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**Probing the Implications of Facebook Use for the Organisational Form of Social Movement Organisations**

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*This article examines the use of Facebook by social movement organisations and the ramifications from that usage for their organisational form. Organisational forms have been viewed to be in flux as networked communication becomes embedded in mobilisation repertoires. In what follows, it is proposed that the utilisation of Facebook by networked heterarchical organisations may grant them access to a hitherto untapped demographic for the purpose of mobilisation. Concurrently, it raises questions pertaining to organisational form, particularly in relation to the role the Facebook audience plays in movement organisations. Communication on Facebook may catalyse deliberation, information sharing and mobilisation. Moreover, evidence was found pointing to its use for the self-organisation of protest participation. Yet, engagement between social movement organisations and their Facebook audience bore little on decision-making within the organisations. Although limited in scope, its emerging contribution may be by way of channelling items into decision-making agendas.*

**Key words:** social movement organisation, organisational form, social network sites, deliberation, information, decision-making

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Social, cultural and political practices have come under systematic scrutiny with the diffusion of social media and in relation to their collaborative and scalable architecture (Papacharissi, 2011). This article charts the communication of two protest camps with their social networking site audiences. Social networking sites (SNS) -an exemplar of social media (boyd and Ellison, 2008)- have been hailed for the renewed opportunities they facilitate to meet new people, connect with friends and acquaintances, to socialize, share information, debate and collaborate (BaeBrandtzaeg and Heim, 2009). Of interest herein is the scope SNSs provide for the honing of democratic engagement (Östman, 2012).

The aim of this undertaking is to explore the organisational ramifications of the communication between two social movement organisations (SMOs) and their audiences on Facebook. The term audience is deployed in a narrow sense to apply to a contingent of Facebook users that consume content whilst also collaborating towards its co-creation and circulation (c.f. Östman, 2012). In so doing, the question of the latitude for deliberative decision-making with information and communication technologies (ICTs) is revisited (see also della Porta, 2011; Loader and Mercea, 2011). For this purpose, communication on the Facebook groups of the 2008 Camp for Climate Action and the 2012 Occupy Den Haag encampment (The Hague, Netherlands) was scrutinized.

Each camp had a presence on Facebook through a number of different outlets such as fan pages, groups or individual accounts. This article explores the communication on the Facebook groups of the protest camps in order to further the nascent, though timely, scholarship on the application of social media to protest (see Harlow and Harp, 2012). There is currently much debate about their contribution to channelling discontent into embodied collective action (Gladwell, 2010; Fenton and Barassi, 2011; Segerberg and Bennett, 2011).

The decision to scrutinise activist communication on Facebook was grounded on previous suggestions that social movement organisations (SMOs) have been historically adroit at strategically harnessing ICTs not least to draw popular support to their causes (Castells, 2009; della Porta *et a*l., 2006; Chadwick, 2007). Social networking sites in particular have been regarded by social movement activists as holding promising potential for mobilisation into collective action (Harlow and Harp, 2012). Nonetheless, the organisational ramifications of their usage are only beginning to be systematically addressed (Juris, 2012). What scope is there for a democratic expansion of SMO organisational forms through SNS communication?

**SMO organisational forms meet social media**

The organisational form of an SMO represents its internal structure of interpersonal relations (Clemens, 1996). Organisational form has been described as a reflection of a purposive strategy to mobilise participants in collective action and to maintain engagement in it (Clemens, 1996; Tarrow, 1998: 124).There are indications that "social network sites pose a challenge to existing hierarchies in organisations- both within the formal political system and without" (Gustafsson, 2012:13).This article takes as a starting point emergent evidence that organisational boundaries are becoming increasingly porous and SMOs are experimenting with organisational forms to face up to more transient involvement in their actions, mediated by ICTs (Flanagin *et al.,* 2006).

The effects of ICTs on organisational forms may be particularly challenging in sectors where they exacerbate existing dilemmas (Desanctis and Fulk, 1999). For instance, social movement organisations have been markedly susceptible to a scrutiny of their openness and democratic conduct (see Hirschman, 1970; della Porta and Diani, 2006:135-40; Gamson,

1991). SMOs have had to reconcile leadership requirements that centralize decision-making with a moral imperative to make their decisions more democratic (Klandermans, 1997:134). Nonetheless, it seems unlikely that SMOs would follow a linear path to a technologically mediated democratisation of their organisational form. Rather, there has been significant restraint in how they interact with their online audience through websites, which are chiefly employed for the top-down relay of information (Stein, 2009). This assessment, in spite of earlier hopeful expectations, continues to be confirmed even in the context of horizontally constructed Occupy protests (Juris, 2012).

