Understanding the Hyperlinks Politics Better:

The Israeli Protest Networks as a Case Study

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This paper attempts to shed light on the debate regarding the nature of the hyperlink as a political tool: whether the hyperlink is part of the "offline world", or should be considered as a new and separate form of practice, mainly due to its low cost and easy construction. The current study offers two innovations to the present literature: first, based on link analysis between 90 protest websites of Israeli NGOs, link strategies were classified into four categories - Isolation, Introversion, Neighborliness and Generalization. Furthermore, rather than focus on the network for a single issue, this study analyzed 15 different protest topics. Second, 29 in-depth interviews were conducted to enable comparison of online and offline policies. The findings show that the internet tends to replicate offline practices and hierarchies: 1) Organizations tend to be linked to those organizations with which they have a mutual working relationship or coalition. 2) Most organizations are linked to protest clusters they <u>perceive</u> as close and relevant. 3) Radical organizations receive fewer hyperlinks. 4) Organizations with limited resources (e.g. finance or membership) tend to be isolated, also receiving fewer links.[1]

In an article published in 2006 in the New York Times magazine, Kevin Kelly proposed we regard the ubiquitous web hyperlink as one of the significant inventions of the last 50 years. The hyperlink is a technical means of linking words and ideas to each other for fun, knowledge, publicity or money, causing the surfer to jump from one web page to another. By definition, the hyperlink interrupts classical linear thinking and is in sync with the medium, which is based on an inconceivable amount of information. Referring to another source of information on the web facilitates expansion and extension of knowledge on a certain topic for those who are interested, increases access to information and provides surfers with a convenient way to navigate through the ocean of available information. In essence, the hyperlink is the navigation tool that can create any kind of link (positive or negative) with another entity, in other words, it encourages relationships (Dimitrova et al, 2003; Kovarick, 2002).

One way to perceive and define the internet as a political arena is using hyperlink analysis to map out cyberspace. The hyperlink is just one example of a new way to transfer information (and power)

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between organizations and people. Balanced, global distribution of knowledge such as the internet allows, can enhance the activities of many political players. The stronger the presence of the hyperlink in online platforms and arenas, the more layers of social and political meaning it encompasses, since the hyperlinks announce to everyone who shares the same online space which players and ideas are worthier than others, and which ideas or players maintain some kind of relationship with each other. In other words, there is definitely competition for political power that is considerably influenced by the offline reality (Turow, 2008; Halavais, 2008).

With the massive penetration of the internet into our lives and with its enhancements such as Web 2.0 and the development of the social web (Facebook, Twitter etc.), many political and economic players (corporations, government institutions, social organizations, bloggers, etc.) have grasped the tremendous power of the hyperlink and now strive to consciously and purposefully use them to advance themselves and their views, so that today it is hard to imagine surfing without them (Turow, 2008; Halavais, 2008). From the ways in which hyperlinks are most often used, and from the logic of the large commercial search engines, we are able to identify the main functions of the hyperlink as conferring reliability and popularity.

The internet embodies an inconceivable amount of information on every topic imaginable – gardening, shaman rituals, building home-made weapons and so forth. In this communications reality, two acute problems arise: the issue of online visibility – how players can ensure their own visibility and hits on their websites, and the issue of filtering information according to relevance. The popular search engines, which were originally meant to solve the second problem, gradually became immensely powerful ranking tools which conferred and determined one's online visibility[2].

It is not only the information search process that is affected by the number of hyperlinks, but also the public online visibility, since the links can also affect the players' degree of prominence and thereby influence the entire public and political discourse on any given issue. In light of this, there is clearly an urgent need to use hyperlinks as a political tool to attain web visibility among challengers, who constitute the object of this research.

Due to these trends, greater research attention has been paid to hyperlinks and a new research method has emerged – link analysis. Understanding the psychology behind the decision to create a link to a particular website or web page may help us understand aggregate social behavior (Halavais, 2008). Turow (2008) calls on researchers to monitor the considerations that guide a person/organization to link to one website rather than another, and to map out the channels of information flow and the power reflected by the digital links in order to gain an in-depth understanding of their social significance. In this article, I will move forward with Turow's suggestion and through an in-depth examination of the Israeli

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[2] Presenting the results as a long list ensures almost exclusive visibility to those results appearing on the first pages at most, if not to just a handful of results at the top of the list. This being the case, one must not underestimate the importance of hyperlinks since they constitute the basis of the search engine rankings.

case, propose a typology that is the first of its kind for classification of linking strategies. The focus of this study is the issue network(s) that exist between 90 Israeli social change organizations. The findings presented here constitute part of a broader research that also includes 29 in-depth interviews I conducted with content managers in order to understand the factors that affect the choice of one linking strategy over another. Due to text length constraints, these interviews are not analyzed here.

Literature's review

The hyperlink as a political tool

The choice of hyperlink, just like the quotation, is a social action *par excellence*, and the practices involved in this decision-making process have social consequences. The hyperlink, which is the exclusive advantage of the medium, by definition empowers the users who can choose whether or not to expose themselves to the linked information. Although the hyperlink empowers the surfers, it is important to remember that it still constitutes a selection made by the content manager, since it is not random, but rather the outcome of a decision. This selection from among all the existing options turns the hyperlink into a gate-keeping mechanism that expresses power and authority in order to promote a particular website or web page over the rest. Similarly, like the quotation, the hyperlink signals the entry point into a specific discourse sphere and may be the reference that grounds and validates the claims of the party making the link (Halavais, 2008; Park & Thelwall, 2003; Dimitrova et al, 2003; Rogers & Marrers, 2000).

In the early years of the millennium, hyperlink networks began to be perceived as having meaning and power, unlike earlier perceptions which failed to grasp their full social and political significance (Halavais, 2008). The most crucial insight gained from link analysis studies of the late 1990s was that websites are linked selectively and not haphazardly. Before research knowledge on this topic began to accumulate, the prevailing assumption was that hyperlinks were chance expressions, such as the button "Move to next blog" (Rogers, 2008). Today it is accepted that the hyperlink should be seen as an application that expresses the communications decisions and strategies of the website operators, so that by analyzing link networks one can learn about the social structure and communication channels among the online actors (Halavais, 2008; Park & Thelwall, 2003; Dimitrova et al, 2003 Shaw, 2001; Rogers & Marrers, 2000). When links are perceived as representative of knowledge structures and social relations, and as part of larger and deeper network structures, one can more clearly identify the underlying social structures and to develop better research methods to analyze them (Halavais, 2008).

Link Analysis

Link analysis is a relatively new methodology based on a combination of techniques from Data Mining, Machine Learning, Text Categorization & Visualization and Knowledge Management. The use of link

analysis preceded the use of computers, and was performed manually for decades by business enterprises, law enforcement agencies and security organizations. Sociologists also conducted manual link analysis in which the social structure of the research objects (tribes, workers' organizations etc.) was mapped out into nodes and links. The appearance of computers enables these techniques to become widespread and much more efficient, in analyzing larger communities and better understanding how information and opinions are currently distributed through the internet. Today, link analysis is used in many areas: social sciences, law enforcement, competitive intelligence, banking, insurance, web analysis (search engines, marketing), and telecommunications (Hasson & Hasson, 2006).

