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Transnational anti-war activism: Solidarity, diversity and the Internet in Australia, Britain and the United states after 9/11

Kevin Gillan [a]; andJenny Pickerill [b]
[a] University of Manchester,
[b] University of Leicester,

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Transnational Anti-war Activism: Solidarity, Diversity and the Internet in Australia, Britain and the United States after 9/11

KEVIN GILLAN

University of Manchester

AND

JENNY PICKERILL

University of Leicester

The upsurge in activism opposing wars and occupations in Afghanistan and Iraq appears to represent a significant process of transnational collective action. Using data collected through participant observation, interviews and web site analysis, this article explores the role of the Internet in facilitating transnational activism between Australia, Britain and the United States. This research confirms Tarrow's (2005a) assertion of 'rooted cosmopolitanism' – a primary commitment to locally contextualised action combined with a desire for transnational support. The Internet is used primarily for gathering news and for sharing symbolic expressions of solidarity. In Australia, in particular, with fewer domestic anti-war resources on-line, international networking proves particularly useful. To an extent, on-line networks reach across both political diversity and geographical boundaries. However, on-line resources do not appear to enable the more personal connections required to build stable, working coalitions across borders.

Introduction: The Internet and Transnational Activism

One of the most striking features of popular politics in the post-9/11 world has been the emergence of large-scale anti-war activism in many countries (Fig. 1). Making similar arguments in a wide range of political contexts, anti-war

Figure 1. No WMDs = No Need for War, London, March 2006. *Note:* All photographs taken by Jenny Pickerill.

campaigns may have moved into the realm of transnational collective action. The latter is defined as 'coordinated international campaigns on the part of networks of activists against international actors' (della Porta and Tarrow 2005, 2–3). Even where a formal international organisation or coalition does not exist, transnational action may occur. Such activism is likely to include material or ideological linkages made between groups at national and local levels, as well as informal ties between grassroots groups. Tarrow claims that transnational collective action is formed by 'rooted cosmopolitans', 'who grow out of local settings and draw on domestic resources'; they engage in transnational activism through 'intertwined networks of a complex international society . . . accelerated by increasing connections across borders' (2005b, 1).

In so far as the Internet offers a relatively inexpensive and highly efficient means of transcending geographical boundaries, it likely facilitates transnational collective action. This paper explores the rise of transnationalism in the anti-war protest arena, particularly examining the extent to which it is facilitated by the use of Internet technologies.

In general, political participation is enhanced by information and communication technologies (ICTs) through, for example, faster interaction, sharing of strategies and tactics across large distances, low cost dissemination of information and interactive creation of news and commentary (Norris 2002; Bennett 2003; Bimber 2003; Chadwick 2006). Of course, the Internet is by no means a panacea for the problems activists face. Activists have shown concern about uneven accessibility, surveillance, unknowable and diffuse audiences, a lack of personal engagement and difficulties in building trust on-line (Pickerill 2003).

Further to general findings about use of ICTs in activism, there is evidence that participation in the latest anti-war movements has been boosted by activists' Internet practices (Nah, Veenstra and Shah 2006). Bennett and Givens' survey of participants in a number of major anti-war protests across America demonstrates that Internet technologies have become central to protesters' daily activities. The more central the Internet has become to political

activism, the more it has become the route through which individuals first experience key collective actors. At least in the US, those most central to the anti-war movement are 'disproportionately likely to rely on digital communications media' and those with close movement affiliations 'overwhelmingly received their information about the Iraq crisis through e-media' (Bennett and Givens 2006, 1, 17). Furthermore, if new ICTs have enabled participation in recent anti-war activism, then it is likely that the Internet has also helped the anti-war movement cross borders. Indeed, one activist argues:

> The US and British lefts are historically quite separated... [they] don't communicate much – two lefts separated by a common language. With the Internet, all that's changed. (Mike Marqusee interview, writer and activist, London)

The following sections of this article present a multi-method analysis of the role of Internet technologies in connecting anti-war movements in three countries. Utilising hyperlink analysis, we examine the structure of information resources created by anti-war web site authors' linking practices. We illustrate the different positions that different kinds of organisations' web sites inhabit within that structure and, thereby, offer an account of the various informational pathways through which activists may travel. However, we are wary of making further inferences from the quantitative analysis of hyperlinks. We therefore use a qualitative dataset in order to explore the meanings that Web use has for individual activists. This combination of data enables a thorough empirical exploration of the claim that Internet communication aids transnational collective action.

Three Anti-war Movements

Our three case countries – the US, Britain and Australia – were all key members of the 'coalition of the willing' that invaded Iraq in March 2003 and continue to represent the three largest military interventions in that country (GlobalSecurity. org 2006a, 2006b). We assume that this direct connection with events, combined with wider similarities, such as common languages, similar histories of radical protest against the excesses of capitalism, and commitment to liberal democracy and legitimate protest, increases the likelihood of transnational collective action across these countries. In addition, there is a strong possibility for using the Internet to forge such connections since each country has high Internet access and usage rates (International Telecommunications Union 2006).

