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[Re-worked, shortened and "actor-network theory-fied" chapter 7 from dissertation]

Network Politics Online

The Gothenburg Social Forum-process, IT and Actor-Network Theory[i]

Introduction

This article focuses on the importance of a functional and well-integrated material infrastructure for communication-processes within contemporary political network organizing. I will argue that IT (information- and communication technologies) in forms of for example e-mail lists are of great importance for upholding information- and meaning production within social movement-organization. To this aim I draw on the Gothenburg Social Forum-process (the GSF), an example of contemporary political mobilizations organized in network-type of organization. The ethnographic content in this text rests solidly on one and a half year of conducted fieldwork among Leftist or, rather, progressive Swedish social movements participating in non-routine or extra parliamentary political networking. The analysis focuses on everyday organizing, e-mailing practices, rules for interaction, the ethics of sharing information and collective production of communication or meaning. All of this is done with a close reading of the role played by IT and the Internet in political organizing. Thus, one of the purposes of this article is to bring light upon such things that are often left out in analysis of social movements and politics, specifically objects and (non-human) actors that play material roles in organizing. The GSF is analyzed through its coupling together of information technologies and social networks, structures and (collective and individual) subjects. Communication technologies greatly reduced the necessity of face-to-face interaction within the GSF-network.

My main theoretical toolbox is Actor-Network Theory (ANT), a school of thought originally developed in Science and Technology Studies (STS) and later spread to areas such as Ethnology, Sociology of Social Movements, Anthropology, and Organization Theory. ANT is

well-known for keeping analysis close to the empirical world of interactions, mobilizations, and translations - the messy world as it is presented - and fits nicely together with ethnographic approaches in parts of contemporary ethnological work. Actor-Network Theory is supplemented in the article by media theorist Marshal McLuhan's famous theorem of "the medium is the message", where the materiality of the medium is at the fore of analysis. Moreover, the GSF is conceptualized as part of a large infrastructure for production, distribution and consumption of alternative political information. Thus, the GSF is placed within the context of geographer Manuel Castells' famous notion of the world as a networked "space of flows".

Towards an Actor-Network Theory approach for analyzing Social Movement Organization

In a short text written within the field of Social Movement research, Colombian anthropologist Arturo Escobar draws heavily on several concepts collected from newer Social Systems Theory and Actor-Network Theory (ANT). Escobar argues that ANT has several advantages for researchers in this field with its focus on concrete world dynamics and with several years of developing an analytically rich methodology along with a highly sophisticated theoretical toolbox for studying various sorts of social assemblages, or actor-networks as ANT-researchers calls their object of study. The text was dubbed with the, for the time being, symptomatic title *Notes on networks and Anti-Globalization Social Movements* (2000). Escobar's main argument was to show how the newest social movements (late 1990s to early 21th century) forced researchers to question well worn in conceptual toolboxes and theories in their study of social movements, since previous conceptual categories did no longer apply to empirical reality. A common metaphor used to characterize these new social movements was *networks*; network-like or network-type of mobilizing structures. The difference between these new actors and older ones was that the new ones had a pluralistic network character and they were often supported by the decentralized technological network of the Internet.

Escobar presents ANT or a network-ontological perspective as a fertile new theory in this field. His starting point is several canonical figures repeatedly mentioned in this context: Bruno Latour, John Law, and Michel Callon, names that work as focal points for what has developed into the Actor-Network approach. Several important texts in the field is presented,

for example Latour's book *We Have Never Been Modern* (1993) wherein Latour argues that modernity in large parts has been about drawing clear cut demarcations between what counts as human and what counts as non-human (nature-culture, subject-object, economic systems-subjective reason et cetera). But, Latour argues, in well versed ANT-prose, that power, order and organization is generated in processes that necessarily include a multiplicity of materials, not solely humans. Latour writes that the social ought to be thought of as constantly being re-assembled, not something existing in clear-cut categories such as subject and object, things counted as culture and nature, or economic law-like behavior distorted by subjective reason and politics (represented as naturally functioning fully fledged economic laws). John Law, presumably even more so than does Latour, speaks of aspects of power and the pivot role played by power in the constitution of reality through actor-networks (2000[1992]).

In this article I will use concepts from the Actor-Network Theory in the analysis of source material collected during fieldwork for a period of a case study of the Gothenburg Social Forum-process (Hansson 2008). In the first section I will present some of the ontological presumptions at work in ANT, secondly, this is followed by the analysis of what I have named *Network Politics*. "Politics" in this context is termed as relations of power among the heterogeneous parts that collectively made up a socio-technological actor-network called the GSF-network (the Gothenburg Social Forum). It has not so much to do with ordinary concepts of politics as something that happens between political parties in government; rather, it has everything to do with how things come into being and sustain themself in time and how elements are mobilized into actor-networks. Power is defined as something that happens in relations and what something can do (power to act and be acted upon) without discriminating along ontological categories such as subjects or objects. I will present an analysis of how heterogeneous parts: technical artifacts, social networks, practices, norms, texts and documents, were brought together and ordered into a functional actor-network for meaning-production and distribution of alternative- or activist political information.

Actor-networks

So, what do these textbooks and prominent philosophers, anthropologists and sociologists say and what are the fruitful conceptualizations made in them? Well, Bruno Latour argues, amongst many other things, that the world, or better, the real, is best understood as a network effect (1993). Reality emerges through assembling of heterogeneous social, technical,

biological and textual (knowledge, documents, actors et cetera) materials in networks and ordered relations between these heterogeneous actors. Reality becomes the end-product of actor-networks (networking) that are put together with a lot of work invested in the process. Latour argues that the aim of ANT is not to add *social networks* to an analysis of the social or society (i.e. social network analysis), but, rather, aims for explaining society (if such a thing exists) or the social by tracing the networks that assembles "it" over and over again (2005). This means to build a theory out of networks – a theory about the network-character of the social (Latour 1997).

