The Network Society

A Cross-cultural Perspective

Edited by

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15. Networked social movements: global movements for global justice

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Facilitated by the greater speed, adaptability, and flexibility afforded by new information technologies, decentralized network forms are out-competing more traditional vertical hierarchies. Nowhere has this trend been more apparent than within the realm of collective action, where transnational social movements reflect the broad decentered networking logic of informationalism, even as they attack the roots of informational capitalism. Since bursting onto the scene in Seattle in 1999, and through subsequent direct action protests against multilateral institutions and alternative forums around the world in places such as Prague, Quebec, Genoa, Barcelona, and Porto Alegre, anti-corporate globalization movements have challenged global inequalities, while making new struggles visible. The more aptly named "movements for global justice" – activists are actually building alternative globalizations from below – involve a politics of articulation, uniting a broad network of networks in opposition to growing corporate influence over our lives, communities, and resources. Movements for global justice can thus be viewed as signs indicating a democratic deficit within emerging regimes of transnational governance, as well as social laboratories for the production of alternative codes, values, and practices.

Inspired by the *Zapatistas* and previous struggles against free trade, structural adjustment, and environmental destruction, global justice activists have made innovative use of global computer networks, informational politics, and network-based organizational forms. Theorists have pointed to the rise of global "Netwars" (Arquilla and Ronfeldt, 2001) or the emergence of an "electronic fabric of struggle" (Cleaver, 1995), but such broad descriptions tell us very little about concrete networking practices or how such practices are generated. Manuel Castells (1997: 362) has identified a "networking, decentered form of organization and intervention, characteristic of the new social movements, mirroring, and counteracting, the networking logic of domination in the information society." However, scholars have yet to explore the specific mechanisms through which this decentered networking logic is actually produced, reproduced, and transformed by concrete activist practice within particular social, cultural, and political contexts.[1]

Following Fredric Jameson (1991), who refers to postmodernism as the cultural logic of late capitalism, and Aihwa Ong (1999), who explores a specific type of late capitalist cultural logic, transnationality, I introduce the term "cultural logic of networking" as a way to conceive the broad guiding principles, shaped by the logic of informational capitalism, which are internalized by activists and generate concrete networking practices.[2] This logic specifically involves an embedded and embodied set of social and cultural dispositions that orient actors toward: (1) building horizontal ties and connections among diverse, autonomous elements; (2) the free and open circulation of information; (3) collaboration through decentralized coordination and directly democratic decision-making; and (4) self-directed or self-managed networking (Castells, 2001: 55). The cultural logic of networking reflects the values and practices associated with "open source" software development, incorporated in operating systems such as LINUX, or the World Wide Web. It thus forms part of a broader "hacker ethic" explored by Himanen (2001), which is rooted in the values of free information, decentralized coordination, collaborative learning, peer recognition, and social service. However, this networking logic represents an ideal type: it is unevenly distributed, and always exists in dynamic tension with other competing logics, often generating a complex "cultural politics of networking" within particular spheres.[3]

This chapter explores the dynamics of networking within movements for global justice along three main analytical planes – networks as computer-supported infrastructure (technology), networks as organizational structure (form), and networks as political model (norm) – and the complex interrelationships among them.[4] Global communication networks constitute the basic infrastructure for transnational social movements, providing arenas for the production, contestation, and dissemination of specific movement-related discourses and practices (Diani, 1995). These networks are, in turn, produced and transformed through the discourses and practices circulating through them (see Mische, 2003). Moreover, above and beyond the level of social morphology, networks are increasingly associated with values related to grassroots participatory democracy, self-management, horizontal connectedness, and decentralized coordination based on autonomy and diversity. The network has thus become a powerful cultural ideal, particularly among more radical global justice activists, a guiding logic that provides both a model of and a model for emerging forms of directly democratic politics on local, regional, and global scales.[5]

THE RISE OF GLOBAL JUSTICE MOVEMENTS

Nearly 50,000 people took to the streets to protest against corporate globalization at the World Trade Organization (WTO) meetings in Seattle on

November 30, 1999. A diverse coalition of environmental, labor, and economic justice activists succeeded in shutting down the meetings and preventing another round of trade liberalization talks. Media images of giant puppets, tear gas, and street clashes between protesters and the police were broadcast throughout the world, bringing both the WTO and a novel form of collective action into public view. Seattle became a symbol and a battle cry for a new generation of activists, as anti-corporate globalization networks were energized around the globe. Diverse networks and historical processes converged in Seattle, producing a new model of social protest, involving direct action, NGO-based forums, labor marches and rallies, independent media, and the articulation of economic justice, environmental, feminist, labor, and international solidarity activism.

Global justice activists alternatively trace their genealogy back to the *Zapatista* uprising, campaigns against the North American Free Trade (NAFTA) and Multilateral Investment (MAI) Agreements, student-based anti-corporate activism, and radical anarchist-inspired direct action, bringing together traditions from the United States, Great Britain, Italy, and Germany, among others. Indeed, Seattle was the third Global Day of Action loosely coordinated through the People's Global Action (PGA) network, which was founded in 1998 by grassroots movements that had taken part in the second *Zapatista*-inspired Intercontinental Encounter for Humanity and Against Neoliberalism organized in Spain the year before.[6] However, when these diverse historical trajectories came together, the result was an entirely new phenomenon bigger than the sum of its parts.

