

**The Activist Group 'Byen Vår' and the use of ICT in the Mobilization
against Advertisement-Financed Public Furnishings in Bergen**

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Introduction¹

One of the most pronounced post world war demographical changes is the development of large, interconnected urban regions, which implies that more people live in big city-regions. This development has altered the context in which people participate and get mobilized. In this paper we study a case of urban, political mobilization in the city of Bergen, Norway. Research show that participation within conventional political institutions (elections and parties) have declined in city areas in Norway (Saglie and Bjørklund 2005), at the same time as urban citizens seem to take more direct popular initiatives to put an issue on the municipal political agenda (Klausen and Christensen 2006). Empirical research on political participation in general also documents that political activity requiring less constant effort by individuals is increasing, whereas participation requiring more long-term engagement is diminishing (Togebly 2005; Oscarsson 2003; Strømsnes 2003). In particular, there is a growth in single-issue mobilization. Parallel to this weakening of traditional representative institutions, and the demand for more direct communication between electors and elected (Budge 1996), the spread and popularity of new information and communication technologies (ICT) such as Internet, cell phones and email have increased, and new ICT are more often used in democratic processes. Enthusiasts of technology thus look to modern ICT to find solutions to representative democracy's participatory challenges.²

In this paper we analyse how new information and communication technologies are used in single-issue mobilization in city areas; i.e. the way in which an urban network-based activist group uses new ICT to mobilize, inform and influence political decisions. The empirical basis for the analysis is a protest against advertisement-financed street furniture and public facilities (buss passenger shelters, city bicycles and public restrooms) in the municipality of Bergen. After competitive tendering, Bergen city council, in spring 2005, negotiated a contractual

agreement with the multinational company Clear Channel, to supply advertisement financed street furniture and public facilities. At this point in time Clear Channel already held legal contracts for street furniture and advertisements concessions in 25 Norwegian cities, in addition to the Norwegian National Railway, Oslo's Gardermoen Airport and numerous shopping centres.³ In Bergen, the contractual agreement included setting up and maintaining 900 buss shelters, 10 so-called SmartBike stations and three public restrooms in the city centre, in exchange for setting up 490 advertising displays. The contract was to be valid for 15 years.⁴

During autumn 2005, a strong mobilization against the contract developed in Bergen, and an activist group was established to prevent its ratification. The mobilization was successful from the activists' perspective, because on October 24, 2005, the city council reversed its position and voted against the contract. Bergen became the first Norwegian city to refuse advertisement financed street furniture and public facilities. The activist group *Byen Vår* (literally translated 'Our City') was the primary agent in preventing the contract's ratification, and it is this group we will examine here. *Byen Vår*, firstly, is a loosely organized network with a flat structure (at least at its inception). Second, it is an *ad hoc* group with clear political goals, in other words, it is active only for a short term and oriented towards only one issue. Third, *Byen Vår* comprises a wide spectrum of perspectives and approaches to the critical issue of advertisement financed city furnishings. The group started with a unified mooring in its opposition to the Clear Channel contract, but beyond that, it appeals to a number of divergent groupings. It is reasonable to assume that these characteristics are significant for how the network uses ICT.

The first section of this paper gives an account of our approach. Here we distinguish between types of technology and their use in relation to internal communication (between activists) and external political mobilization (directed towards the political system and population in general). Thereafter we present the data. This is followed by a chronological presentation of how the Clear Channel case unfolded, and the mobilization within Byen Vår's network. We show how the mobilization process can be divided into distinct phases. The assumption is that ICT will play different rolls for the activist network, all in relation to which phase of a political mobilization process it finds itself in. Lastly, we present the empirical analysis, where we first account for the technologies used by Byen Vår and then analyse their contents. Our focus is mainly on the activist network's website and use of email lists. The paper concludes with a discussion of the main findings.

Approach

The relations between ICT, organization and democracy comprise a growing field of research, yet the field lacks a clear theoretical rooting. While earlier literature has speculated in various arguments for and against digital democracy, and about the possible political effects of new ICT (Budge 1996; Barber 1999; Davis 1999), newer empirical research focuses on how Internet and net-based communication tools (e.g., email) are used in established organizations such as municipalities, administrative agencies and political parties (Fountain 2001; Christensen and Aars 2002; Haug 2003; Saglie and Vabo 2005; Gibson et al. 2003; Pedersen and Saglie 2005; Torpe et al. 2005). The main finding in this literature seems to be that technology accommodates itself to the various activities and ways of thinking of different organizations. Gillian Symon (2000: 405) shows, for example, that 'Technological determinist arguments have been replaced by [the suggestion] that it is the organizational

context (or culture) which will influence how ICTs are implemented and used'. We therefore assume that the organization type (in our case, a network of activists) is significant for the way technologies are used. Research also suggests that the new technologies are particularly well suited to grassroots organizations and ad hoc mobilization (Scott and Street 2000; Norris and Curtice 2004; Garrett 2006). Some researchers even foresee modern ICT helping to '[boost] the importance of issue groups that exist only for the duration of a single political effort' (Garrett 2006: 211, with references to Bimber 2000).

Conventional mass media, i.e. 'old' technologies such as daily newspapers, television and radio, have always been important communication channels for activist groups (Garett 2006). New technologies, we assume, expand the activists' scope of action. Computer networks provide immediate communication, thus making decisions and collaboration happen significantly faster, at any time of the day or night, and thus also more effectively. These characteristics are well suited to activist networks' ad hoc engagement (Riba 2003). Internet is used to spread information which is ignored by traditional mass media channels. Thus activists can circumvent mass media's information filtering and take up the editorial role themselves. New ICT have dramatically changed the resources necessary for publishing alternative information. This is significant because activism often involves not only trying to influence concrete political decisions, but also changing the conditions for the debate. Meanwhile, it should be emphasized that when the cost of publishing is reduced to such an extent as we are talking about here, competition for the public's attention also increases. As Grethe Melby (2002) points out: 'To believe you reach the entire world because you have your own website is like rejoicing over being listed in the telephone catalogue' (translated).

Nevertheless, new ICT allow activists to increase their tempo of interaction, independent of geographic location (van de Donk et al. 2004), and it is reasonable to assume that this makes it significantly easier to coordinate activism. New technologies also create new arenas for discussion. While conventional media (TV, radio) mainly allow passive one-way communication, Internet permits dialogue with others who also communicate electronically. This interactivity enables message receivers to communicate with senders and to influence them. The change implies that an increasing amount of people view this technology as a possibility for discussing diverse viewpoints, and not merely as a channel for spreading information. It can therefore be used to create new forms of democratic dialogue, be they internal (between activists) or external (between activists and the society at large). Worth noting, however, is that although Internet opens a *possibility* for interactive collaboration, one can not assume that communication through the Internet is always interactive (Schultz 2000).

Our point of departure for studying an activist network's use of new ICT is to view the various technologies as tools network-based activist groups can use in different ways. ICT are thus tools that can augment other means, such as demonstrations, signature campaigns or communication through conventional media. From an activist's perspective, all mass media – old and new – are important channels for information and influence. Activism is inherently a goal oriented activity; it concerns putting an issue on the public agenda, reversing a political decision or influencing a decision process in a specific direction. This means that technologies can have external as well as internal functions. Externally, these functions include getting attention, mediating viewpoints, in short, setting the public agenda. Internally, they include developing strategies, spreading information quickly and mobilizing activism. We conceive of new ICT as providing activists with a specific opportunity structure, and that they can fulfil three main functions for an activist network.

