



INSURGENT ENCOUNTERS

Transnational Activism, Ethnography, & the Political

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CONCLUSION

The Possibilities, Limits, and Relevance of Engaged Ethnography

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In these final pages we want to draw out some of the epistemological, ontological, and political possibilities, limitations, and tensions that have been revealed through our explorations of the insurgent encounters presented in this volume. We have sought to draw attention not only to engaged research and activism as a series of complex, diverse, and overlapping encounters (among and between researchers, activists, movements, dominant institutions, systems of power, commitments, positions, knowledges, and so on) but also to their subversive and productive potential. Indeed, as Alex Khasnabish illustrates in his contribution, networked spaces of transnational encounter give rise to unanticipated connections, radical imaginations, and political possibilities. At the same time, such spaces of encounter are always traversed by power, conflict, and inequality. In this sense, as Jeffrey Juris critically explores in his chapter, the intentionality through which spaces of encounter are constructed is always already shaped by prevailing injustices and exclusions.

Although hypermasculinist and militaristic overtones are impossible to disentangle from the language of insurgency, as noted in our introduction, we continue to invoke this discourse as a gesture to forms of intervention that unsettle dominant accounts and systems of power, clearing the way for new acts of imagination and constitution. In her chapter

on the global indigenous movement, Sylvia Escárcega offers just such an “unsettling” account, describing the new paradigms that indigenous activists are proposing as a way to transform dominant understandings of humanity, the world, and nature. In her contribution, M. K. Sterpka draws on historiography and ethnography to offer a compelling depiction of early forms of transnational civil society networking before the rise of the Internet. This chapter is a testament not only to the importance of networked ethnography but also to the lesser known, yet foundational struggles for information freedom whose impact continues to resonate. These narratives subvert the authority of dominant voices that seek to legitimate what is, instead offering paths for envisioning what might be.

SUBJECTIVITY, PERIL, AND PROMISE

It is important to honestly and critically confront one of the core premises at the heart of this volume: that our politically committed ethnographic practice and the social justice struggles with which we engage constitute significant challenges to the status quo. As Manisha Desai contends in her chapter, however, ethnography’s contribution to social justice struggles may not be as expansive as we might hope. Our most important role may be limited to that of the “supportive interlocutor,” rethinking knowledge production, questioning the theoretical and methodological foundations of academic disciplines, and cultivating a critical awareness among students through radicalized pedagogies without taking part in frontline struggles. Perhaps, Desai provocatively suggests, given the power-laden operation of privileged and authorized ways of knowing and speaking, this limited role for scholar-activists is not a terrible thing. Janet Conway’s chapter echoes this epistemologically humble approach by drawing attention to the important contributions that engaged ethnographers can make to the study of transnational social movement fields while asserting that ethnography is not “analytically self-sufficient.” Not all of the contributors share this same degree of caution, but the tension between possibilities and constraints of politically engaged ethnographic research weaves its way through many of the volume’s chapters and our underlying intellectual-political project.

Indeed, we are intensely aware of the fraught nature of our efforts to practice activist scholarship (or scholarly activism), particularly in relation to the gap between the work of knowledge production in privileged

sites such as the academy and movements for radical social change. Compounding this divide is a more fundamental context, namely, that as social subjects we are living through a historical moment defined by an ever-more rapacious form of global capitalism and empire, a temporally and spatially unlimited “war on terror,” and a geopolitical order defined by white supremacy, patriarchy, colonialism, ecological crisis, and vast social and economic inequality. Yet, not all subjects in this order and at this historical moment are equally positioned—as contributors to this volume, for example, we are all located, to greater or lesser extents, not only within privileged sites such as the university but also as relatively privileged actors in “the belly of the beast” of this patriarchal, white supremacist, globalized capitalist order.

Our positioning and subjectivities have profound consequences for our intellectual labor, the social change projects we engage in, and the possibilities, limitations, and blind spots of the activist and academic work we produce. As Vinci Daro compellingly foregrounds in her contribution, our location in relation to the perceived center of events produces very different kinds of encounters and accounts. At the edges of what are seemingly coherent and discrete zones—social, political, epistemological, methodological—varying kinds of transgressive encounters can occur, leading to dynamic, diverse, and unanticipated outcomes. Such “edge effects” provide an apt metaphor for our collective work in this volume, generating both possibilities and uncertainties.

In the introduction, we surveyed a diversity of approaches deployed in the study of social movements and sought to demonstrate how, despite the contributions of this extensive body of work, our engaged scholarship and ethnographically informed perspectives seek to push beyond it. We contend that ethnographic attention to everyday practices, cultural imaginaries, and emerging subjectivities is particularly well suited to understanding contemporary transnationally networked movements. As Geoffrey Pleyers asserts in his chapter, many conventional political process perspectives begin with the assumption that collective actors engage in global justice struggles in order to intervene within an established political arenas. In contrast, engaged ethnographic practice allows us to see and take seriously the fact that many global justice actors instead seek an exodus from the established political sphere and a space to develop forms of resistance grounded in subjectivity, everyday life, and the elaboration of concrete alternatives. This attention to experience and subject-

tivity facilitates abstract analysis and theorization, and it allows for engagement with social movements in all of their diversity and complexity.

