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New Technologies = New Chances ?

The Internet as Survival Tool for Zimbabwean Pro-Democracy Organizations

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1. Introduction

In the aftermath of the 2008 elections in Zimbabwe the world had to witness incredible atrocities against civilians and participants of the Zimbabwean democracy movement. Yet, this outburst of violence was just the peak of a long and sad story of fierce repression. In addition to the recent economic crisis including hyperinflation and food shortage, Zimbabweans have been suffering serious human rights violations during the last years (see Human Rights Watch 2008a/b, EIU 2008a/b, Freedom House 2008). Many social movement organizations (SMOs) fighting for democracy disappeared (Interview Müller), while those that survive encounter severe obstacles to their work.

Still, they keep on actively campaigning and courageously withstanding the repression as we are able to witness via the Internet. Various newsletters, blogs and updated websites kept people informed all around the globe, even when violence burst and street protests would have been impossible. An impressive example is the interactive map of Zimbabwe featuring the time and place of more than 2000 reported cases of violence published on the Internet in the direct aftermath of the elections (<http://www.sokwanele.com/map/electionviolence>).

Such protest is striking considering the hostile environment the SMOs are facing. This paper suggests, therefore, that the Internet serves the Zimbabwean social movements organizations as a survival tool providing them with vital resources beyond the reach of the governmental repression.

"The group can do no more than its resources and its environment permits (...)" (Freeman 1979: 167). Taking this statement by social movement scholar Jo Freeman seriously, we will apply Resource Mobilization Theory to analyze the impact of the Internet on Zimbabwean pro-democracy organizations, but also provide information about the political and economic environment of Zimbabwean SMOs to give a better understanding of the range of obstacles they are facing.

I will start by reviewing the Resource Mobilization Theory. The author finds the approach most appropriate for this research, because -according to the scholars who first developed this

theory-"(...) we focus more directly upon social movement organizations"(McCarthy and Zald 1977:1216), whereas other movement scholars tend to concentrate on social movements (SM) in general, their outcomes and their development (see e.g. McAdam et al. 1996, Tilly 2006, Kriesi 1995). We will analyze the vital resources for the SMOs and how they are obtained. I try to find an adequate operationalization given the differences between Zimbabwe and the Western democracies where the theory originates.

Section three of the paper presents findings on the relation between Internet and social movements. As with social movement research in general, we find a strong bias towards theorizing Western movements, although there are already studies about SMOs using the Internet in developing countries. We analyze the theoretical approaches in conjunction with the research on developing countries to obtain a better picture of how SMOs use the Internet.

In the next section I conduct a first test of the assumptions based on a sample of 16 organizations who answered my questionnaire (see Appendix). The form had been sent by Email to 75 Zimbabwean SMOs labeling themselves "democracy", "civil activism", "political activism and opinion" and/or "human rights" groups on an Zimbabwean NGO-Networking-Website (<http://www.kubatana.net>) where the Email contacts were taken from.

The findings should be viewed as a first investigation in this field of research and are not representative due to the small sample size. Nevertheless, they give us an indication as to how the Internet supports social movement organizations in developing countries and what should future research focus on, as I will discuss in the last section of the paper.

2. Resource Mobilization Theory

Taking into account the small explanatory power of earlier social movement theories that focused mainly upon grievances, the 1970ies saw more and more US scholars emphasizing economic rather than psychological rationales in explaining SM (McCarty and Zald 1977:1213). This was presented

most famously by McCarthy and Zald in the article "Resource Mobilization and Social Movements: A Partial Theory" in 1977. They state that for movement formation "the major factor is the availability of resources, especially cadres and organizing facilities" (Jenkins 1983:530). McCarthy and Zald treat SMOs as any other organizations and therefore assume that "once formed, they operate as though organizational survival were the primary goal" (McCarthy and Zald 1977:1226). Mobilization of resources, from this perspective, is crucial for the existence and survival of the SMO.

Apart from the focus on organizations rather than movements, Resource Mobilization Theory applies especially well for the Zimbabwean democracy movement, because it "appears most relevant for movements among deprived groups and broad disorganized collectivities" (Jenkins 1983:531). On the other hand, this approach, too, focuses mostly upon movement emergence (Voss 1996:228) and takes most of its case studies from the US and -more recently- Europe. SMs in developing countries are neglected. Thus, as McCarthy and Zald allude themselves (1977:1236), by using SM theories to analyse such cases, difficulties may arise, because democratic institutions or a certain level of wealth for example are often taken as a given.

Moreover, to find an appropriate answer as to whether the Internet helps mobilize vital resources, we have to investigate first the most important resources. Yet, McCarthy and Zald (1977) only name resources like time, money or labor and although it is almost taken for granted among movement scholars that "resources are a sine qua non determinant of the course and character of social movement organizations (SMOs) and their activities" (Cress and Snow 1996: 189), the conceptualization of resources is neglected and most research relies on a somewhat vague definition (Gamson 1987:1; Cress and Snow 1996:1089; Edwards and McCarthy 2006:125). While there is some consensus about the importance of resources like money, labor, knowledge/skills and (not always) legitimacy, table 1 gives us three examples of more refined conceptualizations from different decades and alludes to their similarities.

Publicity TANGIBLE Money Space	Sympathetic support MORAL Solidaristic support (both providing legitimacy)	Sympathetic support MORAL Solidarity support Legitimacy Celebrity
	MATERIAL Money Office space Meeting space Transportation Supplies Employment	MATERIAL Monetary Office Space Property Equipment Supplies
Unspecialized labor time and commitment	HUMAN Captive audiences (constituency and bystander populations)	HUMAN Labor
INTANGIBLE Specialized labor status in group status in polity expertise access to networks access to decisionmaking	Leaders Cadres Strategic support (for goal-attainment collective actions) Technical support (for organizational development & maintenance) INFORMATIONAL Referrals (connections to potential external organizations for resources)	Skills Experience Expertise CULTURAL Conceptual tools Specialized knowledge SOCIAL-ORGANIZATIONAL Social networks Organizations Infrastructures
Jo Freeman 1979:174	Cress and Snow 1996:1095	Edwards and McCarthy 2006:125ff.

