PRESS CONFERENCES OR PUPPETS

NGOS' VS. STREET GROUPS' COMMUNICATION IN THE BATTLE OF SEATTLE

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Abstract

This article analyses the types of communication tactics and frames employed by various groups leading up to and during the massive resistance to the Seattle meeting of the World Trade Organisation in November 1999. Participant observation and frame analysis are employed to analyse the communication practices and messages of those groups protesting against the WTO. Organised institutions such as Nongovernmental Organisations (NGOs) tended to adopt a reformist frame, using professional communication routines and bureaucratic language, designed in part to appeal to the mainstream media. Decentralised "street movement" groups often employed a radical frame and grass-roots participatory communication tactics, which drew in part on a postmodern culture jamming ethos that sought to disrupt and resist the very existence of the WTO. These findings suggest that this new global movement should not be analysed as a monolith and that ultimately a social movement's approach to media embodies important messages beyond mere content.

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Introduction

On the eve of the end of the 20th century, the core business district of one of the "high tech meccas" in the United States, a city touted as an exemplar of the benefits of global trade, was literally shut down. The streets were clogged with nearly 50,000 protesters, some of them successfully turning back international trade delegates from conducting their planned millennial ministerial of the World Trade Organisation (WTO). Civil disobedience and direct action were met with a massive police response which resulted eventually in the presence of the U.S. National Guard as Seattle's mayor declared a state of emergency. Most Americans were taken by surprise as these events unfolded on their television sets. Many had never even heard of the WTO. By week's end, however, the city formerly known for coffee, grunge and dot com entrepreneurs, would become a global symbol for thousands of grassroots groups' resistance to what they described as increasingly insidious global corporate power.

This article analyses the types of communication tactics and frames employed by various advocacy and civic groups leading up to and during the massive resistance to the Seattle meeting of the WTO. In particular, it compares the communication forms and content from two different sorts of groups: Organised institutions (Nongovernmental Organisations) compared with less structured, decentralised groups – sometimes called the "street movement" (Yuen 2002, 17). Analysis revealed that NGOs adopted a reformist frame, using professional communication routines and bureaucratic language, designed in part to appeal to the mainstream media, while street groups employed a radical frame and communication tactics that sought to disrupt and resist the very existence of the WTO. Understanding the differences between these groups in terms of their use of media is important in part because studies of social movements often overlook the divisions within such multifaceted movements, treating them as monoliths. Assessing the complexity of their communication forms can help us more fully comprehend these movements.

Framework for Analysis

This project takes social movement theory as its framework, drawing from two different strands: the concept of resource mobilisation and the social constructivist concept of "framing." Resource mobilisation, which came to prominence in the 1970s in the United States following the social change actions of the 1960s, examines how social movements use mobilising structures to facilitate collective action (McCarthy and Zald 1977). Mobilising structures consist of those agreed upon means of engaging in collective action (McAdam, McCarthy and Zald 1996). In general, such structures tend to be groupings of people (a church group, a neighbourhood group, a union), and their tactics, which can range from bombing a building to a holding sit-in. Scott and Street (2000) argue that despite movements appearing in what may be new organisational forms, resource mobilisation remains a valid tool for examining today's social movements. Nevertheless, resource mobilisation has been criticised for ignoring cultural and ideological explanations in understanding social change. In response to those criticisms, others have focused on the more symbolic aspects of social movements such as their construction of shared meanings to legitimate collective actions (McAdam, McCarthy and Zald 1996; Snow and Benford 1988).

Some researchers have focused specifically on the concept of movement "framing." Framing is a cognitive act that all humans engage in as they actively process information in an attempt to make sense of the world. First recognised by Bateman in the 1950s as a concept to explain how humans experience reality, framing was later identified more clearly by Goffman (1974), who noted that the human brain needed an organising means to make sense of all that it experiences. He called that conceptual tool "framing." The notion of a frame was exported into other disciplines and arenas including media studies where researchers such as Tuchman (1978) and Gitlin (1980) used it to explain how the news media operate, by including and excluding certain viewpoints within news articles. Snow and Benford (1988; 1992) applied the concept to the study of social movements, arguing that a social movement defines a problem through a diagnostic frame as well as recommending actions or strategies for solving the problem through a prognostic frame. That is, a frame tells us what is important and what to focus on, while it also tells us what is not important, by what it leaves out. A frame can evoke previous experiences and through these trigger expectations for how to interpret current information and experiences. Frames are not fixed, but ongoing processes subject to change over time. Nevertheless, much framing research seeks a snapshot of a particular frame or frames at a specific moment. In terms of a social movement, a frame can help attract and retain movement actors as well as suggest to outside entities, especially the news media, how to interpret grievances and actions.

