Chapter Ten

Contesting global capital, new media, solidarity, and the role of a social imaginary

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Introduction

> *Maybe it is not really possible, at least not in the foreseeable future (…) to undermine the global capitalist system because we cannot imagine any alternative to it.* (Žižek, 1999: 352)

This chapter suggests that the social and political dynamics of protest are changing due to the ways in which economic globalization and technological revolution has reconfigured politics, social institutions and identity formation within societies. The relationship between new media technologies and social/political mobilization is a specifically modern phenomenon, contemporaneous with and responding to dominant capitalist communications. Today the trend towards concentration marches forth, policies of privatization and deregulation of the media reveal a world-wide trend towards the commodification of information, culture and, hence, of democracy. We are witnessing the privatization of access to information and culture with the shrinking of public space in mainstream communications. Alongside this decline in public space is a digital explosion. This chapter begins from the standpoint that we cannot ignore that we still live in deeply unequal capitalist societies, driven by profit and competition operating on a global scale. It is also premised on the belief that we live in a media dominated world with many different ideas and identities in circulation at any one time. Future studies in communication and mediation need to more adeptly understand the former to appreciate the latter – the relationship between individual autonomy, freedom, and rational action on the one hand and the social construction of identity and behavior on the other. This is often expressed in the catch-all categories of structure and agency, the public and the private, and production and consumption. In other words, in the current media landscape within an ever-globalizing economy, the political, cultural, and economic are interconnected and interdependent. As more and more aspects of social life become subject to commercial pressures or become commercial in and of themselves how can we ever conceive of transcending capitalism and progressing a democratic political project?

One way of approaching this task is to consider the role of new media in mobilizing oppositional politics. In the last 5–10 years, protest upsurges have

been facilitated by new communication technologies. In a global economy, new social movements are now indelibly connected to new media that affords them the possibility of transnational activism. This is, in part, a factor of the aesthetics and form of new media suggestive of the end of linearity, dissolution of the sequel narrative, a communicative process that is additive, interactive, and always unfinished – a form that suits the dynamic, fluid nature of social movement politics. But it is also in large part both dependent on and a response to the structuring forces of global capitalism. This ever-densening web of micro-activisms that enables transnational alliances between disparate groups and causes to condense against the macro logic of global capital is also localized, fragmented, disaggregated, and divided.

In this chapter, it is argued that new media have the potential to mediate solidarity, but that in order for a political project to emerge from a collective identity, a collaborative and collective understanding of an end point is necessary – the hope of a better tomorrow, however thinly expressed. In promoting an analytical framework that can address both political economic, technological, social, and cultural factors the chapter proposes that one of the key questions for future studies in communication and mediation is to ask ourselves 'What is the role of new media in establishing a social imaginary?'

Contesting global capital: the role of the Internet

Klein (2000) argues that the Internet facilitates international communication between non-governmental organizations (NGOs) thus allowing protesters to respond on an international level to local events while requiring minimal resources and bureaucracy. According to Klein, the Internet is more than an organizing tool. It is also an organizing model for a new form of political protest that is international, decentralized, with diverse interests but common targets. Salter (2003) claims that the Internet is a novel technological asset for democratic communications because of its decentred, textual communications system with content most often provided by users. On this basis it accords with the requisite features of new social movements: non-hierarchical, open protocols, open communication, and self-generating information and identities. Social movements share common characteristics with web-based communication – they lack membership forms, statutes, and other formal means of organizing; they may have phases of visibility and phases of relative invisibility; social movements may have significant overlaps with other movements and are liable to rapid change in form, approach and mission.

As pointed out by van der Donk, *et al*. (2004: 18) the Internet is used by two kinds of movement structures: (1) informal networks with a large geographical reach and (2) big, powerful and more centralized social movement organizations. Furthermore, the ability of new communication technologies to operate globally and so respond to global economic agendas is the key to their contemporary capacity to mobilize against the vagaries of global capital. The Internet plays a