Table 1: Three different approaches in conceptualizing resources

One of the first more detailed descriptions of SMOs' resources, Freeman's concept differentiates between tangible and intangible resources and suggests that money, space and "a means of publicizing the movement's existence and ideas" (Freeman 1979:170) are the tangible resources vital to SMOs. Intangible resources are basically people, further described as specialized or unspecialized. Unspecialized intangible resources are time and commitment, which Freeman defines as "the willingness to take risks or entertain inconvenience"(Freeman 1979:173). Yet in

comparison with Cress and Snow, their concept (1996) appears preferable for concrete research, because it derives from a study about the importance of resources to the viability of homeless SMOs in the United States, whereas Freeman, like Edwards and McCarthy, lacks empirical proof. Moreover, Edwards and McCarthy concentrate on SM rather than SMOs. However, their thoughts, which are based on US case studies, about the ways in which resources are obtained by SMOs will be helpful in theorizing the possibilities of Resource Mobilization for Zimbabwean organizations.

Before that, applying Cress' and Snow's concept of resources narrows the research question to: How does the Internet support Zimbabwean SMOs in mobilizing

- 1) Supportive statements or participation by other organizations (sympathetic support and solidaristic support)
- 2) Money and other tangible resources such as office space, meeting space, transportation, supplies, employment (material)
- 3) SMO participants with varying levels of skills and commitment (human resources)
- 4) "knowledge capital pertinent to the organization's maintenance and mobilization" (informational; Cress and Snow 1996:1095) ?

Cress and Snow operated inductively to identify the above mentioned resources and later on tested their importance for SMOs (measured by survival and activities), thus making their findings reliable and easily applicable for empirical research. However, the particularities of the SMOs analyzed have to be taken into account. Therefore the special emphasis on space which the homeless disapprove and strong leadership providing continuity to the organizations (Cress and Snow 1996:1099) will not be adopted hereafter. This is not contradictory to Cress and Snow's findings, because they state that "the salience of any particular resource or set of resources probably varies by type of SMO, the class or socioeconomic status of its constituents, and desired outcomes"(ibid.).

Accordingly, the important differences between the environment of the homeless SMOs in the US and that of SMOs in authoritarian systems have to be considered before implementing the concept

to this case. Depending on the repression level, SMOs in Zimbabwe can try to appeal for moral resources on the national level by turning to trade unions, church groups and industrial groups as those have been supporting the democracy movement, participating e.g. in the National Constitutional Assembly or giving support to the opposition party (Bond 2002:32). Talking about elite allies of the democracy movement, of course, the first one to be mentioned is the Zimbabwean umbrella organisation of trade unions (ZCTU) whose former leader, Mr. Tsvangirai, is now leader of the opposition party. Just like in other African countries, the unions in Zimbabwe have a mass basis, were able to operate unhindered for years and thus gained quite some influence (Alexander 2000). The National Constitutional Assembly (NCA) advocating a new and more democratic constitution is also central, because like the MDC, they are supported by groups from church to industry and also internationally (Danserau 2001:407; Sithole 2001:161ff.).

In recent times, however, even established organizations were deterred by harsh restrictions, so that mobilizing moral support on the regional or even international level became ever more important (see for example the Amnesty International Urgent Action on Zimbabwe Union Leaders; Amnesty International 2008). The advocacy of people like Bishop Tutu from South Africa (e.g. Tutu and Albright in "The Washington Post" 3/29/2007) is a good example of such moral support. It offers SMOs legitimacy and "a sense that others were behind them, an important moral booster (...)" (Cress and Snow 1996:1098), two aspects important for the viability of the SMOs analysed by Cress and Snow.

Tangible resources like the aforementioned office space, meeting space, means of transportation and supplies can be mobilized on the national level through networking with other organizations, termed "co-optation or appropriation" by Edwards and McCarthy. Another means for an SMO to obtain these tangible resources and SMO employment would be to "aggregate" (Edwards and McCarthy 2006) them itself by investing money. Mobilizing money, however, has become almost impossible in Zimbabwe (cf. EIU 2008 a). Therefore we expect successful Zimbabwean SMOs to

have international donors.

Mobilizing human resources, on the other hand, is first and foremost a national issue. As McCarthy and Zald have it: "Participation requires some combination of money, leisure or discretionary time, and energy." (McCarthy and Zald 1987:349). Economic hardship thus is a major obstacle in the Zimbabwean context, as well as repression and the lack of infrastructure, especially of means of communication (EIU 2008b; Internet World Stats 2008). In Zimbabwe, there are large variations in the level of infrastructure, information and repression between urban and rural areas (Sithole 2001:166, Human Rights Watch 2008b, CIA 2008, Danserau 2001). Yet, even in urban areas, economic hardship and fear of repression keep people from joining SMOs and collective action as was seen in the unsuccessful calls for strike this year (The Economist:4/19/2008). Not only in the aftermath of the 2008 elections, but also in various other occasions like 'Operation Murambatsvina' following the 2005 elections Zimbabwe's President, Robert Mugabe, showed his capacity and willingness to 'punish' opposition support rigidly (Bratton and Masunungure 2007, Human Rights Watch 2008a). More discrete ways of raising awareness and recruiting members must therefore be adopted.

At the leadership and cadre level, the brain drain effect caused by one third of Zimbabweans leaving the country in the last years (International Crisis Group 2008) is harming the SMOs. Training for 'captive audiences' to become cadres and leaders gains importance, but is difficult due to the current repression.