This difference can be explained by a short example. Geographer Manuel Castells' takes the network as point of departure in his work on the emergent Network Society, as the paradigmatic principle of organization (1998). We have entered the era of a networked society, Castells argues. Corporations, economy, and the media and so on, all seem to be organized in networks, forming a networked elite. Castells does not use the network as a principle for his social theory of the Network Society; it is an analytical concept. Furthermore, he argues that new information- and communication technology (IT) supports networks. According to the ANT-approach promoted here, Castell's "network society" (a global space of flows and elite structure) would be constituted as an actor-network, with key actors such as finance capital, management technologies (theories, knowledge, professionals), and capitalists. They would be concretely embedded and embodied, not abstractly nested in a global space of flows, possibly projecting an image of "globality". In the same way we can understand actor-networks (AN) that in various ways resist and make use of the components that are included in Castell's logic of dominance. In his critique of abstract globalization theories, Latour argues that according to ANT the global is understood as material practices with effects in forms of what is called the global. But these images or projections (Latour calls them panoramas) can be explained empirically and theoretically as they become "local-global" actor-networks. Globalization is too abstract and structural ("globalocentric") to fit neatly together with assumptions made in ANT. Latour himself prefers empirical studies of every middle range ("meso"-) levels or scales that amount to macro structures. This is usually called a "flat ontology" because it renounces any pre-determined and over determining structure to do all the explaining that the social scientist is trained to trace empirically and historically.

The parts of an actor-network are never fully defined by the role it plays in a particular AN, but can become parts of another and even opposed AN:s. This gives them a certain level of autonomy and ANT becomes a non-essentialist ontology: no things-in-themselves, socially determined objects or inert materiality, and the network would be defined as a: "[…] group of unspecified relationships among entities of which the nature itself is undetermined" (Callon 1993: 263).

Thus, it becomes an empirical affair whether a human or non-human actor collaborates, or better, is made to collaborate, to make up a durable AN (and what kind of position it acquires) or not. To trace the network of relations becomes the analyst's (in this case the ethnologist's) task. A scientific text conceptualized as a network mobilizes heterogeneous elements (people, other texts, equipment, procedures and methods, institutions et cetera) to accomplish a particular goal, develop a product, introduce a procedure or propose a scientific explanation. In a similar manner this article will articulate particular scientific references, be produced within a cultural science discipline and a history particular to Departments of Swedish Ethnology, make reference to empirical phenomena and observations, recorded practices, all of which provides strength to the new "article-actor-network", a network where I myself is mobilized as an actor (together with my laptop, concepts, theories, word processor, as a writer).[ii]

Network Politics Online and material prescriptions

The Gothenburg Social Forum-process was part of the global social justice movement (Hansson 2008: 10). This movement is a multifaceted social movement without central control or a unified political program (Hansson 2008: 221). The Social Forums were initially launched in Brazil in 2001, and have since then been multiplied all over the world, ranging from World Social Forums with hundreds of thousands of participators and visitors, to Local Social Forums with hundreds of participators (Hansson 2008). Below follows an excerpt in which the GSF presents itself in one of its "call for participation letters" that were distributed among local social movement organizations in Gothenburg, Sweden:

[Document: *Call for participation letter* distributed for participation during the GSF-event 2004, my translation]

Since the first World Social Forum in Porto Alegre, Brazil, 2001 the Social Forum-process has been a vital part in the struggles against the contemporary militaristic, neo-liberal world order and an arena

for articulation of alternatives to this order. The Social Forum's goal is to put light on social questions, in front of destructive thinking for economic value and profit, and to elevate discussions about democracy, power and the possibility for change. Social Forums have since their inception been organized at many different levels all over the world and in Sweden.

Sedan det första World Social Forum i Porto Alegre, Brasilien, 2001 har Sociala Forum-processen varit en viktig del i kampen mot den rådande militaristiska, nyliberala världsordningen och en arena för att formulera alternativ till denna. Syftet med Sociala Forum är att sätta fokus på sociala frågor framför destruktivt lönsamhetstänkande och få till en diskussion om demokrati, makt och möjlighet till förändring. Sedan starten har Sociala Forum på många olika nivåer hållits i världen och i Sverige. (inbjudningsbrev GSF)

During the two Social Forums that have been organized in Gothenburg, 2004 and 2005, participators ranged from small collectives and direct action groups (local environmentalists, networks such as *Planka.nu*, a part of the free public transport movement), socialist organizations (*Young Socialists*, the *Swedish-Cuban Association*), Non Governmental Organizations or NGOs (*Red Cross*, *Africa Groups*, *Amnesty International*), to Leftist progressive groups like *Attac Sweden* and alternative news media (*Gothenburg Free Newspaper*). The Forums were characterized by a multiplicity of both organizational forms and political goals or agendas. During my fieldwork in the Local Social Forum and throughout preparatory work it became clear to me how closely interconnected the political organizations were with the decentralized technological network; i.e. the Internet (Hansson 2008: 143-174).

Pretty much in the vein of previous ANT-inspired studies I have chosen to put an extra light upon material prerequisites or elements that provided for the actor-network's material infrastructure. By focusing on material things, objects, artifacts, technologies, and even biological processes, ANT has developed a program to explicitly describe and analyze these actors roles (in the production of the social) and their *prescriptions*; that is, what they make possible and what they proscribe according to their capacities for entering relations with other things, humans, machines, and systems. Prescriptions are […] what a device allows or forbids from the actors (humans and non-humans) that it anticipates: it is the morality of a setting both negative (what it prescribes) and positive (what it permits). (Akrich & Latour 1992: 261)

Computer-mediated communications nested through e-mail lists used for everyday planning and for arranging information were examples of practices that sustained the GSF-network.

Information was distributed and filtered through e-mail lists by members of the network and available for all members to use. The interconnection of a multiplicity of different organizations through e-mail lists made it possible for everyone to take part of the same information, regardless of their geographical position or position within the network. The assemblage of activists, organizations, cables, concepts, and computers, as well as capacities to store, send, receive, display, write, read, interpret, and arrange, constituted a network with a functional political agency.[iii]

Political networks as actor-networks of heterogeneous materials

The "network" is a common metaphor both in empirical descriptions and theoretical work on social movements. Already back in 1994, in an article called *The Chiapas Uprising and the Future of Class Struggle in the New World Order* (1994), activist and economist Harry Cleaver describes how an Internet-connected Sub Commandant Marcos distributes orders and strategies among groups in the Mexican Zapatista-movement (EZLN), and among activist organizations all around the world. Marcos fed them with information and updates on the current situation in the Chiapas jungle in Mexico (Cleaver 1994). Thus, future social struggles were pictured in terms of networks supported by the Internet, and loosely connected activists and movements. Ethnologist Ulf Stahre (2007) summarizes tendencies within the contemporary global social justice movement:

In addition to their critique of global neoliberalism adjacent elements in this movement have been repetitive protests at international political and economic summits of various kinds –i.e. Seattle in 1999, Washington DC in 2000, the Prague in 2000, Gothenburg in 2001, and Genoa in 2001. Coordination of these protests has taken place on the Internet […] The movement's self organized world-wide summits have also had great impact. The so called "World Social Forums" have become large annual gatherings for all kinds of movements and people's initiatives. […] The globalization movement differs from what traditionally is implied by a social movement, mainly through its extremely loosely put together assemblage of independent groups. […] The emergence of these new fleeting movements would hardly have been possible without new Information Technology and the Internet, and they force social scientists to invent new definitions and explanations […]. (Stahre 2007: 186-187 my translation)

Utöver kritiken mot den globala nyliberalismen har det sammanhållande elementet för rörelsen varit de återkommande protesterna vid internationella toppmöten av olika slag – t.ex. Seattle 1999, Washington DC 2000, Prag 2000, Göteborg 2001 och Genua 2001. En samordning av protesterna har skett via Internet […] Egna världsomspännande möten har också haft betydelse. De s.k. "World Social Forum" har blivit stora årliga mötesplatser för alla slags rörelser och folkliga initiativ.[…] Globaliseringsrörelsen skiljer sig genom sin extremt

lösa sammansättning av oberoende grupper avsevärt från vad som traditionellt menas med sociala rörelser.[…] Detta nya slags lösliga rörelser, vars uppkomst knappast varit möjlig utan den nya informationsöverföringen genom Internet, ställer nya krav på forskningens definitioner och analyser […].(Stahre 2007: 186-187)

The Internet has played many different roles in this context: as support for flexible and decentralized local-global activist-networks, for example in the PGA (*People's Global Action*), a long distance communication-tool, an information channel used in large political mobilizations (such as the anti-war protests against the war in Iraq in February 2003 with approximately 14 million participators), an infrastructure for the production of activist- and alternative news (i.e. the Indy Media network), for coordination of common resources, collective action, planning and decision-making processes (Juris 2005; Escobar 2006).[iv] Technical formats such as e-mail lists can become key elements for the exchange of information and sustaining network communication. But they are also system-stabilizing components. E-mail lists afford geographically dispersed actors to connect with each other and function as material infrastructures for maintaining both everyday- and temporarily intensive communication flows. (Lanzara & Morner 2005: 67-90). Actor-Network Theory can shed light upon this material production of communication and, to paraphrase media guru Marshall McLuhan, elucidate how the medium seems to mesh with the message (1994). Digital media's message (*its prescription*) is its capacity to connect nodes, its technical protocol for "many-to-many" communication, and "write-read-write" functionality, and it is in relation to the GSF:s' set of norms, values, actions and structure that these properties become interesting for further examination. The GSF was launched as a meeting place, a place where you could participate in discussions, debate and collectively join alliances with other organizations in a "many-to-many" kind of communication; i.e. an open forum for debate:

[Document: *The Gothenburg Social Forum's Charter of Principles* 2004, my translation]

The aim of the Gothenburg Social Forum is to become a democratic and open space for reflection, debate, to formulate and to deepen suggestions and proposals, provide for exchange of experiences and for alliance-building between groups, movements […]

Målet med Göteborgs Sociala Forum är att vara en demokratisk och öppen mötesplats för reflektion, debatt, formulering och fördjupning av förslag och initiativ, utbyte av erfarenheter och byggande av allianser mellan grupper, rörelser […] (GSF:s principförklaring 2004)

The aim of the social forum-organizers was to support interaction between participating organizations within the GSF-process. Openness was a feature meant to characterize the work of the GSF. In order to reach this goal the organizers developed opportunities for participators to read e-mail messages, have parallel discussion sessions, to post, read and reply to e-mail

messages in "many-to-many" form of communication. This was accomplished by using e-mail lists for internal communication between participators.

The GSF and e-mail lists: key material resources

Towards the end of 2004, at the start up of my fieldwork, I registered on one of the GSF's two e-mail lists: the GSF-list. Through the list it was possible to know when and where meetings were planned to take place and the status of ongoing preparations in support of the forum. Soon I got a pretty good view of the activities as documents and texts became available to me. These documents presented the GSF:s' overall organizational structure and how it was currently organized. This information was open and available for everyone registered on the e-mail list. About two and a half years later, during an interview conducted with one of the forum-organizers, let's call him Christian, I had the chance to talk to him about the role of e-mail lists in their organizing efforts. The impression that they were crucial components in the GSF-organization became stronger as Christian affirmed the centrality of e-mail lists in their work.

Christian informed me regarding how information with reference to social forums and its success as a model for organizing spread fast across Europe, and how this came about by the use of e-mail lists within "activist milieus", as he put it. Information about the forums was deemed interesting in these milieus, furthered distributed and copied, and later materialized into ideas and local activist's own local social forums. Reports and information about the social forum process were distributed and copied in newsletters and published on activist websites, and was also diffused within the activist network that Christian used to be a part of, *Studenter mot Krig* (Students against the War, launched autumn 2002).

I asked Christian whether it would have been possible to arrange the social forums in Gothenburg had it been without access to the Internet and the e-mail lists. He meant to say that it would have been impossible without these resources. The GSF never had access to any financial budget or economic funds of any kind, thus a relatively cheap and easily accessible resource such as the Internet was important for a project that never had these kinds of economic budgets. The e-mail lists were important tools for fast distribution of information to every member of the network, for example foregoing hastily announced meetings and quickly made decisions. Moreover they were used for assembling and storing large amounts of

information (*information as mass*): documents, texts, and messages. In the GSF-network there were only a small number of active organizers who handled large amounts of information.

The GSF's e-mail lists brought together hundreds of e-mail addresses, including other e-mail lists that in an indirect manner were connected to the GSF. They were used for dissemination of messages and texts. Relatively soon organizers were able to register and gather quite a few local political organizations in the Gothenburg area that had shown prior interest in an initiative to organize a local version of the social forum-model, and they catalogued these organizations by setting up a new e-mail list. As a result they could reach out to hundreds of e-mail addresses and a large number of organizations with a single "click on the mouse". But, first the organizers had to get a hold on these e-mail addresses and that was accomplished by means of an old list of e-mail addresses used for communication between organizations previously members of the political action-network called *Göteborgsaktionen 2001* (Gothenburg-action 2001).[v] Information was also distributed reaching about 300 e-mail addresses registered on e-mail lists used by the organizations *Attac* and *Forum Syd* (the Forum South).[vi] This way a collection of local member-organizations was registered on the e-mail lists. When organizers distributed a call for participation prior to the GSF-event in 2005 there were about 240 e-mail addresses that got invitations for participating during the social forum-event.

