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# Exploring the role of the internet in the 'movement for alternative globalization': The case of the Paris 2003 European Social Forum

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## Abstract

This paper attempts to explore the role of the internet in the processes of organization and mobilization of the 'movement for alternative globalization', which is often characterized as an 'internet-based movement'. It reports the findings of a survey undertaken in the Paris 2003 European Social Forum (ESF), which asked 257 respondents about the contexts that mobilized them to participate in the ESF (political/voluntary organizations, friends/relatives, workplace/university, news media), as well as the modes and methods of communication that were used in each context. The findings question the claims about the internet-based character of this movement, as face-to-face contact seems to be the predominant mode of communication. The survey also challenges the much discussed potential of the internet to mobilize politically indifferent or marginalized individuals, as a comparison between users and non-users of the internet revealed that users tended to be mobilized for the ESF through political or voluntary organizations.

## Introduction

Hailed as the medium that would revive democracy, the internet is thought to exert a stronger influence in the realm of non-mainstream politics, inhabited by loose and often marginalized groups and organizations. Nowhere has this influence been considered more prominent than in the case of the 'movement for alternative globalization', whose collective identity, geographical scale and organizing structure are thought to be inextricably linked with its use of the internet. Hence, the 'alter-globalization movement' is claimed to operate as an internet-based, electronic network that is elusive and difficult to capture as it 'swims like a fish in the net' (Castells 2001, 142).

This study is an attempt to examine the above claims by investigating the use of the internet in the mobilization for the Paris 2003 European Social Forum (ESF), one of the most important events for the European part of the 'movement for alternative globalization'. The results derive from a survey undertaken in the Paris 2003 ESF, which asked 257 respondents about the contexts that mobilized them to participate in the European Social Forum (political/voluntary organizations, friends/relatives, workplace/university, news media), as well as the means and methods of communication that were used in each context. This paper aims to present and interpret some of the preliminary results and situate them amongst the wider context of studies in social movements and communication. On a more general note, this study is part of wider effort to restore communication analysis in its rightful place within social movement theory, which even though implicitly or explicitly recognizes the importance of contacts and interactions for the identity, ideology and organization of social movements, has thus far failed to incorporate a more detailed study of communication within its research framework.

**Mobilization, Social Movement Theory and Communication**
According to Klandermans, there are three fundamental motives that account for participation in collective action: *Instrumentality*, which 'refers to movement participation as an attempt to influence the social and political environment'; *Identity*, which 'refers to movement participation as a manifestation of identification with a group'; and *Ideology*, which 'refers to movement participation as a search for meaning and an expression of one's views' (2004, 361). Although not mutually exclusive, these three angles tend to be associated with different strands of social movement theory (Ibid). This part will briefly outline some of the main theories related to each motive. In that respect, instrumentality is connected to resource mobilization theory, identity to new social movements' theory and ideology to 'framing' studies, while the social networks approach covers all of the three motives. I will further discuss the ways in which the role of media and communication has been conceptualized in each theory or, as I will try to demonstrate, under-theorized and under-researched.

**Instrumentality: Resource Mobilization Theory**
Resource mobilization theory perceives insurgencies as rational endeavors, undertaken by minority or marginalized actors wishing to increase their leverage within the political system (McAdam 2003, 282). Centered on Social Movement Organizations (SMOs) and focusing on the relations within and between them, this analysis considers the availability and mobilization of core resources as a prerequisite of contentious action. In that respect, resources are 'usually measured as the amount of money and numbers of staff, volunteers and members' (van de Donk *et al.* 2004, 8) mobilized by an SMO.

In this line of inquiry, communication is perceived simply as a tool to mobilize resources. Resource mobilization theorists thus tend to disregard the influence of communication on mobilization techniques and on the constitution of relationships with allies and enemies. They also fail to acknowledge that by enabling certain types of decision-making and power distribution, communication has an effect on the internal structure and organization of a social movement (Ibid, 9). Collective actors are treated as 'entities' appearing in the public arena, while their internal communication, forms of organization and inner mechanisms remain relatively obscure. Therefore, the fact that social movement organizations are arenas of interaction and that different cultures of interaction shape different trajectories of mobilization seems to elude resource mobilization theory (Clemens and Minkoff 2004, 157). In the few cases where communication constitutes an object of study, the focus rests on external communication, especially the one taking place through the mass media, failing to account for the effects of more interpersonal communication.

**Identity: New Social Movements Theory**
Emerging in Europe as a response to identity and culture-driven social movements, new social movement theory focuses on 'the content of movement ideology, the concerns motivating activists, and the arena in which collective action was focused – that is, cultural understandings, norms, and identities rather than material interests and economic distribution' (Williams 2004, 92). According to new social movement theory, the strength of social movements rests on the production of alternative codes and frames of reference by 'groups that are dispersed, fragmented, and submerged in everyday life' (Melucci quoted in Diani 1992, 6).

