

Centre for Human Rights Education

Social Movements and ICTs: Addressing Complexity and Contingency

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Declaration

To the best of my knowledge and belief this thesis contains no material previously published by any other person except where due acknowledgment has been made.

This thesis contains no material which has been accepted for the award of any other degree or diploma in any university.

Human Ethics (For projects involving human participants/tissue, etc) The research presented and reported in this thesis was conducted in accordance with the National Health and Medical Research Council National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research (2007) – updated March 2014. The proposed research study received human research ethics approval from the Curtin University Human Research Ethics Committee (EC00262), Approval Number #HR 132/2012

Signature:

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Date: ...13/07/2016.....

Abstract

It is hard to deny that how Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) are used by social movements is an issue of great importance. However, it is equally difficult to ascribe meaning to such use - it remains a contested topic within academia and in popular media. In this thesis I develop, demonstrate, and test a unique approach to studying ICT use in social movements. The approach is informed by complexity theory and Bent Flyvbjerg's phronetic social science. Phronetic social science sees the uncertainty contained in issues such as the use of ICTs by social movements as an inherent part of the social, while complexity theorists go on to argue that this means social scientists should concentrate their efforts on producing heuristics – imperfect working principles. In the thesis I advocate using the communicative ecologies conceptual model developed by Jo Tacchi and Don Slater, in concert with the emphasis on processes and mechanisms found in the influential sociological text *Dynamics of contention*, to produce such heuristics. An emphasis on processes and mechanisms provides specificity as to what ICTs can help social movements with, while the communicative ecologies model provides a holistic framework to understand ICTs as part of a complex system – an ecology – rather than in isolation. Applying this approach to case studies on South African movement Abahlali baseMjondolo and the Australian Socialist Alliance, three heuristics are produced which are then related to other cases of ICT-aided activism. I argue that my approach makes an important contribution to the field of social movement studies by providing an analytical framework that properly accounts for complexity and contingency, producing heuristic statements that are explicitly reliant on certain communicative-ecological conditions. Due to this specificity, when tested the heuristics hold up as expected, supporting my argument.

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List of Acronyms

AbM	Abahlali baseMjondolo
ALP	Australian Labor Party
ANC	African National Congress
ARPANET	Advanced Research Projects Agency Network
CHOGM	Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting
CLP	Church Land Programme
CSM	Classical Social Movement
DSP	Democratic Socialist Party/Perspective
ESF	European Social Forum
GJM	Global Justice Movement
GLTV	Green Left Television
GLW	Green Left Weekly
ICTs	Information and Communication Technologies
IT	Information Technology
M5S	5-Star Movement
NGO	Non-Government Organisation
NNSM	Newest Social Movement
NSM	New Social Movement
PGA	Peoples' Global Action
PNG	Papua New Guinea
SA	Socialist Alliance
SAlt	Socialist Alternative
SMO	Social Movement Organisation
SANCO	South African National Civic Organisation
WA	Western Australia
WSF	World Social Forum

Chapter One: Introduction

Over the past two decades, there have been a number of protest events that have captured the public imagination:

In 1994, a guerrilla force calling itself the Zapatista National Liberation Army waged war on the Mexican government. Their cause was the treatment of impoverished and oppressed people in the state of Chiapas. They were hopelessly outgunned. However, rather than the Zapatistas being massacred, a ceasefire was agreed to. This was because information about the confrontation was making its way around the world via the Internet, denting investor confidence and threatening the economy of the Mexican State. Picking up on this development, the guerrillas switched tactics to an information war, using the World Wide Web to battle for hearts and minds across the globe (Martinez-Torres 2001, 347-348).

In 1999, protests were held in Seattle against the World Trade Organisation (WTO) Ministerial Conference and the rampant unchecked neoliberalism it represented. Mobile phones and the Internet were used by demonstrators to aid communication, coordination, and mobilisation, as a diverse range of activist groups flooded the streets. These protests played a significant role in the ultimate failure of the WTO meetings (Van Aelst and Walgrave 2002, 469). For years after the ‘Battle of Seattle’ as it has come to be called, almost every summit of a transnational economic organisation was met with similar street protests (Van Aelst and Walgrave 2002, 470).

In 2009 in Moldova, an election saw the ruling party in that country returned to power. This was a strikingly different outcome than what opinion polls had consistently suggested, and many Moldovans suspected fraud (Mungiu-Pippidi and Munteanu 2009, 138). A small group of activists chose to organise a flash mob in protest, using social media¹ to spread their rallying cry. Over the coming days, the

¹ ‘Social Media is a group of Internet-based applications that build on the ideological and technological foundations of Web 2.0 [participation and collaboration], and that allow the creation and exchange of User-Generated [non-professional] Content’ (Kaplan and Haenlein 2010, 61).

number of protesters in the streets grew from thousands to tens of thousands (Lysenko and Desouza 2012, 345-346).

In 2011 in Tunisia, social unrest due to economic hardship and political oppression came to a head after street vendor Mohamed Bouazizi set himself on fire. A series of street demonstrations, enduring through both State violence and reforms designed to appease, led to the eventual resignation of President Zine El Abidine Ben Ali. Following this, activists in Egypt protested their oppressive government, leading to the similar downfall of President Hosni Mubarak. In both cases the use of social media by activists featured prominently (Lotan et al 2011, 1376-1377), and shortly a ‘tide of mass protests...swept through the Middle East’ in a wave of events now known as the Arab Spring (Stepanova 2011, 1).

At the time that I am writing this thesis (2016), a socialist group in Australia continues their daily agitations, and in South Africa thousands of the poverty-stricken residents in informal ‘shack’ settlements organise to demand the attention of a government that does not seem to care about them. As with the previous accounts, both of these groups make notable use of Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) in their activities. While it is difficult to know what to conclude about all the above, there is good reason to believe that the relationship between ICTs and social movement organisations (SMOs) is an important one (Carty 2010, 8).

The thesis

This thesis examines the relationship between ICTs and SMOs. It seeks to shed further light on what influence the use of ICTs can have on social movements and activism. Moreover, the thesis makes the argument for a particular approach to studying ICTs and social movements. This approach merges insights from the fields of social movement studies and communication studies. Such interdisciplinary work brings with it the difficulties of straddling two different academic worlds with their own traditions and nomenclature, but it is increasingly being recognised as necessary (Dutton 2013, 191). This necessity arises partly due to the already multi-dimensional nature of social movement studies, which crosses fields such as anthropology,

sociology, and social psychology (Travaglino 2014, 7-8). It also arises due to the various social implications of technology use which tie the study of ICTs to the study of society (Dutton et al 2006, 133). A serious study of the use of ICTs in social movements therefore needs to be multifaceted, as my chosen approach is.

In order to study the influence of ICTs on SMOs, I advocate the use of the communicative ecologies conceptual model (Tacchi 2006), from the field of communication studies, alongside the study of contentious processes and mechanisms as suggested in the influential sociology text *Dynamics of contention*, written at the turn of the century by social movement scholars Doug McAdam, Sidney Tarrow, and Charles Tilly (2001). The rationale for advocating this particular combination will become apparent through the course of this thesis.

The processes and mechanisms approach posed by McAdam et al (2001) is based around the idea that topics of study such as protest episodes or revolutions are not simply complicated phenomena which can nonetheless be understood and predicted with the right knowledge. Instead, upon close examination, it is suggested that these phenomena are inherently unpredictable and unstable due to the very many factors at work within (Tilly 1995, 1601). These factors are referred to as processes and mechanisms - processes being the larger of the two, comprised of various mechanisms. While it is not possible to comprehensively understand an entire protest episode or revolution, understanding the processes and mechanisms therein is a more manageable task. Moreover, such understanding does provide some insight into larger phenomena, as each protest episode or revolution is comprised of a particular combination of processes and mechanisms (McAdam et al 2001, 31-32). Adopting this approach, the task of the thesis becomes analysing how ICTs can aid SMOs in a number of specific endeavours, such as mobilising supporters or growing the movement.

The communicative ecologies model is a valuable way of understanding the place of ICTs inside a particular movement. It accounts for the fact that each time an act of communication takes place, it does so within a particular context with social, discursive, and technical aspects – an ‘ecology’ (Tacchi and Watkins 2007, 3). Without at least some knowledge regarding all of these aspects, the extent to which a

researcher can expect to understand what is happening is severely limited (Tacchi 2007). While the processes and mechanisms approach goes some way towards a quality analysis of social movement activities, it is only with the addition of the communicative ecologies model that this analysis can properly focus on the role of ICTs. An influential early use of the model (Foth and Hearn 2007, 756) conceptualises ecologies as containing three interacting layers – a technical layer (devices and media), a discursive layer (ideas and themes), and a social layer (people and organisational forms). I adopt this framework in the thesis as it provides a useful vocabulary for exploring the ways that different elements of an ecology interact, and how this determines the ultimate influence that ICT use has on a SMO.

My use of the processes and mechanisms approach alongside the communicative ecologies model has been informed by two related schools of thought. The first of these is phronetic social science, developed by Bent Flyvbjerg (2001, 57) from Aristotle's concept of *phronesis*, and the second is complexity theory. Phronesis refers to a mixture of scientific knowledge and context-sensitive pragmatism. This is the nature of the social science I practice in the thesis, and I largely justify that decision through the insights of complexity theory. This interdisciplinary school of thought, as it applies to social science, contends that social systems are best understood as complex systems, containing many interacting elements (Johnson 2009, 13). As such, phenomena related to these systems cannot be sufficiently captured by laws or simple theories (Urry 2005, 3). Complexity theory and phronetic social science converge into one guiding implication – the only really possible (and therefore the only appropriate) contributions of social science towards the question of what ICTs could mean for SMOs will come in the form of imperfect but practical working principles, commonly known as heuristics (Spicker 2011, 11; Bar-Yam 1997, 27). Using the communicative ecologies model and the processes and mechanisms approach, this thesis will produce several such heuristics pertaining to the relationship between ICTs and SMOs.

The case studies

In this thesis, I employ my approach to produce case studies that explore two SMOs

– Abahlali baseMjondolo (AbM) from South Africa and Australia’s Socialist Alliance (SA). AbM is a SMO in South Africa that demands basic services and dignity for the poor. It is a grassroots organisation, radically democratic, and non-professionalised, comprised of residents of the country’s many shack settlements. The movement’s formation was the result of shack dwellers’ growing dissatisfaction with the South African government and the many empty promises made with regards to land, housing, and basic services such as water and electricity (Figlan et al 2013). After one such promise was broken, the residents of the Kennedy Road settlement in Durban organised to protest their treatment (Gibson 2007, 61; Pithouse 2008, 75). Soon, more shack dwellers followed their lead. AbM is based around a ‘living politics’, which is grounded in the concrete experiences of shack dwellers rather than abstract theory. This living politics is expressed through Abahlalism, a self-styled ideology developed from these experiences, and influenced by the southern African philosophy of Ubuntu (Zikode 2013). In the thesis, I use my approach to relate these discursive and social/organisational features of AbM to the use of ICTs in their activism.

The second case study in the thesis concerns SA, a socialist SMO with branches throughout Australia. It was originally formed as an alliance of different socialist groups, but quickly grew into an entity in its own right. The purpose of SA is to educate and mobilise people, with the ultimate goal of building a mass party of activists (Jenkins and Woodleigh 2013). From this foundation, they seek to eventually ‘bring about socialism in Australia and the world’. In the meantime, their immediate focus is on building the party and campaigning for reforms that they hope will lead to widespread socialist change (Bainbridge 2013). As with AbM in the first case study, my approach will explore the social and discursive aspects of SA alongside their technical affordances, in order to better understand the SMO’s relationship with the ICTs they use, and the potential of these ICTs to influence movement practices and achievements.

I chose AbM and SA as my cases on the grounds of their usefulness as ‘critical’ cases (as described in Flyvbjerg 2001, 78), which is to say cases that have strategic value for the research topic. For example, if the purpose of a study is to show that something is true in all cases, a critical case might be one in which it is highly

unlikely to be true, and if it is true in that case it is likely to be true in many others. In this thesis, the cases were chosen through consideration of their similarities and their differences, so as to consider and portray ICT use across a range of SMO circumstances. Doing so might hint at plausible generalities about the ICT-SMO relationships which are the focus of the research, but more crucially it will highlight the role of the SMOs' different communicative ecologies in colouring these relationships.

In terms of their similarities, both SA and AbM can be considered revolutionary movements, but with reformist goals in the shorter term. Both have visions of radical change for the societies that they live in, but they also articulate concrete proposals for what changes they would like to see in the immediate future. They are also both, broadly speaking, leftist organisations that are concerned with social justice and anti-capitalism. In terms of the SMOs' differences, SA is a movement from the 'global north' (Australia – geographically south but north in the sense of the 'global north/south' terminology) while AbM is from the 'global south' (South Africa, with a strong presence in Durban). AbM is comprised of some of the most disenfranchised and marginalised people in South Africa. This has important implications for the availability and prominence of ICTs in their communicative ecology, and the likely influence of ICTs on their activism. There are also marked differences in the two SMOs' ideologies, such as the scope of their focus and their attitudes towards established political theory. SA are avowed socialists who believe in widespread socialist change brought about through a revolutionary vanguard, while AbM are highly suspicious of such ideas, preferring a home-grown politics based on lived experience. These factors, among others, make for two quite different communicative ecologies, which serves the purpose of demonstrating the potential of my approach. As the guiding question of the thesis is whether and how ICTs might influence SMOs, my approach addresses it via the sub-questions 'help to do what?', 'influence how?', and 'under what conditions?'

Theories and concepts

The first two terms to define for use in this thesis are social movements and ICTs. A

social movement can be broadly defined as ‘a network of informal interactions between a plurality of individuals, groups and/or organizations, engaged in a political or cultural conflict, on the basis of a shared collective identity’ (Diani 1992, 13). Accordingly, a SMO can be considered a more formal incarnation of this, an organisation that exists to further the movement’s goals (McCarthy and Zald 1987, 21). SMOs are therefore the concern of this thesis, though the terms can sometimes be used interchangeably, for instance as AbM’s cause is particular to that one SMO, it can be considered as both a SMO and a movement.

While the term ‘ICTs’ already existed in academia, it first came into common public use in a report by the 1997 Independent ICT in Schools Commission (Tamilselvan et al 2012, 15). The report states that, ‘[o]n a point of **definition** we talk in this report of **ICT**, adding “communications” to the more familiar “information technology”. This seems to us accurately to [sic] reflect **the increasing role of both information and communication technologies in all aspects of society**’ (*Information and communications technology in UK schools: An independent inquiry* 1997, 12, emphasis in original). Similarly, Gyula Sallai (2012, 9-10) considers the term to extend information technology (IT) to include its convergence with related areas such as telecommunications, media, and audio and visual processing and transmission. It is therefore the term used in this thesis to cover a range of devices and applications used by SMOs in activism, including but not limited to social media platforms, the Internet in general, and mobile phones.

The approach of this thesis blends complementary ideas from the fields of communication studies (the traditional home of research on ICTs) and social movement studies. Both areas have tended towards interdisciplinary work in recent years. The study of social movements has mostly been performed in sociology departments (Travaglino 2014, 2). Along with the rest of sociology, the field has experienced changes such as a ‘cultural turn’ (Travaglino 2014, 6) and in contemporary times it has become increasingly multidimensional and interdisciplinary (Travaglino 2014, 7-8). There has been growing interest in ICTs among social scientists, but collaboration across disciplines continues to be difficult (Dutton 2013, 191). The challenges facing interdisciplinary researchers include the

bridging of different perspectives (Dutton et al 2006, 140), and the need for common frames of reference (Dutton et al 2006, 145). These difficulties will eventually have to be surmounted, as both disciplines seem to recognise. I have been particularly fortunate in this respect as my undergraduate studies have been in both media/arts and politics/sociology, while my postgraduate background has focused on the interdisciplinary study of human rights.

One of the most important ideas for this thesis has its roots in the natural or ‘hard’ sciences. Complexity theory was first developed at a think tank called the Santa Fe Institute in the mid-1980s by a group of mathematicians, physicists, and economists (Waldrop 1992, 12). The involvement of economists would prove telling in terms of the theory’s social implications, as its contribution to economics was the reintroduction of ‘the messiness and irrationality of the human world’ into economic thought (Waldrop 1992, 23). It would grow to have the same effect on wider social and political thought, providing an argument against the Newtonian idea of comprehensible order in the universe. In contrast to that idea, the complexity theory view is more ‘Taoist’, seeing the universe as vast and ever-changing, and describing a situation where we can observe and sometimes act but must always remain aware of the limits of our understanding² (Waldrop 1992, 330-331). As explained further in chapter two, this is the view I take in the thesis, in contrast to the logical positivism that despite mounting critique still dominates much of the social sciences.

The implication of a complexity-based view for the thesis is that social systems (such as SMOs and their relationships with ICTs) are complex, with huge amounts of interacting elements. It is not possible to account for all of these elements, and the result of this is contingency (Qvortrup 2006, 352). To use Niklas Luhmann’s (1995, 106) definition of contingency, ‘[s]omething is contingent insofar as it is neither necessary nor impossible; it just is what it is (or was or will be), though it could also be otherwise’. As with the well-known ‘butterfly effect’ of chaos theory³, it is in the

² This is not to suggest that complexity theory is at odds with science however – it is perfectly in keeping with the laws of physics but casts doubt on the applicability of linear causality to some systems, for instance social systems.

³ The notion in chaos theory that small changes can have big implications is an early example of complexity theory. It challenged the idea that ‘only large changes in causes can produce large changes in effects’ (Urry 2005,

nuance and detail of particular cases that valuable and consequential insights may be found regarding ICTs and their use by SMOs, and since change to any of these details may have disproportionate implications, contingency is an unavoidable part of any conclusions that may be reached on the topic.

Within the social sciences, there exists a school of thought that is appropriately mindful of complexity and contingency. This is phronetic social science, and broadly speaking my work is situated within this tradition. Phronetic social science has gone by that name since it was coined by Bent Flyvbjerg (2001, 57). It has its origins in Aristotle's *Nicomachean ethics* (1999, 94-95) as one of three 'intellectual virtues', and can be understood in contrast to the other two, *techne* (craftsmanship) and *episteme* (science). *Phronesis*, as it relates to social science, is in many ways a combination of the other two virtues – it is pragmatic science (Flyvbjerg 2001, 57). The ultimate implication of both complexity theory and phronetic social science for this thesis is that the best answers to what ICTs may mean for SMOs will come in the form of heuristics – imperfect but practical working principles or rules-of-thumb (Spicker 2011, 11; Bar-Yam 1997, 27). This thesis will produce such heuristics using the communicative ecologies model and the processes and mechanisms approach, before discussing their wider applications, their virtues and their flaws.

Structure of the thesis

Following this introductory first chapter, chapter two explains in more detail the ideas and themes that are central to the thesis. The starting point for this is the observation that as the use of ICTs by social movements has become more widespread and well-known, grandiose pronouncements of what this means have become common. These claims appear in the mainstream media, in academia (Olorunnisola and Martin, 277-278), and from within social movements themselves (Natale and Ballatore 2014). In chapter two I explore the desire for explanation and

4).

certainty in the social sciences generally (Savage 2013, 6; Greenfeld 2005, 108) as well as challenges to that perspective such as Flyvbjerg's (2001, 57) phronetic social science. In this thesis I consider that the emphasis on uncertainty contained within phronetic social science makes it suitable for the study of ICTs within SMOs, where reliable explanations or predictions remain elusive. This view is considered alongside the related concepts found in complexity theory, which suggest that social systems and phenomena are characterised by a level of complexity that makes it impossible to boil them down to the simple explanations that are commonly sought (Urry 2005, 3). From a complexity theory perspective, a more realistic objective is the development of pragmatic working principles, commonly known as heuristics (Bar-Yam 1997, 27).

The second half of chapter two demonstrates how considering social complexity and the resultant contingency within social science leads to the adoption of the particular approach I use and advocate for in the thesis. A focus on studying processes and mechanisms (smaller events occurring and combining within a larger protest episode), as recommended by McAdam et al (2001), is suitable for a complexity-based approach because it works with the same basic logic as complexity theory. A complex system is one in which many different elements are present and interact in ways that determine an outcome, and any change to this complicated and unstable state of affairs has the potential to change everything (Urry 2005, 4). Likewise, McAdam et al (2001, 31-32) view contentious political phenomena (such as revolutions) as combinations of processes and mechanisms, and any change to this arrangement throws any conclusions about the bigger picture into doubt. As such, researchers should concentrate on the study of processes and mechanisms, knowing that such study will lead to a better (if still incomplete) understanding of particular situations as they arise.

The communicative ecologies conceptual model offers a way to enhance the analytical potential of the processes and mechanisms approach as it applies to the thesis topic. The model allows consideration of how ICTs are situated within SMOs, and the implications of that situation (Tacchi and Watkins 2007, 3). Communication or information practices and events do not occur in a vacuum but from and within an existing 'ecology', unique to each particular community (Tacchi and Watkins 2007,

3). While the specificity of the processes and mechanisms approach in itself is useful, a phronetic and complexity-oriented analysis of ICT use by SMOs would be lacking without a means to understand the context of this use (Tacchi 2007). In this thesis, the communicative ecologies of the case study SMOs are examined through an established technique of considering three different ‘layers’ – technical, discursive, and social (Foth and Hearn 2007, 756). This allows some insight into how the layers interact with each other, and this insight informs the later processes and mechanisms based analysis in chapter six.

Chapter three is a detailed discussion of the research methodology employed for the thesis, and the issues related to this. Case studies have been chosen as the primary analytical method because of the primacy they give to context (Radley and Chamberlain 2012, 392-393) and the importance of context in my approach. In this thesis I employ critical case studies, as opposed to paradigmatic. Paradigmatic cases are meant to serve as exemplars, demonstrating general laws or principles (Flyvbjerg 2001, 80-81), and as such are not suitable for research based on the ideas of complexity and phronesis, indeed these ideas tend towards suggesting that social science is (or should be) without such paradigms (Flyvbjerg 2005, 40). Instead, the SMOs AbM and SA are employed as critical cases – chosen strategically to match the aims of the research (Flyvbjerg 2001, 78).

SA and AbM are notably similar in some ways (both being radical left wing SMOs) while being different in many others. These differences serve an important purpose in the thesis. The authors of *Dynamics of contention* (McAdam et al 2001, 75) remark that by comparing cases with considerable differences it is possible to see how common processes and mechanisms play a part in otherwise incommensurable events. Similarly, in the thesis, common processes and mechanisms will be identified in the case studies and with the added insight of the communicative ecologies model it can be seen how these have been influenced by the use of ICTs. Later, in chapter seven, these findings will be tested further through comparison with other cases via secondary sources.

Primary data was collected for the thesis through semi-structured interviews and unstructured participant observation. Like the choice of critical case studies,

interviews were chosen to collect data because they are well suited to obtaining detailed and contextual information (Wisker 2001, 165). The interviews were semi-structured in the sense that I planned general thematic trajectories and guiding questions, but maintained a degree of flexibility. Conducting interviews in this manner allows the interviewer to understand and explore subjects that the participant feels are important rather than starting with assumptions about what these subjects should be (Hermanowicz 2002, 484). It is also appropriate for the study of particular discrete communities such as the SMOs in question, as it acknowledges a participant's role in educating and informing the researcher (Hermanowicz 2002, 486). I conducted unstructured participant observation by spending time with participants as they conducted SMO business, as well as attending meetings. This activity served to deepen my connection to the people and the data, and ultimately enrich the accounts of the case study SMOs and their use of ICTs.

Ethical considerations are relevant to the entire research process, but they were particularly important during the primary data collection phase of interviews and observation. During this time there are power dynamics that must be acknowledged and managed (Nunkoosing 2005, 699). In line with literature on this issue (especially Karnieli-Miller et al 2009, 286-287), I took a number of steps to ensure the ethical pursuit of my research aims. These included providing comprehensive information about the study to participants, and the option of anonymous or pseudonymous participation. I reminded participants of their rights and the purpose of the research throughout the process. I afforded participants an opportunity to view material related to them in the finished product and, reflecting on my privileged position as a researcher, made efforts to centre the participants' voices in the case study chapters (four and five) and establish a reciprocal relationship by taking part in some of the SMOs' day-to-day organisational activities.

Along with the primary data I collected, the thesis makes use of many secondary sources. These are used in chapters four and five to complement, corroborate, and enrich the primary data, a common and well-regarded process known as triangulation (Yin 1994 91-92, Willis 2007, 218-219). Many movement publications are utilised as these are invaluable in articulating the movements' alternative viewpoints and they are highly accessible sources of information on the intellectual life of SMOs

(Lofland 1996, 39). Secondary sources also play an important part later in the thesis, especially chapter seven, where they are used comparatively with the primary data to validate and test the limits of the heuristics that I establish through my analysis.

Chapters four and five are the case study accounts of AbM and SA. Following a brief explanation of the historical background of the SMOs, their communicative ecologies are explored in three sections, each relating to a layer of the ecology (Foth and Hearn 2007, 756). AbM is a radically democratic grassroots organisation made up of shack dwellers in South Africa (Abahlali baseMjondolo 2007b), formed in 2005 out of frustration with their government's broken promises (Figlan et al 2013). A discussion of the technical layer of AbM's communicative ecology explores topics such as the group's use of ICTs in organisation and activism, as well as constraints on such use such as historical deprivation and continuing poverty (Ngongoma 2013). The discursive layer section contains a discussion on the SMO's 'living politics', which is grounded in the lived experience of shack dwellers (Zikode 2013) while the social layer section discusses the enactment of this in movement practices and organisational forms.

SA, in its original incarnation, was an alliance of socialist parties and groups in Australia (Saunders 2015), However, it has since grown to be something more than the sum of its parts and can no longer be accurately described as such. Taking this history into consideration, some discursive influences on the modern-day SMO can be seen in its previous identification with international socialist tendencies such as Trotskyism and Leninism (Percy 2005, 18, 24). A prominent ideological feature that was apparent in the interviews was a populist concern with having broad reach and appeal, so as to bring about socialism through the participation of the masses in their struggle (Jenkins and Woodleigh 2013). As with AbM, in the section on the social layer of the SMO it can be seen how the SMO's discourse influences its practices and organisation, and therefore the implications of its ICT use.

Several processes are identified in the case studies on AbM and SA, and these are flagged for further discussion at the ends of chapters four and five. The first two processes are *mobilisation* – the persuasion and engagement this is necessary before individuals take part in collective action (McAdam et al 2001, 34), and *scale shift* – a change in the scale of a SMO's action and reach, for instance from local to national

(McAdam et al 2001, 331). These processes are featured in *Dynamics of contention* (McAdam et al 2001), while the third, *empowerment* – the process in which SMOs and the participants within become political players with some sense of power (ambiguous though that word may be), is established by myself to account for some of the other observations I have made in the case studies. These processes and the mechanisms within them are discussed further, in terms of both the processes and mechanisms approach and the communicative ecologies model, in chapter six.

Chapter six breaks the processes identified in the previous two chapters down into their constituent mechanisms and explores these in order to shed further light on how ICTs have influenced the practices of AbM and SA. The mechanisms discussed in terms of mobilisation include *social appropriation* – the positioning of social space and identities (and in this chapter ICTs are explained to be understandable as social space) towards movement struggles (McAdam et al 2001, 102) and *diffusion* – communication via pre-existing channels (McAdam et al 2001, 68). Diffusion is a common mechanism that is also relevant to scale shift. The primary scale shift mechanism discussed is *brokerage*, which in contrast to diffusion refers to the creation of new communication channels through the forging of new relationships (McAdam et al 2001, 102). Within the process of empowerment, I have identified three relevant processes – *the allowance for consideration of perspectives*, *the employment of phronetic knowledge*, and *self-efficacy*, which refers to what an individual or collective believes they are capable of achieving. From the analysis in chapter six, three heuristics are suggested with reference to these processes and mechanisms, informed by the communicative ecologies model. Testing and exploring these heuristics is the concern of chapter seven.

Chapter seven is the culmination of my approach and the point where its usefulness in terms of the thesis question is demonstrated beyond the case studies. It begins with a reminder that from a perspective of phronetic social science and complexity theory (Bar-Yam 1997, 27), the most appropriate form for an answer to ‘what influence do ICTs have on SMOs?’ is a heuristic. By using the processes and mechanisms approach and the communicative ecologies model, I have established three heuristics, relating to different movement processes. I contend that by using the processes and mechanisms approach to specify exactly what ICTs can help with (or

not), and the communicative ecologies model to give voice to some of the factors that such influence may depend on, the heuristics I have suggested contain a greater degree of accuracy than they otherwise could have. Nevertheless, as heuristics they are necessarily imperfect, and chapter seven explores both their validity and imperfections through comparison with other cases found in secondary literature.

Finally, the concluding chapter of the thesis will sum up my argument, discuss the value and limitations of my research (for instance the lack of discussion on purely online activism or ‘cyberactivism’) as well as future directions in which it could be expanded. The thesis makes a valuable contribution to the field in a number of ways. It provides new data on two relatively under-researched SMOs. It extends the approach outlined in *Dynamics of contention* (McAdam et al 2001) by suggesting the process of empowerment and the mechanisms within it. And it combines insights from the fields of communication studies and social movement studies to employ a method that has not been used before to address the topical issue of how ICTs might influence social movements and activism.

Chapter Two: Complexity and contingency, mechanisms and communicative ecologies

Introduction

This chapter explores the themes and ideas employed in the thesis, and explains how these inform my analytical approach. It starts with some brief historical background regarding the political use of ICTs. Using the example of the development of the internet, the idea of unforeseen consequences is introduced, which will lead to a discussion of complexity and contingency – key concepts for the thesis and its approach to the study of ICTs and SMOs.

The first section of this chapter begins by describing the project from which the internet was born. Alongside its intended use, it enabled the researchers involved to discuss political opinions. This, not to mention its use in government surveillance, saw it seemingly grow a life of its own, (Scholz 2010, 17-18). This example serves as an introduction to the idea that political use of ICTs is well established, while its ultimate implications were and continue to be uncertain. This uncertainty is referred to throughout the thesis as contingency – a situation where the outcome is not immutable, and could easily be otherwise (Luhmann 1995, 106). Recognition of this contingency in regards to ICT use by SMOs is the starting point for my argument.

Shortly after the internet became publically available in the mid-1990s, the topic of ICT-aided social movement activism gained prominence with the Zapatista uprising (Cleaver Jr. 1998, 622). Throughout this iconic event, anti-government forces in Mexico and their sympathisers made their cause known worldwide through the communicative power of the internet (Martinez-Torres 2001, 347-348). Alongside its political significance for the people of Mexico, the uprising marks the beginning of intensive academic enquiry into the use of ICTs by social movements.

Typically, with popular and scholarly prominence comes enticing, simple, and in some cases utopian theories and explanations. At the time that ICT-aided activism first became topical, one such narrative was the ‘Californian Ideology’, a deterministic faith in ICTs’ emancipatory potential (Barbrook and Cameron 1996,

44-45). The Californian Ideology holds particular relevance here as some social movements have themselves been heavily influenced by this idea of technology-as-liberator (Natale and Ballatore 2014). However, as will be seen, this view does not necessarily hold up under scrutiny (Olorunnisola and Martin 2013, 277-278). A critique of the Ideology and what it represents serves to further underline the role of contingency in my examination of ICTs in SMOs.

It is probably not too surprising that simplistic accounts of complex phenomena are found in the mass media (Olorunnisola and Martin, 277-278). However, within the social sciences, a similar desire for definitive explanation remains influential (Savage 2013, 6; Greenfeld 2005, 108). Some schools of thought challenge this impulse, and it is within that tradition that my work can be situated. As has been noted, a particularly useful idea for the thesis is that of phronetic social science. The term is derived from the Aristotelian concept of *phronesis* – a combination of scientific knowledge and context-specific pragmatism (Flyvbjerg 2001, 57). A phronetic approach acknowledges and accepts the differences between natural and social science, and as such seeks pragmatic working principles (heuristics) rather than universal statements or laws (Spicker 2011, 11). My work can be considered phronetic in the sense that it shares this goal.

The idea the social science need not aspire to resemble natural science is useful in that it accommodates the contingency of topics such as political ICT use. However, it should also be noted that it is not quite accurate to think of a concrete social/natural science dichotomy. The point of ultimate uncertainty made by Flyvbjerg's (2001) articulation of *phronesis* is largely echoed in a school of thought which has its origins in natural science – complexity theory. The argument that many phenomena (especially the social) are complex to the point where they cannot be distilled into comparatively simple theory (as per Urry 2005, 3) means that a degree of contingency is inevitable. As in phronetic social science, this leads to authors in the field advocating heuristics over rigid general laws (Bar-Yam 1997, 27). Complexity theory is useful to consider alongside *phronesis* as while the latter directly refers to the practice of social science, the former offers insights that are instructive in developing a phronetic approach to studying ICTs and their influence on SMOs.

My approach also draws on the recommendations of McAdam et al in their 2001 book *Dynamics of contention*, in particular their advocacy of social movement analysis on the level of processes and mechanisms. Mechanisms are defined as ‘a delimited class of events that alter relations among specified sets of elements in identical or closely similar ways over a variety of situations’ (McAdam et al 2001, 68). For instance, chapters four and five of this thesis show that both case study SMOs engage in the common mechanisms of *diffusion* - the movement or communication of ‘innovations’ (commonly information or tactics) through established channels (McAdam et al 2001, 68), and *brokerage* - the creation of new channels (McAdam et al 2001, 102). Mechanisms combine to form processes, which are ‘regular sequences of such mechanisms that produce (generally more complex and contingent) transformations of those elements’ (McAdam et al 2001, 24). For instance, diffusion and/or brokerage are necessary mechanisms in the process of scale shift, whereby SMOs shift the scale of their actions and influence, such as a national movement going global (McAdam et al 2001, 334). Scale shift and attempts at scale shift are observed in both of the case studies, along with a number of other processes and mechanisms. Examining the cases in terms of processes and mechanisms provides necessary specificity, especially when combined with use of the communicative ecologies model.

Analysis that studies processes and mechanisms is likely to yield more reliable heuristics than a more macro-level study. A heuristic that reads ‘the influence of ICTs on SMOs is X’ overlooks more variables than one that reads ‘the influence of ICTs on SMOs on scale shift is X’. However, the latter is still quite broad, in part because ICTs themselves remain inadequately conceptualised. To address this shortcoming, I employ the communicative ecologies conceptual model. The model is based on the idea that, ‘...each instance of communication or information takes place within an existing “communicative ecology”; and each community has a unique communicative ecology’ (Tacchi and Watkins 2007, 3). The implication of this for the thesis (wherein SMOs are the communities in question) is that ICTs in SMOs are considered holistically – as ‘ICTs in SMOs’ rather than ‘ICTs’ in ‘SMOs’ (as discrete entities) - aka as a complex system, an ecology.

The development of these two pillars of my approach, communicative ecologies and analysis through processes and mechanisms, establishes the method I will use in this thesis to explore the relationships between ICTs and SMOs, using the case studies of AbM and SA. Following this, chapter three will discuss the methodological issues encountered in my research, chapters four and five will present the case studies using the communicative ecologies model, chapter six will further the analysis in terms of processes and mechanisms, and chapter seven will discuss the heuristics suggested through my analysis.

ICTs and a history of contention

This thesis is largely concerned with the role of ICTs in social movements after the mid-nineties. However, it is worth briefly looking back further to see that the arguments I will be making about complexity, contingency, uncertainty and unintended consequences have historical precedents suggesting their relevance beyond the cases and time periods that I focus on. At least as far back as the nineteenth century, there has been technology-driven competition between state forces and other political actors (Deflem 2002, 464). Using the development of the internet as an example, I will make the point that the harnessing of technology for social and political purposes is and always has been a highly unpredictable venture. The value of my work lies in how it addresses that ongoing uncertainty. After providing this historical background, I will briefly discuss the Zapatista uprising, which serves to introduce contemporary perspectives on ICTs and their relationships with SMOs.

In a broad sense, a discussion of the internet is an obvious place to start as it is so influential today. Likewise, the invention of the computer is considered a critical moment in the history of what Anthony Olorunnisola and Brandie Martin (2013, 275) refer to as the ‘new world information and communication order debate’. Nicole Soullière (1999, 38) notes that ‘...following the advent of the computer around the mid-1960s, all technological developments except for DNA identification were linked to the computer and its benefits...’. Following from this, similar importance can be attributed to the birth of the internet.

The internet started its life in 1969 as the Advanced Research Projects Agency Network (ARPANET). ARPANET was designed by the United States Department of Defence as a powerful research tool (Scholz 2010, 17). Tools, however, have no inherent allegiance to their masters, and what happened next illustrates the importance of social and systemic context in the study of technology – one of the guiding principles of my research. Along with their assigned work, researchers using ARPANET started using the network to communicate with each other. Among these communications were discussions on politics, including the contentious subject of the Vietnam War. At the same time, the network was used by the government for surveillance (Scholz 2010, 17-18). The developmental seed of the ICTs discussed in this thesis was already being (mis)used in two very different ways – interpersonal communication and surveillance. In 1991, ARPANET was taken over by the National Science Foundation, and in 1995 what was now the internet was repurposed for commercial use (Scholz 2010, 18-19). With this, the various political uses of this powerful ICT also became publically available.

The 1994 Zapatista rebellion in Chiapas, Mexico was a catalytic moment in the growth of ICT-aided activism (Cleaver Jr. 1998, 622). At this time, the Zapatistas were losing a war against the Mexican government. The war ceased due to adverse publicity in the form of international protests, news of which was spread via the internet (Martinez-Torres 2001, 348-349), and this turn of events changed the Zapatista struggle from a doomed militant confrontation into a broader movement. The group's structure and identity became more informal, with ambiguous boundaries and support from NGOs (Ronfeldt and Arquilla 2001, 187). Importantly, while the internet was used early to rapidly disseminate information, this task was performed more by their supporters than by the Zapatistas themselves (Cleaver Jr. 1998, 627-628). This further impresses the need to consider the social aspects of ICT use, and in chapter four I will demonstrate how my approach accomplishes this, as I discuss how AbM also uses ties with supporters to benefit from their ICTs.

The case of the Zapatistas can be seen as a key moment in the public and academic realisation of ICTs' potential for social movements. Harry Cleaver Jr. (1998, 623), an early scholar on the Zapatistas, argues that this potential meant that previously

(geographically and ideologically) disparate groups were now able to form movements, to a degree not seen before. Use of the internet also enabled the Zapatistas' international 'encounters' – international meetings of (relatively) like-minded activists, which he argues was an ability previously reserved for governments (Cleaver Jr. 1998, 630). Whether the Zapatista struggle truly represents such a game-changing development or not, it sets the scene for current debates on what ICTs may mean for SMOs. In developing my argument, the next section will critique some of these debates and relate them to a problematic tendency in social science to seek and expect certainty in an inherently uncertain domain.

Utopia and doubt

The importance of the relationship between ICTs and society (and thus social movements) is widely recognised. Indeed, the 'new world information and communication order debate' has captured the attention of a range of societal actors in a way that few other issues have (Olorunnisola and Martin 2013, 275). As I have contended in chapter one of this thesis, it is eminently reasonable to suggest that ICTs are very important to many modern social movements – however it remains difficult to definitively articulate the nature of that importance. In this thesis, I attribute this difficulty to the complexity of the social, which renders all such articulations contingent. Later in this chapter, a discussion on complexity theory will explain why this is so. First, however, an examination of 'utopian' perspectives on ICTs (specifically the deficiencies of those perspectives) serves to highlight the uncertainty that is glossed over by those perspectives, which neglect some longstanding and important (if inconvenient and prosaic) issues that affect social movements.

The technological utopianism that I am about to discuss is admittedly an extreme in terms of the various arguments about ICTs and SMOs. But as an extreme it is particularly demonstrative of the pitfalls I seek to avoid in my research. An influential critique of such utopianism refers to it as the 'Californian Ideology'. The authors who coined this term, media theorists Richard Barbrook and Andy Cameron (1996, 44), speak of technological convergence as something 'more than the sum of

its parts'. They note that at a time of such notable social change, the offer of simple explanations of that social change is attractive and will garner great attention. As an example of such an explanation, the Californian Ideology is described as a '...profound faith in the emancipatory potential of the new information technologies...', where '...everybody will be both hip and rich' (Barbrook and Cameron 1996, 45). The Ideology contains a heady mix of New Left and New Right ideas (Barbrook and Cameron 1996, 56), made possible by a technological-deterministic view (Barbrook and Cameron 1996, 50). However, it depends on blindness towards other issues (Barbrook and Cameron 1996, 45), such as structural inequalities that persist despite the advent of new ICTs, and that hinder some actors' abilities to harness their potential. These inequalities are a daily part of the lived experience for AbM activists, indeed an awareness that this is the case for many activists worldwide was part of what informed my choice of AbM as a case study.

As Barbrook and Cameron (1996, 44) note, simple accounts of the role of ICTs in society are attractive and influential. In terms of activism and SMOs, parallels have been drawn between the Californian Ideology and the views of the Italian 5-Star Movement (M5S), which grew to become a serious political player in the 2013 Italian election (Natale and Ballatore 2014, 113). Prominent themes within the movement are described as 'digital utopianism' and a disillusionment with mainstream politics. As per the Californian Ideology, M5S's location on the left/right spectrum is unclear (Natale and Ballatore 2014, 109-110). The movement contains the hallmarks of new and exciting developments in activism, and emphasises an embrace of the future. However, it also suffers from a kind of dysfunction which is less than novel. Internally, rather than being a beacon of democracy, M5S is managed in a top-down, centralised manner by its founders (Natale and Ballatore 2014, 108). This has led to a number of members leaving or being expelled for diverging from official movement positions (Tronconi 2015). The example of M5S shows that, as an idea to shape movements, the Californian Ideology fails through its practical neglect of important organisational issues. And as a way of understanding movements, it fails through its theoretical neglect of those issues.

In the case of M5S, the issue of internal democracy has seemingly been ignored in favour of the dominant narrative that forms the group's identity – the futuristic,

liberating potential of ICTs. Pointing out such neglect is also crucial to critiques of a certain political ideology, an ideology which is frequently associated with movements such as M5S. Throughout their article, Barbrook and Cameron (1996) describe adherents to the Californian Ideology as ‘libertarian’⁴. This is apt, as critics of libertarianism often focus on the ideology’s tendency to ignore or downplay issues such as structural inequality, which render its particular conception of freedom problematic to say the least. Tim Jordan (2001, 7-8) similarly argues that libertarianism is a powerful ideology in cyberspace. Jordan argues that a critical view of cyber-libertarianism would consider questions such as who speaks, in what language, and with what cultural resonances. A simple view of ICTs as inherently technologies of liberation requires that these questions are not asked – that social and discursive factors are largely left out of analysis.

