

TRANSNATIONAL ANTI-WAR ACTIVISM: SOLIDARITY, DIVERSITY AND THE INTERNET IN AUSTRALIA, BRITAIN AND THE UNITED STATES AFTER 9/11

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Abstract

Eliminato: Biographical details:¶ Kevin Gillan recently completed a doctorate in Politics at the University of Sheffield on the impact of ideological traditions on contemporary social movements contesting globalisation and war. He is now a Lecturer in Sociology at the University of Manchester.¶ Jenny Pickerill is Lecturer in Human Geography at the University of Leicester. Her most recent book is *Cyberprotest: Environmental Activism Online* (2003) and she has written over a dozen journal articles on Internet activism.

The upsurge in activism that has opposed wars and occupations in Afghanistan and Iraq represents a significant process of transnational collective action. Using data collected through participant observation, interviews and website analysis this paper 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 place-based 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 online, international networking proves particularly useful. To an extent, online networks reach across both political diversity and geographical boundaries. However, online resources do not appear to enable the more personal connections required to build stable, working coalitions across borders.

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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 (Figure 1). Making similar arguments in a wide range of political contexts the anti-war campaigns have moved into the

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realm of transnational collective action, this being defined as a ‘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. Thus such activism is likely to include linkages made between national-level coalitions, ideological connections between chapters of similar organisations, or loose and informal ties between small 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).

Figure 1: No WMDs = No Need for War, London, March 2006^a



^a All photographs taken by Jenny Pickerill.

This paper seeks to explore the rise of this transnationalism in the anti-war protest arena, particularly in terms of the extent to which it is facilitated by use of the Internet. Given the understanding of transnational action provided above, it is likely to be interwoven with, and assisted by the Internet in so far as it offers a relatively inexpensive and highly efficient means of transcending geographical boundaries.

More generally, 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. The Internet has itself been a site of protest, with techniques of ‘hacktivism’ employed against the information networks of movement opponents. (Bennett, 2003; Norris, 2002; Dartnell, 2005; 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, the lack of personal engagement online, and the difficulty of building trust (Pickerill, 2003). Nevertheless, in addition 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 activity. The more central the Internet has come 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

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Eliminato: Castells argues that activist groups must be represented on the Internet or be consigned to irrelevance since ‘outside the media sphere there is only political marginality’ (1998, 312) and

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media' and those with close movement affiliations 'overwhelmingly received their information about the Iraq crisis through e-media' (Bennett and Givens 2006, 1, 17).

If new ICTs have enabled participation in recent anti-war activism, then, it seems likely that the Internet has also helped the anti-war movement cross borders. Indeed, one activist notes,

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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 paper examine the ways in which anti-war movements are represented online, the structures of hyperlinks that Internet users follow both within and across national boundaries, and interpretations of the online movement by grassroots anti-war activists.

We use this multi-method approach to unpack the multiple ways in which anti-war activists use ICTs in their transnational activism. Thus we use hyperlink analysis to broadly map what links activists seek. These links, while informative of some interesting trends (as we shall explore), are not indicative of formal alliances, collaboration, or shared goals. Their purpose is almost impossible to deduce without further evidence because one group can link to another, and use their informational resources, at near zero marginal cost. The site to which one is linked need not even know such a link exists. In other words, while hyperlinks may hint at a shared perspective we cannot make too broad an assumption on the intention of such links. Consequently, we go on to use qualitative data from interviews with activists to better understand what these online links might mean for their activism, and to infer the reason for some of the trends in linkages. Using this combination of data we are able to empirically explore the notion that Internet communication aids transnational collective action.

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To do so we examine anti-war activism in three countries: the US, Britain and Australia. All of these countries were 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 in terms of a common language, similar histories of radical protest against the excesses of capitalism, and commitment to liberal democracy and legitimate protest, increase the likelihood of transnational collective action across these countries. In addition, there is a strong probability for using the Internet to forge such connections since each country has high Internet access and usage rates. (International Telecommunications Union, 2006). Before presenting the details and findings from our empirical analysis, however, we offer a more detailed examination of difference and similarities among the anti-war movements in each country.