The rapid spread of anti-war activism immediately after 9/11 may be partially explained through the coming together of a politically diverse range of long-standing organisations into coalitions of opposition (Gillan 2006). In Britain, activists met on 21 September 2001, forming the Stop the War Coalition (StWC), which has been central to mobilisation against the war on terror ever since. In the US, ANSWER (Act Now to Stop War and End Racism) took an early leading role in organising demonstrations but faced 'massive discontent ... [because] they were just bloody sectarian, high handed and undemocratic' (Mike Marqusee interview), leading to a new national coalition – United for Peace and Justice (UFPJ) – being rapidly formed (Meyer and Corrigan-Brown 2005; Gupta 2006). In Australia, organisations opposing the war on

terror appeared at the state level although no national coalition emerged (Morrow 2003).

The demographic composition of these movements generally reflected that of earlier peace campaigns. In Britain this meant that they tended to be composed of highly politicised, secular, left-leaning individuals with high levels of education and professional status (Rüdig and Eschle 2003). However, the increase in scale seen, especially towards the end of 2002, resulted from the involvement of many new and re-activated participants (Sloboda and Doherty 2004). Bennet and Givens (2006) found that some 30% of participants at anti-war demonstrations in New York, San Francisco and Seattle were on their first demonstration. Additionally, British anti-war activism saw the inclusion of increasingly assertive British Muslims. This affected the framing of demands within the movement, with multiple demands being made within large demonstrations (Fig. 2). Since the anti-war movements opposed the war on terror in general, and because Muslims were perceived to be at particular risk from both new anti-terror legislation and heightened public anxiety, the new alliances between anti-war protesters and Muslim groups made sense. In Britain there were public calls to 'Stop the Racist Backlash' and StWC organised conferences on Islamaphobia. In Australia, groups linked the introduction of new anti-terror legislation to the rise of anti-Muslim racism (see Fig. 3). US activists made use of the dominant post-9/11 cultural theme of patriotism; a tactic described by Maney, Woehrle and Coy (2005) as 'harnessing hegemony'. Thus, slogans such as 'dissent is patriotic' (Fig. 4) and protests that referred explicitly to the deaths of American soldiers, connected to the prevailing mood of national pride (Fig. 5).

The high point of transnational coordination occurred on 15 February 2003, when between six and ten million people marched in 600 cities across the globe. In London, one million protesters formed the biggest demonstration in British history. In the US 100,000 people protested in New York and 200,000 in San Francisco, and Australia saw 500,000 join demonstrations in six State capitals (BBC 2003). Such demonstrations have been periodically repeated in all three countries since, albeit with falling turnouts that, to some

Figure 2. Multiple messages from the Stop The War Coalition, London, March 2006.

Figure 3. Poster 'Anti-Muslim Racism: The True Face of the War on Terror', Melbourne, August 2005.

Figure 4. 'Dissent is Patriotic' sign in a building overlooking Twin Towers site, New York City, April 2005.

extent, tracked changing public opinion. As war began, 59% of Americans supported military action, but only 39% Britons felt the same way. After 4 months at war support increased so that 61% of the British and 74% of Americans felt it was right to use military force in Iraq (Pew Research Center 2003a, 2003b). Yet, by 2006 51% of Americans believed it was the wrong decision to have taken military action in Iraq (Pew Research Center 2007) and in Australia 55% opposed the war (Grattan 2006). Tactically, the national demonstrations were only part of the story. Britain, for instance, saw a range of direct actions targeting military installations across the country, and

Figure 5. Quaker 'Prayers for Peace', a ribbon for every US soldiers' death in Iraq, New York City, April 2006.

Australian activists protested the Joint Defence Facility military tracking station at Pine Gap and opposed the Sea Swap program set up to support US Navy personnel.

Integrating Anti-war Movements On-line

The anti-war activities described above were organised by a range of groups, some long-standing and others new. Within the British and American national coalitions, resources – including money, personnel, trust and political backing – were negotiated and shared. Nonetheless, beyond such formal and relatively stable arrangements there existed an uneven web of connections between a wider range of international, national and local groups that planned protests together and often had overlapping member-ships. Although we would expect formal connections to be represented via hyperlinks between the relevant groups' web sites, they are not necessarily expected to reflect the full extent of wider off-line network ties. The examination of off-line networks typically identifies individual or collective actors as nodes, which are tied by the flow of information or resources between them. On-line hyperlink networks, conversely, have informational resources at the nodes whereas ties represent the potential flow of individuals among those resources. On-line networks cannot, therefore, be automatically understood as proxies for off-line networks. In particular contexts the relationship between off-line and on-line connections may be stronger (*cf*. Ackland and Gibson's (2006) analysis of links between formal political parties). In the context of the present study, however, we assume hyperlinks to be indicative primarily of web site authors' intent to make their audiences aware of particular information. Networks of hyperlinks offer routes through the informational field, which activists may follow. The experience of the movement as constituted on the Web is thereby structured by web site authors' decisions concerning which sites to link to. In the following, it is precisely that structuring of the information environment on which we focus. In particular, we investigate the characteristics and interrelations of three separate hyperlink networks stemming from key anti-war web sites in each of Australia, Britain and the US.

