, the internet ensures individuality and divergence.

12.9. Email Lists and their Communicative Affordances for the Process of 'Identization'

As I have shown in previous sections of this chapter, all of the examined email lists are used for exchanges and discussions regarding the 'action system' of the movement: its means and goals of action, its resources and constraints, as well as its relationship with the environment. In other words, all of the email lists constituted 'spaces of identization', contributing to the emergence of a collective identity. However, this is not to say that all of these spaces provided the same affordances for the construction of a collective identity, or that they necessarily referred to the same collective, or the same identity. In that respect, every list encompassed and in turn made possible a network of

⁵ Evidently, email, web and IRC are not the only internet applications, but just the ones used by the 'movement for alternative globalization'. Other applications, such as online gaming or online environments simulating real ones may be able to foster a greater degree of togetherness. One can only wonder how activism would be transformed if such applications start to be employed for social movement organization or mobilization.

active relationships between its subscribers. Yet, they each referred to different compositions of actors, different scales, different discussions and thus different types of active relationships. It is these differences that I would like to concentrate on in this part by comparing the FSE-ESF and democratisESF lists whose characteristics placed them at the opposite side of the spectrum. Taking into account that most of my interviewees were subscribed to many lists at once, I will then go on to reflect on what this implies in terms of the individual's experience within the movement and her/his identification with the collective.

Although all of the three lists were unmoderated and open to the participation of anyone who wished to subscribe to them, they all manifested different patterns of association and identity exchanges. In that respect, the FSE-ESF list had the highest number of authors and constituted the most formal and institutional list as it garnered the highest per cent of messages posted by organizations, groups or bodies of the ESF. The FSE-ESF list was also the one with the lowest per cent of 'identity' messages directly referring to the ESF process as it included several messages concerning the specific campaigns and actions organized separately by different groups and organizations. It was also a more fragmented list in terms of language, since more than 30% of its messages were written in languages other than English. The list was used for online collaboration, albeit in a limited way and for procedures that had been formally agreed and clarified in the European organizing meetings.

What is interesting to note here is the limited interactivity of this list, whereby the number of messages referring to discussion and debate on issues of 'identity' was significantly lower than that in other lists. In that respect, avoiding discussion and interaction may have actually been a way of avoiding conflict, which is perhaps easier to erupt in lists with such a diverse composition. Instead, different perspectives and messages, both concerning the ESF process and separate campaigns organized by groups subscribed to the list, tended to exist side by side, but not necessarily in a relationship with each other. In other words, the low degree of interactivity and debate is concurrent with the notion of 'purposeful misunderstandings' (Bennett 2005: 204) and tolerant identities, as diverse positions and goals can more easily co-exist when list subscribers do not enter into a discussion in order to clarify those positions or challenge each other.

The democratisESF list, on the other hand, had a much more homogeneous subscription base than the other two lists. As explained previously, the reason for this lays both on the way this list was created, as well as its purpose. The list was set up by Stuart Hodgkinson, a writer for Red Pepper and participant in the British mobilization network for the Paris ESF, who, disgruntled with the way the London bid was put together, decided 'to set up a front group called "Democratize the ESF" collective which was me, find other people who were sympathetic, that was no problem and start this email list, initially it was called democratize_the_ESF' (Hodgkinson, S., Personal Interview, 2004). As he explained in his interview:

'the idea was very simple, [...] I got the email addresses of every single person I knew in Britain who was an activist, who was horizontal before horizontality was invented and who would need to know, and also all the NGOs and some of the unions, I put them all on the email list, signed them up without their permission, right?, and sent them one email, just one email that said very simply "this is what happened, this is what's gonna happen" and we need an email that is going to expose that information and discuss with each other what to do' (ibid).

Thus, created with the express purpose to democratize the London ESF process and initially consisting of the contacts of a single activist, the democratisESF list was a very specific and relatively homogeneous list. And even though it remained an open list where everyone could subscribe, many activists that were to be later characterized as 'Verticals' opted not to be part of it. As an activist from Globalise Resistance noted, 'I purposely didn't join the democratisESF one partly because I knew I wouldn't agree with a lot of it' (Taylor, G., Personal Interview, 2004), while another interviewee simply laughed when I asked him whether he was subscribed to the democratisESF list (Callinicos, A., Personal Interview, 2005). There were, however, some notable exceptions of activists within the 'Vertical' camp who kept sending inflammatory messages to the democratisESF list, while others were just lurking, curious to follow its discussions even though they disagreed with most of them.

As the results of the content analysis have shown, the democratisESF list was more interactive than the other two and with more individual authors writing on their personal capacity. In addition, it had a higher per cent of messages relating directly to the ESF process, meaning that its object and purpose was much more focused and precise. Furthermore, it had a higher per cent of 'organizing' messages, and a higher overlap

between 'organizing' and 'identity' messages. This meant that many of the emails discussing 'identity' issues did so in conjunction with common organizing work.

Furthermore, evidence from the content analysis suggested that 'identity' messages within the democratisESF list contained many more references to or discussion of attempts by certain groups (most often the SWP or Globalise Resistance) to control the London ESF process. The table below shows the number of such messages for each list also as a per cent of the total number of messages and of 'identity' messages.

FSE-ESF		esf-uk-info		democratisESF	
number	% of 'identity'	number	% of 'identity'	number	% of 'identity'
8	12.5%	15	22.7%	27	30.7%

Table 12.13: Discussing attempts by certain groups to control the London ESF process (% of 'identity' messages from each list)

With a bit more than 30% of the 'identity' messages on the democratisESF list talking about this issue, as opposed to 22.7% on the esf-uk-info and only 12.5% on the FSE-ESF, opposition to specific groups was one of the main themes of discussion on the democratisESF list. As we have already seen, this list also included more discussion about the role of the GLA, as well as the transparency and inclusiveness of the ESF meetings.

Thus, being a list founded on resistance and having a ready-made 'other' in place - those that insisted on organizing the ESF in an undemocratic way - provided the perfect conditions for the emergence of a coherent collective identity for the 'Horizontalists'.

The democratisESF list further aided in the process of synthesizing and pinning down the identity of the group through the co-writing of proposals and documents expressing the ideas and beliefs of the 'Horizontalists'. And even though the purpose of these documents was to influence the decision-making and organizing structure of the ESF, they nonetheless aided the group in arriving to a common understanding of its goals, beliefs, means and resources. Writing these documents also forced the 'Horizontalists' to articulate and record these beliefs in a way that all of their members would be happy with.

The main document written in this way was the 'Call for Democracy in the ESF process' (see Appendix V). Evidence from the interviews and the democratisESF list suggests that this was a long and difficult process. According to one of my interviewees who had a central role in the writing of this document, the main ideas for the call were

initially thrashed out in a face-to-face meeting held by a core of the 'Horizontals' on the 7th of February 2004. My interviewee then took the responsibility to write a first version of the document and posted the draft on the democratisESF list inviting comments and alterations. Here is his account of how this process unfolded:

'if you look at the document, that we are "Horizontals" and we are everywhere, that kind of document, we met, we met because we needed to come up with a broad statement and we had a chat in a meeting, there were very few of us, not many but we already had a big debate on the internet and we threw up different bits and pieces [...] I started drafting the general sections [...] the point is that we draft the things and then immediate feedback "what do you think about this, what do you think about that" [...] so, so that was a really big sketch, the broad sketch and, you know, then we've done it and you know, I've done my part on a word processor and so on [...] and then you start to circulate it and modifications, blah blah blah and then on to the email and that's the way it works' (ibid).

However, this process was not without its problems. As the consultation period for amendments was nearing its end, certain activists associated with the 'Horizontals' protested about the strong wording of parts of the proposal. As the same activist noted:

'then discussion comes up on the last day, so that was, I got really frustrated about this, at that point and some were "I'm not against this, it's too antagonizing" and some others, and it's interesting because you realize that at that point that if you're part of a process which is open and inclusive you have to participate, it's not good, networks have to get responsibility and we learned that you cannot let things happen in the last day, after two weeks of discussion say "I don't like it"' (Massimo d'Angelis, Personal Interview, 2004).

The solution they came up with was to turn the initial petition into a background document and create a smaller version of the proposed points of action that everyone felt comfortable to sign. The final version of the 'Call for Democracy in the ESF process' was uploaded on the alternative website and circulated on the lists on the 26th of February 2004, a bit more than two weeks after the initial face-to-face meeting.

The democratisESF list also helped the 'Horizontals' to crystallize their identity in another and possibly more crucial way: finding a suitable name for the group. More specifically, the name emerged spontaneously from the deliberations on the list after a story about the Argentinean Picatelas movement was posted on democratisESF by Stuart Hodgkinson. According to his own account:

'I sent an email to an email list called democratize_the_esf, which I'll talk about in a minute in which I related the story of the Argentina, Argentine Picatelas movement and how there were

two forces within the Picatelas movement, there were the "Verticals" and the "Horizontal", the "Verticals" were those who came from the Trotskyist groups, they were not interested in the assemblies of the Picatelas movement, they were trying to dominate it and the more sort of anarcho-types within the Picatelas who were interested in spokescouncils and delegates and democracy and someone came on tour in Britain from the Picatelas and she said, you know, the problem in Argentina with the Picatelas is not a single movement [...] and actually in-between there are massive fights and we came to realize for a long time that the "Horizontal" can't work with the "Verticals" and we don't try to work with them anymore and they don't try to work with us, so I sort of sent that email and all of a sudden Peter Waterman, the arch email sender and cyber-sort of-surfer and then Massimo fixed on this dichotomy and they said "Yes! We are the horizontals" (Hodkinson, S., Personal Interview, 2004).

As Massimo d'Angelis put it:

'it was clear that there were two ways of perceiving things and Stuart reported, had a comment on one of his clashes and sent us this story he has read about the Argentinean movement [...] and so this woman, this Argentinean woman said "well there's not much, there's no way for the 'Horizontal' and the 'Verticals', cannot meet" [...] so Stuart reported this and when I read this on my computer screen I remember thinking "wow" (Personal Interview, 2004).

The name 'Horizontal' later appeared on the title of a document that was circulated after the March EPA in which 'some of the 'Horizontal'" celebrated the progress made in the meeting in terms of 'democratizing the ESF' and thanked the European delegations for their support to this effort. The document also explained the democratic beliefs of the 'Horizontal' and the meaning of horizontality. It was from this point onwards that the name 'Horizontal' consolidated. Activists within the 'democratic opposition' camp started to openly call themselves 'Horizontal' and their opponents 'Verticals'. And while people from the other side never referred to themselves as 'Verticals', they nonetheless used the label 'Horizontal' to characterize the other camp. References to those two terms soon became ubiquitous: they appeared on the email lists and uttered in the face-to-face meetings. They also found their way in my in-depth interviews although people often qualified their statements about belonging to either side by saying that this was perhaps a false polarization and that the distinction between 'Horizontal' and 'Verticals' did not entirely capture the ideas at stake.

It is also worth noting here that while the democratisESF list played a key role in the emergence of the 'Horizontal' identity, the links created on the list needed to be consolidated through face-to-face meetings. As Hodgkinson noted:

'what happened was a very very dedicated [...] eligible group of individuals just seemed to emerge within the democratize list and through their involvement in the European assembly we started to go from cyberspace to real place and we started to hold meetings before meetings and hold mid-week meetings, talk to people on the phone' (Personal Interview, 2004).

In other words, while the democratisESF list was important for initially bringing together activists who were unhappy with the London process, the core of the group that emerged from the list deepened their bonds through face-to-face communication⁶. This is concurrent with the discussion of interpersonal trust presented in a previous section of this chapter.

Therefore, each list, depending on the geographical scale it referred to, its specificity, as well as the homogeneity of its subscribers, constituted a different network of 'active relationships' that influenced its degree of interactivity and debate, as well as the themes that the discussion revolved around. The size and composition of the list also affected its degree of institutional communication. Thus, each list presented different affordances for the process of identization and was constitutive of a different 'we'.

Nevertheless, and as I have shown in Chapter 9, these multiple 'spaces of identization' are not distinct but intersecting, since they have overlaps in terms of authors and content. Indeed, nearly all of my interviewees belonged to more than one of the ESF lists and most of the 'Horizontals' were subscribed to all three of the examined lists. In that respect, belonging to multiple email lists may increase the activists' flexibility to move between different sites of identization and juggle their involvement in different 'wes', constituted on different geographical scales and focused on different concerns. In other words, involvement to a variety of email lists may be facilitating the development of 'multiple, tolerant identities' (della Porta 2005b: 186), as well as the emergence of a cadre of activists defined as 'rooted cosmopolitans' (Tarrow and della Porta 2005: 237).