Should researchers rely solely on one of these analytical tools – resource mobilisation or framing – to study social movements? Some researchers argue that it might be appropriate to use both tools in conjunction (Taylor and Whittier 1992; Ingalsbee 1996). Thus, this paper examines both mobilising structures as well as meaning-making processes evident in the frames produced by these tactics. While the role of communication has been acknowledged as important in social movement research, it is an understudied area. What has been written tends to focus on the role of mainstream media. Taking a step toward rectifying the dearth of literature, this article provides an in-depth examination of the frames evoked as well as the communication tactics of social movement actors involved in protesting against the World Trade Organisation meeting. The analysis is based on participant observation research at anti-WTO events over nine months in Seattle in 1999. The Seattle protests were chosen as a case study because they were a prototype for a series of global protests that have followed and are continuing in the early 21st century. They were notable for a number of reasons – the protests were one of the largest and most visible challenges to economic globalisation to take place in the United States. Many of the tactics, from use of the Internet to its organisational forms, were subsequently imitated and built upon at demonstrations that followed. In short, Seattle has become a shorthand term for a new global justice movement.

Observations included attending marches, rallies, teach-ins, press conferences, lectures, town hall forums, video screenings, debates, demonstrations, street theatre, and other events. At each of these, I took notes, talked with participants and collected reports, brochures, fliers, posters, comics, press releases, reports, bumper stickers, T-shirts, press clippings and other items being distributed; I also subscribed to seven e-mail lists and monitored more than two dozen websites at least twice a week or more. All these items were examined for key terms, phrases, and images.

More generally, what did they claim was the problem? What did they see as the solution? What sort of language was used to talk about the problems and solutions? Were the processes of creating these messages open to all movement members or only a select few? I also conducted interviews with eight key organisers from the economic justice, environmental and alternative media communities. To supplement this original research, I also examined oral history interviews and protest materials collected by the University of Washington's WTO History Project. Following the recommendations of Johnston (2002) on verification and proof of social movement framing, I supply detailed examples pulled from the specific "texts" (here interpreted to include all the materials described above).

Background to the WTO Meeting in Seattle

Although little known, the WTO was formed in the 1940s and is technically part of the United Nations. From intellectual property rights to investment rules, the WTO claims its mission is to oversee world trade agreements including disputes, global policies, etc. The WTO has some enforcement power, and if it rules against a country, it can seek punitive measures. Staffed by around 500 trade officials, the WTO is headquartered in Geneva, Switzerland, although the organisation holds regular meetings in other locations (after the Seattle protests, they held their meeting on a ship off the coast of Qatar.)

Today, the WTO is seen by some as a tool for supporting neo-liberal economic policies that are particularly touted by and often benefit the United States and Europe or at least corporations based in those areas. Many NGOs and citizen groups see the WTO as an undemocratic organisation working against the welfare of regular citizens (Beck and Danaher 2000; Shrybman 1999). Advisory committees are seen as stacked with representatives for the corporate world with no representatives for other interests such as labour or the environment. Its rules are highly complicated and oftentimes only a handful of lawyers around the world can even understand them. Some citizen groups believe this obfuscation is designed to keep ordinary people and the governments of poorer countries from understanding the organisation's work (Beck and Danaher 2000; Shrybman 1999).

Seattle was not the first challenge to the WTO; the Global South and European groups had already been protesting against the organisation. In North America, some pre-existing opposition came out of the early 1990s challenge to NAFTA (North American Free Trade Agreement), an earlier trade agreement between the United States, Canada and Mexico, and the opposition to the MAI (Multilateral Agreement on Investment). When the Seattle meeting location was announced, a large coalition of groups formed to organise the protests.

Oppositional Actors in Seattle

That a number of such groups immediately reacted to the announcement of the meeting was not surprising. Just as a decline in the nation state has led to an emphasis on international organisations such as the WTO, so it has also seen the rise of non-state actors around the world, especially Nongovernmental Organisations (NGOs) who have increasingly become important players in global politics. While some NGOs have taken up the social services work the state now forgoes, others concentrate on education, monitoring of governments and corporations,

advocacy, and attempting to shape public agendas (Clark 1990; Fisher 1998; Simmons 1998). NGOs are now said to be constituting a global associational revolution; however, there is often disagreement on how to define or classify them (Salamon 1994).

