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## Performing politics Image, embodiment, and affective solidarity during anti-corporate globalization protests

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**ABSTRACT** ■ This article brings together the anthropological, sociological, and related literature on media, emotion, and performance to explore the role of counter-summit protests within anti-corporate globalization movements. Counter-summit actions produce both external and internal effects, allowing activists to communicate political messages, while generating deeply felt emotions and political identities. However, activists eventually tire while public interest may wane as protests become routine. Moreover, the most unpredictable, free form actions which produce high levels of affective solidarity among core activists often elicit media frames that stigmatize or trivialize protesters. Through comparative ethnographic accounts of mass mobilizations in Prague and Barcelona and subsequent media analysis, I argue that counter-summit protests are important networking tools, but they are difficult to reproduce over time, while the emotional and media impacts of counter-summit actions are often contradictory. I further suggest that grasping the affective dimensions of protest requires an engaged and embodied ethnographic praxis.

**KEY WORDS** ■ social movements, globalization, political protest, performance, emotion, embodiment, image events

Direct Action is praxis, catharsis, and image rolled into one ... To engage in direct action you have to feel enough passion to put your values into practice: it is literally embodying your feelings, performing your politics. (John Jordan, 1998)

After some initial confusion near the Náměstí Míru Square, several thousand young anti-corporate globalization activists began their Pink March descent through the narrow, serpentine streets of Prague to the conference center where the World Bank and IMF meetings were being held. My Barcelona-based affinity group, the Open Veins, took the lead. It was 26 September 2000 – the largest counter-summit action against corporate globalization outside North America to date. Radical activists had mobilized from around Europe, including large numbers from the Movement for Global Resistance (MRG) in Catalonia, Ya Basta! from northern Italy, and the British-based Reclaim the Streets, while solidarity actions had been organized around the world. As we marched, powerful emotions, including a potent mix of excitement, anger, and fear, welled up inside, preparing our bodies for action and enhancing our sense of collective solidarity.

During the months preceding the protest, organizers had worked out an elaborate action plan, dividing the urban 'terrain of resistance' (Routledge, 1994) into three color-coded zones. The Blue March would involve high-risk militant action; the Yellow March would entail the lowest risk, while the Pink March would provide an intermediate zone. In practice, the Italian White Overalls transformed the Yellow March into a mass of bodies engaged in spectacular symbolic confrontation, the Blue March became a battlefield pitting Black Bloc swarms hurling stones and Molotov cocktails against riot police armed with water canons and tear gas, and the Pink March provided a space for creative non-violent blockades. Additional zones were created for decentralized actions in the south, and a mobile blend of festive and militant tactics dubbed Pink & Silver. Competing social movement networks were embodied through diverse protest performances, inscribing distinct political messages on the urban and mass media landscapes. Meanwhile, diverse bodily movements and protest styles generated alternative identities and emotional tones, ranging from militant rage to carnivalesque exuberance.

Counter-summit protests are complex ritual performances that generate a dual effect. Externally, they are powerful 'image events' (DeLuca, 1999), where diverse activist networks communicate their messages to an audience by 'hijacking' the global media space afforded by multilateral summits (see Peterson, 2001). Internally, they provide terrains where identities are expressed through distinct bodily techniques and emotions are generated through ritual conflict and the lived experience of prefigured utopias.<sup>1</sup> Mass counter-summits thus involve what Paul Routledge (1997) calls

'imagineered resistance': struggles that both are mediated and embodied. At the same time, action strategies involving horizontal coordination among diverse, autonomous groups and the division of space among distinct protest styles reproduce a horizontal networking logic on the tactical plane. Counter-summit protests thus allow activists to generate powerful emotions and identities, while simultaneously working out new forms of sociality.

Elsewhere, I explore how anti-corporate globalization networks are generated in practice through diverse communicative interactions shaped by an emerging cultural logic of networking (Juris, 2004). This article explores the performative and affective dimensions of anti-corporate globalization activism. Counter-summit mobilizations are crucial networking tools, allowing activists to communicate political messages to an audience, while eliciting deeply felt emotions and new subjectivities. Given their highly unpredictable and confrontational nature, mass direct actions, in particular, produce powerful affective ties. As the 'glue of solidarity' (Collins, 1990) emotions are particularly important within fluid, network-based movements that rely on non-traditional modes of identification and commitment. Whereas formal movement organizations provide stability during moments of decreasing visibility, informal networks require high levels of commitment to sustain mobilization.

At the same time, counter-summit protests are contradictory. On the one hand, although counter-summits generate high levels of affective solidarity, their emotional and media impact may diminish as they become routine, transforming a strategic weapon into a potential weakness. As Sergi, an informant and colleague from MRG, pointed out, static protests can be 'absorbed by the progressive rhetoric of the system'. On the other hand, the most unpredictable, free-form actions, which may be emotionally satisfying for core activists, often result in media frames that stigmatize or trivialize protesters. In contrast, traditional protests may be ignored, but when they *are* covered they tend to receive sympathetic treatment. In this sense, there may be a tension between what Jennifer Earl (2000) calls 'intra-movement' and 'extra-movement' outcomes, involving, in this case, a contradiction between the emotional and media impact of protest.<sup>2</sup>

This article brings together the anthropological, sociological, and related literature on media, performance, and emotion to explore the role of counter-summit protests within anti-corporate globalization movements. Through ethnographic accounts of mobilizations in Prague and Barcelona, I make two related arguments. First, I contend that counter-summit protests are important networking tools, but they become increasingly difficult to reproduce over time. Second, I suggest that the emotional and media effects of counter-summit actions are often contradictory. I begin by exploring the visual, performative, and affective dimensions of protest, and then provide an historical overview of anti-corporate globalization activism. Next, I

move on to an ethnographic account of the anti-World Bank and IMF action in Prague in September 2000, which was relatively small, yet innovative and emotionally potent. I then turn to a comparative analysis of the March 2002 mobilization against the European Union (EU) in Barcelona, which drew masses of participants but was less emotionally empowering. Finally, I contrast the media coverage of protests in Prague and Barcelona in the Spanish and Catalan press, before concluding with an analysis of activist debates regarding the efficacy of counter-summit actions.

This article is based on ethnographic research carried out between September 2000 and August 2002 as a participant in MRG-Catalonia. My research strategy involved a practice I call 'militant ethnography', which entails both politically engaged research (see Scheper-Hughes, 1995) and an explicit rejection of the divide between observer and practitioner (Juris, 2007).<sup>3</sup> As we shall see, counter-summit protests generate powerful feelings, including terror, fear, panic, solidarity, and joy. To fully grasp such dynamics, one has to actually live the emotions associated with mass direct actions. As Loïc Wacquant (2004) puts it, this kind of research requires not only a 'sociology of the body ... but also a sociology *from* the body' (p. viii). In this sense, the ethnographer's body becomes a research tool (Parr, 2001), involving what Deidre Sklar (1994) calls 'kinesthetic empathy'. As Margaret Mead once pointed out, 'In matters of ethos, the surest and most perfect instrument of understanding is our own emotional response, provided that we can make a disciplined use of it' (Jacknis, 1988: 172).

### Counter-summit protests as performative rituals

Mass counter-summit protests produce evocative images for mass media consumption, while generating powerful emotions and political subjectivities. With respect to image, counter-summits constitute performative terrains where contemporary social movements struggle for visibility (Thompson, 1995). In this sense, mass anti-corporate globalization actions are high profile 'image events' designed to break through busy media cycles by engaging in 'critique through spectacle' (DeLuca, 1999: 22). Spectacular protests conform to prevailing media logics, a particular way of seeing and interpreting the world through the production formats and modes of transmission of the mass media as entertainment (Altheide and Snow, 1991). Indeed, the growing influence of 'infotainment' means that unusual, spontaneous, dramatic, or emotionally satisfying events often garner significant media attention, while less visually and emotionally compelling incidents go unnoticed (Altheide and Snow, 1991; Castells, 1996). By staging spectacular image events, anti-corporate globalization activists attempt to hijack the global media space afforded by multilateral summits, making

power visible and challenging dominant symbolic codes (Melucci, 1989). At the same time, theatrical protest renders protesters susceptible to marginalization and trivialization in the mainstream press (see Gitlin, 1980), while media interest may decrease over time (Routledge, 1997).