⁶ As I noted in Chapter 11, the core group also stopped using the democratisESF list to deliberate on their strategies, since the list was also accessible to their opponents who could thus easily follow their discussions and form counter strategies. Instead, a secret list was created to reflect on strategy.

12.10. The Horizontals and the Verticals: Different Attitudes towards Email and Email Lists

As I have discussed in Chapter 8, the official and the alternative website were indicative of two distinct attitudes towards new communication technologies. Based on a conception of the ESF as an event, the official website was geared towards the provision of succinct and practical information about the ESF and how to attend it. The alternative website, on the other hand, was founded on a conception of the ESF as a process and thus included a range of applications that facilitated the bottom-up organization of the event, such as wiki pages or discussion forums. The two websites were also reflecting two distinct attitudes towards information, communication and control. In that respect, all of the information on the official website had first to be approved by the Co-ordinating Committee, which slowed down the process of uploading content on the website. Thus, the view of communication governing the official website was that of information dissemination from a central and authoritative source to an audience. Within this communication model the website functioned as the 'shop window' of the event, showcasing the London ESF and providing all of the relevant information. Built on wiki technology, the alternative website, on the other hand, allowed registered users to create and upload their own pages. It was thus pervaded by a view of communication emphasizing the collaborative creation of content and its dissemination in a lateral rather than hierarchical way. Within this communication model, the alternative website served as the 'collaborative lab' of the event, facilitating the cooperation required for organizing the ESF in a bottom-up way.

My in-depth interviews suggest that the 'Horizontals' and the 'Verticals' also tended to differ in terms of their attitudes towards email and email lists. In my analysis of activists' views thus far, I have tended to focus on the points of convergence, while simply hinting at opinions that were shared by a minority. In this part, I will try to make these differences more apparent and connect them with the two communication logics permeating the use of the web.

In terms of commonalities, all of my interviewees considered the internet as an indispensable tool for the movement. Yet, all of them remarked that email lists are not suitable to political discussions, as conflicts have a tendency to escalate on email. They were also in agreement when it came to the role of face-to-face communication in

building trust. As for organizing, my interviewees were almost unanimous in their appreciation of email lists as a tool for disseminating information. However, it is at this point where attitudes started to diverge.

This is because while most of the interviewees associated with the 'Vertical' side focused solely on the informational value of email, activists from the 'Horizontals' also talked about the collaborative and interactive aspects of the technology. For instance, the key role of the democratisESF list in co-writing the 'Call of Democracy in the ESF process' was mentioned by some of my interviewees in relation to the vital role of email lists in the process. 'Horizontal' activists also talked about the value of email lists for running consultations or launching petitions. In addition, most of them wished for a greater transparency and more cooperation when it came to issues concerning the offline meetings, such as setting the agenda or deciding the time and venue of meetings.

On the other hand, my interviewees from the 'Vertical' side were often keen to stress that even though email is essential for the movement, one should not forget that it is just a tool. In the words of an SWP and Globalize Resistance activist:

'I think we've got to constantly remind ourselves it's a tool [...] when it comes to relaying messages and coordinating international work it's you know pretty indispensable and but then again if you think about people used to do that kind of thing years before the Internet was invented so I reckon as tool it is very useful and that's why we use it a lot' (Taylor, G., Personal Interview, 2004).

He continued: 'it's a tool, it makes things easier but I don't think it particularly changes that much really' (ibid). The representative of RMT expressed a similar view, saying that although email is important we should ensure that it does not hijack the discourse of the movement. In his own words: 'we don't rely solely on email because and I have real problems, you know, it's very useful as a tool but it also comes to dominate your discourse in some senses' (Gordon, A., Personal Interview, 2004).

These concerns seem to be related to a more general anxiety towards email lists and the view that email lists may drain the energy for action by diverting attention away from campaigning and towards discussion. According to the same Globalise Resistance and SWP activist, the democratisESF list constituted a prime example of this danger:

'I think that [the democratisESF list] is one of the key primary examples of a lot of the stuff I get on the ESF lists, to show you the dangers of email really in the movement where a lot of people really spend a lot of time attacking people but they don't do anything and the very

essence of any political organizer or any political activist has to be what they do' (Taylor, G., Personal Interview, 2004).

This distinction between 'talking' and 'doing' was characteristic of the conflict between the 'Horizontals' and the 'Verticals'. In that respect, the 'Verticals' were criticizing the 'Horizontals' for becoming consumed in discussions about process instead of getting on with the practical work of organizing the ESF. And as it was discussed in Chapter 7, this emphasis on 'doing', on strategy, on effective work and successful outcomes was a distinguishing feature of the 'Vertical' identity, of how they were describing themselves and what set them apart from the 'Horizontals'.

13. Conclusion

Exploring the relationship between the 'alter-globalization movement' and the internet, generated a complex picture, rich in detail, and at times difficult to grasp in its entirety. Inspired by claims linking new communication technologies with the movement's decentralized structure, global scale and plural identity, my thesis remains quite distinctive in its combination of social movement theory with a communications and media point-of-view. It is also one of the few studies investigating the role of email in the internal organization of the movement or the formation of its collective identity. Instead, and as I have shown in my literature review, current research on the subject tends to focus on the connection between the internet and political participation or on the movement's construction of its own media.

The scarcity of empirical data on the subject possibly reflects the lack of a solid theoretical framework on which to anchor such research. As I have noted in my literature review, social movement theory is currently missing a clear theorization of the role of mediated communication within the processes of organizing, decision-making, and collective identity formation. This is compounded by a more general gap in studies examining the internal processes of social movements. Divided into different strands, each with its own concerns and perspectives, this field of enquiry is currently missing a shared theoretical framework for some of its vital concepts, such as the increasingly popular notion of collective identity (Polletta and Jasper 2001: 285).

It is thus unprepared to accommodate research on the relationship between the 'alter-globalization movement' and the internet which calls for a more imaginative understanding of mediated communication than the one afforded by traditional social movement theory or political communication. These perspectives tend to view social movements as already formed or unified actors who present themselves in the media in an attempt to influence the political process. Hence, their focus rests on whether social movements are using the media effectively, as well as on the ways in which their goals and characteristics influence their use of the media. However, the claims concerning the

'alter-globalization movement' and the internet tend to also reverse this arrow of influence, placing communication in a much more central position. Based on a perception of social movements as 'made up' of actors and their interactions, these claims are implying that the use of certain media may be affecting the character itself of the movement, its structure, scale, and identity.

My review of internet studies, on the other hand, revealed a limited dialogue between this field and social movements' research. In addition, and perhaps due to the newness of the field, such studies tend to consider the online in a vacuum, thus ignoring its embeddedness in a specific context and its relationship with other media and forms of communication.

Therefore, my research had to contend with several theoretical and empirical gaps which complicated the conceptualization and design of the study, as well as the interpretation of my results. As I explained in the Methods chapter, I inevitably adopted a more inductive approach to the subject, taking into account the fragments of pro-existing theory and hoping to refine them through my own research. I further opted to focus on a specific case study, the European Social Forum, which would allow me to generate a more holistic understanding of the processes I was researching and of the role of the internet within them.

In what follows, I will attempt to summarize and synthesize the main findings of my study, showing the key patterns that emerge and assessing how well they fit with the claims made about the relationship between this movement and the internet. My analysis is thus going to focus on the role of email and email lists in constituting a flexible and decentralized organizing process for the ESF, one that avoids vertical control and exclusive commitments. I will also explore whether and to what extent the internet aids in installing a decision-making process based on consensus and direct participation, while respecting individual subjectivity. I will further investigate the relationship between email and email lists in the construction of a plural collective identity among the actors involved in the ESF process. In that respect, I will examine whether and to what extent the internet allows the movement to maintain its internal diversity and to protect individual

subjectivities without compromising its unity and the sense of togetherness felt by its participants. Questions of geographical scale will also be addressed, since they are implicated in the processes of organizing, decision-making and 'identization'. In that respect, I will explore whether and to what extent the email lists help in the development of 'rooted cosmopolitans', as well as in the coordination of activities across large geographical distances. I will then highlight the theoretical gaps addressed by my research and clearly outline my possible contributions to the theory of social movements and internet studies. I will finish this chapter by discussing the limitations of my thesis and by making recommendations for further research.

My entry point to the fieldwork was a preliminary survey of the media and modes of communication used in the mobilization process of the Paris 2003 ESF. Although modest in its aspirations and limited in its generalizability, the survey was distinctive in its detailed analysis of the different modes of communication used in diverse mobilization contexts. It therefore addressed some largely overlooked issues, such as the patterns of mediated communication within interpersonal networks. While this is the only data emerging from my doctorate thesis that refers to an area of research addressed by other empirical studies on the subject, it still constitutes the only published study on the mobilization process of the Paris ESF. Within the context of my thesis, this preliminary survey allowed me to glean certain themes that currently hold an integral place in my argument. Firstly, it proved that internet communication tends to complement rather than replace face-to-face contact. Secondly, it confirmed the prevalence of interpersonal and intra-group modes of communication over mass or impersonal ones. For internet applications in particular, this suggested that email and email lists were used more extensively than the web. Thirdly, the preliminary survey indicated that respondents with a more considerable experience in politics or those who were already in contact with political or voluntary organizations were more prone to have used the internet than those who were relatively new to the movement.

The remainder of my fieldwork focused on the internal processes of the movement, garnering the opinions and experiences of those who were more deeply involved in the

organizing process of the ESF. My investigation of the role of email lists in this process was also based on a content analysis of three of its main email lists, which was entirely of my own design and quite original in its conception. Additional data were gathered through the archiving and analysis of the main documents and statements circulated in the process, as well as the minutes of important meetings.

In terms of organizing, the content analysis clearly showed that the email lists were used mainly for the circulation of information concerning organizing. Tasks devoted to online collaboration gained the second lowest per cents, while those referring to providing feedback, asking for help, identifying organizing roles, as well as allocating or assuming responsibility featured much lower in all of the examined lists. In addition, messages exhibited a low degree of multitasking, a tendency which can be attributed to the communicative affordances of email for quick, written interaction. The content analysis also revealed that most of the organizing tasks revolved around the face-to-face decision-making meetings, referring mainly to their preparation, to the dissemination of agendas, minutes, and proposals, as well as to the arrangement of the practicalities for attending them.

However, if we take into account not only what happens *on* the lists, but also how the lists were embedded in the overall context of organizing and decision-making, then their value quickly becomes apparent. In that respect, the function of email lists was integral to the flexible definition of new working groups and organizing units, allowing the organizing structure of the movement to easily shift into new directions responding to the needs that arose. In addition, email lists granted those organizing units with a degree of continuity, offering a stable space where each group member could find and address the others. Email lists also played a central role in bottom-up organizing as they helped to continuously define the membership of the group without the need for a central leadership regulating this process. They further allowed activists to participate in the process while avoiding exclusive commitments that tend to place individual subjectivities at risk. Since any activist could become a member of the working group by simply subscribing to the list, admission to the group was not based on pre-existing commitment

but was open to any individual willing to devote time and effort to the movement. In addition, activists had the liberty to regulate their involvement since, if they wished to, they could remain loosely connected to the group, simply following the information published on the list but opting not to attend its face-to-face meetings.

My study further showed that email lists were tightly entangled with processes of emergent leadership. In that respect, becoming the email spokesperson of the group often thrust individuals to the position of informal leader. What is more, the task of collecting the others' email addresses and setting up the list provided certain activists with leverage to control the composition of the group by regulating entry or exit from its email list. Activists could also attempt to become broadcasters to the list, transforming it from a site of interaction to a broadcasting space. However, the facility with which new lists are created or old ones disappear prevented leadership from becoming centralized or consolidated. Therefore, email lists helped to install a temporary and polycentric type of leadership, where several leaders, each responsible for a specific area of organizing, reciprocally controlled each other.

