Reclaiming Virtual and Physical Spaces
Indymedia London at the Halloween Critical Mass

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Essay – November 1, 2006

Using the Halloween Critical Mass bike ride as an example, Marion Hamm analyses how cyberspace overlaps the physical space of a protest demonstration on the street and how a construction of what she calls 'geographies of protest' is developing. Marion Hamm is affiliated with Indymedia, a worldwide network of independent media centres.

London, Halloween night 2005. The Embankment under Waterloo Bridge is packed with devils, wizards, vampires, witches, ghosts, pumpkins, clowns and fairies on bicycles. To the sounds of drumming, whistling and deafening sound systems the ride takes off over Waterloo Bridge, along the Strand and into Trafalgar Square, then down to Parliament Square, where the festive mood reaches its peak. As the first riders complete a lap to big cheers and the sound of ringing bike-bells, hundreds are still pouring in. The sheer number of cyclists brings it to a halt. Most sit down in the roads, many lift their bikes into the air, some dance to the sounds set up outside Big Ben.

Meanwhile, the chat room of Indymedia UK is buzzing. A dozen people are glued to keyboards, screens and telephones. They receive a steady stream of text messages and phone calls from the streets, which are added to a website. The excitement from Parliament Square spills over into the chat room:

[10/28/2005 08:19 PM] <phunkee> parliament sq!!!!!!!!!!

[10/28/2005 08:19 PM] <ionnek_326610> they are there?

[10/28/2005 08:20 PM] <phunkee> YES!!!!

A participant from Birmingham sums it up: 'It's a friday night, it's like a fucking party, it's like an RTS on bikes!' [1]

This montage was taken from reports about the Critical Mass bike ride in London during Halloween Night 2005. With 1200 participants estimated by the police, it was the biggest ever Critical Mass in London since the monthly bike rides started in 1994. Bike couriers and anarchists, environmentalists and MPs, cycling Londoners, party crowds, skateboarders and alternative newsmakers staged a public, popular and non-commercial event in central London, without central organization and without a budget for PR.

A 'Critical Mass' occurs when a group of cyclists moves slowly through busy urban streets, taking over from motorized traffic, thus appropriating public space in a way that sits between 'being traffic' and 'being a demonstration'. These bike rides have become part of the repertoire of political articulation used by the transnational movements against neoliberal globalization. In 2000, Naomi Klein described how they relate to the Internet: 'The movement, with its hubs and spokes and hotlinks, its emphasis on information rather

than ideology, reflects the tool it uses – it is the Internet come to life'.

With the worldwide network of Independent Media Centers (also known as 'Indymedia'), these movements have created their own platform on the Internet. They are using it for more than exchange of information or production of counter-information. Through a constant process of using and developing web-based tools, they are creating parts of the Internet as socially constructed spaces.

The montage above illustrates how appropriations of physical and virtual spaces can occur in close interaction especially during big or locally meaningful mobilizations – not only at the same time, but mutually influencing each other to the extent that the boundaries between the virtual and physical worlds are dissolving. [2]

This is different from earlier conceptualizations of the Internet. In the 1990s, it was widely seen as a kind of parallel universe, complete with virtual cities and shopping malls. Social movements started to experiment with the Internet as an additional space to articulate political dissent. The Critical Art Ensemble (CAE) declared in 1994: 'The new geography is a virtual geography, and the core of political and cultural resistance must assert itself in this electronic space.' [3] Consequently, they called for a strategic move away from the streets: 'Resistance – like power – must withdraw from the street. Cyberspace as a location and apparatus for resistance has yet to be realized. Now it is time to bring a new model of resistant practice into action.' [4] This type of analysis was widely discussed and put into practice. Hackers, artists and activists started to experiment with electronic civil disobedience. [5] Websites were hijacked, blocked or flooded with DoS-attacks in online-demonstrations and virtual sit-ins, online petitions started to appear, banners campaigning for a wide range of issues spread around the web.

By the late 1990s however, the streets were far from being abandoned as a site of political protest. The practices of an informal network of transnational movements against neoliberal globalization with its globally synchronized days of action and carnival-inspired direct actions, suggested a 'renaissance of street protests' (Schönberger).

