



# Networked politics

Basic Reader

Berlin - June 2007

Rethinking political  
organisation in an  
age of movements  
and networks

work-in-progress



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# Networked Politics in Berlin

## Introduction to the Berlin basic reader

**A**nother subtitle for this project could be 'Rethinking political organisation in a period of radical transition.' Certainly, what we are doing through Networked Politics (along with many others across the world) is trying to understand processes of transition in all their ambiguity, and to reflect on how to act politically in relation to them.

This has certain implications. For a start it implies that we'll be doing it for a long time!! (The prospect of a long haul does not, however, deny the possibility and necessity of moments of sudden and rapid rupture). The transition is fuelled by the rapidly deepening crisis of existing institutions, the spread of disaffection and resistance and yet at the same time, the difficulties of giving birth to new institutions. So our rethinking is also driven by a practical urgency - strengthened by participation in the resistance to the G8. A second implication therefore, is that as we work, we produce shared resources and tools: resources which help us and others to become more self-conscious about where we are going, to have the space to learn lessons - including from our mistakes - as we travel and to be able to create change as we resist and as we think.

### What is Networked Politics?

One resource is the Networked Politics collaboration itself, necessarily loose and occasional in its rhythms and its connectedness. We consider this resource to be modest but at the same time useful; especially in the way that it mixes people from different points in a political map that is constantly changing, people from different generations and experiences who are all searching, curious and desiring to reach out beyond the circuits of the activist movements.

It is also positive to be working simultaneously and without fixed borders, on several dimensions of change: social movement organisation; political representation; state and property institutions; techno-political tools, and bringing them into interaction and tensions with each other.

We should briefly update you with the story so far - since January 2006. The core of the project is four lines of inquiry which we initially defined as follows:

**\*Movements, Networks and New Forms of Organization.** The innovations and problems arising from "movements": their development in practice of a new approach to knowledge, new forms of action and organisation

**\* Political Parties and Rethinking Political Representation** Attempts at renewal taking place in political parties of the left and the experience of their limits and hence attempts at rethinking political representation and communication, beyond the existing political institutions.

**\*Public institutions in the network society.** The ambivalences, dangers and opportunities of the multi-levelled political systems and the idea of the governance.

**\* Techno-political tools.** The "New techno-political tools" made possible by the revolution in information technology and their potentialities for transformative thought, action and communication.

Each line of inquiry has organised its own forms of preliminary research, suggesting starting points and 'hot issues', organizing



small brainstorming workshops and setting up a wiki and an e-mail list to help us to work collaboratively. We have also organised seminars at the World Social Forum in Caracas and the European Social Forum in Athens in 2006. You can see much of this work summarised in the pamphlet: 'Networked Politics; Rethinking Political Organisation in an era of movements and networks. Work in progress'. This was produced after the seminar in Barcelona and is available on the networked politics website [http://www.networked-politics.info/index.php/Reader\\_Networked\\_Politics](http://www.networked-politics.info/index.php/Reader_Networked_Politics) (or to download as pdfs: <http://www.tni-archives.org/docs/200701261425586570.pdf>) Also on the networked-politics website is a web-bibliography e-library. This is a central resource in our collaboration containing articles, papers, seminar transcripts including the preparatory reader for the Barcelona seminar, and dossiers of interviews from the frontline of political innovation and its difficulties.

### **The background to our work.**

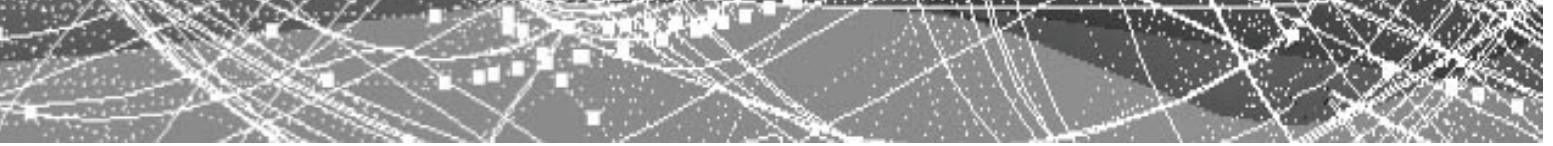
Several aspects of the background are worth stressing. First the implications of the context of radical transition for our methodology. Prediction and projection on the basis of past trends and tendencies no longer works - if indeed it ever did. We are living through a period marked by radical breaks, discontinuities and shifts in paradigms at many different levels. At the same time the new is emerging or trying to emerge out of a variety of relationships of co-existence with the old. The mapping that is needed and the tools that are useful are those that can help to identify and understand processes of conflict and emergence that are often beneath the surface - or like an iceberg have a strength beneath the surface potentially greater than their surface appearance belies - and are uneven in their immediate effect. These processes are significant either because of their relation to the underlying dynamics

of the transition and/or because of the alternatives they prefigure. It is this kind of mapping process that that we had in mind in commissioning out of the discussion in Barcelona, four cases studies on: the open software movement, new labour organising, the experience of the German Greens for the implications of feminism for political organisation; and the ambiguities and potentialities of the experiences of Internet global governance.

A mapping of transformative experiences is also important for strategies based on a collaborative understanding of processes of refusal and alternatives, and on efforts at connecting and contaminating, educating and self-educating, transforming and self-transforming. This is part of the fundamental shift of activism towards an emphasis on communication, the sharing and the making of knowledge, on consciousness raising, and on education as empowerment. (see Geert Lovink and Ned Rossiter on Non-Democratic Electronics in this reader)

This is related to a number of paradigm shifts in transformative political thinking. These shifts have run through our discussions so far and have been summarised in our 'Networked Politics, work in progress' pamphlet. At the risk of being overschematic, they include the following: a move away from notions of political vanguards and/or traditional, parliamentary forms of representation towards principles of horizontality and direct or participatory democracy; a move away from forms of unity that suppress or transcend diversity and plurality towards creating relations of co-operation and deliberation that respect autonomy and create a capacity for flexibility.

Underpinning these shifts is an ethics that breaks from the instrumentalism of ends justifying means and of the individual being subordinate to a reified collective. It is a developing ethics which aspires to



prefiguring in the present the kind of society we envisage in the future, with an emphasis on collaborative relationships through which individual potential is realised and (hopefully) enhances the development of the whole.

An increasingly explicit theme in these shifts is a stress on the diversity of knowledge, practical and intuitive as well as theoretical; embedded in emotion and experience as well as verified through scientific methodology; produced through activity as well as through reflection, self-reflection and research. With this is a stress on the importance of how knowledge is produced by the movements and on consciously addressing questions of how its production and its sharing, socialisation, distribution and accessibility is organised. (Ezequiel Adamovsky and Micha Brie reflect on these shifts in reviewing the principles presented in this process so far). This recognition of the importance of the organisation and the means of sharing of knowledge underpins all the lines of inquiry, making them all distinctively alert to the new issues posed by information technology.

### Sketching key features of the transition.

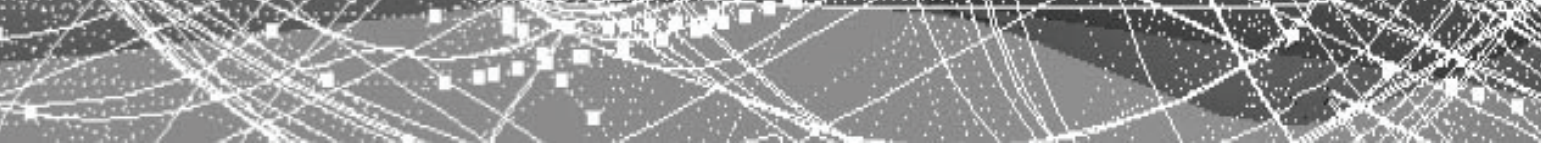
Here we can simply 'flag' features relevant to our discussion. Texts in this reader and the expanded reader in the Networked Politics e-library explore their complexities more in depth.

**\* The potential and the threats of the new (in historical terms) information and communication technologies, the social relations shaping their development and use and the ambivalences of the networked environment that they have contributed towards producing.** As many others have stressed, there is no one set of values inscribed in the new information technologies. It is a matter of understanding and shaping new possibilities and also new sites of social struggles and conflicts. In Barcelona we responded to this aspect of

the transition by focusing on open software as a rich source of metaphors for changing the world. The similarities between many features of the Internet and the horizontal relationships of the movements have helped us to think beyond existing organisational boundaries and categories. In Berlin, the issues raised by the nature of both networked capitalism and networked character of the movements and the need and possibilities of new institutions will pervade all our discussions.

**\*The collapse of the old left agenda based on the primacy of the nation state without, as yet, the emergence of coherent alternative strategies and visions for a society in which the fulfilment of each is the fulfilment of all - at least in Europe, Latin America is maybe illustrating elements of a more positive dynamic.** The weakness of the institutional left in France and in the UK are the most recent illustrations of the political repercussions of this. These European experiences and in a different way, the experiences of Italy, point to the limits of the old as a midwife to the new. So too does the experience of the PT and social movements' in Brazil, whose democratic innovations have been severely undermined by the nature of the PT's engagement with the Brazilian state. These experiences also point to the importance of a new politics whose alternatives are not tied to the dominance of the nation state. We cannot abandon political institutions, at whatever level, to the right but we need to develop new ways of working within them which recognise in practice as well as in theory, that the fulcrum of change lies outside these institutions, in the conflicts and movements in the wider society.

Such a hybrid approach, while not in anyway a coherent strategy at least recognises the corrupt and decayed institutions of representative democracy as necessary spaces of conflict and struggle. At the same time as denouncing their corrupt and alien character we have to recognise their a residual,



ambiguous legitimacy, stemming from the fact that at some point and in some respects they have been influenced by historic struggles for democracy.

In the past four years, the alter-globalisation movement seems to have lost its public visibility: it's acknowledged position as the voice of the 'second super power', of critical public opinion. After a cycle - between 1999 and 2003 - during which it was increasingly recognised as a new social subject, albeit uninstitutionalised and represented through means of communication rather than through conventional political institutions, something changed. This doesn't mean it disappeared, or that it necessarily became weaker. Indeed it could be the opposite: there are signs that the movements became more locally rooted, more concerned with everyday life but in the context of continuing, low key global connections. Certainly, these multiple subjects changed their strategy (ies), their routes, and their way of spreading. Making sense of this process- why did it happen and how? where are these movements and pursuing what strategies? - and its implications, from our diverse experiences and standpoints, will be another theme that runs through our discussions in Berlin.

One feature of the post 2003 context is clear: the movements of 1999 - 2003 were a signal of a rapidly collapsing legitimacy of ruling institutions, globally and nationally. While the movements are no longer so visible, nevertheless there is a new critical awareness that is widespread and growing way beyond the present reach of the movements. It is reflected in many way: in the popularity of critical and radical culture; in numerous local but interconnected instances of popular resistances to corporate and state driven forms of development and 'modernity'; in the growth of 'ethical consumerism'; in the mass illegality of peer to peer sharing of music and films; in the ever widening gulf between the political class and the people. One of

the concerns giving a sense of urgency to our discussions in Berlin is how to overcome the risk of the movements being too self-referential to respond to this wider awareness, which their earlier actions have helped to stimulate.

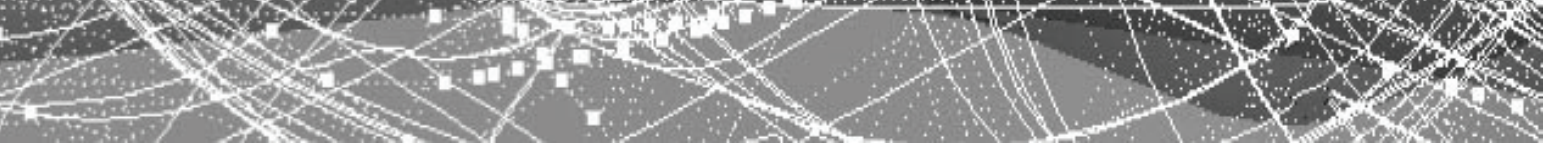
### **The agenda for Berlin: some suggestive thoughts!**

Against this background we see four aims for the Berlin seminar - but of course we are happy if others see more or different! First, through the preparations of this reader and the 'maximum' reader on the e-library, we have sought to open up new areas of research within each of the four lines of the inquiry - the seeds of these new questions were sown in Barcelona and developed since.

**The public institutions in the network society** line of inquiry will explore questions of how we move beyond the old framework of 'state versus market,' focusing especially on communal property rights. Here we are inspired by the new debates about the commons in the Internet community and also those arising from ecological issues and those emerging out of resistance to privatisation and experiments with participatory forms of public management.

**The movements, networks and new forms of organization** line of inquiry will focus on the importance of rediscovering labour as a condition for recreating politics. It will build on the reconceptualisation of labour now underway in theory and in practice - and signalled by the growing connections between the world of labour and recent social movements. It will explore how far the sphere of labour can contribute toward the sustainable and radical unifying of the diverse sources of resistance to globalisation.

**The techno-political tools** line of inquiry will attempt to understand the various kinds of web community from the standpoint of



social transformation, analysing how they are organised, how far they resist conventional market and hierarchical relations, how far they invent or support network and other non-market relations, including social movements forms of organisation. We will also ask why social movements appear nowadays to be limited in their use of interactive forms of web technology (web 2.0) and finally whether online communities help us to understand changing in the building of political identity and political groupings.

### **The rethinking political representation line**

focuses on questions about how far - and how - it is possible to develop the autonomous strength and creativity of social movements and popular struggles while at the same time attempting to reclaim the institutions of electoral politics and public administration from their present state of corruption and decay. Both goals require thinking beyond representative democracy. For the former, questions of communication and media are key to developing new means of connection, establishing common values, developing shared strategies and achieving cultural hegemony. How far could the development of a new public sphere through these non-conventional means also provide a basis for both resisting old forms of corruption and reclaiming electoral politics as one of many spheres for the expression of the desires of the multitude?

A second aim for the Berlin seminar, closely linked to these lines of research is to develop and receive feedback for the **case studies** that explore what is emerging in practice, both its innovations and its problems.

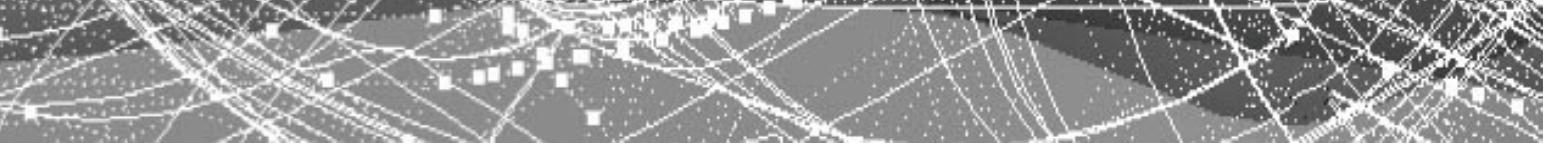
Third and fourth our hope for Berlin is to consider how to develop collaboratively both the project of the **Principles and Challenges** and the project of inventing and systematising a **vocabulary of new politics**. Both seem intrinsically related to the problems of thinking strategically and at many different levels in the kind of period of transition in which we find ourselves.

Periods of transition involve almost by definition a widespread process of rethinking purposeful action - the terrain is changing,

the old subjects are in crisis, the new only emerging. Language is one of the more enduring structures on which we rely as a resource or set of tools for rethinking, for acting and for organising but it too is in crisis if it doesn't change. It is surely the most basic and at the same time the most contentious of social institutions. It changes in practice and with use. It is refined in theory and to understand new realities. Shared thinking, mutual and creative contamination can be surely be strengthened and speeded up if those changes can in some way be codified and reflected upon?

The process of sharing Principles and Challenges has worked so far in the Networked Politics process as a way of building informally an explicit common foundation for our discussions - they've served as a kind of spring board at our seminars giving us the confidence to dive into the deep end! Without being pretentious or exaggerating what we are doing, could this process be useful enough to share on a wider scale?

Finally, briefly to explain the final **Tuesday morning brainstorm**. Across the four lines of inquiry and in all the work reported in this inquiry you will find many cross overs and connections - often more intuitive than proven. One of these the idea of **emergence**, meaning more than simply change but pointing to signs of a new combination of social relations and actors producing or potentially producing a social subject or a social entity, radically different to anything previously existing but yet with a complex often overlapping, co-existing relationship with older institutions and relations. The following texts include references, tentative and cautious - maybe sometimes wishful thinking! - to emerging property relations, emerging connections between the world of labour and social movements, emerging forms of democracy beyond representation, emerging non-market relations through the Internet etc. The conditions for these emergent 'animals'



seemed worthy of a brainstorm of the kind that proved very creative - and enjoyable - in Barcelona on 'open source as a metaphor for new institutions'. A discussion in which we explored ideas and experiences critically and curiously and without inhibition. Whether anything will 'emerge', who knows? But it will be an enjoyable finale to what we hope will be a productive and exciting three days.

This three-day seminar following the demonstration on the 2<sup>nd</sup> is part of the swarming of resistances to the G8 and simultaneous debate on alternatives and strategies in Rostock and Berlin. The final article in this reader gives background on the changing organisation of counter summit mobilisations in Germany. We also want to make sure that we have time to keep up with what is happening at the G8, be ready for different scenarios and be prepared to take whatever supportive action might be necessary - using whatever international networks we have.

Well, these are some of the thoughts behind our planning of this seminar. As we've said before we are just proposing a structure on which others will improvise. We hope this reader and the extended reader available on [www.networked-politics.info](http://www.networked-politics.info) provides useful tools for you to do so. Our aim is a collaborative resource on which the whole of the Networked Politics list can draw.

Marco Berlinguer (Transform! Italia)  
Mayo Fuster (Euromovements)  
Joan Subirat (IGOP)  
Hilary Wainwright (Tni)



# Consolidations

## Principles and Challenges

Where have we got to - so far.

Ezequiel Adamovsky

“These are my principles. And if you don’t like them, I have others.”

**G**roucho Marx’s celebrated joke reflects the empire of pragmatism and selfish interest and the weakness of principled behaviour in our days. The other famous Marx -Karl- was not very inclined to thinking political action as guided by principles (in fact, he devoted most of his life to analysing the objective laws of historical development that paved the way to communism).

**So, do we have principles?**

When asked to propose principles that may guide us to rethink political organisation, we the participants of the Networked Politics Seminar came up with a long and diverse list. It seems that not all of us understood the word “principle” in the same way, though. While some took it as meaning “values” or “fundamental tenets”, others contributed with helpful ideas in general, or identified urgent needs of the current political situation (which the former understood more to be part of the “challenges” section).

Among the principles-as-tenets, some of the items seemed to be more or less shared by most of us.

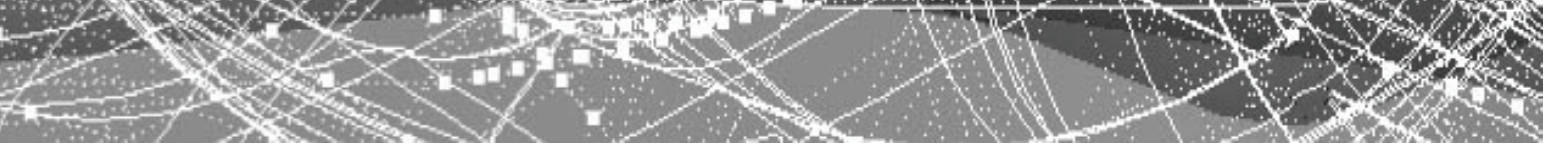
“Horizontalty”, for example, was mentioned by several. As a principle, it sometimes appeared complemented with others like “grassroots democracy”, “direct (or participatory) democracy”, “prefigurative politics”, “non-hierarchical collaboration”, “self-management”, “de-institutionalisation”, “autonomy”, “decentralisation”, “freedom of choice”, “empowerment”, and the necessity

to “break down divisions (between producer and consumer, author and reader, leader and follower, etc.)”. There seems to be an agreement that networks offer models of human interaction that may help us build political organisations in accordance with horizontality.

“Openness” was also an idea that appeared in many of the contributions, sometimes associated with things like “flexibility”, “multiplicity”, “plurality of actors”, “diversity and difference”, “non-exclusivist (or fluid) identities”, “capacity to learn”, and “letting go of our sense that we already know it all”. Thus, the key to building new political organisation appeared to be close related to our capacity to create more flexible, plural and deliberative spaces and institutions.

This, in turn, was related in some of the contributions with the idea that we need to be able to visualise the “complexity” of phenomena of political co-operation and the vast “ecology of counter-movements and networks of resistance”. In association with this notion, it was also argued that we need to “recognise the omnipresence of the capacity to transform”, and to have better tools for the “analysis of ordinary people’s action”.

Other principles appeared less frequently or just once, but can be nevertheless seen as “familiar” with those mentioned above. The need of an “ethics of radical equality” based on the principle of “care of the other” can be conceived as a cultural pre-requisite for real openness and horizontality. And the same applies to understanding politics as “taking care of the common household” and to the imperative



## Consolidations - Principles and Challenges

of “connecting collective and individual transformation”. Likewise, “representativity and accountability” are indispensable for effective network-like decentralised organisations, and help to uphold unity within multiplicity.

The principle that political organising should be based on a more or less clear “strategy” was also mentioned. In this respect one contributor argued that since “class remains as pivotal as ever”, strategy should not overlook the potentiality of class when it comes to giving unity and strength to the whole movement of movements. “Gender equality”, on the other hand, was also pointed to as a fundamental issue for rethinking political organisation and strategy. And the same applies to the necessity to think globally and to acknowledge the differences between the social realities of central and peripheral countries.

Let us now move from things in common to possibly contradictory or unclear aspects of the principles we proposed. There seems to me that more thinking is needed with regards to a number of issues. Firstly, the very notion of political “principles” evokes something fundamental and solid that can be shared by everyone within the movement of movements. But how do we conciliate that with the idea that multiplicity, plurality, flexibility, and openness is also indispensable. If Badiou (quoted by one of us) is true in that “access to truth is nothing but a situated production of radical autonomy and self-determination, i.e., pure freedom from any relation and any network of inter-locked meanings or acts”, Can we really postulate solid principles for all? Can principles help us better build political organisations or, on the contrary, will they be an obstacle to political articulation of differences? Is there such things as “situational principles”, or is that a total oxymoron?

Second issue that needs to be clarified. It was argued that we still need to recognise the politics locked within daily, non-conscious

actions taken by (apparently) non political people. Complexity is about understanding how human society is changing by means of a vast number of actions of millions of people who, maybe without knowing it, are shaping social relations in freer forms. But how does political activism relates to that fact? It seems clear that there is a lesson to be learnt from “the omnipresence of the capacity to transform”. But will that lesson make us change the ideas we have about (our) “political” institutions and (our) “political” action? Is there a “them” and “us” relationship to be reconsidered? Is it at all possible or necessary to distinguish a “biopolitical” plane from a more “institutional-political” plane?

Finally, there is the question whether there is any hierarchy among the multiplicity of social actors and their demands. We value “diversity and difference” and “non-exclusivist (or fluid) identities”. Does that necessarily dissolve the centrality of class and/or gender? Do we need to establish such issues as central at all? Can a common strategy be agreed without establishing (at least implicit) hierarchies among multiple subjects and their demands?

It seems to me that both the list of principles that we came out with, and the tensions and contradictions that that list shows, are well in tune with the fundamental debates that social movements and activists in many countries are currently having. But I wonder if this is not simply because the “political corridor” Europe-Latin America has been developing for some time now a common political language and similar agendas. I wonder if closer contact with realities of the Middle East, Asia, and Africa wouldn’t enrich our list of principles and, perhaps, make them even more contradictory and perplexing.

### Reflections on principles and challenges so far

Michael Brie

#### **F**irst reflection: The difficulties to define what is really new

The subtitle of the project: "Rethinking political organisation in an age of movements and networks" defines an era. Yet, does this definition hold?

First, there seem to have been historical cycles where in phases of crisis networks played a decisive role, whereas in phases of departure, it is constituted movements, whose phases of consolidation and regained stability were characterised by the preponderance of formal organisation. This could be proved in many ways. In my opinion, we are currently in the transition from a phase of departure to a phase of consolidation where it is a matter of securing the achievements of the preceding phase, so as to create the conditions for a new offensive. Without such a consolidation by the reconstruction or the re-foundation of formal organisation, there will simply be a relapse into incapacity for action and growing frustration.

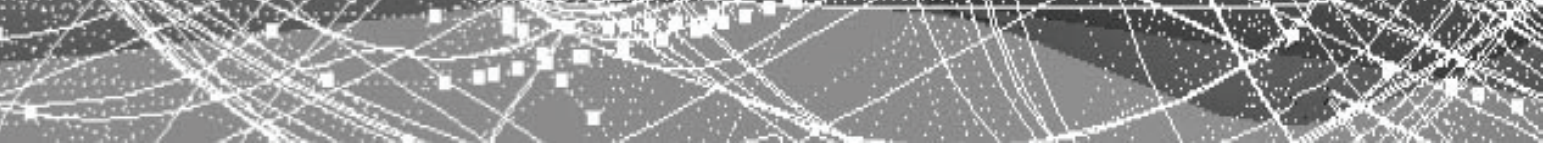
Second, it needs to be asked what is new compared to earlier cycles. Here are list would be: new forms of Internet- based communication and diffusion of knowledge, the globalisation of immediate experience of frontline struggles, strong regional differences continue to exist, there is the almost final dissolution of pre-modern life forms in the South and of the structures of a middle-class society in the North, the emergence of international institutions of state-like character (formulation and realisation of generally binding decisions) in the shape of WTO, IMF as well as of forms of regional and global governance etc. etc. The left has reacted to these processes mainly by the movement of the social forums and the emergence of a global "civil society"

(movement for concrete social and other basic rights, NGOs etc.). In the last couple of years, there have also been attempts, however, at broadening the institutional base of action (participation in government or government take-overs, party foundations/party reconstructions, regional cooperation between states reaching into the domain of the media - for example in Latin America).

It is already possible to draw a few simple conclusions: (1) The left will lose its autonomy if it does not develop networks capable to observe, to criticise and to mobilise. The potential of these networks consists mainly in the creation of an alternative public and thus of a high potential for de-legitimising rule. These networks represent a new type of the organic intellectual in the "information age". (2) Without strong trade unions and other organisations with social anchoring, the Left has of no basis of power outside of parliament that would be in a position to exercise direct political influence. These organisations continue to form the spine of the left. Their autonomous restructuring with a view to action under conditions of financial market capitalism will be decisive. (3) The parliamentary left in government is needed in order to influence politics directly (partly also out of a situation of weakness). Precisely financial market capitalism depends on democratic legitimacy and is sensitive to the withdrawal of democratic support. The rulers react to that by way of a new conservatism that seizes on social claims and integrates them into their neoliberal project.

#### **Second reflection: The awareness of the social basis - a Middle-Bottom Alliance**

The social basis of the left in Germany (but certainly also in other European countries) is



formed by three groups:

- *Critical educated elites* (from the upper middle strata, with high education, high responsibility in their work and high mobility, connection between high personal optimism and great scepticism vis-à-vis social development; are committed to a libertarian, open and tolerant social society and have high expectations from a presciently caring and regulating state);
- *Threatened workers* (from the middle strata, with simple and middle-level education, workers and simple employees, oriented towards well-regulated work relationships; great fears no longer to be able to maintain the living standards once achieved in the face of growing insecurity; expect comprehensive social security by the state);
- *Subproletarian strata* (with experiences of decline, exposed to strong social pressure, hit the hardest by precarious existence, don't see any future for themselves; demand a strong regulating state and have strong ethnocentric authoritarian orientations).<sup>1</sup>

These three groups are united as far as the demand for a strong political influence on community life goes and in their rejection of market regulations. At the same time, they are divided over whether libertarian or authoritarian orientations are to be preferred. A left capable of action must be able to develop values, goals, projects, forms of action and unite these three groups *and* at the same time have an effect far into the centre of society. It is also a question about whether a new right or a new left will win hegemony over

1 Müller-Hilmer, Rita, 2006: Gesellschaft im Reformprozess (Society in the Reform Process). Friedrich-Ebert Foundation ([http://www.fes.de/inhalt/Dokumente/061017/\\_Gesellschaft\\_im\\_Reformprozess\\_komplett.pdf](http://www.fes.de/inhalt/Dokumente/061017/_Gesellschaft_im_Reformprozess_komplett.pdf)).

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the threatened strata of the social middle and the old/new bottom of society.

The project of a solidary, emancipative transformation can only be realised as Middle-Bottom project. It requires an alliance of interests, a social contract between those groups, which form the productive core strata (the "general production worker") and those, which are marginalised by neoliberalism. In such an alliance, the new (and old) middle strata can gain a higher degree of social security, of a stable social environment and social integration, of qualitatively high-value services, of human dignity, of domestic demand for products and services. The lower strata would obtain a dignified basic insurance, access to the "freedom goods" of a society, chances for a far-reaching participation of equal value in social life. All of this must come together in a project of new higher social productivity. However, the middle strata are still caught in the illusion that the chances of the neoliberal project are higher than the dangers, or they see no alternative at all and subordinate themselves.

Such a Middle-Bottom project requires a broad political and cultural alliance of social movements, left parties and organisations as well as forces in the state apparatuses, of the economy, culture, the media etc. that is superior to that of neoliberalism. In Gramsci's terms, it is a historical block, "the creation of aggregate capacity of action with society-wide reach."<sup>2</sup> However, the trade unions are still caught in a defensive battle (there are however the first signs of new approaches), social democracy sees its chances in moderate neoliberalism, the social movements are, to a far extent, middle-class movements, the marginalised are politically and culturally isolated.

**Third reflection: The importance of counter-hegemonic projects.** The struggle for the active de-legitimisation of neoliberalism, the demonstration of its internal contradictions, the non-redemption of the goals it promised,

2 Ibidem, p. 23.



## Consolidations - Principles and Challenges

their distortion into economic, social, cultural, ecological and political catastrophes will only become a real claim to an independent emancipative counter-hegemony, which is more than a “No!” and also more than the contrary of neoliberalism, when it takes on material force in emancipative, solidarity-based initial projects for “another world”.

The core of a solidarity-based emancipative transformation is formed by initial projects that give the above-mentioned Middle-Bottom alliance and the vision of a new productivity a concrete content and can become the common organising reference point of a new historical block, which we can from to wrestle for a change of the social relationship of forces. Initial projects, thus Lutz Brangsch, are projects of open participative, democratic learning:

- 1) Initial projects mediate between reform and revolution as well as between protest and design by inducing lasting shifts of power constellations and drawing a broad re-grouping and re-definition of actors in society in their wake.
- 2) Initial projects must not only be designed for success but they must also make people capable of dealing with success.
- 3) Initial projects mediate between locality, regionalism and globalism.
- 4) Initial projects mediate the totality of way of life, cultural and historical identity.
- 5) Initial project are processes of conscious social learning in the unity of change and self-transformation.