This simple view of ICTs-as-liberator is commonly adopted by the mainstream media. Olorunnisola and Martin (2013, 276) are among those who are quick to criticise common phrases such as ‘Twitter/Facebook revolution⁵’ as simplistic though popular technological determinism. They have examined Western media accounts of the 2011 Egyptian uprising, and academic articles on ICTs and social movements. In regards to the media articles, accounts of the role of Facebook and Twitter in the uprising are described as ‘oversimplified and technologically deterministic in nature’, while within academia a ‘raging debate’ is observed over whether the influence of ICTs in social movement struggles does in fact warrant the reconceptualising of the field’s concepts and theories (Olorunnisola and Martin 2013, 277-278). Reasons for such facile coverage of the issue by the media could be suggested, but these are tangential to the focus of this thesis. What is more pertinent here is the problem the issue poses for academics.

As far as academia goes, it is reasonable to ask - what are we looking for? Is a broad

⁴ Meant in the US sense, where it is associated with capitalism and the Right, as opposed to in Europe where it is analogous to anarchism (Ward 2004, 62).

⁵ Olorunnisola and Martin (2013, 276) note that such phrases were especially popular in the media during the 2009 Iranian protests and 2011 Egyptian uprising, in reference to the presence (and perceived importance) of social media at these events.

question such as ‘what influence do ICTs have on social movements?’ (or any slight variant on this) one that scholars can expect to answer? Aspirations in this direction can be seen. For example, an influential (some 469 citations) article and review of the field by R. Kelly Garrett (2006, 216) ends by stating that ‘[a]s the field matures, approaches yielding more generalizable results should move to the fore’. In his reflections on the political implications of claims to value-free Truth, Joseph E. Davis (2013, 555) refers to the positivist striving for this Truth as the ‘last dogma’ of the social sciences. As such, it is not surprising to see its influence in debates about ICTs and social movements, however nearly a decade after Garrett’s article, more generalisable results have still not been forthcoming.

In line with Garrett’s expectations, in 2011 Patrick Meier asked, ‘[d]o “liberation technologies” change the balance of power between repressive states and civil society?’. His intention may have been partly rhetorical – questions are commonly used to direct research, without it being expected that they are actually, definitively, answered. Indeed, Meier’s (2011) question is not answered. Likewise, a report from the United States Institute of Peace (Aday et al 2010, 5) poses the question ‘[d]o new media have real consequences for contentious politics – and in which direction?’, only to conclude, ‘[t]he sobering answer is that, fundamentally, no one knows’⁶. In a study of 426 digital activism campaigns from 100 countries (Joyce n.d.), it has been found that ‘[o]f the tools in the study with acceptable levels of reliability (forums, e-petitions, social networks, microblogs, digital video, digital maps, and SMS) none had a statistically significant relationship with campaign success.’ The study also points out that ‘political context influences digital tool selection’ (Joyce n.d.) – this is eminently sensible as there would be no point for example, in e-petitioning a dictatorship which has shown itself to be unresponsive to the will of its people. The position of this thesis is one of scepticism towards the idea that generalisable results are imminent, and a suspicion that the only simple answer to all of the above questions is an inevitable ‘it depends...’.

⁶ Interestingly, the report claims that political scientists are increasingly turning to the study of causal mechanisms to address such questions. However, the claim lacks citations in the text and as such it is difficult to assess the extent of this trend (Aday et al 2010, 7).

The previous section of this chapter examined the history of the internet to demonstrate how the political use of ICTs can have entirely unintended consequences, and gave a brief account of the Zapatista uprising which popularised the subject of ICT-aided activism. This section has examined a utopian perspective on ICTs and social movements in order to highlight the attractiveness of simple answers to new questions, and their ultimate paucity. The next sections will move from these observations towards what they imply for social science – namely the issue of contingency. I will argue for the phronetic approach to social science, which embraces contingency as an inherent characteristic of the social, and suggest complexity theory as a compelling explanation as to why this is so. These arguments support my adoption of the communicative ecologies model, and the approach of McAdam et al (2001) to social movement analysis, as the two pillars of my research.

Contingency in social science – The example of ‘power’

In the previous section, it was noted that a question such as ‘what influence do ICTs have on social movements?’ can only really lead to the answer ‘it depends’. The question is too broad and any answer is highly contingent on other factors. Contingency is an important concept in this thesis so it is worth repeating the definition provided in the introduction - ‘[s]omething is contingent insofar as it is neither necessary nor impossible; it just is what it is (or was or will be), though it could also be otherwise’ (Luhmann 1995, 106). The value of the approach I advocate in this thesis lies in its use for identifying and accounting for the factors an answer is contingent upon (why it is one way, and in what circumstances it could be otherwise) in any one case. This is particularly important as contingency is an inherent part of social science, as I argue in this section and the next.

‘Power’ is a useful concept through which to illustrate contingency as it is highly relevant to the study of social movements. Charlotte Epstein (2005, 50) notes that a range of approaches to studying social movements are concerned with impact, and the ‘power to make a difference’, though strangely this is rarely actually theorised in terms of the abundant academic literature on the concept of power. Elizabeth A. Armstrong and Mary Bernstein (2008, 92) advocate an approach that begins with an

examination of the nature of power and how it is understood by activists in particular contexts. As such, many of my early discussions with interview participants concerned power. However, after receiving numerous very different takes on the concept from interviewees I abandoned any notion of being able to use power as a metric to measure the influence of ICTs. Similarly, while it was noted in the previous section that Meier (2011, 22) indicates ‘balance of power’ as a metric in the guiding question for his thesis, the actual research he conducted concerns something much more specific – the use of a particular platform for citizen-based election monitoring. While the idea of assessing the role of ICTs in activism through an increase or decrease in ‘power’ may sound like a good idea, in practice such assessment is highly problematic.

This is because ‘power’ is an empty signifier. To explain what this means - in a 2008 interview, Ernesto Laclau describes the concept of justice as typical of an ‘empty signifier’ (also known as a floating signifier). While the term ‘justice’ is widely accepted and used as a category or subject, its content – what it is, what is in fact just – is ‘open to an infinite debate’ (Laclau in Avgitidou and Koukou 2008, 92). While people might agree that justice is good and important, what each person means by the term is another matter altogether. Likewise, beyond the core notion that A affects B in some significant way, a definition of power is value dependant - it is an essentially contested concept (Lukes 1974, 26). It is also a ‘primitive’ concept, which is to say it cannot be made clearer through reference to a less contentious idea (Lukes 2005, 477). This renders the content of the word radically contingent. Any definition of power is not definitive or necessary, it could be otherwise. This is a problem for any social science research project that deals in some way with power. And arguably, almost all of them do.

Given this contingency, power analysis tends to be contextual rather than general (Baldwin 1979, 163). This is argued to be inevitable – ‘[t]he important thing is recognition that the absence of a common denominator of political value in terms of which different scopes of power could be compared is not so much a methodological problem to be solved as it is a real-world constraint to be lived with’ (Baldwin 1979, 193). Power cannot be simply measured like water. Contextual analysis seems more promising, trading ‘power’ for ‘power to do X’. In this thesis, for instance, instead of

looking at ICTs' influence on social movements, I examine their influence on particular actions or events (spoken of in terms of mechanisms, as explained later in this chapter).

Accepting and embracing contextuality therefore helps in academically discussing power, but difficulties remain. Robert Dahl (1986, 49) notes that a problem persists in that, in the real world, there are always too many variables in play to definitively prove causality - that A definitely affected B rather than the defining factor being X, which was never considered. This is symptomatic of complexity, which will be discussed later in this chapter. The real-world problem is a problem of the social world, outside the controlled environment of a laboratory. It is therefore also a social science problem, and it is in examining this problem in social science that the difficulties of studying ICTs and SMOs can be further understood.

Knowledge and social science

At the start of this chapter, it was seen that the advent of ICT-aided activism was accompanied by simple, deterministic, deeply flawed but popular understandings of the issue. I have suggested that the same impulse to simplify, generalise, and explain can be seen in academia. The human drive towards explanatory and/or predictive narratives is strong, and may even be ingrained (White 1980, 5). Hayden White (1980, 27) remarks that there seems to exist in humans a desire for fullness and coherence of understanding that, in a complex world, is illusory. This may explain why, while most social scientists readily dismiss hard determinism in theory, in practice many tend to fall back into the habit, for instance focusing on the technical capabilities of ICTs with little consideration of the social context (Garrett et al 2012, 218-219). Mike Savage (2013, 4) observes that method is increasingly becoming an object of critical study in itself. Science and technology studies is one of the more reflexive disciplines in this regard, which, Savage argues (2013, 6), makes it all the more important to bring insights from this area into social movement studies (Savage 2013, 6). Nevertheless, in 2013 a number of scholars still found it possible to speak of a 'positivist hegemony' in social science, even if its grip may be loosening (Savage 2013, 6; Greenfeld 2005, 108). There have even been suggestions (St. Pierre

2012, 483; Wright 2006, 793) of its resurgence.

A number of scholars have argued that there is still some way to go for academics seeking alternatives to the positivist will to Truth and certainty. Lynne S. Giddings (2006, 202) argues that while cracks have been exposed in its logic, positivist hegemony continues, as newer developments such as mixed-methods research still retain within them positivist ways of thinking and traditions. Similarly, Elizabeth Adams St. Pierre (2012, 483-484) argues that while many thought the inadequacies of positivism for understanding complex social problems had been established, positivist logic still holds powerful sway in forms such as scientific economic and political rationalism. New methodological possibilities of recent years still seem geared towards this kind of use. In particular, danah boyd and Kate Crawford (2012, 663) explain that '[t]he era of Big Data is underway'. This refers to an increased ability to harness and analyse large data sets, however scholars such as boyd and Crawford (2012, 663) are critical of the accompanying 'mythology' that such access brings us closer to better insights, 'with the aura of truth, objectivity, and accuracy'. As I argue in this thesis, such a perspective does a disservice to attempts at understanding issues like the use of ICTs by SMOs.

My approach can be understood as having some commonality with challengers of the dominant paradigm, including academics of the 'Perestroika' movement and philosopher of social science Bent Flyvbjerg. The Perestroika movement emerged in political science to challenge a perceived positivist hegemony –the dominance of views on knowledge that champion ideals of objective truth and universal generalisation (Schram 2006, 18). The name of the movement refers to an influential email decrying the dominance of positivism, pseudonymously signed 'Mr. Perestroika' (2000). As evidence of positivist hegemony, Perestroika pointed to an academic environment where only a narrow range of methods and approaches enjoyed legitimacy in the eyes of elite universities and political science journals. Broadly speaking, the movement asserted the value of qualitative study and did succeed in changing some attitudes (Rigger 2009, 370). Some (Kasza 2010, 734; Caterino 2010, 754) are pessimistic about Perestroika's ultimate impact, while others (Isaac 2010, 737) are more sanguine. Dvora Yanow and Peregrine Schwartz-Shea (2010, 744) conclude that the movement has made itself heard but that there remains

a long way to go. Though not explicitly part of this movement, Flyvbjerg is considered to capture the spirit of Perestroika (Laitin 2006, 33). An economic geographer and philosopher of social science, Flyvbjerg has been influential to my work in a number of ways, most importantly through his adoption of the concept of *phronesis*.

Flyvbjerg (2001, 43) is particularly adept in articulating the problem discussed thus far – ‘...context-dependence does not mean just a more complex form of determinism. It means an open-ended, contingent relation between contexts and actions and interpretations.’ He therefore criticises social science which tries to emulate natural science, arguing that ‘...being *scientistic* does not amount to being *scientific*...the phenomena modelled are social, and thus “answer back” in ways natural phenomena do not’ (Flyvbjerg 2005, 39). As an example of this with regards to the study of social movements, any academic literature produced on how SMOs use ICTs may be read by members of that or any other social movement and inform new and different ways of using ICTs. Arguably, the dynamic environments social movements exist in make them exemplars of this difference between relatively mechanistic natural science and its unstable social counterpart.

However, if social science cannot ground itself in the domain of natural science, it risks becoming a victim of extreme relativism and nihilism⁷, so to retain its value something else is needed (Flyvbjerg 2001, 48). Flyvbjerg’s (2001, 57) response is to invoke Aristotle’s ‘three intellectual virtues’⁸. These are *episteme* – scientific knowledge, which is universal, *techne* – craft/art, which is pragmatic, and *phronesis* – ethics, which are pragmatic, and context dependent. The most relevant to praxis, *phronesis* requires interaction between the general and the concrete (which is often particular to a specific context), and it requires experience. It is within the seldom-

⁷ Hana M. Owen (2011, 142) makes the point that in its absolute form relativism holds all truth to be relative and as such there is no truth. This assertion is a key feature of nihilism, a philosophy which explicitly denies the value of seeking meaning or understanding.

⁸ *Nicomachean ethics* (Aristotle 1999). In particular pages 94-95.

mentioned realm of *phronesis* (the two other virtues have modern-day legacies in *technology* and *epistemology*) that Flyvbjerg sees the best fit for the social sciences:

Today's researchers seldom make explicit which one of these three roles they are practicing. The whole enterprise is simply called "science," even though we are dealing with quite different activities. It is often the case that these activities are rationalized as *episteme* even though they are actually *techne* or *phronesis*. As demonstrated previously, it is not in their role as *episteme* that one can argue for the value of the social sciences. In the domain where the natural sciences have been the strongest – production of theories that can explain and predict accurately – the social sciences have been weakest. Nevertheless, by emphasizing the three roles, and especially by reintroducing *phronesis*, we see there are other possibilities for the social sciences (Flyvbjerg 2001, 61).

While the primary concern for this thesis is developing a useful research practice, basing social science methodology on the concept of *phronesis* also has an ethical dimension. Flyvbjerg (2005, 39) comments on the tendency for epistemic modelling to produce technocratic practices, where theories and models are applied from above to social situations by those who presume to know best. *Phronetic* social science, on the other hand, is more amenable to reflexive analysis that can serve to contribute to democratic public discourse. Flyvbjerg (1998, 229) contends that '[i]f societies that suppress conflict are oppressive, perhaps social and political theories that ignore or marginalize conflict are potentially oppressive, too'. This is because society is never total or universal, and democracy means diversity, while totality means the neglect or suppression of outliers (Flyvbjerg 1998, 229). Laclau (1996, 35) expresses similar sentiments:

The universal is incommensurable with the particular, but cannot, however, exist without the latter. How is this relation possible? My answer is that this paradox cannot be solved, but that its non-solution is the very precondition of democracy.

Phronetic social science negotiates the need to be able to make general statements, as is the goal of science, with the contingency of the social. As the concept of *phronesis* is essentially ethical, it is not surprising that comparable attitudes can be found in some SMOs. For instance, AbM are fiercely critical of technocratic modes of thinking, as will be explored further in the case study of that group. Richard Pithouse (2011) is a South African academic who has worked with the AbM since its inception. On this subject he states:

Among university-trained intellectuals it is often assumed, perhaps in a neo-Platonic way, that an abstract concept or principle is more universal, truer and perhaps also more beautiful than the necessarily messier engagement with situated reality. But this fundamentally misunderstands the production of the universal.

...In politics, as in art, the particular is the route to the universal.

In a sense that is relatable to these sentiments by Pithouse, this thesis tends towards practical particularities over abstract universals. Further support for this approach can be found in scholarship from another area of social science that emphasises the practical - social policy. Rather than searching for a single truth, social policy asks ‘what works?’ and ‘can this be done elsewhere?’ (Spicker 2011, 2), similar to the practitioner of phronetic social science who asks ‘what should I do in this situation?’ (Spicker 2011, 11). Phronetic approaches do not yield explanations so much as observations, from which one might develop a ‘working principle’ or ‘rule of thumb’ (Spicker 2011, 11). These more modest outcomes are very often of higher quality than the most influential generalisations (Spicker 2011, 15). Moreover, from the point of view of an on-the-ground SMO, they are clearly more useful.

So far in this chapter it has been seen that, while history might have warned against it, the rise in prominence of ICT-aided activism heralded popular and overly simplistic explanations. This tendency is not only a feature of popular culture and mass media, but also much of the social sciences. As an alternative to this, I adopt a phronetic view of social science. However, at this point it remains more an overall attitude or philosophy than a concrete way forward. The next section introduces complexity theory, a field that has grown out of the natural sciences to gain relevance in the social, and which shares with phronetic social science an emphasis on contingency and heuristic outcomes. This discussion will lead to my argument for the two pillars of my analysis – the communicative ecologies model and the processes and mechanisms approach - as effective responses to complexity and contingency.

Complexity

The development of phronetic social science was in part a response to the ‘Science Wars’ (Flyvbjerg 2001, 2-3). This dramatic term is epitomised by an incident where in 1994, physicist Alan Sokal wrote a nonsensical article and submitted it to the

cultural studies journal *Social Text*, where it was published. Sokal intended to expose obscurantism and the misuse of scientific language by certain, broadly poststructuralist/postmodernist, philosophers as well as the acceptance of this misappropriation by many in the field (Editors of *Lingua Franca* 2000, 2). He revealed the hoax in *Lingua Franca* in 1996 (Sokal 2000, 49). Philip Haynes (2000, 52) suggests that the philosophers targeted by Sokal were using scientific language in a bid to be taken more seriously, echoing a claim made by Flyvbjerg (2005, 39) earlier about social science misguidedly aspiring to emulate natural science. There is some irony in the observation by Leslie Henrickson and Bill McKelvey (2002, 7288), that social scientists (especially economists) appeared to be trying to gain legitimacy with linear deterministic modelling, at the same time that natural science actually started straying from this path with the study of complexity.

Both phronetic social science and complexity theory can be seen as ‘third ways’ to bridge the gap between the two sides of the Science Wars (Flyvbjerg 2001, 2-3; Henrickson and McKelvey 2002, 7288). This section will explain how complexity theory is instructive in my development of a phronetic method for studying the relationship between ICTs and SMOs. In the social sciences, emphasis on uncertainty has traditionally been characterised by postmodernism, which as seen in the Science Wars has a combative relationship with natural science. However, Henrickson and McKelvey (2002, 7288) argue that complexity provides a means with which to seriously engage with uncertainty, without abandoning the natural science paradigm altogether. They claim that postmodern ontology ‘parallels that of complexity scientists’ (Henrickson and McKelvey 2002, 7295). Indeed, while complexity theory has its basis in natural science, the study of complex, dynamic systems has implications closer to phronesis than episteme, as will be seen.

The ‘complexity turn’ was a development in both the natural and social sciences in the late nineties (Urry 2005, 3). Complexity theory is concerned with systems that are characterised by complexity to the extent that they are ‘irreducible to elementary laws or simple processes’ (Urry 2005, 3). While scholars in the field offer no unique definition of complexity (Johnson 2009, 3), Neil Johnson (2009, 13-15) explains that

key elements can be identified in a complex system⁹. Firstly, such systems consist of many interacting agents. They are subject to memory or feedback – this is consistent with Flyvbjerg’s (2005, 39) contention that social phenomena ‘answer back’. Complex systems are open and evolving. Phenomena from the system are emergent and often surprising – like Barbrook and Cameron (1996, 44) noted of converging technologies, they are ‘more than the sum of their parts’. There exists no central controller in a complex system, and both orderly and disorderly behaviour can be observed. By these criteria, social systems are complex systems, and it is appropriate to consider the interactions between SMOs and ICTs in such a way.

Thinking about complexity helps to account for the myriad of seemingly incommensurable views that characterise social science, including those within the subject of ICTs and social movements. As Lars Qvortrup (2006, 352) explains, ‘[a] complex system is complex in the sense that it cannot combine every element with every other element, but is forced to make selections. The result is contingency’. To provide a simple example relevant to the thesis – imagine that SMO member X uses social media to contact politician Y. Any statement about what social media can do for social movements based on this interaction is contingent, as the outcome may have been different had X contacted Z instead, or if X had used Twitter instead of Facebook, or if the political climate had been different for any one of many reasons. In reality, arguments about what ICTs mean for SMOs are usually based on more than one simple example. But equally, social movements can contain hundreds or thousands of different members seeking to interact with hundreds or thousands of other people. Any interaction that occurs could easily have been otherwise.

Complexity breeds contingency, and complexity is inescapable in our modern age (Qvortrup 2006, 352). I argue that this is especially true within social science. This thesis emphasises the relevance of complexity and contingency on the issue of ICTs and their relationship(s) with social movements. Complexity theorist Yaneeer Bar-Yam (1997, 27) contends that as such issues are not fully understandable, research

⁹ The use of the term ‘systems’ may invoke ideas of structure, and structuralism. However, complex systems are different as they are typically unstable and cannot be characterised by simple cause and effect (Law and Urry 2004, 401).

should instead turn to the production of ‘insights and partial understandings’ that are of practical use. This accords with phronetic social science’s function of developing a ‘working principle’ or ‘rule of thumb’ (Spicker 2011, 11). It is these insights, partial understandings, and working principles that my approach is intended to produce. In this thesis they will be referred to as heuristics. Heuristics are defined by Nassim Nicholas Taleb (2014, 11) as ‘simplified rules of thumb that make things simple and easy to implement. But their main advantage is that the user knows they are not perfect, just expedient, and is therefore less fooled by their powers’.

My research can broadly be considered phronetic social science – combining the scientific search for knowledge with a practicality that accommodates the complexity and contingency of the social world. My choice of the analytical tools described in the following sections is informed by complexity theory. While much of the other work by McAdam et al (2001, 22) is based in the structuralist tradition, their contentious politics approach is more dynamic and relational, making it well suited to the task of this thesis. The communicative ecologies model is highly compatible with complexity theory (Lennie and Tacchi 2013, 65), making it equally appropriate. These two pillars of my analysis will now be explored.

Mechanisms of contention

The compatibility between complexity theory and the 2001 work of McAdam et al can be seen in an almost poetic way through the comparison of two metaphors. Philip Haynes (2000, 54) describes how one singular cloud can be analysed to some degree of accuracy, but less so an entire storm, as it is a complex system. Sociologist Charles Tilly (1995, 1594-1596), one of the authors of *Dynamics of contention*, asserts that a tendency exists in academia to look for invariant models to explain cases, with an assumption that all will fit if the right model is found. However, he argues, the social world is not actually like that. He explains it metaphorically:

Students of revolution have imagined they were dealing with phenomena like ocean tides, whose regularities they could deduce from sufficient knowledge of celestial motion, when they were actually confronting phenomena like great floods, equally coherent occurrences from a causal perspective, but enormously variable in structure, sequence and consequences as a function of terrain, previous precipitation, built environment, and human response (Tilly 1995, 1601).

Using the vocabulary of his field, Tilly is essentially describing revolutions (and great floods) as complex systems – as seen through comparison with Haynes’ metaphor which makes the same essential point. Analysis of a seemingly simple phenomenon is complicated by the very many variables, some quite small, at play and capable of great influence. To this end, the construction of invariant models in any study of social phenomena like protests or revolutions is counter-productive – ‘[s]ystems are irreducible to elementary laws or simple processes’ (Urry 2005, 3). Therefore, the response to such a state of affairs, found in *Dynamics of contention* (2001), constitutes a response to complexity, which is what I have argued is needed. McAdam et al (2001) respond to this need by focusing on the very many small variables (mechanisms) and how they can combine into larger phenomena (processes). Using such a focus to study ICTs and SMOs is one half of my approach in this thesis.

The concept of mechanisms originates with Robert Merton (1968) but has been built upon by other scholars including McAdam et al. The definitions offered by McAdam et al (2001, 24) are as follows: *mechanisms* are ‘a delimited class of events that alter relations among specified sets of elements in identical or closely similar ways over a variety of situations’, while *processes* are defined as ‘regular sequences of such mechanisms that produce (generally more complex and contingent) transformations of those elements’. The delineation of what is a process and what is a mechanism can be unclear or even arbitrary, which is alluded to by McAdam et al (2001, 27). These are, after all, abstract concepts. It is useful to consider them as existing on a continuum (McAdam et al 2001, 27). On the opposite poles the distinction is clearest – democratisation, for instance, cannot be adequately conceptualised as a single mechanism, it is clearly a process made of a number of mechanisms. Processes, being larger and more general (the flood, rather than one factor such as precipitation) contain a higher level of contingency, a bigger margin of error (McAdam et al 2001, 25). In terms of contentious political events, it is prudent to start with research on the small phenomena they are made up of.

For example, a process that can be commonly identified in contentious politics is *scale shift* – the movement of an organisation’s scope from local to supra-local, or vice-versa. Mechanisms at work in this process might include *boundary deactivation*,

which would allow for expansion (McAdam et al 2008, 311-12), or *brokerage* and *diffusion* which are discussed in chapter six in reference to the case studies. Study on the level of mechanisms is fruitful for the analysis of ICTs and their relationship(s) to social movements as mechanisms are less complex and contingent¹⁰ than processes. Rather than attempting to discover how/if ICTs aid social movement struggles (in the previous sections such a question has been revealed as a chimera), a more useful task is to study ICTs and SMOs on the level of mechanisms. As mechanisms are essentially smaller, simpler, less complex and contingent processes, they are likely to yield more reliable information about the ICT-SMO relationship *in that particular case*. As mechanisms can appear in similar ways in different processes or cases, this information can also give rise to some tentative heuristics regarding the potential of ICTs under certain circumstances. These heuristics will be flagged in chapter six and discussed further in chapter seven.

Analysis on the level of processes and mechanisms goes some way in dealing with the complexity and resultant contingency of the social. As a social movement studies paradigm it fits the perspective developed for this thesis. However, as an approach for studying the relationships between ICTs and SMOs, it can be improved upon. Mechanisms can be seen as environmental (external influences), cognitive (shifts in perception), or relational (connections among people) (McAdam et al 2001, 25-6). *Dynamics of contention* rightly pays a lot of attention to the effects of relational and cognitive mechanisms, but environmental mechanisms are relatively neglected and under-theorised (Kjeldstadli 2004, 114). As the topic of this thesis concerns the introduction of ICTs into social movement repertoires (a change in a SMO's environment, so to speak), such a gap is problematic for my analysis. Understanding the analysis of processes and mechanisms as a way of addressing complexity informs the addition of the communicative ecologies model to my analysis, as this model is instrumental in conceptualising SMOs using ICTs as complex systems, or ecologies. This model will be explained further in the next section.

¹⁰ In fact, McAdam et al (2001, 27) suggest that this is the key difference between processes and mechanisms.

Technology and communicative ecologies

The processes and mechanisms approach discussed in the previous section serves to address the broad, generalised nature of the thesis topic. The thesis moves from the empty signifier of ‘power’ to the specific and contextual ‘power to do X’ - from ‘how do ICTs influence social movements?’ to ‘how do ICTs influence specific social movement mechanisms?’. Heuristics might be produced from such an approach that are general enough to be useful while specific enough to have a degree of reliability. However, the thesis’ conception of ICTs, of technology, remains somewhat amorphous and vague. This section turns to the task of developing a more nuanced conception of technology, which leads to the adoption of the communicative ecologies model, an important tool for my analysis.

The very act of defining technology is complicated and disputed. Val Dusek (2006, 31-33) lists three common definitions of technology. The first is as hardware, artefact or gadgets, for instance a mobile phone. This would allow quite a straight-forward analysis of ICTs in activism, but it precludes another, broader understanding – technology as rules or means-ends patterns, such as an assembly line. This definition is useful with regards to ICTs as it includes software and internet platforms – not tools per se but programs or instructions. The third definition considers technology as a system, hardware within a human context, outside of which it does not function as technology. Within the third definition, an item *functioning* as technology is central – a computer sitting unplugged in the middle of the desert is only technology in the broadest, most nominal sense. As the topic of this thesis is exactly ‘hardware [ICT devices] within a human context [SMOs]’, this seems the appropriate definition to proceed with.

The idea of technology as being more than artefact has been at least partially implicit since the term first came into use. The word itself is derived from *techne* (art or craft) and *ology* (branch of learning). As such, it originally referred to a subject of discussion or learning, rather than objects. It is also much newer than might be imagined (Marx 2010, 562). Even at the time of the Industrial Revolution the term was not often used. In a way that complements Urry’s (2005) assertions about complexity, Leo Marx (2010, 574-575) contends that ‘technology’ increasingly

refers to complex technological systems, in which gadgets or devices play only one part. He speaks of the ‘erosion of the outer boundaries, as it were, those separating the whole technological system from the surrounding society and culture’. Mobile phones and smartphones might be seen in this way. From their beginning the hardware was always part of a system that also included human elements (for example switchboard operators, not to mention a society of other phone users that made the hardware worth owning). This has only become more the case if one considers the vast system within which the latest smartphone resides, as the convergence of technologies combines the vast technological system of a phone network with the vast technological system of the internet¹¹. Within groups such as SMOs, a useful way of exploring these systems (hereafter called ‘ecologies’, in keeping with the chosen model) is the communicative ecologies model.

The communicative ecologies conceptual model was developed by Jo Tacchi and Don Slater (Tacchi 2006, 5). The basic concept behind the model is that, ‘...each instance of communication or information takes place within an existing “communicative ecology”; and each community has a unique communicative ecology’ (Tacchi and Watkins 2007, 3). This being the case, it is asserted that ‘[y]ou cannot understand the effects of an information and communication technology unless you understand the context in which it is situated and how it is being used’ (Tacchi 2007). The model will be used in chapters four and five to present and frame the case study data to paint richer, more nuanced pictures of ICT use by those SMOs, in their particular struggles. In turn, these pictures will inform the analysis in chapter six, illustrating the roles that ICTs play in various social movement mechanisms, and other factors in the ecologies that those roles are contingent upon.

In studying communicative ecologies, key questions are focused around resources available, practices employed, and how the potential of the resources is understood

¹¹ A demonstration of this can be seen in the Internet Society’s (n.d.) representation of the ‘internet ecosystem’, which shows the numerous hardware and social ‘components’ necessary for the internet as we know it to exist.

(Tacchi and Watkins 2007, 3). In Marcus Foth and Greg Hearn's (2007, 756) study of ICT use in Australian apartment buildings, these three areas are addressed systematically by dividing the communicative ecology into layers. The technical layer refers to devices and media – the ICT resources available to community. The discursive layer covers ideas and themes, including understandings of what ICTs can do. The social layer refers to people, organisational forms, and practices. This structure is highly illustrative, and will be used in chapters four and five to present the case studies on AbM and SA. By labelling elements of an ecology as technical, discursive, or social, it is easier to see the interplay between these elements and grasp the complexity of the ecology as a whole. The structure also provides a vocabulary for exploring which elements of the ecologies are influential on the processes and mechanisms discussed in chapter six.

Conclusion

This chapter has served to introduce the two-pillared analytical approach I will use in this thesis, and the themes and ideas that support such an approach. I have noted how attractive simple explanation is in the face of change (Barbrook and Cameron 1996, 44; White 1980, 5). This desire for certainty is answered within the social sciences by an influential positivist view that seeks law-like truths within social issues, emulating natural science (Schram 2006, 18). However, the topic of this thesis – ICTs and their influence on SMOs – constitutes a rebuttal to such a view, as a convincing explanatory narrative about ICT-SMO relationships remains elusive (Aday et al 2010, 5; Olorunnisola and Martin 2013, 277-278).

Throughout this thesis I will refer to this inescapable uncertainty as contingency – a situation where things that are one way could easily be another (Luhmann 1995, 106), through even small changes in the relevant variables. Such contingency is recognised in schools of thought such as Flyvbjerg's (2001, 57) phronetic social science. It is also a key concept in complexity theory (Qvortrup 2006, 352). In this thesis, I embrace the notion that due to complexity, social phenomena are 'irreducible to elementary laws or simple processes' (Urry 2005, 3) and as such, research such as mine should aim at producing 'insights and partial understandings'

(heuristics) that are imperfect but of practical use (Bar-Yam 1997, 27) – a quintessentially phronetic approach.

The specifics of my approach hinge upon Tacchi and Slater's (Tacchi 2006) communicative ecologies model and McAdam et al's (2001) work on processes and mechanisms in contentious politics. In chapters four and five, the communicative ecologies model will be used to present a holistic, complexity-based view of the relationships between the SMOs studied and the ICTs they use. This view will encompass the SMOs' discourses around technology, politics, and social change, as well as their organisational forms, and the access members have to technical devices and artefacts. The data will be presented using Foth and Hearn's (2007) layers – technical, discursive, and social. This provides a framework from which different elements of the SMOs' ecologies can be referred to in chapter six, which analyses the role of ICTs in the processes and mechanisms identified in the preceding case studies (chapters four and five). In this analysis, several heuristics are suggested which will then be discussed at greater length in chapter seven.

The next chapter discusses my research methodology. Building on the theoretical foundations of phronetic social science and complexity theory, I argue for case studies as the best way to explore the question of what influence ICTs can have on SMOs (indeed the only way, given the use of the communicative ecologies model, intended to examine specific communities). My choice of AbM and SA as cases will be discussed, as will the ethical considerations of my research. Following this, my findings and analysis will be presented in chapters four, five, and six.

Chapter Three: Methodology

Introduction

This chapter explains the methodological choices I have made for my research. Building on the discussion in chapter two, I argue that case studies are the appropriate research method through further consideration of complexity and phronesis. Having established the communicative ecologies model and a focus on processes and mechanisms as the pillars of my approach, I argue that case studies are the logical way to proceed as they are geared towards providing particular and contextual information about the SMOs (Radley and Chamberlain 2012, 392-393).

The choice of AbM and SA as my case studies rests on their suitability as critical cases – cases chosen strategically to test a hypothesis or otherwise accomplish a specific research task (Flyvbjerg 2001, 78). AbM and SA are suitable equally because of their differences and similarities, as while the scope of the thesis requires that they must belong to some kind of comparable category (in this case as SMOs), it is through highlighting difference and contingency that the case is made for a complexity-based, phronetic approach to studying ICT-SMO relationships.

The case studies in the thesis contain data collected from participant observation and textual analysis, but rely most heavily on a series of semi-structured interviews with nineteen participants from the two SMOs (eleven from AbM and eight from SA). The gender breakdown in the samples was roughly equal¹², and they also contained variations in age, time spent as members of the SMOs, and inclinations towards technology. As discussed later in this section, the snowball and convenience sampling used in the study means representativeness and balance are not fully within a researcher's control, but the above-mentioned variations indicate a lesser chance of any obvious skews through overreliance on one particular demographic, for instance if the study contained an overabundance of young male participants.

¹² All together there were ten female participants and nine male. AbM – six male and five female, SA – five female and three male.

In the case of AbM, the interviews were conducted over a roughly two-week period in Durban, South Africa. In the case of SA, most of the interviews were conducted over a similar period of time, though political events taking place at the time (the Australian 2013 federal election in September) delayed the completion of one interview, which took place several months later. Background research was performed before primary data collection, observations were made during it, and further analysis and contextualisation performed after.

The main data collection method, semi-structured interviews, was useful as it allowed the gathering of activist knowledge from individuals involved in the SMOs. Like any research method, it has its methodological and ethical issues, such as the power dynamics involved in the researcher-subject relationship (Nunakoosing 2005, 699), and the problem of selection bias (Ibrahim et al 1999, 1). Other data collection methods used included the observation of meetings and organising activities, and the collection of data from secondary sources such as books, journal articles, social media posts, and websites. It is important in these processes to be aware of ethical issues such as participants' awareness (or not) of being observed, and the private or public nature of internet content. The relevance of these ethical issues to my research and how I addressed them will be discussed further in this chapter.

Choosing case studies

The use of case studies is appropriate to the topic of this thesis because, as per the discussions on complexity and contingency in the previous chapter, I expect the ability to generalise about all social movements to be very limited. Case studies do, however, allow a researcher to make some generalisations about other similar cases (in this instance, similar communicative ecologies), and they allow emphasis on important contextual information – what makes a case unique (Radley and Chamberlain 2012, 392-393). Tentative generalisations about similar cases are made in this thesis in chapters six and seven, but it would be a mistake to consider the case studies as serving only this end.

Two extreme views on generalisation can be seen in statements by Robert A.

Stebbins (2001, 43-44), who insists on the ‘supremacy of generalizations’, while also acknowledging the challenge of properly qualifying them in the social sciences, and John Law’s (2004, 155) assertion that ‘[t]here *is* no general world and there *are* no general rules’. In its phronetic, complexity-based focus on producing heuristics, this thesis can be seen as taking a somewhat middle-ground approach. Again, Flyvbjerg (2001, 84) articulates it well:

To the researcher practicing *phronesis*... a particularly “thick” and hard-to-summarize narrative is not necessarily a problem. Rather, it may be a sign that the study has uncovered a particularly rich problematic. The question, therefore, is whether the summarizing and generalization, which the critics see as an ideal, is always desirable.

Moreover:

One can often generalize on the basis of a single case...But formal generalization is overvalued as a source of scientific development, whereas “force of example” is underestimated (Flyvbjerg 2006, 228).

Flyvbjerg (2005, 40) goes so far as to describe social science as ‘non-paradigmatic’. Paradigmatic cases are exemplars –models intended to demonstrate generally applicable phenomena. They are deemed to be such through wide acceptance or consensus (Flyvbjerg 2001, 80-81). This thesis does not attempt to offer any such cases: the SMOs have been chosen instead as critical cases, which are used strategically to achieve the specific aims of a research project (Flyvbjerg 2001, 78). Rather than demonstrate a paradigm within the field, which would be inimical to the approach that has been established for this thesis, the cases have been chosen based on the likelihood of them yielding useful insights, as well as demonstrating the utility of the processes and mechanisms approach and the communicative ecologies model. While heuristics are produced, as much if not more value lies in the way that this end is achieved.

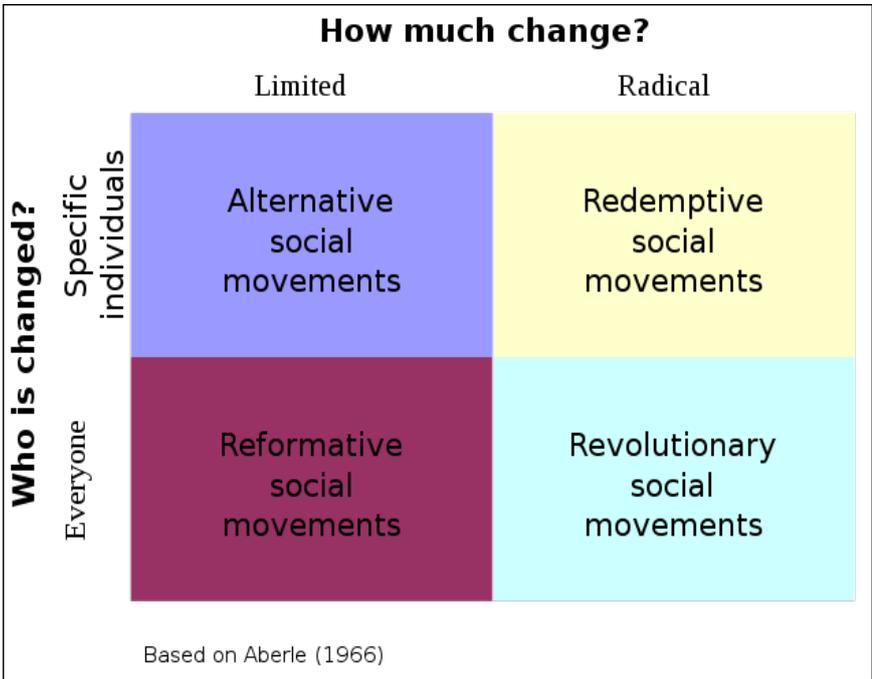
The methodology of my research takes into account a number of requirements that have been identified for complexity-based case study research. The need to understand interdependencies and relationships (Anderson et al 2005, 673) is addressed through the communicative ecologies model, which provides a systematic way of understanding how the layers of an ecology affect each other. A complex system’s history must be considered (Anderson et al 2005, 680), and through the case studies it will be seen at a number of points how the historical backgrounds of the

SOMs have affected their current circumstances. Complexity-based case study research must be concerned with nonlinearities (the possibility that small events may yield large outcomes) (Anderson et al 2005, 675). The concept of nonlinear causal relationships is addressed through the processes and mechanisms approach. Tilly's (1995, 1601) tide/flood metaphor in chapter two advocates the study of mechanisms for exactly this reason - the potentially great impact of seemingly minor factors, which frustrates invariant laws and models. Chapters four, five, and six analyse the SOMs and their use of ICTs as complex systems using these methods. The remainder of this section concerns my choice of AbM and SA as the particular SOMs to be studied.

For effective critical cases, it was important to choose two cases which had similarities which made them comparable, but were different enough to not render each other redundant. There are various different typologies and classifications of SOMs. In my decision I referred largely to the work of David Aberle (1982, 315-33). Aberle's (1982, 316) typology, originally conceived as part of a study on a Native American religious movement, has been adapted and reproduced on the Wikipedia page on social movements in a way that more clearly demonstrates the criteria I have taken into consideration:

Figure 1: An adaptation of Aberle's typology

(http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Types_of_social_movements.svg)



Both of the SMOs studied in this thesis can be characterised as revolutionary (though with more immediate reformist demands), left-wing, concerned with social justice and deeply critical of the currently existing capitalist order. Broadly speaking, they fall into the same (bottom right, revolutionary) square on the above typology, while still containing particularities that set them apart significantly. In terms of their strategic importance, my choice of AbM and SA has been informed by Flyvbjerg's (2001, 78) suggestion that in identifying critical cases a researcher should look for 'most likely' or 'least likely' cases. This refers to the likelihood that a case will confirm (or refute) a hypothesis. For my work, the hypothesis that ICTs significantly and positively affect activism was used to choose cases. As such, AbM was chosen as a case that lies towards the 'least likely' side of the spectrum as the poverty and marginalisation of its members can be expected to make it less likely that ICTs (which are often expensive and reliant on some knowledge of their use and benefits) have a significant impact for the better on their activism¹³. SA, on the other hand, lies much more towards the 'most/more likely' end of the spectrum, as it is a large organisation based in a Western country with ready access to and experience with technology.