Image is linked to emotion through embodied performance. Performances communicate verbal and non-verbal messages to an audience (Baumann, 1977; Beeman, 1993), while allowing participants to experience symbolic meanings in the context of ritual interaction (Schieffelin, 1985). Performances are also constitutive; as Debra Kapchan (1995) suggests: 'To perform is to carry something into effect' (p. 479). In this sense, mass counter-summit protests provide multiple theatrical spaces where oppositional politics are communicated and new subjectivities are forged (see Hetherington, 1998). Tactics such as militant confrontation, symbolic conflict, and carnivalesque revelry involve distinct activist 'techniques of the body' (Mauss, 1973), which generate alternative meanings and identities. Networking politics are thus physically embodied during counter-summit protests, as activists represent themselves not only against a common enemy, but also in opposition to one another. Indeed, it is largely through collective praxis, rather than discursive unity, that political alliances are forged.

Moreover, protest performances generate powerful emotions, which prepare activist bodies for action (Lyon and Barbalet, 1994; Thrift, 2004).<sup>4</sup> As Randal Collins (2001) suggests, protests are characterized by 'high ritual density', resulting from the bodily awareness of co-presence among ritual participants who are physically assembled and share a mutual focus of attention. As performative rituals, counter-summit mobilizations operate by transforming affect: amplifying an initiating emotion, such as anger or rage, and transferring it into a sense of collective solidarity. Collins refers to this kind of Durkheimian collective effervescence as 'emotional energy'. Here I refer to such feelings in less mystical terms as 'affective solidarity'.

Emotion is not incidental to activism. Rather, organizers use emotion strategically in order to generate the commitment necessary to maintain participation. In this sense, activists dedicate a great deal of time and energy to what Arlie Hochschild (1979) refers to as 'emotion management' (see Goodwin et al., 2000; Groves, 1995; Smith and Erickson, 1997; Taylor, 1995; Taylor and Whittier, 1995), working to build affective attachments, convey particular emotional states, or evoke certain emotions with the goal of motivating and sustaining action (Gould, 2001; Robnett, 1997).<sup>5</sup> Such affective dynamics are particularly important for informal networks that rely on friendship and consensus decision-making to reinforce internal solidarity (Polletta, 2002).

Protest provides an alternative way of building solidarity among formal and informal networks alike. Rather than stressing the more restrictive

notion of emotion management, here I follow Guobin Yang (2000) in focusing on the empowering, experiential dynamics of activism. Indeed, mass actions allow activists to produce affective solidarity by pursuing what Yang refers to as 'emotional achievement', or 'the attainment of self-validating emotional experiences and expressions through active and creative pursuits' (p. 596). In this sense, protests provide arenas not only for eliciting images and identities, but also for living moments of freedom, liberation, and joy (Calhoun, 2001; Gould, 2001). These feelings are ordinarily absent in our daily lives, and are thus experienced as personally transformative (Routledge and Simons, 1995).<sup>6</sup>

At the same time, distinct kinds of protest produce contrasting emotional effects. For example, compared to institutionalized marches and rallies, free-form actions are more emotively potent, in part, because activists use their bodies to enact rituals of militant confrontation, but also because they introduce elements of danger, uncertainty, and play. The differences between scripted demonstrations and unpredictable actions are effectively captured by Don Handelman's (1990) distinction between events that 'present the lived-in world' and events 'that re-present the lived-in world'. The former, including standard marches and rallies, directly display, declare, and reflect the world as already constituted. The latter, including open-ended performances such as carnival, entail comparison, contrast, and critique. Events of representation have a distinct liminal quality involving a lack of hierarchy and strong egalitarian sentiments, or 'communitas' (Turner, 1969; cf. Auyero, 2002). Mass actions, in particular, are shot through with liminoid moments of terror, panic, and play, generating high levels of affective solidarity.<sup>7</sup>

The intense feelings, egalitarian sentiments, and oppositional identities associated with mass protests provide a store of emotional resources activists can draw upon to facilitate ongoing movement building. However, as Collins (2001) suggests, peak emotional mobilizations are time-bound, while the ebbs and flows of protest are tied to emotional shifts. In this sense, core activists eventually tire while public interest may wane, particularly as protests become routine (Aminzade and McAdam, 2001; Benford and Hunt, 1992). Indeed, given that the media demand increasingly larger crowds and more spectacular actions, 'successful' counter-summit actions are difficult to repeat, particularly in the context of evolving police tactics. Meanwhile, protesters are often disappointed when protests fail to generate anticipated levels of emotional intensity. In response, organizers can shift to more staged and formal events, such as traditional marches and rallies, but these are less visually and emotionally compelling.

Counter-summit protests are thus important mobilizing tools, but they confront radicals with two sets of strategic contradictions. With respect to internal impact, the more emotionally potent 'high risk' (McAdam, 1989) actions are the most difficult to reproduce, while sustainable forms of

protest are less emotionally transformative and are thus less likely to facilitate lasting commitments. With respect to external impact, although the most unpredictable confrontational actions have the potential to elicit significant media attention, protesters are more likely to be stigmatized or trivialized. On the other hand, traditional protests may be less exhilarating and are often less newsworthy, but when they *are* covered they generate more positive images. The success of a movement depends, in part, on how organizers negotiate such strategic dilemmas.

### The emergence of anti-corporate globalization protest

Nearly 50,000 people took to the streets to protest corporate globalization at the World Trade Organization (WTO) meetings in Seattle on 30 November 1999. A diverse coalition of environmental, labor, and economic justice activists succeeded in disrupting the meetings and helping to prevent another round of trade liberalization talks.<sup>8</sup> Media images of giant puppets, tear gas, and street clashes between protesters and police were broadcast worldwide, bringing the WTO and a novel form of collective action into view. On the one hand, the 'Battle in Seattle' was as a prime-time image event, cascading through global mediascapes (Appadurai, 1996) and capturing the imagination of long-time activists and would-be postmodern revolutionaries alike. On the other hand, activists followed events in Seattle and beyond through e-mail lists, websites, and the newly formed Independent Media Center (see Juris, 2005a). New networks soon emerged, including the Continental Direct Action Network (DAN) in North America or MRG in Catalonia, linking up with existing global networks such as People's Global Action (PGA).

Although Seattle was an important moment of visibility, grassroots movements had been organizing against corporate globalization for years.<sup>9</sup> Indigenous communities, peasants, and workers in the South were among the first to rise up against neoliberal policies and practices in the 1970s and 1980s, challenging IMF austerity programs, privatization, World Bank-financed infrastructure projects, mining, oil drilling, and genetically modified foods (see Fox and Brown, 1998; Gedicks, 2001; Walton and Seddon, 1994). At the same time, many radicals trace their roots to the Zapatistas and their call for an intercontinental network of resistance. Meanwhile, NGO-based networks and citizen campaigns began confronting multilateral financial institutions and free trade agreements in the late 1980s (see Ayres, 1998; Smith and Smythe, 2001), while a wave of anti-corporate activism swept the US and elsewhere in the industrialized world in the latter half of the 1990s (see Klein, 1999).

However, it was largely the mass media images generated by the



confrontations between direct action protesters and police that caught the world's attention in Seattle. As with the US civil rights and anti-war movements of the 1960s, militant actions often coexisted uneasily with traditional marches and rallies on the streets of Seattle. At the same time, the overall direct action provided a cohesive protest framework and helped infuse incipient anti-corporate globalization networks with a radical militancy and a decentralized, non-hierarchical organizing logic.

The mass action strategy, involving horizontal coordination among autonomous affinity groups and consensus decision making (see Graeber, 2002; Polletta, 2002), comes out of the US 'direct action movement': the radical wing of a series of struggles in the 1970s, including anti-nuclear, peace, ecology, gay rights, and Central America solidarity movements (Epstein, 1991). Specific tactics have their own complex genealogies. Radical ecologists began using lock-down, occupation, and banner-hang techniques within Earth First! in the early 1980s while giant puppets and street theater gained popularity in the US during the 1990 protests against the Gulf War. Mass occupations and street party protests were most thoroughly developed in the UK in the 1990s, first in the 'anti-roads movement' and later as part of Reclaim the Streets (RTS), whose festivals of resistance formed part of a broader critique of consumer society (Jordan, 1998). RTS parties have since been organized around the world, becoming a favorite tactic among anti-corporate globalization activists (see Chesters and Welsh, 2004).