Main features of a transformational policy that is able to defeat capital dominance, will be, given the positions developed here, the following capital goals:

- 1) Overcoming of the dominance of global financial capitalism, among other things by the annulment of public debts of the developing countries, the introduction of taxes on international financial

speculation and its curtailment, the creation of a newly regulated world currency system, the elimination of all forms of tax, legal and bank paradises, the gradual introduction of global minimal social and environmental standards;

- 2) Gradually lifting the dependence of fulfilling citizens’ basic needs on capitalistically dominated markets by introducing forms of need-oriented basic insurance, efficient public sectors in the social sector, in health, education and transport etc.; basic social rights and public existential provision must enjoy precedence over free trade;
- 3) Build-up of a participative social democracy, beginning at the communal level up to global processes, which aligns the framework conditions of all economic activity with the social interests of the lower and middle strata of the population and subjects decisions to their participation;
- 4) Realisation of the social obligation of all property in the interests of the lower and middle social strata and subsequent generations (principle of social and ecological sustainability) as well as of the co-determination of those employed as well as all groups directly concerned by the decisions of economic companies in the essential decisions of these companies;
- 5) Roll-back of the military imperial power of the USA and transformation of the regional organisations into powers of peace, which invest their political, economic, and cultural possibilities for crisis prevention on the basis of the UNO and under unconditional respect of international law; persecution of terrorists on the basis of the state of law principle and according to the provisions of international criminal law and procedure.

### Appendix: Contributions from new participants

#### Anastasia Kavada

For me the major principles also constitute some of its major challenges.

My first principle/challenge concerns **internal democracy and accountability**. Networked structures, horizontal coordination and the lack of centralized leadership often obscure the ways in which power operates within networked social movements. This poses a risk to the internal democracy of the movement as leadership may in fact be exercised informally by the most powerful actors and escape mechanisms of accountability. In that respect, the challenge is to institute mechanisms that prevent power from becoming consolidated without excessively formalizing the internal processes of the movement.

My second principle/challenge refers to **the engagement of networked social movements with their environment**. This includes the articulation of a coherent and inspiring vision, as well as the ways in which this vision can be conveyed through the media. It also comprises the communication with vertically organized actors since horizontal and vertical structures often find it difficult to establish a point of contact.

#### Ant Ince

##### Principles:

**Horizontality and Grassroots Democracy:** In order to reflect in the present the principles of whatever future society we aim to create it is important to try to create non-exploitative relations in our organisational and everyday practices. It is in the realisation that self-management and participatory organisation are not a disorganisation or destruction, but a reorganisation of structures that people begin to become aware of the possibility of alternatives to hierarchy and domination.

Direct democracy and organisational horizontality are key to productively engaging with both present and future worlds. Without decentralising the means of knowledge production and decision-making in the present, the organisation of future society is utopian. If we give substance to horizontality even in the process of trial-and-error, it suddenly becomes tangible and achievable.

**Class Politics:** Although class lines have been blurred by 'hip capitalism' and the effects of flexible, globalised and decentred capital, class remains as pivotal as ever. The working class and the employing class still have nothing in common, economically speaking, and this division remains the most brutal and powerful barrier to alternative futures. On the other hand, it gives us unity and connectivity that identity politics and politics of Otherness does not. It unites people and embraces difference through the affirmation that we have something fundamental and powerful in common.

##### Challenges:

**Strategic Discipline:** We remain entrenched in the comfortable, inward-looking ghettos that have divided and alienated the left, ensuring it remains a side-show for 'real' politics. We must be brutally honest and reflexive about what works and what does not - what furthers the interests and autonomy of people against a complex and ruthless enemy, and what simply gives us a moral pat on the back. An approach that targets key issues, spaces and places, and engages strategically at various levels at which capital operates is crucial in maximising the efficacy of our combined efforts.

**Demanding the Impossible:** The impoverished discourse on our future pushed largely by parliamentarians and the right wing - on what is or is not 'realistic' - is increasingly pervading the left. It is vital that this tendency is rejected and challenged through a multiplicity of channels and practices.

#### Connie Hildebrandt

##### Principles:

The ability to learn: we need to build our organisations so that we are continually learning, always able to take criticism and develop a culture in which conflict is not a problem. This means not only transparency, accountability



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and formally democratic procedures it means structures that build in the possibility of criticism and learning from mistakes.

The freedom to dissent: different political and social experiences lead to different perspectives on current problems and solutions. Such a variety of views is not only legitimate but also enriches the discourse. The different approaches should be set in relation to each other in a cultured way.

### Challenges:

**Social exclusion and self-exclusion:** social differentiation is increasingly connected with processes of social exclusion and social disintegrations. This produces new protagonists and sources of rebellion that have a coherent culture of self exclusion and separation.

How can the alternative spaces created by left social movements be constructed to connect with and integrate people who have up till now been excluded or self excluded?

**The problem of administration.** In the left's debates about the state, there is no reflection about the role of administration. But if the left is entering electoral assemblies at different levels, we need an approach to questions of administration. We need to reflect on the changes taking place as a result of 'lean government. This raises the question of political efficiency. What are the left's ideas on this? How far is efficiency something the left must aim for?

### Christophe Spehre

Often, we interpret principles as a kind of limitation, a border that we draw around our activities: beyond this, we would not go. But I think principles can be quite something different. They are ways of acting that we tend to lose in everyday life, everyday organising, that get ruled out by the process all too easily. So it takes some energy to hold them up and to insist on them. But if you do, it really helps. They will surprise you. They will open up ways and give you strength. Sometimes, it's like a spell: you wouldn't think it could work before you'll try. Like a spell, there is some risk in it. But mostly, it will work, in unexpected ways. That's the magic in it. I focus on two in which I am especially interested at present.

**Being honest.** Politically honest, of course, but also in organising, in political-personal relations. We all have too much tactics in our veins. We use to think that we have to conceal our goals, our strategies, our problems because we couldn't succeed if we layed all this open. But the contrary is true. People are fed up with political organisations that just tell nonsense. Everybody knows it's nonsense. We should note what some conservative politicians have achieved recently by recognising this. Angela Merkel for example was quite successful with her strategy of naming problems. She won the 2005 elections by what is considered an absolute sin in election campaigning: announcing tax increases. It worked. People got the impression that she was serious about the problems.

Sometimes it seems that the left find it especially difficult to be honest. To admit: "Yes, we play a very important role here...But we have a lot of open, unsolved questions about the future strategy of our society. Frankly, we are not really sure what can be done. But we will start democratic processes to find ways that are feasible, and social inclusive, because this is what we stand for." - This is very difficult for leftist to say. We all die for sentences and attitudes like: "Those guys have betrayed the people. They did everything wrong. We are the ones who know the right way, and if you had listened to us, we wouldn't be in this mess now." But people do not want to hear sentences like these. They know that politicians who talk like this are not gonna solve problems. Sooner or later, those who talk like this will turn against the people who present the problems.

**Democratic trust:** In theory, we all are democrats and defend the idea that the people have to decide. But in practice, this seems quite hard. We all have long lists of decisions in mind that we think can in no way be done by "the people". You would need experts for that, or politicians, or any kind of small, non-public round that can decide this. This is no special feature of the left. It's what this society tells us: Democracy is necessary as a system of formal representation, but you can't solve any real problems with it. But we can do things differently. You can develop a trust in democratic decisions done by plenaries and assemblies, by the "basis", whatever that means in the concrete case. (See notes in Rethinking political representation)

**To develop a strong, viable, attractive vision of a post-capitalist society and economy that beats Capitalism not only in its weak points, but in its strong points, too.** Capitalism is an easy target if it comes to ecological deterioration, inequality of wealth and income, unemployment, social justice, or care. But capitalism has very strong features, too. It triggers innovation, it uses markets and profits as a very powerful tool of artificial intelligence



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to organize production and distribution, it gives a lot of opportunities to the individual, and it has proven that it can work within the framework of liberal rights and democratic representation (in the political sphere, not at the workplace, of course), that it can take the fragmentations and pressures of a pluralistic, complex society that has no center and no leading single ideology. That is more than one could say about state socialism, for example.

So it is not enough to attack Capitalism for its weaknesses. People will use the Left as an important tool of correction, of counter-power, of capitalist modification. But they will not go for a new society, for an alternative economic order, if they do not see how this could outrun capitalism in its strong points, too. It is not necessary that you can produce more than capitalism; it's not about "better bigger faster". People are not stupid, they know that a lot of the production and ways of living that have dominated the last decades are not sustainable. But they want an alternative that goes well along with a complex, pluralistic society, with individual freedoms, with some privacy, with innovation, technology, and a smart mode of organising production and distribution. .

**To develop a popular left based on a new, modern proletariat.** A proletariat based on the fact that we are all working, that we all know what work means, that this is a major perspective of ours, and that we are all equal in this. A proletariat based on mutual respect that we are all of value and capable of understanding and self-government. As the new global ruling class of global capitalists ties itself together to a very small fraction of the society, this new proletariat stretches out very far. Socially, in terms of "objective class structure", there is almost no one that could not be included in this new working class, and who could not insist on becoming part of it. It will be limited only by the fact that some people will insist on inequality, on class system, on disregard for others and contempt for the majority of people.

In preparing for the Bremen election campaign 2007, we scrutinized closely the changes in popular culture and in the political unconscious that is expressed by movies, magazines, but also the way people talk when they go out or when they have lunch break together. We came to the conclusion that this new working class already exists and that we have to express it somehow. We called it the "James Bond lesson". Because you'll find that there has happened a deep cultural change, even break, between the "neoliberal", cool, sophisticated Bond that Pierce Brosnan had represented, and the "new Bond" that Daniel Craig now represented who, in our view, displayed a lot of the features of this new proletariat. No coolness; a straight, sometimes rude no-nonsense approach; but also a sense of vulnerability, and of class resistance in cultural terms. This was how we wanted to be in the campaign: Not cool, but straight; not academic or bourgeois, but real about the problems; not loud, but direct. Able to play the game and the rules of political representation, but not 100% comfortable with it, coming from somewhere else. This should be the language of our posters, of our material, of our street appearance.

I think we need this new popular left based on a new, modern proletariat to develop a political culture that will be exciting again. Today, political culture is not exciting. It's boring. People feel that politics is needed, so political organisations and political spaces are needed. People do not want to abandon them. But they don't feel attracted to them. They don't like them. There have been times in the history of the social movements and of the Left, however, where things were really different. Times when it was exciting, promising, changing, personally benefiting to get involved.

We need to achieve this today, again. Without this, no real change is gonna happen. And without this, getting involved is not really worth it.

### Carlo Formenti

The first principle is related to **the need to criticise the paradigm whereby "social being determines awareness"**. Or, to be more precise, the need to criticise the version of this paradigm whereby a particular organisation of production (for instance, Fordism or post-Fordism) inevitably matches up with a specific political ideology. In the history of the Marxist left, this notion has meant that certain specific forms of political organisation (the party, the trade union, etc) are regarded as the "natural" reflection of a specific class composition (which is in turn the outcome of a specific technical organisation of labour) rather than the product of the cultural hegemony exercised by the revolutionary elites.

Taking a critical step beyond this idea in the information age means being aware that, with the emergence of the network as the dominant form of productive organisation (and more generally of social relations), there is no necessary correspondence with the emergence of the typical values of the movements in recent decades (the



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rejection of hierarchies, horizontal relationships, egalitarianism, cooperation, participatory democracy, etc). No specific form of political organisation is “inscribed” within the architecture of the network, and neither is there any set of ideological values and principles. The network can cohabit (and does indeed cohabit) with new forms of hierarchical organisation, with individualist and competitive ideologies, with new forms of concentration of political, economic and cultural power (for example, the accumulation of reputation capital and its reinvestment in the political arena, in economic competition, in the struggle for control of the media, etc).

If we move from the critical to the affirmative version of this principle, it consists in stating that libertarian and egalitarian values and those of participatory democracy, though being **compatible** but not necessarily associated with the social relations of the network, can only become dominant through struggles whose objective is the winning of cultural hegemony on the part of the new left.

The second principle involves a partial correction of the first: **the statement that social being determines awareness continues to be true, on condition that the idea of social being becomes extended beyond someone or some organisation’s role of in the sphere of the productive process, to embrace the ensemble of the conditions (linguistic, historico-cultural, ethno-geographical, gender, etc) that constitute them.** This stipulation seems necessary when confronted with the excesses of “subjectivism” and “culturalism” which frequently characterise the political culture of the movements.

It is in particular a matter of avoiding that “post-modernist” perspective that attributes the role of new political protagonists to “self-constructed” identities. No subjective identity is “self-constructed”, but is always the outcome of complex (and contradictory) influences that are social, economic, cultural, ideological and biological, etc . This is to say that determinism is false if it relates to a single form of determination, true if it relates to a plurality of determinations. Translated into concrete terms, this second principle means that the “federalism of identities and differences” upon which the new movements are founded is inevitably bound to fuel a state of permanent conflict, and, much more importantly, that the rules governing the conflict must not be too ambitious (too general and/or too binding, that is). Put in other words: the idea of liquidating all logic of leadership and politico-cultural hegemony, so as to ensure an artificial parity of dignity and equality between the “federated” differences, is utopian and counterproductive. What seems much more judicious is the aim of ensuring that leadership and hegemony are rigorously limited to the “local” setting (in which the adjective clearly has no mere geographical meaning).

Judy Rebick

### Principles

**Embracing diversity** requires an open mind and open heart so that differences of experience, identity, culture and perspective are all valued in developing new political ideas and strategies. Unless we actively embrace diversity by identifying the barriers to it, like racism and sexism, and working to eliminate them in our ranks, we will not achieve the changes we seek. We have taken the first step by the horizontality of politics but there are still serious barriers. For example, at the WSF in Nairobi, the meeting on social movements was still mostly white and European. Diverse peoples may be meeting in the same spaces but not necessarily sharing political discussion across racial and cultural differences. Embracing diversity means a more holistic approach to our politics incorporating heart and spirit as well as mind and therefore.

breaking with the patriarchal and Eurocentric idea that politics is simply about ideas and facts.

**Transformative leadership:** Horizontal forms of organizing do not eliminate the need for leadership. We learned this bitterly in the feminist movement. (The Tyranny of Structurelessness <http://www.jofreeman.com/joreen/tyranny.htm>) Leaders must not only be accountable but also understand their primary role as both creating space and supporting others to be realise their capacities and as sharing whatever power they may have. We were all socialized in a capitalist, patriarchal, colonial order consequently personal change is part of the process. Not only is the personal political but the political is also personal. We need to combat our own tendencies to be dominant or submissive, to be dogmatic or compliant, to be insular or sectarian. Too often this kind of personal change on the left has been seen as moralistic. You are not a good comrade if you do not conform to certain behaviours. Instead we have to see this personal change as what is needed to be most effective and egalitarian in our work.

### Challenges

**How to develop alternative politics within neo-liberal, patriarchal, colonial societies.** The difficulties of sustaining a new politics once in government - even for the most committed revolutionaries - is only the most



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obvious sign of the problem. American feminist poet Audre Lorde famously said, "The master's tools will never dismantle the master's house." But without some use of the master's tools, it is very difficult to have an impact or even to reach masses of people, especially in the global north. The tension between marginalization and co-optation continues to be a pressure on the left.

The alternative means of reaching people online poses its own specific challenges. We are very adept now are talking to each other through various online mechanisms but how do we reach out to masses of people without using the master's tools. It seems to me that Web 2.0 (interactive web) sites like Flickr, UTube, MySpace, Facebook etc are creating a whole new experience of the social, rooted in the individual. Some extraordinary things are happening. For example, photos of key global news events like the Virginia Tech killings or the London Underground bombing appeared first on these common internet spaces. People are choosing to share their photographs with others on the web rather than sell them to the highest bidder in the media. The day of the Virginia Tech killing more people checked out Wikipedia than CNN online. The challenge is to understand what this means to consciousness on the one hand and how the Left can access these massive social networks that are mostly not very politically conscious on the other.

**How to develop ongoing political strategies with so few spaces for debate and discussion.** Horizontality and networked politics create much more of a role for the individual and much less for the social. In North America, at least, there are much fewer venues for political discussion and debate. The rejection of sectarianism and brutality in our political debates has often led to an unwillingness to have debates at all. The consensus method rather than being practiced as a way of achieving the fullest possible contribution and agreement from the participants is too often seen as a way to avoid making decisions in the name of autonomy. The inability of many groups to maintain themselves in face of differences troubles me particularly.

**Plus despite new spaces like the WSF, the national and local spaces for debate have significantly narrowed. While there are online spaces for debate, it is hard to know how these debates impact on political strategies. The new movements seem, certainly in North America, to be much more ephemeral than the old. Their lack of structure prevents bureaucratization but it also seems to prevent sustainability. While there is some poetry in the constant coming together and coming apart of networks, it is hard for me to see how we learn over time from our mistakes and develop our tactics and strategies.**

### Paolo Cacciari

I take for granted the aim of transformation at the very roots of social relations of production, consumption, lifestyle and human behaviour, etc.

I have no hesitation about dipping into the Gandhian repertoire. I have one extrovert principle, that speaks to everybody, and one introvert, which functions to regulate ourselves.

**Method is everything.** There is a close connection that links means and ends: like the seed and the plant -- as Gandhi rightly said. If this is the era of the glory of capitalism as empire, which is to say of permanent global warfare, then the "anti-barbarism" (Giuliano Pontata) ought to be non-violence. Inside each one of us we should have the strength to oppose brutal force with the search for the truth and the force of conviction.

**Political action is a collective and social enterprise.** Here too if the triumph of capitalism is the atomisation of individuals, each alone before the dictatorship of the market, then society's alternative is to have concern for human relationships, to recognise the other, never to violate his or her autonomy. In short, the golden rule to be practised, starting with the altermondialiste political organisations, should be the method of consensus. To go beyond the idea of democracy as majoritarian decision-making.

### Lluc Pelaez

#### Principles

**Austerity of means.** I believe that any action aimed at social change should be based on the principle of austerity in the means it employs. Networked Politics is essentially a space created in the First World. It therefore seems to me all the more fundamental to insist on this principle. Coherence between ends and means is above all a question of minimum expenditure, in terms of both energy and economy, and that this expenditure relies, wherever possible, on providers who also aim for social change.



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### Challenges

The principal challenge is to connect thought with action and to generate an internal logic by which this connection becomes unavoidable. I believe that we should avoid spaces for debate that do not connect with reality, not even with the daily reality of their participants. The challenge of social change through the changes in daily habits.

Jamie King

### Challenges.

**'Multitude' doesn't provide a political program, but a philosophical conundrum.** How does the crowd become a political quantity? In essence, H&N's answer: 'by co-operation' / 'general intellect' (mysterious substance). It seems to me this is insufficient. We need way forward or beyond.

**The question of identity.** Connected to the above, I keep feeling uncomfortable with the absorption of collective values to post-representative political actors. Thus, new ways to conceive collectivity without resorting to crass generalisations. A MySpace for the social movement is wrong \_in kind\_ as it tries to make a false identity or identities where there may be none. (like European, these identities just seem so thoroughly disrupted that their only value can be tactical or strategic.)

I like the idea of a **micro-ecology of political action**; it seems to me Deleuze (The Three Ecologies) and Deleuze/Guattari (A Thousand Plateaus) are still the key to this ecology. I also think that it is interesting to look at how the many nodes of the internet become an internetwork and how this might relate to 'binding' and interaction within and between political formations.

I completely agree that we reach a moment where a **new political language of organisation** should be developed. That, I think, requires rather detailed work. But it is a time for toolkits. Instead of rushing forwards it's a time to go back to atomic principles.

Sandro Mezzadra

My first principle concerns what I would like to call the **"spatial coordinates" of radical politics**. Rethinking and reorganising radical politics only make sense nowadays if we are able to take up the challenge posited by the global dimension of contemporary social and cultural experience as well as of contemporary capitalist accumulation circuits. This doesn't mean that our aim should immediately be to establishment of a kind of "global political network" or even organization. The point is rather that every political experience and attempt to organize must be able to grasp and interpret the global dimension independently of its spatial scope. While political organization needs to be "locally" rooted in order to be effective, the very meaning of "location" (or of "place") has itself to be redefined, keeping it open to the "world". After and beyond proletarian internationalism, we urgently need anyway to reinvent a radical transnational, transcultural and transcontinental imaginary and networking process. Movements and struggles of migration, global cultural flows that shape social experience at the level of everyday life, new communication technologies must play as important a role in this process as the struggle against "global" capitalist actors.

My second principle has to do with the **need of inventing what I would like to call new regimes of translation between different political and social experiences and struggles**. I think that this is not only a problem at the "global" level, but also at the very local level in Europe, where we are confronted with a deep diversity of social experience. This diversity corresponds on the one hand to the heterogeneity of the modes of capture of "living labor" by capital, on the other hand to the many differences that positively crisscross the subjective composition of living labor. To rethink and reorganize radical politics in the face of this diversity means to be able continuously to map this double-sided diversity, to identify the lines of exploitation and domination that run through it, to work from within the struggles that develop around and against these lines, to invent new modes of translation that



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make possible both political communication between them and the construction of a new common ground.

**Jeff Juris**

### **The Additive Principle**

Networked politics is driven by a logic of “both/and” rather than “either/or.” Instead of drawing rigid boundaries based on exclusivist identities (e.g. anti-capitalist vs. anti-neoliberal, anarchist vs. socialist, workers vs. environmentalists, etc.) such a politics seeks to transcend rigid dichotomies by building connections across diversity and difference. Rather than dividing and subtracting, the nodes within a given network constantly multiply and expand, establishing ever increasing numbers of horizontal ties. At the same time, particular networks are always defined by certain guiding values and principles, but these protocols should be as broad and flexible as possible given the specific nature of the goals.

### **Collaborative Practice**

Networked politics involves a search for new modes of collaborative practice, breaking down the divide between producer and consumer, author and reader, leader and follower. The overall goal is to use available social and political tools and technologies to expand grassroots participation, challenging traditional hierarchies and empowering people to become directly involved in those areas of life that most affect them. Horizontal collaboration is not necessarily the most efficient way to achieve a specific goal- although it can be as evidenced by open source software, but it always embodies broader egalitarian values as well as the consonance between means and ends.

**Glenn Jenkins**

### **Reclaiming Land, Reclaiming Economics + Living the Life**

New politics should be mainly about movements and networks **building the alternative economy** - it's from these economic actions that the need for new organisational structures, political discourse etc then arises. By building a 'sharing and co-operation' based economy as a directly opposite alternative to the 'hoarding and competition' based model that is capitalism, we get immediately to the heart of the matter - the rest will surely follow!

We've lost our understanding of the REAL meaning of economics - I couldn't put it better than this short piece I've nicked from the web:

#### **Oikonomia and Chrematistics**

Aristotle made the distinction between the social and natural resource economies (oikonomia), and the money economy (chrematistics). The term oikonomia, from which the term 'economics' is derived, is concerned with the management of the resources of the household for the benefit of all its members over the long run.

If the term 'household' is expanded to include the ecological resources of the land and its peoples, its institutions, language, shared values and history, we can visualise an economics designed to benefit the community as a whole.

**Chrematistics**, on the other hand, relates to the manipulation of property and wealth so as to maximize short-term monetary exchange benefits to the individual owner. "

So - as capitalism has clearly led to a chrematistic rather than economic approach to use of our commonly held world resources, a big part of the answer for me is to reclaim our lands and our lives in order to put the 'eco' back into economics.

As the Brazilian land grabbers Sem Terra say - " Organise, Occupy, Produce"!!

So **all non violent means necessary** (SQUATTING, legal claims, government programmes, purchase for redistribution to the people by rich philanthropists with a guilty conscience, SQUATTING etc) should be employed to reclaim lands and properties which can be put to good community use developing not for private profit economic activities -social housing, community farms, democratic workplaces, shops for local produce, entertainment centres, homeless support centres etc.



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The squatting of closed down shops in Argentina to stock local produce after the economic crash caused the 'owners' to flee was a sort of indication of the way forward - but we need to be doing this before the crash rather than because of it. I am part of a movement doing this in Luton and there are many, many examples internationally.

Just a few 'for examples' - for me real representatives of the new politics:  
would absolutely refuse to live a lifestyle which separates them from the mass of their fellow citizens  
would not enrich themselves either as an individual, as a community or as a country at the expense of bloodstained investments reliant on the toil and sweat of oppressed peoples in local or international sweatshops of any kind  
would not 'earn' (ha ha) interest' from a banking system which raises funding only by 'investments' (exploiting poor people) and 'bank charges' (exploiting poor people)

### **Non violence**

If killing people to forward or 'defend' our new way of life is part of our armoury, then we'll only ever be recreating a new and fresher version of the old. So we need to be much more creative when we select our toolbox for battles. Mass non violent civil disobedience and other forms of resistance need to be taken much more seriously by the left and then developed beyond being the minority sport that it is at the moment. Our refusal to use violence should be one of the key differences separating us from our opposites, otherwise they are not really our 'opposites' at all.

### **Participatory not Representative democratic structures + Urban Villages.**

The 'you take care of my interests for me' model has failed to facilitate anything like genuine democracy, leaving the mass of people to play a spectators role instead of actively engaging in shaping our political and socio-economic lives.

The new politics should be about participatory everything - participatory decision making, participatory budgeting, participatory investment and planning decisions etc.

Democracy needs to be something we do from an early age, - for example as they approach teenage years our young people could and should use school assemblies as forums to organise democratic, accountable and transparent ways of the managing and distributing youth budgets which are currently wasted paying for the upkeep and staffing of empty local authority community centres which are used by only a tiny percent of the local youth/ people whilst far more 'at risk' young people hang on street corners and in the communal areas and stairwells of flats.

A Participatory Democratic system has to happen locally first and from the bottom up - so in the schools, workplaces and local community first **then** federations of the thousands of other small communities (urban villages) doing the same thing would begin to address the decisions affecting all of us on a wider level. I dont pretend to know the shape any new national structures which can evolve would take, but thats part of the beauty of the new politics - its organic and will take shape as these 'urban villages' learn the art of REAL democratic behaviour...

### **The two main challenges that such a process of rethinking faces in practice and/or in theory.**

For me the number one challenge is the reintroduction into the debate and our into our everyday practices of the link between spirituality and economics - without then confusing it all with the religious or political ism's and schisms behind which all the murder and mayhem has been committed (which is really all a load of old mammon worship in disguise!).

To mobilise in great enough numbers to build and defend a new way of life

Effective building of the new economy as well as effective resistance against rampant capitalism and its effects can only be achieved by mass non violent activity. The challenge is to bring together all who are already doing this and to demonstrate the worthwhileness to those millions and millions who are not - but who are seeking viable alternatives.

This is all primarily about taking action, the highlighting and sharing of info about these actions, solidarity between those engaged in the actions, gaining widespread support for the actions - before capitalism takes us all over the cliff.

Gemma Galdon

### Principles

**Accountability:** when used by social movements, network structures can be very useful and innovative. However, we are yet to come up with new ways of defining or organizing key political issues like representativity and accountability, and so internal democracy has often suffered due to lack of clarity and difficulty with leading with “organic” leadership. So far, networks have worked well “when the going is good”, but have tended to fail when faced with conflict and disagreement, thus alienating participants.

**Strategy:** any movement without a strategy runs the risk of falling into the trap of “coolness” or, worse still, irrelevance and demoralization. Moreover, lack of strategy makes it easy for movements and political causes to ritualize their actions and lose perspective of their political goals. Any strategy adopted by a social movement should be flexible and open to re-evaluation.

### Challenges

**Territory:** new social movements and organizations seem to be developing a key feature in common: the need to defend and reclaim a physical space. This feature, common in Indigenous movements, is more and more present in northern and urban social movements. This physical space can be very concrete (public space, a public service infrastructure) or very abstract (nature), but the social demands always relate to a physical environment, to defending “the world we live in” or a “natural” statu quo. This is yet to be theorized.

**Context:** social movements run the risk of falling into self-referential patterns and lose perspective of the broader political and social context, therefore losing their ability to understand the society and context they are trying to change. Understanding the social context, on the other hand, enables movements to relate to other political formations (institutions, etc) while keeping their independence (organizational and analytical).

Michael Brie

### First principle - about methodology: Do not believe in simple solutions!

Networks are a special form of human cooperation amongst others. We need to distinguish strong personal ties from loose forms of often mediated and temporary cooperation (weak ties). Every form of human cooperation has its own advantages with respect to its potency, to the extent of cooperation in the case of differences among participants with high or low identity of goals and in the way it relates to problems with high or low complexity. It is, therefore, also a matter of different levels of effort to maintain this cooperation.

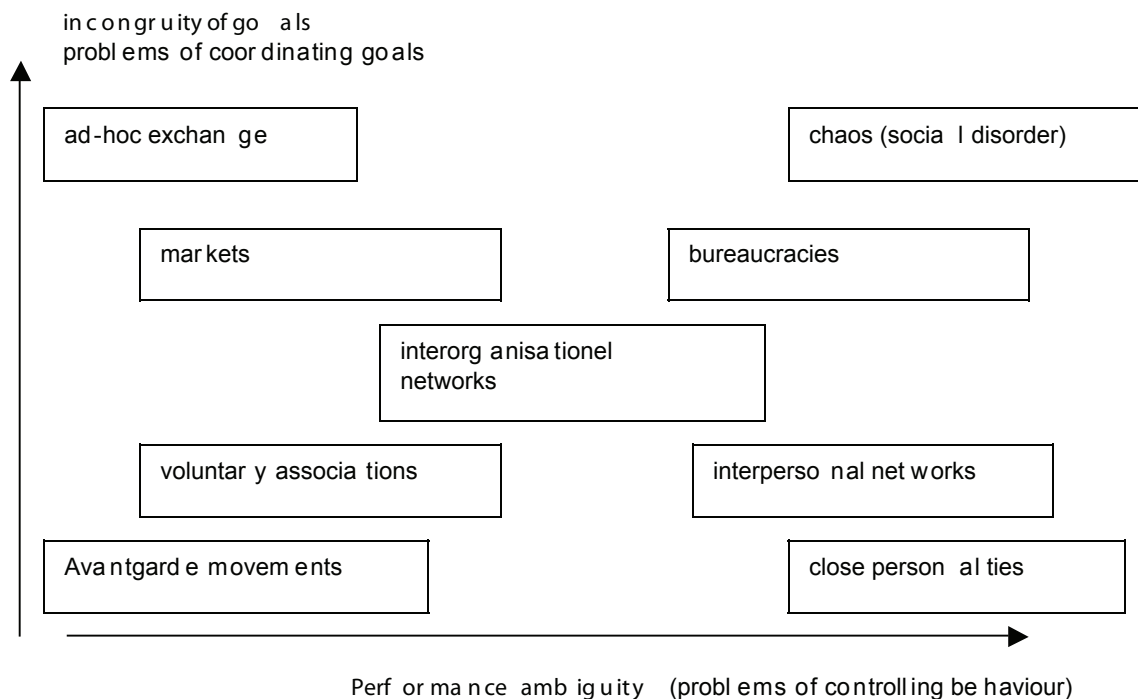
### Second principle - about values: Strive for solidarity!