New social movement theorists perceive collective identity as a continuous, dynamic and self-reflexive process, preferring to use the term 'identization' which clearly captures its open-ended character (Melucci 1996, 77). According to Melucci, the concept can help us 'reach the deep relational texture of the collective actor' (Ibid, 80). This is because the process of 'identization' is defined by a multiplicity of interactions, negotiations and conflicts among movement participants, which render collective identity an essentially communicative construct. But even though the importance of communication is implicitly recognized, it is nonetheless not theorized or researched in detail. How do movement actors communicate in order to negotiate conflicts and reach agreements? How is this process influenced by the

communication media, means and techniques that are being used? Such questions remain unanswered by new social movement theory, which thus falls short from

aiding us elucidate the 'black box' of social movement communication.

## Ideology: the Framing Perspective

Influenced by new social movement theory, the 'framing' perspective is the most well-known culturalist approach in Northern American social movement studies (Williams 2004, 93). Using Goffman's metaphor of 'framing' as a starting point, this approach focuses on 'the deployment of symbols, claims, and even identities in the pursuit of activism' (Ibid). In that respect, 'frames' are perceived as 'clues for identifying and interpreting a problem, its dimension, causes, and probably potential remedies' (van de Donk *et al.* 2004, 12).

In terms of communication, the 'role of media (who has access, who determines images?) and information-ecologies (who owns, produces, controls relevant data?)' are of crucial importance for the diffusion of frames (Ibid, 13). However, again the focus of framing studies tends to rest on the mass media, neglecting the functions of more personal media, such as the telephone or email, in the process of framing.

## The Social Networks Approach

Aiming 'to explore in greater detail the web of multiple ties that make up a movement' (Diani 2004, 339), the social networks approach is a recent development in social movement theory and the only strand dealing explicitly with all three motives for social movement participation.

This is because social networks have traditionally been treated as 'predictors of individual participation' (Ibid). In this sense, the shape and characteristics of an individual's personal networks are considered to be affecting their opportunities for recruitment to a cause. Other studies in this line of inquiry have established a link between networks and collective identity, as well as the creation of 'frames', proposing that networks provide 'the structure of social movements "free spaces" (Polletta 1999), that is 'the areas of social interaction in which holders of specific worldviews reinforce mutual solidarity and experiment with alternative lifestyles' (Diani 2004, 348). In this respect, networks are perceived as phenomenological constructs of meaning (White 1992, 65), constituting 'crucial environments for the activation of schematas, logics, and frames' (Breiger 2004, 519).

A recent shift in this line of inquiry marks 'a move away from static structural models to… better understand the interactive dynamics' that can transform a particular social setting or community… into a source of collective action (McAdam 2003, 284). For instance, in a recent empirical study Passy proposed that social networks are associated with three key mobilization mechanisms: socialization (imbuing individuals with certain cognitive schemes and frames with

which they interpret social reality), structural-connection (connecting potential activists with an opportunity to participate) and decision-shaping functions (helping individuals to assess the costs and benefits of their potential participation through contact with the actions of other participants) (Passy 2003, 24-25).

Given its emphasis on relations, ties and interactions, one would expect that communication and media would be a central element of the networks approach to social movements. This is however not the case. For instance, while social networks are considered as key predictors of movement participation, little attention has been paid to the communicative aspects of an individual's direct or indirect ties to a movement and to the communication media through which these relationships are constituted. In other words, the fact of whether participants in a movement communicate mainly over the telephone or over the internet may have an impact on the capacity of their social networks to act as agents of mobilization. In addition, the transmission of ideas and cognitive schemata taking place through networks also implies a process of communication whose characteristics and mechanisms remain under-researched.

Yet, there are a few studies which 'have focused on the flows of communication and the links between different territorial areas' (Diani 2004, 351), showing that the levels of collective action in one place affect collective action in nearby geographical areas. However, these studies examined uprisings of the late 19th century which took place in a completely different communicative and media context, and as such cannot account for the role of current communication media in the diffusion of protest.

Thus, the role of communication media, means and techniques remains an under-researched subject within social movement study. Even though all of the aforementioned strands of social movement theory recognize the crucial role of communication and interaction in processes of mobilization and participation, they have nonetheless failed to incorporate these considerations into their theoretical framework or research design.

When the role of the media is taken into account, the focus rests on the mass media, disregarding the functions of more personal communication. This perpetuates a seemingly unintentional but nonetheless false perception of mediated communication as indirect or impersonal as opposed to 'direct' face-to-face communication. This preoccupation with the mass media tends to focus attention on the 'external' communication of a movement and not on its internal modes of communication and their impact on the movement's identity, structure and ideology. It also maintains a perception of social movements as entities with specific and given characteristics and ways of communicating. This deprives us of

all the valuable observations that a closer inquiry of the role of media and communication as constitutive aspects of a movement's identity and structure could potentially afford us.


**The role of the Internet**
The advent of the internet brought this lack of research and theorizing more urgently to our attention. But even though the role of the internet in mainstream and institutional politics has been widely researched, the academic community seems to have 'neglected the role of ICTs in the extra-institutional sphere of 'politics' in which loosely structured groups and social movements play a prominent role' (van de Donk *et al.* 2004, 2). This omission is quite remarkable considering that the Internet has been hailed as a medium favouring subversive, extra-institutional and loosely formed groups (Ibid).