The inclusion of AbM in my research also provides an important corrective to a view that may otherwise be too centred in the global North. There is a need for this in research on the topic of ICTs and social movements, as inclusion of a broad range of samples including some from the global South may offer evidence to counter that available from the global North, better capturing the ultimate complexity of the issue (Olorunnisola and Martin 2013, 286). The inclusion of such diverse contexts further destabilises the notion that a truly paradigmatic case could be found on the issue. Instead, a focus on the critical cases of AbM and SA highlights their differences, and speculates as to the implications of these differences. A framework for the comparison of such different cases is provided through the communicative ecologies model.

¹³ There are, of course, already cases that have shown that this is not necessarily true, most famously the Zapatistas in Chiapas, Mexico (though many commentators have also noted that it is primarily Zapatista supporters rather than the group itself that utilise ICTs). Nevertheless, it can reasonably be expected that poverty and a lack of exposure to technology on a regular basis would make it more difficult to incorporate ICTs effectively into activism. The AbM case study bears this expectation out, partially.

My choice of AbM and SA also serves to make the most of the processes and mechanisms approach. In *Dynamics of contention*, McAdam et al (2001, 75) stray from cases that might usually be considered 'comparable' in order to expose common mechanisms and processes in very different instances of contentious politics. This also allows the observation of different combinations of mechanisms and outcomes (McAdam et al 2001, 82-5). As such, while the cases chosen have some similarities for the sake of topical coherence, these are not analytically all that important, as my approach largely makes a virtue out of difference, exploring the limits it imposes on what can be said, and conversely highlighting what can be said in spite of it.

Chapters four and five will present and analyse AbM and SA in terms of their communicative ecologies. Chapter six will then analyse the cases in terms of the processes and mechanisms that can be identified from the previous chapters. From this analysis, a number of heuristics can be suggested, which will be discussed further in chapter seven. This particular method of exploring the use of ICTs by SMOs has not been employed before. A search of the relevant literature reveals one other instance (Chiumbu 2012) in which the work of Tacchi and Slater (Tacchi et al 2003) and McAdam et al (1996) have been used together, however this instance does not constitute an overall approach of using the methods in concert so much as they are both simply citations in the work. This increases the importance of demonstrating the utility of my approach, as will be done throughout the thesis. However, first the details of my methods and fieldwork will be further discussed.

Data collection and management

Case studies were chosen as a method of enquiry because they are useful in capturing the complexity and contingency of the subject matter. The choices I made regarding data collection can be understood in the same way. The main data collection method I used was interviews with members of the two movements. Interviews may be time-consuming compared to other data collection techniques, but they yield detailed and contextual information (Wisker 2001, 165). They also offer privileged, insider insights into a topic, which was important for this research as I sought to come to my

conclusions largely through the sometimes esoteric knowledge of activists, while downplaying any of my own preconceptions. Interview data is useful in complementing other data, and in my research it is used alongside other sources such as articles, websites, and observation.

The interviews were conducted in a semi-structured, conversational format. The benefits of semi-structured interviews for qualitative social science research, and in particular social movement research, have been extensively documented (Hermanowicz 2002; Lodge 2013; Blee and Taylor 2002). A semi-structured approach acknowledges that interviews are not mechanistic and rigid, but conversational (Hermanowicz 2002, 482-483). Questions are useful to guide the conversation, but flexibility is also important: for one thing it allows the interviewer to gain a sense of what is significant to the interviewee (Hermanowicz 2002, 484). This emphasises the important fact that while the interviewer may be the party with formal academic training, in actual fact it is largely the interviewee who is playing the part of teacher (Hermanowicz 2002, 486). Flexibility also allows accommodation for the circumstances of each interview (Lodge 2013, 187). For instance, when I was brought to the Shallcross settlement, I was introduced to several residents who agreed to be interviewed – however, I was aware that they had not specifically set time aside for this, and as such I was much more direct in my line of questioning so as not to take up too much of their time.

In particular reference to social movement research, semi-structured interviews are useful for understanding the perspectives of social movement actors, though at the cost of systematic comparison (Blee and Taylor 2002, 92). Echoing Baldwin (1979, 193), as outlined in chapter two, I consider such a cost as a ‘real-world constraint to be lived with’. Interviews also allow for the capture of nuance, and subtle difference in the perspectives of participants (Blee and Taylor 2002, 95), which will likely not be apparent in official documentation. This was important for the study as, since neither SMO has an official policy position on ICTs, it was through participant perspectives that insight was gained on what ICTs meant for the movements and their members. Moreover, as these perspectives were not uniform across SMO members, the aforementioned flexibility of a semi-structured format was an advantage in terms of allowing the interviewees to express their views.

The semi-structured format allowed me to more freely pursue avenues of discussion that seemed relevant as the interviews progressed, following conversational threads that participants wished and were able to elaborate on, instead of dwelling in areas where they had little to say. That being said, I had prepared a loose thematic structure to the initial questions. Firstly, as both an icebreaker and an overview, participants were asked about their involvement with the SMO, and about the SMO itself. They were asked about what they believed power was, and whether they believed the organisation had a position on this. Questions then moved towards particular accounts of the use of ICTs in movement activities and organisation. The interviews were concluded with an invitation for participants to add anything else they wished to about the research and its topic (the possible influence of ICTs on social movements). These conversations were recorded on a personal recording device with interviewees' consent.

In each case I initially approached the SMOs via their publicly-available contact details, in particular email, though this often proved insufficient in itself. For instance, with AbM my communication with the group was hampered by email problems that prevented me from receiving their replies. I also contacted South African academic Richard Pithouse because of the relationship he has had with AbM since its beginnings. He provided me with useful advice regarding my interactions with the group, for instance advising me that they may be initially wary of me due to past experiences with academics (this is elaborated on in chapter four). I eventually managed to communicate with AbM members through their Facebook page, and secured an agreement from them to engage with my research before I made arrangements to travel to Durban.

I made initial contact with SA by approaching members at a stall in the Perth central business district. From the initial points of contact with the SMOs, I recruited participants using a combination of convenience sampling (who was around and available) and snowball sampling (participants recommended or arranged by other participants). Neither of these methods is ideal for producing definitive conclusions on a topic, as they are not representative of the overall population within a group. However, they are often the only viable option, as was the case here (Crosswell n.d.a; Crosswell n.d.b) - I did not have access to all the SA or AbM members in Perth

or Durban, let alone across the countries in question, and establishing what a pure representative sample of each SMO would even look like would itself take years of work¹⁴.

Given my sampling method, I am aware of limitations in my work resulting from selection bias. Selection bias can occur from improper procedures in the selection of participants, or in my case, from factors influencing individuals' participation in the study (Ibrahim et al 1999, 1). This is especially relevant to my work with AbM, where the vast majority of my data collection involved the English-speaking¹⁵, more prominent and more accessible members of the group who were often available at the AbM office in Durban.

I discussed these sources of possible bias with members of the group, and I attempted to mitigate it by visiting shack settlements and speaking with residents. However, these instances still make up a very small part of the overall data collected, and interviews with non-English speakers conducted through interpreters present their own challenges. For instance, this practice introduces the possibility of interpreter bias, and complications of cultural context (Lopez et al 2008, 1730). Translation methods can impact the data as it is transferred between cultures and languages, so it is wise to use a translator who is acquainted with the culture and values of interview participants, and can express the context and meaning of words rather than simply provide rote repetition (Al-Amer et al 2015, 1159). In my case I was fortunate in that bi or multi lingual AbM members were willing and able to perform this role.

I also spoke on two occasions with Brazilian academic Kalinca Copello, who has performed extensive (as yet unpublished) research on AbM and built relationships with members of the group over a long period of time. These discussions served as a sort of peer review, allowing me to compare my findings with another researcher

¹⁴ Such a task is even further complicated by a complexity theory lens, where small factors might be influential, but overlooked (Urry 2005, 4).

¹⁵ South Africa has 11 official languages. English is the most commonly spoken in official and public life, but only the fifth most common at home, with the most common in that context being Zulu (SouthAfrica.info 2015).

working on a similar project and receive constructive criticism at an early stage. Based on these discussions I have found no reason to doubt my observations and conclusions. Conversations with Copello were also instrumental in my adoption of the communicative ecologies model as she was familiar with the work of one of its developers, Jo Tacchi.

For my research into AbM, I spent two and a half weeks in Durban, South Africa. During this time, the majority of my data was collected through a series of semi-structured interviews with members of the group. Due to the flexibility of the group's operations, borne of a mandate to address the everyday problems of shack dwellers as they occurred, appointments for interviews could only be made in quite vague terms. This meant that I spent a large amount of time waiting around the office, observing its day-to-day activities. I also sat in on a number of meetings, some of which were translated for me (meetings were typically conducted in Zulu, and sometimes in Xhosa). As previously mentioned, on two occasions I had the opportunity to visit shack settlements at Foreman Road and the area of Shallcross. Here I met some residents and observed firsthand the communities in which the shack dwellers live. The data from these activities has been supplemented by data from secondary sources – information from the AbM website, news articles, and other academic research.

I conducted research into SA over a longer period of time, several months in total. This was for a number of reasons. Firstly, I was at this time also writing up my results from Durban. Secondly, members of SA were often busy in the period leading up to the 2013 Australian federal election, and thirdly, living in the same city as the group meant I had the luxury of taking my time. It is possible that this discrepancy between the time taken with the two groups influences the integrity of the data, but this is unlikely as there is nothing in the SA interviews to suggest that they would have gone differently if the study was conducted over a shorter timeframe.

The interviews conducted with SMO members were not transcribed verbatim, from beginning to end. Elizabeth J. Halcomb and Patricia Davidson (2006, 40-41) note that it is often assumed that such transcription is necessary for accuracy and quality of data, but proceed to argue that this assumption is not well supported empirically.

They propose an alternative, in which a researcher records interviews and takes notes, immediately reviews and expands the notes, then listens to the recording again while revising, before analysis begins. The method I employed was similar to this, with the exception that some sections of the interviews were transcribed verbatim, where I intended to use direct quotations or was concerned about exact expressions or anecdotes. Later in the analysis and coding, I referred back to the recordings around any paraphrasing I had used, to check for accuracy.

The data was coded, which is to say it was organised in a way that allowed me to see the significance of what had been said (Auerbach and Silverstein 2003, 31). The method used to initially organise the data was through themes and repeating ideas – different statements that interviewees had made that conveyed similar meanings (Auerbach and Silverstein 2003, 37-38). There is no clear agreement on how to conduct thematic analysis (Braun and Clarke 2006, 79), but Virginia Braun and Victoria Clarke (2006, 86-87) offer some basic guidelines which help to explain my approach. These are: become familiar with the data, perform initial coding, look for themes, review themes in relation to coded data, define and name themes, and finally produce a report. My method differed slightly but was based around the same basic idea. The main difference is that the themes I ultimately used to organise the data were already established before I started working with the data – I had researched and developed my chosen framework/model (communicative ecologies) alongside the interview process, so while it was informed by the interviews I conducted in South Africa, it strictly speaking preceded coding. As Braun and Clarke (2006, 80) explain, themes do not ‘reside’ in the data intrinsically - the researcher’s own ideas always play a formative role in the process, to some degree, as is made explicit in my use of the communicative ecologies model.

Notes from the interviews and observations were divided into four categories: background information and history on the movements, and the three layers of the communicative ecologies (technical, discursive, and social). Areas that would benefit from further contextual information were identified and secondary sources were used for this purpose (for example, the information on housing in post-apartheid South Africa provided in chapter four). These accounts of the SMOs’ communicative ecologies constitute chapters four and five, and they serve to provide illustrations of

how ICTs fit into the lived experiences of members. Additionally, from these accounts, processes are identified which are discussed in chapter six. This allows the production of heuristics, while not forgetting the particular factors (elements of the communicative ecologies) that these heuristics are contingent upon.

Alongside conducting the interviews, I made observations of some SMO activities during the time spent with their members. Unstructured participant observation of the type conducted by myself – spending time around SMO members as they conducted their day-to-day activities, taking notes and occasionally asking questions - is useful in understanding context, interactions, environmental influences and cultural behaviour (Mulhall 2003, 306 -307). Due to my lack of personal familiarity with the cultural and historical influences at work in South Africa, this was particularly important during my work with AbM, and some of these observations are recounted in chapter four. My observation activities with regards to AbM included spending a great deal of time in their office assisting with menial tasks and observing interactions between members, being present at meetings with an interpreter, visiting settlements where I met residents, and accompanying participants throughout their daily life – for instance shopping and commuting from the settlements into the city.

In the case of SA, my observations largely served to confirm what I had been told or understood through my experiences with Australian leftist politics – this was still worthwhile however, as it added to my confidence regarding the validity of this data. The observation activities I conducted with SA included assisting in the office with menial tasks, being present at meetings, and attending protests where I listened to speeches by SA members.

Ethical issues

In interviews, there are always issues of power and responsibility to consider. The interviewer has a duty of care to explain and minimise the risks of participation. During the interview itself, an ongoing interplay of power takes place as the interviewer seeks the consent and cooperation of the interviewee, who may agree or resist. (Nunkoosing 2005, 699). While it is a slight simplification, the relationship

can be understood in terms of control over the proceedings. At the initial stage of participant recruitment, the researcher has control in the form of choices about how to present the project. Once the data collection process begins, participants have control in choosing what to disclose (Karnieli-Miller et al 2009, 282). The researcher ‘courts’ the participant at this stage, and has responsibility for the information they manage to gain (Karnieli-Miller et al 2009, 283). After data collection, in the analysis stage, control returns to the researcher as they work with and present the data (Karnieli-Miller et al 2009, 283). The choice also must be made whether to share and discuss findings with participants, and what data can then be used for (Karnieli-Miller et al 2009, 284).

A range of suggestions (Karnieli-Miller et al 2009, 286-287) have been made for navigating these issues and I have endeavoured to follow them in my research. For instance, information about the study’s aim and likely scope of publication has been provided to participants, and the option of anonymous or pseudonymous participation was provided, though in most cases participants did not consider this necessary. In fact, in most cases, as the activism that participants were involved in was very public, they were happy to have their names attached to the statements that they made. Only one participant, from SA, took up the offer to use a pseudonym.

Participants were reminded of their rights and the purpose of the research throughout the interview process. This was done verbally at the start of the interview, as well as being included in the information sheet provided to all participants. It was reiterated at the end of the interview as well as briefly at any time when I sensed that a question may be sensitive. It was also made clear to participants that an opportunity to view the thesis (or alternatively the parts of it related to them) would be provided upon request. In writing this manuscript, quotes and ‘thick description’¹⁶ have been used where possible to allow participants’ voices to be heard, rather than solely my own. At the same time, I was conscious of the need to remain aware and reflective of my own situation and the influence it may have on work I produce. By this I am referring

¹⁶ The term ‘thick description’ is articulated in the first chapter of *The interpretation of cultures* by Clifford Geertz (1973). It refers to the description of not only behaviour but its context, which is vital for sound interpretation and meaning. Geertz’s description builds on ideas raised in an earlier piece by Gilbert Ryle (1968).

to the privileges inherent in my position as an academic, as well of those associated with being a white, Western male of comfortable means. Self-reflectivity was particularly important in conducting research with AbM, as members have spoken of unpleasant experiences with academics and NGOs that seemingly lacked this trait.

I am also aware of the importance of reciprocity in the research process. Adital Ben-Ari and Guy Enosh (2013, 427) characterise reciprocity within the research relationship in the following passage:

Reciprocity allows for asymmetrical relations, be they static or dynamic, while enabling each research party to gain from them. Power differentials are acknowledged and exchanges between the parties promoted. Each recognizes his or her contribution to the research process, as well as that of the other...The researchers benefit directly from the exchange, whereas the participants probably benefit directly and/or indirectly in the long run, rather than directly and immediately. Thus, reciprocity might be affected indirectly by using the constructed knowledge later to help those participants or others in similar situations. Characterizing the research relationships as reciprocal, we inevitably consider the need for mutual recognition and respect, knowing that advancing the topic in question is contingent upon the contribution of each party.

The need for reciprocity in research cannot be overstated, both for practical reasons of encouraging participation in research projects and for the simple reason that it is the right thing to do. From early in the research process I endeavoured to consider and communicate the benefit of my research to the activist community, and to make a contribution to the development of methods for advancing social change. This is likely true of much social movement research. Even so, this is very much an indirect and somewhat abstract form of reciprocity, while the benefits I gain from interviewees' participation are much more tangible. For this reason, I also offered assistance with menial tasks being undertaken by the groups during the time I was present, such as cleaning or the collating of movement publications, and gave financial donations to the SMOs (this was done after the completion of the interviews, and without prior discussion, to avoid any perceptions of inducement – the dangers of this are touched upon in Gillan and Pickerill 2012, 137).

As explained in the previous section, participant observation is well suited to qualitative and case study research, particularly when little is known about a phenomenon, insider and outsider viewpoints differ substantially, and information is not visible to outsiders (Jorgensen 1989, 12-13). This thesis makes use of such observations made during the research process. An ethical concern with observation

is the subject's continued awareness (or not) of being a subject (Moore and Savage 2002, 59). Flexibility and pragmatism, while in some ways methodological virtues, may serve to blur the line between covert and overt research (Moore and Savage 2002, 60). Curtin University's ethics board was satisfied with my stated position on observation, which entailed non-identification of individuals – practices and events are described but people are not. Lucy Moore and Jan Savage (2002, 66) note, however, that controversial issues about ethics are usually encountered at the level of practice, rather than theory. Likewise, Anne Pirrie, James MacAllister, and Gale Macleod (2012) argue that while universal standards are important, decisions are often made on how to uphold these based on the specifics of a particular instance. This is important to keep in mind, however in the case of my research it was relatively unproblematic – the events observed were largely meant for public consumption and I was explicitly introduced to those involved as a researcher who might use broad, non-identifying observations in my work.

As mentioned, data from interviews and observations was supplemented by data from secondary sources, including online material produced by SMO members. With regards to the internet, while a comparable ethical framework exists between online and offline research, much more is possible online in terms of accessing data not necessarily meant for a research paper, or the publications that may result from it (Hooley et al 2012, 25). There are different schools of thought on how to ethically deal with such a situation. Dorothy Kim (2014) argues in reference to Twitter that, 'Twitter as a public space does not mean academics have permission to make digital bodies data points or experimental cells in a petri dish ...Twitter allows... "objects" of an academic study to speak back, protest, and create ethical disruptions'. Conversely, Michael Thelwall (2010) makes the case that any data that can be accessed online is fair game, though it remains important to protect identities.

While I do not take the position that Thelwall's argument is valid in all cases, in my own research it is defensible as the data collected appears to be meant for public consumption. The Association of Internet Researchers argues that 'privacy is a concept that must include a consideration of expectations and consensus' (Markham and Buchanan 2012, 7). They invoke the concept of 'contextual integrity', which states that it is important to consider 'context-relative informational norms'

(Nissenbaum 2009, 186). Indications of these norms served as a guideline for my use of online data. For instance, the information contained on the AbM Facebook page is also available on the website and in an email list that I was added to by members who were fully aware of my status as a researcher. In the case of SA, there has been some discussion among members about making one of their sites, *Alliance Voices*, private (Saunders 2014). This indicates an awareness among posters that, at the moment, the content of their posts are available to the public, including to researchers like myself. Ultimately, I consider my ethical conduct throughout the research process to be most strongly validated through the approval of the SMOs themselves – AbM have seen fit to link to a journal article I have published on their website (Gill 2014), and I have participated in a forum organised by SA to share my work on that group.

Secondary sources

Over the thesis process as a whole, I conducted substantial amounts of secondary research to build a working vocabulary for the concepts used in the thesis that needed to be unpacked - concepts such as power, technology, and social movements. Secondary sources in the form of movement publications and communications have also been used to supplement the interview data. The use of multiple sources to improve the reliability and validity of a researcher's conclusions is a common and well-regarded process called triangulation (Yin 1994, 91-92; Willis 2007, 218-219). Robert K. Yin (1994, 80) notes that there is bias in all sources, and that they should be used complementarily, with as many different types as possible included. The most important use of documents is to corroborate other sources, though they also must be viewed critically (Yin 1994, 81-82). John Lofland (1996, 39) explains that radical SMOs, through their positing of alternative realities, are highly intellectual, and that '...written items are quintessential artifacts of SMOs'. This includes ICT-based communications (Lofland 1996, 41). SMO websites and Facebook pages, for instance, provided a wealth of archived information on movement activities and views. These in particular were useful in keeping informed about developments that occurred after my primary data collection, for instance the highly relevant use of YouTube by SA in an election campaign. The main resources of this nature used in

the thesis were the SMOs' websites, www.socialist-alliance.org and www.abahlali.org. SA also have other secondary sites such as the Green Left Weekly site (www.greenleft.org.au) and their Wikispace (www.socialist-alliance.wikispaces.com) which I made use of, as well as some AbM supporter websites.

While movement publications and communications directly supplemented the interviews, and were instrumental in learning about the movements before choosing them as cases, the thesis also relies on a wealth of secondary literature in a range of subject areas. My initial secondary literature search began with the parallel use of Google Scholar and the Curtin University library catalogue to explore the available literature on social movements, ICTs, and the specific topic of ICTs in social movements. This stage of the research also acquainted me with books on the topics, and allowed me to identify specific, particularly relevant, journals such as *Social Movement Studies* and *Interface*, that I would routinely refer back to, to check for new developments in the field. It was during this initial stage of the research process that I developed an understanding of communicative ecologies, and the approach of McAdam et al (2001) in *Dynamics of contention*, though it was only after primary data collection began that these took on a central role in my analysis.

Secondary sources were also utilised after my primary research and analysis, as will be seen in chapter seven. An essential component of building theory is the comparing of the concepts, theories, or hypotheses (in my case these are specifically characterised as heuristics) that emerge with other findings that support and/or contradict them. This comparative work makes for more valid, higher quality findings – it articulates their limits, and highlights similarities (Eisenhardt 1989, 544). Gerhard Kleining and Harald Witt (2000, 2) suggest a number of rules to optimize the development of heuristics – the stated goal of this thesis – that accord with this view. The first two of these are to be open to new concepts and open to altering the focus or topic of the research. In the earlier stages of my work I have taken this approach, adapting my theoretical framework to better reflect my findings.

The next rules relate to my later use of secondary sources. Kleining and Witt (2000, 3-4) suggest structural variation to collect a range of results if contingency is likely -

'[i]f researchers assume that a variable may influence the data they should implement variations'. The secondary sources that are introduced in chapter seven allow me to discuss the broader applicability of the heuristics by relating my findings to cases with different communicative ecologies. This is a way of discovering similarities and testing the limits within which the heuristics are valid. As such, a key difference between the secondary research performed for chapter seven and that from earlier is that the later research was centred on different, emergent, themes related to the heuristics.

Conclusion

As I have argued, the use of case studies is the logical way to proceed from my chosen theoretical perspective. Indeed, the communicative ecologies model is intended for the study of local contexts (Tacchi 2006, 6-7; Tacchi and Watkins 2007, 3) so in a practical sense it is difficult to see how else it could be employed. The strategic use of critical cases, rather than the production of exemplars through paradigmatic cases, is supported by my chosen lens of complexity theory and phronetic social science which sees such reductionism as counterproductive. In studying the cases, data collection was largely achieved through semi-structured interviews as these allowed me to capture particular, contextual insights from participants. This data was enriched through the inclusion of observations and secondary sources, and secondary sources are also employed in chapter seven to lend added substance to the heuristics that arise from my analysis.

In this chapter I have also addressed the ethical issues related to my research. I have been mindful of the power and responsibility that I have as a researcher. I have addressed this through acts of reciprocity with participants, through openness and communication regarding my activities and goals, and by careful reflecting on the implications of my use of open-source data. I am satisfied that I have conducted my research ethically and my communications with participants and the university ethics committee suggest that they feel likewise.

Chapters four and five present the case studies as communicative ecologies. These

chapters will begin with some background information on the SMOs. Following this, the data is given form through the use of Foth and Hearn's (2007, 756) layers - technical, discursive, and social. The holistic view provides the foundation for the analysis in chapter six, which explores the SMOs' ICT-aided activities in terms of processes and mechanisms. This allows for the establishment of some heuristics regarding the relationships between ICTs and SMOs. At the same time, the communicative ecologies model means the contingency of these rules or statements remains apparent, as it shows how elements in the ecologies facilitate or hinder the processes and mechanisms. Using this insight, I have included accommodations for inevitable contingency within the heuristics, to be further articulated in chapter seven.

Chapter Four: Abahlali baseMjondolo

Introduction

This chapter presents the case study of AbM. It first provides essential background information on the SMO such as its beginnings, and the political and social climate in South Africa at that time. This information, as well as some references to South African history, helps to explain the current situation. For instance, the limits of the SMO's technical layer can be understood as a legacy of Apartheid, as well as government policy since then, and a number of the attitudes and beliefs in the discursive layer have been shaped by shack dwellers' past experiences with other actors such as government officials and academics.

Following this background, the next sections describe the SMO in terms of its communicative ecology. This conceptual work will be performed using Foth and Hearn's (2007, 756) layers, with a layer covered in each section. The technical layer will be discussed first, as the very presence or absence of particular ICTs immediately serves to establish which technologies are relevant to the group and will therefore feature in further discussion. In that sense, this layer is the most straightforwardly descriptive.

The discursive layer will then be discussed, detailing the ideology, beliefs, and ideas that are present in the SMO. A range of themes and concepts exist under the umbrella of 'Abahlalism', largely stemming from the struggle of the shack dwellers for dignity and basic services, but also with links to traditional Southern African philosophy. In the discursive layer section, I will also make some comparisons between this belief system and the Global Justice Movement (GJM), also known as the Anti or Alter Globalisation Movement. AbM identifies with the 'movement of movements' to a degree, and relating the two will assist analysis in chapters six and seven when those chapters explore the process of scale shift. Considering the similarities and differences between the case study SMOs and others helps in understanding the extent to which insights from my research can be generalised to other SMO ecologies.

The discursive layer has important implications for the social layer of the communicative ecology, which is the third to be discussed. As the social layer concerns people, organisational forms, and practices, it is the layer where the preceding two play their part in affecting the use of ICTs by the SMO. It should be noted, however, that this does not imply that the influence of the layers necessarily runs in a linear fashion from technical through discursive to social. Such relationships can run in many different directions. For example, the social factor of poverty clearly influences the technical and discursive layers. This is in accordance with a point made in chapter three, that in a complex case study not only must the various elements be considered, but also their relationships and interactions (Anderson et al 2005, 671). The communicative ecologies model allows such consideration, and informs analysis in chapter six.

Finally, a brief summary of what has been discussed in the chapter will be provided, as well as the identification of some processes that are apparent from the data. These are scale shift – which refers to the increase or decrease in the scale of contention that a SMO is engaged in - mobilisation, and empowerment – a process not found in McAdam et al (2001), but which I have developed from other sources (Cattaneo and Chapman 2010; Choudhury 2009) as it best reflects some of the interview data gathered from the two case studies. These processes and the related mechanisms will be used in chapter six to further analyse the use of ICTs by the SMOs.

Some recent developments within AbM warrant mentioning. Since data collection was completed in 2013, several members of the group, some of whom I interviewed, have left AbM (see appendix for details). The exact circumstances of this are disputed and speculation would not be appropriate. Information that exists on the matter includes short online articles (Sacks 2014; Tshabalala 2014; Tabloid Newspapers 2014a; Tabloid Newspapers 2014b), an article in which Mdlalose (2014) roundly criticises the group and calls into question claims that members (including herself) have made regarding the group's democratic process among other issues, and a lengthy rebuttal to this (Abahlali baseMjondolo 2015). Ultimately I do not consider these developments to substantially compromise my analysis as the issues involved in the split do not pertain to the group's ICT use or overall ideology. For the sake of coherence, where former members discuss their membership in the group in

the present tense, this has been retained.

Movement background

To talk about AbM, it is necessary to understand some features of post-Apartheid South Africa, as these pertain to shack dwellers' everyday lives and the reason for the movement's existence. In 2008, Africa was the fastest urbanising continent, and 72% of its people were living in 'informal settlements' or 'shack settlements' (Gibson 2008, 6). Sources in a report by the Housing Development Agency (2012, 31) vary in their estimate of the number of these settlements in South Africa – the highest estimate is 2754, the lowest 1016. A 2007 Community Survey indicates that 1.2 million households live in 'shacks-not-in-backyards'¹⁷, though again this figure differs depending on the data source (Housing Development Agency 2012, 23). According to Census 2011, while 72% of these households had access to water, less than half had refuse removal, sanitation, or electricity (Housing Development Agency 2013, 23). This is the most recent in-depth, official data available (*Statistics South Africa* n.d.), though more recently a government minister has stated that the number of shack dwellings in South Africa is almost the same as it was at the end of Apartheid in 1994 (Sapa 2013). AbM members (for instance Figlan 2013; Ngongoma 2013) make various references to this history and situation in the interviews, and it plays a key role in their communicative ecology.

As explained in chapter three, history is important to consider from a complexity perspective (Anderson et al 2005, 680) as it informs and influences the present. At the same time, a complexity perspective also suggests the impossibility of complete understanding, and in line with this there is no universally accepted explanation for the shack dwellers' contemporary plight. Grant Saff (1994, 377) attributes the situation to the widespread urbanisation of the black population after the decline and end of Apartheid, coupled with a lack of sufficient economic growth. Other contributing factors that have been suggested include the impact of neoliberal

¹⁷ In some neighbourhoods it is common to see shacks in the backyards of peoples' houses. The survey does not include these in its figures, referring only to shacks in informal settlements.

economics on the country's poor (Habid and Padayachee 2000, 259), the desire of young people for independence, and family or political violence such as that which was widespread in the 1980s (Birkinshaw 2008, 2). While causal factors are debated, what is more clear is the South African government's shortcomings in dealing with the crisis.

Marie Huchzermeyer (2010, 144) explains the reaction of the country's then-new African National Congress (ANC) government to the shack settlements:

In a technocratic and perhaps late-modernist determinism, the political leadership of the post-apartheid state chose first to focus simplistically on the delivery of one million houses in its first term, and then on the target of eradicating slums or informal settlements by the end of its fourth term.

Particular attention should be paid to Huchzermeyer's use of a term introduced earlier in this thesis – 'technocratic'. In this political sense it can be read as meaning rule by those who consider themselves the most intelligent (Pithouse 2008, 72). Some other definitions of the term, from both popular and academic sources, are more generous, describing the role of science and expertise in technocracy, but these definitions all also concede that technocratic rule is inimical to democracy (BBC News Magazine 2011; Tucker 2011; Centeno 1993, 330). Miguel Angel Centeno (1993, 312) describes technocracy as a mentality rather than an ideology, or alternatively, '...not an ideology of answers or issues, but an ideology of method...' As will be seen in this chapter, technocratic practices are employed by both left and right-wing political forces. As a mentality or ideology of method, it stands in glaring contrast to the considerations discussed in the early pages of this thesis such as those that underpin phronetic social science.

The idea of technocracy has been employed to describe the actions of the South African government by a number of authors. Pithouse (2008, 72) refers to the government's 'Slum Clearance Project' as being authoritarian and technocratic, wherein the state uses escalating violence to maintain its hegemony in terms of planning and decision-making. Violent eviction and forced relocation are commonly

directed at shack dwellers by state authorities¹⁸ (Huchzermeyer 2010, 131). Pithouse (2008, 74) describes a typical eviction:

An eviction normally occurs very swiftly when a relocation site becomes ready. There is no discussion with residents as to whether or not they approve of the relocation site or of the houses that have been built on the site. Evictions happen without a court order, without consultation, without adequate notice, without any acknowledgement that residents have the right to oppose evictions and in many instances are accompanied with casual violence. It is typical for houses to be knocked down while people's possessions are still inside. Once houses are flattened, machines are brought in to pulverize the building materials and often, but not always, a fire is then set to burn away the last remaining evidence that there had been a settlement there. People on the list to get a house are taken to the relocation houses but people not on the list are simply left homeless. In general, shack owners get onto the housing list but shack renters are left homeless. It is not unusual for more people to be left homeless than relocated.

As the ideal plan has been for new housing and settlement eradication, settlements are considered 'temporary'. Because of this, upgrades to settlements were suspended then stopped in 2001, as was maintenance and services such as water provision (Pithouse 2008, 73). This was the environment in which, in 2005, AbM was born.

On March 18, 2005, at the Kennedy Road settlement, construction started for a brick factory, on land long promised by the council for public housing. Shack dwellers moved to the site and demanded an explanation from the council, and were arrested. Nigel Gibson (2007, 61) explains that, '[i]nstead of housing, people found themselves facing bulldozers as well as removal twelve miles outside the city (a ten-dollar cab ride), far from work opportunities, schools and hospitals'. A mass meeting was held at the settlement, followed by a mass demonstration in the morning that led to a confrontation with riot police (Pithouse 2008, 75). From this beginning, AbM was formed, out of a realisation by shack dwellers that they had common concerns – described by the shack dwellers I interviewed as a dissatisfaction with the broken promises of their government (Figlan et al 2013). In the movement's own words, from their website, 'Abahlali baseMjondolo is a radically democratic, grassroots and entirely non-professionalised movement of shack dwellers in South Africa. It grew out of a road blockade organised by residents of the Kennedy Road Shack Settlement

¹⁸ These events are routinely documented on the AbM website (abahlali.org). For instance, in late September 2013, evictions and demolitions occurred at Cato Crest, Durban. Earlier that year, an AbM activist was murdered. The movement routinely faces violence and repression, especially in recent times (Bullock 2013; Nicolson 2013).

in the City of Durban in early 2005. The words Abahlali baseMjondolo are Zulu for people who stay in shacks.’ (Abahlali baseMjondolo 2007b). This summation makes reference to the SMOs’ discursive and social characteristics, which are expanded on in the following sections along with its technical layer.

The original mass mobilisations against evictions were organised via SMS, indicating some engagement with ICTs since the movements’ inception. However, the evictors were armed and violent (Pithouse 2008, 80). Violence is something the movement has had to contend with often. For instance, on September 26, 2009, violent attacks in Kennedy Road left two people dead and about 1000 displaced, with AbM leaders forced into hiding. The armed group self-identified as ANC supporters. Police and government involvement or complicity has been alleged, while state officials blamed AbM itself for the violence¹⁹ (Chance 2010, 1-2). The allegations against AbM were later disproved (Socio-economic Rights Institute of South Africa 2011). A 2010 diplomatic cable from the United States embassy in Pretoria, released by WikiLeaks, has compared the ANC’s treatment of AbM members to the behaviour of the previous Apartheid government (IOL News 2011). The ever-present threat of violent repression has caused changes in the way AbM organises.

During my time with AbM I was told that the movement’s meetings used to take place in the shack dwellers’ communities, which was advantageous in terms of encouraging popular participation, but that this was no longer a safe option since the Kennedy Road attacks. Now, they rent an office in the Durban city centre. Most of my interactions with people from AbM occurred at this office. It contains a computer in a partitioned reception-like area in the entrance, as well as a second one in the main room. These seem to be shared by those who regularly inhabit the office. The way the office is run emphasises inclusion, in keeping with the movement’s democratic ethos – there is an open-door policy in place as the nature of people’s problems means appointments are not always feasible. The general meeting that I attended was standing-room only, with people flowing out into the hallway. Even so I was still welcomed and provided with translations of the proceedings. Meetings run

¹⁹ More information on the attacks is available at Abahlali baseMjondolo 2012c.

for as long as they need to, with care taken that everyone present has a chance to speak. This is an indication of the movement's discursive and social commitment not to marginalise shack dwellers' voices as the government has.

This section has thus far provided some background information on AbM. It is by no means sufficient to understand the movement fully – in fact AbM members themselves would rightly contend that that is simply not possible without concrete experience of the shack dwellers' struggle. For this reason, in the case studies presented I emphasise that the statements recorded are from individuals within the SMOs, rather than a complete representation of an amorphous and abstract entities called 'AbM' or 'SA'. In keeping with this, some background on these participants will now be provided.

Upon first arriving at the AbM office, I spoke to former President and current chairperson S'bu Zikode, Lindela 'Mashumi' Figlan, and then General Secretary Bandile Mdlalose. Figlan has been the Vice President of AbM since 2008. He stepped down in 2010 after the Kennedy Road attacks to give other people a chance, but has since been re-elected (Figlan 2013). Leadership in the non-hierarchical organisation is considered a responsibility rather than a perk, since the non-professionalised ethos of the movement means that there is no financial gain to be had. Figlan states that those who fought for the ANC during Apartheid believed that it would be a government chosen by them, a government for the poor. That is what they were promised before 1994 – but now, he argues, the system of minority rule used by the government is the same as before the end of Apartheid – 'the people they are still suffering, the people they are still burning in the shacks, the people they are still living in the shacks...there are still massacres, there is still everything which was happening before 1994...' (Figlan et al 2013). AbM exists to remind the government of their promises. They explain that while they understand that they are not part of the government, they believe that power remains with people on the ground (Figlan et al 2013). According to Mdlalose, the government gives lip service to this idea, saying the people have power, but in reality these powers and rights have to be fought for (Mdlalose in Figlan et al 2013). This statement reflects an important aspect of AbM's discursive layer which causes them to reject party politics.

Zodwa Nsibande came to Durban in 2003. Her mother was involved with AbM, and she got involved over time. She studied IT for two years until she was injured in an accident²⁰. Nsibande had wanted to be a private investigator, and she tells me that she considers that many of those skills have been transferable to her work with AbM, as the movement concerns itself with finding facts about corruption and duplicity in government. Another of the interviewees, Themrani 'TJ' Ngongoma (2013), used to be a police officer. As such, he points out that he knows well the risks of speaking out about government corruption (as illustrated further by instances of violence against activists), but he wants AbM's work known worldwide. Ngongoma sees AbM as upholding the constitution, which he says has been betrayed by the government. During Apartheid, black people did not have access to quality education, and were dispossessed of their land. Now, says Ngongoma, trying to reverse that situation, as AbM is doing, is considered criminal. He argues that the changes in the country since 1994 are only felt by the country's elites. He states that AbM stands on the side of poor, not to speak for them, but to represent themselves, as AbM is an organisation made of the poor – 'it's all about justice, it's all about doing things for yourself' (Ngongoma 2013). In the meantime, he explains, those who associate with the poor are outcasts, stigmatised. The exception to this is when there is an election. At this time, politicians will come down to the settlements and listen - once every five years (Ngongoma 2013). Again this speaks to the movement's discourse against mainstream politics.

Most of the interviews I conducted took place in the office, but I also visited two shack settlements and spoke to some of the residents. Two of the AbM members I interviewed, Mnikelo Ndabankulu and Philani Ntanzu (2013), live in the Foreman Road settlement. Foreman Road is located right next to a group of houses. Many of the settlement's residents work in these houses – while showing me around the settlement, Ndabankulu highlights the importance of this, as the relocation to rural housing sometimes mandated by the government would mean long and expensive commutes to work. Along with as Foreman Road, I also spent some time at the Shallcross settlement with Albert Ngubane.

²⁰ I later learned that Nsibande was burned in a fire, a common danger for shack dwellers due to the use of candles and kerosene lamps where there is no electricity (The Guardian Weekly 2009).

Ngubane (2013) has been involved with AbM since 2010. The area where he lives, in Shallcross, Ephuleleni, contains about 87 AbM members. As the local committee chairperson it is his job to pass information on to the community. He states that many people in Shallcross have houses now because of AbM. Indeed, the Shallcross settlement consists of both shacks and government houses. Ngubane has a house but is hesitant to leave his shack, as ownership of the houses is disputed at the moment and it is possible he could lose it. He shows me a large folder of documents relating to an ongoing legal battle. When the houses were built, it was discovered that none of them were being allocated to the shack dwellers living in the area. AbM fought this allocation in a court battle, ultimately exposing corruption within the housing project - for instance, some houses were being sold to multiple buyers, and he implies some may have been traded for sexual favours. Some of the culprits have since been jailed, but at the time of the interviews the final court decision on ownership of the houses was still pending. Ngubane explains that it is this side of AbM's activities that he is involved in – information gathering and legal challenges, rather than protests. At the Shallcross settlement, Ngubane introduced me to Bongwiwe Nkabinde, a community organiser and coordinator, and AbM members Nontokozo and Phileleli. These women did not speak English but Ngubane served as a translator for their interviews.

In the following sections, the communicative ecologies model will be employed for its utility in exploring the options available to entities such as SMOs for interaction with other actors (Berglund 2010, 93). For instance, in the technical layer, complete lack of access to a particular ICT would itself answer the question of its influence (and it should also be noted that as well as physical access, an ICT must be recognised and 'appropriated' for activist use – this is discussed in chapter six as the mechanism of social appropriation). Difference in the choices available to SMOs is part of the reason that findings concerning ICT use are contingent, so information on these options serves to help analysis and potentially determine which cases might be at all comparable. In this thesis I take the position that the layers in a communicative ecology are interrelated. For instance, choices in regards to interactions or practices (on the social layer of the ecology) are affected by the discursive layer. Options are also affected in a more straightforward manner by whether a SMO has access (physical or in terms of knowledge and experience) to an ICT for its members' use. This refers to the technical layer of a communicative ecology, which is where the

case study will start.

Technical layer

In this chapter and in chapter five, the technical layer is the first to be discussed as it provides tangible information on what ICTs are available to the SMOs. The use of ICTs by AbM has not been researched extensively, and what work does exist on the topic is quite brief and general. An example is Josie Baum's (n.d.) observation of communication between settlements via mobile phone due to their accessibility, as well as the use of a website and Facebook for dissemination of knowledge, and an emphasis on physical actions - organised with technology but realised in the physical world²¹. In another work, Cerianne Robertson (2014) analyses the movement's website as well as a booklet that was published in PDF form on the Church Land Programme's (CLP) website (Figlan et al 2009). There is also some work forthcoming from Brazilian scholar Kalinca Copello. Throughout my research on AbM I was in contact with Copello, who several years ago spent time with AbM, conducting participant observation for her research. In a personal conversation, Copello pointed out that access and use of a lot of technology is limited to a relatively few members of AbM, and there are striking differences between different members' engagement with ICTs. Copello also remarked that she wonders what would happen to the movement without the relatively few members who regularly use the internet.

As mentioned (Anderson et al 2005, 680), history is a relevant factor for complexity-based case studies. This is starkly evident in terms of AbM's technical layer. Ngongoma (2013) notes that growing up in Apartheid-era South Africa, black people were not exposed to the technology being discussed in this thesis, by law. This gap has been observed more broadly in the South African context - for instance in the higher education sector, a study has found greater use of technology by whites than non-whites, and the author of that study attributes this to the legacy of Apartheid – specifically a lack of access to a 'knowledge domain' (Sooryamoorthy 2015, 79-80).

