

A conversation with the Turbulence Collective

Sasha Lilley, with Michal Osterweil and Ben Trott

Sasha Lilley The essays in this book were put together in newspaper form for distribution at the G8 summit in Heiligendamm, Germany in 2007. What response did you receive from counter-summit activists?

Ben Trott The immediate feedback we received in Heiligendamm was overwhelmingly positive. To be honest, I had my doubts that people would find the time to read through the paper whilst so much was going on. But it seems that somehow they did.

Ahead of the summit, some members of Attac, with John Holloway, organised an event in Berlin, as well as another series of workshops at one of the protest camps in Rostock. Some of the articles from the paper – now included in this book – formed the basis for discussion at these events.

During the summit itself, thousands of people took part in three days of mass blockades, organised by Block G8. While we were taking part, we distributed copies of the paper. The police had been fairly brutal in trying to stop people reaching the blockades, but once the roads had been taken there was very little confrontation and people found various ways of occupying themselves. This included reading the paper. We were really amused to see what else people did with the collection of texts. Some people, on their way to the blockades, wrapped the papers around their arms to protect themselves from the police's batons. And during the blockades, one group managed to turn the paper into a giant game of Twister.

The paper was also distributed around some independent bookstores and radical social centres in the UK, the US and Germany. Demand soon outstripped supply, so we were really pleased to get the offer to collaborate with PM Press on this book.

People have also been really great in terms of translating some of the articles in the first issue of *Turbulence*. Most of these can now also be found on our website.

So generally speaking, the paper we distributed at Heiligendamm was well received. However, my feeling is that it was more the *problematics* addressed, rather than the ‘answers’ offered up by the articles which allowed it to find the resonance it did. I think there is now a general recognition that the counter-globalisation movement finds itself at an impasse. To take the time to ask ourselves what it would mean to win – or to be winning again – seems like an extremely timely task to busy ourselves with.

SL You argue that Left victories can be complex and contradictory, as capital often responds by co-opting oppositional demands so as to open up new avenues of accumulation. How does this process tend to work – and is there a way for us to organise to impede it?

BT This is one of the issues that we sought to address by problematising the notion of measuring success in the first issue of *Turbulence*. And it’s something we explore in relation to the current struggles around climate change in *Move into the Light*?

There’s a quote from William Morris, the 19th Century English socialist, writer and founder of the Arts and Crafts Movement, which explains this process brilliantly. He suggests people “fight and lose the battle, and the thing they fought for comes about in spite of their defeat, and then it turns out not to be what they meant, and other men have to fight for what they meant under another name.”

Quite appropriately, the quotation forms one of the two opening epigraphs to Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri’s book *Empire*. I say appropriate because I think one of the greatest accomplishments of their book has been to bring together the Italian Marxist tradition of *Operaismo* and a particular strand of French post-structuralism, i.e. that of Foucault and, more importantly, Deleuze and Guattari. The book was not the first time that the two traditions had resonated with one another, but it is certainly the most accomplished effort to date towards developing a productive synthesis between the two approaches.

Operaismo famously inverted the traditional approach to analysing the relation between labour and capital, in which the former had often been regarded as a passive, reactive victim of the latter – whether that be through territorial expansions embodied through colonial or imperialist projects, or transformations at the point of production. What *Operaismo* did was turn this on its head and explain capitalist development as a constant process of *reacting* to the struggles of the working class. Every upsurge in struggle was met by an effort at ‘decomposing’ the working class, attacking its organisational forms and reorganising both the mode of production and regulation. The most recent and generalised examples of this would be the move from the era of ‘Fordism’ to ‘post-Fordism’.

Towards the end of the 1960s and beginning of the 1970s, there was a massive upsurge in resistance by the social subjects which constituted the Fordist-Keynesian

reality. From workers involved in mass production (characterised by the industrial factory conveyor belt) and students (who were subject to a similar process of massification, through the so-called 'proletarianisation' of education), to women's movements and the increasing power of anti-imperialist and anti-colonial struggles the world over.

Capital's gradual and uneven response to these struggles was the move towards what is generally labelled 'post-Fordism' and neoliberalism. Large production plants were broken up and replaced by smaller scale, networked, more flexible processes exemplified by the developments at Toyota and Benetton (this was, of course, a process which was most obvious in the global North, but similar, less drastic tendencies have also been observable in the South). Trade was liberalised and regulation – both domestically and internationally – was reduced, increasing capital's mobility. Restrictions were placed on the ability of trade unions to act and intervene.

As a result, 'old' organisational forms were decimated (i.e. 'decomposed'), providing huge challenges, for example, to workers seeking to improve their lot. And in those locations where workers were able to organise, capital was increasingly able to simply pack up and move elsewhere.

Post-Fordism and neoliberalism, however, have their ambivalences. Whilst the former, for example, in many ways represents an *intensification* of exploitation – to the extent that it tends towards requiring that our entire subjectivities are put to work for capital – it is in many ways a result of the demands of earlier movements for a more creative way to spend one's time than working 9-to-5, five days a week on a conveyor belt, or pulling a lever. So to stick with the Morris quote, post-Fordism in many ways was the defeat of the struggles of Fordist social subjects, whose victory – in part – came about after all, in the sense that change was forced. But the precarious, neoliberal reality of today is certainly not the communist or socialist utopia that the workers and students of '68 were fighting for. The task which faces us now, then, is to continue this struggle (albeit, perhaps, under a different name!).

Deleuze, particularly in his collaborations with Guattari, describes a similar dynamic in their deployment of a number of different concepts. What they describe as the 'war machine', perhaps surprisingly, does not stand for any kind of 'military-industrial-complex', but rather resistance *against* the state. The war machine operates as something that resists centralisation and everything sedentary, it sets in motion a process of transformation (what they call 'becoming'). In response, the state always attempts to appropriate and/or capture this resistance, using it for its own ends.

There are strong parallels here with Deleuze's concept of 'desire', a productive and positive force which embodies a potential for transformation against that which seeks to repress it. At the same time, it is never entirely 'free' from codification by the powers of social regulation. The combination of these two processes tends to involve the harnessing of desire – again, like the war machine, a kind of resistance – by power, as a means of transforming and reinventing itself.

These processes and dynamics, however, don't just take place on the level of large epochal shifts, like the move from Fordism to post-Fordism. The approach developed by *Operaismo* and, in a slightly different way, Deleuze and Guattari, provides a more general way of thinking about the relation between power and resistance. We refer to a similar phenomenon, for example, when we talk about the development of summit protests and the counter-globalisation movement in *Move into the Light?* The discourse around poverty alleviation at the 2005 G8 Summit in Gleneagles, and climate change at Heiligendamm in 2007, illustrates, on the one hand, the power of our movements to move and set the global agenda. On the other, however, it demonstrates the means by which capital often seeks to harness movements of resistance – or the changes in public sentiment which they produces – and render them productive for itself.

At Gleneagles, a worldwide movement against global poverty and, more generally, for a better life than a constant struggle for bare survival, was translated into a discourse of poverty alleviation which eventually began to be deployed by the 'world leaders' themselves. By and large, it involved flirtation with the idea of a new global Keynesianism (what George Caffentzis has called neoliberalism's 'Plan B'). A billion people were to be lifted out of poverty through their fuller incorporation into the capitalist, wage-labouring economy. Whereas in the 1930s, Keynes saw a necessity for 'political' intervention into 'the economy' in order to create full employment (largely through the stimulation of demand) which he saw as the key to economic growth and stability, the global Keynesianism of 2005 involved considering similar interventions designed to turn large numbers of the 'global poor' into wage-labourers. The goal was to achieve full employment *par excellence* by turning those who reproduced themselves, at least in part, outside of capitalist social relations, into wage-labourers proper.