As slogan for the left, I would like to formulate: “Freedom without equality is exploitation. Equality without freedom is oppression. Solidarity is the common root of freedom and equality.”

Precisely also action “in the age of movements and networks” is action under conditions of lack of freedom and of inequality. The mere fact that large parts of the population in whose name the movement of the social forums acts, mainly culturally, but also socially and economically can often play no effective part of these forums shows the deep ambivalence of such action. Solidarity is the obligation to support the freedom of others and to turn, for that reason, against the monopolisation of possibilities of social development. Politics in network must allow itself to be

## Consolidations - Principles and Challenges

Graph 1: Optimal capacity of different patterns of social interaction



measured by the extent to which it strengthens solidarity and promotes common free action among people who are free to unequal degrees.

### First challenge: The new role of formal organisations

The celebrated age of movements and networks could - thus my diagnosis - be replaced precisely now by a new rise of formal institutions of organisations. We may face an era of re-institutionalisation. The significance of movements and networks in my view was caused mostly by the crisis of formal institutions. To the degree that these are reformed precisely also by those who organise in movements and networks, they may again grow in significance. That also holds for the left: the reshaping and foundation of new parties, the weight of participations in governments, the efforts of the trade unions to actively adapt to the conditions of financial market capitalism and to organise also informational workers, those in so-called atypical earnings relationships and the unemployed - all these and other forms could be mentioned. In that effort, the achievements of the departure of movements and networks up to now must be kept up in dialectical form.

### Second challenge: Formal organisations as the basis for networked politics under conditions of inequality

When in Germany in 2004, an unemployed man called for protests against the neoliberal labour market reforms that were linked mainly with an expropriation of the unemployed from social claims, soon enough it was the trade unions and the PDS that created the essential conditions for the protests to gather momentum. As a result of the fusion of the Left.PDS and the Electoral Alternative (WASG) at the federal elections, the demands of these protests were carried into the Federal Parliament after they had reached a limit simply as protests. Hearings and discussions in parliamentary space ensure continuity. At the same time, there again grows the danger of the subordination of the social movements under the parties and the trade unions as formalised organisations. Again it is a matter of finding solidary and emancipative forms for these resistance movements. One form is the redistribution of resources from the formal organisations towards the social movements into their sovereign disposal. The G8 protest movement in Germany should be investigated from this point of view.

Translated by Carla Krüger, May 16, 2007



Stefano Fabri

### The challenge of multi-level participatory democracy.

The problem that I want to present concerns complexities in the concept of locality and in particular, the relationship between decision-making over local particularities and decision-making over general interests. I want to show how participatory democracy is not limited simply to the sphere of local autonomy but can also be the basis of decision-making over general interests.

In the management of territory there are always spaces of local autonomy and but at the same time there also always exists relations of interdependence between the local and institutions at other levels. For example in Italy, the commune (the Italian word is *comune* - that is the municipal level) has a small autonomous budget but it is also dependent on transfers from the province, the region (which also allocates European funding) and the national levels. In some respects this duality of autonomy and interdependence is the same as the difference between the local and the general (in which the concept of locality changes according to the territorial context). My argument concerns the importance of recognising the relationship between the local and the general. A particular issue to be solved at the level of the neighbourhood is often in reality a particular element or single expression of a problem that at a general level is present in wide areas of the territory.

What people have locally is the knowledge of the territory and the specific characteristics of a problem or need. But when we talk about local participation we must recognise the relationship of the problems or needs faced at the level of local autonomy and those areas of interdependence in political decision-making. Otherwise we strongly limit the potential of participatory democracy. If spaces of participatory democracy only exist at the lowest level (i.e. the sphere of autonomous decision-making) the possibilities for citizens to interact in a process of participatory decision-making will be severely reduced. Issues that cannot be directly resolved at a local level, lead to proposals to be decided at a higher administrative level. And if this higher level of decision-making is not structured in a participatory way then representative democracy takes on the role of mediating between different territorial proposals in the general interest.

There are two problems with this: the first is that under representative democracy, these higher levels of decision-making e.g. regional government, tend to make decisions that are too detailed. Second and most important, participatory democracy is relegated to a particularistic space, leaving representative democracy to be responsible for the general interest. What is needed to overcome these problems is **multi-level participatory democratic structures** through which citizens co-operate across localities to negotiate and decide about matters of general interest, thus widening the participative space and avoiding the counterposition of participative democracy as concerned with the particular and representative democracy as the sphere of the general interest.

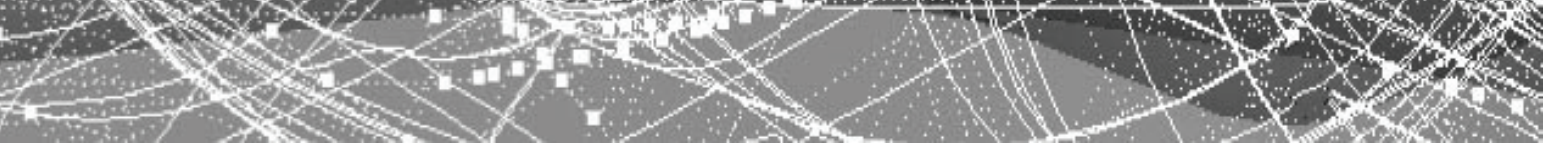
### Social construction of territorial realities

Institutions of direct democracy present an opportunity for citizens to intervene in the political processes of representative democracy. If citizens' intervention in decision-making is restricted only to the occasions when they exert pressure, then the outcome is proposals which cancel each other out - producing a zero sum game (as defined by game theory).

Multi-territorial participatory structures are an opportunity to overcome the fragmentation of political proposals. It encourages people, through cooperation and understanding of others, to look for the advantages and critical points of every alternative solution, in a shared and constructive path of improvement. If there is no agreement on the needs of a certain number of citizens, then there could be a direct intervention in the representative political system.

Representation has therefore to change from a classical vision with objectives defined by the pretensions of representative institutions, to a complete recognition of needs of the ecosystem of participation. This idea seems to be a variation of multi-stakeholder approach in which the interests of the various components have to be mediated.

The concept on which to focus is not so much that of mediation between the parts but that of social construction of reality. The importance of this process is that, through the recognition of the "other", to doubt and expand one's view of the whole system, it can bring everyone to a richer and shared form of representation of reality.



This follows from the objective of abandoning a simple position of pressing one's own interests and instead cooperating to achieve a result that can be advantageous for the whole system.

The objective for the participants is therefore to reconstruct a wider and more complete representation of the territory in order to act directly through deliberation. As in game theory the solutions with a sum different from zero are those that guarantee "victory" where the deliberation is a decision shared by the citizens. Failure will occur if the proposal does not attract the necessary approval, leaving to representatives politicians free to act in full autonomy. This configuration should be reconstructed in every participative space at different administrative levels.

## Moses Boudourides

### 1. The Idea of Networked Politics as Robust Political Action

The network paradigm should not overdetermine actors goal maintaining their multiple voices, flexibility and freedom of choice as long as possible, while at the same time, in contentious situations, trying to narrow the options of their opponents. The history of the Medici and Machiavelli, as protagonists of robust and "distributed" forms of political action, demonstrates that certain actors positioned inside a web of multiple influences and dependencies can maintain their fluid identity by tactical outmaneuvering of their opponents. According to Padgett & Ansell (1993), "locked-in commitment to lines of action, and thence to goals, is the product not of individual choice but at least as much as others' successful 'ecological control' over you"; thus, "[a]mbiguity and heterogeneity, not planning and self-interest," should be the raw materials of a networked robust political action. Contrary to understanding it in opportunistic terms, network robustness needs to be conceived as an autonomous (self-organized) and "invisible" (latent) process - c.f., Mellucci's sense of "network latency" - of building counter-hegemonical and aleatoric/democratic-materialist acts, which would strive to immunize communities in defense, by developing and mobilizing a whole ecology of counter-movements and networks of resistance.

### 2. The Non-Idea of Relations in Networked Politics

The 'spontaneous' relational ontology of networked politics (which often substantializes the procedural notion of relations) needs to be questioned and contested in a critical way. Formal(ized) philosophies, like Alain Badiou's, might provide some of the means. For Badiou, relations do not exist, existence becomes just a function of belonging alone, while truth is unrelated, autonomous and self-constituent: the idea of a link or a relation is fallacious. It is exactly at the point where a link is undone or freed that a truth procedure operates, especially in processes of political emancipation and during the emergence of new subjectivities. In this sense, access to truth is nothing but a situated production of radical autonomy and self-determination, i.e., pure freedom from any relation and any network of inter-locked meanings or acts. For Badiou, the critical element in the political process of becoming-subject or becoming-actor is found in the generic and self-referential notions of "confidence" and "fidelity," exhibited at those contingent encounters with all sorts of events that transform radically and disrupt the situation in which human beings are submerged. Therefore, next or as an alternative to the "holly alliance among Marxism and pragmatism" (Deleuze & Guattari) - which, in particular, amounts to an epistemological alliance among contentious collective action and social networks - autonomous networked politics needs to revisit the generic and formal resources that are grounded on robust politico-ethical truths and procedures. Otherwise, emancipatory, revolutionary and transformative politics runs the risk to be subsumed by an endless and pointless vicious circle of relationality (relations regressing/justifying relations ad infinitum).



# Consolidations

## Case Studies

### The workings of the free software community/movement

Stefano Fabri

Looking into the universe of FLOSS production is a difficult operation. The fragmentation of the phenomena, the lack of homogeneous agents and the distribution process makes it difficult to find those elements that allow this ecosystem to survive, expand and contaminate the other sectors of cultural production with its philosophy and methodology.

In reality, the movement is a patchwork of different cultures that have met, negotiated different models, and yet have managed to create specific identities on the Internet, with basic shared values and institutional aggregations.

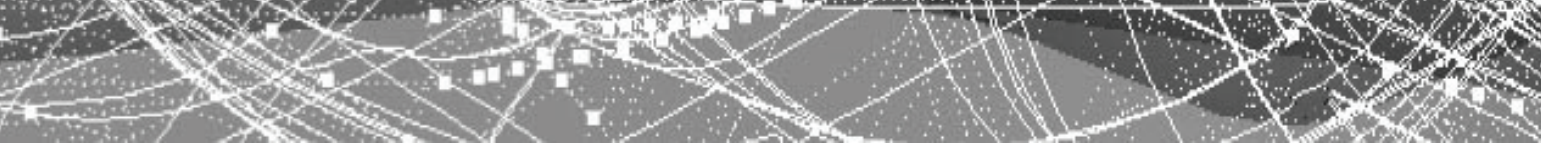
With the enhanced quality of the produced software, more and more institutions are beginning to find an interest in this phenomena: public administrators, private companies and universities, by being socialised into the system, are representing both an opportunity of growth and a potential to change the equilibriums, turning it into a dynamic landscape.

The mutual and autocratic aspect of the free software is increasingly coming in contact with the business culture, which is interested in reaping profits on the floss software through different business models. These vary from the provision of support and training services and the politics of commercial administration of marks to the differentiation within the same software between free software components and ownership components or to the application of a double licensing regime of both open source and ownership.

The role of the community, of those who contribute on a voluntary basis to the projects, is still predominant but companies too are now strongly interested in the concept of voluntary. Researches that have looked into motivation show that the main reason behind the participation in an open source project is the sharing of knowledge which is considered a fun and creative activity: a vision that is deeply rooted in the hacker culture.

Other relevant sources of motivation include the wish to participate in a cooperative process and the conviction that the software, as a cultural product, should not be owned. Another reason is that it offers the opportunity to resolve stimulating problems, where solutions are not yet available.

The cooperative activity on a voluntary basis for the production of free software, the participants' investment of their free time, their individual abilities and knowledge, group interaction and coordination are all defined as the "social capital" of the community. The availability of free time is surely one of the most critical factors. The possibility of working full-time for a floss project is surely a valid attraction for the developers. Hence, a company that is interested in a specific floss program can hire the main developers and maintain a relationship with the other participants at the same time. If, on one hand, there exists a convenience in "freely" taking advantage of voluntary work, on the other there exists the need to maintain a relationship with the community that does not follow the usual governance policies of a



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business company. Transparency, the need to reach some form of consensus when making decisions and the acknowledgement of the value and merit of the participants' work, are all factors with a strategic importance in the relationship between business and community. The voluntary nature of the work, combined with the type of licence that governs the software, strongly characterizes internal dynamics.

Generally, the founders of a project are assigned leadership roles. However, the nature of the license and voluntary work that exists within the community are such that it requires a certain level of consensus to be reached amongst its members. When the work of members is predominantly on a voluntary basis, both companies and leaders that coordinate the project cannot exercise their role in a hierarchical manner. The fact that it is impossible to force volunteers to undertake certain tasks, on which previous consensus has not been reached, is reinforced by the role played by the licence which governs the free software. A project that is handled without transparency and with a despotic leadership that is hostile to new ideas would not only risk losing its developers but also, in extreme cases, would cause a schism in the project itself.

Indeed, *forking* occurs when a developer or group of developers bring to life a new project from the rising code of a previous one. In practice however, forking is more likely to be used as a weapon of containment.

The risk of dividing the community of developers and hence reducing the resources available to both the old and new project and the risk that the successors will not gather enough consensus, means that forking is only used as a last resort, when conflict has reached such levels where dialogue is no longer seen as an option.

Some projects, however, adhere to more structured regulations. An example of this is the Debian project,

which has a constitution that outlines the basic rules and regulations to which the community must adhere to and has a leader that is elected annually through an electronic election.

A critical factor for the movement is also given by the business of the software, which is intended as a service. The problem which emerges in this case is that, although in this sector companies would be able to finance platforms on which their applications are based, in truth they interrupt the process of free circulation and resource enrichment, using what is produced by the community to provide services that are based on owned software development.

In any case, The FLOSS philosophy has contaminated other online realities amongst which we can surely remember the movement surrounding the Creative Commons. The free circulation of knowledge, culture and above all its collaborative nature represents the basis of innovation and social growth. On the horizon, if we can envision some revolutions taking place that could take us from industrial production to personal production - we can predict a way in which, the philosophy of "free and open", will override mere cultural production and cognitive software artifacts to reach the physical dimension of matter.

(This is available in Italian on in the e-library maximum reader for Berlin. And soon in English)

### The Governance of the Internet: what can we learn?

Vittorio Bertola

The Internet is a telecommunication system that was born and developed in a fundamentally different way than the previous ones. While in the telephone or television networks there usually is a single operator that creates the network, owns its facilities, and dictates which content and which services can be deployed over it, the Internet was born by interconnecting pieces of networks that were owned by different institutions - Universities initially, then commercial connectivity suppliers. As a result, there is no central authority that validates content and services before they are allowed onto the network.

Thus, Internet users are free to innovate, and to invent and distribute new content, services and even technologies; this is the key to the amazing and unprecedented growth of the Internet on a global scale in just a few years. Actually, most of the Internet applications that we use today - including the World Wide Web - were not invented by telcos, by governments or by companies for commercial purposes, but by individual users, often as a personal side project.

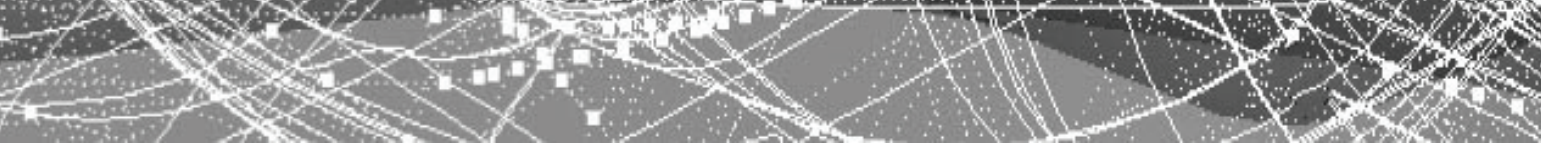
Thanks to this distributed ownership and leadership, it is very difficult to impose policies and rules over the Internet. Even intellectual property rules, which are backed by strong capital investment, political lobbying and police activities, have been proven impossible to enforce. However, "governance" activities are often proposed by governments and corporations as an instrument to gain more control over the global net.

Traditional governance models for the Internet are informal, based on bottom-up delegation of authority to trusted entities, often to

individuals, such as the famous Jon Postel who ran the root level of the Internet domain name system - the list of top level domains such as .com, .de etc. - as a volunteer job until 1998. Technical standards are developed through online discussions on the mailing lists of an informal and open entity known as the IETF, where all participants debate on an equal footing and in individual capacity, and where decisions are taken by "*rough consensus and running code*" - a technical standard is approved when most people agree with it, and when it is already used in practice.

However, this mechanism works well in a homogeneous group of engineers discussing technical matters; it works less well when discussing political issues in a much more heterogeneous and global group. In 1998, the Clinton administration decided to set up a new kind of international entity to manage the assignment of top level domains, which has implications in terms of business, privacy, free expression and even national security; however, the U.S. Government, which traditionally controlled these resources for having funded initial developments through Defense grants, would keep a power of veto on any decision. The new entity, named ICANN, was meant to be governed for half by representatives of the industry, and for the other half by representatives of the global users of the Internet, elected online. However, industry pressures and the difficulty of holding meaningful global online elections led to the demise of the principle: ICANN eliminated the representation of Internet users from its Board, and the U.S. Government, after 9/11, decided to keep Internet resources under tight control.

After the change of millennium, the United



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Nations launched the process of the World Summit on Information Society (WSIS). After a while, the governance of the Internet was picked as one of the two main themes, also due to the pressures by certain governments and by the ITU - the UN agency dealing with telecommunications - to gain control over the administration of core Internet resources. The first WSIS, held in December 2003 in Geneva, decided that it needed a deeper understanding of the matters; so, the U.N. Secretary General appointed a group of individual experts from governments, industries and civil society, the WGIG, that prepared a report for the second WSIS, to be held in November 2005 in Tunis.

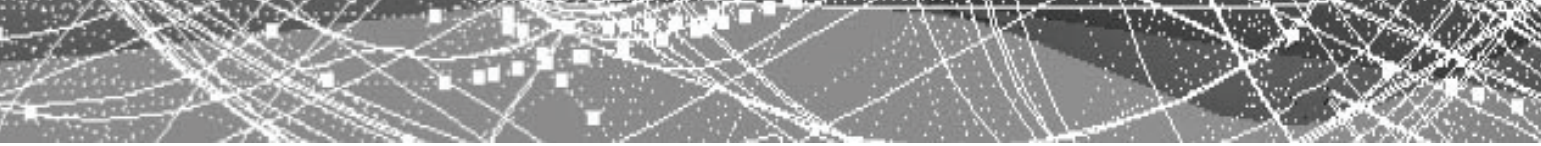
The WGIG process established the fact that the governance of the Internet goes well beyond core resources such as domain names, delving into socioeconomical aspects ranging from security to multilingualism and from connectivity to intellectual property and free expression. It proposed the creation of an open forum, the Internet Governance Forum (IGF), to discuss any open issue, and to try to reach consensus from the bottom, as per the traditional Internet governance models, rather than operating by authority. WSIS-II approved the creation of the IGF, and also of a separate process to discuss possible changes in the ties between ICANN and the U.S. Government. The first IGF was successfully held in Athens in November 2006; a number of participants decided to set up open coalitions to address specific issues. However, there is still no clear way to get formal outputs from the IGF process, and thus for it to have significant impact.

There is still an unresolved conceptual debate on whether the Internet actually needs to be governed. The utopian position of the beginnings - that complete liberism would work - has been proven wrong by several serious threats due to antisocial behaviours such as spam. However, heavy governance structures would be instrumental for corporations and government to exert control

over the Internet. The key feature of the Internet, the individual freedom of its users, is to be preserved for the Internet to remain free and open, useful to a fair growth of the planet. Governance structures should maintain the bottom-up principle rather than being imposed from the top.

One of the main conceptual advances embodied in traditional Internet processes, and recognized as fundamental through the WSIS process, is *multistakeholderism* - the practice of including in policy discussions not only governments, but any group or individual that has a "stake" in the decision to be made. This is necessary exactly because, on the Internet, the power to change, make and create lies with any node of the network - not just with traditional regulators, but also with the companies, NGOs and individuals that are connected to it. Multistakeholderism short-circuits traditional indirect representation, as affected parties are directly represented in the specific policy making process. In this type of process, all participants act in individual capacity on an equal footing, and the focus is on ideas.

However, in cases where "rough consensus" cannot be reached, there still may be the need to weigh the different participants; and this is quite difficult. At ICANN, the choice was to define *constituencies* - a set of homogeneous socioeconomical groups to which a certain voting power is preallocated. This system works, but is unfortunately prone to distortion and capture by stronger interest groups, as adapting the rigid allocation of votes to rapidly changing social environments in a fair manner is an unsolved problem. In the WSIS, there was a supreme authority - the U.N. Secretary General - deciding the appropriate representation of different stakeholders in decision-making groups; the result was sometimes good, sometimes not so good, as even the U.N. Secretary General is subject to behind-the-doors pressures.



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In the end, the multistakeholder model is excellent for discussions, but still immature to form representations for decision-making. It is also true that representation is the job of governments through the instruments of traditional democracy: this new model complements democracy rather than replacing it.

When it comes to citizens, one has to realize that the participatory opportunity offered by the multistakeholder model is not enough: citizens have a huge stake in the aggregate, but a weak one individually, and so motivations must be really high for them to participate. This implies a requirement for policy discussion venues to proactively engage citizens, through information and funding. It is not however particularly important the number of citizens who show up, because, as we said, this is not about representation and voting, but about participation: sharing and advocacy of ideas from a broad range of different individuals. Citizen participation is about exposing diversity, not about claiming power.

The traditional global governance models embodied by the United Nations rely on national states, and on a balance of powers coming straight from the Second World War; as such, they are inadequate to govern global phenomena, which make governments not powerless, but definitely not any more the ultimate and only controllers of what happens. This actually empowers citizens a lot: also thanks to the opportunities for global communication and self-organization opened by the Internet, they can set up effective campaigns and deploy alternative but influential media. This destabilizes first of all the set of established global NGOs, as individuals do not need intermediaries any more (but this also creates a risk of lack of unity and coordination).

In the end, it is in everyone's interest to engage the general public as far as possible in policy discussions, to avoid releasing policies

that then turn out to be inapplicable due to popular opposition (again, see intellectual property rules). Not all strong powers already understand this need, and will try to continue ignoring citizens, or even attempt to put the Internet under control and reduce freedoms and opportunities for action. Thus, citizens should know and care about these opportunities, defend them, and make good use of them.



## Feminism and political organisation: the experience of the German Greens.

Interim Report

Frieder Otto Wolf

The 'second wave' of feminism in the 1970s was not concerned with classical political organisation. It originated its own distinctive forms: autonomous self-organisation as a socio-cultural movement which centrally, and at the same time, emphasised individual agency. The women's movements also originated a number of principles of practice which propagated themselves throughout the new social movements which were taking shape in these years. These were principles like 'the personal is political', and the ensuing critique of representation ('politics in the first person'), or 'starting from oneself', as well as the principles of 'gender autonomy' or at least of 'gender parity'. These influenced the German Greens, less in their role as an election-contesting 'ecology party' (one line of their constitution and development), but very much in their life as a 'new social movement party' based on a 'Basis-Demokratie' determined by grass-roots initiative and control. (This was paradoxically articulated by the late Petra Kelly in the slogan 'an anti-party party'.) Feminist principles were brought into the green debates on party building in two different ways: indirectly, via the feminist influence in the new social movements generally, and directly, via the participation of feminists in the process of Green party building.

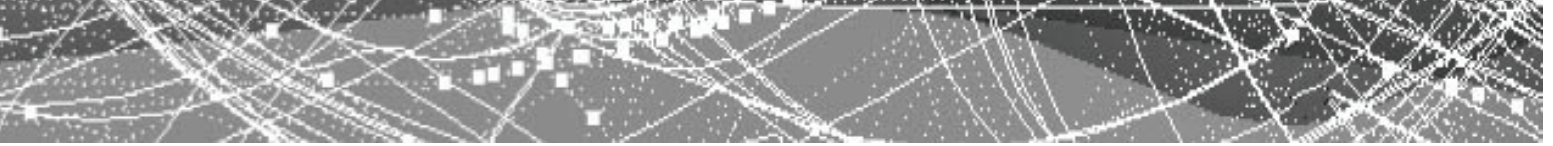
Telling the story of how these principles were articulated and implemented evokes memories of sharp contradictions and defeats for many of the participating women. It is therefore not easy to undertake a meaningful case study with their active participation. On the other hand it is not a meaningful case study without it. This preliminary is based on a series of interviews.

We start by taking stock of the high point of a feminist theorising of Green party building which had been reached in the late 1980s.<sup>1</sup> Since then, the German unification drive has redefined almost all parameters in Green party building - not the least by cutting the link between party building and the new social movements.

In retrospect, salient features of the 'high point' debates was the importance given to broader 'moral' issues of a feminine approach, and the slight attention given to organisational details - just as if discussing the 'spirit of the laws' was much more important than discussing these laws themselves. This history, of the spirit of the laws, let alone the history of the underlying practical initiatives, has not yet been written. Some attempts at oral history, together with a careful reading of historical documents, from the utopian perspective of building a party 'outside the State' (Tiefenbach) will bring some useful insights into contradictions overpowering most of the protagonists then. The conflict over strategy between pragmatic 'realists' and radical 'fundamentalists' tendentiously overlaid all conflicts of substance - not only between liberalism and socialism, but also between 'silent' patriarchalism and outspoken feminism.

Today, a small number of Green feminist activists who had participated in these practical attempts at 'alternative party building' and in the debates accompanying

1 With contributions by Elke A. Richardsen/ Regina Michalik, Elke Kiltz/ Brigitte Sellach, Gisela Erler, Maria Mies, Angelika Birk/Irene Stoehr, Cornelia Klinger, Ilse Lenz, Christina Thürmer Rohr, Veronika Bennholdt-Thomsen, Marie-Theres Knäpper, Verena Krieger, Steffi Engert, Adrienne Göhler, Marianne Schwan



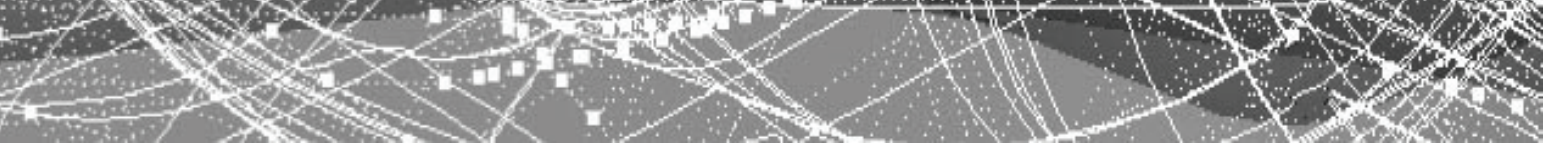
were prepared for a short debate about their past. After a number of preliminary discussions with former protagonists and some women of the younger generations, the following groups of questions have emerged as a meaningful structure for conducting a concluding debate (still to come):

- (1) *Social movement organising and party building - the role of feminism as a 'third position'*: The specific role of feminism as keeping a critical distance from current 'revolutionists' as well as 'reformists', and insisting on an absolute and immediate rupture with their pasts and consequently to reject those principles of organisation which either serve to 'prepare for the revolution' or to adapt to the functional requirements of politics as they are.
- (2) *Leadership and 'grassroots' initiative' - formal structures of accountability and informal power relations within the party*: The critique by feminists of male ideas of personal leadership, leading to a more subtle approach to informal power, but often underestimating the impact of formalised procedures and responsibilities - and the resulting revival of informal power politics.
- (3) *The role of external factors - counter-cultures and the changing media*: The essential importance of Green feminists linking into a broader feminist counter-culture with a developing dynamics, and the dependence on reinforcement by adequate media of grass-roots democracy and feminism, which , for lack of reinforcement were soon culturally absorbed by the mainstream. More generally, the impact of the 'paradoxical wish-fulfilment' offered to the new social movements by the rise of neoliberal politics, especially its assimilation of feminism.
- (4) *[Paradoxes and unintended consequences of practising feminist principles: ???*Not only the ambiguity of

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the principle 'the private is political' - at once asking for the personal to be understood as an important transition point of structural reproduction and for the 'outing of the intimate' -, but also the practice of not distinguishing between feminist and 'square' women (or worse, doing so by inadequate criteria as 'heterosexism' and 'motherhood' considered to be a clear criterion for exclusion from feminist 'inner circles') made for a constant ambiguity in the practice of feminist autonomy, as well as in alliance building.]

- (5) *Electoral success as a yardstick of a new kind of party building - parliamentary presence and inner-party relations*: The success of the process of Green party building has always been measured in terms of electoral success, especially in beating[?] the 5% barrier (a party has to win a minimum of 5% of votes cast in the party ballot to win a seat). This has turned out to be a very strong limiting factor for the development and practice of inner-party principles of organisation as it tends to displace the 'party base' with the electorate at large. This has resulted in persistent attacks on Green feminists as constituting a burden upon the party's electoral success.
- (6) *Government participation as the dominant aim of electoral participation, and its paradoxical effects on Green feminism*: From the moment in the early 1990s when government participation was accepted by most of the party as an element of electoral politics, the next round of inner-party debate concentrated on making it the exclusive aim of electoral politics. This seems to have had a most unexpected effect of the mainstream of Green feminism: the perspective of imposing gender parity in government took over from a feminist perspective of what these governments did and could



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do. This seems to have had a decisive effect in replacing the idea of politics in the first person with a mechanism of identification with 'our minister' who had suddenly turned, by virtue of 'gender', into a 'representative' again.

- (7) *Strategic instrumentalisation of grass-roots organisation principles:* From 1983 the Green principles of Basisdemokratie, especially the principles of gender parity have been used in the inner-party fight between the 'fundi' and 'realo' factions - leading to the creation of a type of female candidate who could be integrated into the party bodies and into parliamentary groups with a 'subaltern' inclusion into the 'leading circles' of the factions. On the 'realo' side, leadership has been much more personalised and more reliant on the media, which has allowed for a 'middle strata' of strong women in high positions. In contrast, on the 'fundi' side women (with the notable exception of Jutta Ditfurth who conquered an independent position of leadership) tended to be younger when 'catapulted' into positions of formal leadership by the informal leading circles.
- (8) *Diverging strategies of coping with the situation of 'feminism under political stress':* Very soon, feminist groups who had put their bets on building an alternative party in the form of the German Greens were in a difficult situation. As it became apparent that feminist autonomy and parity were not to be achieved as first expected, a fierce struggle tendencies broke out between tendencies to define a strategy for coping with this situation. The main point at issue was the proportion to be observed between feminist intervention and feminist autonomy within the party structures. The tendency of radicals to leave rather than to give in, in combination with a mounting tendency

for a neoliberal reclaiming of seemingly similar principles led to a fragmentation and marginalisation of feminist sensitivities among women on both sides of the realo-fundi divide.