²¹ This was found to be the case for both of my case studies – as discussed in the concluding chapter, 'cyberactivism', activism which takes place mostly online, is not within the scope of this thesis.

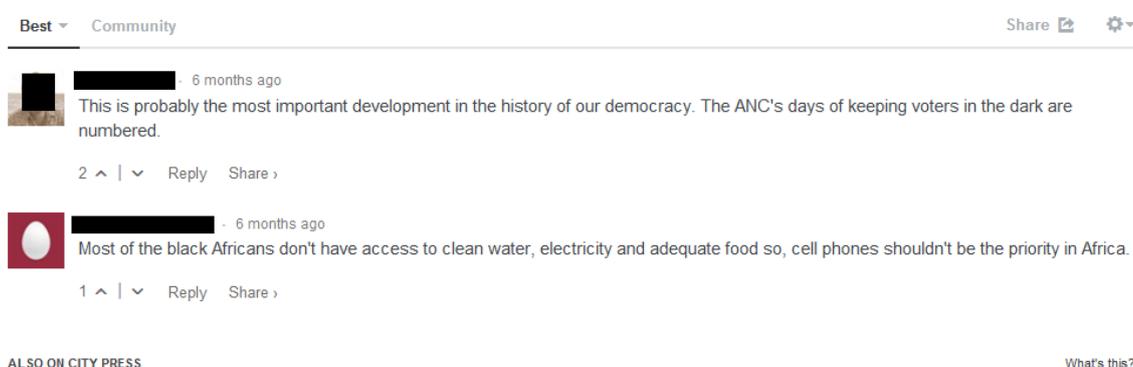
In line with this, Ngongoma notes that it is only in relatively recent times that black people can be seen accessing ICTs and their benefits. And still, even as the advantages of such technology are recognised, to make use of it money is needed, not to mention electricity. Activists such as those in AbM are expected to compete with those who have ready access to these resources (money is an obvious issue for shack dwellers, and while many can access electricity through illegal connections, others cannot). This kind of situation is commonly referred to as the ‘digital divide’, but the reality is more complicated than that term might suggest.

In accord with the assertions of this thesis, ICT use is ‘...woven in a complex manner in social systems and processes’ (Warschauer 2002). As Ngongoma (2013) explained, the digital divide does not only concern access to hardware but also the other resources that allow its effective use, in other words the larger technological system, or ecology (Warschauer 2002). Steve Cisler (2000) describes the divide as more like a spectrum. This is a useful conception because different members of AbM seem to fit into different places on that spectrum, and as discussed further throughout this chapter, AbM’s ideology influences how those members with more access to technological resources are able to spread their benefits throughout the movement. Though the movement overall is disadvantaged by its socioeconomic position, its use of ICTs, especially mobile phones, is nevertheless notable. The prominence of mobile phones within the movement’s ICT use can be at least partially explained by the national and regional context.

Africa was the first continent to have more mobile phone users than landline users (Chiumbu 2012, 193). Mobile phones are widely used even in very poor communities. This has been attributed to the recognition in those communities of their practical uses in managing both the personal and professional networks in people’s lives (Miller et al 2005, 3; Bure 2006). The mainstream media outlet City Press (2011; 2013) in South Africa has opined that mobile phones are ‘bridging the digital divide’ through their relatively low cost. It also reports that not only are mobile phones commonly used in South Africa as the fixed line infrastructure pales in comparison, but smartphones with internet access are being adopted very quickly. While it is not typical of shack dwellers (and I would caution against the idea of a ‘typical shack dweller’), some members of AbM possess and use smartphones.

Ndabankulu comments that he spends less than US\$3 on internet access in a month, through the prepaid Blackberry Internet Service (BIS)²². He considers this very reasonable (Ndabankulu and Ntanzi 2013). Though it is by no means certain, it is conceivable that such technology may become more common in the shack settlements as it becomes cheaper. The likelihood of ICTs playing a large part in social movement struggles in Africa is debatable, as seen in Figure 2.

Figure 2: City Press comments: These two comments left in response to the City Press story ‘Cellphones are bridging the digital divide’ illustrate two possible interpretations of what the proliferation of mobile phones might mean for shack dweller struggles (City Press 2013).



For now, however, it is reasonable to say that internet adoption has not seen the same success as mobile phones in the poorer communities of South Africa (Miller et al 2005, 3 – this is an old study but comments from interviewees suggest this is still largely the case). It has been suggested (Miller et al 2005, 4) that poor communities tend to see value in technology for communication rather than information access. However, the internet does play a role in AbM’s communication with the wider world, in the sense that developments in the struggle can be reported in a very timely manner to international supporters and media. For instance, Ngongoma (2013) considers the movement’s email lists to be useful. They were suggested by a Swedish supporter. In response to incidents being reported in these email lists, foreigners can telephone the embassy in South Africa, and the government is sensitive to international opinion. The content of the emails is replicated on the movement’s website and Facebook page, as seen in Figure 3. Some comparisons might be drawn

²² BIS will not be available on newer models such as the Blackberry 10, but will continue for the older Blackberry 7 (Mohapi 2013; Carstens 2013).

between this and the initial network of support drawn upon by the Zapatistas, as will be discussed in chapter six.

Figure 3: Screenshot from AbM's Facebook page



Email lists are a means of low-cost affiliation with a movement for those unable or unwilling to take part in its physical activities (Kavada 2010, 53). As well as the function that Ngongoma attributes to them, AbM's email lists allow for the affiliation of international supporters. The documentary film *Dear Mandela*, which was made about the group, also contributes to international awareness of the shack dwellers' struggle. In reference to the film, its creators Dara Kell and Christopher Nizza state that visual communication is important, and can be understood around the world, across barriers that might otherwise stand in the way such as language or culture (Kell and Nizza cited in Pambazuka News Editors 2008). The importance and difficulty of crossing these barriers is discussed in chapter six, where it is seen how they might complicate the potential communicational benefits of ICTs.

As a further channel to reach out internationally, the AbM website (www.abahlali.org, available in English and Zulu) is a massive repository of information for those who wish to learn about the movement. It contains news articles, essays and statements by the movement as well as by academics who have

studied it, photos and videos of events such as meetings and protests, contact information, and regular updates on developments in the struggle. In the spirit of radical democracy, all AbM members are (in theory at least) able to contribute to the site by getting a username (Abahlali baseMjondolo n.d.a). Issues with the website are directed to academic Raj Patel, indicating some involvement by Patel in the technical and maintenance side of the site (Abahlali baseMjondolo n.d.b)²³.

This section has provided a sense of what ICTs are available for use by AbM, and to what extent. Like all layers of the ecology, this will have significance in chapter six, when movement processes and mechanisms are discussed. For instance, AbM members' limited access to the internet sees this technology largely used for the diffusion of information to outsiders, while mobile phones and face-to-face interaction play a much larger role in movement mobilisation and organisation.

Beyond simply recognising their presence, it is useful to differentiate between devices and applications on the basis of what communication model they enable (Foth and Hearn 2007, 757). Different communication models serve different purposes, and therefore are appropriate or not depending on what an individual or group is trying to do. The devices and applications that form AbM's technical layer can be thought of in such a manner – mobile phones correspond to a 'one-to-one' model, the film one-to-many, while email and other internet applications can facilitate a one-to-many or a many-to-many communication model. The relationship between a SMOs' aims and beliefs and the type of communication an ICT affords supports the idea of a particular and contingent view of ICT use, and speaks especially to the importance of the discursive layer of an ecology. The way that ICTs are used is informed by the discursive and social layers, which in turn inform each other. This complex interaction forms the basis for understanding how the technological system/communicative ecology relates to the processes and mechanisms at work in a SMOs' struggle. The next section examines AbM's

²³ It has been suggested to me that more information regarding input into the website would be useful. However, this is difficult to obtain accurately in the current climate of conflicting claims between current AbM members and those who left the movement, for instance Mdlalose claims that the website is controlled by an 'outsider academic' and that many of the movement's statements were in fact drafted by him (Mdlalose 2014, 347), a claim which the movement strongly denies (Abahlali baseMjondolo 2015).

discursive layer.

Discursive layer

The discursive layer refers to what might loosely be called the ideology of the group²⁴. The distinction between this and the group's practices and organisational modes (the social layer) is at times indistinct, as beliefs and actions influence each other, and are not always as inseparable as the employment of categorical 'layers' might suggest. Indeed, the point of employing the communicative ecologies model is to illustrate how the layers interact –for example as the coming sections will show, the implications of lacks in AbM's technical layer are affected by the SMO's communitarian discourse and social practices – to a certain extent, the digital divide is what you make of it.

AbM is based around a 'living politics' – a politics that is based on the concrete experiences of people in the movement. Zikode (2013) explains that, as such, the movement does not subscribe to any outside model or ideology, it has its own. He describes 'Abahlalism' as a new concept to form a new ideology for the movement. It is based around 'humanistic characteristics', such as fear the bad, and have sympathy for others. It is about the responsibility entailed in being a human, and the responsibility to act when wrong is occurring. Importantly, Zikode emphasises, it entails the acceptance that freedom will never be delivered on a silver plate. This emphasis on building shack dwellers' agency is a significant part of why I found it necessary to develop the idea of empowerment as a movement process in chapter six – to account for this idea and the related practices.

Zikode (2013) argues that the people in the shacks need to know that their situation is not God-given – for him, this attitude is some of the greatest damage that the Apartheid system has left in its wake. In reality, he argues, people are made poor or kept poor through political decisions. Abahlalism emphasises the importance of

²⁴ In this I defer to Trevor Purvis and Alan Hunt's (1993, 473) observation that the terms are at times used interchangeably, and here can be simply understood as referring to a group's attitudes, ideas, and beliefs.

being conscious of the forces that create poverty and inequality. As an example of this, Zikode describes how the people in Haiti were made to believe that the earthquake that devastated the country was God's will. But, he points out, in the aftermath somebody has chosen that they suffer, and somebody benefits. For this reason also, he criticises charities that ignore the politics of such situations (Zikode 2013). The importance of promoting this kind of consciousness is reflected in AbM's social layer, as will be discussed in that section.

One of AbM's slogans is 'speak to us, not about us'. As a main concern of the movement is the dignity and voice of the often marginalised poor, it is not surprising that AbM is critical of those who assume that they know better than the poor, or presume to speak for them. This is one of the grievances that the group has with the government, but also with some academics and non-governmental organisations (NGOs). Mdlalose (2013) considers that many academics use their own terms and vocabulary, and can't relate well to activists. While academics have much more time to think, activists are concerned with action. She is critical of academics that do not get involved, engage, and experience:

Academics who sit behind a desk are no better than the government who breeds poverty, who criticise the people on the ground, who think that we are poor because we make ourselves poor, who have not gone down to the people and realised what is really, really happening to the people on the ground...

This is not to say that academics and intellectuals are not needed or wanted among the struggles of the poor. Zikode (2013) stresses that these struggles need to be for everyone. Links with the middle class (such as academics) connect the struggle to a network of useful resources (Bryant 2008, 50). However, AbM is conscious to avoid 'zim zims' – dogma, terminology or nomenclature that privileges those who know it above those who do not (Pithouse 2008, 80). A statement on the movement's website explicitly sets out the terms under which AbM is willing to engage with academics, terms which reflect these ideas (Abahlali baseMjondolo 2007b). These, along with discussions with movement members and affiliates, guided my conduct and relationship with the movement, as explained previously in chapter three.

The assertion by AbM that the poor can think for themselves has not always made

them popular. There have been many efforts to crush the group, from both the right and the left. In the words of Zikode (2013), ‘our crime has been, “who the hell are you that you can speak for yourself, because you should have known your place in the first place, which is, your place is in the shack”.’ The extension of this is that the shack dwellers’ ‘place’ is in rural areas - that they have no right to the city - which shack dwellers are removed from under government plans. However, Zikode explains, they have fought and remained in the city. In response, basic services are denied to continue to keep the city (in terms of its benefits) from them. This attitude from a government that is supposed to represent the people has led AbM to conclude that it is better that they speak for themselves, and get their mandate from one another (Figlan et al 2013).

Illustrating this point, Ndabankulu mentions the South African National Civic Organization (SANCO). He describes this organisation as similar to AbM, in that it was vigilant and critical of the government, but he considers that it became dysfunctional due to issues that arose around political alliances. AbM are open to all who support their struggle, regardless of other allegiances. Ndabankulu explains that with what AbM are fighting for, they will be the direct beneficiaries. He points out that this is unlike political parties, where your camp may win, but you do not really win anything, the party or candidate wins. The shack dwellers, in contrast, are fighting for houses and services for themselves, not the AbM leadership. Questions often arise over the movement’s political affiliation (for instance, the ANC and Inkatha Freedom Party (IFP) have a history of bitter and violent conflict, so the movement is commonly asked which side they are on – the answer being neither). Others try to use membership as a career move (Ndabankulu and Ntanzu 2013). While Abahlalimumbe may seem like a simple concept, the movement’s rejection of mainstream politics can be difficult for people to accept in an environment of strong political allegiances.

Mdlalose (2013) asserts that every individual should have dignity and in AbM, ‘we don’t need to be inside [government/politics] to speak’ - the shack dwellers have dignity as an organisation. She contrasts this with the false representation of elite rule (Figlan et al 2013). She contends that in reality, most people do not count, and there is a need for techniques and strategies to correct this. As an example she notes that

many people have protested against councillor Nigel Gumede²⁵, but he is still in power (Mdlalose 2013). Mdlalose states that she cannot remember a time when an elected councillor listened to the people, and has thus concluded that voting amounts to taking your power and giving it to someone else. A well-known AbM slogan is ‘no land, no house, no vote’. This basically means ‘you do not give us what you promise, so there is no point in voting for you’. AbM asserts a right to speak for themselves without voting, the right of people to represent themselves (Figlan et al 2013). In this way AbM can be seen in contrast to the ‘representative democracy’ of governments – as a general will that is made of its individual parts, rather than an imposed model that falsely assumes this role. This idea is influential in shaping AbM’s political practices, as seen in the next section on the social layer.

Abahlalism can be related to the southern African philosophy of Ubuntu (Zikode 2013). The word ‘Ubuntu’ comes from an isiXhosa proverb – ‘umuntu ngumuntu ngabantu’ – ‘a person is a person through their relationship to others’ (Swanson 2007, 53). Claire Oppenheim (2012, 370) explains that, ‘Ubuntu is a spiritual ideal, a way of life that is conceptually represented in a wide range of sub-Saharan African societies. While Ubuntu exists in many variations within different African cultures and languages, each conceptualisation retains the same core of meaning...’ Zikode (2013) notes in his explanation of Abahlalism that personal virtue is not enough, the state of the community is also important. This has obvious parallels with the ‘...duality of individuality and simultaneous unity...’ present in Ubuntu, where true personal enrichment is naturally compatible with the nurturing of community (Oppenheim 2012, 370). This fundamental concept can be found in other cultures (Gianan 2011, 63). For instance, a comparable view of the relationship between the universal and particular, the general and specific, can be found in descriptions of the GJM²⁶. Relating AbM to the GJM is useful in understanding the nature of their global presence online and their solidarity with other movements, which in turn

²⁵ Gumede is a politician that AbM have been particularly critical of. In return, Gumede has publically threatened the life of S’bu Zikode (Pambazuka News 2011).

²⁶ It is also a theme that spans a vast range of scholarly works. This is noted by Chantal Mouffe (2000, 34) – ‘[[]et’s just recall that the anti-essentialism I am endorsing, far from being restricted to post-structuralism, constitutes the point of convergence of many different currents of thought and that it can be found in authors as different as Derrida, Rorty, Wittgenstein, Heidegger, Gadamer, Dewey, Lacan and Foucault’.

informs analysis of their use of ICTs for scale shift in chapter six.

The phrase 'Unity in Diversity' has roots in non-Western cultures back hundreds of years, cultures such as indigenous North Americans, Taoists and Bahai (Lalonde 2004). It is a well-known slogan of the GJM. With some irony it can be noted that it has also been adopted by some nation-states, including South Africa. When asked whether he considers AbM to be part of the GJM, Zikode (2013) answers yes with some caveats. He argues that the term 'global' raises a lot of questions. For Zikode, there is a link between the local and global, and both views are necessary. It can be problematic, however, when people have no base or foundation in local movement, but want to be big from the start - any universality needs to be grounded in popular movement.

Part of AbM's living politics is 'living solidarity'. Zikode (2013) explains that he believes the movement underestimated the possibility and power of global solidarity during the Kennedy Road attacks. Due to the personal pain and frustration of those affected, which others elsewhere did not feel or experience for themselves, this solidarity felt somewhat unreal. However, he believes that this view has largely changed after movement members became aware of solidarity marches in New York and London. Furthermore, in the wake of a spate of assassinations of activists in 2013 and 2014, widespread solidarity actions (both online in the form of petitions and open letters, and offline in the form of marches around the world) took place (Justin B. 2014). Zikode (2013) notes that many injustices are similar in nature around the world, so to a certain extent one can identify with this, and recognise what is common with other movements. And, he notes, these connections are often made possible with communication technologies, through websites and social media. This is an important feature of ICTs that will be discussed and analysed in chapter six in terms of new possibilities for ICT-aided scale shift, and the role of collective identity.

Situating AbM within the GJM is useful, but not without its problems. As Sky Croeser (2015, 113) notes, due to its diverse nature few SMOs fit neatly and fully within this 'movement of movements'. As seen above, Zikode (2013) explicitly identifies with the GJM, while also taking the position that such identification is

complicated. A movement can be seen as associated with the GJM through alliances and communications with other members, as well as engagement with events (Croeser 2015, 114-116). Many examples of these indicators exist in regards to AbM (Abahlali baseMjondolo 2007c; Abahlali baseMjondolo 2012a; National Economic and Social Rights Initiative 2013; War on Want n.d.).

AbM and the GJM also share many movement characteristics. Carles Feixa, Inês Pereira and Jeffrey Juris (2009, 425) argue that the GJM has ‘an emphasis on globalism and transnationality and their articulation with local contexts’ - this is shared with AbM. The GJM is also known for ‘the use of new information and communication technologies, particularly the Internet’ (Feixa et al 2009, 425). As previously mentioned, the use of ICTs by AbM has been noted by authors such as Baum (n.d.), and is being expanded on in this thesis. Moreover, within the GJM worldview is ‘the articulation of economic and identity-based demands’ (Feixa et al 2009, 425). The relevance of this for AbM needs little explanation: the struggle of the shack dwellers is in the simplest terms a struggle by the poor for the basics of life and for their dignity as human beings.

The GJM is associated with ‘the development of innovative forms of action’ and new forms of organisation (Feixa et al 2009, 425). One example of such innovation in AbM is ‘UnFreedom Day’. Coinciding with the South African holiday ‘Freedom Day’, which celebrates the end of Apartheid, UnFreedom Day mourns the fact that the poor are still not free (Figlan et al 2009, 24-25). Another example is the ‘cellphone toyi-toyi’, elaborated on in the next section. New organisational forms can be seen in the fact that AbM is ‘...known for having democratized the internal governance of many settlements...people elected into office are not elected to make decisions on particular issues but rather to ensure a democratic decision making process on questions and matters related to those issues’ (Abahlali baseMjondolo 2007b). Finally, the GJM exhibits ‘the gathering of diverse traditions and organizations under a common umbrella’ (Feixa et al 2009, 425). An example of this trait in AbM is that it is stated on the movement’s website (www.abahlali.org) that they are part of the Poor People’s Alliance, a network of radical poor movements.

Considering discursive elements such as those that relate AbM to the GJM may be

instructive in knowing what cases of ICT-aided activism are in some way comparable, though other aspects of SMO communicative ecologies will undoubtedly also prove significant. The extent to which SMOs may have comparable communicative ecologies allows for the development of the heuristics in chapter six, while the fact that differences remain is what keeps these heuristics from being anything more definite. It may be apparent that this section on the movement's discursive layer makes only small mention of its use of ICTs. However, I argue that the movement's discourse vitally influences its structure and praxis and, as part of this, the way in which ICTs are used in the movement's struggle. This is the concern of the next section.

Social layer

In the spirit of Abahlalism, love, taking care of one another, is power. In this it can be seen how the concept of 'power' is ultimately contextual, as the vulnerability of being a shack dweller is the reason that community-spiritedness, or love, is important and hence powerful. In AbM an emphasis is placed on the importance of the very act of the poor organising. This emphasis is shared by all of the interviewees. Organising has allowed shack dwellers to raise issues publicly (Zikode 2013). Mdlalose (2013) notes that government officials now pay some attention to AbM, although the government still falls short of actually implementing any changes. AbM meetings also serve as a platform for people to be heard. This, Zikode (2013) notes, is important in itself:

I have always also viewed this power as a basin that collects tears...In one of the meetings we had in Pietermaritzburg about four years ago, one woman stood in the meeting, the hall was fully packed, the woman stood and said "I'm a single mother, I have no husband, when I voted then I put my trust on my councillor", and she burst into tears, saying that "today, I have no one to report to. The pain that I have, I have nowhere to share." ...and that's how people get frustrated and for us, that moment of being able to be a platform for people to speak for themselves, it's really important because we don't know what kind of damage happens when tears fall inside a person.

Zikode notes that this is one thing that the shack dwellers have that the rich lack. In South Africa, he says, rich people have gated communities - they do not know their neighbours, so they have no sense of community. For AbM, community makes a

human being complete. You can only be a human being if you recognise other human beings around you.

Nsibande (2013) likewise argues for the importance of community, as well as commenting on the problems of technocratic government. Knowledge can be power, Nsibande says. She considers that AbM speaks truth to the powerful, and powerful people are scared of things being written about them. She states that she knows that some people in the government have good intentions, but the government is detached from the people. AbM tries to inform those with good intentions so they can act well, but the government often does not like this. Ultimately, she concludes, the political parties do not help so the poor must unite and ‘speak with one voice’.

Zikode (2013) argues that ‘the reality is that there are many forces in our society that contest power...’. The poor people who united as AbM have, in doing so, become one of those forces. This illustrates what Zikode calls one of the bigger questions within the movement – challenging the assumption that poor cannot think for themselves and need to be represented by someone else (Zikode notes that this assumption is also made in regards to other marginalised populations, such as black people generally, and women). Shack fires, a serious and often fatal problem in the settlements, are often seen as happening because shack dwellers are careless, or drink too much, rather than a consequence of the state not providing electricity to the area. But, as Zikode points out, people in Berea (a richer area of Durban) also drink – but they do not have candles burning to knock over. This perception means that the shack dwellers first need to define themselves and stand firm that they count just like anyone else – that they possess the same intelligence, and the real question is of opportunities that they may not have had (Figlan et al 2013). As mentioned, the importance Zikode, and other shack dwellers placed on this in the interviews was instrumental in my conceptualisation of ‘empowerment’ as a political process to fit within the processes and mechanisms analysis in chapter six.

Zikode explains that AbM is viewed in different ways by different people, and so a difficult task is that of articulating the struggle to gain unity, of stressing that there are no human borders – that a human is a human. Just as AbM criticises various entities for not listening to the poor, Abahlalisms demands that the organisation itself

must be radically committed to democracy so as not to marginalise its members. While the state has its own elite that view themselves as ‘custodians of power’ (Zikode 2013), AbM believes in bottom-up democracy. In Durban I witnessed several of the movement’s meetings and the great lengths that were gone to in order to maintain a democratic praxis. Pithouse (2005) has noted this:

A democratic practice within struggle has to have structural mechanisms to take account of the fluidity of struggle and it has to take account of the fact that mass participation in decision making is vastly more democratic and renders movements vastly less vulnerable to co-optation or co-ercion than representative approaches to democracy. A radically democratic approach also makes gender representation come right and ensures that lots of people get experience reducing dependency on individuals.

Abahlali base mJondolo [sic] is approaching decision making in a genuinely democratic manner. All movement meetings are preceded [sic] by community meetings at which representatives to the movement meetings are elected and mandated for that meeting only. If the movement meeting has to choose a delegation (or individuals) to undertake negotiations with council, meet with other movements or take a platform on the radio etc then people are elected and mandated for that one specific task. There is always a report back and discussion.

ICTs are used where possible to further communitarian and democratic aims. This is complicated, however, by the need to operate outside of the communities for safety reasons since the Kennedy Road attacks (not to mention numerous violent incidents since then, continuing into the present - information on these is available from the movement’s website, for instance Abahlali baseMjondolo 2011; Abahlali baseMjondolo 2014a; Abahlali baseMjondolo 2014b).

As a result of its living politics, AbM makes few statements about global institutions on a day-to-day basis. Zikode (2013) explains that the World Bank or the International Monetary Fund are too abstract for ordinary people with more immediate concerns like electricity or sanitation. Still, these institutions operate by working with smaller entities to promote injustices and maintain unequal structures. For the shack dwellers this is where the struggle takes place – ‘...it makes sense for people in Abahlali to deal with local councillors, they can see them, they interact with them, they lie to them, they steal from them...’ A statement on the AbM website (Abahlali baseMjondolo 2006a) on this highlights the importance of the particular in keeping the universal relevant and legitimate:

The kind of 'radical' academics who like to write about the struggles of the poor without deeming it necessary to speak to the poor or to attend their meetings or take any attempt to learn their language have often considered these mobilizations a consequence of ignorance or false consciousness. They would prefer a march on the World Bank, or, at least, the president or capital or white power. But ordinary people live and work in local places and are watched and controlled by the state, via the party, in these local places. No popular radicalism is possible without first taking on the local relations of dominations that immediately restrict the possibilities for subaltern militancy. Local councillors chair the local ward committees and Branch Executive Committees of the ANC through which local and micro-local political control is exercised over an often restless populace.

Unfortunately, Zikode (2013) observes, in the office a computer with internet access makes it easier to communicate with the outside world than with the movement's own, computer-less comrades. The website serves more to communicate in solidarity with the outside world than with AbM members. The movie *Dear Mandela* has also served as a powerful tool in this respect. It has allowed the movement to travel around the world without having to actually travel. Zikode notes that an unfortunate consequence of this shortcoming in the group's technical layer is that AbM is well known worldwide but sometimes less so in South Africa itself, partially due to gated communities. Even so, Zikode maintains that as long as the office is there to serve the shack dweller communities, its technology helps. Also, the spread of phones with internet access is helping close the gap. Still, Ndabankulu argues that while AbM's main base in Durban maintains some solidarity with other regions through phone communication, this is often insufficient, as the struggle is hard for people to understand (Ndabankulu and Ntanzu 2013). He states that even the Western Cape branch of AbM is fairly autonomous, partially due to the lack of resources to coordinate across the country. This is a testament to the way SMO activities can be hampered by deficiencies in the technical layer. However, sometimes this can be at least partially overcome.

Ngubane agreed to take me to his area in Shallcross, where he introduced me to several Zulu-speaking women from the neighbourhood, who I talked to. As a testament to both the digital divide that affects AbM and the way the SMO's social layer serves to mitigate it, none of these women regularly use any ICTs themselves, but in the interviews all recognised the importance of ICTs in the movement. Bongwiwe Nkabinde (2013) is a community organiser and coordinator in the area. She has been involved with AbM for two and a half years. Nontokozo (2013) and

Phileleli (2013) are also AbM members, Nontokozo joined after the municipality tried to evict her family. Nkabinde (2013) recounts a time that she has seen technology used by AbM. It was used to inform people about court dates and provide information around evictions, and she also remembers the presence of the media. Phileleli (2013) relates how AbM contacted them with mobile phones during evictions. Nontokozo (2013) has likewise seen ICTs being used to disseminate information. She stresses the importance of working together and the confidence this provides people. She also stated that she thinks seeing me at the settlement means the organisation is growing – making progress, becoming well known. Figlan (2013) makes a similar point in my interview with him back at the office. He considers that mostly, people in the movement do not know very much about using technology, however he points out it was the AbM website that led to my very presence in Durban, so its influence on the movement is hard to deny (Figlan 2013). This particular influence is discussed in chapter six in terms of the process of scale shift.

The above suggests that the barriers to ICT use created by poverty, and the unequal access to ICTs within the movement, are at least slightly mitigated by the dedication of AbM to community and direct, participatory democracy, which emphasises consensus and keeps everyone informed about developments in the struggle. When I raise this with Ndabankulu (Ndabankulu and Ntanzi 2013), he is quick to stress the importance of technology in this sense, especially mobile phones:

...a comrade which doesn't have a cell phone is one of the most difficult comrades to work with. Because even to coordinate the meetings, we rely on the mobile phones. You have to phone the coordinator or the chairperson of a particular branch to tell the comrades that there is a general meeting, and then that person who received a call from the office can then use the word of mouth to the locals...

Ndabankulu shares an anecdote that illustrates why he believes in the worth of ICTs to the movement. Ndabankulu and Nsibande are Facebook friends. When there was a protest at Kennedy Road, Nsibande was in Pietermaritzberg, outside of the city. Ndabankulu took a photo of the protest on his Blackberry and uploaded it to Facebook. The media called Nsibande, who was not well informed of what had happened, but was able to comment on behalf of AbM via information on Ndabankulu's Facebook page. Ndabankulu emphasises that you cannot trust everything on Facebook, but if it comes from a trusted source you can. The

relationship between the two, and Ndabankulu's status within AbM as a respected leader, who takes the struggle seriously, means Ndabankulu's posts are considered reliable. He also mentions that Facebook and Twitter are useful to communicate with comrades outside of South Africa - for instance he could not afford to call me in Australia, but could Facebook message me for less than a Rand – 'even an SMS is very expensive compared to Facebook' (Ndabankulu and Ntanzi 2013). Though the digital divide is a reality, the lowered costs of communication via ICTs is as well.

When I discuss it with him, Zikode (2013) agrees with my premise that the movement's structure, ideology and their use of ICTs are interconnected. For instance, the AbM executive often operate from a small office, having to deal with many communities. ICTs make this possible, in the manner described by Ndabankulu in the previous paragraph. Likewise, Ngubane (2013) explains that AbM is upfront about everything, and informs everyone of what is going on, and mobile phones in particular help with this task. He considers that mobilisation (another process discussed in chapter six) is also important, as are meetings and communication with people. While these activities could be accomplished without technology, Ngubane argues that ICTs provide the best way to do this, a view shared by Nsibandé (2013).

It is not only in this sense that the living politics of Abahlalism can be seen in the practices of AbM. Movement practices reflect aspects of local culture. Meetings sometimes spontaneously break into song, or start with one, as well as prayer²⁷. Also, Figlan (2013) explains one particular protest action undertaken. *Toyi-toyi* is 'a quasi-military dance step performed during black protests' (Roberge 2004, 222). It distracts dancers from their fear, and during Apartheid symbolised a 'triumph of spirit'. It is now often used by post-Apartheid social movements for similar purposes (Nevitt n.d.). Figlan describes a 'cellphone *toyi-toyi*' conducted by a group of AbM members. Tired of marching and being on the road, AbM members coordinated phone calls to the housing department. Someone would call, asking 'W questions' ('When are you going to build our houses? How?' etc.). When this call ended, the next one would begin, asking the same questions. This would continue all day,

²⁷ The exact nature of these songs and prayers was lost on me as they were in Zulu, and I was unwilling to break up the natural flow of the meetings, though much of the meetings' contents were translated for me.

wearing down their quarry with comparatively little energy expenditure for the callers. Such an act is best understood as the coming together of the elements of AbM's communicative ecology – believing that orthodox politics has failed them (discursive layer), they use mobile phones (technical layer) to organise and execute a collective response that draws on local and national history/culture (discursive and social layer).

Perhaps not surprisingly, the story of ICT use in this particular SMO is a mixed one. For Zikode (2013), '...the question of technology is now a famous question, and an issue, because it sounds very technical for people, then once it's technical then it means it is only important to certain kinds of people, yet [this] is not true...' Nsibande (2013) shares the opinion that in today's environment and society, engagement with ICTs is necessary. The movement is now worldwide, so there is a need to keep in touch with international supporters. The website can inform and (to a degree) engage people. However, she also notes that technology sometimes makes people lazy and reliance on it is dangerous if it fails, especially if you do not have an alternative. Within the office, experiences and necessity educate members on ICT use. Zikode (2013) considers that maybe AbM is not using ICTs to their full potential. Noticing the device that I am using to record the interview, he mentions that they sometimes use such recording devices when meeting officials to put them (and the lies they tell) on record. This is an example of the organisation doing what it can to realise that potential. Still, Zikode states that like any organisation they risk people thinking it is not their job to innovate - rather that they should sit and wait for innovation to come to them.

The overall importance of ICTs to the movement is difficult to quantify. Members recognise the benefits of the technology but are hesitant to attribute too much of the movement's success or effectiveness to it. Also, there can be problems if technology is advanced in the office but the wider membership is not educated on its use. Text messages are considered by Zikode (2013) to be the most improved method of communication, but at the same time illiteracy can make SMS useless (reinforcing once again that context is vital, and that access does not just mean availability). As

many shack dwellers are illiterate²⁸, expecting them to use ICTs in their activism can be an added burden for them rather than a liberating experience. Nsibandé (2013) considers that, ultimately, AbM could exist with or without such technology. For all their utility, most of AbM's activities are done without ICTs. Mdlalose (2013) states that technology has helped members to communicate with each other and the world, and it makes the organisation and the struggle sustainable, it shares the story. However, she emphasises that the struggle is not about technology – the computers might go but they still have their voices, minds – 'the struggle is in our veins'.

Conclusion

In line with the contingency of the thesis topic as a whole, there is no consensus about the potential of ICTs for social change in Africa, or even which factors are relevant (Wasserman 2010, 2). However, many of the themes illustrated in my case study on AbM do accord with other studies on social movements and ICTs in South Africa. Herman Wasserman's (2007, 123-124) work on the Treatment Action Campaign and Anti-Privatisation Forum indicates the presence of 'two-step flow' communication in which ICTs serve to aid communications that also rely on more traditional methods (those with access to technology serve as 'nodes'). This can be seen in the case study on AbM, where information was distributed where possible by internet or phone, then distributed further through word-of-mouth. Sarah Chiumbu's (2012, 201) work on the Western Cape Anti-Eviction Campaign also mentions this, as well as noting the 'multiplicity of purposes' that mobile phones serve in that movement. The similarities and differences between these SMOs (which could be made readily apparent through the communicative ecologies model), and the commonalities between their experiences with ICTs, might yield important insights in further research.

The value of the communicative ecologies model in presenting the case studies is

²⁸ According to the World Factbook (2015), literacy in South Africa is at 94.3%, however such statistics are skewed by assumptions and omissions, such as the assumption that the completion of Year 7 indicates literacy (Pretorius 2013). At the same time, glaring inequalities in education quality for the poor and wealthy have been noted (Spaull 2012).

twofold. It is a descriptive framework that illustrates the interconnectivity of the layers, showing how the use of ICTs by a SMO is inextricably tied to the complex system that is the SMO and its struggle. This complexity, as previously stated, leads to contingency – in the sense that choices are made in regards to what information is relevant for analysis, but also, more importantly for this thesis, in the sense that the ability to make generalisations relating to all SMOs is compromised. The communicative ecologies model allows for systematic comparison of movement ecologies, which helps suggest where generalisations might hold true. The processes and mechanisms analysis of chapter six articulates specifically what ICTs might help SMOs achieve. Combined, these two approaches allow some heuristic statements to be brought forward. Chapter seven will discuss the prospects of these statements to be of general use to social movements and scholars.

Several processes can be identified in the AbM case study. These are *scale shift* – seen in accounts of AbM uniting with other like-minded SMOs in South Africa such as the Poor People’s Alliance, in AbM’s recognition by supporters internationally (though these supporters are not technically ‘members’), and the identification of the group as part of the GJM. Another process is *mobilisation* – a necessary process for any kind of action, and indeed for the group’s formation to begin with. Also seen is *empowerment* – seen in the shack dwellers’ recognition of their self-efficacy and their struggle to be heard. This is a process that was not featured in McAdam et al (2001) but has been included in this thesis as a way of articulating a process observed in the case study. These processes (and the role of ICTS within them) will constitute the beginning point for analysis in chapter six. First, however, the second case study will be presented.

Chapter Five: Socialist Alliance (Australia)

Introduction

This chapter presents the case study of SA. As with chapter four, it will begin with essential background information which gives context to SA and highlights its differences with AbM. This SMO's beginnings as an alliance of socialist groups is instructive in understanding its nature today, in particular the influence of the founding Democratic Socialist Party/Perspective (DSP) is noted. The chapter will then proceed to discuss the layers of SA's communicative ecology, from the technical through to the discursive and the social.

The interaction of the layers is shown in this chapter as it was for AbM previously, and the implications of this for the role of ICTs becomes apparent. For instance, while AbM makes use of mobile phones to support their way of organising, which fits their discourse, the account of SA shows more emphasis on various internet platforms as a vital part of their ecology. Examining the SMO's ideology, which sees broad appeal and mass politics as the key to socialist revolution, helps to explain why this manner of ICT use is important to SA.

Other discursive elements also help to understand SA, for instance the ideas of state socialism and democratic centralism. In the same manner that the previous chapter related AbM and their ideology to the GJM, in this chapter I argue that SA can be seen as inheritors of more classical social movement traditions, while also incorporating some new social movement characteristics. As with the AbM case study, situating SA in this wider context will help to make clear what the case can contribute to wider knowledge of ICTs' influences on SMOs, and this is discussed further in chapters six and seven.

Finally, the chapter will identify the processes that can be seen in the case study. These are scale shift, mobilisation, and empowerment - analogous to those found in the case study on AbM, though important differences exist in how they manifest. Chapter six will analyse what the two case studies can reveal about the (potential, contingent) influence of ICTs on SMOs using an approach that examines these

processes and the mechanisms within them. This analysis will lead to several heuristic statements that are discussed in terms of their general usefulness in chapter seven, bringing the study to its conclusion and showing how the method I advocate for in this thesis can yield heuristics that account for the complexity and contingency of the subject matter.

Movement background

SA came into being as the unification of Australia's two largest socialist parties, the DSP and the International Socialist Organisation (ISO), along with some smaller socialist groups (Saunders 2015). The ISO soon abandoned the alliance amid fears of undue influence from the DSP (Boyle n.d.). Authors such as Ewan Saunders (2015) dispute the idea that SA is simply the DSP under a different name, however these beginnings do mean that the history of the DSP is relevant historical context for SA, and as such should be briefly covered here.

Radical socialist thought has only ever had a small following in Australia (Percy 2005, 13), and so the main influences on DSP ideology are found internationally. These included the Industrial Workers of the World – a radical labour union, Trotskyism, and Lenin's Bolshevik Party (Percy 2005, 18, 24). Later they abandoned Trotskyism, but re-affirmed their commitment to the socialist organisational tradition of democratic centralism, and a mandate to 'participate in all the struggles of the oppressed, learn from them, and help lead them' (Percy 1990). Throughout this chapter it will be seen that the latter commitment remains highly influential in SA's communicative ecology.

SA was formed in 2001. The first national executive of SA contained members from the following Australian socialist groups - the ISO, DSP, Worker's Liberty, Worker's League, the Freedom Socialist Party, Socialist Democracy, and Workers' Power, as well as representatives from Socialist Alternative (SAIt) and the Workers Communist Party of Iraq (Socialist Alliance National Office 2008, 25). Despite this wide range of founding parties and the use of the term 'alliance', the exact character of SA is more complicated than an alliance of socialist groups. By late 2002, close to

70% of SA members were not members of any of the founding organisations (Riley 2005). In 2003 a motion was adopted that identified a move towards SA becoming a broad multi-tendency party, citing the need for a 'common socialist voice', but welcoming the continued existence of different tendencies within such a voice (Socialist Alliance National Office 2008, 32). In line with this, the DSP changed its name from the Democratic Socialist Party to the Democratic Socialist Perspective (Boyle 2004). As such, rather than an alliance of socialist groups, the 'Alliance' in Socialist Alliance more accurately refers to an alliance of different perspectives on socialism. Currently, SA's website describes it as both an 'anti-capitalist party' and a 'broad socialist coalition' (Socialist Alliance n.d.a). This characterisation is expanded on in the sections of this chapter that cover the SMO's discursive and social layers.

A broad picture of the organisation can be established through its description by the members I interviewed. Chris Jenkins (Jenkins and Woodleigh 2013) has been involved in SA for three years. He shares his characterisation of the SMO and the activities he participates in as part of it. He states in the interview that the aim of SA is to build a broad mass party of activists. To this end it participates in the actions of other movements as well as its own campaigns. It disseminates its messages through information stalls and its newspaper Green Left Weekly (GLW), as well as 'educationals'²⁹ and so on'. SA's activities are promoted through leafleting, word of mouth, and posters, but now also in an 'exponential' way through Facebook and other social networks. Jenkins explains that the frequency of activities has not increased in his time but that they have been 'more broadcast.' A concern with having a broad reach was a common theme among interviews with SA members, as will be expanded on the discursive layer section.

The length and extent of interviewees' involvement with SA varied greatly. For instance, Kamala Emanuel (2013) is a branch organiser with a long history of involvement with socialism and SA, while Christie Woodleigh (Jenkins and Woodleigh 2013) got involved with SA through university when she moved to Perth

²⁹ This refers to sessions held to study socialist literature and issues. I attended one of these which amounted to discussions on section of a Marxist reader that had been studied by participants beforehand.

in 2012. At the time of her interview, Nicole Stiles (2013) had been involved for a ‘few months’. In terms of the newer members’ motivations for joining, they often were linked to the SMO’s broad appeal. Stiles’ interests and involvements have been centred in feminism and women’s rights, while another activist, Karwil, came to the group through activism on Indigenous issues.

‘Karwil³⁰’s (2013) great grandfather was an Aboriginal activist in the 1920s, and each generation of the family has had some involvement with Indigenous issues through to her. At the time of the interview she had only recently (‘about a month or two’) been a member of SA, but has had a relationship with the group for longer. For instance, SA has supported the Nyoongar Tent Embassy at Perth’s Heirisson Island³¹. Karwil maintains the ‘Original Sovereign’ website, which posts information about Indigenous struggles around the world. The website was originally started as part of the Aboriginal exposition at a protest at the Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting (CHOGM) when it was held in Perth in 2011. Once the tent embassy was established, this website was a quick way to spread the word, as it constituted an already-existing network of people who were likely to be interested (this phenomenon is the mechanism of diffusion, discussed in chapter six).