Like the study of social networks, link analysis is a process of building networks of actors that are connected to each other, except that here it is the online relationships that are examined. The aims of this analysis are to identify and uncover link patterns that will help analyze the patterns of communication and information flow among a large number of actors. This non-invasive method of data gathering does not relate to any one particular technique or algorithm, but rather to the combined techniques according to the type of data being processed. These techniques are applied to data that can be presented as nodes and links. A node represents an actor (a website, a web page, a document etc.). The results of the analysis are presented as a map of the actors on the net. This visual representation reveals hidden structures and links that are not found through 'real-world' analysis and enables rapid isolation of patterns needed to continue the study (Hasson & Hasson, 2006; Park & Thelwall, 2003).

This methodology, with the backing of the field's accumulated knowledge that not all links are equal, and not all links are reciprocal, (one-way links are much more common than reciprocal ones), has turned the research spotlight onto questions of inclusion vs. exclusion, questions that are essentially political (Rogers, 2008). One must seek to integrate the macro (social network) with the micro (a single link or the particular linking pattern of a single player), because the analysis of linking networks rather than of each website on its own significantly improves our understanding, and can even help us understand the micro level better (the whole is greater than the sum of its parts). This analysis raises questions about the quality of the relationships, or lack thereof, between entities, as well as why the power's distribution in the online arena is such as it is (Halavais, 2008). The importance of this methodology lies in the fact that this analysis helps researchers map out the web sphere and the issue networks (Gillan, 2009).

What hyperlink networks can tell us?

Once the research spotlight shifted from random links to goal-oriented hyperlinks, the examination of the links between two given websites became more significant and it was possible to test how political the hyperlink tool is. Acts of making or not making a link, or omitting a link may be examined sociologically as a gesture of recognition, non-recognition or detachment respectively (Rogers, 2008;

Park & Thelwall, 2003). The decision which website to link to reflects the choice of a certain communications strategy, and embodies three stages: whether or not to create a hyperlink, how many links to create and the main dilemma – who exactly to link to (or not) (Shumate & Dewitt, 2008). The decision to provide a link almost always indicates the granting of authority, support and trust in the linked website and what it stands for. Hence, the existence of a network between certain websites can testify to the connective character of a particular community. The hyperlinks play an important role in political, collective and communications activities since the linking network increases the interest in and importance of any issue on the web (Ackland et al., 2006; Park & Thelwall, 2003; Rogers & Marrers, 2000).

Links between sites testify to the symbolic relationship between entities, since unlike traditional networks in which resources and information are transferred between actors, hyperlink networks are representative. These representative networks indicate group affiliation, because the links indicate the public group affiliation of the actors (Shumate & Dewitt , 2008; Barnett & Sung, 2005; Park & Thelwall, 2003; Rogers & Marres, 2000). It thus emerges that **link networks, as representative networks, help establish and define the structure and boundaries of a community and/or a discourse on the web** (Ackland et al., 2006). As one might expect, the selective construction of link networks has led to the creation of spaces on the web – those areas shaped and framed by certain limited acts of recognition. The aims of mapping web networks are to discover those discourse spaces / issue networks, identify their boundaries, map out their members and their channels of information flow. All of these make it possible to uncover underlying social structures and kinds of relationships. Adamic (2008), who analyzed linking among political bloggers in the USA sums up her research as follows: "***The hyperlink frequently reveals very real underlying communities***" (Adamic, 2008. quoted in: Turow, 2008, pp: 15). She thus reminds us of the importance of the offline world when we discuss hyperlinks and their socio-political significance.

Hyperlink analysis as a means to examine political protest and collective action

As an application representing the structure and nature of a network, the hyperlink can help construct a collective identity, social capital and the establishment of coalitions. Moreover, through the link analysis between the protest organizations' websites we can identify cooperation, ideological affinity and recognition. Hence it emerges that an examination of the hyperlink structure of network protest can unearth important characteristics of the network that may lead to collective action outside the web. (Biddix & Park, 2008). The hyperlink structure is the outcome of conscious decisions made by the activists who build and manage the website and not by professionals. Hence link analysis is, in fact, a way to examine the preferences of the organization's members regarding information and the flow thereof, and enables profound and complex identification of the internet within political protest processes.

In the early days of link analysis, there were attempts to understand how different domains tend to link up. It was found that government bodies (.gov) tend to link only to other government sites, while corporations (.com) tend to provide internal links within their site, i.e. to themselves but not to other entities. In contrast, social organizations (NGOs with an .org domain) tend towards a very interesting and complex pattern of hyperlinks. It was found that compared to the other two domains mentioned above, they are more generous with their hyperlinks, and tend to link mainly to other social organizations, but also to government institutions, research institutes and so forth. Yet, it was also found that these organizations are quite selective about which organizations they link to (Roger & Marres, 2000).

Rogers and Ben-David (2008) claim that in the past, the political point of handling the question of why organizations link involved an attempt to direct research towards geo-politics and generate link classification schemes based on the features of a website such as size, amount and quality of information or other functional features. They claim that this approach is questionable in light of other studies (Rogers, 2004; 2002; Rogers & Marres, 2000) on Hyperlink Diplomacy which found that delicate social aspects were involved. Organizational selectivity regarding hyperlinks is expressed in not linking to actors to whom this would afford direct or indirect recognition. Organizations may mention other actors, slogans, documents and other contributions, but still not generate a hyperlink. The presence or absence of hyperlinks or their reciprocity is discussed in terms of the Politics of Association and presentation on the web.

According to the Politics of Association, the decision not to link to "enemies" is considered as a given and legitimate, and so it is very common not to find hyperlinks between opponents, but it would not be typical, or would even be surprising not to find links between organizations fighting for the same cause. Intentionally and consciously not making hyperlinks to those sharing your struggle might express a low opinion of that organization's importance, value and relevance to your cause. Such an act might be interpreted as an attempt to exclude that organization from the issue network space, or even to reduce its visibility and prominence on the web in general (following the guiding principle of search engine activity). In terms of the Hyperlink Diplomacy approach, not making a hyperlink may be considered an intention to humiliate or a sign of disrespect (Rogers & Ben-David, 2008).

Creating issue network links may also be explained by the Theory of Collective Action as a rational contribution for the public good. The hyperlink has been defined as a connective computer-mediated public good, since when the organization chooses to link to another organization, it contributes to its virtual space and also chooses to share its contacts with others. The hyperlink networks of non-profit NGOs are defined as sets of inter-organizational links meant to connect members and non-members to other organizations holding similar positions in order to increase the visibility of the goals of the issue network through informal organizational strategies (Shumate & Dewitt , 2008; Shumate & Lipp, 2008).

While these networks may be connected to other forms of collective action, the creation of a link network in and of itself is perceived as a collective act since it has implications for the degree of visibility of a particular social discourse on the web (Ackland et al., 2006).

Links on social organization websites

In a study that examined 70 websites of non-profit organizations in the USA in the mid 2000s, it emerged that only 38% of them had links to supporting organizations, and there were no links at all to the opposition. Similarly, most of the external links were placed only on specially designated links pages rather than being integrated into the website content (Kenix, 2007). Another study which examined the websites of social organizations in the USA found that most of them link to other organizations working within the same protest cluster (61.6%), and only about one third had links to organizations belonging to another protest cluster (34.9%). Similarly, it was found that there was no connection between an organization's budget and the size of its membership and the degree of technological sophistication of its website (to what extent it exploited the medium) (Stein, 2009).

In a study that examined the hyperlinks between websites of student protest organizations it was found that the website on its own was insufficient, and that it was the links to other websites that improved the implementation of the protest, from recruitment to organization. Connecting the website to a larger protest network and making it one more link in a chain made it much more effective for the purposes of the protest (Biddix & Park, 2008).