crucial role in transnational protest allowing for immediate communication across the globe. This synergy between social movements and the Internet emphasizes the interrelationship between the nature of civil society (in terms of its form and organization) and attempts to explain the social foundations of democracy (or its political and ethical premise). In other words, the link between the specific organization of social and cultural bases (such as the Internet) within civil society for the development of an effective rational–critical discourse or fully functioning public sphere (Habermas, 1989). Calhoun (1993) reminds us that what is at issue is the relationship between patterns of social organization and a certain kind of discourse and political participation, a public sphere in which rational–critical arguments are decisive, rather than the status of actors. It is not helpful to collapse discourse or politics into social organization as if neither culture nor the wills of actors mattered. Neither is it helpful to forget how much democratic life depends on specific kinds of social organization, even though they do not necessarily and deterministically produce it (Downey and Fenton, 2003). Public communications are part of the process of realizing the public sphere, allowing us to analyze how shared democratic values and identification as democratic citizens are achieved and maintained; how political/civic cultures are generated – essentially, to begin to imagine how civil society can potentially organize democratically for politically progressive ends. The democratic potential of the Internet is not dependent on its intrinsic features. It is realized only through the agents who engage in reflexive and democratic activity. It is an enabling device that is as susceptible to the structuring forces of power as any other technology.

> *It is false to say that individuals possess immediate control; they have control only through assenting to an asymmetrical relationship to various agents who structure the choices in the communicative environment of cyberspace* (Bohman, 2004: 142).

The use of the Internet by New Social Movements (NSMs) may be, and is, frequently problematic at the democratic level. Many sites are generated and maintained by individuals or small groups of people with little or no accountability or representativeness.

Taking this integrated theoretical stance extends to a consideration of the relationship between the virtual and the material. The use of the Internet can affect the internal organization of social movement organizations through the manner in which they operate online and the extent to which they forge alliances and coalitions across different movements. Similarly, the protest activity and alliances of social movements on the ground affects the internal organization of the Internet. It is possible, therefore, to argue that the Internet represents a new technology that has the potential to communicate and mobilize political agency and as a consequence reinvent activism.

Being true to the theoretical premise established at the beginning of the chapter means that the earlier optimistic interpretation has to be critically examined in relation to the dominant social context of global neo-liberalism. Can we confidently say that the margin of unpredictability, disjunction, and improvization has increased with the 1980s turn to the post-Fordist economy of cultural diversification resulting in new means of mobilization? Or, is the growing multiplicity of protest rendered irrelevant by the concomitant move towards ever-greater privatization? The tension between the relations of structure and agency are framed within overarching concerns of the nature and role of opposition within contemporary bureaucratic capitalist states that can be usefully examined by recourse to Foucault's concept of the biopolitical:

> *In the postmodernization of the global economy, the creation of wealth tends ever more toward what we call biopolitical production, the production of social life itself, in which the economic, the political, and the cultural increasingly overlap and invest in one another* (Hardt and Negri, 2000: xiii).

Hardt and Negri's re-interpretation of Foucault can be further extended. The economic, political, and cultural feed off each other to the extent that they become entangled in symbiotic relationships. These relationships are neither equally nor mutually beneficial but they are interdependent (as established right at the beginning of this chapter in the discussion of the relationship between mass media and alternative media). Markets and politics become intertwined so that what seems to be political may be no more than market-based activism. Proponents of biopolitics state that new forms of social militancy are allowed to arise within capitalism with no possibility of transcending it. Following on from this, those groups within civil society who strive to contest contemporary capitalism do so from within the very system of governmentality they seek to oppose. This outward sign of protest can project an illusion of civility and democratic practice that ultimately has a civilizing influence on market and state rather than create a genuinely free space where political agency might be articulated and lead to a political project. Biopolitics frames agency within a symbolic system in which both the power to create symbols and access to the channels of their circulation is hierarchically structured and intimately integrated into a system of capitalist economic production and exchange. The symbolic tools we have at our disposal are determined by the system we may be struggling against. The result is that the political mobilization of individuals and organizations in civil society act to normalize and stabilize conditions that threaten the well-being of populations 'but not to alter the structural conditions responsible for those threats and disturbances' (Lipschutz, 2005: 28).

