

**The Net Repertoire:
Global Activist Networks and
Open Publishing**

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The Net Repertoire

Globality means that from now on nothing which happens on our planet is only a limited local event; all inventions, victories and catastrophes affect the whole world, and we must reorient and reorganize our lives and actions, our organization and institutions, along a 'local-global' axis.

–Ulrich Beck, What is Globalization?

Political, economic, and cultural globalization are rising in the wake of new travel and communication technologies, which have woven ties between far-flung lands, virtually shrinking away the spaces between them. In the resultant global market transnational corporations are flourishing and multiplying, while the economic and political foundations of nation-states may be eroding (Beck 2001). In this environment a new form of social movement is taking shape – the global activist network. Social movements that have adapted network forms of organization are learning to wield the force of the Internet as a powerful new weapon. Activist networks use emails and instant messages to quickly and effectively mobilize thousands of geographically dispersed individuals to actions such as street demonstrations and electronic petition signing. But the Internet and innovative software have made another tool available: open publishing. This paper sets out to explore the implications for online open publishing as a resource for networked global activists. It is possible that, just as the development of commercial print media, in concert with new models of association, helped to break down the barriers between individuals and

between the public and elites in the 18th century (Tarrow 1998), in the hands of networked global activists, open publishing is democratizing media and changing the balance of political power in the 21st.

Globalization, the Information Revolution, and Network Forms of Organization

Globalization is shifting the loci of power. In the course of economic, political, ecological, and cultural globalization, the nascent world society portends “the emergence of new power opportunities and new social spaces for action, living and perception...” While on one hand this means that transnational corporations can defy the authority of the nation state as “the world market eliminates or supplants political action,” globalization is also providing new opportunities to traditionally less empowered political actors seeking to hold accountable those companies operating in the subpolitics beyond the power of the political system (Beck 2001). This is no less true when opposition arises where politics are still played out within and between states.

Two aspects of the new global environment are empowering weaker political actors relative to the established political and economic elites. First, a key foundation of globalization, the information revolution, “is favoring and strengthening network forms of organization, often giving them an advantage over hierarchical forms.” In what has been labeled *netwar*, multitudes of small and dispersed groups are using the latest communications technologies to act in concert across great distances. Second, “[m]ore than ever before, conflicts revolve around ‘knowledge’ and the use of ‘soft power’” (Arquilla and Ronfeldt 2001). These dramatic changes have altered the political atmosphere and given rise to a new *political opportunity structure*. Unlike those perennial weapons of the elite—money and power—political opportunity names those resources

existing outside and beyond the group but which can nevertheless be advantageously exploited. “[C]ontentious politics emerges when ordinary citizens...respond to opportunities that lower the costs of collective action, reveal potential allies, show where elites and authorities are most vulnerable, and trigger social networks and collective identities into action around common themes” (Tarrow 1998). The Internet is just such a resource.

It is in new political environments created by shifting opportunity structures that innovative repertoires of contention emerge. Repertoires of contention refer to sets “of routines that are learned, shared, and acted out through a relatively deliberate process of choice” and which are implemented when “people act together in pursuit of shared interest.” The conventions of contention are “culturally inscribed and socially communicated” (Tilly 1995). Social movements are repositories of knowledge of particular routines in a society’s history, which help them to overcome the deficits in resources and communication typically found among the poor and disorganized (Kertzer 1988; Tarrow 1998). Actors first implement known repertoires, but when faced with new challenges and new situations, they expand on these extant routines by “creating innovations at their margins” (Tarrow 1998). Activists have long drawn on a publishing repertoire to facilitate their causes. Beginning in the 18th century the advent of commercial print media “diffused ways of mounting claims that helped ordinary people to think of themselves as part of broader collectivities and on the same plane as their betters” (Tarrow 1998). It was in the form of pamphlets that the democratic implications of print really appeared: “Highly flexible, easy to manufacture, and cheap, pamphlets were printed in the American colonies wherever there were printing presses, intellectual ambitions and political concerns” (Bailyn 1967).

Open Publishing: A New Repertoire of Contention?

I propose that within the realm of online journalism there may be an emerging new repertoire of contention as networked, global activists use open publishing software on the Internet to promulgate their claims before a global audience. In considering whether and how this is happening, I will first discuss the exclusionary nature of traditional media before defining open publishing and outlining the key distinctions from traditional news outlets which make it a potential resource for global activists.

Open publishing on the Internet radically departs from the news construction process at traditional media outlets in the United States. The different processes arise from fundamental distinctions in the institutional natures of these disparate organizations. Corporate-run mainstream news outlets, which are operated for profit, have evolved to operate via a hierarchical structure under a set of routines that minimize expense and maximize profit. The hierarchy of corporate news organizations means that owners, through high-level personnel including managers and editors, control the operations of journalists toward the end of enhancing profits. A key aspect of profit maximization is appealing to the largest possible base of news consumers. To do this, news organizations endeavor to appear as objective as possible, which they do by citing reliable sources.

Organizations of the U.S. news media and political elites have a special working relationship, which dominates the day-to-day production of news. The press operates as a sort of “fourth branch of government,” interacting on a regular basis with government officials whose briefings and press conferences have become the primary source of news (Sigal 1973). Hallin (1987) suggests that United States officials, despite some changes since the Vietnam War, remain the basic source of news—especially for foreign policy coverage. The persistence of this

special relationship between the media and government has blunted the impact of ideological change in several ways by defining the issues, setting the agenda, and certifying legitimate authorities. Elites are often able to define the issues for public debate because the media-government relationship means that policy elites are able most of the time to pose the dominant issue around which news coverage will revolve. The media-elite relationship also profoundly affects the news agenda. This can be an important political resource for the administration in power, since it gives it the ability to choose when public attention will be focused on a given problem and when it will not. Finally, the media's reliance on official sources is an important symbolic acknowledgement of the legitimacy of political authorities.

Lance Bennett (1990, 1994) has shown that journalistic norms of objectivity, inspired by profit motives, mean that “[m]ass media news professionals, from the boardroom to the beat, tend to ‘index’ the range of voices and viewpoints in both news and editorials according to the range of views expressed in mainstream government debate about a given topic.” When journalism practices function according to the indexing hypothesis, during times of open public debate “foreign policy debates in the news can be relatively rich, with more (and more diverse) voices participating, more views and options being introduced, and continuing for more extended periods of time, with noticeable effects on the course of policy itself.” However, in times of elite consensus or oppositional silence, there are “shorter debate periods, with fewer and less varied voices and views making it into the news” At these times “there is little ground established for evaluating policies or holding officials accountable, and the lack of much historical reference within the debate leaves officials free to reinvents history and make untested claims about policies” (Bennett 1994). A more recent study concludes that even in instances when there is a fairly rich elite debate, it may be simplified by the mainstream media, which may feed “usable

themes into the preexisting frame that was strongly shaped by the [government's] rhetorical emphases" or, by presenting conflict as a dichotomy "may eliminate policy options that...officials are actively discussing from the media debate" (Althaus et al 1996).

Alternatives to mainstream media have existed as long as traditional media itself, as exemplified by the pamphleteers of the 18th century mentioned above. Subscription-based alternative news magazines, such as *The Nation*, listener supported radio such as *National Public Radio*, and government subsidized public access broadcast and cable television stations, such as *PBS* have long offered content which departs from that of mainstream outlets. With the rise of the Internet, many of these outlets have taken their content online, while other web sites have been started by people by those without the resources to run a print magazine or broadcast station, but enabled by the low-cost, easy-access nature of the Web to offer unique or divergent news perspectives.

The Internet, beyond providing an easy-entry forum for those who wish to offer their content to news consumers, has made possible news sites which are alternative, not only in the nature of their content, but in the nature of their construction of the relationship between the news producer and the news consumer. On some sites software has been implemented allowing anyone with Internet access to post their own content, and to interact with existing content on the site. This is called *open publishing*. "Open publishing means that the process of creating news is transparent to the readers. They can contribute a story and see it instantly appear in the pool of stories publicly available. Those stories are filtered as little as possible to help the readers find the stories they want. Readers can see editorial decisions being made by others. They can see how to get involved and help make editorial decisions" (Arnison 2001). While all of the traditional formats of alternative press present formidable obstacles to those who are resource

poor (even the pamphleteers of the 18th century would have had to pay for the use of the printing press) open publishing provides a forum to which anyone with Internet access can instantly, remotely create content with global reach. While there is an undeniable digital divide, computers with Internet access are available for use, free of charge, at schools, libraries, and community facilities in most urban areas in the U.S. and elsewhere. Thus this medium with global reach is potentially cheaper and more accessible than facilities for making flyers likely only to be seen within the city where they originate.