Method

It is possible to identify, follow and analyse hyperlink networks using a software tool called 'Issue Crawler' created by Richard Rogers and colleagues.[1] The founding assumption is that a hyperlink between sites indicates an association of content – that the sites are, at least in part, oriented to the same issue. The analysis begins with the selection of a 'seed set' of relevant URLs; in this case, 11 prominent anti-war web sites from each country were included (total seed set = 33). These sites are then used to identify the sites constituting the issue networks. The Issue Crawler visits each site in the seed set, 'reading' the content of the homepage and examining, firstly, internal hyperlinks. The software follows internal hyperlinks to a depth of two; that is, it downloads each page of the site that was accessible through one or two 'clicks' from the homepage. The software records all external hyperlinks contained in each visited page, compiling a list of linked web sites.[2] Through visiting every site in the seed set, Issue Crawler utilises 'co-link analysis' to identify a resulting 'issue network'. At this stage any web page in the compiled list that had only one hyperlink reference from another site in the network is removed. Sites that received links from two or more other sites (i.e. were 'co-linked') are considered to be members of the issue network. The procedure is then reiterated using the new list of co-linked sites. Reiteration reduces the bias exerted by the researcher's choice of web sites for the seed set, yet on the grounds that co-link analysis establishes some commonality of content, also ensures that the network remains rooted to the originally identified issue.[3]

In addition to delineating the issue network, Issue Crawler also provides data on the links between sites. In particular, it records the number of links received by each web site from other members of the issue network. This figure provides an estimate of the centrality of each site in that those web sites that receive the most links from other web sites in the network have the greatest probability of a user visiting them if they start browsing from any other point in the network.

The sites included in each of the seed sets were identified via knowledge of the most prominent off-line anti-war movements in each country. As well as being clearly identified with the anti-war effort, the sites needed to meet two further specific criteria to be included in the seed set: (1) they needed to display an explicit orientation/bias to the relevant case country; and (2) they needed to explicitly advocate activities outside of the sphere of institutional politics. Social movements are typically defined by a preference towards non-institutional

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[1]The software is available at www.issuecrawler.net; see Rogers (2002) for a description of the software; see Rogers and Marres (2000) for an interesting application.

[2]A web site is defined here by domain name; thus, 'internal hyperlinks' refer to pages with the same domain name (e.g. stopwar.org.uk), and 'external hyperlinks' refer to pages with different domain names.

[3]The number of hyperlinks to follow in an issue network is potentially vast and Issue Crawler visited over 58,000 individual web pages across our three networks. Networks for analysis are limited, therefore, to a maximum of one hundred web sites (domains) at each stage of co-link analysis. Since the one hundred web sites carried to further analysis are those with the greatest number of in-links from web pages identified elsewhere in the network, and because the following arguments do not depend on the absolute number of web sites in each network, this software limitation is not problematic.

collective action and by their characteristic claims and framings (della Porta and Diani 1999, 15–25). These criteria reflect our ambition to study social movements opposing the war on terror, rather than the wide array of different forums in which these issues have been discussed. A total of 33 seed sites were identified, with 11 seed sites per country (see Appendix 1).

To extend the depth and reliability of our analysis, we manually coded the content of the web sites. The homepage and linked internal pages of each site in each network were reviewed and coded on two dimensions. 'Locale' coding reflected the national focus of content of each web site and was used to investigate the level of transnationalism evident in the networks. Coding of 'web site purpose' was designed to examine the extent to which networks were involved in promoting activities and issues beyond the anti-war focus. More detail on the specific coding categories of each dimension is provided below, following the overall network profiles.
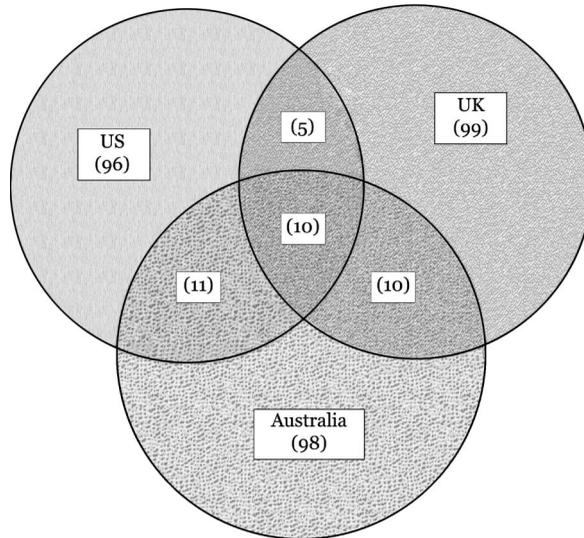
Network Overviews

By running Issue Crawler separately for each seed set, we identified three issue networks, each consisting of slightly fewer than one hundred web sites.[4] As Fig. 6 illustrates, there was some overlap between the three resulting issue networks; that is, some high visibility sites were discovered in more than one of these networks.

