Storytelling and globalization: The complex narratives of netwar

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Appardurai's five landscapes of globalization are used in this article to demonstrate that storytelling in the mediascape can transform the terrain of an ideoscape. Storytelling is viewed to be of special significance to network organizations because it is the means by which they encourage members to identify with and act on behalf of the network. When network organizations compete in storytelling with other organizations, they engage in narrative netwar. An illustrative case of the Direct Action Network protests of the World Trade Organization's 1999 meetings in Seattle, Washington demonstrates how narrative netwar occurs in the global mediascape and how the global mediascape may influence the ideoscape.

Introduction

Globalization is a complex process, shaped by and shaping organizations and communities. It has been described as complex networks of flows (Held, *et al.*, 1999) and as interconnected adaptive landscapes (Appadurai, 1996). In addition, globalization theorists have noted that different organizational types influence globalization processes. Social movement organizations (Guidry, *et al.*, 2000), multinational corporations (Parker, 1998), criminal cartels (Castells, 1998; Passas, 2001) and a host of other storytelling actors comprise the global system.

This article explores how one type of global competition, narrative netwar (Arquilla & Ronfeldt, 1996), functions within this complex process. Narrative netwar is defined as storytelling competition between two or more organizations when at least one of them operates as a network. Using Appadurai's (1996) *global-scapes*, we posit that narrative netwar in the mediascape has the potential to influence the fitness of an ideology or set of ideologies on the ideoscape. The narrative netwar surrounding the 1999 protests of the World Trade Organization (WTO) summit meeting in Seattle, Washington by the Direct Action Network provides an illustrative case study to illuminate this perspective.

Theoretical framework
Globalization as a complex system

The beginning assertion of this article is that globalization should be viewed as an interorganizational complex adaptive process. Held, *et al.* (1999: 16) describes globalization as "a process (or set of processes) which embodies a transformation in the spatial organization of social relations and transactions." Appadurai's (1996) definition includes the symbolic realm, noting that cultural imagination is influenced by these complex processes. Appadurai, in classic complexity imagery, contends that global cultural flows occur on complex adaptive landscapes, similar to the rugged landscapes described by Kauffman (1993) and McKelvey (1999) for biological and organizational systems. Appadurai's landscapes include: ethnoscapes, technoscapes, financescapes, mediascapes, and ideoscapes. *Ethnoscapes* are the shifting configurations of persons who move around the world. *Technoscapes* are the fluid configurations of technology, especially networked technology. *Financescapes* describe the movement of global capital. *Mediascapes* refer to the fluid production and distribution of media and entertainment around the globe. *Ideoscapes* are "concatenations of images" that often relate to political ideologies (Appadurai, 1996: 35). This is the landscape in which global ideologies compete.

Kauffman (1993) and McKelvey (1999) describe complexity in terms of actors competing for fitness on landscapes. These landscapes have peaks, or advantageous positions, that may be occupied by one or more actors. Landscapes vary on a continuum of ruggedness. At one end of the continuum, the landscape "appears as gently rolling ridges coming off a towering volcano" and "has one very high global optimum" (McKelvey, 1999: 285). In these landscapes, actors move gradually to further and further fitness. At the other end of the continuum, the landscape is littered with multiple jagged peaks. In these landscape actors' moves do not necessarily lead to greater fitness. An important measure of landscape ruggedness is Kauffman's (1993) *NKC* formula. In this formula, *N* represents the number of parts, *K* represents the number of internal connections on the landscape, and *C* represents the connections among

external agents.

Applying Kauffman's (1993) model to Appadurai's (1996) global-scapes yields a view of globalization where landscapes vary in complexity. Appadurai's landscapes would be more rugged, or complex, if there were a greater number of actors on the landscape, greater connections among the actors, or greater connections between the landscapes such as the mediascape and ideoscape. Held, *et al.* (1999) and Castells (1996) demonstrate an increase in the number of actors and actor connections on various landscapes of globalization.

Appadurai (1996) posits that the global-scapes are interconnected, which in Kauffman's (1993) formula suggests that the connectedness component, C, is influential. Moves on one of the connected landscapes have the ability to morph the terrain of the other global-scapes. In this paper, we examine the narrative competition that occurs on the mediascape and its ability to alter the fitness of ideologies on the ideoscape. Additionally, we note that storytelling adaptations can influence the retelling of stories by actors on the mediascape.