Thus far, my results seem to confirm the claimed relationship between the 'alter-globalization movement' and the internet, since email lists indeed contributed to the establishment of an open, flexible and decentralized structure that ensured direct participation and respected individual subjectivity. There were, however, elements that disturbed this image. In that respect, my analysis uncovered some informal barriers to direct participation referring mainly to the ways in which activists could discover the existence of the lists and subscribe to them. With the process lacking an official mechanism to inform potential participants about the working groups and email lists in operation, activists who attended the face-to-face meetings or who were already involved in certain networks had better accessibility to this sort of information than first-time participants. Yet, these filters were also indispensable for the smooth functioning of the groups and their lists, since, as my interviews suggested, email lists with a smaller number of members who have regular face-to-face meetings tend to function more successfully.

Such filters were also necessary for the process of trust-building which in turn benefited the operation of the working group. In that respect, by screening activists according to their ability to participate in the physical meetings or their involvement in certain networks, these filters facilitated processes of trust as they favoured activists whose evidence of trustworthiness was more believable, either because it was relayed within a face-to-face context or because it was based on past interactions with other members of the group. And while email lists can be used to offer cognitive evidence of trustworthiness, such evidence is more believable in a context of co-presence where one can more easily judge the intentions, sincerity, and identity of the others. In this respect, offline authentication of relationships forged online is necessary even when activists tend to collaborate mainly online. This is also because face-to-face contact is more effective for conveying emotive content, as email and email lists are lacking the necessary paraverbal and non-verbal cues. Synchronicity is also important here, as spontaneity and the lack of premeditation tend to act as guarantees of the others' truthfulness. In addition, open email lists with a large number of subscribers were hostile habitats for trust since one was always unsure of whom s/he was addressing. Therefore, publicness is not necessarily conducive to the establishment of interpersonal trust as individuals may be reluctant to disclose their emotions in a public list or simply in an email that can easily be forwarded to people it was not intended for. In other words, the barriers to direct participation and the construction of closed and regulated communicative spaces may be actually necessary for the establishment of interpersonal trust which is in turn required for the smooth operation of the organizing process.

The decision-making practices of the movement displayed similar patterns of opening and closing, including and excluding. In this regard, all levels of the movement, from the European to the local, tended to take decisions in face-to-face meetings, which allow for more civil and complex negotiations. However, direct participation to such gatherings is limited to activists with the necessary time and resources to travel to the European Assemblies or attend regular face-to-face meetings at their locality. This means that,

although open, the ESF meetings were accessible to a specific cadre of activists, a feature that seriously questions the inclusiveness of the process.

In this regard, email lists were used extensively to prepare for and widen up participation to the offline meetings. Constituting the main spaces for the circulation of minutes, proposals, agendas, and announcements, as well as for launching formal and informal consultations, the ESF email lists aided the activists who could not attend the physical meetings to influence the decision-making process. In addition, by helping to arrange the practicalities of meetings and to fight illegitimate exclusions from the process, the email lists facilitated physical participation to the offline meetings. What is more, by allowing consultations and negotiations to take place prior to the assemblies, email lists assisted in the achievement of consensus in the face-to-face meetings, which would have otherwise been almost impossible for a decision-making process of such a scale. This was also accomplished through the online discussions around the correct functioning of consensus, as well as the code of conduct that should be followed in meetings. Email lists further allowed activists to vent off negative emotions and engage in conflicts in a space where such activity was less hurtful and destructive for interpersonal relations. This helped to curb the intensity of arguments in face-to-face meetings where they could more seriously delay the decision-making process and sever relationships of trust.

Therefore, in pragmatic terms, the decision-making system of the ESF tended to operate on the basis of informal representation rather than direct participation. This was more the case for the process on the European level, since the European meetings were held in a variety of locations across Europe and were thus less accessible to non-professional activists. Therefore, individuals taking part in the meetings acted as the informal representatives of those unable to attend. However, this is still a system that purports to function as a direct and not representative democracy and whose legitimacy thus depends on ensuring that everyone has an equal say in the decision-making process (Grant and Keohane 2005: 30). This means that since the authority to make decisions falls, often disproportionately, to the activists attending the meetings, then this

authority needs to be somehow legitimated. In that respect, I would argue that, apart from practically helping to install this system of informal representation, the ESF email lists were also implicated in its legitimation. This was achieved through the timely circulation of information regarding the offline meetings which symbolized that, at least in principle, everyone was given an equal opportunity to participate. In addition, email lists allowed activists to participate indirectly through consultations and proposals, as well as to hold people to account based on the minutes of meetings. Therefore, although not necessarily granting an equal say in the decision-making process, the email lists contributed towards this direction, preventing those unable to attend the meetings from feeling entirely excluded from the process. This lessened demands to formalize this unofficial system of representation and to institute specific rules in order to ensure its representativeness. Yet, this also meant that there was no pressure to install formal mechanisms that prevented those unavoidable exclusions from becoming consolidated or that motivated those included to enlarge participation in the process.

As hinted above, transparency was integral not only for the legitimacy of the system but also for its mechanisms of accountability. As I have shown in Chapter 11, email is particularly suited to transparency since it constitutes a written form of communication that can be archived and re-visited. These electronic records can also be widely circulated at a very low cost, thus allowing a larger number of people to gain access to sensitive information and to be involved in the process of accountability. In fact, email is often the carrier of an 'unintended transparency' as a message can be easily forwarded to people it was not intended for. In that respect, and as Garton and Wellman (1993) have argued, this greater transparency could indeed help to dissolve pyramidal relationships and traditional boundaries, as information is circulated more freely among movement participants.

However, on its own, transparency is not sufficient to hold someone accountable. This is because a system of accountability also requires a clear and shared understanding of who is accountable, about what and to whom. It also demands a common view of what constitutes evidence of transgression, as well as of the kinds of

sanctions that should be imposed. In that respect, the facility with which new organizing units are founded, their changing membership, as well as the fact that their leaders are not actually recognized as such, all complicate the process of identifying who is to blame when there is a transgression. In addition, the circulation of too much information may actually hinder its epistemic understanding, as well as the development of a common perception about what constitutes evidence of abuse. This opens the way for the more influential actors to control the process of accountability since their evidence may carry more weight, not because of its reliability or persuasiveness, but because of the power of the actors circulating it. What is more, and as I have shown in Chapter 11, the main sanctions afforded by the system are those referring to loss of reputation and poor relations. Again, this confers disproportionate power to the most influential peers, as it is their understanding of the situation and, consequently, the loss of their trust that constitutes a graver sanction.

Therefore, this decision-making and organizing system contains certain asymmetries of power that are not formally acknowledged. In fact, this concealment is actually necessary for the survival of the movement. As Melucci argues, for social movements based on a belief in participation and plurality, owning up to the existence of such asymmetries seriously threatens their internal solidarity. This observation is especially pertinent in the case of the 'alter-globalization movement', where horizontality, direct participation, and consensus decision-making constitute a sort of meta-ideology (Bennett 2005: 216-17). Concealing these asymmetries also aids the movement in maintaining a collective identity based on the notions of openness, horizontality and participation, even though those values are not always upheld in its practice. The role of email lists was important here as, not only did they constitute sources of power for certain actors, they also aided in concealing these asymmetries of power by making them more informal and thus less explicit. As I have shown, email lists had an integral role in maintaining and legitimating the system of informal representation, while their information overload may have actually helped to confuse the process of accountability. In addition, email lists aided

in the flexible and bottom-up definition of working units, thus complicating the process of identifying those responsible.

Yet, turning a blind eye to these asymmetries of power may actually strengthen and consolidate them to the point where they become too pressing to ignore. Recent developments within the ESF process seem to confirm this assumption. As part of the process of self-reflection and criticism taking place after the latest ESF in Athens in May 2006, the EPA has launched a consultation on the goals and problems of the ESF. In that respect, the consultation identified a series of problems referring specifically to the organizing of the EPAs. Among them was the need to enlarge the process since '[n]ormally the people who can participate are the ones who have big organisations who can pay for them' (Casalucci and Colignon 2006: 2). Other problems included the difficulty to understand the functioning of the EPA for 'external people', as well as the fact that '[s]mall groups are taking the leadership at the EPAs' (ibid).

However, issues of organizing cannot be disentangled from those of collective identity. In that respect, this informal and flexible system of organizing, accountability and decision-making makes it easy for activists to participate in the ESF process without the need to be committed or tied down. It is thus crucial for the appeal of the movement to a wide range of actors coming from various political traditions and organizing cultures. However, email lists are also more directly involved in the construction of a plural identity for the movement. First of all, and as I have shown in the previous chapter, email lists constitute 'spaces of identization' by hosting discussions around the action system of the movement. In that respect, all of the examined lists contained statements and debates referring to the means and goals of the movement, its resources and constraints, as well as its relationship with the environment. In addition, all of the lists included messages with references to the diversity or plurality of the movement which is supposed to be the defining aspect of its identity. However, apart from vehicles of discussion, the email lists were also sites of common work and collaboration, either within the formal processes of the ESF or outside them, that fostered a better understanding among their subscribers.

Nevertheless, each list constituted a different 'we' according to its size, composition, and geographical scale. This affected the discussions and concerns of its members, as well as the affordances of the list for the process of 'identization'. In this sense, the FSE-ESF list, the larger and most diverse of the sample, contained a higher number of messages and statements signed by groups or organizations than the other two where messages were mostly sent by individuals. It was also far less interactive, resembling more of a bulletin board than the other two lists. This meant that within this list different perspectives could exist side by side while conflicts and internal challenges were restricted as diverse opinions were expressed in statements and announcements rather than debate and discussion. However, this also curbs the potential of large lists to foster unity, since this limited engagement between different opinions does not contribute towards the development of common positions.

On the other hand, the smaller, factional or more homogeneous lists seem to be better sites for the generation of a shared identity for their subscribers. In that respect, the democratisESF list illustrates how an email list can be employed, first, to define a population of participants with a common view that can potentially unite them. The list was then used for the circulation of stories that reinforced the identity of the group, for the co-writing of statements that pinned down and articulated its goals and objectives, as well as for discussions that allowed a better understanding between the members of the group. In this particular case, the list also constituted a site for the naming of the group which helped it to clearly identify itself in opposition to its adversaries.

Therefore, referring to different geographical scales and population of subscribers, email lists form diverse networks of active relationships that frame differently the process of identity construction. They thus constitute an infrastructure for the simultaneous development of multiple identities within the movement. However, these 'sites of identization' were not distinct from one another but connected through overlapping memberships and content. In fact, the overlaps and flows of content were also indicative of the hierarchies and power relations between these sites. In that respect, and as it would be expected, messages tended to travel from the European scale to the national

and then to the factional list, while the reverse journey was relatively limited. In addition, the national list mediated between the European and the factional one, as it had overlaps with both of them, while the overlaps between the other two were minimal. In other words, these multiple 'sites of identization' intersected in ways that are indicative of the hierarchy of concerns within the movement, as messages on the European list may be of more interest to the national and factional levels than vice versa.

On the individual level, belonging to multiple email lists allowed activists to be simultaneously part of different networks of active relationships. This may indeed facilitate the establishment of 'multiple, tolerant' identities, defined by della Porta as 'characterized by inclusiveness and positive emphasis upon diversity and cross-fertilization, with limited identification' (2005b: 186). What is more, with email lists operating on different geographical scales, belonging to a variety of lists may also allow for supranational or global identities to 'sit comfortably alongside traditional and local identities' (Tarrow 2005: 57). Email lists can thus constitute an infrastructure for the emergence of 'rooted cosmopolitans' (Tarrow and della Porta 2005: 237), of a cadre of activists that can easily switch between local and global concerns. However, the capacity for multiple belongings is reliant on the nature of the communication afforded by those email lists, as well as on their openness and loose requirements for affiliation. As mentioned earlier, admission to the ESF email lists is not based on commitment since the lists are open to anyone wishing to subscribe to them. What is more, with no obligation to respond to the messages that are received, individuals can encounter different perspectives without necessarily committing to one opinion or taking sides. They are also freer to pick and choose the messages they are more interested in, thus carving their own path within the information posted on the lists. Therefore, email lists allow individuals to come in contact with diverse views while protecting and indeed expressing their own subjectivity.