Militant tactics, including Black Blocs or White Overalls, are rooted in the autonomous Marxist tradition (see Katsiaficas, 1997). Inspired by the Zapatista emphasis on making hidden struggles visible, White Overalls were first used by the 'Invisibles' collective in Rome in 1997. The following year, Milan-based Ya Basta! combined overalls with protective padding during an action against a migrant center in Trieste. Over the next few years Ya Basta! developed a unique form of protest in which large, orderly groups of activists wearing White Overalls and foam pads advance behind plastic shields toward police lines, where they initiate 'non-violent' physical contact. Beginning in the 1970s, the autonomist tradition in Germany forged a more aggressive path. Based in squatted social centers, *autonomen* engaged in direct confrontation with police to defend against evictions (Katsiaficas, 1997). They often wore black, military-style attire, which inspired similar 'Black Bloc' actions in the US. Although repertoires vary, Black Bloc tactics often include the destruction of private property targeting banks and transnational corporations, ritual confrontation with police, and a series of specific practices such as 'de-arrests', marching in small groups with elbows linked, and jail solidarity.

Counter-summit protests and forums have played key roles in the expansion of anti-corporate globalization movements. After Seattle,

activists organized another mass action against the World Bank and IMF in Washington, DC in April 2000, while anti-corporate globalization protest moved back to Europe for the mobilization against the World Bank and IMF in Prague that fall. The initial World Social Forum (WSF) was organized in Porto Alegre, Brazil, in January 2001, as activists began to stress alternatives to corporate globalization. Meanwhile, following the action against the Free Trade Area of the Americas (FTAA) in Quebec City in April 2001, European protests continued to intensify, including militant actions against the European Union in Gothenburg (May 2001), World Bank in Barcelona (June 2001), and G8 in Genoa (July 2001).

US anti-corporate globalization movements were severely shaken by 9/11, but reemerged when activists shifted their attention from the Iraq war back to globalization during counter-summits against the WTO in Cancun and the FTAA in Miami in fall 2003. Elsewhere, mobilizations continued to grow, including a half-million person anti-EU protest in Barcelona in March 2002. Anti-globalization and anti-war movements soon converged, leading to a million-person anti-war march at the European Social Forum (ESF) in Florence in November. The next three editions of the WSF in Porto Alegre (2003, 2005) and Mumbai (2004) each drew more than 100,000 participants, and regional forums have now been organized in Europe, Asia, and Latin America. The most recent WSF was held in Nairobi in January 2007, while US activists held the first ever US Social Forum in summer 2007.

### **Prague: counter-summit action in Europe**

After protesters shut down the WTO Summit in Seattle, activists around the world were eager to organize their own counter-summit actions. Europeans would have their next chance when the World Bank and IMF fall meetings came to Prague in September 2000. A small group of anarchists, environmentalists, and human rights activists forged a loose coalition called the Initiative against Economic Globalization (INPEG), which started meeting regularly during summer 2000 to prepare for the mobilization. In addition to local Czechs, a small contingent of internationals from the US, Britain, Spain, and Catalonia also began to organize in Prague that summer, while listservs were established to coordinate at-a-distance. As with previous actions, decisions were taken by consensus, and a 'spokes' model was employed based on decentralized coordination among autonomous affinity groups organized into larger clusters and blocs.

Activists hammered out the action framework during an international meeting in Prague in August 2000.<sup>10</sup> Rather than preventing delegates from meeting, activists decided to blockade them inside the congress center. The

major sticking point involved strategy. Socialist-oriented activists, particularly from the British Socialist Workers Party (SWP), supported a single march, while those of an anarchist bent preferred autonomous actions. Socialists argued that protesters would arrive late, making it difficult to self-organize, while strength in numbers would allow activists to break through police lines. Anarchists felt police would be less prepared to handle autonomous actions, whose discrete movements could surround the congress center from several directions. The disagreement was not just tactical, it was also expressive. For the SWP, a single march would reflect their goal of fomenting a unified uprising from below. For the anarchists, smaller pack actions would express their commitment to diversity, decentralization, and self-management. After nine hours, organizers reached a compromise: marchers would start together and then split into separate blocs, swarming the congress center through a diversity of tactics.

My Prague experience began at a workshop in Barcelona where I joined an affinity group called the Open Veins.<sup>11</sup> The morning after arriving in Prague together with several buses from Madrid and Barcelona, we held an assembly downtown. Pau gave us a brief update, describing the plan to divide the action into three color-coded marches. Our affinity group decided to spend the day getting to know the terrain. After checking e-mail, we headed to the Infocenter, a modern storefront taken over by INPEG. A Catalan activist met us at a large table with event schedules, volunteer sign-up sheets, and information, while the walls were covered with posters, schedules, and announcements in Czech, English, German, Spanish, and Italian. Across the hall the media center was overflowing with Czech and foreign journalists. Finally, we walked over the river to the Vltavska Cultural Center, where the counter-summit forum was taking place.

Later that evening we went to the convergence center, a teeming beehive of activity on the edge of town where activists were preparing for the action. We arrived just in time for a massive spokescouncil meeting involving 350 activists from more than a dozen countries. An organizer from the US-based Direct Action Network facilitated the meeting in English with simultaneous Czech and Spanish translation. Organizers went over the battle plan, explaining how the march would begin at the Náměstí Míru Square before splitting into three blocs: Blue for militant action, Pink for non-violent protest, and Yellow for an intermediate level of conflict. The topography would be crucial, as the congress center was located next to a deep ravine. A six-lane access highway ran from the outskirts of the city to its south-eastern side. Meanwhile, the high, double-lane Nusle Bridge led directly there from Náměstí Míru, while narrow cobblestone streets surrounded the congress center along the western side. The 'swarming' (Arquilla and Ronfeldt, 2001) strategy would involve blockading the primary access road,

and then entirely surrounding the summit. Over the next few days, two additional blocs would be formed: a Pink & Silver march led by a UK-based Samba Band and a series of autonomous blockades in the south. My affinity group decided to join the Pink March, which desperately needed more bodies.

The emerging terrain of resistance was thus divided into various color-coded zones, each providing a space for diverse kinds of visual and emotional expression through distinct embodied performances.<sup>12</sup> During the Blue March, masked, black-clad militants associated with squatted social centers in Germany, Poland, Czech Republic, Greece, Spain, and elsewhere would use their bodies to enact rituals of violent confrontation, swarming the western side of the congress center and communicating an angry rejection of the system. The Yellow March involved a traditional revolutionary tactic, as a bloc of disciplined bodies would approach the congress center across Nusle Bridge from the north, practicing direct but non-violent confrontation. Socialist networks would be identified by traditional sectarian markings and a serious demeanor, while thousands of young Italian radicals associated with a vibrant circuit of squatted social centers, together with large numbers of anti-corporate globalization activists from around Europe, would perform their network identities through a festive yet confrontational White Overalls action. Meanwhile, the Pink March and southern actions would practice traditional civil disobedience, using vulnerable bodies to occupy space and communicate determined, non-violent dissent. Finally, the Pink & Silver March would follow a flexible route, as activists associated with PGA and other networks contrasted an exhilarating world of creativity, play, and egalitarianism to the hierarchical universe of states and corporate capitalism.

On the morning of 26 September, Náměstí Míru Square was bustling with thousands of activists holding colorful puppets, signs, and props. We lined up in the street along with the Pink March early that afternoon, and, after sending out a scout to make sure the route was clear, we moved out, chanting 'Hey hey, ho, ho, the World Bank has got to go!' Dozens of Czech and international journalists began snapping pictures and recording video footage. Sandra, Miguel, and I exchanged glances, as our moral outrage transformed into feelings of collective power. We were literally embodying our networks through a performative 'assertion of agency' (Wood, 2001: 268). Reflecting a sense of emotional achievement, Nuria, from MRG, recalled, 'There are times when something surges up from inside, as if your body were saying, "now you are living something truly important".' I would experience similar feelings throughout the day, as we encountered activists from diverse protest marches around the city.

## Yellow March

After a few minutes people began shouting at us to slow down. Most of the Pink March had followed the Ya Basta! sound system toward the bridge. The Blue March navigated their way along the western side of the congress center, but the Pink Block was in disarray. Rather than continue with depleted numbers, we decided to turn around and walk back toward the bridge, where thousands of activists from the Pink and Yellow Blocs were standing around a grassy plaza. I made my way through the crowd to get a closer look, and sure enough, two tanks were blocking the bridge flanked by an impressive battalion of soldiers and riot cops. Several hundred Italian, Spanish, and Finnish activists dressed from head to toe in white overalls and protective padding were pushing up against police lines with huge plastic shields and inner tubes.