On the one hand, the "Battle of Seattle," packaged as a prime-time image event (Deluca, 1999), cascaded through global mediascapes (Appadurai, 1996), capturing the imagination of long-time activists and would-be post-modern revolutionaries alike. On the other hand, activists followed the events in Seattle and beyond through Internet-based distribution lists, websites, and the newly created Independent Media Center.[7] New networks quickly emerged, such as the Continental Direct Action Network (DAN) in North America,[8] or the Movement for Global Resistance (MRG) in Catalonia,[9] where my own field research was based, while already existing global networks such as PGA, the International Movement for Democratic Control of Financial Markets and their Institutions (ATTAC), or Via Campesina also played crucial roles during these early formative stages. Although more diffuse, decentralized, all-channel formations (Arquilla and Ronfeldt, 2001), such as DAN or MRG, proved difficult to sustain over time, they provided concrete mechanisms for generating physical and virtual communication and coordination in real time among diverse movements, groups, and collectives.

Global justice movements have largely grown and expanded through the organization of mass mobilizations, including highly confrontational direct

actions and counter-summit forums against multilateral institutions. The anti-WTO protests were a huge success, and everywhere activists wanted to create the "next Seattle." Mass mobilizations offer concrete goals around which to organize, while they also provide physical spaces where activists meet, virtual networks are embodied, meanings and representations are produced and contested, and where political values are ritually enacted. Public events can broadly be seen as "culturally constituted foci for information-processing" (Handelman, 1990: 16), while direct actions, in particular, generate intense emotional energy (Collins, 2001), stimulating continuing networking within public and submerged spheres. Activists organized a second mass protest against the World Bank and International Monetary Fund (IMF) in Washington, DC on April 16, 2000, and went truly global during the subsequent mobilization against the World Bank/IMF in Prague on September 26, 2000. Protesters came from around Europe, including large contingents from Spain, Italy, Germany, and Britain, and other parts of the world, including the United States, Latin America, and South Asia. Solidarity actions were held in cities throughout Europe, North and South America, and parts of Asia and Africa.[10]

The first World Social Forum (WSF), organized in Porto Alegre, Brazil, in late January 2001, coinciding with the World Economic Forum, represented an important turning point, as movements for global justice began to more clearly emphasize alternatives to corporate globalization.[11] The unexpected success of the first WSF was magnified during the subsequent two editions, which drew 70,000 and 100,000 people from around the world, respectively. Much more than a conference, the WSF constitutes a dynamic process, involving the convergence of multiple networks, movements, and organizations. Whereas PGA remains more radical, horizontal, and broadly libertarian,[12] the WSF is a wider political space, including both newer decentralized network-based movements and more hierarchical forces of the traditional left. Meanwhile, mass actions continued to intensify and expand during the spring and summer of 2001, including the anti-FTAA (Free Trade Area of the Americas) protests in Quebec and increasingly militant actions against the European Union in Gothenburg, the World Bank in Barcelona, and the G8 summit in Genoa, where widespread police violence culminated in the death of an Italian activist and a brutal night-time raid on the Independent Media Center. Mass marches and rallies the following day brought 350,000 protesters onto the streets of Genoa, and hundreds of thousands more around Italy.

US-based global justice movements, which were severely shaken by the September 11 attacks, re-emerged when activists shifted their attention from the war in Iraq back toward corporate globalization, leading to mass mobilizations against the WTO in Cancun and the FTAA summit in Miami during the fall of 2003. In the rest of the world, mobilizations continued to grow after

9/11, including a march of half a million people against the European Union in Barcelona in March 2002, and a mass protest involving more than 30,000 people against the FTAA in Quito, Ecuador during October 2002. Movements for global justice and those against the war in Iraq soon converged, leading to an anti-war protest of more than a million people during the European Social Forum in Florence in November. Meanwhile, the third edition of the World Social Forum in Porto Alegre drew 100,000 participants during January 2003. The following June, hundreds of thousands of global justice and peace activists descended on the border of France and Switzerland to protest against the heavily militarized G8 summit in Evian.

THE DYNAMICS OF OPPOSITION IN THE INFORMATION AGE

In *The Power of Identity*, Manuel Castells (1997) points to the emergence of powerful communal resistance identities that have arisen in opposition to economic globalization, capitalist restructuring, and the disruption caused by global financial and cultural flows, all important features of the information age. He also holds out another possibility: that from the midst of communal resistance, the seeds of a proactive project identity might emerge, capable of producing alternative cultural codes and sowing the seeds for a global civil society. In this sense, movements for global justice represent the (re)-emergence of an alternative political project based on the articulation of diverse local/global struggles against the disjuncture wrought by corporate globalization. Beyond creating alternative cultural codes, however, activists are generating new networking forms and practices that allow for the production of global webs of resistance, while providing diverse models for building an alternative, more directly democratic and globally networked society. Global justice movements can thus be characterized according to three specific features, which are more broadly associated with the nature of informational capitalism.