At the same time, web-based tools from mailing lists and forums to websites and chat rooms and later collaborative content management systems (Wikis) and media streams were appropriated with breathtaking speed. Indymedia as a worldwide network of roughly 160 mutually linked alternative open publishing news websites uses a back office that includes a wide range of these tools. Combined with more traditional communication channels like printed media, FM-radio shows or film screenings, and in convergence with various forms of street protest, this extensive use of information and communication technologies creates temporary geographies of protest that are changing spatial and temporal perceptions.

But how exactly does this twofold appropriation of virtual and physical spaces work? How are they put into interaction, which practices are involved? A closer look at the Halloween Critical Mass bike ride in London can give us an idea about the construction of these evolving geographies of protest through discourses and practices both online and offline. To understand this process, it is necessary to explore both online and offline practices. Reflecting on a sociological interpretation of information technologies, Saskia Sassen argues that 'a purely technological reading of technical capabilities inevitably neutralizes or renders invisible the material conditions and practices, place-boundedness, and thick social environments within and through which these technologies operate.' [6]

The Halloween Critical Mass bike ride allows the exploration of both online and offline practices, as embedded in a thick social environment. It was fuelled by local knowledge as well as popular, political and subcultural practices. Volunteers from Indymedia London produced an extensive report on the alternative news website Indymedia UK in a chat room, parallel to and in interaction with the event in the streets.

Based on alternative media online publications as well as my participation in the Indymedia reporting effort, I will first outline a broad debate in webforums, blogs, chat rooms and alternative news websites which preceded the event. I will then explore how the stage was set for this performance of dissent through choices of place, time and action, and how media technologies were used in the streets. From there, we move to the practices in Indymedia UK chat rooms. Finally, I am trying to describe the temporary geographies of protest using the theoretical concept of deterritorialization.

Civil Liberties, Critical Mass and socpa Legislation: Negotiating the Demonstration Exclusion Zone

In April 2005, the UK government passed a new legislation as part of the Serious Organised Crime and Police Act (SOCPA). In London, a central area up to 1 km around Parliament Square was declared as a demonstration exclusion zone. This includes many London landmarks where protests traditionally take place, for instance Whitehall, Downing Street, Trafalgar Square and Parliament Square. For any demonstration in this area, notice must now be given six days in advance. This legislation first affected activist Brian Haw, who in 2001 started a permanent protest against the sanctions against Iraq and later the Iraq war in London's Parliament Square, where he has been camping ever since. Paradoxically, he is now (after a court case) the only person legally entitled to protest in Parliament Square, while other people can be arrested for activities as innocent as a Sunday afternoon picnic.

The legislation was widely discussed within civil society. It was criticized by civil liberties organizations and Members of Parliament. Alternative as well as corporate media, campaign websites and bloggers reported debates, actions and court cases. According to journalist George Monbiot, the new measures 'have the effect of banning any spontaneous protest outside Parliament or in Trafalgar Square, and of permitting the Secretary of State to ban demonstrations in places "designated" by him "in the interests of national security".' [7]

Among the events affected was the monthly Critical Mass bike ride. Often described as 'unorganized coincidence' rather than a demonstration, Critical Mass (CM) takes place 'when a lot of cyclists happen to be in the same place at the same time and decide to cycle the same way together for a while'.

Quoting from a report from indymedia.org.uk: 'On Friday 30th September, those who joined London's monthly Critical Mass ride, found themselves being issued with letters from the Metropolitan Police, threatening arrests at future Critical Mass rides, unless the 'organizers' give notice of the route at least six days in advance, and warning that the police can impose restrictions on the rides once the advance notice has been given.' [8]

Giving notice of a Critical Mass route in advance would be difficult, as one of the foundations of this cheerful tradition is that the route develops spontaneously. The (now defunct) London CM website stated: 'Nobody organizes CM in the sense that they control the event – what happens at the ride is up to all the individuals. However, as with any project, some individuals are usually more involved than others, for example in printing and distributing leaflets and other publicity, or maintaining this website. However, they only do the work, and don't have any authority over anybody else – their only power is to make suggestions.'