- (9) *Looking back - consequences of and for the present generation of feminists:* Many of the debates and issues which have been alive and kicking still in the 1980s seem to have been concerns of a different age for today's feminist activists. There still is important work in remembering and analysing the past to be done, in order to make those underlying principles relevant again for the present situation. A specific feminine sensibility can no longer be experienced as a separate issue, but still has to be brought out distinctively within broader struggles. Questions of party organisation and electoral participation either seem remote or are taken for granted as political necessity, meaning no thought is given to the option of building an alternative practice of politics, which could be extended to party politics as well as to the participation in government. .

The results of this debate will provide the materials for an independent assessment of what the feminist dimension of the experience of the German Greens (cf. Wolf 2006, . 2007 for the wider discussion of this experience) can mean for today's endeavours at linking social movement agency carried by women with political organisation and practice. This is intended to be a starting element for a broader debate among today's feminists active in the network to understand, gauge and evaluate both the relevance and the limits of the original principles of organisation, their underlying 'spirit', and their historical specificities and limitations - and to define a perspective on how to move on from there under present conditions, in a different age and in different countries.

### Understanding and Assessing New Wave Labour Movement Organising

Anthony Ince

The last thirty years have seen a continuing - and sometimes rapid - decline in union membership and power throughout much of the world. Anti-union laws, economic globalisation, privatisation and increasingly precarious employment conditions for many have managed to cut back unions in virtually all sectors of the economy. However, a small but growing number of unions and other workers' groups and organisations have been challenging orthodox methods of labour organising and have seen positive results. In the last few years, union decline has slowed and in some countries membership is growing for the first time in decades. A sizeable aspect of this change in fortunes in many countries is down to these new strategies.

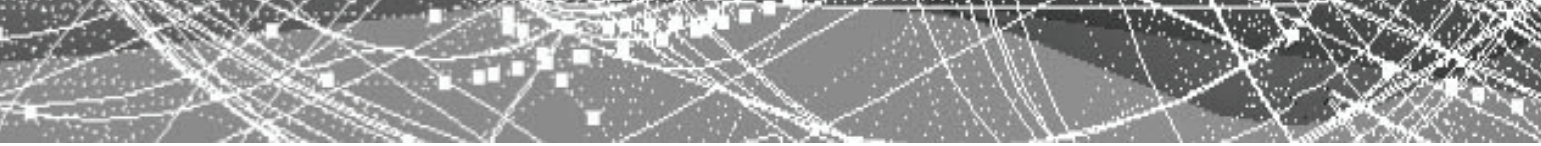
This paper explores the new strategies, critically analyses their effectiveness and looks to their future in the context of the broader labour movement. I hope to show how they actually push beyond what has commonly been called 'Social Movement Unionism', into new territories that may prove productive and complimentary when combined with more standard unionism. Much of this paper will concern other organisations, actors and relatively informal networks that are often separated from unions, in an attempt to create a wide survey of these new strategies and how they fit together as a whole.

As part of this broader picture of what I will call 'New Labour Organising', I will attempt to break down the strategies into three broad categories, each further distanced from the traditional union model than the previous. First is what I call New Union Organising, which is seen as an 'old meets new' situation in which techniques and principles from the height of unionism have

been fused with sophisticated and target-oriented contemporary union strategy. It tends to be premised on greater democratisation of the union, mass worker mobilisation and highly planned recruitment and organisation. I argue that there remains a strong element of top-down bureaucratic power and control in campaigns and a retention of partnership agendas in many cases, but the direction in which these strategies are heading is, on the whole, positive and so far successful.

The second category is termed Network Unionism, due to the cutting of the boundary between workplace and community by attempting to link union campaigns with social activist and community-based campaigns and vice versa. Co-operation and coalition-building between unions and other organisations helps to pool resources for the common good, while raising the profile of unions and workplace issues more generally. Again, this involves a more active membership at the grassroots, but also tends to be organised from the top down in many cases. They can also be high-risk and long term ventures that, although often very promising and have many qualitative benefits, have few immediate calculable gains from which to estimate effectiveness.

Associated with this is the small but often vocal family of radical and (anarcho-)syndicalist unions, whose popularity has risen at a time when the mainstream unions have struggled to break even in terms of membership. I will argue that although they remain relatively very small and their politics are often off-putting, their grassroots, networked and militant movement-based strategies can prove highly effective relative to their membership and resource bases. Furthermore, these are strategies that



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progressive sections of the mainstream are attempting to partially emulate due to their effectiveness at worker empowerment.

Finally, the third category is entitled New Worker Organising and is comprised largely of groups, organisations and initiatives that seek to organise workers and support workers' struggles outside of the unions. First, I explore the rise of worker centres in the USA, and their innovative approach to community-based worker organising, before discussing solidarity networks and the use of the internet as a virtual space for information dissemination and solidarity. In particular, the worker centres are highly promising and powerful models of worker self-empowerment outside the unions. However, their relationship with the unions is fraught with problems and difficulties. I contend that despite these differences, if unions and worker centres find a way of co-operating, they can be an exciting and extremely powerful combination in the future.

The paper then moves towards some tentative conclusions regarding these forms of New Labour Organising. Several over-arching characteristics stand out and run through the various strategies discussed. Grassroots agitation and a more movemental element (proto-movemental, I would argue) within unions are particularly important. Similarly, a greater emphasis on strategic planning has made the unions and other organisations become more focused and target-driven than previously. In what seems ironic, but is in fact very sensible, a firm emphasis on *organisation* rather than *recruitment* has usually boosted recruitment to the unions that have made that shift. Associated with this emphasis on organisation, campaigns have become more multi-faceted and flexible, attacking the issue from several different angles, often through the combined use of two or more the above strategies. I argue that it is beneficial to look back to the days when unions were powerful for inspiration

and guidance, but that this should not become an act of nostalgia. Rather, we have seen some hints of how these old strategies of militancy and grassroots agitation can be productively combined with contemporary strategic planning methods. Similarly, the rise of radical syndicalist unions in recent years shows that confrontational strategies of organising are still relevant, indeed, more now than ever.

However there remain problems that may reduce the effectiveness of these strategies. Firstly, there is a tendency in unions to only superficially implement these policies, particularly in terms of democratisation. The unions remain top-down, with the majority of power resting in the leadership and bureaucracy. Aside from a handful of exceptions, it is only amongst the worker centres and radical unions where we find genuine rank-and-file control. I also argue that although unions are co-operating, the splitting of the workforce into trades reduces their collective power. On the other hand, examples of *industrial* unionism show that power - and therefore membership and participation - is augmented through adopting a 'one union, one industry' model.

Other difficulties arise around the economics of these New Labour Organising strategies. They are often labour and resource-intensive, with fewer paid officials who often have to do more work than in traditional union models. As far as the worker centres are concerned, they rely on donations, precarious and short-term funding from NGOs and sometimes the government to stay afloat financially. The economic sustainability of these practices, therefore, may be a key determinant of their future success.

In conclusion, the next decade or so will be a key era for the labour movement. How will these strategies fare? Are they sustainable? Will the syndicalist unions continue growing? What other, unexpected problems will be faced? I see increased emphasis on rank-and-



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## Dictionary

### The vocabulary of a new politics

Marco Berlinguer

**T**he phenomenon that we can approximately call global movements is rich in linguistic inventions and shifts, fast and diffused - the sign and symptom of a need of renewal and not only at the conceptual level.

Within of the Networked Politics project, the idea is been born therefore to construct a dictionary. We think that a critical analysis of the emergent political vocabulary can help us to identify points of real political innovation and to deepen the understanding of the novelties that social practices and languages are trying to reach, and also to clarify the difficulties that reveal themselves in this process.

One of the hypotheses of Networked Politics is that what has been called "movement of the movements" constitutes more than a formed and definable subject. The suggestion is that it is rather a symptom, an important manifestation (amongst many others) of the embryonic constitution (or to the struggle in process for such a creation) of a new form of political subjectivity, critical and alternative to the process of capitalistic globalization.

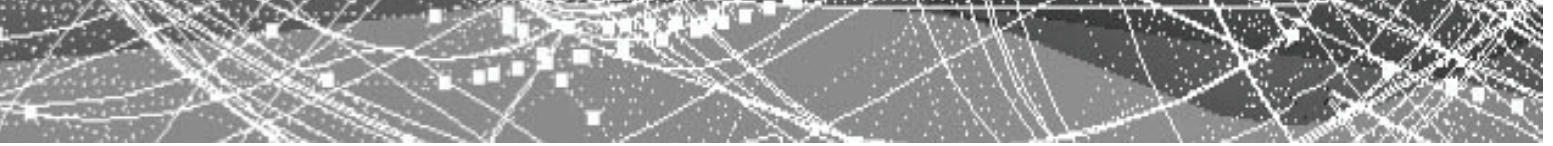
Therefore when we speak about a dictionary, we do not think about a rigid and systematic coding; neither about an organic, coherent vocabulary. We rather think about a work around words, concepts, definitions understood like the nodes of a nebula, gravitational fields around which aggregations and shapes of the organization of this subjectivity are being formed. We are think therefore about an open work that tolerates and recognizes as in its own genesis and character, the fragmentary, uneven, multiple character of the new

language.

But also we think about a work of surveying, explaining and deepening that aids this process, by identifying emerging cross-sectional elements, homologies, sets, conceptual constellations. We hope that in this way it will contribute to that process of production, communication, translation, contamination that occurs is course of practical experience. We intend it to facilitate shapes of linguistic (and political) cooperation and of common search. Of course, we have no expectations that elements of confrontation could be eliminated in this way.

As we have known for long time, movements of resistance and rebellion are generators of new knowledge. The emergence out conditions of invisibility, subordination, and of social oppression (the process, in effect, of the constitution of a critical and independent subjectivity) passes through acts of speaking out, of self-understanding, consciousness raising, the liberation of thought, the growing confidence of independent expression; the subversion of existing linguistic conventions and the invention of new ones.

The language - perhaps the most fundamental human social institution - is always also a battlefield. Or rather we should use the plural and talk about the languages: because, inspite of the consequences of various forms of domination and colonization, they are always many language, different kinds, for different uses, with different origins, rules, ambits of application, universes of reference, sources of authority, hierarchies.



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The inner rules of the constitution of the community of speakers who we imagine are the reference of this linguistic enterprise, are therefore very important.

Indeed, the new generation of social movements has been characterized for having resumed and radicalized practical critics made by the previous generation of social movements toward the academic methods: the neutral, narrowly specialised conception of the science, and vertical understanding of knowledge separated from the experience and the action. Above all, this new generation has put into practice with impressive effectiveness - thanks also to the potentialities offered by the new technologies - experiences of opened, horizontal, cooperative production of knowledge. These experiences are, after all, the translation into the field of the linguistic practice, the critique of the representative political institutions and the hierarchical and alienated forms of command of the state and the capitalistic enterprise. These innovations of the new generation of social movements accompany, on the cognitive field, the search of new forms of democracy.

After the seminar of Barcelona (October 2006), we have made, like Transform! Italy, a first step along the idea of the dictionary. With experimental spirit, we have asked to twenty or so authors (several involved in Networked Politics) to write up some definitions. They are now going to be published in Italy in a book entitled: Words of a New Politics<sup>1\*</sup>. Many of

them have been used in the reader and maybe can be the basis of a version of the Italian book in English.

In Berlin, we would like to resume discussion of this theme; and to evaluate collectively, after this first experience, the possible paths in order to develop the materials already produced and in general terms the idea of the dictionary.

For this purpose we have asked Lawrence Cox to comment the experience and to introduce this session of debate with some proposals. We also thought it would be useful to consider an example: the example of the related concepts of 'global movement' and 'social movement'. So we present below Donatella della Porta's text for the Italian book and a major essay on the concept of 'social movement' commissioned by Network Politics after a small workshop in Manchester where the concept became the focus of an extended and interesting discussion, revealing many diverse meaning amongst a group of people who assumed they all knew what it meant! (his essay is available on the Networked Politics website and will be available in hard copy at the seminar.

1 \* The words and the authors are: Migrant (Sandro Mezzadra); Precarity (Andrea Fumagalli); Social Invisibility (Stefania Bonura); Body (Lea Meandri); Metropolis (Massimo Ilardi); Common Good (Bruno Amoroso); Ecologism (Alex Foti); De-growth (Paolo Cacciari); Alternative economy (Alberto Castagnola); Free Software (Arturo Di Corinto); Net (Ugo Esposito); E-participation (Stefano Fabbri); Techno-Political Tools (Mayo Fuster); Post-democracy (Carlo Formenti); Representation (Hilary Wainwright); Governance (Joan Subirats); Cartel Party (Peter Mair); Associationism (Giulio Marcon); Global Movement (Donatella della Porta); Social Movement Trade Unionism (Peter Waterman); Social Forum (Chico Withaker); Europe (Fausto Bertinotti).

## The politics of dictionaries: who is writing?

Lawrence Cox

As with the study of language generally, there have been two contrasting approaches to writing dictionaries, which sometimes coexist within a single project and sometimes give rise to separate approaches. The first, which we can call the “academy” style, is for a body of appointed experts to devise rules for the accreditation of words as authentic, pure, “proper words” as we say in English. The second, which we can call the linguistic style, is to describe the way actual users speak and write, on the basis of historical citations or, more recently, on the basis of a large-scale corpus of the spoken and written language. The former approach is normative, and states “this is how others *should* speak and write”; the latter is descriptive, and states “this is how people *have* spoken and written”.

Clearly, to each approach there is a different politics; crudely, one is top-down and the other is bottom-up. The linguist’s prejudice is naturally for the latter: to understand the real, living language in all its etymological processes, complexity of dialects and contested usage. The former suits better the purposes of self-appointed experts of a literary bent (there are of course also historical reasons for this divergence). More broadly, we can ask “who writes?” in a particular dictionary, and what their purposes are.

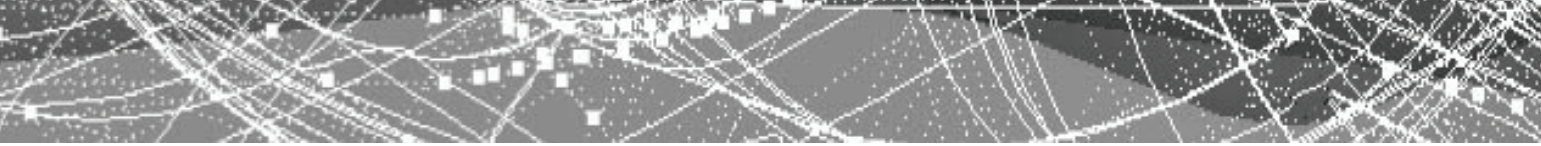
Movements as language creators: what are we defining?

These two politics of language mirror two different forms of the politics of knowledge: one which focuses on the knowledge created unofficially through movements - identifying issues, naming structures, developing practices, distinguishing approaches - and one which draws on authority to define what knowledge a particular expert feels

movements *ought* to value. A simple test of what kind of definition we are looking at is to see who is cited as the source of a particular word: movement debates and organisations, or the writings of academics and celebrities? We could also ask what position the author assumes for these purposes: participant or expert?

Thus, some of the definitions collected so far in this project are entirely top-down, privileging the latter kind of authority (and in the process buttressing the author’s own claim to participation in the circle of accredited knowledge-producers). These tend to be written within a particular kind of discourse: professional, literary, “theoretical”, positioning ourselves as academic experts or “radical intellectuals”; they are typically devoid of any real linguistic understanding (though not immune to the tendency to a sophisticated kind of folk etymology of the “real” meaning of a word).

Others to my mind are more appropriate to the original project (as I understand it), of focussing on the ways in which *movements* create knowledge, and hence also language, and attempting to work with this everyday language of the new politics: certainly attempting to develop and systematise this, but understanding that this is a process where the intellectual learns from the movement, rather than the other way around. In other words, they fit within a project of developing knowledge from below, in struggle, whose lineages can be traced through Marx and Gramsci to Freire and second-wave feminism (among others). This project relies on recognising the importance of *tacit* knowledge, generated in *practical* activity (whether material work or political struggle), and articulated in opposition to *official* knowledge,



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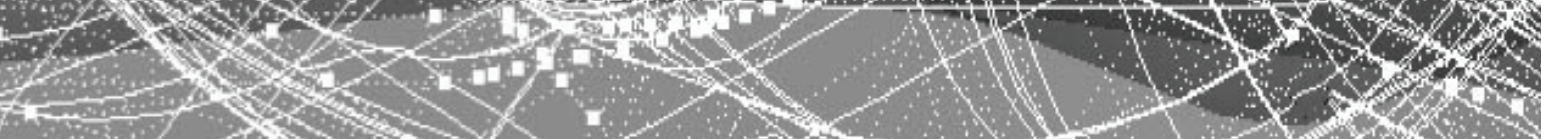
as a crucial aspect of real learning. Of course, different relations can exist within this. For example, there is an old-style adult educational approach where a separate intellectual language (often, as with Marxism or feminism, a language originally generated by movements but preserved in the academy) is presented to movements or activists who then selectively appropriate it for their own purposes; I take it that this is the intention of some at least of the more apparently “top-down” contributions.

Secondly, there is the analysis of how cooperative work and struggle lead to the generation of new kinds of language, sharing tacit and practical understandings in the process of creating new kinds of community. At a macro-level, this is what has been analysed in the study of how multilingual situations lead to first-generation pidgins and second-generation creoles (as the second generation develops its own grammar and syntax). The world of the developing Atlantic working class of sailors, slaves, soldiers, indentured servants and indigenous peoples represents exactly this process: first the new sailors’ languages (international in their origins to this day), rooted in pidgin vocabularies, secondly the creoles generated by multinational populations working together in circumstances rarely of their own choosing.

Here I should also mention the model of dictionary exemplified by Raymond Williams’ *Keywords*, which aims to articulate the changing and contested nature of language through a more critical exploration of the interrelations between different meanings, different speakers, and different social purposes; an approach which draws on the Marxist understanding of language as at once shared space and dialogical contestation. Moving beyond these descriptive / critical approaches to language, which nevertheless have to be the bedrock of any democratic intellectual practice, is the broader project of translating *between* different movements,

*between* different national cultures, *between* different theoretical languages. This is in some sense the antithesis of traditional “banking intellectualism”, where the intellectual invests in cultural capital within particular frameworks, and produces on the basis of understood genres: it is a process of *letting go* of our inherited cultural capital (and of the sense of a fixed point of systematic knowledge) in order to contribute to the developing process of popular knowledge creation. In doing this it reflects the process of much of our own movements (see my background paper in the maximum reader on the Grassroots Gatherings in Ireland).

Purposes, methods, suggestions: how can the process be developed? This brings us to the question of what a political dictionary is for and how to do it well. Three obvious uses spring to mind. Firstly, a dictionary can help with translation: both between different movements, theoretical traditions and cultures and between movement languages and more established languages. Secondly, it can provide a “how-to” for newcomers - most usefully when it gives not a single set of “official” definitions but discusses the complex and contested usage that newcomers to a movement actually encounter. Thirdly, it can help the process of developing a shared language, whether by providing clarity or (equally often) by offering spaces of creative ambiguity. A single text might serve all three purposes; but it would help to be clearer about this. Looking at the definitions offered so far, it is clear that they come from very different theoretical and national cultures, with very different types of entry and different imagined readers. The methodologies span the whole spectrum I identified earlier, but with a clear weighting on the side of the normative, the top-down and the authority of intellectuals. In the authorities cited for particular words and usages, academics top the list, followed by left intellectuals and movement celebrities; the everyday language of movement



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organisations and processes would come last. This goes hand-in-hand with a strong tendency in many authors for special pleading as to the importance of words from their one's own academic speciality, the jargon of one's own theoretical / political tradition, and so on. I think this is a pity; it reverses the linguistically appropriate order and falls some way behind the more ambitious (and more useful) project as originally outlined. If so, what can be done? One basic suggestion would be to have clearer directions to authors and a more robust editing practice geared to making the original project real. The existing definitions could be treated as drafts and returned to their authors for greater convergence; or, failing this, to treat them as wiki entries and organise a larger task of editing for collective use. This would have the merit of taking the original project seriously, rather than abandoning it when the original directions are ignored (as here in large part) by the authors.

Other suggestions which might advance the project, both linguistically and politically: Start from an existing corpus of usage such as the documentation around the various social forum processes.

Ask authors proposing words to ground them in movement *practice* rather than what they think movements *should* be interested in, and provide examples of usage from movement contexts rather than from elite (even radical elite) sources;

Consider contested usage and constellations of words. Rather than a single definition of "the global justice movement", for example, recognise that this is one of a series of competing terms, where the choice between phrases indicates political perspectives and strategic choices;

Ask authors to reflect more systematically on how context-bound a particular word might be, and to indicate this (e.g. where clear cognates do not exist in the different languages used, where a word is familiar only within a particular theoretical tradition, or whatever).

All of this may sound overly critical. The

project, though, is one which could be extremely worthwhile; and for this reason it deserves to take itself seriously and be tackled systematically. I also take it that one reason for doing things in stages is to reflect on what can be learned from a first approach. The project as originally outlined is worth pursuing, but this needs to be built into the process of *who* is asked to participate, *what* they are asked to do, and *how* their initial contributions are edited. So I hope these comments will encourage the initiators to hold their nerve, go back to the process and argue for their original ideas.

## An example: The Movement for Global Justice

### Donatella della Porta

In November 1999, as approximately fifty thousand people demonstrated against the Millennium Round of the World Trade Organisation, social scientists were still busy trying to explain the institutionalisation of social movements. Only very slowly did the counter meetings and actions - such as the Global Days of Action, the European Marches against Unemployment, the Intergalactic Meetings and the World Social Forum - begin to generate interest in the emergence of a new cycle of social protest. In the years that followed, hundreds of thousands, at times millions, of people demonstrated against the International Monetary Fund and World Bank summits held in Washington and Prague in 2000, against the EU summits held in Amsterdam in 1997, in Nice in 2000 and in Gothenburg in 2001, against the World Economic Forum in Davos, against the G8 summit held in Genoa in 2001, and on the 15<sup>th</sup> February 2003 in hundreds of cities around the world against the war in Iraq. The 'People of Seattle' have gradually been recognised as an alter-globalist, no global, new global movement - a movement for global justice - as *Globalisierungskritiker*, *altermondialiste*, grass-roots globalists, and so on.

Although somewhat unexpected, this new wave of protests was no improvised phenomenon. The said protests were the result of a series of campaigns that had led to the creation of a network of organisations protesting against the North American Free Trade Agreements (NAFTA), against the Multilateral Agreement on Investment, in favour of the cancellation of the foreign debts of the world's poorer countries, and in favour of a more social Europe. Within the context of these campaigns, a number of global identities and new transnational protest networks have

been built. After the initial experiences of the 1980s, the subsequent decade witnessed a growth in the new of counter-summits, together with UN conferences on topics such as the environment and women's rights, supported by the activism of the NGOs who declared that they not only represented their hundreds of thousands of members, but also the interests of those millions of citizens around the world deprived of any public voice. However, the transnational protests have been linked to more traditional local and national protest movements, such as: the protests in France by those who are 'without' (*les 'sans ...'*) a job, a home, documents and so on; the campaigns against new road building in the UK; the actions of the grassroots unions in Italy; the environmental protest campaigns in Spain. Local and national organisations interact at the transnational level, opposing the super-national institutions of governance, but they are also rooted in national traditions and situations.

The global social movement has gradually come to be known as the 'movement of the movements': it is a movement into which diverse identities and organisations converge. Social movements are generally defined as informal networks based on solidarity and shared beliefs; movements which mobilise on conflictual issues by frequent recourse to various forms of protest (della Porta and Diani, 2006, ch.1). Sidney Tarrow defines the transnational movements (2001, 11) as: "*socially mobilised groups with constituents in at least two states, engaged in sustained contentious interactions with power-holders in at least one state other than their own, or against an international institution, or a multinational economic actor*". The *global social movements* can be

defined as transnational networks of actors who define their causes as global, and who organise protest campaigns and other forms of action that target more than one state and/or international governmental organisations. The *global justice movement* may be defined as a loose network of organisations (characterised by varying degrees of formality and including also political parties) and of other actors, engaged in collective action of various kinds, on the basis of the shared goal of advancing the cause of justice (economic, social, political and environmental) among and between peoples across the globe. The main aspects of this definition focus on collective identity, repertoires of non-conventional actions, and organisational networks.

One fundamental feature of a social movement is its ability not only to develop a common interpretation of reality capable of nurturing solidarity and a collective identity, but also to produce or resist changes in the external environment. Movements develop alternative visions of the world to those prevailing ones: new conflicts over new values emerge. From the 1970s onwards, the 'new social movements' began to be seen as actors in emerging conflicts, as opposed to the 'traditional' working class movements which by that time were perceived as thoroughly institutionalised. Gender difference, the defence of the environment and the co-existence of diverse cultures are just some of the areas around which social movements have been based in recent years. The establishment of a global social movement requires the development of a discourse that identifies both a common identity - the 'us' - and the target of the protest - the 'other' - at the transnational level. The global justice movement is made up of groups and activists that frame their actions in terms of global identity and concerns: they identify themselves as part of a 'global movement' which targets 'global enemies' within a global field of action. Although specific actions often have a limited purpose, solutions are pursued

at the global level, and specific demands are enclosed within a perspective of global change. Within this context, the movement's main objective is a genuine pledge for global justice - a general term that encompasses several specific fields, such as human rights, the rights of citizenship, peace, the environment, etc.

Social movements are characterised by their use of protest as a means of putting pressure on institutions. Whoever protests is appealing first to public opinion before turning to any elected representatives or to government bureaucracy. Whereas the foundation of the nation state witnessed protests at the national level, one effect of globalisation is that it generates protest campaigns at the transnational level against international actors. From this point of view, the movement for global justice includes organisations and activists who have taken part in protest campaigns regarding questions of poverty, the taxing of capital, the extinction or reduction of the foreign debt of the world's poorer nations, fair trade, global rights, and the reform or abolition of International Governmental Organisations.

Social movements are *informal networks* linking a plurality of individuals and groups that are more or less structured from the organisational point of view. Whereas parties and pressure groups possess clearly-defined organisational boundaries, with membership of a given organisation generally ratified by a membership card, social movements on the contrary are composed of loose networks of individuals who feel that they are part of a collective undertaking. Although there are organisations that refer to movements, movements as such are not organised, but tend to be networks of connections among and between various actors, including (but not only) certain organisations with a formal structure. One of the most distinctive features of movements is the opportunity to belong to them and

feel involved in collective action without necessarily having to be a member of any specific organisation. It follows, therefore, that a global movement involves organisational networks in diverse countries that are active on various, more or less specifically defined issues within a global framework; networks such as the (world, national and local) social forums.

In defining the movement for global justice, as was the case with other previous movements, a number of questions remain open regarding the degree of homogeneity of views, the intensity of relations, the capacity to mobilise required if we are really to talk of the actions of a single actor. These questions are particularly complex in the case of a movement that proclaims itself diverse and global. Exactly how much internal consensus can be asked of a movement that presents itself as being heterogeneous, plural and tolerant of differences? How much of its energy (actions, organisational structures, analyses) should be focused at the global level?

While these issues are destined to remain unanswered, another way of perceiving the existence of a movement is in terms of the identification with the movement of its activists, and recognition of its existence by the outside world. After Seattle, the American magazine "Newsweek" (13/12/1999, p.28) was already writing: "up until now, it has been easy to claim that anyone who opposed trade was, by definition, a protectionist, happy to hide behind the shield of the nation state. This simple equation no longer holds; one of the most important lessons we have learnt from Seattle is that there are two visions of globalisation being proposed here: one guided by trade, the other by social activism". News coverage of the first social forum, held in Florence, included a piece that spoke of "a movement of various different spirits and no leader" ("La Stampa" - 17/11/2002). Within the movement, the assembly of the social movements declared that "we have come together to strengthen and broaden our alliance, because the building of a different

**Table 1: The degree of identification with the movement for global justice of those taking part in the European Social Forums**


| Degree of identification | Florence 2002 |             | Paris 2003 |             | Athens 2006 |             |
|--------------------------|---------------|-------------|------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|
|                          | %             | no.         | %          | no.         | %           | no.         |
| none                     | 3.8           | 91          | 2.7        | 56          | 0.9         | 10          |
| some                     | 19.0          | 452         | 13.7       | 282         | 12.4        | 146         |
| quite high               | 53.3          | 1270        | 41.0       | 846         | 47.4        | 557         |
| considerable             | 24.0          | 571         | 42.6       | 879         | 39.4        | 463         |
| <b>Total</b>             | <b>100</b>    | <b>2384</b> | <b>100</b> | <b>2063</b> | <b>100</b>  | <b>1176</b> |

Sources: for Florence, della Porta et al 2006; for Paris, Agrikoliansky and Sommier 2005; for Athens, della Porta 2007b.

**Table 2 - Sense of belonging to the movement for global justice (%)**

| Does your group feel it belongs to the movement for global justice? | Country (% of yes answers) |                  |                  |                  |                  |                  |                  | Total              |
|---|----------------------------|------------------|------------------|------------------|------------------|------------------|------------------|--------------------|
|   | F                          | G                | I                | SP               | CH               | UK               | Trans-national   |                    |
| No  | 17.9                       | 23.1             | 13.5             | 0.0              | 0.0              | 0.0              | 0.0              | 7.6                |
| The members of the group do not agree on this question              | 14.3                       | 0.0              | 2.7              | 2.9              | 3.6              | 0.0              | 0.0              | 3.3                |
| Yes, albeit with some reservation                                   | 14.3                       | 15.4             | 5.4              | 11.4             | 0.0              | 10.3             | 11.1             | 9.5                |
| yes   | 53.6                       | 61.5             | 78.4             | 85.7             | 96.4             | 89.7             | 88.9             | 79.5               |
| <b>Total (no.)</b>  | <b>13.3 (28)</b>           | <b>12.4 (26)</b> | <b>17.6 (37)</b> | <b>16.7 (35)</b> | <b>13.3 (28)</b> | <b>13.8 (29)</b> | <b>12.9 (27)</b> | <b>100.0 (210)</b> |

Source: della Porta and Mosca 2006



Europe and of a different world is urgently needed”.

Focusing on the European movement for global justice, the results of the study “Democracy in Europe and the Mobilization of Society - Demos” (<http://demos.eui.eu>) indicate, first and foremost, an increasingly high degree of identification with the movement among both activists and organisations (della Porta 2007a). Surveys of those who attended the various editions of the European Social Forum reveal that between 80% and 90% of those interviewed identify to a certain degree, or considerably, with the movement (see Table 1). Moreover, there was a very considerable sense of belonging to the movement among those 210 organisations analysed in the study (see Table 2). Although these organisations have in various ways organised or taken part in events such as the social forums, this widespread sense of belonging not only among the more recent organisations (such as Attac and the social forums), but also among representatives of trade unions and NGOs, among political parties and cultural centres, charitable associations and alternative media, would seem to confirm the consolidation of the movement for global justice.