Storytelling and complex systems

Storytelling is a nested, adaptive, nonlinear, and open process. Stories are nested in that they occur at different levels within organizations. Narratives are created, reinforced, and impaired by heterarchical processes (Kontopoulos, 1993; Monge & Contractor, 2003) that flow along multilevel organizational structures. People often create competing discourses in order to deal with ambiguities and their own experiences that do not fit with organizational meta-narratives. "At one extreme, the storytelling organization can oppress by subordinating everyone and collapsing everything to one 'grand narrative' or 'grand story'. At the other extreme, the storytelling organization can be a pluralistic construction of a multiplicity of stories, storytellers and story performance" (Boje, 1995: 1000). Similarly, media organizations can allow multiple competing stories of an event to emerge, making sense of the multiple fragments from politicians, social movement leaders, and observers, or they can report only the 'official' story of one organization.

Stories are adaptive in that they alter over time because of changing organizational memberships, competing narratives, and a host of other environmental factors such as the actions of external actors. Over time, new organizational members tell (or fail to tell) the old stories, changing them both in-

tentionally and unintentionally (Boje, 1995: 1000). As organizations are faced with competing outside stories, they may change their own stories in order to maintain coherence and fidelity (Fisher, 1987). Moreover, many stories are nonlinear. Nonlinearity implies that stories may not follow a chronological ordering of events. Instead, stories are formed and adapted, as people make sense of nonlinear bits and pieces over time.

Finally, stories are open systems because they change based on narrative dynamics outside the system. These external pressures can come in the form of public criticism, academic critique, or competing organizational stories created by other actors. The interaction of multiple storytelling organizations "constructs 'subject' positions of self and other within interactive, iterative, and negotiated stories" (Boje, *et al.*, 1999: 341). Through this negotiated process, organizations make sense of experiences, relationships and other stories (Boje, 1991; Boje, *et al.*, 1999). The process by which stories become sensemaking vehicles is also nonlinear and dynamic. Boje (1991: 106) describes this process:

"*The implication of stories as precedents is that story performances are part of an organization-wide information-processing network. Bits and pieces of organization experience are recounted socially throughout the firm to formulate recognizable, cogent, and seeming rational collective accounts that will serve as precedent for individual assumption, decision and action.*"

Boje's characterization of storytelling highlights several important dynamics. First, storytelling in this definition is not the modernist version in which the story of the organization is "administered and rationally planned" (Boje, 1995: 1003). Instead, network members participate in processing bits of the storyline, incorporating them into their individual interpretations. Second, storytelling is the mechanism by which organizational resources and routines (Nelson & Winter, 1982) become reified actors (Morgan, 1997) to whom identities can be attributed. Third, Boje (1995) notes that storytelling is the way in which individuals identify with organizations, noting that stories allow people to enact their communities. These stories then become precedents for possible continued action on behalf of their organizations.

Applying these principles of storytelling to Appadurai's (1996) global–scapes, we note that storytelling can occur via technology, the media, or

through face-to-face interaction. The medium of storytelling changes the nature of stories (McLuhan, 1964). While storytelling occurring through the technoscape, currently including internet chatrooms, blogs, and forwarded e-mails, allows everyone to be a storyteller (Holeton, 1998), storytelling through the mediascape limits the number of voices heard. Stories become less messy, more high-level, legitimized, and pervasive through networked connections among actors, like the AP wire service. Despite the transformation of these stories through the mediascape, stories about organizational actors still play the important role of creating public identities for organizations and allowing people to identify with organizations. We argue that organizational stories told by other actors in the mediascape are processed by publics in a similar way that organizational stories are processed by those internal to organizations (see Boje, 1991, quoted above). These fragments of stories, heard from various media actors, competing and cooperating in the mediascape, allow individuals external to the organization to form opinions about the identity and actions of organizations.

This media storytelling process is complex and adaptive. The stories told by organizations and their members through the media both verify and confront stories told by other organizations. When the stories align, they form a cooperative, coherent, integrated web; when they differ, they create a competitive[1], fractured, disjunctive set of narratives. From an evolutionary perspective, cooperation is important for increasing resources available to actors, thus increasing overall fitness. Cooperation is more prevalent when resources are plentiful and/or when an organizational population is newly founded (Aldrich, 1999; Baum & Singh, 1994). Competition arises as populations grow and resources become limited (Astley, 1985). Particularly in environments of scarce political, economic, and/or social resources, the competitive success of the stories told may be vital for organizations to endure and to survive (Astley & Fombrun, 1987).