Training is also a way of amplifying the informational resources within an SMO. Moreover, SMOs can obtain such knowledge through networking with other Zimbabwean SMOs or asking other, wealthier international organizations for staff or technical assistance (a "patronage" way of access to resources; Edwards and McCarthy 2006). In modern times, however, the Internet provides one of the simplest ways of mobilizing informational resources.

But before I explore the advantages of Internet in achieving the above explained resources, a short

introduction into the research of Internet and SM gives us criteria for further analysis.

3. The Internet and Social Movements

Given successful Internet mobilization like the 'Battle for Seattle', the international support of the Zapatistas in Mexico or awareness raising for Nike's sweatshops by Jonah Peretti (Rucht 2005:16f.), at the beginning of the new millennium there was a genuine euphoria about the benefits of Internet. Especially "kleine, ressourcenschwache Akteure, die sich mit geringem Aufwand im Netz einem großen Publikum zeigen und zudem schnell und kostengünstig auf politische Prozesse einwirken können" (Rucht 2005:11) were assumed to take advantage of it, because it allows for "reduction of participation costs, creation of networks, and promotion of collective identity" (Van Laer 2007:6).

The cheaper and faster way of communicating, participating in collective action, and organizing nurtured the assumption that especially traditionally excluded groups with less resources would now begin to actively participate in a "cyber-democracy" (Norris 2001:235). However, this was contradicted by scholars emphasizing the unequal access to Internet technologies producing a "digital divide" (Norris 2001) on different levels: the global divide (between industrialized and developing countries), the social divide (between the rich and the poor in each country) and the democratic divide (between those people inside the Internet community who do and those who do not make use of its democratic potential) (Norris 2001:4).

Recent empirical research like Van Laer's analysis of demonstration participants in Belgium shows evidence for the pessimistic view of Norris' "reinforcement thesis" (Van Laer 2007:17), which states that "those already most interested and involved in public affairs take most advantage of the new opportunities for information, expression and political mobilization available via the Web" (Norris 2001:23). Still, the fact that the already advantaged make most use of the Internet, doesn't mean that the traditionally disadvantaged are completely excluded from its use. The above mentioned successful campaigns of relatively powerless actors prove that, even though they are

outnumbered.

While the democratic aspect of the Internet is controversial, its general advantages are not. According to Rucht: "Die prinzipiellen Vorzüge des Internet – Reichweite, Geschwindigkeit, geringe Kosten, Informationsreichtum, Dezentralität, weitgehende Abwesenheit von Zensur, Suchmaschinen, neuerdings auch die Verbreitung von WebBlogs usw. – können als bekannt vorausgesetzt werden." (Rucht 2005:11). Alongside the benefits for SMOs provided by the access to the endless amount of information, organizations are found to use Internet "to organise themselves and to interact with their members, sympathisers and core staff" (Cammaerts 2005:57), and for mobilisation of online as well as offline actions. Here it has to be noted, that apart from being quicker and cheaper, activism on the Internet is attributed to have special impact for its "strongly symbolic, image-driven, and representational form along with its claim to provide immediate and authentic information from specific groups" (Dartnell 2006:19).

SMOs are also described as communicating, organizing and networking transnationally (Cammaerts 2005:57). New technologies advanced the development of "international audiences, transnational advocacy networks, transnational social movements, and a global civil society" (Schock 2005:19). Cheaper and easier means of communication facilitate the mobilization of (tangible) third party support for SMOs and allow for routine interaction between SMOs of different countries (Schock 2005:18f.).

SMOs using new technologies are more likely to be involved in transnational advocacy networks (or TANs) thoroughly analysed by Keck and Sikkink (Keck and Sikkink 1998). That SMOs in repressive systems are also heard by TANs is emphasized by the fact that "bodily harm to vulnerable individuals and legal equality of opportunity" (Keck and Sikkink 1998:240) are among the most characteristic issues of TANs. Moreover, imposing pressure upon authoritarian regimes is typical of these networks (Keck and Sikkink 1998: 206).

Mixed findings are available about the potential of the Internet to attract new movement participants

(Van Lear 2007:8 and 19), but the unchallenged fact, that it intensifies existing social ties (Van Laer 2007:19) already supports the SMOs, especially when thinking of SMOs that are facing violence against their members. Scholars find that, SMOs benefit particularly "from Web access when conditions for open opposition are not available"(Dartnell 2006:25).

But the global digital divide makes sure that often repressive politics and little availability of new technologies coincide. This is why in depth research on SMOs' use of the Internet in developing countries is limited. In the theoretical literature about SM and new technologies we find the notion of 'third world countries' mostly to stress the uneven access and lacking democratic structures of the Internet (e.g. Norris 2001, Rucht 2005, Cammaerts 2005, Tilly 2003), despite examples of Internet-usage by SMs/SMOs in poor countries.

Apart from the already mentioned Zapatistas (e.g. Garrido and Halavais 2003), the Internet was utilized by the (exile) pro-democracy movement of Burma as early as in the 1990s (Danitz and Strobel 1999). Examples of Internet using SMOs can be found from Pakistan (Dartnell 2006) to Peru (Dartnell 2006), South Africa (Wassermann 2007) or Korea (Haesoo Kwon and Jong Youl Lee 2004).

The South African Case, being most similar to Zimbabwe, can give us an useful indication insofar that the international findings also apply to developing countries. The case study outlines the lacking infrastructure and extreme social inequalities limiting the access to online communication, as well as the importance of using available sources effectively: "fewer connections do not necessarily translate into limited political impact, if these connections are used effectively and creatively" (Wasserman 2007:114). Indeed, the SMOs reviewed often use of the Internet to communicate with other organizations and for administrative tasks benefiting from the cheap and fast communication. International networking is carried out through new technologies mainly - online communication being described as an "invaluable tool" (Wasserman 2007:122) to raise funds from abroad. The SMOs provide news and information about their claims and actions to a broader

public and use it to mobilize members of the "connected class" (ibid.), being well aware that the Internet is inappropriate to reach their own (less privileged) constituents. For this task "word of mouth" (Wasserman 2007:118) was still the best alternative, but Internet was also used as one means of communication amongst others to contact specific community members and ask them to spread the word (Wasserman 2007). Like their South-African counterparts, Zimbabwean SMOs can thus be expected to make use of the Internet, despite the global digital divide.