Further, we have argued that our ethnographically grounded research can produce robust depictions of social movement activity, while actively contributing to movements by situating ourselves as activists and researchers within rather than outside movement spaces. However, such a position does not mean uncritically celebrating these movements or placing ourselves at their service, nor does it mean denying the tensions and contradictions of such “embedded” positions. One of our core goals has been precisely to unsettle dominant conceptualizations of social transformation, political possibility, knowledge production, and the relationship between intellectual labor and sociopolitical activism. In their collaboratively authored chapter, for example, Maribel Casas-Cortés, Michal Osterweil, and Dana Powell provide not just a potent critique of ethnography as representation and explanation but also a convincing vision of a politically relevant ethnographic practice predicated on the trope of the ethnographer as a “translator” or “weaver” of situated knowledges. Rather than being the arbiter of “truth,” the ethnographer is but one knowledge producer in a “crowded field.” The ethnographic challenge becomes not representation but the facilitation of communication among diverse knowledges. In another collaboratively authored chapter, Juris, Giuseppe Caruso, Stéphane Couture, and Lorenzo Mosca deploy the tools of ethnography to examine the conflicts over free/libre and open-source software (FLOSS) in the context of the social forum process. Far from uncritically celebrating FLOSS or the forums, the authors interrogate conflicts over technology and software in explicitly cultural and political terms rather than merely technical ones. In these ways ethnography itself becomes a tool for political intervention.

Through the essays collected here, we have sought to demonstrate that activist-oriented research can be rigorous and robust in academic terms while generating analytic and theoretical insights that are useful to activists. In this sense, as Caruso argues in his chapter, ethnographic practice can assist academics, activists, and practitioners in understanding and transforming conflicts, but not by offering prescriptive analysis or promising an unattainable transformative moment. Rather, it can do so by facilitating knowledge making, deliberation, and transformative action by actors situated within movements, the academy, and wider social spheres. However, politically engaged research carried out from within movement

spaces is by no means a guaranteed path to ethically superior scholarship. Indeed, as David Hess points out in his chapter, ethnography often sits uneasily along the divide between academic and activist communities. Paul Routledge thus insists in his contribution that a commitment to activist ethnography can never erase power relations but instead compels us to forge solidarities based on a relational ethics with resisting others and to eschew the all-too-easy separation of knowledge from action, particularly at a moment when the realities of eco-social crisis have never been more apparent.

None of this is enough, though, to completely transcend the contradictions that constitute our academic work for and about radical movements. After all, as social subjects we are not entirely of our own making, coming into a world overdetermined by relations of power, exploitation, inequality, and violence. This is even more so with respect to dominant institutions, such as the university, extending far beyond matters of disciplinary structure and pedagogy to the very heart of how the university is configured in relation to the production and reproduction of a particular social order (see Wallerstein et al. 1996). Moreover, the very ways that scholars practicing politically committed research go about our intellectual labor with, for, and about social struggles are themselves embedded within civilizational structures of power and oppression and the cultural myths that underwrite them. For example, as Charles Mills (1997) provocatively argues, in a world characterized by white supremacy, what we think about, our goals for such thinking, and the conceptual and analytical tools at our disposal are all structured by the operation of an underlying Racial Contract.¹ This is most obviously true for scholarship rooted in dominant paradigms, but it is no less a threat to engaged, critical research, because this contract suffuses the entire sociopolitical fabric, shaping both dominations and resistances.

ETHNOGRAPHY AND POLITICAL COMMITMENT REVISITED

Although the chapters in this volume have staked out diverse positionalities with respect to the movements and spaces we examine, overall we have argued that ethnographers studying transnational social movements should not only clearly and openly align ourselves with groups in struggle but also seek, where possible, to break down, or at least unsettle, the divide between subject and object, theory and practice. The multiple

strategies highlighted by our authors include the practice of a militant, activist, or transformational ethnography; the assuming of various participant roles such as facilitator, networker, mediator, companioner, activist knowledge producer, independent media practitioner, or sympathetic interlocutor; and the enactment of diverse forms of mutual solidarity. Despite the cautionary remarks above, we argue that such politically aligned and committed ethnographic strategies allow us to contribute something concrete to our collaborators in resistance while, at their best, also producing insightful, nuanced, and sophisticated analyses. These are not the only or even necessarily the best strategies, but they are, we suggest, particularly appropriate modes of ethnographic research for grasping the dynamics of contemporary struggles such as the global justice, social forum, and other related movements that are networked in form; transnational in scale; heterogeneous in terms of political subjectivity and class, ethnic, and racial composition; and highly self-reflexive.

The extent to which our engaged ethnographies can actually make a difference to the movements we work with was extensively addressed in this volume's introduction and most of the subsequent chapters. We will not rehearse these discussions here, except to note that while we are optimistic about the contributions of our engaged ethnographies in practical and/or strategic terms, we remain aware of their significant contradictions and limitations. Nonetheless, is it still possible that we have gone too far in our explicit commitment to and engagement with the movements and groups we are studying? Can we achieve the relative distance required to be critical of our interlocutors and to produce sound scholarship? More generally, what are the consequences of our violating long-standing principles of neutrality and impartiality upon which traditional academic research has been based?

We would suggest that ethnography is always a highly subjective pursuit, reflecting in subtle and sometimes not so subtle ways the underlying assumptions, frameworks, affinities, and political predispositions of the ethnographer. Perhaps the main virtue of the Writing Culture critique was to finally question the authority on which so many traditional ethnographic accounts were based (see this volume's introduction), suggesting that the objectivity of the singular authoritative voice is more a result of specific modes, tropes, and techniques of writing than an accurate depiction of reality. Indeed, the Heisenberg principle suggests that even in the "hard" sciences observers always affect their objects of study, an effect that

is multiplied in a highly subjective humanistic endeavor such as ethnography. By clearly positioning ourselves, and reflexively accounting for our own social, cultural, and political locations, we recognize the necessarily partial nature of our ethnographic accounts (see Clifford 1986; Haraway 1991), and we provide our readers with tools for critically assessing our ethnographic representations.