Yet, it is for the same reasons that email lists are not well suited for a process of 'mutual persuasion' as described by Etzioni and Etzioni (1999: 243), where participants arrive at common positions and opinions. This is because the interaction afforded by

email lists does not carry the same obligations to mutuality than other types of communication and particularly face-to-face contact. The fierce conflict that often erupts on the lists is an indication of this tendency. As many of my interviewees remarked, email is not appropriate for political discussion since individuals tend to be more aggressive towards others when they are not in physical proximity. In that respect, communicating asynchronously through text relaxes the obligation to attend to the feelings of those that are addressed. While this may allow greater digression and revolt, thus protecting individuals from the pressures of the group, it may also be destructive for the development of mutual trust or shared opinions.

What is more, and as mentioned earlier, email list communication relaxes the obligation to respond to all of the messages that one receives, facilitating the avoidance of conflict. Indeed, information overload makes it difficult for activists to even read every message that they receive. In that respect, the strategies that activists employ in order to cope with information overload may actually limit their contact with opposing or unfamiliar views and issues. This is because individuals tend to prioritize messages from authors they know and respect, concerning issues that they are interested in or posted by groups that they are already involved in. Thus, rather than bridging diverse perspectives, email lists may be better suited to deepening the bonds between activists with similar views or pre-existing relationships.

Instead, face-to-face communication may be more appropriate for networking with individuals from diverse perspectives, countries, and ideological positions. First of all, this is because within a face-to-face context, the norms of politeness often make it impossible to explicitly ignore people whose views are unfamiliar or uninteresting. In addition, the process of creating relationships with diverse others involves more risks, since the lack of familiarity and similarity renders expectations uncertain. Therefore, more guarantees are needed in order for people to make leaps of faith. And since evidence of trustworthiness tends to be more believable when relayed through face-to-face communication, interacting in the same physical space may provide a better context for creating bonds with diverse others. What is more, bonds of this sort tend to be

consolidated on the interpersonal rather than inter-organizational level, since this facilitates the transcendence of divergent ideological views. As many of my interviews showed, the willingness to trust is more dependent on personal qualities rather than the state of ideological beliefs. In that respect, the non-verbal and para-verbal cues of face-to-face communication allow individuals to convey emotive content more easily, thus facilitating the establishment of relationships on a more emotional and personal level.

Nevertheless, once established, email is suitable for maintaining these relationships of trust across geographical locations, so much so that geographical distance becomes almost unnoticeable. Thus, email contact helps to reconfigure the sense of proximity with others, as it is the extent of collaboration or the closeness of the relationship that determines proximity rather than common geographical location. In addition, email increases the capacity of individuals to sustain their own transnational networks of relationships, instead of having to go through more institutional channels. In that respect, such interpersonal networks facilitate the flexible coordination of the movement on a transnational scale.

While this lateral or criss-cross bonding is necessary for the cohesiveness and continuity of the movement, it does not really constitute an affirmation of the collective. Instead, such bonding locates individuals somewhere between the subjective and the collective, constituting a form of 'networked individualism' (Wellman 2001). It thus allows them to negotiate the tensions between subjectivity and collectivity by perceiving themselves as 'belonging to a network of relations between groups and individuals who maintain their own specificity while developing shared action' (Farro 2004: 236). However, my research shows that this has not diminished the need of activists to feel part of the collective, to be able to identify the whole movement and to think of themselves as belonging to it. In that respect, large events, demonstrations and gatherings are moments that make the collective a tangible reality. As I have noted in Chapter 12, most of my interviewees recalled such instances as the first time when they felt themselves as part of the movement. Email lists are not well-suited for generating such feelings, since the lack of synchronicity and the inability to gauge the reactions of

others to the happenings that one experiences at the moment s/he experiences them fail to produce this sense of identification with the whole group. What is more, within the decision-making process, consensus-based decisions also serve to affirm the existence of the collective since they constitute an expression of the collective will. The process of consensus is important here as it provides participants with a sense of ownership of the commonly agreed decisions.

Therefore, the ESF process is characterized by these transient moments where the collective becomes tangible. Such moments occur in face-to-face meetings where large numbers of activists are present at the same time in the same space. However, in-between such gatherings, the ESF process and its participants are located online, on the website of the ESF and its various email lists. As my interviews showed, email lists tend to provide participants with a sense of stability, since they feel that if they need to, if there is an emergency, they can always address the other activists by sending an email to the list. In other words, the internet functions as a stable location for the movement, as a port of call for anyone wishing to come in contact with its participants at any point in time. Still, this stability is precarious since websites and email lists can easily disappear without a trace. For instance, six months after the London 2004 ESF, the *esf-uk-info* list suddenly vanished from the server never to appear again. The fact that no one thought it necessary to create another national mobilization list is indicative of the British movement's state of disarray after the intense conflict of the London ESF.

The routinization of offline meetings is another source of stability and continuity for the movement, as the recurrent practice of meeting, discussing, and deciding ascertains the existence of the collective at regular and predictable intervals. In that respect, and as Holmes has argued, what constitutes a collective is not only its shared beliefs but also its routinized practices of interaction which produce a universe that is knowable and familiar (2005: 175-6). The recurrent meetings also serve another function, that of the convergence and synchronization of the multiple ESF email lists. As I have shown in Chapter 9, each email list had its own time rhythm in terms of the number of messages posted every day. However, traffic on the lists tended to peak at the time of offline

meetings, meaning that all of the examined lists shared more than half of their peaks with the other two. Thus, the offline meetings created a degree of synchronization between the multiple online spaces of the movement.

Nevertheless, the communicative affordances of new communication technologies did not arise solely from their material characteristics, but also depended on the activists' perceptions and understandings of these technologies, as well as of the politics and goals of the ESF. In that respect, my interviewees who were more experienced users of the internet tended to be more open to its capacities for decision-making and collaboration. They also found it easier to convey emotive content online, as well as to ensure that their messages did not reach unintended audiences. Yet, within my study, the activists' political backgrounds and cultures of organizing seemed to exert an even stronger influence on their use of the internet for the organizing of the ESF. As I explained in Chapter 8, the line of demarcation between the 'Horizontals' and the 'Verticals' extended to their understandings of the use of the web, with the two camps generating two websites with very different characteristics. In that respect, the official ESF 2004 website, which was under the control of the 'Verticals', functioned mainly as a 'shop window', whereas the *esf2004.net* website, created by the 'Horizontals', operated as a 'collaborative lab'. These reflected the two camps' opposing understandings of the politics and goals of the ESF, with the 'Verticals' viewing it as 'an event that should be organized as efficiently as possible', while the 'Horizontals' perceived it as 'process that should embody the democratic ideals of the movement'. They were also illustrative of their different attitudes towards publicness and the management of information. In that respect, the content uploaded on the official website had first to be approved by the Coordinating Committee. The *esf2004.net*, on the other hand, was operating on wiki technology allowing all registered users to create pages and upload content. The 'Horizontals' and the 'Verticals' also exhibited different attitudes towards email lists. While both sides praised their value for disseminating information, the 'Horizontals' were more appreciative of their use for collaboration, while the 'Verticals' feared that too much online deliberation may drain the energy for action. The two sides were ultimately

characterized by two different communicative logics: while the 'Verticals' were guided by a broadcasting logic, the 'Horizontals' were more inclined towards dialogue.

Therefore, the synthesis of my results renders a complex and at times contradictory image. It suggests that the state of the movement is shaped by the countervailing and interacting dynamics of convergence/dispersion, multiplicity/singularity, diversity/uniformity, fragmentation/unity, opening/closing, subjectivity/collectiveness. In other words, whether and to what extent the movement is plural, decentralized, flexible, inclusive, unified or transnational depends on the point of equilibrium between those interacting dynamics. Communication plays an integral role in all of these dynamics, enabling and constraining them in different ways. In fact, email and email lists afford opposing dynamics to the ones generated by face-to-face communication.

More specifically, email and email lists tend to produce dispersion, multiplicity, subjectivity, and the opening of the system. As I have shown, email lists enable the flexible *multiplication* of organizing units and 'spaces of identification'. They are further associated with a dynamic of *divergence* and *dispersion* as the multiplicity of online spaces allows its participants to disperse to its various electronic locations, each with its own rhythm and concerns and each constitutive of a specific 'we'. What is more email relaxes the obligation to mutuality, allowing subscribers to behave in ways that do not attend to the feelings of others. It also permits them to disregard the messages of those who are unfamiliar, distant or uninteresting. In turn, this facilitates the affirmation of *subjectivity*, since it provides individuals with the opportunity to digress and disagree with the group. Being able to participate in various email lists with limited commitment, picking and choosing the information and messages one is interested in is a further mechanism through which individuals can affirm and express their subjectivity. In addition, the capacity for automatic affiliation to the movement through subscription to the lists contributes to a dynamic of *opening*, making the movement more permeable to its environment. This greater openness is also produced through the transparency of email that accelerates the circulation of information, as well as through the use of email lists to widen up participation in the decision-making process of the movement.

On the other hand, face-to-face communication tends to generate convergence, unity, a sense of collectiveness, as well as the closing of the system. In that respect, physical meetings are associated with a dynamic of *closing* as direct participation is restricted to those who have the time and financial resources to travel to the various geographical locations where gatherings take place. However, closed and secluded spaces are necessary for the establishment of relationships of trust since they provide a secure environment for the disclosure of feelings and sensitive information. As I have shown in my study, email lists can be used to this effect but with limited success since email is often characterized by an 'unintended transparency'. In turn, this allows the establishment of relationships of trust across ideological and geographical divides as they bring individuals in a position where it is difficult to avoid those who are different or unfamiliar. Such relationships are most often defined on the interpersonal level and can then be maintained and cultivated through online contact ensuring the *unity* of the movement. In addition, face-to-face meetings facilitate the *convergence* of individual activists in the same space at the same time, thus affirming the existence of the *collective* and enabling individuals to feel themselves part of the movement. Such meetings also assist the *convergence* of opinions and viewpoints in commonly agreed decisions and statements that again render the *collectivity* a tangible reality.

Thus, it is the combination between email and face-to-face contact that produces seemingly contradictory dynamics, allowing the movement to be diverse but unified, multiple but stable, dispersed but coordinated and permitting its participants to protect their subjectivity while being part of the collectivity. This balance is obviously not perfect and is continuously altered through the new conflicts and challenges that arise, often as a result of the imperfections of the system itself. In that respect, asymmetries of power and exclusions are inescapable and are often concealed, with the help of the internet, to prevent them from threatening the internal solidarity of the movement and its image of plurality and horizontality. However, as I have also shown, the communicative affordances of internet applications are also dependent on the cultural understandings and political priorities of those using them.

However, apart from generating empirical evidence concerning the claimed relationship between the movement and the internet, my research also has the potential to enrich the theory on the subject. More specifically, social movement research can benefit from a more nuanced understanding of communication, while insights into how new communication technologies complement and interact with other modes of communication can be a valuable contribution to internet studies.

In this line of enquiry, my study can provide a more refined conception of the role of the internet within decentralized systems. In his most recent article outlining the decentralization theory, Gerlach considers the internet solely in terms of reticulation, arguing that it helps the coordination of activists across large geographical distances (2001: 297). However, my research has demonstrated that the internet may not be the most suitable medium for creating bonds between diverse individuals, even though, once established, the internet may indeed help to sustain and cultivate those bonds on a scale that transcends geographical barriers. My study has further illustrated the ways in which email lists are directly involved in the two other aspects of decentralized systems, namely segmentation/multiplication and polycentric leadership.

When it comes to participatory democracy and consensus decision-making, I have managed to show that, contrary to Mansbridge's definition (1980: 5), a system of participatory democracy can be equally based on face-to-face and internet communication. In fact, for a decision-making process operating on such a scale, the use of the internet may be instrumental for the achievement of consensus in the face-to-face meetings. In addition, my research has demonstrated the value of researching the decision-making process as a whole, examining equally what happens before and after the meetings where decisions are taken. In that respect, the preparation of meetings on the email lists and the timely circulation of agendas and information may actually constitute a source of legitimacy of the decision-making system, as well as a basis of its transparency and accountability.

In terms of the process of collective identity, I have shown how the email lists can constitute 'spaces of identization' and how their affordances for this process are in turn

influenced by their size, purpose, or geographical scale. I have also considered the processes for generating trust, solidarity and a respect for subjectivity and how these are related to basic characteristics of the communication afforded by different media, as well as to the understandings and goals of the activists using them.