First, ICT generally, and Internet in particular, will be important channels activist groups can use for *disseminating information* to the general public. Because Internet allows more comprehensive and quicker exchanges of information, control over the information becomes an important aspect of the external battle between activists and their opponents. The activists' information strategy must be viewed from this perspective. What activists promulgate via Internet must be interpreted in light of the picture they want to portray. When we study a website, it is insufficient to merely examine the contents found there; just as important is the information left out. This aspect of control can also have significance for the way the technology is used *internally* in the activist network. Just as with other groups, activists need to test strategies and viewpoints before they are publicly launched, and internal email lists can be used to develop various forms of self-censure. Because our research concerns activists with exceedingly clear political goals, we also assume that effectivity in relation to achieving goals has greater priority than safeguarding internal democratic game rules amongst the activists themselves. It is therefore worth studying how different opinions internal to the network come to expression – whether all information is available to everyone, or whether technologies are also being used to differentiate between internal participants.

Second, ICT will fulfil an important *mobilization and influence function*. The ad hoc network's objective is to turn a decision in a specific direction. Externally, this involves using technologies to mobilize support for the activists' viewpoint. It can involve spreading unfavourable information about their opponent, and information that can tip the balance for key decision makers. Not least, it will be important to use technologies to build alliances with other organizations, organized groups and community members, by publishing information that can interest, engage and mobilize them. A website can, e.g., enable activists to reach

people directly with a political message by presenting the background and motivation for their activism. They thereby avoid the filtering mechanism that characterizes other mass media. These media's information monopoly dissolves when community members can themselves seek factual information on the activists' website. Internal to the activist network is the ICT function of mapping who key decision makers are, above all, who can be persuaded to change their position, but the technologies are also used to hold the network together. Furthermore, they can be used to map which resources the network can access internally: Who has knowledge about what? Who knows important people? Who has knowledge of political processes and decision-making procedures?

Third, new technologies can be used to create an *arena for debate*. While traditional mass media only allow one-way communication, Internet allows citizens to dialogue with others who also communicate electronically. There are many ways to organize debates via Internet (Grönlund and Ranerup 2001; Ranerup 1999; Melby 2002), e.g., email lists from which to follow 'threads' from earlier contributions, net-based voting, political blogs and rather technically complicated debate systems. Hence, activists have several options when it comes to organizing debates. One way is to create external and open debate forums where anyone and everyone, via, e.g., the activists' website, can enter into direct political debate about the issue at hand. An alternative is to set up a more internal solution, by using a closed debate forum or email list for coordinating activism and discussing internal strategies and initiatives. Such email debate forums mass-distribute entries to participants who are usually pre-registered.

In addition to shaping a technical solution for engendering debate, it is also common to stipulate certain rules for how the debate should proceed. It is common to distinguish between

open and un-moderated debate forums and those regulated in different ways. Usually there is an entry by a moderator (a list owner/editor) who decides what should or should not be published. This editorial function is critical. A debate page/email list that publishes everything can quickly lose its users' respect, if it is punctuated by unserious entries and breaches of decorum. On the other hand, a debate can lose legitimacy if participants experience that serious content is being excluded (Grönlund and Ranerup 2001; Ranerup 1999). The editor function can thus be interpreted as censure. The main point is that if overly strict demands are placed on the debate's contents and the way it is conducted, one risks scaring away potential participants, simultaneously as the framework for the debate can be interpreted as defined by an elite. Before examining how Byen Vår deployed new ICT for, among other things, generating debate, we will briefly present the data on which this study is founded.

Data

The analyses in this paper are based on four main data sources. First, we have systematically gone through Byen Vår's website (<http://talsmann.no>) and all its hyperlinks. This is easily accessible information. Studies of websites usually find their point of departure in two broad categories of use: 1) Information: To what degree does the website provide comprehensive insight into the complexity of an issue? 2) Communication and debate: Does the website make it possible for individuals to debate the issue? Thus an important distinction is made between websites geared primarily towards disseminating information about an issue, and websites that also invite community members to participate (static versus more interactive websites). This distinction is also an important starting point for our research.

Second, through *A-text*, the Norwegian newspaper archive, we have collected and reviewed all information about the Clear Channel case which was published in Bergen's local newspaper *Bergens Tidende*, during the period of activism as well as directly before and after that period. There are links from Byen Vår's website to most of what is found in *Bergens Tidende*, but *A-text* has allowed us to review the entire material, also information to which Byen Vår's website has no links.

Third, we have reviewed all emails sent within the email list `byen@uib.no` during the period of activism and its aftermath (from June 16, 2005 to December 4, 2006). This includes more than 300 emails sent over a period of 1 ½ years. Most emails (2/3) were written within two months (September and October 2005). The email list `byen@uib.no` is private and hosted by the University of Bergen. Individual persons must subscribe to and log onto it via a personal password.⁵ The list only accepts email from persons who are already registered on it, and one must send email from the address registered in the list's address archive in order to have it sent. If someone sends mail from another address, it is placed on a 'waiting list' and the list administrator must accept the mail. We sent an email to the list owner in February 2007, asking for permission to conduct an analysis of the list archive. The list owner forwarded our mail to members of the email list, asking if anyone had any objection in allowing us to access the archive. Twelve persons in all replied, and all consented to the archive being used in this way.

This data provides valuable insight into how such activist networks function. Emails are written in the form of internal communication between network activists, and without reflecting over the possibility that the material might be analysed later. The material offers a large degree of contemporaneity because arguments are presented just as they were when the

activism was underway, and without the subsequent rationalization often occurring in interviews conducted in an event's aftermath. It is thus to a greater extent possible to analyse the material in its initial context, than what is the case for interviews or ethnographic studies (Langner 2001; Wilhelm 2000, chapter 5). Also beneficial is that emails are written sources; we can quote activists in writing, using their own formulations (translated from Norwegian). Nevertheless, there are also drawbacks to using such material. First of all, it is important to not interpret this material as being the full, exhaustive communication between the activists, as we know less about other communication taking place between them. In our particular case, a great deal of communication transpired between certain members (the so-called core group) parallel to the regular email list. This is one reason why we have deemed it important to supplement information gleaned from the email list with interviews (see below). Another problem is that Internet users can communicate while hiding their identity. As such, we have no guarantee the individual actor *is* who he or she claims to be. In our material, there is, e.g., an actor who signs on as pippi.langstrompe (Pippi Longstockings), and we do not know who this person is. All things considered, this is not a big problem, and we have also stressed the need to follow how the case unfolds in other mass media where the same actors appear.

There are different ways of analysing this sort of data, and quantitative as well as qualitative strategies can be used. Because our chief interest is in how communication happens and what the information between activists consists of, we have approached the material mostly from a qualitative perspective. This entails a good many direct quotes from communication between network actors. Quotes from the email list are printed in *italics*, with the send-date in parentheses. Just as with the website, we are also interested in finding out how much the email list is used to transmit information and concrete messages, or whether it is used for debating and exchanging points of view. We are also interested in how many list members are

active, who they are and the degree to which activity on the list can help mirror the intensity of how the case unfolded.

