Social Life of Issues 4
Workshop Announcement

Competing Realities: The Social Lives of Issues on and off the Web

23-28 July 2001
C3, Budapest, http://www.c3.hu
Begins at 15.30hrs on Monday, 23 July, runs daily thereafter from 10.00 to 18.00, and ends at 13.00hrs on Saturday, 28 July.

An issue could be said to lead a meaningful social life on the Web if it meets a number of criteria. In the three previous workshops we have taken snapshots of such life on the Web, and we've begun to spell out these criteria. In our final workshop we'd like to put this process and our findings up against its competitors - against other media and models with some compelling claims to know the actors, the issues and their dynamics. Indeed, we'd like to take up Noortje's invitation from the grand introduction last time, and test the strength of issue network realities against its potential competitors.

Let us begin with the criteria to be met for an issue to lead a meaningful social life on the Web, and along the way discuss competing realities. First, there is 'issue-fi-cation', or issue-making. Three manners of identifying issue-fi-cation have been explored. We began by presuming that Web issue aggregators could be issue-makers. The issue aggregators - issue portal sites as the UN, World Bank and OneWorld International - chart and present issues (with various agendas), deliver issue stories (with various bents) and offer links to others covering or debating the themes (with various politics). (Are they the source of issues, more generally? No one can deny the weight of the issue- and agenda-setting of the UN and the World Bank.) We also have noted attempted issue-fi-cation by NGO campaigners, either of the established or the activist traveller variety. Indeed, we may choose a basket of issue-makers (aggregators, established NGOs, activist-travellers), chart their issue lists, seek cross-issue agreement (or co-issue occurrence) and derive a list of issues that way. Elsewhere, this technique has been employed to derive Web issue indices, as we will see at the workshop in a presentation by Richard. Finally, we may intuit issues, with potential lives to be led on the Web, from the traditional media sources, as we have done with HIV-AIDS in Africa and Vaniqa. Noortje (and I) have felt that the mass media (on the Web) - or Webbified mass media such as mass engines and mass portals - are indispensable for issue identification. Thus the first (obvious) requirement for an issue to lead a social life on the Web is that it has been called to life by Webby issue-fiers.

We have been proposing new methods (and a new location) for the identification of issue-making. By taking the tools of network analysis to the Web, we have thought that processes of issue-making can be monitored in quite an exceptional way. We often have been asked to please explain this 'exceptionality,' so we started to refer to issue-making on the Web as a candidate competing reality. We argued that issue-making on the Web, with some help, could stand up against issue-making in newspapers or perhaps even in boardrooms, at least in some cases. Thus we began to show how the Web agreed or disagreed with the indications of the presumed heat of issue-making, as presented by mass media and policy 'thermometers.' We have used the Web as the reality. But now we'd like to turn the tables on the Web by summoning the reality contenders.

Web disagreement with the traditional media sources and with other competing realities is what interests us in this workshop, and the field of competitors is strong, vast and varied.
Where the mass media competitor is concerned, we have found at least one issue whose social life on the Web differed substantially from the pictures in the papers, and on TV. In the case of the French farmers protest, the pictures in the papers showed 'a bunch of protest tourists', while the Web showed us organisational sociology, complete with pyramid structure. Secondly, the social life of issues on the

Web could compete not only with 'media', but with media models. One is the 'issue attention cycle', put forward by policy researchers. To caricature, the 'issue attention cycle' is a five-stage process from foreknowledge by certain experts, over media discovery, government agenda-setting, policy-making and, finally, to a decline in public interest. Attention declines no matter if the issue has been settled satisfactorily to the media's, the publics' and/or the policy-makers' tastes. [1] Though we needn't refute this model directly (i.e., we also could ignore it), it is these issue life spans as well as other stories of issue life that are entrants in Competing Realities. Why do we choose the 'Web' over the attention cycler's notion of foreknowledge by experts to describe a process of issue-fi-cation? Put differently, how does the Web's foreknowledge compete with that of the experts? Will our choice of the Web hold up against the policy researchers' choice of more traditional opinion-makers?