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# The four lines of inquiry

New questions for research : Ownership and the commons

Public institutions in the network society line: Property and the commons.

## Intro: Rethinking property in the context of the commons

Joan Subirat IGOP


**P**ublic property is the program of the “friends” of the workers who, given the hard operation of depraved Capitalism, wish to replace it by a modernized and softer operation... Common property is the program of the working class itself, fighting for its self-liberation. If the working class rejects the public property with its servitude and operation, and vindicates the common property with its freedom and self-government, it cannot do it without fulfilling the conditions and the duties... The common property demands common direction of the work as much as common productive activity; it only can be possible if all the workers take part in this autogestión of which which is the base and the content of social life; and if they are going to create the organs that unite their separated wills in a common stock

Anton Pannekoek, “Public property and common property”. *Western Socialist*, november 1947

The debate about property and politics is long and crucial in terms of social transformation. After the experience of “soviet collectivism” and central planning, there is a lack of clear alternatives to the presently hegemonic way of organizing life based on institutions of private property institutions. The term “property” designates things (ideas) that a person or group has exclusive rights in respect of. A right of ownership is associated with

the exclusion of others from using this thing. The main elements that are connected with property rights, are: access, management, exclusion and alienation of the good. But many things have existed and already exist that did not have an owner. We call them “commons”. And also, this term “commons,” is often used to mean “general collective ownership”, “common ownership”. We have a lot of examples of those kinds of goods all over the world, with a strong presence of it in the traditions of indigenous peoples (see Latin America, Africa,...). At the same time, in last years, it has been a strong development of “commons culture” in Internet expansion, with strong communities built around different initiatives (“Commons creative”, “Linux”, and “2.0 License”,...).

A general debate is now going on about the performance of communal property rights system. Some elements to consider: participants share generalized norms of reciprocity and trust participants share a common understanding about costs and benefits participants could develop a self-organization way of managing the resource-good, regulate access, and the way of include-exclude users and “owners” participants are equally concerned on the sustainability of the resource-good (not discount the future) It will be very important to our process of rethinking political activism, to be able to address the issues related to the organization of economy and social production. And, in this sense, one of the main sources of “inspiration” should be: the debate about “commons” in ecological politics, and the debate around “commons” in Internet community.



## Common Good - the story so far and a map for the future

Bruno Amoroso

The concept of the Common Good has become an increasingly important part of political discourse over the past five years or so. It has been given two different meanings: 1) the cornerstone of a new society, which is due to replace that of the 20<sup>th</sup> century Welfare State; 2) the singular of 'Common Goods' which take different forms in diverse situations and societies.

The present notes are designed to provide a coherent reading of recent developments around these themes and overcome the fragmentation that presently exists around these questions.

The story begins at the end of the 1940s with the birth the social project of the Welfare State out of the particular economic and political circumstances and culture of post-war Europe. Its objectives and functions were expressed in terms of Public Goods.

"Public Goods" were designed to satisfy a series of primary needs (education, healthcare, transport, postal service, housing, etc.) and to provide essential infrastructures and to guarantee the production of basic goods. The meeting of these basic material needs were, first and foremost, the responsibility of the State, the only subject legitimised to fulfil such functions by public consensus and by force. These "Public Goods" thus were mainly provided through the state. Another feature of this period was the nationalisation of infrastructure and basic forms of production (for example steel and coal) and the strong presence of state-run companies in sectors of strategic importance for the nation's economy.

Much of this was driven by the need to ensure the rapid reconstruction of post-war Europe. There was little knowledge at that time of the limited nature of the available resources which was later to lead to the

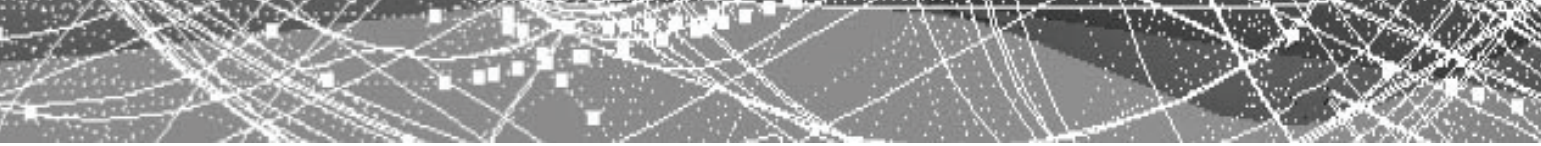
fundamental questioning of the sustainability of these political, social and economic systems.

A particular institutional and political framework of political parties and trade unions was created around this organisation of the economy and of the state: hence the "industrial" trade union and the "class-based" party associated with Fordist production. This project had little time for Europe's rural society, for safeguarding civil society as a channel of participation in governing of society, for social relations and transversal social ties, or for specific local knowledge.

The Welfare State entered a prolonged period of crisis in the early 1970s leading to a radical reform of Europe's economic and political systems in the 1980s, the rise of capitalistic globalisation and the abandonment of the Welfare State. Two factors were particularly significant in bringing about this crisis:

The welfare system's incapacity to evolve in the economic context of a rise in social and environmental costs, the weakening of the national dimension of the market and the state, and the emergence of new needs and desires. The pressures on the welfare state were exacerbated by an economic system which increased people's dependency on "work" as opposed to family and social life, and on "consumerism" as opposed to the enjoyment of objects' long term use and benefits.

The growing awareness of the existence of substantial environmental, democratic and social deficits. For example, the environmental deficit, which emerged from a series of reports published towards the end of the 1970s entitled "Limits to Growth", led to widespread awareness of the interdependence of those problems that needed dealing with at the



global level.

This new awareness broke up the national idyll created of the 1950's and 60's. Within the working class movement it exposed the limits of a philosophy focused only on questions of distribution. It demonstrated that the division between capital and labour concerned not only the distribution of "profits" but also questions of the fairness of the system of prices, the utilisation of raw materials and the nature of trade. The term coined to express this new awareness was "global awareness". Global awareness along with "globalisation" and "universalisation" are three responses that mark the principal economic and political trends of our time.

Globalisation is the result of the adoption of a neo-liberal philosophy based on the privatisation of the economy, and responds to the new challenges to the welfare state by creating a system of Global Apartheid - a system only sustainable for one-fifth of the world's population. Universalisation is the attempt to counter this project with campaigns in support of human, social rights and solidarity that aim to limit its damaging impact on weaker nations and underprivileged social groups.

Global awareness represents the attempt to find alternative forms of economic and political organisation to those of western capitalism; forms capable of providing space for all nations and peoples. This approach is currently producing a series of different solutions in Asia, Latin America and Africa. I'm focusing here on directions that the European nations can feasibly take.

The principal subject of global awareness in Europe is the idea of the common good: a project for a different society and a diverse form of modernisation, which for European nations would mean giving up from the much-vaunted ideal quantitative, individualistic growth.

This idea requires radical rethinking regarding: (i) the nature of production and


consumption, which should tend towards sustainability and towards the cooperation between states and communities; (ii) nature of institutions - which implies redefining the boundaries created with the emergence of the "national capitalistic market", in the direction of new forms of self-government at the local and regional levels, and of cooperation between areas and countries belonging to the same intermediate region.

For European countries, the idea of the common good involves a new perception of modernity, one that is capable of reducing their "dependency" on a series of unsustainable economic and political systems - the product of three centuries of world dominion. It also implies radical institutional change to re-invigorate the organisations of civil society's institutions and to give meaning to the identities rooted in the lives of Europe's diverse communities and states.

In the University of the Common Good, research and learning focus around three principal topics: 1) *community welfare*; 2) *associative and cooperative welfare*; 3) *personal welfare*.

The Common Good: "is constituted by the principles, institutions, means and practices that society utilises in order to guarantee for everyone the right to a humanly decent existence, to a peaceful, beneficial, cooperative form of collective existence, and to preserve the safety of one's own home: in other words, the 'sustainability' of 'local' and global ecosystems; all of this bearing in mind the right to life of future generations" (Riardo Petrella). The Common Good constitutes the basis for the community's welfare, and as such represents the cornerstone of associative and personal welfare.

In order to achieve the common good, a society must provide public goods. These need urgently to be redefined. Public goods include both necessary goods and those new sectors of strategic importance for the life of the community. An initial list



includes: air, water, public lands and forests, knowledge, education, health, energy, public transport, communications and necessary information, safety, justice, basic financial activities, and political institutions.

Global public goods include: air, water, peace, space (both above and below the ground), forests, the global climate, safety, financial stability, energy, knowledge, information and communications.

We are not proposing a simple return to the statist forms adopted at the beginning of the last century. But we are suggesting that powers of public ownership and management, based on a high degree of participation should be entrusted to local communities and civil society as a whole.

Associative welfare and cooperative goods: *“Associative welfare comprises a series of principles, institutions and instruments that society uses to promote the voluntary cooperation between people and/or groups pursuing common goals, for the purpose of which they share their material and immaterial resources in according with the practices of cooperation and mutual aid.”* (Ricardo Petrella) To “de-privatise” means to extend de-commercialisation to forms of organisation within the private economic sector that value and encourage those cooperative and associative economic relations linked to concepts of ‘alternative economy’, ‘caring economy’, ‘ideas of solidarity’ and ‘social districts’.

These economic relations including production, consumption and the provision of services, may be allowed to develop if they can create their own spaces, both within and outside the market economy, consistently with their distinctive driving spirit.

Through the creation of special zones, these “alternative economies” can be freed from the economic regulations created specifically for the capitalist economy, which limit them from making the most of a spreading process of de-commercialisation, of de-monetisation, of fair trade of both goods

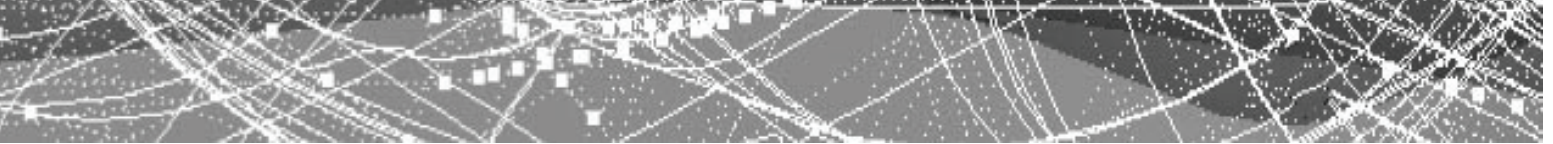
and services and the general emergence of a social economy and so on. The strengthening of such structures and “alternative economies” can also have an impact on private companies. In other words, the marketplace needs to be brought back into the local community and be associated once again with the system of “social interaction”, so as to help preserve and strengthen that community and that system.

Personal welfare and private goods:

*“Individual welfare consists of a series of principles, institutions, means and practices that society uses to enable each individual, in competition with the others, to optimise his or her personal utility in terms of pecuniary wealth and freedom of action”* (Ricardo Petrella). This involves the supporting the private economic sector in accordance with regulations that favour its reconnection to the real economy; the pursuit of company profit within channels freed from the system of “kickbacks” created by the financial systems, and by excessive State influence on company costs and decisions.

It would involve the creation of a company culture capable of dealing with the problems of social costs and an economy of peace; a culture that is prepared to discuss issues with those local communities and societies in which companies operate. This is a realistic objective. We should, however, be alert to those attempts to deal with these social and moral issues under the rubric of ‘company ethics’. These are designed and implemented *ex post facto* and are little more than public relations to legitimate corporate behaviour that in reality is quite the opposite to the social and ecological behaviour we are proposing here.

Transversal topics include “non violence” and “economies of peace”, which if they are to avoid being accused of representing religious utopia on the one hand, and ineffective forms of struggle on the other, have to be seen to be stronger and more effective in countering the generalised violence caused by globalisation.



| OBJECTIVES              | WELFARE STATE   | GLOBALISATION  | COMMON GOOD   |
|-------------------------|---|--|---|
|                         | Individual - material   | Individual- status   | Social - relational   |
|                         | Public goods:<br>Steel<br>Electricity<br>Transport<br>Schooling<br>Healthcare | Private goods:<br>Finance<br>Technology<br>Trade<br>Society<br>Knowledge | Common goods:<br>Water<br>Environment<br>Habitat<br>Education<br>Health |
| ACTORS/<br>INSTITUTIONS | Individual - rights   | Consumers - choice   | People - access   |
|                         | Nation state  | Triadic power  | Community and intermediate religion                                     |
|                         | Government  | Governance   | Self-government and participation                                       |
|                         | National development  | From global to local   | From local to meso-regional   |
|                         | National growth   | Global apartheid   | Crops - nature - culture  |

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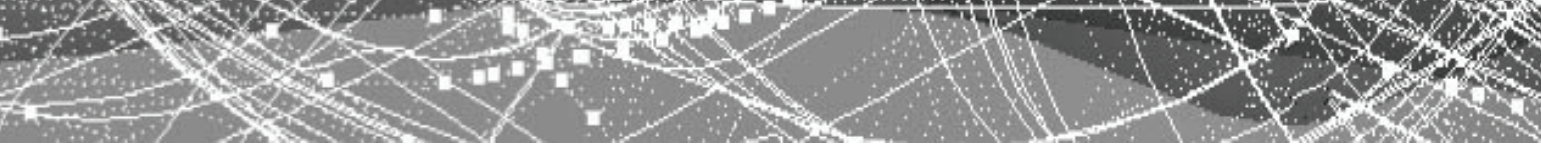
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## Free software as a Common

### Arturo Di Corinto

“Thanks to its characteristics, the free software is a distributed property that is capable of evolving into a Public Good.” Its “open” and modular language, which is freely accessible and created thanks to the collaboration of many in different stages, allowing it to be perfected and modified, make the free software a “relational good” that, thanks to its accessibility, non-exclusivity and lack of competitiveness presents all the characteristics of a common resource: something which everyone can make use of, even if they have not participated directly in its creation.

The free software as an “environment for interaction”: It presents itself as a meeting place for scientific research, social cooperation and innovation. Thanks to its “openness”, the free software is capable of “evolving” as an incubator for ideas and relations, which are the abstract constituents of highly evolved technological products.

The free software acts as an incubator: Offering tools and resources to produce a social capital and hence, a repertoire of information and relations that present themselves as a resources available to the collectivity. This offers single enterprises the opportunity to organise themselves and work in unison.

The free software represents a: Space-environment-instrument for the sharing, collaboration and commerce, which is oriented towards the production and development of other softwares. It facilitates the coming together of demand and supply, the interaction between producers and users and encourages the creation of products that are flexible and adaptable to the needs of agents and the market.

The free Software favours evolution based on variability: because it is characterized as

a “vivisystem”, where the genetic pool of a software and digital lifespecies expresses its “phenotype” through the interaction with its socio-technical environment. The lifespecies that best adapt themselves to the environment are reproduced, spread and they carry their genetic type to the next generation according to the system of “natural selection”. Also, similarly to “natural selection”, the mutations that occur in the software are those which reveal themselves most efficient in relation to their environment. They also decide the fitness of the artificial organisms and of the software itself.

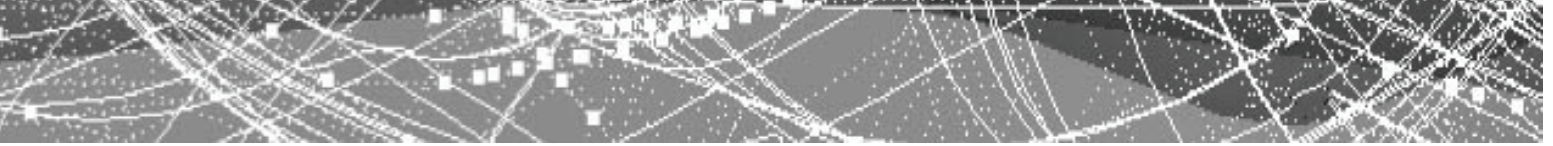
#### **The Value of Self-organisation**

The study of emerging systems has shown that complex activities develop from single behaviours and that these are somewhat different from their simple sum.

From the behaviour of bees and ants to the community that is responsible for developing the software, the principle of self-organisation presents itself as the dynamic element in the development of recognizable macro-behaviours, which allows for the successful achievement of complex objectives.

Similarly to the community of programmers, “smart mobs” are complex and adaptable systems that show an emerging behaviour, they develop a peculiar movement from lower level rules to higher and more sophisticated levels. With time, these behaviours can increase in intelligence and respond to specific necessities that are present in their surrounding environment.

This occurs because we are dealing with complex systems, in other words, systems with multiple agents that interact dynamically in different ways, following local rules and are able to co-evolve in symbiosis with the environment itself.



A system is emerging if it produces a recognizable “macro-behaviour”: in vivisystems, the most common “macro-behaviour” is cooperation. Indeed, symbiosis and cooperation are observed at all levels of life, from cells to complex societies. If, within a colony of ants, single behaviours are initiated by the DNA and the objective of cooperation is to safeguard the genetic pool of the colony, in a community of software programmers, behaviours are informed by shared cultural regulations and the objective is to produce an increasingly intelligent software.

The cultural rules of the developers’ community, which follow the method of open source, invariably go back to the strategy of cooperative altruism and hence, to the *gift logic*. This is a consolidated method within the scientific community that has, in time, been configured in a similar way to a gift economy. The *gift economy*, contrarily to what one may think, is an adaptive and complex behaviour with a highly rational nature. Particularly in a context characterized by a high rate of competitiveness and an abundance in resources/knowledge.

Those individuals who cooperate by following the logic of gift, compete most favourably and achieve better results than those who do not. The evolution of the GNU/Linux makes up the best example. GNU/Linux is an efficient technological system, whose added value is given by cooperation.

The mechanism of exchanging gifts, which is at the basis of free software production, facilitates the process of accumulating global knowledge. The latter, differently from many other goods, is not deteriorated by the circulation process. On the other hand, its use and consumption enhances its quality and the opportunity to create new products. This is exactly what occurs with the *Commons*. A common good is in fact a good that increases through consumption.

Cooperation, which is at the basis of free software production is a good example of

the production of “digital commons” that “behave” themselves differently from the majority of other collective goods, characterised by a life span and level of consumption beyond which the resource cannot reproduce itself.

The mechanism of free software is a typical example of the emergence of cooperation within a complex, social supply chain whose parts autonomously concur but are coordinated to determine a result that is incommensurable to the sum of the actions by the single participants.

### **The emergency of cooperation**

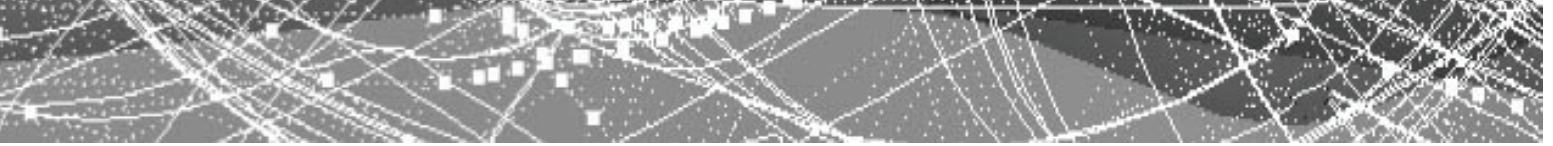
Why should cooperation be necessary?

Studies on cooperation have been carried out and show that, whenever two subjects in competition (such as stakeholders with different interests) are given the opportunity to cooperate, the results of that cooperation are to the advantage of both.

Game theory has attempted to provide an explanation to this behaviour, showing that even in highly competitive environments such as in “the prisoner’s dilemma”, cooperation based on reciprocity is the winning strategy. This strategy, referred to as *tit for tat*, presupposes that one should begin by cooperating and then by replicating the partner’s behaviour, hence maximising the results of cooperation.

Whereas in game theory, cooperation is an “economical” choice to maximise individual outcomes, in a gift economy, cooperation is based on solidarity, which is subordinate to a series of social obligations and non-economical factors, which guarantee that the community will benefit from the cooperation. The gift economy is not so much associated with the idea that things are free as it is based on a different model of exchange: the model of reciprocity. Reciprocity is the ring that joins together competitive cooperation and cooperation based on generosity.

Reciprocity that lies at the basis of gift-exchange a triple obligation: to give, receive and return. Giving a gift is also assuming



that you will, at some point, receive a gift in return. Hence, although it is not immediate, there exists a convenience in donating a gift. One is both obliged and seeking an interest when offering a gift.

In the case of the free software, for example, the innovative contribution that each person gives may be motivated by the intellectual challenge of producing something different and useful. In other words, there is a will to create a social tie, which is geared towards advancing your local community and advertising the product to facilitate its entrance in new market fields.

However, this model of exchange, which in the case of free software leads to an accumulation of richness, is influenced by non-economical factors, such as trust in collaboration.

In the production model of the open source software, the logic of cooperation between egoists, which is typical of Game Theory, i.e. to cooperate only "if and when the other cooperates" changes to: "I will cooperate so long as the other cooperates too."

The strategy of donating gifts, until the other continues to donate gifts, presupposes a trust in the other person's behaviour or the certainty that you will manage to induce a collaborative behaviour.

The precondition for such a thing to occur is that there must be a likelihood that interests will communicate and have numerous occasions to meet.



# The four lines of inquiry

## New questions for research : Labour and the movements

### Innovations and problems arising from the movements line

**Intro: Rediscovering labour - to recreate politics.**

**Marco Berlinguer**

**N**etworked Politics is an inquiry into new forms of political organisation - not in any kind of world, but in this present world in which we live and work: and labour is the very soul, the body, the network of this world, a world that has never been so productive, that has never been so interconnected in its overall labour practices. Our point of departure is that in order to recreate politics we need to "rediscover" labour and its subjectivity, its disputed productivity, its battles. This is the case for all politics. It may seem obvious to say so, but the truth is it is not so obvious because in reality, we are up against the eclipse of labour. The workers' movement, the main actor on the 20<sup>th</sup> century's political stage, has become politically invisible: and it is no coincidence that the true drama today is the ongoing eclipse of politics as such. For a number of reasons, the world of labour has gradually lost what is possessed during the past century: a self-identity as a social, political, collective, autonomous subject. Those historical organisations set up by the workers' movement - the political parties and the trade unions - have in the main reacted by following the path of subordinate institutionalisation, often becoming the weak, self-referential, corporatist subjects of a system of governance of globalisation. They have become totally incapable of countering the negative impact this globalisation is having on workers' conditions. The crisis of

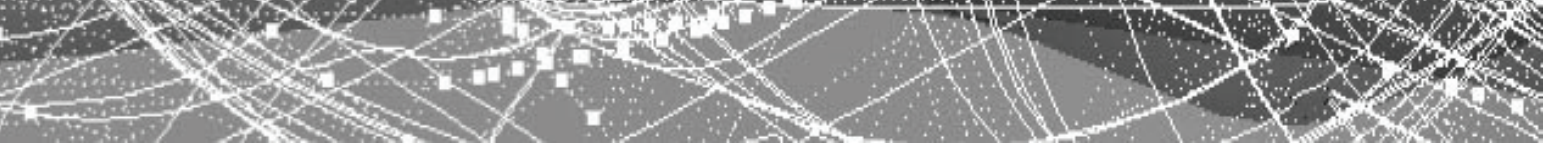
the systems of collective representation and organisation - systems that have characterised the Fordist era - have had, and continue to have, one of their epicentres right here in the world of labour.

What role is labour to play in the social and political conflicts of the third millennium? Is it still possible to create a class identity? It is from these radical questions, which Carlo Formenti poses at the beginning of his paper, that we wish to begin our investigation. As yet we have not found any real answers. We know as Sergio Bologna says (see the maximum reader: "*Uscire dal veicolo cieco. Indizi di coalizione nel lavoro postfordista*" - Getting out of a blind alley. Traces of a post-Fordist labour coalition), that while "Fordism produced the working masses .... Our reasoning on the post-Fordist class is not so clear". Indeed, "until we have a suitable perception of that class ... all effort at transforming it into a political subject which Government and capital are to have dealings with, shall be in vain".

The crisis is a deep one: it impacts on the very concept of labour and the basic forms of its eventual constitution as subject. Indeed, we are currently faced with a new "cultural anthropology" and new productive relations. However, we also know that attempts are currently underway to re-conceptualise labour, and we would like to begin to integrate such attempts with our own study, with regard to the issue of the new forms of political organisation.

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At the turn of the millennium, a new generation of social movements appeared on the horizon. One section of the trade union



movement has been part of the founding of such movements, and symbolically from Seattle onwards. This, then, is the second point of departure of our current study (which of course intersects with the first): the possible coming together of these social movements and the world of labour, as a potential key to the regeneration of the subjectivity of labour; and as possible terrain for the redefinition of the new cycle of social mobilisation. The more specific question of the complex, difficult relationships between the new social movements and the unions, clearly comes within this context.

Several observers have noted that the theme and the subjectivity of labour have struggled to emerge as central elements of this new wave of social movements. This should come as no surprise if what we have just said is true. Nevertheless, if we broaden our perspective, we see a number of signs (albeit still weak ) of the emergence of a new generation of movements and conflicts centred around the conditions of labour. For example, those organised movements which often lie outside the bounds of the trade unions themselves, such as the immigrants' movement for basic citizenship rights; or the early movements designed to counter the growing precariousness of employment, especially among young people; or the explosion of alternative networks centred around solidarity, self-production, fair trade and sustainable consumption. Think also of those movements which have seen sectors of the trade-unions allied with other subjects, as in the protests and actions against the liberalisation and privatisation of public services (both as citizens and as users of these services), or against the international trade agreements (together with other categories of citizens and producers); or think of the more "traditional" labour disputes which have involved the pursuit of a multitude of alliances at the territorial level. Such phenomena also include signs of growing concern among many trade-union organisations; the opening up

to new subjects and cultures; innovations in trade-union practices and in the concept of trade-union action; a move towards regaining lost independence and reducing the degree of institutionalisation of trade-union practices. (See the case study: "Labour Movement Organizing" by Anthony Ince).

The encounter between the new generation of movements and the organised trade-union movement has been seen as the potential foundation on which to build a new political subjectivity, centred around the concept of labour, but based upon a radically new, much broader understanding of that concept. A new term has been coined to express this new encounter: the "social union movement" (see "A New Social Unionism" by Peter Waterman). Indeed, it is interesting to note that a new network has been recently set up, called the "The Labour Network within the World Social Forum" (see "The Nairobi Appeal" ). While on the one hand it seems clear that, from the trade-union movement's point of view, there is an urgent need to open up to an in-depth, strategic discussion with the new movements, from the latter's point of view, many believe that their (self)definition and their involvement in the sphere of labour and production could contribute towards the discovery of a new way forward, one that goes beyond mere multiplicity towards the building of forces capable of radically reunifying the various different forms of resistance to globalisation; or it could help overcome the intermittent, transitory nature of mobilisation, and produce a more sustainable duration, a diverse efficacy, a deeper-rooted link with the daily living and reproductive conditions of modern-day society.

However, as things stand these remain little more than intuitions. What we would like to begin to explore in Berlin is if, and how, these signals can be transformed into a mature concept and mature practices, into a series of ideas and actions that may be framed within a radical new strategy.



## Class unity and the transformation of labour

Carlo Formenti

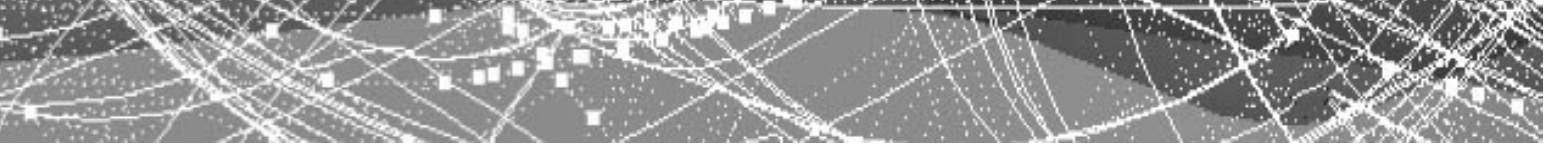
Is labour still the key to our understanding of social and political conflict in this the third millennium? Does the clarion call “workers of the world unite”, which has characterised the history of the past two centuries, still have any meaning to anyone? Put this way, the question inevitably calls for a negative answer. The word “labour” does not bring to mind the same material and cultural practices for a white-collar worker in a Californian Internet company as it does for a blue-collar worker in a European car factory, or for a worker in an Indian call centre, or for a non-European immigrant working as a home-help in a large western metropolis, or for a Shanghai bricklayer, or for a Pakistani child sewing footballs or trainers for a distant multinational, and so on. Unless we invoke the abstract bio-energetic perception of work as an “organic exchange between Man and nature”, we have to admit that the aforesaid activities evoke such different cultural, economic and social contexts that they can hardly be brought together under any one common ideological denominator.

Let us try then to formulate the question differently, by narrowing its scope somewhat: is work still a source of socio-political identity for a significant percentage of men and women living in those areas (the USA and Europe) dominated by immaterial capitalism (the capitalism of information, knowledge or whatever)? To put it more plainly: is work still capable of creating a class identity from both the objective point of view (daily practices, life styles) and from the subjective one (self-representation, ideological traditions, movement practices)? Even if we admit that the “working class” still exists, what kind of relationship does it have with the rest of society? Does it express a hegemonic project,

or does it suffer the hegemony of other social strata?

Before expressing any opinions on such matters, I have to say that I personally belong to a theoretical tradition, that of Italian *operaismo* (Workerism), that has always maintained an ‘eccentric’ approach to the problem of the relationship between work and class identity, in the sense that it has constantly refused to celebrate the ‘formative’ role of work, which it perceives as shared oppression and exploitation, and as such capable of generating solidarity, individual and collective awareness, and political discipline. During the entire course of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the workers’ movement has exalted labour and toil, together with its ‘scientific’ organisation in Fordist production, indicating it as the ‘objective basis’ of class consciousness, and its incarnation in a centralised, hierarchical form of political party based on the factory model. Italian *operaismo*, on the contrary, has always perceived the roots of class conflict as lying in groups and individuals’ resistance towards, and refusal of, labour and toil and capitalist control as epitomised in company hierarchies. From this point of view, class unity is not the product of ‘objective’ conditions, but results from a conspiracy of the said subjects against work - a conspiracy that takes on the form of direct democracy, and opposes the kind of discipline imposed by political parties and trade unions as much as that of capitalism itself.