Earlier studies evinced the conspicuous absence of a deus-ex-machina in the technology which would prompt a democratisation of SMO organisational forms to incorporate online audiences in decision-making processes (Mosca, 2008; Vromen, 2008). Indeed, organisational forms have been depicted as imbued with the values and cultural character of the societies they populate (Castells, 2007). Concurrently, however, SMOs operate in a global network of communication flows underpinned by ICTs, which foster organisational forms fundamentally embedded in networked communication (2007:250). Reflecting on the implications to accrue from the networked communication of SMOs, Castells noted that 'the Internet provides the essential platform for debate, their means for acting on people's mind and ultimately serves as their most potent political weapon' (2007:250). Yet, lingering questions have to do with whether, in what organisational context and to what degree such debate is democratic and coterminous with the decision-making on which collective action is predicated.

With the application of ICTs to social movements, there have nevertheless been some SMOs which have become platforms for democratic participation in organisational affairs (Downing, 2001; Dahlgren and Olsson, 2007; Olsson, 2008). Described as networked organisational forms, such SMOs were constructed around distributed online communication

between their members. It has been asserted that they have fostered a political culture of participatory democracy underpinned by collaborative and communal values (Dahlgren, 2009: 198-99). Indeed, democratic decision-making premised on inclusive deliberation is common to networked and horizontal forms of organisation among social movements that have spanned space and time not least through their use of ICTs, e.g. the Global Justice Movement (Juris, 2008; della Porta, 2011). Fundamentally a communicative process, this deliberative decision making mode is transparent and inclusive with all participants getting an equal opportunity to persuade the others of the validity of their arguments in the attempt to rally individual preferences behind a vision for the public good that concerns them (2011:812). Mailing lists are a prominent example of a communication technology that has facilitated this process in a social movement context (della Porta, 2009).

Fresh anticipations of democratic engagement have been pinned on the scalable networking capacity of social media coupled with their affordance for horizontal collaboration (Bruns, 2008; Gustaffson, 2012). Before social media, the internet was regarded as 'static' and 'fragmented' while high-value information was generated by 'authoritative concentrated sources' (Chadwick, 2008:12). The prophets of social media platforms envisaged these as panacea for what they regarded as encumbrances to productive collaboration, not least towards commercial ends (O'Reilley, 2005). In their perspective, collaboration would unseat the concentration of information and democratise creative 'intelligence' (2005). Collaboration referred principally to the concerted practice of 'posting, judging, and commenting on the contributions made by self or others in UGC [user-generated content] environments online' (Östman, 2012:5). As an SNS, Facebook has been viewed as a prime example of such an environment (Chiu et al., 2008).

Collaboration on SNSs has held the promise of diffusing a democratic mode of individual participation in networked organisations that lack central coordination and rely on

the activation of latent social networks when carrying out collective actions (Chadwick, 2007). Other, more sceptical commentators have suggested that the individual social media user has become a commodity (Fuchs, 2009) in a business model that turns the ingredients of collaboration -individual preferences and expressiveness- into advertising revenue (Goldberg, 2010). Whilst such commercial reroutings of collaboration may indeed be in train, SNS users seem equally likely to become immersed into a 'participatory culture' of content consumption that hinges on the aggregation of their preference rankings (Beer and Burrows, 2010). According to these two authors, such aggregation underpins the inner workings of social media whilst arguably rendering them profoundly democratic.

Concerns have nonetheless been raised about the perceived inconsequence of expressive and ostensibly democratic political action in the form of posts, comments and the viral circulation and valuation of content rendered through social media (Dean, 2009; Karpf, 2010; Morozov, 2011). Commentators have sought to dispel claims that the augmented social networking capacity of social media inevitably translates into higher levels of public participation in meaningful collective action. Indeed, it has been proposed that social networking sites, much like websites before them (c.f. Stein, 2009), are chiefly a 'microbroadcasting' instrument for one way content distribution, including by SMOs (Juris, 2012). According to that assessment, social networking sites are instrumental for 'quickly, cheaply, and effectively blast[ing] out vast amounts of information, links, and updates via person-to-person, ego-centered networks' (Juris, 2012:267). In other words, instead of enablers of concerted democratic deliberation and horizontal coordination among social movement actors and organisations, SNSs may rather be tools for transient involvement in collective action through quickly scalable networks.

Conversely, it has been suggested that organisation on social networking sites may emerge from messy and unruly collaboration (Jenkins, 2006:246) reminiscent of agonistic

varieties of deliberative democracy (Dahlberg, 2007). An emergent structure of interpersonal relations is arguably possible even when participants deliberate without necessarily converging on the parameters of their collaboration. Thus, on the one hand, it has been posited that communication in SNS groups may revolve around the creation of collective content and consequent rules to mark its boundaries (Olsson *et al*., 2009:247). On the other, ruleformation has been depicted as distinctly not teleological as it is often the case that in collaboration in online collectivities 'each participant applies their own rules…none of which are wrong at face value. Debates about rules are part of the process' (Jenkins, 2006:53).