While corporate news outlets are operated by the wealthy for a profit, open publishing sites are run by the people for the people. Community news sites, blogs, and other open publishing outlets, generally not run for profit, are often rooted in a philosophy of non-hierarchy: “Indymedias are restructuring the traditional news hierarchy of publishers, advertisers, sources, journalists, and readers. In the world of Indymedia news, the relationship between the sources, journalists, and readers is all that matters. In the Indymedia community, publishers, advertisers, and corporate interests are left out of the picture” (Hyde 2000). The non-hierarchical structure of open publishing organizations lends itself to two fundamental characteristics of these kinds of sites: minimal editorial control and intercreativity.

Of minimal editorial control—a key operational difference distinguishing open publishing from corporate media—one Barcelona IMC volunteer says, “The mainstream press censors its own journalists and in Indymedia we have had cases of journalists coming to us to publish the news they cannot publish in the publications they work for,” while “social organizations and related movements come to us to publish their news because the mainstream press won't do it. They will not publish when a demonstration is going to be held, or the agenda of a weekend gathering to discuss social issues and alternative politics” (Pavis 2002). The lack of

editorial control on open publishing sites means they need not succumb to the institutionalized news routines of mainstream media. Hence the indexing habits that characterize mainstream news establishments are largely absent in open publishing forums.

A second important distinction between traditional media and open-source journalism lies in the level and nature of public participation invited by each. Although mainstream news outlets, such as the New York Times or CNN, which have online versions, allow a certain level of interactivity—by allowing users to personalize the organization of their “front page,” for example—open publishing sites invite what Meikle (2003) calls *intercreativity*. While interactivity expands the ways in which readers can consume the news, intercreativity allows readers to create and shape the news. “Stories that are the end result of the news process in traditional media are just the starting point for online communities, which spin off discussions full of context, historical background, conjecture and related links.” Kuro5hin's rating system, adapted from that of the techie site Slashdot.org, enhances credibility and further develops the original article through its intensive feedback loop. “The end result, says Kuro5hin’s founder Rusty Foster, “is an understanding and depth that just is not possible in traditional one-direction journalism” (Andrews 2002).

Open Source Journalism and Global Activist Networks

The lack of editorial control and the intercreative, public participatory nature of open publishing journalism facilitated by online community news rooms and blogs may make it a weapon ideally suited to the needs of widely dispersed activists loosely banded together via network forms of organization.

Transnational advocacy network[s] include those relevant actors working internationally on an issue, who are bound together by shared values, a common discourse, and dense exchanges of information and services...At the core of the relationship is information exchange. What is novel in these networks is the ability of nontraditional international actors to mobilize information strategically to help create new issues and categories and to persuade, pressure, and gain leverage over much more powerful organizations and governments. Activists in networks try not only to influence policy outcomes, but to transform the terms and nature of the debate (Keck & Sikkink 1998).

Whereas news routines mean conventional media outlets privilege the voices of political elites, the democratic nature of open-source media sites invites activist individuals and organizations to report on their issue in their own way, without a filter that is programmed by time, space, and commercial sponsorship constraints. Movement organizers must compete with the media, “which transmit messages that movements must attempt to shape and influence...States are also constantly framing issues, both in order to gain support for their policies and to contest the meanings placed in public space by movements.” In the realm of traditional media, “[i]n the struggle over meanings in which movements are constantly engaged, it is rare that they do not suffer a disadvantage in competition with states, which not only control the means of repression but have at their disposal important instruments for meaning construction. The struggle between states and movements takes place not only in the streets but in contests over meaning” (Tarrow 1998). Where infrastructure and economic and political conditions make the Internet publicly available, self-publishing platforms offer a forum where competition does not automatically advantage the state or other elites.

As an activist tool for shaping and publicizing discourse, I hypothesize that open publishing online is a *repertoire of contention*. Citing Tilly, Tarrow suggests that repertoires of

contention describe “[t]he ways that people act together in pursuit of shared interests” via “a limited set of routines that are learned, shared, and acted out through a relatively deliberate process of choice” (Tarrow 1998). Where the traditional repertoires of contention were “parochial, bifurcated and particular,” the new forms were cosmopolitan, modular, and autonomous in character:

They were cosmopolitan in often referring to interests and issues that spanned many localities or affected centers of power whose actions touched many localities. They were modular in being easily transferable from one setting or circumstance to another... They were autonomous in beginning on the claimants’ own initiative and establishing direct contact between claimants and nationally significant centers of power” (Tilly 1995).

The new repertoires “could be adapted to a number of different settings and its elements combined in campaigns of collective action.” Further, “once used and understood, it could be diffused to other actors and be employed on behalf of coalitions of challengers. The result was to make it possible for even scattered groups of people who did not know one another to combine in sustained challenges to authorities and create the modern social movement” (Tarrow 1998).

When Tarrow distinguishes between the old and the new repertoire of contention, he speaks of the transition from effigies to boycotts, mass petitions, and urban insurrections. While these new repertoires are still effective and in use, they seem no longer to be the newest thing in contentious politics—the collective action “used by people who lack regular access to institutions, who act in the name of new or unaccepted claims, and who behave in ways that fundamentally challenge others or authorities.” These “new” routines are the living ancestors of a new generation of actions employed by the networked social movement in the information age.

Facilitated by digital communication technology, the newest new forms of contention involve online petitions, virtual marches, hijacking corporate symbols in culture jamming campaigns, and, increasingly, message framing online via open-source journalism. I therefore propose the moniker *Net repertoire* for this nascent set of routines for contentious politics. The term Net repertoire serves us in several ways. First, the terms “old” and “new” fail us as soon as we wish to distinguish between more than two iterations of events. Is an “old” car a 1920’s antique, or a 2002 model that has been updated for 2003? Instead of naming a repertoire based on its newness relative to the last generation of routines, the term Net repertoire gives us a descriptive handle, evoking its relationship both to networked activism, and to the Internet.

Within the Net repertoire, open publishing serves the crucial function of providing a forum for framing. In the information age, this ability is perhaps more vital than it has been traditionally, as “Emerging global civil society actors have found new power in networking, emphasizing the ‘battle of the story’—a more purely informational dimension of netwar” (Arquilla and Ronfeldt 2001). First, because activists must frame their issues in ways that will win widespread public support, self-publishing becomes a crucial activist resource. Second, social movements are “based on underlying social networks and resonant collective action frames” which must “develop the capacity to maintain sustained challenges against powerful opponents.” The coordination of collective action depends on the trust and cooperation that are generated among participants by “shared understandings and identities...on the collective action frames that justify, dignify, and animate collective action” (Tarrow 1998). Blogs and community online news sites provide a forum for creating and dispersing the frames that build and reinforce the bonds of these frequently geographically dispersed actors. Finally, “...networks open channels for bringing alternative visions and information into international debate.” By

circumventing the mainstream media via open publishing outlets, activists may be able to develop powerful issue and collective action frames which may then be injected into the mainstream media, “overcoming deliberate suppression of information that sustains many abuses of power” (Keck and Sikkink 1998). For a campaign that “bypasses the established media and relies on horizontal connections among participants... also relies, to some extent, on the participation of the established media” (Meikle 2003). Networked activists can then “help reframe international and domestic debates, changing their terms, their sites, and the configuration of participants. When they succeed, advocacy networks are among the most important sources of new ideas, norms, and identities in the international system” (Keck and Sikkink 1998).

Using open publishing forums, then, Palestinian rights movements are able to frame the story of the Israel-Palestine conflict in ways that humanize the Palestinians and emphasize the institutional basis of the conflict rooted in U.S. financial support of the military occupation of Palestine, overcoming the tendency of mainstream media in the U.S. to portray Palestinians as terrorists and Israelis as victims. Such media campaigns are executed by a geographically diverse group of activists working from within the Occupied Territories and Israel, elsewhere in the Middle East, as well as Europe and the United States. These activists are not only dispersed around the globe, but are of diverse cultural and ethnic backgrounds. Some are part of the Palestinian diaspora; others are Jews who disagree with the policies of Israel. Others are simply individuals concerned with what they see as the oppression of one people by another—but all see the Israel-Palestine conflict as an injustice, and all see themselves as the potential agents of change.