This theoretical model has proven perfectly capable of accounting for the cycle of struggles of the mass-worker which transformed Italy between the end of the 1960s and the beginning of the 1970s. For example, it has enabled us to identify the avant-garde of

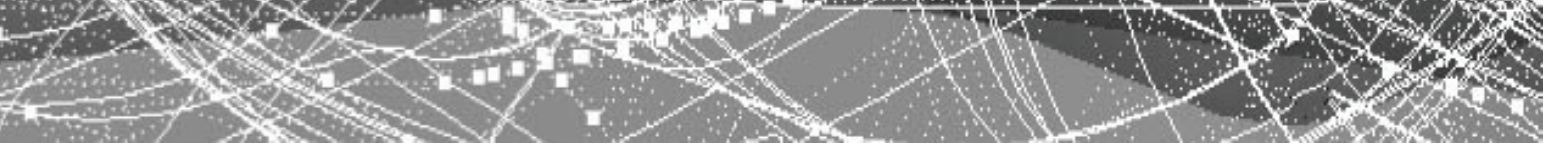


the class struggle as being those de-qualified workers who recently emigrated to the big cities, most of whom came from the South of Italy. Unlike their qualified, local northern counterparts, they had no 'professional pride' in their jobs, nor did they identify with work, which they detested. Moreover, they did not accept trade-union or party discipline, and they organised through informal networks that tended to reflect their cultural, ethno-linguistic and family origins. Theirs was an 'anthropological' struggle against the commercialisation of their lives, rather than a class struggle in the traditional Marxist sense of the term. The *operaismo* model proved even more effective in furnishing an explanation of the social movements that were witnessed during the subsequent decade, characterised by the large-scale reorganisation of capitalism. Although sociologically rather approximate, the new concept of the 'social worker', which replaced the mass worker as a point of reference, managed to encapsulate the emergence of a new form of resistance to capitalistic domination: a federation of antagonistic subjects - the youthful proletariat, the women's movement, environmental movements et. -which was determined to an increasingly smaller degree by people's jobs and conditions of employment.

Is this model still valid in the age of network capitalism? Firstly, it should be pointed out that from the end of the 1970s to the present day, the idea of class struggle has all but disappeared from the cultural baggage of western leftwing movements, while the reference to labour only preserves its validity for the purpose of the representation of corporate interests. Even the radical left's usage of the concept of class struggle retains a merely rhetorical-celebratory importance, whereas the focus of its attention has shifted towards movements that come together on questions of gender difference, pacifism, environmental protection, the fight against racism, the fight against poverty in the world,

and so on: these movements occasionally converge on occasion of the no global movement's larger-scale gatherings. The few exceptions to this general rule consist of theoretical neo-Marxist or post-Marxist attempts to use the concept of class to define mass intellectuality, which represents the backbone of post-Fordist, informational modes of production. Initial steps in this direction were taken during the 1960s and '70s in the form of analyses of mass education, student revolts and the growth of the 'tertiary sector of factory employment' (white-collar workers and technicians). At that time, the analysis went no further than the theory of the 'proletarianisation' of intellectual labour. Thirty years later, at a time when the dismantlement of the Fordist factory, the computerisation of labour and the emergence of the network company has completely transformed the processes of production, distribution and consumption (together with the same objects of consumption and consumers themselves), we now possess more sophisticated conceptual models: the creative class, the hacker class, knowledge workers etc., and numerous empirical analyses of the practices, values and behaviour of these 'new classes'.

In fact, it is these very analyses that show that for this social stratum, work has become once again a powerful identifying factor, and more importantly, a positive identifying factor unlike that of the factory worker. What Castells calls the 'culture of Internet producers' represents an important example in this sense. Intimate joy over the creation, and pride in the results of the creative enterprise; the absence of boundaries between leisure time and working time (the passion for one's job encroaches on leisure time, and the playful 'distractions' of one's leisure time are now important for creative production); the joint presence of meritocratic competition (the struggle for peer-group recognition) and cooperation involving the sharing of skills, interests and knowledge (the economy of community shared

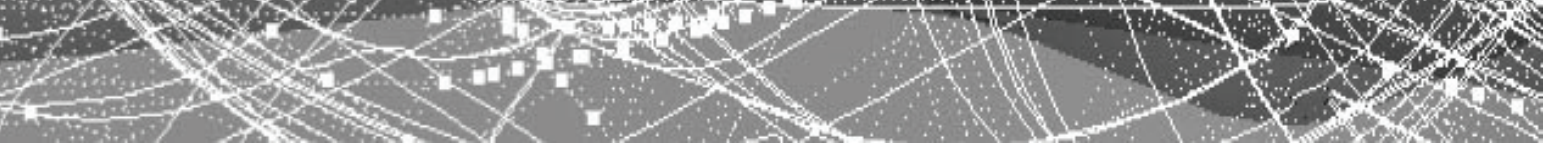


open-source software); the joint presence of individualism and communitarianism (self-centred relational networks founded upon shared passions and interests). These are all characteristics that bring such forms of labour closer to pre-capitalistic artisan labour than to modern industrial labour. This is partly because such forms of work enable individuals to enter into self-made relations rather than into those imposed by any corporate organisation. Indeed, this context makes it difficult to imagine the emergence of practices whereby people 'refuse to work'. So how is a new form of 'class conflict' going to emerge within such a context?

McKenzie's reply to this question is that network capitalism (which he calls 'vectorial capitalism') needs to expropriate the creativity of the hacker class through the legal device entitled intellectual property. Florida insists on the conflict between creativity and organisation (as much as the capitalistic enterprise may level out hierarchies and evolve towards a network format, it invariably has to limit-regulate the creativity of spontaneous groups). Bifo describes the crisis that has hit the Net Economy as the effect of the 'nervous breakdown' of knowledge workers, overwhelmed by the stress caused by excessive, self-imposed workloads! However, none of the said explanations seem to me capable of resolving the following challenges: 1) although it attempts to superimpose company networks on informal networks, immaterial capitalism is forced to grant significant room to individual and group creativity, unless it wishes to suffer a drastic fall in productivity; 2) this implies the need to constantly co-opt new groups - even the more culturally 'eccentric' among them - into the valorisation process, promoting the upward mobility of talented individuals; 3) the possibility (real and/or perceived) of upward mobility means that class membership is perceived as the result of personal ability, and leads to strong resistance to collective organisation designed to promote personal

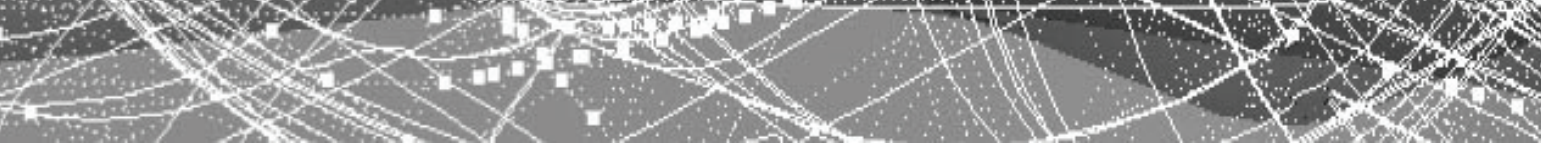
interests; 4) not even after the 2000-2001 crisis and the mass sacking of New Economy workers, were we witness to any meaningful forms of resistance/opposition to the dominion of 'vectorial capital'; 5) the transition to a new phase of capitalistic development characterised by the business models of the so-called Web 2.0, does not appear to require the use of the aforesaid device of intellectual property: with the advent of User Generated Content, the collective intelligence of hundreds of thousands of *prosumers*, connected via the Internet, is 'put to work', although this does not really generate collective knowledge, nor does it produce any form of resistance (other than that of 'digital bootlegging' - which appears destined to become 'normalised' by the new business models). The hacker class (creative class, knowledge workers, etc.) seems more a statistical entity than a social grouping. Neither does it display any propensity to exercise any form of 'hegemony' over other strata of workers - traditional service industry workers, factory workers, etc. On the contrary: the interests of the 'creative workers' and those of the unqualified service workers who take the latter's place in those reproductive and caring jobs that the former no longer wish to do, are more conflicting than they are mutually beneficial; it is as if the emerging social strata had unloaded some of their gender contradictions - at least as far as reproductive work is concerned - on the unqualified service workers, most of whom are immigrants).

In order to deal with such new challenges, workerist theory has abandoned the concept of class in favour of that of the 'multitude': in a certain sense, this development was already implicit in the analysis of the mass factory worker advanced some thirty years ago. In fact, the 'rejection of labour' theory may also be interpreted as a conflict between the general intelligence of living labour (the antagonistic collective intelligence that manifests itself as the factory worker's self-



organisational capacity) and the general intelligence of dead labour (technical-scientific knowledge objectified in the machine): living labour does not allow itself to be subjugated to dead labour, and this refusal to do so expresses the reluctance of actual individuals to be 'reduced to classes'. However, in the age of the immaterial capitalism of networks, the knowledge that generates productivity has been entirely transferred from dead labour to living labour. This is why modern-day capitalism is only capable of reproducing its rule by subjugating life itself (that is, by taking language, communications, emotions, feelings etc. and 'putting them to work'). There is no longer the previously existing antagonism between the class avant-garde - capable of political planning and of exercising hegemonic power over other social strata - and capitalistic dominion as epitomised by the company; what we witness now is the conflict between a multitude of real individual and group singularities on the one hand, and the 'parasitism' of a capitalism that pervades the entire sphere of social relations at the global level.

The initial question was: can labour offer a horizon of meaning to social and political conflict? The answer is: no, if understood as the 'technical' basis of class composition which allows us to identify an avant-garde of the struggle; or yes, if understood as the transformation in labour of all vital activities. However, this no longer enables us to indicate avant-gardes, or organisational forms (as a multiplicity of singularities, a multitude cannot find any form of representative unit). It also makes it difficult, if not impossible, to identify an enemy (this is what Antonio Negri meant when he spoke of 'the problem of problems'). The debate over workerism - *operaismo* - has come this far. Another story is probably about to unfold from here on.



## A New Social Unionism, Internationalism Communication and Culture -in a Nutshell

Peter Waterman.

**N**ew Capitalism + New Work and Workers =  
New Unionism?

This is an attempt to combine, in the most compact form, ideas about a new kind of unionism appropriate for our present world (dis)order. These are about three closely inter-related aspects of labour protest.

I do not here go into the now familiar scenario of capitalist globalisation and union crisis, except to say that the Chinese ideograph for 'crisis' combines those for 'danger' and 'opportunity'.

I start from the fact that the labour movement has dramatically changed form with successive transformations of capitalism: from the local Guild to the national Craft Union, from the national Craft to the international Industrial Union.

We seem to urgently need a new form of labour self-articulation - articulation meaning both joining and expression - appropriate for both effective defence and counter-assertion against a radically new kind of capitalism of a highly-aggressive and literally destructive nature.

This whole argument is, of course, open to criticism, rejection, adaptation and surpassing - particularly by union activists and workers themselves.

### A New Social Unionism

By a new social unionism is meant a labour movement surpassing existing models of 'economic', 'political' or 'political-economic' unionism, by addressing itself to all forms of work, by taking on socio-cultural forms, and addressing itself to civil society. The characteristic of such a union model would include:

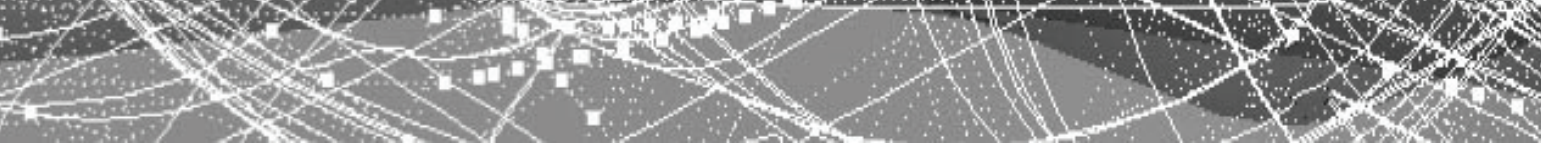
Struggling within and around waged work,

not simply for better wages and conditions but for increased worker and union control over the labour process, investments, new technology, relocation, subcontracting, training and education policies. Such strategies and struggles should be carried out in dialogue and common action with affected communities and interests so as to avoid conflicts (eg with environmentalists, with women) and to positively increase the appeal of the demands;

Struggling against hierarchical, authoritarian and technocratic working methods and relations, for socially-useful and environmentally-friendly products, for a reduction in the hours of work, for the distribution of that which is available and necessary, for the sharing of domestic work, and for an increase in free time for cultural self-development and self-realisation; Intimately related with the movements of other non-unionised or non-unionisable working classes or categories (the precariat, petty-commodity sector, homeworkers, peasants, housewives, technicians and professionals);

Intimately articulated with other non- or multi-class democratic movements (base movements of churches, women's, residents', ecological, human-rights and peace movements, etc) in the effort to create a powerful and diverse civil society; Intimately articulated with other (potential) allies as an autonomous, equal and democratic partner, neither claiming to be, nor subordinating itself to, a 'vanguard' or 'primary' organisation or power;

Taking up the new social issues within society at large, as they arise for workers specifically and as they express themselves within the union itself (struggle against authoritarianism,



majoritarianism, bureaucracy, sexism, racism, etc);

Favouring shopfloor democracy and encouraging direct horizontal relations both between workers and between the workers and other popular/democratic social forces; Active on the terrain of education, culture and communication, stimulating worker and popular culture, supporting initiatives for democracy and pluralism both inside and outside the dominant institutions or media, locally, nationally, globally;

Open to networking both within and between organisations, understanding the value of informal, horizontal, flexible coalitions, alliances and interest groups to stimulate organisational democracy, pluralism and innovation.

### **A New Labour Internationalism**


In so far as a new labour internationalism addresses itself to the problems of a globalised networked capitalism (of which inter-state relations are but one part), this would have to see itself as part of a general global solidarity movement, from which it must learn and to which it must contribute. A new kind of labour internationalism implies, amongst other things: Moving from the international relations of union or other officials towards face-to-face relations of concerned labouring people at the shopfloor, community or grassroots level; Surpassing dependence on the centralised, bureaucratic and rigid model of the pyramidal international organisation by stimulating the self-empowering, decentralised, horizontal, democratic and flexible model of the international information network; Moving from an 'aid model' (one-way flows of money and material from the 'rich, powerful, free' unions, workers or others), to a 'solidarity model' (two-way or multi-directional flows of political support, information and ideas); Moving from verbal declarations, appeals and conferences to political activity, creative

work, visits, or direct financial contributions (which will continue to be necessary) by the working people concerned; Basing international solidarity on the expressed daily needs, values and capacities of ordinary working people, not simply on those of their representatives;

Recognising that whilst labour is not the privileged bearer of internationalism, it is essential to it, and therefore articulating itself with other democratic internationalisms, so as to reinforce wage-labour struggles and surpass a workerist internationalism; Overcoming ideological, political and financial dependency in international solidarity work by financing internationalist activities from worker or publicly-collected funds, and stimulating autonomous (independent of capital/state) research activities and policy formulation;

Replacing the political/financial coercion, the private collusion and public silences of the traditional internationalisms, with a frank, friendly, constructive and public discourse of equals, made accessible to interested workers. Recognising that there is no single site or level of international struggle and that, whilst the shopfloor, grassroots and community may be the base, the traditional formal terrains can be used and can also be influenced;

Recognising that the development of a new internationalism requires contributions from and discussion with labour movements in West, East and South, as well as within and between other socio-geographic regions. Elements of such an understanding can be found within both international union pronouncements and practice. It is, I think, becoming the common sense amongst left labour internationalists, although some still seem to consider labour (or even union) internationalism as the one that leads, or ought to lead, the new wave of struggles against neo-liberal globalisation. Yet others are beginning to go beyond ideal types to spell



out global labour/popular and democratic alternatives to 'globalisation-from-above' in both programmatic and relational terms.

### **Internationalism, Labour Internationalism, Union Internationalism**

We need to distinguish between the concepts of 'internationalism', 'labour internationalism' and 'union internationalism'. Within social movement discourse, *internationalism* is customarily associated with 19<sup>th</sup> century labour, with socialism and Marxism. It *may* be projected backwards so as to include the ancient religious universalisms, or the liberal cosmopolitanism of the Enlightenment. And it *should* be extended, in both the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> century, so as to include women's/feminist, pacifist, anti-imperial and human rights forms. In so far as it is limited to these two centuries, and to a 'world of nation states', we need a new term for the era of globalisation. Some talk of 'global solidarity', in so far as it is addressed to globalisation, its discontents and alternatives. As for *labour internationalism* this refers to a wide range of past and present labour-related ideas, strategies and practices, including those of co-operatives, labour and socialist parties, socialist intellectuals, culture, the media and even sport. As for *union internationalism* this is restricted to the primary form of worker self-articulation during the national-industrial-colonial era. Trade union internationalism has so displaced or dominated labour internationalism during the later 20<sup>th</sup> century as to be commonly conflated with the latter. Yet it is precisely *union* internationalism that is most profoundly in crisis, and in question, under our globalised networked capitalism.

### **Networking, Communications, Culture**

We really need an additional, even an alternative, principle of worker self-articulation (meaning both joining and expression) appropriate to our era. In other words, we need one that would continually and effectively undermine the reproduction of bureaucracy, hierarchy, and dogma that

occurs also within 'radical' and 'revolutionary' unions.

This principle is the *network*, and the practice is *networking*. There is no need to fetishise the network or to demonise the organisation. 'Networking' is also a way of understanding human interrelations, and we can therefore see an organisation in network terms, just as we can look at a network in organisational ones. Nonetheless, it remains true that the movement from an inter/national-industrial to a globalised-networked political-economy is also one from an organised to a networked capitalism. It is from the international labour networks and networking that the new initiatives, speed, creativity, and flexibility tend to come. An international unionism concerned with being radical-democratic and internationalist will learn this, or it will stagnate. International union networking itself will stagnate if it does not recognise itself as a part of a radical-democratic internationalist project that goes far beyond the unions, far beyond labour problems.

'Networking' relates to communication rather than institutions. International labour networking must be informed by and produce a radical-democratic style of communication and sense of culture...a 'global solidarity culture'. Labour has a long and rich cultural history and has in the past innovated and even led popular, democratic, and even avant-garde cultural movements. Once again, international trade unionism has to either surpass its reductionist self-definition or remain invisible in the international media arena, which is increasingly challenging and even replacing the institutional terrain as the central site of democratic contestation and deliberation.

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# Proposal for a Labour Network on and in the World Social Forum process

Neoliberal globalisation implies the most vicious attack on labour in living memory.

Yet labour has so far had neither the necessary centrality, nor even visibility, within the WSF process

We propose for this purpose to build a labour network on and in the WSF process. This network will link different experiences, understandings of and skills engaged in every place and every aspect of work.

We believe that such a network can help us to:

- give more centrality and visibility, in this crucial historical phase, to labour issues and workers' rights in the WSF process
- develop a permanent exchange of experiences, information and knowledge
- discuss a new and enlarged understanding of labour, considering not only productive but also reproductive work; not only formal, but also informal work
- strengthen the alliances between unions, movements, intellectual forces and citizens
- go beyond defensive, isolated and - for that matter - failing struggles and find a new transnational capacity for action
- find common global objectives for such action
- confront the question of the meaning of production (what to produce, how, for whom)
- map all the different labour actors so as to enlarge the network

Following this assembly, held in Nairobi during the WSF 2007, we propose to initiate a process for the formation of such a network.

This document has to be considered as an open one, to be discussed in any and every interested organization, network, movement, starting from here.

In the next weeks and months our common task will be to establish a permanent system of communication for the network; to increase the number of interested and involved actors, to debate and define more precisely the aims and contents of the network.

Agreed Nairobi January 2007



# The four lines of inquiry

New questions for research : The new web communities and political culture

**Intro: Interrogating the reality and significance of web communities.**

**Mayo Fuster i Morell**

How do we interpret and learn from the phenomenon of web communities, from the point of view of political - social transformation? This is the question we invite you to debate

It breaks down in to the following further questions which I will address in turn:

How are the web communities governed and how they resist or use market and hierarchical conventional forms? How the online communities support (and could reinforce) the social movements non - conventional forms of political organization? Why do the social movements appears now-a-days to be limited to use the technology Web 2.0? And, Do the online communities help us to understand the changes in the construction of political identity building and the political grouping forms in an information/post-democracy society?

Here are some thoughts to introduce the debate

In the following lines some of the reflections around these questions and related issues are presented in order to introduction to the debate.

**What are we referring by the web communities phenomenon?**

Firstly we must make clear what do mean when we refer to web communities.


The term virtual community is attributed to the book of the same title by Howard Rheingold, published in 1993. Now-a-days,

*Virtual community, Web communities or online community* is used broadly for a variety of social groups interacting strongly via the Internet. In the Networked Politics debate the questions refers not to any type of online community, but to a specific type, exemplified by the software *development communities*, Wikipedia, Flickr, My Space and You Tube<sup>1</sup>. I propose to term this type as online communities and defining them as: “a collective action by a loosely and integrated “network” of people that, through several types and levels of participation, and with some continuity in time, dynamically and non conventionally cooperate and interact, strongly via the Internet, with the common goal of knowledge making and sharing, and embedded by the open knowledge culture and, in some degree and in some occasions, in its claim” (Fuster Morell, 2007).

Are Wikipedia, My Space, Flickr, You Tube, the development communities etc. all the same ? Apart of the common elements of these experiences summarised in the proposed definition, we could make a deeper analysis and also identify the differences and the risks. Carlos Formenti questions the transformative potential of the social networking communities, like Flickr, You Tube or My Space. He questions whether and in what sense these

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<sup>1</sup> You Tube: “Broadcast yourself” A website to archive, share and commend home-made videos. <http://www.youtube.com/> My space: A website for social networking. Each person have its own page to present him or herself and interact with the others at My space. <http://www.myspace.com> Flickr: A website to archive, share and comment photos. <http://www.flickr.com>



experiences are different from TV. He points out the easy way in which they could be drawn into the logic of the accumulation of the capital, for example through mechanism of advertising and publicity.

### **How are the web communities governed and how they resist or use market and hierarchical conventional forms?**

From the work of Lanzara and Morner on the Open-source project, the distinctive and consistent pattern of system behavior in the different online creation communities is that the coordination of resources of information and knowledge. This takes a specific form that goes beyond the conventional forms of coordination based on classic mechanisms of the market, the hierarchy or the network. Instead it constitutes a hybrid system. It is not that traditional mechanisms are non-existent or irrelevant in the online creation of communities. What emerged from their analysis is that to differing degrees and in varying mixes they are all present. In this sense, the governance of the Open source project results from a combination of formal organizational mechanisms and decentralized and spontaneous mechanisms (Lanzara and Morner, 2003, 2006).

On the one hand, a large online creation community, which is the case of some open source software project, when it reaches a critical mass, operates itself as a giant decentralized mechanism for making knowledge. This decentralized and spontaneous governing is supported by the electronic artifacts, as mediation of human interaction. On the other hand, online communities also exhibit characteristics that are more typical of formal organizations, e.g. some simple decision making rules for programming and communication, also legal forms and stable membership for a certain core of professional developers (Morner, 2003). The presence of these formal organizational features, however, do not really have a dominant or pervasive role in open-source software projects, and taken alone would not


be strong enough to account for the impressive performance of large scale projects.

This hybrid pictures is also applicable to Wikipedia. Using the *history flow* visualization technique Viégas, Watternberg, Kriss and van Ham, developed an empirical analysis and discuss how the Wikipedia community has evolved as it has grown. They found that the fastest growing areas of Wikipedia, are not the articles themselves, but the pages dedicated to coordination, planning, conflict resolution and organization. They concluded that the Wikipedia community places a strong emphasis on group coordination through technical artefacts, policy and process. In Wikipedia the founder has a veto-power, but such characteristics of collective governance could not be explained in terms of the exertion of power from the top down, yet in Wikipedia they seem to emerge, to some degree, spontaneously (Viégas, Wattenberg, Kriss and van Ham, 2007).

How the online communities support (and could reinforce) the social movements non-conventional forms of political organization? In the frame of the global movements, experience of these online development communities are regarded with curiosity and several initiatives are based on trying to apply to these online forms to support political process, an example of it is the ESF Memory Project<sup>2</sup>. In these latter experiences Internet phenomena are sometimes considered to be the “answer” for politics and democracy, although that it is not always clear what the question is: **What is it that is expected to be solved by the Internet?** This question highlights the need to clarify what ideal of democracy underpins the the application of the Internet.

Many people agree that we are in a new phase. While in the previous phase most of the innovation on the social use of the technology used to be led by a political dynamic, with experiences such as the Indymedia becoming a “classic” the open publishing form, now there

2 [Presentation of the ESF Memory Project: http://www.sfmemoryandtools.info](http://www.sfmemoryandtools.info)



is a sense that the “market is going beyond us” (Alex Foti argued this in the Infoespai Debate on Techno-Political tools 2006. See the notes of this debate from Infoespai).

Why the social movements appears to be limited to use the technology web 2.0 in this phase?

In this phase, the social movements seem to make limited use of the technology based on multi-interactive mechanisms (technology frozen in the concept of Web 2.0). Indications of this include the following: first, fact that only ten per cent of social movement’s websites have interactive mechanisms (Della Porta and Mosca, 2006); secondly that Wikipedia starts using wiki technology in 2001, while the first wiki used in the social forums were in 2004; thirdly, that Indymedia is losing its “audience” in some countries, for example Indymedia Italy had being closed; and finally that the recent initiative to build interactive website to organize the social forums and to collectively collect the social memory of the process has very limit use.

Putting this data into context, it appears to be more problematic if we consider that outside the borders of the global movement there is an explosion of social networking experiences based on Web-multilateralism or Web 2.0, such as, You Tube, My space or Flirch.

Some suggest that the limitations on the use of Web 2.0 at the frame of the global movements could arise from the type of identity that the social movements groups generated and from the limitations that arise due that the initiatives of create online communities at the frame of the global movements has also a strong offline dimension.

And does the online communities help us to understand the changes in the political identity building and the political grouping forms in an information/post-democracy society?

As Formenti points out, there is the need to approach the Internet not only as a “cura” for democracy, but as a cause that change society, that combined with other aspects, change society in a way that transform

democracy towards what Formenti call the post-democracy. In this second sense, the question would be if the online communities are a sign or/and could help us to understand those changes.

In this sense, Christophe Aguiton and Dominique Cardon in their analysis of online communities conclude that the collective action based on online cooperation generally creates weak links, in comparison with the offline collective action, and it is resulting of an ex-post decision and not a planned action (Aguiton and Cardon, 2007). Aguiton and Cardon also highlight the fact that the growing of the multilateral cooperation online is not only based on a political and altruist identity (neither in an egoist one), but from their research it resulted more mixed, being between the *sociological and the economics homo*, proposing a new political identity of “public individualism” (Cardon and Aguiton, 2007). A concept which it is close to Castells “network individualism” (Castells, 2000).

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## Ten Theses on Non-Democratic Electronics: Organized Networks Updated

Geert Lovink and Ned Rossiter

### 1. Welcome to the politics of diversion.

There is a growing paradox between the real existing looseness, the 'tyranny of structurelessness' on the one hand, and desire to organize in familiar structures such as the trade union, party and movement on the other. Both options are problematic. Activists, especially those from the baby-boom generation, do not like to speculate on the potential of networks as they fluctuate too much - an anxiety perhaps fuelled by the instability of their pension funds. Networks are known for their unreliability and unsustainability. Even though they can scale up in unprecedented ways, and have the potential to perform real-time global politics from below, they also disintegrate in the same speed. Like Protestant churches and Christian sects, leftist political parties and traditional union structures can give people a much needed structure to their life. It is hard to argue against the healing, therapeutic value that such organisations can have on societies and neighbourhoods that are under severe pressure of disintegration. What we observe is that these two strategies are diverging models. They do not compete, but they do not necessarily overlap either.


**2. Uphold the synthesis.** Think Global, Act Local. It sounds obvious, and so it should be. But what is to be done in a situation of growing gaps, ruptures and tensions? It is naïve to think that old trade union bosses are likely to give up their positions, in the same way as political parties will not risk their institutional commitments for some digital hipsters. The question then becomes how to arrange temporary coalitions, being well aware of the diverging interests and cultures. We see this happening in unique ways amongst activist bloggers and, for instance, the Muslim

Brothers in Egypt. Instead of 'managing' disruptive technologies, it should be also taken into consideration to radically take sides with the new generations and join the disruption. It is high time for radical politics to take the driver's seat and suppress the compulsive response to point at 'damaging consequences'. Let's get rid of moral pedagogies and shape the social change we envision.

### 3. Applied scalability is the new technics.

How to crack the mystery of scalability and transformation of issues into a critical proliferation of protest with revolutionary potential? With the tendency of networks to regress into ghettos of self-affirmation (the multitudes are all men), we can say that in many ways networks have yet to engage 'the political'. The coalition building that attends the process of trans-scalar movement will by design create an immanent relation between networks and the political. Moreover, it will greatly facilitate the theoretical and analytical understanding of networks. Tension precipitates the will to utterance, to express and to act. And it is time for networks to go to work.

**4. Dream up Indymedia 2.0.** No more Wikipedia neutrality. Where are the social networking sites for activists? The Internet flagship of the 'other globalization movement', Indymedia, has not changed since its inception in late 1999. Of course the website has grown - there are now editions in dozens of languages, with a variety of local and national nodes that we rarely see on the Net. But the conceptual basics are still the same. The problems have been identified a long time ago: there is an ongoing confusion between the alternative news agent model, the practical community organization level and strategic debates. All



too often Indymedia is used as an 'alternative CNN'. There is nothing wrong with that, except that the nature of the corporate news industry itself is changing.

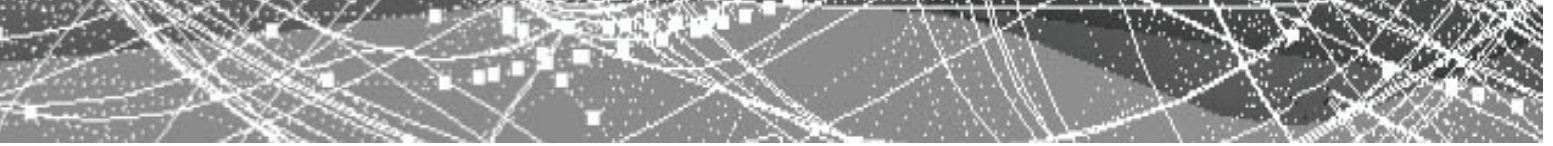
**5. The revolution will be participatory or she will not be.** It there is no desire addressed, not much will happen. YouTube and MySpace are fueled with no shortage of desire. Rightly or not, they are considered the apogee of participatory media. But they are hardly hotbeds of media activism. Linux geeks - leave the ecosphere of servicing free software cartels. The abbreviation policy, from G8 to WTO, has failed, precisely because abstract complex arrangements within global capitalism do not translate well into the messy everyday. By contrast, the NGO movements, at their best (we won't go into a catalogue of failures here), have proven the efficacy of situated networks. The problem of trans-scalar movement, however, remains. This was made clear in the multi-stakeholder governance model adopted by government, business and civil society organizations throughout the UN's World Summit on the Information Society (2003-2005). Here we saw a few civil society organizations find a seat at the negotiating table, but it didn't amount to much more than a temporary gestural economy. As civil society participants scaled the ladder of political/discursive legitimacy, the logic of their networks began to fade away. This is the problematic we speak of between seemingly structureless networks and structured organizations. The obsession with democracy provides another register of this social-technical condition.