The fourth source of data consists of qualitative interviews with key informants in the network and others involved in the case. We have interview material from six of the most central activists in Byen Vår, and an interview with a Bergens Tidende journalist who covered the case for the newspaper. In addition, we have been in contact with the server administrator at the University of Bergen, because the email list was housed at the university. The interviews were conducted between November 27, 2006 and March 20, 2007. In addition to information about the cluster of issues related to the case, and about the activists' work methods, we have been especially intent upon interviewing those responsible for the technical solutions the network used.

Mobilization phases and the use of technology

The case started when Bergen city council in the spring of 2005 negotiated a contract with Clear Channel to supply advertisement financed public furnishings and facilities. Information about the contract was initially withheld from the public because it was defined as a business deal. Making the contract public was Byen Vår's first demand. The activists started their work, among other ways, by passing out flyers at public arrangements in Bergen on the 1st and 17th of May (Informant #3).⁶ In the beginning the group consisted of students and artists, but it eventually appealed to a wide spectrum of interests, and over time, a number of key cultural figures became involved in it. The arguments launched against the contract also varied widely, and included aesthetic considerations, Bergen city patriotism, economic factors and navigability.

When a group of activists mobilizes against a concrete issue such as this, there will often be distinct moments of change, milestones, which help determine the activism's character and affect changes in concrete goals and forms of activism. In this specific case, four outstanding milestones lead us to analyse the mobilization as falling into *five distinct phases* (see *Figure 1*). The first milestone was when the contract was made public on June 22, 2005. Before this date the activists had discussed the issue generally, but now they could take a more concrete point of departure in the actual contract and develop arguments based specifically on it. The second decisive milestone was September 19, 2005, when the city council discussed the contract and resolved to postpone the final decision. Activism up until this first city council treatment can be characterized primarily as an argument-development phase. The third milestone was October 11, 2005, when an open hearing on the contract was arranged. In the weeks before the hearing, the activists worked to build as wide a network as possible against the contract. The last milestone was October 24, 2005, when the city council again met to discuss the contract and ended up rejecting it. Between October 11 and 24, intense political mobilization took place to try to get political parties and individual politicians to reverse their positions. In the last phase, after October 24, the entire context changed, because the network, thus far mobilized widely *against* the contract, now tried to pull together in relation to what it was *for*. Now the critical issue became much more a matter of agreeing on an alternative to the rejected contract (policy formation).

06. 22. 05	09. 19. 05	10. 11 .05	10. 24. 05
Contract	First	Public	Second
made public	city council meeting	hearing	city council meeting

Figure 1: Activism against Clear Channel in Bergen, timeline.

The first meeting of what later became Byen Vår was held in March 2005. The provocation was a notice in Bergens Tidende stating that the multinational company Clear Channel had won a street furniture tender in Bergen (Informant #5). Already the day after the activist's first meeting, interested parties could join an email list by signing a paper at, among other places, Landmark Café. Feature articles were published in the newspaper and placards were hung on bus shelters in Olav Kyrresgate (the city centre street through which the majority of buss traffic passes). Early in the process a signature list was posted at www.opprop.no, a website was set up to inform the public about the Clear Channel issue, and an email list was established. The group also worked in various ways to grab mass media attention, and a public meeting was arranged in which the primary demand was that the contract should be made public. On June 22 the contract was made public, and the activists were now able to work more goal-orientedly in relation to developing arguments against it.

The mobilization became far more powerful through the autumn and up until September 19, when the city council planned to make a final decision on the contract. This mobilization included a panel debate at the shopping centre *Galleriet*, in connection with the exhibition 'City of Dreams', where representatives from Byen Vår held their own exhibition of 'Bus Shelters in Bergen 1970-2005'. The goal was to show the diversity that would disappear if all

Bergen's buss shelters were standardized as a consequence of the Clear Channel contract, and that the existing buss shelters were not as bad as politicians claimed. On September 16, the poster from this exhibition and 3,500 signatures protesting the contract were presented to Mayor Herman Friele (Conservative Party). The Clear Channel issue caused a furore within Bergen's cultural life, and a symbolically important event happened on September 15, when Jon Skjerdal, leader of Nattjazz ('Nightjazz', Bergen's annual jazz festival), said 'No, thank you' to the municipality's cultural prize, because the municipality wanted to sell the public's space for only 5,6 million kroner annually for fifteen years.⁷ This second phase is characterized primarily by argument development. A distinct collection of arguments was made, sent to everyone on the email list and published on the website. In the city council meeting on September 19, the Socialist Left Party motioned that the contract between Bergen municipality and Clear Channel should be presented to the public through a public hearing, and that the decision should be postponed until the city council's meeting on October 24. The motion was carried by one vote (34 against 33 votes).⁸

Further mobilization mainly revolved around establishing a wide network of people against the contract. The activists worked purposefully to mobilize other organizations and groups. On October 11, an open hearing in Bergen City Hall was held and the contract's contents and hearing statements from a number of different organizations were presented. The open hearing demonstrated that there was a united front against the contract, and that this opposition cut across a wide spectrum of groups (cultural-event organizers, student organizations, political youth organizations, environmental organizations, the church, etc.). A concert was also arranged on October 19 at Club Kameleon, to protest against Clear Channel. Furthermore, during this period the activists worked purposefully to prevail upon political parties and individual politicians to reverse their positions. The efforts led to the city council

voting against the contract on October 24, after the Labour, Liberal and Christian People's parties all reversed their positions. Only the Conservative and Progress parties supported the contract. This indicated a significant defeat for the city council, comprised of the Conservative, Liberal and Christian People's parties, who broke ranks with each other over the case.

The last phase, after the city council voted against the contract, was once again a period of discussion within the activist network, but now it concerned alternatives to the contract and which role the network should play henceforth. It proved to be far more problematic to agree on these issues, and the network finally disintegrated. As of today, the activists characterize the network as 'a sleeping cell' (Informant #1).

Byen Vår used a wide range of information and communication technologies in its mobilization against the contract between Clear Channel and Bergen Municipality. At the very beginning of its activism the group established a blog, but this lasted only for a short time.⁹ It was seldom used and functioned poorly, among other reasons, because it had a complicated address and required a password to gain access (Informant #5). The protest action started with a signature campaign at <http://www.opprop.no>. This is a website run by Dagbladet, a national newspaper which freely hosts electronic signature lists. Instead of using traditional signature lists via email, it was important for the activists to use a neutral actor who could guarantee the appeal's credibility. An added bonus was the ease with which Opprop.no could be used (Informant #7). The appeal, launched May 1, 2005, was entitled 'Stop the Sale of Bergensians', and it was possible to sign it either via email or 'short message service' (SMS).¹⁰ Calls to sign the appeal were passed from actor to actor, and during the period of activism, 3,500 signatures were collected.¹¹

The protest action also created the need for a website informing the public about the case. The activists chose to use an existing domain owned by one of the network's central figures.¹² The main reasons for this were that the website was needed right away, and that the domain name seemed to fit well ('talsmann' literally translates as 'spokesman'). While the protest action lasted, there were, on average, 400 hits per day on the website, and it was updated daily during this period (Informant #1).¹³

In addition to the website, the email list was important (byenvår@uib.no). This was set up by a student and launched on the University of Bergen's server.¹⁴ At most, approximately 200 persons were registered here (Informant #1).¹⁵ This list consists of email addresses gathered at meetings, as well as addresses of those applying through the email address posted on the website. A mass emailing was also sent to everyone who signed the appeal at opprop.no, inviting them to join the email list. There was no 'free' or 'open' way to add names to the email list; every name and email address had to first be approved, so that no one would be able to infiltrate the list (Informant #1). Neither is there a link from the homepage to the email list; there is only an email address through which the activist group can be contacted. In addition to the email list byenvår@uib.no, there was also a shorter email list of eight to ten persons who could be characterized as the activist network's core. This list was used, among other things, for 'behind-the-scene mailing' in relation to issues addressed on the 'long' email list (Informant #5, see below). Here the core group could discuss and lay plans without their mails being read by all 200 people on the main email list.