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Three Anti-War Movements

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 with them ... [because]

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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. (Gupta 2006; Meyer and Corrigan-Brown 2005). In Australia, organisations opposing the war on terror emerged at the state level, although no national coalition emerged (Morrow 2003).

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The demographic composition of these movements generally reflected that of earlier peace campaigns. In Britain this meant they tended to be composed of highly politicised, secularised, left-leaning individuals with high levels of education and professional status (Rüdiger and Eschle 2003). However, the increase in scale seen especially towards the end of 2002, resulted from the involvement of many new and reactivated 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 (Figure 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 Islamophobia. In Australia groups linked the introduction of new anti-terror legislation to the rise of anti-Muslim racism (see Figure 3). In the US, activists made use of the dominant post-911 cultural theme of patriotism, a tactic described by Maney, Woehrle & Coy (2005) as 'harnessing hegemony'. Thus, slogans such as 'dissent is patriotic' (Figure 4) and protests that referred explicitly to the deaths of American soldiers connected to the prevailing mood of national pride (Figure 5).

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Eliminato: But complex alliances between faith-based campaigners, secular leftists and others created a need to cope with diversity of worldviews; we will return to this issue in later sections.

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



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



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 extent, tracked changing public opinion. As war began 59% of Americans supported military action, 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 take military action in Iraq (Pew Research Center, 2007) and in Australia 55% opposed the war (Grattan,

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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 Australian activists protested the Joint Defence Facility military tracking station at Pine Gap and opposed the Sea Swap programme set up to support US Navy personnel. These alternative tactics reflect a wider range of political beliefs brought to the anti-war movements.

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In each country, anti-war activism was organised by a range of groups, some long-standing, and others new. An uneven web of connections between such groups took the form of coalition meetings, joint planning of protest, shared resources and overlapping membership. Formal national-level coalitions formed in Britain and the US, and this involved the sharing of a variety of resources; material, such as money or human resources, and those less tangible, such as trust or political backing. Such resources are harder to share in transnational collective action because they cannot be given freely and publicly and thus typically require a more formal structure within which to build trust and coordinate. Moreover, as noted earlier while we cannot make assumptions about why hyperlinks are made, we can view such links as very deliberate actions and not simply random choices. Thus we assume, for instance, that co-sponsors of demonstrations – as seen in the stable connection between StWC and CND in Britain – are likely to link to each other’s online resources, and we expect groups who communicate internationally to do the same. In other words, we would expect offline connections to be reflected in hyperlink patterns, but not necessarily vice a versa.

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Integrating Anti-war Movements Online

This section offers the results of an analysis of hyperlinks connecting websites that form the online anti-war movements. Hyperlinks connect discrete structures of information and may be understood as the fundamental building block of the World Wide Web (hereafter, Web), giving it its central network characteristic (Berners-Lee 2000, 17-33). We identify three hyperlink networks that stem from key anti-war websites in each of the three countries and investigate the characteristics of, and interrelations between,

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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: they are, in part at least, oriented to the same issue. By selecting a seed set of URLs that point to websites characteristic of a particular issue one defines the basis around which the resultant network will be built. The Issue Crawler then visits each site in the seed set, ‘reading’ the content of the homepage. We set the software to visit pages in each of the seed sites to a depth of two; that is, it followed internal links from the homepage to other pages within the site, these pages then being crawled for further internal links. It then identified the external hyperlinks contained in each page visited, creating a

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

³ A website is defined here by domain name, thus ‘internal hyperlinks’ refer to pages with the same domain (e.g. stopwar.org.uk), and ‘external hyperlinks’ refer to pages with different domain names.

list of linked websites.³ Through visiting every site in the seed set, Issue Crawler identifies a resulting 'issue network' through 'co-link analysis'. At this stage any pages that have only one hyperlink reference from another site are removed. Sites that receive links from two or more other sites are 'co-linked' and considered to be members of the issue network.