We return to the criteria to be met for issues to lead a meaningful social life. The second condition for the study of issue life has been the formation of a network on the Web of issue-carrying actors, organizations, Web sites or even pages. Co-link analysis, with special software (the beloved netlocator) as well as analytical considerations of starting points, iterations of method and authority threshold, is employed to locate a network. It is the staying power of a network or a series of networks around an issue, not of a particular set of actors involved in the issue, that allows us to begin to speak of social life on the Web. (This view departs from the issue attention cycle 'perspective' in that the "usual suspects" - the appointed institutions - may not be the carriers of the issue-networks on the Web.) Indeed, issue life is often characterised by actor, organisation, site or page variation, over time.

But can these networks be said to show 'foreknowledge'? In the viagratool.org case, which we have all heard in one form or another and which is now live on the Web (http://www.viagratool.org), it seemed clear that the Web 'knew' about Viagra's underground user culture before the traditional media. In that product network, however, there is a key piece of evidence to support expert foreknowledge - the 'dear doctor' letter from Pfizer explaining to medics that they should not administer the standard treatment for heart attack (*stillstand*), for the victim may be 'on' viagra, and poppers (nitrates). Viagra as party drug was 'known' by Pfizer. The Web, then, only becomes a traditional media feeder. From the point of view of mass mediators, there may then seem little difference between checking the Web and calling the expert. There is, however, one small but potentially decisive difference we can speculate about. The expert's knowledge, and foreknowledge, is in many senses private knowledge. It is the type of knowledge that circulates in e-mails with legal disclaimers and 'confidential' exclamations in the footer (which may later, of course, be 'leaked' to the Web). Issue-networks on the Web, on the other hand, may be said to show social knowledge, which is neither altogether public nor altogether private (remember that the word 'social' was invented back in the eighteenth century, precisely to fill the conceptual lacuna between public and private.) To the degree that the Web shows the (fore)knowledge of a social grouping, it may be a suitable site to find out about the collective life of things that experts consider too 'private' to make 'public,' or conversely, of things that have indeed reached publics, but have not yet attained the status of commonly accepted (public) fact.

Let us speak briefly of more competitors, more modellers. Here we could contextualise the approach of the issue network Webwork as distinctive from actor network and social network theory and method-candidate entrants in Competing Realities. Arguably the most famous slogan of actor network theory is 'follow the actors!' We have been arguing (through practice) that the issues lead us to the actors, instead of the other way around, as actor network method would have it. We have inadvertently invented a test to begin the debate about the competing reality posed by actor network thought. Following the actors to the issues - an actor network theory approach applied to the Web - would presumably lead us to a set of issues, as we have tried out in the case of the UN, the World Bank and OneWorld. Why were we dissatisfied about the issues that collective led us to? Why did we toss out those issues? Could it be that they (at least as a collective) are not au fait with the social life of issues on the Web? If we could indeed say such a thing - this remains to be seen - it could mean we have stumbled on some sort of yardstick against which we could measure actors' positionings. Actor

network theory, though, doesn't do yardsticks. Arguably the second famous slogan of actor network theory is: 'the actors are never wrong.'

The comparison between issue network theory and actor-network theory quickly becomes quite complicated, however. Actor-network theory, in practice, strictly speaking, does not follow 'actors', at least not in the old-school sociological sense of the word. When Latour follows around the 'anthrax vaccine' actor, for example, he also follows around the statistics and the reports and the diagrams et cetera that are related to the vaccine. In his theory, actors can multiply very easily - so easily, in fact, that they almost start to resemble Issues (Latour, 1993). (We return to this, though.)

As for issue network theory, in practice, strictly speaking, we do not follow issues. We are following links, something in between actors and issues! Questions arise. Is the actor composition of the network formed by links something that an individual actor, chain of actors, or a Webby collective could never lead us to? (Methods of finding that which is not known by the actors, but by Web links, could be construed as a form of 'Web epistemology'. Do the links 'know'?) There are methodological challenges ahead in Competing Realities.