Ten sites were found to exist in all three networks and a further 26 web sites were found in two of the networks. Nevertheless, there remained a strong degree of national clustering with 221 out of a total of 247 unique web sites being found in only one network. In this regard it seems that the Web is a long way from transcending the importance of national boundaries. Among those sites that do provide interconnections between national networks (i.e. those located in the overlap zones in Fig. 6) more are linked into the Australian network. Exclusive overlap between the British and US networks is low (five sites) with both of these networks sharing twice that number of web sites exclusively with Australia. This suggests more internationally oriented hyperlink practices within the Australian on-line anti-war network.

Table 1 presents an overview of each issue network. The three data columns present three separate network analyses. When a site was present in more than one network their in-links were re-calculated for that network. As a result, these overlap sites have different in-link counts depending on which network they are considered to be part of, given the changing nature of the surrounding sites. The raw in-link counts indicate that the US network is the most densely connected and Australia the least. The standardised scores (mean in-link counts) confirms this, showing that, on average, a US organisation in the network is linked to by 14 other web sites, whereas in the Australian network the figure is almost half that total. The US network density is also reflected by the scores recorded for individual sites within it. The United for Peace and Justice (UFPJ) web site records the highest number of in-links of any site in any of the networks, with

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[4]The identified networks all reached the software limit of one hundred web sites per network. However, cleaning of the data to remove web sites that were still linked to but no longer existed (and, therefore, unavailable for manual coding) marginally reduced network size.

Figure 6. Proportional Venn diagram representing network overlap. *Note:* Areas represent approximate proportionality, calculated using on-line software made available by Peter Rogers, University of Kent. URL: <http://www.cs.kent.ac.uk/people/staff/pjr/EulerVennCircles/Euler VennApplet.html>. Consulted 17 January 2007.

Table 1. Overview of three anti-war hyperlink networks

	US Network	UK Network	Australian Network
No. sites	96	99	98
Total network links[a]	1385	1088	792
Mean in-link count[b]	14.3	11.0	8.1
In-link count range[c]	5 – 50	5 – 36	3 – 21
Most central sites (in-link count)	unitedforpeace.org (50)	cnduk.org (36)	unitedforpeace.org (21)
	ivaw.net (40)	basicint.org (26)	indymedia.org (20)
	veteransforpeace.org (38)	caat.org.uk (24)	iraqbodycount.org (19)

[a]'Total network links' gives the sum of in-links for every site in each network. We are only interested in links between sites within the network so each relevant out-link is also an in-link for one of the other network members. By counting in-links only we avoid double counting. For each network the maximum possible total network links = no. sites × (no. sites – 1).

[b]'Mean in-link count' is simply the ratio of total site-to-site links to the number of sites in the network and, therefore, represents the density of connections. For each network the maximum possible mean in-link count = no. sites – 1.

[c]'In-link count range' gives the lowest and highest number of in-links received by one site in the network.

over 50% of sites linking to it. Interestingly, however, the network produced from the Australian seed set also shows the UFPJ web site to be its most highly in-linked site. Further analysis of the content of the UFPJ web site reveals that it represents an organisation that is clearly American in both its location and its focus. The large number of Australian sites linking to UFPJ may reflect the lack of an Australian national coalition off-line, which might otherwise have provided a central information point on-line.

Analysis of Locales

The Venn diagram presented in Fig. 6 examines the degree of overlap across the networks, with web sites counted simply as 'belonging' to the national network(s) in which they were found after the analytical process had been completed for each of the three seed sets. Finding an overlap between the networks, however, implies that some sites were either included in the networks of countries to which they were not oriented, or had a genuinely transnational locale. Rather than rely on domain names or hosting location, therefore, we engaged in manual coding of every web site to define its geographic locale. Coding took account of the locations of advertised events, the subjects of political critique and the addresses provided for correspondence with the organisation represented by that site. When all three of these elements were clearly oriented to one country, it was easy to identify the appropriate locale. The locale was identified as 'international' if there was evidence that it had organised events or activities, or was administratively supported, in more than one country. Table 2 represents the findings on overlap based on the manual coding of locale for each site.

The left-hand side of Table 2 considers each of the three networks separately. The findings confirm the generally limited degree of overlap reported in Fig. 6. The table shows each national network to be biased towards web sites with locales in that nation. However, the strength of this bias varies considerably across networks. The US network is the most homogenous with the vast majority of sites having an American locale. The British network is somewhat looser, with just over half of sites having a British locale. The Australian network, however, is the most geographically heterogeneous, with less than half of its network being focused on Australia. The British network shows the strongest inclusion of internationally operating web sites (such as the global nuclear disarmament network, Abolition 2000), whereas the Australian network contains the largest proportion of sites focused on nations other than its own (such as UFPJ or Veterans for Peace, which are both focused on the US). In total, we find that 37 sites (39.8%) out of the Australian on-line anti-war network are focused on single nations other than Australia.