In response to this incident, cyclists announced 'London's biggest ever Critical Mass bike ride' for the Friday before Halloween. The leaflet stated: 'Critical Mass in London has rolled on since 1994 without police threatening to use the POA to impose conditions. Why invoke it now when there's been no need up to now? Why are they wasting time threatening innocent cyclists? Car drivers flock together to block the roads on a daily basis commuting to and from work. We don't block the traffic – we ARE the traffic!!!' [9]

Jenny Jones, an MP and member of the Green Party, informed the Metropolitan Police Commissioner in a public letter that she intended to participate in the next CM, and explained that 'many people do not see Critical Mass as a demonstration, but more like a hundred people getting on the same train at London Bridge.' [10]

The campaign against CCTV surveillance in the UK looks at the wider implications of the SOCPA legislation: What applies to the Critical Mass bike riders, will also apply to anybody thinking of, for example, driving down Whitehall past Downing Street, to protest about Fuel Tax or Prices, or the London Congestion Charge. [11]

These negotiations were embodied in a more practical manner in the 'networks of alternative communication'. Leaflets appeared in bike shops, health food shops, or social centres. The editors of the longstanding alternative newssheet 'Schnews' invited readers to 'get on yer bike'. People reported on Indymedia UK about the threat against Critical Mass. Several threads on Brixton based urban 75 community webforum [12] discussed the politics of cycling as well as practical issues about Critical Mass in general. Starting in early October, synchronized local solidarity rides were planned from Bristol to Glasgow. Levels of excitement rose 'on the day', when people shared their preparations for the Halloween bike ride on the forum: a cold gets in the way, arrangements are being made to leave work early or to meet up in town, a broken bike needs fixing, last minute information about the location is being exchanged.

The London Halloween Critical Mass was a culmination of complex negotiations about the right to protest involving parliament, the courts, civil liberties groups, media and grassroots movements. A vibrant public sphere opened up, made up of interventionist practices, discourses and competent use of communication channels. Critical Mass with its hybrid meaning between legitimate transport, use of urban public space and demonstration is predestined to push the boundaries of legislations like the newly introduced exclusion zone. While being in a legal grey zone, it constitutes a statement of dissent first of all against the priority given to cars, but also against the privatization and commercialization of urban space.

Setting the Stage: British Empire, Carnival and Halloween

On the day, the Critical Mass by far exceeded the 100 participants expected by Scotland Yard. [13] Ignoring the SOCPA legislation and unhindered by police, an estimate of 2000 cyclists moved slowly through the Central London exclusion zone.

The stage for this performance of dissent was not only set by a debate in the public sphere in a traditional sense. Crucially, the debate was embodied through the choice of symbolic place, time and action.

It is no coincidence that the Critical Mass reached its climax at Parliament Square, with no need for any prior agreement. This highly symbolic space was loaded with meaning about the relationship between government and citizens long before it was put in a demonstration exclusion zone. Situated in the vicinity of Westminster Abbey, the houses of Parliament, Whitehall, Buckingham Palace and Big Ben, it denotes the heart of the British Empire: Government, Parliament, Anglican Church and Monarchy. The right to stage protests in this green square directly in front of Parliament stands for the right to free speech.

Those meanings of Parliament Square are inscribed in a collective popular memory in London. London's grassroots movements are well aware of the symbolic meanings of Parliament Square: When 'Reclaim the Streets' faced criminalization and a vicious campaign in corporate media after the 'Carnival against Capitalism' on 18 June 1999 (another early globally synchronized protest), they chose Parliament Square to stage a peaceful 'Guerilla Gardening' complete with saplings and maypole dancing on Mayday 2000. On this occasion, the first independent media centre was set up in the UK with a public access point right in the middle of the action.

The Critical Mass in the SOCPA zone coincided with Halloween. This was taken up as a welcome link to the relatively recent popular (and commercial) practice to celebrate Halloween with decorations, 'trick or treats' and fancy dress parties. Combined with the carnival spirit that has become so crucial for direct action movements in the UK and beyond, [14] the connection to Halloween allowed for an extra festive atmosphere, as many cyclists turned up in fancy dress.