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

To identify our anti-war issue networks we first identified a series of prominent anti-war organisations in each country with websites, producing a total of 33 sites or 11 seed sites per country (see Appendix 1). Interview and observation data indicated that the anti-war movements tended to focus on pressuring their own national governments and on mobilising demonstrations in their capital cities. Since this was the active focus of the major anti-war organisations it was not surprising to find that the major anti-war websites also had a strong bias towards one nation. Beyond being focused on the relevant case country, the seed sites were chosen by two further criteria: they should be explicitly oriented to anti-war activities; and they should explicitly advocate activities outside of the sphere of institutional politics. Social movements are typically defined by a preference towards non-institutional collective action and by their characteristic claims and framings (della Porta and Diani 1999: 15-25). These criteria thereby 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.

To extend the depth of our analysis we then manually coded the content of the websites according to two dimensions – locale and website purpose. This was done by visiting each site in the network and reviewing the home page and linked internal pages. 'Locale' coding reflected the national focus of content of each website and was used to investigate the level of transnationalism evident in the networks. Coding of website purpose was designed to examine the extent to which networks were involved in promoting activities and issues beyond the anti-war focus. The specific coding categories on each dimension are detailed below.

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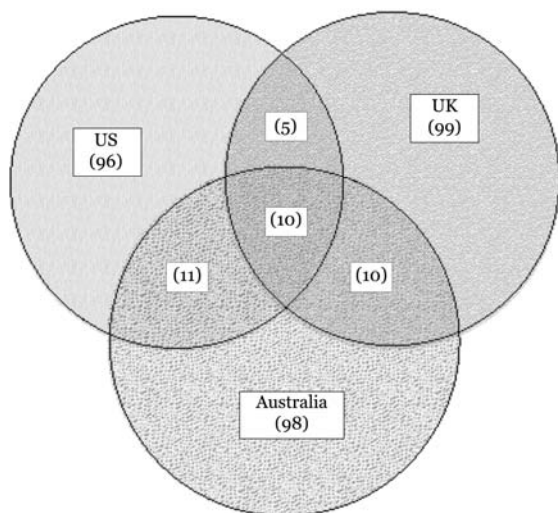
Network Overviews

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

⁴ The number of hyperlinks to follow in an issue network is potentially vast and would make the analysis consume very large server resources. The software therefore includes a maximum limit of one hundred websites in the resulting issue network. The raw data was cleaned to remove websites that were still linked to but no longer existed (and therefore unavailable for manual coding), thus resulting in less than one hundred sites per network. The following arguments not depend on the absolute number of websites in each network and thus the software limitation is not problematic – yes but this applies only if the 100 sites are representative of the full network? Can you claim this? Either representative or most central would do for this argument – still, one of these claims does need to be made explicitly.

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Figure 6: Proportional Venn Diagram Representing Network Overlap^a



^a Areas represent approximate proportionality, calculated using online software made available by Peter Rogers, University of Kent. URL: <http://www.cs.kent.ac.uk/people/staff/pjr/EulerVennCircles/EulerVennApplet.html>. Consulted 17 January 2007.

Ten sites were found to exist in all three networks and a further 26 websites were found in two of the networks. Nevertheless, despite minimal costs of visiting a website located anywhere, and the fact that our chosen cases share the same language, there remained a strong degree of national clustering. 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 – that create overlap zones in the diagram – more are linked with the Australian network. Exclusive overlap between Britain and US is smallest (5) while both those networks share twice that number of websites exclusively with Australia. This suggests more internationally oriented hyperlink practices within the Australian network, a finding which will be explored shortly.

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) ivaw.net (40)	cdnuk.org (36) basicint.org (26)	unitedforpeace.org (21) indymedia.org (20)

^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. Thus each relevant out-link is also an in-link for one of the other network members. By only counting in-links we therefore avoid double-counting.

^b ‘Mean in-link count’ is simply the ratio of total site-to-site links to the number of sites in the network.

^c ‘In-link count range’ gives the lowest and highest number of in-links received by one site in the network.