In Heiligendamm, we saw the heads of state recognise the pressing need to deal with the issue of climate change. In many ways, this was a victory for environmental campaigners and a relatively small number of climate change scientists who had been trying to highlight the issue for years. At the same time, it became increasingly clear as to how the challenge posed by climate change also offers a number of *possibilities* for capital. On the one hand, as we explain in *Move into the Light?*, this is likely to involve austerity measures: regressive 'green' taxation, restrictions on mobility and the consumption of 'luxuries', and so on. On the other, it is likely to mean the opening of new, potentially profitable, markets: carbon trading, climate consultancy, 'green' consumerism, etc.

The task with which struggles and resistance movements are confronted, then, is to remain aware of the way in which these processes operate. This is where the reasonably abstract ideas about power and resistance offered up by the *Operaisti* (as well as Deleuze and Guattari) has real, practical application. This recognition then provides a basis for both recognising our own agency; as well as the need to constantly rethink strategy, tactics, and the very nature of struggle as capital constantly develops new ways of imposing decomposition.

Michal Osterweil I want to raise a couple of related issues that I think often go undressed in leftist and movement discussions of strategy and social change: the role we play in creating the monster known as capitalism, and our insufficient attention to other problems, such as the dogmatism and microfascisms, that sometimes arise precisely because of too rigid or too encompassing a theory or ideology.

As many people have already pointed out, a very serious problem on the Left is our complicity in creating a vision of capitalism as total, totalising and completely hegemonic. As J.K Gibson-Graham put it in *The End of Capitalism (As We Knew It)*, “the project of understanding the beast [capitalism] has itself produced a beast, or even a bestiary; and the process of producing knowledge in service to politics has estranged rather than united understanding and action.” (There is an important difference here between ubiquity and totality. It is one thing to acknowledge that capitalism is everywhere (ubiquity), and quite another to speak of capitalism as having no outside and being that which defines all social relations (totality)).

While I have few qualms with the former, I believe that analyses based on the latter are very problematic in that they contribute to a sense of paralysis, powerlessness and hopelessness – leading so many of us to ask, ‘What can we do that won’t be co-opted or destroyed by capital?’ However, they also obscure other issues and problems that are not necessarily reducible to capitalism’s processes of accumulation, nor the antagonism between capital and labour. (Issues having to do with cultural and sexual difference, but also complicated issues of crime, gentrification, etc. come to mind.)

This is particularly interesting because it makes it difficult to know what action will really be most radical – most able to get at the heart of the system. For, while within the global justice movement we have been quick to distinguish between ‘reformists’ and ‘radicals’ – i.e. people with more systemic, or rather *anti*-systemic approaches, we neglect that the depiction of the system might create other obstacles to transformative change. For example, often, in our efforts to organise movements with an anti-systemic orientation – i.e. movements that understand that it is not just a matter of repealing a few misguided policies, or reforming institutions like the G8, World Bank, etc, but rather overturning or transforming an entire political, economic, cultural and social system – we not only make capital appear far more coherent and hegemonic than it actually is, we also make it seem like the definition of a more ‘radical’ approach is universal, or definable outside particular circumstances. Moreover, in the process we end up reproducing the kinds of movements and activist subjectivities that are unable to address and deal with complexities issues, and problems, which are not necessarily already explainable vis-à-vis the meta-analysis of capitalism those activists are working from.

The appeal of an anti-systemic analysis and vision of ‘our enemy’ always risks turning into a rigid, un-reflexive, and potentially problematic formula that people fall back on even in situations that are tremendously complicated. A very serious challenge at the core of the *Turbulence* project is finding ways to undermine the

tendencies within so many of our movements (and ourselves!) to become so invested in one meta-narrative, ideology or reading of both the problem and the solution that we both help create the monster *and* neglect other issues and possibilities.

SL You make the point that we may not be able to recognise our victories, since some are not immediately visible. That's fair enough. It can be difficult to see which seeds will grow. But it's equally hard, or harder, to ask if we're failing. For example, opposition movements cannot necessarily take credit for the breakdown of multilateral negotiations within the World Trade Organisation, as these have been derailed, not by stateless movements, but specific nation-states. A contributor to *Turbulence* puts it in bold terms: the movement – or 'movement of movements' as you refer to it – is in crisis, following the mass mobilisation in Genoa in 2001. What do you think is the basis of that crisis?

BT This distinction between 'success' and 'failure' takes us back to the Morris quote mentioned earlier. What appears as a failure, in other words, often turns out to be some kind of a limited success. The challenge which then presents itself is moving beyond these limitations. And you're certainly right about identifying failures being as difficult as successes – and in a similar way. In other words, what initially appears as a *success* might, in some ways, also point towards certain *defeats*.

Let's take the example of the collapse of WTO negotiations, since you mentioned them. There have been at least three separate ministerials at which talks have either completely broken down (Seattle in 1999 and Cancún in 2003) or the agreement reached has been so precarious that it came undone almost immediately afterwards (Hong Kong in 2005). At each of these three events, despite enormous demonstrations and mass acts of disobedience, it was in fact a collection of state actors – largely acting in their own political and economic self-interest – which brought about the collapse of negotiations. So whilst movements celebrated this breakdown, and in part claimed the victory as their own, it would perhaps seem that it was states, or coalitions of states, which were able to derail negotiations and halt the neoliberal juggernaut, rather than 'stateless movements'. In this sense, the collapses could be interpreted as a sign of the agency of *constituted* over *constituent* forms of power.

There is certainly some truth to this. But the full reality is a little more complicated. There are, for instance, a number of ways in which the agency of movements can be seen as having influenced the behaviour of state actors within negotiations. First of all, there are powerful, popular anti-neoliberal movements in many of the countries which made up the G20 group of 'developing' nations, for instance, which played a key role in derailing the negotiation of the Doha Round in Cancún. The ability of these movements to influence domestic political and economic policy impacted on the position taken by state representatives engaging in international negotiations.

Secondly, the development of a worldwide movement against neoliberalism – which often took its cue from these movements in the South – as well as often

spectacular scenes on the streets outside the summits themselves, almost certainly contributed to the legitimacy with which the G20 and other states were able to rupture negotiations.

There are certainly issues worth considering here as to where change does and does not take place, but there does seem to have been a (not-entirely deliberate) *working in concert* that took place between movements and state actors during the WTO negotiations. Precisely whether this represents a ‘success’ or ‘failure’ for movements, I’m not so sure. This is a question that The Free Association deal with at length in their article, ‘Worlds in Motion’, contained in this book.

In relation to the question of the counter-globalisation movement’s crisis and its nature, I would agree that the current crisis began sometime around the mobilisation to Genoa in 2001. Although it is important to point out that what took place in Genoa was unlikely the sole, or even primary, cause of the crisis.

In terms of how this crisis can be understood, I think the movement – since 2001 – has undergone a number of *decompositions*. In other words, a reduction in its ability to act, intervene and influence has been experienced through a simultaneous attack on its forms of organisation (through the introduction of new legislation, transformations in policing, an escalation in the levels of violence generally waged against the movement), as well as significant changes in that which the movement is posited against: neoliberalism. This second aspect is connected to fall out from the flirtation with global Keynesianism by the G8 and others around 2005, mentioned above.

The conventional way of thinking of ‘movements’ – including by many people who consider themselves involved in them – is quite problematic. They are often thought of as discrete actors, with a clear inside and an out; generally possessing a ‘consciousness’ as to their own existence, as well as their aims and objectives. On one level, of course, movements do lead an existence on this level. Often, people either recognise themselves and/or others as ‘belonging’ to a movement, or not. There may be some quibbles – ‘Those reformists have got nothing to do with us, we’re a movement for real change’ ‘The black bloc aren’t part of our movement, we want a world without that sort of behaviour’ – but this is often about relatively minor details.

The problem with this kind of a definition of movements, however, is that it privileges a particular kind of agency as the only – or primary – means by which change takes place. It’s more useful, I think, to think of ‘movement’ occurring through the constant *moving* of social relations – i.e. the way in which we relate to one another and the means by which these relations are mediated.