The collaborative use of SNSs such as for debates or sharing and consuming content seems nevertheless to be less frequent than for maintaining social contact (BaeBrandtzaeg and Heim, 2009: 147-149). Still, when collaboration occurs in interaction on SNSs, it can be associated with distributed forms of leadership (Jameson, 2009). Based on a horizontal, informal and flexible approach to group coordination, such distributed leadership can empower participants to actively contribute to the articulation of a collective project.

Ultimately, democratic SMO organisational forms premised on SNS collaboration would see SNS audiences included in the coordination of a collective project. Such cooperation may be conducive to the formation of rules that demarcate collaboration and consequently the parameters of an organisational form that incorporates SNS audiences. SNS audiences could thus become active stakeholders in a collective action project to whose shaping they contribute through commentary and circulation. In what follows, these propositions are examined after a brief overview of the methods used for case selection, data collection and data analysis.

**Methods and case selection**

A multiple-methods design was constructed for this study with the aim to generate a context-rich analysis informed by a plurality of sources allowing for a fine specification of interpretations. The comparative examination of the Facebook groups maintained by the two protest camps followed the logic of literal replication in case study research (Yin, 1994). In that line of research, the chosen cases are similar and the resulting findings are expected to be comparable. As it is shown below, the two protest camps were akin to each other in their open and horizontal organisational structure, their consensus-seeking decision-making routines and their adoption of Facebook as a platform to communicate externally. The data at the heart of this study were collected at different stages in the course of a multi-annual project on the use of computer-mediated communication in social movement protest (Mercea, 2012; Mercea *et al.*, 2013).

This paper reports on field work conducted at the Climate Camp and at Occupy DH which included participant observation and semi-structured interviews with four media coordinators at the two protest camps. The topic of organisational transformations wrought by the use of SNSs was raised in the interviews. The activists were invited to reflect on their motivation for adopting social media platforms in their external communication. Moreover, they were queried about the expectations and any subsequent evaluations of the communication with the audience on those platforms. In addition, the activists were encouraged to ponder on the implications for their organisations to derive from such communication.

Textual data reviewed here were gathered solely from the Facebook groups of the protest camps. This particular type of outlet was common to both camps whilst the layout and functionality of these Facebook venues remained largely unchanged between 2008 and 2011. According to Facebook, groups are designed for people to congregate based on mutual interests, discuss and organise (Pineda, 2010). The two Facebook groups were public (c.f.

Sveningsson Elm, 2009) in the sense that they were freely accessible to all Facebook users and contributions were not moderated by administrators. Both protest camps had, however, other Facebook outlets that were not examined in this analysis because they were either not public and therefore posed complex privacy issues (2009) that would have rendered this research impractical; or they were not used by both organisations.

The Facebook groups were contrasting in regard to membership. There were 1,500 Climate Camp group members in August 2008 as opposed to 245 Occupy DH members in December 2011. They were furthermore dissimilar in terms of member activity. There were 189 posts and comments retrieved from the Climate Camp group covering the period of fieldwork conducted on the Climate Camp, January 2007-January 2009. Approximately 1800 posts and comments were subsequently collected from the Occupy DH group in the course of a second field study undertaken in October-December 2011. A possible explanation for the latter discrepancy is that at the Climate Camp, Facebook was still a novelty tool used exploratively (Rachel, 2008) whereas at Occupy DH it was the staple means to relate with the outside world (Joost, 2011). Facebook's facilitation of the expression of one's point of view (Hunt *et al*., 2012:189) coupled with the continual growth in the time and intensity of Facebook usage (Hunt *et al*., 2012), might provide a more general answer for the noted difference in the number of posts.

As this analysis will go on to show, the character of the posts was unexpectedly similar. This observation is derived from a content analysis conducted on the retrieved data which commenced with the direct and inductive development of coding manuals from the raw data (c.f. Zhang and Wildermuth, 2009). The data were coded and examined semantically by means of a qualitative content analysis. Each post was treated as a single unit of analysis. Each unit was amenable to multiple coding, depending on the semantic complexity of the post. In practical terms, this approach was undertaken to identify and map

out key themes (Zhang and Wildermuth, 2009) to emerge from the communication on the Facebook groups.