In the meantime, we can still be bold, and in the interest of a good game, challenge actor-network theory. Actor-network theory claims not to make any normative or even evaluative distinctions between actors. Not only are the actors never wrong, but none are ever prioritized over others by the actor-network researcher. But following the critique of Susan Star (1991), the theory does apply implicit yardsticks by establishing normative differences among actors. Here the results of issue network analysis potentially could embarrass actor-network results. (Could it be that sometimes the 'wrong' actors are followed?)

Perhaps issue network thought comes closer to that social network theory, another candidate in Competing Realities. Indeed, social network theory presumes a kind of space of flows (Castells, 1996) lent structure by communicating actors. The communications of actors in this space may reveal a network. Roughly comparing social networks and issue networks, messages replace (issue network) pages, and message quantities and qualities replace (issue network) links. What if we are presented with social networks of actors messaging about an issue, with a reality claim attached? (That is to say, this is the network, these are the actors, these are the issues!) We could deem this a competing reality; we could deem it the beginning of comparative research. Here, too, however, theoretical debates are on the horizon. Chances are high that a meeting with social network theory would soon usher in debates about naturalisation. For social network theory, networks and their nodes and the message flows are all givens. Networks have natural borders and message flows fall in natural categories. For issue network theory, on the other hand, these boundaries and categories are profoundly political: they are the result of the political work done by actors and, we readily admit it, also by the theory (see below). For issue network theory links make for some set of actors rather than another, and a network makes for one version of the issue rather than another. This all depends. For social network theory, networks, actors and messages are three independent givens. It makes no inferences about actors from links, or about issues from networks. Here again, issue network theory diverts from the social network theory it challenges, in that it recognises the demarcation effect of network mapping. (So, yes, it's reflexive, too.)

We return to the criteria to be met for an issue to lead a meaningful social life. Third, we have begun to note temporal changes not only in the actor compositions of issue networks (movable debate) but also in network types (morphing networks). Previously, we have spoken of sets of distinct features that would allow us to classify a Web network, or a 'state' of a Web network at a particular point in time - features that classify states of networks as knowledge networks, debate networks, issue networks, programme networks, summit networks, scandal networks and product networks, with or without a hierarchy implied to these network forms. Previously, it was suggested that a knowledge network, for example, would be a 'higher' form of network than an issue or scandal network.

In formalising these features, we could compare Web networks, and perhaps note continuities in their dynamics, their transformations from one state to another. For example, do all of our 'dead networks' (vaniqa, hate, runaway productions) share features and state transformations that could partially explain their passing? It appears that vaniqa and runaway productions will have been scandal networks with a predictable fate, but hate, a Webbified issue in the sense that there are hate sites and hate monitoring sites interlinked and in the sense that the Internet has been 'blamed' for hate spread, saw its demise when the maker of hatewatch.org departed for queer studies. The network fell to pieces, so to speak, and there is now a set of smaller subnetworks. Some subnetworks are 'hate culture' networks, with hate guru receiving links from hate music, hate clothing, and hate literature purveyors. Would certain summit networks have (dreadfully) similar features? We have noted with Christian Haslacher's research on the Porto Alegre and Quebec summit networks, and partially with Christian Toepfner's research, possibly a culture network to summit network to issue network to culture network transformative phenomenon. (I realise we haven't formally adopted the term 'culture network', we have previously discussed
lifestyle networks though.)