As for the articulation between online and offline I think that I have successfully demonstrated how within this movement, the internet and face-to-face meetings produce countervailing and interacting dynamics. In that respect, the dynamics produced by internet applications depend on those generated by other media and forms of communication. I have also demonstrated how many of the assumptions of internet studies, with anonymity being the most glaring one, do not stand up to scrutiny when we take into account that the same individuals may be communicating through various means and modes of communication.

Treading new ground and attempting to establish a dialogue between two distinct fields of enquiry, my study often had to trade systematization for innovation. In that respect, the lack of a solid theoretical framework connecting mediated communication with the internal processes of social movements forced me to take a more explorative and inductive route to my study. However, a more systematic approach would have enabled us to distinguish more clearly between the diverse internet applications and their communicative affordances. For instance, within my argument, references to email and email lists are often interchangeable even though I was careful to flag up their differences whenever possible. The same can be said about the various types of face-to-face contact, as the communication afforded by large physical meetings is not always differentiated from the face-to-face contact taking place in a closed circle. What is more, my content analysis, although indeed quite original in its conception, did not engage with the particular words and textual characteristics of the analysed emails. This could have shed additional light on the processes of collective identity formation and of the concerns and issues occupying the different email lists. In general terms, my thesis has focused on a particular case study of an organizing process associated with the 'alter-globalization

movement', meaning that its empirical evidence is to an extent influenced by the specific context and composition of actors that participated in the London ESF process.

In that respect, it would be worth to examine whether these results and insights are true for other events organized by the 'movement for alternative globalization'. Yet, studies on the subject are still scarce, even though the claims concerning the 'alter-globalization movement' and the internet have accompanied the movement since its very first occurrence in late 1999. This is regrettable as my thesis, along with a couple of other studies on the subject, have only started to scratch the surface of what a better understanding of mediated communication can offer to the field of social movement theory. Hence, my study will hopefully offer a stepping stone for more systematic research on the role of communication media within the processes of organizing and collective identity formation of current social movements. And while this is admittedly a very complicated subject, my thesis has shown that by focusing on a rich case-study and by keeping an open mind, one can discern the mechanisms and dynamics of such processes while respecting their complexity.

Yet, I would argue that the central concerns of my thesis extend far beyond the ESF process, or even this specific movement. Emerging from the consolidation of pre-existing activist networks, this movement still constitutes a response to the specific conditions of our time. In that respect, the factors that gave birth to its grievances and helped to shape its characteristics show no sign of abating. Global interdependence, capitalism, neoliberalism, the increasing disillusionment within Western representative democracies, the crisis of governance in world politics, as well as the growing individualization are issues that in one way or another are determining current conflicts and concerns. How do we foster unity, solidarity and a sense of collectiveness while affirming difference and individual subjectivity? And how can we manage to organize, coordinate and make decisions in a way that respects all of the above? Such questions are vital not only for the 'movement for alternative globalization', but also for the design and operation of transnational institutions and coalitions, as well as for political participation in general. A more lucid understanding of the role of mediated communication within processes of

organizing and collective identity formation can help us to provide better answers to these complex questions of our time.

Seven years on from the 'Battle of Seattle' and mentions of the movement are not accompanied by the same pang of recognition and excitement. Demonstrations and protests do not attract the same numbers, even though the World Social Forum is going from strength to strength. The same can be said about the internet, whose seamless incorporation into the working life of office employees worldwide has made it less of an escape into a new imaginary. However, it is now, when wide-eyed enthusiasm has subsided, that academic research can offer a more sober and grounded account of their relationship. I would argue that this has the makings of a better story, one that is more complex, nuanced, and rich in detail. I hope that in its own way my thesis has contributed to the telling of this story.

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Re: [democratisESF] communications working group meeting, Email sent to the esf-uk-info email list on 5 April 2004.

Re: [esf-uk-info] code of conduct, Email sent to the esf-uk-info email list on 4 March 2004.

No Subject, Email sent to the esf-uk-info email list on 28 January 2004.

The UK ESF is dead, Email sent to the esf-uk-info email list on 29 January 2004.

Red Star case: Inappropriate use of this list, Email sent to the esf-uk-info email list on 28 April 2004.

Appendix I: Survey Questionnaire

SURVEY

First and foremost I would like to thank you for the time spent filling this questionnaire. This survey is part of a PhD research aiming to understand the means of communication used to mobilize people in the anti-globalisation movement. The researcher belongs to the School of Media, Arts and Design of the University of Westminster. For any queries, please contact Anastasia Kavada at anastasia_kavada@yahoo.co.uk, by phone at +44 2072 535 845 or by post at Flat 62, Gambler House, Mora Street, London EC1V 8EJ, UK. Once again, thank you very much for your cooperation.

By what means of communication were you mobilized to come to the European Social Forum? (By mobilization we mean how you heard about it and how you organized to come here)

A. Were you mobilized through an organization involved in the anti-globalisation movement (political, voluntary, NGO, trade union etc.)?

Yes No

If your answer is Yes, then

1. (Optional) Are you a member or supporter of this/these organisation(s)?

Yes No

2. (Optional) Could you indicate the name(s) of this/these organisation(s)?

3. How did the organisation(s) communicate with you about the European Social Forum?

(Please tick one or more of the boxes that correspond to your answer)

Leaflets	<input type="checkbox"/>
Posters	<input type="checkbox"/>
Their website(s)	<input type="checkbox"/>
Email list(s)	<input type="checkbox"/>
Face-to-face communication	<input type="checkbox"/>
Mailings	<input type="checkbox"/>
Other	<input type="checkbox"/>

B. Were you mobilised through friends or relatives?

Yes No

If your answer is Yes, then

1. How did they communicate with you about the European Social Forum?

(Please tick one or more of the boxes that correspond to your answer)

Face-to-face communication	<input type="checkbox"/>
Telephone	<input type="checkbox"/>
Email	<input type="checkbox"/>
Other	<input type="checkbox"/>

C. Were you mobilised through the workplace or the University?

Yes No

If your answer is Yes, then

1. How did they communicate with you about the European Social Forum?

(Please tick one or more of the boxes that correspond to your answer)

- Face-to-face communication
- Telephone
- Email List(s)
- Their Website
- Leaflets/Posters
- Other

D. Were you mobilised through the news media?

Yes No

1. If your answer is Yes, then was it through the

(Please tick one or more of the boxes that correspond to your answer)

- Radio
- Television
- Newspapers
- Web
- Other

Are you male or female?

Female Male

What is your year of birth?

.....

What is your nationality?

.....

What is the last grade that you completed in school? Please circle the appropriate number.

1. None
2. High school incomplete
3. High school graduate
4. Business, technical, vocational school after high school
5. Some university, but no 3 or 4 year degree
6. University graduate
7. Masters graduate
8. PhD degree
9. Don't know

What is your profession? (Mark where appropriate. If you have any doubts, specify your profession in the box 'other')

Unskilled Manual Worker	
Skilled Manual Worker	
Foreman & Supervisor	
Non-manual - office worker non-supervisory	
Supervisory - office worker: supervises others	
Professional worker (doctor, lawyer...)	
Employer / manager of less than 10 employees	
Employer / manager of more than 10 employees	
Unemployed / looking for a job	
Retired / early retirement	
Housewife / house husband/ no paid work for family reasons	
Student	
Other (describe).....	

Comments

.....

.....

.....

.....

If you would be available for a short interview to elaborate further on the questions asked in this survey, please provide your email address and/or phone number.

Name

Email address

Phone number

THANK YOU VERY MUCH!!!

Name	Date of Interview	Participating as...	Role in the ESF process	Groups/ Organizations/ Networks	Country of Residence	Age	Profession
Dave Timms	26.11.2003	Representative of WDM	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Member of the Programme Group 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> World Development Movement 	UK	20-30	Press Officer - World Development Movement
Natasha Theodorakopoulou	08.01.2004	Representative of Synaspismos	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Greek Coordination Member of the European Programme Group 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Synaspismos Greek Social Forum 	Greece	40-50	Working professionally for Synaspismos
Panayotis Yulis	06.03.2004	Delegate of 'Network for Human Rights'	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Greek Coordination 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Network for Human Rights Greek Social Forum 	Greece	30-40	Doctor
Guy Taylor	15.03.2004	Representative of Globalise Resistance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Helped with organizing the EPAs in Britain 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Globalise Resistance SWP Stop the War Coalition 	UK	30-40	Working professionally for Globalise Resistance
Alex Gordon	18.03.2004	Representative of RMT	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Coordinating Committee 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> RMT 	UK	30-40	Train Conductor
Massimo de Angelis	31.03.2004	Individual Capacity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Very active in the 'Horizontalists' 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> London Social Forum 	UK	40-50	Academic
Javier Ruiz	10.06.2004	Individual Capacity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Editor of the esf2004.net website Member of the Communications working group 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Indymedia 	UK	20-30	

Name	Date of Interview	Participating as...	Role in the ESF process	Groups/ Organizations/ Networks	Country of Residence	Age	Profession
Marco Berlinguer	19.06.2004	Representative of Transform! Italia	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Member of the Italian Coordination Member of the Working Group on Memory and Systematization 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Transform! Italia Rifondazione Comunista 	Italy	30-40	
Mayo Fuster Y Morell	19.06.2004	Delegate of MRG	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Member of the Working Group on Memory and Systematization 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> MRG 	Spain	20-30	
Pierro Bernochi	19.06.2004	Representative of COBAS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Member of the Italian Coordination Member of the European Programme Group 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> COBAS (Press Officer) 	Italy	50-60	
Laurent Jessover	20.06.2004	Individual Capacity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Creator of the fse-esf website (website of the Paris 2003 ESF) Webmaster of the FSE-ESF email list Member of the NO:AD project Member of the Working Group on Memory and Systematization 		France	30-40	

Name	Date of Interview	Participating as...	Role in the ESF process	Groups/ Organizations/ Networks	Country of Residence	Age	Profession
Adnane Ben Youssef	20.06.2004	Individual Capacity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Creator of the fse-esf website (website of the Paris 2003 ESF) • Member of the NOMAD project • Member of the Working Group on Memory and Systematization 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Campagne Civile Internationale pour la Protection de Peuple Palestinien CCIPPP-France 	France	20-30	
Laurent Vannini	20.06.2004	Individual Capacity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Creator of the fse-esf website (website of the Paris 2003 ESF) • Member of the NOMAD project • Member of the Working Group on Memory and Systematization 		France	20-30	
Naima Bouteldja	07.07.2004	Coordinator of Muslim Organizations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Member of the Programme Working Group 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Radical Activist Network (Chair) • ex-member of Globalise Resistance • ex-member of ATTAC UK 	UK	20-30	

Name	Date of Interview	Participating as...	Role in the ESF process	Groups/ Organizations/ Networks	Country of Residence	Age	Profession
Helena Kotkowska	08.07.2004	Delegate of ATTAC UK	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Member of the Programme Group Member of the European Programme Group 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ATTAC UK 	UK	30-40	
Hannah Griffiths	15.07.2004	Representative of Friends of the Earth	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Member of the Programme Group 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Friends of the Earth 	UK	30-40	Campaigner for Friends of the Earth
Chris Nineham	15.07.2004	Representative of Globalise Resistance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Member of the Programme Group Member of the Outreach Group Member of the Coordinating Committee 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Globalise Resistance SWP Stop the War Coalition 			
Tina Becker	19.07.2004	Representative of CPGB	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Member of the Programme Group Member of the Coordinating Committee 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> CPGB 	UK	20-30	Journalist for the Weekly Worker
Stuart Hodkinson	21.07.2004	Individual Capacity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Very active in the 'Horizontals' 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Red Pepper 	UK	20-30	PhD Student

Name	Date of Interview	Participating as...	Role in the ESF process	Groups/ Organizations/ Networks	Country of Residence	Age	Profession
Kate Hudson	29.10.2004	Representative of CND	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Member of the Office Working Group Member of the Coordinating Committee, Director of the ESF company Played a role in the allocation of the solidarity fund 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> CND (Chair) 	UK	30-40	Academic
Oscar Reyes	11.11.2004	Delegate of Red Pepper	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Member of the Programme Group Member of the Practicalities Working Group Member of the Working Group on Memory and Systematization 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Signs of the Times Red Pepper Radical Activist Network ex anti-war organiser 	UK	20-30	PhD Student
Hugh Johnson	15.11.2004	Individual Capacity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Creator of the esf2004.net website 		France	20-30	
Simo Endre	26.02.2005	Delegate of the Hungarian Social Forum	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Member of the Hungarian Coordination 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Hungarian Social Forum 	Hungary	50-60	Journalist
Alex Callinicos	14.03.2005	Representative of Project K	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Member of the Programme Group 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Project K (Network of Critical Marxist Journalists) SWP 	UK	50-60	Academic