The GSF functioned as point of convergence and as a tool used by local organizations without discriminating along ideological-political programmes as long as they agreed on the GSF:s' Charter of Principles and the World Social Forum's Charter of Principles.[vii] The list of organizations added up to a diverse assembly of actors: *Ekosofen* (ecosophically inspired organization), *Attac Sweden/Gothenburg*, *Internationalen* (a newspaper connected to a local Socialist Party), *Studenter mot Krig* (Students against the War), *IKFF* or *Internationella kvinnor för fred* (Swedish section of Women´s International League for Peace and Freedom, WILPF), *ISM* or *International Solidarity Movement*, *Arbetarmakt* (Worker's Power), *Revolution* (socialist revolutionary youth association), *Exil Filmfestival* (a film festival called "Exile"), *Iranska Kvinnoföreningen* (Iranian Women's Movement), and many more. The open e-mail list used by the GSF was also registered to an e-mail list used by Swedish social forum-organizers on the national level and an e-mail list used on the European level focusing on European Social Forum-organization. This generated a large flow of information through the GSF-e-mail list.

Generally speaking, e-mail lists can be moderated which means that one or several individuals control incoming messages sent to the distributor-address approving further distribution. This means that there is a control mechanism supervising distribution of messages to subscribers registered on such e-mail lists. The GSF-e-mail list was close to non-moderated, even though a low degree of control of incoming and outgoing content characterized the network. Being an open access e-mail list meant little or no control over content. So, what kind of acts did these information-technology systems afford its users? It was possible to post messages, either as a reply to previous posts or as a new message with a new subject headline. One could reply to messages using the e-mail list either replying personally to the actual e-mail address used by a person posting a message to the e-mail list or directly replying to individual organizations. The registered user-address was visible in the program-display on the computer screen while using the e-mail list, which provided an opportunity for direct reply to the e-mail address that sent the message or contributed with a post to the list. It was possible to send regular texts or patched-in texts, links, attached files or documents, protocols, and articles (some of them were stored inside the message for a longer period of time). A user could include parts of a text, as for example parts of a message used for quotation in a reply or a complete new message. Electronic e-mail lists, like the ones used by the GSF, were actually hybrids made out of e-mail lists used for distribution of messages to registered users, and Internet-forums, so called Web-mail applications.[viii] It was a web-application that supported ongoing discussions and negotiations, and was used for posting user-produced content. As a user a person or organization could choose between receiving e-mail delivery in a synchronized manner, weekly delivery or by visiting the shared e-mail list inbox: the digital storage.

Organizing-threads and focal points

Internet-forums and e-mail lists such as the GSF-list are spaces on the Internet where people, groups and organizations can send messages, and later on these are exposed in an open manner to the totality of subscribers to such spaces. Within such spaces users are able to read visualized messages and their subjects, "headings" or titles by means of the program interface and choose to open any one of these. Messages on the GSF-list were organized in forms of "*threads*" or, rather, message-threads. When subjects (i.e. the title of the message that you send to an e-mail list) heading reply-messages were presented underneath the originally posted message, a "thread" of traceable discussions, communications or conversations was constructed. These threads could serve as units for the list-moderator (one or several activists

from the "organizing-group" within the GSF-network) for organizing or distributing communications, or as points of reference for other users. For example, such threads contained information about decisions, goals, rules or purposes for the use of the e-mail lists. I will give an example of a thread displaying a discussion regarding the GSF:s' call for participation-letter, or to be more precise, the size of the files used for distributing this letter on the e-mail list. The "thread effect" is revealed as similar ingresses repetitively "heading" added messages posted as replies to previous ones, thus creating a nested thread of messages (figure 1). The excerpt is consciously kept in the original Swedish language because it does not diminish the value of the visualized *thread effect* emerging from these posted messages, as I am particularly interested in analyzing materially constructed communications, and therefore, do not use the source material for detecting semiotic content within this thread:

[Figure 1 Computer screen shot displaying the construction of organizing-threads]

inbjudningarna mm inbjudningarna mm
Hej! Tack för de kommentarer till inbjudningsbrevet som jag fått. Jag snackade med några (de jag hade telefonnummer till) i programgruppen och vi beslöt...

person@epostadress Feb 7, 2004 8:28 pm

Re: inbjudningarna mm Re: inbjudningarna mm
Hej! Jag tog just emot inbjudan till "organisation.web" och måste komma med några invändningar vad gäller utskicket. Mailet inkl. de bifogade filerna är 135 kb,...

person@epostadress Feb 8, 2004 1:01 pm

Re: inbjudningarna mm Re: inbjudningarna mm
 Hej! Jag instämmer. Jag kunde inte öppna de bifogade filerna. (Är det samma intresseanmälan-blankett som delades ut på mötet, fast med ny deadline? I...

person@epostadress Feb 8, 2004 8:11 pm

Re: inbjudningarna mm Re: inbjudningarna mm
Hej! Trodde inte att 135 kb var såpass mycket att det ställde till problem (jag har en rätt stor mailbox själv vilket gör attt jag ofta glömmer bort att...

person@epostadress Feb 8, 2004 9:40 pm

Re: inbjudningarna mm Re: inbjudningarna mm
... From: Person To: GSFlistan Listan Sent: Sunday, February 08, 2004 9:40 PM Subject: Re: Re: Re: [GSFlistan] inbjudningarna mm Hej! Trodde inte att 135 kb...

person@epostadress Feb 8, 2004 11:17 pm

Re: inbjudningarna mm Re: inbjudningarna mm
Jag tycker inbjudningar ska gå till följande organisationer också (om jag anger två adresser, skicka till bägge) organisation avd 1 ordförande x...

person@epostadress Feb 10, 2004 1:25 pm

Several individuals participated during the discussion and by this thread effect a linear text mass formed out of massages following each other, and a perfect overview of conversations was constructed. In *Artifacts rule! How organizing happen in open source projects* (Lanzara & Morner 2005) Lanzara and Morner writes about how threads of discussions and negotiations anchor people's attention, focusing on a particular subject or problem. They argue that this actually characterizes open, co-operative and collective projects such as the GSF. They name such threads of discussions "*focal points*", whilst focusing on technological affordances that assist organizing collective efforts and human attention (Lanzara & Morner 2005:71). Such focal points directed attention among users towards a reduced number of objects and this in turn condensed the total sum of variation. As an effect collective attention steered towards certain problems or questions during organizing. Pre-programmed functions designed for communication steer our perceptions and direct users' attention (focal points). This affected the GSF in the way that individuals could choose to participate in ongoing deliberations while reading messages. Several individuals could add new posts to such threads, thus adding arguments and perspectives. The excerpt above regarding a discussion about file-size used for distributing attached files on the e-mail list led to adjustments according to user's demands for smaller files. If member organizations couldn't read the attached files containing information and the call for invitation-letter, they couldn't possibly follow ongoing organizational work. Thus, it would have been to actively exclude parts of the network-members to make use of too large files. And, that kind of actions did not go together with GSF norms, such as openness, previously inscribed in the Charter of Principles. Consequently, pre-programmed technological capacities help steer attention towards collective issues by coupling together technology and a social network of e-mail list users.