A similar picture emerges from three studies examining the websites of initiatives and organizations protesting against corporate globalization. The studied showed that the vast majority of the websites sampled were linked to each other in such a way that one could identify an issue network with clear boundaries where actors had varying degrees of centrality (Rosenkrands, 2004; Bennett, 2004; Van Aelst & Walgrave, 2004). Bennet (2004) found that the hyperlinks between protest sites kept the sites alive and active and connected them to wider communities of activists than those who attended the various demonstrations. Furthermore, the referrals to other websites according to current events and campaigns were meant to help enlist activists and support. These ties enabled the distribution of information about events across time and space within the various relevant audiences and thereby helped established an online issue network against corporate globalization. Bennet also believed that in order to truly understand the features of web-based politics, one must overcome the temptation to examine the issue only by looking at a single organization or issue. Instead, dynamic networks have become the unit of analysis within which all levels (organizational, personal and political) can be examined coherently.

A study that examined the hyperlinks between Islamic resistance organizations distinguished between general organizations with broad-scope objectives and specific ones with more limited and focused

goals. It found that these two kinds of organizations differ in how they function and in how they contribute to the issue of the hyperlink network. The linking patterns of the various actors were influenced by the degree of heterogeneity of the goals of the actor, the heterogeneity of the goals of the network as a whole (the goals of the other organizations in the network) and the role each actor fulfilled within the network. It was further found that the links between general and specific organizations were limited, and that the general organizations tended, for the most part, to limit their collective rationale only to general organizations. The specific organizations played a relatively isolated role with the network, probably because they did not see the goals of the larger issue network as beneficial for their purposes (Shumate & Lipp, 2008).

In the above-mentioned study, quantitative differences were found first of all in the linking patterns – general organizations had almost three times as many hyperlinks as the specialized ones. Secondly, it was found that the general organizations promoted a long list of goals within the network rather than focusing on a limited, narrow list of goals. Thirdly, it was found that the general organizations preferred not to link to the specialized ones, which were mostly perceived as more radical. The analysis revealed that the general organizations linked to the most central and legitimate organizations thereby make them more visible in the issue network. Fourthly, there were differences on the roles each kind of organization played within the issue network. The general organizations carried great weight within the issue network, since as brokers and initiators (for both types of organization) they filled in structural blanks – linking between organizations previously not linked, thereby contributing to the recognition and linkage between the general organizations and also between all actors within the network (Shumate & Lipp, 2008).

A study that examined hyperlinks between NGOs around the world working to defeat AIDS drew some important conclusions - technology has not eliminated the global digital divide. Many organizations received only a few hyperlinks while a few received many hyperlinks, and this division matched the global digital divide. Organizations from the northern hemisphere made many more links than those from the southern hemisphere, both internally and to local organizations, in other words, their contribution to the issue network was more significant and they had greater legitimacy and centrality. **This means that the power distribution known from the world outside the internet is retained in linking patterns**. The northern organizations act more globally and this was also reflected in their hyperlinks, while the organizations from the southern hemisphere act more locally and this too, was reflected in their hyperlinks – **work practices from the 'real' world are transferred into the hyperlink network** (Shumate & Dewitt, 2008) .

In contrast to these conclusions, the findings of a study on the hyperlink network among British protest movements against the war in Iraq led to contradictory conclusions. The analysis of their expression and mainly of their hyperlink network revealed gaps between the nature of these movements and how they act in the 'real world' and their decisions in relation to the online issue network. The study proved

that the online experience of the movement may differ from the offline experience of the movement/struggle. Moreover, the research demonstrated the unique power of the internet in overcoming the physical limitations of time and place and all the other strategic decisions regarding the establishment of coalitions and collaborations. In other words, **one does not have to maintain contact in the physical world or generate joint activities in order to link**. The study also indicated an added value of constructing a virtual issue network – expansion of the options for interaction beyond those in daily life (Gillan, 2009).

The two studies above show that existing research literature dealing with links between social organizations, present contradictory findings regarding questions such as: to what extent is offline politics (balance of power and behavior) replicated in online behavior, particularly in regard to linking patterns? To what extent does the internet actually enable the establishment of a 'new' kind of politics? Deriving from these two questions is a very important third one: what has a greater influence on the decision whom to link to – **the actual work relations between organizations or purely the perceived ideological proximity**? Purely ideological proximity means there is no actual ongoing working relationship and the link, as a simple and accessible technology application, actually bypasses the various physical obstacles (inter-organizational politics, differences in size and budget, geography, modes of activity etc.). Thus the link enables organizations to also legitimize and recognize others with which they do not collaborate in practice but which share the same ideals, goals and vision. On the other hand, one might claim that the link is the continuation of the politics by other means, and that an organization's working practices offline are reflected in and permeate its online behavior. This fascinating issue underlies this current study.

The <u>only</u> research published to date that has studied the hyperlinks between Israeli protest organizations discovered among its many findings that there is a hyperlink network between a very wide range of them. The issue network of organizations opposing the separation fence included very many kinds of organizations that are not directly or exclusively connected through the issue of the fence – feminist organizations, peace organizations, conscientious objectors organizations, human rights organizations, Israeli Arab advocacy organizations, Palestinian organizations and even one Israeli environmental organization (Rogers & Ben-David, 2008). This finding begs the question of why this is so – a question beyond the scope of the above study by Rogers and Ben David, but one certainly worthy of investigation in the current research. This finding proved and justified my desire to research protest issues in Israel, examine their points of contact and to discover whether the degree of ideological distance or proximity between the various protest topics as expressed in the organizations' daily functioning is also expressed in their linking patterns.

Based on all of the above and the unanswered questions, this study proposed to examine the following:

1. **What are the dominant linking strategies among social change organizations in Israel?**

2. **What are the main factors that influence the choice of one linking strategy over another?**

Importance of the research and its contribution to existing literature

Firstly, the main contribution of this research is its construction of a typology of linking strategies that enhances our knowledge of linking patterns by domain (Rogers & Marres, 2000), specially of NGOs. This typology, which draws a finer distinction between actors with the same domain name – .org – deepens our understanding about when an organization chooses not to make a hyperlink at all, when to link to websites dealing only with the same protest topic, and when to link to websites that deal with a variety of protest issues. Moreover, the typology proposes measurable variables that can explain a preference between the various strategies with reference to the factors both at the micro-level (within the organization) and the macro-level (the political environment).

Secondly, so far the theories that have tried to explain the findings of link analysis – the Politics of Association, Hyperlink Diplomacy and the Collective Action Theory – discussed the fact that social organizations were selective in choosing their hyperlinks, and that the act of linking was meant to grant recognition to the organization linked to. These theories are a solid foundation for continued research on the unanswered questions: why are there organizations that do not link at all while others are very generous with their hyperlinks? Is it possible to distinguish between different linking strategies? Will all the organizations in the same protest cluster have the same linking pattern and why or why not? Is it possible to guess the odds that an organization will create hyperlinks, and to how many actors if one knows its cluster? What variables can explain why a particular organization chooses to link to another? Is there any preference between ideological proximity and practical partnership when deciding on a link? The above theories only provided partial answers to these questions. In this study I wished to get into the "black box" of the decision-making process for linking, using tools suggested by the above theories in order to improve them by adding explanatory variables and constructing a typology of linking strategies.

Thirdly, unlike studies published to date, this study did not stop at describing the existing state by presenting the issue network though hyperlink analysis. In order to reinforce the linking strategy typology proposed in this article, 29 in-depth interviews were conducted with organization webmasters. From these interviews one may learn not only why certain hyperlinks are chosen and not others, but also about the offline politics and how it compares to online politics as reflected in the hyperlink network.