The 'movement for alternative globalization' or 'global social justice movement' is an exception to this rule. This is because its characteristics are thought to be so inextricably linked with the use of new communication technologies that any study of the movement had to include from very early on a reflection on the role and impact of the internet. In the analysis that follows, I will briefly outline these claims and engage in a wider discussion about the possible effects of the internet in social movement activity. This analysis will provide the basis upon which the survey results will be assessed and interpreted. The 'movement for alternative globalization'[1] burst into the public consciousness in Seattle in late 1999 and since then has been the centre of much attention and controversy. Drawing on the broad and flexible frame of 'alternative globalization', this movement has managed to unite diverse and often disparate groups and organizations, from leftist political parties and charity organizations to anarchist groups of the Black Bloc. These groups seem to operate as a 'network of networks' constituting a prime example of 'leaderless resistance', as they manage to co-ordinate protests and events without a specific leader, a common programme or a centre of command (Castells 2001, 142). With its seemingly loose and flexible structure, global scale, and multi-issue politics, the 'alter-globalization' movement seems to represent a new type of social movements which is as much a product of the globalized world of late modernity as the problems that it tries to address.

These characteristics are thought to be influenced and afforded by the use of new communication technologies, which has been a distinguishing feature of the movement since its very first occurrence. In that respect, the 'Battle of Seattle' is to an extent regarded as internet-based victory, presumably 'won by a multifaceted and partly electronically organized coalition of social movements, some of them already of a predominantly virtual character themselves' (van de Donk *et al.* 2004, 5-6). This first victory has given rise to claims that this movement operates as an

internet-based, electronic network. In this sense, the internet is thought to be affecting not only the way the movement communicates its goals or protests in support of its ideas, but also its scale, organizing structure and collective identity. These claims place communication in a much more central position than the one it has hitherto assumed in social movement theory, instigating a more systematic reflection on the role of the media in social movement activity.

In this vein of inquiry, current research tends to consider the Internet not only as a new form of communication, but also as an organizational process in itself that is affecting the internal structure of the movement (Tarrow 2002, 15). This is because the internet seems "to constitute a social network (which is) remarkably similar to the reticular structure of social movements", so that "it is only a short step to regarding the Internet itself as a form of organization" (Ibid). In that respect, the internet is thought to drive the 'alter-globalization' movement towards looser and less hierarchical modes of organization, which imitate its own loose and non-hierarchical structure. For instance, according to Klein "[w]hat emerged on the streets of Seattle and Washington was an activist model that mirrors the organic, decentralized, interlinked pathways of the Internet" (Klein 2002, 17). Contrary to the more conventional means of communication which are relatively expensive and tend 'to foster just a few centres of communication (and often related to this, of power and decision making)', the internet does not 'demonstrate an inherent tendency to be concentrated and controlled in the hands of a few movement entrepreneurs' (van de Donk *et al.* 2004, 9). Thus, by intensifying communication among all parts of the organization, the internet has the potential to contest the prevailing model of top-down communication (Ibid, 19).

What is more, the internet seems to also affect the scale and scope of the 'alter-globalization movement' both in terms of organizing and in terms of the development and negotiation of a collective identity. Serving as a connecting mechanism between participants in different countries, the internet can facilitate an international division of labour both prior to and during protests (Walgrave and van Aelst 2004, 101). It can further act as 'a channel for the geographical dispersion of the intimacy of interpersonal networks' (Burnett and Marshall 2003, 37), expanding the geographical scale at which a collective identity, as well as interpersonal relationships of trust and solidarity can be developed. This poses a challenge to previous notions of intimacy and community as bounded within the confines of a specific locality or as associated with some kind of face-to-face communication.

This scale shift in the personal connections among activists also contributes to the establishment of open and extended activist networks, whose unity does not necessarily depend upon a common ideology. Instead, the internet seems to

encourage connections among ideologically diverse actors, as it is 'conducive to forging (temporary) alliances and coalitions, both vertical and horizontal, across different issues' (van de Donk *et al.* 2004, 19). But if it is not a shared ideology, then what is it that keeps these networks together and prevents their internal conflicts? According to Bennett, the answer rests on the loose and non-hierarchical modes of organizing adopted by these networks which 'allow different political perspectives to coexist without the conflicts that such differences might create in more centralized coalitions' (2004, 134). Therefore, the ease of linking or dropping out of these digital coalitions, their loose organizational structure, as well as the geographical dispersion of interpersonal activist relations, permit the 'alter-globalization movement' to foster ties of solidarity and collective identity in an international scale and among diverse participants, whose ideological differences may have hitherto been considered irreconcilable.

What the foregoing analysis aptly demonstrates is that the extensive use of the internet by current social movements and the 'alter-globalization movement' in particular has led to recognition of the integral role of communication in social movement activity. However, it is not only social movement theorizing which has been challenged and transformed by the advent of the internet; it is also our perceptions of media and communication themselves and of the distinctions that we make between private and public, personal and mass communication. Since this may affect our inquiries into the relationship between social movements and communication, it is worth exploring its implications in more detail.