In addition, we would go further to argue that beyond the impossibility of objectivity, any purported neutral stance is ultimately complicit with the status quo, reproducing domination by allowing the current order of things to go unquestioned. As João Costa Vargas writes, "Neutrality is impossible—or better still, neutrality may work for the maintenance of privileges, but it does not work for all. Many forms of oppression, exclusion, and death continue to be perpetrated in the name of objectivity and detachment" (2006, 19). Indeed, the positivist logic of objectivity has long served as a mask to hide a false universality of supposedly "uninvolved" scholars reproducing a social world outside themselves" in ways that support the interests of those with greater socioeconomic, political, and cultural power (Wallerstein et al. 1996, 92). In this sense, objectivity has often meant in practice the detached, god's-eye view of the white, male, European scholar, enacting a "sociology of absences" that has silenced the voices of myriad ethnic, racial, gendered, and colonized Others (Santos 2006). This critique does not have to mean a complete retreat into the solipsistic depths of subjectivity. On the contrary, once we have recognized our situatedness and go on to produce analyses that reflexively emerge from our own personal, ethical, and political locations and inclinations, we can enter into collective dialogues that allow us to make intersubjective judgments about the nature of social reality based on our observations and lived experiences (Wallerstein et al. 1996, 92).

Beyond the situated, partial, and subjective nature of our ethnographic research as well as the need to account for our sociopolitical locations through reflexivity, is it still possible that we overidentify with the movements we study, that in collapsing the distance between subject and object we remove any space for critical engagement with our interlocutors and collaborators? In other words, do we exhibit a lack of analytic distance that results in accounts that are uncritical, and thus fail to allow for complexity and contradiction? If this were the case, it would affect the quality of our analysis and also lead to ethnographies that are less politically and strategically useful for movements themselves.

With respect to these concerns, it is important to stress that we too are uncomfortable with overly celebratory accounts of social movements. In this sense, the approaches in this volume do provide room for constructive criticism of the movements we work with, as the critical strategic discussions contained in many of the chapters attest. As we argue in the introduction, one of the benefits of politically committed ethnography carried out from within grassroots movements is that it not only allows us to better understand the dynamics of such movements but it also provides us a position from which to engage in critical discussion and debate with other activists. In this sense, it is important to clarify what we mean by bridging the divide between subject and object in light of our view of political subjects as heterogeneous and internally differentiated.

Regarding the relation between subject and object, we mean to challenge and unsettle, not collapse this divide. Instead, throughout the research process, politically committed and engaged ethnographers move back and forth between deeper modes of sociopolitical identification with our collaborators and more distant moments of interpretation and critical analysis based on our embedded and embodied experiences as activists during more physically and emotionally engaged moments of participation. Even during more active, less reflexive moments, militant ethnographers are constantly reflecting on and analyzing our actions and practices. In this sense, action and reflection are inseparable; what changes is the relative degree of importance of one or the other depending on the specific moment and context of research. This is as true for other activists as it is for engaged ethnographers—indeed, relative and shifting degrees of distancing is a constitutive aspect of all political action. What is unique about militant and other forms of politically committed ethnography, however, is the relative intensity, length, and importance of the bridging moments that periodically transcend the subject-object divide, resulting in a practice perhaps better termed “observant participation,” to borrow a phrase from João Costa Vargas (2006), but that is no less ethnographic for its degree of engagement.

On the other hand, it is also possible that we do not go far enough: that we are not sufficiently experimental or collaborative in our ethnographic writing, that we do not overcome the persistent inequalities and power differentials at the heart of the ethnographic endeavor, and that we remain too wedded to academic forums, formats, and processes. With regard to the first concern, we could have been more innovative and ex-

perimental in our textual practices, but, as we point out in the introduction, we are more influenced by the recent politicized turn as a response to the critique of ethnographic authority and the colonial relations that have historically characterized the ethnographic pursuit. While we are by no means averse to nonorthodox modes of ethnographic writing, we are not convinced that textual strategies, whether polyvocality, nonlinear narratives, or fictive accounts, can dispense with authorial control, unequal power relations, and underlying dominations. We are more enthusiastic about emerging collaborative forms of ethnographic writing that involve multiple authors and networks of scholars and activists—indeed, such network-based collaborations reflect the emerging logics and practices of the movements we study. However, although at least two of our chapters are collaborative in nature, we fall well short in this regard.

Along these lines, perhaps we do not go far enough in actually combating the unequal power relations and imbalances underlying the ethnographic encounter. In this sense, significant social, economic, and political hierarchies remain between researchers and our interlocutors, and, for the most part, the authors in this volume retain tight control over our research and writing projects, affording little space for our collaborators to influence either the research process or the final product. Both of these points ring true and point to additional limitations. With regard to the first, although many of us have made a conscious effort to try to minimize the social distance and hierarchies between ourselves and our collaborators, by studying processes and practices that we are an integral part of, many of which are situated outside the traditional sites of anthropological research in local communities and villages of the global South, we cannot completely overcome inequalities and imbalances with respect to power, resources, and cultural capital. The best we can do, and what we have tried to do in the preceding chapters, is to recognize and remain reflexively aware of the lingering hierarchies, inequalities, and exclusions along axes of race, class, gender, nationality, and social location that continue to shape our ethnographic engagements.