With this we can better understand the considerations behind the decision-making about hyperlinks, and to fully understand their political and social significance and try to answer some of the as yet unresolved questions in the current research literature.

Fourthly, as far as I know, so far there have only been studies published analyzing hyperlink networks that focused on one protest issue (such as anti-globalization, the environment, fair wages, Islamic resistance, opposition to the war in Iraq). This study is the first to offer an analysis of 15 protest issues and thus enables an examination of macro variables (belonging to one protest cluster rather than another, cluster size) as factors that can influence the decisions regarding linking strategies. Moreover, most studies that examined the impact of the internet on the consolidation of a collective identity completely ignored the function of the hyperlinks. I believe that this research vacuum should be filled and the hyperlinks should be discussed directly as a factor that simultaneously reflects and shapes the collective identity of a political organization, and not just as a factor that motivates people to act, recruits them and distributes information.

Fifthly, until now, there has been only one published study that examined hyperlink networks among Israeli protest organizations. The study by Rogers and Ben David (2008) only dealt with the issue network of the struggle against the separation fence. We need to enrich our knowledge about the Israeli hyperlink networks and expand the scope of research to other areas of protest so that we may better understand the Israeli civic protest on the web

Finally, as far as I know, so far no study has been published that used digital methods to analyze political protest in Israel in its broader context – ideological proximities, partnerships, social networks between organizations from _different_ protest clusters. In this, too, the current study hopes to break new ground and attempt to fill the research vacuum. The hyperlinks analysis and the interviews reveals the deep structures of political protest in Israel – who the main actors are, which protest clusters are linked to each other etc, in order to map them out more clearly.

Methodology

The findings of this study were extracted in three stages: firstly, a manual analysis of all the hyperlinks on the Links Page of the organization's website; secondly, automatic hyperlink analysis using the 'Issue Crawler' software to all the pages on the organization's website; thirdly - based on hyperlinks maps and according to the Network Ethnography Approach (Howard, 2002) - 29 partially structured in-depth interviews were conducted with those responsible for organization website content. In this part I will set forth the rationale underlying the choice of each of the stages of gathering, extracting and analyzing the findings.

Qualitative and manual hyperlinks analysis conducted at the beginning of the study permit a unique and perceptive understanding of the various linking strategies as well as a deeper understanding of the

linking politics of the organizations studied. However, it appears that an analytical tool is needed to quickly and efficiently analyze a larger research corpus. For this purpose the Issue Crawler software was chosen to conduct hyperlink analysis, since it enables several analytical options at variable depth levels, and provided a variety of maps.

Constructing the sample

The sample construction procedure was also conducted in several stages. Firstly, following the research question, as many protest clusters as possible were chosen. After extensively reviewing dozens of protest movement and social change organization websites in Israel, it was determined that the 15 largest and most central protest clusters would be included in the sample, and these are: feminism, human rights in Israel - in general, human rights in Israel - Israeli Arabs, human rights in the Palestinian territories, human rights - refugees and migrant workers, conscientious objectors, peace, the movement for greater Israel, social justice, workers' rights, environment, education, Oriental Jewry[3] struggle, animal rights and the rights of lesbians, gays, bisexuals, and trans-genders (LGBT). The attribution into protest clusters followed the main area of activities, according to the organization's stated self-definition. With the aim of achieving a finer distinction in my research, and in light of the profusion of Israeli organizations operating under the general definition of human rights, I broke this down into 4 sub-clusters, according to the primary target audience of the organization.

Later, two prerequisites were set for selecting the organizations in the sample: the organization must be recognized and not merely a transient initiative, and must have an official website (not a Facebook page, or a page on another organization's website). It was decided to sample certain sites even if it was not entirely clear whether the organization was still active, since it is my opinion that this might also in some way affect the results. It is important to bear in mind that some entity continues to pay for the domain, which could indicate that perhaps the organization is just in 'hibernation' mode.

The starting point in sampling the sites was a long-term personal knowledge of Israeli social change organizations. During the year prior to the research, and during the study itself, I volunteered as the internet coordinator for the Israeli Infoshop that serves as an information distribution centre for social change. Pursuant to this, and due to my prior involvement in other social organizations active in several protest clusters (feminism, human rights, social justice and workers' rights), I composed an initial list comprising dozens of organizations. Later, as is customary in such studies, I followed the hyperlinks on these websites and the hyperlinks on the linked sites, and so on and so forth, until - at a fairly early stage - these organizations were simply repeating themselves over and over. I added the 'new' organizations to the list, and eventually also consulted with activists in various fields who added organizations. Ultimately 90 organizations were selected for this research sample.

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[3] Sephardic Jews originating from Arab countries.

Definition of the research variables

In order to better understand the various factors which can explain the selection of a certain hyperlink strategy, a number of independent variables were tested. Since the greater part of the information about the organizations in this sample is based on self-reporting by the organizations themselves, as published on their websites, or emanating from the in-depth interviews, there are disparities in the quantity of available information about each organization. Whenever possible I closed these information gaps with information available outside their website (in various online publications). To overcome this obstacle, the different variables were measured ordinally, where each variable was determined by an appropriately graded category:

Size of protest cluster - how many organizations are active in this field in Israel: small cluster - up to five social organizations; moderate cluster - 10-30 organizations; large cluster - over 40 active organizations.

Number of protest clusters the organization is involved in - the organization's main fields of activity, according to the organization's self-definition, a description of objectives and details of activities (no limit on the number of areas).

Size of organization - how many employees / members / volunteers the organization has in its close and distant circles: small organization - dozens of activists; moderate one - hundreds of activists; large one - thousands of activists.

Extent of publicity - how well the organization is known by the general public. A questionnaire was distributed amongst 100 individuals across a wide range of ages, political leanings and education, asking them to indicate one of three possibilities: have not heard of the organization at all; the name of the organization 'sounds familiar'; they know the organization. Each response was given a point (0 - 2) and after totaling the points an index of organization recognition was constructed, with 5 levels of recognition.

Resources - the organization's annual budget: small - tens of thousands of Israeli shekels; medium size - hundreds of thousands of NIS; large - millions of NIS.

Website as a database - to what degree the organization's website is recognized as an information reserve for the organization's field, i.e. whether the site contains a lot of information (documents, reports, testimonies, photographs, videos, referrals), or represents a type of electronic brochure only about the organization itself.

Degree of perceived ideological proximity between protest clusters - the extent to which the organization's ideology stresses the points of contact between the different areas of protest: low degree – an ideology that emphasizes the distinction and the separation of the areas of protest, or no explicit statement is made regarding any ideological connection with others; moderate degree - an ideology that perceives points of contact with related issues (for example, human rights and social justice); high

degree - a holistic ideology that perceives many points of contact between a wide range of protest fields. A typical statement representing this ideology is: "Oppression is oppression is oppression", for instance: an organization that holds an ideology connecting animal rights, human rights in Israel, human rights in the occupied territories, conscientious objectors, LGBT rights, feminism and the environment.

Degree of cooperation with other organizations - the frequency with which the organization cooperates with others, which ones and which protest clusters they belong to. Cooperation has many facets such as seminars, demonstrations, petitions, appeals to the Courts etc: low degree - cooperation with other organizations is infrequent; moderate degree – cooperation is according to objective, with routine partners active in the same central protest cluster; high degree – ongoing collaboration with many other organizations, and partnership in a broad range of coalitions, even with organizations that may not directly engage in the same protest cluster.