The White Overalls tactic was designed to create evocative images of resistance while generating powerful feelings of affective solidarity through the massing of absurdly decorated bodies in space. Indeed, as I looked on from a safe distance, row after row of similarly outfitted, yet uniquely adorned bodies, with elbows linked, were pushing up against multiple lines of riot police protecting the entrance to the bridge. Behind them were the two armored vehicles, as the coercive power of the Czech state was on display. Across the battle line, the multitude of bodies was at once a collective, yet individualized force. In addition to white overalls, activists wore multiply colored head gear, including black, silver, white, yellow, blue, and orange helmets. Some also carried shields made from black inner tubes, clear plastic panels, and detached seat cushions. The mass of assembled bodies continued to push against the police barricade for several hours, communicating resistance, while creating an emotionally and visually compelling conflict. At the same time, the shared focus of attention and bodily co-presence transformed feelings of anger and rage into a powerful expression of affective solidarity.

The action had practical *and* performative dimensions. For example, the bizarre, padded outfits protected activists from powerful baton blows, but they also expressed political messages regarding the importance of frivolity, laughing in the face of power, and uniting across diversity and difference. Moreover, the white overalls represented, in part, the autonomous Marxist ideals promoted by the activist networks who wore them, including making conflicts visible, generating new subjectivities, and the (self-) constitution of the 'multitude' (Hardt and Negri, 2004). At the same time, diverse bodily adornments, such as recycled inner tubes, helmets, and foam padding, produced 'grotesque' bodies (Young, 1993), providing ready-made images for the mass media. The White Overalls thus not only helped enclose World Bank/IMF delegates inside the congress center, they generated a spectacular



**Figure 1** Close-up of the White Overalls during the Yellow March in Prague.  
(Photographer: Andreu Blanchar i Arnavat)

image event, as disciplined rows of dystopically decorated bodies conveyed a powerful message of dissent. Indeed, dramatic photos circulated widely over the next few days depicting the massive bloc of protesters pushing against the police lines high above the streets below. As we shall see, protesters succeeded in eliciting widespread media attention, embodying their networks through non-violent, highly confrontational performance.

### Pink March

After observing the Tute Bianche for several minutes, I rejoined my affinity group, and together with several others from Britain, Sweden, and Norway, we began to reorganize the Pink March using our giant flags to lead people down the narrow streets along the eastern flank of the congress center. As we guided hundreds of protesters around the corner, Jorge looked up at me and observed, 'This is great; I've never felt so alive!' Indeed, using our bodies to direct such a large and determined crowd generated powerful feelings of agency and solidarity. It was largely through these kinds of intense emotional experiences that we began to feel connected, both as an affinity group and as part of a larger convergence of anti-corporate globalization networks.



Eager to begin the blockade, we became more purposeful and serious. By the time we approached the access highway, our ranks numbered several thousand. A contingent of Swedes and Norwegians marched directly up the ramp, while the rest of us wound our way around the side streets, meeting at a park next to the congress center. A bike messenger gave a quick update at a brief spokescouncil meeting: autonomous affinity groups had taken up blockade positions in the south that morning, while the Yellow March was still engaged in a standoff with police at the bridge. Meanwhile, a pitched battle was raging in the west between a few thousand Black Block militants from Germany, Poland, Greece, and the Czech Republic, and several heavily fortified police lines. Finally, the Pink & Silver March had joined the other Pink Bloc group back along the highway.

After the meeting, we took up blockades, using our bodies to occupy the space in front of the police lines. The other Pink Bloc group soon came over and joined us. Men in business suits occasionally tried to break through, at which point we would stand up and lock arms to prevent them from passing. The police stood by, some looking fearful, others mildly amused. Beyond the practical impact of the action, protesters were communicating messages of determined yet non-violent opposition, reproducing archetypal scenes of non-violent protest. At one intersection, a group of Swedes wearing jeans and colorful t-shirts sat cross-legged across from several dozen riot cops in black. As the police threatened to charge, the activists quietly held their ground. Just a few feet away, a lone protester with his hair in a bun knelt quietly in meditation, holding his hands out before him in a classic sign of peace. Such non-violent performances symbolically contrasted the vulnerable, morally righteous bodies of the protesters with the menacing bodies of the police. At the same time, they created an emotional tone of serene yet determined resistance.

We maintained the blockade for several hours, talking, strategizing, and eating vegan stew. Rumors soon began circulating that most of the delegates had been whisked away before the Summit had concluded through an escape route. Our initial euphoria had given way to a period of malaise, but our spirits picked up once again when we realized we were having an impact. Moreover, with stories circulating of violent clashes in the east, we began to sense the nervous excitement preceding a 'discharging' crowd (Canetti, 1962). Shortly after dinner, word began circulating that Blue Bloc reinforcements were on their way. All of a sudden, a long line of police began approaching from around the corner. We made a quick decision to sit down, using our bodies to hold the space. Just then, dozens of masked and hooded anarchists appeared, hurling stones and empty bottles at the police lines surrounding us. Several activists were struck with projectiles, while the terrified cops violently broke through our blockade, smashing several heads along the way. 'Hey, what are you doing, this is a non-violent

zone, people are getting hurt!’ someone called out, but to no avail, as few of the militants spoke English or Spanish. The panic, fear, and confusion provoked minutes of chaos, before things calmed down.

After the melee ended, I went around the corner to join my affinity group, which had initiated another blockade. An armored police vehicle soon approached, and we maintained our position. After a brief but intense standoff, the vehicle backed away, as a small group of hooded Czech anarchists banged on the windows. The police soon reinforced their lines, and we feared another attack. Our fear transformed into elation, however, when the riot cops backed off again. ‘They’re retreating!’ exclaimed Gerard. We had successfully held the space. Miguel, Gerard, and I cheered and hugged each other, and then the entire group began celebrating our momentary victory through playful mockery and dancing in front of the stoic, heavily armed riot cops. At one point, we organized a conga line and began to circle, chanting, ‘The Conga, of Calixto, walks round and round!’ We had entered a riveting space of carnivalesque revelry, inducing feelings of collective power and solidarity. Many of us had experienced shifting emotions throughout the day, as Gerard, from MRG, recalled:

There was a pre-Prague and a post-Prague in my life. I met so many people there and had such an incredible experience. There were moments of happiness, then times when your morale sunk through the floor. There was fear, panic, but also festivity; it was incredible!

Indeed, protesters often remember such rapid shifts from one emotional state to another most vividly (Barker, 2001). It was precisely the flexible, constantly changing, spontaneous, and open-ended nature of the Pink March, and the overall Prague action that generated such high levels of affective solidarity. Moreover, as Gerard’s characterization of his transformative experience suggests, such high-risk activism has the potential to alter the trajectory of activist lives (McAdam, 1989).

### Pink & Silver March

As we patiently held our Pink March blockades, the Pink & Silver Bloc danced in and out behind the UK-based Samba Band. Several dozen dancers wearing pink skirts, tights, pants, and leotards, and the occasional silver jump suit, frolicked to the beat of the drums along with their brightly colored masks and flags. Drumming, dance, and music help create what Elias Canetti calls the ‘rhythmic’ crowd; as he explains: ‘What they lack in numbers, the dancers make up in intensity ... As long as they go on dancing, they exert an attraction on all in their neighborhood ... They move as though there were more and more of them. Their excitement grows and reaches frenzy’ (1962: 31–2). Activist bands, including various Samba





**Figure 2** Two members of the Samba Band perform during the Pink & Silver March. (Photographer: Tim Russo)

troupes or the Infernal Noise Brigade from Seattle, provide focal points during anti-corporate globalization mobilizations, producing widespread feelings of embodied agency. In Prague, Samba dancers not only helped generate affective solidarity, their festive and playful performances also represented a stark contrast to both militant protesters and the Czech police.

Meanwhile, Radical Cheerleaders and Pink Fairies would occasionally break away from the group, performing ironic cheers and taunting the police. As we held our intersection, a Pink Fairy approached a nearby police vehicle and began ‘cleaning’ it with her feather duster, much to the delight of the crowd. When the police failed to respond, she was emboldened, and started to approach individual officers, brushing their shoes as they nervously looked on. Such playful provocation represents a form of ritual

opposition, a symbolic overturning of hierarchy much like Medieval Carnival. As Bakhtin suggests, 'Carnival celebrated temporary liberation from the prevailing truth and from the established order; it marked the suspension of all hierarchical rank, privileges, norms, and prohibitions' (1984: 10). Although anti-corporate globalization activists in the North are generally drawn from the middle rather than the working classes, during mass actions they occupy subordinate positions with respect to the police. The ritualized inversion of established hierarchies during political protests generates new visions and powerful feelings of affective solidarity.