There is a competing reality built into the finding of culture networks. It meets our expectations (or at least Christian Toepfner's) as partial practitioners of indymedia. A practitioner's expertise, or perhaps lay expertise (sic) of network features and dynamics, revolves around knowing 'usual suspects' actors, knowing 'how these things go'. In the presentation by Stephanie and Darius, Stephanie pointed out an instance of 'actor recognition' of the parties in the Web issue network. (At the Global Knowledge Forum in Malaysia some time ago, actors recognised the GM Food debate network map as a reality. This surprised them.) That is a kind of reality check, where the tables could be turned on the Web. Such a check could be formalised, sort of. We could ask Darius, for example, to list the parties in the digital divide network, and compare those with Christian Toepfner's findings. Rather obviously and perhaps unavoidably, we may compare particular network states (knowledge, debate, issue, etc., with features attached) to competing off-Web networks (competing realities, with features attached). We could do this by putting issue-actor network lists side by side with practitioner actor-network lists, with summit participant lists, with journalists' actor-story lists, with eyewitness-author actor-network lists (i.e., Seattle Web network vs. *Five Days that Shook the World*), etc. But where would this lead us? Table-setting, as opposed to agenda-setting? Actor-Issue guidebooks, anyone? Practical value for practitioners?
Along these comparative lines, we could put issue network 'link patterns' next to 'known associations', though penetrating (corporate and governmental) intranets is not on the cards. We also could put issue network life cycles up against the more established issue attention cycle approach. Should we wish to find five stages, we could ask the new software to refresh our network accordingly, or pick phases out of a set of refreshes. (Would we do this, we would however risk a splicing of competing realities. Is that bad?) Would we find that campaigning NGO issue-fiers correspond to experts with foreknowledge (phase 1), or that it begins with a media scandal network (phase 2)? From an issue network or scandal network, would we see a transformation to a summit or programme network, with .org's and .gov's (phase 3)? Would this network state be followed by a .gov-only network, with a high authority threshold (phase four), that ultimately ends in a dead issue network (phase 5)? We could do that, we're afraid, and send the results to a public policy journal; findings should be reported to the scientific community, in the old style. Or should they 'live' on the Web?

This brings us inevitably to brands of politics. It may be suggested that both a criterion for studying issue life, in our manner, and the effect of bringing the findings to life are a network's possession of a 'brand of politics'. Previously we have inquired into brands of politics to be attached, somehow, to the Internet, and we have attempted to grapple with the brand of politics embodied and implied by issue networks, and their visualisations (e.g., roundtable, rectangular boardroom, the outer hippodrome and inner harem implied by the Sultan's eye, in the Russian HIV-AIDS map). By brands of politics embodied and implied by issue networks, we mean methodological reasoning and presumed usage,

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respectively. There are politics built into the underlying assumptions and hardened into the software design; the issue network also could come to lead a political life, presumed or otherwise.

To say that the software has politics, and politics have software does not shatter many windows; the same goes for the slogans that networks have politics, and politics have networks. Let us explain. Unearthing the embodied politics of technologies (shattering the 'we're only innovating' claims of the makers of Windows 98, for example) is an exercise in the 'sub-political', in demonstrating 'lower', perhaps base forms of politics. True, this pejorative use of the prefix 'sub-' was not necessarily intended in the original coining of the concept 'subpolitics' (Beck, 1986). There it mainly referred to the displacement of politics beyond the *formally* political. But in recent critical projects of unearthing the all-too-worldly politics that come with software applications, indignation has turned out to be the main button pressed by these critiques. (Sub-politics can be contrasted with the notion of super-politics: the grand models of democracy, as they are still being conjured up in the studies of the learned, and operationalised by decision-making modellers.)

When proceduralists step forward with new processes to design technologies and new means to take decisions about what and whether to build (e.g., 'participatory design' and 'public debate', respectively), they are coming down from the heights of super-politics. In an attempt to free technologies, and their users from sub-politics, they let loose democratic formula, in their deliberative or participatory versions, on design practice. In the arena of the politics of software, a quite neat divide between sub- and super-political approaches can thus be traced. More provocatively, it could be argued that two parallel routes can be seen to run through the land of the politics of software (compare Latour, 1999). The first route runs from sub- to super-politics, but never quite reaches the end of the line. (This is the route taken by the critics of sub-politics.) The other route runs from super-politics to sub-politics, where the end of the line equally remains out of sight. (This is the route taken by the messengers of super-politics.) This is also what we mean when we say it does not shatter many windows to declare that software has politics, and politics have software.

From the outset, issue network theory has taken cues from the sub-political tradition, in the school that excavates the political in the presumed apolitical, showing backstage politics, attempting to put them on the front stage, in a different process. (Much of 1970s philosophy of technology was still calling technology neutral; Langdon Winner's 1980 piece on 'Do artefacts have politics?' ushered in a different version.) In a sense, issue network theory joined in with the aim and pretension of revealing sub-politics - in this case, showing politics of association behind links. Actors are performing subpolitics in their strategic or even unwitting linking patterns, and we are putting those subpolitics on display.