In terms of the Seattle protests, researchers have tended to lump all groups under an NGO label. Smith and Smythe (2001) identified NGOs as the primary organisers of the opposition to the WTO; Wall (2002) describes all organised groups participating in the Seattle protests as NGOs, defining them as non-profit, voluntary, private organisations that include a broad spectrum ranging from grass-roots groups to large transnational institutions. Smith (2001) differentiates between groups based on their transnational ties, while De Armond (2001), writing for the conservative think tank RAND, grouped Seattle participants into networks, anarchists and labour.

In this article, groups will be defined as either a) NGOs, which here represents established private, non-profit institutions or networks of such groups, which activist Kristine Wong (2002) calls "elite supergroups ... [that] articulated and marketed the 'fair trade not free trade' demand"; or as b) what Yuen (2002) calls the "street movement" groups, often based on informal, non-hierarchical networks of individuals and affinity groups, articulating a more radical message (Wong 2002, 216; Yuen 2002, 17). Establishment NGOs is the chosen term here because the groups operate in a more bureaucratic manner than say the anarchists and because they aim much of their efforts at reaching the establishment. "Street groups" seems an appropriate label in part because these outfits concentrated so much of their efforts on street activity. A more specific description of each group follows.

NGOs: "Elite Super Groups"

Among the NGOs who have been identified as playing a key role in organising the protests are Public Citizen, Sierra Club, Friends of the Earth International, Greenpeace, Transnational Institute, Council of Canadians, Corporate Europe Observatory, Earthjustice, International Forum on Globalization, Institute for Agriculture and Trade Policy, Oxfam, Global Exchange and others (Thomas 2000; Eagleton-Pierce 2001; Wall 2002). Most of these groups share a number of characteristics. They are well-established entities, ensconced in specific "power" cities such as Washington, D.C., San Francisco, and London. While they are operating from a liberal or left of centre perspective, their views are generally emanating from within the rich countries of the Northern Hemisphere, especially the United States. The geographic exceptions among these established NGOs appeared to be the Third World Network, headquartered in Penang, and Focus on the Global South, based in Bangkok. NGOs are generally staffed by well-educated, white upper and middle class professionals, often adept in policy analysis and legal issues. Often internationally oriented, such NGOs are generally supported by foundation grants from major founders such as the Ford Foundation, Charles Stewart Mott, Solidago Foundation, as well as donations.

In February, shortly after the WTO announced it would meet in Seattle in November, members of some of these NGOs were holding planning meetings in Washington, D.C., discussing teach-ins, fund raising, and the message they hoped to deliver. When representatives from those meetings arrived a few weeks later in

Seattle to begin organising, they told local grassroots activists who called for a more radical approach that partner organisations would not cooperate unless a reform message was offered. The NGOs set up a week's worth of events, designating each day with a theme ("Environment Day," or "Agricultural Day"), which would feature NGO-sponsored panels of experts as well as marches and other activities. As one Seattle student noted: "Dolan [Mike Dolan, lead organiser from Public Citizen] and D.C. just came in and said, 'We're going to do this, day one will be this, day two will be this,' and it was a Eurocentric analysis and a Eurocentric program" (Ghosh 2000). Many of these NGOs also registered with the WTO in order to attend officially sanctioned events.

Street Groups

In contrast, a bevy of street groups, which tended to support a more radical-oriented approach was also organising, sometimes in conjunction with the NGOs and sometimes on their own. Groups included People's Assembly/Sentenaryo ng Bayan, the Black Bloc, Reclaim the Streets, the Independent Media Center and other Seattle-based groups including the Community Coalition for Environmental Justice (CCEJ). The prominent umbrella group was the Direct Action Network, which incorporated People's Global Action (PGA), Ruckus Society, EarthFirst!, Rainforest Action Network, Art & Revolution as well as Seattle community groups. The geographic "home" of these groups varies and in some cases is not clear. Art & Revolution, the Ruckus Society and Rainforest Action Network are all based in the San Francisco Bay area. PGA is a global network affiliated with the global Zapatista movement, although a key mover with this group in the Seattle protests was working out of Philadelphia; the Filipino People's Assembly describes itself as a "forum" with a global membership. The Black Bloc, while associated in media accounts with Eugene, Oregon, was also a diffuse group from multiple locations, and according to L.A. Kauffman (2002), they were also not mostly male as media reports had it. The Independent Media Center was spearheaded by media activists in Seattle, New York and San Francisco. Like the establishment NGOs, many of the street groups tended to be made up of Northern Hemisphere members (with some exceptions such as People's Assembly). While there seems to be more people of colour associated with these groups, they too have been criticised for representing a white, middle class point of view (Wong 2002). The most prominent of the radical groups, the Direct Action Network, was predominantly white, "young and fairly experienced radicals" (Guilloud 2002, 227). DAN was also accused of fostering an atmosphere that some people of colour found inhospitable (Martinez 2000). The street groups tended to be less hierarchical and based on loose networks of affinity groups. They were often headed by a younger set of leaders, who tended to have fewer professional qualifications than the NGOs' leaders.