Farida Iqbal (2013) has a background in academia, but acknowledges that she has previously held a cynical view about the value of academic research for activism. This is comparable to some views I encountered in AbM. She has since come to see the value of academia after being involved in the sex worker rights movement. In Iqbal’s words, this value is that ‘...we’re trained to not assume we understand things...’, which is a skill that she argues is not necessarily always instilled in activists. She notes that there are a lot of misconceptions about sex work in society, and these misconceptions can be present in activist communities. As such, academic work on controversial ideas and subjects can be a valuable resource. In the interview, this topic led to a discussion about the use of ICTs by particularly marginalised groups in societies, which is discussed in this chapter and informs discussion in

³⁰ Pseudonym chosen by interviewee.

³¹ The Nyoongar Tent Embassy was established in February 2012, to represent Nyoongar sovereignty and draw attention to issues of land and justice (Kerr and Cox 2013, i).

chapter six on the process of empowerment. Iqbal joined SA in 2005, in the context of the government's move to effectively ban gay marriage through amendments to the Marriage Act in 2004 (*Marriage Amendment Act 2004*). She states that '...to my mind the Socialist Alliance was the only organisation that I could see that was really taking it seriously...'. With the diversity of primary interests of SA members such as Iqbal, Stiles, and Karwil, the relevance of seeing the group in terms of an 'alliance' persists.

Sam Wainwright is a SA member and councillor for the City of Fremantle, involved with SA's electoral efforts. As a teenager Wainwright (2013) was a member of Young Labor (the youth wing of the Australian Labor Party (ALP)³²) but became increasingly disillusioned with the ALP. This was particularly due to its role in Australia's bipartisan support for the Indonesian occupation of East Timor, as well as other instances of the Western backing of atrocities. In Hobart in 1990, he met some socialists, who convinced him to quit the ALP and join the organised socialist movement there. In the mid-nineties he lived in France and was involved in campaigns, both socialist and broader, there. He then returned to Australia in 1997 and, in 1998, worked on the waterfront, where he stayed for twelve years and was involved with the union movement. He explains that a sense that he would be settling in Fremantle moved him to get involved with local politics there. As of the interview he has been on Fremantle council for almost four years.

Alex Bainbridge (2013) has been a socialist activist since 1990. He was involved with the DSP in Perth before that group's role in forming SA and its subsequent absorption into the SMO. Demonstrating its multifaceted nature, in the interview Bainbridge describes SA as a political party (rather than or as well as a SMO), whose aim is 'to bring about socialism in Australia and the world'. He describes how much of their work is centred on 'educating activists' about socialism. He characterises the other work done by SA, such as campaigns for reforms or improvements to the current system, as seeking to create the circumstances under which 'broader socialist change can come on the agenda'.

³² One of Australia's major parties, ostensibly of a centre-left persuasion.

As well as examining publications and interviewee statements, another way of exploring SA's ideology is to contrast it with that of another prominent Australian socialist group, SAlt. Bainbridge (2013) describes SA and SAlt as the two biggest groups of their kind in Australia. SA's stated position is in favour of working towards unity with SAlt, seeing no good reason for separate groups. However, for the time being their disagreements cannot be overcome. The groups have differences of opinion and approach including their views on Cuba, Venezuela, and the efficacy of election campaigns for social change. This latter point will be explored in the section on SA's social layer. In terms of Cuba and Venezuela, SA take an arguably more pragmatic stance while SAlt opt for ideological adherence. This is demonstrated in a statement by SA in an article - '[p]art of the reason for Salt's [sic] success is their over-simplified thinking. For example, the argument 'Cuba has faults, therefore Cuba is not socialist, therefore Cuba is capitalist' appeals to a significant number of people' (Slee 2012). As SA's belief in the need for broad appeal is a recurrent theme in this chapter, SAlt serve as a convenient foil to highlight this.

A meeting was held regarding the prospect of unity between SA and SAlt in 2012. The meeting was described as 'cordial and constructive' (Boyle 2012), but as of 2013 talks have stalled, with SAlt withdrawing and issuing a statement that the talks have come to an 'impasse' (Boyle and Price 2013). Accounts of these talks, available on various internet sites, have been instructive in understanding the discursive layer of SA. While concerns with mass politics and a broad appeal are an important part of SA discourse, they also serve to render impressions of the group's ideology somewhat vague. Examinations of the SA-SAlt talks yield valuable insight, through the groups' disagreements, about what SA does and does not believe. The ideological makeup of SA, as well as its structure and practices, will be explored further, later in this chapter. First, however, its technical layer will be examined.

Technical layer

SA's concern with having a broad reach can be seen in the various forms its internet

presence takes. A report by Robert Ackland and Rachel Gibson³³ (2004, 15-16), which analyses the networking behaviour of political parties, shows SA's website to have relatively high levels of connectedness compared to many other 'fringe' political players. Their website (www.socialist-alliance.org) contains information on events, articles by members, contact information, and YouTube clips. It also has links to a discussion bulletin called 'Alliance Voices', Links Journal of Socialist Renewal (LJSR), 'Resistance' – an affiliated youth organisation, the SA Facebook group, SA councillors' blogs, and the *Green Left Weekly* (GLW) site. GLW is a weekly zine that is closely associated with SA, who have a regular column in it and distribute it at their stalls. The physical GLW zine is wholly reproduced on its website (www.greenleft.org.au). The GLW site features Facebook, Twitter and RSS links, as well as links to Resistance, SA and LJSR. LJSR (www.links.org.au) is described as the 'sister publication' of GLW. It is a forum for discussion between socialists of different traditions or schools of thought. Peter Boyle, a co-convenor of SA, is on its editorial advisory board.

SA also has a wiki space (www.socialist-alliance.wikispaces.com) for collaboration between members. This contains information and resources for stalls, actions and campaigns. Updates and additions to the site seem to only be made by a small handful of people, however, mostly co-conveners Susan Price and Peter Boyle (*Socialist Alliance wiki – changes* n.d.). The wiki has thirty-four members (*Socialist Alliance wiki* n.d.). SA also has a Twitter account, @SocialistAllnce, with about 2500 followers. This account is mostly used to post links to larger articles or videos, and photos. Also, the group has two Facebook pages - one as an addable 'friend' and one as a group. The 'friend' page contains photos, links to groups, and various SA and general leftist articles. The group seems to be more loosely for whatever its members decide to post. More recently a member has been looking into making SA podcasts (Riley 2015), however as of the moment this has not yet happened.

The extensive list above, encompassing SA's internet presence, is demonstrative of

³³ Being more than ten years old this report is of limited validity, however no newer data is available. It does indicate the state of the group's technical layer at its very beginnings, however, and casual observation of the SA website seems to suggest that this high level of connectedness remains.

how the SMO's concern for mass politics is reflected in its use of ICTs – it was stated several times in the interviews that SA wants their message to reach as many people as possible, and so they adopt many diverse platforms including rallies, elections, and the many internet sites and spaces listed. In contrast to this high internet connectivity, while I brought them up in each interview few people from SA had much to say about their use of mobile phones in activism, and even within the small sample interviewed for this thesis, the levels of engagement with mobile phones varied greatly (three participants mentioned them, and one of these, Karwil (2013), did so to express that she did not use or like them).

As in South Africa, mobile phone penetration is almost ubiquitous in Australia, with one study estimating twenty-nine million mobile phones in Australia, despite a population of only twenty-three million (Mortimer 2013). The fact that these phones are commonly used for smart-phone-like purposes (apps and the ability to access the internet) blurs the boundaries around what is 'use of phone' and 'use of internet'. The Australian mobile phone lifestyle index³⁴ suggests that while the use of phones for voice calls and SMS is obviously common, the use of phones for email, information gathering and internet browsing is as well³⁵ (Mackay 2013, 43). This suggests that the lack of emphasis on phones during the interviews with SA members may not indicate that they are not used, so much as that they are not considered as important to the group as other ICTs like social media sites. To an extent it may also reflect the argument that 'older' ICTs are often simply assumed and their use taken for granted (Wall 2007, 259). Along with the utility of the internet for mass communication, this attitude towards phones further indicates the need to consider discursive influences on ICT use.

Some comparisons can be made between AbM and SA that highlight the importance of considering the differences present in the communicative ecologies of SMOs. To

³⁴ 'In general, the socio-demographic profile of survey respondents is broadly in line with the profile of adult Australians released by the Australian Board of Statistics (ABS). Given this finding and the sample size, the confirms that the results of the 2013 Survey sample can be generalised to Australian mobile phone owners between 18 and 75 years of age' (Mackay 2013, 8).

³⁵ Within the sample, 98% had used their phone for voice calls within the past year, 99% for SMS, 79% for email, 87% for information access, and 86% for website and internet browsing.

reiterate, Foth and Hearn (2007, 757) have argued that in the technical layer, it is useful to think about the devices and media in terms of what communication mode that they enable. The modes refer to the direction of communication and the number of actors involved. There is a one-way, one-to-many mode. There is a two-way, one-to-one or 'peer-to-peer' mode. And there is a multi-directional, many-to-many mode. The appropriateness of a mode depends on what the communicator is trying to do (Cohen 2011). Thus while the technical layer is influenced by availability, it is also influenced by the discursive layer as this is where decisions are made as to what a SMO is seeks to achieve. ICTs are adopted or not by a SMO depending on how well they are suited to these aims.

For instance, it was seen in chapter four that AbM have a website (which constitutes a one-way, one-to-many mode) which largely serves to communicate with outsiders, as the web is not widely used by shack dwellers. However, much more emphasis is placed on the use of mobile phones (which constitute a two-way, peer-to-peer mode). Foth and Hearn (2007, 763) explain that 'place-based' social interaction is compatible with this mode. AbM, with its living politics centred around life in the shack settlements, is very much place-based. Peer-to-peer communication (in the case of AbM, by phone and then by mouth to spread messages throughout communities where people do not all have phones) resembles more of a network than a 'homogenous group' (Foth and Hearn 2007, 757). On the other hand, while many different devices and platforms are used by SA, emphasis is placed on 'one-to-many' media such as websites and pages, and zines both online and print. These kinds of media are conducive with SA's goal of bringing the socialist idea to the masses. This is one of the prominent discursive features of this SMO that will be discussed in the following section.

Discursive layer

It is important to establish an idea of the ideology that informs a SMO's actions, ICT-aided or otherwise. In some instances, this is more straightforward than in others. Jenkins explains that SA has never explicitly identified itself as belonging to any specific school of thought, not even Marxism, though Marxist thought is highly

influential within SA (Jenkins and Woodleigh 2013). At the 2013 annual national conference in Geelong, Victoria, moves were made towards the group becoming more theoretically and tactically 'cohesive' (Emanuel 2013). It was also at this time that SA specifically identified itself as a revolutionary group (Jenkins and Woodleigh 2013). The most recent version of the SA constitution contains language that accords with this, for instance it includes the stated aims of replacing the capitalist system and achieving 'fundamental political and social change' (Socialist Alliance 2015b). It aims to do this through building a revolutionary organisation and working to 'deepen its connection to and authority among working people' (Socialist Alliance 2015c). Emanuel (2013) states that SA is socialist in a broad sense of the word, and in this section I show that this broadness is an important strategic element of SA discourse.

The SA conception of socialism, as described on their website, is based around notions of worker-run democracy, and 'people and the planet before profit' (Socialist Alliance n.d.(a)), while seemingly remaining noncommittal on the details of these ideas. Stalinism is explicitly rejected by SA, and in keeping with its broad identity, there is little dogmatism on an organisational level (Emanuel 2013; Jenkins and Woodleigh 2013). This can be seen as both a result of the original pluralistic formation of the group, and the related idea that their revolution will necessitate the coming together of the masses. It should be noted however, that in the social layer section it will be seen how organisational/structural factors complicate this ideal of anti-dogmatism, at least in the eyes of some new and younger members.

Two conceptual threads that can be identified in SA discourse, both in the interviews and secondary sources, are populism and state socialism. The statist nature of SA's socialism can be seen in policy such as the group's call for the nationalisation of Australia's mines and banks. Nationalisation in Norway, Venezuela, and Bolivia are praised on the SA website (Socialist Alliance n.d.(b)). Illustrating the SMO's populism, Emanuel (2013) states that SA emphasises what needs to be done to build socialism today, and this is to build a movement - a united front - that includes as many communities as possible, supporting each other. In doing this, SA hopes to build support for the idea of socialism within said communities. Jenkins likewise emphasises the need for change through an active majority (Jenkins and Woodleigh 2013), and many of their practices are aimed at encouraging this, as seen in the next

section where I discuss how this discourse, and the ICTs used to support it, manifest in the SMO's practices.

While SA's aversion to dogmatism can make it difficult to pinpoint specific ideological traits through studying the official statements, some impression of these traits can be established through examination of the interactions between SA and its fellow socialist SMO, SAlt. In these interactions, ideology and discourse is revealed through the articulation of the differences between the groups, as well as the similarities. For example, Chris Slee (2014) writes in an article in LJSR that SA hopes to convert less 'radical' activists to the socialist cause through engagement with their struggles, while the SAlt member he is responding to in the article derides such a strategy as 'reformist'. As part of this strategy, election campaigns are used by SA for propaganda and recruitment.

The value of electoral politics is another major issue on which SA and SAlt differ. Their views on this are somewhat tied to their views on less radical activists – welcomed by SA, less so by SAlt. SAlt criticise SA's broadness as not allowing explicitly Marxist thought and practice to grow and flourish (Oakley 2013). Both agree, however, on the general principle of the need for an organisation that seeks to '...win mass support through involvement in all the day to day struggles of the exploited and oppressed...' (Fredman et al 2013). The effect of this principle on SA's practices becomes apparent in the next section on the social layer, which discusses SA's earnest engagement with other SMOs and activists in Australia.

While an idea of SA's ideology is necessary to understand its communicative ecology, this is not to say the SMO's members are all in complete agreement on how to move forward. Like in most organisations, internal debates within SA are apparent, particularly on the online forums where socialist theory and practice are discussed. In an online article, Brisbane member Ewan Saunders (2014) notes, as I have, the usefulness of the unity talks with SAlt in comparing the groups' orientations. Saunders (2014) considers that two lessons can be learnt from SAlt's practices – prioritising the training of cadre, and the targeting of youth. Saunders (2014) expresses concern that SA has 'prioritised political breadth at the expense of

political depth', and that it sometimes concentrates too much on helping other movements, without gaining proportionate returns for SA. Dom Hale (2014), also from the Brisbane branch, is largely in agreement with Saunders. He suggests that the movement needs to move towards being more inward-looking. Whether such concerns among members will result in changes to the organisation is yet to be seen, though it is definitely conceivable as the comments made by Saunders and Hale have largely been upheld in a draft document on the Alliance Voices website following SA's tenth national conference (Socialist Alliance 2014). As of this thesis, however, involvement with other movements can still be considered a significant aspect of SA's social layer.

As mentioned in the introduction, at the time of SA's formation there were fears of a '...hollow "re-badging" of the existing DSP's political culture' (Davis 2003). While I do not necessarily argue that this came to pass, the DSP has been influential. At the early stages of the alliance, the DSP was resource-rich and had the best-known publication - GLW, now assimilated into SA (Davis 2003). It has also been acknowledged that various 'strengths and gains' have been inherited into SA from the DSP. As well as GLW and its readership, these include engagement and party-building skills (Democratic Socialist Perspective 2010). Both groups also aspire to democratic centralism as an ideal organisational form (Democratic Socialist Perspective 2010), a discursive preference which has implications for SA's organisation and practices, as will be seen in the social layer section.

Democratic centralism amounts to majoritarian decision-making, enforced by centralised power (Harman 1998, 1). In his defence of the concept, Chris Harman (1998, 3) makes two noteworthy statements. He asserts that '...a small revolutionary organization is certainly not the embryo of a new society...' and that the alternative to democratic centralism would be to give up on the socialist principle of vanguardism. Commitment to this concept contrasts starkly with AbM discourse which is openly anti-vanguardist and prefigurative. Ironically, the ANC invoked democratic centralism in demanding loyalty from supporters in 2000, and this approach allowed the implementation of the neoliberal Growth, Employment and Reconstruction (GEAR) program, over the objection of some ANC members (Mattes

2002, 25-26). The embrace of democratic centralism and its use in decision-making by SA (Price 2014) is therefore a key difference between the discursive and social layers of SA and AbM.

In chapter four, I argued that AbM can be situated within the larger political phenomenon of the GJM. In a similar way, in this chapter I will argue that SA has a discursive place within the loose category of ‘classical social movements’ (CSMs), as opposed to ‘new social movements’ (NSMs) or ‘new new social movements’ (NNSMs). CSMs is a term that refers to the Old Left of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, while NSMs are associated with the New Left of the nineteen-sixties through to the eighties, and NNSMs refer to the social movements of the last few decades (Day 2005, 5). This typology is not perfect, and SA does not fit completely and neatly into a simple class, so further discussion is needed. Numerous scholars have considered both that the categories are problematic and that they are useful, since they articulate some key discursive differences in movements (Buechler 1995, 449, 459; Chesters and Welsh 2011, 1; Day 2005, 68; Fuentes and Frank 1989, 180). For this thesis, understanding where the SMOs fit in relation to others (with similar or different communicative ecologies) is useful in tentatively generalising results, as will be discussed in chapters six and seven.

The CSM/NSM/NNSM typology helps to situate SA in regards to organisation and social change, as was the case with AbM and the GJM. A feature of CSMs is that they are concerned with ‘...systemic ideological change...’ (Chesters and Welsh 2011, 10). As such, prominent themes within CSMs include liberalism, Marxism, and hegemony (Day 2005, 65). Steven Buechler (1995, 449) warns against considering CSMs and NSMs in terms of a strict dichotomy. For instance, while NSMs can be considered a critical reaction to the perceived shortcomings of CSMs, many NSM actors still share some conceptual traits with, for instance, Marxists (Buechler 1995, 442). Likewise, there are debates within Marxism about whether struggles such as environmentalism or feminism are mere diversions from class or worthy of consideration on their own merit (Chesters and Welsh 2011, 126). SA certainly engage with such issues earnestly, though at the same time the ultimate class-based goal of socialist transformation remains paramount. One way to reconcile this might be to think of SA as neo-Gramscian, containing ‘one hegemonic centre’

that privileges class analysis, but also paying some attention to culture and civil society issues (Carroll and Ratner 1994, 21). This remains speculative, however, as no such designations or influences are mentioned in the interview material or any publications. In any case, will be demonstrated in chapter six that the characterisation of SA as a CSM that embraces some NSM elements helps to understand aspects of its ICT use.

The move away from aspects of CSM discourse by many SMOs has also amounted to a move away from centralisation and bureaucracy, towards a more holistic framework (Coronel Ferrer 1997, 2). As such it can be related to the decline of statist politics (Coronel Ferrer 1997, 2-3). However, as state and class remain relevant to social movement struggles (even if no longer central to them), CSMs can adapt to stay relevant rather than abandon their overall paradigm. In this sense they themselves become 'new' (Coronel Ferrer 1997, 3). SA can be seen as an example of a CSM undergoing this tentative process, as opposed to AbM whose compatibility with the GJM means they are better thought of in terms of NNSM discourse.

Three elements can be confidently inferred with regards to SA's discursive layer. SA's ultimate goal is the replacement of capitalism with socialism. To achieve this, it seeks to engage with and influence a broad range of activist struggles such as those around indigenous rights and LGBTI issues. It is also a SMO that can be considered in terms of CSMs and all that this implies, though it is not a watertight and prescriptive category by any means. These elements will be pertinent to analysis in chapter six, but must also be taken into account in the following section on the social layer, where it is seen how they manifest as ICT-aided practices that largely emulate the use of other, 'one-way', media. Given that SA's discourse and practices see them frequently interacting with other groups and causes, the next section will also feature some discussion on ICT use in the other SMOs that SA members engage with.

Social layer

While the shack dwellers of AbM are united in their unenviable situation, SA members unite around the socialist idea. Jenkins states that SA members are from all

walks of life, and that there is no characteristic member, though an older average membership compared to fellow socialists SAlt is also mentioned (Jenkins and Woodleigh 2013). The two WA branches in the neighbouring cities of Perth and Fremantle are demographically different. In Fremantle the membership is largely industrial workers and unionists who have become disillusioned with the ALP. Perth SA conducts more non-union-based community campaigns such as those focused around the environment or asylum seekers. Emanuel (2013) notes that the Perth branch is often more ready and able to respond to developments in the city, as the membership not being as constituted of industrial workers and people with families means it tends to have more time for SA activities. The Perth membership is often younger, though it is considered that SA still needs more young members generally, as young people tend to be recruited by the more campus-focused SAlt (Emanuel 2013).

The main organisational unit of SA is the branch. As mentioned, in WA there are branches in Perth and Fremantle, which are closely related. The interviewees in this thesis were from both of these branches. SA policies are decided at a national conference, with proportional representation of branches, through a simple majority vote. Branches also use simple majority voting. The prioritisation of particular campaigns is left somewhat open for branches (Emanuel 2013). Branch committee discussions include subjects such as involvement in other movements, organising 'educationals', the projection of socialist ideas into communities, and issues such as the decision to emphasise SA's nationalisation policy during the recent election campaign (Emanuel 2013). The SA constitution states that members elected into government can only collect an average wage, with the remainder going to SA (Socialist Alliance 2015b). Meetings come in the form of public forums and organisational meetings of SA members. The meeting agenda is voted on as the first item of discussion in the meetings (Jenkins and Woodleigh 2013). It is stated that in the interests of accountability, SA members holding political office are not afforded a conscience vote and must uphold the SA platform (Socialist Alliance 2015b). This is compatible with the socialist practice of democratic centralism, which as mentioned in the previous section is part of SA's discourse.

Democratic centralism in practice within SA reveals some tension between group orthodoxy and the commitment to being non-dogmatic. Members of SA are expected to support the SMO's non-sectarian goals. They have the right to form a tendency through which to influence policy. If a tendency is formed, its members must inform the National Executive of this, and ultimately continue to abide by SA decisions (Socialist Alliance 2015b). A recently formed tendency, 'The Witches', claims that within SA there exists some opposition to certain entrenched positions and practices. Members of the Witches have sought changes to support minority voices, such as the representation of opposing sides in the leadership. The Witches claim that outside of the stated rules and structure of the SMO, informal power structures exist. Furthermore, they charge that the SA's support of other groups is highly self-interested – that they only get involved once a group is seen as 'successful', and then self-promoting within (Goopy et al 2015). This dissonance is hinted at in official documents – SA claims to be developing its political program through engagement with other struggles (Socialist Alliance 2015c), however it is not made explicit that they seek to engage as equals, in fact it is stated that 'SA members are recognised leaders in many of these movements' (Socialist Alliance n.d.(a)). Other SA members (Sanders 2015) have been quick to dispute The Witches' claims, countering with the argument that democratic centralism and majoritarianism are important aspects of SA's identity, and that these practices are truly democratic as they prevent undue minority influence.

Online discussions have shown that social layer issues such as organisation and practice are influential in how SA uses ICTs. A recent *Alliance voices* article (Verner and Cumberland 2015) makes several criticisms and suggestions regarding SA's online presence. It suggests separate public information pages and secret organising groups. It also suggests centralised efforts to effect and enforce the changes that the authors want to see. This is particularly illustrative of the convergence of discourse, and organisation, and ICT use. Aside from this, the authors also criticise the visual style of the SMO's website, and claim that the SA Facebook presence is fragmented and confused. Ultimately, the article considers that SA's current web practices are largely a replication of its offline communications, according with the principal argument of this chapter.

Woodleigh explains that GLW plays an important role in the group's communications, and Jenkins adds that the publication is now entirely reproduced on the internet, adding to its 'circulation' (Jenkins and Woodleigh 2013). He considers that everything that SA does is geared towards encouraging physical action, and that this is where the group's strength lies. In this sense, articles in publications such as GLW can be considered 'education' to empower members to feel confident to engage strangers about the issues SA is concerned with. He reiterates the statement made by many social movement participants, to the point where it is almost truism, that ICTs can facilitate one-on-one contact but cannot replace it. Woodleigh notes the difficulty of convincing people on the streets to stop and talk, but emphasises that this face-to-face work needs to be done. For SA, its aim is to discuss the particular issues important to the person being spoken to, and then invite them to be educated on how they can get involved with SA's activities (Jenkins and Woodleigh 2013). This 'knowledge is power' notion, also seen in AbM, further informed my inclusion of empowerment as a political mechanism in chapter six.

Figure 4: Facebook page for snap action in

Perth <https://www.facebook.com/events/list/2013/July#!/events/1382847485271340/>



As seen above in Figure 4, Facebook is used to create pages for SA events (through the state committees), but SA organisers do not encourage extensive debate or conversation about issues on these pages, as the medium allows for these interactions

to occur unrestrained by the usual notions of responsibility or civility present in ‘real-world’ conduct (Jenkins and Woodleigh 2013; Stiles 2013). This aspect of the internet also has a more positive flipside when it comes to the anonymous political involvement of ostracised or persecuted people and groups, as will be discussed later in this section. Through the share button on Facebook, the scope of awareness about events is broadened. At the same time, YouTube clips provides a sense of what protest rallies are like for the uninitiated (Jenkins and Woodleigh 2013). Woodleigh notes that RSVPs on Facebook are not always accurate reflections of the number of people who will attend an event (Jenkins and Woodleigh 2013). That many other factors will undoubtedly affect attendance seems obvious, but it is worth pointing out that it neatly illustrates the contingency that is borne of complexity – the causal relationship between Facebook and event attendance cannot be adequately captured by a principle or formula, and will never be without any doubt.

Even so, it is possible to cite some convincing examples of where the potential of Facebook for quick and effective mobilisation was borne out. In 2013, SA was involved a refugee rights rally in response to then Prime Minister Kevin Rudd’s ‘PNG Solution³⁶’. This was organised literally overnight via Facebook and had a turnout of about 200 people. Similar rallies were held in other capital cities around the country (Landy 2013; ABC News 2013b). The relative success of this, coupled with the fact that this is not always the case, prompts questions as to what other influences are at work in these attempts at mobilisation. By studying communicative ecologies, some light may be shed on this when movement mobilisation is explored in chapter six, and this will help to develop reliable heuristics.

Jenkins emphasises the need for SA’s politics to be accessible to everyone (Jenkins and Woodleigh 2013). For this, he claims, they need to operate on many different planes (such as at stalls, and online, as well as in more traditional protests). This forms part of the rationale for taking part in election campaigns, an activity not necessarily condoned by other socialist groups that identify as revolutionary. SA is a

³⁶ Policy implemented by the Rudd government wherein asylum seekers who arrived in Australia by boat would not be eligible to resettle in the country, and instead would be processed and (potentially) resettled in Papua New Guinea (*Prime Minister Kevin Rudd – Address to the nation* 2013).

registered political party that participates in elections, and seeks to use elected positions to further SA's aims, and to support campaigns (Socialist Alliance n.d.(a)). Wainwright (2013) is involved in this aspect of SA's social layer.

In our discussion on power, Wainwright (2013) places importance on the role of economic power in political analysis. He points out that, 'formally speaking we live in a democracy, but so many of the decisions that affect our lives are not made in parliament at all, they're made in corporate boardrooms. And so many of us spend so much of our lives, so much of our waking, adult lives, at work, at places where we have no democratic control over our lives...'. He argues that while the primary driver of progressive social change comes from people power (an idea that AbM would broadly agree with), an activist must use every platform including elections, and that to not use this opportunity would be a mistake (in contrast to AbM's view on the matter, as well as SA's). Social media is used widely during SA election campaigns, organised and coordinated by the branch committees (Emanuel 2013). This is an example of the argument, echoed by Karwil (2013) later in this section, that ICTs afford a level of voice and media power to activists that they did not previously have.

Wainwright (2013) mentions SA's YouTube channel Green Left Television (GLTV) and praises its reach, as well as that of Facebook, though he notes that whether it constitutes a net gain for activists would be difficult to objectively measure (a problem already discussed at length in this thesis). He observes that organisation is much easier and quicker now than when he started activism. ICTs allow snap actions to take place, for instance. Not everyone embraces these technologies though, so like Jenkins he emphasises the need for multiple platforms in order not to leave anyone behind. He also reiterates that technology will never be a substitute for face-to-face interactions - '...the value of electronic media has been precisely their capacity to mobilise people to do things the old fashioned way...' Indeed, this is largely the role that ICTs seem to play in both SA and AbM.

Woodleigh notes that it can be difficult to predict what issues will become prominent in SA, as this depends to some degree on what members choose to get involved in (Jenkins and Woodleigh 2013). In keeping with their mass politics discourse, SA

members are often part of other community organisations and campaigns, with which SA collaborate (Emanuel 2013). For this reason, I found that when interviewing SA members, they would often speak about episodes of activism tangential to SA but relevant in the sense that they were part of the practices of SA members. Iqbal (2013), for instance, has been involved in what she refers to as the queer movement in Australia since 2003. She has also been involved in anti-nuclear protests. Karwil (2013) has a history of involvement with indigenous activism, and speaks about these experiences when discussing the use of ICTs by social movements.

Karwil (2013) considers that Facebook has brought media power back to the people as it allows individuals to broadcast their views. In contrast to this, she explains how the Indigenous group she is part of does not have a good relationship with the station manager at the local station *Nyoongar radio*. She claims that he has his own agenda and that because of this he refuses to air their content. She likens this to unsympathetic major media outlets such as the *West Australian* (the state's major newspaper). Whether this is true of *Nyoongar radio* or not, the issues of a lack of media diversity and the concentration of media ownership are particularly pertinent in the Australian media landscape³⁷. This is important when considering the extent to which personal, relatively low-cost media power is a significant contribution that ICTs can make to activism.

The need for such media power is illustrated in an article on popular media representations of the Nyoongar tent embassy by Australian academics Thor Kerr and Shaphan Cox (2013, 15). Their findings are based on 'critical examination of over 100 media reports' (Kerr and Cox 2013, 15). The article details media representations of the embassy that are based on very narrow sourcing, privileging the views of the police and city council (Kerr and Cox 2013, 7). This, the authors claim, served to legitimise violent police raids (Kerr and Cox 2013, 5). Police brutality at the tent embassy was alleged to have occurred on March 22. Karwil

³⁷ This is illustrated in statements such as '[w]hile Australia has some laws encouraging media diversity by limiting concentration in media ownership and limiting foreign ownership of media sources, it is doing badly in both areas by international comparisons' (The Australian Collaboration 2013), and 'Three owners – News Limited, Fairfax Media and APN News and Media – hold approximately 98% of the sector, and two of these owners, News and Fairfax, together hold about 88% of the print assets in the country' (Dwyer 2013).

(2013) was present and alleges that the mainstream media witnessed her being 'pushed around' by police but did not report on it. She further claims that if it were not for the communications of SA on March 22, no one would have known that anything had happened at all.

Many protesters who were at the embassy are not well versed in the use of social media, but like AbM, the embassy makes use of those who are. Access to YouTube allowed footage of police conduct at the protests to be disseminated directly and immediately (Karwil 2013). In a similar manner, Iqbal (2013) recalls the use of YouTube with regards to the policing of an anti-fracking protest in 2012. Incidents such as those recalled by Iqbal and Karwil demonstrate how SA members bring their ICT access and knowledge to groups that do not have it. This is a clear example of how SA's social practice of engaging with other struggles fulfils the task of showing the SMO's worth, and by extension the worth of their ideological message, to sympathetic fellow activists. Such practices are the practical embodiment of their discourse around mass politics and as such shows how this has influenced their perceptions and use of ICTs.

Iqbal (2013) provides another example of how ICTs can represent a source of media power for marginalised people. Speaking of her work before and within SA, she notes that sex workers face 'extreme social ostracism'. She argues that Facebook and other such social networking tools provide means to interact anonymously³⁸. They allow sex workers to speak on forums (for example some feminist forums where Iqbal feels there can be prejudices against sex workers), while still feeling safe. In this sense she considers that the internet has been 'absolutely critical' for fragmented or ostracised groups, and as an example argues that the intersex rights movement '...would not have cohered if it weren't for the internet...' Within the intersex rights movement, websites, blogs and social networks are used (Brossi et al 2012, 72) to share information, organise, discuss, and advocate (Brossi et al 2012, 69). The implications of ICTs for enabling the perspectives of the marginalised to be heard

³⁸ This is a vexed issue, and the idea that Facebook allows anonymity is complicated as the platform has had a number of issues surrounding identity, recent examples being controversy over its 'real name' policy (Francis 2014) and the creation of pseudonymous 'rooms' (Constine 2014).

will be discussed further in chapter six, in terms of the process of empowerment.

Ultimately, Bainbridge (2013) considers that the net effect of ICT use by SMOs is ‘not cut and dried’, and that many accounts may ‘exaggerate a certain reality’. SA uses ICTs to organise, which is in some ways very effective, and undoubtedly fast. Facebook is useful in reaching out beyond the usual activist network. At the same time, Bainbridge notes, Facebook as an entity has a questionable record in terms of tolerating discrimination, and turning off controversial accounts. He argues that it is not an egalitarian resource and that the corporate power imbalance that exists in society also exists online. Iqbal (2013) notes this as well, but contends that if it results in people coming together, this is good, even if corporations ‘have their tendrils in it’. Bainbridge (2013) reiterates that Facebook numbers do not always reflect real numbers (for better or worse - SA has experienced this in both ways). He cites a protest at the Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting (CHOGM) held in Perth in 2011 as an example of Facebook being used to reach a lot of people who then followed through and came to the event. He also mentions the Australian Equal Marriage campaign, advocating equal marriage rights for non-heterosexual couples, which had a large turnout. In these cases, Bainbridge argues that the pre-existing popularity of the causes meant Facebook advertising was enough to attract people. Evidence from other cases exists to support this argument, as will be seen in chapter six.

This section has shown several aspects of SA’s social layer that correspond with what has been established about their discursive layer. The SMO is organised in a way which reflects common currents of socialist thought such as democratic centralism, with both centralised and democratic elements present (Socialist Alliance 2015b; Democratic Socialist Perspective 2010). This is notably different from the AbM conception of democracy – in this sense it might be suggested that ‘democracy’, like ‘justice’ or ‘power’, is an empty signifier, at least until a clarifying prefix is added, such as ‘direct’, or ‘representative’, or ‘participatory’, or ‘majoritarian’. Another example of discursive elements at work in the social layer is found in SA’s attempts to further socialism through broad participation in compatible movements. This differs from AbM’s focus on the immediate lives of its members (though the movement is also theoretically and philosophically rich). This difference

is not surprising given the immediate struggles AbM faces such as daily poverty and routine oppression. The implications of these differences for the SMOs' use of ICTs will be further explored in chapter six, where it is shown that differences in the communicative ecologies of SMOs have potentially great effects on how ICT-aided processes and mechanisms play out.

Conclusion

At this point, before beginning the second pillar of my analysis, it pays to reiterate the value of the last two chapters to my overall thesis. It has been established so far in the thesis that a question such as 'what is the influence of ICTs on SMOs?' cannot be answered as such, since the complexity of the subject matter means the contingency of any answer (Urry 2005, 3; Qvortrup 2006, 352). The communicative ecologies model, based on the premises of complexity theory, affords a measure of pragmatism and realism, looking at actual interactions and relationships. It serves to '*clarify messy solutions to complex problems*' (Lennie and Tacchi 2013, 62, emphasis in original) such as the relationships between ICTs and SMOs. This should be apparent now that the two case studies have been presented using this model, illustrating the interplay between the technical, discursive, and social, and showing how any influence ICTs may have on a social movement is shaped by this.

In SA, a significantly different communicative ecology can be seen than that of AbM, which is not surprising given the vastly different contexts in which the groups exist. In an environment where computers, the internet, and related platforms are readily available to many people, these ICTs are widely utilised and were often the first to come to mind in discussions with SA members. Furthermore, examination of the social layer of SA shows efforts to reach a broad demographic and engage in mass politics, in line with the ideology of the group (itself kept broad and inclusive to a degree) as seen in the discursive layer. The use of internet platforms for enhanced broadcast of the socialist message complements this aim.

The use of ICTs by SA in an extension of their offline communication practices amounts to taking advantage of the opportunity to amplify their own voice and

message, as well as that of the groups they support. Internal concerns about the efficacy of this (Saunders 2014), and even questions about the sincerity of their engagement with other causes (Goopy et al 2015) notwithstanding, it is an example of how discourse affects actions and therefore ICT use. Another example of this is the relationship between SA's ICT use and socialist organisational principles such as democratic centralism.

Like many socialist SMOs, SA considers democratic centralism to be the preferred organisational form (Democratic Socialist Perspective 2010), and this influences the rest of their communicative ecology, as well as colouring views in the organisation on how to improve on their ICT use (Verner and Cumberland 2015). In terms of relating SA to the broader social movement ideological spectrum, they can be loosely considered as a CSM, albeit with a tendency to attempt innovation – especially with regards to the use of ICTs (Riley 2015). This characterisation will inform some tentative generalisations about ICT use in different SMOs in the next chapter.

As noted in the introduction to this chapter, the processes of scale shift, mobilisation, and empowerment can be identified in this case study. Attempts to broaden the movement and spread socialist thought through engagement with other groups and causes are clear cases of an attempt at scale shift. Recruitment and encouragement to attend rallies and other events constitutes mobilisation. And the process of empowerment can be seen in some of the activities SA members are involved in with other groups. These processes will be the subject of chapter six.

By identifying the processes at play in the activism discussed in chapters four and five, the role and importance of ICTs for specific movement activities is illuminated. Processes are made up of mechanisms (McAdam et al 2001, 24), and as such the SMO activities (including the role of ICTs) can be further broken down to the mechanism level. This will be the task of the next chapter. As each political upheaval or revolution is made up of these processes and mechanisms, assembled differently and thus yielding different outcomes, understanding those processes and mechanisms is the first step to knowing the bigger picture. As this thesis maintains, this approach - combined with the communicative ecologies model for conceiving of

ICT use within SMOs - can enlighten scholars about the implications of those ICTs. The next chapter introduces processes and mechanisms into my analysis, before chapter seven discusses what can ultimately be said about the influence of ICTs on SMOs, based on the case studies and other, secondary, cases used to place my research in a wider context.

Chapter Six: From communicative ecologies to processes and mechanisms

Introduction

This chapter introduces the second pillar of my approach. It discusses and analyses the processes flagged in chapters four and five, and the mechanisms contained therein. Appropriate to the phronetic and complexity-based lens of the thesis, the processes and mechanisms approach avoids both extreme particularity and crude generalisation (Kjeldstadli 2004, 104). McAdam et al (2001, 31-32) provide an example of its use:

Seen as wholes, the French Revolution, the American civil rights movement, and Italian contention look quite different from each other...Yet when we take apart the three, we find a number of common mechanisms...

Furthermore, they argue that:

By embedding our analytical categories in the historical and cultural particulars of each episode we study, we are betting that analysts can discern the more general, dynamic processes that typically fuel contention. Our work provides a starting place, but no more than that (McAdam et al 2001, 347).

This chapter constitutes a further progression from that starting place, and the communicative ecologies laid out in chapters four and five allow my analysis to fully consider said historical and cultural particulars. Firstly, however, more can be done to explain the processes and mechanisms approach and how it complements the communicative ecologies model.

It is axiomatic that social movements are all very different. They are complex entities, with multiple interacting elements and relationships. This complexity leads to contingency in regards to anything that can be said about them as an overall grouping ('social movements'). As such, it is difficult and probably impossible to answer a question like 'what influence do ICTs have on SMOs?', with much credibility. Likewise, 'ICTs meant Y for X revolution' glosses over too much to have a great deal of further use.

Those familiar with *Dynamics of contention* (2001) may note that as well as mechanisms and processes, episodes (which consist of multiple processes) are discussed as a third, broader, unit of analysis. Episodes are defined as ‘continuous streams of contention including collective claims making that bears on other parties’ interests’ – for example the French Revolution (McAdam et al 2001, 24). This level of analysis is omitted from the thesis. The reason for this omission is that, as Tilly (2001, 37) argues, analysis on the level of episodes is too fraught with contingency to be fruitful – better to stick with processes and mechanisms, leaving episodes as simply a unit of historical observation.

However, when episodes are observed, some common, dynamic, processes and mechanisms³⁹ can be identified - as explained by McAdam et al (2001, 31-32) above, in their statement on different episodes of contention such as the French Revolution or the American Civil Rights Movement. In the case study interviews, participants spoke about particular instances of ICT use, such as the use of Facebook to mobilise for a protest. These can be understood as processes within the contentious episodes which are their struggles. The data cannot accurately explain why a protest was successful or not, as whatever is considered, there were undoubtedly many other factors. It can, however, say something about how Facebook can be used to mobilise through the diffusion of information.

In turn, that specific insight may then have relevance to some other cases. For example, the author of a report on events in the ‘Arab Spring’ is right to warn against inferences from her findings outside of their immediate context (Ruth 2012). But as with the case of the SA interviews, accounts of how ICTs were used for mobilisation in the Arab Spring inform specifically about what a *specific ICT* can do for *mobilisation - in comparable circumstances*. The communicative ecologies model allows some of these circumstances to be identified. All elements of culture, each individual in government, the weather, and so on and so forth, may all play a role in

³⁹ To reiterate from chapter three, ‘**Mechanisms** are a delimited class of events that alter relations among specified sets of elements in identical or closely similar ways over a variety of situations’, and ‘**Processes** are regular sequences of such mechanisms that produce (generally more complex and contingent) transformations of those elements’ (McAdam et al 2001, 24).

the eventual outcome and they cannot all be considered. This is why findings will always remain contingent. But a social movement's relationship with the ICTs it uses can be better understood using my approach.

Processes and mechanisms are ill-defined by positivist-structuralist standards (Demetriou 2009, 452-453), so it is not expected that they flawlessly mirror reality. This is acceptable as long as it is acknowledged and remembered (Demetriou 2009, 457). Indeed, it is unavoidable – as was seen earlier in chapter two's discussion on power, abstract formulations are inherently unstable in relation to the tangible world. Keeping this in mind, Chares Demetriou (2009, 457), suggests that explanations produced from this method should be thought of as heuristics. To reiterate, heuristics are 'simplified rules of thumb that make things simple and easy to implement. But their main advantage is that the user knows they are not perfect, just expedient, and is therefore less fooled by their powers' (Taleb 2014, 11). This is fitting as it accords exactly with the argument from complexity theory outlined in chapter two, that well-supported heuristics are the most appropriate response to complex social problems (Bar-Yam 1997, 27; Spicker 2011, 11). The value of my approach is that by combining the communicative ecologies model with the processes and mechanisms approach, the heuristics produced in this thesis provide valuable insight into the nature of their own imperfections.