4. The Case of Zimbabwean Organisations

In accordance with the prior findings, I will now analyze the answers to the questionnaire.

4. 1.The Sample

As mentioned above, the sample size is too small to speak of empirical evidence, but offers good indications of tendencies and can suggest further research.

A set of 75 organizations labeling themselves as concerned with "democracy", "human rights", "political activism and opinion" or "civil activism" was taken from the website of a Zimbabwean SMO dedicated to support NGO networking (www.kubatana.net). The site is well known among Zimbabwean SMOs, as there are more than 250 organizations listed on their website, it won several prizes, and the organization has more than 3000 Zimbabwean subscribers to their newsletter (http://www.kubatana.net/html/donate/donate_cont.asp).

The questionnaire, along with a letter describing the background of the project, was distributed via Email. 18 organizations responded to the request, two of which turned out to be inappropriate for the project: one was based in South Africa and the other one said they were not involved in political activities and were partially state-funded. The following analysis is thus based on a sample of 16 Zimbabwean SMOs and includes a superficial review of their websites, if they had one. To provide for the anonymity of the SMOs the groups were given numbers from 1 to 18 and will hereafter be quoted as "ON X" (Organisation Number X). Tables summing up the answers to the questions are

found in the appendix.

Asked for their main goals, 12 SMOs gave answers that can be grouped as expressing different aspects of democracy (participation, civil liberties, rule of law, civic empowerment and good governance), 2 groups are concerned with HIV/Aids and Women empowerment, 1 group is dedicated to childrens' rights and the last one is a political theatre group. So they can all be treated as part of the broad pro-democracy movement in opposition to the repressive regime.

Striking about the sample was that all SMOs have more than one employee and 9 out of 16 were either not membership based or they were umbrella organizations having other SMOs as their members. Two of them are national chapters of an international organization. We have to take this high level of professionalism in mind when concluding from the findings.

That the struggle for survival is also a concern to the sample SMOs, becomes clear when looking at their replies to the question on restrictions to an SMO's work. This was asked as an open question to give the opportunity to phrase concerns as uncontroversial as possible given the threat of governmental harassment. However, all organizations openly stated that there are restrictions. Legal and political restrictions were mentioned by 13 SMOs. Restricted media was indicated 7 times, state violence 4, financial or problems of supply also 4, and the hyperinflation 3 times. Asked about their biggest problems, 11 brought up financial problems; government repression and violence was named by 8 SMOs; 5 alluded to the economic crisis of the country, and deficient supply and infrastructure was named by 2 groups each.

These answers illustrate and give credibility to the considerations of section 2 about the problems SMOs are facing in Zimbabwe, which were based on the Resource Mobilization Theory and international reports about the current situation in Zimbabwe. In addition, the fact that only 2 organizations feared their website will be closed because of financial problems and only 5 feared the government to shut it down, is rather suggestive of the hypothesis. I will now continue by comparing the theoretical assumptions to the SMOs' statements.

4.2. Moral Resources

We found moral resources can be obtained on the national level from churches, unions or industrial groups if repression allows for their freedom of speech. As those groups belong to the elite and are generally more likely to have Internet access, the Internet may be helpful, if used to inform about the SMO's work via website or direct Email to potential supportive groups, because the Internet is presenting a cheaper, faster, and less labor-intensive means of communication than traditional ones. Focusing on the international level, the Internet offers the possibility to present the SMO activities in a catchy and rapid way, never before available to small groups. Additionally the SMOs can send their reports or 'advertising' to international supporters directly using the Internet. One comment of ON 9 fits well in this context: "Yes the internet helps in that you can communicate with like minded people on a global level, you can also keep abreast of current events in your sector , and you can also source and share information and link up with others."

In the sample SMOs, indeed, give information about their work online (14 out of 15 replies). While only 11 of the SMOs have working websites (as of September 2008), all of these websites offer detailed information about the organization and feature contact details of the SMO. Almost all also give information about their campaigns (10 of 11).

All SMOs (15 out of 15) state that they communicate with other Zimbabwean activists or NGOs via the Internet. Many also contact journalists (11 out of 15). Most groups (14 of 15) use the Internet to communicate with activists or NGOs from other countries and 14 out of 15 try to address the international public via Internet-communication. ON 3 for example, when asked about the advantages of new technologies, explains that "the Internet brings the world into a global village." As for the sample, we can conclude that the SMOs capitalize the Internet's facilitation in mobilizing moral resources.

4.3. Tangible Resources and Money

Networking to co-opt or appropriate (Edwards and McCarthy 2006:134) tangible resources of other local organizations is again facilitated by the Internet's communicative advantages, although, of course, we may not forget that online communication is only possible between groups with Internet access and that research findings suggest that Internet-communication is most effective as an additional means of building relationship rather than an exclusive one. Thus, SMOs in the urban areas that have Internet access are most likely to profit from Internet-facilitation of networks, because their respective networks with tangible resources like space, means of transportation or supplies ought to be also situated in urban areas.

As the questionnaire doesn't cover the networking aspect directly, the only indication is the fact that all SMOs use the Internet to communicate with other SMOs in Zimbabwe (cf. 4.2.). Another clue is given by ON 13 whose members are individuals and other organizations: "Witout (sic!) it, it would be almost impossible to operate in terms of information sharing and mobilising network members (...)" (ON 13). It states that to communicate with other NGOs and activists in Zimbabwe the Internet is the means of communication most frequently used. Of course, to share tangible resources tangible contact is vital and can only be complemented by facilitated networking and organizing via the Internet.