Network transparency and the ethics of sharing information

It was of great importance that participant member organizations of the GSF had access to up to date information, and preparatory work became a lot easier through habitual incorporation of the decentralized technical network. It was always possible for participant organizations to get access to updated information, for example last minute changes by the forum-organizers on the scheduled forum-timetable, either through direct communication with organizers or visits to the e-mail list and the GSF website:

[Figure 2 Excerpt from e-mail list displaying digital communication regarding availability of information in the GSF-network, my translation]

Reply: [GSF-list] the Programme-schedule and next preparatory-group meeting: how do you enter?

Hi
Excuse one ignorant computer-geek; how do you enter the [anonymous…] group-site to read the programme-file?[ix]
[Anonymous activist name]

Hi!
Tomorrow at 18 pm the preparatory-group (programme) will meet at Världshuset and an additionally added meeting for last minute changes before the programme is sent for printing are made. The programme is available at the [anonymous…] group-site for everyone to read (the file is too large to be distributed on the e-mail list). Caution that the available file is not the final programme, we are still making changes, for example there is text missing and pages will be in another order. But, all in all everything is in there. When the programme is complete it will be on the web-site. Printed programmes will be ready approximately next week.

SV: [GSF-listan] Programmet och nästa programgruppsmöte: hur går man in?

Hej
Ursäkta en okunnig datanörd; hur gör man när man går in på [anonym…] groups-sidan för att läsa programmet/filen?
/[anonymiserat namn]

Hej!
Imorgon klockan 18 kommer programgruppen att träffas på Världshuset för ett extramöte, där vi kommer att göra de sista korrekturändringarna av programmet innan det går till tryck. Programmet finns nu på [anonym…] groups-sidan, där alla kan läsa det (filen är för stor för att skickas ut). Observera dock att den fil som finns där inte är det färdiga programmet, vi håller
fortfarande på med ändringar av det, bl.a. fattas lite text och sidorna kommer att vara i en annan ordning. Men i stort sett finns all info där. När programmet är helt klart lägger vi upp det på hemsidan. Det tryckta programmet beräknas vara klart i slutet på nästa vecka.

In order to make essential information about organization-work easily accessible to the totality of organizations connected to the GSF-network, the e-mail lists and their "group-functions" were used analogously to a suggestion board.[x] They were used by member organizations for submitting suggestions for presentations during the forum-events and to increase overall transparency characterizing the organizational structure of the GSF. They afforded the GSF-network members documents for downloading and therefore ensured organizers that everyone had access to shared resources. Also, prior to meetings interactions between organizers and participant organizations were pre-arranged through the use of e-mail lists, a feature made visible within the communication-sequence presented in the excerpt above. Consequently, if the whole of the GSF-network collectively took part of the same information, it made it a lot easier for making last minute changes, for instance in preparations before meetings. The organizers continuously published document and texts that affected the

whole of the network, and in the excerpt below (figure 3) one of the organizers reassures member organizations that several important documents were available for downloading. Interestingly, the organizer also guides other users in how to find specific information and which documents that had recently been updated:

[Figure 3 Excerpt from e-mail message highlighting forum-organizers' attempts to make important documents and other text-files available to GSF-members, my translation]

Hi!

I have compiled call for participation letters, the Charter of Principles, and the document for filing interest for participation on the [anonymous…] group-site. Also, I have compiled samples for funding-applications that [anonymous activist] distributed. All of them are in rft-format. Previously the Charter of Principles, the call for participation letters, and the document for filing interest for participation were available in pdf-format. You will find the files under Files-menu on the left. The web-address to the GSF-group site is http://groups.[anonymous].com/group/GSF

Regards,

[Anonymous GSF-organizer/e-mail list-moderator

Hej!
Jag har nu lagt upp inbjudningsbrevet, principförklaringen och intresseanmälan som rtf-filer på [anonym…] groupssidan. Dessutom har jag lagt upp de mallar för bidragssökande som [Anonym] skickade ut. De också som rtf-filer. Sen innan finns principförklaringen, inbjudningsbrevet och intresseanmälan som pdf-filer där. Filerna hittar du under Files på menyn till vänster. Adressen till GSF [anonym…] groupssida är http://groups.[anonym].com/group/GSF

MVH
[anonymiserad GSF-organisatör/moderator]

This means that the documents were available for downloading by paying a visit to the GSF website (www.gbgsocialaforum.se) or the e-mail list webmail account, and they were mass-distributed via e-mail messages to every GSF-network member organization. Transparency and availability were core values in the GSF during preparatory work and strongly associated to the ideal of openness. This was expressed through organizing-practice; the distribution of important documents and information about progressions in organizational and preparatory work, continuous updating of information on how to become a participant member organization and how member organizations and individuals were supposed to act according to the networks Charter of Principles et cetera. The use of e-mail lists for increasing transparency-value came about through distributing protocols from meetings and the forum-organizers were keen on reminding each other that such protocols were distributed throughout the network:

[Figure 4 Excerpt from e-mail message where one of the forum-organizers reminds other organizers about the necessary work of distributing such protocols for maintaining network-transparency, my translation]

I have said it before and I say it again, do not forget to distribute calls to meetings and protocols from meetings on the large list, the GSF-list@... Otherwise it's not possible for them [i.e. member organizations] to know what's going on… […]

Apropos "the GSF-organizing group e-mail list" [anonymous]; It would be practical if one of you who are located in Gothenburg also was the list-moderator, then you could add new members […] (another reason for using the large e-mail list, since I easily forget to add people, and new members of the organizing group won't know about the next meeting if we don't use the large list…) Tell me who/whom it's going to be and I'll fix it!