Media Technology Goes to the Streets

Apart from symbolically meaningful timing and choice of space, and the use of a tactic situated in a legal grey zone, oscillating between legitimate use of public space and direct action, technically mediated practices were involved in setting the stage. This included the creation of a soundscape made up from bicycle bells, singing, the rhythms of resistance Samba band and several sound systems. On Indymedia UK, Bazmo reports: 'I was Djing on the "Pedals" sound system – a 180 litre volume high-tech wooden loudspeaker cabinet towed behind a metallic green tandem. We towed pedals from London to Scotland in June 2005, part of the G8bikeride, a 60 strong cycle protest. The pilot sits at the front, the DJ at the back. I play tracks off my MP3 player, hyping the crowd with a microphone. Its an open mic giving us an interesting mix of protest & party announcements, points of view, rallying cries, songs & confused burbles. I play a mix of music – Drumnbass, Breakbeat, Breakcore, Blues, Jazz, Protest Tunes, RocknRoll, Heavy Metal, Funk, Reggae, Ragga, Dub, Hiphop, Folk, Psychadelic Trance, BreakCore. I try to ensure there's something for everyone. Judging by yesterday's smiling faces & bouncing front wheels, it went well.'

This account shows first the combination of almost archaic technologies – a wooden loudspeaker cabinet on a tandem – and the latest mp3 technology. Second, the reference to the G8 bike ride shows that the practice of disseminating tunes via mobile sound systems is an established practice within social movements, at least for this particular reporter.

Looking at the amount of pictures and reports on Indymedia UK, several blogs and the free image website flickr, it can be assumed that large numbers of people brought their cameras to take pictures. This should not be taken for granted: Early camcorder activists in the 1990s, like for example the UK-based group Undercurrents, were often faced with plain hostility when filming during actions and demonstrations. Today, producing and uploading protest reports has almost become a routine for many of those who participate in demonstrations.

The emergence of the worldwide network of alternative news websites Indymedia marks a

change of attitude towards media technologies within social movements since the late 1990s. The first 'Independent Media Center' (IMC) was set up 1999 to report about the protests against the World Bank meeting in Seattle. It consisted of a physical space and a virtual space. In a shop front packed with old computers, Internet access was provided for hundreds of instant journalists. Photos, videos, audio- and text files could be uploaded to a specially designed open publishing website, www.indymedia.org.[15] No registration was required for the website. Equally, everybody was free to use the physical space. Being both a web-based and an urban hub, this model provided more than a news resource: Indymedia became an interface between the events in the streets and the Internet.

The commitment to openness and a participatory, consensus-based style of collaboration resonates both with the free software movement and the 1990s grassroots movements. The Indymedia model was reproduced all over the world. Today, there are roughly 160 Indymedia websites, each run by a local collective. Technical resources, knowledge and media-making skills are being shared both locally and globally. The Indymedia collective in London, for instance, has been sharing minidisk recorders, microphones, network cables, a video projector and laptops. It has often used these appliances to bring media technologies to the streets, as public access points or physical media centres. The website indymedia.org.uk is hosted on a server in the USA. The software is maintained by an international working group.

Communication among and between the Indymedia collectives takes place in a 'back office' consisting of roughly 900 mailing lists, an ever growing wiki, and at least 80 chat rooms. This back office is a crucial infrastructure when media technology goes to the street in events like the Halloween Critical Mass bike ride.

Along with many other activist online projects, Indymedia is building an infrastructure for electronic communication among and beyond social movements. Servers need setting up, software needs to be developed and tweaked, wikis, chat rooms, mailing lists and websites need to be hosted, content needs to be produced. Cyberspace has become something that needs to be 'made' as well as a space where political interventions can be effectively staged. The practices involved have become part of a culture of protest, and they are playing an important role in the emerging geographies of protest. Like any technology, information technology is socially constructed. Taking a mailing list as an example: What is it for – extensive discussions, short announcements? Is it public or private? Who can subscribe to it, who has admin rights? Or the use of indymedia irc-chat rooms: Can they be used for decision making, or does this exclude too many people who don't have powerful web-access? Use of technological tools is constantly under negotiation, raising questions of hierarchies, collaboration style and transparency.

Participating by Reporting: Indymedia uk

On the day of the Critical Mass bike ride, Indymedia UK produced up-to-the-minute reports. The featured report on the Halloween Critical Mass on the indymedia.org.uk website was produced in the course of four hours of intensive collaboration. As people returned from the bike ride, they filled the open publishing newswire with additional reports including many photos and two video clips as well as dozens of mostly euphoric comments. All these were linked to the feature.