With regard to the economic crisis, funds have to be raised outside Zimbabwe. This is underscored by the fact that 15 out of 16 SMOs are donor funded (the remaining one depends on donor funding for its projects) and 14 out of 16 have donors from outside Zimbabwe, while the other two note that only currently they have none. Actually, just 4 SMOs additionally rely on membership fees. Mobilising money therefore depends particularly on the SMOs ability to raise international awareness of their issue, to present their work and to find possible supportive networks. Hence an informative website, as well as online networking, are crucial to attract TANs given that travelling or comprehensive postal communication are unaffordable for most Zimbabwean SMOs.

As already mentioned, websites include detailed information about the organizations and their campaigns, often using pictures to illustrate it (8 out of 11). Another means of representing their work and claims is to offer reports on the website, 9 SMOs use this option. Although only two of the 11 websites reviewed offered tools to donate or subscribe to membership directly, 13 out of 15 SMOs stated that they communicate with donors via the Internet. ON 7 seems to be absolutely convinced about the benefits derived from the Internet: "For ON 7 the net has become an innovative way of releasing news to our partners, a means of researching about policy issues and specific best practices. Communication with donors and stakeholders has become easy and possible, above all our website www.ON7.co.zw markets our objectives and lots of people contact us after seeing our website." When asked whether new technologies like the Internet help the SMOs, 9 out of 15 SMOs named its advantages for international networking or communication with donors. "Actually it is difficult to operate without the internet in this globalised world. We use it for campaigns, for marketing purposes, fundraising, raising awareness, advocacy, education etc. It is also vital since we are able to reach many people world over."(ON 16).

4.4. Human Resources

Concerning human resources, like in the South African cases (Wasserman 2007), SMOs with a normal Zimbabwean constituency are assumed to be unable to mobilize the majority of their members online, as in both countries only around 10% of the population is online (Internet World Stats 2008). On the other hand, the Internet and particularly E-mails offer a safe and easy (in comparison to personal meetings and reunions) way of communication between members. Moreover, websites, newsletters and blogs provide the possibility of raising awareness and offering uncensored information which would not be possible via traditional media in Zimbabwe. ON 8 stresses this aspect of new technologies: "They also assist in reaching people quickly and cheaply. In Zimbabwe where there is strict curtailment on channels of information, the Internet is vital for

maintaining contact with people and getting out information."

Although Internet is not available in rural areas (CIA 2008), it remains interesting whether SMOs use the Internet to communicate with urban members (which would make communication and organization cheaper for the SMO) and whether information on their websites and blogs is targeted to inform the people of Zimbabwe.

First insights are provided by analyzing who the SMOs are online-communicating with: although communication via the Web is more common with other organizations, still 9 out of 15 use the Internet to stay in contact with their members.

members	public in Zimbabwe	international public	politicians	donors	journalists	other Zimbabwean activists/NGOs	activists/NGOs from other countries
9/15	9/15	14/15	6/15	13/15	11/15	15/15	14/15

Table 2: Who the SMOs communicate with

Also 9 out of 15 use online communication with the public in Zimbabwe. Yet, asked whether they think the Internet helps them to reach people in Zimbabwe, only 7 (out of 16) replied positively, one negatively and 8 are undecided. The latter groups are pointing to the difficulties to reach people at the countryside. ON 10 underlines this: "Internet helps a lot in networking with other organisations in Zimbabwe but it is of little use when it comes to communicating with our target groups. Rural Zimbabwe is not electrified and people in rural areas do not have access to computers, let alone the internet". While some are determined that they can reach urbanites, one SMO adds another aspect: "However in our experience cyber advocacy and activism is more effective when based in EMAIL (sic!) rather than Internet as many more people access email. In an embattled economy it is also important to note that people using internet cafes do so to check and use email rather than the internet because they are watching the costs of online access. Often access to the internet is slow." (ON 18). This may be an explanation for the fact that only 6 (out of 16) are communicating with

members via blogs and only 4 of the 11 websites offer interactive tools like a forum. It seems that websites are a less appropriate means to communicate with members or the broader public in Zimbabwe. 15 out of 16 communicating via Email with their members and affiliates and 11 out of 16 SMOs offering an electronic newsletter also points into that direction.

On the other hand side, 9 out of 11 websites reviewed feature reports and 10 offer information about the campaigns. Moreover, talking about the advantages of the Internet 5 SMOs mention the benefits of online information in the absence of free media.

The findings lead us to conclude that a) SMOs in Zimbabwe do make use of online communication and especially Email when contacting their members and partners. Statements of the SMOs in addition to the low Internet-penetration in Zimbabwe, also give us an idea about who are the SMO-members and evidence Pippa Norris' digital divide within a society. However, the fact that SMOs make active use of online communication means that skilled labor is more likely to be mobilized via the Internet.¹

b) SMOs also benefit from the advantages of uncensored information on the Web and use it to reach people in the urban centers. Still, an alternative public space is not created online. Similar to what Van Laers (2007) found out, the SMOs do not rely on the Internet as a means of attracting or mobilizing new members.

This point is further strengthened by the fact that only 5 SMOs (out of 15) ran a Web-campaign, whereas also 5 ran a mobile phone one. ON 18, an expert in Internet Communication Technologies, advises: "I believe that NGOs should be wary of replacing traditional communication methods with cyber initiatives. They may be "sexy" and new but in real terms, in a country like Zimbabwe, printed information rules the day as the most important way of communicating with constituencies."