Degree of radicalism - the extent to which the organization is distanced from the Israeli consensus? Any organization that defines itself as being post-Zionist, calling for a boycott on Israel, or refusing a command from one side of the political spectrum; or, alternatively, calling for the establishment of a religious State in Israel - revoking the secular rule of law, is defined as radical.

The next stage was to identify the regularity in the hyperlink patterns of the sampled websites, and to differentiate between the various strategies. It is important to note that this is essentially an inductive process due to the pioneering nature of the research (there are no previous studies examining anything similar) and thus the category classification developed as the research data was gathered and analyzed. All the hyperlink strategies found were refined into the four primary ones. Later, the non-dependent variables were tested and, based on that, the typology presented in detail later on was constructed.

Since this study does not end with a description of the existing situation, but is interested in a deeper understanding of the various motivations behind hyperlinks, it was also necessary to conduct in-depth interviews to provide sociological-political explanations for the hyperlink mapping generated. In order to avoid any bias deriving from the sample, the methodology selected was called Network Ethnography (Howard, 2002), where ethnographic methods are applied to selected cases using social networks' analysis. This integrated methodology allows the best of both worlds - social networks analysis and ethnography - and their combination helps overcome the inherent weakness of each. Thanks to a sharper understanding of the roles of the actors in the social network studied, it is possible to improve how representative and utilized they are during selecting interviews, thus increasing the validity of the study, while gaining an in-depth understanding of the social relationships. Also, this method balances the macro level (structure / social network) and the micro level (organization, and even the individual within the organization). Due to space restrictions these interviews will be analyzed at length in a separate article.

Results

The typology of hyperlink strategies distinguishes between four hyperlink strategies used by organizations: *Isolation, Introversion, Neighborliness* and *Generalization*. I shall now discuss each one of these more broadly. I shall explain its components and the characteristics of the main organizations that tend to choose one strategy over another.

Isolation

A little more than one quarter of the organizations in the sample (24) chose to link to no other organization whatsoever, neither on their Links Page nor on any other page of their website. The relatively high proportion in this sample is surprising, interesting and raises questions pertaining to the type of organizations that would chose such a hyperlink strategy. It is important to remember that there is a methodological difficulty in reaching sites that are not linked, and in the main these are not linked, through digital tools only. In other words, had there not been previous knowledge (outside the internet) about these actors, it would have been difficult to locate these organizations at all.

Firstly, the findings show that more than half of the organizations choosing this strategy (14, 58.33%) belong to the medium sized protest cluster and three-quarters of them (18) operate only in a single protest cluster. In other words, they are single issue organizations. Furthermore, almost 80% thereof only consist of a few dozen activists whose annual budgets amount to some hundreds of thousands of shekels. 62.5% of the organizations (15) achieved low and the lowest levels of publicity, only 12.5% achieved a high level of publicity, and not a single one of the organizations in this group (!) achieved the highest level of publicity, which could point to the fact that most residents of Israel are unfamiliar with most of the organizations that choose this hyperlink strategy. Only 12.5% (3) of the organizations in this group turned their web sites into a database intended to supply surfers with a great deal of high-content information regarding that organization's field of activities. Moreover, most of the organizations in this group 62.5%, (15) demonstrated a low ideological proximity to other clusters, despite the fact that slightly more than half of them cooperate to an intermediate degree with other organizations, so that a significant proportion of the organizations in the group cooperate with other organizations only seldom or not at all (41.66%, 10). This proportion is significantly higher when comparing this to what happens in the other groups: *Introversion* - 15%; *Neighborliness* - 25%; and *Generalization* - 14.28%. Furthermore, only 16.66% of the organizations in the group presented any ideological manifesto on their websites that could be defined as radical.

In this group of isolationist organizations, one can find ones from many protest clusters, but one recurrent characteristic was that the target populations of those organizations belonged to weaker groups in society, e.g.: *Kayan* - Israeli Arab women; *The Association of Forty* - Bedouin struggling for recognition for their villages; *Women's Spirit* - Women injured by violence; *Community Advocacy* - The

residents of neighborhoods in distress; *Taayush* - Palestinians who have had part of their lands nationalized by Israel; *Tebeka* - Ethiopians; *Humans Without Borders* - Palestinians requiring medical treatment in Israel; *Other Voice* - of Sderot residents under constant shelling. This is contrary to other organizations that primarily choose other hyperlink strategies and whose target audience is the Israeli general public.

An unusual and especially interesting exception was the environmental organization- *Adam, Teva V'Din*, which holds a very good public and political status. It was surprising to find an Israeli environmental organization of good repute in the isolation group, as it that represents Israel at various international conventions, advises many Israeli decision-makers, and has a budget of millions of shekels and dozens of paid employees. From the in-depth interview conducted with this organization's webmaster, it appears that the organization suffers from "a rich man's problems" - every day, various environmental organizations request to exchange hyperlinks. As this organization's workers jealously guard the high reputation the organization has built for itself, they made a principled and sweeping decision not to link to anyone else. In the interview, the claim was raised that they really do not need hyperlinks, as even without them the organization is very well known, a claim that was found to be true in this research. However, it is important to recall that alongside this unique situation, a very large proportion of this group includes small, poor and almost unheard of organizations.

Another outstanding finding is that nine organizations out of the entire group, i.e. more than one-third, belong to one cluster, which is: the struggle over the complete historical Land of Israel. This is especially surprising in light of the fact that in the entire sample there is a total of 11 organizations in this cluster. In other words, more than 80% of the organizations in this cluster chose an identical hyperlink strategy - *Isolation*. Regretfully, all nine of the right-wing organizations that chose this strategy refused to be interviewed for this research, namely: *Honenu; Human Rights in Judea, Samaria & Gaza; Women in Green,* and others, so that faced with no other choice, I had to apply to other sources to attempt to explain this finding.

From comprehensive research on Israeli right-wing protest movements, it appears that this involves a group distinguished by its sociological characteristics whose members establish dense social networks that include not only uniquely sectoral media organizations, but also who live geographically very close together, share formal and informal educational institutions, as well as common religious and political attitudes (Sprinzak, 1981). Furthermore, recently concluded research among Gush Katif evacuees (the forefront of the struggle against the Gaza Strip Disengagement) shows that those asked reported that the most popular media for keeping in touch with other community members were phones and Sabbath Leaflets (newspapers distributed in thousands of copies, obtainable in synagogues before the Sabbath) namely, small-scope media that maintain the intimate character of the community (Lev-On, forthcoming). This research can shed light on the online behavior of right-wing organizations and may perhaps hint that organizations belonging to protest clusters containing substantive social networks that are relatively

very dense and closely knit will feel that there is no need for hyperlinks between the various websites as this function is fulfilled in other more substantial ways. This is only an initial direction and further research is required to assess its veracity.

Finally, I would like to discuss another interesting protest cluster – the conscientious objectors cluster (refusal to serve in the Israel Defense Forces at all or only in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip). In the present sample, and in Israel generally to the best of my knowledge, there are three such organizations, two of which - *Courage to Refuse* and *New Profile* - chose not to have any hyperlinks at all. In the Israeli context, a refusal to serve in the army is a criminal offense punishable by actual imprisonment, but more than this, it is a radical position that is condemned and denounced in the mainstream press, by the establishment and public opinion. Hence we can see that this cluster also chooses the linking strategy of isolation, mostly for organizational reasons that are identical for most of the isolation organizations: a lack of human resources, money and technical understanding (deriving from, inter alia, the high average age of the organization's members) as was shown from the interview conducted with the volunteer responsible for *New Profile's* website.