Qualitative content analysis is not aimed at producing results that are amenable to statistical manipulation. Nonetheless, an inter-coder reliability test on the emergent themes was carried out to verify the consistency as well as the internal and external validity of the codes (Lindlof and Taylor, 2002; Zhang and Wildermuth, 2009:4). Data coding was an iterative process which entailed the following steps: first, the inductive generation of independent coding manuals. As is customary with qualitative content analysis, the manuals were discussed and amended to attain agreement between the coders (Zhang and Wildermuth, 2009:4). Following that, the coding manuals were applied to a comparable amount of text units, i.e. the entire Climate Camp data set (N=189) and a random sample of every 10th post from the Occupy DH data set (N=183 or 10%, an optimal sample size for inter-coder reliability tests; Neuendorf, 2002). Krippendorff's Alpha values were .836 for the Climate Camp data and .915 for the Occupy sample. These values suggested a good level of inter-coder agreement (c.f. Krippendorff, 1980)[i].

TABLE 1 HERE

In the final stage, all Occupy DH posts that were text-based (n=945) were coded with the tested coding manual. Excluded from the count were free-standing images not accompanied by any commentary and posts automatically generated by Facebook, e.g. whenever a new member joined or was added to the group; and all the 'likes', the automated endorsements Facebook allows users to make should they appreciate someone else's post. Between-code distributions were in line with the frequencies presented in Table 1 with the notable, though expectable, exception (c.f. Stein, 2009) of the higher proportion of units coded as information (54%). The distributions for the other codes were: mobilisation (8%),

deliberation (22%), self-organisation (7%), solidarity (3%) and personal communication (6%).

## The organisational form of the protest camps

Protest camps have been designed as autonomous physical spaces freed from the authority of the state and the control of the police. They have been described as a milieu for innovation in collective action built on cultural re-encodings of political action. They depart from the established institutional practices of liberal democracies and subscribe to deliberative models of decision-making (Jowers, Dürrschmidt, O'Docherty and Purdue, 1999; c.f. della Porta, 2011). The Camp for Climate Action was a protest camp directed against the largest carbon polluters in the UK. The Camp followed in the tracks of direct action protest camps of earlier decades staged by the peace movement (Doherty, 2000). Preparations for the 2008 Climate Camp started in late 2007 and culminated with the week-long camp erected outside the coal-fired power station at Kingsnorth in South-East England. Occupy DH was one of the many protest camps around the world inspired by the Occupy Wall Street protest in the US. Both protest camps were part of ample, trans-national movements aimed at tackling topical problems with a global impact, i.e. climate change (Flowers and Chodkiewicz, 2009) and the global financial crisis (Tharoor, 2011). Both protests emerged in countries where protest participation has been historically high (Norris, 2002) and internet access widespread (Eurostat, 2011).

From the outset, the two protest camps were viewed as social movement organisations (SMOs). The term SMO has been adopted here in spite of, on the one hand, the realisation that the organisational contours of the Occupy movement have remained elusive because of its ostensible articulation as a pluralist aggregation of individuals (Juris, 2012). On the other

hand, the Climate Camp sat at the radical end of the UK environmental movement which has been noted for being cliquey and detached from the mainstream of the movement (Saunders, 2008). Yet, the Camp sought actively to redefine itself as the organisational lynchpin for a new-fangled social movement on climate change, fundamentally premised on direct action (Rachel, 2008; Saunders and Price, 2009). The Occupy encampments may have performed a similar movement-building role as they constituted the organisational groundwork for an otherwise amorphous movement of individual participants transitorily orbiting the protests, chiefly by recourse to social media (Juris, 2012:269). Consequently, both the Climate Camp and Occupy DH were seen as pillars of a social movement- a loose network of individuals and groups who converge under a common collective identity and act together to articulate their grievances (Diani, 1992).

The Climate Camp's organisational form comprised a loose and informal network of local, variably-sized activist groups as well as unaffiliated individuals relying extensively on ICTs for coordination (Larry, 2008; Rachel, 2008). Together, they formed the organisational backbone of the Climate Camp which materialised once a month at national coordination meetings. The latter were called 'National Gatherings'. National Gatherings were convened at different locations around the U.K., starting approximately one year before the 2008 event. They were weekend-long reunions open to anyone wishing to attend them.

Local groups were instrumental to organizing the gatherings and arranging meeting venues. The meetings were planned in advance by a 'Camp Process Group' which each month included activists native to the gathering venue (Camp for Climate Action, 2008). At the National Gatherings, matters would be discussed and decided through a consensus-seeking procedure. All participants could propose an item for deliberation, express their views on a topic under consideration, abstain, voice objections to a decision or ask for

qualifications without effectively blocking it. Consensus-seeking was the decisional procedure in place also at Occupy DH.

From the outset, in a similar vein to the Climate Camp (see Saunders and Price, 2009), Occupy DH developed as a loose, informal and horizontal assembly of individuals protesting against the economic and political arrangements that brought about the global financial crisis unfolding since 2008.The camp was one of the 13 protest camps that spawned and endured in the Netherlands as local enactments of the Occupy ethos (Occupy the Netherlands, 2011). In contrast to the Climate Camp, the Occupy camps in the Netherlands were described as assembling principally individuals, many with no prior activist experience, rather than activist groups or organisations  (Joost, 2011).To them, Facebook was a mainline into the Occupy movement in the Netherlands and around the world.