Similarly, in 2002 as the Bush administration began a discourse which pointed toward the likelihood of a war on Iraq, activists around the globe began publishing news which countered the prevailing tone of the mainstream media. Some were in the U.S., protesting the actions of their own government, while others around the world were criticizing the actions of a foreign nation. Some viewed the pending war as immoral, others as a violation of international law. All were united, however, in their belief that a pre-emptive strike against Iraq was wrong.

These loose networks of protest journalists have met at the intersection of political and social activism and the open publishing movement, and have written an alternative record of the conflict they struggle to end, in the first case, and fought to avert, in the second. The same can be said of many other activist movements.

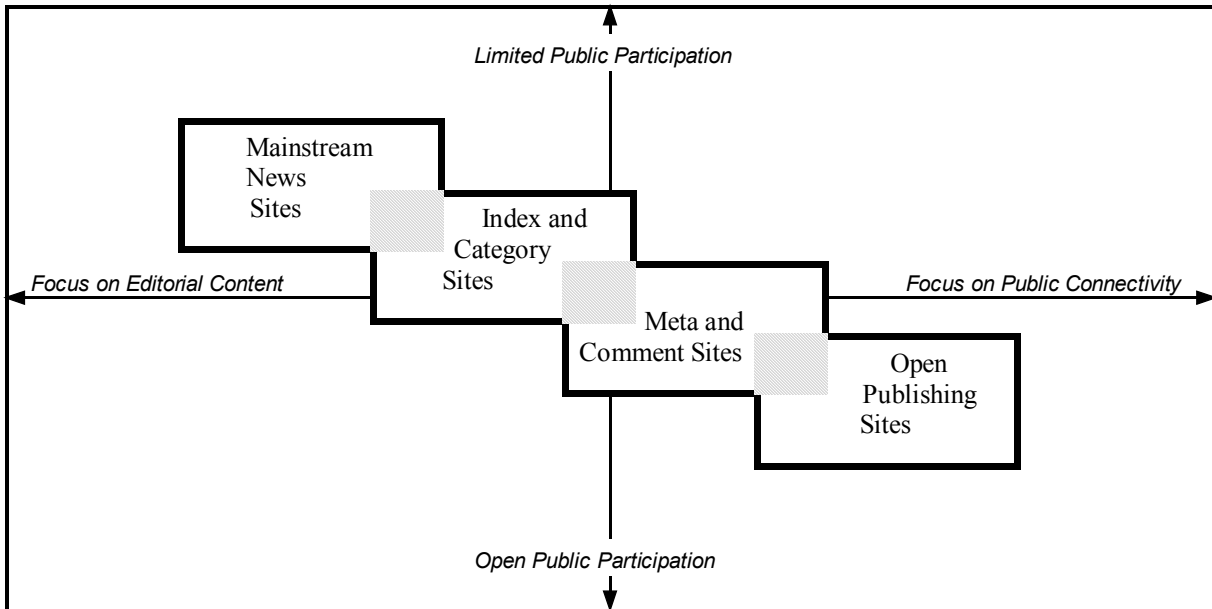
Summary

Globalization is shifting the loci of power as the information revolution favors network forms of organization over hierarchical institutions, and as conflicts, more than ever before, revolve around the control and use of information. These changes have created the space within which a new repertoire of contention has emerged—that of open publishing. While mainstream media in the U.S. excludes alternative voices and disadvantages activists challenging the status quo due to news routines which lead to practices like indexing official views, open publishing offers a forum where activists can frame their own stories, altering the character of public debate, buoying their movements while gaining broader public support for their causes.

In the following section I give a breakdown of the different kinds of online news before introducing a conceptualization of several open publishing models. I will then offer a comparative analysis of three open publishing sites.

Conceptualizing Open Publishing

To contextualize our discussion of open publishing as a new repertoire of contention, it is useful to consider where open publishing fits within the broader realm of news on the Internet. Online journalism sites can be roughly assigned to one of four broad categories falling into different domains along two continua, as shown in Figure 1. On the horizontal axis, content is tightly controlled at the left end of the spectrum, while at the opposite end the focus on public connectivity means direct point-to-point communication with minimal editorial interference. On the vertical axis, the range of public participation can vary from those sites where the public is limited to content consumption, to those where visitors to the site may contribute the bulk of the content with minimal filtering. The first site category—mainstream news sites hosted by traditional media outlets such as CNN, the BBC and MSNBC—falls into the upper left quadrant of the model, as content is subject to editorial scrutiny and public participation is generally restricted to levels similar to traditional print media. Index and category sites such as Alta Vista and Yahoo generally draw from the mainstream news sites and tend to offer limited original content. Moving down and to the right along the intersecting continua, Meta and comment sites like Mediachannel and Poynter's Media News offer coverage of the media. Finally, open publishing sites are strongly focused on public connectivity and open public participation, meaning the content is largely posted by the public with only minimal editorial interference. The Indymedia sites are well-known examples. It should be noted that there are no clear barriers between these four categories of online news sites—they overlap with one another and frequently bleed into more than one quadrant of our model, as suggested by the representation below (Deuze 2001).

Figure 1. Model of Online Journalism

This model was adapted from the one proposed by Mark Deuze in his article “Online Journalism: Modeling the First Generation of News Media on the World Wide Web,” *First Monday*

It is with the open publishing sites that our interest lies. This particular segment of online journalism utilizes the Internet’s potential for connecting people with other people “on a boundless global level” by facilitating the exchange of ideas and stories (Deuze 2001). Open publishing means that the process of creating content is transparent to the readers. Visitors to a site can post text or images and watch it instantaneously appear where it is available for public consumption. Editorial interference is kept to a minimum, kept transparent and open to participation. The software that makes open publishing possible is generally free and freely available for others to copy, implement and adapt on their own web sites, which in turn make their modified version of the software publicly available (Arnison 2001). Open publishing sites

can take many forms, but it is specifically open publishing journalism, or online community journalism, that concerns us here. Our analysis focuses on three modes of open publishing: community news sites built on an open publishing model; individual news weblogs; and news-oriented collaborative blogs. Community news sites, such as Indymedia, are built with open publishing software that enables visitors to the site to contribute content. Though there are exceptions, they are generally not focused on any single issue. Individual news weblogs are journals created and maintained by a single individual, therefore reflect the particular interests of their host. However, visitors to the blog can post comments in response to the entries of the host blogger. Finally, news-oriented collaborative blogs are a kind of meta version of the individual blog. There are multiple host bloggers who can generate the primary postings, but visitors can post responses. Detailed descriptions of each kind of open publishing site follow.

Online Community News Sites

Created just prior to the Seattle World Trade Organization summit in 1999, the Independent Media Center network invites the public to become the media. Any visitor to the site may publish print, audio, or video stories, while comments sections appearing adjacent to each post facilitate a dialogue on the content (the Philadelphia IMC later implemented an online ratings system which allows anyone to sign on as a ratings judge, providing guidance on post quality while maintaining the open and public aspect of the newswire). During the protests, “Hundreds of community radio and television stations rebroadcast the IMC's programming, sending the project's impact outward, beyond the digital divide, to break the corporate media's information blockade” (Perlstein 2001).

Indymedia can be described as a network of media activists. In the years since “The Battle in Seattle,” the IMC network has expanded as dozens of Indymedia sites have been founded around the world. In an effort to create a virtual space for civil society to meet and, through media, create a better society, IMCs have created “‘community newsrooms’ with virtual online counterparts (e.g. sf.indymedia.org, prague.indymedia.org). These autonomous nodes in the network address the unique needs of their local communities as they see appropriate. They are linked in virtual space through the global Indymedia website, which features content contributions from the participating IMCs and society at large.” Structurally and procedurally the IMCs aspire to radical non-hierarchy, operating with variations on the consensus model. The global network structure is horizontal and composed of working groups that actively communicate with each other to share information (Perlstein 2001).

Though no credentials are required to become a journalist at Indymedia, many volunteers and contributors are activists who report on the movements they are active in. Says one IMC volunteer, “With Indymedia, we bridge the gap between online news, activism, real work media labs, and many non-cyber mediums” (Pavis 2002).