Perhaps it’s helpful to think about something like the counter-globalisation movement as constituting a *body* amongst a broader, permanent moving of relations within which it is embedded. In one of his books on Spinoza, Deleuze explains that the Dutch philosopher defined a body in two different, simultaneous ways. First of all, a body is something made up of an infinite number of ‘particles’, its individuality defined by the speed and slowness, motion and rest, between them. Secondly, it is defined by its capacity to affect (its power to act), which for Spinoza is always equal to

its ability to be affected. A body undergoes a transformation, then, through changes in the way in which its (internal) particles move in relation to one another; as well as – relatedly – changes in its capacity to affect or be affected by other (external) bodies.

Applying this to the counter-globalisation movement, its body changes – and enters a crisis (in itself, not necessarily a bad or good thing) – through both alterations in the way in which its constituent parts act and relate to one another; as well as via a transformation in the way it behaves towards – or is treated by – other bodies. The fact that the borders between ‘outside’ and ‘in’ are, in the case of the counter-globalisation movement, so porous does not invalidate this understanding, but simply increase its complexity.

MO The conventional way of reading movements and their agency also tends to preclude recognising the multiple levels or scales at which movements move and act. In fact, one could argue that one of the most important ‘outcomes’ of movement can be seen at more micro-political or cultural levels including the production or cultivation of different kinds of subjectivities; subjectivities that are willing to put their assumptions, practices, political analyses into question. In this sense while it is certainly hard to know or ask about whether a movement is failing, the clearest sign of the failure of movement is when the movement becomes a static category or space, with rigid boundaries and fixed content, where actors within it participate and proceed uncritically.

It is quite refreshing to see how many people are in a place of questioning, reflection, and research, not only for effective ways of opposing capitalism, the G8, etc. but of how to organize our lives differently. I recognize that this might sound like I am romanticizing the idea of uncertainty, but I don’t think it has to be that way. There is a difference between the type of uncertainty that leads to inaction or paralysis and the kind that I think is evidenced by people’s interest in *Turbulence*. That is people that want to act, do, move, but recognize and are open to the fact that they might not already know the exact way forward. I think this is particularly important especially when we consider the rather violent, polemical political culture that surrounds us – both more mainstream electoral politics, but also within so-called progressive spaces, or the left more generally. A political culture where one is constantly compelled to fight for the truth or superiority of one’s position, rather than recognize the messy, contingent nature of all political work.

SL Your argument that the crisis of the global justice movement(s) can be traced to repression on the one hand and shifts in the nature of neoliberalism on the other seems incomplete at best. In the spirit of not proceeding uncritically, one would have to point out that such an argument lets these movements themselves – however we might conceptualise their form – off the hook. And it sidesteps the many legitimate questions that have been raised about the strategies and goals of the movements, including most immediately whether protesting at summits makes sense either for

movement-building or for framing opposition to the capitalist system. So what of the movements themselves? How have strategic and political choices, conscious or not, fed into this impasse?

MO I do not think we have claimed that the ‘crisis’ or impasse of the counter-globalisation movement has to do *only* with repression or shifts in the nature of neoliberalism, nor have we denied that the agency and choices of movement actors are themselves worth critiquing, analysing, and reviewing. On the contrary, our project is premised on the belief that we need more spaces in which to critically and honestly assess the effectiveness of activist and movement practices, as well as their strategies and visions. But we believe that the criteria by which effectiveness, or even what counts as movement, are judged also need to be critically assessed. Constructively analysing impasses on the one hand, and movement successes on the other, requires complicating our views of both politics and social change. Often substantial change does not only include things we typically look for in measuring political outcomes – e.g., legislative change, building large movement organisations, actually shutting down a multilateral institution. Change also happens at more subtle levels, acting as a potential, creating the conditions of possibility for *other* futures, emergences.

I think most of us would agree that, for all their weaknesses, counter-summit protests have been productive and successful in many ways, even if they have not eliminated the supposed ‘targets’ of their protest. Besides eroding the hegemony and claims to legitimacy of many of the multinational institutions that enforce neoliberalism – including the G8, WTO, IMF, and the World Bank – these counter-summits have been very important in terms of cultivating radically different subjectivities, with radically different visions of how social life can and should be. These transnational protests create spaces in which other ways of being and organising life can be attempted and experimented. So, rather than judge counter-summits negatively, in terms of whether they disrupt or eliminate transnational institutions, we must be able to evaluate them in terms of what they produce and generate. Politically vital in and of themselves, these include high levels of energy and affect, experiences in collaboration, as well as the immense villages and events that get constructed around them. Rather than judge the movements as failures because they did not fully shut down the institutions, or curtail neoliberalism, we must understand that the successes of counter-summits are difficult to measure, or even see, given our current categories and vocabularies, because they exist at these ‘other’ levels.

That said, I would agree that those of us – especially those of us in the global North – seeking to make movement have not been very effective at building sustainable, durable spaces and structures outside the exceptional times and spaces of counter-summits, social forums, etc. Nor have we been very good at recognising that a key level of the success of the global social justice movement has to do with this other level of politics; a level that involves not only the macro defeat of neoliberal institutions and policies but the production and refining of diverse knowledges and capacities. In this sense, it is not that counter-summit protests and other mass

events were ill-advised or bad strategies, but once again, we have not carried the lessons and strong points of those moments through to their logical developments. In other words, we need to figure out how to articulate the new ideas, experiences and practices born at the height of these exceptional moments, more durably to daily life and for a much wider public.

SL Like the movements celebrated in this book, a significant part of the New Left also emphasised decentralisation and localism, symbolic protest, direct action, the empowerment of those who had been marginalised, as well as a commitment to rejecting the mistakes of the traditional Left. Yet many of these attributes are now being championed as unique to current movements for global justice. If “illumination” is a concern – the question of what can and can’t be perceived – shouldn’t an effort be made to place these movements in historical context? And isn’t there real risk, when one is close to, or a participant in, a movement, that one’s assessment may be distorted by proximity?

BT The issue of proximity is an important one. None of the editors want *Turbulence* to become a project in which our own involvement with the movements addressed leads us to becoming so caught up in ‘internal’ movement debates that we lose sight of broader dynamics; or, equally disastrous, that we end up overestimating the (currently rather limited) social relevance of that which is often called the ‘movement of movements’.

I think Lenin’s writing on the function of political newspapers are relevant here. In a text called *Where to Begin?* Lenin argued that newspapers do not just serve the function of propaganda and agitation, but also organisation. “In this last respect”, he said, “it may be likened to the scaffolding round a building under construction, which marks the contours of the structure and facilitates communication between builders, enabling them to distribute the work and to view the common results achieved by their organised labour.”

I think this scaffolding metaphor is helpful. Both the form and the pace of its construction, in order to be of use, needs to be determined by the real productive process of movement building. If it begins moving too rapidly away from that which it is designed to aid in the construction of, it becomes redundant. At the same time however, a certain amount of distance can also open up space for expansion or development in unforeseen directions. The fact that we do not know what the final construction – the movement – will look like means the scaffolding requires a far greater degree of flexibility than if it were simply to aid something clearly designed by a single architect, following a tried and tested blueprint.

Obviously, it is not only newspapers or other publishing projects that serve this function. Social forums, conferences, and other gatherings can also enable a similar process of collective reflection on, and distribution of work within, a process of organisation. We would very much like to think that *Turbulence* could become one part of this movement scaffolding; and we hope that we will be able to judge these

questions of proximity and distance appropriately, although I'm sure we've made plenty of mistakes in this respect already!