First, global justice movements are *global*. Coordinating and communicating through transnational networks, activists have engaged in institutional politics, such as global campaigns to defeat the MAI or abolish the external debt, and extra-institutional strategies, including coordinated Global Days of Action, international forums, and cross-border information sharing. Perhaps most importantly, activists *think* of themselves as belonging to global movements, discursively linking their local protests and activities to diverse struggles elsewhere. Global justice movements have thus emerged as transnational fields of meaning, where actions, images, discourses, and tactics flow from one continent to another via worldwide communication networks in real

time.[13] Some have objected that these movements are restricted to middle-class youths with Internet connections and resources to travel. This is largely true for direct action-oriented sectors, which tend to be youth-based and located in major or secondary "global cities" (Sassen, 1991), along important transnational trajectories of power. Even so, radical youth sectors should not be mistaken for the whole. Sizable contingents from Southern indigenous and peasant networks have taken part in anti-globalization actions, while movements such as the Brazilian MST or the Indian Karnataka State Farmers have played key roles within both PGA, whose global conferences have been held in India and Bolivia, and the WSF, which has taken place in Brazil and India. Moreover, Southern movements have organized against free trade, structural adjustment, environmental devastation, and corporate exploitation for decades.

Second, global justice movements are *informational*. The various protest tactics employed by activists, despite emerging in very different cultural contexts, all produce highly visible, theatrical images for mass-mediated consumption, including: giant puppets and street theater, mobile street carnivals (Reclaim the Streets), militant protesters advancing toward police lines with white outfits, protective shields, and padding (White Overalls), and black-clad, masked urban warriors smashing the symbols of corporate capitalism (Black Bloc).[14] The general blockade strategy, where diverse formations "swarm" their target (Arquilla and Ronfeldt, 2001), inscribing meanings into urban terrains of resistance (Routledge, 1994) through alternative forms of embodied political praxis, produces high-powered social drama indeed. Whether broadcast images depict roving samba dancers dressed in pink and silver, thousands of Michelin Men advancing toward a "red zone," or skirmishes between robocops and hooded stone-throwers, mass actions are powerful image events. Militant protest violence becomes yet another form of symbolic communication, while tactics circulate through global networks, where they are reproduced, transformed, and enacted in distant locales. Moreover, the horizontal, directly democratic process through which direct actions are organized, involving decentralized coordination among autonomous affinity groups, as well as the prevailing "diversity of tactics" ethic among many activists, embody the broader cultural logic of networking itself.

Finally, global justice movements are organized around flexible, decentralized *networks*, reflecting the dominant organizational logic of informational capitalism. In practice, they are composed of a multiplicity of diverse network forms, including more hierarchical "circle" patterns, intermediate "wheel" formations and the more decentralized "all-channel" configurations (Kapferer, 1973: 87).[15] Alternative network models imply divergent cultural logics, often leading to a complex cultural politics of networking when different logics

interact within broad convergence spaces. In addition, real-time global activist networking is made possible by the emergence of new information technologies, particularly the Internet, which allows for a "politics of scale" based on direct coordination and communication among small-scale, autonomous units without the need for hierarchical mediating structures such as traditional political parties or labor unions. Diverse, locally rooted struggles can now directly link up, articulating around common objectives without compromising their autonomy or specificity, which is precisely what global justice activists mean when they talk about "unity through diversity." Moreover, as we shall see, the network is also emerging as a widespread cultural ideal among certain sectors, implying new forms of decentralized, directly democratic politics, reflecting both the traditional values of anarchism and the logic of computer networking.

COMPUTER NETWORKS AND GLOBAL JUSTICE MOVEMENTS

By significantly enhancing the speed, flexibility, and global reach of information flows, allowing for communication at a distance in real time, computer networks provide the technological infrastructure for the operation of contemporary network-based organizational and social forms. With regard to social networks more generally, Barry Wellman has argued that "computer-supported social networks" (CSSNs) are profoundly transforming the nature of communities, sociality, and interpersonal relations (Wellman, 2001; cf. Castells, 2001: 129–33). Although the proliferation of increasingly individualized, loosely bounded, and fragmentary community networks predates cyberspace, computer-mediated communications have reinforced such trends, allowing communities to sustain interactions across vast distances.[16] Moreover, the Internet is being incorporated into more routine aspects of daily social life (Wellman and Haythornthwaite, 2002), as virtual and physical activities become increasingly integrated (Miller and Slater, 2000; Wellman, 2001). Despite the shrinking, yet still formidable, digital divide, the Internet facilitates global connectedness, even as it strengthens local ties within neighborhoods and households, leading to increasing "glocalization" (Wellman, 2001: 236; cf. Robertson, 1995).

Similar trends can be detected at the level of political activity, where Internet use, including electronic distribution lists and interactive web pages, has broadly facilitated new patterns of social engagement. Global justice movements thus belong to a particular class of CSSN: *computer-supported social movements*. Using the Internet as technological infrastructure, such movements are increasingly "glocal," operating at both local and global levels, while seamlessly integrating both online and off-line political activity. The

Zapatistas were important forerunners in this regard: although locally rooted among Mayan Indian communities in Chiapas, the *Zapatistas* used the Internet to communicate with a global network of solidarity collectives (Cleaver, 1995; Castells, 1997: 72–83; Ronfeldt et al., 1998; Routledge, 1998).