Table 2. Locale compared across national networks and network overlap (figures in parentheses are %)[a]

Locale	By Network			By Site Position		
	US	UK	Australia	Overlap Sites	Non-overlap Sites	All Sites
US	86 (91.5)	12 (12.2)	23 (24.7)	19 (54.3)	78 (38.0)	97 (40.4)
UK	2 (2.1)	51 (52.0)	4 (4.3)	5 (14.3)	46 (22.4)	51 (21.3)
Australia	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)	39 (41.9)	0 (0.0)	39 (19.0)	39 (16.3)
Other National Focus	0 (0.0)	3 (3.1)	10 (10.8)	2 (5.7)	9 (4.4)	11 (4.6)
International	6 (6.4)	32 (32.7)	17 (18.3)	9 (25.7)	33 (16.1)	42 (17.5)
Totals	94 (100%)	98 (100%)	93 (100%)	35 (100%)	205(100%)	240 (100%)

[a]All web sites where the locale was identifiable were included; eight cases were unidentifiable.

The right-hand side of Table 2 compares those sites that appeared in more than one network with the majority that did not. Thus, we can consider what differentiates sites that gain international recognition (as expressed through position in the overlap zones) with those that do not. Confirming our previous point, we see that none of the overlap web sites have an Australian locale, whereas over 50% have a US locale. So, although overlap between national anti-war networks may represent a form of transnationalism, it is a form that is dependent on the high profile of sites within the US issue network.

Analysis of Web Site Types

Coding categories for 'web site type' were developed after an initial examination of the three issue networks. The categories were based around identifying the general orientation or purpose of the authors or owners of the site (as represented in the site contents) and, in the case of activist groups, their approach to political action. This approach resulted in the following seven web site types being identified:

(1) *Peace protest sites* – articulated a strong commitment to values of peace (i.e. anti-war, pro-nuclear disarmament, anti-arms trade etc.). The sites either described the site authors'/owners' involvement in non-institutional political activities, such as mass demonstrations or direct action, or they promoted such activities.
(2) *Peace lobby sites* – contained a similar value/issue focus to protest sites but the political activities described or promoted were more institutionalised, taking the form of direct lobbying of institutions of governance, or writing letters to elected representatives. Sites that were purely informational resources on peace were also included in this category.
(3) *'Wider' protest* and (4) *lobby sites* – followed the above distinctions, respectively, in terms of their orientation to action but had multiple issue foci or a primary focus on an issue area other than peace/anti-war, such as human rights or the environment.
(4) *Alternative media and movement support services* – included non-mainstream media news and information sources (from Indymedia to a range of web blogs) and web sites that offered on-line services such as web site hosting or electronic petitions.
(5) *Mainstream media sites* – included established off-line news outlets, such as television channels (e.g. CNN) or newspapers (e.g. *The Guardian*).
(6) *Governance sites* – included institutions of national government (e.g. Ministry of Defence) or international governance (e.g. United Nations).

Table 3 examines the types of site represented in the on-line anti-war networks. The first five categories may be considered as social movement sites whereas the latter two are non-movement sites. Each on-line anti-war network has a broadly similar proportion of movement to non-movement site types, with movement sites making up 90.1%, 87.6% and 94.3% of the British, US and Australian networks, respectively. However, as Table 3 demonstrates, when we look within the broad category of movement sites, we can see some notable

Table 3. Website types compared across national networks and network overlaps (figures in parentheses are %)

Web Site Type	By Network			By Site		
	US	UK	Australia	Overlap Sites	Non-overlap Sites	All Sites
Peace Protest	25 (27.2)	24 (24.7)	18 (20.0)	7 (20.6)	51 (25.4)	58 (24.7)
Peace Lobby	13 (14.1)	33 (34.0)	12 (13.3)	7 (20.6)	43 (21.4)	50 (21.3)
Wider Protest	5 (5.4)	5 (5.2)	12 (13.3)	2 (5.9)	18 (9.0)	20 (8.5)
Wider Lobby	20 (21.7)	13 (13.4)	22 (24.4)	6 (17.6)	41 (20.4)	47 (20.0)
Movement Media and Services	20 (21.7)	10 (10.3)	21 (23.3)	9 (26.5)	28 (13.9)	37 (15.7)
Mainstream Media	5 (5.4)	2 (2.1)	2 (2.2)	2 (5.9)	5 (2.5)	7 (3.0)
Governance	4 (4.3)	10 (10.3)	3 (3.3)	1 (2.9)	15 (7.5)	16 (6.8)
Totals	92 (100%)	97 (100%)	90 (100%)	34 (100%)	201 (100%)	235 (100%)