More than two dozen people with various degrees of involvement in Indymedia participated directly in the electronic arm of this local action. Indymedia volunteers located in bedrooms or social centres in London, Birmingham and Germany converged in a dedicated irc chat room to 'do dispatch' online. This means to process incoming news that arrives via phone, SMS, chat, the Indymedia open publishing newswires, or by messengers, and to upload it onto the Indymedia website. Live reporting has become a crucial part of many mobilizations and events. Indymedia volunteers tend to regard it as 'participating in' rather than 'reporting about'.

By 7pm, the reporting machine was in full swing. Breathless chitchat in the chat room produced background information about the SOCPA legislation and Critical Mass in other cities as well as information about solidarity bike rides in the UK. Every few minutes, people called in from the streets. The messages were typed into the chat room and added every few minutes to a timeline. When the Critical Mass reached Parliament Square, the excitement from the streets spilled over into the chat room, when anap, phunkee and ionnek each received phone calls within four minutes:

[10/28/2005 08:19 PM] <phunkee> parliament sq!!!!!!!!!!

[10/28/2005 08:19 PM] <ionnek_326610> they are there?

[10/28/2005 08:20 PM] <phunkee> YES!!!!

[10/28/2005 08:20 PM] <un> 8-)

[10/28/2005 08:20 PM] <ionnek_326610> 8:20 mass has arrived IN parliament

. . .

[10/28/2005 08:23 PM] <ionnek_326610> wow

[10/28/2005 08:23 PM] <ionnek_326610> just had a call.

[10/28/2005 08:23 PM] <ionnek_326610> cycling round and round parliament square

[10/28/2005 08:23 PM] <ionnek_326610> cheers so loud i could hardly understand!

. . .

[10/28/2005 08:25 PM] <anap> 2000 people rising their bikes

[10/28/2005 08:25 PM] <<phunkee>> people are lifting their bikes in the air

[10/28/2005 08:25 PM] <anap> yes that's what i menat

[10/28/2005 08:25 PM] <anap> meant

[10/28/2005 08:25 PM] <anap> i could hardly hear anything!

[10/28/2005 08:25 PM] <anap> wow

. . .

[10/28/2005 09:11 PM] <phunkee> looks like the movement has finally found a medium that's effective again :)

As one of the participants in the chat room, checking and updating the website and receiving phone calls, I experienced an immediacy, urgency and intensity not unlike the atmosphere reported from the streets. In the sequence quoted above, my heartbeat accelerated, my face was smiling while my fingers were typing. Participation in such events triggers emotional and physical responses, whether they are transmitted through

keyboards, wires, software and boxes or the sounds of a samba band or the physical experience of cycling in a Critical Mass. Social interactions in chat rooms, sometimes called co-present interactions, like greeting each other, toasting, even dancing are more than a simulation of their face-to-face equivalents: Sometimes they are even transferred from the chat room back to real space. [16]

A translated version of the English language reports on the Halloween Critical Mass appeared on the German Indymedia website almost at the same time as the original. [17] For Indymedia volunteers in Germany, the Indymedia UK chat rooms are only one click and a language away. Being part of the same project, with its own communication codes and rules of conduct, many imc volunteers are moving with great ease between chat rooms of various countries. Especially when 'geographies of protest' are emerging at times of large mobilizations, news and information are travelling fast over long distances.

Is 'doing dispatch' reserved for technically savvy people? And if not, how do people learn the basic technical skills needed to participate? Here is an example.

During the Critical Mass dispatch, there was time to share some basic html knowledge on the side. Ionnek, who is editing the feature article for the website, wants to know how to make a word appear in green colour. Skep replies.

[10/28/2005 08:44 PM] <phunkee> there are a few hundred people on roller skates travelling the opposite direction to parliament sq!!!!

[10/28/2005 08:44 PM] *phunkee this is fucking nuts

[10/28/2005 08:50 PM] <ionnek_326610> how do i html something green?

[10/28/2005 08:50 PM] <phunkee> 4 people phoning me sound deliriously happy

. . .

[10/28/2005 08:51 PM] <skep> ionnek_326610, I don't know if uk imc blocks certain html-tags, but normaly you could do it via 'test . . . but I think the software blocks that.