Among the isolation group is left-wing ideological extremism - *Anarchists Against the Wall*, but also on the right, *The Temple Mount and Eretz Israel Faithful Movement*, which call for the founding of the Third Jewish Temple on the Temple Mount and the enforcement of Jewish religious law in the State of Israel.

Introversion

This hyperlink strategy relates to an organization's decision to link only to those organizations that directly deal with the area of protest of that organization and in the current sample 20 organizations chose this strategy. One-third of the organizations that chose introversion within their protest cluster/s (35%, 7) belong to a large protest cluster, primarily environment and feminism, while about a third (30%, 6) simultaneously deal with several protest clusters of various sizes. A unique finding for this cluster is that a high percentage of organizations specialize in only one area of activity (60%, 12) - only 20% of the introvert organizations operate in three or more protest clusters. Two of the most outstanding protest clusters in this group are: the animal rights cluster and the environment cluster.

Two-thirds of the introversion organizations are small (only dozens of activists). The annual budget of half of these organizations is medium (hundreds of thousands of shekels), while one third has a large budget. It is easy to understand this finding if you understand that for the overwhelming majority of cases in the sample, when there is a small organization with a large or medium budget, this will involve a social advocacy organization that employs workers, rather than a broad-base grass roots movement. The degree of publicity of these organizations is affected by the quantity of the media coverage and the quality of the work of the organization's spokesperson (PR). 70% of the organizations in this group had a low or the lowest degree of publicity among those asked, which hints at the complete anonymity of

most of the organizations in this group. However, it is important to state that a quarter of the organizations were ranked as having a high or the highest degree of publicity.

As opposed to the small percentage among the isolation organizations that have turned their organization's websites into a database intended to supply surfers with a great deal of information regarding the organization's field, among the introversion group, this rate jumps to 35%. There are websites with much detailed content owing to the focusing on a specific protest issue, which is not part of the Israeli public agenda, such as animal rights. From the interviews, it appears that all three organizations working in this field that belong to the introversion group - *The Israeli Association against Animal Experimentation; Anonymous;* and *Shevi*, have turned their organization's websites into a respectable database (each in its own field) which includes many articles, referrals to movies, books, and researches related with vegetarianism, veganism, and a wide range of rights and struggles (battery cages, meat industry, fashion and the cosmetics industry, entertainment, etc.). An additional reason for turning an organization's website into a database is the fact that they have a very specific target audience - e.g. Arab lesbians in *Aswat*; or religious feminist women in *Kolech* - and the desire to fill it with information relevant to their lives, as arises from the in-depth interviews.

From interviews with representatives of four of the above-mentioned organizations, it appears that the uniqueness of the organizations constitutes a reason to invest hundreds of work hours on the website to provide information which is mostly not available, or that does not appear in the relevant language (Hebrew or Arabic). Furthermore, in this way organizations generally keep in touch with those who might potentially join the organization, and try to reach anyone interested in the subject but who does not want to be actively involved. Another type of organization that has turned their website into a database is the rich and large environmental organizations such as *Green Peace Mediterranean*, or activists in the grass roots movements such as *Green Action* that also displays a marked desire to distribute knowledge and to make it readily available to the general public. The hyperlinks are without doubt an inseparable part of building a database and in most cases, there are dozens of hyperlinks referring to other sites.

It is interesting to note that 70% of the organizations in this group demonstrate a low degree of ideological proximity to other clusters. This percentage is the highest in the sample (even among the *Isolation* group only 62.5% was found) and this can explain the choice in this hyperlink strategy. Furthermore, three-quarters of the introversion organizations mostly or always cooperate only with organizations from the same cluster, which is true primarily for environmental and animal rights organizations dropping the high rate of cooperation with others to 10% only, which is still relatively high compared with the *Isolation* and *Neighborliness* groups.

Only one out of the 20 organizations in this group, presented an ideological manifesto on its website that could be defined as radical - *Socialist World* - that calls for eliminating the capitalist system. But it is

important to remember that both *Kolech* and *Aswat* are considered radical within the communities they derive from - lesbian women in Arab society, or feminist women in religious society, are perceived as unusual, but because other colleague social organizations do not perceive them as radical, in this research also they are not classified as such.

In attempting to identify linking strategies at the macro level- the protest cluster as a whole, ,the findings unequivocally show that the environmental cluster and the animal rights cluster replicate their offline modus operandi in their linking strategy. Six out of the nine environmental organizations in the sample chose the *Introversion* hyperlink strategy. In the in-depth interviews, several reasons were mentioned for this decision, primarily the desire to keep the environmental cluster "free" of politics. The aim is to position environmental issues as belonging to everyone, and not only to left- or right-wingers. The fear of losing an audience that has been given an incorrect impression about the organization because of the hyperlinks it provides, becomes more acute when it comes to the potential loss of support funds which, to put it mildly, do not like siding with political organizations (in the narrow sense of the word). Furthermore, issues such as human rights in Israel, social justice, feminism, or animal rights are simply not perceived as relevant for hyperlinks as far as the above webmasters are concerned. A similar picture also arises from animal rights organizations, where 3 out of 4 have chosen the *Introversion* strategy. Even if, at the personal level, most of their activists are involved in other social change organizations (most of which, by the way, belong to the radical left) they made an principle decision that at the organization level they are putting forward one single issue message - animal rights - in order not to "push away" potential activists with radical messages that do not deal directly with the main issue of the organization. .

Another important point worth noting is that a large proportion of the introversion organizations belong to a protest cluster that is more clearly differentiated. Others, such as social justice or human rights clusters can relate to a very large number of other sub-clusters (as will be demonstrated later). Environment and animal rights are areas whose boundaries are much more clearly defined.

Neighborliness

This group is the largest in the sample with 32 organizations, slightly more than a third of the total sample. This strategy relates to organizations that chose to link also to organizations and websites that do not directly deal with the same area of protest, but where there is still some relatively significant similarity between them. For example, the general field of human rights might connect with several sub-clusters depending on the subject of the activity: human rights of Palestinians in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip; human rights of refugees and migrant workers; human rights of Arabs and Bedouin in Israel; human rights in Israel in general (where the objects of the assistance are not explicitly indicated, or when it is not included in any of the above groups, such as Ethiopians). Furthermore, women's rights, or the rights of the LGBT community could connect also with human rights, and thus also with such protest

clusters as social justice, workers' rights, and even education or oriental Jewry struggles - each organization at its own discretion.

One quarter of the *Neighborliness* group organizations belong to one large sized protest cluster while half of these belong, simultaneously to several protest clusters of various sizes. So one might summarize the protest clusters most of the organizations in this group belong to as: human rights in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip (12); feminism (11); human rights for Israeli Arabs (11); and social justice (9). It is interesting, but not surprising, to observe that only 37.5% (12) of this group are single-issue organizations (as compared with 60% in the *Introversion* group). A further 37.5% of these organizations belong to two protest clusters while the remaining quarter are organizations belonging to 3-7 protest clusters, e.g.: *Worker's Hotline*; *Adva Center*; and *Tarabut* that operates in 5, 6 and 7 protest clusters respectively. This finding is important as it can explain the practices of the organization outside the web and shed light on the connection between online and offline politics. The findings show that organizations which work with more organizations and cooperate with a larger number of coalitions, tend to link more, when those hyperlinks follow the organizations they work with. Based on this finding, it is not surprising to see that among the isolation organizations there were only two organizations (8.33%) that worked in three or more protest clusters.