For example, campaigns such as 'No Sweat' that are directed at the likes of the Nike corporation and aim to improve health and safety conditions and

provide minimum wages to workers in Nike's plants scattered around the world have gained much attention and resulted in Nike joining the Fair Labor Association, co-establishing the Workers and Communities Association, and improving the terms and conditions of their workers. But, as Lipschutz (2005) notes, we would be hard pressed to claim that these campaigns have changed corporations of capitalism in discursive terms. Nike workers and consumers continue to be part of a regime of consumption that is neo-liberal contemporary globalization. The structures of capitalism remain firmly intact, and one could even argue they are substantially strengthened.

Similarly, for Castells (1996), the globalization of the capitalist system does not open up the possibility of a labor-led emancipatory project. In his view, the network society results in labor becoming localized, disaggregated, fragmented, diversified, and divided in its collective identity:

While capitalist relations of production still persist, capital and labor increasingly tend to exist in different spaces and times; the space of flows and the space of places, instant time of computerized networks versus clock time of everyday life. Thus, they live by each other but do not relate to each other as the life of global capital depends less and less on specific labor and more and more on accumulated generic labor, operated by a small brains trust inhabiting the virtual palaces of global networks (Castells, 1996: 475).

Concluding that:

Under the conditions of the network society capital is globally coordinated, labor is individualized. The struggle between diverse capitalists and miscellaneous working classes is subsumed into the more fundamental opposition between the bare logic of capital flows and the cultural values of human experience (Castells, 1996: 476).

Approached from this perspective, the fragmented nature of new media does limit the capacity of social movements creating coherent strategies. Problems of quantity and chaos of information challenges the way analysis and action are integrated in decision making processes as well as existing configurations of power and collective identity in social movement organizations. Habermas (1992) also notes that the mechanism for counter publicity may 'not' work because of a fragmentation within civil society. He too registers his ambivalence towards new ICTs as a potential source of equal and inclusive communication:

Whereas the growth of systems and networks multiplies possible contacts and exchanges of information, it does not lead per se to the expansion of an intersubjectively shared world and to the discursive interweaving of

conceptions of relevance, themes, and contradictions from which political public spheres arise. The consciousness of planning, communicating and acting subjects seems to have simultaneously expanded and fragmented. The publics produced by the Internet remain closed off from one another like global villages (Habermas, 1992: 120–1).

But the 'fundamental opposition' that Castells refers to earlier stems from the ever more efficient circulation of commodities. Information has also been argued to open up greater potential for strategies of resistance that reside in the conflicts over communication:

With the dominance of communication there is a politics of struggle around not accumulation but <u>circulation</u>. Manufacturing capitalism privileges production and accumulation, the network society privileges communication and circulation (Lash, 2002: 112).

Cleaver (1999) also points out that one of the main means by which anti-capital movements communicate is through the circulation of struggle. This circulation benefits from fragmentation that can be both inclusive and diverse but produces nonetheless a high degree of identification among citizens of the web. The capacity to maximize connectivity and interaction is 'the' political act. Local organizations confined to localized actions realize similar types of activity is taking place in locality after locality and by their participation they can contribute to reshaping these global networks for communication into global zones for interactivity (Sassen, 2005).

These large, decentralized, and leaderless networks facilitated by new communication technologies operate a form of politics that is based on the participation of all citizens rather than the hierarchical model of traditional politics. 'Moreover, the essence of politics is considered the elaboration of 'demands and responses' – constructing identities rather than 'occupying power' (Della Porta, 2005: 201). Participation then can be both online and offline. But the online participation is often about moving people to action offline. It is about building relationships and forging community rather than simply providing information (Surman and Reilly, 2003). In her extensive interviews with and questionnaires to activists Della Porta (2005) also discovers a link between mistrust for parties and representative institutions with very high trust and participation in social movements. The distinction between institutional politics and social movements rests on the former acting as bureaucracies founded on delegation and the latter being founded on participation and direct engagement.

Sassen (2005) notes that for many, cyber space is a more concrete space for social struggles than that of the national political system, which is difficult to access and from which people feel alienated. Cyberspace is inclusive,

accommodating a broad range of social struggles thereby facilitating the emergence of new types of political subjects more at home outside formal political systems.

If the global, polycentric, interactive, additive space both feeds from and contributes to the actual shape of political mobilization and organization, it follows that a theoretical stance refusing to separate the virtual from the actual, but recognizing the matter of the virtual and the circulation of the actual may be more productive than approaches that seek to treat them as distinct entities.