Table 1 presents an overview of each issue network. The three data columns present three separate network analyses, so where sites are present in more than one network they are counted in each network in which they were found. Any such site will have a different in-link count depending on which network it is in, since the surrounding set of websites is different. The raw in-link counts indicate that the US network is the most densely connected and Australia the least. The standardized scores (mean in-link counts) confirms this, showing that on average a US organisation in the network is linked to by 14 other websites while in the Australian network the figure is almost half that total. US network density is also reflected by the scores recorded for individual sites within it. The UFJP website records the highest number of in-links of any site in any of the networks, with over 50% of sites linking to it. Interestingly, however, the network produced from Australian seed sites also shows the UFPJ website to be its most highly in-linked site. Further analysis of the content of the UFPJ website reveals that it represents an organisation that is clearly American in both its location and its focus. The fact that a large number of Australian sites link to UFPJ, therefore, may reflect the lack of an Australian national coalition offline, as noted above.

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Analysis of Locales

The Venn diagram presented in Figure 6 above examined the degree of overlap across the networks, with websites 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. The finding of 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 website to define its geographic locale. In defining locale, the 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. Where 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.

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Table 2: Locale Compared Across National Networks and Network Overlap^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 Focus	National	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	98	93	35	205	240

^a All websites where the locale was identifiable were included; 8 cases were unidentifiable.

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 Figure 6. Each national network is found to be biased towards websites with locales in that nation. However, the strength of this bias is shown to vary considerably across networks. The US network is found to be 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 found to be the most geographically heterogenous, with less than half of its network being focused on Australia. The British network shows the strongest inclusion of internationally operating websites (such as the global nuclear disarmament network Abolition 2000) while the Australian network clearly contains the largest proportion of sites focused on nations other than its own (such as UFPJ or Veterans for Peace, both focused on the US). In total we find 37 sites (39.8%) out of the Australian online anti-war network are actually focused on single nations other than Australia.

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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 websites have an Australian locale, whereas over 50% have a US locale. So, while 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.

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Analysis of Website Types

- Table 3 examines the types of site represented in the online anti-war networks. The first five categories may be considered as social movement sites while the latter two are non-movement sites. The categories were developed in order to reflect the range of purposes that the websites and wider organisations that they represent had.

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Table 3: Website Types Compared Across National Networks and Network Overlaps

By Network

By Site

Website Type	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	4.3	10 (10.3)	3 (3.3)	1 (2.9)	15 (7.5)	16 (6.8)
Totals	92	97	90	34	201	235

Each online 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 differences between the networks. First, within the US network, peace *protest* sites are dominant while within the British network, it is rather peace *lobby* sites that predominate. Second, ‘movement media and services’ sites 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. While 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. The distinction can also be seen in relation to wider protest sites: while all networks contain only a small proportion of wider protest sites these are most important in the Australian network.

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Eliminato: It is, perhaps, unsurprising to find such distinctions given the fact that each of the networks is quite strongly oriented to the particular political contexts of each nation. More surprising, however, is a third finding:

When comparing those sites with transnational linkages (those situated in the overlap of the three networks) we find that these sites are much more likely to be in the category ‘movement media and services’ than to be sites that promote particular issues (either peace or others) through either protest or lobbying. The only other category that is more heavily represented (proportionally) in the overlapping zone than outside of it are mainstream media, with the BBC and the Guardian being important examples. 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

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degree of implicit agreement among website authors from each country over which news sources are most relevant, than over which protest or lobby sites are most significant.

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Being Global – Diversity and Solidarity on the Internet

Our analysis of hyperlinks highlighted a limited set of international linkages between the anti-war movements of the three countries and a number of characteristic differences between them. The most striking distinctions are related to the Australian network. The Australian anti-war movement, as it appears online, is only loosely interconnected and is dependent on informational resources provided by anti-war movements in other countries and by the environmental movement in Australia. The Australian anti-war movement may well be affected by the ‘tyranny of distance’ that Capling and Nossal (2001) describe in anti-globalisation activism. One respondent explained,

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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 appear to offer an online remedy for a lack of domestic anti-war resources and the perception of distance from other movements. Describing the fact of online 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 online national and international links and how far these map to their offline or face-to-face connections.