differences between the networks. First, within the US network, peace *protest* sites are dominant, whereas within the British network it is rather peace *lobby* sites that predominate. Second, category 5 sites (i.e. alternative media and movement support services) form only a small proportion of the British network (10.3%), whereas in the US and Australia that category makes up nearly one-quarter of the network. Third, within the Australian network it is the *wider* lobby sites that predominate. Although these sites may discuss peace issues, their goals are firmly directed towards other issues. Many are primarily oriented to environmental concerns and the issue of nuclear power is clearly an important one. Like the peace lobby sites that dominate in Britain, the methods of the groups represented on these wider lobby sites tend to eschew protests and demonstrations, and instead utilise constitutional or informational means for achieving political change. This emphasis on broader concerns in the Australian context can also be seen in relation to the presence of wider protest sites. While all networks contain only a small number of such sites, these are most numerous in the Australian case.

When comparing sites with transnational linkages (i.e. those situated in the overlap of the three networks), we find that they are more likely to fit into the category of alternative media and movement support services than any of the other site types. The only other category that is more heavily represented (proportionally) in the overlapping zone than outside of it is mainstream media and services. The very fact that many media sites are quite central in these networks points to the desire of movement activists to refer, through their hyperlink practices, to relevant sources of news. The fact that the same news sources are more often found in more than one network than are the various categories of movement site suggests a greater degree of implicit agreement among web site authors from each country over which news sources are most relevant, than over which protest or lobby sites are most significant.

Being Global: Diversity and Solidarity on the Internet

Our analysis of hyperlinks has highlighted a limited set of international linkages between anti-war movements and a number of characteristic differences between them. The most striking distinctions relate to the Australian network: on-line it appears only loosely interconnected and is dependent on informational resources provided by anti-war movements in other countries and by the domestic environmental movement. This reflects the 'tyranny of distance' that Capling and Nossal (2001) identified in Australian anti-globalisation activism more generally. As one respondent explained:

> It just seems like we're really small and it also seems like we're really disconnected...we don't have really huge networks, there's not as many people...you look at any American or European discussions of the global movement and it's like Seattle, Washington, Prague, and it's like, 'Hello, hi, down here.' (Aggy interview, Melbourne)

The hyperlink practices of Australian anti-war activists offer an on-line remedy for a lack of domestic anti-war resources and for the perception of distance from other movements. Describing on-line connections, however, is far from understanding the degree to which they produce genuine transnational collective action. In the following section of the paper we utilise a qualitative dataset to probe the importance of Internet connections for anti-war activists from each of the three countries. In particular, we examine the value placed on on-line national and international links and how far these map onto off-line connections.

Method

Qualitative material was collected through in-depth interviews and participant and on-line observation. Interviews were conducted with activists in Australia shortly before the start of the Iraq war (21 interviews between September 2001 and January 2003), and with British and American activists after three years of war in Iraq (60 interviews between January 2006 and June 2007). Respondents came from a range of organisations that represent a wide diversity in terms of political world-view, activity and scale of organisation.[5] Our analysis of these data focuses on two much-discussed themes particularly relevant in the context of transnational collective action; namely, diversity and solidarity.

Imagined Solidarity and Mediated Action

Initial responses to questions regarding the value of the Internet in campaigning frequently referred to the easy availability of informational resources. Some

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[5]Groups included: Stop the War Coalition (StWC), Justice Not Vengeance, CND UK, Religious Society of Friends, Faslane 365, Muslim Association of Britain, Muslim Anti-War Network, Respect, Student Islamic Societies, Friends of the Earth Melbourne, Australian Indymedia collectives, Green Left Weekly, Democratic Socialist Party, AWOL, Global Justice Coalition, the Australian Greens – Victoria, and independent New York anti-war activists.

groups, such as Justice Not Vengeance in Britain, define their primary purpose as exactly to provide such resources for other campaigners (Milan Rai interview, Hastings). Additionally, many respondents referred to morale-boosting benefits of connecting to other anti-war groups on-line and the desire to find and express solidarity. Following Bayat (2005), we might term this 'imagined solidarity'. Bayat draws on Anderson's work defining the nation as an imagined community 'because the members of even the smallest nation will never know most of their fellow-members . . . yet, in the minds of each lives the image of their communion' (Anderson 1991, 5).

Imagined solidarity may be achieved through projecting locally grounded actions into the global arena, thereby increasing the significance of a campaign for participants. Interviewees highlighted their ability to communicate their participation in protest:

> A lot of the big demonstrations have coincided with demonstrations internationally . . . if nothing else – if we don't stop the wars – at least you can hope that word about our actions gets out around the world. (Chris Goodwin interview, Leicester Campaign to Stop the War)

The need to show solidarity was felt most keenly amongst activists who identified closely with those being persecuted in the Iraq war. In Britain this was most obviously represented by Muslim communities and reflects the Islamic concept of one *umma*; 'the unity, the brotherhood, the sisterhood, of all Muslims, wherever you are, whatever colour your skin is, wherever you live' (Arif Sayeed interview, Islamic Students Society [ISS], Leicester). For some, this extended to a concern for justice for all: 'You stand up for an injustice wherever it is – it doesn't matter whether they're Muslim or not' (Naazish Azaim interview, ISS, Leicester).