If we accept the possibility for resistive, differentiated, individual political identities that are able to resist mass mediated representations of society and create their own political interventions via the Internet, we can then attend to the prospects for emergent political projects. The problem rests in the inevitable multiplicity of competing counter publics, each marked by specific terms of exclusion (class, race, gender, etc.) yet each understanding itself as a nucleus for an alternative organization of society. The 'proliferation of subaltern counter-publics' (Fraser, 1992: 69–70) does not necessarily lead to a multiplication of forces. Unless powerful efforts at alliances are made, the oppositional energy of individual groups and subcultures can sometimes be neutralized in the marketplace of multicultural pluralism or polarized in a reductive competition of victimizations.

The notion of fragmentation in modern life and, in particular of political culture, is fuelled by the rise of identity politics that focuses on consumption not production. Issues that relate to lifestyles are fore-grounded over and above the domain of work. Party allegiances and class alliances are joined by more fluid and informal networks of action. Postmodern theorists celebrate fragmentation because it allows the recognition of diversity in political desires, acknowledges difference between individuals, and debunks the myth of homogenous political units leading ultimately to liberation. Social movements are agglomerations of organizations, events, actions, publications, struggles and individuals. They are never unified or straight forwardly coherent. They are marked by contradiction and complexity and survive on breadth, complexity, and uncertainty. Apart from traditional threats of state repression, social movements, such as the anti-globalization movement, which embraces everything that is not of the neo-liberal global economic order, may run the risk of implosion through uncertainty or internal friction. While uncertainty and friction can create useful political dynamism, feminist theorists have noted (Braidotti, 1991; Spivak, 1992; Fenton 2000) that for political efficacy there must be more than the apparent freedom that comes with embracing difference and diversity, more than just an increase of instances of mediated protest or opposition. If we accept the description of society as fragmented, then solidarity is crucial in order to create a viable political community. Solidarity is the socio-political glue that prevents dissolution through difference (Dean, 1996, 1997).

Contesting global capital: the role of solidarity

So how will a politics of solidarity in difference be realized? Social solidarity can be described as a morality of cooperation, the ability of individuals to identify with each other in a spirit of mutuality and reciprocity without individual advantage or compulsion, leading to a network of individuals or secondary institutions that are bound to a political project involving the creation of social and political bonds. There must be a commitment to the value of difference that goes beyond a simple respect and involves an inclusive politics of voice and representation. It also requires a non-essentialist conceptualization of the political subject as made up of manifold, fluid identities that mirror the multiple differentiations of groups. Chosen identities at any one time can not be taken as given or static – political identities emerge and are expressed through an ongoing social process of individual and collective identity formation. In this manner, social solidarity can be augmented. Diani (2005) insists that it is the networking of collective action that constitutes a social movement. Solidarity also reaffirms the need for political intervention that may be translated and relayed in the symbolic immaterial world of cyberspace but necessarily originates from and solidifies in the material world of the real. The Internet can proffer a cultural politics that resists, transforms, or presents alternatives to the dominant virtual and real worlds.

> *This cybercultural politics can be most effective if it fulfils two conditions: awareness of the dominant worlds that are being created by the same technologies on which the progressive networks rely (including an awareness of how power works in the world of transnational networks and flows); and an ongoing tacking back and forth between cyberpolitics (political activism of the Internet) and what I call place politics, or political activism in the physical locations at which the networker sits and lives* (Escobar, 1999: 32).

Tarrow and Della Porta (2005: 237) refer to the interconnections between online and offline participation as 'rooted cosmopolitans' (people and groups rooted in specific national contexts but involved in transnational networks of contacts and conflicts); 'multiple belongings' (activists with overlapping memberships linked with polycentric networks); and 'flexible identities' (characterized by inclusiveness and a positive emphasis on diversity and cross-fertilization). Participants in these movements are drawn together by common elements in their value systems and political understandings and, hence, by a shared belief in narratives that problematize particular social phenomena (Keck and Sikkink, 1998; Della Porta and Diani, 1999).