Furthermore, a very central characteristic of this group is that most of the organizations belonging to this group operate in cluster/s that is/are close to other protest clusters to the point where it is hard to define a clear and obvious boundary between them, e.g. social justice and workers' rights, or peace and human rights in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip. The hyperlinks between the most widespread protest clusters created ever-widening circles. In other words, the hard core of most of the organizations that link to their neighbors include hyperlinks between the cluster for human rights in the West Bank and Gaza Strip, human rights in Israel in general and human rights for Israeli Arabs. Frequently, to this circle is added the *Worker's Hotline* organization whose main but not exclusive focus is workers' rights. Sometimes it was also possible to find hyperlinks to feminist organizations that promoting the rights of the Palestinians. Another circle of organizations included social justice and workers' rights and sometimes even feminism, Oriental Jewry struggles, human rights in Israel in general and human rights in Israel for Arabs. Another circle of hyperlinks that appeared several times included organizations for peace and for human rights in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip that sometimes even linked to social justice and feminism, and four times even to the shunned cluster of conscientious objectors.

Another characteristic of this group is that its organizations are usually partners in relatively many coalitions, and work on a daily basis with other organizations from the same or close clusters, such as: *Coalition of Women for Peace, Gush Shalom, Israeli Committee against House Demolitions,* etc. These three and others, differ from multi issue organizations referred to above, because they have a narrower orientation. They focus only on human rights in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip , peace and at the

most, also human rights for Israeli Arabs. It is important to mention that these kinds of organizations also link to organizations involved in similar areas of protest too.

65.62% (21) of the organizations in this group are small, 53.12% (17) have a large budget (in millions of shekels) with a quarter of them having achieved a high or the highest level of publicity, which, as we have said, indicates the large number of social organizations (SMOs) rather than grass roots movements. As with the *Introversion* group, 34.37% (11) of the *Neighborliness* group organizations have turned their websites into a database. Furthermore, most of them (59.37%, 19) demonstrate an ideological proximity to other clusters to a medium degree, and 71.87% (23) of them cooperate to a medium degree with other organizations.

Surprisingly, 21.87% (7) of the group's organizations present an ideological manifesto on their website that could be defined as radical, namely: *Civil Forum, Zochrot, Gush Shalom and Israeli Committee against House Demolitions* which object, in varying degrees, to the Zionist character of the State of Israel. These organizations received significantly lower linking rates compared with the non-radical organizations, and where they did receive a hyperlink, it was mostly from other radical organizations, or at least from organizations that to some degree or other disagree with or doubt, the Zionist narrative.

Generalization

This hyperlink strategy is surprising and especially interesting as at first sight it is difficult to understand the logic behind it - organizations choosing to link to others and to websites that not only do not deal directly with their areas of protest, but on the face of it are not even close to it. This is the essential difference between the *Neighborliness* and the *Generalization* groups. For example, an LGBT organization that links to one dealing with the Oriental Jewry struggle, or an Oriental feminist organization that links to an environmental organization. This is the smallest group in the sample, numbering only 14 organizations.

Even though 28.57% (4) of the organizations choosing this strategy belong to a medium sized protest cluster and 28.57% belong simultaneously to several clusters of different sizes, it is very interesting to see the high percentage that this group has of organizations that belong to a small cluster - 21.42%. This is relatively high compared with the *Neighborliness* (6.25%) and the *Isolation* (8.33%) groups. This finding is especially interesting as it sheds light on one of the characteristics of this strategy - the frequency of small protest clusters located on the fringe of the protest issue spectrum - Oriental Jewry struggle (3), conscientious objectors (1), animal rights (1), education (1), the rights of migrant workers and refugees (2), as well as medium sized clusters also: LGBT (1) and workers' rights (2). Moreover, despite the fact that the overwhelming majority of the organizations operate only in a single protest cluster, in other words they are single issue organizations - 64.28% (9), 28.57% of them still operate in

three or more protest clusters, which is the highest proportion in the sample (compared with 8.33% in the isolation group).

Furthermore, most of the organizations (71.42%, 10) are small, half with budgets of hundreds of thousands of shekels, while a third have budgets of millions of shekels (35.71%, 5). A significant and fascinating finding reveals that 42.84% of the generalization organizations are publicized to a high or the highest degree, a percentage with no competition in the sample (*Neighborliness* and *Introversion* - 25%; i*solation* - 12.5%). Future research will need to look into this question in depth. In the meantime, one may guess that this is related partially to the dominance some of the organizations have in the relevant protest arena and therefore their greater prominence in public discourse, such as: *The Association for Civil Rights In Israel, Peace Now* and *The National Association of LGBT In Israel*.

Another interesting and unique finding that arises is that 64.28% (9) of the organizations in this group have turned their website into a database (*Neighborliness* - 34.77%; *Introversion* - 35%; *Isolation* - 12.5%). In other words, there is an increase in desire to distribute unique information and to make it accessible to a wider audience. Examples may be found in the websites of the following organizations: *Ir Amim* that specializes in Jerusalem-related problems; *Public Committee Against Torture in Israel* – which speaks for itself; *The Association for Civil Rights in Israel*, a veteran civil rights organization in Israel that has been reviewing this field from every possible angle, etc.

Despite the fact that half of the generalization organizations have shown a medium degree of ideological proximity to other clusters, while 21.42% have demonstrated a low degree of ideological proximity, it is important to remember that this is a relatively low percentage compared to the other groups (34.37% of *Neighborliness*, 62.5% of *Isolation*, and 70% of the *Introversion* group). Moreover, 28.57% of the organizations expressed a high degree of ideological proximity on their websites with other protest issues, which is definitely a higher percentage compared to the other groups (10% from the *Introversion* group; 8.33% from the *Isolation* group; and 6.25% from the *Neighborliness* group). This finding has far-reaching implications as we can learn from it about the main motivation in choosing this linking strategy. A significant proportion of the organizations in the generalization group are organizations with a generalized protest philosophy that stresses the connections between the various struggles.

In the in-depth interviews held with the webmasters of organizations in this group, the ideological concept that stresses points of contact between many different protest clusters arose repeatedly. Excellent examples of this are the movements: *One Struggle* and *Sister*. *One Struggle* is an anarchistic radical movement that fights for animal rights and whose main message is 'oppression is oppression is oppression'. From their point of view, there are close connections between animal rights, human rights, whatever they are- the human rights of Palestinians in west bank and Gaza Strip, the rights of Israeli Arabs, of refugees and migrant workers, peace, conscientious objectors, social justice, workers' rights,

LGBT rights, feminism, Oriental Jewry struggles, and environmental justice. The name of the movement emphasizes this holistic ideology completely. This concept is also expressed in the everyday activities of the movement, and is also in full sync with the hyperlinks appearing on its website. *Sister* is a movement for Oriental feminism (the Israeli version of black feminism) that also links the above problems to human rights in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip, peace, social justice, workers' rights, LGBT, education, the rights of refugees and migrant workers, and the rights of Israeli Arabs. They even went so far as to place a hyperlink on their website Links Page to an environmental organization.

Indeed, most of the generalization organizations (71.42%, 10) cooperate to a medium degree with other organizations, but it is interesting to still see that this is the group with the highest proportion of organizations that cooperate to a high degree with others: 14.28% (compared with 3.12% for *Neighborliness*; 4.16% for *Isolation*; and 10% for *Introversion*). Furthermore, this is the group with the lowest proportion of organizations that cooperates to a low degree with other organizations: 14.28% (compared with 41.66% for *Isolation*; 25% for *Neighborliness*; and 15% for *Introversion*).

