

**INFORMATING GREENPEACE: MATERIAL
PRACTICE, WORK CULTURE, AND GLOBAL
ORGANIZATION**

By

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ABSTRACT

This study examines the entwined histories of global IT infrastructure development and central office IT support at Greenpeace, a well-known environmental NGO with increasingly global reach. Through participant observation in the IT department at Greenpeace International and interviews with Greenpeace staff serving in varied roles, the study documents the development of key IT projects at Greenpeace, highlighting the decision-making processes within and around these projects, how people viewed these decision-making processes, and the organizational role of technical staff. Results indicate that 1) IT development has received (until quite recently) limited attention from Greenpeace's senior managers, and has been instead steered organically from group processes amongst technical practitioners, middle managers, and users. 2) IT specialists and other participants in IT projects were influenced by a range of moral constructs, some of which were characteristic of environmental advocacy, while others reflected the values and interests of progressive technical communities. 3) At the same time, IT development was not widely seen as a morally or politically charged area of work at Greenpeace. 4) As IT development has expanded in scale and scope, there is growing recognition of its impact on both relations between offices and the organization's effectiveness, warranting increased attention from the organization's senior managers. This shift, however, will likely narrow the role played by IT practitioners, who have in the past been key players in

IT projects. The study provides insight into the ways IT has been integrated into non-profit organizations, drawing out 1) a tendency to view IT as somewhat apolitical 2) how technologists in advocacy oriented non-profit organizations are governed, at the individual level, by moral ideals that characterize advocacy organizations and 3) a growing awareness of the importance of technical governance in non-profit organizations.