Comprising several applications, such as email, email lists or websites, the internet 'plays with the boundaries that have traditionally delineated three modes of communication, interpersonal (one-to-one), mass (one-to-many) and computing (many-to-one)' (Burnett and Marshall 2003, 48). Thus, while websites adhere more to a broadcast model of communication, email serves mainly as a form of interpersonal communication. However, the internet is such a flexible and malleable medium that even within the category of a specific application it can foster varying degrees of public or private communication. For instance, an email might be intended for and received by only one person, constituting a private interaction, but can then be forwarded by the initial receiver to multiple users, being thus transformed into a public multicast. In terms of social movement research, this questions the distinction between the internal and external communication of a movement, implying that their separate investigation may no longer be an effective research strategy, as the boundaries between public and private, internal and external become increasingly blurred. Similarly, the internet has obscured the distinction between mass and personal communication, since a message can be potentially transformed from a private dialogue to a mass broadcast as it travels from one application to another.

Apart from the boundaries between public and private, mass and personal, I would argue that further inquiries into the role of the internet in social movement activity should also question the clear-cut distinctions between the offline and the online, the 'virtual' and the 'real'. Such distinctions were a defining characteristic of early internet studies, which tended to conceive the internet as a space or a 'new frontier', as a virtual world which 'actually removes heavy users from the exigencies of everyday life' (Ibid, 15).

This distinction is partly reflected in current theorizing concerning the role of the internet in social movement activity. For instance, in a recent article about social networks and movement participation, Diani proposes that further studies should examine 'whether "virtual," computer-mediated ties may replace "real" in the generation not only of practical opportunities, but of the shared understandings and – most important – the mutual trust, which have consistently been identified as important facilitators of collective action' (2004, 352). This shows a concern over the substitution of 'real' ties with computer-mediated ones, echoing earlier criticisms of the internet as a virtual domain which has the power to replace the real one.

However, this type of theorizing fails to acknowledge 'the continuities between the offline and the online', necessary in order to 'understand and explain how the new potentials are actually used' (Slater 2002, 542-543). In that respect, it is worth considering 'virtuality' or 'reality' not as the inherent properties of a specific medium but as the result of its social uses by people. As Slater notes, '[i]t is the making of the distinction that needs studying, rather than assuming that it exists and then studying its consequences' (Ibid, 543). Furthermore, it is worth bearing in mind that the creation and maintenance of social relationships takes place through multiple communication media. For instance, a recent study of the social use of the internet by college students discovered that 'the more people with whom students communicated using the internet, the more they communicated with face-to-face and on the telephone' (Baym *et al.* 2004, 316). Therefore, the internet may reinforce rather than replace other forms of communication in the maintenance of social relationships. In the case of social movement ties and participation, these findings suggest that the distinction between 'virtual' and 'real' ties may indeed be misleading, as ties are constituted through various media. This should divert the focus of current research from the distinction and comparison between these different media and orient it towards their interplay and complex articulation.

**The survey**
Against this backdrop and as part of my PhD fieldwork, I undertook a survey of participants in the Paris 2003 European Social Forum exploring the mechanisms

of mobilization for the ESF, as well as the role of different communication media in processes of mobilization and participation. Constituting the first stage of my fieldwork, this study could then serve as the basis of a more in-depth inquiry into the claims about the role of the internet in the processes of organizing and identity formation, which were described earlier.

The event I decided to focus on, the European Social Forum, constitutes one of the most significant annual events for the European part of the 'movement for alternative globalization'. Inspired by the World Social Forum, the first ESF was organized in Florence in (2002)  The second one, which took place in Paris in November 2003, comprised several hundreds of seminars, workshops and plenary meetings spanning three days and reportedly attracting 40,000 participants. The main function of the ESF is to act as a space that brings different actors, organizations and individuals together to discuss the state of the world, to network and to form useful relationships. In other words, it is an event which helps this movement to define itself and what it is for, to attract new participants and also to identify, loosely and informally, its 'membership'.

To an extent, this event is a reflection of the movement itself which can be better understood as a process facilitating the co-operation and networking of various actors (organizations, smaller groups and even individual activists) opposed to neoliberal globalization. And even though all social movements 'tend to be fuzzy and fluid phenomena often without clear boundaries' (van de Donk *et al.* 2004, 3), I would argue that this is even more the case for the 'alter-globalization movement', whose plurality and loose structure render it a fluid and mutable movement and hence a difficult object of study. In that respect, selecting a representative sample is an almost impossible task, as there is no exhaustive list of the groups or organizations involved in the movement. And even if there was, such a list would quickly become obsolete, as this movement is always in a state of flux, with existing actors withdrawing in order to focus on their specific campaigns and interests while new actors take their place. Thus, focusing on a specific event such as the European Social Forum, which is an expression of the movement as a networking and collaborative process, seemed to resolve the problems mentioned above.

I distributed 280 questionnaires in the venues where the Paris ESF was taking place and received 257 questionnaires on the spot. The questionnaire was fairly simple, asking respondents about their demographic characteristics, their media use, as well as their methods of mobilization. For reasons already mentioned, it was not possible to obtain a representative or even random sample. The Paris ESF was taking place in four different locations across Paris, so its participants were dispersed in the various venues. What is more, the registration database of the Paris 2003 ESF, containing some information about the participants who

registered individually (and not as part of an organization) for the ESF was not made publicly available by the organizers after the event. It is thus very difficult to know whether the sample examined in this study is representative of the population who attended the 2003 Paris ESF.