I think the issue of repetition is also really interesting. In the opening few pages of *The Eighteenth Brumaire*, Marx describes the way in which revolutionary uprisings or events often invoke past occurrences. He compares this process to learning a language, where a beginner always starts by translating back into her first language. Yet it is only when the mother tongue can be forsaken, and this process of translation left behind, that one can properly enter into the spirit of the new language and start speaking it with fluency. So while it is true that on the one hand, "Tradition from all the dead generations weighs like a nightmare on the brain of the living"; on the other, there is sometimes something enabling and productive in this process of repetition.

I would like to think that much of the (only partial) repetition of the New Left which has characterised the counter-globalisation movement has mostly taken place in this sense. Language of difference, autonomy, opposition to authoritarianism, and the rejection of hierarchy were all characteristics of the movements of the 1960s and 1970s – in the global North at least. And all have been redeployed by the 'movement of movements'. But I think this has largely involved a process of renewal, rather than parody. And as others have argued much more fully elsewhere, changes in the mode of production and regulation, as well as new technological developments, have enabled this process of horizontalisation and the formation of more genuinely-networked networks (like the 'rhizomes' described at the beginning of Deleuze and Guattari's *A Thousand Plateaus*, characterised by de-centredness and many-to-many connections – whilst always *also* still containing centralising or hierarchical elements within them) to go much further than was the case with the New Left.

By and large, this has been a great thing. The problem arises, however, when this returns to being ideology, as was the case with parts of the movements of the '60s and '70s. Certainly, there is a huge amount to be learned from the problems generated by what could be called the 'undemocratic' movement practices of yesteryear (where democracy is understood as the ability of everyone to fully participate in the constitution of society). But ideological opposition to experimentation with, for example, 'mass' forms of political organisation that tend to involve some form of delegation and representation; or cooperation with 'non-autonomous' social actors, such as trade unions or political parties, on the basis of maintaining difference/identity/'autonomy' can be tremendously debilitating.

Rather than defending identities *per se*, surely the idea ought to become creating forms and practices where difference no longer provides the basis for establishing hierarchies of privilege. And to be sure, there are strong tendencies within the 'movement of movements' in this direction of identitarianism. But my feeling is that these stand for a politics that already, long ago, ran up against its limits. I feel that there's an increasing recognition of this. There seems to be a new pragmatics infused with the knowledge, experience and sometimes 'ethics' of past movements; but nevertheless with a greater openness towards experimentation with organisational forms, the

building of transversal connections between micropolitical struggles, and a larger emphasis on *becoming* over being than was often the case with the New Left.

MO This question seems to have multiple levels of concern: on the one hand there appears to be a simple factual or empirical question. Just how ‘new’ are the logics, visions and effects discussed at length in this book, and often associated with the post-Seattle movements for global justice, really? But, on the other, this question itself has to do with assumptions about the nature of history and progress, as well as what the relationship between knowledge and social change is or should be.

I have actually been quite struck by how concerned people seem to be about whether or not it is true that the movements for global justice offer unique or new political insights and approaches. However, rather than concerning myself with answering that question directly, I have become quite interested in why people ask it. What is at stake? I suppose at one level it seems obvious: clearly one wants to be as accurate as possible. After all, we live in a society where competitions over truth-claims seem to posit the difference between accepting reality or denying it (just think about the ‘scientific debates’ on global climate change, for instance.) But at another level it might be interesting to step back for a moment and ask why. Why does it matter if the ‘movement of movements’ is new or different from past movements, like those that emerged in the late 1960s and are associated with the New Left? What assumptions, fears or anxieties underlie the concern about whether the claim to uniqueness is false? What would it mean if the qualities being lauded were *not* new or unique? What happens if they are actually repetitions?

I want to suggest that if we start thinking seriously about these questions we can begin to see that underlying the seemingly obvious or neutral curiosity about the accuracy of claims to novelty, are rather strong normative positions about the nature of history, progress and reality itself. These positions and rationalities not only shape possible interpretations, they also make or obscure other ways of doing politics.

One interpretation that would understandably lead to concern is one based on the idea that these movements are simply repeating past mistakes. That is the New Left’s vision or theory of social change that emphasised decentralisation, localism, micropolitics, etc. was wrong then; and using a correspondence model of history, movements must be wrong now. This interpretation also presumes that it is because of an error inherent to their political analysis that the New Left failed. (The error itself could have been caused by a number of things, for example the Left misread or misunderstood the real nature of what they were against, the particularities of the conjuncture, etc.) I think this belief is the source of much of the anxiety about just how new the ‘movement of movements’ really is. However, I would also suggest that not too far beneath the surface of these worries lies a particular normative view that treats history as progressive, linear, and often working like a zero-sum game. In this way of viewing things, *knowing* whether these movements are the same or similar to those in the past, is important because repetition means lack of progress.

Or, at the very best, it indicates an inability to learn from past failures. In either case the implication is that ‘really knowing’ our history – in this case, recognising that these practices are at least to some extent *not* new – should convince us that there is really nothing to be gained from (re)investing in the approach. After all, these practices were already proven to be failures. And moreover that any excitement and hope surrounding these positive beliefs actually distracts us from the *real work* of inventing politics that would actually count as new. This I would argue is quite a pervasive view, and helps us understand why so many people are concerned with whether or not there is something new here.

But what if it was not the fact that the analyses and practices of the New Left were wrong, but that they were never taken far enough? What if the guiding theories, visions, and implicit strategies etc were right, but that for a number of reasons the New Left never achieved success? We know that even according to its own analyses, true success would require complete transformation of the cultural, epistemological and ontological foundations of the then present. In other words, the changes required were so radical and thorough that even activists and others who believed in overturning the capitalist system – which they viewed as much more than an economic system – were unable to go far enough. (Whether that was because they didn’t have enough time, they were themselves too deeply entrenched in the dominant culture, or the political and economic Right were effective in interfering, is an important question but not necessary to answer here.)

SL I would disagree that placing movements in historical perspective leads one down the slippery path to a positivist notion of ‘progress’. Attempting to get a handle on history, including the history of prior struggles, debates, successes and failures, has great value. It allows us to resurrect tools from the past to arm ourselves in the present, to take a hard look at where the Left may be repeating its mistakes, to think strategically while taking a long view, and even to ask some of the questions that you are posing above.

I raised the question of ‘originality’ because I’ve been intrigued by the frequency of claims by participants that these movements are unique and have broken with the earlier *modus operandi* of the Left (including in your piece “‘Becoming-Woman?’ In Theory or Practice’ where you write that current movements embody and posit ‘deliberate reactions to the practical and theoretical failures of previous political approaches of the Left.’) The reality strikes me as something quite different – that there is, in fact, much more continuity than rupture. The question I would counterpose is that, given this, why are today’s movements so invested in seeming new? What’s at stake for them?

MO To begin with, I want to stress that I do not at all dismiss the importance of learning from history. In fact, the argument I am making, both in this interview and in ‘Becoming-Woman?’, is premised on the importance of historical knowledge, interest, and interrogation. Claims to uniqueness, novelty, and rupture by no means

negate historical trajectories and lineages; they are in fact premised on them. In fact, while one might assume that narratives of continuity and rupture are opposed, I want to suggest that they are mutually constitutive and dependent on each other. For it is only with historical knowledge and understanding that we can begin to claim that our *current* politics are attempts to address the failures of *past* politics. In other words, the very argument that our current political movements are deliberately enacting forms of politics and movement meant to address the pitfalls of old models, suggests that we know and seek to understand what those past politics were and why they failed. Whether our understandings of what those past failures were is accurate is another question altogether, but I want to be clear that I in no way refute the importance of placing movements in historical context, nor assume that all attempts at putting movements in historical context are necessarily premised on positivist notions of progress.

That said, I do wonder whether, underlying this question about newness and originality, there weren't also certain conscious or unconscious positivist and/or historicist assumptions and anxieties at play. In general I think many of us on the 'Left' are plagued by a certain latent historicism, the sense that if we could just get it right, ultimately we will achieve victory against capitalism. (Borrowing from Derrida, I could suggest that this is perhaps one of Marx's many spectres that continues to haunt us and our visions of social change.)