Building on the pioneering use of the Internet by the *Zapatistas* and early free-trade campaigns, such as the successful battle against the MAI, global justice activists have employed computer networks to organize direct actions, share information and resources, and coordinate campaigns through communication at a distance in real time. For example, the flurry of electronic activity that accompanied the organization of the Seattle protests quickly moved to a new nationwide list-serve after the WTO action to coordinate the mobilization against the World Bank/IMF in Washington, DC in April 2000, while new distribution lists were created shortly thereafter to plan for the summer 2000 mobilizations against the Republican and Democratic National Conventions in Philadelphia and Los Angeles, respectively. Meanwhile, European-based activists set up a series of English-language list-serves in early May 2000 to prepare for the September 26 actions against the World Bank/IMF in Prague. The first Spanish-language anti-globalization list-serve was also established around the same time to coordinate local solidarity actions throughout Latin America, mainly involving anarchists and radicals from Mexico, Brazil, and Argentina. Later that month, activists in Barcelona established the first distribution list in the Spanish state to organize for Prague. Since then, global justice list-serves have sprung up in nearly every country around the world, particularly where local actions and campaigns have been organized. Internet use has complemented and facilitated face-to-face coordination and interaction, rather than replacing them. Activists use list-serves to stay informed about activities and to perform concrete logistical tasks, while more complex planning, political discussions, and relationship building occur during physical settings, where virtual networks become embodied.

Although global justice activists have primarily used e-mail lists to facilitate planning and coordination, interactive web pages are becoming more widespread. Particular activist networks and processes – such as PGA, WSF, or ATTAC – have their own home pages, while temporary web pages are created during mobilizations to provide information, resources, and contact lists, to post documents and calls to action, and, increasingly, to house real-time discussion forums and chat rooms.[17] Activist networking projects, such as the "Infospace" in Barcelona, have also begun to collectively produce and edit documents online using new "wiki" open-editing technology, reflecting a more general growth in computer-based networked collaboration.[18] Similarly, independent media centers, which have been established in hundreds of cities around the world, provide online forums for activists to post their own news stories, constituting a self-managed communications network that bypasses

the corporate media.[19] Moreover, activists have created temporary convergence centers, media spaces, and communication hubs during mobilizations and forums, providing physical spaces for the practice of "informational utopics," involving the production of alternative media, experimentation with computer and video technologies, and the sharing of ideas and resources.[20] Activists are thus using new technologies to physically manifest their political ideals, both within temporary and more sustained spheres.

NETWORK-BASED PRACTICES AND ORGANIZATIONAL FORMS

The Internet does not simply provide the technological infrastructure for computer-supported social movements, its reticulate structure reinforces their organizational logic. Decentralized, flexible, local/global activist networks constitute the dominant organizational forms within global justice movements, reflecting the broader logic of informational capitalism. New Social Movement (NSM) theorists have long argued that, in contrast to the centralized, vertically integrated, working-class movements, newer feminist, ecological, and student movements are organized around flexible, dispersed, and horizontal networks (Cohen, 1985). Mario Diani (1995), on the other hand, defines social movements more generally as network formations. In a similar vein, anthropologists Luther P. Gerlach and Virginia H. Hine (1970) argued years ago that social movements should be characterized as decentralized, segmentary, and reticulate. Gerlach (2001: 295–6) has more recently suggested that: "The diverse groups of a movement . . . form an integrated network or reticulate structure through nonhierarchical social linkages among their participants . . . Networking enables movement participants to exchange information and ideas and to coordinate participation in joint action." However, the introduction of new information technologies has significantly enhanced the most radically decentralized all-channel network configurations, greatly facilitating transnational coordination and communication among contemporary social movements.

Network designs are diffusing widely, as new technologies power the expansion of globally connected, yet locally rooted computer-supported social movements. These are increasingly organized around highly flexible all-channel patterns rather than more traditional top-down political formations. Global justice movements in Catalonia, for example, initially grew and expanded with the emergence of highly diffuse, flexible, and decentralized activist networks. The Movement for Global Resistance (MRG), which mobilized around the protests in Prague and subsequently became a major anti-globalization referent in the Spanish state, was initially conceived as "a network of people and

collectives against economic globalization and unitary thinking . . . a tool for providing local struggles with global content and extension."[21] Activists wanted to create a flexible mechanism for communication and coordination among diverse local struggles, including environmentalists, squatters, *Zapatista* supporters, solidarity and anti-debt activists, and opponents of the European Union. Rather than top-down, centralized command, activists preferred loose and flexible coordination among autonomous groups within a minimal structure involving periodic assemblies, logistical commissions surrounding concrete tasks, such as finances or media, and several project areas, including a social movement observatory and a resource exchange. In practice, the MRG often dissolved into broader campaigns, but it remained an effective space for sharing resources and information, generating analysis and discourse, and inspiring more broadly what activists considered to be a new form of political action based on "working as a network, through horizontal assemblies, and with local autonomy in order to reach people with a more open, less dogmatic style" (interview, May 30, 2002). In contrast to traditional leftist forces, open participation was favored over representation: "MRG is a movement 'without members;' membership … leads to static, non-dynamic structures and to a clear and distinct, rather than a more diffuse sense of belonging."[22]