## Survey Results
### The sample

The sample consisted of 257 respondents, with women accounting for 46% and men 54% of the sample. Respondents were also predominantly young as 64.5% of the sample was 30 or less than 30 years old. Table 1 presents in more detail the valid percents for each age category.

| Table 1. Age | |
|---|---|
| less than 20 | 14.8% |
| 21-30 | 49.6% |
| 31-40 | 13.7% |
| 41-50 | 9.0% |
| 51-60 | 5.9% |
| over 60 | 7.0% |

The majority of respondents were also fairly educated as 32.3% of the sample was university graduates. However, 17.1% was high school graduates, while 5.2% had not finished high school and 0.8% had not had a high school education. These figures can be explained by the young age of the sample (14.8% was less than 20 years old), which implies that some the respondents may not have had the opportunity to finish high school and attend university.

| Table 2. Education | |
|---|---|
| None | 0.8% |
| High school incomplete | 5.2% |
| High school graduate | 17.1% |
| Business, technical, school after high school | 4.0% |
| Some university, but no 3 or 4 year degree | 17.1% |
| University Graduate | 32.3% |
| Masters graduate | 16.7% |
| PhD degree | 6.0% |
| Don't know | 0.8% |

In terms of profession, an overwhelming percent of the sample (45.7%) were students, a figure which is again partly explained by the young age of the respondents. Professional workers (doctors, lawyers, academics) came second accounting for 17.3% of the sample.

| Table 3. Profession | |
|---|---|
| Unskilled Manual Worker | 0.4% |
| Skilled Manual Worker | 1.6% |
| Non-manual - office worker non-supervisory | 6.6% |
| Supervisory - office worker: supervises others | 4.9% |
| Professional worker (doctor, lawyer...) | 17.3% |
| Employer/manager of less than 10 employees | 2.9% |
| Employer/manager of more than 10 employees | 2.1% |
| Unemployed/looking for a job | 4.9% |
| Retired/early retirement | 3.3% |
| Housewife/house husband/no paid work for family reasons | 0.4% |
| Student | 45.7% |
| Working for a political or voluntary organization or NGO | 2.1% |
| Researchers | 1.6% |
| Other | 6.2% |

Finally, in terms of nationality, and as it was expected, the highest percent of participants (30.4%) comes from France, the host country of the 2003 European Social Forum. In addition, 16.7% of the sample was from Spain and 14.8% from Italy. Overall, the sample included respondents from 24 different countries. Table 4 presents some of the countries with the largest percents.

| Table 4 Nationality | |
|---|---|
| France | 30.4% |
| Spain | 16.7% |
| Italy | 14.8% |
| Britain | 5.1% |
| Germany | 4.3% |
| Greece | 3.5% |
| USA | 3.1% |
| Belgium | 3.1% |
| Sweden | 2.7% |
| Switzerland | 2.3% |
| Finland | 1.6% |
| Tunisia | 1.2% |
| Ireland | 0.8% |
| Poland | 0.4% |

**Mobilization Contexts and Modes of Communication**

The survey further asked respondents about the contexts that mobilized them to participate in the Paris 2003 European Social Forum. 'Mobilization' was defined in terms of obtaining information about the ESF and organizing attendance. The questionnaire distinguished between four mobilization contexts, political or voluntary organizations, friends or relatives, the workplace or the university, and the news media. Distinguishing between different contexts was considered necessary for reasons of analytical clarity, even though it tends to disregard the possible overlaps between the various contexts. For instance, one can be friends with people who belong in the same organization, or be mobilized through a political organization with a university branch. The survey also included some questions about the means of communication that were used in each mobilization context. For instance, did the communication with the political or voluntary organization take place through the telephone, an email list, face-to-face, or the organization's website? Did respondents talk to friends or relatives face-to-face, on the phone, or via email? The respondents could select one or more means of communication, helping us gain a first insight into the range of media used in each context.

An initial breakdown of results showed that 74.2% of the respondents were mobilized by a political or voluntary organization, 65.2% through friends or relatives, 34.1% through the workplace or the university and 36.1% through the news media.

Out of the 190 respondents who were mobilized through a political or voluntary organization, 61.6% communicated with the organization face-to-face, 51.1% through email lists and 34.2% through the organization's website. Table 5 also shows that 18.9% were contacted through mailings, 20% through leaflets and 27.4% through posters.

| Table 5. Mobilized through political/voluntary organizations | |
|---|---|
| Face-to-face | 61.6% |
| Email list(s) | 51.1% |
| Website | 34.2% |
| Mailings | 18.9% |
| Leaflets | 20.0% |
| Posters | 27.4% |

Face-to-face contact was also the main communication method for the 167 respondents who were mobilized through friends or relatives, as an overwhelming 73.1% communicated with them face-to-face. In addition, 40.1% used email and 30.5% used the telephone.