Netwar

Although there are many ways in which organizational stories cooperate and compete with one another, the rest of this article will focus on a particular competitive process in which certain types of organizations engage: *narrative netwar.* Netwar is a type of competition in which at least one of the entities is a network (Arquilla & Ronfeldt, 1996, 2001). In today's global society, these network organizations are guided by "non-hierarchical command structures that communicate through 'all-points'

communication channels of considerable bandwidth and complexity" (de Armond, 2000). Netwar has recently been studied because it is different than typical forms of competition. In traditional wars, if one disables the leadership or normal channels of communication, the war is won. In netwar, however, the network adjusts quickly to the environment, continuing on the offensive on some fronts, and establishing alternative channels of communication. The most recent discussions of netwar have involved the strategies of terrorist organizations (Arquilla & Ronfeldt, 2001). In order to succeed in netwar, network organizations master five areas of competency: structural, technological, doctrinal, narrative, and social (Arquilla & Ronfeldt, 1996). These five netwar competencies are developed and refined as organizations and communities coevolve with one another and respond to environmental pressures.

The 'narrative competency', that Arquilla and Ronfeldt identify is what Boje (1991) and Boje, *et al.* (1999) refer to as 'storytelling'. Narratives are particularly important for organizations engaged in netwar (Arquilla & Ronfeldt, 2001). Arquilla and Ronfeldt claim that organizations that utilize the adaptive strength of the dynamic network form are the most structurally competent. This is because these organizations continually adapt to changing environments, such as leadership that is removed during attacks and disrupted channels of communication. Under these difficult circumstances, narratives tie individual entities to their networks. Narratives can function to promote cohesion and greater organizational commitment or they can become dysfunctional (Waldman & Yammarino, 1999). Coherent narratives may become an important resource by which these organizations survive and thrive or without which they dissolve. However, narratives may also act to marginalize certain groups and encourage competition within levels.

For today's network organizations, narrative competency requires sophisticated use of the media. From the website created by the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia People's Army (http://www.farcep.org/pagina_ingles/) to the multimedia initiatives of grassroots organizations such as the Rainforest Action Network (www.ran.org), network organizations are using media to support coherent internal narratives, to articulate a consistent story for the public, and to counter the stories being told by the organizations with whom they are in conflict. In narrative netwar, organizations not only tell stories about themselves that are communicated through the media, but also tell stories about the identities

of actors with whom they are competing.

Boje (1991) theorized that narratives in traditional organizations are multiple and fragmented, creating a 'Tamaraland'[2] where individuals engage in wandering discourses, seeking to make sense of fragmented and partial stories. Of course, the media do not view all storytellers as equal. Narratives told by formally appointed, centralized and conservative organizational spokespersons are often considered more legitimate (Schumaker, 1975). Public relations researchers and professionals note that a single spokesperson telling the organizational story in times of crisis is essential to an effective media strategy (Miller, 1999; Zoch & Duhé, 1997). The reason for only allowing a single spokesperson to speak on behalf of the organization is to create a single, cohesive, and favorable story of organizational actions.

In network organizations, however, there are no central spokespersons or leaders (Arquilla & Ronfeldt, 2001). Instead, multiple committed persons must tell the organizational story to the media. This creates the possibility, even the likelihood, that stories related to and by the media will be fragmented and inconsistent. Despite this hurdle, network organizations engaging in netwar also strive to tell coherent narratives that will ring true to the larger public and be coherent with one another (Fisher, 1987).

Identity narratives play an important role for both traditional and network organizations. Boje (1995) notes that storytelling is one way in which individuals identify with and give identity to organizations. Identity narratives in network organizations play an additional role; they are the primary boundary creating and maintaining system, denoting inclusion, exclusion and centrality within the network (D. Ronfeldt, personal communication, 2000). By tweaking stories, networks can open their boundaries to include other groups or close their boundaries to previous allies. Thus, by changing the narrative boundary conditions, the organization may change the network configuration.