Does issue network theory do politics in other senses? It doesn't merely participate in sub-politics by critiquing agendas, in the tradition of the exposer, the critic (cf. Patelis, 2000; Wallace, 1997). It also embodies sub-politics. Demarcation processes at work in co-link analysis are sub-political, in that they exclude lesser linked voices, and also deem them 'not relevant'. (That's built right in to the software!) Previously, we have argued the point pragmatically ('avoiding democratic overload') and socio-epistemologically ('the network actors deem those lesser-linked voices as not relevant, so let's follow the network'). In doing so, we are adhering to the principle that the Web, 'one way or another', decides relevance. Our 'one way or another' point concerned the argument about Web epistemological practice - that issue network analysis must stand up to the current methods of ranking sources on the Web, must also be 'Webby'.

But another attempt has also been latent in issue network theory. While it lowers itself to sub-politics, it also explores the possibilities to derive a super-politics from sub-politics. From the sub-political links and key wordings on the Web, it is latently aiming to extract political figurations that could bear the light of day, so to speak. In its depictions of network traces can be found a 'roundtable,' a deliberative democracy-type of formula, for example. The attempt to derive a super-politics from sub-politics, or at least, the attempt to establish continuities from sub-politics to a super-politics, has not been born out

of a disdain for the efforts the learned continue to make in the area of a theory of democracy. To the contrary, it finds in some of these theories an invitation to build politics from practices itself (Mouffe, 1993). Whether this would lead to a more 'realistic' politics remains to be seen.

Allowing ourselves to stretch the limits of our discussion of competing realities, we ask the question, whose claim to reality should be judged stronger: that of sub- or that of super-politics? Academics, in informal settings, come to mind. After a discussion of the assumptions that come built into the browser, an appeal is made to move on to the real issue, e.g., democratic institutions. In the face of such basic democratic provisions, the question of browser buttons pales in comparison. (Here the move is made from sub- to super-politics). But the inverse situation is equally easy to imagine. After a meaty discussion of 'pluralist' versus 'agonistic' democracy, the discussants are kindly requested to 'get real' and take into account, for example, the above browser button effects. In the face of such real practical constraints, how can one seriously believe that there is any realism in such overly sophisticated models, let alone the choice between them? The competition over the real between super- and sub-politics is thus easily re-opened, time and again.

Moving from the sub-political to the political remains a step to be taken with care. But what may interest us in the workshop is whether a Parliament of Issues - a Hippodrome of Issues may be preferred, because Robert's Rules of Order are not followed - whether a Hippodrome of Issues makes any hay against a Parliament of Things. To the very least, it presents some added features. Firstly, it has an in-built procedure for selecting who to listen to in the Hippodrome. (In contrast to the formal institution, participating parties come and go - not according to set election periods.) This also implies that, occasionally, surprising actors may be found and heard in the Hippodrome (and surprising things heard).

"While [Constantinople] inherited from her elder sister the passion for chariot races, the Byzantine hippodrome [loosely translated as race track] acquired a political significance which had never been attached to the Roman circus. It was here that on the accession of a new Emperor the people of the capital acclaimed him and showed their approval of his election... The hippodrome was again and again throughout later Roman history the scene of political demonstrations and riots which shook or threatened the throne... It may be said that the hippodrome replaced, under autocratic government, the popular Assembly of the old Greek city-state" (Bury, 1958, p86).
In the Parliament of Things, weird non-humans may be seen, but only the 'experts' speak in their stead.

The Hippodrome provides for heavily mediated encounters among visitors. This is no small detail, considering the fears of 'assimilation' of Davids by Goliaths (and not to be underestimated, the other way around) with regard to parliamentary formulae. Should the Web technique be able not only to create the notion of the Hippodrome of Issues, but also tell us which ones are about to catch the Emperor's and, later, the Sultan's eye, then we also have our Web as predictive medium.

Note

1. Downs's Model (1972) and O'Rioran's Model (1991) are discussed in Parsons, 1997, p116.

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Langdon Winner (1980), Do Artefacts Have Politics?, *Daedalus*, 109, pp121-36.
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Bring your pc laptops (with ethernet connection and cd-rom drive), we have netlocator software and a hub!