Each section in this chapter will correspond with a process that has been identified in the case studies. Sub-sections will discuss the mechanisms that can be seen in these processes, in terms of the role of ICTs, and with some reference to other cases from secondary sources. The first two processes discussed, mobilisation and scale shift, are covered extensively in McAdam et al (2001). As these are very common processes they serve to clearly demonstrate the approach I am taking. The third process, empowerment, has not been discussed in this way before and is not featured in *Dynamics of contention* (2001). I have conceptualised empowerment as a political process as a way of understanding some of the erstwhile unnamed phenomena observed in the case studies. While underdeveloped in comparison to the first two, it demonstrates the expansive potential of my approach for analysis.

Process – Mobilisation

The importance of mobilisation for social movement action is self-evident. For people to become involved in such action, they need to be informed about it and in some sense recruited into it (Hooghe et al 2010, 406). The challenge for social movement studies is to explain this process - to show how people who were not involved, engaged, and informed become so (McAdam et al 2001, 34). The case studies developed in this thesis demonstrate two common mobilisation mechanisms – *social appropriation* and *diffusion*. It can be expected that in different cases these will manifest differently due to various factors (McAdam et al 2001, 120, 123). Some of these factors, such as ideology and organisational structure, are accounted for in the case studies through the communicative ecologies model, though others such as national context are admittedly not.

Outside of the cases explored in this thesis, other studies also exist to suggest that ICTs can aid mobilisation. One such study is an experiment that explored participants' reception to the same information via different media. The results suggest that, contrary to popular wisdom, mobilisation via the internet is '...at least as effective' as face-to-face mobilisation (Hooghe et al 2010, 424). In reference to the Arab Spring uprisings, Courtney Radsch (2012, 4) describes Twitter as '...a key tool in the battle to frame the protests and set the news agenda...'. There is, then, sufficient reason to believe that ICTs have the potential to positively influence mobilisation. The question remains how, and under what circumstances. One obvious factor is the limits or opportunities present in a SMO's technical layer. How a SMO takes advantage of this (or not) is the subject of the first mechanism to be discussed, social appropriation.

Mechanism – Social appropriation

Social appropriation refers to the appropriation of existing social space and collective identities for social movement struggles (McAdam et al 2001, 102). In many cases, SMOs may be resource-poor or subject to oppression, which is why the appropriation of existing social sites for the SMO struggle is important – it allows SMOs to

overcome these organisational hurdles (McAdam et al 2001, 44-45). Such hurdles are definitely experienced by AbM, as noted by Ngongoma (2013) in chapter four. With the formation of AbM, informal settlements have been appropriated as sites for protest and activism. SA's involvement in other movements can also be seen in this way - the activity of supporting other struggles with the aim of promoting socialism is an act of at least partially appropriating that social space for the socialist cause.

Examples cited in *Dynamics of contention* (2001) demonstrate that this is a common mechanism. One example is the appropriation of Nairobi's radical trade unionist community into the Mau Mau rebellion in Kenya. Rebellion leaders and action group members were often involved with these unions (McAdam et al 2001, 106). Another example is the fall of Ferdinand Marcos in the Philippines, where growing discontent, catalysed by the assassination of opposition leader Benigno Aquino Jr., allowed the social appropriation of the Catholic Church into the growing movement against the Marcos regime (McAdam et al 2001, 113). Very broadly speaking, this might be compared to the growing frustration of the shack dwellers over empty promises being crystallised in the initial protest that led to AbM being formed in 2005, after which the settlements were spaces for continuing activism. McAdam et al (2001, 113) explain that the structures required for mobilisation (such as communities, organisations, and institutions) may already exist or may be created for the purpose, but in either case need to be positioned towards that goal. This section concerns the positioning of ICTs for use by SMOs.

Social appropriation is relevant to ICTs and activism in a different way to how other mechanisms are discussed in this chapter. It is nevertheless an important discussion to begin the analysis with, as it makes a certain narrative sense to begin by thinking about how SMOs come to use ICTs. While the case study interviews provided little insight as to how ICTs might aid the appropriation of social spaces for the SMOs⁴⁰, what I am concerned with in this section is the manner in which ICTs can be appropriated for activism, as without this occurring the question of what ICT use means for social movements is null and void.

⁴⁰ In both cases, the appropriation of the main social spaces used by the SMOs (the shacks, the streets, the SA activist centre) was not particularly associated with the use of ICTs.

Scholars such as J. Macgregor Wise (1997, 69)⁴¹ consider technology to be social space, and therefore subject to appropriation by its users. This position is also seen in work by Sky Croeser and Tim Highfield (2014) who in their analysis treat Twitter as an online ‘space’, which can be virtually ‘occupied’ in a manner analogous to the physical occupation of spaces. I also take this position, as my view of technology as a social and technical system leads to the implication of it as contested social space. Moreover, its appropriation is necessary before discussions on *effective* use are even relevant; before ICTs can be considered part of a SMO’s technical layer.

Appropriation – how a technology is used – is one of the most pressing issues in the ‘information society’, because technologies can be exploited for a great number of different ends (Surman and Reilly 2003, 10). Technologies vary in their ‘openness’, that is to say the degree to which they can be employed for different uses (Mackay and Gillespie 1992, 709). ICTs, their primary use being communication in the hands of any user, have a high degree of openness. Mark Surman and Katherine Reilly (2003, 19) articulate the degree to which SMOs manage to appropriate ICTs, describing three levels of engagement. The levels are access – the basic possession of the technology, adoption – the use of the technology and learning of relevant skills, and finally appropriation – its use in activism – putting up content, turning the technology towards the groups’ own ends. Both case study SMOs have fully appropriated some ICTs into their arsenals.

SMOs are likely to come across some barriers to the appropriation of ICTs. Chapter four showed that in AbM’s technical layer, barriers to access were not only financial and physical, but also cognitive and social, in terms of a history where education and technological experience was denied to shack dwellers (and black people in general). Comparably, a study on ICT appropriation in Brazil revealed that barriers to (legal) ICT appropriation can be financial, or social, for instance a lack of understanding of aspects such as billing (de Souza e Silva et al 2011, 415-416). Like in South Africa, the Brazilian example shows how social relations materialise in technology

⁴¹ An articulation of this can be found in Wise’s (1997, 73) conception of the ‘...Internet – or rather its communities...’ as social space. In terms of a definition, ‘Social space is a network of relations between actors (animate, inanimate, or both)...’ (Wise 1997, 70). Social networks are an obvious example of this but by Wise’s definition other ICT-based social spaces might include, for instance, discussion boards or phone trees.

appropriation, for example the shared use of mobile phones within favelas (de Souza e Silva et al 2011, 419), and the use of phones for collective ends by AbM, as described in chapter four. This demonstrates the need for an approach such as mine. Aspects of a SMO's technical layer can be explored using the concept of social appropriation, while at the same time aspects of the discursive and social layers help to understand how this appropriation occurs.

While ICTs have a high degree of openness, they also contain a degree of purpose and prescription, inscribed in them by their creators or previous users. This was observed by interview participants from SA. Bainbridge (2013) and Iqbal (2013) both commented on the involvement of corporate interests in Facebook. Taking this possibility of residual influence into account, a typology of three different appropriation strategies has been suggested: These are baroque, creolisation, and cannibalism (Bar et al 2007, 17-20). The order listed indicates increasing hostility to the original purpose of the technology, and the increasing skill requirement for that type of appropriation (Bar et al 2007, 30). As such, cannibalism is rarer than the other two (Bar et al 2007, 34). In the two case studies of this thesis, the appropriation performed by the ICTs is largely baroque. Baroque appropriation is the filling in of 'blanks' left in technology, for instance the creation of a Facebook page as both SMOs have done. AbM and SA also make use of the 'blanks' in phones and social media - spaces that can be filled with any messages or content. Creolisation is characterised by hybridising, or the recombining of parts, and cannibalism is ingesting, processing, and transforming - breaking ICTs down and then building them back up differently (Bar et al 2007, 29). Examples of cannibalism range from mild cases such as the cloning of phones to extremes like using a phone as a detonator for a bomb (Bar et al 2007, 35). Appropriation in the form of creolisation or cannibalism requires specific capabilities within a communicative ecology (the most obvious being a high degree of technical know-how), capabilities which are lacking in both case study SMOs. Not everything that can be done with ICTs by SMOs can be done by every SMO, highlighting the need to understand unique communicative ecologies.

While the category of cannibalism might contain some of the more exciting and innovative uses of ICTs in protest, these examples are not as accessible and common

as more mundane uses, such as the baroque utilisation of phones and internet platforms by groups such as AbM and SA. Distinguishing between different types of ICT appropriation allows scholars to speak more specifically about the use of ICTs by a social movement, avoiding the unwarranted generalisation shown in chapter two as attractive but counter-productive to real knowledge on the subject. For instance, while compelling stories might be told about the cannibalistic ‘hacktivism’ of groups like Anonymous, these contribute little to an understanding of what ICTs mean to SMOs like SA or AbM, so a systematic means to distinguish between them is useful. Consideration of social appropriation and whole communicative ecologies – how discursive and social elements influence appropriation of an ICT into the technical layer - constitutes such a means.

This section has approached the mechanism of social appropriation by considering ICTs as social spaces that can be appropriated for social movement causes. ICTs contain a relatively high degree of openness, and their appropriation and use for certain ends is highly contested. This is important as their appropriation is a necessary first step in any influence they might potentially have on the struggles of SMOs. The appropriation (or not) of ICTs directly affects the technical layer of a SMO, so it was important to address this first in the same way that it was important to begin chapters four and five with discussions of the technical layer. The following section examines the mechanism of diffusion and how ICTs can influence the way that this plays out in social movement struggles.

Mechanism - Diffusion

Diffusion is the transfer of information via existing lines of communication (McAdam et al 2001, 68). In its simplest form this could be communication between SMO participants, or other established contacts that a SMO has developed. A vital feature of diffusion for social movements, and one that supports the approach of this thesis, is that ‘[p]ractices that accord with cultural understandings of appropriate and effective action tend to diffuse more quickly than those that do not’ (Strang and Soule 1998, 278). An understanding of the communicative ecology of any SMO

studied is therefore necessary. In particular, the discursive layer is relevant as it addresses culture and ideology.

An early conception of diffusion, by Everett M. Rogers (1962, 11), identifies several elements in the mechanism. An *innovation* (an idea, practice or object) is *communicated* through *channels* over *time*. Most definitions of diffusion since are a variant on this, containing the elements of transmitter, innovation, channel and adopter (Soule 2004, 295). Theoretically, ICTs constitute a dramatic change in the channels available for diffusion. Rogers' definition has been criticised as essentialist, with some scholars claiming that it treats the elements as 'pre-given, fixed and coherent' rather than 'emergent, dynamic and relational' (Chabot and Duyvendak 2002, 701-702). These critics have countered that diffusion items (innovations) may be 'fundamentally malleable and fluid', and that actors 'dislocate' and 'relocate' information into their particular settings (Chabot and Duyvendak 2002, 727). This is to say, the fundamental point behind an innovation is distilled and separated from its context, then translated into the new context of the adopter, where possible. This is important in considering transnational diffusion in particular, where contexts may be radically different. It is also a potential sticking point with regards to ICTs and the possibility of them enhancing diffusion, as while ICTs may enhance some aspects of diffusion, this cultural-cognitive translation issue remains altogether human.

Examples of this mechanism at work in the case studies are readily apparent. The use of ICTs for diffusion was present in the very first AbM anti-eviction actions, where SMS helped to mobilise people, though it should also be noted that this was met with violent repression (Pithouse 2008, 80). During times of repression such as this, global solidarity with the movement has been possible due to ICT communication (Zikode 2013). The global diffusion of information about acts of repression has therefore played a key role in the mobilisation of international support, an advantage of ICTs long recognised and hard to deny. SA activities also emphasise diffusion channels as mobilisation tools. They have been used in mobilising attendees for events such as refugee rights rallies, the CHOGM protest, and equal marriage rallies (Bainbridge 2013). In these cases, Bainbridge (2013) argues that pre-existing community attitudes made mobilisation through Facebook successful. This speaks to the limits of using ICTs simply as diffusion channels with extended reach – success

still depends heavily on favourable circumstances such as a discursive compatibility between sender and recipient.

In the case of an AbM member diffusing information about a protest to other members via a phonecall or SMS, such compatibility can be assumed. Less so with the use of the internet to reach an audience globally. This newfound ability to reach huge audiences, possibly far away, is commonly remarked upon (for instance by Wainwright 2013). In terms of mobilisation outside of the already committed, shared discourse and collective identities must be considered when speculating on how useful ICTs really are for a movement. Material from the SA case study shows that they use mostly websites and social media, in a one-way manner, as it fits with their discursive imperative of 'broadcasting' (diffusing) the socialist message as widely as possible. In the case of the GLW website, technology is used to directly further the function of the hardcopy newspaper. This newspaper might be considered a kind of weak brokerage in the sense of it possibly being read by audiences unfamiliar with SA, but it is more characteristic of diffusion in the sense of communicating recent developments in the movement to already interested readers. The online version, existing without a human counterpart to converse with, functions as diffusion as websites do not approach people in the street - they have to be visited with pre-existing intent. In this section I will argue that this kind of activity is a common way for SMOs to use ICTs to aid diffusion, and while reach is improved, the fundamental limits of diffusion (its reliance on already-existing discursive factors) remain unchanged.

Websites can potentially be used in a two-way, dialogic manner – for brokerage rather than diffusion – but in the activist world they generally are not. Michael L. Kent and Maureen Taylor (1998, 327-330) have made some general suggestions for a dialogic World Wide Web. These include training group members to use sites dialogically, having generally useful information and content available, attracting repeat visits with responsive features such as FAQs, prioritising ease of use, and conserving users by avoiding directing them to other sites. A study was undertaken of a random sample of 100 activist websites, to assess dialogic features (Taylor et al 2001, 269). The data suggests that two-way dialogic features are often lacking, even when the technical side has been embraced (Taylor et al 2001, 277-278). In the cases

where some dialogic features were present, only 54% of online calendars were updated within a month, and human interaction on the websites was low (Taylor et al 2001, 279). These findings accord with how SA and AbM use their websites, not dialogically as instruments of conversation and brokerage but as tools of one-way diffusion.

It is worth noting that in areas outside of activism the internet is being used dialogically, for instance two health wikis observed by Corey A. Hickerson and Sharlene R. Thompson (2009) that can be considered dialogic, based on Kent and Taylor's (1998) criteria. There are, of course, significant differences between the circumstances behind an activist website and a health wiki. In AbM's case, using the Internet for more than simple diffusion is probably not a priority given the immediacy of their struggle on the ground, in their communities. This assumption is supported by scholarship on other social movements. Boris Gladarev and Markku Lonkila (2012, 1375) detail two successful campaigns against building developments, in Finland and Russia. They found that social networking sites were used to inform and organise, and to reinforce identities (in other words, to diffuse information). However, they were not used dialogically, as an online public sphere. Gladarev and Lonkila (2012, 1391) suggest that this is because in such campaigns (high-risk activism with a threat of physical violence), mobilisation and action are prioritised over discussion. Bainbridge (2013) states that he considers the threat of state violence against SA to be quite low, so this explanation is less compelling in their case, but even so SA tend to converse offline and use the web mostly for diffusion. Elements of the SMO's discursive layer help to explain this.

Specifically, it can be seen as an instance of the discursive layer affecting the technical layer. Regardless of their actual capabilities, internet sites in practice are mostly a one-to-many, one-way communication platform (Lusoli et al 2002, 101). For example, in a sample of twenty-nine different political organisations in the UK, the provision of information was the most commonly cited function for websites (Lusoli et al 2002, 94-95). Erich J. Sommerfeldt, Michael L. Kent, and Maureen Taylor (2012, 303) argue that websites are, generally speaking, not dialogic because they are not perceived as being useful for dialogue, and are therefore not used in this way, even though it is possible. Sommerfeldt et al (2012, 306) argue that websites

are perceived as (and therefore used for) passive communication, useful to supplement offline public relations practices and cater to existing publics. In other words, for diffusion.

As noted in the methodology chapter, a feature of semi-structured interviews is that the interviewer can establish what is significant to the participant, as emphasis will tend to be placed on this topic by an interviewee with the freedom to direct the discussion in that way (Hermanowicz 2002, 484). Unlike with AbM, only a few interviewees from SA were interested in talking about their mobile phones. Within the SA interviews, a large emphasis was placed on computer-based ICTs (especially websites) and their use for diffusion. As previously established, the dialogic functions of a website are commonly ignored by SMOs. This is especially the case if a one-way medium fits the discursive layer of a SMO.

It can be argued that the use of websites as a one-way medium, despite the technical potential for them to be used for dialogue, is influenced significantly by a SMO's discursive layer - how ICTs are viewed, but also ideas about how activism is done. SA activists regularly employ tactics such as stalls and zines to spread their messages. The interactions that take place could be characterised as diffusion, in instances where receivers have had some exposure to SA before and know what the SMO stands for, or attempts at brokerage in instances where a longer conversation is had, introducing the receiver to the group and their message. SA use the internet in a comparable way to further the same ends, for instance they publish GLW verbatim on a website (Jenkins 2013; Woodleigh 2013). However, online, less back-and-forth discussion is held (Jenkins and Woodleigh 2013). SA's websites are primarily, if not exclusively, used for diffusion to already-engaged parties.

ICT use that mirrors offline communication methods, by SMOs with a certain discursive layer, can be seen elsewhere in an example that can be related to the case of SA. Tim Fowler and Doug Hagar (2013, 202) examine the use of social media by unions during two Canadian elections in 2011. Unions which traditionally supported the centre-left New Democratic Party used social media more than those that endorsed voting strategically, for whoever stood the biggest chance of defeating the

conservatives in a particular area. Fowler and Hagar (2012, 221-222) argue that this was the case because strategic voting is complicated, requiring complex and context-specific messages which are difficult to relay on social media. This was exacerbated as the social media platforms were not used dialogically - rather they were used as a simple extension of the already-existing press releases. From this, they suggest that the unions were slow to grasp the nature of social media, and its difference from other media (Fowler and Hagar 2012, 222). It is further suggested that established organisations (such as unions) encounter more difficulties incorporating ICTs into their entrenched communication strategies than do newer, 'looser' ones (Fowler and Hagar 2012, 222-223). This argument is partially supported by the way that SA continues the media strategy of GLW online, but as will be seen, there is also a degree of nuance which fits SA's characterisation in chapter five as a SMO with classical and newer features, sitting in both worlds so to speak.

SA, which runs candidates in elections, faced a similar problem in that it needed to explain to voters how placing a SA candidate first in the preferential voting system would still lead to their vote supporting the Greens, a prominent leftist minor party, whereas a vote for the Greens would not flow down to SA. SA's behaviour in this instance does not exactly conform to what was seen in the case of the Canadian unions. SA attempted to communicate this information via a YouTube clip (Green Left TV 2014). Given the many factors at play in an election campaign, it is not possible to properly gauge how successful this was (the clip had had 597 views as of February 16, 2015. SA received 743 votes, 0.9% of the total, a comparable amount to many other minor parties (ABC News 2013a)). Whatever the result, however, this clearly speaks to the relationship between a SMO's communicative ecology and its use of ICTs. In the case study on SA it was identified as belonging largely to the CSM tradition (generally associated with traditional Marxism), with some newer features. Accordingly, its online communications tend to resemble an offline communication strategy typical of a CSM – however, it is also at times more adventurous and innovative than groups such as the aforementioned Canadian unions.

An observation by Bainbridge (2013) demonstrates the power of discourse and collective identity to determine the effectiveness of ICTs as diffusion channels. In

chapter five he noted that mobilisation for an event via Facebook tended to be more effective around an already-popular issue (which is to say one that people already identified with). Comparable discourse seems undeniably significant when assessing the potential of ICTs for better diffusion. It is well-established that ICTs particularly enable contagion, also known as proximal diffusion (Rane and Salem 2012, 99). Proximal diffusion is based on spatial or cultural proximity. This is further borne out by a study of the Arab Spring protests by Halim Rane and Sumra Salem (2012, 108), which shows how ICTs allowed communication across state and national borders, facilitating the diffusion of ideas about ideology and tactics. This will be discussed further in the section on scale shift, but for now it suffices to note that, like with SA, improved channels were not the sole determining factor for success— participants in the Arab Spring also had a wealth of region-specific shared experiences to draw on, through which ICT-aided diffusion could prove effective (Rane and Salem 2012, 108). This can be understood as the social and discursive layers of movement ecologies influencing the effectiveness of the ICTs available in the technical layer.

As well as demonstrating the usefulness of the communicative ecologies model in exploring ICTs and the process of diffusion in social movements, the analysis of ICT-aided diffusion in this section provides the basis to tentatively suggest a heuristic. In the process of mobilisation, there are myriad factors that influence the role of ICTs. An easy and general formula for the use of ICTs to mobilise remains elusive. However, an examination of the mechanism of diffusion, with the added structure and vocabulary of communicative ecologies model for looking at the role of ICTs, has provided some insight. The distillation of this into a heuristic statement will allow further discussion of ICT-aided mobilisation in chapter seven. That chapter will relate the heuristic to other cases, seeing how it is useful but imperfect, and how thinking in terms of communicative ecologies, processes, and mechanisms provides a phronetic and complexity-aware way forward.

The heuristic statement for this section reads as follows:

ICTs have the most effect when diffusing mobilisation information to individuals already broadly in agreement with a SMO's position - or at least able to discursively relate.

This accords with the received wisdom among many activists, including those in AbM and SA, about the strengths and limitations of ICTs. Culture and discourse also play a large role in the next process to be discussed, which has been briefly mentioned already – scale shift.

Process – Scale shift

This section discusses the process of scale shift and its related mechanisms. McAdam et al (2001, 141) explain that there are three dimensions along which social movement practices and identities differ. The first of these is particularism, which refers to the extent to which the claims being made by a group are specific to that group. An example of this can be seen in the difference between the specifics of the demands of AbM (for water, electricity, land, and other resources, as well as dignity for the poor) and SA's goal of an overall socialist system (however in this case it also must be noted that SA makes more specific claims within this agenda, just as AbM members also ruminate at times on more national or global issues). The second dimension is the level of mediation, which refers to the level of a SMO's reliance on privileged intermediaries. The third dimension is scale, and change (growth or reduction) to this dimension, is referred to as scale shift.

Scale is defined as 'how many clusters of people who are readily distinguishable in social life participate in the making of claims' (McAdam et al 2001, 141). Scale shift, then, is '...a change in the number and level of coordinated contentious actions leading to broader contention and a wider range of actors and bridging their claims and identities' (McAdam et al 2001, 331). Scale shift occurs through two, at times linked, mechanisms. These are diffusion and brokerage (McAdam et al 2001, 334). Diffusion and brokerage in turn rely on two smaller mechanisms (just as mechanisms are semi-arbitrarily distinguished from processes based on complexity and contingency, it is sometimes possible to break these units down even more). These are 'attribution of similarity' - which refers to actors identifying enough commonality in each other to relate and perhaps collaborate, and 'emulation' - action modelled on or inspired by another's action (McAdam et al 2001, 334-335). This

section identifies diffusion and brokerage within the case studies, and discusses the role of ICTs in aiding these mechanisms.

Scale shift and attempts at scale shift can be seen in the cases studies on AbM and SA. AbM uses ICTs to communicate nationally, diffusing its message through already established channels. However, the need to articulate the struggle was also mentioned (Zikode 2013), which necessitates the attribution of similarity, even more so in cases where new ties are being forged (brokerage) (Ndabankulu and Ntanzi 2013). AbM has also been situated as part of the GJM (Zikode 2013). As will be discussed, this ‘movement of movements’ is heavily dependent on the mechanism of brokerage to bring different SMOs under a common macro-scale conceptual umbrella. The attribution of similarity among SMOs spread throughout the world is made possible via ICTs (Zikode 2013). For SA, the group’s overarching socialist goals also mean working towards scale shift, as they are concerned with working towards widespread socialism. As Jenkins stated, SA members are from ‘all walks of life’ (Jenkins and Woodleigh 2013), so the socialist idea can be considered the similarity attributed to and between actors to bring them together.

The argument that ICTs aid efforts at scale shift is common, though it is not always phrased in such a way. For instance, Saskia Sassen (2004, 649) argues that globalisation and ICTs have allowed non-state actors (including SMOs) to engage internationally, whereas that scope was once the exclusive domain of nation-states. Likewise, Randy Stoecker (2002, 155-157) argues that while the internet does not inherently change the nature of activism, scale and reach can be improved. In discussing the mechanisms seen in scale shift attempts by SA and AbM, this section will show that while the affordances of ICTs for scale shift are very real, cultural and discursive factors remain that cannot be surpassed as easily as physical distance.

Diffusion in scale shift

The main purpose of the section on scale shift will be to explore the mechanism of brokerage, as scale shift necessitates the brokering of new relationships. However, diffusion also commonly takes place in this process, and so the points made about

this mechanism in the previous section apply here as well. In chapter four, it was seen that Zikode (2013) considers AbM to be part of the GJM, though with some caveats. As a general, ‘umbrella’ movement, the GJM is a generalisation of the concerns and beliefs of a range of movements around the world, and as such, it can be considered a kind of scale shift. However, analysis on the level of ‘the GJM’ loses some of the nuance and detail found in studying these movements separately. Identification with the GJM remains partial and contingent, and while the idea of the GJM highlights similarities in the constituent movements, closer examination reveals difference. A similar situation can be seen in the ‘new global protest wave’ of 2011, which includes the Arab Spring, Occupy and the Indignados (Gerbaudo 2013, 86). By examining how similarity is attributed, it can be further seen how the technical potential of ICTs plays but one part in a technical, social, and discursive equation.

As mentioned earlier in the previous section, the ICT-aided diffusion that helped mobilisation in the Arab Spring was itself made possible by the attribution of similarities between protesters in the region – they could relate to each other and so were receptive to said diffusion (Rane and Salem 2012, 108). When viewing the Arab Spring as part of a bigger, global, protest wave (as per Gerbaudo 2013, 86), the importance of this becomes even clearer. The diffusion of ideas in this wave was actually slow compared to past global protest waves (such as in 1848, 1968, and 1989), which puts paid to the idea that more effective channels (ICTs) are in themselves sufficient to positively influence diffusion (Gerbaudo 2013, 93-94). Paolo Gerbaudo (2013, 87-88) attributes this slowness to the continued importance of cultural barriers – the same factor that makes identification with the GJM less than total for AbM. These barriers and the negotiation of them can be seen in the ‘sub-waves’, and examining how these played out highlights the conditions that enabled ICT-aided diffusion in those instances.

The diffusion of protest first occurred among Arab countries, then from the Arab world to Southern Europe via the Indignados, and finally from the Arab Spring and Indignados to Occupy (Gerbaudo 2013, 94-95). As the protest wave spread, cultural adaptations were necessary. In the Arab countries, helpful preconditions for diffusion included compatible cultural contexts, shared languages, history, and a shared political situation – life under authoritarian rule (Gerbaudo 2013, 95). The jump to

Southern Europe was more complicated. For instance, in Spain the government may have been corrupt but it came to power through an election. It is important to note that the Indignados did not simply emulate the movements of the Arab Spring, they also drew on comparable events in local history. Diffusion was also helped by the fact that some similarities exist between Southern Europe and the Arab world, such as vibrant street life (Gerbaudo 2013, 96). In Occupy, new culturally and regionally specific elements can be seen, for instance in Occupy protest was framed as resistance to the 'corporate state', and protesters refused to make demands. These elements resonated with the resurgence of anarchism in the US (Gerbaudo 2013, 97). While ICTs were no doubt useful in diffusing the impetus for protest across borders, the shift in scale from a national event to a regional then global wave still depended on human relationships and culture, lending further credence to my previously suggested heuristic about ICT-aided diffusion and the crucial role of the discursive layer. The importance of discursive and social factors is impressed even more by examining the creation of new communicative links - the mechanism of brokerage.

Mechanism - Brokerage

While diffusion is present and necessary in the process, significant upward scale shift requires more than this. It requires the brokering of new connections (McAdam et al 2001, 333). Brokerage is the linking of social sites through a mediator - a 'broker' (McAdam et al 2001, 102). As such, where diffusion refers to the use of existing lines of communication, brokerage means the creation of new ones. McAdam et al (2001, 335) note that while diffusion is a more common mechanism, brokerage is potentially more powerful, creating new and durable identities. Exactly who (or what) takes on the role of broker can vary. In the simplest manifestation on the mechanism, brokers will be individual actors – local elites, arbitrators, interpreters, or other such people of influence. However, they can also take the form of institutions such as informal cliques, organisations, or spaces. This includes, as I will show, virtual space such as that found on the Internet – continuing the idea of ICTs as social space. In this section I will argue that ICTs can affect brokerage by helping activists take on the role of broker themselves, rather than relying on external forces. I will also argue that, as social spaces, ICTs themselves can take on brokerage roles.

As with diffusion, however, the ability of ICTs to do this is contingent on human factors and cannot be assumed in all cases. The discursive layer continues to be a significant factor, as does the social layer, particularly organisational forms.

Both SMOs in the case studies show awareness of the need for brokerage for effective scale shift. Emanuel (2013) argues that what is needed for SA to build socialism is a united front of as many communities as possible, while Zikode (Figlan et al 2013) states that real 'unity in diversity' could conquer the world. The case studies present accounts of attempted ICT-aided brokerage in the SA (Bainbridge 2013; Emanuel 2013) and AbM (Figlan et al 2013; Mdlalose 2013; Zikode 2013; Ngongoma 2013) interviews. On the surface the contribution of ICTs to this mechanism seems clear. For instance, in terms of ICTs bringing more people to the struggle of AbM, Nontokozo (2013) expressed the opinion that seeing me at her settlement meant the organisation was growing, a sentiment echoed by Figlan (2013) who noted that ultimately it was their website that brought me to Durban, acting as an electronic mediator attracting outsiders to the struggle.

While diffusion is easier to achieve but limited to pre-existing ties, brokerage engages unfamiliar actors, bringing in more people and new ideas (Bilić 2013, 809-810). Diffusion allows contention to be spread quickly, but only narrowly through pre-existing ties⁴², which ultimately weakens a cause as new blood is not brought in (Bilić 2013, 809). Conversely, as an example of ICT-aided brokerage, in chapter four Ngongoma (2013) explained that a Swedish supporter suggested the email lists that AbM uses to relay information across the world. It would be difficult to argue that a shack dwellers' movement in Durban could broker relationships in Sweden just as easily without ICTs.

The different implications of brokerage and diffusion for social movements is illustrated particularly well in a comparison of two SMOs in former Yugoslavia. The Antiwar Campaign of Croatia and the Centre for Antiwar Action in Serbia were both

⁴² These ties do not necessarily have to be obvious or strong, and there is potential merit in studying 'weak ties' (see Granovetter 1973 for a discussion on this concept) as they pertain to this statement, but the study of weak ties is outside of the scope of the thesis.

founded in 1991. Brokerage was the primary scale-shift mechanism at work in the Croatian campaign, where efforts were made to support and engage with other initiatives. In Serbia, diffusion was the dominant mechanism, with activists gravitating towards already-established links. Bojan Bilić (2013, 809) argues that this resulted in fragmentation of the movement. Moreover, he argues that the group in Serbia had 'older' SMO traits, while the group in Croatia had 'newer' traits (Bilić 2013, 810). Given that brokerage requires a degree of discursive flexibility, a trait more readily associated with newer social movements than older ones, a connection could be inferred here. Indeed, such a discursive distinction is important to consider when discussing the influence of ICTs on a movement, but it cannot be boiled down to a simple formula and a case-by-case approach continues to be prudent. In the case of SA, the SMO ambiguously straddles the line of what 'should' be true for CSMs, and what might be considered more typical for NSMs or NNSMs. SA members actually expend a large amount of time and energy brokering or attempting to broker new connections. However, the effectiveness of this in furthering their socialist ambitions is not clear and has been questioned internally (Saunders 2014; Hale 2014). Even attempts at unity with another socialist group have been thwarted – despite their efforts SA and SAIt have not been able to attribute enough similarity to each other to form a complementary and much larger common force. Brokerage is not easy.

Attempts at brokerage, in fact, can be dangerous to a movement. A short time after my visit, AbM (in particular its leadership) suffered a backlash, which included the resignation of some members, over the brokerage of a relationship with a political party. The movement controversially (given its official distaste for all parties) chose to endorse the major opposition party to the ANC in an election. This action was taken in response to the increasing brutality of the ANC towards AbM members, which resulted in many believing the ANC needed to be removed from power, even if it meant endorsing a lesser evil (Sacks 2014). This particular brokerage was not itself aided by ICTs (beyond presumably a phone conversation or two between involved parties). However, it highlights issues with brokerage that cannot be surmounted by ICTs. Such difficulties in brokerage can be seen elsewhere as well, and recognising the complexities behind them is instructive in understanding the gains to be had by the use of ICTs, as well as their limits.

As seen with AbM above, brokerage is a risky undertaking as a broker risks blame or alienation from unsuccessful attempts. In another example of this, Eitan Y. Alimi and Liora Norwich (2011) describe an attempt at brokerage by Rakah⁴³, the Israeli Communist Party. Rakah was a legitimate (recognised in the formal political system) but marginalised political player, with a centralised structure and communist ideology which was used to invoke attributions of similarity with other groups. It aimed to organise collective action for the 1976 Land Day protest while maintaining its political legitimacy (Alimi and Norwich 2011, 47-49). However, Alimi and Norwich (2011, 47-49) explain, ultimately its insider role as an Israeli political party compromised its ties to Palestinian groups (Alimi and Norwich 2011, 47-49). In this case it would seem that the gulfs in the discursive (ideas on how to effect change in the regional political system) and social (ties that the groups had and sought to maintain) layers of the different groups were insurmountable.

In the examples of AbM and Rakah, attempts at brokerage were compromised because of a discursive difference that was seemingly immutable, namely differing attitudes towards participation in mainstream politics. However, even without this kind of discursive difference, the diverse perspectives of SMOs can be difficult to negotiate, and this becomes ever more the case as the scope for scale shift increases. Sally Engle Merry (2006, 39) considers transnational human rights discourse and its relevance to local populations. Here, ‘vernacularization’ is said to take place – the adaptation or translation of a concept into a local context or ‘language’. This is necessary challenge for any kind of macro-level scale shift. To relate this to SA, the broad idea of ‘socialism’ might be seen as another transnational discourse with local particularities. Being able to form an umbrella movement around it would be another question, however, and ICTs have not been any kind of panacea in that sense. Again one might observe a difference between the rigid ideologies of (particularly Marxist) CSMc and the ‘unity in diversity’ of the GJM. This will be explored later in this chapter, however first more will be discussed about how ICTs can ideally aid scale shift.

⁴³ Rakah formed out of a split within Maki, the Israeli communist party. In 1989, they changed their name back to Maki (Knesset n.d.).

The sentiment behind the transnational human rights discourse described by Merry (2006) is similar in outlook to Ubuntu ('a human is a human') and Abahlalism. Zikode (2013) argues that injustice is similar around the world, so it is possible to identify with global struggle and humanity while not losing sight of the local context. And ICTs make such connections easier. With them, SMOs can communicate relatively easily and articulate their discourse and circumstances to international audiences. In chapter four, Zikode (2013) noted that AbM was sceptical about international solidarity until they saw evidence of it, much of which was online.

However, international solidarity still suffers from being a rather general, broad concept. The uneasy identification that AbM has with the GJM is characteristic of an umbrella entity of that size and its need to negotiate ('vernacularize') its broad message with many particular contexts. This is more problematic with some local contexts than with others. The GJM has had problems with underrepresentation and the fragility of links when it comes to regions such as Africa and Asia (Kong 2012, 70). While AbM is an example of this in Africa, an Asian example can be seen in Korean SMOs.

Historically, in Korea SMOs have been situated as nationally-bound pro-democracy movements. To orient these groups towards being part of the GJM, it has been necessary to foster a transnational 'cosmopolitan worldview' (Kong 2012, 74). The rise of neoliberalism helped to highlight the need for such transnationalism, but habits and frames do not shift easily (Kong 2012, 76). Korean peasant groups were late in moving towards transnationalism, only doing so as they became more and more threatened by free trade agreements in the early 2000s (Kong 2012, 80). These groups have been engaging more with the GJM, but according to Suk-Ki Kong (2012, 82), they still lack effective brokers in their ranks to properly facilitate this engagement. Such brokers need the both-local-and-global view described by Zikode (2013). They remain with their primary ties intact but are also part of a 'complex international society' (Tarrow 2005b, 42). Within AbM, many such brokers are academics, connected to the SMO through ICTs (as well as in person in the case of South Africans – in turn these people play a role in AbM's international profile).

These academics will be discussed below, however first the concept can be clarified through a well-known instance of academic brokerage and its benefits, related to the Zapatistas.

An example of academic brokerage, and of the role of ICTs in facilitating brokerage, is the relationship between Harry Cleaver and the Zapatistas. In 1994, Cleaver (n.d.) developed *Chiapas95*, an internet list for the diffusion of information about the Zapatista struggle. It went through many changes in its lifetime but was always operated out of the economics department of the University of Texas (Cleaver 2014a). Eventually it was superseded by information sources directly from Mexico, as the Zapatistas' capacity for managing their own communications increased. It remains archived on the internet (Cleaver 2014b). The relationship between Cleaver and the Zapatistas illustrates two instances of brokerage. Firstly, the Zapatistas and Cleaver engaged in brokerage to form a relationship through which Cleaver could contribute to the group's limited technical layer, using his connection to the university. Secondly, Cleaver and *Chiapas95* (the two together might be seen as a kind of socio-technological system) engaged in brokerage and diffusion for the Zapatistas through email lists and the translation of documents into different languages, spreading information to existing ties and forming new ones across the world.

AbM's relationships with some leftist NGOs and academics are characterised by great acrimony, with disagreement on fundamental issues. But like the Zapatistas, AbM also has beneficial relationships with some academics, such as Richard Pithouse and Raj Patel, who use their privileged positions to aid the movement (Zikode 2013; Bryant 2008, 50). One of the ways they do this is by serving as brokers, their articles widening interest and support for the movement within the academic community. Also, both AbM and the Zapatistas have been affected by the digital divide, and have needed mediators to get messages online (Mills 2002, 82-83). Like with the eventual supersession of *Chiapas95*, this has become less necessary for AbM over time. The UK-based AbM solidarity group ceased reproducing AbM communiqués in 2010 as the movement's own website grew, and instead now concentrates on promoting their own events in support of the movement (onegodonemaster 2010).

Government violence against AbM is common, but it can be surmised that the situation would be worse if the group were completely unknown. For what it is worth, they have international supporters who can potentially put pressure on the South African government. While it has not managed to prevent numerous murders of AbM members in 2014 and 2015, there are well-supported arguments that the internationalisation of support matters. Kurt Mills (2002, 84) explains the difference between the ‘CNN effect’, where the mass media sets the news agenda, and the ‘internet effect’, which constitutes a challenge to this. At the start of the Zapatista conflict, the mainstream media covered the group’s messages and perspectives superficially and misleadingly, if at all (Mills 2002, 84). However, a corrective to this came as supporters with access to computers posted the group’s communiqués online (Russell 2001, 357). Also, as ICTs became part of the group’s communicative ecology, they interacted with other elements, affecting the group’s evolution.

The relationship between the Zapatistas and ICTs was two-way. Once the Zapatistas had captured international attention, their discourse changed to reflect that (Russell 2001, 359). The Zapatistas became global political players, even with their essentially local agenda. They contributed to international discourse on issues such as the impact of neoliberalism, and international supporters offered protection for the people of Chiapas by ensuring that any violations by the government were noticed (Russell 2001, 361). The future of AbM is yet to be written, but some parallels can be drawn in this respect. For instance, through the connective powers of ICTs, AbM engages with and offers solidarity to other struggles around the world, such as the evicted squatters of Pizzeria Anarchia in Austria (Knoetze 2014). This solidarity gesture by AbM reveals some of the potential of ICTs for scale shift.

As suggested by the eventual supersession of (some) outside brokers for AbM and the Zapatistas, ICTs can allow SMOs to increasingly engage in brokerage themselves, rather than relying on outsiders. This is further supported by a study of GJM activists in Aotearoa, New Zealand (Ganesh and Stohl 2010, 54-55). The study found that the financial, cognitive, and emotional costs of brokerage were reduced by ICT use. This had a positive effect on activist agency and self-efficacy through their awareness that they did not have to rely on others to communicate or broker, though

the context of being in an organisation and/or part of a collective identity still matters in the sense that it shows what an activist stands for (Ganesh and Stohl 2010, 60-61). This is evident in the AbM interviews as participants emphasised both the importance of shack dwellers speaking for themselves and the power of having a united voice as a SMO. And while my association with a university definitely helped, no outside brokers were necessary for me, an Australian student, to communicate with a group of shack dweller activists in South Africa.

Being that AbM is a movement of the poor, on the less privileged side of the digital divide, the degree to which ICTs allow them to engage transnationally is a striking indication that ICTs matter for social movements. One of the digital resources AbM have produced for brokerage is a booklet detailing discussions between members and academics (Figlan et al 2009), which is available as a PDF online. This can be seen as a more traditional act of brokerage taking place online, as the PDF is available on the website of the CLP, an organisation sympathetic to AbM, and CLP members may be introduced to AbM through this document. The DVD of the film *Dear Mandela* can also be considered in similar terms. Zikode (2013) has stated that the film allows the movement to travel around the world by proxy. As per Latour (1994, 40), while technological devices have no immutable nature of their own, elements of a previous relationship can be left indelibly on them – the narratives and statements of AbM members on the DVD continue to engage in some form of brokerage with viewers. While this may not be as effective as an actual conversation with a human broker, it travels easily and is a close-to-permanent artefact. Moreover, while websites have until now been discussed in terms of diffusion, there is a feature of them with some implications for brokerage – hyperlinks.

The Original Sovereign website, maintained by SA member Karwil (2013), is a brokerage tool that facilitates an online collective identity encompassing indigenous struggles around the world. This illustrates a common way that ICTs can aid scale shift, though its significance is largely an increase of scale on a symbolic level. Stefania Vicari (2014) has examined the construction of transnational social movement identities online, specifically looking at the World Social Forum (WSF) and European Social Forum (ESF). She describes how online, links can be likened to an alliance, and the resulting online network constitutes the forums' online identity.