I return to my earlier response: There is a difference in the assumption that the New Left failed because its theories and political ideals – i.e. horizontalism, anti-hierarchy, localism, etc. – were themselves inherently flawed, and a view that argues that the theories guiding the New Left were not taken far enough.

Here it is critical to see that the political analysis that accompanies commitment to localism, decentralisation, horizontality, etc. is itself based on a recognition that beyond the macro-institutional and economic systems, culture and micro-politics form the terrain where hegemonies of the current economic and political regimes maintain themselves. This means that the dominance of these systems are both manifested in and dependent upon various cultural elements, including subjectivity, social institutions and social relations, the unspoken rules that govern the micro-practices of daily life; as well as cultural logics such as progress, individualism, and identity. As such, successful strategies of resistance must confront not only the political-institutional and economic manifestations of neoliberal capitalist globalisation, but also, and at the same time, the foundational cultural logics and the everyday practices and social relations that both constitute, produce, and make the dominance of these systems possible. This is especially important because these logics and practices all too often manifest themselves among organisations that call themselves progressive – including many movement organisations, and certainly the traditional Left. The conception of history as linear and progressive, as well as the notion that there is one certain path to revolution, are both examples of how these logics persist.

As such, to engage in effective struggle requires radically challenging not only a current economic or political system; but enacting, sustaining and cultivating other ways of being. But rethinking and remaking the ways we are and do in the world is a tremendous task, one that requires a great deal of time and space for elaborating, experimenting and even failing at times. Rather than dismiss the apparent repetitions as products of historical ignorance, it might be more helpful to see them as attempts to take these practices farther, aware of the limitations of past attempts, but optimistic about the possibilities that trying again, *differently*, might bring.

The important point is to recognise that there is a fundamental difference here between a perspective that sees the repetition of many things that characterised the New Left as evidence of ignorance and naïveté, and a likely indicator of current movements' meagre prospects; and another approach that sees the repetition as a *possibility for more thorough follow-through* – 'renewing' as Ben says. This renewal is itself based on critically engaging with earlier attempts, but also builds on the innovations and changes brought about by technological advances and global connectedness, on the one hand, but also by the lessons, cultural practices and ideals and more intensive engagements with the legacies of the 1960s and the New Left, on the other – including in particular, more intensive understandings of the meaning and value of radical ontological difference, and the partiality of any view or subject position.

I have always found the temporal politics of judging movements quite perplexing: we are talking on the one hand about a system and culture – 'Western Capitalist Modernity' – that has been violently and systemically fought for, produced, defended, and entrenched for several centuries, and yet we expect 'movements' to somehow be able to successfully overthrow that system (of which we are all largely products) and remake society anew in a matter of a few years or decades? That expectation seems unrealistic and indeed part of the problem.

Claiming newness and rupture, then, is not necessarily about false consciousness or denying history but potentially the most natural and hopeful claim someone can make. Again, newness does not mean rejecting everything from the past. It means rearticulating it. It also suggests recognising that the past (even the past of the Left) is dense and multiple.

There's a beautiful Zapatista quote that is relevant here: "We will walk then the same path of history, but we will not repeat it; we are from before, yes, but we are new." Not only have the Zapatistas inspired many all over the world with their understanding of the need for a humble and reflexive approach that changes while it unfolds, they are themselves the products of profound clashes between radically different subjects who challenge simplistic divisions between 'old' and 'new': e.g. clashes between urban guerrillas who tried to bring Marxist visions of social change to indigenous communities, only to find that rather than convince the indigenous that they held the recipe for revolution, they were themselves transformed by learning that indigenous communities had their own systems of knowledge and politics, many that were profoundly more democratic and sustainable. Inherent in

the Zapatista valorisation and use of history, then, is precisely this double-movement: a recognition of their connection to diverse pasts, diverse revolutionary efforts; part of a long, enduring path, with tumultuous curves and twists, and the continuous and inevitable production of new realities along this path that gives one the possibility and necessity of being new. In this way of seeing things, repetition is not a real risk or possibility, because the subjects walking the path are necessarily constituted by all the sediment, cultural, technological and otherwise left behind, on the hand, and by the difference of the present: the possibility of *this time, this place, maybe*, getting it right – or at least doing it better. (For as some philosophers and the Zapatistas remind us, what we call repetition can only exist with the constitutive and generative presence of difference.)

SL Most of these essays assume that the common ground between these numerous movements is opposition to capitalism. But is that a fair assumption? Many people in these movements take to the streets against the market, neoliberalism, or against corporations, but that doesn't necessarily mean they oppose capitalism as a system.

MO Certainly, I agree. Not everyone who has participated in the movements against the World Bank, G8, NAFTA, etc. would identify themselves as anti-capitalist, nor would they perhaps agree with our calling them that. But I guess to that I would say that the term itself doesn't matter all that much. (And I might even be convinced – though I think other editors might disagree – that perhaps we need to find a better word, one that is not so loaded historically and theoretically for people.) I would argue that even those working with a rather limited (reformist) agenda, seeking to curb the power of the G8 and other institutional sites of corporate driven neoliberal globalisation without undoing capitalism completely, have also been inspired, energised and motivated at least in part by the anti-systemic nature and effects of the 'new' politics of the 'movement of movements' – whether they recognise it or not. In other words the qualities that excite people – the network form, the diversity, the affect (all part of a minoritarian political modality) that so many people from various political stripes speak so much about – resonate and work precisely because they hit against, and between, something that is far bigger and more systemic than the specific economic policies of the WTO, IMF or multinational corporations. They hit against an entire culture of politics, and at the same time, they reveal the cultural foundations of the political and economic institutions they are seeking to reform.

It is only when we consider the political analysis accompanying commitments to decentralisation, horizontality, localism that we can begin to understand that those things that make people identify with the 'movement of movements,' have everything to do with their discovering a different cultural-political modality. A cultural-political modality that becomes visible as it reveals and discovers sites and possibilities for disrupting the present, a present that is decidedly and systemically capitalist. Again, we could also call the system something else. The point is recognising that there is an entire system and culture, not simply a set of bad economic

policies or institutions that we are struggling against. And the fact is even if we don't use the label, we discover this when victories, or the 'affect of winning', accompanies events and things that don't neatly translate into traditional ways of measuring political outcomes.

In addition, part of what was so powerful about social movements' experiences in recent years was – rather than proceed according to a map or plan for social change, whether that was defined as defeating capitalism, or simply demanding certain reforms – the ways in which working with such a diversity of actors and experiences brought in the unexpected. Such that it was not only, or even primarily, the contents of our movements, but also our very form, that could, often unexpectedly, both create (new) cracks and reveal myriad existing gaps and holes in the dominant (capitalist) system. A system that is as much dependent on people thinking that there is only one way of being and doing – economics, community, social relations – and that certain human characteristics are both natural and inevitable, rather than a product of this system, as it is in accumulating profits.

So to reiterate: although I agree that many people are committed to very pragmatic, 'achievable,' or reformist goals against neoliberalism and the economic hegemony of today, and do not subscribe to the *label* of anti-capitalist, this does not mean that their political effectiveness does not register at a more systemic level – whether we call it anti-capitalist or something else.

BT OK, in answering this question, let me take a very quick detour through Marx's critique of capitalism – what he called his critique of political economy – and how it applies to the way we live and work today, before trying to explain what this has to do with the political practice of the counter-globalisation movement or the global Left.

Personally, I think it is more useful to think not about 'capital-ism' as a *system*, but about 'capital' as a *social relation*. Most of us, today, live in a situation in which we are denied access to the means of our own reproduction: food, shelter, clothing, the latest iPhone, whatever. Our bare survival and everything else, in other words, is premised on selling our time on the market in return for a wage. Of course, in some places, a welfare state still exists. But this increasingly serves, on the one hand, as a cushion to absorb frustrations likely to lead us to rebel rather than starve; and on the other, to provide some kind of a 'post-industrial' reserve army that allows average wages to be kept low.