And, indeed, 14 out of 16 SMOs indicated that they communicate with members in person and

¹ As leadership and - and cadre-resources are specifically hit by the brain-drain, this is also an important aspect for SMOs. In the sample, however, only one group complained about this (ON 18) and one can say that, when it comes to new technologies, they already possess quite some knowledge as of 11 homepages 10 were developed by Zimbabweans and 8 directly by group members.

affiliates of the organization, 15 use mobile phones and still 13 use landline communication, others mentioned 'old fashion' media like mail, newspaper, or postcards. Yet, ON 13 explains that in Zimbabwe Email is the safest. They therefore use mainly Internet-communication between members and confirm that the Internet also helps to mobilize human resources, although not in the broad public.

4.5. Informational Resources

Informational resources can be obtained through training, networking, patronage and online information (cf. Edwards and McCarthy 2006). Except training facilitation, the Internet provides advantages in mobilizing informational resources by making networking and contact to possible patronage organization more easily accessible. I have already outlined that Zimbabwean SMOs in the sample appreciate the facilitation of communication with international organizations: "Being a civic organisation we have a lot to learn from others and we rely on support and solidarity from other like-minded organisations. The Internet is the medium of communication, exchange and learning for us" (ON 10).

Furthermore, Zimbabwean SMOs share from the online knowledge SMOs from around the globe have gathered. Strategic information concerning tactics and ideas for collective action, technical information about organization and maintenance aspects of the SMO, or information about potential supportive organizations, identified as the most important informational resources by Cress and Snow (1996:1095), are easily available nowadays. Accordingly, 15 out of 15 SMOs state they use the Internet to get information and many (9 out of 15) named this advantage in answering the open question. It therefore stays clear that the Internet supports the mobilization of informational resources for SMOs in Zimbabwe.

5. Conclusion

This paper started by reviewing Resource Mobilization Theory, which was found as most appropriate to investigate the research question. Although it indicates that for SMO survival the availability of certain resources is crucial, I had to first find an adequate operationalization of the concept. The inductive concept of Cress and Snow (1996) deriving from a case study was most convincing, so I defined the four different groups of vital resources as moral, material, human and informational resources. In combination with approaches on resource access (Edwards and McCarthy 2006), I developed general considerations about Resource Mobilization of Zimbabwean SMOs.

A first approximation to the Zimbabwean case, made us expect SMOs turn towards the international arena for moral, informational and tangible resources (especially money), while network access and people mobilization on the national level are equally important for human, tangible, informational and, if repression is moderate, even moral resources.

Further, I examined the research on the relationship between the Internet and SMOs: when the Internet first came up, scholars were enthusiastic about its expected promotion of political participation and empowerment of traditionally disadvantaged groups. Later on more, skeptical voices saw little chance for the disadvantaged to actually benefit from the Internet. Although the pessimistic view now overbalances, we also find case studies forwarding successful examples of SMOs in developing countries.

Indeed, the examination of the 16 Zimbabwean SMOs suggests that the organizations benefit in various aspects from online access. This is definitely the case with moral resources: SMOs in the sample use the Internet to give information about their work to other organizations within or outside Zimbabwe and to link up with them. This networking also helps mobilizing tangible resources on the national level. As the SMOs under review conduct networking activities online, they profit from the fast and cheap flow of information. Furthermore, the sample gives strong evidence to the

assumption that money will rather be mobilized internationally than from within Zimbabwe. Of course, other means of communication, as well as in-person-meetings remain important for the SMOs in the sample, but for gathering informational resources the amount of online-information provides extraordinary advantages, from which these SMOs are keen on benefiting.

However, online mobilization of human resources is restricted. While many SMOs under review offer a newsletter and still more than half of them communicate online with their members and the Zimbabwean public, the problem of Internet-access at the countryside, but also for the urbanites is brought up by many of the groups. This is mirrored in the little use of Internet campaigning. After all, less than half of the SMOs trust that the Internet could help them to reach people in Zimbabwe. However, it doesn't keep groups from delivering uncensored information to those Zimbabweans that can be contacted online and we may assume that SMOs mobilize Zimbabwean elites via the Web.

We can conclude, that for the sample SMOs the Internet facilitates access to all of the types of resources considered vital for organization maintenance. Although the scope of facilitation differs among the resources, we can still state that for the reviewed SMOs the Internet does provide a survival tool in times of financial and political constraints.

However, to establish more reliable findings on the topic, a larger sample would have to be reviewed. This paper presents an operative framework for such research. Taking into account the bias of the sample towards professional and rather established groups, an interesting question arising from this paper, is to find out whether new, less affluent and smaller SMOs are able to benefit from the Internet, too. Or is the Internet a survival tool only for the fittest?

While this paper doesn't try to answer such questions, it does want to attract attention to the active use of the Web by SMOs in developing countries. Let me therefore conclude by saying that without the Internet, my attention wouldn't have been drawn towards Zimbabwean SMOs and I wouldn't have researched them without Email-newsletters like that of the following quote:

"Everyone has had been touched by the regime's terror tactics and no one believes that the regime

will back down without a fight. While they use terror and fear and violent weapons, democratic forces are determined to spread words, and hope and bright colours in a dark period."

(ON 19-Newsletter, June 2008).

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Interview

22.06.2008, Ute Müller, member of the German Amnesty International 'Koordinationsgruppe Zimbabwe'.

Appendix:

Questionnaire: Civil society and new technologies

Please comment and/or explain your answers. If any questions are difficult for you to answer, please feel free to skip them. Your answers will be dealt with anonymously and only for university research. Where appropriate, please type your answers under the questions that are asked or write them out on the back of the form.

Please return your form to: 1st of September 2008

1. General information about your association:

- a) What are the main goals of your association?
- b) How many members does your association have? How do you define membership?
- c) How many employees does your association have?
- d) How do you finance your association?
- e) Do you have supporters and/or donors from outside Zimbabwe?

2. Your means of communication (check all that apply):

- a) How do you communicate with members and affiliates of your association?