In her interviews with activists, Della Porta (2005) notes that common solidarity develops in concrete actions that are immediately gratifying. It is the act of participating itself that creates the collective identification rather than sacrifice

for the sake of a distant future as in old style political activism. Mutual trust and shared understandings developed in offline protests and demonstrations have been consistently identified as important facilitators of collective action. Virtual computer-mediated ties will not replace traditional forms of protest, such as rallies and demonstrations, but may complement them in terms of building collective identity and reinforcing solidarity. Social movements that use the Internet must find the balance between the virtual connection and exchange and the actualization or the enacting of that politics. The effectiveness of the Internet as virtual activism lies in its ability to connect with the real world (Terranova, 2001).

Mansbridge (2001: 240–1) argues that oppositional consciousness requires identifying with an unjustly subordinated group, recognizing a group identity of interest in doing so, understanding the injustice as systemic, and accepting the need for and efficacy of collective action. She also states that the formation of an oppositional culture is both an additive and an interactive process (2001: 249), where a variety of motivations are at play within the group. Seen in this way solidarity is no longer about struggles relating to each other like links in a chain but communicating like a virus or a global web (Hardt and Negri, 2000; Klein, 2000) facilitated by new communication and information technology – a techno politics of the information age (Jordan and Taylor, 2004). Tomlinson (1999: 2) refers to this as 'complex connectivity': 'By this I mean that globalization refers to the rapidly developing and ever-densening network of interconnections and interdependences that characterize modern social life'. Solidarity does not need to be linear; it does not need to follow a prescribed narrative:

> *These initiatives proceed without central focus. They constitute a diffuse coalescence of microactivisms contesting the macrologic of capitalist globalization…. They exist as a sort of fine mist of international activism, composed of innumerable droplets if contact and communication, condensing in greater or lesser densities and accumulations, dispersing again, swirling into unexpected formations and filaments, blowing over and around the barriers dividing global workers* (Dyer-Witheford, 1999: 157).

Hardt and Negri (2000: 65) ask 'how can the endeavor to bridge the distance between the formation of the multitude as subject and the constitution of a democratic political apparatus find its prince?' In accord with Lash (2002), they believe that the answer lies in working with the flattened, fragmentary, immanent world of the information order and its relationship to the external, material world:

> *Any postmodern liberation must be achieved within this world, on the plane of immanence, with no possibility of any even utopian outside. The form in which the political should be expressed as subjectivity today is not clear at all* (Hardt and Negri, 2000: 65).

One possible response is that solidarity expressed through new communication technologies can embrace a thousand fragmented subjectivities:

Contemporary movements are prophets of the present. What they possess is not the force of the apparatus but the power of the word…. They force the power out into the open and give it a shape and a face. They speak a language that seems to be entirely their own, but they say something that transcends their particularity and speaks to us all (Melucci, 1996: 1).

Emphasis on the material, visible conflict as the defining attribute of a collective identity reduces collective politics to the moment when struggle is mediated. Refusing to see the material as the crux of identity allows us to escape the traditional logic of politics, acknowledges the non-spectacular and infers a history of identity development. It is useful here to consider the work of Lovink (2002) who refuses to comply with ready-made dichotomies between the real and the virtual. The virtual is not unreal neither does it function to inculcate a de-realization. It does not somehow exist 'out there' untouched by reality rather it is continuous with reality; it is part of our reality. The two spheres of activity shape each other in terms of organizational structures, network stability, and capacity (Bennett, 2004a).

The dialogic and globalizing characteristics of new communication technologies do not eradicate difference but can be said to promote political consciousness, reflexivity, and agency. Breslow (1997) argues that the Internet promotes a sense of sociality, but its anonymity and lack of spatiality and density may be counterproductive to solidarity. Similarly, van der Donk *et al.* (2004) note that the very ease of mobilization may devalue it as a political resource that attracts public attention and respect and be devalued by the activists because it takes the fun and adventure out of some forms of collective protest. The crucial point is that the performative capacity of solidarity, the ability to give power to the word comes from the felt existence of struggles that are situated in the real material world of poverty, inequality, and other social injustices. Furthermore, only through the embodiment of solidarity offline will social movements gain public legitimacy and political force. The immaterial mediated world that embraces fragmented political subjectivities connects with the material world at the site of conflict, bringing together disparate experiences of political reality and finding common ground, though that ground may be uneven, contested, and complex.