| Table 6. Mobilized through friends or relatives | |
|---|---|
| Face-to-face | 73.1% |
| Email | 40.1% |
| Telephone | 30.5% |

The same is true for the respondents mobilized through their workplace or the university, whereby 71.3% had face-to-face contact. Email comes second, as it was used by 37.9% of the respondents mobilized through this context. This is closely followed by leaflets and posters (33.3%), while the web (18.4%) and the telephone (17.2%) feature a bit lower.

| Table 7. Mobilized through the workplace or the university | |
|---|---|
| Face-to-face | 71.3% |
| Email | 37.9% |
| Website | 18.4% |
| Telephone | 17.2% |
| Leaflets/Posters | 33.3% |

In terms of the news media, newspapers garnered the highest percent (66.3%) of the 92 respondents who were mobilized through this context. The web comes second with 52.2%, while radio and television feature much lower, with 27.2% and 19.6% respectively.

| Table 8. Mobilized through the news media | |
|---|---|
| Radio | 27.2% |
| Television | 19.6% |
| Newspapers | 66.3% |
| Web | 52.2% |

**Associations between communication methods**
What becomes apparent from this initial breakdown of results is that in each mobilization context respondents used a wide range of communication methods sin order to mobilize for the Paris 2003 European Social Forum. This raises interesting questions about the relationships between these different communication methods. Is face-to-face communication in one context associated with face-to-face contact in another? Is the use of the email negatively associated with face-to-face communication or the use of other media?

In order to examine this interplay, I checked for statistically significant associations between the different communication methods used both within and across the various mobilization contexts.[2] The crosstabulations produced only weak associations between the different communication media; some of them were hardly surprising, whereas others were quite unexpected and, therefore, interpreted with caution.

Within the political or voluntary organizations' mobilization context, a weak association was discovered between respondents using email lists and respondents getting information from the website of the organization. In addition, a stronger relationship was recorded between respondents being informed through leaflets and through posters. As for respondents mobilized by friends or relatives, a weak association was found between the use of email and use of the telephone. In addition, respondents using email to communicate with friends or relatives also used email to communicate with the workplace/university in order to mobilize for the European Social Forum.

Furthermore, within the workplace/university mobilization context weak associations were recorded among almost all of the means of communication. In that respect, face-to-face contact is related with the use of email, the telephone as well as leaflets/posters. Apart from face-to-face communication, the use of email is also related with the use of the telephone and the web. Finally, the use of the web is also associated with the use of the telephone, as well as with leaflets/posters. Therefore, the workplace/university seems to constitute a much denser communicative universe than the contexts of friends and relatives or political and voluntary organizations. A possible interpretation of these results points to the nature of the workplace/university as a site of mobilization. In that respect, the workplace/university constitutes a prime location of daily face-to-face contact as, contrary to other contexts, it is a setting where individuals spend a significant part of their day. This may explain why face-to-face contact is by far the main mode of communication used by the respondents mobilized through this context. What is more, the need to perform certain work-related tasks daily, as well as the availability of communication media and resources, may indicate that work

or university colleagues are regularly in contact through various forms of media. These can be used in combination not only for instrumental (work or study) purposes, but also for other 'extra-curricular' activities, such as mobilizing for the European Social Forum.

In terms of the respondents mobilized through the news media, mobilization through newspapers was weakly related with mobilization through all of the other media, namely television, the radio and the web. In addition, a weak relationship was recorded between mobilization through the radio and through television. However, getting information about the European Social Forum through the web was not associated with either television or the radio, meaning that even though all the other news media are weakly related to each other, the use of the web is relatively isolated. This observation is reinforced after looking for associations between mobilization through the web as a news medium and the use of email or the web in all of the other mobilization contexts. This examination did not produce any statistically significant relationships, indicating that mobilization through news websites is an issue worthy of further research.

**Use of the Internet and Demographic Characteristics**
Further analysis of the available data controlled for statistically significant relationships between the respondents' demographic characteristics and the use of the internet (email, web or email lists) in every mobilization context.[3]

This analysis detected a weak association between the respondents' *nationality* and their *mobilization through a political or voluntary organization's email list*. In that respect, 40.2% of the respondents mobilized through an organization's email list come from France. The remaining 59.8% is more or less equally distributed among the remaining countries. It is also worth noting that only 9.3% of the respondents mobilized through organizational email lists come from Italy and 10.3% from Spain, even though 14.8% of the sample was Italian and 16.7% was Spanish.

*Nationality* was also weakly associated with the *mobilization through news websites*, even though this relationship was marginally statistically significant. In that respect, 25% of the respondents mobilized through news websites was French and 22.9% was Italian, while the Spanish, even though a significant percent of the sample, represent only 4.2% of the people mobilized through news websites.

We can compare these figures with the ones of *face-to-face communication with political or voluntary organizations*, which also shows a weak association with the respondents' *nationality*. Figures for Spain are much higher for face-to-face communication, as 72.1% of the Spanish respondents were mobilized through face-to-face contact

with an organization. These represent 26.5% of the overall number of respondents mobilized by an organization face-to-face. The French represent 21.4% and the Italian 12.8%.