Moreover, many MRG participants were active in broader regional and global networks, particularly PGA, which itself represents a highly diffuse, all-channel network design involving communication and coordination among diverse local struggles around the world. Given the lack of resources and cultural differences, transnational coordination around concrete campaigns has proved difficult within PGA, yet global conferences and distribution lists have facilitated the exchange of experiences and information, while inspiring many Global Days of Action. There has been much more effective grassroots participation at the regional level, particularly in Europe, where the MRG served as a continental "co-convenor." Like the MRG, PGA has no formal members, seeking to provide an instrument of coordination and to help "the greatest number of persons and organizations to act against corporate domination through civil disobedience and people-oriented constructive actions."[23] Any person or collective can participate so long as they agree with the basic hallmarks, which include: a clear rejection of capitalism and all systems of domination, a confrontational attitude, a call to direct action and civil disobedience, and an organizational philosophy "based on decentralization and autonomy."[24] Rather than a centralized coordinating committee, each continent selects its own rotating "convenors" to organize regional and global conferences, assume logistical tasks, and facilitate communication mechanisms along with the help of various support groups. In September 2002, the European PGA assembly decided to organize

a decentralized network of PGA "Infopoints" in order to give more visibility to the network and promote the struggles, activities, and values of participating collectives.

Within movements such as the MRG or PGA, the cultural logic of networking has given rise to what grassroots activists in Barcelona call the "new way of doing politics." By this they mean precisely those network-based forms of political organization and practice based on non-hierarchical structures, horizontal coordination among autonomous groups, open access, direct participation, consensus-based decision-making, and the ideal of the free and open circulation of information (although this is not always conformed to in practice). While the command-oriented logic of traditional parties and unions is based on recruiting new members, developing unitary strategies, political representation through vertical structures, and the pursuit of political hegemony, network-based politics involves the creation of broad umbrella spaces, where diverse organizations, collectives, and networks converge around a few common hallmarks, while preserving their autonomy and identity-based specificity. Rather than recruitment, the objective becomes horizontal expansion and enhanced "connectivity" through articulating diverse movements within flexible, decentralized information structures that allow for maximal coordination and communication. Guided by this networking logic, key activists become relayers and exchangers, generating concrete practices involving the reception, interpretation, and relaying of information out to the diverse nodes within and among alternative movement networks.

Following Diane Nelson (1999), who employs the term "Maya-hacker" to characterize Mayan activists engaged in cultural activism and transnational networking, global justice activists can be similarly viewed as "activist-hackers," generating innovative networking practices guided by the cultural logic of networking. Like computer hackers, activist-hackers receive, combine, and recombine cultural codes, in this case, political signifiers, freely sharing and circulating information about projects, mobilizations, strategies, tactics, and ideas through global communication networks. As with computer hackers, activist-hackers seek to enhance the connectivity of social movements, widening and diversifying networks through the open sharing and circulation of information. For example, a member of the PGA network support group, the son of Chilean exiles who grew up in Germany near the French border, stressed the value of "proficiency in multiple languages" and "cultural flexibility" for contributing to the group, signaling both the importance of recombining codes and connecting people through diversity and difference. In addition, a Barcelona-based activist, widely recognized as a key social relayer and exchanger, developed a system for instantly sending messages to hundreds of list-serves around the world.

Visibly impassioned, he once remarked, "Now I can reach thousands of activists at the touch of a button every time we want to communicate something important!"

This networking logic is unevenly distributed within global justice movements, however, and often generates fierce resistance. Network-based forms and practices are more prevalent among certain sectors, while the discourse of open networking can also serve to conceal other forms of domination and exclusion based on unequal access to communication technologies or control of information flows. Indeed, these issues often emerge as crucial points of contention among activists. As a grassroots activist from India commented in Porto Alegre: "It is not enough to talk about networks, we also have to talk about democracy and the internal distribution of power within them." A given cultural logic thus always exists in dynamic tension with other competing logics, and even when specific cultural practices become dominant within a concrete social space, they never achieve complete hegemony. What many observers view as a single, unified global justice movement is actually a congeries of competing, yet sometimes overlapping, social movement networks that differ according to issue addressed, political subjectivity, ideological framework, political culture, and organizational logic.

Social movements are complex cultural fields shot through with internal differentiation and contestation. Struggles within and among different movement networks largely shape the way specific networks are produced, how they develop, and how they relate to one another within broader social movement fields. Cultural struggles surrounding ideology (anti-globalization versus anti-capitalism), strategies (summit hopping versus sustained organizing), tactics (violence versus non-violence), as well as organizational form and decision-making (structure versus non-structure, consensus versus voting) – what I call the cultural politics of networking – have become enduring features of the global justice landscape. Indeed, the ubiquity of movement-related debates and discussions within physical and online forums, including the incessant production and circulation of documents, reflections, editorials, and calls to action, reflects the highly "reflexive" nature of contemporary social movement networks (see Giddens, 1991; Beck et al., 1994). Some of the most intense conflicts revolve around political culture and organizational form. Newer movements, such as the MRG and PGA, are characterized by a networking logic, while more traditional movements involve command logics and vertical structures, such as political parties and trade unions. Discrepant logics often lead activists into heated struggles within the broad umbrella spaces characteristic of global justice movements, such as the "unitary" campaigns against the World Bank or the European Union in Barcelona or the World Social Forum process at local, regional, and transnational scales.