In terms of the significant control that most of the authors in this volume maintain over our research projects and products, it is true that other methodologies, such as participatory action research (PAR), go much further in terms of equalizing the relationship between researcher and collaborator (see Greenwood and Levin 1998). In PAR, for example, the group being studied helps to design the project so it addresses useful questions,

and it participates in the project's implementation at every stage, including the writing. At the same time, as we point out in the introduction, PAR works best when researchers enter into relationship with a formal group or organization that has clear decision-making procedures and clearly delimited boundaries. When ethnographers study movements that are more fluid and diffuse, such as many of those addressed in this volume, and of which they themselves are a part, the relationship between the researcher and the movement is more ambiguous. Moreover, although PAR confers significant control to the participants in the research, resulting in a more directly accountable process, the same tight control may also result in projects that are useful to the groups involved but more positivist in orientation (Hale 2006), or they may generally lack the nondirectionality and open-endedness of the ethnographic encounter. By giving up their autonomy in this way, researchers may compromise their ability to produce ethnographically informed analyses that are both analytically critical and strategically relevant.

Finally, the question might arise as to why we remain committed to ethnography at all, and why we continue to situate our ethnographic writing and publishing within the academy. If we are so keen to emphasize the participation side of the participant-observation equation, why do we continue to frame our work as ethnographic? At the same time, given the increasingly crowded field where so many other movement participants are carrying out their own quasi-ethnographic research and are writing, publishing, and distributing their own movement-oriented reflections and analyses (see Casas-Cortés, Osterweil, and Powell, this volume; Juris 2008a), can politically committed ethnographers contribute anything that is unique or particularly relevant?

In some ways, the ethnographic projects featured here diverge substantially from classic ethnographic practice: the authors have always already gone native; many of our interlocutors are engaged in similar "paraethnographic" research and writing (Holmes and Marcus 2005), as Tish Stringer discusses in her chapter; many of us are studying at home; and we are more concerned with practices, processes, and problems than with particular cultures or groups. However, rather than a rejection of ethnography, these trends are very much in line with post-Writing Culture, postfunctionalist, and poststructuralist trends in anthropology and related fields. Meanwhile, our commitment to spending extended periods of time in the field, collecting and writing fieldnotes, grounding our

analyses in thick description, and engaging with contemporary anthropological, sociological, and related theories and debates situates our work squarely in the ethnographic tradition.

POLITICAL PROMISES AND LIMITATIONS

Another central argument running through the volume is that contemporary social movements that are transnationally networked, internally heterogeneous, and rhizomatic require theoretical frameworks and engaged, ethnographic methods that go beyond traditional objectivist and state-centric approaches for studying social movements. We have addressed these novel frameworks with respect to subjectivities, paradigms, knowledge production, and new technologies, among other concepts. We have also explored some of the complex internal dynamics, political tensions, and tactical struggles associated with emerging networked spaces of transnational encounter. However, even though many of the chapters touch on the impact of the movements we explore, it might help to further consider the political promises and potential limitations of these forms of activism. We thus conclude the volume by reexamining the political stakes of the movements we have studied and contributed to as active participants.

Most of the movements and spaces of encounter explored in this volume are associated with the wave of transnational struggle that many activists and observers date to the Zapatista uprising,² and that gained widespread visibility with the mass counter-summit mobilizations against international financial institutions such as the World Bank, International Monetary Fund (IMF), and World Trade Organization (WTO), culminating in the global expansion of the World Social Forum process (Juris 2008a). Specific examples of this transnational wave of global justice activism examined in the volume are world and regional social forums, autonomous Zapatista communities and transnational Zapatista solidarity networks, feminist movements, European and North American autonomous and direct action-oriented collectives, Argentine *piqueteros* (picketers), struggles for climate justice, indigenous movements, movements of South and Southeast Asian farmers, alternative-economy pathways, and independent media and technology movements. Although these struggles vary in terms of their constituent actors, subjectivities, organizational forms, strategic and tactical repertoires, and political goals and visions, they share many common characteristics:

- relative autonomy from political parties, trade unions, and state institutions;
- flexible, network-based forms of organization;
- a focus on autonomous self-management within the sphere of daily social life;
- an emphasis on lived experience, subjectivity, and alternative models of sociality;
- the use of creative and/or confrontational direct action tactics; and
- a commitment to directly democratic and prefigurative modes of decision making.

Not all of the movements and sectors covered in this volume reflect all of these characteristics. As Geoffrey Pleyers's chapter suggests, for example, they are particularly pronounced within struggles oriented more toward radical autonomy and direct action, such as the Zapatistas in Mexico, the Argentine piqueteros, or younger global justice activists in Europe and North America. On the other hand, the global indigenous movement examined by Sylvia Escárcega has tended toward more institutional forms of politics in international forums, despite its emphasis on alternative paradigms and autonomy, but it has more recently begun to engage the social forum process. At the same time, the grassroots base-building groups surveyed in Juris's chapter tend to have more traditionally bureaucratic organizational forms with paid organizers and clearly identifiable memberships. Indeed, one of the virtues of the networked spaces of transnational encounter considered in this volume is that they bring together movements and groups with very different political and organizational visions, forms, strategies, and tactics. Nonetheless, the movements we have examined exhibit at least some, if not all, of the attributes identified above.