Most had access to fewer funds and other material resources than the establishment NGOs. Some survived on donations and contributions of labour from group members while others such as Ruckus take funds from foundations and other grant-making entities (Working Assets, a private telephone company in the United States with slightly left of centre, has funded Ruckus); during the Seattle protests, Public Citizen provided some funds for DAN as well as the PGA caravan project.

During the first months of organising, a split between the more established

NGOs and the more loosely organised street groups developed. The institutional-affiliated mainstream NGOs articulated a reformist message that called for the WTO to stop and assess the damage it had done so far. On the other side, radicals called for a dismantling of the WTO and a challenge to capitalism itself. In the following assessment, the communication tactics of both groups will be examined. Because the NGOs and the street groups offered two different frames, each will first be examined separately, then compared with each other.

The Mainstream NGO Theme: "No New Round, Turnaround"

The NGOs tended to be better funded, larger, more mainstream organisations such as the Sierra Club, Third World Network, Consumers International and Public Citizen. Among their key communication tactics: courting or relying the mainstream media by staging press conferences and purchasing advertisements or commercials in the mainstream media; hosting teach-ins at various venues including schools, churches and even Seattle's premier performance hall; producing reports and analyses; hosting a media centre where NGOs held press conferences for the mainstream media; and sponsoring a WTO ministerial-week newspaper that appeared in print and online. An important element in many of these tactics was the emphasis on collaborating with mainstream media.

Their message: The WTO is a flawed institution; thus the Seattle ministerial should not be the launch of a new round of trade negotiations, but rather a pause used to assess what damage had been done by previous rulings and to "turnaround" those rulings and rules which are harmful to the environment, labour and human rights. NGOs provided a critique of the WTO's values, structure and performance. The problem was presented as the "trading away" of the environment, animal rights, etc., implying that the WTO has struck a bad deal, rather than arguing against the existence of the institution itself. Instead, they argued, the dispute lies with the definitions or terms of trade (i.e., free trade versus fair trade) and with the WTO's priorities, which were depicted as misplaced. Because democracy and accountability are assumed to be part of the existing political system, the NGO reformists ultimately sought to make the system work, and not to overthrow it.

The language and images used were about rules, policies and procedures – generally the same sorts of terms likely to be used by the WTO and other bureaucratic entities. They reflect a level of professionalisation within the ranks of the NGOs. For example, they employed legal language in a full-page Earthjustice Environmental Defense Fund advertisement which ran in the October 12, 1999, *Seattle Times*. The text of the advertisement read in part,

> *The committees advising the U.S. delegation to the WTO are made up of timber and paper industry executives ... Scientists, labour representatives, and environmentalists have been excluded from the panels. Having stacked committees is not only wrong; it's illegal under the Federal Advisory Committee Act.*

For NGOs, the motivation for solving the problem revolved around the WTO's lack of accountability including its antidemocratic tendencies and lack of citizen input. To make this argument, they often relied on empirical evidence seen in their

use of data-driven charts and graphs. Such information was well-documented and pulled together in glossy reports and briefs, designed to convey credibility and an expertise with the issues.

The NGOs suggested that the problem could be solved by citizens taking actions such as contacting politicians or changing their consumer habits. In a glossy brochure with colour photographs of Third World coffee workers picking beans, the Dutch Network of European Worldshops suggested countering the WTO and the corporations it represented through buying fair trade coffee and thus "do business in a fair way with respect for people and the environment." The website of the U.K.-based Consumer International argued that the solution is to "improve the profile of consumer issues and build capacity within the consumer movement to influence decision making... No Millennium Round until a review and the system is reformed." These arguments were based on assumptions that governments would listen to and make changes based on citizen input. Thus, NGOs assumed individual citizens have a real impact on the WTO through individual choices and actions.