In the process of selling our time, we do not only generate enough 'wealth' to cover that received in our wages, but also a surplus which is appropriated. 'Capital' is the name of both this relation of exploitation, as well as one pole within it. Once locked inside this relation, there is a constant attempt on behalf of capital to increase the surplus extracted. This happens through increasing the length of the average working day: cutting back on holiday periods, reducing the length of breaks, getting people to stay late or come in early, requiring work at the weekend, encouraging workers to take their work home with them, etc. This is what Marx describes as

the process of ‘absolute surplus value extraction’. At the same time, capital tries to increase efficiency: introducing new technologies, rearranging the labour-process, imposing discipline through surveillance, encouraging self-discipline by increasing workers’ control over the productive process (as was the case, for example, at Toyota). Translated into Marxian: this is, very broadly speaking, ‘relative surplus value extraction’.

Individual capitalists, of course, might be more or less philanthropic. Or more or less innovative in extending or intensifying periods of worker exploitation. But taken at a total social level, there is a constantly waged class struggle from above geared towards increasing absolute and relative surplus extraction. The only limits to this are, on the one hand, natural (the working day obviously cannot be extended beyond 24 hours, and at some point a worker would simply drop dead), and on the other, determined by class struggle from below.

Again, struggles against the extension of the working day (or for its shortening), or against the introduction of new technologies or the restructuring of the labour process, have been far more intensive in some regions, periods and industries than others. But taken as a whole, all these struggles play an extremely important role in determining the rate of exploitation.

Looked at in this way, it is not *only* those of us consciously involved with the counter-globalisation movement whose everyday lives are embedded in these relations of antagonism, but the vast majority of humanity. Simply living today – whether that is understood as bare survival, or struggling for a better existence – implies resistance to capital’s never ending efforts to intensify exploitation. A very large part of the ‘movement of movements’ in the global North has tended to focus on this process of exploitation as it manifests itself in its most extreme form, such as sweatshops in parts of the global South. Likewise, it has often addressed the commodification of nature and the ecological crises this is generating; as well as conflicts over resources, such as oil. For me, this means that the movement is anti-capitalist whether or not it describes itself as such. It takes on the very logic described above, as well as many of its by-products (enclosure and war, for example). I don’t think that there is really any necessity for the movement to always call itself ‘anti-capitalist’, and some of the alternatives it proposes of course do not break entirely with capital’s logic, but it is important to recognise what it is that the movement is in conflict with.

What should be pointed out, however, is the extent to which the movement in the global North – including those parts which *do* explicitly regard themselves as anti-capitalist or ‘revolutionary’ – fails to translate this into a political practice directed towards their own involvement in processes of social production and reproduction.

SL On the other hand, by defining resistance to capitalism so broadly, one might conclude that there is no reason to build movements, think strategically, or even figure out how to win people over to an anti-capitalist outlook – since through the labour process, we’re all effectively involved in resisting capitalism. And the claim

that it isn't really important if people identify capitalism as the ultimate enemy raises similar concerns. There is nothing intrinsically anti-capitalist about opposition to 'globalisation', itself a tremendously murky term, which for radicals may mean the expansion of capital on a global scale, but for others may mean the contamination of supposedly pristine national cultures by undesirable foreigners. Shouldn't the fact that much of the Right is against 'globalisation' give us pause in assuming that a simply oppositional stance will lead people to taking on the system of capitalism, rather than pursuing potential red herrings like defending 'national sovereignty'?

BT There are at least two separate issues at stake here. First of all, you are of course correct that there are a number of serious dangers involved with pursuing a politics of 'anti-globalisation.' The Right, around the world, have generally been critical of what they regard as the erosion of national identities and sovereignty; something the Left, or the radical Left at least, would tend to celebrate. Much of the global movement, however, has been fairly clear that its opposition is far more to a particular kind of *neoliberal* globalisation, than to the opening of borders to movement, communication and hybridisation in general. It is a movement founded in opposition to the reality it emerges from, but whose practices and discourses – albeit somewhat incoherently – *propose a different kind of globalisation*. Of course, with the attempt to repeat earlier European imperialist projects during the era of the Bush administration, much of the Left returned to a language of anti-imperialism. This was often rooted in an uncritical relationship to the notions of 'the nation', 'sovereignty' and so on. The failure of these so-called 'new imperialist' projects, in both Iraq and Afghanistan, will likely also present a problem for 'anti-imperialism' – where 'critical' solidarity tends to be expressed with anyone resisting the projection of a nation state's sovereignty beyond its own borders. As more multilateral efforts are sought to impose a particular kind of stability in those regions, I imagine the global Left will begin rethinking the way in which a resurgent Empire can be resisted.

The other issue you raise, about whether we should be attempting to win people over to an anti-capitalist outlook, I understand as addressed to the questions of consciousness, spontaneity and organisation. These are difficult questions which were dealt with extensively by the workers' movement at the beginning of the last century and which still have not been resolved. To be sure, I believe there is an important role for organization. Moreover, I believe that we have yet to discover organisational forms capable of adequately dealing with the changed composition of the working class brought about by the uneven but definite move from the era of Fordism/Keynesianism to post-Fordism/neoliberalism – let alone the as yet to be determined mutations the current epoch is about to go through as a result of the current economic crisis. For the Left, the project of experimenting with and developing new organisational forms is, then, one of the most important with which it is confronted.

At the same time, what our text, *Move into the Light?*, is all about is trying to recognise that movements do not always emerge where we expect, or take forms or

use a language which those of us on the Left necessarily immediately recognise in their radicality. It is precisely the fact that struggles sometimes emerge where they are least expected which poses the biggest challenge to the development of organizational forms. The task is to try and create modes of institutionalising movements into sustainable forms of counter-power, but where this institutionalisation does not imply sedentarism. We need institutions which can move, because the world never really stands still.

SL It's certainly fair to criticise the Left's past dogmatic approach – what you call the 'old-school politics of certainty' – but it appears that these movements have swung to the opposite end of the spectrum. That leaves one with a very nebulous sense of what unifies them, aside from a limited opposition to the free market. And isn't there a danger in celebrating fragmentation and fluidity of organisation, when these characteristics may signal the weakness of these movements and the lack of unity between them? Just as we may be blind to our successes, might we mistakenly see our limitations as strengths?

MO I think that this is a very important question, and one that we do need to devote serious energy to – but I don't see it so much as a problem of positing and celebrating fragmented and fluid organisation against unity. Rather it is a matter of finding ways of imagining forms of unity that also allow for difference, flexibility, and dispersion. I say this because not only would I suggest that these would be more durable and effective versions of unity, they also run less risk of reproducing the forms of problematic social relations discussed in previous questions. At the same time it is also a matter of recognising that part of the ethic in which fluidity and fragmentation might be celebrated, has corollary principles including partiality, reflexivity, and contingency. As such we can only take these seriously if we do not turn fluidity and fragmentation into hard and fast ideologies or 'rules for good movements,' that would then not be open to the particularity and specificity of different circumstances and contexts.

This is largely a matter of perspective, and we might ask, what is at stake in claiming unity on the one hand, versus fluidity/fragmentation on the other? I would suggest that generally the concern that drives people to want more unity, and less fragmentation is the feeling or belief that in order to be effective we need to create such a powerful opposition that we are able to defeat the enemy or force it to make concessions. And moreover, that part of why we haven't been effective is that we can never put all our energies together to exert enough power against capitalism to defeat it, and then in Negri and Hardt's words, "push through ...to come out the other side."