Appendix III: Interview Outlines

Individual Activists

1. **Activist Background: involvement in politics, Ideological positions, the organizations the activist belongs to.**
2. **Initiation and role in the ESF process:**
 - **How s/he became involved in this process (was it through her/his organization, through personal contacts?)**
 - **How long has s/he been interested in this movement (was it from the beginning?)**
 - **Her/his role within the ESF preparatory process.**
3. **The process so far: problems and positive characteristics, how those problems can be solved.**
4. **The role of the Internet in the process:**
 - **Email and email lists: their functions (e.g. transparency, decision-making, community feeling, collective identity, creating and maintaining relationships), their problems, her/his own use of email and email lists.**
 - **Web: its functions (disseminating information, attracting people to participate in the process, communication with a greater public), its problems, her/his own use of the web (which are the websites used for information, is s/he involved in designing and setting-up websites etc.).**

Representatives of Organizations

A. Questions concerning the organization

1. **What does your organization stand for? Which are its goals and beliefs?**
2. **Does your organization consider itself part of the anti-globalization movement and why?**
3. **How is the organization structured internally? Who is responsible for the decision-making?**
4. **Which are your sources of funding? (e.g. members, merchandising, donations)**

B. Questions concerning the website

5. **When was the website launched?**
6. **How many people are involved in its maintenance? Are adequate resources devoted to the management and maintenance of the website? (resources: technical skills, people, funding)**
7. **Who decides about the content of the website?**
8. **How often do you update the content of your website?**

C. Questions concerning the functions of the Internet

9. General

- Which are the goals of online communication? What is the website mainly used for? (e.g. provision of information, mobilization etc.)

10. Dissemination of Information

- What types of information are provided online? (e.g. press releases, leaflets, information about campaigns, information about the organization)
- Is the content of your website more internationalized than the content of other types of communication?
- Who is this information mainly addressed to? (members of the public, journalists, other organizations)

11. Campaigning/ Mobilization / Fundraising

- Uses of the website for campaigning, mobilization and fundraising.
- How does the offline tie with the online? Are they planned together?

12. Networking – Community Building

- Which would you say are the organizations that you have close relationships with? Why these organizations? Is it because they have similar views?
- How are relationships with other organizations within the movement established and maintained? (e.g. face-to-face meetings, participation in the same demonstrations, previous collaborations, personal relationships)
- Is the website used to establish and maintain bonds?
- Are these bonds translated in external links to the websites of those organizations?
- Who decides about where to link? Which are the criteria for those decisions?
- How often do you update your links?
- Is email used more for the establishment and maintenance of such bonds? Are these bonds mostly personal or inter-organizational? How does the Internet compare in that respect with other media or face-to-face communication?
- Do you have an email list as an organization? Who participates in it? Is it mostly used by your organization to inform your participants or do you also get feedback from it?
- In which email lists do you participate as a person or as an organization? Which are the purposes for participating in those lists? (e.g. information, networking)
- Do you maintain any discussion groups? If yes, what is their purpose and are they effective? If not, why?
- Does the feedback that you get through emails and discussion groups affect your strategy, goals and actions?

13. Decision making and organizing

- What is the process of co-organizing protests and events? How does your organization participate in it?
- Do you consider this process open and participatory? What kinds of problems do you face? (e.g. cooperation with organizations of different culture, undemocratic or not transparent procedures) How do you overcome such problems?
- How is the Internet used for organizing protests and events? (e.g. provision of information through the websites, decisions and preparation through email)

D. General Questions

14. What is your opinion about the effectiveness of the anti-globalization movement? How do you see it evolving? What do you think will be your organization's role within it?
15. Is your strategy or goals changed since you became involved in the movement? What kinds of feedback do you get from other organizations? Do you see a cross-fertilization happening (both on an organizational and ideological level?) If not, which are the problems to this cross-fertilization?

Appendix IV: Content Analysis Codebook

Basic

1. Number of message

Access number of message

2. Name of author

(or their nickname on the list – name as it appears on the email - string variable)

3. Type of author

1 = individual/personal capacity

2 = Individual but as part of a specific group or organization (message is in first person singular but the author signs with his affiliation to a specific group)

3 = working group/office/decision-making body of the ESF preparatory process

4 = group/organization/political party

5 = not clear (refers to spam or email sent by the mail service of the server)

Note: When the author does not specify in the content of the message who s/he is (e.g. does not sign the message), then the identity of the sender can be gleaned from the email address

4. Subject of message

The subject of the message (the phrase on the subject line of the message)

5. Date of message

In the form of dd.mm.yyyy

6. Type of message

1 = Statement/Announcement/Calls to participate in offline events (no replies are expected)

2 = Introducing a new topic for discussion/debate

3 = Reply to a discussion/debate

4 = Questions/request for information

5 = Reply to a request for information

6 = Circulating a document (without any other questions/notes – circulation of the document is the primary goal of the message) - note the theme of the document in item 7

7 = Online Petitions/Proposals – circulating a petition/proposal and calling members to sign it/ endorse their agreement on the list (replies are expected)

8 = Reply/ Sign Up/ Endorsement of an online petition/proposal

9 = Forwarding the message of another person/group – note in item 8 where the message comes from

10 = Other (includes messages of more than one type)

11 = Replies to statements or announcements

7. Theme of document

(title or theme of document – string variable – see category 6 in item 6)

8. Forwarded Messages

- 1 = from the list democratize_the_esf**
- 2 = not a forwarded message**
- 3 = from the list esf-uk-info**
- 4 = from the list FSE-ESF**
- 5 = from the list of one of the ESF working groups**
- 6 = forwarded message is a message sent personally to the person forwarding the message**
- 7 = forwarded message is a message sent from a group not related to the ESF**
- 8 = other**

9. Language of the message

- 1 = English**
- 2 = French**
- 3 = Spanish**
- 4 = Italian**
- 5 = German**
- 6 = Other (includes messages combining two or more languages)**
- 7 = not clear**

10. Links

Does the message include links to other websites, online proposals etc.?

- 1 = link to Indymedia**
- 2 = no links**
- 3 = link to esf2004.net**
- 4 = link to other news**
- 5 = link to the website of a group/organization**
- 6 = other**
- 7 = link to the fse-esf website**

11. Length of Message

- 1 = long (over 15 sentences long excluding salutation and signature)**
- 2 = medium (between 5 and 15 sentences excluding salutation and signature)**
- 3 = short (under 5 sentences excluding salutation and signature)**

12. Relation to the ESF preparatory process

Is the message directly related to the ESF preparatory process?

1=yes, 2=no

13. Notes on Unrelated Messages

Note the subject/function of the unrelated message

(describe – string variable)

Note: Items 14 – 27 refer to the organizing of the ESF and not to organizing of campaigns/issues not directly related to that process

14. Identifying tasks/roles

Does the message propose/identify an organizing task/role or propose some kind of division of labour?

1=yes, 2=no

**15. Task that identification refers to
(describe – string variable)**

16. Leadership/Responsibility

note: This is supposed to be a movement without leaders, so leadership will be considered in much broader terms. Thus, under this category, we will include

- proposing/deciding about who is in charge about specific tasks
- assuming responsibility for specific tasks

1=yes, 2=no

**17. Task that leadership/responsibility refers
(describe – string variable)**

18. Reports on tasks

Does the message report on the progress of tasks undertaken by members of the list?

1=yes, 2=no

**19. Task that reports refer to
(describe – string variable)**

20. Seeking help/advice/feedback about specific tasks

1=yes, 2=no

**21. Task that seeking help/advice/feedback refers to
(describe – string variable)**

22. Carrying out tasks collaboratively on the list – e.g. co-writing a document or proposal etc.

1=yes, 2=no

**23. Task that online collaboration refers to
(describe – string variable)**

24. Outreach

Proposals/Decisions about who to contact concerning the ESF preparatory process and around specific tasks (people/groups proposed to contact are not part of the ESF preparatory process)

Subset of item 22 – Constitutes online collaboration

1=yes online

- 2=no
- 3=yes offline
- 4=yes both online and offline

25. Putting together the ESF programme

This item refers to the official process of proposing seminars, workshops and plenary speakers

Subset of item 22 – Constitutes online collaboration

1=yes, 2=no

26. Disseminating information about the date and place of meetings

Does the message contain announcements or decisions about the date and/or place of an offline meeting?

1=yes, 2=no

27. Disseminating minutes or reports of meetings

Does the message circulate official minutes or reports of meetings and events?

1=yes, 2=no

28. Circulating the agenda

Is the message used to create or circulate the agenda for a meeting?

1=yes, 2=no

29. Disseminating information about the practicalities of the meetings (o.g. transport, accommodation etc.)

1=yes, 2=no

30. Disseminating other types of information concerning the ESF preparatory process

1=yes, 2=no

31. Type of 'other' information

(describe – string variable)

Note: Items 25-30 refer to tasks 'Disseminating Information'

32. Affiliation to the movement

Does the message contain questions/statements about affiliating or becoming part of the movement or the ESF preparatory process?

- 1 = affiliation to the movement in general
- 2 = no affiliation
- 3 = referring specifically to the ESF preparatory process
- 4 = referring to the ESF event
- 5 = referring to WSF
- 6 = other

33. Notes on organizational issues

(describe - string variable)

Functions/Issues relating to the list

Note: Items refer to the email list where the email is sent to and not to other email lists (even email lists associated with the ESF preparatory process)

34. Affiliation to the list

Subscribing/unsubscribing to the list and questions/discussion about how to be a member on the list

1=yes, 2=no

35. Privacy concerns and openness/inclusiveness of the list

Does the message contain statements/discussion about privacy concerns over this list? (e.g. who can view the content, names of the authors of the list) Does the message contain discussion about the boundaries/openness/inclusiveness of the list excluding questions about becoming a member or affiliating to the list?

1=yes, 2=no

36. Management and purpose of the list

Does the message contain discussion about the management of the list apart from becoming a member? (includes moderation or not of the list, questions about the archives, the server etc)

1=yes, 2=no

Collective Identity

37. Discussing/Referring to the means and ends of action

Does the message contain discussion about goals, mission and how to achieve them?

1=yes, 2=no

38. Discussing/Referring to the resources and constraints of action

(includes the existence/lack of funds, volunteers etc.)

1=yes, 2=no

39. Discussing/Referring to the relationship of the movement with the environment (including government, opposing groups, corporations etc.)

1=yes, 2=no

40. Discussing/Referring to the etiquette of deliberation on the list

1=yes, 2=no

41. Discussing/Referring to the etiquette of deliberation/ code of conduct in offline meetings

1=yes, 2=no

42. Identity 'talk'

Does the message contain references to the personal feelings of the author or disclosure of more personal information about the activist (e.g. personal experiences in the movement, activist biography etc.)?

1=yes, 2=no

43. Discussing/Referring to the inclusiveness/plurality/diversity of the movement or the ESF preparatory process

1=yes, 2=no

Collective Identity items referring specifically to the ESF preparatory process

44. Discussing/Referring to the decision-making process and the decision-making bodies of the ESF preparatory process

1=yes, 2=no

45. Discussing/Referring to (perceived) attempts by certain groups to control the ESF preparatory process

1=yes, 2=no

46. Discussing/Referring to the meaning, definition, rules and norms, advantages and disadvantages of consensus decision-making

1=yes, 2=no

47. Discussing/Referring to the affiliation fees and party affiliation to the ESF preparatory process

1=yes, 2=no

48. Discussing/Referring to the openness/inclusiveness/accessibility of the ESF preparatory process meetings (subset of item 40)

1=yes, 2=no

49. Discussing/Referring to the transparency of/process of circulation of information around the ESF preparatory process (includes comments on the announcement of meetings, the prompt or wide distribution of agendas, minutes etc.)