As we mention in the introduction, because of the proclivity of these movements toward non-state-oriented politics (if not their complete eschewal of the state) and their unorthodox forms, they tend to escape the categories of traditional social movement theories, particularly those in the resource mobilization and political process traditions. At first glance they might seem to resemble the idealized noninstitutional actors of new social movement theory, but they deviate from the new social movements typology in important ways. For example, the broader movements and

spaces of encounter considered here integrate cultural and economic themes, they tend to be multigenerational and multi-issue, they are often composed of heterogeneous actors (see Feixa, Pereira, and Juris 2009), and, perhaps most importantly, they are not necessarily self-limiting (Cohen 1985). In other words, they are putting forth radical visions that challenge the underlying institutions and assumptions of modernity and would significantly reconfigure socioeconomic, political, and cultural life.

But what is the ultimate political significance of such movements and networked spaces of encounter? Can they achieve lasting political change and longer-term social transformation? Some might question their tendency toward noninstitutional, non-state-oriented strategies. Given that the state remains the primary locus of political power in modern liberal democracies, how can movements pursuing radical alternatives achieve material benefits for their constituencies? Short of revolution, what do such movements offer? We might also question the networked structure of the spaces and struggles we address here. It is often argued that to achieve political victories, movements require formal organization, clear structures of accountability, and singular strategies. The more diffuse, rhizomatic movements and spaces of encounter considered in this volume are perhaps too ephemeral, too unfocused, and too lacking in clear strategy and leadership to have a lasting political impact and to make a difference in people's lives.

Finally, many observers have noted that more informal, networked movements and spaces of encounter, particularly in the global North, tend to constitute a privileged, white, middle-class domain of politics that leaves out the poorest and most marginalized actors from working-class and people-of-color communities. As Juris suggests in his chapter, this was precisely the critique of the global justice movement that resulted in the intentional organizing strategy implemented as part of the U.S. Social Forum process. However, before addressing these reservations, it is important to remember that these also reflect internal debates, productive tensions, or "frictions" (Tsing 2005), which are constitutive of and help to determine the shape and trajectory of the networked movements and spaces of encounter considered here.

With respect to non-state-oriented strategies, first, we would like to reiterate our argument from the introduction that as activist-ethnographers we feel it is crucial to take the movements we work with seriously on their own terms. For this reason, we have tried not to impose categories that

our movement collaborators would find irrelevant, instead elaborating movement-based frameworks or developing concepts from our own engaged ethnographic work. Pleyers's chapter most directly addresses this issue by arguing for the importance of subjectivity and experience for the movements and spaces he examines rather than engaging in a reductive analysis of their institutional impact. Nonetheless, this still begs the question of what these movements can achieve, particularly in terms of durable, concrete social change. Many of the movements we engage, such as the Zapatistas or the radical autonomous collectives in the North, are specifically responding to the failure of state institutions to address their needs and concerns.

The Zapatistas, for example, have been influenced by the wider movement for indigenous autonomy in Mexico, but they are also challenging the historic neglect of Mayan communities on the part of the Mexican state in spheres such as education, health, and development. Moreover, the Zapatistas began to intensify their development of their autonomous forms of government in the wake of the failure of the Mexican state to implement the San Andrés Accords that would have granted indigenous communities in Chiapas and elsewhere a modicum of autonomy, but as part of a reconfigured Mexican state (Speed 2007; see also Chatterton 2010). For their part, young European squatters have built autonomous social centers, in part, as a response to the lack of economic opportunities, affordable housing, and spaces for social interaction provided by state institutions (see Hodkinson and Chatterton 2006; Pickerill and Chatterton 2006). In other words, as much as an abandonment of the state, struggles for autonomy reflect a history of the state abandoning grassroots communities and movements "from below" (Zibechi 2010). In their efforts to organize for themselves, then, autonomist movements are meeting their own concrete material and cultural needs with respect to economic well-being, health, housing, education, media, and artistic expression.

At the same time, many autonomy-oriented movements do not seek complete separation from the state but prefer to organize their own spaces and networks outside state institutions. Indeed, the failure of so many state-oriented movements to achieve the freedom, liberation, and democracy they had promised, as well as the negative experiences of so many grassroots activists in their efforts to work with political parties and trade unions, has reinforced their emphasis on autonomous political mobilization. Rather than rejecting the state entirely, such movements often prac-

tice a "dual politics" (Cohen and Arato 1992; see Juris 2008a), strategically building up their own autonomous spaces and networks as spheres for developing new meanings, subjectivities, and models of sociality, while tactically intervening within the realm of the state through mass mobilizations, media campaigns, and direct action protests. Such reform-oriented tactical interventions are perhaps increasingly necessary to ward off the worst excesses of the current neoliberal capitalist order, even as movements continue to organize in their own spaces for more deeply rooted structural and cultural transformation.

Such movements can influence the state indirectly by making certain issues visible and influencing public opinion, and they can also serve as laboratories for the creation of alternative paradigms, identities, and models of socioeconomic organization that may gradually migrate more widely (Juris 2008a; see also Melucci 1989). In this sense, the wave of mass counter-summit actions associated with the global justice movements made visible the negative impact of multilateral institutions such as the World Bank, IMF, and WTO; the harmful effects of debt, deregulation, and free trade; and the role of global decision-making bodies such as the G8 and European Union in reproducing neoliberal policies and practices. For their part, networked spaces of transnational encounter, such as the social forums, provide more of an emphasis on alternatives, ranging from reformist policies such as financial regulation, the Tobin Tax,³ and debt cancellation to more prefigurative proposals related to participatory budgeting, free software, and alternative monetary systems, including those addressed by David Hess in this volume. Global justice protests, social forums, and other spaces of encounter thus also allow activists to put into practice their far-reaching visions and goals. Although radicals may reject certain reformist proposals, the broader spaces and networks they take part in bring together diverse sectors and models across the radical-reformist divide. The inevitable frictions that result help generate much of the innovation and dynamism of such spaces.⁴