While we are using the electronic networks for communication and reporting, we produce more than counter information. We are also involved in the very process of building the technical base by further developing the software, supporting each other in the improvement of hardware, and building a network where knowledge is being produced and shared in everyday practice. An example for the innovative potential of the Indymedia model is the code base used for the websites themselves: It was developed within the local Sydney activist community in 1999, at a time when the ability to update websites via a browser with only basic knowledge of the html programming language was very rare. With their chronologically displayed newswire entries, each with its own URL, Indymedia sites are basically forerunners of the now widespread weblogs.

Geographies of Protest: Emerging Hybrid Spaces

Social scientists and web-theorists have been tackling the complex interactions between the digital and material worlds for over a decade. When looking at the implications of new technology use, they have identified a process of social, temporal and spatial reorganization, a 'hybridization' of physical and virtual spaces. The blurring of traditional boundaries has been described as 'deterritorialization', while emerging new boundaries are pointing to a process of 'reterritorialization'. For the social construction of geographies of protest, deterritorialization means that notions of proximity and distance are not solely defined by miles and kilometres, accessibility of transport or the borders between states. Traditional temporal definitions where a protest is followed by reports are collapsing into each other, when events are reported by activists live on the Internet through websites, blogs and streams in a collaborative social process. This does not only change the subjective experience of those who participate online. It can also provide a navigation system for those in the streets. Deterritorialization through geographies of protest also affects notions of identity. Markers like gender, age, class or ethnicity are less obvious in cyberspace, although they are by no means irrelevant. Online communication channels allow office workers to participate in protests even when they are confined to their workplace – the boundaries between work time and 'own' time can dissolve.

At the same time, new boundaries are reterritorializing the emerging hybrid space: Access to and familiarity with technological tools and online communities are becoming important for a person's social positioning both online and offline. The speediness of real-time online tools creates a sense of immediacy and urgency. Online behaviour becomes an identity marker in addition to traditional signifiers. Emotional and embodied responses adjust to the online environment, while typical online behaviour can be found in material encounters.

Within the Indymedia network, the process whereby virtual and physical spaces are merging into 'networks of alternative communication' is taking place every day. But the geographies of protest are most tangible during big mobilizations like the G8 in Scotland in 2005, or locally significant actions like the Halloween Critical Mass.

The story about the Halloween Critical Mass shows that such interactions are not restricted to technologically advanced settings like, for instance, corporate video conferences. Social movements with their do-it-yourself approach to information and communication technologies are competently mixing old and new technologies, thus integrating virtual and physical spaces.

The 1996 Zapatista call for 'networks of alternative communication' is a poetic expression of a concept that imagines the Internet neither as restricted to a site of protest nor as an additional journalistic outlet. Spatial metaphors are used to evoke a vision of future communication practices: 'Let's make a network of communication among all our struggles and resistances. An intercontinental network of alternative communication against neoliberalism . . . (and) for humanity. This intercontinental network of alternative communication will search to weave the channels so that words may travel all the roads that resist . . . [it] will be the medium by which distinct resistances communicate with one another. This intercontinental network of alternative communication is not an organizing structure, nor has a central head or decision maker, nor does it have a central command or hierarchies. We are the network, all of us who speak and listen.'[18]

This call doesn't even mention the technological tools. They are embedded in daily practices of resistance. Day-to-day use of online technologies – predominantly in, but not confined to industrialized countries – includes regular email checking, chatting, and contributing to forums, blogs, and websites. During events like the London Critical Mass bike ride, cyberspace can merge with the physical space of street protests, thereby creating socially constructed, temporary geographies of protest that add a layer of

meaning to both physical and virtual spaces.

Protecting Virtual Spaces?

The London Halloween Critical Mass as a classic intervention in urban public space, connected to digital channels of alternative communication, illustrates how physical and virtual spaces are intersecting to form a hybrid communication space.