Yet not only ICT, but also older forms of information and communication technology played important roles in the protest action. For example, the telephone was a critical tool when

activists made personal calls to diverse interest groups and politicians of various parties, to try to get them to reverse their position on the contract. The group also wrote feature articles in Bergens Tidende. Furthermore, older technology was used in a new context; for example, video recordings of key events were posted on the website. This was evaluated as being very effective (Informant #5), in spite of the recordings often being amateur.

In the following pages we will look more closely at what we perceive to be two of the most important channels for information and influence used by the activists: the website and the email list.

The website: The activist's Internet product

Various criteria are commonly used to analyse websites. We have chosen to examine the website's structure, contents and opportunities for debate (the possibility for two-way communication).

The website for the activist group Byen Vår is first of all structured around the contract and the municipality's handling of it, in addition to disseminating negative information about Clear Channel. The title chosen for the homepage is 'Bergen vs. Clear Channel'. It is a simple website, deliberately designed to be 'not too fancy'. It was deemed important that it 'looked like an honest and genuinely felt involvement' (Informant #1). Only one person administers the website; he updates it, selects its contents and answers email. There has thus been a relatively centralized information strategy, and questions about the website's administration have not been discussed within the activist group (Informant #1).

As for contents, the website functions largely as an information portal which almost exclusively presents the issue from one angle. Information has been primary, both during the mobilization of activism and in its aftermath. The website's purpose, as is now formulated on the homepage after the events of 2005, also emphasizes information:

October 24, 2005, Bergen City Council made a wise and foresighted decision by cancelling the competition for advertisement financed public furnishings and facilities. The purpose of this website is to provide background information about why we believe this was a wise decision, and to make information available to others who want to work against this type of contract (<http://www.talsmann.no>, translated).

The homepage contains links to case documents, official recommendations and resolutions by the city council, a collection of arguments against advertisement financed public furnishings, a collection of press clippings (over 100 articles and other entries from diverse media in 2005), information (negative) about Clear Channel as a company, and individual references and links to comparable protest actions in Oslo and Trondheim. It also offers video clips of important meetings (the debate at the Landmark Café, the meeting at the Galleriet shopping centre, presenting protest signatures to Mayor Herman Friele). On the whole, we can conclude that the website contains a great deal of information, but that it presents a one-sided perspective of the issue.

Just as important as which information can be found on the website is which information cannot be found there. To begin with, there is no introductory statement addressing the question 'Who are we?'. There is no presentation of who stands behind the activism, other

than a diffuse sentence at the bottom of the homepage stating that the protest action was started by '[a]rchitect students, artists, teachers, worried parents, students and other citizens of Bergen'. Furthermore, the site contains numerous links to other sources, e.g., newspaper debates, but has little self-produced information, that is, information written expressly for the website. However, the activist group regularly used other mass media to express its viewpoints, and after publication, these were linked to the website. Bergens Tidende in particular wrote a great deal about the case. In the media archive 'A-text', there are approximately 200 Bergens Tidende entries dealing with Clear Channel during the period of activism; talsmann.no has links to about half of these.

As for two-way communication, there is no possibility for this from the website. This may have to do with the nature of the target group. In order to avoid internal dissention, an open debate forum is not offered on the page, and no issues are mentioned that could create antagonism between divergent yet allied groups. The website is not notably ideological, but rather a level-headed (albeit one-sided) amassment of arguments. There is a desire to distance Byen Vår from radical groups who also address the Clear Channel issue, and the website is deliberately presented in a tone that can also appeal to opponents (Informant #1). The homepage is thus written and presented in such a way that will appeal not only to partisans, but to those who are more moderate or undecided, and to help influence them (Informant #1). While the website's intention is to reach 'everyone', and therefore downplay ideological aspects, it is more probable that the email list functioned as a meeting place for the like-minded.

The email list

At its inception, the email list was designed as an open list, yet individuals had to register to join. Two people were responsible for determining who could join the list and what information was posted, yet no one who wanted to join was denied access, neither were any emails stopped (Informant #1). The email list was also open in the sense that no special rules were given to regulate the discussion. In the very first email sent, there is an attachment with general information about email lists, and how one should behave in such a forum ('netiquette'), e.g., to not write with capital letters, because it could be interpreted as SHOUTING at the receiver (Melby 2002). Beyond this, few guidelines for the debate were given.

The period we are studying is from June 2005 to December 2006. When studying the email list, we are also concerned with the degree of interactivity, e.g., to what extent are there entries that invite people to write back? Are there, e.g., many threads per entry (that is, emails following up and answering earlier entries)? The extent to which the email list's purpose was to engender debate, we would expect to see it reflected in the entries. *Figure 2* shows the email list's activity in relation to Byen Vår's various milestones and phases (such as we have defined them), and the number of Bergens Tidende entries registered in A-text when the search word 'Clear Channel' is given. These follow each other closely, as the graph shows. The main bulk of entries, both on the email list and in Bergens Tidende, are from mid September through the end of October 2005. Below we look closer at the different mobilization phases.

[FIGURE 2]

Phase 1: Initial discussion

The first message in the email archive is dated June 16, 2005. Here participants are welcomed and oriented on how the email list functions, e.g., about how to join the list, and how it is possible to use a filtering function to sort messages from the list and put them in a special folder. There is also a direct reference to the activist's website (www.talsmann.no). Subscribers (90 at that time) are listed at the end of the message.