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Method

Qualitative material was collected through in-depth interviews and participant and online 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 worldview, activity and scale of organisation.⁵ Our analysis of these data focuses on two much-discussed themes – diversity and solidarity – which are particularly relevant in the context of transnational collective action.

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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 New York anti-war activists.

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 groups, such as Justice Not Vengeance in Britain, define their primary purpose as exactly to provide such resources for other campaigners (Milan Raj interview, Hastings). While this confirms the picture we presented above, respondents referred to further morale-boosting benefits of connecting to other anti-war groups online, 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).

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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 closely identified 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). This was 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). Solidarity may thus be ‘built upon embodied experiences and mutuality’ (Sundberg 2007, 162) and solidarity across struggles may aid creation of new identities (Featherstone 2005, 268).

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 online. 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 ... that we built up networks of international correspondents 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 described above, there was a preponderance of alternative and mainstream media websites in the overlap between the issue networks identified for our three case countries. This represents a small set of media websites linked to by a relatively large number of sites in all of the three networks.

Respondents repeatedly report frustration with the lack of coverage of anti-war ideas and activities within mainstream media. There are two remedies found on the Web. First, website authors can be highly selective in their choice of mainstream media, linking only to sites that offer some satisfactory coverage of the anti-war movement. This would explain why website authors are clearly willing to look across borders for sources of news, and thus why there is a strong commonality in which sources are considered appropriate to link to. Second, website authors can utilise the available alternative media, again selecting for those sites that offer satisfactory coverage. Moreover, 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 online since the structure of Indymedia is designed to prioritise place-rooted action while offering communication at a global scale. (Pickerill, 2007).

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Diversity in Collective Action

In our analysis of website types above we have shown that the three anti-war networks differed in terms of their activist orientation. Within the US network peace *protest* sites were most commonly found while within the British network, peace *lobby* sites predominated. Within the Australian network it was the *wider* lobby sites that proved most common, particularly those oriented to environmental concerns. Overall, our findings on website type indicate a degree of political diversity across the networks that supports the conclusions about 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). Figure 7 displays the physical co-presence of a range of groups on one demonstration. Similarly, US anti-war coalitions include divisions between 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 routes (Burgman, 2003). Friends of the Earth, the Australian Greens (Figure 8), Democratic Socialist Party, and Resistance (a socialist youth organisation) all took centre stage in key anti-war demonstrations.

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



Figure 8: Australian Greens website, December 2006, note prominence of 'No War on Iraq' photo.



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).

Use of ICTs, illustrated by the diversity that is embodied in hyperlink practices of anti-war movements, may both reflect that found in the offline environment and serve to enhance and expand it. Tarrow argues that 'all shifting and reticular movements reduce ideological cohesion, but the internet 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 organisations, the Jews against Zionism organisations. (Arif Sayeed interview, ISS, Leicester)

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

However, Bandy and Smith are ambivalent 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).

There is a distinction here between hyperlink practices which cross boundaries with relative ease, creating a seemingly diverse network, and the formation of offline transnational collective action. There is also unevenness between our case countries. Australia has an internationally orientated hyperlink practice and is thus most heterogeneous in its hyperlinks. The US is the most homogenous in its links, but is highly linked to by groups from other countries (perhaps because Iraq is increasingly viewed as a US-led war). Thus from hyperlinks analysis we would expect Australian groups to be seeking transnational collective action more than we would US groups.

For all our case countries, however, the diversity of hyperlinks was not matched by evidence of equivalent offline collaboration. As in much activism, 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 has 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

This article explores the role of ICTs in the process of transnational collective action between anti-war movements in Britain, US and Australia. We identified a distinction between the hyperlink practices of anti-war groups and the existence of collaborative transnational activism. The character of each issue network was affected by national context, but the hyperlink practices of web authors do reach across both geographical and political boundaries especially in the search for relevant news and commentary from across the globe. The Australian network stood out as particularly connected to websites focused on other countries. Online activities then are facilitating the diversity of anti-war movements and their pluralistic alliances. However, interviewees noted the lack of face to face interaction necessary to enhance trust and resistance (or inability) to share non-informational resources which consequently limited their ability to build transnational ties for action.