Closely following the example of Occupy Wall Street and again resembling the Climate Camp, Occupy DH resisted any imposition of agendas and organisational procedures emanating from established activist organisations (Tharoor, 2011). In another respect, the allowance that anyone may put forward items for consideration by the general assembly -the principal decision-making body at the encampment- Occupy DH matched the decisional setup of the UK Climate Camp. In what follows, the communication on the Facebook group of the two protest camps is unpicked, to weigh possible ramifications for their organisational form to derive from it.

**Facebook communication at the Camp for Climate Action**

From the very moment the Climate Camp embraced Facebook, it regarded the service as a direct conduit to a hitherto untapped pool of non-activist prospective participants

(Rachel, 2008). The activists who first discussed having a Camp presence on Facebook estimated that a smaller number of people would be reached through Facebook than via emails circulated on various listservs (Rachel, 2008). According to that evaluation, 10 to 15,000 people were expected to receive email announcements from the Camp (Connor, 2008). But what galvanised the creation of the Facebook group was an anticipated significant qualitative advantage of Facebook mobilisation over outreach done through email messages. A central merit of the group was the latitude it afforded for a decentralized and networked mobilisation of non-activists through proxies, i.e. Facebook friends. That premise was a key incentive for the establishment of the group (Rachel, 2008).

It was expected that the Climate Camp's group would be a magnet for the "Facebook demographic" regarded to be made up overwhelmingly of young people, "sort of sixteen to twenty five…ish" (Rachel, 2008). They were seen to be a cohort of non-activists previously inaccessible in a similar manner with activist media including emails. As Rachel (2008), one of the three group administrators explained, 'it's… a good way of reaching out to non-activist types because you can easily contact all of your friends regardless of whether or not they're in activist circles'.

Communication on the Climate Camp's group was twin-tracked. First, members used the group to engage in conversations with one another. There were instances, Rachel observed, when members would chat amongst themselves on the wall without any intrusion from the administrators. Second, group members would send direct messages to the group administrators. Rachel described this communication as a means for the Camp to build affinity with Facebook group members by responding to their queries in a timely fashion. She recalled that a good number of messages arrived from people who thought their concerns were too trivial to be raised in an email to the Camp's official email address. As she recollected,

'I also, as the administrator of the group, got a lot of Facebook messages from people with concerns, or questions, or strange rants... which was really good because… I think it was mostly people who wouldn't have felt it was quite serious enough or their question was important enough to sort of email one of the official Climate Camp emails but it was OK to send somebody a quick message on Facebook' (Rachel, 2008).

The questions about the Camp, raised by group members in posts directed at the group administrators, were relayed across through email to other Camp activists, for an informed response.  By way of the online mediation of three administrators, a feedback loop seemed to develop between two different organisational regions which Rachel identified as "informal and formal networks". The former were made up of Facebook group members with no prior involvement with the Camp as an organisation. The latter -formal networks- comprised Climate Camp activists running different task groups involved in setting up the event. In the process, the Camp's Facebook audience was linked into the network of interpersonal relations underpinning that SMO's organisational form. Rachel explained that the information exchanges she and fellow administrators mediated between members of the Facebook group and the Camp networks were essential for those 'informal, loose networks, loose groupings to organise, to form' (Rachel, 2008).

Relating these observations back to this study's hypothesis, they suggested collaboration occurred between the Camp and its Facebook audience. However, it was geared towards enabling group members to self-organise for their participation and did not feed into any decision-making. These initial indications of collaboration were further cross-examined through the qualitative content analysis of the communication on the wall of the Climate Camp Facebook group. The classification of the posts on the group is presented in Table 1.

Under the first category, 'information', were grouped those posts which conveyed factual information relating to actions choreographed by the Climate Camp and other affiliated organisations as well as references to various news sources covering them. 'Deliberation' designated all posts which were either soliciting or responding to another member's comment. Topics discussed touched on the science and politics of climate change; the merit and consequences of the campaign against plans to build a new power station at Kingsnorth; or ways to adapt one's lifestyle to climate change. The third coding category, 'mobilisation', comprised calls to action -mostly offline but also online- in support of various causes and campaigns. Of the rallying cries for action online, a large number invited members to join other activist groups on Facebook or visit their fan pages. Fourthly, under the coding category 'solidarity', were collected all posts signalling members' determination to attend the Climate Camp as well as posts commending previous Camps; or posts offering moral support to various other actions. Finally, in the 'self-organisation' category were gathered all posts deemed to guide members and fans on how to organise independently to attend the Climate Camp or participate in other actions.