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The Social Life of Issues: Workshop Abstract 3

'Disaggregating Global Civil Society'

20 June - 26 June, 2001, C3, Budapest

During this workshop, we will further articulate the network features and network types for the issue-networks we have demarcated. In parallel to this, we will discuss the brands of politics, and perhaps even democracy, that are embodied in issue-network maps. Our general aim still is to describe, conceptualize and visualize the social life that issues lead on the Web.

The first two workshops have resulted in a provisional lists of network features and network types, and cartographer's logs (including matrices of hyperlinks) of nine to eleven issue-networks (see below). We will now determine how the demarcated issue-networks fit in with the network features and types we have previously distinguised. On the basis of the preliminary findings collected in the cartographer's log's, and the matrices of hyperlinks, we will characterize and visualize the issue-networks we have found. What are the features of these networks? Do their features correspond in any way to their particular network type? What are the differences in terms of actor composition, linkpatterns and life cycle between the different network types? Subsequently, we will edit and complete the provisional lists of features and types on the light of our empirical findings. Special attention will be paid to the phases of issue-life that can be read from the networks: is the issue-network getting more active and united (as in the case of the AIDS network, which is morphing into a summit network?), or is the issue-network in the process of fossilizing (as in the case of the Quebec network, that is currently being configured to a "relic of the past")?

In our previous discussions of the readings, we have tried to situate issue-network-maps with regard to three contexts: issue coverage by the mass media, social research of issue-life on the Web, and global civil society (or perhaps more appropriately, govcom.org). We identified a series of epistemological and normative problems, mainly with regard to the first two contexts. In the reading sessions of this workshop, we will focus on the third relevant context, that of global civil society. We'll look into the kinds of politics and democracy that can be traced in issue-networks, and in our own network-maps. Do the various brands of politics and democracy that have become en vogue in relation the Internet - from direct democracy to what Manuel Castells calls "informational politics" - survive the encounter with issue-networks? And vise versa? We'll also continue to explore the properties of a social study of the life of issues. What does a social analysis of hyperlinks look like? And how does research into the social life of issues relate to other social research of the Internet (notably, community studies and community critiques)?

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At the end of this workshop, we'll have made a classification of network types, a classification of network features, and gazetteers (annotated maps) for the nine to eleven issues listed below. Hopefully, we'll have gained a clearer idea of the forms of politics implicit in issue-network maps. We are then ready for a comparison between issue-network-maps and mass media coverage of the issues mapped, in the next, and last, workshop. This will give us a glimpse of how a social science may work with the Web as a predictive medium.

Readings:
Chantal Mouffe, on the "political community"
Bruno Latour, on "the parliament of things"
Manuel Castells, on "informational politics"
Craig Warkentin, on "NGO's, the Internet, and global civil society"
An object trouvé, "on community critiques of the Internet"
Michel Callon, on "mapping the dynamics of science and technology"
H. Dreyfus, on "the hype about hyperlinks"

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Social Life of Issues 2
Budapest Mapping Workshop
22-26 May 2001 at http://www.c3.hu
Info: Noortje Marres (marres@dds.nl) and Richard Rogers (rogers@chem.uva.nl)

Having aggregated the issue aggregating portals (UN, World Bank, OneWorld) and thought through different features of networks, we classify webby networks according to 'knowledge', 'debate', 'issue', 'summit', and 'scandal'. There could be a proposed hierarchy to these network classifications. Networks may be classified as knowledge networks if the source nodes, by connecting to one another, are using each other's knowledge also to generate new knowledge or bring new knowledge to the attention of the network. That 'new knowledge' would have to become a part of the network (i.e., sufficiently interlinked once it's been generated or brought to light). Debate networks are interlinking networks that 'interphrase', that is, they are updating their positions because of the others' positions. They may not be generating new knowledge or bringing new knowledge to light. Issue networks are formed through connections between sources all dealing with the same issue. They may not be generating new knowledge, bringing new knowledge to light or even 'debating' each other. Summit networks are sources interconnecting, only to *mobilise* around summits. These are largely logistical networks; they may not be generating new knowledge, bringing new knowledge to light, debating, or even interconnecting issue sites. They tend to interconnect a set of *mobilisation* sites. Finally, a scandal network is in the shape of a star: a set of sources (spokes) referring to a scandal (the center of attention), but not referring to each other. To find a scandal network, you'd check the hyperlinks to the scandal site. (An example is when a set of sites all refer to one TV program site, as was the case with the early Food Safety network I charted some months ago in the Netherlands.) Each of these network types are temporal, which means that that one type of network may morph (sorry!) into another type at another time. Should the categorization be deemed sufficiently robust, we are able to classify our found networks into these types.