- directly (in person) - mobile phones - landline
- e-mail - electronic newsletter - blogs
- other: _____

- b) Do you think the Internet helps you to reach people in Zimbabwe?

- c) Who do you communicate with via Internet (check all that apply)?

- members - the public in Zimbabwe - the international public
- politicians - donors - journalists
- other Zimbabwean activists/NGOs - activists/NGOs from other countries
- other: _____

3. Your use of new technologies:

- a) For what purposes does your association make use of the Internet?

- to get information - for fundraising - for campaigns
- to give information - other: _____ (Please give details.)

- b) If you have run a campaign on the web or via mobile phones (please give details):

- what was it about? - how could people participate? - how many people participated?

- c) If you have your own website:

- who developed it? - how old is it? - how many visitors per month does it have?

- d) Do you think new technologies like the Internet help you? Please explain.

4. Obstacles to your work:

- a) Are there any restrictions on your activities? If so what are they?
- b) Is there any concern that your website could be shut down?
- c) What are your biggest problems as an association? Please explain.

Tables

A. Answers to the Questionnaire

1. General information about your association:

a) What are the main goals of your association?

ON	Type of SMO
1	HIV Women
2	democratic values
3	democratic values
4	n/a
5	human rights, democratic values
6	HIV Women
7	childrens' rights
8	GAY-Lesbian, democratic values
9	democratic values
10	human rights, democratic values
11	exile (South African)
12	mental health (State sponsored)
13	democratic values
14	human rights, democratic values
15	human rights, democratic values
16	democratic values
17	human rights, democratic values
18	human rights, democratic values
comment	12 democratic values, 2 Women and HIV, 1 childrens' rights, 1 n/a (political theatre group), 2 not appropriate

Democratic values = civil liberties, participation, rule of law, civic empowerment, good governance

b) How many members does your association have? How do you define membership?

ON	Number of Members	Comments by the SMOs
1	-	We moved from a membership organisation to a Women trust.
2	280 individual members	
3	300 000	
4	16	
5	98	Our association has no membership but beneficiaries
6	-	We're part of a global family in over 44 countries all over the globe,
7	-	ON7 is constituted by membership of organisations and individuals.
8	about 500	Members join the association & pay an annual membership fee.
9	-	24 members. Members are constitutionally registered NGOS operating in Zimbabwe who are accepted after application
10	-	
13	-	as stated above, it is a network of 38 members.
14	70	We have an active membership of seventy (70) XXX professionals countrywide.
15	-	It's not a membership organisation but a trust
16	-	
17	12 000	Members are those individuals and institutions that have paid a subscription and membership is renewable every year.
18	-	

c) How many employees does your association have?

<i>ON</i>	<i>Number of Employees</i>
1	13
2	8
3	8
4	n/a
5	8 (one woman)
6	approximately 35
7	33
8	13
9	3
10	5 full time staff members and 10 volunteer trainers.
13	11 programme staff and 7 support staff.
14	4
15	104
16	5 (volunteers)
17	17
18	5
comment	every organisation has employees

d) How do you finance your association?

<i>ON</i>	<i>Donor</i>	<i>Member</i>	<i>Own</i>
1	1		
2	1	1	
3	1		
4			1
5	1		
6	1		
7	1		
8	1	1	
9	1	1	
10	1		1
13	1		
14	1		
15	1		
16	1		1
17	1	1	
18	1		1
total=16	15	4	4

e) Do you have supporters and/or donors from outside Zimbabwe?

<i>ON</i>	<i>Yes</i>	<i>No</i>	<i>Details</i>
total=16	16	-	two not at the moment (ON 14 and ON 16)

2. Your means of communication (check all that apply):

a) How do you communicate with members and affiliates of your association?

<i>ON</i>	directly in person	mobile phones	landline	e-mail	electronic newsletter	blogs	other
1	1	1	1	1	1		print news letter
2		1	1	1	1		
3	1	1	1	1	1		
4	1	1					
5	1	1		1	1	1	pamphlets
6	1	1	1	1	1		
7	1	1	1	1	1	1	
8	1	1	1	1	1		
9	1	1	1	1	1		
10	1	1	1	1			
13	1	1	1	1	1	1	workshop
14				1			hand delivered mail.
15	1	1	1	1			mail
16	1	1	1	1	1	1	
17	1	1	1	1		1	newsletter
18	1	1	1	1	1	1	newspapers, leaflets, DVDs, Fax, news-paper ad, postcards
total=16	14	15	13	15	11	6	

b) Do you think the Internet helps you to reach people in Zimbabwe?

<i>ON</i>	<i>Yes</i>	<i>No</i>	<i>Undecided</i>
1	1		
2			1
3			1
4	1		
5		1	
6			1
7	1		
8	1		
9	1		
10			1
13			1
14			1
15	1		
16			1
17			1
18	1		
total=16	7	1	8

c) Who do you communicate with via Internet (check all that apply)?

ON	members	public in Zimbabwe	international public	politicians	donors	journalists	other Zim activists/ NGOs	activists/ NGOs other countries
1	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
2	1		1			1	1	1
3	1				1	1	1	1
4			1		1		1	
5		1	1	1	1	1	1	1
6		1	1		1		1	1
7	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
8	1	1	1		1	1	1	1
9	1	1	1		(?)		1	1
10		1	1		1	1	1	1
13	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
14	1		1		1		1	1
15			1		1	1	1	1
16	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
17			1	1	1	1	1	1
18	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
total=15	9	9	14	6	13	11	15	14

3. Your use of new technologies:

a) For what purposes does your association make use of the Internet?