In other instances, the Internet was crucial in solidifying activists' experience of acting at the global scale: 'I didn't even know [the movement] existed before I saw it on-line. That's what politicised me . . . the connectedness factor is what made the international days of action' (Nik interview, Melbourne). In Australia, 'we do find internationally that [ICT is] the only way that people get in contact with us and . . . we have built up networks of international correspondents that have been entirely net based' (Sean Healy interview, Democratic Socialist Party, Sydney). Similarly, 'in the United States the global movement was a source of inspiration for those of us who spoke out. We gained confidence and strength in knowing that we were standing with the vast majority of the world's people' (Cortright 2004, 29). Each of these examples demonstrates the value of the kinds of symbolic interaction that the Internet is so well suited for; it has facilitated the expressions of solidarity through making available information about protest elsewhere.

A key interchange of expressions of solidarity is in the sharing of news. As noted above, the mainstream and particularly alternative media web sites dominated the shared space or overlap area between the issue networks across the three countries. Such repetition is no accident. Respondents repeatedly reported frustration with the general lack of coverage of anti-war ideas and activities within much of the mainstream media, making them highly selective in the outlets they linked to, and promoting the voice of alternative media sources

that offered more satisfactory coverage. In addition, because media sources were key sites of transnational interconnection we can see the utilisation of these sources as a way of locating local struggles in the global context; that is, in imagining solidarity. A major development here is the way in which the Internet has facilitated the growth of alternative media sources, which were more frequently linked to across the three issue networks than mainstream sources. Sites such as Indymedia have become a core medium for interchange between anti-war groups. Again, we see the possibility of imagining solidarity on-line since the structure of Indymedia is designed to prioritise place-rooted action while offering communication at a global scale (Pickerill 2007).

Diversity in Collective Action

Our analysis of web site types above shows that the three anti-war networks differed in terms of their activist orientation. Within the US network peace *protest* sites were most commonly found. Within the British network peace *lobby* sites predominated and in the Australian network it was *wider* lobby sites that proved most common, particularly those oriented to environmental concerns. Overall, our findings on web site type indicate a degree of political diversity across the networks that supports the arguments concerning the broad basis of contemporary activism in general, and the anti-war movements in particular (Gillan 2006). As an activist in Britain herself noted, 'the anti-war movement has forced some bizarre coalitions' (Yvonne Ridley interview, Respect, London). Participant groups include those committed to ideological pacifism (Society of Friends), feminism (Code Pink), anti-globalisation (Wombles), political parties (Respect), artistic performance (Rhythms of Resistance), and faith (Muslim Association of Britain). Fig. 7 displays the physical presence of a range of groups participating together in one demonstration. Similarly, US anti-war coalitions include divisions between

Figure 7. Multiple messages: Placards from Muslim Association of Britain, Green Party and Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament, London, March 2006.

goal-focused groups (often informed by variants of Marxism) and process-focused groups from a range of perspectives, such as feminism, ecology and civil rights (Firat 2004, 612–14). The key organisations in the Australian anti-war movement have strong environmental and social justice roots (Burgman 2003). For instance, Friends of the Earth, the Australian Greens (Fig. 8), Democratic Socialist Party, and Resistance (a socialist youth organisation) all took centre stage in key anti-war demonstrations.

Activists recognise that incorporating political differences can serve to diffuse and complicate a campaign: 'whenever movements grow . . . their composition becomes more diverse and more politically uneven; people come with a variety of political consciousnesses, assumptions and experiences, and confusions' (Mike Marqusee interview). Since hyperlinks provide conduits for interested readers to follow from site to site, the diversity of groups linked within anti-war on-line networks both reflects the diversity found within the off-line environment and may serve to enhance and expand it. Tarrow argues that 'all shifting and reticular movements reduce ideological cohesion, but the [I]nternet may be extreme in its centrifugal effects' (2005a, 138). It is possible to see this effect with a positive inflection:

> Stop the War is like an umbrella – there's so many small denominations attached to it and they all amalgamate on that web page and from there you get to learn about the anti-capitalist organisations, the gay rights organisa-tions, the Jews against Zionism organisations. (Arif Sayeed interview, ISS, Leicester)

Additionally, visual symbols and simple slogans translate easily into different contexts and the Internet certainly provides a plausible avenue for the sharing of symbols (O'Neill 2004, 239–41; Pickerill and Webster 2006).

Figure 8. Australian Greens web site, December 2006. Note the prominence of the 'No War on Iraq' photo.