Other activist-operated open publishing sites created on models similar to Indymedia have emerged, including The Palestine Chronicle, Electronic Intifada, Palestine Media Watch, Protest.net, Worldrevolution.org and Alt.muslim, which all invite visitors to publish content. Still other sites are dedicated to publishing content created by activists, but do not operate on the open-source software that supports IMC-like sites. CommonDreams.org, for example, features the Progressive NewsWire, which “brings you the press releases and the statements from America's progressive community directly to you - no filters, no editing” (www.commondreams.org).

Slashdot is another example of community-moderated news. Henry Jenkins, Director of the Comparative Media Studies Program at MIT, credits Slashdot with getting the public involved in deciding what qualifies as news, and says that:

I've found [Slashdot] consistently more reliable and thoughtful than much of the news media. I think the community is better informed on the issues that Slashdot covers and they're less susceptible to fear mongering and sensationalism. Yes, they'll say what they think and say it bluntly, but if you read between the lines, they're asking the right questions and they're skeptical of people in power in a way that much of the press is not. Also, because you've got such a large group pulling information together, it's not like a television reporter trying to cover a story like the Washington sniper and filling the 24-hour news cycle with speculation (Pavis 2002).

Blogs

Another form of grassroots online journalism is thematic blogging. A blog is a type of web site, consisting of a running commentary with embedded links to other sites. The original weblogs, which appeared on the Internet in 1994 and took the name in 1997, were link-driven sites created and edited by people who knew how to make websites (“Blogs: the Newest New Journalism,” 2003). These early blogs were comprised of links, commentary, and personal thoughts and essays. From the time of its inception, the blog proliferated among the HTML proficient. Then, in 1999 the first free do-it-yourself software was offered by Pitas, making it possible for anyone with a computer and Internet access to create their own blog. Several other

blogging shareware sites appeared later the same year, sparking an explosive proliferation of weblogs (Blood 2000). Blogs therefore constitute a form of open publishing, not in the sense of the community news forum where anyone can post on the site, but rather in the sense that anyone with Internet access can launch their own blog. Current estimates suggest a population of hundreds of thousands of bloggers online, with over 150,000 residing at Blogger.com alone (Sullivan 2002).

Many blogs are simply personal diaries posted online. Many others, however, constitute a burgeoning new form of journalism. Says J.D. Lasica, Senior Editor of the *Online Journalism Review*, “Where the Weblog changes the nature of 'news' is in the migration of information from the personal to the public...Hit the 'post' button and any personal writing becomes published writing. ... As a thousand flowers bloom, the Web's garden of information becomes more diverse, enlightening and transformative than anything the traditional paper-based print world can provide” (Lasica 2001). In addition to writing their own articles and opinions, “Weblog editors sometimes contextualize an article by juxtaposing it with an article on a related subject; each article, considered in the light of the other, may take on additional meaning, or even draw the reader to conclusions contrary to the implicit aim of each” (Blood 2000). The dialogue created between the blogger and her contributing readers begins to create a journalism that is public and participatory.

Andrew Sullivan has suggested that blogs not only represent “a milestone in the short history of the Internet” but that they “could well be a milestone in the long history of journalism.” Referring to the blogosphere as “the nascent Napster of the journalism industry,” he says, “Just as Napster bypassed the record companies and brought music to people with barely any mediation, so Blogger bypassed established magazines, newspaper, editors and proprietors,

and allowed direct peer-to-peer journalism to flourish” (Sullivan 2002). According to J.D. Lasica, “blogging represents Ground Zero of the personal Webcasting revolution” (Lasica 2001). Yet for some, this technological coup evokes a long-established tradition of self-publishing: “I know the bloggers appear to be a new phenomenon, but I really think they go back to a very old phenomenon, early 20th-century pamphleteers” (Seipp 2002).

Signaling the next step in the blog evolution are collaborative blogs like Kuro5hin, and meta blogs. The Kuro5hin site is powered by a software system called Scoop which allows anyone to submit an article, post comments on an existing story, or vote on whether an existing article meets the bar, “meaning posts can be rated into oblivion” (Hiler 2002). Kuro5hin, which has 100,000 regular readers, “offers the ultimate democratic editorial process: Impromptu discussion groups form around thoughtful postings mostly spun off the news. Regulars rate postings for quality, accuracy and depth” (Andrews 2002). Another incarnation of the collaborative blog is the collective of like-minded bloggers expounding on a particular topic of mutual interest.

Comparative Analysis—A Range of Approaches to Open Publishing

Within the realm of open publishing, beyond site type (community news site, blog) there is great diversity among news sites. Content, site features, and the ratio of publicly-posted content to editorial-controlled content vary, largely dictated by the site’s *raison d’être*. Following is a discussion of the philosophical and operational features impacting the relative openness of open publishing sites, followed by an examination of how these features are manifested in the Indymedia, Electronic Intifada, and No War Blog sites.

Mission

While for Indymedia the production of grassroots, non-corporate reporting is the supreme tenet of their mission, other sites such as Electronic Intifada and have a particular social or political objective as their primary aim. The mission of the organization behind the web site has a profound influence on the structure and the operative functions of open publishing on the site. For example, a site dedicated to the liberation of an oppressed ethnic group is likely to restrict contributions to content pertaining to that issue, while a site created to facilitate grassroots journalism is likely to give publicly-created content a significant presence.

Primacy of Open Publishing on Site

Organizations whose primary mission is to revolutionize the way news is produced and consumed tend to make open publishing a primary feature of the site. On these sites the open publishing content is likely to take up a large percentage of the visual space on the front page. On the other hand, organizations with a specific political objective to which alternative media is a means to an end may offer open publishing as a small part of a site where the majority of content is under strict editorial control. The open publishing content on these sites may not appear on the front page, but may have to be found via a link somewhere on the site.

Ease of Posting / Interactivity

Sites primarily dedicated to open publishing tend to clearly invite visitors to the site to post content with a prominently displayed front-page link. In addition, visitors to the site are likely to find a link at the bottom of each article inviting comments, creating a dialogue between

the journalists and their readers. Such interactivity blurs the line between media creators and media consumers, encouraging readers to become participants in the media-creation process. Sites on which open publishing is a secondary feature make posting less simple, and may require that submissions be made via email for review prior to posting.

Editorial Control and Transparency

When open publishing is the primary mission of the site, efforts are made to keep editorial control to a minimum. Though it seems that no sites are absolutely free of editorial intervention, those which are most open restrict interference to cases of illegal postings (copyright infringement, threats, etc.), threats and content which violates the maintenance of a safe publishing/reading environment, or posts which, from a news perspective, may be deemed content-free (advertisements, duplicate posts, or literally empty posts). The editorial process on these sites is highly transparent—readers can find posts that have been hidden, with comments from the editor who hid the post explaining the decision. Sites on which open publishing is a secondary feature generally exercise more rigorous editorial control by limiting posts to content pertaining to the issue or issues on which the site is focused, and in some cases restricting postings to content which expresses or supports the point of view or mission of the site. Other criteria, such as the location, nationality, or political affinity of the poster may be imposed as well.

Indymedia www.indymedia.org

Open publishing is a fundamental cause of the Indymedia project: “The Indymedia newswire encourages people to become the media by posting their articles, analysis, videos,

audio clips and artwork directly to the web site.” Indymedia also has close ties to the activist community more generally, with different sites frequently having particular ties to activist movements pertaining to issues related to their locales. The Independent Media Center (IMC) was established by various independent and alternative media organizations and activists in 1999 for the purpose of providing grassroots coverage of the World Trade Organization (WTO) protests in Seattle. Providing a media forum for activists remains a primary focus of the organization, which sees corporate media as unwilling to cover activist movements fully or fairly. As the Indymedia network has expanded, IMCs have been established for one-off events, such as May Day in London, and as part of longer-term, localized political campaigns, from India to the Czech Republic... The Brazilian IMC, for instance, offers ground-level analysis of trade issues in a choice of three languages, while the Israeli site offers eyewitness accounts of conditions in the West Bank and Gaza” (Meikle 2003).

Tying in with its mission of democratizing media, open publishing constitutes the bulk of IMC content. The newswire, composed entirely of open publishing content, runs down the right column of the front page, and a full-page newswire format can be accessed via a prominent front-page link. Further, the features column on the front page, which is the most prominently displayed section of content, consists of articles compiled from multiple articles on the news wire as well as original features created by IMC volunteers. Anyone can propose a feature to the editorial working group.

