Democratic Insurrection, or, what does the alterglobalization movement have in common?

Abstract

This paper develops a framework for understanding new possibilities of radical democracy through the alterglobalization movement. Unlike many theories of radical democracy that seek to either reform liberal-democratic institutions or construct hegemonic identities in civil society, the alterglobalization movement points towards a form of radical democracy beyond the state and hegemony. This form seeks to balance struggles for autonomy with the necessity for large-scale collective action by disaggregating democratic practice into three distinct moments – deliberation, decision and action – each of which occurs on different scales, at different times and within different structures in the movement. Taken together, deliberation in the social forum, decision in the affinity group, and action in the network, offer new possibilities for conceptualizing radical democracy on a global scale, but also suffer from important limitations.

Keywords: radical democracy, alterglobalization, social forum, affinity group, network

Introduction

Protest is when I say I don't like this. Resistance is when I put an end to what I don't like. Protest is when I refuse to go along with this anymore. Resistance is when I make sure everybody else stops going along too.

-Ulrike Meinhof[1]

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[1] Ulrike Meinhof, *Everybody Talks About the Weather . . . We Don't: The Writings of Ulrike Meinhof*, 1st ed. (Seven Stories Press, 2008), 239.

And it is doubtless the strategic codification of these points of resistance that makes revolution possible…

-Michel Foucault[2]

Alterglobalization is tearing down fences, burning GMO crops and occupying universities. It is indigenous communities struggling for autonomy in the jungles of Chiapas. It is a group of friends linking arms with PVC pipes that read 'Climate Justice Now!' It is buses of activists, organizers and community members traveling to social forums to debate alternatives. It is networks of communities joining in simultaneous resistance to domination. The alterglobalization movement is a project for democracy, but a kind of democracy quite alien to those living in what are commonly considered democratic states. For the movement, the perversion of democracy has emptied it of meaning and replaced it with a palatable imperialism, an accepted aristocracy and passive dependence.[3] The alterglobalization movement seeks to overcome this perversion through a project of constructive resistance, a struggle 'for humanity and against neoliberalism.'[4]

Radical democratic theory has sought to reconceptualize democratic practice and political space as an open site of contestation, and transform it into a coherent political project. The alterglobalization movement challenges many of these theories in both its form and its desire for 'another world.'[5] These theories are reluctant to accept the irreducible difference of the struggles and subjectivites in the movement, for fear that such difference will restrict the possibilities of collective action. However, the alterglobalization movement exhibits new forms of collective action that enable both the ceaseless becoming of open and flexible relationships and global collective action. To understand these forms and trajectories we will turn to poststructural and anarchist theory, developing a framework for understanding the organizational structures and decision-making processes of the alterglobalization movement.

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[2] Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality, Vol. 1: An Introduction* (Vintage, 1990), 96.

[3] Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri, *Multitude: War and Democracy in the Age of Empire* (Penguin (Non-Classics), 2005), 270-285.

[4] The *Ejército Zapatista de Liberación Nacional*, or Zapatistas, have held several *encuentros* that they refer to as 'Intercontinental Encounters for Humanity and Against Neoliberalism'.

[5] The slogan for the World Social Forum is "Another World Is Possible!"

As the movement is both a desire for autonomy and large-scale collective action among autonomies, it is important to develop theory that can account for the irreducibility of difference in these autonomous struggles without precluding the possibility of some form of collective action. Here we will build from Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri's concept of *the common* – shared material resources and the results of social production and practice – as a medium for fluid forms of collectivity. The form of radical democracy found in the direct action wing of the movement relies on various forms of the common, but is fragmented into three distinct moments – deliberation, decision and action. Each of these moments occurs on different scales, at different times and within different structures in the movement – deliberation in the social forum, decision in the affinity group, and action in the network. Taken as a system this forum-affinity-network structure offers new possibilities for conceptualizing radical democracy on a global scale, but also suffers from important limitations.

Radical Democracy as Collective Autonomy

Since the publication of Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe's *Hegemony & Socialist Strategy* in 1985,[6] theorists have continued the search for a radical democratic politics.[7] While this growing literature exhibits a diverse range of perspectives, we will here focus on three salient features that have emerged among the many interpretations: the attempts to reform liberal-democratic institutions, the role of civil society, and the importance of demands for inclusion in the political.