Actual interaction between the linked groups is low, but the WSF and ESF act as ‘symbolic master frames’, as well as brokers between the groups within, introducing supporters of one cause to other causes that share the same values or goals (Vicari 2014, 104-105). As explained in chapter five, SA’s web presence is characterised by a high level of connectivity, and while this falls short of an expansion of SA *per se* beyond the borders of Australia, it indicates a symbolic master frame, a perceived common identity, between a number of socialist groups internationally.

Within these website networks, ‘hyperlinking brokerage’ constitutes paths that a user can follow from one website to another (Vicari 2014, 106). This makes connecting with a relatively like-minded SMO easy. Nevertheless, even among groups with some similarity attributed, discourse and culture are still vital factors. Vicari (2014, 106) notes that in the case of the social forums, links tended to connect to sites with similar backgrounds and cultural elements, and reiterates that on the transnational level the significance of the network was largely symbolic rather than being an actual unified entity. As argued by Zikode (2013) in chapter four, the universal is (ideally) borne of the particular – but it cannot capture everything within each particular case, and so macro-level identities remain, to some degree, contingent and vague.

This has been observed with regards to the GJM by Zikode (2013) and Croeser (2015, 113). As a broad idea, the GJM is powerful because it is large, however the defining idea contains a high level of contingency, as it cannot capture all the particular elements that exist within its parts. The extent to which ICTs aid scale shift is connected to the extent to which they facilitate the creation of larger and more complex (and therefore contingent) entities. Echoing the claim by Urry (2005, 2-4) that complexity is not only more visible but a growing force in the world, Hermann Maiba (2005, 41) claims that in modern times there is a ‘heightened’ ability to organise transnationally. As such, larger ‘universals’, containing more particulars can, emerge.

In keeping with the theme of this thesis, it would be a mistake to attribute this increased ability for macro-level organisation purely to the benefits of ICTs. Social and discursive factors play their part. An example to show this is Peoples’ Global Action (PGA), an actor in the GJM (Maiba 2005, 42) and an activist coordination

instrument (Maiba 2005, 55). PGA serves a purpose comparable to the Original Sovereign site, as a hub for various GJM-affiliated SMOs. Important historical processes behind PGA include a growing disillusionment with the hierarchical left and the development of the technical means for transnational communication and organisation (Maiba 2005, 49). As such, it is not merely the product of new discourse or advances in technology, but a specific technological, social, political-discursive system. The communicative ecologies model is invaluable in understanding such systems.

ICTs can help extend frames and broaden audiences, but they do so at the cost of added complexity, through increased access to information (Qvortrup 2006, 351; Pickerill 2006, 275). While scale shift can be aided dramatically by ICTs, this increase in scale increases complexity, bringing in more particular identities and partial, contingent similarities. SMOs such as AbM may be right to see this as a double-edged sword, and fight for the continued recognition of their concrete particularities as the possible scope for scale shift increases. A unique feature of movements associated with the GJM (such as AbM) is the desire for an ‘accommodative’ definition of justice⁴⁴. This implies a flexible and inclusive solidarity, a synthesis of the universal through the particular (Hosseini 2009, 19-20). Such a meaning, properly realised, would serve to address the complications of identity brought forth by this new ICT-aided scale shift.

Such negotiations of identity inherently need to be performed by the movements involved rather than solved academically. However, the idea - and how it helps ICTs to help social movements - can be understood in an abstract sense. Social movement identity on this larger scale, this idealised ‘unity in diversity’, can be conceptualised using Slavoj Žižek’s (1989, 125) characterisation of ideology as a ‘montage’. Žižek (1989, 87) describes how discursive elements (‘floating signifiers’) are ‘quilted’ (stopped from ‘sliding around’) by the intervention of a ‘nodal point’. The attribution of similarity required for successful brokerage would seemingly depend on shared nodal points between groups, who may otherwise have differences in the other

⁴⁴ Such a claim is convenient as ‘justice’ was identified in chapter two as an empty signifier in need of a definition.

elements surrounding that point. The existence of a ‘movement of movements’ such as the GJM depends on the accommodation of those differences.

This way of understanding identity, aptly summed up in the GJM’s ‘unity in diversity’, is invaluable for successful brokerage. In terms of AbM, nodal points might contain terms such as ‘dignity’ or ‘housing’, surrounded by other elements common to other GJM groups but also many different ones. For SA, the central node would be ‘socialism’, as it would be for SAlt. However, these two socialisms have too many different other nodal points surrounding them, it would seem. Theoretically, it stands to reason that more unified movements would contain less difference in this cloud, though some such as Melissa A. Wall (2007, 274) have argued that this is illusory and more a result of choosing which elements to downplay and which to emphasise. In any case, as ICTs increase and broaden opportunities for brokerage, this conceptual work, this attribution of similarity, remains vital.

Choices of what to downplay and what to emphasise are how sufficient similarity is attributed for brokerage and thus scale shift. There are no hard and fast rules to such negotiations, they illustrate the complexity and contingency of the subject matter. Actually, an interesting parallel can be drawn between the formation of macro-level social movement identities such as the GJM and the methodological discussion of chapter three. Both can be understood through complexity theory. In accord with complexity theorists (Bar-Yam 1997, 27; Spicker 2011, 11) I argue that in social movement analysis, unavoidable complexity and contingency (no study can consider absolutely everything) means the most realistic goal of such analysis is the production of heuristic statements. Likewise, as there are no hard and fast rules for the formation of social movement identities, and because of complexity and contingency, the formation of such identities is the result of practical but incomplete conceptions of the collective. The degree to which ICTs can aid scale shift is tied to the ability of human beings to negotiate difference.

The heuristic statement derived from this section reads like so:

The potential of ICTs to aid scale shift is tied to the ability of movement actors to develop and nurture contingent and flexible collective identities, as increased scale

means more complexity.

The next section is an extension beyond the processes and mechanisms discussed by McAdam et al (2001), based on my interpretation of the interview data through that lens, and supported by secondary sources. The process of empowerment I suggest is new, and as such less refined than those presented by McAdam et al (2001), but it is a useful way of understand some of the data from the case studies and further demonstrates the value of my approach.

Process - Empowerment

Some aspects of the case study interviews could not be adequately captured in terms of the processes and mechanisms discussed in *Dynamics of contention* (McAdam et al 2001). I organised this material into themes, as discussed in chapter three, and from this it was possible to identify another mechanism, which I refer to in the thesis as *empowerment*. Empowerment can be thought of as ‘...a function of [an action] being an imposition of self or identity in the world...’ (Drury and Reicher 2009, 716-717). As such, it is highly relevant to social movement activity.

The concept of power shifts and the empowerment of actors is a common undercurrent in discussions about ICTs and activism. For instance, Courtney Radsch (2012, 5) argues that ICTs have ‘fundamentally shifted the balance of power’ in the Arab world, not just between citizens and governments but within the citizenry. Many of the interviewees in the case studies spent some time musing on whether or not this was also the case for their struggles. Radsch (2012, 40) contends that the Arab Spring constitutes a revolution on many planes, not only political but social, sexual, and even religious, as traditions and cultural norms are challenged. She supports this argument by noting the central roles played by women, who have commonly been politically sidelined in the region, as revolutionaries, organisers, or citizen journalists. These roles are to some extent enabled by social media. Empowerment, then, is an important process to discuss in terms of the ICT-SMO relationship.

Empowerment as a process is discussed frequently within the field of psychology (some examples are Cattaneo and Chapman 2010; Santillán et al 2004; Zimmerman 1995; Choudhury 2009). Much of that discussion can be extrapolated to inform the topic of this thesis, by considering empowerment in a political sense to be a process, containing a number of mechanisms. Like ‘power’, the term ‘empowerment’ is commonly used but not well defined (Cattaneo and Chapman 2010, 646; Santillán et al 2004, 535). Also in a similar way to power, it is commonly considered as relational (Cattaneo and Chapman 2010; Zimmerman 1995; Christens 2012). According to Lauren Bennett Cattaneo and Aliya R. Chapman (2010, 647), ‘[t]he successful outcome of the process of empowerment is a personally meaningful increase in power that a person obtains through his or her efforts’. Naziat Choudhury (2009, 345) offers a more specific criterion, stating that empowerment takes place when an actor’s⁴⁵ perspectives are taken into consideration. This equips them with the ability to effect change. Both of these views are drawn upon in the development of the idea for the thesis.

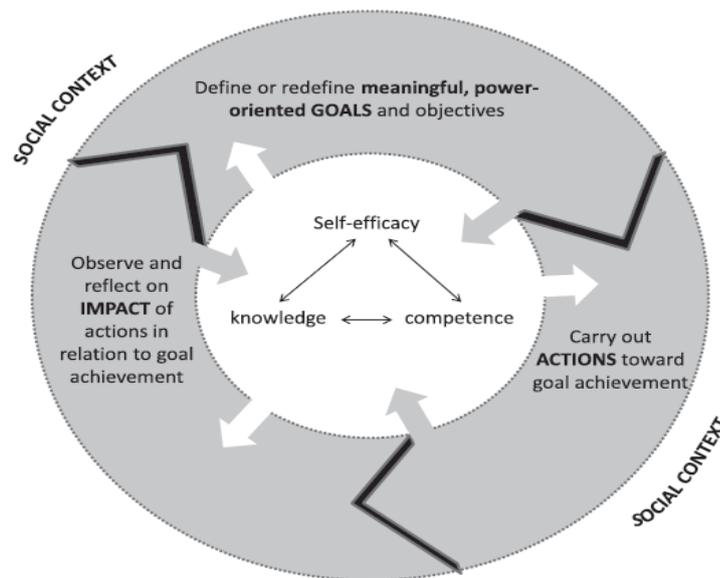
The notion of an empowerment process as employed for analysis in this thesis draws on a number of works for articulation. Naila Kabeer (1999, 437) considers empowerment to contain three interrelated and indivisible dimensions. These are resources (pre-conditions), agency (process) and achievements (outcomes). The latter two of these have equivalents in the following process model by Cattaneo and Chapman⁴⁶, and the first, resources, accords with considerations regarding different communicative ecologies (in particular the technical layer). Cattaneo and Chapman (2010, 647, 651) locate ‘core elements’ within an ‘iterative process’ that they use to develop a model for the process of empowerment. These include the setting of personally meaningful (read social context, therefore related to the social and discursive layers), power-oriented goals. Both these criteria (personally meaningful and power-oriented) are needed for the process to be that of empowerment (Cattaneo and Chapman 2010, 652).

⁴⁵ While the sociological term ‘actor’ tends to refer to an individual, it can also refer to institutions, such as SMOs (Hindess 1989, 89). It is this definition that is used for the purposes of the thesis.

⁴⁶ Likewise, while Cattaneo and Chapman (2010, 655) tend to discuss their model on an individual level, brief reference is made to the model also being suitable for the analysis of collective empowerment.

Also listed in the model (figure 5, shown below) are *self-efficacy*, *knowledge*, *competence* (Cattaneo and Chapman 2010, 652-653) and *impact*. Impact ‘...involves an assessment of what happens following the individual’s actions’ (Cattaneo and Chapman 2010, 653). These mechanisms are interrelated, for instance impact feeds into efficacy beliefs. Cattaneo and Chapman (2010, 654) explain that reflection on impact yields knowledge of structural factors, such as institutionalised racism, that reveal power dynamics and inform a person’s goals.

Figure 5: Empowerment process model, reproduced with permission from authors (Cattaneo and Chapman 2010, 647) – see Appendix 2



From the case studies, three mechanisms can be identified using the above considerations about empowerment. Firstly, the development or assertion of a voice from which an actor’s perspectives, individual and/or collective, might be taken into consideration. This comes from Choudhury’s (2009, 345) criterion and is referred to as *the allowance for consideration of perspectives*. Secondly, *the employment of phronetic knowledge*, adapted from Cattaneo and Chapman’s model (2010, 647), with reference to Flyvbjerg’s (2001, 57) work to specify the nature of this knowledge. As it is intimately related to information (Hannabus 1984, 80-81), knowledge can also be related somewhat to previous discussions of diffusion. Diffusion also at times refers to information, but the two are different mechanisms as

the knowledge mechanism is concerned with content and effect rather than the transmission. Important effects of this mechanism are that it lessens the vulnerability of social movement actors to manipulation, and it contributes to the third mechanism, *self-efficacy*. Self-efficacy refers to what an actor believes they can achieve. Relatedly, the consolidated self-efficacy of all the members of a SMO or other grouping is referred to as collective efficacy (Bandura 1995, 34). Being that the elements in Cattaneo and Chapman's model (2010, 647) are iterative and interrelated, the relationship between self-efficacy and impact will be prominent in that discussion.

Mechanism – The allowance for consideration of perspectives

The importance of having a voice and being listened to cannot be overstated for those working towards social change. Within Cattaneo and Chapman's model (2010, 647), this mechanism fits under the broader heading of 'carry out actions toward goal achievement'. However, this is too vague for the processes and mechanisms approach. Using Choudhury's (2009, 345) statement about the importance of the consideration of an actor's perspectives, the specific action of making oneself heard is articulated as a vital mechanism in the empowerment process.

In different ways, this has been recognised by a number of scholars. Along with Choudhury (2009, 345), Bob Pease (2002) and Ann Hartman (1992) also emphasise the importance of considering subjugated or marginalised knowledge and voices when considering empowerment. Tacchi (2012, 653) discusses voice as part of development, and extends this to include listening, arguing that voice needs to be valued, not just facilitated, as this has implications for 'the quality of relationships between speakers and listeners mediated by technologies and institutions' (Tacchi 2012, 656). In the case of AbM, some progress was formally made with government officials who were prepared to meet and talk with shack dwellers, but the overall relationship between the parties remained problematic which meant these talks ultimately amounted to little. While the mechanism of diffusion covers the way that information is relayed, the ability to speak and be (potentially) listened to, for those who previously were denied this, is another matter altogether. Returning to the

discussion on power in chapter two, conceptions of power (and so empowerment) are relational – an interaction between specific forces. The rise in prominence of a previously unacknowledged perspective, referred to by Pease (2002, 142) as an ‘insurrection of subjugated knowledges’, is best thought of as part of a localised power struggle.

It has been suggested that ICTs have the potential to positively affect the consideration of activist perspectives. Matthew Smith and Laurent Elder (2010, 65-66) hypothesise that ‘*open ICT ecosystems [read communicative ecologies] provide the space for the amplification and transformation of social activities that can be powerful drivers of development*’ (italics in original). ‘Openness’ in the article is characterised by universal access and participation, and an emphasis on collaboration over centralisation. The authors associate these qualities with new ICTs. If this taken to be the case, then it has implications for the mechanism of empowerment, as access and participation would allow for perspectives to be voiced and therefore considered. It should be noted, though, that Smith and Elder (2010, 65-66) appear to be referring to a fairly specific and somewhat idealised communicative ecology, one that does not reflect any and all SMOs that use ICTs. This is exactly the kind of generalisation I critique in this thesis, but their hypothesis does provide a starting point from which to explore the realities.

One of these realities is cost - an important factor for SMOs using ICTs. While the digital divide still exists, the difference between the costs of ICTs and those associated with traditional media is also a compelling fact. For example, the internet and the film *Dear Mandela* have allowed the resource-poor AbM to have a voice internationally, as a movement if not individually, though individual contributions are allowed for on the website. ICTs, especially social media platforms, have helped SA run an election campaign (Jenkins and Woodleigh 2013; Emanuel 2013; Wainwright 2013), which would be cost-prohibitive in the extreme through more conventional means⁴⁷. In AbM, the very act of organising as a democratic SMO (an

⁴⁷ No official figures exist on the campaign spending by the major Australian parties in the 2013 election, but it is in the millions of dollars (Orr 2013). This situation has been the case for a long time - ‘[u]ntil recently the stability of its two-party system was a long-running feature of Australian politics’ (Martin and Pietsch 2013, 212).

act aided by ICTs, though not dependent on them) affords individuals a platform through which to be heard (Zikode 2013). Organising has also led to discussions with a government that otherwise was not willing to consider the perspectives of shack dwellers, though meaningful dialogue and actual change is still resisted (Figlan et al 2013; Mdlalose 2013). As will be explored in this section, voice is important but so is a particular social factor - the presence of willing listeners.

In the right circumstances, ICTs can aid immensely in recording a perspective or viewpoint, and getting it out into the world. However, it must also be remembered that, in and of itself, this is not enough. Mdlalose (in Figlan et al 2013) notes that organising as AbM, with the aid of ICTs, has afforded shack dwellers a voice unlike before. However, she also notes the limits of this when interacting with a government that has no intention of making concessions to them. Similarly, in an account of a digital storytelling project in Sydney, Australia, Tanja Dreher (2012, 161) argues that it seemed like the participating marginalised community themselves were listening to the stories, but less so the mainstream public or policy-makers. Digital storytelling has been suggested as fit for adaptation for activist purposes (Clarke 2009; Tacchi 2009). However, as Dreher (2012, 166) argues, ‘...the opportunity for voice must be understood not as an end-point, but rather as a vital starting point for ongoing processes of engagement and debate, negotiation and response’. Voice is a vital component of this mechanism that ICTs do appear to be able to amplify, but the conditions for that voice to be heard and for perspectives to truly be considered rely on more than just this amplification.

Even so, plenty of accounts exist that suggest that activists recognise ICTs as helping them communicate their perspectives, through lower costs either financially or in terms of reduced risk. Nothing in the AbM interviews suggested that ICTs made their activists safer, and SA interviewees did not raise the issue in relation to their own work, but it was mentioned in terms of stories from other activists. In the SA interviews, Iqbal (2013) commented on the affordance of a (relatively) safe voice for intersex people and sex workers through the anonymity of the Internet, which would allow those people an outlet for their perspectives to be expressed. Oppression on the basis of sexuality is still common in many countries, and as such, accounts of the internet providing a voice for these oppressed individuals can be seen elsewhere as

well.

For marginalised groups, the internet can be seen as a relatively⁴⁸ safe environment for personal expression (Prinsloo 2011b, 33). In South Africa, the mainstream media portrayal of transgender identities is one of socially unacceptable deviance. However, the internet offers opportunities for transgender people to meet others who share such an identity, and thus engage with a part of themselves that is discouraged by the dominant cultural norms (Prinsloo 2011b, 37-38). The online site *Gender DynamiX* is mostly concerned with the personal rather than the political, but Jeanne Prinsloo (2011b, 38-39) argues that such sites enable a sense of community, which is a precondition for political action. She argues that the notion of community, while not without its problems, can be a force to mobilise people ‘along the lines of a particular affinity’ (Prinsloo 2011b, 33). However, in this case its potential is likely hampered by the low levels of internet use in South Africa (Prinsloo 2011b, 33). Similarly, homophobia is prevalent in South Africa (Prinsloo 2011a, 294). Interviewee attitudes in South African lesbians indicated the use of the internet for ‘community’ purposes and political/counter-public use (Prinsloo 2011a, 304). These examples indicated that there seems to be potential political value in channels through which marginalised voices can speak and be heard, and that there is potential for ICTs to provide such channels.

Two SA interviewees in particular note the utility of ICTs as an avenue for communicating their perspectives, when these perspectives are ignored by the mainstream media. In the SA interviews, both Karwil (2013) and Iqbal (2013) describe the filming of police behaviour at protests, and the dissemination of the footage via the internet. This practice is known as ‘sousveillance’, a term originally coined in an article by Steve Mann, Jason Nolan and Barry Wellman (2003). Sousveillance has been observed at a number of other events events such as the 2009 protests against the G20 in Pittsburgh (Bradshaw 2013, 448). Roughly translated, the term means ‘watching from below’ (Mann et al 2003, 332), though this thesis is less concerned with the watching as the recording and subsequent showing or telling.

⁴⁸ The qualifier ‘relatively’ is important here, as the internet as a portal for expression contains its own safety and security risks such as the possibility for tracking and identification.

ICTs and the sousveillance they enable have been referred to as ‘inverse’ or ‘inverted’ panopticons (Bradshaw 2013, 453; Bossewitch and Sinnreich 2013, 230). This is in reference to Foucault’s (1979, 200-202) analysis of the panopticon, a potentially all-seeing tower originally conceived by Jeremy Bentham. Foucault explains how the panopticon works by creating a situation where a prisoner never knows if they are being watched, but it is always a possibility that they are. As such, it alters the prisoners’ behaviour. As a reversal of the implications of the panopticon, sousveillance can be considered not as passive watching but as direct action, potentially changing authoritarian practices (Bradshaw 2013, 455). Of course for this idea to hold true, figures of authority not only need to be potentially watched, but this information, the activists’ perspective, needs to be seen, heard, and considered. If this were more common, the powers of sousveillance would be great. ICTs have the potential to help deliver this outcome, but it is by no means guaranteed.

Consideration of their perspectives is an important aspect of the dignity AbM demands for the poor. They maintain a constant counter-narrative with regards to evictions, demolitions, and government violence, a narrative which is often very different to the official story that the authorities want known. They have used recording devices to back these counter-narratives up, and articles on their website (as well as sympathetic media outlets) to assert that the poor are not stupid or criminal, that they can think for themselves and that they deserve to be heard (Zikode 2013). As with SA, the case study on AbM shows that ICTs are potentially another avenue to achieve this end.

As seen in this section, ICTs can lower communication costs and provide a conducive environment for expressing a perspective. However, the art of persuasion - getting attention and changing minds - is still vital. The conceptualisation of this mechanism helps articulate one aspect of empowerment, and the potential contribution of ICTs. Elements of a SMO’s communicative ecology continue to play an important role in this, for example while ICTs have helped AbM be heard, the content of their message (their discourse) seemingly remains unacceptable to the powers-that-be in South Africa, and consequently the consideration of their perspectives by these powers is limited. However, communicating with outsiders

such as the government is not the only way ICTs can be used to empower, as seen in the next section.

Mechanism – The employment of phronetic knowledge

There is worth in the adage that knowledge is power, repeated in the AbM interviews by Nsibandé (2013), but here it needs to be further articulated, especially as power remains an empty signifier without such articulation. A certain kind of knowledge, discussed in this section, helps activists resist manipulation and gain confidence (building self-efficacy, the next mechanism to be discussed). SA interviewees Jenkins and Woodleigh (2013) define power as ‘the capacity to meet desired ends’. This is similar to Nico Stehr’s (2010, 18) definition of power as ‘*capacity for action*’ (italics in original), and his claim that as such, knowledge is indeed power.

The argument of knowledge being power can be traced through some more related definitions. Stehr (2010, 19) defines civil society as ‘...the public arena of active citizens interposed in the space between the state and intimate forms of life’ – ergo it is where activism takes place. Furthermore, ‘at the heart of civil society is agency’ – defined as ‘...the ability of citizens to set goals, develop commitments, pursue values, and succeed in realizing them’, and ‘[p]ossession of knowledge enhances agency’ (Stehr 2010, 19). The importance of knowledge for activist empowerment is therefore great.

However, knowledge is a broad term. It must be related to the context here. In their book *Activist wisdom*, Sarah Maddison and Sean Scalmer (2006, 46-52) describe a particular kind of knowledge suitable for activism, which they call ‘practical knowledge’. It is local and partisan, social, intuitive and therefore experimental, narrative, and reflective. To translate it to the terms of this thesis – practical knowledge is phronetic. This knowledge also accords with the views expressed by members of AbM about the importance of concrete experience.

The vital role of knowledge in the case studies is clear. SA uses ‘educationals’ to empower SA members with the knowledge about socialist thought that they need to

feel confident discussing issues on the street (Jenkins and Woodleigh 2013). ICTs can be used to make this knowledge more accessible, and more widely broadcast (Jenkins and Woodleigh 2013). Within AbM, ICTs are used to inform shack dwellers about court dates and evictions (Nkabinde 2013). Also, the use of personal recorders by AbM (Zikode 2013) aids the investigation of corruption by recording statements (Nsibande 2013). Ultimately, contra Marshall McLuhan⁴⁹, the knowledge mechanism here refers to the content of communication, a discursive matter, rather than the channel. However, ICTs can aid with its management and diffusion as they do for both case study SMOs.

While SA and AbM reap some of the benefits of ICTs with regards to this mechanism, the example of the Egyptian Revolution shows what ICTs can contribute in especially favourable circumstances. Essam Mansour (2012, 148) argues that ‘[a]s long as citizens have access to them [ICTs], governments are no longer able to manipulate public opinion as they could in the past’. This statement is informative as it indicates both the perceived benefits of ICTs and acknowledges the role of the technical layer. There are varying views as to how influential ICTs were in the Revolution. Melissa Loudon and B. Theo Muzumdar (2013, 63) note the usual frame of technology-as-liberator for Egypt, but argue that ‘[t]he instrumental use of social media to organise on the ground is belied by low penetration rates and the resilience of the demonstrations in the face of the Internet (and mobile network) shutdown’. Nevertheless, Mansour’s (2012) study illustrates that ICTs can play a positive role in activism within particular ecologies.

As discussed in the thesis, ‘access’ to ICTs means not only physical access but the presence of enabling cognitive and environmental factors. The details of Mansour’s (2012, 137-138) study of the Egyptian Revolution reveal such factors, describing a sample of highly educated, relatively wealthy participants. Among these, there was a large incidence of usage of multiple social networks, and more than half had been using them for more than a year (Mansour 2012, 137-138). Given these specifics, it is understandable that almost all participants held the opinion that social networking

⁴⁹ Marshall McLuhan (1964, 7-8) famously claimed that ‘the medium is the message’ – that it is consequential in itself regardless of content. Moreover, in fact, the ‘message’ or content, is ‘always another medium’.

sites were ‘very significant’ in the uprising (Mansour 2012, 147). As has been mentioned, the story for AbM and SA is more mixed, in line with their different communicative ecologies.

While causality cannot be conclusively shown, there are obvious aspects of the demographic information in Mansour’s study that suggest a favourable communicative ecology for the employment of phronetic knowledge. As such, while the potential contributions of ICTs to these social movement mechanisms are highlighted so is the continuing contingency of such conclusions. If ICTs can contribute to a social movement struggle, however, the role of knowledge is clearly worth considering – for instance Zikode (2013) places great importance on the need for the poor to know that their poverty is not an act of God, but of the political forces that reinforce inequality. Unlike God, these forces can be challenged. This last point illuminates how knowledge interacts with the next mechanism to be discussed, self-efficacy.

Mechanism - Self-efficacy

Protest and activism is often considered as the path people turn to when mainstream politics has failed them. However, evidence suggests that hopelessness and desperation in themselves do not breed militancy and action – self-efficacy is crucial (Bandura 1982, 143). In their daily lives, people make decisions about what they will do, and how much effort they will exert, based on what they believe they are capable of. This is referred to as their self-efficacy (Bandura 1982, 123). Personal experience of success or failure can raise or lower self-efficacy. Vicarious effects are also possible but these are likely to be weaker (Bandura 1982, 126). Conversely, making people feel like they do not or cannot understand issues is a way to lead them to accept authoritarianism or technocracy (Bandura 1982, 144). Part of the AbM’s *raison d’être* is to convince shack dwellers of their worth and intelligence, that their fate is the result of political decisions and that these can be challenged (Zikode 2013). This demonstrates the importance of AbM’s emphasis on building self-efficacy among shack dwellers.

As it relates to thinking and acting for oneself, self-efficacy is comparable to agency. Social-cognitive theory provides a typology of three forms of agency – personal, proxy, and collective (Bandura 2000, 75). As well as self-efficacy, Albert Bandura (2000, 76) also describes collective efficacy, which is related to and operates in a comparable way to self-efficacy. This is because the former is largely made up of instances of the latter (Bandura 1995, 34). An important difference, however, is that collective efficacy is described as emergent (Bandura 2000, 76). Emergence is a key idea in complexity theory, related to nonlinearity. It refers to outcomes that are more or different to the sum of a system's parts (Urry 2005, 5). The idea that collective-efficacy is emergent is supported by statements made by AbM participants, namely that membership in AbM increased their self-efficacy, and that organising as a movement increased their power. This being so, the separate elements that make up collective efficacy (instances of individual self-efficacy) are all the more important to consider when seeking to unravel the influence of ICTs on social movement activism.

ICTs and globalisation create new opportunities and challenges for self and collective efficacy. For instance, increased interconnectedness provides more opportunities for vicarious self-efficacy, while a shared sense of efficacy becomes more vital (Bandura 2000, 78). Evidence exists beyond the case studies that ICTs can affect self-efficacy in politics. During the 2011 uprising in Tunisia, social media informed people about the magnitude of past events, relayed predictions about the magnitude of future events, and by doing this helped citizens overcome their fear (Breuer and Groshek 2014, 32). Anita Breuer and Jacob Groshek (2014, 39) have observed increases in self-efficacy over the period of the transition out of authoritarian rule. This suggests some positive effects for self-efficacy through ICTs, in some circumstances. But further examination is required to determine why.

The Tunisian study (Breuer and Groshek 2014, 28) sought to measure 'political efficacy', which is defined as the same as Bandura's self-efficacy but split into two different dimensions – belief in one's own abilities and influence, and belief in a government's responsiveness. It found that political efficacy was positively affected by trust in social media as providing reliable information and safe communication. Breuer and Groshek (2014, 40) argue that the role of ICTs in increasing self-efficacy

is that of a trustworthy non-government source of information (linking it back to knowledge - as noted, these mechanisms are interrelated). This was seen in both the SA and AbM case studies, where the SMOs communicated counter-narratives to challenge the mainstream account of events via their websites and Facebook pages.

In the case studies, the mechanism of self-efficacy appeared to also be linked to experiences of success or failure, as per Bandura (1982, 126). Jenkins and Woodleigh (2013) explain that SA uses GLTV to show the uninitiated what protests are like. It is possible that this provides some vicarious self-efficacy, showing protests in a positive light that encourages individuals to also take action. Similarly, seeing the impact of their activism positively influences the self-efficacy of members of AbM. It was remarked on a number of occasions that the presence of a foreigner (myself) at the settlements, taking interest in their struggle, shows that AbM is growing and being noticed (Nontokozo 2013; Figlan 2013). In chapter four, Zikode (2013) recounted a similar effect when AbM members witnessed global actions in solidarity with the shack dwellers.

According to Bandura (1982, 126), however, the strongest efficacy effects are through personal experience. Similarly, Zikode (2013) suggests that the involvement and unity of the poor organising has a positive effect on self-efficacy, and that many shack dwellers recognise that the communicative affordances of ICTs make this participatory organisation easier. In particular, this has been spelled out by Ndabankulu (Ndabankulu and Ntanzi 2013) with his remark about the difficulties of organising without them.

The evidence that personal experience has a strong effect on self-efficacy has important implications for the question of what ICTs can possibly contribute. It means that any benefits are linked to aspects of the social layer. Specifically, they depend on the presence of participatory forms of organisation. This argument accords with research by Linda Markowitz (1998, 379), who studied the implications of different strategies used by unions to organise workers. The study found a strong link between active participation and increased self-efficacy. Further evidence to support this will be discussed in chapter seven.

This section on self-efficacy has identified two ways in which ICTs can have a

positive influence on this mechanism. Evidence suggests that the act of organising and participating in collective action can itself improve self-efficacy. As well as this, ICTs can provide a source of knowledge in contexts where official or mainstream sources cannot be trusted, which adds to an actor's sense of self-efficacy. This is closely related to the previous mechanism, the employment of phronetic knowledge. The first empowerment mechanism discussed, the allowance for consideration of perspectives, also suggests a certain conclusion. All concern the potential of ICTs to help activists do themselves what they previously relied on others for.

The heuristic statement for the process of empowerment reads:

ICTs can aid SMO empowerment through allowing control of activities at an individual level rather than through proxies – assuming the social layer of the SMO is conducive to this (encourages and facilitates participation).

In keeping with the philosophy of this thesis, the statement articulates a very specific function ICTs can perform for SMOs, while highlighting the contingency of this by making the necessity of a particular kind of communicative ecology explicit. This and the previous two heuristics will be explored further in chapter seven.

Conclusion

The case studies of chapters four and five showed how ICTs are best conceptualised as existing in a system or 'ecology' with their users, in this case SMOs. The capabilities of a particular device are important, but equally so are the ideas and practices of the users, not to mention their level of access to the device. In this chapter, these insights were paired with a particular approach to social movement studies – an analytical focus on processes and mechanisms – to make some heuristic statements that take into account inescapable social complexity.

Social appropriation lies somewhat apart from the other mechanisms discussed in this section as it does not contribute towards the heuristics, however it is an important supplement to ways of thinking about the technical layer of communicative ecologies. The idea of ICTs as social space to be appropriated helps

in considering how SMOs may or may not have the option of using ICTs in their struggles, and moreover, that this situation may change.

Diffusion is a common mechanism in both mobilisation and scale shift, but the data from the interviews mostly concerned its use for mobilisation. In particular, the section on mobilisation highlighted the relationship between mechanism, ICT, and discourse. Diffusion via websites tends to be a one-way form of communication (Taylor et al 2001, 279), which suits SA's discursive layer and the resultant social practices, where ICTs are largely used to further the offline communication strategies typical of a CSM. In the case of AbM, where ICTs were used for diffusion, this one-way tendency also proved true, though these instances represented less of that group's overall ICT use. The major insight from the mobilisation section of this chapter was that such communication is mostly effective on those who needed little convincing of the message, as will be further discussed via heuristic statement in chapter seven.

Brokerage, the creation of new ties, is potentially much more powerful than diffusion (Bilić 2013, 809-810; McAdam et al 2001, 333). It is also more difficult, requiring negotiation between disparate causes and identities. ICTs can enable activists to take this task on themselves rather than deferring to external brokers (Ganesh and Stohl 2010, 60). Ultimately, however, this mechanism relies on the attribution of similarity between actors and as such the compatibility of communicative ecologies remains a necessary consideration. The enhanced communication afforded by ICTs may allow scale shift of previously unthinkable proportions, but this ability also brings with it the difficulties of building collective identities across often vast difference. The heuristic for that section suggests as much.

The process of empowerment contains three mechanisms that are relevant to the case studies. The first of these is the allowance for an actor's perspectives to be considered. Ideally, ICTs are beneficial to this mechanism as they allow for greater participation in social life (Smith and Elder 2010, 65-55) and provide some level of protection for controversial speech (Prinsloo 2011b, 33). They can also afford SMOs the capacity to watch and report on the actions of authority figures in a levelling out of a relationship that was previously much more one-sided (Bradshaw 2013, 455).

This increased participation has a positive effect on self-efficacy (Markowitz 1998, 379), and thus collective efficacy (Bandura 1995, 34). However, real as these benefits may be at times, they are ideals and subject to the existence (or not) of favourable contexts. Particularly, the social layer of a SMO must accommodate this potential, as will be further discussed in chapter seven.

In this chapter, it has been demonstrated how examining the contributions ICTs have made towards mechanisms for the two social movements gives some insight into their role in larger processes. Looking at them on this levels allows some speculation about what can be said about their role in SMOs more generally, as seen in the heuristics suggested at the end of each section. This is a practical way of talking about ICT-SMO relationships, systematic enough to be useful in further analysis and grounded enough to potentially inform SMOs themselves for future actions. The communicative ecologies model allows such discussion to retain some specificity in terms of any one SMO's particular situation, and in terms of the heuristics, the model helps to articulate the nature of their contingency. I contend that heuristics developed from, and with reference to, both communicative ecologies and processes/mechanisms are useful in contributing to the broader discussion of what ICTs mean for SMOs, without losing valuable nuance and context. This will be explored in the next chapter, where the heuristics are related to other cases.

Chapter Seven: Exploring the heuristics

Introduction

The thesis has so far demonstrated my two-pillared approach to studying the use of ICTs by SMOs. Chapters four and five presented the case studies as communicative ecologies, showing how the technical, discursive, and social layers interact to form a complex system – a holistic context without which the idea of ICTs within the SMOs is sterile, generalised, and without nuance. In chapter six, the way that the SMOs in question use ICTs was conceptualised via processes and mechanisms, which allowed more specificity with regards to that use. The communicative ecologies model provided a means with which to discuss the contingencies that affect these processes and mechanisms, and from this it was possible to suggest some heuristic statements about ICTs within SMOs. It now remains to test these heuristics for their wider utility regarding that topic.

This chapter will relate the heuristics from chapter six to other cases, exploring their broader relevance. It can be expected that they give provide some insight into what ICTs may mean for some other movements. However, at the same time, they can be expected to be imperfect, as is the nature of heuristics. The communicative ecologies model continues to serve as a vocabulary with which to discuss this contingency.

The central premise of this thesis is that the acknowledgement and accommodation of complexity is necessary for studying the relationship between ICTs and SMOs, as only by recognising our limits can we work effectively within them. This premise has been discussed in relation to a number of different, related, ideas including AbM ideology. The Abahlalist concept of living politics is about the concrete particularities of peoples' lives, in this case the lives of shack dwellers. Taking these particularities into account means understanding that factors unique to one specific case may have great implications, so any broad statements about categories such as 'social movements' are marked by contingency – whatever is could easily be otherwise (Luhmann 1995, 106).

Complexity and contingency have also been considered through the lens of social

science philosophy (Flyvbjerg 2001), and in social movement studies through Tilly's (1995, 1601) metaphor about floods and tides, where social phenomena are like great floods, irreducible to the simple formulas available for knowing tidal patterns. In the same vein, a number of scholars (Olorunnisola and Martin 2013; Comunello and Anzera 2012) explicitly criticise simple narratives of ICTs and social movements, emphasising real-life complexity. Bar-Yam (1997, 2-3) conceives of human societies, and on a broader scale civilisation, as complex systems, too vast and interconnected for us to fully understand. It follows then that we cannot expect to fully understand collective behaviour - we can only collect 'insights and partial understandings' (Bar-Yam 1997, 27). The collection of such insights and understandings (heuristics) has been the goal of this thesis, and chapter six has suggested three for further discussion here.

People commonly use what Kurt Weyland (2012, 921) calls 'inferential shortcuts' (heuristics) to function in fluid (especially if also complex and uncertain) environments. However, the incompleteness of these shortcuts can be a problem. In the Arab Spring, a 'representativeness heuristic' led to overly firm conclusions about how ICT-aided uprisings would play out in different countries across the region. This led to the diffusion of both tactics and the very idea of revolution (Weyland 2012, 921). However, the similarity between the circumstances of people in different Middle Eastern countries was overstated. Success in some cases was taken to be representative of the likely outcome elsewhere. This represents a misunderstanding of the use of heuristics, an overly confident reliance on them that, as history now shows, did not bear fruit (Weyland 2012, 927-928). It is my intention in the thesis to avoid such misunderstandings through the use of the communicative ecologies model, and the processes and mechanisms approach, as will be shown.

The shortcomings documented by Weyland (2012, 927-928) should not be taken to mean that heuristics are useless. That position would be untenable. Bar-Yam (1997, 27) points out that heuristics are the best we can hope for in the face of massive complexity, while in a similar vein cognitive scientist Daniel Kahneman (2011, 97) suggests that people will use them regardless of whether they choose to or not - '[i]f a satisfactory answer to a hard question is not found quickly, [the unconscious] will find a related question that is easier and answer it'. Kahneman (2011, 417) argues

that the best way of preventing the unconscious mind from producing errors from the use of heuristics is to consciously recognise that they are being used, then ‘slow down, and ask for reinforcement’ from the conscious mind. The approach I advocate for in this thesis is a way of doing this. Moreover, Kahneman (2011, 418) contends that a richer vocabulary is the key to thinking more critically about heuristics. The processes and mechanisms approach, and the communicative ecologies model, provide such a vocabulary.

When statements about how ICTs can influence SMOs are inevitably qualified, they constitute heuristics. As per Kahneman (2011, 417), it is important to consciously think of them this way and proceed accordingly. The heuristics I have suggested through my research are largely distillations of received wisdom in social movement studies – there is little in them that has never been said. For example, Stoecker (2002, 160) has previously made the common point about the importance of the social and discursive factors on what ICTs can contribute to SMOs. However, with the added support of the case studies, and conceptualised explicitly as heuristics, my particular distillations are useful to consider while moving forward as a scholar or activist. And the use of the communicative ecologies model, together with the processes and mechanisms approach, provides clarity in terms of the potential and limitations of these statements. In the proceeding sections, the heuristics will be discussed in relation to the field in general to demonstrate this.

Heuristic 1

ICTs seem to have the most effect when diffusing mobilisation information to individuals already broadly in agreement with a SMO’s position - or at least able to discursively relate.

Chapters four and five showed how ICTs (specifically websites) were used by AbM and SA as diffusion devices to mobilise members and supporters (Zikode 2013; Bainbridge 2013), which accords with Sommerfeldt et al’s (2012, 303) argument that social movements tend to use websites in a diffusive, non-dialogic manner, due to perception rather than the capabilities of the technology. This, as well as other evidence such as SA’s use of YouTube in an election campaign (Green Left TV

2014), highlights the relationship between ICT use and the discursive layer. Moreover, in the mechanism of diffusion, discourse/ideology also influences the reception of information. Bainbridge (2013), among others, attributed the success of some Facebook-advertised protest events to pre-existing attitudes in the community. This section relates this argument - that successful ICT-aided diffusion largely depends on compatible discursive layers in the sender and receiver - to other cases.

A case that supports the heuristic is the manner in which the Right-to-Know movement, active in China in 2011 and 2012, chose to present itself in order to gain supporters. Chinese cities are subject to air pollution and potentially harmful smog. However, no trustworthy official information exists on air pollution levels in China. In response to this, a movement was created for do-it-yourself testing. The movement used websites and microblogging for public outreach (Hua Xu 2014, 1380). Small environmental NGOs organised for volunteers to measure air quality in urban areas, and the results of these tests were posted online (Hua Xu 2014, 1374). The movement mobilised volunteers by adopting a discourse that would appeal to many Chinese and alienate few. Some of this work was already done for them - Chinese environmentalists are especially sceptical of the government and media (Hua Xu 2014, 1379), and the idea of the right to know resonated with urban Chinese (Hua Xu 2014, 1387). However, in China any kind of advocacy that challenges the government can lead to unwanted attention from the authorities, so it was important for the movement to consider the delicate situation of grassroots participants, and present the activity of air testing in a way that would not seem intimidating (Hua Xu 2014, 1387). As such, movement members presented themselves as nature lovers, rather than dissidents (Hua Xu 2014, 1382). This suggests some awareness that the success of ICT-aided diffusion depends, to a degree, on existing attitudes.