The next section provides an illustrative case study of the narrative netwar waged between the Direct Action Network (DAN) and the World Trade Organization (WTO) during the DAN protest of the WTO in Seattle, Washington, November, 1999. The purpose of this case study is not to provide a definitive account of the protests or their ramifications. That has been done by several others (see Danaher & Burbach, 2000; de Armond, 2000; Klien, 2000).

Instead, the purpose is to illustrate how two actors engaged in narrative netwar on the mediascape can morph the ideoscape. DAN, a social movement organization, operated as a virtual network organization (de Armond, 2000; Shumate & Pike, 2005), with local affinity groups represented via a spokesperson in group discussions, consensus decision-making, and use of information communication technology to organize. Conversely, the WTO is a global intergovernmental organization characterized by a relatively hierarchical structure with geographically-situated headquarters in Geneva.

Both of these organizations have particular ideological positions on the issue of globalization. Each organization engaged the media to tell their identity narratives to a larger public. The global mediascape transformed these local and individual narratives. Narratives were broadcast around the world through the global interconnectedness of agents on the mediascape (Appadurai, 1996). Stories were repeated, changed, and adapted by various journalists, sometimes relying on first-hand accounts, but also relying on the accounts of other journalists.

The identity narratives told by DAN actors and WTO actors, both about themselves and the competing actors, were efforts to change the boundary conditions of the other. If DAN expanded its boundaries to include all people of conscience, who cared about the environment, poverty, or justice, then they gained an advantage in their netwar over the WTO. If the WTO limited the boundaries of DAN, by stating that they were a few radicals with whom no one should identify, then they gained an advantage in the netwar.

The telling and retelling of these identity narratives also had the potential to transform the global ideoscape, since these organizational actors represented particular positions on the issue of globalization. The most advantageous positions on the ideoscape, and their relative proximity were shaped by the stories told by these two actors.

Narrative netwar: The competing narratives in the mediascape

In order to explicate the narrative netwar that occurred between DAN and the WTO during November 30, 1999 (N30) protest, a variety of archives were examined, including online listerv and spokescouncil meeting minutes of DAN, articles and chapters written by participants in the protests, interviews and historical archives about the protests (WTO History Project, 2000), and media coverage

before (November 22 - November 29) and immediately following (December 3 - December 7) the protests[3]. Specifically, the authors utilized Strauss and Corbin's (1998) approach to grounded theory development. First, we engaged in open coding, categorizing stories told about protestors and the WTO into emergent stories. Second, we utilized axial coding, noting the timeline of events of the protests. Third, we engaged in process coding, following the storytelling of events from one newspaper to another and noting changes in storytelling that occurred in the pre-protest (before N30) and post-protest (after N30) media coverage. Finally, we engaged in selective coding, organizing our codes into four written descriptions of identity narratives, the conditions that gave rise to each narrative, and changes in each narrative over time.

The four descriptions that follow are the emergent identity narratives told in newspaper coverage of the N30 protests. While the WTO and DAN contributed to the storytelling about themselves, they relied on media actors to retell their stories. Some mediascape actors told stories that are more or less consistent with what these actors portrayed. Three stories emerged about the N30 protestors, including DAN. Only one identity narrative emerged about the WTO.

DAN as a 60s Flashback

The first identity narrative that emerged about the N30 protestors was one of hippies or party goers. Even before the main event of N30, The *Wall Street Journal* dubbed the protest "the Woodstock of Globalization." *The Boston Globe* called it "a '60s flashback'." Early reports of nonviolent, dramatic, and fun activity were reported on November 27 by Helen Jung of *The Seattle Times*. She told the story of the radical cheerleaders who woke up too late to cheer. "A few members of the 'Radical Cheerleaders' carrying a Hula-Hoop 6 feet wide, raced through the crowds watching the annual holiday parade. They had slept late, said the Santa Cruz, Californian resident who identified herself as Mz. T, and were searching for the rest of their group. The others had already danced and staged their demonstration behind Mayor Paul Schell as he walked the parade route."