First, in their original formulation, Laclau and Mouffe emphasize both their connection with the liberal tradition, and their roots in a socialist vision of equality. They argue that the task of a radical democratic project 'cannot be to renounce liberal-democratic ideology, but on the contrary, to deepen and

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[6] Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe, *Hegemony & Socialist Strategy: Towards a Radical Democratic Politics* (Verso, 1985).

[7] See: David Trend, *Radical Democracy: Identity, Citizenship and the State*, New edition. (Routledge, 1995).; Lars Tonder and Lasse Thomassen, *Radical Democracy: Politics between Abundance and Lack* (Manchester University Press, 2006).; Chantal Mouffe, *Dimensions of Radical Democracy: Pluralism, Citizenship, Community* (Verso, 1996).; Adrian Little and Moya Lloyd, *The Politics of Radical Democracy* (Edinburgh University Press, 2009). for recent works both extending and critiquing the concept.

expand it in the direction of a radical and plural democracy.'[8] In her later work, Mouffe re-iterates this intimate connection with the liberal tradition:

> The aim is not to create a completely different kind of society, but to use the symbolic resources of the liberal democratic tradition to struggle against relations of subordination not only in the economy but also those linked to gender, race, or sexual orientation, for example.'[9]

For Mouffe, liberal political institutions are necessary to prevent a tyrannical popular sovereignty and to promote the pluralism necessary for a democratic society. Other proponents have framed the radical democracy in similarly relative terms, as *more* participatory and *more* deliberative than the existing democratic institutions.[10] Ultimately, interpretations in this vein seek to improve what is seen as an imperfect system rather than radically transform it.

Second, while many theorists posit a project of reform, the critical site of radical democratic practice is typically not found in political institutions themselves. In their introduction to a recent collection of radical democratic theory, Adrian Little and Moya Lloyd argue that for many, 'civil society rather than the state is construed as the principal, even exclusive, site of democratic struggle.'[11] This focus on civil society is important, but ultimately leads back to an intimate, though perhaps antagonistic, relationship with the state. Similarly, in Laclau's more recent work he posits 'the people,' a collective subject emerging from civil society, as necessary for a radical democracy. He argues that it is possible to construct such a subject through establishing 'chains of equivalence' between diverse social struggles, each based on various signifiers such as race, class or gender.[12] For Laclau, a signifier such as 'the people' can serve as a site of identification and a means for a hegemonic democratic movement capable of collective action at the state or global level, but also remain open to contestation and redefinition.

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[8] Laclau and Mouffe, *Hegemony & Socialist Strategy*, 176.

[9] Chantal Mouffe, "Radical Democracy or Liberal Democracy?" in Trend, *Radical Democracy*, 20.

[10] Joshua Cohen and Archon Fung, 'Radical Democracy', in *Swiss Journal of Political Science*, (2004): 23-34; Joshua Cohen, 'Reflections on Radical Democracy,' in Thomas Christiano and John Christman, *Contemporary Debates in Political Philosophy* (Wiley-Blackwell, 2009)., 247-263.

[11] Little and Lloyd, *The Politics of Radical Democracy*, 3.

[12] Ernesto Laclau, *On Populist Reason* (Verso, 2007).; Laclau and Mouffe, *Hegemony & Socialist Strategy*.

Third, the focus on civil society or 'the people' as the key site of radical democratic politics is echoed in theorists such as Jacques Rancière, though he does not discuss the concept of radical democracy itself. Still, in line with radical democratic theory, he argues that a fundamental moment in democratic practice is the demand for inclusion by excluded groups. Recalling Olympe de Gouges' audacious claim during the French Revolution that if women were 'entitled' to go to the scaffold, then they must be entitled to go to the assembly, he emphasizes the need for exposing and contesting the contradiction in principals of inclusion.[13] For Rancière, each contestation produces a more inclusive, more democratic political space.

What is seen as radical in these conceptions, then, is the re-conceptualization of the *demos* as a more inclusive political subject, albeit one that is a site of continuous conflict and re-composition. Though they may focus on civil society and the *demos*, behind these conceptions lies an assumption of the nation-state as the principal unit of political organization. As Little and Lloyd note, 'It is clear that the state has a fundamental role to play in radical democratic politics.'[14] Thus, for many theorists, the goal of radical democracy is to develop a radically democratic *state* through expanding the influence of civil society. The emphasis on civil society is an attempt to alter the top-down functioning of power. By demanding greater participation and deliberation, and by civil society playing a key role in the political, radical democracy has championed a system in which power flows from the bottom to the top. However, what remains problematic for many in the alterglobalization movement is that there is still a bottom and a top; there is still a political class granted the power to make and enforce decisions. A truly radical democracy must overcome all hierarchy and all forms of hegemony. As we will see, many groups in the alterglobalization movement reject the top-bottom organization for horizontal organizing beyond the state.