However I would argue that fluid, diverse and disperse struggles can cumulatively exert forces that are potentially even more powerful. Not only by opposing capitalism, but by revealing and discovering cracks and holes that are already here (often as a result of prior oppositions), cracks that we can push open and connect. The effect of this might be to lessen capital's strength not simply by taking it down battle style, but by proliferating so many other ways of being that capitalism is no

longer as central, necessary and powerful in determining the order of things, or at least how people perceive the order of things.

Here we might consider the distinction between ubiquity and totality, and the corollary visions of social change that accompany them. There is a huge difference between imagining a movement that manages to be everywhere, even if differently, and a unified mass movement that clearly comes from somewhere and whose inside is easily delimitable from its outside. As Gibson-Graham and others have pointed out, feminism is an excellent example of the former: an effective and transformative movement that worked less by building massive united organisations and alliances, and more through generating cultural consciousness, tools and ethics that spread virally and differently, ultimately including many people over vast geographies without ever fitting the description of a unity.

The common denominator, whether recognised by everyone in this way or not is that in the common experiences of opposition to a current way of organising the present, people have discovered different things, but underlying those different things is the common idea and possibility that other forms of politics, other ways of being, are possible, and already being co-created. You are right, though, we definitely need to spend more time discussing, discovering and articulating these because there is a tremendous strength gained by seeing how our different projects, strategies, and tools work together, even when not fully coordinated. It makes you recognise that things can and do work, and are not simply symbolic. But again, we need to articulate them not as if we are looking to establish new blueprints or road maps. We need to be able to share our stories, ideas, and narratives so that we can tease out commonalities, and even perhaps give us a better insight into what does work and doesn't without creating new dogmatisms.

BT I would answer both 'yes' and 'no' to both these questions. *No*, because I think it is useful to *begin* with a negative definition of the movement: not *for* a particular kind of socialism, for example; but first and foremost, *against* capitalism, or the free market, or whatever.

But yes, you are right, this is not enough. This negative moment can only be the very beginning. If we say 'Another World Is Possible', which of course it is, it seems ridiculous to fail or refuse to talk about what that world would or could look like. I tried to address this question in the article, 'Walking in the Right Direction?', included in this book. I talked about the (albeit often limited) role that demands have played in previous movements as well as current experiments with so-called 'directional demands'. To briefly summarise, I proposed the articulation of demands which fulfill certain criteria. Firstly, their realisation – either individually, or when taken together – should necessitate a break with capitalist social relations. Secondly, they should aim towards constituting commonalities amongst a vast multiplicity of social subjects, rather than privileging one (like the male industrial worker, for example). Thirdly, there should be no single point, or limit on the number of points,

from which demands can be articulated; rather this articulation should take place through the movement of antagonistic social subjects. Finally, the demands should not follow a logic of linear accumulation, or traditional notions of ‘progress’ or ‘development’; but rather should have as their aim a ‘deterritorialisation’ which opens things up for new possibilities and potentialities.

The two examples I cited of possible directional demands, going some way towards fulfilling these criteria, were ‘a universal basic income’, and something like ‘freedom of movement’ and/or ‘the right to remain/legalisation’. On the one level, both contain the potential to create rupture within capitalist social relations. A guaranteed income, delinked from productivity requirements, undermines one of the fundamental characteristics of capitalism: the requirement to sell one’s labour-power in order to survive (unless of course one owns considerable property!) And an undoing of mechanisms of migration management would also pose an enormous challenge to a global regime of accumulation based on the attribution of different economic values to labour performed in different locations.

Equally important, however, is the fact that these demands – or perhaps general ‘desires’, like for the reappropriation of the social wealth we produce, or to move freely – *already exist*. What I was not proposing is to come up with a renewal of Lenin’s famous formulation: electrification + soviets = communism (something perhaps like: reappropriation + global citizenship = what ever it is that we say instead of ‘communism’ today). I don’t believe in these kind of magic formulas. What I think we need to do, though, is both think about the ways in which those of us involved with social movements can start using a language which does not sound antiquated, and which explains what we want in a way that seeks to find resonance (rather than simply reproduce identity, as is so often the case with a lot of what the Left says and does). Equally important is to start listening more closely to the demands, desires and ideas of others. We need to start training ourselves to recognise the radicality in a lot of what people say and do which often go unnoticed because it does not pass as the usual way of doing or talking ‘politics’ (whatever that is!)

Fragmentation is certainly nothing to celebrate (although you are right, it very often is). And ‘unity’ is not really something I think we should be striving for. At least, not in the way it has generally been conceived philosophically, or in terms of its previous deployment by the ‘traditional’ Left. Michal mentioned Hardt and Negri, and I think that their work on the notion of ‘multitude’ is useful in this respect, particularly in the way it builds on the Spinozian rejection of a binary opposition between the ‘One’ and the ‘many’.

For me, the placing of primacy on the agency of the male, industrial worker by traditional Marxist-Leninism involved a problematic sublimation of difference in the name of unity. Involved with this process was not only a serious limit on the extent to which the workers’ movements could articulate both the needs and the desires of the range of social subjects in whose interests it claimed to be acting; but also a serious obscuration of important terrains of anti-capitalist struggle outside

the direct realm of industrial production. However, the polar opposite of this position – a blind faith in ‘spontaneism’, a retreat to identity politics, a total rejection of everything that seeks to pursue change on the level of macropolitics – is, albeit in very different ways, equally unsatisfactory.

What Hardt and Negri, and others like Paolo Virno, have tried to do with the concept of multitude is to think a social subject which is internally heterogeneous, yet nevertheless manages to constitute a coherent social actor. ‘Unity’ is not really the goal; but rather to uncover and create *commonalities* amongst a vast multiplicity of singularities. Whether or not people choose to work with the term, I think this notion of multitude is very helpful when considering this question of organisation.

SL You describe how movements can coalesce around opposition to something, as happened in Seattle, Genoa, Cancún and Heiligendamm, and these moments can lead from the strictly oppositional to advocating a positive agenda. But beyond potentially improved strategy and tactics, what shared ideas are coming out of these gatherings?

BT These movements were, first and foremost, oppositional movements. The nuns and queers, environmentalists and trade unionists, anarchists and communists who took to the streets of Seattle – and the similarly contradictory constellations of actors which have since appeared in Genoa, Cancún and Heiligendamm, to pick up on the examples you cite – at first glance, do not have that much in common. Their immediate interests and stated objectives appear at odds with one another. Yet they were nevertheless able to discover something that they had in common: a shared opposition to the present.

And in many ways, I think it is a helpful way for movements to define themselves. As John Holloway has argued much more powerfully elsewhere, movements’ negative self-definition often allows them to avoid falling into sectarian discussions and debates about how, precisely, the world would – or could – be remade in the future. It enables communists, anarchists, socialists, radical-ecologists and others to establish a common – negative – struggle: *against capitalism*. And in and through developing this common struggle, new ways of relating, being and becoming end up coming about anyway. And it is these practices which open room for new, shared ideas.

MO I see the fact of these collective discoveries that Ben mentions – the discoveries of new ways of relating, being, etc. – as an important part of what might be called a common-sense that has emerged out of recent movements. It is no coincidence that so many of the most repeated and resonant terms to emerge from the global mobilisations – including the Zapatista ‘*caminar preguntando*,’ (to walk while questioning), the notion of ‘open space’ and encounter – point to a way of creating the ideas and theories of our movements in a very ongoing and reflexive way. As such it is not a matter of finding a way of defining the ideas, objectives and visions of the movement and then using that definition as a blue-print, or map; but rather discovering a new way of producing theories and analysis in ways that are more attentive to

contingency, particularity, etc. The fact that so many ideas have been ‘discovered’ in and through political events, rather than out of more abstract or intellectual efforts, is a testament to the fact that *how* and where ideas and theories gets produced, has everything to do with how effective they will be.