Specifically, Pink & Silver protesters used burlesque bodies to symbolically contrast a world of utopian creativity, color, and play to the dark, oppressive forces of law and order. Such performances are 'emergent' in that they make certain aspects of social structure visible and thus amenable to change (Baumann, 1977). Play, in particular, reveals the possibility of radically reorganizing current social arrangements. It exists in the subjunctive mood: 'the domain of the "as-if"' (Turner, 1986: 169). Ludic critique, including parody, satire, and slapstick, 'subverts past legitimacies', signaling a 'store of possible cultural and social structures' (p. 170). Play thus entails an intense virtuosity, linking bodies, emotions, and lived worlds (Lancaster, 1997).

Pink & Silver involved the strategic appropriation of carnivalesque performance and aesthetics, including playful mockery, ritualized inversion, gender bending, drumming, dance, outlandish costumes, and wild masks. In addition, Pink & Silver combined militant and playful protest, reproducing a networking logic within a tactic dubbed 'tactical frivolity'. As David, from MRG, recalled, 'There were beautiful people, like the Samba Band, completely festive, and then there were uniformed militants ready to fight the police.' Unlike the other blocs, Pink & Silver succeeded in penetrating the congress center, using their creative, mobile blend of tactics to confound the police. Pink & Silver, like the larger action of which it was a part, thus created a performative terrain that was oppositional *and* subjunctive, a platform for critiquing prevailing social, political, and economic orders, enacting new forms of sociality, and generating affective solidarity through mobile and free-form virtuoso performance. At the same time, although such carnivalesque tactics generate a great deal of affective solidarity, they can be difficult to interpret for outside observers and, as we shall see, are often trivialized by the media.

## Blue March

Meanwhile, as we held our blockades, the Blue March battle raged in the west. Raul and Paco, from MRG-Zaragoza, had offered to navigate, assuming the march would be non-violent. When they attempted to direct

the crowd away from a battalion of riot cops, militants screamed, ‘police!’ and charged at them up a hill, pushing a huge plastic blue ball from Náměstí Míru. Activists were repelled, but regrouped at the bottom of the hill, and continued to charge again and again. They were able to move police lines back until riot cops responded with tear gas and water canons. Militants then began to dig up cobblestones, hurling them along with Molotov cocktails. The street battle raged for hours. As Paco, from MRG-Zaragoza, later recalled, ‘I had never seen such a violent confrontation, before or after. Genoa was a battlefield, but there wasn’t as much body-to-body contact. There was fire everywhere; cops were burning.’

As I discuss elsewhere (Juris, 2005b), militant tactics involve the ritual enactment of violent performances through distinct bodily techniques, political symbols, and protest styles, including black pants and jumpers, combat boots, and bandanas to cover the face, which serve to express solidarity while simultaneously portraying archetypal images of rebellion. As Peterson (2001) suggests, militant activists generate identities through emotionally powerful embodied ritual performances which construct the militant body as the ground of agency and produce an ‘embattled’ activist subjectivity. Moreover, the typical image of the Black Bloc activist reflects a masculine ideal of aggressive confrontation. Violent performances constitute militant networks by physically expressing a radical rejection of the



**Figure 3** Black Bloc protester moves in toward the riot cops during the Blue March. (Photographer: Florian Schuh/pixelfighters.com)

dominant order, including the major symbols of capitalism and the state. They also allow activists to express powerful feelings of anger and rage. At the same time, however, mass mediated images of violence are often used to stigmatize protesters (Juris, 2005b). Militant violence thus provides a clear expression of the contradiction between the emotional impact of non-traditional direct action and the external impact of such tactics with respect to a wider public.

### The opera house

Later that evening, protesters headed to the opera house, where delegates were scheduled to reconvene. Nearly a thousand of us marched, danced, and sang our way through the streets, passing shattered bank and McDonalds windows along the way. After arriving, we learned the dinner banquet and opera had been cancelled. Before we had a chance to celebrate, several heavily armed lines of Czech police began advancing using sound grenades and tear gas. My heart began to pound, but there was also a sense of excitement as we were engulfed by smoke. Several hundred of us began playing cat and mouse with police, who would advance by hurling tear gas canisters, as we ran several blocks up the street and waited for their next charge. The alternating sensations of fear and elation, panic and glee were at once terrifying and exhilarating.

Meanwhile, Black Bloc protesters continued to smash storefront windows at major transnational banks and car dealers. A helicopter suddenly appeared and began shining a bright spotlight, as the police lines advanced. When we realized we were being hunted, a group of us ran toward a large urban park. We had been overtaken by the excitement of the 'flight' crowd. As Canetti explains, 'People flee together because it is best to flee that way. They feel the same excitement and the energy of some increases the energy of others' (1962: 53). Although a few activists were beaten and arrested, Miguel, Marcela, and I escaped inside a bar at the far end of the park. We took off our bandanas, changed shirts, and shared our experiences from the front lines. These stories increased our sense of belonging to a common struggle despite the differences among protest blocs and networks. As Marcela pointed out, 'Today was really intense; if we can keep up the pressure there will be no stopping us!' Indeed, the emotions sparked by bodily contiguity and collective action had generated intense feelings of affective solidarity throughout the day.

### The morning after

The following morning our affinity group met at the Infocenter to attend a series of press conferences, which were dominated by the question of

violence. Despite the negative attention, however, the action had elicited significant press coverage. Indeed, correspondents from Spanish, Catalan, and other international newspapers and television stations covered the protests, creating an anti-corporate globalization media boom throughout the Spanish state. Meanwhile, reports of random beatings and arrests began circulating, and the police vowed to take control of the streets. In response, activists decided to hold a jail solidarity action. Later that afternoon dozens of protesters began marching from the Watchtower Plaza in the heart of the tourist district to the Charles Bridge carrying signs that declared, 'I'm an anti-globalization activist, arrest me too!' However, an intimidating police blockade awaited them on the bridge. After a tense standoff, the group returned to the Plaza, where it was announced that the World Bank and IMF meetings had been suspended. The police maintained their distance, and the Plaza soon erupted in a wild street party, unleashing an intense outburst of euphoria and *communitas*. During this brief 'moment of madness' (Zolberg, 1972), protesters began to cheer, hug, sing, and dance, as Nuria recalled:

There were people from all around the world; it was overwhelming. This was one of the most magical moments in Prague, totally spontaneous. Protesters began to meet up at the Watchtower Plaza, from Asia, Africa, Latin America, Britain, and Spain, all together. We began to talk one by one, everyone applauding. Then there was music, drumming, and we began to realize we had won. When you are so wrapped up in things you don't have time to enjoy, but we started to realize we had really won!

Nuria's testimony not only emphasized powerful feelings of freedom, liberation, and joy associated with such 'peak' experiences, but also the way diverse groups came together across racial, national, and class differences. As Routledge and Simons (1995) suggest, these 'spiritual' moments often involve such 'heterogeneous' affinities, which I would argue are linked to the liminal aspects of relatively open, free-form styles of action. Rather than incidental to political protest, such affective dynamics provide a reservoir of emotional resources which activists can draw on as they work to build grassroots movements for political and social change.

Prague was a classic event of re-presentation. Activists generated affective solidarity and oppositional identities through diverse bodily movements and techniques. These included the use of vulnerable bodies to occupy urban space (Pink Bloc), rhythmic dancing and drumming (Pink & Silver Bloc), violent and symbolic confrontation (Blue and Yellow Blocs), and autonomous maneuvers (Southern Actions). Each of these actions also involved distinct emotional tones and intensities: quiet determination; festive exuberance; militant rage, anger, and aggression; as well as nervous anticipation. At the same time, alternating moments of ritual conflict and

egalitarian outbursts generated powerful feelings of emotional achievement. Prague was also a compelling image event, as alternative networks communicated diverse political messages, while rendering conflicts visible, although, as we shall see, the press coverage was somewhat stigmatizing and trivializing. Moreover, many of the tactics enacted in Prague, including White Overalls or Pink & Silver would circulate through global communications networks, providing repertoires for activists to appropriate in distant locales. Meanwhile, the intensely lived emotions would translate into sustained networking, particularly in Catalonia, to which we now turn.

### **Victory in the streets: Barcelona against the 'Europe of Capital'**

The spring 2002 mobilization against the EU in Barcelona provides a clear contrast with respect to Prague, illustrating how different forms of protest generate distinct emotional effects. Rather than free-form direct action, the highly scripted 'unity march' took center stage this time. Moreover, the anti-EU protest involved a much broader coalition. Significantly, NGOs, leftist parties, and unions took part, although within their own platform called the 'Barcelona Social Forum' (BSF). Marxists and Trotskyists also joined in, working with grassroots formations such as MRG and the Citizens Network to Abolish the Foreign Debt (RCADE) as well as an informal network of squatters, anti-capitalists, and anti-militarists with the 'Campaign against the Europe of Capital and War'. Two rivals thus dominated the field: the 'Campaign' and the 'Forum'. Moreover, less than two weeks before the counter-summit protest, a third block appeared: a network of nationalist forces including Basque separatists Herri Batasuna.