In his recent book, *Gramsci is Dead*, Richard J.F. Day takes aim at the hegemonic core of radical democracy. He argues that radical democracy, particularly Laclau & Mouffe's post-Marxist brand, relies on 'a logic of representation of interests within a state-regulated system of hegemonic struggles.'[15] As we

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[13] Jacques Rancière, "Who Is the Subject of the Rights of Man?," *South Atlantic Quarterly* 103, no. 2 (Spring 2004): 297-310.; Jacques Ranciere, *Disagreement: Politics And Philosophy* (Univ of Minnesota Pr, 1998), 40-41..

[14] Little and Lloyd, *The Politics of Radical Democracy*, 202.

[15] Richard J.F. Day, *Gramsci is Dead: Anarchist Currents in the Newest Social Movements* (Pluto Press, 2005), 75.

have seen, Mouffe insists on the importance of liberal-democratic institutions to regulate these struggles, rejects any sort of truly radical socio-political transformation, and contends that such institutions merely need to be reformed. One cannot but question what is actually radical about such a claim. Similarly, the emphasis on a more inclusive system has been theorized in terms of demand – the impetus lies on excluded groups to make demands on the hegemonic power for inclusion. Directing such demands to those in power serves in the end to legitimize the ruling state or corporate power as legitimate.[16] For many in the alterglobalization movement, these attempts are inadequate. Contrary to Mouffe's insistence that liberal-democratic institutions can be reformed, they proclaim, 'Another world is possible!' Indeed it is possible and necessary to theorize and actualize radical democracy beyond hegemony and the state.

Many of the grievances raised by the movements for an alternative globalization are concerns shared by such radical democratic theorists as Laclau and Mouffe. As Laclau and Mouffe point to the absence of civil society actors in the political sphere, social movements point to failures of representation that are exacerbated in global politics. States, international rule-making bodies, such as the United Nations, and international financial institutions such as the WTO, IMF and World Bank are seen as grossly unrepresentative, much of their policy generated by unelected officials or disproportionately influenced by corporate and other special interests. But poststructural theory, from which Laclau, Mouffe and many other radical democratic theorists take their cue, as well as the anarchist tradition, question the possibility of reforming these institutions. They take the criticism further, illustrating the impossibility of representation and throwing into question the 'radical' democratic demands for *more* representation.[17]

While Laclau and Mouffe, in alignment with much of the New Social Movement theory generated at the time, seek to de-center the importance of class and economic interest as representative signifiers in socio-political struggle, they merely expand the list of signifiers to include other categories such as race, gender, sexuality and ethnicity. Though this move does challenge the hegemony of class, they place a series of other potentially hegemonic relations in its place and ultimately champion an

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[16] Ibid., 80.

[17] Jesse S. Cohn, *Anarchism And the Crisis of Representation: Hermeneutics, Aesthetics, Politics*, 1st ed. (Susquehanna University Press, 2006), 11-21 and 199-216; Todd May, *The Political Philosophy of Poststructuralist Anarchism* (Pennsylvania State University Press, 1994), 82-84 and 97.

equivalence between these relations to produce one hegemonic identity, such as 'the people' that can include all of these, but not be equal to any one of them. These identities and the hegemonic identity of 'the people' are representations that smooth over the irreducible differences that poststructuralists have fought to expose, stitching together diverse interests into a majoritarian logic vis-à-vis 'the people' or civil society.

For many in the alterglobalization movement, this attempt at a sutured political subject contradicts their desire for autonomy.[18] Simon Tormey seeks to elucidate this desire by drawing on the work of Deleuze and Guattari. He examines their concept of of 'becoming-minor' – an ontology of difference that ceaselessly resists grounding in any particular identity. He contrasts 'becoming-minor' to a majoritarian logic of representation. Becoming-minor resists both hegemonic identities such as 'the people' and demands for inclusion in the state, moving beyond both. Tormey argues:

> An ontology of becoming involves resisting the superior codes and meanings of the social field, rather than allowing them to subordinate difference to the Same, as in the case of analogy and associations. This translates as a continual struggle against 'territorialising' attempts to envelop within the categories and codes that underpin sociality, and in particular against being subsumed within logics of representation.[19]