In addition to occupying diverse spatial terrains, the movements and networks considered here are also oriented toward multiple temporalities of struggle and transformation (Wallerstein 2008), which intersect with particular spatial domains in complex ways. In the short run, for example, activists are often focused on addressing immediate concerns, including concrete survival issues,⁵ while over the long term, they can emphasize social transformation, a horizon toward which political imaginaries are

oriented, and a sphere within which sociopolitical and economic alternatives become possible. Over the intermediate term, meanwhile, movements are often concerned with strengthening their own organizational networks and capacities while refining their political strategies in order to achieve longer-term social transformation, particularly with respect to the twin goals of enhancing democratization and egalitarianism (Wallerstein 2008). In spatial terms, whereas intervening within the terrain of the state is often necessary to achieve short-run goals, state-oriented mobilizations can facilitate intermediate-term movement building while providing a platform for experimenting with longer-range utopian visions and alternative modes of sociality. Likewise, organizing within more autonomous movement spheres is not oriented toward only intermediate- and long-term objectives; it can also build movement capacity for engaging in shorter-term campaigns around issues and needs of immediate relevance.

A second concern about the movements explored in this volume relates to their diffuse, networked structure. Traditional Leftists and community organizers in the Saul Alinsky tradition might fault the movements and spaces considered here for lacking clear structures of leadership and accountability, for their failure to coalesce around unified strategies and visions, and for their lack of political efficacy and sustainability.⁶ With regard to the first criticism, this position would suggest that networked movements lack direction and accountability because anyone can participate, make decisions, and come and go as they please without responding to a grassroots base. Indeed, a similar critique was made of the Occupy movements in 2011–12. According to this view, movements are stronger and more democratic when formal leaders are given clearly defined roles and are held accountable by a membership base that consists of those who are most directly affected by a problem or issue. The lack of a clear organizational and decision-making structure and leadership also makes it more difficult to develop common goals and political strategies that would allow movements to accomplish specific objectives. Finally, this lack of structure, unifying vision, and coordinated strategy means that such movements are particularly susceptible to the inevitable ebbs and flows of popular mobilization, making it more difficult to sustain themselves over time, further reducing their political efficacy.

Again, we emphasize that such debates regarding organization are also internal to the movement spaces and networks examined here, as Juris's

chapter on the U.S. Social Forum attests. Perhaps most fundamentally, it is important to recognize the pluralism and diversity that such movements and spaces exhibit with respect to forms of organization (in addition to diversity in terms of tactics, strategies, and visions). More formally structured organizations are perhaps better equipped to develop common programs and visions; they do have clearer structures of leadership and accountability, and in theory they are better able to respond to the needs and wishes of an identifiable grassroots base. The benefits of networked movements lie elsewhere: in their capacity for bringing together diverse movements and groups; in their flexibility and openness, which make them more strategically adaptable; in their decentralization and lack of formal hierarchy (despite their continued vulnerability to informal hierarchies; see e.g., Freeman 1972), which multiply the channels for direct participation in movement activities and decision making; and in the emotional, solidary, and pedagogical benefits of participatory, directly democratic forms of organization (Polletta 2002).⁷

Bureaucratic organizations and vertical leadership structures are not the only means of ensuring democracy and accountability, however. For example, spokescouncil models in North American direct action circles, where decisions are made by consensus among rotating delegates selected from networks of decentralized affinity groups, ensure representation and accountability in the absence of formal leadership structures. Similar systems have long been in place throughout the global South, including the traditional assemblies in Mexican indigenous communities that serve as the basis for the Zapatista Juntas de Buen Gobierno (good government councils), which are made up of rotating delegates from the municipal assemblies that comprise a particular *Caracol* (literally shell, refers to meeting point and regional seat of autonomous government).

Despite these contributions and the political paths they have opened, these movements continue to face major barriers. The years following the WTO protests in Seattle in 1999 have witnessed the rise of increasingly securitized and militarized state apparatuses, particularly in the wake of 9/11. Across the global North, an ascendant radical Right has seized state institutions and used them to deepen and entrench inequality and exploitation domestically and internationally, and around the world military forces have been deployed as police actions in defense of elite interests and an ever-more predatory system of capital accumulation through dispossession. In the wake of the global capitalist crisis that began in 2008,

these tendencies have only accelerated as elites pursue strategies of accumulation by dispossession, no longer even bothering to cloak the realities of exploitation, injustice, and inequality in the once-celebrated language of Keynesian social welfarism or, more recently, the rhetoric of neoliberal capitalism as a tide that lifts all boats (see McNally 2011). As elites across the global North and in emerging centers of capitalist power in places like China and India deploy the state and its juridical, propagandistic, and normative orders to erode workers' rights, police racialized migrants, roll back hard-won rights and liberties, impose austerity, and surveil and disrupt resistance movements, the well-worn slogan "we are winning" that appears so often at global justice counter-summit mobilizations seems increasingly hollow.