ICTs facilitate transnational diffusion, as seen in both case studies. Examinations of such diffusion serve to strongly highlight the heuristic in question, as in a global context, cultural similarity is a vital factor for a receiver determining what external innovations are suitable for adoption by political actors in a country (Uhlen 1993, 539). This is seen in a study by Anders Uhlin (1993, 517) which considers the extent to which demands for democratisation in Indonesia in the early 1990s were a result of transnationally diffused trends. The conclusion reached is that both internal and

external factors were at play, however external factors were weighed in terms of their compatibility with Indonesian culture. Specifically, Islam and Islamic values were an important cognitive motivating factor, and arguments for democratisation were commonly made through that lens (Uhlen 1993, 538-539). While the appeal of democracy has some universal value, its reception relied on translation ('vernacularization') into a local language and relation to an already-held discourse.

As ICTs should (at least theoretically) allow for faster and further diffusion, the question arises as to how SMOs using them might address the need for discursive compatibility in their messages. Gerbaudo (2015, 916-918) notes the use of personal profile pictures or 'avatars' in the 2011 protest wave (the Egyptian revolution, the Indignados in Spain, and Occupy in the US). He refers to these avatars as 'memetic signifiers' - symbolic references conducive to collective identification. These somewhat-empty signifiers allowed rapid diffusion (Gerbaudo 2015, 921) as they were not connected to ideologies but actual events (Gerbaudo 2015, 924), aiding the necessary attribution of similarity by receivers through not demanding agreement with a strict ideology or discourse. As such, they also afforded a particularly inclusive collective identity to the movement (Gerbaudo 2015, 927-928), which has relevance to the next heuristic. For the moment, however, it suffices to observe that the unfolding of this high-profile protest wave supports this first heuristic by highlighting the need for appealing to already-shared values when diffusing information across diverse cultural contexts.

The idea that culture and discourse are tied to the successful diffusion of innovations is not exclusively linked to ICT use. Rather than a precondition of success that appeared with ICT-aided diffusion, this is a precondition that persists even with the contribution of ICTs. A study of the spread of militancy in the Suffragette movement shows this. The study examines the adoption, and conversely the rejection, of militant tactics by two individuals involved in the movement, using historical data (Edwards 2014, 53). In accord with the findings of this thesis, the existence of a strong diffusion channel was in itself not enough to determine adoption, even among members of the same movement (Edwards 2014, 65). Instead, the wider context of the individuals' involvement in the movement shaped the 'culturally available discourses, symbols, schema and scripts' that legitimated militancy (or not). It is

further suggested that this context is particularly important for the acceptance of high-risk practices (Edwards 2014, 66). Therefore, culture and discourse are factors that remain to be considered whether ICTs are present in activism or not. In the next section it will be seen how certain cultures and discourses might be more compatible with the potential benefits ICTs present. First, however, further discussion of this first heuristic is needed.

While the above examples lend credence to my argument, a heuristic is necessarily imperfect, and as such it pays to examine those imperfections. For one thing, the heuristic was developed via case studies of SA and AbM, SMOs who use ICTs, but as an overall strategy emphasise offline action. Consequently, activism that focuses more directly on the online world has been neglected. While the importance of ideology cannot be discounted in those cases, with their inclusion the heuristic is less convincing as a general principle. For instance, an online survey of the environmental movement Friends of the Earth, in the Netherlands (Brunsting and Postmes 2002, 535), suggests that online actions are driven more by perceptions of effectiveness than group identification (Brunsting and Postmes 2002, 550). Hybrid groups such as MoveOn, who heavily feature online petitions and fundraising, but seek to combine online and offline activism (Carty 2010, 164-165) further complicate the matter. But even if such cases are ignored as simply being outside of the scope of the heuristic, other concerns must be acknowledged.

Diffusion success through compatible discourse can be a double-edged sword, as it is essentially diffusion based on popularity or agreeableness, rather than effectiveness or value. In the US anti-Apartheid student movement of the 1970s and 80s, one tactic employed was for activists to build and live in shacks on campus. The tactic was compatible with existing student activist values and discourse – it evolved from the sit-in (Soule 1999, 124-125), and it was also symbolic of the South African struggle as the students understood it (Soule 1999, 127). Diffusion occurred, which led people to believe that this tactic was successful, especially as the goal of Universities' divestment from South Africa also happened to take place. However, Soule (1999, 121) points out that on further examination there was no real link between the presence of the tactic and divestment at those particular universities. In fact, universities with 'shack settlements' tended to be slower to divest than those without.

While examples such as this do not discredit the heuristic as such, they present a problem for any claim that ICT-aided diffusion will necessarily help a movement.

More general literature on diffusion, outside of the topic of social movements, accords with the argument made above, that pre-existing discursive compatibility is a powerful driver of successful diffusion, even when such diffusion is unwise. An example from Brazil both supports the heuristic, and the idea that diffusion/reception is a more fluid interaction than it might seem. After the adoption of the Brazilian democratic constitution in 1988 and the related decentralisation of social responsibilities, people expected change to take place in the form of locally tailored programs (Sugiyama 2008, 82-83). However, policies were instead adopted through diffusion and emulation (Sugiyama 2008, 83). A number of states innovated, and these innovations were then replicated elsewhere in the country in non-equivalent contexts (Sugiyama 2008, 84). This inappropriate adoption of innovations can be explained by the heuristic in question.

In Brazil, ideology and social norms drove the adoption of diffused policy more than anything else, in many cases even trumping self-interest (Sugiyama 2008, 103). In the cases where social norms played a part, their role was to convince actors to understand and interpret innovations in a way that fit with their ideological beliefs, and therefore implement them in line with said norms (Sugiyama 2008, 101-102). Sean Chabot and Jan Willem Duyvendak (2002, 703) argue that innovations often prove to be 'dynamic, ambiguous, and malleable...not finished products but works-in-progress' (Chabot and Duyvendak 2002, 706). The Brazilian example illustrates the active role receivers played in interpreting innovations in a way that accorded with their beliefs (even when this may have been incorrect or unwise). Like Soule's (1999) example, this reinforces the heuristic while showing that successful diffusion is in itself not enough for effective activism.

The cases discussed in this section suggest that the first heuristic rule I posit - that the ICT-aided diffusion of mobilisation information remains dependent on elements in the discursive layer - is reasonably valid. A further implication comes to mind for social movements if this heuristic is taken into account. It can be expected that SMOs with strong, exacting ideologies will have more trouble with ICT-aided diffusion

than those with more ‘open’ discourses (such as the aforementioned Chinese Right-to-Know movement). SA appear aware of this, and their new program (Socialist Alliance 2015a) reaffirms their message of popular participation – ‘[a] socialist organisation does not need a detailed agreement on theory and history’. In contrast, an article by the other major socialist SMO, SAIt, in their publication *Marxist Left Review* (Myers 2014) criticises SA’s program on the grounds of statements by Trotsky that they hold sacrosanct. It might be suggested that this distinction between the discursive layers of the groups is what leads SA to interact more with other SMOs than with their fellow socialists. These issues of inclusive and exclusive identity are relevant to the next heuristic.

Heuristic 2

The potential of ICTs to aid scale shift is tied to the ability of movement actors to develop and nurture contingent and flexible collective identities, as increased scale means more complexity.

SA’s involvement with other groups cannot be reduced to an attempt to grow the movement or spread an agenda, which is just as well as there are doubts as to whether this is being achieved (Saunders 2014). Even the two largest explicitly socialist groups in Australia cannot achieve unity, so it seems that an international scale shift is not impending for Australian socialism. However, both SA and AbM recognise the need for flexible identities that are inclusive of difference when it comes to expanding the scope of their projects. These identity concerns, which can be superficially captured in the notion of ‘unity in diversity’, are clearly demonstrated through AbM’s engagement with the GJM. A broader view of such identities can be gained by examining what AbM has in common with another NNSM, the Occupy movement.

While they are in some ways comparable, the similarities between Occupy and AbM should not be overstated. To start with, and in accordance with the heuristic, the Occupy movement is diverse and cannot be easily defined. This trait carried over from Occupy Wall Street to Occupy South Africa, which contained platforms for a range of diverse SMOs (Van Wyk 2011). Also, when Occupy Wall Street announced

an international day of action, the South African incarnation was driven by mostly white, middle class, globally-focused anti-capitalists. Jared Sacks (2011) has noted the white, privileged, and presumptuous character of much of Occupy South Africa. A number of SMOs, including AbM, were unsure about whether they should participate and sought a collective decision on the matter (Tolsi 2011). AbM has since cautiously engaged with the movement (Abahlali baseMjondolo 2012; *Occupy South Africa – Operation Ubuntu* 2013). The identification of AbM with the GJM and movements such as Occupy remains partial and contingent, as is the nature of the collective identities discussed in this section.

In his study of Occupy, Jeffrey S. Juris (2012, 260) identifies two ‘logics’ at work. Firstly, he describes a ‘logic of networking’ which is ‘a cultural framework that helps give rise to the practices of communication and coordination across diversity and difference on the part of collective actors’. Secondly he describes a ‘logic of aggregation’ – ‘which involves the assembling of masses of individuals from diverse backgrounds within physical spaces’ (Juris 2012, 260). The logic of networking, as a cultural framework, corresponds to the discursive layer of Occupy and likeminded SMOs, while the logic of aggregation, an actual practice, is how that discourse manifests in the social layer. While it is not necessary to adhere to Juris’ vocabulary, these two concepts – discourse that accommodates or even welcomes diversity, and forms of social organisation which bring this discourse to life – are central to understanding this heuristic and the following one, respectively.

The account of Occupy by Juris (2012, 260) emphasises the role of social media in that movement. That degree of emphasis is less fitting for a SMO such as AbM, however the logics of networking and aggregation have relevance and ICTs do play some role in AbM’s social and discursive layers. Inclusiveness and participation are undoubtedly part of AbM’s discourse. As far as putting this into practice goes (logic of aggregation), social media are not widely used for this due to the SMO’s technical layer – most shack dwellers cannot access social media (Zikode 2013). Much more commonly, mobile phones are used to spread the word about meetings and important events, often through a two-step strategy of contacting people via phone calls or SMS, who will then pass the information onto the wider community (Ngubane 2013; Ndabankulu and Ntanzu 2013). This practice illustrates how ICTs contribute to

enabling a certain organisational form and collective identity. At the same time, this organisational form and collective identity (logic of networking) prepares fertile ground for ICTs to facilitate transnational scale shift.

ICTs can afford SMOs the resources and ability to follow elites into the global arena, and the prospect of their use in achieving this scale shift tends to be more attractive to decentralised SMOs, whose social layers match the logic of the internet (Van Laer and Van Aelst 2010, 19). More than organisation, however, my heuristic proposes that the full potential of ICTs to aid scale shift is linked to a certain kind of identity, in the discursive layer. This kind of identity has been extensively researched and theorised. In a book chapter on the ESF, Donatella della Porta (2005, 186) describes 'tolerant identities' and diversity, made possible through a mix of discursive traits and movement practices (della Porta 2005, 189). Kevin McDonald (2002, 124-125) goes so far as to argue that 'collective identity' is too strong a term to describe what is more like shared experience. This 'refusal of fixed identity' (McDonald 2015, 980) evokes images of a movement which is stable but shifting, identity in the sense of Žižek's (1989, 125) montage. Examples of this within the case studies include AbM's identification with the GJM, possible because of the GJM's own identity as a flexible movement that embraces diversity, and SA's refusal of one iron-clad socialist ideology as a strategy to encourage participation. As ICTs increase the possibilities for movement scale, these kinds of identities become all the more important.

There are a number of other examples to support this heuristic. For instance, the 'Unibrennt' (university is burning) movement in Austria in 2009 was quick to spread across universities and cities (Maireder and Schwarzenegger 2012, 174). This movement contained a flexible and contingent identity, and could be quit easily (Maireder and Schwarzenegger 2012, 182). Protests were strictly issue-based, the movement did not rally around any one ideology (Maireder and Schwarzenegger 2012, 182). In fact, attempts by some to establish more structured discourse led to decreased participation - the more the movement defined itself, the more it alienated those who did not fit within that definition (Maireder and Schwarzenegger 2012, 183). This supports my earlier contention that more traditional SMOs, bound to established ideologies, may lack the flexibility necessary to fully reap the benefits of

ICT-aided communication.

For those SMOs with a more flexible identity, ICTs can be very beneficial. The transnational identity of the European Mayday Parade owed much to ICTs, as the existence of a virtual space reinforced ideas of commonality (Mattoni 2008, 115-116). Its negotiation of the local and transnational illustrates how the level of scale shift enabled by ICTs necessitates more complex identities. ICTs (especially mailing lists) ‘sustained continuity of discussion’ among dispersed groups (Mattoni 2008, 112-113). Local conflicts between members were downplayed on a transnational level (Mattoni 2008, 119). The movement website was used to diffuse materials and so maintain a uniform aesthetic, created from local material (Mattoni 2008, 113). This is a practical example of a macro-level identity that accommodates local particularities.

For activists from many NNSMs, global or transnational identities fit perfectly well alongside local ones, even complementing them (Tarrow 2005a, 57). In reference to GJM-affiliated groups, Nicola Montagna (2010, 639) notes that movement activity usually remains largely national/local, while showing increasing awareness of transnational and global contexts, issues, and linkages (Montagna 2010, 639). Abahlalisms is a demonstration of this way of thinking, combining the living politics that informs AbM’s activism with the universal spirit of Ubuntu, and offering solidarity to groups around the world while keeping their own mandate focused on the concrete realities of life in the South African shack settlements.

The evidence for this heuristic is compelling. However, SMOs should not be viewed through rose-tinted glasses, and it should be noted that the identities and corresponding forms of organisation being discussed here are not perfect. While SA emphasises inclusivity (within the ideology of socialism) as a movement trait, the reality of this has been disputed (Goopy et al 2015). Similarly, within La Via Campesina, an international peasants’ movement, diversity poses challenges. Differences stemming from factors such as class or ideology are not easily overcome (Mann 2008, 7). The predominance of English in the movement’s internet presence has been criticised (Mann 2008, 10), and on the ground, participation from some areas is low, meaning they are underrepresented (Mann 2008, 7). Adding to this,

though the movement attempts to be rooted in the local, with regions choosing the focus (Mann 2008, 9), regional actors are often under-resourced (Mann 2008, 11). Still, alongside flagging these difficulties, Alana Mann argues that the possibilities presented by ICTs for movements with inclusive, flexible identities and horizontal structures are great (Mann 2008, 11). While this section has highlighted the role of such identities in the discursive layer of a movement communicative ecology, the next will discuss the corresponding organisational structure in the social layer, as it is in the actual organising and doing of activism that a movement stands to achieve its goals or not.

Heuristic 3

ICTs can aid SMO empowerment through allowing control of activities at an individual level rather than through proxies – assuming the social layer of the SMO is conducive to this (encourages and facilitates participation).

In the case of AbM, the shack dwellers coming together as a movement positively affected self-efficacy among members, through their involvement in trying to change their own lives (Zikode 2013). At the same time though, participation in a system that did not value their inclusion, through fruitless talks with the government, was less satisfying as it remained empty talk (Mdlalose 2013). Statements in both the AbM and SA interviews indicated recognition of the benefits of ICTs in helping the empowerment of their members. This third heuristic argues that the extent of those benefits depends on a certain kind of social layer, informed by a certain (participatory, horizontalist) discourse.

The heuristic is supported by the results of a study of eight development projects across South Africa. The researchers sought to explore possible links between participation, empowerment, and sustainability. The study confirmed strong links between participation and empowerment, with a local participatory culture positively affecting empowerment on both an individual and collective level, and the lack of such a culture having the opposite effect (Lyons et al 2001, 1249). It was also found that there was a positive link between the extent of participation and the sustainability of empowerment gains (Lyons et al 2001, 1248). It is reasonable to

suspect that the potential of ICTs to aid empowerment in organisations relates to these already-established factors, and while there is some difference between social movements and development projects, it is also possible that the heuristic speaks to some fundamentals of human organisation.

Examples supporting the heuristic can be found in the activist world. A comparative study found that the hierarchically structured organisation MoveOn.org was effective at mobilisation and short term goals, but ineffective in community building. The Florida Tea Party, horizontally structured, was less effective at short term endeavours but did better at building a strong community (Rohlinger and Bunnage 2015, 540). Individuals who stayed with MoveOn did so because they perceived it to be efficient, which gave them a sense of self-efficacy. Those who left did so because of a lack of participatory decision-making (Rohlinger and Bunnage 2015, 546). For those who stayed with the Tea Party, 'efficacy and voice were closely related', while those who left disagreed that horizontalism delivered this (Rohlinger and Bunnage 2015, 546), arguing that it meant the movement could be co-opted by the Republican Party (Rohlinger and Bunnage 2015, 548). As with the previous heuristic, consideration of fully or mostly online activism complicates issues. With MoveOn, online participants felt empowered through information and assurances, but at the same time their actual employees felt discontented and disempowered because of the hierarchical nature of the organisation. A possible explanation for this is that online, new people were mobilised who were excited and engaged, while offline, the movement's grassroots image rang hollow (Hara 2008). If true, such an explanation supports the heuristic as it suggests that the empowerment (or not) of members was related to their understanding of the organisation as grassroots.

While I suggest that the above accord with my argument, another example tells a story that definitively supports the heuristic. Hollaback is a movement that aims to end street harassment. It has grown from a single blog to blogs and applications in a number of cities worldwide (Dimond et al 2013, 2). The value of the movement is that '[b]y reading other people's stories of harassment on the site, participants felt that their own experience was validated and that they were part of a larger epidemic that wants change' (Dimond et al 2013, 7). As such, it has led to some further actions such as workshops in schools (Dimond et al 2013, 10). Hollaback is a demonstration

of how ICTs can allow activists to perform framing tasks (and thus have their perspectives considered) that were previously the domain of those with more resources and structural support – those in positions of institutional power (Dimond et al 2013, 11). This is an important feature of ICTs for SMOs, but as per the heuristic this feature is optimised when combined with organisation that put this new power in the hands of individuals, rather than movement elites.

A strong case can be made that ICTs mean the state has lost ground in many battles over meaning, as ICTs allow new points of view to gain an audience. AbM and SA both credit ICTs for affording them media power to tell their own stories and challenge dominant narratives. In another example, Iraqi dictator Saddam Hussein's execution was supposed to be a carefully controlled event, due to its political sensitivity. It was performed quickly and internally in Iraq, with strictly limited coverage. However, this attempt at control failed, as secret footage of the execution emerged on the internet, derailing the official narrative (Bakir 2009, 11-12). One person and their mobile phone put lie to the story of a defeated tyrant being terrified as he met clinical and humane justice, instead showing the reality of his continued defiance and macabre end. This is a very clear example of what influence ICTs can have on the mechanism of an individual, or previously ignored collective, having their perspective considered.

While such evidence is compelling for the heuristic as general, rough principle, the lesson of Weyland (2012, 927-928) about too much misplaced faith in such principles should be remembered. In the Egyptian uprising, activists themselves could feed their stories to the international media (Eltantawy and Wiest 2011, 1215). It might be expected that such potential could be used elsewhere to achieve similar ends. Farid Shirazi (2012, 46) argues that '[t]he Internet has provided a voice for the silenced and marginalized groups of Iran, especially women, to express their concerns about socio-cultural, political and economic matters' (Shirazi 2012, 46). Increased education and ICT skills in Iran has led to more participation in the public sphere via blogs, and Shirazi (2012, 53) notes that in many cases women's blogs are among the most active and popular. However, it also pays to remember that in the Iranian uprising, the protesters ultimately lost, with the uprising being repressed, activists punished, and the government power base left intact (Baldino and Goold

2014, 32). This does not in itself negate the value or truth of the heuristic, but it pays to keep in mind that the benefits of ICTs for activist empowerment still have their limits.

This thesis concentrates on ICTs within SMOs, and adds nuance to our understanding of this relationship through the use of the communicative ecologies model. At the same time, however, these ICTs and SMOs also exist within the larger ecology/system of the state (and larger still, the world). This fact is one of the limitations of my work, discussed in its conclusion, chapter eight, but it should be briefly noted here as well. While the first AbM protests were organised via SMS, this mobilisation was still effectively thwarted by the usual offline brutality. This social reality of being poor in South Africa remains. Likewise, the Iranian government seemingly mitigated the potential for the internet to hold any special status as an activist tool through the use of similar repressive tactics as those used against traditional actions (Lerner 2010, 566). Similar stories can be found in other Arab states (Lynch 2011, 305), as well as places such as China (MacKinnon 2011, 39-41) and Honduras (Espinoza Vasquez 2013, 6). The continued effectiveness of violence is an unfortunate reality, especially in more repressive regions of the world.

Relatedly, though somewhat less dramatically, there may be some traits of ICTs, courtesy of the political implications of their development and ownership, that do not gel with participatory organisation. Iqbal (2013) and Bainbridge (2013) both alluded to this in terms of the corporate provenance of Facebook, and they are not the first to do so. For Popolo Viola, a movement opposing the then Italian Prime Minister Silvio Berlusconi in 2009 to 2011, Facebook was too influential, affecting the group's structure, leadership, communication, and identity. The commercial interests behind Facebook's design and the egalitarian ideology of Popolo Viola proved incompatible – pages could not be managed in a manner that reflected the decision-making process of the movement, instead promoting hierarchy (Coretti and Pica 2015, 963). The heuristics I have developed in this thesis address complexity and the resultant contingency by identifying and including such contingency in their wording, through the vocabulary of the communicative ecologies model. The processes and mechanisms approach also provides specificity and helps avoid overgeneralisation. However, as is inevitable in social complexity, important variables (in this case

external influences such as government or corporate practices) remain overlooked.

Accepting that the limitations of the thesis mean external influences are not fully accounted for, it should also be remembered that the relevance of particular communicative ecologies still surpasses what can be captured in a heuristic. A study of local 'eDemocracy' (the use of ICTs to enhance participation) in New Zealand identified conditions that enable 'local citizen-centric democracy'. These essentially equate to elements in the layers of a communicative ecology, and include the reduction of technical layer barriers (access, skills, awareness), processes of engagement to allow action (social layer), and the successful promotion of the value of eDemocracy in the discursive layer (Williamson 2007, 2-3). The heuristic being discussed in this section relates to the social layer considerations of the New Zealand study. The previous section's concern with discourse and identity is relevant to the discursive layer considerations. However, for these heuristics to ring true, a workable technical layer also needs to be present.

It is worth reiterating a point made by Wainwright (2013) in the SA interviews as it emphasises the importance of considering whole communicative ecologies. He argued that it is important to reach people via mediums that they are comfortable with and use in their daily lives, which may not include ICTs for all intended audiences. This was also pointed out by Zikode (2013), who noted the detrimental effect of expecting illiterate shack dwellers to communicate via SMS. It can be seen yet again in a study of protests by homeless people in the US (Toft 2011, 719), where ICTs were used but in different ways by different people.

Similar to South Africa, in terms of ICT use, the homeless people interviewed in that study mostly used mobile phones (Toft 2011, 713). These homeless activists have been less reliant on ICTs to organise than their housed allies, and tended to use ICTs to further decisions made offline (Toft 2011, 712). They emphasised the importance of face-to-face interaction to build trust when 'organizing across class' (Toft 2011, 709). This also accords with the way ICTs seemed to be used in AbM, and while poor people are of course not a homogenous group, there may tend to be commonalities in such SMOs' communicative ecologies to account for this similarity, such as restrictions in the technical layer through lack of resources, or the

idea that concrete experience is necessary for outsiders to have sufficient understanding of the situation. Given this, while ICTs may potentially help empower activists in some circumstances, they are not always appropriate.

Conclusion

This chapter has produced the final stage of my analysis, in which my findings are related back to the initial question of ‘what influence do ICTs have on social movements?’. In this thesis I have used the communicative ecologies model and the processes and mechanisms approach in two case studies to develop heuristics related to the topic of ICTs and their influence on SMOs. It has been my intention to develop these heuristics in such a way that they are in a sense self-reflexive, containing within them statements on the nature of their own contingency. The communicative ecologies model has provided the vocabulary with which to do this. In this chapter, the heuristics have been tested for their broader relevance (as per Kleining and Witt 2000, 3-4) through comparison with data from secondary sources.

The case studies indicated that ICTs can be used by SMOs to amplify diffusion (Zikode 2013; Bainbridge 2013), but that this is still dependent on a level of discursive compatibility between sender and receiver, much as it was long before the use of such technology (Edwards 2014, 53). Beyond the case studies, this can be seen in the Chinese Right-to-Know movement (Hua Xu 2014) and their appeal to already-held common Chinese sensibilities and the political situation. It can also be seen in cases such as the push for democratisation in Indonesia during the 1990s, when external influences were embraced or rejected via the filter of local and national culture (Uhlin 1993, 539). Other factors complicate the matter, however, in the case of movements with more online presence and activities (Brunsting and Postmes 2002, 550; Carty 2010, 164-165). Moreover, cases in the US and Brazil (Soule 1999, 121; Sugiyama 2008, 103) serve to make the point that effective diffusion is itself only as useful as the innovation being diffused.

Both SMOs studied in this thesis recognised the importance of inclusive collective identities if ICTs were to help the movement grow. The importance of this discursive factor is already widely recognised (della Porta 2005, 189; McDonald 2002, 124-

125), however as with the other heuristics I argue that my approach offers a new level of articulation, the use of the communicative ecologies model providing a way to talk about the factors that affect SMO scale shift. An inclusive identity in the discursive layer of an ecology is the vital factor here. However, this can potentially be complicated by affordances or limitations in different technical layers (for instance one might compare the favourable technical layer of Occupy as described in Juris 2012, 260 with that of AbM). Nevertheless, the growing recognition of the principle behind this heuristic is testament to its validity, and it is also linked with the next.

The third heuristic discussed in this chapter concerned empowerment. It makes the claim that the potential of ICTs to aid in the empowerment of SMOs and their members depends on a certain factor in the social layer - a form of organisation that emphasises high levels of participation. In a sense, this can be seen as the social layer equivalent of the discursive concerns raised in the previous heuristic. Beyond the case studies, supporting evidence for this claim has been found in the case of the anti-harassment group Hollaback (Dimond et al 2013, 11), as well as in studies on contentious activity in Egypt (Eltantawy and Wiest 2011, 1215) and Iran (Shirazi 2012, 46). However, as can be expected given the nature of heuristics and this thesis's ongoing concern with contingency, the claim can also be problematised. Complicating factors identified in this chapter have been the possibility of ICTs being tainted by the interests of their developers and owners (Coretti and Pica 2015, 963), as well as the technical and discursive factors cited by both SMOs (Wainwright 2013, Zikode 2013) that may inhibit individuals from using ICTs in their organisation and activism.

The use of heuristics is inescapable, from a complexity perspective (Bar-Yam 1997, 27), a phronetic social science perspective (Spicker 2011, 11), and a cognitive science perspective (Kahneman 2011, 97). However, they can also be dangerous if they lead people to unfounded beliefs (Weyland 2012, 927-928). I have argued that the heuristics I have developed through my approach go some way to avoiding this danger, containing within them considerations of their own contingency. This chapter has explored the wider applicability of my findings as well as their limitations, by testing them against other examples from secondary sources. It is

hoped that this thesis has contributed some new articulations of the ideas around ICTs and SMOs. The next and final chapter will sum up the discussions and analysis of the thesis and suggest some directions for further research.

Chapter Eight: Conclusion

Introduction

It has been observed in this thesis that a tendency exists among humans to seek explanatory or predictive narratives (White 1980, 5), and to expect complete answers and solutions. This tendency is reflected in the social sciences (Savage 2013, 6; Greenfeld 2005, 108) as well as in the mass media (Olorunnisola and Martin 277-278). It has been the contention of this thesis that such answers and solutions are illusory or at least that they are always incomplete, and I take seriously the suggestions of scholars such as Flyvbjerg (1998, 229) and Laclau (1996, 35) that, unchecked, reliance on them is both academically unwise and potentially undemocratic.

The alternative to the search for unshakable knowledge, however, need not be the other extreme of epistemological nihilism. Ideas such as phronesis and phronetic social science have been developed to find a middle ground between the two (Flyvbjerg 2001, 48) and as part of this tradition, my approach to the question of how ICTs can influence social movements is designed to allow the best of science and uncertainty to thrive. In this thesis, I have employed my approach to study the ICT use of AbM and SA, and I have suggested three heuristics about ICTs and SMOs that capture the complexity and contingency of the subject. This concluding chapter will discuss the limitations of my research, as well as future directions for further study, before reaffirming the value and significance of the work contained in the thesis.

Limitations and directions for further research

Into the future, the research I have presented in this thesis would benefit from further and deeper exploration of the case studies. Both AbM and SA are large organisations spread nationally, and in both cases my research was limited to particular locations and branches. In the case of AbM research was also limited by cultural constraints, as interviews with non-English speakers were mediated through translators, and even in the case of English speaking interviewees there is evidence that cultural barriers

can be difficult to surpass in a search for truly mutual understanding (Li-Jun et al 2004, 63-65). Selection bias is also an issue, as during my relatively short time in Durban the majority of interviews were conducted with the more prominent members of the organisation. It should also be noted that the scope of the thesis is quite broad, encompassing the case studies but also large amounts of more abstract material. This was necessary to make the case for my approach, but now that this has been achieved, future study may benefit from more narrow-but-deep research within the parameters now established by this work.

That being said, another (arguably unavoidable) limitation of the thesis comes from particularity. As the case studies formed the basis from which further analysis was entered into, this analysis remained somewhat limited to the ICTs and practices encountered in the case studies. These limitations speak to the contingency of any discussions of ICTs and activism, as it can mean many things to many different groups, and no discussion is likely to capture everything. For instance, it has been somewhat famously observed in cases such as the 2001 overthrow of Filipino President Joseph Estrada, and the 1999 Battle of Seattle (Lee 2015, 4), that ICTs have been used in on-the-spot coordination, such as ‘swarming’ and the avoidance of police at protests, another area not discussed in the thesis as neither of the SMOs studied use ICTs in such a fashion.

Another significant way in which ICTs have affected social movement activities that was not discussed due to its absence in the case studies is purely or mostly online activism, or ‘cyberactivism’. The absence of a discussion on this is notable due to the prominence of groups such as WikiLeaks, a whistleblowing organisation and website that became infamous after the ‘Collateral Murder’ video which made public footage of Iraqi journalist being killed in a helicopter strike (Beyer 2014, 143). WikiLeaks came under pressure from the US government who attempted to shut it down, and tried to deny it necessary infrastructure by pressuring companies to refuse it service. However, the International Pirate Party assisted Wikileaks by mirroring the site, and hacker group Anonymous staged online protests and attacks on companies seen to be collaborating with the US government (Beyer 2014, 144-145). Groups such as Anonymous and Wikileaks are undeniably relevant to the topic, and while my approach is still valid in studying such groups difficulties may be found doing so as

for cyberactivism a discrete, contained, physical SMO may not be necessary or present.

The thesis also does not discuss the extent to which ICTs may aid prefigurative politics. Ideally, democratic tendencies can be aided through the organising capabilities of the internet, ‘contradicting Michel’s Iron Law of Oligarchy⁵⁰’ (Pickerill 2006, 271-272). It is argued that ICTs help network forms (which are often decentralised) by allowing constant and dense communication (Arquilla and Ronfeldt 2001, 10-11; della Porta and Mosca 2005, 185). Prefigurative politics can be defined as ‘the attempted construction of alternative or utopian social relations in the present, either in parallel with, or in the course of, adversarial social movement protest’ (Yates 2014, 1). With their democratic organisational form, it may be said that AbM practice such politics, but little can be said from the interview data as to how ICTs relate to this, beyond the somewhat relevant empowerment heuristic.

Future studies that include work on prefigurative politics may be able to conceptualise it as a process containing various mechanisms as I did with empowerment in this thesis. Marianne Maeckelbergh (2011, 2) observes that the term ‘process’ is common in contemporary movement discussions, spaces and practices. While these actors may not be using the term ‘process’ in direct reference to McAdam et al (2001), the implications may be largely the same, for instance Luke Yates (2015, 2) has described the concept of prefigurative politics as having five elements to it – experimentation, the circulation of political perspectives, the production of new norms and conduct, material consolidation, and diffusion - which could easily be understood as mechanisms as was done with empowerment in the thesis. Indeed, diffusion has already been articulated in this way.

Another limitation has briefly been alluded to in chapter seven. The thesis employs the communicative ecologies model to conceptualise SMO relationships with ICTs. However, it must be remembered that these SMOs themselves do not exist in a vacuum but within communities, societies, and nations that can also be

⁵⁰ Robert Michels (2001, 6) argues that due to the nature of people, political struggle, and organisation, ‘[d]emocracy leads to oligarchy, and necessarily contains an oligarchical nucleus’.

conceptualised in terms of communicative ecologies. For instance, while not all SMOs accept definition of their struggle in terms of confrontation with a clear enemy, social movement activity generally implies political contention. As such, any research on the effectiveness (or not) of social movement struggles would be enriched by the availability of research on the communicative ecologies, and processes and mechanisms of state apparatuses and other sources of oppression or repression.

The approach I demonstrate in this thesis could be used to study protest policing. Various factors influence protest control (Rafail et al 2012, 759), so rather than taking a macro view of trends and practices, the employment of my approach may yield important insights. Patrick Rafail, Sarah A. Soule, and John D. McCarthy (2012, 758) point out that looking nationally at protest policing trends ‘may oversimplify a more complex picture’, citing the relative autonomy of local police departments in the US. Another example of how particular state responses to protest can be seen in Iran. There, the government eagerly embraced blogging, and as a consequence of this, there was originally little internet censorship⁵¹. To this day, very conservative government figures maintain blogs (Lerner 2010, 560). However, in 1999, the Internet platforms were used for communication by activists as it became dangerous for them to communicate in person. After this, the Iranian Internet is now highly censored and blogs have been used as evidence against activists (Lerner 2010, 559-561). While studying the communicative ecologies of SMOs can go some way to understanding the potentials of ICTs, the discursive, social, and technical circumstances of other actors such as states is also relevant.

In Australia, Bainbridge (2013) seems confident that the authorities will not take any drastic measures to suppress SA, for fear of being seen as heavy-handed. However, ostensibly democratic governments do engage in mass surveillance (Podesta 2015, 4), and worldwide there is a trend towards more of this in the online arena (Podesta 2015, 5). The *National Security Legislation Amendment Bill (No. 1) 2014* was passed

⁵¹ Complexity tends to bring ‘ironic and unintended consequences’ (Gillham and Marx 2000, 12) – it should also be noted that in Egypt, concerted government efforts to proliferate ICTs probably affected their eventual role in the revolution there (Kamel 2014, 79). Egypt’s political blogs are among the most interconnected in the region (Alkazemi et al 2013, 262).

in Australia in 2014, giving increased powers to intelligence agencies. The bill has been described as a move towards a 'surveillance state' (Pearce 2015; Pearson 2015). It cannot be known how much of a slippery slope such a move will ultimately prove to be, but it impresses the importance of studying state reactions to protest in specific contexts.

The same sentiment can be carried on beyond activists and the state. In terms of capturing as much of the complexity and nuance of SMOs and their activism as possible, the ability to place them within the communicative ecologies of states, societies and communities would provide valuable further context. Many of the studies cited give some mention of this context, but systematically framing the various relevant factors in terms of a communicative ecology would help manage and provide coherence to the complexity of the subject matter.

Recognising the importance of considering states and communities means knowing that factors of importance have likely been overlooked in this thesis due to the limited scope of the analysis, and while this may be unavoidable it should also be acknowledged. Other areas for further study relate to the extension of the current analysis. One approach to this would be the application of the method used in the thesis to more SMOs, which would serve to strengthen (or refute) tentative findings and conclusions arrived at in this thesis. The suggested additional process and mechanisms discussed in chapter seven remain embryonic without further testing and refinement. The secondary data used in conjunction with the case studies to reach these conclusions was not initially collected by its authors with this use in mind, and further data collection specifically for this purpose and this framework would likely be more effective in developing the argument.

Conclusion and contributions to the field

This thesis makes several contributions to the field of social movement studies. Its primary contribution is the development of a holistic and interdisciplinary framework through which to study the influence of ICTs on SMOs. Through this, it provides further articulation of certain scholarly trends, namely the consideration of complexity in the social world and the resultant contingency. This approach is

important in a number of ways. Significantly, it is an approach which avoids vanguardism and technocratic thinking on the part of the scholar, as it implies the importance of the particular, and the ultimate inaccessibility of pure universals. While it is of practical use in the search for knowledge, the approach also addresses the political dimensions of such a search. For instance, the struggle of the shack dwellers is in itself a powerful illustration of the dangers of technocratic thought.

In its suggested framework, the thesis suggests an extension of the processes and mechanisms framework advocated by McAdam et al (2001). Like Flyvbjerg (2001, 1-5), I claim no exclusive breakthrough regarding how scholarship on the topic of ICTs and social movements ought to be done from now on, but my suggestion is practical and pragmatic and suggests a systematic way of proceeding with challenging research. It is my belief that the approach of McAdam et al (2001) is important and warrants extension beyond the original text. Alongside that approach, the communicative ecologies model captures the multi-faceted nature of particular technological systems. It allows the exploration of how ICTs are integrated into communities (Tacchi 2006, 7), and therefore can be instrumental in understanding the relationship of particular SMOs to the ICTs they are using or seek to use in their activism. By looking at the different facets of ICT use, the communicative ecologies model is an important corrective to technological determinism (Hearn et al 2014, 211).

A focus on mechanisms as advocated by McAdam et al (2001) is flexible in its commitment to generalisation, as ultimately ‘some mechanisms seem more equal than others’ (Welskopp 2004, 123) and those mechanisms are more generalisable. This allows a negotiated approach towards the universal and the particular. The processes and mechanisms approach allows a view of what is being done or sought beyond the simplistic notion of ‘doing activism’. The approach of using these concepts together allows an articulation of ‘what influence ICTs have on activism’ that is more situated and practical. The case studies presented begin to show this in those cases, but it is hoped that the implications of the thesis are much more. Examples of how my work is geared towards situated and practical outcomes include its publication in an open-access journal aimed at both academic and activist audiences (Gill 2014) and the presentation of my findings at a forum for local

activists.

A need has been recognised for better relationships and greater dialogue between academics, activists, and their respective theories (Cox and Nilsen 2007, 427). It is claimed that social movement literature largely fails to recognise activist theory and knowledge as equal, and in return academic literature is often ignored by activists (Cox and Nilsen 2007, 430). Barriers preventing engagement between academics and activists include such circumstances as the demands of academia versus the concrete needs of activists (Stanford 2008, 211). Jim Stanford (2008, 212-213) provides several suggestions to remedy this, which basically amount to not dismissing the value of academia, but also being aware of what is useful to activists. This relates to the previously mentioned findings of Maddison and Scalmer (2006, 46-52) regarding activist-orientated 'practical knowledge'. This knowledge is local and partisan, social, intuitive and therefore experimental, narrative, and reflective. These attributes do not fit well with the idea of a general theory or law - they seem more compatible with the previous discussion on complexity and contingency.

In its case studies, the thesis provides data on two relatively under-researched SMOs. SA, along with contemporary Australian SMOs in general, is underrepresented in academic literature. There are a number of scholarly articles on AbM, mostly from within South Africa but also internationally. Few discuss the group in reference to the GJM, which is in a way appropriate given AbM's emphasis on the local, however there is much in their discourse and practice that can inform political thought everywhere. AbM in particular hold importance as a case study – as Arturo Escobar (2004, 226) notes, '[the poor, as the majority of the world] will have to be central at any attempt at making the world a better place. What kind of logics are coming out of such worlds? These need to be understood in their own terms, not as they are constructed by modernity'. If research into how ICTs can help SMOs is to be of real effect, it needs to include those without the privileges often implicitly associated with such technology.

It can safely be assumed that ICTs will continue to play an important part in societal dynamics and change. Therefore, attempts to understand the nature of the part that they play continue to be important if we are to think critically about the world that

we live in. At the same time, as the world grows ever more interconnected, glib pronouncements of what it all means no longer suffice, if they ever did, and do no justice to the rich complexity of peoples' lives. In looking at social movements, where actors not recognised in mainstream politics struggle to participate in public life, these considerations are vital. It is hoped that this thesis, by demonstrating how ICTs and SMOs can be studied in a way that reflects this complexity, has contributed to the growth of such a way of thinking.

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Appendix – List of Interviewees

Abahlali baseMjondolo

Lindela ‘Mashumi’ Figlan - AbM Vice-President since 2008, has since left movement.

Bandile Mdlalose - AbM General Secretary since 2010 (joined 2008), has since left movement.

Mnikelo Ndabankulu - AbM founding member and spokesperson, has since left movement.

Them bani ‘TJ’ Ngongoma - AbM member and spokesperson, former police officer.

Albert Ngubane - AbM member and chairperson at Shallcross, Ephuleleni.

Bongiwe Nkabinde - AbM member, community organiser and campaigner at Shallcross.

Nontokozi - AbM member.

Zodwa Nsibande - AbM member.

Philani Ntanz i - AbM member.

Phileleli - AbM member.

S’bu Zikode - AbM founding member and former President.

Socialist Alliance

Alex Bainbridge - SA founding member.

Kamala Emanuel - SA organiser in Perth.

Farida Iqbal - SA member since 2005.

Chris Jenkins - SA member since 2010.

Karwil (pseudonym) - SA member, maintains the ‘Original Sovereign’ website.

Nicole Stiles - SA member.

Sam Wainwright - SA member and Councillor for City of Fremantle.

Christie Woodleigh - SA member since 2012.

Appendix 2 – Author’s permission

Lauren B Cattaneo

Tue 28/10/2014 1:06 AM

Hi Gerard,

Certainly! I am glad it's of use.

Best,
Lauren Cattaneo

Lauren B. Cattaneo
Associate Professor
Director of Clinical Training
Department of Psychology
George Mason University
4400 University Drive, MSN 3F5
Fairfax, VA 22030

From: Author <gerard_gill@hotmail.com>
Sent: Saturday, October 25, 2014 3:35 AM
To: Lauren B Cattaneo
Cc: m.willson@exchange.curtin.edu.au; s.croeser@curtin.edu.au;
lisa.hartley@curtin.edu.au
Subject: Empowerment process model - permission to use diagram?

Hi,

My name is Gerard Gill, I am a PhD student at Curtin University in Perth Australia. I am contacting you to ask permission to use the diagram of the empowerment process model (in American Psychologist 65 (7)) in my thesis.

Kind Regards,

Gerard Gill