The “publish” link on the IMC sites is prominently featured at the top of the front page, taking the user to a simple form where the article title, author name, and article text can be written or pasted from another document. No registration is required, and there is no attempt to ascertain a poster’s identity (many contributors use a pseudonym when posting articles). At the

end of every article in the IMC newswire is a link to “add your own comments,” leading the reader to a form which allows her to comment, briefly or extensively, on the substance of the original post as well as comments posted by other readers, encouraging an intercreative, rather than a passive role for readers.

Also consistent with Indymedia’s mission is an editorial policy designed toward minimal interference and maximum transparency. Though there is no editorial filter to be passed before posting the IMC, Indymedia volunteers do monitor the newswire and remove posts when they are deemed to be comments rather than news, duplicate posts, obviously false or libelous posts, or inappropriate content. Inappropriate content refers, for example, to threats made against individuals and speech which violates the “safe environment” which Indymedia aims to maintain for its readers and posters. Indymedia aims to maintain transparency in their editorial process. Posts that have been hidden can be found on the “hidden” page, and the IMC is working on the technology to make their editorial process more transparent, so users can see when such decisions have been made, and why.

Electronic Intifada www.electronicintifada.net

The Electronic Intifada’s primary aim is to provide an alternate point of view on the Israel-Palestine conflict by publishing news, editorials and reference materials from a Palestinian perspective. In its effort to gain public exposure for Palestinian views via the mainstream media, the Electronic Intifada (EI) aims aspects of its information service at journalists & editors. There is also a mobilizing aspect of the site, with materials targeted toward activists.

An advocate of Palestinian rights, EI asserts its independence from any political, factional, ethnic, or religious affiliation, and cites the foundations of universal rights and

international law as the foundation of its view of the conflict. While working to draw attention to the structural roots of violence in the conflict, including the imbalance of power that perpetuates it, EI condemns all attacks on civilians, regardless of the perpetrators. Seeking a just peace, the activists behind EI say that may come via the creation of an independent state for Palestine beside Israel, or a single shared state for Palestinians and Israelis in which everyone enjoys peace and full and equal rights. The end of “uncritical and one-sided support of Israel by the United States...including massive amounts of military and economic aid since 1967” is critical to resolving the conflict in EI’s view.

Open publishing is a relatively small aspect of the Electronic Intifada site, reflecting the organization’s focus on a political goal other than media democratization. The EI Diaries—the open publishing section of the site—is reached via an unimposing link half way down the front page, and consists of first-hand accounts of life in the Occupied Territories posted by residents, visiting activists and other travelers. Postings to the diaries are rather sparse, averaging less than one per day. Further demonstrating the relative lack of focus on open publishing on EI, there is no apparent link for those who wish to post to the site, nor is there any way to append comments to existing articles or diary entries.

Because Electronic Intifada is focused on ending the Israel/Palestine conflict, the content of the site is focused exclusively on issues relating to the conflict, directly or indirectly, while the open publishing section of the site is open only to those who are in the Occupied Territories, either as residents, activists, or other visitors. The mission of the site precludes content which expresses a predominantly pro-Israeli/anti-Palestinian viewpoint, with the exception of a large media analysis section of the site, in which articles found in the global—especially Israeli and U.S.—press are critiqued. Because visitors to the site are unable to post content directly and

independently, submissions to Electronic Intifada undergo an editorial process. This process is has minimal transparency, since the public does not see the original submissions, and does not know which submissions have been rejected, and on what basis.

Stand Down Blog www.nowarblog.org

During the build-up to the March 2003 invasion of Iraq by the U.S. and its allies, a group of politically diverse bloggers collaborated to form the Stand Down blog opposing the war. United in their belief that the use of military force to effect "regime change" in Iraq was ill advised and unjustified, the Stand Down bloggers from across the political spectrum argued that the high costs of invasion in the form of the death of innocents, the destabilization of the region, and the swelling of the ranks of terrorists as anti-American sentiment is inflamed, combined with the absence of clear evidence that Saddam Hussein had planned attacks against the United States, war was the wrong response. Instead, they argued, the U.S. should rely on the strategies of deterrence and containment that have effectively shielded the U.S. from attack by nuclear-armed adversaries for the past 50 years. Responding to criticism that being anti-war is being unpatriotic, the blog's founders respond: "It is precisely our affection for the ideals of a constitutional republic that leads us to believe that a country imbued with America's enormous power must exercise equally great restraint."

All substantive content on the Stand Down blog is openly published content, as all articles and editorials are posted by member bloggers. However, only member bloggers who have joined in agreement with the site's unity statement are able to post articles and editorials. Visitors to the site are invited to post comments, which are appended to the original article. The

blog is open to comments from all readers, including those who may hold views in opposition to the Stand Down blog's mission.

The end result is a dialogue between writers and readers, broadening the discussion beyond the viewpoints of the member contributors. However, because only member bloggers post the primary content, and readers' intercreativity is restricted to responses to that content, the member bloggers effectively set the agenda for the site.

Content on the Stand Down blog is effectively limited to posts pertaining to the war on Iraq that advocate an anti-war stance within a narrow rhetorical and ideological range. While there is no absolute bar to open speech, the editors reserve the right to remove content not posted in the spirit of the unity statement, which says that nowarblog.org is working to appeal to those who do not generally identify with the political left and who are unlikely to be impressed by the existing anti-war coalitions centered around "Not In Our Name" and "ANSWER." The unity statement further emphasizes the importance of U.S. national security and the unsatisfactory character of the Hussein regime overlooked in much of anti-war politics. There is an expectation that member bloggers agree that considerations of self-interest and practicality will be most effective in deterring a U.S. invasion of Iraq. Comments from readers are not censored unless they are abusive or spam.

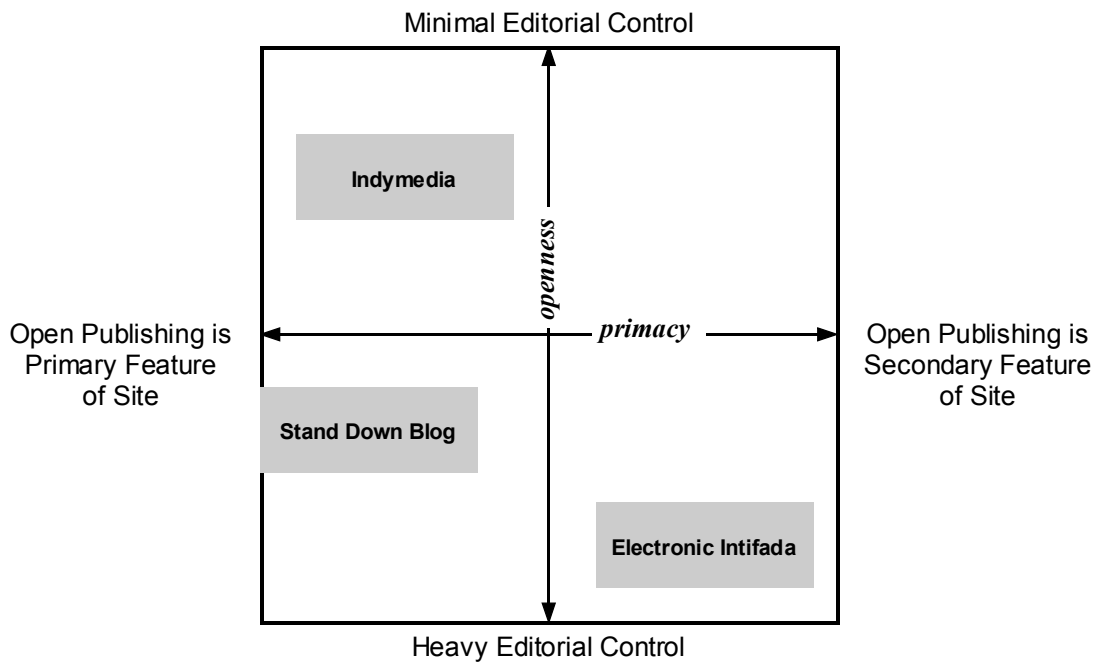
Modeling the Open Publishing Spectrum

Two broad traits characterize open publishing: public participation/intercreativity and minimal editorial control. Within the domain of public participation/intercreativity are included primacy of open publishing as a feature of a given site, as well as ease of posting and the level of

intercreativity. In the domain of editorial control we consider how heavily content is regulated by an editorial body, as well as how transparent the editorial process is.