See you!

[anonymous GSF-organizer]

Jag har sagt det förut, och jag säger det igen, glöm inte att oxå skicka kallelser till och protokoll från arbetsgruppsmöten på stora listan, GSF-lista@... . Det finns ju ingen möjlighet för dem att veta vad som händer annars....
[…]
Apropå "GSF-arbetsgrupps –listan" [min anonymisering], mejlade redan till [Anonym] om det, men det vore ju praktiskt om vi även gjorde nån av er på plats i Gbg till moderator, så att ni kan lägga in nya medlemmar, […] (ytterligare en anledning att använda sig flitigt av storlistan, jag glömmer lätt att lägga in folk, som nu, och då får ju nya medlemmar av arbetsgruppen inte reda på när nästa möte är om man inte även använder stora listan...)
Säg till vem/vilka ni vill att det ska vara, så fixar jag det!

ha det bra!
[anonymiserad GSF-organisatör]

Transparency within the GSF-process was an emergent property. It developed through continuous updating of documents and the ethics of sharing information: organization-manuals, protocols covering meeting procedures and decision-making negotiations, and this made it possible for the singular participant to be updated with relevant information and informed on the overall progression of the network organization. Also, this feature was further increased as a prominent network-property emerging out of critical self evaluation among the most actively engaged forum-organizers, reflecting on their positions within the organization and the work that they put into the GSF. *Legitimacy* was tightly knit together with the practice of sharing information and making sure that every node of the network had access to information. We can see this in the excerpt presented above, as one of the forum-organizer

activists puts extra weight on the importance of distributing information for the whole network to read. These features characterized several conversations among core-activists [organizers] at preparatory meetings that I visited; the sharing of information and critical self evaluation among forum-organizers (Hansson 2008: 223ff). It was part of the stabilization of the GSF-network and expressed in easily accessible information about who to contact for instructions or help, how to get in contact if you were interested in participating during the GSF-events, and the GSF-network's internal organizational responsibilities. In the excerpt below (figure 5) one of the forum-organizers explains that they are in the process of building the new website and how it is supposed to function as a tool in the collective production of the GSF-event in 2005:

[Figure 5 Distributed e-mail message from the forum-organizers on the GSF-list containing information about the new website, my translation]

We are currently in the process of building the new website. It will be a tool in the production of GSF 2005 [i.e. the forum-event] and to keep you updated on the GSF as well as the overall Social Forum-process. At present we are updating documents as the Charter of Principles, call for participation applications and call for participation-letter. Furthermore, we are trying to work out an organization-plan and a comprehensible blueprint for differentiations of work- and responsibility within the GSF, so that it will be easier to figure out what needs to be done and who's supposed to do it. In this way we hope we will be able to be more efficient and to increase transparency, and to make it easier for those of you who would like to be engaged in the preparations before the GSF 2005 event. Every document will be available on the new website, hopefully launched before next year, and they will be distributed on the e-mail list when ready. It is our wish to introduce them to you at the upcoming meeting.

För närvarande håller vi på med att konstruera en ny hemsida, som skall kunna fungera som ett bättre verktyg i skapandet av GSF 2005 och för att upplysa om GSF såväl som forumprocessen i stort. Vi håller på och uppdaterar dokument som principförklaring, intresseanmälan och inbjudningsbrev. Dessutom jobbar vi med att utveckla en organisationsplan och ett tydliggörande av ansvars- och
arbetsfördelningen inom GSF, så att det skall bli lättare att få en överblick över vad som behöver göras, och vem som skall göra det. På så sätt hoppas vi att kunna både effektivisera arbetet, samt öka insynen i processen, liksom underlätta för människor som vill engagera sig i arbetet med GSF 2005. Alla dessa dokument kommer att finnas på den nya hemsidan som vi hoppas skall vara klar innan årsskiftet, och kommer också att skickas ut på listan när de är klara. Förhoppningsvis kommer vi också att kunna presentera dem för diskussion på stormötet.

The property of network-transparency, an assessment expressed both in words and action, became a prominent feature of the GSF and as always, it is a lot easier to express something in linguistic form rather than by concerted action and mutual support.

Collective intelligence in networks: the production of [main themes] and many-to-many communication

The e-mail lists were activated during collective processes of document revision and consultations in the production of common "main themes" or political categories (i.e. "*justice*" and "*welfare*"). These themes or categories were later used as mobilization-tools, attracting political organizations not yet part of the GSF-network (Hansson 2008). Such processes actualized a collective intelligence involving the sum total of GSF-members. On these occasions ideas were distributed among GSF-members and suggestions were shared horizontally throughout the network, and these processes incited a feedback process: e-mail lists made possible continuous articulation and re-articulation of various issues and problems that organizers and participant member organizations specifically needed to address during the forum-events. And, decisions were based on collectively produced information:

[Figure 6 Excerpt from e-mail message containing a summary of previous discussions on the GSF:s' annual "main thematic", my translation]

Regarding this year´s main theme for the forum there is a proposal that was up for discussion during the last meeting. It boils down to try to put together a positive theme and to focus this year´s forum around the welfare-issue, and to shed light upon this issue from various angles. That way we can debate issues such as health care, public transport and the situation on the housing market, all of these are issues that are still on people´s minds and connected to welfare as well as questions on justice. Also, we could connect to issues such as workers' rights and union rights (very significant issues right now!) and global processes such as peace and social change. Simply put such a theme could be Welfare-Peace-Change, or something along these lines. We think such a theme would be specific enough, and at the same time it provides opportunity for many issues to be brought up. More on this at the next meeting! If you can't participate, but still have opinions on this, send them to us on info@...