Deliberation on the politics of climate change was the most often occurring form of interaction on the group. Perhaps surprisingly polarised given the Camp's explicit belief in an anthropogenic causality of climate change, the vibrant polemic encountered was seen as a testimony to the agonistic democratic engagement that can ensue in online venues where commentaries and rejoinders challenge each other and any entrenched discursive boundaries (c.f. Dahlberg, 2007). Illustratively, one group member contributing remarked:

> 'I must say, I am very worried about the current theories regarding global warming being a result of human $CO_2$ emissions. This has become a highly politicised movement which frequently presents information in an improper context and seems reluctant to accept findings that contradict the idea that

human emissions cause climate change. I would consider myself an environmentalist and this is why I am worried by the possibility that an entirely new 'environmental' movement may have been created on the auspices of flawed science'.

Yet, deliberation did not dwell on decision-making by the Climate Camp on aspects relating to the protest itself or any other issues concerning the workings of the SMO. Instead, a number of posts and comments prompted group members to decide on the parameters for their own involvement in the Climate Camp or other actions. Wall posts appealing to self-organisation did not allude to specific ways in which people should organise themselves. Most posts suggested events and topics to organise around and invited members to take their own decisions on how to arrange their participation. Such posts were regarded as potentially empowering for group members willing to prepare autonomously for their collective action (Rachel, 2008). Thus, on top of using the platform to liaise with the Camp about participation in that and other protest events, Facebook group members also exchanged suggestions amongst themselves on the same topic.

Both these communication dynamics, it is proposed here, can be regarded as instances of collaboration. Collaboration seemed to be the result of a two-pronged cooperative process whereby Climate Camp activists attempted to forge a connection between Facebook group members and the Camp's organisational core whilst group members swapped views and know-how, priming themselves for collective action. Incorporating the flow of communication originating on Facebook into the organisation seemed unproblematic to the extent that it was feeding into the horizontal mobilisation and coordination structure (Larry, 2008) of the Camp's existing organisational form.

One final observation might be made based on the content of the appeals to self-organisation. Several of those posts appeared to be premised on an assumption that the Climate Camp's support base would convene in small and self-guided groups, the prevalent organisational unit at the Camp (Larry, 2008). If they found that proposition unrealistic, the Facebook following was encouraged to find and join such existing local groupings. Ultimately, the Facebook group administrators were instrumental in connecting an organisational core with what was arguably the Climate Camp's Facebook periphery. However, that process did not spill into the decision-making process.

**Facebook communication at Occupy Den Haag**

Following the initial Occupy DH demonstration on the 15th of October, a group of participants set up the Occupy encampment, making it a key priority to establish an internet connection on its premises, in order to livestream all activities from the site (Joost, 2011). In that manner, anyone not on location could keep abreast with events on the ground whilst having the concomitant possibility to contribute with comments and questions to the proceedings. This distinct capability was embedded into the online platform employed for the purpose ([www.livestream.com](www.livestream.com)) which incorporated an in-built as well as a Facebook chat application for comments. Thus, from the outset, online communication seemed weaved into the very fabric of the encampment. Moreover, and in contrast to the Climate Camp, Occupy DH's audience had the distinct possibility to have a real-time input in camp affairs. This communicational facility suggested that this SMO's organisational form could not be defined with reference to an online-offline distinction, as the interpersonal relations at the heart of it straddled both domains.

Yet, Joost (2011), the Camp's media coordinator, distinguished between the on-site activists who dedicated most of their time to the smooth running of the physical camp, and the online audience who were primarily interested in building and sustaining the momentum behind the cross-national movement. He viewed Facebook primarily as an effective avenue for mobilisation. To him, Facebook was particularly suitable for highly personalised mobilisation drives. Such drives were credited with the capacity to effectively diffuse appeals to action among Facebook users (2011). He surmised that the success of any mobilisation drive could be immediately, if not necessarily entirely accurately, gauged by the number of new individuals joining the encampment's Facebook outlets. He at once voiced both scepticism and hope regarding the contribution of the Facebook audience to the manpower of the Camp, portraying it as an intrinsic part of the Occupy movement. As Joost put it,

'I think we've got 1400 fans on *Facebook* and I think 900 people are just there to show off. Okay, we are occupying, you know- but it doesn't involve [us] in any [other] way. But that's fine, you know, as long as they spread the word everybody is welcomed, from my part. And, uhm, you are also occupying when you only speak about it, you know' (2011).