Figure 2. details where the three open publishing news sites we have just discussed would fall in a dual-axis spectrum, with a horizontal axis defining the level of primacy of open publishing on the site, and a vertical axis defining the level of openness. As discussed above, primacy refers to how prominently and extensively the open publishing content is featured on a site. Openness encompasses the other site traits, including ease of posting, level of potential user interactivity, as well as the level of editorial control and transparency.

Figure 2. Dual-Axis Spectrum of Open Publishing



Indymedia falls in the northwest quadrant of the spectrum, due to the organization's emphasis on open publishing as a fundamental feature of the site, and due to the IMC's policy of minimal editorial interference and maximum transparency. By contrast, Electronic Intifada

belongs in the southeast quadrant. The obscure location of the open publishing content on the EI site, and its relatively slight presence in comparison to other content indicates that open publishing is a secondary feature of the site. Further, because content is restricted to a single issue and point of view, and those permitted to post are confined by political and geographical characteristics, there is heavy editorial control with nonexistent transparency even over the open publishing portion of the site. The Stand Down blog seems fit in the southwest quadrant of our model. If we accept that all blogging is a form of open publishing, Stand Down's content is exclusively that. However, because the site is dedicated to a single issue, and those who post must do so in accord with a unity statement that is prescriptive of a particular point of view, there is a fairly large degree of editorial control. This is balanced, though, by the site's policy of permitting all readers to comment without risk of censorship.

Summary

Open publishing is characterized by two key features: public participation and minimal editorial control. Our examination of three open publishing sites—Indymedia, Electronic Intifada, and the Stand Down Blog—has demonstrated that open publishing sites manifest these characteristics to different degrees. In other words, some open publishing sites are more open than others. Indymedia appears to have the lightest editorial touch, and has institutionalized processes geared toward maximizing transparency in the editorial process. The Stand Down Blog enforces a fairly high degree of editorial control, first by only inviting bloggers of a particular ideological standpoint to contribute the primary content of the site, and by posting guidelines on rationales against the war to which member bloggers must adhere in their posts. However, because readers are permitted to respond freely without editorial intervention, the Stand Down

Blog has a lighter editorial touch than does Electronic Intifada, which retains control over all content posted to the site with no real transparency.

Along the continuum of primacy of public participation, the Stand Down blog seems more open than Indymedia or Electronic Intifada, since all primary content is posted by member bloggers and all secondary content is posted by readers. Indymedia, by comparison, reserves the large center column of its front page for articles posted by its editorial collective as features. There is certainly room for debate about the degree of difference between features created and posted by members of Indymedia's editorial collective and articles posted and the Stand Down blog by member bloggers. However, because any feature must go through an approval process within the editorial working group before it can be posted, feature content seems less publicly created than posts to the Stand Down blog which can be instantaneously added to the site without editorial review, though these bloggers, like members of Indymedia's editorial collectives, have been admitted to the group after a screening process. Finally, the Electronic Intifada site puts a very low priority on public participation and intercreativity. Although their electronic diaries featuring residents of occupied Palestine means the site features open publishing, it constitutes a relatively small portion of the overall site content. Further, potential contributors cannot publish directly to the site.

In the next section we will look at two case studies—the Palestinian rights movements and the global protest against the U.S. war on Iraq—to examine how global activists are using open publishing to further their causes.

The Net Repertoire in Action: How Activists Are Using Open Publishing

Here it will be illuminating to examine several examples of how global activists networks are using the various facets of the open publishing forum. Two transnational networks that have been highly active in the past year are the Palestinian rights movement, and the global movement protesting the pending U.S. war on Iraq.

The Palestinian Rights Movement

Since the state of Israel was created in 1948, conflict with stateless Palestine has been ongoing. Following the original loss of territory in the creation of the Israeli state, Palestine has lost additional land in recurring cycles of war while the flow of Palestinian refugees to neighboring Arab states and beyond has exacerbated the crisis. Israel continues to divide the remnants of Palestinian territory into veritable Bantustans, separated by Israeli-controlled roads connecting a growing number of Zionist settlements. Demands by pro-Palestinian activists vary, from the return of Israel to its 1967 borders, to creation of a Palestinian state with commensurate autonomous authority, to right of return for the refugees, to the end of the state of Israel in former Palestine.

There are many organizations representing the full spectrum of possible solutions to the Palestine/Israel conflict—some are based within Palestine, some have been founded by the Palestinian diaspora in the Middle East and around the globe, others are run by Jewish groups who oppose Israel's handling of the conflict--and a great many of these have a Web presence.

In Palestine itself, the Birzeit University Human Rights Action Project (<http://www.birzeit.edu/hrap/>) was founded in 1977 to monitor the cases of all students and staff of the institution who are detained by the Israeli military authorities. The organization also follows cases of restriction orders, house raids, deportation, and denial of freedom of movement and travel as it relates to university and academic activities, and documents violations against the university itself, including army raids, closures, restrictions, and discrimination. Although the organization's web site is four years out of date at this writing, it seems to have maintained its web presence by posting content to open publishing sites elsewhere on the Net. Another Google search yields 113 results for HRAP's URL and the term IMC. IMC Italy, IMC UK, IMC Russia, and IMC San Francisco are all hosting content pertaining to the Birzeit University Human Rights Action Project.

In Israel, *Shalom Achshav* (http://www.peacenow.org/shalom_achshav.html) was founded in March 1978 by 348 reserve commanders, officers, and combat soldiers of the Israel Defense Forces. "*Shalom Achshav* advocates a secure peace through Israeli withdrawal to safe borders from the West Bank and Gaza; creation of a Palestinian state subject to strict military limitations; negotiation of security and peace accords between Israel and Syria leading to a safe Israeli withdrawal from the Golan Heights; and a resolution on the status of an undivided Jerusalem that accommodates the national aspirations and religious needs of both Israeli and Palestinian residents." The sister organization Americans for Peace Now (<http://www.peacenow.org/>) "was founded to help *Shalom Achshav* and to build an informed and empowered pro-peace American public." Although a Google search using *Shalom Achshav*'s URL returns only one link to Indymedia, its US-based counterpart returns 85 links, reaching IMC Palestine, IMC Israel, IMC Norway, IMC Sicily, IMC Ithaca, and IMC San Francisco.

A US-based organization is Palestine Chronicle (www.palestinechronicle.com). As an Internet magazine, Palestine Chronicle focuses on democracy and freedom of expression and their concern with ‘the plight and welfare of Palestinian refugees, as well as other displaced and oppressed people around the world.’ Visitors to the site are invited to contribute content: “Palestine Chronicle is written and constructed solely by volunteers from various places around the globe with a common purpose, bringing to light the suffering of humankind everywhere, from Palestine, the Middle East and Beyond.” Palestine Chronicle disavows any political or religious affiliation. When a Google search is executed using the Palestine Chronicle URL in conjunction with the term IMC, 366 results are returned. This search yields links on IMC Argentina, IMC Italy, IMC Palestine, IMC Israel, IMC Montreal, IMC San Francisco, IMC South Africa, and IMC Sydney.

Based in Chicago, Electronic Intifada (EI) (www.electronicintifada.net) describes itself as being independent of any political, factional, ethnic, or religious affiliation, and bases its view of the conflict on the foundations of universal human rights and international law. “The Electronic Intifada condemns all attacks on civilians, regardless of the perpetrators, yet encourages people to examine the structural roots and dynamics of violence in the conflict and the imbalance of power that perpetuates it.” On its web site, Electronic Intifada prominently displays the message, “End the Israeli military occupation and give peace a chance.” EI describes its mission as an online educational gateway to information about the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict, which is produced by a small network of activists with a history of Internet and alternative media development. EI aims aspects of its information service at journalists and editors of traditional media as well as students of the media and activists. The site also features a “Live From Palestine” section, with daily diary entries published by residents and activists inside the

occupied territories. Cofounder Ali Abunimah says, “what we've tried to do with The Electronic Intifada is to shake off traditional and conventional ways of viewing this conflict” (“Middle East In Focus” May 2001).