1=yes, 2=no

50. Discussing/Referring to the communication tools (including website, wiki, email lists) used in the ESF preparatory process (Subset of item 35)

1=yes, 2=no

51. Discussing/Referring to the relationship between the UK preparatory process with the European one, as well as the role of the Europeans in the preparatory process

1=yes, 2=no

52. Discussing/Referring to the relationship of the ESF preparatory process with the Mayor of London and the Greater London Authority (subset of item 36)

1=yes, 2=no

53. Discussing/Referring to the funds/logistics/practical issues around the ESF preparatory process (subset of item 35)

1=yes, 2=no

54. Discussing/Referring to the programme of the ESF (e.g. themes or axes, what should be included and what should not etc.)

1= yes, 2=no

Other

55. Interesting message

Opinions in the message are interesting

1=yes, 2=no

56. Notes

(string variable – anything unusual worth noting)

Appendix V: Important Documents and Statements

A. World Social Forum Charter of Principles

The committee of Brazilian organizations that conceived of, and organized, the first World Social Forum, held in Porto Alegre from January 25th to 30th, 2001, after evaluating the results of that Forum and the expectations it raised, consider it necessary and legitimate to draw up a Charter of Principles to guide the continued pursuit of that initiative. While the principles contained in this Charter - to be respected by all those who wish to take part in the process and to organize new editions of the World Social Forum - are a consolidation of the decisions that presided over the holding of the Porto Alegre Forum and ensured its success, they extend the reach of those decisions and define orientations that flow from their logic.

1. The World Social Forum is an open meeting place for reflective thinking, democratic debate of ideas, formulation of proposals, free exchange of experiences and interlinking for effective action, by groups and movements of civil society that are opposed to neoliberalism and to domination of the world by capital and any form of imperialism, and are committed to building a planetary society directed towards fruitful relationships among Humankind and between it and the Earth.
2. The World Social Forum at Porto Alegre was an event localized in time and place. From now on, in the certainty proclaimed at Porto Alegre that "another world is possible", it becomes a permanent process of seeking and building alternatives, which cannot be reduced to the events supporting it.
3. The World Social Forum is a world process. All the meetings that are held as part of this process have an international dimension.
4. The alternatives proposed at the World Social Forum stand in opposition to a process of globalization commanded by the large multinational corporations and by the governments and international institutions at the service of those corporations' interests, with the complicity of national governments. They are designed to ensure that globalization in solidarity will prevail as a new stage in world history. This will respect universal human rights, and those of all citizens - men and women - of all nations and the environment and will rest on democratic international systems and institutions at the service of social justice, equality and the sovereignty of peoples.

5. The World Social Forum brings together and interlinks only organizations and movements of civil society from all the countries in the world, but intends neither to be a body representing world civil society.

6. The meetings of the World Social Forum do not deliberate on behalf of the World Social Forum as a body. No-one, therefore, will be authorized, on behalf of any of the editions of the Forum, to express positions claiming to be those of all its participants. The participants in the Forum shall not be called on to take decisions as a body, whether by vote or acclamation, on declarations or proposals for action that would commit all, or the majority, of them and that propose to be taken as establishing positions of the Forum as a body. It thus does not constitute a locus of power to be disputed by the participants in its meetings, nor does it intend to constitute the only option for interrelation and action by the organizations and movements that participate in it.

7. Nonetheless, organizations or groups of organizations that participate in the Forum's meetings must be assured the right, during such meetings, to deliberate on declarations or actions they may decide on, whether singly or in coordination with other participants. The World Social Forum undertakes to circulate such decisions widely by the means at its disposal, without directing, hierarchizing, censoring or restricting them, but as deliberations of the organizations or groups of organizations that made the decisions.

8. The World Social Forum is a plural, diversified, non-confessional, non-governmental and non-party context that, in a decentralized fashion, interrelates organizations and movements engaged in concrete action at levels from the local to the international to build another world.

9. The World Social Forum will always be a forum open to pluralism and to the diversity of activities and ways of engaging of the organizations and movements that decide to participate in it, as well as the diversity of genders, ethnicities, cultures, generations and physical capacities, providing they abide by this Charter of Principles. Neither party representations nor military organizations shall participate in the Forum. Government leaders and members of legislatures who accept the commitments of this Charter may be invited to participate in a personal capacity.

10. The World Social Forum is opposed to all totalitarian and reductionist views of economy, development and history and to the use of violence as a means of social control by the State. It upholds respect for Human Rights, the practices of real democracy, participatory democracy, peaceful relations, in equality and solidarity, among

people, ethnicities, genders and peoples, and condemns all forms of domination and all subjection of one person by another.

11. As a forum for debate, the World Social Forum is a movement of ideas that prompts reflection, and the transparent circulation of the results of that reflection, on the mechanisms and instruments of domination by capital, on means and actions to resist and overcome that domination, and on the alternatives proposed to solve the problems of exclusion and social inequality that the process of capitalist globalization with its racist, sexist and environmentally destructive dimensions is creating internationally and within countries.

12. As a framework for the exchange of experiences, the World Social Forum encourages understanding and mutual recognition among its participant organizations and movements, and places special value on the exchange among them, particularly on all that society is building to centre economic activity and political action on meeting the needs of people and respecting nature, in the present and for future generations.

13. As a context for interrelations, the World Social Forum seeks to strengthen and create new national and international links among organizations and movements of society, that - in both public and private life - will increase the capacity for non-violent social resistance to the process of dehumanization the world is undergoing and to the violence used by the State, and reinforce the humanizing measures being taken by the action of these movements and organizations.

14. The World Social Forum is a process that encourages its participant organizations and movements to situate their actions, from the local level to the national level and seeking active participation in international contexts, as issues of planetary citizenship, and to introduce onto the global agenda the change-inducing practices that they are experimenting in building a new world in solidarity.

Approved and adopted in São Paulo, on April 9, 2001, by the organizations that make up the World Social Forum Organizing Committee, approved with modifications by the World Social Forum International Council on June 10, 2001.

B. Founding Document of the UK Organising Committee

Note: The document was first drafted by Alex Gordon, representative of RMT, and adopted with some amendments by the UK Assembly on the 24th of January 2004. Further amendments were made in the European Preparatory Assembly, held in London on the 6th and 7th of March 2004 (see final paragraph of the document). The underlined phrases and sentences were added to the document as a result of these amendments.

For a UK Organising Committee to host the European Social Forum In London

1. The European Preparatory Assembly of the 2004 European Social Forum (ESF) held on 13th/14th December 2003 agreed that, if the necessary practical preconditions can be assembled, the next European Social Forum should be held in the UK.
2. Given the participation of tens of thousands of people from across the continent in the previous European Social Forums in Florence and Paris, it is clear that hosting the European Social Forum in the UK would be a major undertaking, requiring substantial financial, organisational and institutional support. The signatory organisations to this statement consider it necessary to form a 'UK Organising Committee' of national and regional social movements, organisations, networks and local social forums to assemble the necessary support and coordinate the immense effort that will be required to host the ESF in London. It will be open to the participation of individuals.
3. We invite trade unions, social movements, organisations, networks and local social forums who share the objective of hosting the next ESF in London on the basis of the principles of the World Social Forum to join us in this endeavour.
4. The ESF was launched from the World Social Forum (WSF) meeting in Porto Alegre, Brazil. Its first two massive gatherings were in Florence (2002) and Paris (2003). The ESF in London will be based upon the Charter of Principles of the World Social Forum (<http://www.wsfindia.org/charter.php>).
5. As in Porto Alegre, Florence and Paris, the ESF in London will be an open international event in which the entire range of social movements and organisations of civil society in Europe can debate ways of making "another world possible" and alternatives to the "process of globalisation commanded by the large multinational corporations and by the governments and international institutions at the service of those corporations' interests" (Charter of Principles of the World Social Forum <http://www.wsfindia.org/charter.php>).

6. The ESF in London will allow social movements, trade unions, NGOs, refugees, peace and anti-imperialist groups, anti-racist movements, environmental movements, networks of the excluded and community campaigns from Europe and the world to come together and discuss themes linked to major European and global issues; privatisation and the neo-liberal offensive; globalisation and war; Europe's role in the global South; opposing racism and xenophobia; the role of the United States; the arms trade and collective security; the struggle for equality for all; the defence and development of public services; responsible approaches to the environment; access to culture;...
7. The ESF in London will be organised under the guidance of the European Preparatory Assemblies.
8. The meetings of the UK Organising Committee for the ESF in London and of its sub-committees will be open to those who agree to the Charter of Principles of Porto Alegre and abide by the rules and trust building process of the UK ESF.
Organisations not involved from the beginning will be welcome to participate later in the process. The work of the organising committee will be open and transparent and will be published on the European mailing list and all relevant activist websites and mailing lists.
9. In order to fund the work of the UK Organising Committee participating organisations, networks and local social forums will pay affiliation fees on a sliding scale in proportion to their size in the following bands: National organisations: £250 - £1,500; Regional organisations: £100 - £500; Local organisations: £50 - £250. The affiliation fee may be reduced in specific cases by agreement of the Organising Committee to ensure that lack of finance does not lead to exclusion.
10. The UK Organising Committee will establish such bodies, legal entities, staffing arrangements, web site and other practical steps necessary to assemble support for and organise the ESF in London.
11. The UK Organising Committee will work within the framework set up by the European Preparatory Assemblies. It will do so to form an inclusive consensus process contributing to the enlargement of our movements and an atmosphere of mutual respect amongst the diverse components of the process. All decisions and accounts will be transparent and published.
12. All of these structures will publish their agendas and discussion documents in public well in advance of the meetings and make available minutes/reports as soon as

possible afterwards. The content of these minutes will take account of exceptional issues of confidentiality.

Amended through a negotiation between three members of the Organising Committee, three supporters of the Call for Democracy, two members of the Italian ESF and three members of the French ESF. The negotiation was set up at the Process workshop of the European Assembly, 6 March 2004.

C. Call for Democracy in the ESF Process

We are a wide group of UK and European activists who are currently extremely unhappy with the ESF 2004 Organising Process. Despite frequent interventions and attempts to make our views known, our methods of organising, demands for democracy and transparency, and even the right to attend meetings have been trampled upon by those currently dominating the process. This is unacceptable in a process which declares "Another World is Possible!". Despite all this, we believe very strongly that a European Social Forum in the UK can be a positive event, which we would like to support. We are calling not for the abolition of the ESF 2004, but rather for the enlargement of the process and the involvement of all sectors of the UK and European movement.

We are urging the delegates at the European Assembly to closely examine the ESF 2004 Organising Process as it currently stands. We believe that the basic principles of the WSF Charter have already been treated with contempt. In particular, we propose that:

- (i) Ways are devised in which individuals and loose networks of activists can participate fully in the Organising Process.
- (ii) The Organising Process **MUST** be made less London-centric and more accessible to all sectors of the movement, not just large trade unions and the Greater London Assembly.
- (iii) The role of the GLA in the process must immediately be clarified.
- (iv) The role of political parties within the process must be clarified.
- (v) A clear, transparent and fair decision-making process must be instituted to replace the opaque and confusing 'faux-consensus' that is currently being used, which is neither majority voting nor proper consensus decision making.
- (vi) The outsourcing of ESF functions to private companies must be urgently addressed. By sidelining hundreds of enthusiastic activists, those currently organising the ESF are forcing us to spend thousands of pounds on private services.

(vii) No one part of the UK movement can be allowed to blackmail or bully another. A process of disaffection and disengagement with the ESF process has already begun. This may seem convenient for those organising the process at the moment, but when the time comes that enthusiastic volunteers are needed, we fear that no-one will become involved.

(viii) Agendas and minutes of all ESF meetings should be openly circulated to all interested parties in good time before them in the case of agendas and immediately after them in the case of minutes. This is currently the official policy but has largely been ignored.

We urge everyone to support this *positive* transition towards a more democratic and open ESF process, which will lead to a successful ESF 2004.