Some emphasized the more dramatic aspects of the protests, suggesting that the protest was more like a great party than an actual action. Mark Rahner, *The Seattle Times,* reported:

"*In what one protestor called 'a rehearsal for insurrection,' hundreds opposed to the World Trade Organiza-*

tion marched up and down Broadway in Seattle yesterday. With a crowd that could have been mistaken for that of a Grateful Dead concert and an atmosphere that was more Mardi Gras than mayhem, the nonviolent procession clogged the Capitol Hill street for about three hours, starting at 1pm. Estimates of the crowd size were upwards of 500 - surprising organizers. 'It was three times the number we expected,' said David Solnit of the Direct Action Network. 'We were overwhelmed that the whole neighborhood came out.' Solnit said the march was to set a 'festive' and nonviolent tone for the week's WTO protests. Some marchers carried huge puppets, some walked on stilts, and others carried anti-WTO banners- including one that announced, 'I'd rather be smashing imperialism,' while many simply danced down the street to the sounds of drums, whistles and chants."

Les Blumenthal, of the *Star Tribune* (Minneapolis, MN), headed the report of this particular protest as "Dressed as Butterflies." Robert Collier of *The San Francisco Chronicle* used the opportunity to directly attack a competing identity story by noting:

"*A front-page headline in the Seattle Times summed up the growing paranoia: 'WTO - Whose Idea Was This?' The article went on to warn of 'terrorist attacks' - without explaining further. Yesterday, a trial run of the protests went off peacefully. About 1,000 people marched through downtown, pausing before chain stores they call symbols of WTO-style corporate power - Gap and Starbucks, among others. The scene was festive. Dancing stilt-walkers wore monarch butterfly costumes (to symbolize claims that butterflies are being killed by genetically engineered corn).*"

The Houston Chronicle went on to state that the protest would be staffed by "hundreds of protestors in sea-turtle costumes and stilt walkers dressed like monarch butterflies."

After the violence surrounding the N30 protests, many stories told by media actors retained the positive, almost nostalgic, storyline. For example, the *Houston Chronicle* reported (December 3):

"*Old Hippies and Yippies joined together to march against a system they believe is run for Yuppies... Seattle evoked the days of massive civil disobedience of the 1960s, when demands for social justice sent citizens from a wide range of races, religions, and economic backgrounds into the streets. It was designed to be, as the ponchos distributed at one march proclaimed, 'the Protest of the Century'.*"

While the *Houston Chronicle* posed a more global nostalgia, Sacha Pfeiffer of *The Boston Globe* (December 4) focused the story on a single individual, Sarah Bridger, a 21 year old Brown University student, who was arrested during the protest. Bridger had flown from her home to be in Seattle because she resonated with issues she learned about in college. In telling Bridgers story, Pfeiffer commented:

"*But whether or not she was aware of the historical parallels, the tale Bridger told from jail was strikingly reminiscent of the great social upheavals of the generations past. And like her 1960s forebears, the left-leaning college student seems intoxicated by the political issues that drove her to the streets in Seattle and by the collective social voice she discovered in the process.*"

The implication of the story was that this protest was staffed by 'Sarah Bridgers' college students who were experiencing the same powerful pulls as their parents did.

Not all who saw this protest as a 1960s flashback had such positive views of the experience. Thomas Friedman (*Plan Dealer*, Cleveland, OH, December 3) stated that these protestors were simply "yuppies looking for their 1960s fix". He goes on in the article to decry their self-indulgence. Robert Lusetich (*The Australian*, December 3, 1999) paints a more detailed picture of Generation X feeling the need to protest because of advertising and media trends. He stated:

"*Nurtured by an X-Files induced distrust of Big Brother government and oh-so-fond anything retro, the US grunge capital's hosting of the WTO provided Generation X with the perfect venue to get a taste of the 60s while venting concerns about their future. Seattle was to be their San Francisco, the cradle of the anti-Vietnam movement, and the WTO their 'Tricky Dicky' Nixon.*"

Whether nostalgic or indulgent, the stories of the Seattle protests reliving the 1960s painted the protestors as at best naïve. The protestors seemed to have just found social issues, and they were finally being let in on the things that the rest of the world already knew. Their protests were merely child's play or a party.

DAN as hero with legitimate claims

A second story about DAN emerged in the course of the protests. This was the story of mostly peaceful protestors who came to Seattle with real issues, who were largely successful and who were attacked by a police force that overreacted. What is remarkable about this story is that it was not part of the pre-N30 coverage. In an example of the adaptive nature of storytelling, this identity narrative emerged in response to the violent events and actions of police.