There is a good deal of discussion and debate on the list at the start. The first email after the welcome message can, in fact, be interpreted as *support for the Clear Channel contract*. '*With Clear Channel's smart solutions we will at least avoid seeing so much shabby tagging and graffiti because Clear Channel will keep it's property clean*' (June 17, 05). Amongst the themes discussed during this phase are the use of the phrase 'Sale of Bergensians' (the title used at opprop.no), the extent to which Switzerland is a nation of culture (since it is so clean and well-organized), what distinguishes advertisements on public furnishings from other kinds of advertisements ('*Neither do I vote on who should be allowed to decide over what is printed in Bergens Tidende, but I vote on who should be allowed to decide what will happen in the municipality. So it's mixing apples and pears to claim that advertisements in newspapers are the same as advertisements in municipal buss shelters*', June 24, 05), about what the Socialist Left's policy is on the issue, and how Byen Vår should position itself in relation to the Socialist Left ('*Here I feel the conclusion must be that the Socialist Left should take on the job of crusader, while Byen Vår should allow greater room for dialogue, since this initiative encompasses more than the average Socialist Lifter*', June 23, 05). Several suggestions for newspaper feature-articles are discussed on the list as well. There is also a

suggestion to discuss which role the email list should have – whether it should be a discussion list or a channel used mostly for sending email. It is clear that some people want a lot of discussion while others want to work in a more goal-oriented way, and those wanting more discussion do not always feel they receive the responses they want (*'You guys, I feel it is almost embarrassing, storming silence on the list after I dared to mention some questions that struck me after reading [...s] contribution'*, June, 27, 05). Already during this phase, the concept of 'do-ocracy' is introduced – *'a model that is open to everyone who wants to do something, but which should, strictly speaking, not be confused with 'democracy'* (June 23, 05).

From June 16 to the end of the month there are 26 contributions to the list. There are nine writers, two of which dominate. Of these, one is clearly against the Clear Channel contract, while the other is more ambivalent.

Phase 2: Development of arguments

After the contract is made public, a more goal-oriented phase starts, and a working group convenes to work with the issue through the summer. This becomes the core of the network. An invitation to participate in this is sent to everyone:

To all email list participants: We must begin to tighten our grasp on strategies between now and the city council meeting on September 19. Since the decision will be made only four days after the election, it is important to present our case to the public, and to work in a goal-oriented way. We need people who will lobby politicians, take initiative, give reactions, act as activists, etc. The working group will hold a meeting

at week's end to lay plans for the summer. Those who would like to participate more or less actively in the work can mail me directly. Everyone is welcome to participate! (July 3, 05).

There is relatively little activity on the mailing list until the end of August, when a new meeting is scheduled and list participants are once again invited to join the working group: *'Sorry for announcing the meeting so late. If there is anyone who wants to join the 'working group', send a message, even if you can't come on such short notice!'* (Aug. 29, 05).

During this phase, up until the first city council treatment on September 19, the main focus is on developing arguments, orienting list members about different events and initiatives, and about mobilizing in relation to concrete tasks. A distinct set of arguments is developed, dealing with financial considerations, democracy, public freedom of expression, Bergen as a brand, aesthetic evaluations, and ramifications for local industry and cultural life. Events are announced – both those that are relevant, e.g., the debate in the exhibition 'Drømmebyen' ('City of Dreams') at Galleriet shopping centre and the exhibition 'Buss Shelters in Bergen 1970-2005', and less relevant events such as the meeting about 'Open Software and Linux in Bergen Municipality'. Further mobilization occurs in connection with concrete tasks: calling and sending email to city council members, being a disputant at the city council meeting, or presenting the list of signatures to Mayor Herman Friele. A copy is posted, of a fact-oriented email that was sent to every member of the city council, along with the admonition to others on the list to also send email to city council representatives. *'Write concisely about the issue from your own perspective – and send it to the city council members'* (Sep. 15, 05). With this mail is an attachment of email addresses for all city council members.

In the beginning the mobilization seems to proceed slowly (*'I can not be a wide grassroots opposition all on my own'* Aug. 31, 05). Eventually activity increases, and we also find entries saying, e.g., *'By now many people have called Liv Røssland,¹⁶ and she is tired of all the calls. We don't need to call her again before Monday'* (Sunday, Sep. 18, 05). When Jon Skjerdal, leader of Bergen's Nattjazz, says 'No, thank you' to Bergen Municipality's culture prize, because he believes Bergen Municipality is selling itself too cheaply, this is lionized as a very important symbolic act. Moreover, this helps put the spotlight on the economic side of the contract between Bergen Municipality and Clear Channel. *'Some people do not care about the environment or historical inheritance. Many people do not care about aesthetics. But many of those who today are in favour of the contract understand economics'* (Sep. 16, 05). Regarding participation in the city council meeting, email list members are admonished to *'Be there and show your presence and your concern, but behave well...'* (Sep. 18, 05).

There are eight new writers on the list during this period.

Phase 3: Network building

The next phase – after the city council postpones the case, and until the open hearing on October 11 – largely concerns mobilizing different groups and creating a wide network in support of the cause. This period is to a much greater extent punctuated by strategic thinking about working locally as well as nationally. An appeal amongst academics is attempted but fails (Informant #5). This is in connection with Jürgen Habermas coming to Bergen to receive the Holberg Prize (*'What if we could get him to address the issue...could anyone get a hold of his email address?'* Sep. 29, 05).

During this period there is also mobilization through concrete appeals for action – *‘Everyone who knows a politician from the Christian People’s Party, call! Call!’* (Sep. 20, 05), *‘Everyone who knows anyone leading an urban residents’ association – call call!’* (Sep. 25, 05). And different people sign up to work with various target groups and to mobilize sundry organizations (labour unions, the National Association for the Blind, the Norwegian Association of Handicapped Persons, urban residents’ associations, etc.) to show up at the open hearing. There is also a fair amount of activity with planning a concert at Club Kameleon on October 19, and a proposed torchlight procession before the concert (this last suggestion was dropped after a discussion on the list – *‘There was a request to arrange a torchlight procession before the concert. None of us in the concert committee have gotten this going. Especially since we could have torrential rain and no people’*, Sep. 28, 05). In addition, far more critical information about Clear Channel as a company is dug up (from it being a neo-liberal American company to information about the so-called ‘Utomhusbibelen’, that is, the ‘Outdoor Bible’).¹⁷

Most mobilization during this period happens via telephone and email. Plans are made to set up a meeting, but it is cancelled because *‘we found that there wasn’t much point in meeting at Landmark Café; fortunately this does not mean that no one is on the ball. Rather, everyone is working well in each their own way, and we are in the process of getting quite detailed tasks between now and the hearing on October 11. Therefore: we’ll do it via telephone or email instead.’* (Sep. 27, 05).

There are approximately ten new writers on the mailing list during this period, including politicians with in-depth knowledge about how the representative system functions. Only five of the people who participated in the two first phases are also active in this phase.

Phase 4: Political mobilization

There is extensive activity on the email list in the period between the open hearing and the city council meeting just less than two weeks later. Now the question arises of creating an alternative to the Clear Channel contract. Work is also far more systematic in relation to individual political parties (*'It's important not to forget the Liberal Party. Is anyone working specifically with the Liberal Party?'* Oct. 14, 05). Efforts are also made to create a situation where it is possible for politicians to reverse their position without losing face. An important event in this respect is when Clear Channel threatens to sue the municipality – *'To this it is not embarrassing to say No, Thank You.'* (Oct. 18, 05).¹⁸

As far as internal discussion within the group, the email list also performs a critical function in relation to coordinating public statements, not least, feature articles and written debate contributions. This particularly concerns the necessity for always keeping to facts (*'In the heat of battle it is easy to fly off the handle, but I, writing from Oslo, must come with the following three points, which are more important than all other aspects of this case: 1. Facts. 2. Facts. 3. Facts.'*, Oct. 13, 05) and to not come across as hot tempered and sour (*'It is easier to capture flies with honey than vinegar. What you served in your latest debate contribution is vinegar'*, Oct. 15, 05). And the one who wrote the debate contribution agrees: *'It is so easy to become a sweaty, mean socialist'* (Oct. 15, 05). The chief strategy therefore is *'that we can manage to draw a picture of ourselves as being the open, listening and pleasant people we are, with the democratic mindset we all have ;-)* And such people do not scold or punch, but instead continuously present their arguments in a matter-of-fact way' (Oct. 19, 05). This issue is addressed repeatedly as the case moves towards a climax: *'Even though I now inform [you]*

about this letter, this doesn't mean I want everyone on this list to get angry and agitated. Quite the contrary, I urge you to keep calm. Take it very calmly, in fact. There is nothing these people would like more than angry activists' (Oct. 24, 05).