D. ESF in London: a celebration for all and an invitation from few horizontals

SUMMARY

This is a letter written by a few people who have been involved in the 'horizontals' movement for a more democratic and open European Social Forum. We are individuals from socialist, autonomist, anarchist, communist, environmentalist, spiritualist traditions sharing the principles of non-hierarchical, open, democratic organising. We wanted to make a few important points to the movement at large:

1. Following the decision of the European Assembly last weekend, the ESF will now take place in London, October 15-17, 2004.
2. After the organised intervention of UK and other European social forces, there IS space in the European Social Forum for all networks and individuals who want to see a better world.
3. This space needs people to exploit it. Without the involvement of grassroots networks of all types, *of course* the ESF will be bureaucratic, stale and uninspiring. We urge people to get involved to make the ESF positive and constructive.
4. We call for respect between all involved in the movement. For a brief moment at the European Assembly on March 6th/7th it seemed that this was possible - we want to try to keep open that possibility.
5. Specifically, there is an URGENT need for people trained in facilitation of large meetings using consensus. There is no point in us calling for fair and transparent facilitation if the people who are able to pass on such skills are not involved in the process. The ESF process is our chance to prove that a large-scale event can be organised using a process that moves towards 'another world' - we appeal for all to become involved.

Date	Meeting	Location	Major decisions
10 November 2003	European Assembly	Paris	• Provisional decision to hold the next ESF in London
03 December 2003	British Mobilization Meeting	London (City Hall)	• Discussion about the London bid
13-14 December 2003	European Preparatory Assembly	London (City Hall)	• Establishment of 4 working groups for the preparation of the ESF
24 January 2004	UK Assembly	London (City Hall)	• Decision to disband the 4 working groups created in the 13-14 December EPA • Establishment of the UK Organising Committee
29 January 2004	UK Organising Committee	London	
05 February 2004	UK Organising Committee	London (City Hall)	• Establishment of the UK ESF Co-ordinating Committee
12 February 2004	UK Organising Committee	London (City Hall)	
29 February 2004	UK Organising Committee	London	
04 March 2004	UK Organising Committee	London (City Hall)	
06-07 March 2004	European Preparatory Assembly	London (City Hall)	• 'Process' Workshop amends the founding document of the UK Organising Committee
27 March 2004	UK Organising Committee	Birmingham	• Discussed issues of process and democracy
13 April 2004	UK Organising Committee	London (City Hall)	
16-18 April 2004	European Preparatory Assembly	Istanbul	• Discussed the programme of the ESF
16 May	UK Organising Committee	London (LSE)	• Discussed the programme of the ESF • Conflict over lack of discussion of process and practicalities
13 June 2004	Unofficial UK Meeting	London (LSE)	• Discussed issues that were not properly addressed in the UK Organising Committee meeting on the 16th of May
19-21 June 2004	European Preparatory Assembly	Berlin	• Decision to have 'autonomous spaces' at the ESF • Establishment of the European working group on 'Memory and Systematization'
06 July 2004	UK Organising Committee	London (City Hall)	
31 July 2004	UK Organising Committee	London (Congress House)	
4-5 September 2004	European Preparatory Assembly	Brussels	• Discussed the final details of the organisation of the ESF
15-17 October 2004	European Social Forum	London	

Appendix VII: Affiliated Organisations to the London ESF Process

Name of Organisation	level	website
1990 Trust, The	national	www.blink.org.uk
AADC		
Abolition 2000 UK	national	www.gn.apc.org/abolition2000uk
Abortion Rights	national	www.abortionrights.org.uk
Africa Centre, The	national	www.africacentre.org.uk
African and African Descendants Caucus	local	www.blink.org.uk
Agreed Ireland Forum	local	
Amicus, East London Health Branch	local	
Amicus London Computer Staffs	local	
Amicus London Regional Council	regional	
Amnesty International	national	www.amnesty.org.uk
Arms Reduction Coalition	local	www.arcuk.org
Asian People with Disabilities Alliance	regional	www.apda.org.uk
ASLEF	national	www.aslof.org.uk
Association of University Teachers	national	www.aut.org.uk
BABELS	international	www.babols.org
Back to Basics Training Somali Refugees	local	
Black Londoners' Forum, The	regional	www.blacklondon.org.uk
Bookmarks		www.bookmarks.uk.com/
British Deaf Association	national	www.bda.org.uk
Buddhapadipa Temple, The	regional	
Campaign Against Climate Change	national	www.campaigncc.org
Campaign to Close Down Campsfield	local	www.closecampsfield.org.uk
Campaign to Defend Asylum Seekers, Southwark	local	
CAMPEACE (Cambridge Campaign for Peace)	local	www.campeaco.org
CGIL Scuola Estero GB	national	
Christian CND - Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament	national	www.ccnd.gn.npc.org
Christian Aid	national	www.christianaid.org.uk
CND - Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament	national	www.cnduk.org
CND - Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament, London	local	www.cnduk.org
CND - Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament, Labour	national	www.labourcnd.org.uk
Committee to Defend Asylum Seekers	national	www.dofend-asylum.org

Name of Organisation	level	website
Communication Workers Union	national	www.cwu.org
Communication Workers Union South West No.1 Branch	local	
Conference of Social Economists	national	www.cseweb.org.uk
Cuba Solidarity Campaign	national	www.cuba-solidarity.org.uk
Dalit Solidarity Network	national	
Day-Mer (Turkish and Kurdish Community Centre)	local	
Defend Asylum Seekers Campaign, Bristol	local	www.asylumbristol.corg.uk
Diaspora	regional	www.diaspora.org.uk
Diligence Advice	local	
Elcena Jeffers Foundation	national	
Federal Union	national	www.federalunion.org.uk
Fire Brigades Union - London Regional Office	regional	www.fbu.org.uk
Fire Brigades Union, Region 10	regional	
FM Arts	local	
Gay Authors' Workshop	national	www.paradosopross.org.uk
Genuine Empowerment of Mothers in Society	local	
Globalise Resistance		www.resist.org.uk
Globalise Resistance- Oxford	local	www.resist.org.uk
GMB	national	www.gmb.org.uk
GMB Holborn Branch	local	
GMB, Leeds General	local	
Goldsmith's College Students' Union	local	www.gcsu.org.uk
Halkevi (Kurdish and Turkish Community Centre)	local	www.halkovi.com
Hands off Venezuela	local	www.handsoffvenezuela.org
In Defence of Marxism (IDOM)	local	www.marxist.com
Inquest	national	www.inquest.org.uk
Institute of Employment Rights	national	www.ior.org.uk
International Association for Community Development	international	www.iacdglobal.org
International Socialist Resistance	national	www.anticapitalism.org.uk
Jubilee Debt Campaign	national	www.jubiloedebtcampaign.org.uk
Justice for Colombia	national	www.justiceforcolombia.org
Kurdish Federation- FED-BIR	local	
Lewisham Community Network	local	www.lowishamcommunitynetwork.org.uk
London Churches Group for Social Action	regional	

Name of Organisation	level	website
London Muslim Coalition	regional	
London Older People's Strategy Group	regional	
London Transport Regional Council	national	
London Voluntary Sector Training Consortium	regional	www.lvstc.org.uk
London Wildlife Trust	regional	www.wildlondon.org.uk
Milda Multipurpose Centre	national	www.milda.co.uk
Millennium Disability Agency	national	
Mission Initiatives Group		
Movement for the Abolition of War	national	www.abolishwar.org.uk
Muslim Association of Britain	national	www.mabonline.net
Muslim Council of Britain	national	www.mcb.org.uk
National Assembly Against Racism	national	www.naar.org.uk
National Association of Teachers in Higher and Further Education (NATFHE)	national	www.natfhe.org.uk
National Assembly of Women	national	www.sisters.org.uk
National Union of Students (NUS)	national	www.nusonlino.co.uk
National Union of Teachers (NUT)	national	www.teachers.org.uk
National Union of Teachers (NUT), Dudley Branch	local	
National Union of Teachers, Greenwich Teachers' Association	local	
National Union of Teachers (NUT), Islington branch	local	
National Union of Teachers (NUT), Leeds	local	
National Union of Teachers (NUT), Sandwell division	local	
National Union of Teachers, Westminster Teachers Association	local	
Network of Oxford Women for Justice and Peace (NOW)	local	www.nowpeace.org.uk
New Left Review	national	www.nowloftreview.org
Newham Monitoring Project	local	
Nicaragua Solidarity Campaign	national	www.nicaraguasc.org.uk
NO2ID	national	no2id.net
No Sweat	national	www.noswoat.org.uk
Nuclear Free Coalition	local	www.nuclearfreeplymouth.org.uk
Older Feminists' Network	national	www.ofn.org.uk
OXFAM	national	www.oxfam.org.uk
Oxford World Development Movement Group	local	
Palestine Solidarity Campaign	national	www.palestinecampaign.org

Name of Organisation	level	website
Punjabi Women's Social and Cultural Society UK	regional	
Paradise Press/ Gay Authors Workshop	national	www.paradisepress.org.uk
PCS (Public and Commercial Services Union)	national	www.pcs.org.uk
People and Planet, LSE	local	www.peopleandplanet.net
Pensioners' Forum, Plymouth & Cornwall	local	
Project K	national	
Redbridge Teachers' Association, teachers centre Ilford	local	
Red Pepper	national	www.redpepper.org.uk
RMT (National Union of Rail, Maritime and Transport Workers)	national	www.rmt.org.uk
RMT (National Union of Rail, Maritime and Transport Workers) Bristol Rail Branch	local	
RMT (National Union of Rail, Maritime and Transport Workers) Central Line West Branch	local	
RMT (National Union of Rail, Maritime and Transport Workers), Finsbury Park Branch	local	www.rmt.org.uk
RMT (National Union of Rail, Maritime and Transport Workers), London Transport Regional Council	regional	
RMT (National Union of Rail, Maritime and Transport Workers) Piccadilly & District West Branch	local	www.rmt.org.uk
RMT (National Union of Rail, Maritime and Transport Workers) Waterloo Branch	local	
Share the Worlds Resources (STWR)	local	www.stwr.net
Sierra Leone Womens' Forum UK	national	www.slwf.org.uk
Simon Jones Memorial Campaign	local	www.simonjonos.org.uk
Socialist, The	national	www.thesocialist.co.uk
Socialist Appeal London Supporters' Club	local	
Socialist Resistance	national	www.socialistresistance.co.uk
Socialist Teachers Alliance	national	
Spirit Matters	national	www.spiritmatters.info
Stop the War	national	www.stopwar.org.uk
Stop the War, Brent	local	www.redmagic.co.uk/stopwar
Stop the War, Mersyside	local	
Stop the War, Plymouth	local	
Student Assembly Against Racism	national	www.naar.org.uk
Student CND	national	www.cnduk.org
Sumac Centre, Nottingham alternative community centre	local	www.voggios.org/sumac

Name of Organisation	level	website
TGWU (South East and East Anglia)	regional	www.tgwu.org.uk
TGWU 1/1228 - 63 Branch	local	
TGWU 5/908 Branch	local	
TGWU ACTS Branch 1/618	local	
TGWU VBA Branch 1-1912	local	
Transport and General Workers' Union (region 2)	regional	
Thames North Synod of the United Reformed Church	regional	www.urc10.oog
Third Age Foundation	regional	www.thirdage.org.uk
Tourism Concern	national	www.tourismconcern.org.uk
Tobin Tax Network	national	www.tobintax.org.uk
Trades Union Congress	national	www.tuc.org.uk
Trades Union Council, Birmingham	local	www.btuc.org.uk
Trades Union Council, Colchester	local	
Trades Union Council, Hammersmith and Fulham	local	
Trades Union Council, Haringey	local	
Trades Union Council, Oxford and District	local	
Trades Union Council, Plymouth and District	local	
Trades Union Council, Southampton	local	
Trades Union Council, Yeovil District	local	
Travellers' Law Reform Coalition, The	national	www.travellerslaw.org.uk
UNISON	national	www.unison.org.uk
UNISON, Ashfield	local	
UNISON, London Fire Authority	local	
UNISON, City of Newcastle upon Tyne Branch	local	
UNISON Housing Associations Branch	local	
UNISON Islington	regional	
UNISON LSE	local	
UNISON, SOAS	local	
UNISON South West	regional	
UNISON Southend Borough Branch	local	
UNISON, Surrey Council	local	
UNISON United Left	national	
UNISON, Westminster	local	
UNISON, City of Plymouth	local	www.plymouthcity.unisonplus.net
Unite Against Fascism	national	www.uaf.org.uk

Name of Organisation	level	website
Wolfe Tone Society	regional	www.wolfetone.org.uk
Womens' International League for Peace and Freedom	national	www.ukwilpf.gn.apc.org
Woodcraft Folk, Hornsey	local	
Workers Power	national	
Zimbabwe Womens' Network - UK	national	