After the N30 violence, dozens of short stories provided fragments about the peaceful demonstrators, massive sit-ins in the face of violence, and protestors who sought to calm the violence of the Eugene Black Bloc Anarchists. Lance Dickie of the *Seattle Times* (December 3) stated in one such account:

"*Ugly, tragic events must not be allowed to overwhelm peaceful protests that resonated inside the ministerial meeting. Random acts of bravery on mean streets must be acknowledged as well... In this lawless void, protestors tried to protect shops and business with nothing more than chants of 'No violence, no violence.' When the window-smashers started to trash a sixth Avenue Starbucks, an angry crowd forced the vandals back onto the streets. A gray-haired, bantam-weight woman in a yellow parka put herself between the Christmas blend and the thugs and chewed them out... Later Tuesday night, a young man blinded by tear gas stumbled down a side street being reclaimed by the police. His face and eyes were on fire and he was bleeding from head wounds. This young protestor, a UW student from California, had put himself between Niketown and the vandals and got whacked repeatedly for living his nonviolent beliefs.*"

For the most part, Lance Dickie communicated the story told by DAN before the event in their action pack. In these protests, they were to stand out because of their non-violence. Their message would resonate with people. In fact, this is the story they came to Seattle to create.

However, without police force reported throughout Seattle, this story would not have been possible. A party had to be to blamed for the violence in the streets. This was most simply stated in a December 5th headline of *The Guardian* (London): "Meacher [environment minister] Blames Seattle Police For Riots." Others began to report stories of excessive police force. For example, Ian Ith (*Seattle Times*, December 3) reported the following story:

"*Late Wednesday night, police forcefully advanced against a crowd of protestors who had been marching up and down Broadway for hours, blocking traffic. In only a few minutes, tear gas and concussion gre-*

nades pushed the marchers from Broadway and Pine Street to the far northern end of Broadway at East Roy Street. While police and protestors tangled, gas wafted throughout Broadway, sending other people running. Later, when a crowd of onlookers assembled two blocks south of the clash, a line of police charged them, shooting tear gas and rubber bullets to chase them onto side streets."

This was an international story repeated in *New Straits Times (Malaysia)*, *Business Times (Singapore)*, *The New Zealand Herald*, and *Il Sole (Italy)*. While there were notable exceptions to repeating this story - *The Australian* and *The South China Morning Post* - the vast majority of English-language international newspapers repeated the story of the peaceful protestors with legitimate issues being abused by an oppressive US police force.

DAN as violent rioters

A third story about DAN was told in the mediascape. This identity narrative frames DAN as a group of violent and irresponsible rioters. This story began to be told before the N30 protests, focusing on the events of the June 18th (J18) protests in London. On November 25, *The Guardian (London)* ran an article warning that the 'riot' that happened in London would pale in comparison to what was being planned in Seattle. Kieron Sharp, the city of London police Chief stated in the article that "When you start looking back at the way these groups operate, they say that they are non-hierarchical, that nobody takes control, nobody is in charge, that they are not an organization. I think that this [J18] was different because this was the first time we got them all together, and that the violence was pre-planned. The attack on the Liffe building was planned from the beginning." This story continued in the *Seattle Times* on November 26th, when J. Martin McComber reported "Protests, marches, auto traffic and motorcades are expected to jam the heart of downtown. The city is now bracing for the potential of violent clashes, terrorist attacks, and massive arrests."

The first story based on events in Seattle was reported on November 28th in the *Seattle Times* by Lisa Pemberton-Butler.

"*Three people were arrested yesterday and booked into King County Jail after hanging a banner on a wall along Interstate 5 near Denny Way to protest this week's World Trade Organization meeting in Seattle. Leonie Sherman, 27, of South Seattle and Shannon Service, 24, of Bainbridge Island dangled from a wall with mountain-climbing equipment for*

about 90 minutes until they were pulled up by Seattle police... This event, highly publicized by the Direct Action Network, closed off a block of Melrose Avenue East and slowed traffic on I-5 and several streets on Capitol Hill... 'If anyone has a problem, how will medical help get in?' asked one worker at Denny Terrace. 'Maybe their protest is valid, but they could have picked another place'."