However, online 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

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It is worth contrasting the notion of transnational collective action that we have been using throughout, to the more formal coalition structures found within national-level anti-war activism. Where resources are shared in transnational collective action it is because they are given freely and publicly. Indeed, information (especially when transmitted via the Internet) has that peculiar potential to be widely consumed at near zero marginal cost. Coalitions typically involve the sharing of other resources, whether material, such as money or human resources, or less tangible, such as trust or political backing. Because such resources cannot be shared as freely, coalitions typically require a more formal structure.

Eliminato: National coalitions used the Internet as an international linking mechanism very little, 'there was a tension between sectarianism and ... [the] Internet ... because sectarianism requires the channelling of ... [1]

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what meaning such connections have for grassroots activists; one respondent summed up this question particularly well:

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 while he used the Internet to scour global sites for information to put on the StWC website – 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 international efforts in terms of flows of information and the actual mobilisation of opposition. The latter is highly national for the most part, but the former is much easier across the Internet. This importance of being grounded in place, despite the possibilities the Internet offers reflects what Tarrow (2005a, 2005b) has termed 'rooted cosmopolitanism'. That is a primary commitment to the domestic arena at the same time as an investment in the need for transnational linkages.

Importantly, while the Internet may be celebrated for giving the user access to a diversity of opinions, and while anti-war website authors may link, promiscuously, to sites with a range of worldviews, such connectivity does not seem to encourage the creation of more formal coalitions across political boundaries. However, by enabling imagined solidarity, Internet networks help the rooted cosmopolitan to *feel* global and thus the lesson of transnational collective action might be that the value of such ties are not reliant on formal structures (Diani 2001). Nevertheless, concrete action remains predominantly affixed to place and to the political context of the nation.

Eliminato: We conclude that online anti-war networks are particularly suited to sharing symbolic expressions of solidarity.

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Appendix 1 – Starting Points for Hyperlink Analysis

Table 4: Websites Used as 'Starting Points' for Issue Crawler 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.cairnspacebypeace.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.freeseve.co.uk	www.veteransforpeace.org
www.womenforpeace.org.au	www.faslane365.org	www.votetoimpeach.org

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Eliminato: Castells, M. 1998. *The Power of Identity: The Information Age - Economy, Society and Culture – Volume II*. Oxford: Blackwell.¶

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National coalitions used the Internet as an international linking mechanism very little, 'there was a tension between sectarianism and ... [the] Internet ... because sectarianism requires the channelling of communications between leaderships... [StWC] always wanted to just negotiate face-to-face with whoever they decided was their opposite number in the United States' (Mike Marqusee interview, London). Even so, formal alliances across the Atlantic were not possible because of political difference: '[StWC] wouldn't have done what some parts of the anti-war movement in America has recently done which is... they met representatives from what we regard as a puppet government in Iraq' (Robin Beste, interview, StWC).

At the national level wide-ranging political diversity came together in (relatively) stable coalitions, yet beyond national borders and the possibility of personal networks, coalitions floundered.

Thus, diversity may limit the potential for transnational coalitions. Hyperlink practices cross such boundaries with relative ease, creating a diverse issue network.

That form of interaction may be possible partly because there is little need for a commitment of resources; indeed, one may link one's website to any other resource without the owner of that resource necessarily knowing. Additionally, visual symbols and simple slogans translate more easily into different contexts (O'Neill 2004, 239-41) and the Internet certainly provides a plausible avenue for the sharing of symbols (Pickerill and Webster 2006). But, it is precisely the symbolic resources that might form the basis of bonds of the (imagined) solidarity that many activists seek. The lesson of transnational collective action might be that the

Through examining online issue networks connected with anti-war movements in each case country we highlighted (limited) transnational connections across nationally clustered website groupings. The character of each issue network was affected by national context, but nevertheless, the hyperlink practices of web authors do reach across both geographical and political boundaries especially in the search for relevant news and commentary from across the globe. The Australian network stood out as particularly connected to websites focused on other countries. Overall, this data confirms Tarrow's notion of rooted cosmopolitans, since the Internet facilitates the location of one's locally-based action in a transnational context.