Campaign organizers were particularly concerned about police repression. The previous summer protests in Gothenburg, Barcelona, and Genoa had turned increasingly violent, and everyone wanted to avoid another confrontation. The terrain also presented a complex challenge, requiring an alternative approach to the swarming strategy implemented at previous actions. The Summit was held far away from the city center, protected inside a large bunker in the outlying University Zone. A contingent of 10,000 riot cops was called in, while the federal government constructed a fence around the entire protest zone. Consequently, the dynamics of mobilization shifted toward a focus on traditional marches and rallies. Radicals decided to continue with their plans for action, but they called for multiple protests instead of a single blockade. Meanwhile, the 'unity march' was the central focus of attention. As we shall see, there *were* highly charged moments during the protest, but many core activists, in particular, experienced the unity march as less emotionally intense than previous actions.



In the early evening of 16 March, I went to the Plaça de Catalunya to meet up with my affinity group before the march. We waited anxiously for the masses to appear, and after what felt like an eternity, thousands of people started pouring in, seemingly from nowhere. Suddenly, the large banners and floats separating the blocks moved into place, and before we could figure out who was supposed to go where, a huge crowd swept us along. When we moved toward the street, I saw familiar faces from past mobilizations. Indeed, counter-summit protests had become important spaces where transnational networks were lived and embodied. As Nuria recalled, 'Seeing Jose Bové, and the people from Porto Alegre, had a powerful psychological effect. Like, "wow, I'm surrounded by *compañeros*." There was an amazing feeling of internationalism; we were building networks beyond our own countries.' In this case, the ritual co-presence of so many familiar bodies helped produce and reinforce emerging transnational network identities and affective attachments.

As the march began, we danced alongside a samba band, chanting 'Another World Is Possible, Another World Is Possible'. Other protesters carried colorful banners denouncing the Europe of Capital, depicting greedy businessman clenching Euros and dollar bills, or portraying Presidents Aznar and Bush as war criminals. Meanwhile, packs of Euro-Fighters began darting in and out, while further along, we passed a drumming troupe dressed as red devils and giants. These mobile performances created a festive, carnivalesque atmosphere. As we neared the port, I glanced back and saw hundreds of thousands of protesters. Organizers were ecstatic, suggesting this was the largest demonstration they had seen, more than a half-million people. Activists later expressed a sense of catharsis, as an accumulation of tension was transformed into an explosion of euphoria. As Mateo, from RCADE, explained, 'When the march began, everyone was serious and tense, then all of a sudden, it was like an orgasm. We began walking up and down, and the people didn't stop! I just couldn't grasp how many people there were.' The sheer number of bodies crowded into a compact space created powerful feelings of exhilaration and joy (see Lofland, 1982).

The next morning's headline in *La Vanguardia*, a popular pro-business daily, exclaimed: 'Victory in the Streets!' The press hailed protesters as a paragon of 'civic virtue', which many saw as an attempt to subvert the Campaign's far-reaching critique. Indeed, the march reached masses of supporters, but was far less confrontational than previous mobilizations, and failed to communicate a message of radical dissent. At the same time, many activists experienced powerful moments of affective solidarity, as Nuria explained:

At the concert, I felt a sensation like, 'we have really won!' There was a moment when everyone was on stage that reminded me of the 1930s. You

became connected with the past, with your grandparents and great-grandparents, and you felt nostalgia for the civil war, the republic, or the collectivizations. There was also a sense of community, like in Genoa, with the songs and videos from past movements. It was like, 'this was all worth it; so we could be here, so something important could happen.' It was like that moment in Prague, when they told us the World Bank and IMF meetings had been suspended, that intense feeling of community in the Watchtower Plaza.

Nuria recounted sentiments of community, solidarity, and emotional achievement similar to those she had lived during previous protests, including the action against the World Bank and IMF in Prague. Clearly, the march had stimulated powerful emotions, but these were oriented as much toward earlier experiences as the anti-EU protest. Meanwhile, other activists expressed a nagging sense of frustration and even defeat, suggesting the movement had been contained and neutralized. Rather than an open ended, confrontational event of representation, the march felt overly formal and routine. Indeed, compared to past actions, many radicals felt the protest lacked risk and excitement, and was thus less emotionally empowering. As Paula, from *las Agencias*, pointed out, 'We were afraid to organize confrontational actions, which really make conflicts visible. The actions were great in terms of content – extremely transparent and public. But making sure people weren't afraid to bring their young kids to the actions was excessive.'

As it turned out, despite occasional moments of *communitas*, there were relatively few liminoid outbursts of freedom, excitement and uncertainty. In this sense, the actions and unity march were more akin to events of presentation, as Joan, from RCADE, pointed out:

The mobilization was a success, but not an epic experience. There were epic moments, but not like in Prague, Genoa, or last year in Barcelona ... The demonstration was a numerical success, and it produced an image that makes our critiques acceptable, but it wasn't a life-changing experience where you radically confront the system and live through dangerous situations full of adrenaline, at least not for me.

Given Joan's thirst for 'epic' moments of personal transformation, a traditional protest, regardless of the numbers, was bound to disappoint. The march thus failed to generate the same feelings of emotional achievement as past counter-summit actions. For many radicals, the anti-EU mobilization felt overly controlled, staged, and predictable – the open crowd had been caged. As Pablo, from *las Agencias*, suggested, the movement had reached an impasse, involving the 'normalization of the new grammar we created'. He went on to explain:



The summit was resituated, by the police and the Campaign. It was easily appropriated by a traditional political discourse. We are at a moment when our politics are hyper-codified: organizing demonstrations that are more and more massive, and decentralized actions that disrupt the demonstration as little as possible to keep us in our place.

In other words, counter-summit protests were beginning to lose their confrontational edge. Their emotional impact was waning, they were becoming routine. At the same time, the anti-EU march may well have produced an empowering experience for some, particularly those not accustomed to attending political demonstrations. Indeed, given the intense emotions they produce, mass actions have an 'addictive' quality, and many core activists seem to require ever increasing levels of risk and confrontation. However, such high levels of emotional intensity are difficult to reproduce over time, particularly given the decreasing novelty of counter-summit protests and the growing security around them. At the same time, as we shall see, the massive numbers, traditional format, and relatively peaceful tone of the march generated sympathetic media images, which facilitate wider movement building and recruitment.

### **The politics of signification**

As I have argued, confrontational, free-form protests such as the September 2000 actions against the World Bank and IMF in Prague generate high levels of affective solidarity, but they are difficult to reproduce over time. In contrast, traditional protests, including the spring 2002 anti-EU march in Barcelona, are more sustainable but are often experienced as less emotionally transformative. The impact of protest with respect to the mass media tends to work in the opposite direction. Spectacular actions draw significant media attention, but the coverage is more likely to be disparaging. For their part, traditional marches and rallies are less likely to elicit media interest, but when they do, they generally receive more sympathetic treatment. In this sense, as mentioned above, there may be a tension between intra- and extra-movement protest outcomes.

One way to assess extra-movement outcomes is to examine the impact of protest on political discourse and public opinion through the mass media (see della Porta, 1999; McCarthy et al., 1996). Protesters stage spectacular image events, in part, to gain visibility. At the same time, however, reporters tend to focus on violence and intrigue rather than underlying political issues. By employing widespread 'media frames' (Gitlin, 1980), journalists select, exclude, emphasize, and interpret verbal and visual cues in particular ways. As Gamson and Modigliani (1989) suggest, individual frames

composed of metaphors, images, catchphrases, and other devices are grouped together as 'media packages', which continually incorporate new events into their interpretive schemes. Competing sponsors, including political parties, police officials, and social movements, use a variety of platforms – speeches, interviews, advertising, editorials, and press conferences – to promote their interpretations. Media terrains thus constitute symbolic battlegrounds for the 'politics of signification' (Snow and Oliver, 1995).