A weak association was also discovered between the respondents' *age* and their use of a *political or voluntary organization's email list*. In that respect, 41.2% of the respondents who were mobilized through an organization's email list was between 21 and 30 years old. This is hardly a surprise as this age category represents nearly 50% of the total sample. Thus, even though this percent is high, it is nonetheless not as significant within this age category, as respondents mobilized through an organization's email list account for only 31.5% of the people between 21 and 30. On the contrary, more than half of the respondents over 40 years old were mobilized through an organization's email list. The figures for each age category are as follows: 65.2% for the 41-50 category, 73.3% for the 51-60 and 61.1% for the respondents older than 60.

*Age* is also associated, albeit weakly, with *mobilization through an organization's website*. The patterns are nearly the same as with mobilization through email lists described previously. Thus, 33.8% of the respondents mobilized through an organization's website belong to the 21 - 30 age category, but represent only 17.3% of that category. However, figures are much higher for the older respondents as 43.5% of 41 - 50 years old and 46.7% of the 51 - 60 age categories were mobilized through an organization's website.

Again, we can compare these figures with face-to-face contact, as *age* has a weak association with mobilization through *face-to-face communication with friends or relatives*. In that respect, 59.1% of the respondents belonging to 21 - 30 category, as well as 40% of the 31 - 40 and 55% of the younger than 20 years old were mobilized through face-to-face communication with friends and relatives. Figures are much lower for the older respondents, as only 13% of the 41 - 50, 33.3% of the 51 – 60 and 22.2% of the over 60 were mobilized through face-to-face contact with friends and relatives.

**Users versus Non-Users of the Internet**
In order to compare users with non-users of the internet, a new variable was constructed by grouping together respondents who have used an internet application (email, web or email lists) in any mobilization context and controlling for differences from respondents who have not used the Internet at all. Overall, 88 respondents have not used the internet in their mobilization for the 2003 European Social Forum, representing 34.2% of the sample, while 169 have, accounting for 65.8% of the sample.

The crosstabulations with the demographic characteristics of the sample did not produce any statistically significant relationships, meaning that users and non-users of the internet do not differ significantly in terms of age, profession, educational level, nationality and gender.

I further examined whether the use of the internet was related with any of the contexts that mobilized respondents to participate in the European Social Forum. In that respect, the only statistically significant, albeit weak, association was with mobilization through a political or voluntary organization. In that respect, 76.8% of the respondents who were mobilized through an organization have used one or more internet applications in one or more of the mobilization contexts, representing 86.4% of the internet-users category.

A statistically significant relationship was also revealed between use of the internet and members or supporters of a political or voluntary organization, even though this relationship is very weak. However, the percent of members or supporters who has used at least one internet application in any mobilization context is a staggering 79.3%.

In order to compare internet use with face-to-face contact I constructed a similar variable for face-to-face communication, grouping together the respondents who were mobilized through face-to-face contact in any mobilization context against those who were not contacted face-to-face. The frequencies for this variable showed that 183 respondents were mobilized through face-to-face communication, representing 71.2% of the sample, while 28.8% have not. I further checked for statistically significant relationships between this variable and mobilization through a specific context. This analysis revealed a statistically significant, but again weak, association between face-to-face communication and mobilization through friends and relatives. In that respect, respondents mobilized through friends or relatives represent 76% of the respondents who were contacted face-to-face.

The crosstabulation of the two variables did not produce a statistically significant relationship, meaning that non-use of the internet does not necessarily mean reliance on face-to-face contact or the reverse. This would anyway be a quite straightforward association, as it would indicate that the internet is indeed replacing face-to-face communication. Rather, face-to-face contact and communication through the internet seem to have a far more complicated symbiotic relationship which should be the object of further and perhaps more qualitative study.

## Discussion of Results and Conclusions

What the preceding analysis effectively demonstrated is that within every mobilization context a wide range of media and modes of communication have been used in order to bolster participation in the Paris 2003 European Social Forum. This raises interesting questions about the relationship between the different modes of communication, their interplay and articulation. Thus, instead of making simplistic distinctions and comparisons between these different modes, it is worth examining in greater detail their relationships and the ways in which one influences another. The existence of statistically significant associations between different types of communication both within and across different mobilization contexts constitutes a useful starting point.

The inspection of possible associations revealed some expected and some counter-intuitive results. For instance, the fact that respondents mobilized through the email lists of political or voluntary organizations were also mobilized through the organization's website is hardly surprising. The same can be said for the relationship between the use of email in the workplace/university and the use of email to communicate with friends and relatives.

However, the finding that mobilization through news websites has a weak association only with newspapers is quite unexpected, as one would anticipate that this type of mobilization would relate to mobilization through at least one internet application (email, email lists, and especially websites) in any of the other three mobilization contexts (political/voluntary organizations, friends/relatives, workplace/university).

This analysis further revealed that within the workplace/university mobilization context the use of one mode of communication is associated, albeit weakly, with nearly every other mode. Therefore, the workplace/university seems to be a very tight communicative realm, contrary to other contexts such as political or voluntary organizations and friends or relatives. As it was already mentioned, this can be attributed to the nature of the workplace/university as a mobilization context which constitutes a prime location of face-to-face contact as it is a site where individuals spend a significant part of their day. In addition, the use and availability of different communication media, necessary for the accomplishment of work- or study-related tasks, may also facilitate other activities, such as mobilizing for the European Social Forum. This effectively shows that the interplay between different means and modes of communication may be affected by the mobilization context where their use is located or with which they are associated.