'Weaving channels, so that the words may travel all the streets of resistance' means opening up spaces of resistance, temporary autonomous zones as well as ongoing technical infrastructure. Examples from the Indymedia project show that both are within the reach of state authorities: The physical independent media centre for the protests against the G8 in 2001 was brutally raided by the Italian police. A court case against the police is as yet ongoing. Two Indymedia servers in London were seized on request of the FBI in 2004, only a few days before the European Social Forum started in London.[19] These servers were hosted by a subsidiary of a US-based Internet Service Provider. The request for data on them was initiated by Italian authorities, who requested 'mutual legal aid' from the FBI, which then bypassed the British authorities and seized the hard drives in London via the US-based headquarters. The legality of this operation, requested by US-based authorities and carried out on UK territory, is still in doubt. Deterritorialization here as well: Traditional legal structures, bound within the confines of national boundaries, are becoming dysfunctional. Jebba, a tech-activist in the Indymedia network, comments: 'The Empire stole our harddrives.'[20]

These are only two examples of real power structures that are catching up with cyberspace. Sometimes such attacks have even strengthened the networks of alternative communication: The London server seizure, for example, has lead not only to technical improvements, but also to numerous new connections between Indymedia and trade unions, advocacy groups and civil liberty organizations.

In a speech titled 'Freedom and the Future of the Net: Why We Win',[21] Eben Moglen, lawyer of the Free Software Foundation, stated that there is no such thing as cyberspace. He uses the telephone as an example: if someone makes a fraudulous phone call, nobody would say it is
a crime committed in phonespace. It is a crime committed in the real world and someone used a phone. Similarly, the Internet exists in real space, where there are laws and land and switches and societies. It is in this real space that we are using, developing and defending our intercontinental networks of alternative communication.

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Footnotes

1. Indymedia uk: Massive Critical Mass Defies socpa Exclusion Zone, 28 Oct 2005. http://www.indymedia.org.uk/en/2005/10/326614.html, accessed 24 April 2006. rts stands for 'Reclaim The Streets'.
2. Some examples in: Marion Hamm, 'A r/c tivism in Physical and Virtual Spaces', on the webjournal: republicart.net 09/2003. http://www.republicart.net/disc/realpublicspaces/hamm02_en.htm, accessed 10 April 2006. Published in German in: Gerald Raunig (ed.), *Bildräume und Raumbilder. Repräsentationskritik in Film und Aktivismus* (Vienna: Turia & Kant, 2004), 34-44.
3. Critical Art Ensemle, *The Electronic Disturbance* (New York: Autonomedia, 1994). http://www.critical-art.net/books/ted/ted1.pdf, p3, accessed 24 April 2006.
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6. Saskia Sassen, 'Towards a Sociology of Information Technology', *Current Sociology* 50 (2002) 3, 365-388, 366.
7. George Monbiot, 'Protest as Harrassment', *The Guardian*, 22 February 2005. http://www.monbiot.com/archives/2005/02/22/protest-as-harassment-/, accessed 24 April 2006.
8. Indymedia uk, London Critical Mass under threat. 4 Oct 2005. http://www.indymedia.org.uk/en/2005/10/324919.html, accessed 24 April 2006.
9. Ibid.
10. Indymedia uk, Letter from Green Party to Met. police, 6 October 2005. http://www.indymedia.org.uk/en/2005/10/325044.html, accessed 24 April 2006.
11. http://www.spy.org.uk/parliamentprotest/2005/10/critical_mass_monthly_cycle_ri.htm, accessed 24 April 2006. This campaign website also gives a roundup of other protests against the socpa legislation.
12. Several threads on http://urban75.org/bulletins are dedicated to the October Critical Mass.
13. 'Cyclists to defy police in pedal power revolt', *The Guardian*, 7 October 2005. http://www.guardian.co.uk/uk_news/story/0,3604,1586675,00.html, accessed 24 April 2006.
14. See Sonja Brünzels, 'Reclaim the Streets: Karneval und Konfrontation', *Derive* 2 (2000). http://www.derive.at/index.php?p_case=2&id_cont=291&issue_No=2, accessed 24 April 2006.
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16. Examples in Marion Hamm, 'Indymedia – Concatenations of Physical and Virtual Spaces'. On: republicart.net 06/2005. http://republicart.net/disc/publicum/hamm04_en.htm, accessed 24 April 2006. In German: 'Indymedia - Zur Verkettung von physikalischen und virtuellen Öffentlichkeiten', in: Gerald Raunig and Ulf Wuggenig (eds.), *Publicum. Theorien der Öffentlichkeit* (Vienna: Turia & Kant, 2005), 176-186.
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Tags

Activism, Media Society, Urban Space