However, Bandy and Smith express ambivalence about the power of the Internet to provide the basis for coalition building, arguing that face-to-face meetings are more conducive to the creation of trusting relationships (2004, 234). Respondents confirm the view that 'contacts are built on personal networks [and] it's very hard to pass a network on' (Aggy, interview, Melbourne). This illustrates the distinction between hyperlink connections, which cross boundaries with relative ease and the formation of off-line transnational collective action, which remains restricted by geographical distance. There is also unevenness between our case countries. The fact that the Australian issue network included more internationally orientated hyperlinks demonstrates an attempt to use information from other countries to create feelings of solidarity; to an extent this may substitute for the far more difficult task of creating more formal transnational coalitions that would require much greater resources.

For all our case countries the diversity of hyperlink connections was not matched by evidence of equivalent off-line collaboration. The differences between groups were more divisive than the potential unity of sharing common goals. Thus, for example, formal alliances with the British StWC and the US were not possible because of political differences: '[StWC] wouldn't have done what some parts of the anti-war movement in America have recently done which is . . . they met representatives from what we regard as a puppet government in Iraq' (Robin Beste, interview, StWC). Such divisions were evident between many groups, but were more acute transnationally where the possibility of personal networks and face-to-face meetings through which to build trust were dramatically reduced. Some links were made internationally between disparate grassroots groups and some activists sought to build a decentralised transnationalism but such links remained reliant upon personal ties and rarely crossed ideological differences.

Conclusions

The foregoing discussion explores the role of ICTs in the process of transnational collective action. We highlight a distinction between the border-crossing hyperlink practices of anti-war web site authors and the existence of off-line transnational collaboration. Although the character of each on-line issue network was affected by national context, hyperlink structures do reach across both geographical boundaries and a variety of political strategies and foci. This became particularly pronounced in the search for relevant news and commentary from across the globe. The Australian network stood out as relatively highly connected to web sites focused on other countries. On-line activities create the appearance of diversity of anti-war movements and, therefore, affect the experience of the movement for those who encounter it on the Web. However, our interviewees noted the lack of face-to-face interaction necessary to enhance trust and offered only limited evidence of the sharing of non-informational resources. Consequently, activists' ability to build transnational ties for action was limited.

On-line anti-war networks are particularly suited to sharing symbolic expressions of solidarity. It is precisely these symbolic resources that often form the basis of bonds of the (imagined) solidarity that many activists seek.

Our analysis of qualitative data asks what meaning such connections have for grassroots activists. One respondent summed up this question particularly clearly:

> You're wanting a localism, you're wanting a reality and a directness ... but you're interested in the whole world. How do we really become global citizens and what does that mean? What does it mean to know all about what's happening in Italy? (John interview, Sydney)

'Being global' is less about building formal connections between international groups and far more about re-scaling the meaning of local actions to a global audience. This is achieved primarily by articulating a form of imagined solidarity, while simultaneously maintaining the importance of domestic issues. Robin Beste explained that although he used the Internet to scour global sites for information to put on the StWC web site – itself examined by Internet users around the world – he considered that 'it's what you do at home that counts' (Robin Beste, interview). Here we can distinguish activists' work as directing flows of information, on the one hand, and the actual mobilisation of opposition on the other. The Internet enables the former to cross national boundaries whereas the latter remains, for the most part, achieved primarily at national and local scales. This importance of being grounded in place, despite the possibilities the Internet offers, reflects the notion of 'rooted cosmopolitanism' introduced earlier (Tarrow 2005a, 2005b). So, although concrete action remains predominantly affixed to place and to the political context of the nation, Internet connections help activists locate their action within much broader movements. In so far as anti-war web sites link to a wide range of world-views they enable the construction of imagined solidarity. The value of informational linkages does not, therefore, lie in their potential for enabling more formal alliances between organisations (*pace* Diani 2001). Rather, we find that because the sharing of information across borders allows activists to gain a sense of solidarity, Internet networks help the rooted cosmopolitan to *feel* global.

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Appendix

Appendix 1. Web sites used as seed set for hyperlink analysis

Australia	UK	US
www.anti-bases.org	www.j-n-v.org	www.internationalanswer.org
www.ajpp.canberra.net.au	www.barewitness.org	www.legitgov.org
www.cairnspeacebypeace.org	www.caat.org.uk	www.codepink4peace.org
disobedience.nomasters.org	www.cnduk.org	www.space4peace.org
www.elaunceston.com/people/PEACE	cndyorks.gn.apc.org/caab	www.iraqpledge.org
www.nukefreeaus.org	www.networkforpeace.org.uk	www.michaelmoore.com
www.peaceconvergence.com	www.peaceexchange.org.uk	www.mfso.org
www.pinegap6.org	www.stopwar.org.uk	www.notinourname.net
www.stopwarcoalition.org	www.studentstopwar.org.uk	www.unitedforpeace.org
www.vicpeace.org	www.viwuk.freeserve.co.uk	www.veteransforpeace.org
www.womenforpeace.org.au	www.faslane365.org	www.votetoimpeach.org