(Distributed e-mail message from the forum-organizers on the GSF-list)

Vad gäller temat har vi även där ett förslag, som diskuterades på förra stormötet. Det handlar om att skapa ett positivt tema genom att centrera forumet kring välfärdsfrågan, och belysa olika aspekter av den. På så sätt kan man diskutera till exempel sjukvård, lokaltrafik och bostadssituationen som ju alla fortfarande är brännande aktuella teman, ur ett välfärds och rättighetsperspektiv, men även knyta an till frågor som arbetsrätt och andra fackliga rättigheter (mycket aktuellt just nu!) och globala processer som fred och social förändring. Enkelt formulerat skulle temat kunna lyda Välfärd-Fred-Förändring, eller något dylikt. Vi tror att temat på så sätt både blir tillräckligt specifikt samtidigt som det ger utrymme för många olika frågor. Men detta kommer vi naturligtvis att diskutera mer på stormötet! Kan ni inte komma på stormötet, men har åsikter om ovanstående, skicka dem till oss på info@...,

Thus, e-mail lists made it possible for the GSF-network to constantly reformulate issues, to include new commentaries and ideas in a collaborative co-production of themes within a networked sociality that effectively originated from connections with decentralized technology in this context; "many-to-many" communication. References to previous themes and issues in the excerpt above inform about updates of such features and that they were re-articulated to 1) suite newcomers or new members to the GSF-network, 2) focus on current political events and 3) potentially have a mobilizing effect, increasing the number of members

in the network. Electronically supported decentralized communication and interaction worked hand in hand with face-to-face routines such as regular meetings. The two levels of interaction worked synergistically, adding to a durable form of communication.

Network links

The coupling together of network-members and registering them on the GSF-list created a network whose strength was measurable by how fast and effectively news could travel the network, and the potentially large number of organizations getting access to the information. This logic was exemplified by a co-arranged meeting between local social movement organizations and *Göteborgs Folkhögskola* (Gothenburg's Folk High School), where students and organizations could exchange experiences and knowledge, and there was a scheduled session for questions for the students interested in these organizations:

[Figure 7 Excerpt from communications on the e-mail list regarding invitations for a co-arranged meeting, my translation]

Hi!

I would like to invite the GSF to our school, Gothenburg's Folk High School, October the 26th. [...] the purpose is for the students to get in contact with associations and subjects that they could get involved with. I have also invited Attac, Amnesty, Ofog [civil disobedience group], Women's International Peace Organization, and a couple of others. Hopefully questions about power relations between State, market and the civil society will come up. Our plan is for the students to ask questions and take a tour around the invited organizations, and after lunch we will split up into smaller groups and deepen discussions. The actual form is not finished. Have a good one!

[Anonymous]

I would be grateful if you replied before long

Sunny regards

[Anonymous 070-cellphone number]

Hi!

The IKFF [Swedish section of Women´s International League for Peace and Freedom] is happy to join in! Get in touch and inform us on the time and place and what we are supposed to do! Regards [Anonymous] The Gothenburg group/IKFF telephone number: 031-[...]

hejsan!
jag vill bjuda GSF till vår skola, Göteborgs Folkhögskola 26 oktober. [...] meningen är att eleverna ska komma i kontakt med föreningar och områden som de kan engagera sig. jag har bjudit attac, amnesty, ofog, kvinnor för fred, och några andra liknande. förhoppningsvis kommer maktfrågan bland stat, marknad och civil samhälle att tas upp med. vi tänkte att på morgonen ska eleverna gå runt och ställa frågor och efter lunch ska vi dela [upp oss]

i mindre grupper och diskutera lite djupare. Helt färdig med formerna är vi inte. måsågött!
/[Anonymiserad]
skulle vara mycket tacksam om ni kunde höra av er soon
 med soliga hälsningar
[Anonymiserad. 070mobilnummer]

Hej!

IKFF [Internationella Kvinnor för Fred] ställer gärna upp! Tag kontakt och tala om tid och plats och vad du vill
vi skall göra! Hälsningar [Anonym]/Göteborgskretsen av IKFF tel: 031-telefonnummer

Novel opportunities for collaborations, such as the one in the excerpt presented above,
or invitations to participate during seminars, organized political events and various
dialogues were frequently posted on the GSF-list. In this way the GSF-network
repetitively organized, in a distributed manner linking diverse actors, sequences of
messages and information being sent between senders and receivers. Thus, the e-mail
lists connected persons and groups, but also disconnected them from the totality of
Internet users, and specific issues or subjects were focused or narrowed down. At the
same time as e-mail lists introduced users to a large variety of views and masses of
information; they filtered and re-arranged the available chaotic information on the
Internet. Selection processes like these produce segmented islands of information, with
links reaching from different external web-sites, news-groups, and other e-mail lists,
sorted by interest or by theme. Specific information was distributed to the GSF-list from
various sites; the Swedish Social Forum-e-mail list (an e-mail list for organizers on the
national level) and the European Social Forum-e-mail list, mainly from the local forum-
organizers distributing information concerning the Social Forum-process on national
and regional levels. The GSF e-mail lists thus organized information and usage (i.e.
actualization or meaning) of Internet-distributed material through the coupling together
of the two processes: 1) circulation of information and 2) circulation of interpretations
and evaluations from locally, nationally and globally dispersed political organizations.
The flow of information was not limited to a local Gothenburg context, but expanded
and contracted in a stretched out global frame of reference. There was a mixture of
concrete Gothenburg-located activities (i.e. seminars, events, days of action and
dialogues), and "virtual" forms of engagements, such as the example presented below
about a report on the situation on Palestinian refugees in Lebanon. This message spread
between organizations in Sweden and the GSF-e-mail list was one of many information
channels reproducing this message (figure 8):

[Figure 8 Excerpt displaying a distributed e-mail message that was copied, reproduced and distributed on the GSF-list and other computer supported e-mail lists, containing information on the situation of refugees in Lebanon, English in original]

spread please!

Salamat,
So finally some news about the Naher El-Bared attacks, the situation is extremly urgent for the people in the refugee camp and for those who are becoming refugees once again.. a long list of urgent needs was provided by the Naher El Bared Relief Campaign and is ATTACHED to this email. Please help raise donations or send supplies. A quick note that Palestinian refugees in Lebanon are not suffering the islamic militias repression and violence, but also the violence andracism of the Lebanese society. Urgent support and help is needed.Electronic Lebanon http://electronicintifada.net/lebanon/Nahr El Bared blog http://www.nahrelbared.info/Nahr El Bared Relief Campaign http://nahrelbareddonations.blogspot.com/By 23/5/2007:a. 25 Palestinian civilians killed, 250 injured (80% civilians)b. No possibility to enter the camp. Evacuation of civilians is underprocess.c. 200 houses destroyed (either partially or totally)d. UNRWA clinics are closed, no medical attention available.e. Around 1157 families displaced on 23/5/2007

In solidarity and rage,!-Mad (http://[anonym].yahoo.com/group/GSF-listan/message/591) Sun May 27, 2007 1:39 pm