If the benefit of harnessing Facebook for mobilisation was somewhat disputable, there was no ambiguity about the possibility of utilizing online tools in decision-making at the Occupy DH. Next to its mobilisation functionality, it seemed, Facebook was a tool for collaboration essentially devoid of a purchase on organisational matters. Decision-making was a consensus-seeking undertaking at general assemblies which took place solely on location at the DH encampment. Joost (2011) noted that '[Facebook] is only mostly for people to let me know: I got a new video, I got this new link, I got this [and] this. But it's not used for uhm as a platform for decision-making'. Thus, although Facebook was regarded as essential for liaising with the larger number of people who took an interest in the DH

encampment but who did not make it to the site, the engagement it fostered was not amenable to decision-making. Joost suggested the design of the platform, i.e. the asynchronous nature of communication in comment threads as well as the limited operability of Facebook's chat component, were the main impediments to it. In his words,

> '… you don't have like, I don't know…a group-chat function, I don't know. But if you really want to have like decision-making, you really have to…[have] a round table and…discuss certain points….you can put something on *Facebook* and wait for reactions, but that's not a [practical] way of decision-making' (2011).

Evidence was found also in the wall posts indicating that the Hague Occupiers and their audience collaborated on Facebook. That collaboration was chiefly directed at informing sympathisers or enabling them to actively develop the Camp's prominence on Facebook, and in the transnational Occupy movement. Scrutinizing the wall posts, it was first noted that unlike at the Climate Camp, the largest share of posts were circulating information pertaining to diverse aspects of the Occupy movement including upcoming actions and demonstrations, articles, opinion pieces and talks on the global financial crisis and the fallout from it. Deliberation was also lively on the Occupy DH group if only less polarised than on the Climate Camp wall. Posts under this category raised issues such as the mainstream media coverage of the Occupy movement; reflected on the perceived insidiousness of capitalism as a normative framework for economic relations as well as on the effectiveness of the Occupy protests; or commented on commonalities with other mobilisations such as the anti-ACTA[ii] movement. As with the Climate Camp, the self-organisation category comprised posts that people used to describe the ways in which they would become involved in the protest or ask for advice on participation. Similarly to the Climate Camp, those posts revealed what may be

described as a periphery of the SMO whose communication on Facebook placed it into a networked organisational constellation encompassing the physical encampment.

In contrast to the Climate Camp, a post was initially retrieved from the Occupy DH group wall which was aimed at feeding into the decision-making agenda of the Occupy encampment's general assembly. The post related to the provision of shelter to 'one-night occupiers' who turned up at the encampment. It proposed the creation of a list of volunteers who would be ready to put up such participants for a night and the postee undertook to raise the point at the next general assembly. A singular comment, the post was aimed at contributing to the decision-making process rather than to altering it. Further inspecting the entire Occupy DH dataset led to identifying four more examples of posts that appeared to reaffirm the existing decision-making process, i.e. by flagging up ideas for further deliberation or by reminding people they can get involved in the general assembly.

The question of implications for Occupy DH's organisational form to arise from communication with its Facebook group audience may thus be addressed with a double-barrelled answer. On the one hand, in spite of the initial synergy between online and offline mobilisation which culminated with the establishment of the Occupy DH encampment, its online constituents were seen as standing apart from the onsite contingent chiefly in terms of preoccupations. Self-organisation messages seemed to be the bridge between these two organisational regions of Occupy DH in that they provided the Facebook audience with custom-tailored routes into the embodied occupation. Doubt nevertheless prevailed among the Occupiers as to the success of the translation of Facebook activity into embodied participation at the encampment (Joost, 2011).

On the other hand, despite the absence of facilities to take the Facebook communication on board in the decision-making process as well as an apparent reluctance to

the idea, the group was used, if only marginally, to put items on the agenda of the general assemblies. In other words, such communication may constitute a gateway into decision-making for the Facebook audience of an SMO with a heterarchic organisational form and consensus-building decisional routines. Such potential was only very marginally fulfilled because it did not seem to be systematically pursued by either the representatives of the physical encampment or the members of its Facebook group.

**Discussion and conclusion**

The two SMOs saw Facebook chiefly as a tool for mobilisation. Facebook was primarily adopted by the Camps in order to extend mobilisation in the events to new cohorts. Nonetheless, the content analysis undertaken in this study revealed that messages explicitly aimed at mobilising people were not prevalent on either of the groups. An initial and wilful use of SNSs for mobilisation into collective action may come from a conscious adaptation, on the part of the SMOs, to a context which ostensibly grants them access to non-activist prospective participants; or it may be based on a realisation that SNS audiences are an increasingly important area of an SMO's organisational form for the purpose of protest diffusion. Ultimately, communication on the Facebook groups of the two protest camps may have been consequential to their organisational forms in that it galvanised the self-organisation of autonomous groups and individuals.