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

The overwhelming figures associated with face-to-face contact also point to another tendency, the predominance of interpersonal modes of communication over the more impersonal ones, as face-to-face contact and the email garner higher percents than posters, leaflets, or the web. For instance, in the case of respondents mobilized through a political or voluntary organization, 61.6% were contacted face-to-face and 51.1% through email. More impersonal modes of communication, such as posters, leaflets or the web feature much lower. This tendency is also apparent in the workplace/university, the other context where a combination of personal and impersonal media has been used and where an overriding percent of respondents has been mobilized through face-to-face communication. Additional evidence corroborating this assumption is provided by the relatively low percent (36.1%) of respondents mobilized through the news media, compared to respondents mobilized through an organization or through friends or relatives.

This prevalence of more personal modes of communication is hardly surprising. Studies in mobilization and movement participation have repeatedly demonstrated that interpersonal networks and direct or indirect ties to a social movement increase the possibility of an individual's participation. It is thus rather astonishing that social movements' studies have hitherto failed to take into account the effects and uses of interpersonal communication, opting to focus instead on the impact of the mass media.

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

Another major inference provided by this study concerns the possible relationship between internet use and the respondents' political experience or degree of involvement in politics. The basis for this assumption is supplied by the associations between internet use and the respondents' age, as well as the context through which they were mobilized. In that respect, the survey results showed that older participants tend more than the younger ones to be mobilized through the email lists or websites of political or voluntary organizations. On the other hand, younger participants tend to be mobilized more through face-to-face contact with friends or relatives. To an extent, this seems as a counter-intuitive result. It can however be explained, if we consider that older activists may refrain from participating in the day-to-day meetings of the political or voluntary organizations they belong to, but still choose to stay in touch and follow the latest news through email lists and the organizations' websites. For younger activists, on the contrary, participation in a social movement may constitute an opportunity for or be a result of face-to-face socialization with friends and relatives.

The interpretation of these results would be aided significantly, if information about the respondents' political experience and prior participation in the 'alter-globalization' or other movements was available. For instance, a study of participants in the anti-war demonstration of the 15th of February 2003 both in Europe and in the USA has revealed that more experienced activists tended to get their political information online, contrary to first-time demonstrators (Bennett, Givens and Willnat 2004, page numbers not available). In my study, even though the respondents' age can be considered as an indication of their political experience, it is far from conclusive. To address this gap, more information about the political experience of the respondents is being sought through a follow-up study to the 2003 survey.

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

were mobilized by face-to-face contact in at least one mobilization context, tended to be mobilized more through friends or relatives.

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

Additional research could employ more qualitative research techniques which would be better able to capture these relationships with all their hues and nuances. By highlighting the value of the, largely unexplored, role of interpersonal mediated communication, as well as the need to examine the interplay between different media and modes of communication, this survey has hopefully offered a useful starting point. The need to distinguish between different internet applications and to understand how internet use is related to the respondents' demographic characteristics and political experience, as well as the context through which they were mobilized can also serve as pointers towards this direction. More importantly, what this study ultimately calls for is a greater awareness of the crucial role of media and communication within social movement activity and of the necessity to place them in a more central position within social movement inquiry.

**Notes**
[1] Emerging as a direct reaction against the process of neoliberal globalization, this movement was initially dubbed as the 'anti-globalization movement'. However, this label seemed to spur too much confusion and misunderstanding, as the movement was identified with its most extreme anti-capitalist part. Thus, evolving from its initial outburst in Seattle in 1999 the movement came to define and call itself the 'altermondialiste movement' (in French), translated in English as the 'alter-globalization movement' or the 'movement for alternative globalization'. The name 'global social justice movement' is also used, particularly by its trade justice/development part. This 'alter-globalization' label indicates more clearly that anti-globalization protesters are not opposed to globalization per se, but to the way it is shaped by neoliberal concerns, disregarding human rights and environmental issues (Walgrave and van Aelst 2004, 99). The change of name also points to the constant negotiations and re-negotiations of the movement's identity, in its effort to accommodate and unite disparate groups and organizations.

[2] The statistical significance of these relationships was measured using the Chi-Square and the strength of the relationship was assessed using the Phi Coefficient, a measure suitable for establishing associations between nominal (and particularly dichotomous) variables. If the value of the Phi Coefficient was below 0.3 then the variables were considered independent. Values between 0.3 and 0.7 were indicative of a weak association between the two variables, while if Phi was above 0.7 then the association was considered strong. All of the reported associations were statistically significant with $p<0.05$, while in many cases p was 0.000.

[3] The significance of the association was measured using again the Chi-Square, while the strength of the relationship was assessed using the Gamma measure in the case of an association between a nominal and an ordinal variable. The association between nominal and dichotomous variables was measured using Cramer's V and the Phi Coefficient.

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