No mention of what was written on the banner was ever made in the article. Their message was not central to this story, but their threat to public health was. This story was repeated again in articles published by the *Financial Times* (London) on November 29. In this article entitled "WTO Prepares For The Battle In Seattle," Mark Suzman reported that "Two women have already been arrested after disrupting traffic over the city's main highway for more than an hour as they hung a giant banner from a retaining wall reading: 'Caution: Corporate Rule Ahead. Shut down the WTO'." The "Battle In Seattle" was the headline in the multiple articles in newspapers across the country, insinuating that it was inevitable that violent conflict would erupt. This perception was reinforced in a story by Ian Ith of the *Seattle Times* on a retired police officer making clubs, bigger than normal police batons, for officers during the WTO protests.

This story, after the violence during the N30 protests, emerged as one of the dominant identity narratives. Charles Babington of the *Washington Post* stated on December 3, "Billowing clouds of tear gas and rampaging protestors are images indelibly linked to the WTO gathering." Relying on a global mediascape, a global viewing of the most raucous aspects of the protest was made available to the public. The sense that many journalists made of those images was that a riot had taken place in the streets of Seattle and there was no purpose behind it. Daniel Mader in *The Ottawa Citizen* (December 3) ran the following under the headline "Mob Rule Must Not Deter The WTO":

"*All this week we have seen the images coming out of Seattle. Tens of thousands of angry demonstrators. Closed-down streets. Clouds of tear gas. Riot police everywhere. On Tuesday, demonstrators succeeded in forcing postponement of the opening of the World Trade Organization conference... The WTO's opponents are not unhappy because it is an organization where only governments get to vote. They are unhappy because it is not controlled by their agenda.*"

In this story of mob violence, no single message was heard. Instead, it is a mass of voices that degenerated into petty street violence. An editorial in the St. *Petersburg Times* (December 3) stated the story this way:

"*Protestors at the World Trade Organization meeting made a lot of noise, but they produced precious little thought. Though there are some legitimate criticisms, most leveled in Seattle are not among them. The assorted protestors at the World Trade Organization meetings in Seattle spoke with contradictory voices. Isolationists accused the WTO of wielding power so aggressively that it compromises US sovereignty. Environmentalists argued, more persuasively, that the WTO has failed to use its power as aggressively as it should to protect endangered species and prevent dumping of hazardous waste. Groups representing various sectors of the US economy were there to defend protectionist policies at home or to decry them in other countries. And then there were the self-style anarchists, who made no pretence of being in Seattle for any purpose other than mindless destruction.*"

While some sought to give credit to at least some of the protestors for trying to communicate real issues, others saw them all equally in a mass riot. In perhaps the strongest statement of this story, Assistant Police Chief Ed Joiners stated in a December 7 *Seattle Times* article that "These were not peaceful protestors... These were rioters trying to take over the streets of Seattle." Dozens of stories resonated with this theme, characterizing the events in Seattle as 'violent protest', and the protest-plagued WTO convention as 'mayhem' and a 'riot'. This story was really a continuation of the previous "Battle In Seattle" story. This story simply had new details to tell about the story, but the characters and their attributes remained the same.

WTO as a beneficent body

A single coherent WTO identity narrative was relayed by actors in the mediascape. Because this is a more hierarchical organization, it is not surprising that the public WTO story was primarily told by the WTO Director-General Mike Moore. In response to the stories being told by the protestors, especially those picked up by the media, Mr. Moore portrayed a vision of the WTO as a beneficent global body that struggles to support the same people and ideals held by the protestors. An article in the *Star Tribune* (Minneapolis, MN) on November 29 provided several of these comments by Moore:

"*I wanted this job because I saw the WTO as a way of lifting living standards for working people everywhere.*

No single parliament or international institution can legislate away all the evils of our planet or the miseries often made worse by bad government. But together we can 'inch up' workers' and families' conditions.

The WTO is not a world government, a global policeman or an agent for corporate interests. It does not force countries to kill turtles or lower wages or employ children in factories. Put simply, the WTO is not a supernational government and no one has any intention of making it one."

These, and very similar statements, were the WTO self-narratives most often cited in the media. Moore was considered the 'legitimate' storyteller of the WTO's identity narratives, and sometimes the identity narratives of the protestors. Meanwhile, protestor's identity narratives about the WTO were rarely reported by mediascape actors and never repeated by other papers. In contrast, official quotes from Moore were often repeated across the globe within days.