In a preliminary effort to explore how Electronic Intifada is utilizing the open-publishing forum, an advanced search at Google.com for the term IMC and EI’s URL returns 485 results. Though not all of the results are postings to the various Indymedia sites, a superficial examination of the results demonstrates that a significant portion of them are. Further, it appears that posts relating to EI have appeared on geographically diverse nodes of the IMC network, including IMC Israel, IMC Jerusalem, IMC Vancouver, IMC Montreal, IMC D.C., IMC San Francisco, and IMC Barcelona.

Following these links provides deeper insight into the nature of the cross-pollination between EI and the IMC. One EI article—“On Violence and the Intifada”—was posted to the Vancouver IMC newswire (<http://vancouver.indymedia.org/news/2003/02/30987.php>) by a member of the Anti-Zionist Committee of Vancouver. Ali Abuminah, one of the cofounders of Electronic Intifada, authored the article which acknowledges that suicide bombing attacks against Israeli civilians are “a cruel and illegitimate reaction to Israel's aggression” while insisting that “one has to forget all of history to believe that these operations are what stand in the way of progress towards a peaceful solution, and are not in fact simply a symptom of the violence and despair of life under endless occupation.”

Kristen Ess, a political activist and freelance journalist from New York City, has lived in the West Bank and Gaza since March 2002. She posts regularly to the EI Diaries section, and submits these same articles as posts to the various IMC sites, with a link back to EI’s site.

Many posts to various Indymedia sites are announcements of demonstrations pertaining to the Israel/Palestine issue, with links to the web sites of various Palestinian Rights groups, including Electronic Intifada, and in the case of “NYC Demo April 16th,” posted to the Jerusalem IMC newswire (<http://www.jerusalem.indymedia.org/news/2002/04/4948.php>) by a member of the Palestine Activists Forum.

An story entitled “American Activist Gunned Down” is an EI article that was posted to the Rochester IMC newswire (<http://rochester.indymedia.org/media/text/00/00/01/96/>) by an IMC volunteer. The article gives accounts of several recent incidents of American activists being injured or killed by Israeli military and demolition workers, including two ISM (International Solidarity Movement) members attacked by machine gun fire, and a reference to the death of another ISM activist, Rachel Corrie, who had been run over by a bulldozer two weeks earlier while she stood in front of a Palestinian home slated for demolition. “I posted the article so that local readers of Rochester Indymedia would have access to this information. Though I'm deeply concerned with the situation in Palestine, I'm not a member of ISM or a group that does work in this area. I am a member of the Rochester Indymedia editorial board, and often will post to the newswire on our site.”

Perhaps because the story of Rachel Corrie—a 23-year old U.S. activist who was killed while trying to protect Palestinian homes—is especially compelling to Westerners, the cross-pollination of related articles on Electronic Intifada and Indymedia sites is quite high, with 102 links occurring which match a search for Rachel Corrie and Electronicintifada.net and Indymedia. “Rachel Corrie Inspired Protest Shuts Down NY’s 5th Avenue” is an EI story (<http://electronicintifada.net/v2/article1299.shtml>) about protesters who staged a “die-in” in front of a New York branch of an Israeli bank. The protestors, covered in fake blood and laying in

front of a mock-up of a Caterpillar bulldozer, reenacted Corrie's death in a crosswalk, stopping traffic until police carried them away. The article links to a photo gallery of the protest on the NYC Indymedia site (http://f15.nycimc.org/gallery/m26_lockdown). However, most of the returned links on the Google search are articles on various Indymedia sites—IMC Peru, IMC Germany, IMC Mexico, IMC Argentina, etc.—on Corrie's death, with links to “Photo story: Israeli bulldozer driver murders American peace activist” (<http://electronicintifada.net/v2/article1248.shtml>).

Electronic Intifada's success in getting its message to permeate geographic borders has gone beyond the array of links on Indymedia sites. EI's site has been covered and its founders have been interviewed in several mainstream news venues. The *Washington Post* ran an article about the EI diaries (“Electronic Diaries from within Occupied Palestine,” April 2 2002): “Live from the Israeli-occupied Palestinian territories, residents are uploading several diary entries each day despite electricity problems, curfews, and increasing military action. The diaries are part of Electronic Intifada, an independent pro-Palestinian Web site dedicated to putting across the Palestinian point of view on the Web and in the global media.” Another article in *Foreign Policy* (“Net Effect: The Middle East's e-War” July 29 2002) says, “Unlike the fighting on the ground, geography is largely irrelevant in the cyberbattle for hearts and minds. Its combatants include Nigel Parry, Scottish cofounder of the pro-Palestine Electronic Intifada, a site that encourages media activism and features daily reports from the Palestinian territories.” Similar articles, focusing more on the use of Internet Technology in the conflict than on the substantive messages of EI have appeared in the *BBC News Online*, *The Jerusalem Post*, and the *Philadelphia Inquirer*.

However, the founders of Electronic Intifada have had opportunities to frame the conflict from a Palestinian point of view on the occasions when they have been interviewed in mainstream publications and when they have debated representatives of the Israeli perspective in radio debates. Abunimah debated Daniel Pipes on BBC Radio Five Live in September of 2002. During the course of the broadcast, Abunimah characterized the nature of the conflict in terms that depart from the usual portrayal in the mainstream press: “The Palestinian people live under a foreign military dictatorship...were it not for the unilateral backing of the United States for the Israeli military dictatorship in the Occupied Territories we would have had peace and harmony between Israelis and Palestinians a long time ago.” In an interview in KPFK (“Middle East In Focus” May 2001), Abunimah states that the Palestinians have the right of return, “because that's part of international legal precedent and the Geneva Conventions which say you have the right to return to where you're from and having anybody chase you away or block your return militarily is not legal under international law.”

Blogs

Palestinians living under occupation are also using blogs to webcast their message. Hundreds of bloggers in Palestine “are changing the terms of media and policy debates through their handmade, personalized blogs.” Blogger Arjan El Fassed, a Dutch-Palestinian resident of Ar-Ram, a Ramallah suburb says, “Weblogging has given Palestinians their own media tools. Now we don't have to rely on mainstream media. To Palestinians who have so long been deprived of the opportunity to narrate what it is like to live under the world's last military occupation, the citizens' diaries in the form of blogging are a logical outcome” (Abbey 2002).

For Palestinians, whose stateless government is granted limited autonomy and authority, access to the mainstream press is limited. The free press activist organization Reporters Without Borders (<http://www.rsf.org/>) has denounced “attacks on press freedom in the Palestinian Territories by Israeli army troops using excessive and undue force against foreign and Palestinian journalists, who have been roughed up, insulted, targeted with weapons and harassed. In April of 2002 when Israeli tanks were invading the Jenin refugee camp, reports emerged that in Israel and the West Bank journalists had their press cards confiscated, were caught in crossfire, and were refused access to the scene of the bloodiest fighting. “At one stage, the journalist-activists of the [Independent Media Centre](#) Palestine were the only observers able to report from behind the barricades” (Ben-Canaan 2002).

Such conditions make alternative news outlets such as online open publishing sites crucial. Via blogs and sites like Indymedia, Palestinians living under occupation and abroad can appeal to the international community in an effort to achieve their goals of ending Israeli occupation, refugee right of return, and independence. These efforts fit into the rubric of Keck and Sikkink’s *boomerang model*. “Where the powerful impose forgetfulness, networks can provide alternative channels of communication. Voices that are suppressed in their own societies may find that networks can project and amplify their concerns back into their own countries” (Keck and Sikkink 1998). The global network of activist organizations focused on the Palestinian cause, including Palestinians living under occupation, former Israeli Soldiers, and concerned members of the international community, are using open publishing forums to frame the issue for the global public in the hopes that international pressure on the Israeli government, the U.S., and the U.N. may encourage a resolution.

The Global Movement Protesting the U.S. War on Iraq

When President Bush began talking of a pre-emptive strike against what he called a terrorist threat in Iraq, US citizens and the international community began mobilizing in a global protest against the pending war. The anti-war network encompassed decades-old pro-peace organizations like the Fellowship of Reconciliation, coalitions of ideologically diverse and geographically dispersed organizations such as International A.N.S.W.E.R., and even multiple organizations founded by the friends and families of the victims of the September 11th World Trade Center attacks, including Not In Our Name and Peaceful Tomorrows. Thousands participated in coordinated demonstrations around the world.