In the face of this robust pushback from the Right, many of the movements and spaces we engage in this volume and the broader "movement of movements" have found themselves forced into defensive postures, seemingly ill-equipped to meet this new challenge. And yet, in September 2011, the momentum of the biopolitics of austerity was interrupted by the emergence of a new and unanticipated collective actor on the political stage. Drawing inspiration from the Arab Spring and spurred to action by a call to "Occupy Wall Street!" issued on July 13, 2011, by the culture-jamming publication *Adbusters*, starting on September 17, 2011, in New York City a wave of occupations swept cities across North America and beyond (see Juris 2012). These occupations followed in the wake of the historically unprecedented transfer of public wealth into private hands that constituted government bailouts of capitalist institutions deemed "too big to fail," as well as the rise of the austerity paradigm that promised only further impoverishment and dispossession for the vast majority—referred to by the Occupy movement as "the 99 percent." Introducing a new political lexicon, the occupiers declared that their actions were expressions of the anger and frustration of the 99 percent against an entrenched and widening socioeconomic inequality that was devouring them to feed the monstrous wealth appropriation of the richest and best connected—named by the movement "the 1 percent."

Bursting onto the political scene at a moment when radicalized, social justice-oriented mass movements were conspicuous in their absence, the Occupy movements were remarkable in their mobilization of so many diverse groups, including, yet moving beyond, the usual suspects in experienced activist circles, many of whom had earlier cut their teeth in the

alter-globalization movements. Taking place across North America and around the world, these protests combined the physical occupation of public space in city centers; the establishment of camps with an assembly-based model of collective, participatory decision making (see also Pleyers, this volume); and a reticence to engage in the institutional politics of demand. Certainly not without criticism—some fair, some not—of the diverse, popular, loosely structured, and politically undetermined nature of the occupations (to say nothing of the use of the language of occupation itself and its imperialist, genocidal overtones), these eruptions of popular dissent signaled the presence of a widely shared outrage at the status quo as well as the endurance of a spirit of resistance and alternative building that had been incubated most recently in the alter-globalization movements. By the end of 2011, the vast majority of these Occupy encampments had been systematically and forcibly dismantled by agents of the state.

In the absence of physical camps, Occupy movements in many cities shifted to community organizing and networking with established organizations, periodic protest marches and direct actions, ongoing debates about whether and how to articulate concrete political demands and engage with electoral politics, and continuing general assemblies as directly democratic alternatives to the corrupted state of a representative-democratic system largely controlled by the power and wealth of the 1 percent. Regardless of what happens going forward, the Occupy movements helped to partly shift national conversations in the United States and elsewhere from an exclusive focus on budgetary deficits and austerity to include a countervailing concern for economic fairness and inequality (see Juris 2012). What the future holds for the Occupy movements is far from clear, but even without the violent evictions at the hands of state authorities, the encampments and the movements as a whole were beginning to confront hard questions about the capacity of the Occupy movements to shift beyond the spectacle of dissent to the building of a genuine counter-power.

The current political moment reveals a renewed materiality of power. At this juncture, some radical voices have begun calling for a rebirth of principles that once seemed consigned to the dustbin of history: communism, the party, insurrectionism, and revolutionary organizations, to name a few (see Badiou 2010; The Invisible Committee 2009). In the wake of the global capitalist crisis that began in 2008, even Keynesian social democracy has returned as a hope (however faint) for something

modestly less rapacious and predatory than an increasingly desperate and ravenous neoliberalism. The return of these political projects points to and is made possible by the perceived limitations and failures of the political currents we have explored in this volume and that, to a significant extent, have seen their continuation in movements such as Occupy and even the Arab Spring. When elites push back against social justice struggles with the juridical, bureaucratic, and repressive apparatuses of the state while using these same apparatuses to engage in a project of accumulation by mass dispossession, our struggles can only be judged by their capacity to defend and fight back against this onslaught. In this sense, there is an urgent need to better understand what the movements and spaces can contribute and what they cannot with respect to social struggles in an age of austerity and radical right-wing mobilization, a task of immanent reflection and critique already under way within movements and spheres of politically engaged research. Interestingly, as with the previous wave of global justice activism, politically committed anthropologists played key roles as activists and observers in the Occupy movements (see Juris 2012; Juris and Razsa 2012; and Razsa and Kurnik 2012).

In practice, traditional Leftist, grassroots base-building, and more diffuse, networked organizations have all been able to coexist, interact, and coordinate within the social forums. As the Zapatistas like to say, the idea is to create a world where many worlds fit. Such broad-based formations are absolutely vital to the reconfiguration and revitalization of a powerful Left, which is nowhere more urgent than in the United States, where both neoliberalism and right-wing Tea Party populism are increasingly resurgent. Only a broad-based networked model of resistance can bring together the diversity of actors needed to confront such trends and to begin building an alternative world based on true democracy, freedom, and economic justice. At the same time, it is true that more diffuse and rhizomatic models of organization tend to be less sustainable than formal organizations, a challenge that confronted the Occupy movements. What is particularly interesting and important about spaces of encounter, such as the world and regional social forums, is that they represent an institutionalization of the networked model of movement, providing a relatively sustainable networked “movement infrastructure” (Andrews 2004) that can facilitate sustained movement building and interaction.

A final concern commonly advanced with regard to contemporary net-

worked movements, particularly in the global North, relates to their perceived white, middle-class character. One version of this position laments their lack of diversity, another questions their underlying legitimacy given the perceived absence of those who are most directly affected by the principle issues at stake, including various forms of social, political, and economic domination. This was the main thrust behind the “Where Was the Color in Seattle?” critique following the anti-WTO protests in November 1999, and a prime motivator of the efforts to build a more diverse and racially inclusive social forum in the United States (see Juris, this volume). Similar critiques reemerged in the context of the Occupy movements in the United States (see Juris et al. 2012).