Facebook provided groups and individuals with the means to coordinate autonomously, to independently decide on the parameters of their participation and to informally join the loose network of variably sized groups that collectively formed the two protest camps. Yet, for the Climate Camp, an organisational accommodation for the benefit of self-organised groups and individuals remained unlikely outside the confines of physical

meetings, which were the sole avenue for involvement in its decision-making. In the case of Occupy DH, the Facebook audience and the on-site occupiers seemed to diverge in their interests. On Facebook, this protest was embedded into a collaborative cross-national network of encampments spawned by the Occupy movement. Offline, it grew roots in its immediate physical setting marked by localized concerns. Despite such apparent divergence in activist strategies, the Occupy encampment and its Facebook group audience appeared to operate with a common technological frame- a shared understanding of the group's role as a communication platform (c.f. Orlikowski and Gash, 1994)- articulated in the utilisation of the group principally for information exchange and political debate.

Ultimately, it was difficult to see how collaboration on the two Camps' Facebook groups, geared principally towards the circulation of information or the explication of activist politics through deliberation, may translate into changes in organisational form that implicated their decision-making routines. Neither group was set up as an agora for democratic decision-making. At the Climate Camp, the networked organisational model appeared to devolve decision-making to the level of autonomous groupings. No bottom-up calls for participation in decision-making in the 'Camp Process' through communication on Facebook could be identified on the Camp's group wall. The Camp's group administrators, on the other hand, encouraged self-organisation rather than an active input into the 'Camp Process'. In the case of Occupy DH, the group was used, inter alia, to propose items for the decision-making agenda. This was the only indication found of how Facebook communication could stimulate an alteration of an SMO organisational form, by providing a path into colocational decision-making for the SMO's Facebook audience.

The present research design can only provide an exploratory foray into potential implications for SMO organisational forms to accrue from their communication with Facebook audiences. The findings herein should be viewed as a timely probe into a

qualitative question that moves beyond the broad-scoped debate about the potential contribution of social media to political participation (Loader and Mercea, 2011). Instead, this article proposed a focus on how such engagement may unfold and with what possible organisational consequences for social movement organisations.

Given that the logic of literal replication was applied to case selection, it is proposed that other studies use theoretical replication and contrast SMOs with dissimilar organisational forms. An instance of heterarchic organisations relying on consensual and inclusive decision-making, the protest camps facilitated the use of their Facebook groups for deliberation as well as to allow group members to self-organise for the purpose of participating in the camps and other protest events. Further evaluations of the communication occurring on the Facebook outlets of other SMOs could advance this research by providing more evidence to show under what conditions SMOs may democratically alter their organisational forms as they engage with their Facebook audiences, possibly over longer periods of time.

This article suggests that despite the structural horizontality of an SMO and its consensual decision-making, Facebook may at most act as a conduit for feeding proposals into existing decision-making arrangements. More often, though, it might act as a medium for deliberation and the circulation of information, both of which may ultimately have a purchase on mobilisation in collective action (Boulianne, 2009; Margetts *et al*., 2012). Such deliberation has been applauded for giving scope to robust democratic engagement that foregrounds voice over consensus (Dahlberg, 2007), an all the more significant development in settings where one may expect a high degree of ideological affinity. Yet, such interchange may only bear few consequences on the decisions that validate the actions of an SMO.

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**Table 1: Code descriptors and the inter-coder reliability test frequencies for the Climate Camp and Occupy Den Haag Facebook Groups**

| Code | Code Descriptions | Frequencies* Climate Camp | Frequencies* Occupy Den Haag |
|---|---|---|---|
| Information | References to information that comes from sources external to the Facebook group and is not commented by the poster. | 135 (27%) | 163 (39%) |
| Mobilisation | Calls to participate in online or offline activism as well as to recruit others into it (including the camp and online/offline petitions). | 84 (17%) | 29 (7%) |
| Deliberation | Comments or questions that instigate or contribute to discussions on the politics at the heart of the camp. | 170 (34%) | 106 (26%) |

| Self-organisation | Comments and questions on one's preparations to attend and enquiries about logistics at the camp as well as other protests. | 89 (18%) | 36 (9%) |
|---|---|---|---|
| Solidarity | Praise for past, on-going or forthcoming actions including for the present camp. | 18 (4%) | 18 (4%) |
| Personal Communication | Messages raising issues unrelated to protest that concern private interactions between one or more individual posters. | - | 61 (15%) |
| Total | - | 496 | 413 |

*The final code count is larger than the number of text units (Facebook posts) examined because, depending on its semantic complexity, each unit could fall under more than one code.

[i] The additional code for 'personal communication' comprised posts unrelated to any aspects of the Occupy or any other protests. Communication in the DH group revolved around the same activities: the circulation of information, political deliberation, mobilisation, the expression of solidarity with protests and the self-organisation of involvement in protest.

[ii] The Anti-Counterfeiting Trade Agreement was a proposed international treaty outlining measures for a stringent cross-national prevention of copyright infringements. The treaty was struck down by a vote in the European Parliament in 2012 and consequently never came into force.