During Phase 4 it also becomes clear that the core group is practicing behind-the-scene mailing parallel to the email list. This first becomes apparent when one of those involved forwards an email which initially was written only to the core group. In the email it says, among other things, *'then I wonder if it actually would be polite to mediate information about this initiative to everyone on the Byen Vår list, because it can easily be interpreted as though we are excluding some people...'* (Oct. 18, 05). The reason for this behind-the-scene mailing is presented in a later email:

Strictly speaking, we should discuss the practice of so-called 'behind-the-scene mailing' – it will always happen, sometimes it's helpful because you want to ask somebody for advice, like I did in relation to an initiative to the politicians, that was because I was very unsure whether I actually had a good idea, and I also received the reply that it was not. Ideally however, we should dare to discuss this type of question on byen@uib.no – and not just between a few selected people. Meanwhile, we don't know each other, and if one is unsure, one wants most of all to first discuss ideas with those one knows. I would like to meet everyone who has participated. For example, I have no idea who [...] is, and would really like to say hi. (Oct. 22, 05)

Now the first 'who are we' discussions begin within the network, in part, because the press would like to know. It turns out that *'when we talked about the history, we soon found that we*

have slightly different stories/memories about how it all actually started. This has partly to do with us being loosely organized' (Oct. 21, 05). This also comes up in a discussion about whether the group should send out a press release: *'Press releases are sent out by organizations that have a somewhat fixed structure, and where members are somewhat univocal. We are not like this. We are a loosely-linked network. The way I see it, it is rather the 'testimonials' or stories we tell that are our form of communication. All the small debate entries, all the different contributions...'* (Oct. 22, 05).

During this period there are eight new writers on the list, two being especially active, with more than five mails each. Only three of the earlier writers contribute more than five mails in this period.

Phase 5: Policy formation

The last period, after the city council rejects the contract, starts out with extensive activity on the email list, including entries where activists congratulate each other over the victory. Thereafter, the theme arises as to whether the activists are responsible for providing an alternative to the Clear Channel contract. This discussion is partly triggered by an editorial in Bergens Tidende, saying, 'Now we anticipate the protestors will come up with an alternative. Thus far alternatives have been status quo; continued littering and locked public toilets' (Bergens Tidende Oct. 25, 05, our translation).¹⁹ The discussion also arises because the minister for city development, Lisbeth Iversen (Christian People's Party), wants to meet the activist group in order to discuss future solutions. There are strong reactions to this now becoming the activist's responsibility.

The haste with which this now is characterized causes me to think that I [...] now perhaps must solve the city council's practical problems – and henceforth scrub latrines in the name of freedom. And I am willing to do so in order to make a statement: This is how the city's culture is – those who are concerned with democracy, cultural freedom, the freedom of information and freedom of expression must today sweep the streets in order to defend these values, because politicians in the world's richest nation cannot find the money. (Oct. 28, 05)

Coinciding with this, the need intensifies to find out what the group actually is; *'We need to find out a little bit about who we are and what we want. It is not a given that we are a "we"'* (Oct. 26, 05). Among other things, this is backgrounded in questions about further media strategies, as well as the invitation to take part in discussions about future solutions.

Who are we? We are different, that's all we know. Some are steadfast anti-capitalists who believe local politicians who entered into negotiations with CC are traitors, some think advertisements are a moral problem, some are against the proposal for other fundamental reasons, etc., etc. What sort of discussion can we have with Iversen when we do not know who we are? I believe that with this as our point of departure, we can only have a very confusing discussion. (Oct. 29, 05)

As a consequence, some participants want a firmer structure around the network: *'Byen Vår needs some internal game rules – perhaps a transition from a "do-ocracy" to a democracy'* (Oct. 30, 05), yet others believe it should continue to function along the lines of a loose network:

There is still a need for some people to stand outside and comprise an enlightened, informed and perhaps also critical public who comment on processes concerning city development in particular and local politics generally. I tend towards thinking this is the role of Byen Vår, mostly organized as a forum and an organ/arena that provides information and generates debate, more than being an actor in internal political processes, like a special interest organization would be. (Nov. 2, 05)

The manifold variety – the network’s strength while working *against* the contract – now, when trying to find out what the network is *for*, becomes a weakness:

The engagement has thus been extensive and many-faceted. Now, as we are invited to participate in volunteering ideas, I believe this great variety is one of Byen Vår’s greatest strengths. Even so, there is an inherent danger that it will lead to internal friction, what is more, it is unclear what this “internal” is. (Oct. 28, 05)

Internally, the question about clicks also comes to full flower: *‘Hello everyone, just a few words about the community’s solidarity: From my outside position, it looks like there are attempts to form clicks in Byen Vår, and some people are being overlooked. [...] A real democracy is not excluding but including’* (Oct. 26, 05). Likewise, a question about the elitist network is raised:

Cleaning personnel, who possibly also are enlisted at Byen Vår, are disparagingly referred to when it is written that an intellectual, artistic elite must

wash latrines in the name of freedom of speech and because of “democracy’s infrastructure”. [...] When and why do toilets become latrines? Who has said that people who clean for a living stand outside the elite? Where is the elite? Who then are the others? Are any of us less important? (Oct. 28, 05).

There are ten new writers on the list during this phase, i.e. after the case is ‘won’.

Review

When examining the email list’s total activity, we see that relatively few persons are active. 45 persons in total write entries on the email list during the entire period covered in our study. 20 write only one entry. Only eight people write ten or more emails: Seven of these are already active in the first phase, while the eighth joins the list through a feature article she writes, and is later included in the core group. Meanwhile, two of the most ardent writers clearly stand on the sideline. Of the remaining six, three persons distinguish themselves as central, with 55, 45 and 34 entries respectively. That so few people are active on the list concurs with earlier research on Internet-based debate forums (Grönlund and Ranerup 2001). Email lists are however a participatory form necessitating a relatively large number of passive participants (Langner 2001). If everyone registered on the list was active, then the number of messages would be so high that interactive communication would collapse.

Particularly during the first and last phases, there are many entries by the two writers who stand on the sideline of the activist group’s practical work – one writes long, ‘half-philosophical’ arguments in support of the case, the other, who calls himself ‘an inhabitant of Bergen city centre’, writes critical comments (*‘No, I am not in favour of Clear Channel being*

allowed entry. I am just so amazed over a group of individuals claimed to represent the breadth of Bergen's cultural life being so narrow minded about such a huge topic', Oct. 10, 05). As was expressed in the interviews, a problem with this type of debate forum is that it often attract people who want to discuss everything to the enth degree, and that often in such forums, it seems like whoever has the most time on their hands wins the debate (Informant #5). We also note that the two writers we talk about here participate in discussions in the beginning and ending phases, but have less to contribute to the more goal-oriented work.