Representation always requires 'territorialization' or grounding through the subordination of difference, while becoming-minor resists the signifiers of class, race, gender and the people, refusing to be grounded or essentialized by any of them. Even these 'marginalized' signifiers can serve to limit the possibilities of difference and the expressibility of multiple, intersecting forms of oppression – what some have analyzed in terms of the *intersectionality* of numerous identity categories.[20] Deleuze and Guattari, and more

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[18] See: Amory Starr and Jason Adams, "Anti-globalization: The Global Fight for Local Autonomy," *New Political Science* 25, no. 1 (2003): 19.; Steffen Böhm, Ana C. Dinerstein, and André Spicer, "(Im)possibilities of Autonomy: Social Movements in and beyond Capital, the State and Development," *Social Movement Studies: Journal of Social, Cultural and Political Protest* 9, no. 1 (2010): 17.

[19] Simon Tormey, ' 'Not in my Name': Deleuze, Zapatismo and the Critique of Representation.' *Parliamentary Affairs* Vol. 59 no. 1 (2006): 142.

[20] See: Leslie McCall, "The Complexity of Intersectionality," *Signs* 30:3 (2005), pp. 1771-1880; Kimberley W. Crenshaw, "Mapping the Margins: Intersectionality, Identity Politics, and Violence against Women of Color," *Stanford Law Review.* 43:6 (1991), pp. 1241-

recently, Hardt and Negri have championed the concept of singularity, to understand the unique multiplicity of individual subjectivity and counter the representational logic of hegemony.[21] They define a singularity as 'a social subject whose difference cannot be reduced to sameness, a difference that remains different.'[22] The subjectivity of every individual is defined by a unique set of values, desires and experiences, a unique identity. Similar to theories of intersectionality, an individual cannot be reduced to a single defining characteristic, such as class.

Resistance to hegemony and representation through singularity or becoming-minor is, more practically, a project of autonomy.[23] However, taken to their limit, singularity and becoming-minor can lead to a totalization of the particular, which would preclude any possibility of political action; there would be no possibility for congruence or communication between the desires of individuals. Each individual would be isolated in their particularity, their individuality, their total autonomy. But autonomy need not be conceptualized or actualized in terms of individual autonomy. Indeed, for many social movements, autonomy is a *collective* project vis-à-vis the state, capital and other forms of domination and hierarchy. It involves, 'a group working together in common to construct alternative ways of living, rather than simply an individual seeking to assert their subjective autonomy against a dominating group.'[24]

Thus, theorizing the political through radical democracy challenges the hegemony of class, promotes a more robust civil society and makes demands on the state for greater inclusion, but merely de-centers class in lieu of 'the people' and perpetuates the indispensability of the state as the site of demands. Radical democratic theory has sacrificed a truly radicalized conception of difference for a political strategy though hegemony. Singularity and becoming-minor offer alternative concepts through

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1299; Patricia Hill Collins, "Learning from the Outsider Within: The Sociological Significance of Black Feminist Thought," *Social Problems* 33: 6 (1986), pp. 14-32.

[21] Hardt & Negri trace the evolution of the concept of singularity back to the philosophy of Duns Scotus, but emphasize their affinity to the Deleuze's interpretation of its use in Spinoza. See: Hardt and Negri, *Multitude*, 381, 52f.

[22] Ibid., 99.

[23] Gilles Deleuze, Felix Guattari, and Brian Massumi, *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia* (University of Minnesota Press, 1987), 106.

[24] Steffen Böhm, Ana C. Dinerstein, and André Spicer. '(Im)possibilities of Autonomy: Social Movements in and beyond Capital, the State and Development.' *Social Movement Studies* 9, no. 1 (January 2010): 19.

which to understand the struggles for autonomy that continue to proliferate in struggles for an alternative globalization. But for effective action against global problems such as economic exploitation and ecological destruction, again, autonomy must be understood as a project of collective resistance.