Once networks are classified, we are able to note dynamics by type, and perhaps find candidate explanations for type tendencies. Certain network types may tend to morph into another type, given certain conditions. The workshop will aim to define those network morphing conditions. These are the 'conditions of network life' - the title of the Workshop.

Steps to follow:

How shall we classify our networks, if any were found?

The topics shared by the three portals (UN, World Bank and OneWorld) are:

1. Agriculture
2. Indigenous rights / peoples / knowledge / health
3. Food / food safety
4. Education
5. Labour / child labour

Topics shared by two of three portals are:

1. Agriculture
2. Climate Change
3. Sustainable Development / Development Cooperation
4. Landmines / de-mining
5. Education
6. Indigenous
7. Environment
8. Energy
9. Human rights
10. Food
11. Children
12. Youth
13. Nuclear Issues / Atomic Energy
14. Disability
15. Refugees
16. Biodiversity
17. Trade / Trade Development
18. Democracy / Elections
19. Defense / Peace & Security
20. Population

From the above tri-issue and bi-issue results, and from interest and intuition (that is, narrowing topics to issues and also seeking 'globalization'), the networks we have been seeking, currently, are:

1. Davos [Summit network bound by reference to suppliers. Richard has a too large set of starting points at the moment.]
2. HIV/AIDs in Africa [Heidi has sent the starting points.]
3. Child Labour (Sweatshops) [Cathi is working on this]
4. Quebec [Drifting from Porto Alegre - Christian H]
5. Digital Divide [Philanthropist network? - Christian T]
6. Vaniqa [Scandal network?]
7. Filtering [Noortje has data]
8. GMOs [Comparison with 1999]
9. Climate Change [Comparison with 1998]
10. Landmines

How do we define conditions of network life?

And how do we visualise these networks?

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Social Life of Issues 1

Organized by dr Richard Rogers, University of Amsterdam, in association with Govcom.org.

at the Center for Culture and Communication, Budapest (formerly the Soros Center), Orszaghaz utca 9, Castle District.

18-21 April 2001
22-26 May
20-26 June
23-28 July

The workshops are devoted to empirical research into the 'social life of issues', led on webby networks. First, a set of leading globalization issues are identified by aggregating major issue portals (such as Oneworld International, World Bank and United Nations) and seeking issue co-occurence. Second, issue network analysis is performed using the pre-eminent 'issue carriers' per issue as entry points; these issue carriers are entered into home-made network location software, and a set of issue networks based on interhyperlinking patterns is located. Third, the issue networks are subsequently monitored for 'issue barometric' properties, such as 'temperature' (measured by frequency of page refreshes), 'direction' (measured by <delta> change in geographical origin of issue carriers), and 'pressure' (measured by the mix of actor types in the issue network). The process is repeated monthly for as few as ten to as many as 80 issues. In all, the work aims to create an 'issue atlas' on the Web that reveals the changing actor composition as well as barometric properties of the issue networks.

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Ideally, the issue network maps in the atlas would refresh themselves at a rate that depends upon the heat of the debate around the issues.

The research and web design project aims to retool the Web to perform live social science, with the continually refreshing issue atlas being the 'lively' social scientific space, and the software behind it being the tool.

Eventually, comparative research of the properties of aggregated issue networks on the Web and those sets of traditional media sources (online and offline) could show the extent to which the Web may be seen as a predictive medium. Comparative research also may provide a picture of the mobility of issues.

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Networked computers, installed with issue network location software, will be available at C3. You also may bring your PC laptops.