This reformist message was also disseminated via a special newspaper produced during WTO week in Seattle. Earthjustice Legal Defense Fund, the Institute for Agriculture and Trade Policy, Friends of the Earth International, International Forum on Globalization, Public Citizen, and Sea Turtle Restoration Project published *The World Trade Observer* tabloid newspaper daily during the week of the Ministerial. Available in print and online editions, the *Observer's* intended audience was the media, outside activists, official delegates and other observers. While the paper covered the protests, it also offered issue-oriented stories such as features on eliminating export subsidies for agriculture or an explanation of the Pacific Declaration on Biotechnology in Genetic Engineering. The paper aspired to an insider's view of the negotiations with the aim of influencing the meetings, not cancelling them. Those producing the paper were almost all experts in their own areas who were paid staffers of various national or international NGOs. Their goal was to be taken seriously by the trade delegates and other elites while still presenting an alternative, reformist view.

The NGOs differed especially from the street groups with their tactic of relying on the mainstream media. This meant that messages had to be presented in a language, format and setting that was attractive to mainstream media. For example, the sponsors of a billboard/bus ad campaign in Seattle – a group of 15 including the AFL-CIO, Earthjustice Legal Defense Fund, the Seattle Audubon Society, and United Steelworkers of America[1] – staged a press conference choreographed by the Environmental Media Services (EMS), a Washington, D.C., based public relations outfit hired to secure media coverage of mainstream environmental organisations' arguments against the WTO. Funded by Seattle's Bullitt Foundation which focuses on environmental issues, EMS ensured that the press conference conformed to the expectations and practices of mainstream media, from providing sound-bites to visuals (life-size versions of the bus ads were plastered around the room) to coaching the sources toward legitimacy ("wear ties") and a consensus message that was not polarising. An EMS representative said,

> *You need a consensus message, not a polarizing one. You'll be happier with the [mainstream media] coverage ... You need a message that a broad range can relate to – those people who read the PI [Seattle Post-Intelligencer], Times*

[Seattle Times]. That's who their viewers are. The radical stuff turns them off. Some members of the activist community may view my viewpoint as collaborating.

The Street Movement Mantra: "Resist the World Trade Organization"

In contrast, the street groups relied on a different set of tactics including staging street theatre with puppets and musical acts; showing amateur videos; broadcasting pirate radio; distributing fliers at coffee-houses, shops, schools and on the streets; and working with the Independent Media Center. Their message suggested that the problem is corporate power itself, emphasising the potential loss of freedom and the need to resist and ultimately get rid of the WTO. For example, the website of the Direct Action Network noted that "leaders of transnational corporations, governments, and an army of bureaucrats come to the World Trade Organization's Summit to further their drive for profits, to control our political, economic and cultural life and nature. Their new strategy to concentrate power and wealth, while neutralising people's resistance, is called economic globalization."

Whereas the NGOs talk the same language of the ministerial attendees, the street groups speak a more emotional language designed at least in part to stir passions, but also to tap into a youth oriented approach drawing in part on a postmodern appropriation of rave culture, DIY attitudes toward technology and culture jamming consumer icons.

For the street groups, the motivation comes from an outrage over corporate greed and related problems inherent in the capitalist system. Yet, this serious message is combined with a focus on making demonstrations and taking over the streets fun. This is seen in the performances of the Radikal Cheerleaders who appeared at various street demonstrations and direct actions as well as at more structured events including an unexpected disruption of a town hall meeting featuring Clinton administration officials, local politicians and representatives from establishment NGOs. These groups of young men and women, sometimes coifed in mismatched pigtails, dressed in outfits that made them look like slovenly versions of "real" cheerleaders. Their anti-WTO chants punctuated WTO protest street performances with messages such as: "The corporations have blood on their hands. ... Stop corporate greed." In the many street theatre gatherings, the WTO was represented by a giant capitalist puppet which wanted to devour the earth and its resources. These towering figures held aloft with long poles were painted to look as if they were wearing a suit; they might carry a sign with slogans such as, "Our earth and health OR WTO profits."