THE SELF-GENERATED NETWORK AS EMERGING POLITICAL IDEAL

Expanding and diversifying networks is much more than a concrete organizational objective; it is also a highly valued cultural goal in itself. The self-produced, self-developed, and self-managed network becomes a widespread cultural ideal, providing not just an effective model of political organizing, but also a model for re-organizing society as a whole. The network ideal is reflected in the proliferation of decentralized organizational forms within global justice movements, as well as the development of new self-directed communication and coordination tools, such as Indymedia, the European Social Consulta, a process for generating information exchange among local assemblies coordinated at regional and global levels, or the countless Internet distribution lists established over the past several years. The dominant spirit behind this emerging political praxis can be broadly defined as anarchist, or what activists in Barcelona refer to more broadly as libertarian.[25] Classic anarchist principles, such as autonomy, self-management, federation, direct action, and direct democracy, are among the most important values among radical sectors of the movement, while activists are increasingly identifying themselves as anti-capitalist, anti-authoritarian, or left-libertarian.

I would argue, however, that these emerging political subjectivities are not necessarily identical to anarchism in the strict ideological sense; rather, they share specific cultural affinities which revolve around the broader values associated with the network as an emerging cultural and political ideal: open access, the free circulation of information, self-management, as well as coordination based on diversity and autonomy. Despite widespread popular belief, anarchism does not mean complete disorder. One of the important threads uniting the many diverse strands of anarchism involves precisely the importance of organization, although of a distinctly different kind: organization based on grassroots participation from below rather than centralized command from above. As Bakunin (1872) once wrote, "We want the reconstruction of society and the unification of mankind to be achieved, not from above downwards by any sort of authority, nor by socialist officials, engineers, and other accredited men of learning – but from below upwards" (cited in Ward, 1973: 22). After the Bolshevik Revolution, another Russian-born anarchist, Voline (1955),[26] similarly posited that: "The principle of organization must not issue from a center created in advance to capture the whole and impose itself upon it but, on the contrary, it must come from all sides to create nodes of coordination, natural centers to serve all these points" (cited in Guerin, 1970: 43).

The networking logic within contemporary globally linked social movements involves precisely this conception of horizontal coordination among autonomous

elements. Colin Ward, a contemporary British anarchist, specifically views anarchist federations as decentralized networks, explaining that communes and syndicates would "federate together not like the stones of a pyramid where the biggest burden is borne by the lowest layer, but like the links of a network, the network of autonomous groups" (1973: 26). In many ways, anarchism resembles the decentered networking logic of informational capitalism, as Ward (1973: 58) further explains: "The anarchist conclusion is that every kind of human activity should begin from what is local and immediate, should link in a network with no center and no directing agency, hiving off new cells as the original ones grow." From this vantage point, it is not surprising that anarchism, or left-libertarianism more generally, would become the prevailing ethos of opposition within an age characterized by decentralized network forms. The "autopoietic" or self-produced network (see Luhmann, 1990) thus becomes a powerful model, reflecting an open-source development logic, based on a multitude of autonomous components coordinating and interacting without mediating structure or central command.

Kropotkin (1905) similarly argued that in a society without government, social order and harmony would be produced through "an ever-changing adjustment and readjustment of equilibrium between the multitudes of forces and influences" (cited in Ward, 1973: 52). Whereas neoliberalism revolves around the ideal of the self-regulating market, anarchism does away with mediation altogether, positing completely self-managed, self-regulating networks. The important point, though, is not whether networks are autopoietic in a strict sense, but, rather, that the self-generating network becomes a broader cultural and political model for organizing society based on horizontal connectedness, direct democracy, and coordination through autonomy and diversity – among hackers, anarchists, and more radical global justice activists alike.[27]

This emerging network ideal was particularly pronounced among the Catalan and Spanish activists I worked with during my field research in Barcelona. For example, the Citizens Network to Abolish the External Debt (RCADE), which helped give rise to and continued to work alongside the MRG, self-consciously employed the terminology of computer networks to characterize its organizational structure. The "Network," as it is popularly known, is thus composed of various local, regional, and statewide "nodes." The organizational and political base of the Network is constituted by local nodes, which are "self-defined, self-managed and self-organized spaces." Broader coordination is carried out through periodic meetings of regional and statewide nodes, as well as annual gatherings. The Network was specifically forged to organize a statewide consultation to ask citizens if they were in favor of abolishing the external debt owed by developing nations to the Spanish government. As one activist explained:

We organized ourselves as nodes, using the nomenclature of the Internet. It was completely new because we were thinking in network terms. The nodes were the spaces where information was produced and made public, the physical embodiment of the Internet, what we might call affinity groups today. We took the idea, not of a platform – we didn't want to work as a platform – but rather of a network. (interview, June 12, 2002)

Moreover, the broader political goal was not just abolishing the external debt, but rather expanding the Network itself, along with its directly democratic modus operandi, as an RCADE document explains, "The Network is a tool for creating social fabric, and we do this in our local contexts . . . Participatory democracy is not only a transversal theme in our work; it constitutes our model of . . . operation."[28] This network ideal emerged among many activist sectors around the Spanish state during the latter half of the 1990s, ultimately becoming an important part of the broader ethos within global justice movements, as an MRG activist explained: "For me, the twenty-first century, with the discourse of postmodernity, people are always talking about the 'network of networks of networks,' but for me building these networks represents the world we want to create" (interview, June 11, 2002). She went on to define her ideal world as composed of "small, self-organized and self-managed communities, coordinated among them on a worldwide scale." When asked about networks, another global justice activist and squatter responded: "The revolution is also about process; the way we do things … is also an alternative to capitalism, no?" (interview, June 2, 2002). Specifically contrasting traditional politics with the network ideal, another MRG-based activist described networks as the best way to "balance freedom with coordination, autonomy with collective work, self-organization with effectiveness" (interview, May 30, 2002). Networking tools – such as Indymedia, electronic distribution lists, interactive web pages, the European Social Consulta, or the Barcelona Infospace – are thus specifically designed to help people "construct networks at whatever rhythm possible."