Yet mainstream coverage of the opposition to the war was unsatisfactory in the views of many. “If you get your news by reading newspapers and watching television, you won’t find much coverage of the antiwar movement.” Many turned to the Web, where “there’s plenty of evidence of a global grassroots sentiment opposing the war. In fact the Internet’s crucial role in public debates has never been more evident. The Web is proving to be increasingly important for both interested citizens seeking alternative perspectives, and antiwar activists seeking to mobilize the public” (Moss 2001).

Community News Sites

International A.N.S.W.E.R (Act Now to Stop War & End Racism) is a coalition of activists and organizations that worked to prevent the war on Iraq. Partners included the US chapter of the Free Palestine Alliance, the Nicaragua Network, the Korea Truth Commission, and the Mexico Solidarity Network. Among the signers to the charter was former US Attorney General Ramsey Clark. A preliminary look at the presence of this organization on the web via

open-publishing sites suggests an important alliance between this activist network and sites like Indymedia. The Google search for IMC and internationalanswer.org returns 800 links. Posts to IMC Wellington, New Zealand, IMC Ithaca, IMC San Francisco, IMC Buffalo, and IMC Prague suggest that International A.N.S.W.E.R. is using self-publishing resources to transmit its message to a global audience. United For Peace and Justice, a Washington D.C.-based coalition of U.S. organizations opposing the war has a similar presence in Indymedia sites, as does MoveOn.org, recently famous for orchestrating an online virtual march on the White House.

In the U.K. the Stop the War Coalition campaigned under the slogans “no war,” “no racist backlash” and “defend civil liberties” (www.stopwar.org.uk). The Google search returns 187 results, with stories appearing on IMC Bristol, UK, IMC Manchester, UK, IMC Italy, IMC France, IMC Austria, IMC Athens, IMC Montreal, and others. Again, though not conclusive, this evidence is suggestive of an international media presence facilitated by online self-publishing. There are also multiple open-publishing sites which are forums constructed specifically to voice opposition to the war, or which focus their concentration on that issue, including Online Journal, Iraq Action Coalition, and Electronic Iraq. The latter two are not truly open-source in the spirit of Indymedia, but contain news published by activists. Such coverage of the anti-war movement on open-publishing sites is having an impact. In one example, the site www.humanshields.org was set up after activist Ken Nichols O'Keefe posted a message on the alternative news network www.indymedia.org saying he was going to drive to Baghdad with a friend to act as a human shield. “Within days he had dozens of people clamoring to go with them. The viral power of the internet turned what started as a two-person protest into a global movement for peace” (Moss 2001).

Blogs

Blogs and bloggers also played a part in the debate about the war. In fact, their role has been hyped to incredible proportions by some: “CNN owned the story of the first Gulf War -- blogs and the Internet may carry the day if there is a sequel” (Pasick 2002). It has been portended: “it is precisely their unconventional methods that make the war bloggers enemies to be feared. Like Al-Qaeda, the war bloggers are a loosely structured network, a shadowy underground whose flexibility and compulsive log-rolling make them as cost-effective as they are deadly. Kill Glenn Reynolds and a thousand James Tarantos will rise in his place. Try to apply the Powell Doctrine and the war bloggers will elude our grasp.” While most online activist organizations focused on the war are fighting against it, “the war bloggers are a hawkish bunch...for the most part the war bloggers are toughened desktop Guderians committed to the belief that the terrorists will win if our blogs fall silent” (Cavanaugh 2002). Prominent pro-warbloggers include www.andrewsullivan.com, www.instapundit.com and www.blogsofwar.com. At warbloggerwatch.blogspot.com is a blog that monitors the warbloggers (Moss 2001).

Still, an ideologically diverse range of bloggers protesting the war maintained a substantial presence on the Web. The Gutless Pacifist offers a blog as “a place for dialogue about faith, politics, and peace” (<http://www.gutlesspacifist.com/>). Joe Says No (<http://www.joesaysno.blogspot.com/>) is one man’s protest against the war with commentary and a collections of “the best (ie the funniest, the prettiest, the most inspiring) of the leftfield antiwar graphics out there.” The Q Factor is an Indian anti-war blog (<http://www.theqfactor.blogspot.com/>). Disturbing Trends (<http://disturbingtrends.tk/>), The Agonist (<http://www.agonist.org/>), Killing Goliath (<http://www.killinggoliath.com/>), Back to

Iraq (<http://www.back-to-iraq.com>), and Headblast (<http://www.davidcogswell.com/>) are other anti-war blogs.

Collaborative blogs protesting the war also abound. Warblogs.cc offers “content from the best of the warblogs,” and is “designed to provide you with a birds-eye view of Gulf War Redux, the American government and civil liberties issues in the United States” (www.warblogs.cc/), while the Stand Down Blog is a collective of left- and right-wing bloggers opposed to an invasion of Iraq. “The members of Stand Down hold a wide variety of different and, indeed, conflicting political positions, but all are in agreement on a single proposition: that the use of military force to effect "regime change" in Iraq is ill advised and unjustified” (www.nowarblog.org).

Findings

In summary, a preliminary examination of the presence of activist messages in open publishing forums such as Indymedia and the blogosphere indicate that networked individuals and organizations are exploiting this burgeoning medium. Actors traditionally ignored by the mainstream news media, such as Palestinians living under Israeli control, or activists opposing the message and actions of a determined US president, are now able to frame their messages for themselves, and distribute that message across the seas to distant publics via the Internet. Empowered with control over their own frames, activist networks are to an extent liberated from the control of traditional gatekeepers, and better equipped to persuade the global public to sympathy, recruit new members to the network and maintain connections with others in their movements. Ultimately, the open publishing weapon may give activist networks greater leverage

in their battles with powerful state actors. Community journalism on the Internet is a nascent but powerful Net repertoire.

There is a growing body of evidence that open publishing is increasingly likely to have an impact, not only on the public, but on traditional media outlets as well. Original coverage from the realm of online open publishing has permeated the mainstream news barrier. Palestinian blogger Arjan El Fassed has recently published op-ed pieces in the Philadelphia Inquirer and Newsday. El Fassed says “When Israeli authorities prevented foreign media access to various cities, towns and villages on the West Bank, what they failed to recognize is that the media is no longer limited to those with press passes...In the age of the Internet, anyone can become a journalist.” (“The Blogging War” 2002). “As their identity, audience, credibility and influence grow, online communities also are breaking news on their own, seeding traditional media reporting readers (Andrews 2002). It has further been suggested that as bloggers become more widely accepted and respected by readers and journalists, “they’ll increasingly provide a valuable middle ground between professional and amateur journalism” (Hiler 2002).

Meanwhile, the U.S. audience for online news has grown significantly since the beginning of 2002. “Visitors to news sites jumped from 67.5 million in Jan. 2002 to 82 million [in January 2003], drawing nearly two of three Internet users” according to Internet measurement firm Nielsen/NetRatings (Ostrom 2003). Remarking this phenomenon, “many in the \$55 billion newspaper industry are hustling to improve their Web sites; some are opening the door to more interaction with online readers (Andrews 2002). The Guardian online, noting the “ground-swell of public sentiment against an attack on Iraq” which was quickly becoming evident on the Web, decided to set up [a special report](#) on the anti-war movement. “The [guide to anti-war websites](#) was set up to provide a permanent information source for people wanting to find out more about anti-

war groups, not just protests against an Iraq conflict” (Moss 2001). As an indication of the potential of the blogging phenomenon it is interesting to note that Google has purchased Blogger.com.

Further Study

It seems clear that the public is turning with greater frequency and in greater numbers to alternative sources of news—particularly online. It is also evident that many mainstream news outlets are adapting their online presence, incorporating many of the interactive and participatory features of blogs and community news sites, at least on a superficial level. One avenue for further research is the investigation of the extent to which mainstream news outlets have picked up the activist narratives of the open publishing realm. When have amateur/activist reporters online broken stories, been the source of new information, or altered the media discourse? To what degree are activist frames that have found a forum in online open publishing sites breaking through the barriers of the mainstream news? Ethnographic research, such as interviews with members of activists groups, should provide important insights into the ways in which activist networks strategically exploit the open publishing media. Also, a more in-depth analysis of how various open publishing sites are linking to one another, creating a global network of activist journalism, would add meaning and understanding of the phenomenon of open publishing as part of the Net Repertoire.

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