For the street groups, the solution lay in direct action and civil disobedience. In the Radikal Cheerleaders' performances, they chanted, "When so few own so much, it's time to take a stand. Take back the power." Organised groups scaled iconic stores such as Old Navy to unfurl banners inspiring individual protesters to climb the Nike store balcony and kick apart the store's sign. Fliers produced by unnamed groups promoted the protests as "Street festival to: End corporate rule. In unity and diversity there is strength ... Music, giant puppets, theatre and you!!! Celebrate!" The emphasis was on "you" and what an ordinary person can do about putting an

"end to corporate rule." Resistance becomes a rave-like celebration. Thus, the street groups' language often spoke directly to individuals in personal, welcoming tones with the message that one doesn't need to read reports and position papers to partake in political actions. Most striking was the celebratory, festive tone that emphasised fun rather than the serious nature of these activities.

The communication tactics associated with the street groups tended to be less formal and less oriented toward establishing credibility with the mainstream media. For example, materials often had no by-lines or similar indication of authorship, and they relied on emotional and/or cultural appeals as opposed to presenting a fact-supported argument. Many of these communication methods also were more open to direct public participation. For example, street theatre and puppets provided participants on the street with an opportunity to take part. The emphasis was not just on challenging the WTO, but also on having a good time. Materials reflecting a more radical message were distributed informally. Fliers were posted at shops, coffee houses and illegal spots such as on U.S. Post Office boxes and telephone poles (illegal in Seattle). Other informal venues included video screenings such as at a micro cinema, pirate radio broadcasts, and spoken word performances at music clubs. Some of these methods were illegal (pirate radio, for example); all required in general less professional knowledge or skills than was seen with the NGO message distribution.

In fact, much of the creative culture jamming in Seattle – from the banner hangs at Old Navy to tearing down the Nike sign to the Radikal cheerleaders – seems to embody a postmodern political message; one challenging – not celebrating – capitalism's mass consumerism. While it has been debated whether a postmodern message can also resist capitalism, one need only look to examples such as the Situationists who countered the "spectacle" of consumerist capitalist society in 1960s France with a "pleasure-seeking ... popular resistance" to see a precedent for many of the communication tactics of the Seattle protests (Debord 1977; Plant 1992, 1). Indeed, Plant (1992) identifies the Situationists' ideas and practices as the "tyre tracks of the style, vocabulary, and scope ... run[ning] across postmodernism" (1, 5).

Finally, perhaps the most significant tactic amongst the radical groups was the creation of an Internet-based independent news operation to cover the events that week. The grassroots Independent Media Center (IMC) produced a daily newscast for satellite distribution, live streaming on the Internet, and the *Blind Spot*, a special "zine created for the ministerial which represented the protesters" points of view. The all-volunteer, collectively run media Center sought to counter the corporate media version of the week's happenings. Anyone could participate in the production of its news, and hundreds of volunteers worked together to do so. Some were professionally trained journalists, others were not. The IMC aimed to give ordinary people a chance to tell their own stories. Those who used the IMC facilities were required to register and sign a set of rules that included no violent behaviour or "abusive language or behavior that is racist, homophobic or sexist." The pledge also included an agreement to work volunteer shifts and share 50 percent of compensation for any content produced or distributed using IMC resources. Their web site received one million hits that week, and around 100 other IMCs have subsequently been launched around the United States and the world based on this model. One Seattle-based IMC organiser described it as:

Decentralised. It was inspired by the Media and Democracy Congress where [Subcommadante] Marcos called for a decentralised independent media. We're trying to work toward that sort of grassroots media. This project is an opportunity to test these ideas and assess them ... we're learning not just how to make media but to have respective interactions with people. That what's going to change society ... [its] affinity group [structure] is inspired by Act-up and Earth First.

Thus, the chaos on the streets was reflected in the media production processes of the IMC. This is not to say they didn't get anything accomplished (indeed, they achieved a great deal), but that it was not centrally controlled and tidy.

On the print side, the IMC's Blind Spot's goal was to "further the self-determination of people underrepresented in both media production and content, and to illuminate and analyse local and global issues that impact ecosystems, communities, and individuals." Stories ranged from an article about a group of anarchists who took over an abandoned building in downtown Seattle to a story about activists who were denied visas to enter the United States. Coverage of the WTO events by the Blind Spot also linked the WTO to a world system that seeks to control and abuse entire populations. As one story read, "There is no hope of reforming the WTO because it perpetuates an imperialist legacy."