CONCLUSION: BUILDING LABORATORIES FOR DEMOCRACY

In the process of using new networking technologies and practices to communicate, coordinate, and (self-)organize, global justice activists are building new organizational forms that are network-based, and which express and reflect the network as an emerging political and cultural ideal. Eric Raymond (1999: 224) has characterized a popular folk theorem among software engineers in the following terms: "Organizations which design systems are constrained to produce designs which are copies of the communication structures of these

organizations." There is indeed something to this. Emerging network norms and forms within global justice movements (and within the academy as well) thus not only mirror one another, they also reflect underlying technological transformations mediated by concrete human practice, pointing to a much broader dialectic among cultural norms, organizational forms, and technological change.

Global justice movements are extremely diverse phenomena. While some Marxist and social democratic sectors promote a return to the nation-state as the locus for democratic control over the global economy, others support an internationalist "globalization from below" (Brecher et al., 2000), where transnational movements represent an emerging global civil society. Activists within more libertarian networks, however, increasingly view social movements as concrete political alternatives in and of themselves. Many ecologists, squatters, and militant anti-capitalists emphasize the local sphere, while others share a broad vision for a decentralized, yet globally coordinated network of autonomous, self-managed communities. What brings all these different visions together involves a commitment to help people establish democratic control over their daily lives. Alberto Melucci (1989: 75–6) argues that social movements are signs that announce to society the existence of a conflict and render power visible. In this sense, global justice movements highlight the increasing social and economic polarization, environmental devastation, and cultural domination that activists associate with the current regime of corporate globalization, where the market has become disembedded from society (Polanyi, 1957).

Moving from resistance toward alternative political projects often generates heated micro-political struggles among activists, which largely revolve around two distinct forms of practicing democracy: one based on political representation within permanent structures and another rooted in flexible coordination and direct participation through decentralized network formations. Political parties, unions, and formal organizations of civil society operate according to a representative logic, where social movements function as lobby groups, applying grassroots pressure to institutional actors, who ultimately process and implement political proposals. On this view, movements, parties, and unions should work together, each filling distinct, yet complementary roles, as a labor delegate from Barcelona explained: "Social movements carry out grassroots work, raising awareness among citizens, but they cannot substitute for political parties … Each one has to know what role they play, and in which social and political space they operate" (interview, June 12, 2002).

On the other hand, radical network-based movements have articulated a more sweeping political project: transcending both the market and the state. During a debate between Catalan activists and their more institutional counterparts in May 2002, for example, an activist from XCADE (the Catalan

version of RCADE) strongly criticized the logic of electoral representation, suggesting that very few people identify with political parties: "We are thus creating a new political culture, a new way of doing politics, based on grass-roots citizen participation." An MRG-based militant later confided that he stopped voting after becoming involved with grassroots movements, explaining that "I am building an alternative political system, and that is much more important." When I specifically asked another activist from XCADE what might replace representative democracy, he was unsure, but thought it was important to create a more directly democratic system from below:

> One of the things that most motivates me these days is trying to figure out how to organize democracy at the beginning of the twenty-first century given the new technological infrastructure at our disposal. How do we deepen our local democratic practices – at work and in our neighborhoods – and transfer that spirit to the global level?

Whereas directly democratic forms of participation have historically been tied to local contexts, new networking technologies and practices are facilitating innovative experiments with grassroots democracy coordinated at local, regional, and global scales. Among the more radical global justice activists, networks represent much more than technology and organizational form; they also provide new cultural models for radically reconstituting politics and society more generally. In this sense, grassroots, network-based movements can be viewed as democratic laboratories, generating the political norms and forms most appropriate for the information age.