To address this problem of collectivity and autonomy and theorize a possibility of collective autonomy, Hardt and Negri redefine the concept of *the common*. Though the concept traditionally refers to shared material resources, they write, 'We consider the common also and more significantly those results of social production that are necessary for social interaction and further production, such as knowledges, languages, codes, information, affects, and so forth.'[25] Linking this concept back to singularities, they claim, 'Singularities interact and communicate socially on the basis of the common, and their social communication in turn produces the common.'[26] A fundamental example of the common is language, which is not merely the medium in which social practice exists, but is continually redefined through its use. As the result of social production and social practice produced in *every* social interaction, it follows that the common is not uniformly distributed through all social relations, but is as varied as these interactions. Social practice produces the common, or develops existing forms of the common, that vary in strength, scale and permanence. This variation has a direct impact on the possibility of radically democratic relations – the more robust the common, the greater the possibility for such a practice.

As sociologist Donatella della Porta illustrates the problem in terms of the alterglobalization movement, 'The challenge for contemporary movements is, then, to develop a model of internal democracy able to bring all the subjectivities together by valuing the role of individuals rather than sacrifice for the collective.'[27] Little and Lloyd provide the beginnings of an alternative along these lines, pointing to another thread in radical democratic theory, 'That democracy is not a form of government or set of institutions but rather a moment marking the practice of politics itself.'[28] Democracy is practice that cannot be captured in the apparatus of political institutions. If this conception of democracy as a moment is expanded to allow for the possibility of democratic practice to expand over several moments or be

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[25] Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri, *Commonwealth*, 1st ed. (Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2009), viii.

[26] Ibid., 184.

[27] Donatella della Porta, "Making the New Polis: The Practice of Deliberative Democracy in Social Forums" in *Culture, Social Movements, and Protest*, ed. Hank Johnston, (Ashgate, 2009), 207.

[28] Little and Lloyd, *The Politics of Radical Democracy*, 3.

divided into multiple moments, the beginnings of a new conception of radical democracy appear. Within the alterglobalization movement three distinct moments of radical democracy can be found – deliberation, decision and action. Democracy (deliberation, decision and action) need not occur in one moment or even a smooth succession of moments. The alterglobalization movement demonstrates that the moments of democratic practice can be fragmented across time and space. Deliberation may occur in Brazil, decision in London and action globally – all as part of the expanded practice of radical democracy. This fragmentation of democratic practice allows for a range of organizational forms, demonstrating the possibilities for fluid and flexible collectivities that do not rely on hegemony, but are still capable of large-scale action. As we see here, the challenge in theorizing, or indeed practicing, this form of political relationship lies in the delicate balance between collectivity and autonomy, unity and diversity. Avoiding the 'chains' of hegemony requires conceptualizing alternative relations between autonomous individuals, communities and identities.

Three moments of the common

While the alterglobalization movement demonstrates a range of organizational structures, our main focus will be on the direct action wing of the movement. These activists, unlike those of the NGO advocacy networks in the movement, participate in the movements in three forms that vary in scale, structure and purpose: the inclusive, open spaces of movement-wide social fora; small, 'friend-like' affinity groups; and finally, the networks that produce large-scale protest events and Global Days of Action.[29] Each of these forms most clearly demonstrates a particular moment of the common – deliberation, decision and action – and is limited in the others. Social fora function most centrally and most effectively as spaces for deliberation, affinity groups for decision, and networks for action.

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[29] For a comparison between these two forms of organization see: W. Lance Bennett, "Social Movements Beyond Borders: Understanding Two Eras of Transnational Activism."Donatella della Porta, *Transnational Protest and Global Activism*, illustrated edition. (Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc., 2004).

Spaces of Deliberation

We have critiqued Laclau and Mouffe's dependence on liberal-democratic institutions, but the liberal tradition does provide important contributions to a radical democracy conceived beyond the state. In his essay, 'Deliberation and Political Legitimacy,' liberal political philosopher Joshua Cohen examines the core principles of democracy. He argues, 'When properly conducted, then, democratic politics involves *public deliberation focused on the common good*, requires some form of *manifest equality* among citizens, and *shapes the identity and interests* of citizens in ways that contribute to the formation of a public conception of common good.'[30] Given our discussion of singularity and becoming-minor, it would be inconsistent to accept that there can ever be *a* common good; however, deliberation does play a key role in the production of the more open concept of *the common* and is essential for thinking a radical politics beyond both the state and hegemonic relations in civil society. In her book *Freedom Is an Endless Meeting*, sociologist Francesca Polletta provides an ethnographic account of what she refers to as 'deliberative talk' within social movements:

> They expected each other to provide legitimate reasons for preferring one option to another. They strove to recognize the merits of each other's reasons for favoring a particular option even though they did not rank those reasons in the same order. The point was to make each person's reasoning understandable: the goal was not unanimity, so much as discourse. But it was a particular kind of discourse, governed by norms of openness and mutual respect.[31]

Discourse, which as we noted earlier is a key form of the common, figures centrally in Polletta's description, but she does not paint a picture of isolated, talking heads. Deliberation is a process in which each strives to recognize the merit in another's argument, to understand the reasoning behind their preference, and in this understanding, opinions and indeed subjectivities are transformed; the common is

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[30] Joshua Cohen, "Deliberation and Democratic Legitimacy," James Bohman and William Rehg, *Deliberative Democracy: Essays on Reason and Politics* (The MIT Press, 1997), 69.