**6. The borders of networks comprise the "non-democratic" element of democracy (Balibar/Mezzadra).** This insight is particularly helpful when thinking 'the political' of networks, since it signals the fact that networks are not by default open, horizontal and global. This is the mistake of much of the discourse on networks. There is no politics of networks if there are no borders of networks.

Instead of forcing 'democracy' onto networks, either through policing or installed software, we should investigate its nature. This does not mean that we have to openly support 'benevolent dictatorships' or enlightened totalitarian rule. Usually networks thrive on small-scale informality, particularly in the early existence of their social-technical structures.

**7. The borders of networks are the spacings of politics.** As networks undergo the transversal process of scalar transformation, the borders of networks are revealed as both limits and possibilities. Whereas in Organized Networks 1 we emphasized what happened to the 'inside' of a network, we will look here at what happens at the edges. In the process of growth the kernel of a network crystallizes a high energy. After some months or, for the lucky ones, a few years, there is longer an inside of networks, only the ruins of the border. This is an enormous challenge for networks - how to engage the border as the condition of transformation and renewal?

**8. There are no citizens of the media.** Find and replace the citizen with users. Users have rights too. The user is not a non-historical category but rather a system-specific actor that holds no relationship to modernity's institutions and their corresponding discourse on rights. What is needed, then, is total reengineering of user-rights within the logic of networks. As much as 'citizen journalists', liberal democratic governments, big media and global institutions are endlessly effusive about their democratic credentials, organized networks are equally insistent in maintaining a 'non-democratic' politics. A politics without representation - since how do networks represent anything? - and instead a non-representational politics of relations. Non-democratic does not mean anti-democratic or elitist. It has proven of strategic importance to loosen ties between 'democracy' and 'the media'. Let's remember that the citizen journalist is always tied to the media organs of



the nation-state. Networks are not nations. In times of an abundance of channels, platforms and networks, it is no longer necessary to claim 'access'. The democratization of the media has come to an end. People are tired of reading the same old critique of NYT, CNN and other news outlets that are so obviously Western and neo-liberal biased. It is time to concentrate our efforts on the politics of filtering. What information do we want to read and pass on? What happens when you find out that I am filtering you out? Do we only link to 'friends'? And what to make of this obsessive compulsion to collect 'friends'? Would it be alright if we replaced friends with comrades? What could object against the tendency to build social networks? Wasn't this what so many activists dreamt of?

**9. Governance requires protocols of dissensus.** The governance of networks is most clearly brought into question at the borders of networks. Control is the issue here. Borders function to at once regulate entry, but they also invite secret societies to infiltrate by other means. The contest between these two dynamics can be understood as the battle between governmental regimes and non-governmental desires. We do not have to decide here as we have split agendas: we long for order in times of chaos and simultaneously overload and dream of free information streams. This brings us to the related issue of sustainability. If the borders of networks consist of governmental and non-governmental elements (administration vs. inspired sabotage and the will to infiltrate), then we can also say that the borders of networks highlight their inherent fragility. How can this be turned into a strength for the future of networks? There are always overlaps of identity and social structures.

**10. Design your education.** At the current conjuncture we find inspiration in the proliferation of education-centred networks, of non-aligned initiatives, of militant research. Education, of course, has always been about

the cultivation of minds and bodies in order supply capital with its required labour-power. Organized networks have a crucial role to play in the refusal of subjugating labour and life to the mind-numbing and life-depleting demands of post-Fordist capital. And it is through these 'edu-networks' that we see some of the most inspiring activities of new institutional invention. This, we believe, is where energies can be directed that engage in practices of creative collaboration. What we need is a conceptual push and a subsequent 'art of translation' in order to migrate critical concepts from one context to the next. It is time to reclaim an avant-garde position and not leave the further development of such vital techno-social tools to the neo-liberal corporate sector. What we say here about new media and the Internet can also be transposed to other sectors of education and research. Over the next decade, half of the world's population will use a mobile phone and two billion the Internet. How are we going to use this potential?



## Reaction to “Open Source as a Metaphor for New Institutions”

### Felix Stalder

This hits on a lot of very important issues.

I think one of the most important challenges that the open source movement poses to thinking about networked forms of organization and cooperation more generally and in social movements in particular is to understand their particular organizational ecologies.

In my view, they are a mixture of stable organizations (a), hierarchical social networks at the core (b), and relatively low entry hurdles at the edges of the network (c), all held together by voluntary cooperation (d).

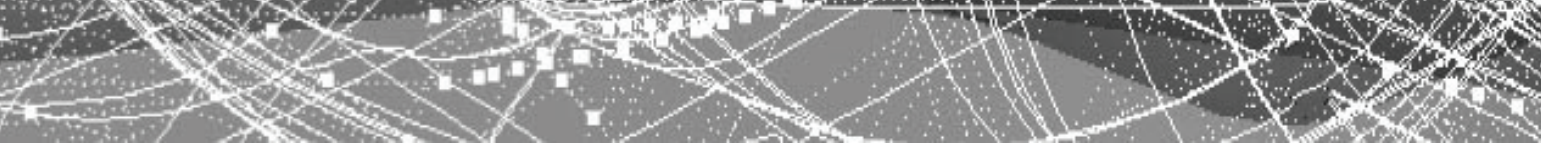
(a) Virtual all major FOSS projects today have a formal foundation of some sorts, that can take care of things that loose networks are really bad of (ie. hold legal rights, manage money, create long-term accountability etc). Sometimes these foundations have paid staff, sometimes not, but always they have formal procedures and roles that allow them to interface with the outside institutional world.

b) Everyone can change FOSS code (in legal theory), but in terms of the actual social practice, the rights to write to the relevant repositories are usually strictly limited. And since writing a complex software project is necessarily collaborative, the official repository is where the action is. Access to the repository is often not open, but restricted to an “inner circle” of trusted long-term collaborators, often forming relatively strict hierarchies.

c) There are no clear boundaries at the edges, but infinitely fine gradual distinction between “user” and “programmer”. At the very least, the user shows the programmer that his work is appreciated, thus contributing the to his motivation. Then there there is the filing of bug-reports, or the contribution to less technically challenging aspects of the development (e.g. documentation, translation) which allows an interested user to move, step by step, into the inner circles. If he has the dedication and the ability to interact with the specific culture of the network (this is often very difficult for women, because these cultures tend to be very male).

d) voluntary cooperation, and the forking you also mention, ensures that these highly structures systems do not turn into systems of dominance, but remain oriented towards ensuring the continuous voluntary cooperation. It creates a very peculiar form of organization which I called “voluntary hierarchy”.

I got most of this from reading “Weber, Steven (2004). The Success of Open Source. Cambridge, MA, Harvard UP” of which I wrote a short review that focusses on this ideas of the voluntary hierarchy [1]. There’s an shorter, earlier paper (2000) that contains the main ideas available online [2]. Of course, there’s also Yochai Benkler, in particular his paper “Coase’s Penguin, or, Linux and The Nature of the Firm.” [3]



I've written a little bit about the particular type of hierarchies in FOSS projects in an early paper [4], which might still be useful in this regard even if the examples are dated by now.

To simplify a bit, FOSS as a social form of organization is characterized by between elements that ensure openness and collaboration and elements close the process down to reduce noise and friction. In a technical context, it's relatively easy to say what is noise and friction, hence the elements of closure are not particularly contentious. However, in non-technical contexts, it is much more difficult to differentiate clearly between "signal" and "noise" and hence elements of closure become more contentious. From this perspective, I tried to understand better why the particular style of cooperation that underlies many FOSS projects is so difficult to emulate in non-technical projects [5]. That text is very raw and has lots of limitations, but perhaps it's useful nevertheless.

[1] <http://info.interactivist.net/article.pl?sid=06/03/20/0343205>

[2] <http://e-conomy.berkeley.edu/publications/wp/wp140.pdf>

[3] <http://www.benkler.org/CoasesPenguin.html>

[4] [http://www.firstmonday.org/issues/issue7\\_6/stalder](http://www.firstmonday.org/issues/issue7_6/stalder)

[5] <http://publication.nodel.org/On-the-Difference>

--- <http://felix.openflows.com> -----

out now:

\*|Manuel Castells and the Theory of the Network Society. Polity, 2006

\*|Open Cultures and the Nature of Networks. Ed. Futura/Revolver, 2005



# The four lines of inquiry

New questions for research : Democracy beyond representation

## Rethinking Political Representation

**Intro: Beyond - but not without - representation?**

**Hilary Wainwright**

Read 'political representation' and your eyes probably glaze over at dreary images of career politicians. Or is there a spark of curiosity as you remember electoral victories of Eva Morales in Bolivia or in Europe, the defeat of Thatcherism or Berlusconi and the occasional election of radical parties in municipalities and in parliament? Can the idea of political representation be rethought, reclaimed, as part of rethinking transformative politics or is it a concept - reflecting a reality - irreversibly drained of critical democratic content? Political representation was once a radical idea. Read the following words of Tom Paine in *The Rights of Man*. At the time he wrote them, they were the foundations of an appeal for representation but they read to us now like a vision of popular self government:

'It appears to general observation, that revolutions create genius and talent; but those events do no more than bring them forward. There is existing in man, a mass of sense lying in a dormant state, and which unless something excites it to action, will descend with him, in that condition, to the grave. As it is to the advantage of society that the whole of its facilities should be employed, the construction of government ought to be such as to bring forward, by quiet and regular operation, all that capacity which never fails to appear in revolution'

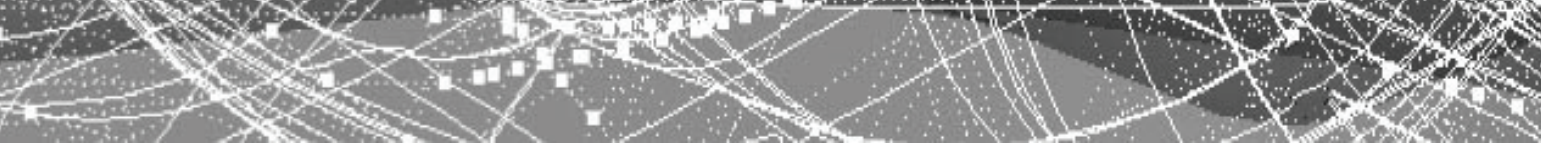
For Paine and others like him, the struggle

to win the vote, the right of representation, was the first step in the construction of the popular government he describes in his quote. As an assertion of political equality he assumed it would open a process of popular entry into the processes of government.

In reality of course, the same forces that resisted the granting of the right to vote effectively regrouped and for the past century have in different ways worked to halt any such democratic dynamic. From the very beginnings of democracy under capitalism there have been constant and powerful institutional pressures to block, blunt, mediate and divert popular pressure from control over state institutions. This struggle is of course a product of a fundamental tension between democracy and the capitalist market, between the interests of private business and the ideas of political equality and popular control of government. All this is pretty obvious.

The result has been that the institutions of representative democracy have proved too weak even to save themselves. In Europe, they could not save themselves against fascism; the defeat of fascism required other deeper, including armed, forms of popular mobilisation by a combination of anti-fascist states and autonomous resistance movements. In Latin America they could not save themselves against dictatorship; the defeat of the dictatorships required militant popular movements.

Now in the 21st century, representative democracy cannot save itself against the power of financial and corporate capitalism. As Peter Mair describes in this reader they and the parties that claim to represent the



voters within them have become emptied of democratic meaning. And the voters can see what is happening.

Who if anyone will save representative democracy this time?. Is it worth defending? Do we abandon these institutions to a slow death, presuming that we can create other forms? Or must we think in new hybrid terms of defending but in the process reconfiguring and opening up representative institutions on the basis of more radical forms of autonomous popular democracy? ( a model perhaps partially prefigured - sometimes ambiguously - in many localities by experiences of participatory budgets and other forms of participatory government)

The transition we highlighted in the introduction to this reader presents us with a historically unique and critical situation with regard to institutions of representative politics. Two opposing processes have shaped their marginal position in both today's capitalism and today's would-be transformative politics. On the one hand, as Carlo Formenti sums up in this reader, de-regulated liberal and global capitalism has increasingly eroded any autonomous power of the the nation state, the previous stronghold of representative institutions. And the disintegration of traditional class identities has contributed to a dramatic weakening of the political parties that gave these institutions their political life.

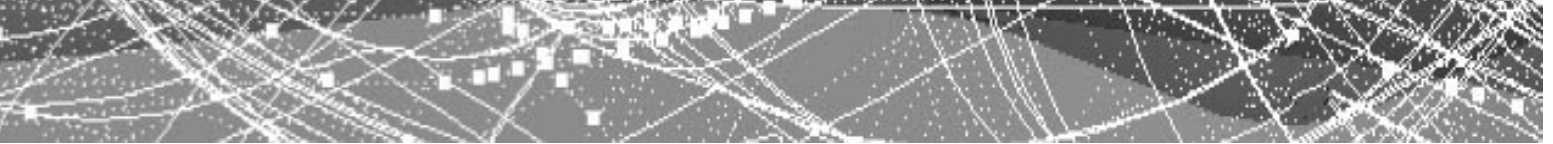
On the other hand, over the past thirty years new social movements and radical currents within the labour movements have come and gone and come again in a new forms, all insisting in their practice that the state and political institutions have no monopoly on social change, indeed their distinctive innovation has been to dramatically widen our definition of politics demonstrating that the sites of social transformation and struggle are everywhere, including in ourselves. Electoral institutions more often than not, are an obstacles to these deeper processes of democracy or at least extremely conservative in their response.

We start from the primacy of the this movement dynamic, though recognising that it is not a simple progression from strength to strength. As a result of their historical origins, emerging out of the limits of the welfare state and liberal democracy they have a particular political importance for the possibility (or not) of rethinking, reconfiguring political representation. They have witnessed representative institutions at their strongest, found them severely flawed and commenced a practical and experimental search for alternatives. They are therefore movements politically of a particular kind.

These recent social movements, including grass roots movements of labour, have demonstrated the potential (not always realised in a sustained way) to be independent political actors, connecting with each other to develop global visions of social change, exercising their own sources of transformative power and developing their own collective memory and shared knowledge - thus carrying out in distinctive and diverse ways, activities historically associated with political parties. As Networked Politics discussions have noted on many occasions this has involved inventing, retrieving radical forms of democracy not simply to strengthen resistance and protest but also to prefigure alternative social, political and economic relations.

It is clear that these innovations and creations do not amount to anything so strong and mature or developed as a 'new system waiting to be born' but a question to consider is whether and in what way they provide ways of thinking and ways of organising that can contribute towards the emergence on a wider popular scale of a new kind of democracy able to challenge capitalism's new sources of strength, in a way that representative institution are incapable?

One angle on answering this is to examine critically the conditions and circumstances where new forms of democracy have been created or are being created beyond representative forms, from the genuine



experiences of participatory democracy like Porto Alegre (1989 - 2004) and Seville to the swarming and networked process associated with social forums at their most effective and also including micro experiences like that described by Christophe Spehr in this reader. One feature they seem to have in common is the emergence (messy and often problematic) of an autonomous democratic sphere with its own infrastructure, procedures and forms of negotiation. Does this notion of structured autonomy provide any clue to a basis for going beyond representation?

Our answers need to go in two related directions: on the one hand, how might this structured autonomy develop its capacity, density, breadth, depth and sustainability and what could be the usefulness and impact of the new technology in this process ( questions which overlap with the work of the movement organisation and the techno- political tools lines of inquiry)

On the other hand, what relations might such forms of autonomous democracy have to institutions of representative democracy? And how would these, including political parties need to change to support the emergence of such forms?

Now is the time only to pose the questions not to answer them but I would point to micro clues to contribute to answers for each. For the first question about the development of a structured, interconnected autonomous sphere of democracy I would reinforce points made by Rossiter and Lovink about the importance of communication and education, stressing not simply electronic tools but the interconnection between electronic and other media. Look for example at the role that Carta, a journal, a weekly newspaper and a website plays in helping to interconnect popular struggles and create spaces for strategic reflection and debate in Italy.

For the second question about the role of political institutions I would point to micro examples for new kinds of engagement with state - normally local state but with

some national experiences - when elected representatives consciously work within political institutions to open them up to social conflicts, seek to break up their power and disperse as much of it as possible to democratic actors in society. There are many such experiences to reflect on for example in Latin America and parts of Europe but undoubtedly elsewhere.

A final series of questions concern the implications of this for the nature and role, if any, of political parties. We have implied a challenge to the predominance of parties. Yet political representation at least at the level of the legislature, requires some continuity of organisation around a programme of political commitments. Without this, the accountability and a structured, transparent and continuing relationship between representatives and citizens would be difficult. But how can this be achieved in a way which takes full account of the multiplicity of actors sharing common goals but exerting diverse forms of power of which electoral activity is only one? And in which the autonomy of movements and struggles from political parties is an essential condition of their efficacy? Some answers including negative ones might lie with experiments with self declared 'movement parties' or 'network parties'.

Clearly then - I would argue - political representation is a contested rather than a residual term, to be rethought, gone beyond but not thrown its totality into the junk box. Well, not yet!



## Beyond representative democracy: how we can do things differently

Christophe Spehr

In my principles I lay out the principle of 'Democratic trust' I referred to the limits of representative democracy and I asserted that you can develop a trust in decision-making by plenaries and assemblies based on direct or participatory democracy. This could apply to many different kinds of political institutions from parties through to parts of the state. Let me explain with an example. In explaining I will also bring in the importance of my other principle, 'being honest'.

In the Bremen election campaign 2007, the Left Party's campaign was led by a campaign board and an activists' plenary. All the books about campaigning would tell you that this cannot work, that especially in campaigning what you need is a kind of monarchy. But this turned out not to be true. We had plenaries discussing everything, debating the style of the posters, the texts and slogans, the way the campaign should work. And looking back, we found that the plenary's decisions were usually the best. And anyhow, if you make false decisions, it's better to have them done at least all together.


This is, of course, related to the first principle, Being honest. The plenary needs to know that the board trusts it, that the plenary gets all the facts it needs to know, that its decisions are taken seriously. Based on this, the plenary develop a lot of political wisdom. It had a good sense of what it could really decide in detail and what had to be "handed back" to the board to rework it and make a new proposal. It had a good sense of what could be done by majority vote (which was reserved for "lesser issues"), and what had to be done by soft consensus (where a proposal is modified as long as there is no more strong resistance against a decision).

This experiences are quite contrary to the

traditional instinct of the left. For example as I argued in my 'being honest' principle, even in our own organisations, we tend to behave tactically. We even have those patriarchal, politico-male ideas that "a real man wouldn't reveal his plans", or even his situation, the needs he's in. That the aim of the political game is to achieve decisions that you wanted and that wouldn't have happened if everybody had known all the facts. But this is stupid. If you would conquer the government but had no strong majority support for your explicit aims, what would you do? If you would won the majority on the board of a party but without a strong coalition for your aims, what good would it do to you? You'd had to go on gambling, to go on destructing the very organisation itself, in order to keep a position that is not based in political consent.

But it all turns out easy if everybody just lays open what the different fears, problems, anxieties, desires, claims are. Then you can search a solution - how to build your board, how to design your program, how to plan your campaign, etc. Like Garfield says: "It's amazing what headways you can make if you stop playing games." As a principle, it's worth trying. That's what we found in Bremen - where incidentally we won 8% of the vote and x (can you fill this in Christophe?) members of the Lande parliament.

In the course of the campaign, we felt more and more safe to "bring things to the plenary". We became used to its strange wisdom. But also the plenary changed and developed, it became more and more used to its role. Because this is an old trick of all hierarchies: Bring them together once a year and make them decide, and you can be sure they'll feel completely uncomfortable and fearful, or they'll just show rage and distrust and feel only inclined to take as much space as possible



to talk and brawl. Anyway they'll prove that "they can't do it". People have to train themselves to decide collectively. They need a chance to learn and develop.

But you will be surprised how fast they'll learn. Doing self-rule is some kind of a burden, but it is also a great seduction. In the beginning people will not believe they have power. But when they found out, they'll quickly become responsible with it. I think it would be a challenge to develop a theory that would defend Democratic trust by a deeper insight in how decision processes work and how individuals and collectives do them. But it's not a major challenge because you don't need such a theory to do it. To do Democratic trust, wherever it can be applied.


From the being honest: `Even in our own organisations, we tend to behave tactically. And it doesn't work either, of course. Some of us even have these patriarchal, polit-male ideas that "a real man wouldn't reveal his plans", or even his situation, the needs he's in. That the aim of the political game is to achieve decisions that you wanted and that wouldn't have happened if everybody had known all the facts. But this is not smart, it is stupid. If you would conquer the government but had no strong majority support for your explicit aims, what would you do? If you would conquer a board but had no strong coalition for your aims, what good would it do to you? You'd had to go on gambling, to go on destructing the very organisation itself, in order to keep a position that is not based in political consent.

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**The Cartel Party**  
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The concept of the 'cartel party' was first proposed in 1992 as a way of drawing attention to the potential for *collusion* between political parties rather than competition as such; and as a way of emphasising the influence of the *state* on party development. In definitional terms, the cartel party is a type of party that emerges in advanced democratic polities and that is characterised by the interpenetration of party and state and by a pattern of inter-party collusion. With the development of the cartel party, the goals of politics become self-referential, professional and technocratic, and what little inter-party competition remains becomes focused on the efficient and effective management of the polity. The election campaigns that are conducted by cartel parties are capital-intensive, professionalized and centralized, and are organized on the basis of a strong reliance on the state for financial subventions and for other benefits and privileges. Within the party, the distinction between party members and non-members becomes blurred, in that through primaries, electronic polling, and so on, the parties invite all of their supporters, members or not, to participate in party activities and decision-making. Above all, with the emergence of cartel parties, politics becomes increasingly depoliticised.

The concept of the cartel party was also first proposed in order to move the prevailing conceptions of party away from an over reliance on the notion of the *mass party*. For a long time it had been believed that most political parties could be defined as mass parties - or as the *catch-all* or *electoral-professional* variant of mass parties - and that they could be judged as mass parties. This was the key empirical model and also the key normative model. The idea was that this was how parties should be, and to the extent that they did not meet the standards of a mass party, then they were somehow weak or failing. That parties might survive and prosper



in another organizational guise was often overlooked.


There were two major developments in particular which could be associated with the emergence of the cartel party. The first of these was the evident movement of political parties towards the state, in the sense that it had become clear that the development of party organisations was now increasingly dependent on the rules and laws that were established by the state. This observation was important, since up to that point, most of what had been theorised or hypothesised about party organisations and their development, and most of the writings on the mass party and catch-all party in particular, had always looked to the society as the key driving force, and as the place where explanations for party change were usually sought.

These influences from the state and the government included the now well documented practice of state subventions to political parties, that is, the use of public money to fund party organisations and parties in parliament; the increasing prevalence of party laws, which had often accompanied the introduction of state subventions, and which laid down sometimes in quite strict legal terms what parties could or could not do with regard to their organisational practices; the rules regarding public service and sometimes even commercial broadcasting and media, which were becoming more and more important for party campaigning and publicity; the access to the state machinery which parties enjoyed, and which provided a source of patronage and support; and the access of parties to government office, which had become increasingly commonplace by the end of the 1980s, such that there were then very few parties of note in the advanced democracies which had not enjoyed a recent experience in government at national level.

These signs of movement towards the state and its institutions were of fundamental importance to parties and suggested a number of hypotheses or conclusions which played a major role in the cartel party thesis. First, and most obviously, this tells us that parties are much more influenced by the state than

is usually realised. Second, it follows from this that if parties are strongly influenced by the state, and are drawing closer to the state, then, almost necessarily, they are likely to be drawing further away from society. In fact, the evidence for this latter conclusion is growing ever stronger, and can be seen in the sharp decline in levels of party membership, the dropping to record low levels of the sense of popular attachment to parties, and the generally falling levels of participation in national, local and European elections. Third, if parties are more influenced by the state and become drawn more closely into the state, then it is also almost inevitable that they will begin to resemble one another more and more closely. The parties now share so much, whether in modes of communication, sources of finance, or styles of campaigning, that instead of this party or that party in the singular, we increasingly speak of '*the parties*' in the plural. Fourth, if parties are more influenced by the state, and by public laws and regulations, and so on, then they are not being influenced by something which is necessarily exogenous to them. In other words, parties are being influenced by laws and rules which they themselves, as governors, devise and write. Once this point is recognised, then we have to consider a very different set of relationships and a very different world: Parties are no longer simply objects, but also *subjects*. They are unique in that they have the ability to devise their own environment - no other organisation can do this - and effectively to write their own salary cheques. Once that is accepted, then it makes sense for the parties to cooperate with one another; in fact, the parties need to cooperate with one another if these rules and regulations are to be established. They need to reach agreement with one another, and it is then a small step from consideration of cooperation and agreement to the onset of collusion.

The second major development that led to the elaboration of the cartel party thesis was the discernible shift that had begun to occur inside party organisations themselves, and which saw the weight of power moving from the party on the ground to the party in



public office. Party organisations may be regarded as being like political systems in their own right, with three important faces or constituent units. These are first, the party in public office, which includes the party in both parliament and government; second, the party in central office, which is constituted by the permanent bureaucracy, national executive organs, and so on; and third, the party on the ground - the organised membership. Over time, and particularly from the 1980s onwards, there has been a general shift in the balance of power within parties in western democracies, with the locus of decision-making, as well as the distribution of internal resources - finance, staff, and so on - moving firmly into the hands of the party in public office. This has profound implications for how parties act and how they compete. In brief, as the party in public office gains the ascendancy inside the party as a whole, the interests of the public office holders becomes the interests of the party as such. Moreover, the interests of the party in public office can be summarised very easily as wanting to be in a winning position; if winning is not possible, then their interests lie in having the costs of losing reduced to their lowest possible levels. This is likely to be true for the parties in public office of all mainstream parties, and this, in turn, is likely to encourage a system of mutual cooperation. Under normal circumstances this should lead to the emergence of a *Nash equilibrium*, that is, an equilibrium or compromise that reflects the best solution for all of the participants, such that no one participant will have an incentive to defect.

If we put these two developments and their implications together, then we reach the following conclusions. First, parties are increasingly part of the state, and increasingly removed from society, and this new situation encourages them, or even forces them, to cooperate with one another. They write their own cheques, but they can only do so if there is general agreement to do so. Second, these parties increasingly resemble one another. In terms of their electorate, policies, goals, style, there is less and less separating them and dividing them. Interests are now much

more likely to be shared, and this also facilitates cooperation among the parties. Third, part of the parties' shared interest is to reduce the costs of losing, and in this sense they share the need to find an equilibrium that suits each of their 'private' interests. This also means cooperation, even if, and this is important, such cooperation need not be overt or conscious. The result is collusion between the parties and the development of cartel-like behaviour.

Finally, this type of party is called a cartel party, because the nature of its organisation, the interests it reflects, and its relations with its environment (social, political, institutional) encourage such a party to look for cartel-like solutions in concert with other such parties. Should these solutions be found, the party *system* may be seen as having become cartelized. And because of this process of cartelization, or even just because the parties have an interest in cartelization, we then sometimes witness the emergence of *populist*, challenger parties that seek to mobilise popular opinion against the cartel. Cartel parties, in other words, provoke *anti-cartel* parties.

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## Post-democracy

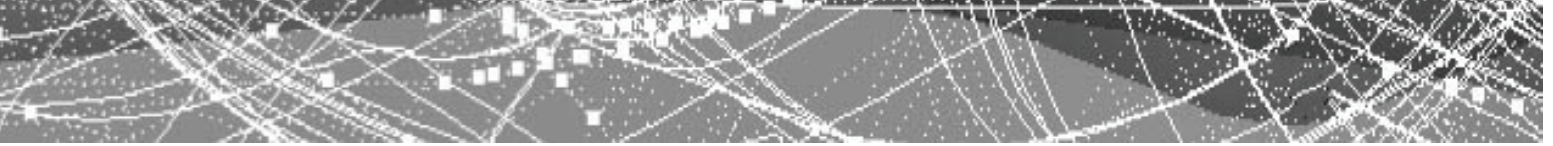
Carlo Formenti

The space at my disposal impels me to focus attention on two aspects: 1) the role of the media in the weakening of old forms of political participation and the emergence of new ones; 2) the divergent points of view within the left's theoretical debate on the subject of post-democracy; these are points that I shall not deal with separately, and shall instead attempt to interweave them in the course of my argument.

Let us begin with critical positions. In a famous essay on post-democracy, Colin Crouch establishes a correlation between economic globalisation (with particular reference to the effects of the deregulation of financial markets), the transition to a service economy centred on the operations of the media and a reduction in democratic participation. The globalisation, tertiarisation and growing finance-based emphasis of the capitalist economy provoke the progressive weakening of class identity (brought about in the first instance by the processes of decentralisation and the restructuring of production) with the consequent loss of roles for parties, associations and trade unions. This leads to a lack both of any perception or awareness of common interests on the part of specific social groups, and of organisational channels through which these interests can be given weight at the heart of political mediation, which means that the ritual of elections becomes the only opportunity for mass political participation. At the same time, the processes whereby social identities are formed are displaced from the sphere of production to the sphere of consumption (in particular the consumption of communication). The result is not a falling away of interest in relation to politics, nor least of all any increase in admiration and respect for the professional politicians who exercise a monopoly on making decisions. On the contrary, interest in the "spectacle"

of politics remains high, while its "actors", exposed to the glare of the media spotlight (Crouch shares Meyrowitz's analysis of the role of the media in laying bare what goes on "behind the scenes" of the political system) are the object of contemptuous opinions and systematic mistrust. But this critical stance is merely the reverse side of the powerlessness of the masses: "... it is citizenship in the positive sense when groups of people and their organisations develop collective identities, become aware of their common interests and make autonomously formulated demands of the political system, whereas it is merely protest when they pillory politicians, disputing their public and personal integrity". To sum up: for Crouch, on the one hand post-democracy means the end of any real scope for the governed to limit the power of those who govern, and on the other it means the need for those who govern to gain legitimacy and consensus by reciting a script that has some degree of credibility in the malign eyes of the public.