SL This interview is being conducted while the capitalist financial system is in freefall. It may be too early to tell, but it appears as if neoliberalism is in serious trouble and a more overtly interventionist state – or rather, a more *visibly* interventionistic state, since a *laissez-faire* system is dependent on massive state involvement to undergird markets and protect private property – is in the offing. Going back to my earlier question about how one might organise to try to limit capital from co-opting oppositional demands in moments of upheaval or crisis, what might such organisation look like at this juncture, which presents substantial opportunities as well as hazards?

BT It is important to be clear what this crisis is. To be sure, it first manifested itself in the financial sector, but it is more than a financial crisis. It is a very material crisis of capitalism. The fact that the financial sector and the so-called ‘real’ economy are not as separate as some seem to think would always have ensured this was the case. Moreover, though, the situation within what is generally considered the ‘real’ economy (the auto-industry, retail, or international trade for instance) is visibly deepening by the day. The crisis is also an ideological crisis for neoliberalism, from which it may never recover. In his end of year address, British Prime Minister (and former Chancellor of the Exchequer) Gordon Brown declared 2008 ‘A year in which an old era of unbridled free market dogma was finally ushered out.’

There has been much talk of late of a ‘New New Deal’ or a ‘Green New Deal’. Endless parallels have been drawn between the situation in which President Obama finds himself, and that of Franklyn D. Roosevelt, elected amidst the Great Depression in the 1930s. FDR’s New Deal was of course an effort to save capitalism from itself, whilst simultaneously heading off efforts by workers and the Left to bring about more systemic change. Doing so, however, involved granting workers considerable concessions which improved their lot vis-à-vis capital. The welfare state was invested in, a minimum wage introduced, and real wages rose.

Although different in composition to that which preceded it, out of this New Deal Keynesianism again arose a politically strong and demanding working class, to which the neoliberal counter-attack eventually emerged at around the beginning of the 1970s. You are right, of course, that some of the strongest proponents of neoliberal ideology – which argued that social wealth and resources are best allocated by the market, because only there can individuals’ pursuit of their self-interest somehow be transformed into social progress – were hypocritical. They very often saw fit to intervene, when it was in their own interest. David Harvey’s *Brief History of Neoliberalism* describes this brilliantly. However, neoliberalism did largely involve the stripping back of social provision and the welfare state, combined with extensive privatisation and financialisation. The ‘deal’ neoliberalism offered was

very different to that of Keynesianism, but it was a deal nonetheless. In return for increased precarisation and the stagnation or fall in real wage levels, cheap credit was granted to workers and the poor – enabled in part by low interest rates and a deregulated financial market underwritten by rising house prices. (Increased access to cheap commodities produced in China and elsewhere and made readily available on the world market, of course, also played a role.) As the term ‘credit crunch’ implies, much of this deal is now null-and-void.

Whatever comes next will not be neoliberalism, or not in the form in which we knew it up until now at least. In itself, this is not necessarily a cause for celebration of course. Indeed, there are few immediate indicators for optimism. Both the neoliberal ‘deal’ described above, as well as FDR’s New Deal, were struck in periods characterised by a far stronger workers’ movement and Left than we can claim today. It is the balance of forces and the way in which the struggles between them play out which will determine the future, and at the moment the odds do not look good.

At the same time, however, we could of course be on the precipice of a new cycle of struggles. History suggests that movements do not so much emerge out of poverty and immiseration as such, but more in response to perceived injustices and peoples’ expectations not being met. The generation of so-called ‘Baby Boomers’, whose expectations of entitlement and prosperity were formed during their childhood in the post-war economic boom period of the 1950s, have similarly shaped many of those of the younger generation. As many of the Baby Boomers realise their pensions are perhaps not as full or secure as they had expected, and as the younger generations face increasing insecurity, real wage stagnation and price increases, there is the potential for something to emerge which might contribute towards evening the odds.

Without a doubt, capital will attempt to co-opt oppositional demands. But as yet there are currently very few demands (anti-capitalist or otherwise) being articulated, and more importantly: not much of a movement to articulate them. As such, the issue as to how co-optation can be avoided appears a little premature to say the least.

SL Many of the pieces in this book focus on what happens when movements lose momentum, ossify, or flame out, and how new directions may materialise from the impasse. How true has this been within these movements of the global justice movement? Have you witnessed any promising directions emerging recently?

BT New directions, new movement bodies, always emerge from impasses. Antagonism is built into the capital relation, struggle and conflict is always there and always produced anew. And in the process of struggle, desires emerge and find resonances; new organisational forms and political practices are created. Obviously, this should not lead to complacency. There is no automatism that whatever comes next (or might already be here, unrecognised) will help move things in a ‘better’ direction.

Towards the end of *Move into the Light?*, we talk about the need to flirt with the death of our own movement. Bodies – understood in the Spinozian sense, set out above – always involve ‘internal’ movement, and are always defined in part by their

relation to other bodies. This is no different for the counter-globalisation movement. As 'particles' within the movement begin to move at different speeds, it changes. And this in turn changes the way it relates to everything which is other; or said differently, changes its capacity to affect others. Likewise, as other bodies to which it relates undergo a transformation, *their* capacity to affect – and indeed to be affected – also changes, often transforming the speed and relation between particles within each of the various bodies relating to one another.

If we think about movements in this way, it makes the idea of preserving a particular movement body seem nonsensical. Its very existence, in other words, is *defined by movement* and relations that are constantly in flux. We're neither able to entirely control the way in which the infinite number of particles within the movement's body relate to one another (in fact, usually we can't even identify them all); let alone the precise nature of the relationship to other bodies. As such, we need to be far more accepting of the idea of letting go of identities than is often the case within the counter-globalisation and other movements.

As to whether or not there are any encouraging instances of the formation of new bodies, or an increase in the movement's ability to effect change, this is something that we will have to wait and see. To be certain, though, there is some cause for optimism. I think the current movement impasse *has* encouraged a renewed openness, including towards closer cooperation with elements previously considered by some to be 'outside' the movement – or at least, outside its more radical area. In the global North, the Block G8 blockades of the Heiligendamm Summit – which involved antifascists, liberation theologians, party youth organisations, autonomous groups, elements of the trade union movement, the anti-war and anti-nuclear movements, and others – was a strong example of this. In the South, the Zapatistas, as ever, have been involved with an interesting process of experimentation through the Other Campaign, where they sought to connect their own, indigenous struggle to that of workers, students and other peasants throughout Mexico and the world. Of course, there were problems with and limits to the Block G8 process; and by all accounts, the Other Campaign has stumbled into plenty of problems of its own. But a readiness to experiment is, in general, an encouraging thing.

MO I will just conclude by reiterating (and echoing part of what Ben has just said): the resonance of *Turbulence* points to a general openness and desire for action, outside of dogmatic, sectarian identities and ideologies. This is definitely a good sign. I also think people and groups have matured and learned from what worked and what didn't over the past 15 (or so) years, and these lessons are very much alive in the collective memories of loads of people that are still very active. The US Social Forum that took place in Atlanta about a month after Heiligendamm was an incredible manifestation of this maturity and capacity to improve and develop institutional and coalitional spaces based on taking recent lessons and critiques of other Forums and of organising very seriously.

I also think that recent crises and conditions the world over – including the rising price of food, the decline of the US economy and US hegemony more generally, the increasingly felt effects of climate change – while incredibly distressing and frightening at one level, also pose the possibility of making the issues and struggles that the global justice movement has raised time and time again more relevant and resonant to a broader public. They can also be an opportunity for developing and bringing the lessons of other ways of living to more and different spaces, even those who never considered themselves part of or affine with movements. I think if there was ever a moment in which our movements and the knowledges and ideas generated by them can gain traction and grow, we are there, but it could also go very, very differently. An old and overused Gramsci quote is very *à propos* – we could definitely use a good dose of “optimism of the will,” but always tempered by “pessimism of the intellect.”

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