Moore and other participants in the Seattle meeting touted the importance of the WTO and the free-trade ideals, which the protestors were vehemently against as global equalizers. Lee Siew Hua, on December 1 in *The Straits Times* (Singapore) wrote:

"*To the anti-globalization camp pushing for the WTO's shutdown - claiming it has placed free trade above worker rights, the environment, consumer interests and health concerns - Mr. Moore commented that a world without a multilateral trading system 'would be a poorer world of competing blocs and power politics'.*"

British Development Minister Clare Short shared this viewpoint in an article by Stephen H. Dunphy in *The Seattle Times*. "Without the WTO and its rules, the rich and powerful could bully the rest as they used to," Short said. "Let's face it, no rules is when the rich and powerful do bully the poor." In addition, she called the WTO the "organization they love to hate." This portrayal as the martyred international governing body got considerable play in the media. Moore epitomized this perspective in an article by Les Blumenthal in the *Star Tribune* (Minneapolis, MN) when he said: "Fifty-thousand people may be demonstrating against us in Seattle,

but remember, too, that over 30 countries *some 1.5 billion people* want to join the WTO. They know what it offers and they want to be part of it."

Conclusion

This case illustrates how multiple stories can compete with one another on the global mediascape. No single journalist tells the entire story. The organizations that are in conflict create and adapt their own stories, attempting to get mediascape actors to retell their story. When one of the actors in the story is a network organization, then actors are engaged in 'narrative netwar'. Since the network encourages individuals to identify with and act as a network through the story, rather than formal authority structures, stories bear particular significance for the network organization.

However, networks face a challenge in communicating their story in the global mediascape. It is notable that three competing DAN identity narratives emerged in the media, while the WTO identity narrative remained unchallenged. Without an identified spokesperson or leadership from DAN, journalists were left to observe and create their own identity narratives of the protestors. Some relied on past experience with protests, harkening them to a 1960s revival. Others observed the violence and concluded that the protestors were rioters. Only after police action lead to an adaptation of DAN's story, was their adapted story (re)told by mediascape actors.

This article makes three contributions to the study of narratives and complexity theory. First, it extends Boje's (1991, 1995) concept of storytelling as complex sensemaking outside the boundaries of the organization. The analysis shows that stories are told by organizational actors and then reinterpreted, (re)told, or wholly ignored by journalists. These journalists are essential storytellers for organizations, like DAN, because they can be instrumental in gaining public support for their ideologies.

Second, the research demonstrates how storytelling in the mediascape is also complex and adaptive. Journalists repeat stories they gain from a wide variety or sources such as the AP wire or CNN. They make sense of events and then re-tell their adapted stories to readers. These stories themselves can be seen as nonlinear adaptive systems.

Third, the analysis shows that the global interconnectedness of the mediascape transformed the identity narratives of protestors from local, fragmented narratives to global repeated and re-ified narratives. These narratives became the way in which global citizens made sense of the events in Seattle, the organizations involved, and their issues. In this way, identity narratives transmitted in the mediascape have the potential to increase or decrease the fitness of ideologies on the ideoscape. Because of the police action in Seattle, the views of protestors became recognized and gained prominence among many in the world.

Finally, the arguments and evidence developed in this article demonstrate that globalization can be understood as the complex global processes of interacting global-scapes. Through their interactions on these global-scapes, individuals and organizations can morph the fitness and ruggedness of other global-scapes. Thus, storytelling has the potential to change the nature and direction of globalization.

Acknowledgements

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Notes

[1] As noted by one reviewer, stories are not intrinsically competitive. Instead, stories may coexist and contradict one another but not necessarily compete. While acknowledging that competition is not an intrinsic property of stories, we argue that multiple fragmented identity narratives can be told by multiple persons affiliated with a networked actor in order to discredit and/or distort the identity narratives of another actor within a netwar conflict. We also agree with this reviewer that stories may be utilized as "instruments of persuasion, coercion and power" but these properties are not intrinsic to all stories.

[2] Tamara was a long-running play in Los Angeles, California in which the audience wandered through a large house while the play unfolded, everyone seeing the play from the various perspectives they obtained from constantly changing locations.

[3] Materials from DAN included 305 pages of single spaced listserv texts, all materials DAN produced downloaded from the WTO History project, interviews with two DAN organizers from the WTO history website, and numerous books and articles collected by that authors on DAN. Media coverage was garnered by examining all major newspaper articles included in Lexis-Nexis Academic Universe using the search terms 'WTO' and 'protests' from the selected dates. This yielded 863 pages of line

numbered text.

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