Again, it is important to recognize that this is also an internal critique expressed within many networked spaces of transnational encounter. At the same time, from a global perspective the critique is largely off base. Many southern working-class and people-of-color movements, particularly in Latin America, such as the Zapatistas, the piqueteros, the Argentine popular assemblies, and the urban popular movements in Bolivia (see Zibechi 2010), are organized through decentralized networks of community and neighborhood assemblies, involve consensus decision making, and are rooted in lived experiences and subjectivities. Moreover, grassroots popular movements from throughout the global South have long played critical roles in transnational global justice networks such as Peoples’ Global Action, Via Campesina, and the social forum process.

Nonetheless, it is the case that networked movements in the global North, particularly the radical autonomy and direct action sectors, that are most likely to emphasize directly democratic decision making, experience, and subjectivity tend to be relatively more white and middle class than other kinds of movements (such as the grassroots member organizations that have headed up the U.S. Social Forum process). As Paul Lichterman (1996) suggests, white, middle-class activists in the United States tend to prefer looser, directly democratic forms of organization that facilitate a more personalized politics, while activists of color tend to practice a more communitarian politics through formal organizations that are more deeply rooted in local histories, identities, and social conditions. Whereas formal communitarian organizations are more focused on concrete issues and are more directly accountable to their memberships, informal personalized organizations are more flexible, open, and partici-

patory. We saw this dynamic at play in the Occupy movements, despite increasing efforts to build understanding and connections across different kinds of movement organization.⁸

These differential patterns of participation can be at least partly explained by the fact that white, middle-class activists have the time and resources to spend long hours attending meetings and concerning themselves with process, while poor and working-class activists of color have more immediate concerns rooted in their daily lives. Middle-class activists also have greater access to the new technologies around which many networked movements are organized. Interestingly, similar dynamics have led many poor and marginalized communities of color in the global South, particularly where weak states have been unable or unwilling to address the needs of such communities, to organize through more informal yet locally rooted networked movements (Zibechi 2010). Beyond differences in political tradition, this may have something to do with the more pressing conditions, the more politicized context, and the lack of formal organizational resources in these communities. The important point is that there is no necessary connection between a particular organizational form and a given activist community (see Polletta 2002). Instead the links are contingent and highly contextual.

The current challenge, it seems to us, is for contemporary struggles to develop hybrid structures that can mobilize diverse communities with the goal of building the widest-possible movements. This is precisely the promise of networked spaces of transnational encounter. The process will inevitably be conflictual, but the capacity of broad-based progressive movements to reinvigorate themselves depends on their ability to work through and effectively negotiate such differences.

NOTES

1 As Mills writes, the Racial Contract is “that set of formal or informal agreements or meta-agreements . . . between the members of one subset of humans, henceforth designated by (shifting) ‘racial’ (phenotypical/genetical/cultural) criteria . . . as ‘white,’ and coextensive (making due allowance for gender differentiation) with the class of full persons, to categorize the remaining subset of humans as ‘nonwhite’ and of a different and inferior moral status” (1997, 11).

2 It should be noted that related strands of anti-free-trade, anti-IMF, and

anticorporate activism had taken place previously and were also occurring simultaneously throughout the global South, as well as in Europe and North America.

3 First proposed by the economist James Tobin, the Tobin Tax would levy a small tax (Tobin initially suggested 0.5 percent) on all foreign exchange transactions in order to discourage speculative currency trading. In some later versions of the proposal, the tax would also be used to raise money for a global development fund.

4 With respect to observable political impacts, particular policy changes are difficult to trace to specific movements (see Diani 1997), and the likelihood of reforms will vary across political contexts. In this sense, alternatives to neoliberal policies and practices have been more noteworthy in regions such as Latin America, which witnessed a string of Leftist political victories in the 2000s in the context of widespread anti-corporate-globalization organizing and sentiment (e.g., Lula in Brazil, Nestor Kirchner in Argentina, and Evo Morales in Bolivia), than in Europe and the United States (Juris 2008a).

5 As Immanuel Wallerstein (2008) points out, decisions regarding shorter-term strategies always entail a choice between the lesser of two evils and are primarily defensive in nature, oriented toward the protection of those rights already secured or gains already achieved and against the threat of their erosion, whether that means voting for a particular party, abstaining from voting altogether, or opting to take up arms.

6 Some have also made the point that networked forms of organization were pioneered by global capital as part of an argument against the forms’ liberatory potential for social movements. Indeed, as Juris has written elsewhere (2008a), there is nothing inherently emancipatory about networks or any other organizational form. Their ultimate impact depends on the specific uses to which they are put, the values that inspire their use, and the contexts within which they operate.

7 For more on direct or participatory democracy within global justice movements, see Graeber 2009; Juris 2008a; Maeckelbergh 2009; and Polletta 2002, 176–201.

8 In Occupy Boston, for example, representatives from community-based organizations with a constituency of largely working-class people of color met regularly with occupiers to build solidarity, develop common projects, and figure out how to coordinate despite differing organizational structures and logics. For their part, many occupiers fought for the implementation of anti-oppression principles and practices as a way to recognize racial and class privilege and create spaces for historically marginalized voices (see Juris 2012). In this sense, the Occupy movements shifted largely from a more indi-

visualized “logic of aggregation” where protest camps embody the coming together of “crowds of individuals,” reflecting, in many ways, the organizational logic of social media, toward a more sustained and institutionalized networking logic, where distinct movements, organizations, and groups coordinate through the general assemblies, spokescouncils, and other emergent structures (Juris 2012).

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