At the same time as this text was distributed on the GSF-list it circulated on, among other sites, http://www.kibush.co.il/show_file.asp?num=20191 (26th of May 2007) and on the global alternative media network *Indymedia* (http://www.indymedia.org.uk/en/2007/05/371686.html 27.05.2007 14:34).[xi] The text was distributed via the *Indymedia* network by an organization called *Queers Without Borders* and commented on another initiative called the *Nahr el-Bared Relief Campaign* which was a petition for supporting refugees and people in need in Lebanon. The information-routes and the circulation of messages between dispersed nodes: news media, groups, individuals and organizations that circulated information across territorial borders, mirrored the emergence of a decentralized self-referencing organization of information. Reports and translations of globally distributed texts materialized into what geographer Manuel Castells has analyzed as an emergent global network society (1998). Such processes operated as selection processes, thus prescribing materials for specific users or subscribers. Anthropologist Jeff Juris (2005) has written extensively on how the Internet has changed the conditions for political activity and argues that global social justice movements be labeled *"computer-supported social movements"*:

Despite the shrinking yet formidable digital divide, the Internet facilitates global connectedness, even as it strengthens local ties within neighborhoods and households leading to increasing "Glocalization" (Wellman 2001, 236; cf. Robertson 1995). Similar trends can also be detected at the level of political activity, where Internet use – including e-mail lists, interactive Web pages, and chat rooms – has facilitated new patterns of

social engagement. Anti-corporate globalization movements thus belong to a particular class of CSSN [computer supported social networks, min anm.]: *computer-supported social movements*. Using the Internet as technological architecture, such movements operate at local, regional, and global levels, while activists move back and forth between online and offline political activity. (Juris: 2005: 191)

Notes on a political actor-network, network politics online and information

The GSF was installed as an information-disseminator, information-producer and a political network with preferences for specific patterns of information. Movement-specific and self-produced information were preordained to attain wide-ranging dissemination to the largest extent possible among member-activists and organizations within the GSF, and as such the GSF repetitively organized meetings between senders of information and its receivers. This process dependended on the signal to reach its destination and that the contact between sender and receiver could be kept intact and not drowned out by interfering noise such as spam mail or simply too much information (Hansson 2008). In short, this amounts to a feedback loop: the circulation of information and the circulation of meaning-production, including information technology (computers, cables, modems, infrastructure, and bandwidth) and users (activist subjects, human agents) collectively enabling the common production of information.

In this article I have presented how these actors were mobilized to function together constituting an actor-network for distribution of extra parliamentary or social movements' information, supporting organizational work and meaning-production. For this purpose I made use of concepts worked out in the language of Actor-Network Theory and the ontology of networks. I have analyzed the role of information technology, as an actor, in network politics. On several instances Bruno Latour has dubbed the constituting parts of actor-networks *actants* in order to try to get rid of the dominating role given to human actors, often portrayed as the only active parts of socio-technological systems (Akrich & Latour 1992). Instead of stipulating acting abilities to human agents only, often in the form of human agency, we can write about *actancy* (*actant agency*), thus giving "voice" to different but never the less really existing forms of agency in a somewhat more horizontal manner.

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[i]Parts of the content in this article is further developed in my Ph. D dissertation *"Nätverkspolitik – organisering, öppenhet och kontroll i Göteborgs Sociala Forum-process 2003-2005"* (2008).

[ii]Latour's analysis of texts as parts of actor-networks is developed, for example, in his book about Pasteur, *The Pasteurization of France* (1988).

[iii]Processes that stabilize or *translate* heterogenuous actors into convergence (linking together or ordering previously non-related entities) are called "translation" processes within Actor-Network Theory. It is a translation whereby actor A translates its goals, inscriptions or agenda by forcing actor B to act according to A:s' prescriptions and co-act in stabilizing the actor-network. Its a non-reductionist micro-power analysis focusing on small scale translations that make possible large scale actors and stable structures.

[iv]The PGA or People's Global Action is a political action network that has played a signifiant role in coordinating and mobilizing protests against economic and political summits around the world, such as the protests against the WTO (World Trade Organization) in Seattle in 1999.

[v]The Gothenburg-Action 2001 was one out of two activist-networks that organized the demonstrations against the EU-summit in Gothenburg 2001.

[vi]"The Forum South gather 205 Swedish organizations working internationally with solidarity aid and mobilizing public opinon on global issues. Among the member-organizations are popular movements but also small associations organized by idealist forces." (http://www.forumsyd.org/, 2008-04-28) The Forum South focuses its efforts on North-South collaborations and different kinds of solidarity work. Member-orgnizations are for example Attac, Africa Groups, World Shops (Fair Trade), TWIGA, International Workers' Team, Färnebo Folk High School and many more.

[vii]The most important ideas directing the social forums or the social forum-process were dictated in the Charter of Princples, for example the work against militarism, a neo-liberal world order, sexism, racism, and homophobia. Also, issues such as the economy, the environment and peace, and the internal forum organizational structure were elaborated in the Charter of Princples.

viiiWeb-mail is a web-application that provides users with opportunities to write and read e-mail on the Internet using a web-surfer program, for example the Internet Explorer web-surfer program.

ixOn several occasions I have consciously left out activists- and organizers real names, and put in the word "anonymous" instead. This also implies other likewise sensitive data, for instance the real name of the e-mail list provider used in the GSF.

xThe name of the web-application is kept anonymous in the text. It was a commercial web-application providing free group-e-mail accounts, e-mail lists and private e-mail services, for example services for registered users to set up e-mail lists and share a common inbox space.

xiKibush was presented in the following manner: "The Occupation Magazine was established in October 2004 by a group of Israeli anti-occupation activists who were disturbed by the growing discrepancy between the grim reality which they observed in the Occupied Territories , and the way in which it was (and is) reported in the main stream media. The ongoing colonization policy in the Occupied Territories is being misrepresented by the Israeli and US media as "fight against terror" and a "struggle for Israel's existence / security". This is while in reality, the colonization policies promote terror, and endanger the future of both nations in this country.
The aim of this website is to provide information and commentary on the ongoing developments in the Occupied Territories in Hebrew and English. The Editors of the Occupation Magazine represent a range of opinions as to the optimal solution for the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. However, we are united in the belief that a viable solution must be based on the unconditional end to the Israeli military occupation, and on principles of equality, justice and mutual respect." (http://www.kibush.co.il/about.asp?lang=1 20080110) Thus, Kibush was an alternative media initiative for disseminating and production of news on the conflict between Israel and Palestine.