With respect to protest, the mass media are generally more sympathetic to discourses and practices that reflect dominant values, such as the sanctity of private property and the state, and can be easily incorporated into hegemonic frameworks. As Gitlin (1980) suggests, 'Discrepant statements about reality are acknowledged – but muffled, softened, fragmented, *domesticated* at the same time' (p. 270). On the other hand, dominant media packages employ various techniques, including trivialization, marginalization, disparagement, and a focus on violence and internal division, to deflect and contain radical dissent (Gitlin, 1980; Hall, 1974). Consequently, anti-globalization movements receive more favorable press coverage to the extent that they engage in peaceful protest, emphasize reforms, and include institutional actors. Ironically, perhaps, these conditions produce less emotionally compelling events. In order to demonstrate the contradiction between internal and external impacts of mass actions, the following sections contrast the media coverage of protests in Prague and Barcelona in the Spanish and Catalan press.<sup>13</sup>

### Prague, September 2000

Large numbers of Spanish and Catalan activists took part in the September 2000 anti-World Bank and IMF protests in Prague, eliciting significant media interest back home. At least two contrasting media packages were perceptible. On the one hand, the protests were treated as battles or sporting events with identifiable teams, winners and losers, and running scores. On the other hand, reporters stressed the division between 'good' and 'bad' protesters. Radical youths were disparaged and criminalized, while moderate non-governmental organizations (NGOs) received more favorable treatment, including coverage of their political demands.

A story in *El País* set the stage on 24 September, using a military metaphor to depict protesters and leaders of the World Bank and IMF as 'poised on opposing sides of a trench in a ferocious global battle for public opinion ... set to begin, perhaps violently, in the coming days in the streets of Prague' (24 September, p. 60). The article further suggests, 'protesters know if they don't achieve a spectacular triumph on Tuesday, their anti-globalization movement, which has been picking up steam since the past December in Seattle, runs the risk of deflating'. On the day of action itself,

*El País* reported that radicals had only been able to 'gather 5,000 people ... giving the police ... a margin of more than two to one in their favor' (26 September, p. 76).

The next day's headlines portrayed massive street battles with photos depicting Black Bloc and White Overall militants hurling stones, breaking windows, and confronting police lines. A story in *El País* characterized the action in this way: 'Protesters numbered 9,000 by morning, with nighttime reinforcements from Italy, Greece, and Spain. They ripped up cobblestones, made Molotov cocktails, gathered sharp objects, and set off for the Convention Center singing fight songs' (27 September, p. 74). When protesters closed delegates inside, reporters attributed a victory to them: 'Thousands of demonstrators scored a success in their battle against globalization after surrounding the international capitalist elite in Prague' (p. 74). The next sentence provided a justification: 'Institutional authorities recognized the legitimacy of protests and promised to work so that "globalization benefits the majority and not just a few".' Indeed, *El País* reported before Prague that protests had already affected World Bank President James Wolfensohn, who 'did not hide the fact that the protests in Washington, DC last April and those upcoming in Prague have weakened the institution's spirit' (25 September, p. 76).

However, there was a significant discrepancy between media representations of radicals and moderates. For example, a story in *El País* characterized militants as 'rioters with colored hair and gas masks, radicals for the sake of being radical, with no more ideological foundation than trashing windows and luxury cars, and punks with *pierced penises* urinating all over the streets' (28 September, p. 70). Other reports echoed specious assertions that Spanish detainees were 'associated with radical Basque movements' (*El País*, 29 September, p. 102). Militants were specifically contrasted to Reformists, as an *El País* article explained: 'Wolfensohn met with 350 moderate NGOs requesting dialogue ... but radicals are not interested in building bridges and will play revolution in the streets' (23 September, p. 73). Another article asserted that, 'Various NGOs, who have struggled for years to force the IMF and World Bank to forgive the debt of the world's poorest countries, separated themselves from the rioters' (*El País*, 28 September, p. 70).

The anti-World Bank and IMF protests in Prague elicited significant media coverage in the Spanish and Catalan press. By staging a spectacular, confrontational action, protesters not only produced high levels of affective solidarity, they generated a great deal of media attention. However, much of the coverage portrayed protesters in a negative light, stigmatizing them as violent criminals or trivializing them as marginal squatters and punks committed more to their subcultural lifestyles than political change. In contrast, moderate NGO activists were depicted as legitimate political

actors engaging in peaceful protest and offering a reasonable challenge to World Bank and IMF policies. Overall, the mass media impact was mixed. On one level, radicals and moderates worked well together, the former stimulating media interest through militant protest, the latter providing legitimacy and a focused message. On another level, the dominant frames stigmatized and trivialized radicals, making it more difficult for movement organizers to reach beyond a committed core of activists. In this sense, the same factors that generate affective solidarity among militants may also complicate efforts to recruit more broadly.

### Barcelona, March 2002

By the time of the March 2002 protests against the EU in Barcelona, institutional actors, including the Spanish Communist Party (PCE) and the Catalan Socialist Party (PSC), had aligned themselves with moderates inside the Barcelona Social Forum (BSF). Before the mobilization, protesters and officials from the conservative Popular Party (PP), which controlled the central government, promoted contrasting media packages. In particular, the PP stepped up its attempts to link protesters with Basque street fighters. As an *El País* headline exclaimed, 'Barcelona arms itself for protests against globalization, Aznar [the Spanish President from the PP party] warns demonstrators of the risk of joining Batasuna' (10 March). A story in *El Mundo* called, 'More than a Thousand Basque Radicals Will Go to Barcelona', portrayed a city poised for an epic battle between militants and police (14 March, p. 3). Another headline in *La Vanguardia* read, 'Spain Impedes Entrance of 118 Anti-globalization Activists', and was accompanied by an image of sequestered bats, sticks, and guns (15 March, p. 23), setting the stage for police repression.

Activists and leftist parties promoted an alternative media package stressing non-violence and blaming the tension on the central government. A story in *El Periódico* thus reported that the Campaign 'accuses police of "provocation", and asks officials to "let us demonstrate in peace"' (12 March, p. 17). *El Mundo* ran headlines declaring that the 'PSC Criticizes "Obsession" with Security' (12 March, p. 17), and that the 'Barcelona Social Forum Advocates Massive, "Peaceful" Demonstration' (p. 19). At the same time, beyond violence and tension, several stories focused on political content. As an article in *El Periódico* explained, activists denounced the Spanish EU presidency for being 'guided by ... deregulation, flexibilization, and privatization', and thus, 'imposing the "law of the market above all else"' (12 March, p. 16).

Finally, the rise of three protest blocks – the Campaign against the Europe of Capital, the Barcelona Social Forum, and the Catalan Platform – led to a third media package: division among radicals and reformers. An

article in *El País* thus argued, 'Unlike previous mobilizations, there will be more than one platform claiming the *spirit of Porto Alegre*', signaling a 'tension between those who would govern globalization from within, and those who call for direct confrontation' (10 March, p. 21). As an accompanying feature explained, the BSF 'would intervene in existing institutions to correct globalization, giving it more social content', while the Campaign is 'more radical' and supports 'express, non-violent confrontation'. Another article in *El País* exclaimed, 'Never have the conveners of the same demonstration been so divided' (13 March, p. 8).

Following the massive non-violent demonstration on 16 March, the 'peaceful protester' package won out. A headline in *El País* thus exclaimed, '300,000 People Peacefully Demand Another Globalization' (17 March, p. 1). A *La Vanguardia* headline similarly announced, 'Huge Anti-globalization March, Hundreds of Thousands March Peacefully in Barcelona'. For its part, a headline in *El Periódico* triumphantly declared '300,000 People Demonstrate Peacefully in the Largest Anti-globalization March in Europe' (17 March, p. 1). A story in *El País* praised the new 'Barcelona model' (17 March, p. 4), while its editorial page lauded the 'maturity' of protesters and the city's 'civic display'. The prevailing sentiment was perhaps best summarized in this way: 'Anti-globalization forces are seen as more legitimate' (*La Vanguardia*, 18 March, p. 6).

The press coverage during the anti-EU mobilization in Barcelona began by emphasizing familiar media packages, including protest as a battle, the threat of militant violence, and internal divisions. For their part, activists and leftist parties promoted an alternative 'peaceful protester' package, which carried the day following the massive unity march. However, for radicals, the media impact, once again, was mixed. On the one hand, the dominant media frames emphasized reformist critiques while extolling the virtue of cooperation. On the other hand, the sympathetic coverage made it more likely that potential adherents would be willing to take part in future protests. Whereas the action in Prague was emotionally potent, but resulted in media packages that stigmatized and trivialized radicals, the march in Barcelona was experienced as routine by many core activists, but led to triumphant headlines that helped legitimize the wider movement.