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NOTES

1. Moving beyond much of the recent anthropological literature on networks (cf. Latour, 1987, 1993; Riles, 2000), I employ a practice-based approach, which explores the construction of concrete social networks by human actors within specific locales. Riles's (post)-structural analysis remains largely formal, while Latour sheds light on how resources are mobilized, alliances negotiated, and ideas translated within actor-networks, but obscures the specific practices through which networks are built within broader social, political, and economic contexts. Bockman and Eyal (2002) provide a much more socially and historically grounded use of actor-network theory. Similarly, recent sociological approaches have explored network structure, resource mobilization, and the circulation of meaning within local and transnational activist networks (cf. Smith et al., 1997; Keck and Sikkink, 1998; Diani and McAdam, 2003), but have yet to examine the specific practices through which such networks are generated. However, Mische's (2003) discussion of how conversational practices constitute activist networks represents an important exception.
2. Like Bourdieu's *habitus*, my use of cultural logic implies a set of internalized dispositions, shaped by social, economic, and political conditions, which generate concrete practices. However, unlike habitus, they are not so mechanical or deeply embedded, and can thus be contested and transformed through cultural struggle, innovation, or interaction within diverse social fields.
3. Andrew Barry (2001: 15) has recently criticized the network metaphor, suggesting that it "may convey an illusory sense of rigidity, order and of structure; and it may give little sense of unevenness of the fabric and the fissures, fractures and gaps that it contains and forms." By shifting the emphasis from network structure toward networking practices, however, involving myriad micro-level political struggles, my work specifically elucidates the fluid, uneven, and contradictory nature of the process of network formation. Moreover, as we shall see, grassroots activists in Barcelona often directly contrast highly diffuse, decentralized networks with what they consider to be more rigid and structured organizational forms.
4. Barry (2001: 102) also introduces a distinction between the political and technological, urging caution when using the network metaphor to characterize both politics and technology. Although his point regarding the danger of analytic conflation is well taken, I specifically explore how networks operating within multiple domains mutually shape one another, mediated by concrete logics and practices.
5. Barry (2001: 87) makes a similar point based on research within the European Union (EU), pointing out that, "Networks do not so much reflect social, political and technological reality; they provide a diagram on the basis of which reality might be refashioned and reimagined: they are models of the political future." For EU officials, networks represent a mode of government beyond the opposition between market and state. For many radical global justice activists, on the other hand, networks represent a directly democratic form of self-management that transcends the market and state altogether.
6. The first Intercontinental Encounter was held in Chiapas in 1996. For more information about PGA, see: http://www.nadir.org/nadir/initiativ/agp/. For more information regarding the First and Second Intercontinental Encounters for Humanity and Against Neoliberalism, see http://www.geocities.com/CapitolHill/3849/gatherdx.html and http://www.eco.utexas.edu/faculty/Cleaver/dailyreports.html.

7. The Independent Media Center (IMC), or Indymedia, was initially launched in Seattle as an alternative source of news and information for activists. The network has since expanded along with global justice movements, and there are now hundreds of autonomous sites throughout the world.

8. The Continental DAN process came to a standstill during the year following Seattle.

9. MRG-Catalonia proved more sustainable, coordinating activities, meetings, and actions from shortly before the Prague mobilization to January 2003, when activists "self-dissolved" the network as both a response to declining participation and a political statement against the reproduction of rigid structures.

10. See http://www.nadir.org/nadir/initiativ/agp/s26/index.htm.

11. For more information regarding the World Social Forum, see http://www.wsfindia.org/.

12. This brand of left-wing "libertarianism" should be distinguished from the variety prevalent in the United States. The former involves a radical critique of both the market and the state, while the latter is oriented toward limiting the role of the state in order to unleash the dynamic potential of the free market.

13. For scholarly analyses of transnational social movements, transnational advocacy networks, and global social movements, see Smith et al. (1997), Keck and Sikkink (1998), and Cohen and Rai (2000), respectively.

14. US-based political art collectives, such as Art and Revolution or the Bread and Puppet Theater, have specialized in the use of large, colorful puppets and dynamic street theater during mass protests. British-based Reclaim the Streets (RTS) emerged in the 1990s, when activists began organizing impromptu street parties and festivals of resistance as part of a broader cultural critique of corporate domi-nated consumer society. RTS street parties have since been organized in cities around the world. Black Bloc refers to a set of tactics employed by loosely orga-nized clusters of affinity groups, often involving targeted property destruction against capitalist symbols. Based on the aesthetics of German autonomen, Black Bloc militants wear black bandanas, ragged black army surplus pants, black hooded sweatshirts and shiny black boots. Finally, the White Overalls tactic, which was developed by Milan-based Ya Basta!, involves a form of action where large, orderly groups of activists advance behind large plastic shields toward police lines where they initiate bodily contact, involving pushing and shoving.

15. Broadly, networks can be defined as sets of "interconnected nodes" (Castells, 1996: 469), which can assume any number of structural shapes according to the specific pattern of connections that adhere.

16. Wellman (2001) argues that the shift toward personalized relations, where the indi-vidual becomes the basic unit of connection, constitutes a new form of "networked individualism" (cf. Castells, 2001: 129).

17. See the following websites: www.agp.org, www.wsfindia.org, and www.attac.org.

18. For more information, see http://c2.com/cgi/wiki.

19. See www.indymedia.org.

20. Kevin Hetherington (1998: 123) refers more broadly to "utopics" through which "a utopian outlook on society and the moral order that it wishes to project, are translated into practice through the attachment of ideas about the good society onto particular places." "Informational utopics" specifically refers to the embodiment of utopian visions through innovative networking practices involving experimen-tation with new information technologies.

21. Cited in an article written by an MRG activist called "La Organización del

MRG,' which was published in the February–March 2001 edition of *EIMA*, a Catalan activist journal.

22. Cited in a document produced by MRG activists regarding the identity, structure, and functioning of the network that circulated on the global@ldist.ct.upc.es list-serve (October 18, 2000).

23. See PGA Network Organizational Principle no. 1: www.nadir.org/nadir/initia-tiv/agp/cocha/principles.htm.

24. See PGA Hallmarks: www.nadir.org/nadir/initiativ/agp/gender/desire/nutshell.htm.

25. See note 12.

26. "Voline" was the pen name used by V. M. Eichenbaum.

27. Although Varela (1981) maintains that autopoiesis cannot be directly transposed to society, other theorists have also used autopoiesis to characterize social systems (Benseler et al., 1980; Luhmann, 1990).

28. Cited in an organizational proposal presented at the Fifth RCADE Encounter (October 12–14, 2001).

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