The email list has first and foremost an internal function, that of delegating responsibility for concrete tasks, although we sometimes find external actors posting information and informing about events or articles they have read. The list is barely used as a debate forum except for in the beginning and ending phases. Otherwise, it is used to mobilize, to agree on who will do what, and to mediate arguments. The point here is not primarily to discuss an issue, but to reverse a decision. The debates which do take place are only minimally directed outwards. Instead discussion revolves around whether one should write a reply or a feature article, should the article keep its present form, etc. The email list has therefore an important internal function in that it helps make the activism less radical. Through the email list the activists test out their debate contributions and feature articles, and practice a form of self-censure. Two aspects in particular are emphasized – to hold to facts and to keep calm. The email list is also used to find out which resources the group has internally, who knows what people, or who is best suited to try to influence this or that person or group.²⁰

The group characterizes itself as a 'do-ocracy'. There are consultations, but thereafter each individual does what he or she thinks is best. For the most part, therefore, it entails 'getting things done' (Informant #5). The group has neither a formal leader nor a fixed structure, but

in practice, an inner core clearly takes on leader functions, e.g., only one person has control over what is posted on the website, and those who want to join the email network have to apply to one of two people. Yet not only do the activists meet via Internet, they also meet physically. The core group and the behind-the-scenes mailing list function well, precisely because they have meet each other (Informant #5).

The aspect of time and the tempo of communication are important factors in relation to using email lists; these are what make it such an effective information channel. There is no need to arrange meetings, for whenever one has time, one can present impromptu arguments or send out messages about things that need to be done. The email list records activity at all hours of the day and night. If someone, in the middle of the night, feels they have something to say, a message is sent: *'I can't sleep. Instead I lay awake thinking about what I would say if I was a member of the Norwegian Labour party...'* (Oct. 17, 05, 4:35 am).

The email list also offers a kind of flexibility that allows participation by people who otherwise would have difficulty in attending fixed meetings: *'Unfortunately I do not have the possibility to come to Café Opera in the middle of suppertime, since I have little children and I should eat supper with them. [...] Unfortunately, neither am I able to come to the planning meeting at Landmark – for the same reason. I am not flexible. I am mother to two ;-)'* (Sep. 24, 05) Yet this does not hinder the sender from participating in the discussion and sharing her viewpoints with others on the list.

We also see that communication via Internet function well as long as the activists work *against* something. As soon as the focus turns and becomes a matter of finding out what the group is *for*, the needs arise for meeting one another and for a more fixed structure. The

transition from a loose network to a more traditional special interest organization has implications for democratic leadership and how participants interact with one another. As soon as a person participates in forming an alternative policy, it involves representing others, not merely oneself. At that point variety ceases to be a strength. Whereas loose networks can accommodate individuals who represent only themselves – they represent something by virtue of their viewpoints and involvement – in traditional organizations, it is much more a matter of representing something collective. As such, it becomes important for the collective ‘we’ to be more substantive and unified. This indicates that traditional special interest organizations hardly can be based on ICT alone, while loosely organized networks to a greater extent can.

Conclusions

In this paper we have analysed how the Internet-based activist group Byen Vår used new information and communication technologies in order to mobilize, inform and influence a concrete political decision. One key assumption has been that the type of organization has significance for how ICT are used. We assumed therefore that the activist network would use ICT differently than would traditional voluntary organizations. As a short-term single-issue network, it would be most important to use ICT (and other means) in relation to achieving the goal. The distinction between the ad hoc organization and traditional voluntary organizations was clearly demonstrated in the last mobilization phase, when Byen Vår was faced with the issue of forming its own policy. Then the ‘do-ocracy’ malfunctioned and the need to meet one another face to face arose.

What benefits do new ICT offer in relation to other means that could have been used? We have seen that in its period of activism, Byen Vår used new ICT in purposeful and rational

ways, inasmuch as this was an ad hoc network with clear goals for achieving a political outcome. Yet they were not the only means used: There were also frequent uses of good, old fashioned technologies, e.g., telephone calls to politicians and other key actors were critical, or a synthesis of solutions, such as when videos and placards were posted on the website. The activists also wrote to newspapers and worked in traditional ways to sway opinions and key decision makers. Physical meetings between the activists were also important, not least in order to establish trust.

In this analysis we have particularly focused on the network's website and email list use. During the period of study the website had an important function in relation to the outside world and politicians. It was simply designed, precisely because its makers wanted it to have a wide appeal and to seem as though it arose from the grassroots of society. The contents functioned to bring people together, in the sense that no information was presented that would offend any group, and there was no 'click here and have your say' feature. By comparison, the email list was more important for conducting a good dialogue. It gave a rapid flow of information, the feeling of a flat structure and of being with like-minded. Yet the email list functioned only partly as a debate forum and mostly dealt with matters of mobilization. It was largely used to delegate concrete tasks and to formulate arguments that could tip the balance in the protestors' favour. Through the email list, activists could mobilize activism and quickly inform about any new turn of events. The objective was not to create debate about the Clear Channel issue, but to make politicians reverse their position. The group worked to achieve a specific goal. When the goal was achieved the network fell apart. Meanwhile, the email list technology can help Byen Vår function as a 'sleeping cell', which, if necessary, can quickly mobilize again.