## Conclusion

Counter-summit protests are important mobilizing tools that allow activists to perform their networks and make their struggles visible, while generating affective solidarity through ritual catharsis. On the one hand, mass direct actions, in particular, constitute high-profile image events where activist networks represent themselves through diverse embodied spatial

practices. Spectacular actions involving Pink Bloc, White Overall, and Black Bloc tactics are thus meant, in part, to capture mass media attention, while communicating political messages to an audience. In this sense, the action in Prague and the anti-EU march in Barcelona made headlines in Spain and Catalonia and throughout Europe. However, as the novelty of counter-summits wears off, increasingly spectacular actions may be required to break through busy media cycles. As Paul Routledge suggests, 'as the practice of resistance becomes increasingly dramaturgical, there is a danger that politics may become more about appearance than effect, more about symbolic protest than material change' (1998: 255). Indeed, although the meaning of specific actions may be evident to activists, they are often difficult to interpret for an outside audience.

Counter-summit protests also generate affective solidarity. As we have seen, activists perform their networks through diverse bodily movements, techniques, and styles, generating distinct identities and emotional tones. This was evident in Prague, where organizers divided the urban terrain into three color-coded zones, each reserved for specific forms of embodied action: masked, black-clad rebels expressing anger and rage via militant confrontation (Blue March), masses of dystopically decorated bodies engaging in festive yet determined resistance (White Overalls), vulnerable bodies communicating serious, purposeful dissent (Pink Block), and samba dancers contrasting a gleeful world of creativity, play, and egalitarianism to the hierarchical universe of states and corporate capitalism (Pink & Silver Block). At the same time, different kinds of protest events generate varying degrees of emotion. Prague was a classic event of re-presentation, producing powerful feelings of affective solidarity through heated conflict between protesters and police, periodic liminoid outbursts, and the lived experience of prefigured utopias during Carnavalesque moments of transgression. The march against the EU in Barcelona, on the other hand, created a significant impact through sheer numbers, but for many activists, it felt scripted and routine. In this sense, although counter-summit protests are critical networking tools, they generate diminishing returns with respect to visibility and affective solidarity.

I have also addressed a second contradiction related to a potential disconnect between intra- and extra-movement outcomes. As we have seen, the most spectacular, confrontational free-form actions, which are particularly potent in emotional terms, often contribute to media frames that stigmatize or belittle protesters. In this sense, many activists experienced the anti-World Bank and IMF action in Prague as emotionally transformative, but the press portrayed radicals in a disparaging light. Conversely, although peaceful protests are often ignored, when they are covered due to factors such as large numbers, the participation of institutional forces, or the *threat* of violence, they are more likely to elicit sympathetic treatment. For core

activists, however, they tend to generate lower levels of affective solidarity, as we saw with the anti-EU protest in Barcelona. Organizers, and radicals, in particular, thus have to confront two related strategic challenges: balancing the need for affective solidarity and sustainability, while also managing the tension between the emotional and mass media impacts of political protest.

For their part, anti-corporate globalization activists have expressed their own doubts regarding the efficacy of counter-summit actions. As a Dutch anti-capitalist argued before the protest in Prague, 'Causing a summit to fail appeals to the imagination and provides the media with pretty pictures, but while a mass protest may have great symbolic value, it does not mean much more.'<sup>14</sup> Others have countered that mass counter-summit actions are important strategic weapons, which allow activists to publicly challenge multilateral institutions and the neoliberal order they support, as US organizer Starhawk (2002) suggests:

Our purpose is to undercut their legitimacy, to point a spotlight at their programs and policies, and to raise the social costs of their existence until they become unsupportable ... The big summit meetings are elaborate rituals, ostentatious shows of power that reinforce the entitlement and authority of the bodies they represent. When those bodies are forced to meet behind walls, to fight a pitched battle over every conference, to retreat to isolated locations, the ritual is interrupted and their legitimacy is undercut. (p. 117)

In a world where politics is largely waged through global media terrains, mass actions, even if not always perfectly intelligible, have allowed activists to communicate beyond their networks and render conflicts visible. At their best, counter-summit protests also elicit intense emotions, particularly when they are confrontational and free-form. Indeed, building a mass movement requires sustained networking, which is facilitated by the generation of affective solidarity during periodic moments of embodied interaction. But what happens when protests become overly scripted, controlled, or predictable? How should activists confront the tension between emotional and mass media outcomes? On the one hand, organizers can coordinate and reduce the number of mobilizations during a particular period, allowing time for activists to rest and focus on everyday struggles. On the other hand, activists can stress tactical and strategic flexibility, combining free-form actions with traditional protests. At the same time, regional and global gatherings of transnational networks, including the social forums, provide alternative, if less emotionally intense, platforms where activists can perform their networks, experiment with network-based forms of organization, and generate affective solidarity.

Indeed, sustaining a mass movement is a complex art, requiring a delicate



balance between periodic outbursts of embodied agency and their controlled management, improvisation and staged repetition. Moreover, different strategies and forms of protest may be required to reach out to potential adherents as opposed to core organizers. The danger is mistaking a specific tool for a goal. Mass counter-summit mobilizations can facilitate movement building, but they are not ends in themselves. Similarly, Barbara Epstein (1991) has argued that the US-based direct action movement of the 1970s and 1980s proved unsustainable, in part, because it defined itself around a specific tactic. When mass direct actions began to stagnate, activists were unable or unwilling to develop new approaches. Anti-corporate globalization activists face a similar challenge. This ultimately points to the need for sustainable organization, even if decentralized and network-based, which can survive the ebbs and flows of mass mobilization.

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## Notes

- 1 Pulido (2003) similarly refers to the 'exterior' and 'interior' dimensions of social movements. The former involve social, cultural, economic, and political structures, while the latter include 'emotions, psychological development, souls, and passions' (p. 47).
- 2 Intra-movement outcomes include factors such as emotion, biographical impact (Giugny, 2004; McAdam, 1989), and collective identity (Taylor and Whittier, 1992). Extra-movement outcomes include institutional/policy change (Amenta and Caren, 2004; Burstein, 1999; Gamson, 1990), cultural transformation (Earl, 2004), and media impact, which mediates between cultural and institutional/policy spheres (see della Porta, 1999).
- 3 This practice is inspired by Nancy Scheper-Hughes's (1995) 'militant anthropology', but is distinguished by its radical insistence on collaboration. Moreover, the emphasis on ethnography suggests a methodology that goes beyond the field of anthropology.
- 4 Here I view embodiment both in terms of how meanings and identities are expressed through the body (Scheper-Hughes and Locke, 1987), as well as



the body as a lived subject and agent (Csordas, 1990; Lyon and Barbalet, 1994).

- 5 Arlie Hochschild (1979) specifically argues that individuals manage emotions in response to 'feeling rules' within particular social contexts.
- 6 Abu-Lughod and Lutz (1990) rightly caution against 'essentializing' emotions by presuming a false universality. However, constructionist approaches overlook how emotions are lived and embodied (Kapchan, 1995; Lyon, 1995; Lyon and Barbalet, 1994). Here I am concerned with how such deeply felt sensations, which Rosaldo (1984) refers to as 'emotional force', emerge through embodied ritual interaction. The notion of affective solidarity attempts to capture this underlying embodied dimension of emotion (see Jasper, 1998).
- 7 For Turner (1982), the 'liminal' is a functional requirement of pre-modern societies, which compensates for the rigidity of social structure. The 'liminoid' corresponds to dynamic industrial societies, and is often associated with social, even revolutionary critique.
- 8 The negotiations broke down due to internal conflicts, but Southern trade delegates cited the protests as emboldening them to resist the demands of Northern governments (Weissman, 1999).
- 9 Seattle was actually the third in a series of PGA-inspired global days of action beginning with the protests against the G8 Summit in Birmingham in May 1998.
- 10 This discussion is based on conversations with activists, an account provided by Starhawk (2002), and minutes from the meeting.
- 11 We took the name of our affinity group from Eduardo Galeano's (1997) well-known book regarding colonialist exploitation in Latin America, *Open Veins of Latin America*.
- 12 See Chesters and Welsh (2004) for an analysis of color codes in Prague from the perspective of framing. Here, I am more interested in the embodied performances enacted within each zone.
- 13 My sources include two of the top-selling national dailies in Spain – *El País* and *El Mundo*, and the two most popular Catalan regional papers – *El Periódico de Catalunya* and *La Vanguardia*. *El País* is center-left, *El Mundo* is center-right, while *El Periódico* is left leaning and provides the most sympathetic coverage of protesters. For its part, *La Vanguardia* promotes a pro-business, Catalanist line. It is important to recognize such differences, but a finely-tuned analysis of the contrasting coverage within these sources is beyond the scope of this article.
- 14 [<http://squat.net/eurodusnie/articles/dusnieuws/2000/moves.htm>], accessed 26 December 2006.

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