ON	to get information	for fundraising	for campaigns	to give information	other
1	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	
2	1	1	1	1	
3	1	1	1	1	
4	1	1		1	
5	1	?	1	1	(elsewhere they state to communicate with donors; the author)
6	1	1	1	1	
7	1	1	1	1	
8	1	1	1	1	
9	1	1		1	
10	1	1	1		
13	1	1	1	1	
14	1	1	1	1	
15	1	1		1	
16	1	1	1	1	
17	1	-	-	1	-
18	1	1	1	1	
total=15	15	13	12	14	

b) If you have run a campaign on the web or via mobile phones (please give details):

- what was it about?

- how could people participate?

- how many people participated?

<i>ON</i>	<i>Online Campaign</i>	<i>Campaign via mobile phones</i>
1	n/a	n/a
2	1	
3		
4		
5	1	
6		1
7	1	
8		1
9		
10		
13		1
14		1
15		
16	1	
17		
18	1	1
total=15	5	5

c) If you have your own website:

- who developed it?

- how old is it?

- how many visitors per month does it have?

<i>ON</i>	<i>Zimbabwean</i>	<i>Group member</i>	<i>how old</i>	<i>visitors</i>
1	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
2	1	1	1 year	30-50
3	1	1	2 years	min 500
4	-	-	-	-
5	1		4 years	min 50
6	1	1	1year	don't know
7	1		8 years	don't know
8	1	1	3 years	don't know
9	-	-	-	-
10	1	1	<1year	don't know
13	1	1	8 years	
14	-	-	-	-
15	1	1	5 years	don't know
16			>1year	>50
17	n/a	n/a	<1year	don't know
18	1	1	7years	don't know
total=15	10	8		

d) Do you think new technologies like the Internet help you? Please explain.

<i>ON</i>	<i>Yes</i>	<i>Safe & free media</i>	<i>Inter-national networking</i>	<i>Network-ing with other SMOs</i>	<i>Communi-cate with donors</i>	<i>Communi-cate with members</i>	<i>Fast, cheap & easy com-munication</i>	<i>Get Informa-tion</i>	<i>Give Informa-tion</i>	<i>Limited Impact in Zim</i>
1	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
2	1	1								1
3	1		1							
4	1		1				1			
5	1	1					1			
6	1							1		1
7	1				1	1		1	1	
8	1	1				1		1	1	
9	1		1	1				1	1	
10	1			1	1			1	1	
13	1		1	1		1		1	1	
14	1		1	1		1	1			
15	1			1	1	1	1			
16	1		1		1				1	
17	1	1				1	1			
18	1	1						1	1	1
total=15	15	5	6	5	4	6	5	7	7	3

4. Obstacles to your work:

a) Are there any restrictions on your activities? If so what are they?

<i>ON</i>	<i>Yes</i>	<i>Legal/ Political restrictions</i>	<i>restricted Media</i>	<i>Violence</i>	<i>Money/ Supply</i>	<i>Inflation</i>	<i>other</i>
1	1	1	1				
2	1	1	1	1		1	
3	1	1	1	1			
4	1	1					
5	1	1	1				
6	1	1	1		1	1	
7	1					1	
8	1	1	1				
9	1				1		Not having a website is a restriction as we cannot make ourselves and our work known to the world
10	1	1		1	1		
13	1	1		1			
14	1	1					
15	1	1					
16	1	1			1		Expensive subscription fees for websites, e-mails etc
17	1	1					
18	1		1				We need:- improved IT infrastructure, more service providers etc - Tertiary institutions to provide more computer and access to the internet for their students - liberal policies on cyber communications, - Zimbabweans check their inherent self-censorship – the government does not censor the Internet, Zimbabweans censor themselves
total=16	16	13	7	4	4	3	

b) Is there any concern that your website could be shut down?

<i>ON</i>	<i>Yes</i>	<i>No</i>	<i>Comments by the SMOs</i>
1	1		HIV /AIDS offer opportunities to challenge the status quo. Politicians may feel threatened
2		1	Not yet
3	1		
4			(have none)
5	1		As the interception and communication Act gives the state powers to interrupt with emails and websites.
6	n/a	n/a	
7		1	
8		1	No, and it is mirrored.
9			(have none)
10		1	If we fail to pay the charges to the company hosting our website
13	1		There is a possibility that it can be shut
14			(have none)
15		1	
16	1		The major threat is that it will be shut down if we fail to pay our subscription
17	1		Zimbabwe has passed a law called Interception of Communications Act which empowers government to snoop into people's communications and to charge those found with messages deemed to be dangerous by government. This affects e-mails, snail mail, telephones, radio stations, etc.
18	1		Always, but we'll start up again. You can't keep a good project down.
total=15	7	5	3 have no website, one n/a

c) What are your biggest problems as an association? Please explain.

<i>ON</i>	<i>Economic situation</i>	<i>Supplies</i>	<i>Infrastructure</i>	<i>Government repression and violence</i>	<i>Financial Problems</i>
1		1			1
2	1			1	
3	1			1	
4				1	1
5		1			1
6				1	1
7					1
8	1			1	
9					1
10				1	1
13				1	
14					1
15	1		1		1
16					1
17				1	
18	1		1		1
total=16	5	2	2	8	11

B. Review of the Websites

<i>ON</i>	<i>Website</i>	<i>Interactive</i>	<i>Pictures</i>	<i>Donations via the Website</i>	<i>Information about the SMO</i>	<i>Reports</i>	<i>Information about campaigns</i>	<i>Contact</i>	<i>Links to other SMOs</i>
1	(doesn't open)	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
2	1		1		1	1	1	1	1
3	1		1		1	1		1	1
4	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
5	(under construct ion)	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
6	1		1		1		1	1	1
7	1			1	1	1	1	1	
8	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
9	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
10	1		1		1	1	1	1	-
13	1	1	1		1	1	1	1	1
14	(not yet)	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
15	1				1	1	1	1	1
16	1				1		1	1	1
17	1	1	1		1	1	1	1	1
18	1	1	1		1	1	1	1	1
total=11	11	4	8	2	11	9	10	11	9