The subject of the "neutralising" effect exercised on social conflict by the processes whereby politics is personalised and turned into spectacle (without extinguishing the conflict, but diverting its objectives and effects) is developed from another perspective in Richard Sennett's book *The Fall of Public Man*. For Sennett, the expropriation of the political subjectivity of the masses by professional political actors is a process that was already underway in the 19th century (see the analysis of Lamartine's placatory speeches to the Paris insurgents in 1848), but one that could reach full completion only through the erasure of the boundaries between public life and personal life that was made possible by the advances of the electronic media after the Second World War (here too we find an echo of Meyrowitz's arguments). The rapidity of these advances, Sennett maintains, was in




part due, paradoxically, to the movements of 1968, and in particular those of the 1970s. By coining the slogan “the personal is political”, and replacing class identity with a plurality of “weak” identities based on biographical trajectories (sexual choices, etc) and/or on experiences of single issue movements (ecological, pacifist, etc) that do not take for granted any unity between social being and consciousness, these fulfil a role that is decisive in facilitating the triumph of politics as spectacle, to which they offer the fertile ground of a culture based on the personal, whereby social categories acquire credibility only when they seem to be inherent in the life of a particular individual. Sennett therefore introduces a further precision to the concept: a political regime is post-democratic wherein the boundary between the public and private spheres is erased to the extent that it becomes impossible to give meaning to notions such as public (or, if preferred, collective) good or public interest.

The same features which critical thinking levels its charges against -- personalisation, the blurring of the public and private spheres, individualisation, the crisis in strong social identities and their forms of representation, along with the renunciation of universalist political aspirations -- assume a positive value in the reading of them proposed by left-wing authors who (and this is no accident) devote much more attention to the “democratising” potential of the new media. I shall analyse two currents: respectively, theorists of cyber democracy and upholders of the paradigm of the post-Fordist multitude.

From its very early days, the culture of the Internet set itself up in terms of a “secession” (one only has to think of John Perry Barlow’s famous “Declaration of the Independence of Cyberspace”) in relation to political power. The Internet utopia as a new digital frontier, as a cosmopolitan territory at a remove from any kind of ruling interference and capable of self-governance by means of tools of direct democracy (some descriptions of the Web community offer strong analogies, by no means

coincidental, with those of the organisations of direct democracy attempted in the proletarian revolutions of the last century), assumes explicitly anarchist connotations. For example, in a contribution to the anthology *Dopo la democrazia?* [After Democracy?], Derrick de Kerckhove talks about a not-too-distant future in which the role of politics will be limited to administrative functions (“I think that human beings can do without political activity”). And although less radical (in the sense that it still maintains a role for forms of representation mediated by the electronic agora), Pierre Lévy’s thinking celebrates for its part the irreversible trend towards forms of self-government or direct democracy in which individuals will join together in I-centred communities (to use Manuel Castells’ terminology), based on a commonality of identities and subjective interests and/or on the convergence of biographical trajectories (individualism plus collective intelligence). Bloggers’ networks are cited as an example of the positive function of the end of the separation between public and private spheres: the mode of action communicated by the bloggers speeds up the process whereby the political system is “made transparent”, and it influences the ways in which leadership choices are made, in the sense that a capital of reputation and trust built up through “horizontal” networks replaces the top-down logic of consensus that professional politicians build up among the audiences for broadcast media.

The theories that replace the traditional categories of class and working people with the concept of multitude (see Antonio Negri, and passim) shift attention around from the technologies of communication to the mode of production that exploits them. The advent of non-material capitalism, the crisis of the nation state and the establishment of the Empire as the planetary domination of the nexus of capital are seen as phases of a single process whereby the capitalism of the networks is counterposed with the whole of humanity, transformed into living work which -- merely by virtue of existing,



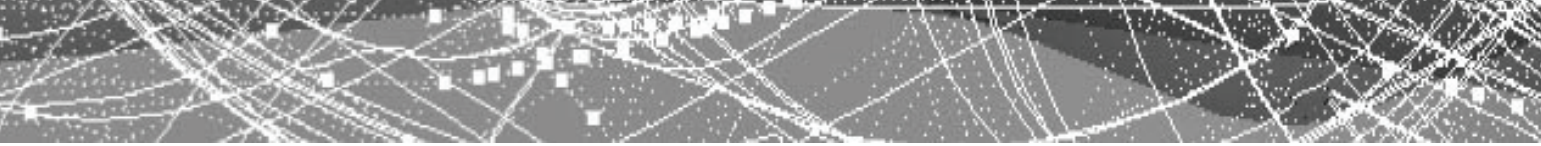
reproducing itself and communicating -- fuels the process of valorisation. Defined in this way, the subject of antagonism cannot be led back to old forms of political representation. Representation is in fact the key to reducing a people to a unit and shaping it in the form of state-of-action, so that it acts as a procedure for mediating class interests, arousing a class identity that can be represented in a unitary way. Nowadays, none of these models of action makes any sense: in the era of globalised politics and economics, Negri writes, "the one man, one vote refrain is impracticable". According to this perspective, post-democracy signifies, on the one hand, the transition from the regime of national sovereignty to the regime of the Empire (which does not coincide with American supremacy, but instead with the hierarchical stratification between institutions of the global market and regional and local organisations that administer consensus); and the other hand, it signifies the insurgency of the multitude that "challenges representation because it is a multiplicity, undefined and immeasurable". Contrary to the "cyber-Utopians", the idea of the multitude does not venture any hypotheses about the forms of participatory democracy and self-government of the multitudes, who are left to get on with the concrete experiments of the movements (Negri talks, for example, about a "commune of the multitude" in relation to the demonstrations called autonomously -- via mobile phone texting -- after the Madrid bombings).

In the little space I have left I shall try to express an opinion on the "figures of post-democracy" that I have listed, albeit summarily. In relation to the critical theories I shall say no more than that, although grasping some crucial aspects of the transformations underway, they remain trapped in "nostalgic" celebration of a past grounded in strong class identities, without indicating any practicable alternatives. The cyber-democratic utopia is based on the conviction that there is an "anarchist" principle inscribed within the very architecture of the Internet -- an illusion

belied by the "counterrevolution" in the wake of the attacks of 11 September 2001, which decreed an end to the "antistatist" alliance between the "people of the Web" and the ICT corporations: the tactical convergence between libertarian culture and neo-liberal ideology ran out of steam as soon as the companies started offering governments the technical know-how to re-establish their sovereignty over the Web, in exchange for online commercial quid pro quos and copyright. As for the paradigm of the multitude, it seems to me that it underestimates the necessity to translate the forms of democratic participation that emerge from what is happening in the movements into formal principles and procedures: without the rights of the citizen in the digital era being "constitutionalised" (without arriving at the definition of a Bill of Rights for the Web, as Stefano Rodotà demands) no experiment in direct democracy will leave any lasting traces.

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# Brainstorm

‘Emerging subjects of transformation - their existence, character and conditions of emergence.’

## Questions to encourage discussion

Many features of the ways we describe the new movements suggest processes of emergence that we have not yet understood. More, in our inquiry we propose the necessity of enlarging the (self)understanding of the global movement, and we are trying to establish connections between very different movements (for scope, territorial dimension, involved subjects, practises, relationships with pre-existing organizations, political approach, etc.), suggesting that they belong in some way to a sort of common family. But indeed, are there in fact common, recurrent principles or features of the present and recent movements?

Around this question we would like to provoke a loose brainstorming on the last day of the seminar in Berlin. We understand how adventurous and abstract this can be but we hope it can be useful too, in understanding general conditions characterising the background of the new movements and common novelties showed by them. So, the brainstorming could be organized around some of the following (and many more!) questions.

If these common, recurrent principles or features of the new movements exist, what are they?

And what do they teach us about the conditions of the emergence of movements? Can generalizations be drawn about this?

What kind of common problems - if they exist - are these movements engaged to face? What kind of common enemies do they have? What kind of common affirmative action do they attempt to liberate?

What kind of innovations and transformations are they producing in the social relations, compared to the conditions existing before the uprising of the movement?

Considering these commonalities existing, can we talk about signs of new political subjectivities emerging?

How far is emergence the product of deliberated strategy and how far the outcome of surprising convergences? Whatever is the answer, what does it indicate? And what if any is the connection between the two? How far can one prepare the ground for emergence?

How do we understand the alternation between visibility and immersion (carsicITÀ) in terms of the possible nature

(difficulties and potentialities) of emerging subjects?

What does it mean to call a certain kind of change emergent or producing emergence?

What is the relation of the emergent to the old? How far does emergence require breaks and ruptures? How far can it co-exist/ occur within the old?

What kind of efficacy did they have (if they did)? How can it be measured? What dimensions of the reality do we have to focus on to perceive it?

Can we speak about any kind of accumulative process that is actually occurring in this uneven overlapping of so different movements? And if yes, how it works?

What can we learn from our experiences and from historical examples about the conditions for transformative creativity? What can we learn from historical experiences as far as the logic and nature and conditions of emergence - long past like the Paris Commune, recent like the popular assemblies in Argentina?

Does innovation/new principles of organisation have to be sustainable before one can talk about emergence?

What are conditions for moving from moments of social creativity and apparent emergence of new principles to sustained forms of transformation/emergent subjects/emergent institutions?

And can one talk about pre-emergence? What are the signs?

## Biogs of participants

(from [http://networked-politics.info/index.php/Participants\\_presentations](http://networked-politics.info/index.php/Participants_presentations) )

### Ezequiel Adamovsky

Ezequiel (Buenos Aires, 1971) is a historian and anti-capitalist activist. He studied history at the University of Buenos Aires --where he also teaches-- and has a PhD from University College London. As an activist, he has been involved in the students' movement and, more recently, in the neighbours' Assemblies movement that emerged in the city of Buenos Aires after the rebellion of December 2001. A member of collectives and networks of global resistance, he also participates in the process of the World Social Forum. Apart from his academic publications --mainly in the field of intellectual history-- he has written extensively on issues of globalisation, anti-capitalism and Leftist politics for websites and journals from several countries. He has recently published the book *Anti-capitalism for Beginners: The New Generation of Emancipatory Movements* (Buenos Aires, 2003). Contact: eadamovs@mail.retina.ar

### Christophe Aguiton

French activist researcher- Key figure in the no-global movements. Comes from IV International and SUD trade union. Worked in many international networks (Euromarches, Attac, WSF, ESF etc). He studies and publish, recently mainly on new forms of organization. Knows and work on ITC.

### Bruno Amoroso

Chairperson of the 'Federico Caffè Center', University of Roskilde, Denmark. Director of the Faculty of Global Awareness, University of the Common Good, Milan-Ferrara. Joint director of the review *Interculture*, Marzabotto. Publications: *Della Globalizzazione*, Meridiana, 1998; *L'apartheid Globale*, Edizione Lavoro, 1999; *Europa e Mediterraneo*, Dedalo 2000; *La stanza rossa. Riflessioni scandinave di Federico Caffè*, Città Aperta, 2004; (with Sergio Gomez y Palma) *Persone e Comunità. Gli autori del Cambiamento*, Dedalo, June 2007.

### Kenny Bell

Secretary of the UNISON (the UK's main public sector union) branch in Newcastle City Council and also Deputy Convenor of the Northern Region of UNISON, with a long history of involvements in politically minded trade union, community and antiracist anti-fascist organizing;

has attended the WSF in Porto Alegre, on behalf of the Newcastle branch of Unions and the Northern Region as well as organized UNISON delegations to the every ESF. Recently involved in the special public services issue of Eurotopia.

### Marco Berlinguer

Marco Berlinguer was born and lives in Rome. In the last years he contributed to the foundation of Transform! Italia and of different European networks as: Transform! Europe; Euromovements; Eurotopia; The Network for the Charter for Another Europe. He is mainly engaged in studying and experimenting new forms of connection between social and political action and research; and between new forms of production of information, knowledge and communication and the production of new forms of dissident and transformative subjectivity. In the last years edited "World Social forum: A Debate On the Challenges for Its Future" (2003); "La Riva sinistra del Tevere - Mappa e conflitti nel territorio metropolitano di Roma" (2004); and "Pratiche costituenti - Spazi, reti, appartenenze: le politiche dei movimenti" (2005). Contact: marco.berlinguer@transform.it

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I'm teaching at the University of Patras in Greece at the Department of Mathematics. My current research is on social networks and social movements. Some of my work on social movements is available at <http://nicomedia.math.upatras.gr/mobilizations/SMIG/> and <http://nicomedia.math.upatras.gr/sm/>, while a number of things I'm working on social networks can be found at <http://nicomedia.math.upatras.gr/sn/>.

### Michael Brie


President of Rosa Luxembourg Stiftung. Expert of German and International Left politics.

### Quim Brugué

General Director of Citizen's Participation of the Catalan Government. Professor of Política Science and member of IGOP (Institut de Govern i Polítiques Públiques). Areas of work: public management, local governance, participatory democracy and public policy analysis.

### Angel Calle

Ángel Calle is currently working in Córdoba, Spain, at the Instituto de Estudios Sociales de Andalucía. They are involved at DEMOS project, which studies in six different countries the nature and goals of these sort of movements in Europe (see [demos.iue.it](http://demos.iue.it)). He has published some articles and a book, *Nuevos movimientos Globales* (Madrid, Editorial Popular, 2005), claiming that



a “radical democracy” wave is allowing new cycles of “alterglobalisation” protests. At the same time, he is quite involved in these networks as an activist. Contact: [angel.calle\(at\)nodo50.org](mailto:angel.calle(at)nodo50.org)

### **Pedro Chaves**

Director of United Left’s Fundación Europa de los Ciudadanos and professor at the Universidad Carlos III (Madrid)

### **Laurence Cox**

I grew up in Dublin in the 1970s and 1980s, in the shadow of capitalist modernisation, economic recession and war, was socialised into the ecology, peace, human rights and solidarity movements of the day and for the past 25 years have been active in one movement or another. For the last 15 years I’ve been working on building networks between different movements: first in green parties, then in autonomous contexts and most recently in the frameworks of the developing “movement of movements”, along with a hundred other more immediate projects and issues. I work as a sociologist, training movement activists doing action research on their own movements’ practice as well as being involved in community-based oral history projects. My two big problems at the moment are trying to build links between community activism and counter-cultural anti-capitalism, and trying to find a publisher for a book on humanist Marxism as a theory of social movement practice. I feel lucky to have seen a moment like our current movement in my own lifetime and my own city, and am determined not to let it pass without pushing things as far as we possibly can. Contact: [laurence.cox@nuim.ie](mailto:laurence.cox@nuim.ie)

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### **Carlo Formenti**

Carlo Formenti, born in 1947, living between Milano and Lecce (where is professor of New Media Theory). Working in Unions (metallurgy) from 1969 to 1974, collaborating to Political Science Institute (University of Padova) directed by Antonio Negri until 1979, journalist (Alfabeto, Europeo, Corriere della Sera) from 1980 to 1997, teacher (Science of Communication - University of Salento) from 2001, blogger (<http://www.pazlab.net/formenti/>). Between his last works: “Incantanti dalla Rete” (2000), “Mercanti di futuro” (2002), “Not Economy” (2003) now is working to a new book (“Cybersoviet: new media, new classes and crisis of political representation”) that will be published in 2008.

### **Mayo Fuster i Morell**


I’m Mayo. I was born in Oliva (Valencia), a small town in front of the Mediterranean sea, 30 years ago. I was part of the first generation born in democracy after Franco dictatorship. But I start active politically inserted at Praha 2000 generation. I was part of the Movement de Resistencia Global of Catalonia (MRG) and active at the People Global Action networks, and afterword the European Social Forum from the autonomous spaces perspective. I became an activist research through Global, Mobilised Investigacion, [Investigació](#) and [Euromovements](#) experiences. I had been based on Amsterdam, working with [\[Eyfa\]](#) (an European environmental organization) and at Barcelona, founding [Infoespai](#) social center. Currently I’m most of my time between Rome, Florence and Barcelona, exploring and researching the techno political potentiality. And putting into practice the reflections coming from it with the creation of a [E-library for and on social transformation](#) and an [E-yearbook on social movements across Europe -2006](#). E-mail: [lilaroja@gmx.net](mailto:lilaroja@gmx.net)

### **Gemma Galdon Clavell**

Gemma Galdon Clavell (Mataró, 1976) obtained her masters in Contemporary History and History of Africa in 2000 at the Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona. She moved to the United States when she completed her dissertation on the Black Panthers and the countercultural and revolutionary movements of the 60s and 70s. In 2001, back in Barcelona, she got involved in grassroots and international social movements, and began organizing campaigns for global justice, editing books and writing. Recently she has moved towards countercultural movements and cultural dissent networks. She is currently living in Amsterdam and working at the Transnational Institute . [www.tni.org/gemma](http://www.tni.org/gemma)

### **Ant Ince**

During my short time as an academic and an activist



I have seen myself shift from a hippie philosophy student at the University of Liverpool to an anarcho-curious libertarian communist geographer in London. Currently at Queen Mary University of London, I am undertaking PhD research into the geographies of anarchistic organisational strategies in theory and practice. I am also a member of the [Anarchist Studies Network](#), a specialist research group of the Political Studies Association. Outside of 'work', I live with my beautiful girlfriend, I am active in my union, the (small but growing) [IWW](#), and regularly find myself involved in converting derelict squatted buildings into free social and community spaces. Contact [a.ince@qmul.ac.uk](mailto:a.ince@qmul.ac.uk).

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Young US researcher activist. Worked in the antiauthoritarian movements some years in Barcelona and Europe (MRG - PGA - Autonomous spaces in ESF and WSF). Theorist of networked politics. Worked with Castells. Now live and work in California.

### Anastasia Kavada

I was born in Athens in 1978 and I am currently living in London. My first contact with social movements was as an activist - I was a volunteer for Greenpeace and Amnesty International in Greece from 1996 to 2001. In 2001, I moved to London and soon started to study social movements from a media and communications perspective. I was recently awarded a doctorate by the School of Media, Arts & Design of the University of Westminster. My thesis investigated the role of the internet in the preparation of the 2004 European Social Forum focusing on the processes of internal organizing, decision-making and collective identity construction.

### Jamie King

Funder editor of the "Meta Mute Magazin: Culture and politics after the net" (<http://www.metamute.org/>) and specialist on intellectual property rights, londoner squater.

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Lluc Pelàez studied Philosophy at the University of Barcelona (UB) and get a master's degree in Public Politics at the Autonomous University of Barcelona (UAB). Since 1998, he is a member of the Government and Public Politics Institute (IGOP) at the UAB. He has recently published the books "Insubmissió; moviment social i incidència política" (Ed. UAB, 1999) and

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### Oscar Reyes

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Many thanks to Dan Tierney for designing the reader. Also many thanks to Connie Hildebrandt and Gemma Galden for all their work on the organisation of the seminar.



## Menu of maximum reader

Direct link: [http://www.networked-politics.info/index.php/NP\\_Maxim\\_Reader\\_Berlin\\_June\\_2007](http://www.networked-politics.info/index.php/NP_Maxim_Reader_Berlin_June_2007)

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## Moving Against the G8

### Ben Trott

The G8 last met in Germany in the summer of 1999, six months before the World Trade Organisation (WTO) protests in Seattle, and well into the so-called 'cycle of struggles' which began with the 1994 Zapatista uprising in Chiapas, Mexico. Yet for Germany's 'globalisation-critical movement', as it came to be known, the mobilisation against the Cologne G8 Summit was a false start.

The mobilisation was split in numerous directions. Confusion had been created by the role that the Green Party (with strong roots in the peace movement) - and in particular Joscha Fischer who was Foreign Secretary and their most senior member of parliament - were playing in steering NATO towards a military intervention in Kosovo. The radicals, meanwhile, were split into two different camps and unable to exert much influence within the broader coalition. The turn out on the streets was low, huge police repression was experienced, and the mobilisation generally considered a disaster. The mobilisation around this year's G8 Summit (6-8 June), to be held in Heiligendamm near Rostock, has sought to learn from this experience.

#### Common Places

In the middle of April of this year, around 450 people met at the old Ehm-Welk School in Rostock for the third and final Rostock Action Conference - a series of events attended by trade unionists, NGOs, members of political parties (specifically, the new Linkspartei and the Green Party Youth), Attac, antifascists, church groups, and groups belonging to the autonomous left, including those organised within the Dissent Network ([www.dissentnetwork.org](http://www.dissentnetwork.org)).

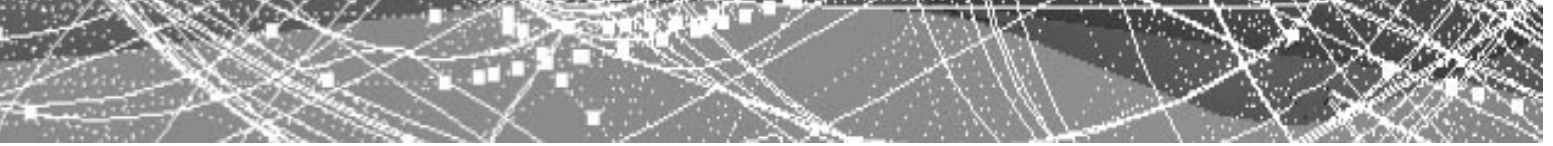
As well as Cologne, the 2005 G8 mobilisation to Gleneagles has been a model for 'how-not-to-do-a-Summit-protest', with its three separate, only very slightly overlapping mobilisations: Make Poverty History (composed of big NGOs, charities and 'civil society'), G8 Alternatives (a Trotskyite-dominated coalition, with a number of smaller NGOs also involved), and Dissent! (anarchists, autonomists and the 'direct action movement'). Everyone pretty much remained within the comfort zones of their own traditional political practices, whether those be demonstrations, counter-conferences or small 'affinity group' based actions, further entrenching both their own ideological positions and cultural identities. The Rostock Action Conferences - initially conceived by the Interventionist Left ([www.g8-2007.de](http://www.g8-2007.de)), a network of groups and individuals from the radical-left - have sought to use the G8 mobilisation to do precisely the opposite.

First of all, the desire to create one broad-based coalition arose from the assessment that the various aspects of the German left - from the once-huge movement against nuclear transport, to the plethora of antifascist groups scattered across the Federal Republic - are nowhere near as strong as they once were. So their ability to influence the direction of politics and society is extremely limited when they act alone.

Yet the political rationale for mobilising against the G8 remains as strong as ever. As an institution, it has a very obvious lack of *democratic* legitimacy. Even if one were to assume that the G8 heads of state represent the interests of their entire populations (which of course they do not), these amount to only 14 per cent of the world's population. Despite this, these states control 48 per cent of votes within the IMF, 46 per cent in the World Bank, and hold four out of five veto-holding seats on the United Nations Security Council, enabling them to wield enormous influence over and throughout the global political economy. Moreover, the G8 lack a *political* legitimacy in the sense that it symbolises a globalised and militarised form of capitalism. It's *raison d'être* is the expansion and intensification of the neoliberal project, meaning: enclosure, privatisation, the curbing of trade union powers, an attack on any existing welfare state, and the flexibilisation of labour. The extent to which they set the agenda within other international institutions allows the G8 to function as one of global capitalism's 'crisis managers', creating stability for sustained exploitation. Summit protests function as a symbol of resistance to neoliberalism. For this symbol to be powerful, considerable cooperation and coordination is required.

The G8 mobilisation is also motivated by the desire to transform the 'globalisation-critical' movement into a more genuine 'movement of movements', so that the whole becomes more than simply the sum of its parts. Central to this, it was felt, is developing a common political practice; engaging in social struggles together with others, learning from one another, being sensitive to our differences, and in the process all being prepared to become something else - together.

At the beginning of the mobilisation, almost two years ago, it was clear what this would have to mean in practical terms. First of all, the radical, explicitly anti-capitalist areas of the left would need to try and escape its own largely self-imposed isolation. It would not (and should not!) have to give up its desire for a complete break with capitalist social relations, but it would have to show a willingness to work together with those who have - or indeed, those whose goals were always somewhat different. An anti-capitalist position would not have to be hidden, but a new language would need to be found if it were to be able to communicate with



anyone other than just itself. It would be able to push (even break) the boundaries of legality, but it would need to find ways of bringing others with them and avoiding political isolation.

Others, of course, would be presented with different challenges. Whilst there would not be the need for complete 'unity' within the coalition, commonality would have to be sought. Furthermore, any attempts at adopting the role played by The Party in previous eras of struggle - in other words, of assuming the vanguard role, bringing the official 'consciousness' and leading the direction - would have to be given up. This does not mean that there is not a role for political parties within the movement of movements (or the G8 mobilisation), but they will never again be able to assume the hegemonic role that they once did. And finally, there would need to be a mutual toleration of different forms of action - including those that would inevitably be condemned as 'unreasonable' by those in power.

Of course, it was also clear that there would need to be limits to the breadth of the coalition. In Germany, the far-right have a long history of deploying an anti-globalisation discourse rooted in anti-semitism, racism and the construction of fear on the basis of the 'threat' posed to national identity by processes of globalisation. And indeed, the Nationalist Party of Germany (NPD) will be demonstrating in the nearby town of Schwerin at the same time as the International Demonstration in Rostock the weekend before the summit (see [www.demo-schwerin.tk](http://www.demo-schwerin.tk) and [www.heiligendamm2007.de](http://www.heiligendamm2007.de)). There has also been a desire to learn from the experience of 2005 and the extent to which Live8 (and parts of Make Poverty History) succeeding in presenting the demonstrations as pro-G8. A clear rejection of the political and democratic legitimacy of the G8 has been a hallmark of the spectrum which has gathered around the Rostock conferences.

#### A pre-emptive evaluation

At the time of writing, around a month before the summit, there are many reasons for optimism about the potential for a successful mobilisation, measured in terms of numbers of participants, cross-pollination between different milieu, the visibility of anti-neoliberal (even anti-capitalist) movements on the world stage during the summit, and the potential for involving people who have had no previous engagement with social movements.

Action, demonstrations and events around the Summit begin on 1 June, with a number of camps and convergence centres providing places to eat, sleep, plan and party ([www.camping-07.org](http://www.camping-07.org)). The biggest and broadest event planned is the International Demonstration through Rostock on Saturday 2 June. Under the banner of 'Another World Is Possible',

between 50 and 100,000 demonstrators are expected. An Alternative Summit, debating the official themes of this year's G8 (energy and climate change; Africa; AIDS and infectious disease; and intellectual property) and more will take place from 5-7 June. Other events include concerts in Rostock and beyond ([www.move-against-g8.org](http://www.move-against-g8.org)), a day of action on the issue of migration on June 4 (<http://g8-migration.net.tf>), and on war and militarisation the following day ([www.g8andwar.de](http://www.g8andwar.de)), as well as blockades of the G8 Summit itself on June 6 and 7.

For the Interventionist Left, the single actor most responsible for setting in motion the Rostock Action Conferences, success will be judged by the visibility of an anti-capitalist politics in the international demonstration and the breadth of participation in the mass blockades - particularly those being organised by the Block G8 campaign ([www.block-g8.org](http://www.block-g8.org)). To achieve these goals will mean undoing - to a very large extent - the process by which Geldof, Bono and others created an unprecedented legitimacy for the G8 at Gleneagles. It will require a sizeable number of radicals to give up on the idea that an ethics of autonomy means refusing productive engagement with non-autonomous others, and instead 'getting their hands dirty' by working to influence the direction of broad coalitions. It will mean more official 'civil society' organisations accepting the legitimacy of a far wider range of action forms as means of trying to create another world; and radicals accepting that they also need to make compromises - preparing actions which do not primarily cater to the needs of the supposedly most radical (read: militant), but which constitute the greatest possibility of effecting change. It will mean no longer placing primacy upon our difference over our commonalities. And it will mean not only recognising these commonalities in theory, but having them played out in practice on the streets of Rostock and the roads and fields around Heiligendamm. See you there!

**Ben Trott is a PhD candidate at the Freie Universität, Berlin, an active participant in the Für eine linke Strömung (FeLS) group, and co-editor of Shut Them Down!: The G8, Gleneagles 2005 and the Movement of Movements ([www.shutthemdown.org](http://www.shutthemdown.org))**



## Programme of events

### Day 1

#### Consolidation of past work

10 - 11.30am

Principles and Challenges.

New participants in the process to present their two key principles and challenges. Reflection on principles and challenges so far e.g. identifying underlying themes; homologies; gaps; contradictions/tensions

Ezequiel Adamovsky and Micha Brie to prepare something to open up and others encouraged to do the same.

11.45 - 1pm.

Dictionary. Marco Berlinguer to chair/introduce.

Concept case study of 'social movement'. Frieder Otto Wolfe, Moema Miranda open up discussion. (and background paper from Donatella Della porta)  
Lawrence Cox gives intro comments on the idea of dictionary.

1-2.30 Lunch

2.30 - 4.30.

Case studies. 1 hour presentation - 20 min each. 1 hour small group.

i. Social movement trade unionism: Ant Ince. Discussant: Gonzalo Berrón

ii. Open software movement: Stefano Fabri. Discussant: Felix Stalder.

iii. Feminism and political organisation case of the German Greens; Discussant: Judy Rebick.

4.45 - 7.30

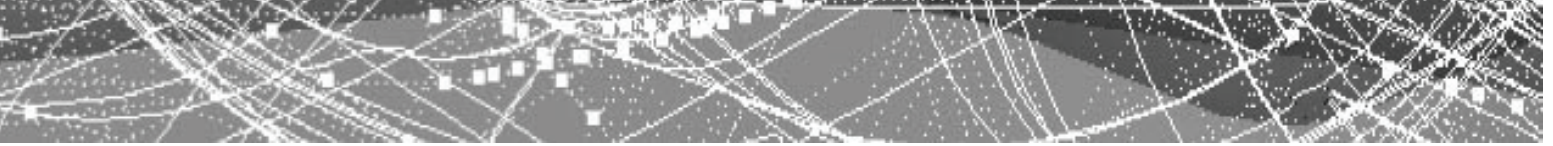
Begin the discussion of the four 'axes' /lines of inquiry and future work (the idea will be presentations, Sunday evening and Monday am, then working groups and return to a plenary discussion.

A. Ownership and the Commons. .

Intro. Quim Brugeé.

Discussion presentations: Arturo Di Corinto, Glenn Jenkins

Synthesiser. Oscar Reyes.



## Day 2

The other three axes: lines of future work..

9.15 - 10.45am

B. Labour and the movements.

Intro: Marco Berlinguer

Carlo Formenti

Kenny Bell

Synthesiser: Rodrigo Nunes

11. - 12.30pm

C. The new web communities and political culture:

Intro: Mayo Fuster.

Presentations: Felix Stalder

Jamie King

Synthesiser: Anastasia Kavada

12.30 -1.45pm Lunch

1.45 - 3.15

D. Rethinking Representation.

Intro: Hilary Wainwright

Presentations: Christophe Spehr.

Jeff Juris.

Synthesis: Ángel Calle

3.15 -6.15 Working groups

6.30 - 7.30 Plenary discussion

## Day 3

9.15 - 12.30pm

Brainstorm style discussion on 'Emerging subjects of transformation - their character and conditions of emergence.' (And indeed whether we can honestly argue such a process exists).

Everybody - but opening thoughts from Glenn Jenkins and Moema Miranda.

12.30 - 1.45pm lunch

1.45 - 5.30

A. Where next?

Website.

A resource book/collaborative product.