Chesters and Welsh (2004: 317) call this an 'ecology of action' defined as:

The systems of relations between differing groups and individuals who are engaged in producing collective action within a context determined by fixed temporal, spatial and material constraints which are themselves a product of contingent social, political and cultural forces.

This is an important reminder of the social constraints all participants are subject to. Issues of cultural and economic capital are ever prevalent. The ability to define and shape the nature of any movement often falls to those with the relevant social and educational resources. Many of the high-profile protests take place at distant locations – only those protestors with funds for travel can get to them. And as these protests are often organized on the Internet, the economic and cultural resources involved in the use of this technology also exclude many potential participants, probably those suffering the most impact of the very thing being protested against (Crossley, 2002).

As noted earlier, the Internet is only as democratic as the agents who use it. New media can become the location for counter reflexive political deliberation and activity – but that activity must be organized and planned to be deliberative and democratic. It remains to be seen whether the likes of the Internet can avoid the way in which state sovereignty organizes public space and time. Its aterritorial character helps this process but the way in which the Internet reproduces inequalities to access to rule making institutions is a major hindrance.

Kavada (2005) notes that the Internet has not led to a greater integration within civil society due to the restrictive policies on external links on web pages adopted by civil society organizations and a lack of trust and solidarity between them. This further highlights the fact that new media technology alone does not lead to a brand new age of political collective radicalism. New forms of mediation have revealed new forms of protest but mediated solidarity is far more than signing an online petition or clicking on protest websites while alone in your own home – this is, however, not techno-determinism. Indeed online activism can be seen as lazy politics – it makes people feel good but does very little. It allows like-minded individuals and organizations to talk to each other unfettered by too many social norms and actually do nothing. It can be criticized for further distancing people from each other and deepening already abstract social relations as well as increasing competition between organizations.

Solidarity is about engaging beyond the click of a mouse and much more than mediation. Solidarity insists on foregrounding the link to the enduring primacy of capitalist relations of production and capitalist imperatives that dominate not only production but also consumption and other domains of society and culture. Workers remain exploited by and struggle against capitalists and capital remains as the hegemonic force. Solidarity also emphasizes that the global reorganization of capital is not a monolithic force of impenetrable power and domination. The powers of mediation are now where the struggles of cultural activism find their home. The use of new communications technology to spread radical social critique and alternative culture is the realm of new social movements marked by fragmentation – a postmodern notion that embraces the possibility of social agency.

Social agency alone, however, does not make a political project. Gerlach (2001) notes that in contemporary social movements, such as the anti-globalization

movement, the primary basis of their integration and growth has shifted from ideology to more personal and fluid forms of association well suited to computer-mediated networks. It can be argued (Drache, 2005) that part of the success of Internet dissent is that you can enter and exit easily. Collective identity has always been a central concern of social movement theorists. Melucci (1996) sees collective identity as a continuous, dynamic, and self-reflexive process defined by its multiplicity of interactions, negotiations, and conflicts among fellow participants. The Internet, relying as it does on a network of networks, can assist collective identity and reinforce solidarity. In other words, it partakes in the process of meaning construction. The nature and scope of the technology affects not only the way the movement communicates its aims and objectives but also its geographical scale, organizing structure, and collective identity. The decentralized, non-hierarchical modes of organizing allow for diverse political agendas and identities to exist without conflict.

Conclusions: contesting global solidarity and the role of a social imaginary

Can loose, multi-issue networks progress from a resistance identity to a political project that is sustainable and likely to produce social change? The danger in constructing global solidarity online, as Tarrow (1998) points out, is that the speed at which social movement actors can respond and the short term and rapidly shifting issues that are their focus rather than fully fledged ideologies do not lend themselves to long standing commitments or deeply held loyalties, but a following that is also fleeting and momentary. This sort of issue drift whereby individuals or groups can shift focus from one issue to another or one website to another raises the question of whether global civil society has a memory that can retain a collective political project. The ultimate problem that arises is how to ensure that non-hierarchical, open, and participatory movements are also effective in influencing public policies. Habermas (2001: 126) has argued that solidarity at this level cannot simply be based on shared moral conceptions of human rights but only on a shared political culture. That political culture is constituted not only of social agents who can enable the mediation of dialogue across borders and publics but also institutions that can translate those claims into a reality.