To sum up, I will add that only 14.28% of the organizations in this group presented an ideological manifesto on their website that could be defined as radical, which is consistent with the general picture that shows that the generalization organizations will be, in the main, well-known, rich, with a high status, that frequently work with many organizations and are partners to a large number of coalitions such as: *Physicians For Human Rights - Israel*, *Public Committee against Torture in Israel* and *The Association for Civil Rights In Israel*.

* A summary table of the typology of linking strategies

Strategy name Name of variable	Isolation	Introversion	Neighborliness	Generalization
Numbers of linked protest clusters	No links at all	A link to one cluster only	Most organizations link to another 2-5 clusters	Most organizations link to another 5-7 clusters
Degree of ideological proximity between the linked clusters and the organization	No links at all	A link only to the protest cluster within which the organization operates	Links to clusters relatively close to protest cluster of the organization	Links to a wide range of clusters that have varying degrees of proximity to protest cluster of the organization
Degree of practical collaboration between the organizations	No links at all	Relatively very high degree of cooperation between linked organizations	Relatively very high degree of cooperation between linked organizations	Varying degree of proximity – the more distant the cluster, the less cooperation in most cases
Size of protest cluster	Mostly medium	Mostly large or small	Mostly relatively large and central	From smallest cluster to largest, but with a high proportion of small ones
Main characteristics of this group that could explain the link strategy found	* **Single issue organizations with low ideological and practical proximity to other**	* **Single-issue** organizations that belong to a clearly **distinct protest cluster** (such as environment,	* **Multi-issue** organizations belonging **to a large, and central protest cluster** (like feminism and human rights in the West Bank and the Gaza	* Most are **single issue** organizations, but there is quite a high percentage that are **multi-issue**.

clusters. * Relatively **small and unknown** organizations representing weaker groups (Ethiopians, residents in the periphery, domestic violence victims, etc.) * Organizations with **substantive social networks that are relatively dense and closed** (like the complete historical Land of Israel cluster).	animal rights, and LGBT rights. * Organizations with **a low ideological and practical proximity to other clusters**. * Organizations with **a relatively specific and distinct target audience** (lesbians, Arabs, religious women). * Organizations that are **relatively small and mostly unknown**.	Strip). * Organizations that belong **to a cluster that is very close to other protest clusters where it is difficult to define boundaries between them** (e.g.: human rights in Israel generally, human rights in Israel-Arabs, rights of migrant workers and refugees). * Organizations that **are members in relatively many coalitions**, and that frequently work with other organizations. * Organizations that are relatively **rich and well known**.	* Organizations that have **a general and holistic protest philosophy** - emphasizing the connections between the various struggles. * Mostly organizations that are relatively **rich, large and well known**. * Organizations whose protest cluster is **at the margin of the protest continuum** (Oriental Jewry struggle, LGBT rights). * Organizations that **are members in many coalitions**, and that frequently work with other organizations. * Their website function as a **database**.

Discussion and conclusions

The main conclusion of this study is that hyperlinks are the continuation of politics by other means. In other words, hyperlinks are, to a very great extent, a reflection of practices, behaviors and world views that exist outside the web, and that despite the ease with which they are created, for the most part they do not establish any 'new politics". An organization which stresses its individuality and rarely collaborates with other organizations outside the web is likely to choose an *Isolation* linking strategy. An organization which is careful choose to work only with organizations from within its own protest field outside the web is likely to choose an *Introversion* linking strategy. An organization that is active is several protest clusters and often collaborates with others in the same or proximal clusters is likely to choose the linking strategy of *Neighborliness*. An organization that has a holistic ideology and relates to the close connections between different protest clusters, and which tends to collaborate frequently with others is likely to choose the linking strategy of *Generalization*.

Other variables examined reinforce findings from earlier studies (Shumate & Dewitt, 2008; Shumate & Lipp, 2008; Stein, 2009). The power distribution existing outside the web is retained in the linking patterns: organizations that seek to promote weaker populations and were "weak" themselves, did not receive many hyperlinks on the whole, neither did they provide hyperlinks for the most part. Radical organizations were also relatively isolated within the issue networks, and most received hyperlinks either from other radical organizations or from less consensual ones. Moreover, the more aims an organization has, the greater and more varied its contribution to the issue network. In this study, too, hyperlinks were not found between opposing organizations, and there were hyperlinks to different kinds

of websites such as mainstream and independent news websites, research institutes and overseas websites. The lack of space prevents a discussion on the fascinating topic of overseas hyperlinks.

Despite the similarity to Stein's (2009) research, it is important to note two significant differences. The first is the higher percentage of organizations linking to other organizations. While Stein shows links in only 38% of the websites sampled, in the current study this figure stands at 73.4%. The second difference is that while Stein found that only 34.9% of the organizations linked to another protest cluster, here this figure rises to 51.11%. Other researches are needed in order to determine the reason for these differences. Perhaps it is merely a function of time, or perhaps the explanation lies in the differences between the USA and Israel in political culture and socio-political contexts.

This study supports the claims about the political and social significance of the hyperlink as a political tool that expresses trust, credit and support of another actor (Rogers & Ben-David, 2008; Park & Thelwall, 2003; Rogers & Marres, 2000; Rogers, 2004; Rogers, 2002; Halavais, 2008; Ackland at el, 2006; Turow, 2008). Unfortunately, we cannot go into details here about the various motives regarding the decision who to link to and who to avoid arising in the in-depth interviews, but I can sum up by saying that underlying this seemingly simple decision there are, indeed, complex, ongoing politics of ideological ideas, organizational and even personal power struggles, tactics of "you scratch my back and I'll scratch yours" and other practices worthy of any parliament.

A number of studies (Biddix & Park, 2008; Rosenkrands, 2003; Bennett, 2003; Van Aelst & Walgrave, 2003) mentioned the tremendous power of the hyperlink in collective action and political protest – distribution of information, motivation and recruitment to action. The current study was limited in scope and thus did not examine this issue, but it definitely should be related to in future studies. Likewise, future studies should deal with the limitations of this study. Firstly, the pioneering linking typology presented here should be validated across many contexts (other countries, other types of actors) as possible and on as broad a sample as possible in order to conduct comparative studies. In addition, further research studies could monitor the websites in this sample to see if and how linking strategies change and why this might be so. There is also a need to measure more precise variables which will strengthen the validity of this study. Another important variable that deserves serious attention is the degree of technological sophistication and how the digital divide between classes and mainly between different age groups affects the choice of one linking strategy over another. Preliminary evidence of the digital divide and its impact on hyperlink strategy was found in the in-depth interviews, the findings of which will be presented in a separate article.

It is important to remember that the internet medium is a highly dynamic arena and that things can change from one moment to the next. In the year that has passed since the start of this study, a small number of the websites included in the sample have completely disappeared from the web, some have been completely revamped and upgraded, including the Links page, and on some websites the Links

page was changed, partly as a direct outcome of the in-depth interview were conducted with the webmaster. This is natural and even inevitable in this communications environment and one must be aware of the fact that internet studies are an image of a particular point in time that is open to change. However, it is worth remembering that not only have the vast majority of hyperlinks from the sample websites remained unchanged, but the pioneering typology proposed in this study extends far beyond the local Israeli context and contributes to the accumulation of knowledge about the political and social role of hyperlinks in general and about the internet as a medium still perceived as new in general. This study shows that while technologies may come and go, politics remains forever.

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