Comparing NGOs and Street Groups

Clearly, as the previous descriptions suggest, the NGOs and the street groups are marked by their different organisational structures and memberships as well as their choices of communication tactics, frames and protest behaviours. What is evident from this analysis is that the type of communication tactics employed by various actors differed depending on how centralised and institutionalised the organisation was. Greater hierarchy seems to be connected with communication tactics that would be more palatable to mainstream media as well as to an overall message of reform. In contrast, street movement groups using affinity groups or other decentralised organising forms adopted less professional and often more participatory media uses. The differences in communication approaches are summarised in Table 1.

Table 1: A Comparison of NGO and Street Group Communication Characteristics

NGOs	Street groups
Professional	Amateurs (Do It Yourself – DIY)
Conducted by skilled group members	Open to public participation
Rational arguments	Emotional appeals
Emphasis on empirical evidence	Emphasis on "fun"
Uses formal language, routines and formats	Uses informal language

NGOs

In general, NGOs used communication tactics that tended to be routinised and professional. At times, these tactics were adapted to the mainstream media's perceived needs, often relying on rational arguments and empirical evidence in hopes

of winning favourable coverage. Their tactics included working with a public relations firm, holding press conferences, taking out advertisements in mainstream media and buying billboard and bus advertisements. Besides aiming to influence the general public through mainstream media, the NGOs' reformist frame also was intended to keep internal supporters educated and energised. To reach their own publics, they relied on face-to-face events such as teach-ins and talks, plus materials such as brochures and reports, many of which were posted on the Internet. During the ministerial, they sought to reach the trade delegates and other officials with their own newspaper, *The World Trade Reporter.* Yet there were generally few if any opportunities for the general public to participate in these communication activities directly. Their message invoked images, language and intentions that are palatable to the mainstream, corporately controlled media. By orientating themselves to mainstream media, those producing the reformist messages co-operated with a process whereby the mainstream media framed their message. Their collective identity was intended to appeal to mainstream society, but it also limited their range of messages and tactics. They gave up some control of their message in hopes of gaining more exposure and support through the media, but by doing so, they seemed to have limited their possible actions and messages.

Street Groups

The street groups' tactics were characterised by an emphasis on grassroots and amateur (DIY) media. Indeed, so unprofessional were their uses, that they were sometimes illegal (microradio, for example). They refused to adopt watered-down language and formats to court the mainstream media, although they did not shy away from interacting with them. The street groups' media for the most part were open to anyone who wanted to participate, thus enabling a broader range of voices. Their messages were designed to resonate with a receptive audience. They focused more on self-mobilisation instead of mobilising the mainstream. They were more likely to use emotional or cultural appeals. Their media use was more disruptive – that is, it is often flouted rules and conventions of mainstream media and often sought direct contact with people. Their online postings via email lists and the IMC embodied the chaos of the streets. They tended more toward what Scott and Street (2000) have identified as a characteristic of anti-capitalist protests in Britain: an emphasis on pop culture and carnival taking place in the marginal or liminal spaces of society as a means for these new movements to claim power. Likewise, I would argue that their media use and attitudes toward information distribution and creation are challenges to the NGO notion that "the media" means the mainstream media or a set of professional routines and practices.

It is possible their call for others to actively participate in creating change ultimately limited their numbers of participants because some who shared some of their ideals didn't want to invest themselves in the issues, but it is also possible that asking people to actually produce messages and distribute information enhanced those participants' level of commitment to the cause because it required risk taking and high levels of involvement. Certainly with participatory communication tactics, groups are more likely to lose control of their message and identity, but sometimes the goal is to inspire individuals to participate in their own forms of resistance. Unlike the NGO reformers, the street groups did not seek to supply a

pre-packaged identity. Rather, their identity was open to interpretation and, indeed, dependent upon the creative resources of participants.

This is not to say that the street groups were right and the NGOs wrong or vice versa, but that ultimately a variety of frames and communication tactics will make up any social movement. Social movement organisations that draw primarily on "professional resources" will differ from those which draw mainly from "participatory resources" (Diani 2000, 392). In the case of the WTO, identities were created in part through the choice of communication vehicles used to convey messages as well as the content of the messages themselves.