> *The issue-and-identity bridging facility of social technologies may explain the organisational capacity of what appears to be a movement with weak collective identity and relatively weak core political agenda. At the same time these defining features of the movement raise questions about other aspects of movement political capacity, from communicating clear messages to larger publics, to developing effective relationships with political targets* (Bennett, 2005: 225).

Rosenkrands (2004: 75) notes that although several websites refer to themselves as part of an anti-corporate movement, they do not push alternative epistemologies or political programmes reflecting a 'logic of protest more than a logic of project' (see also van Aelst and Walgrave, 2004). Wright (2004: 91) concurs with this assessment adding that keeping 'action' and 'theory' as separate, while always privileging the first over the second, is part of the current anti-capitalist movements' mindset. This prompts the question that given the fact that networked communication increasingly enables the success of campaigns, can networks without a political project sustain any degree of political coherence? Can, in other words, a networked, polycentric global civil society movement deliver the policies, strategies, ideologies, and plans for socially progressive change? It can be argued that the lack of ideological rigor allows the growth of much broader networks creating a vast web of oppositional politics. It can also be argued to lead to problems of control, decision-making, accountability, and collective identity. Talking about the World Social Forum, Hardt (2002: 113–14) stated:

> *What kinds of transformations are necessary for the Euro-American globalization movements and the Latin American movements, not to become the same or even unite, but to link together in an expanding common network? The Forum provided an opportunity to recognize such questions and differences for those willing to see them, but it did not provide the conditions for addressing them. In fact the very same dispersive, overflowing quality of the Forum that created the euphoria of commonality also effectively displaced the terrain on which such differences and conflicts could be confronted.*

Mouffe (2005: 107–15) criticizes Hardt and Negri's (2004) faith in the multitude as being unable to transfer antagonistic struggle into agonistic politics without which politics cannot function. Waterman and Wills (2001) ask whether – being post-Seattle – it is now time to give the negative name of anti-capitalism a positive face or whether socialism will remain a utopia that dare not speak its name. Has the time come to publicly declare the reinvention of a socialist internationalism? Or does this fix us back in to hierarchical modes of political organizations based on national sovereignty and, therefore, existing legal and social systems rather than borderless networks? The desperate desire to avoid a politics based on binary oppositions and exclusionary meta-narratives may end up with biting our individual noses off to spite our collective face. Building collective solidarity is partly to do with organizational capacity but just as vitally it is about a battle of ideas. A collective movement needs credible mobilizing rhetorics, visions of a better future; it needs utopias – the role of a social imaginary. To sustain a collective oppositional identity requires a vision of a post-capitalist society that can be named or at least recognized.

Bauman (2003: 22) argues that 'the utopian model of a "better future" is out of the question' because of (1) its reliance on fixity both in terms of geographical context and the immobility of the meta-narrative; (2) the tendency to locate the secret of happy life in social reform that is now discredited; and (3) the detachment of trust from the future and faith in progress from the flow of time. This has resulted in a shift from a focus on a better tomorrow to the more tangible, securely within reach, 'today':

> *Happiness and more happiness are desired now as they used to be in bygone times of utopia-writing; but happiness means now a different today rather than a more felicitous tomorrow as it did in the past* (Bauman, 2003: 22).

We are left with an unending sequence of new beginnings. Although this perspective resonates clearly with much of what has been described earlier, others have been rather more optimistic.

Levitas (2000) talks of the necessity of combining a dialogical utopianism with visions of a post-capitalist society. She also warns that an undifferentiated notion of dialogical transformation that ignores the diversity and conflicting interests within contemporary society will take us nowhere. The contestation of global capital needs to move beyond the identification and publicity of injustices to political interventions that may lead to transformation. The Internet with its networked, additive, interactive, and polycentric form can accommodate radically different types of political praxis from different places at different times. Sometimes this may fall into the realms of a traditional politics based on national sovereignty at others it may call for an internationalist approach. Both may be appropriate to the particular circumstances of capital, the potential for mobilization, and the specific processes of transformation available. For a collective consciousness to be maintained and developed in this complex, confusing, and contradictory tangle of global capitalism, nation, states, and everyday life a social imaginary is required that will be flexible, inclusive, and visionary – that will offer us all the hope of a better tomorrow.

References for Chapter Ten

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