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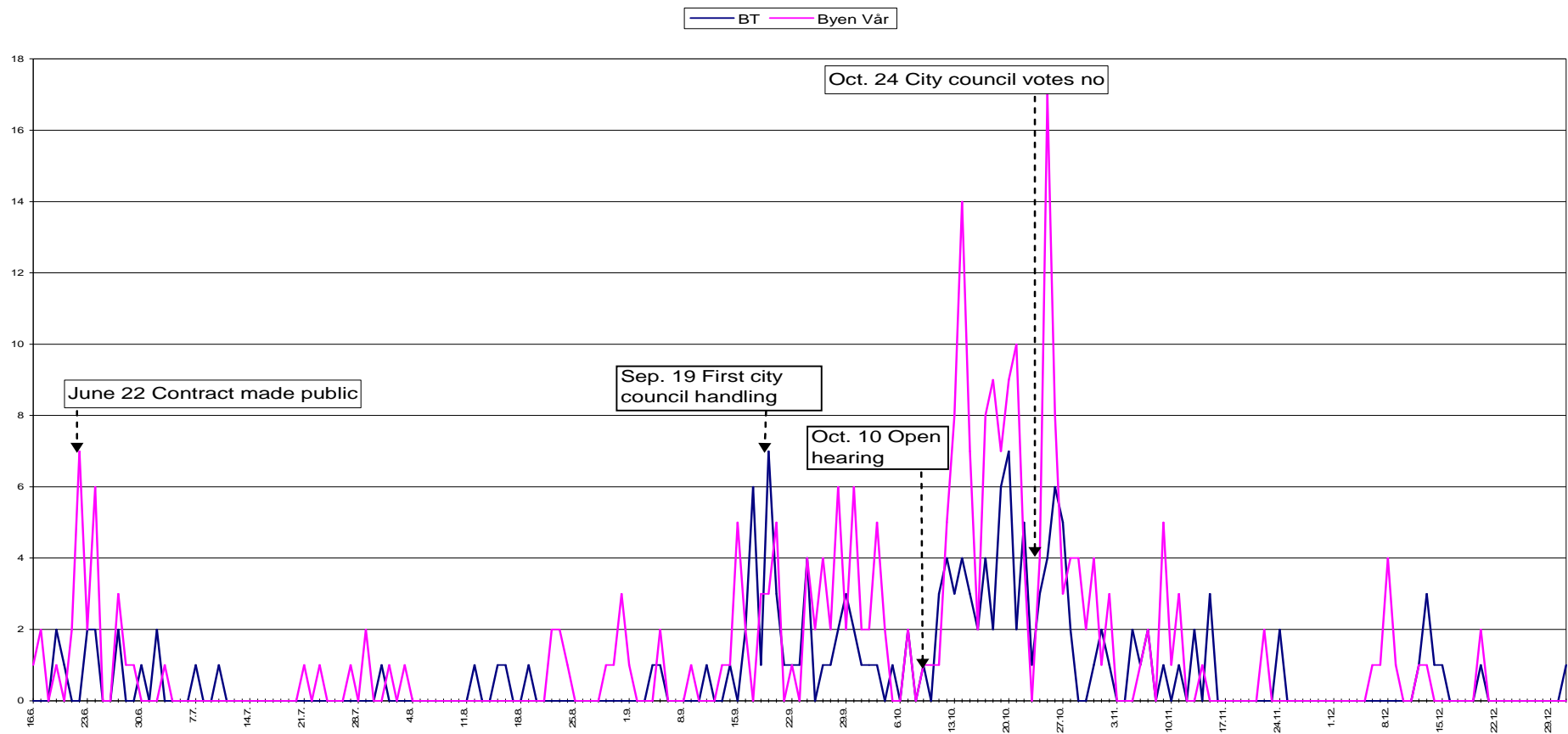


Figure 2: Messages on byen@uib.no and entries in Bergens Tidende during the period June 16, 2005 – December 31, 2005.

Notes:

¹ We would like to direct our thanks to Trond Ekornrud for help in interviewing, and Bjarte Folkestad, who helped prepare data from the Norwegian newspaper archive *A-text*.

² Nicknames such as digital democracy, virtual democracy, cyber-democracy, tele-democracy, button pushing democracy and techno-democracy are all linked with possible visionary scenarios (Åstrøm 1999; Wilhelm 2000; Grönlund and Ranerup 2001; Abrahamson and Means 2001; Christensen et al. 2004; Sodaro 2004).

³ [Http://www.clearchannel.no/content.asp?ID=4&ParentID=0&MicrositeID=5&Page=1](http://www.clearchannel.no/content.asp?ID=4&ParentID=0&MicrositeID=5&Page=1).

⁴ See *Avtale om Reklamefinansierte Byromsmøbler og Vegutstyr* (Agreement for Advertisement-Financed City Furnishings and Road Equipment):

http://www.bergen.kommune.no/info/_ekstern/nyheter4/220605_CCA_avtale.pdf.

⁵ See <http://mailman.uib.no/listinfo/byen>. *Mailman* is a computer program used to administer email discussions (see <http://www.gnu.org/software/mailman/mailman.html>). The program also automatically generates an archive that can sort entries according to author, date, subject or thread, and thereby helps to simplify analysis of the material.

⁶ The 17th of May is Norway's national constitution day.

⁷ See <http://www.ballade.no/nmi.nsf/doc/art2005091613114147382925>, cf., *Bergens Tidende* 9. 16. 2005.

⁸ The decisive vote belonged to Kenneth Rasmussen, from '*Demokratene*' ('The Democrats', renegades from the Progressive Party, the party furthest to the 'right' in Norwegian politics), who is otherwise known for his suggestion to hang pickled pig's feet from pillars and lamps on Bergen's main city square in order to scare away Muslims (see *Dagbladet* Feb. 27, 07). Rasmussen is a buss driver, and was scheduled to work the day the contract was to be voted on. Since it was assumed that the substitute representative from the Progressive Party would vote for the contract, the activists mobilized intense pressure on Rasmussen to come to the meeting and vote. The activists achieved their goal. Rasmussen dropped off his passengers, turned the bus around, drove back to the city and participated in the vote (Informant #5; *Bergens Tidende* Sep. 20, 05).

⁹ <http://byenvaar.blogspot.com/>

¹⁰ An activist was also posted on the main city square with a traditional signature list, intended to gathering up those with no access to Internet, but these signatures were never delivered to the politicians (Informant #3).

¹¹ Some signatures have also been added after the city council's rejection of the contract, and as of March 3, 2007, there were 3,788 signatures posted. This appeal is one of the ten most signed appeals at *Opprop.no*. There was also an attempt to start a separate appeal amongst academics ('*Akademikeropporet*'), but this was not as successful (Informant #5). As of October 22, 2005, this latter appeal had only 344 signatures.

¹² [Http://www.talsmann.no](http://www.talsmann.no). This Internet domain originally belonged to 'Arne Talsmann', Telenor's synthetic voice (Telenor is Norway's largest telephone company, formerly government owned.) Arne Talsmann was a speaking computer which, among other things, gave its own interpretation of well-known Norwegian tunes. See http://www.talsmann.no/index_arne.htm.

¹³ There was also talk about buying the domain name 'byenvår', but nothing came of it. This name was first purchased much later by activists in Oslo (Informant #5, <http://www.xn--byenvr-mua.no/>).

¹⁴ According to our informant from the Information Technology Department at University of Bergen, there were no negative reactions to the email list being under the auspices of the university. 'The IT department sets up email lists for students and employees who contact us, and very seldom will we evaluate what the list is for' (Informant #8). The activists, however, evaluated the issue, but decided that 'we would not do anything about it unless we were contacted by them' (Informant #1).

¹⁵ When we joined the list in February 2007, in order to gain access to its contents, only 84 persons remained on it. Many cancelled their membership after the case was won, and the number sank quickly to around 150. 'The list has not been used very much since then, but almost every time someone posts something on it, one or two people cancel their membership' (Informant #1).

¹⁶ Chair of the Committee for Health and Social Affairs (Progressive Party).

¹⁷ The 'Outdoor Bible' is a series of instructions the Swedish division of Clear Channel made for its outdoor advertisers, with ten 'commandments' for how to be most effective in advertising. The advice includes the use of sex, children and animals. This 'bible' became an important tool for the activists in getting the Christian People's Party to reverse its position. Another important factor in this context was that the cathedral's dean involved himself in the case (Informants #6 and #3).

¹⁸ This proved to not be an empty threat. After the contract with Clear Channel was cancelled, the company sued Bergen Municipality, but lost the court case.

¹⁹ During the entire period of activism, the editorial column in *Bergens Tidende* consistently supported the contract between Bergen Municipality and Clear Channel.

²⁰ For example, a blond girl with a mild Southern Norwegian dialect is considered especially well suited to influence the Christian People's party, which traditionally has had a stronghold in Southern Norway (Informant #5).