Conclusion

As became apparent in Seattle, the two frames had difficulty peacefully co-existing. Both the established NGOs and the street level groups saw each other as interfering with or hijacking the movement's message. The NGOs believed that the anarchists' property damage and even sometimes the unscripted street theatre overshadowed their ability to get their message out, whereas the more radical street groups and their supporters saw the NGOs seizing the opportunity to write the reformist version of the history of the Battle in Seattle (Cockburn and St. Clair 2002). Yuen (2002) notes the WTO and its corporate supporters ultimately aimed to incorporate reformist NGOs into their negotiations in order to legitimise their decisions, while Davis (2002, 175) warns that NGOs were being used as a "device for the containment of political dissent." These tendencies are not unique to Seattle. With their greater access to resources and more stable structures, NGOs have often been identified as operating within social movements as "nodal points" or "power knots" (Alvarez 1997). Yet Graeber (2002, 62) argues that "anarchism is the heart of the movement" and identifies the Direct Action Network, Reclaim the Streets, the Black Bloc and Tute Bianche as creating a "new language" of civil disobedience" (Graeber 2002, 66).

Thus, not surprisingly, the different frames identified here carried forward throughout the protests that followed Seattle from Prague to Quebec City to Johannesburg and beyond to the now annual gatherings of the anti-globalisation movement itself in Porto Alegre, Brazil. Even outside the Northern Hemisphere, when local politics played out, the NGO-street movement divide opened up. In the fall of 2002 in Johannesburg at the World Summit on Sustainable Development, a reformist umbrella group, the Global Civil Society Forum, backed by the ANC, trade unions and churches was challenged by the more radical, street-level group Social Movements Indaba, which rejected the United Nations itself for being controlled by corporations and corrupt governments. The Indaba group aligned with Via Campesina and the Landless People's Movement and the anti-capitalist wing of the Seattle movement.

At this conference, Greenpeace signed a declaration of unity with a group of corporations including representatives from oil companies. Several months earlier Oxfam had released a controversial report promoting market access to global trade as a key to the "development" of the Global South after all. Shortly afterward a group of reformist NGOs met in London under the following conference title: "NGOs and Social Protest Movements: Partners or Rivals?" which saw reformist NGOs lamenting what they perceived as the street group's superior media and

mobilising skills, leading to a debate on whether they could even consider themselves part of a social movement.

In the wake of the protests following Seattle, some movement leaders determined that it needed to offer an alternative vision of the world and not simply protest the current one. Thus the World Social Forum began in Porto Alegre, Brazil in 2001 as a counter forum to the corporate world's World Economic Forum, traditionally held in Davos, Switzerland. The forum has drawn tens of thousands of participants from a broad range of groups with a theme of Another World is Possible. Yet the WSF too has been criticised for reflecting a more reformist message, for being too aligned with governments, trade unions and electoral politics (Sader 2002). Anarchists have staged protests claiming the reformists have shut them and their message out.

In the broader scheme, the Seattle frames have appeared repeatedly at all these major gatherings – be they held in the First World or the Third, be they against world bodies and governments or even a gathering of the movement itself. In each case a fundamental difference in world view is evident: In the reformist view, institutions are seen as the place where political policies are formulated and political actions take place. The state is seen ultimately as the vehicle to control global capitalism. In the radical view, the movement subscribes to a vision that defines both the public space for political action and politics itself differently, where a non-national alternative is the answer to democratising globalisation (Calabrese 1994; Hardt 2002). Can these two views peacefully co-exist, becoming what Albert (2002) calls "a movement of movements" articulating different world views, united by their opposition to the current practices of global capitalism? Or will these seemingly irreconcilable differences ultimately be the demise of the first social movement of the 21st century? It seems most likely that the movement will become even more layered, creating a web of different movements which occasionally work together, pooling resources of resistance – particularly via the networking capabilities of the Internet. Within these webs, the more reformist elements will continue to use more professional resources – including media ones – designed to reach policymakers and other opinion leaders. These will be rational and modernist with an expectation of a passive reception. The radical street groups will draw on their human and symbolic resources to create their own media, relying on the Internet and individual participation along with their own facility with culture jamming postmodern imagery and language. They will be the creativity that gives the movement buzz and attracts new younger members. Thus, if Melucci (1989) has noted the movement is the message, this article more specifically suggests that the movement's media embody important messages as well.

Note:

1. AFL-CIO, Asia Pacific Environmental Exchange, Basel Action Network, Earthjustice Legal Defense Fund, Free Burma Coalition, Friends of the Earth, Industrial Shrimp Action Network, Institute for Agriculture and Trade Policy, Northwest Ecosystems Alliance, Progressive Animal Welfare Society, Sea Turtles Restoration Project, Seattle Audubon Society, United Steelworkers of America, Washington Toxics Coalition, Western Sustainable Agriculture Working Group.

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