[31] Francesca Polletta, *Freedom Is an Endless Meeting: Democracy in American Social Movements*, 1st ed. (University Of Chicago Press, 2004), 7.

produced and strengthened through the production of shared meaning, goals and values. But for this to be possible the common must already be at work in the 'norms of openness and respect.'

Within the alterglobalization movement, deliberation has taken a unique form in what Donatella della Porta has argued is 'perhaps the movement's most significant cultural innovation' – the social forum.[32] In 2001, the World Social Forum (WSF) was established in Porto Alegre, Brazil as a counter-summit to the World Economic Forum, which occurred simultaneously in Davos, Switzerland. But the forum was founded to be more than a counter-summit voicing criticism of the World Economic Forum or the neoliberal policies produced by the WTO, IMF, World Bank or G8. It was founded in response to post-Seattle criticisms that the movement was a movement of negation, criticisms that the movement was *anti*-globalization without offering any alternatives. Thus, the forum was conceived as a space for civil society groups and individuals to gather to develop alternatives under the motto, 'Another world is possible.' Since its inception the form has expanded to include multiple regional and thematic fora around the world, a single forum drawing as many as 100,000 participants from over 100 countries.[33]

What is most unique about the forum is that it is conceived of as an '*open* and *inclusive* public space.'[34] This conception of the forum is formalized in the WSF Charter of Principles. The first Principle states, 'The World Social Forum is an open meeting place for reflective thinking, democratic debate of ideas, formulation of proposals, free exchange of experiences and interlinking for effective action...'[35] The designation of the forum as a space or 'meeting place,' is a critical distinction that has also been a constant source of tension since the founding of the WSF. Some argue that the WSF should function as an agent, making demands, issuing statements and proposing alternatives as a unified body. Others contend that the forum ought only serve as a space where groups are free to make demands, issue statements or present proposals as individuals, groups or coalitions, but that such actions should not be taken in the name of the WSF as a whole. Principle six of the Charter explicitly states, 'The meetings of

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[32] Donatella della Porta, "Making the New Polis," Johnston, *Culture, Social Movements, and Protest*, 181.

[33] Ruth Reitan, *Global Activism*, 1st ed. (Routledge, 2007), 10.

[34] Donatella della Porta, "Making the New Polis,"Johnston, *Culture, Social Movements, and Protest*, 183.

[35] Reitan, *Global Activism*, 259.

the World Social Forum do not deliberate on behalf of the World Social Forum *as a body.*'[36] It is not that deliberation is not a key feature of the forum, but that the forum itself is not a body such as a legislature or a political party.

Chico Whitaker, one of the founders of the forum and authors of the Charter of Principles, has weighed in heavily on this debate with a public letter that was later published as 'The World Social Forum as Open Space.' In it he describes the rationale for this concept:

> If we maintain it as a space, it will not prevent nor hinder the formation and the development of movements – to the contrary it will ensure and enable this process. But if we opt for transforming it into a movement, it will inescapably fail to be a space, and all the potentialities inherent to spaces will then be lost. Furthermore, if we do transform the Forum into a movement, we will be – without any help at all from those we are fighting against – throwing away a powerful instrument of struggle that we have been able to create by drawing on the most important recent political discovery, of the power of open, free horizontal structures. [37]

According to Whitaker, the space is essential as an incubator for a plurality of movements, groups, new organizational structures and decision-making processes. If the forum were to unify and form a single, collective subject, that potential would be lost. For Whitaker the forum is a space where the common can emerge through deliberation, but if the forum is made to speak and act as one unified voice, dissenting voices will doubtless be silenced. The WSF Charter of Principles makes clear that the forum's central function is to serve as a *place* where individuals, groups and movements can *deliberate.* This process of deliberation is open, in the sense that it is not exclusive, all are free to participate, but the process is also open in the sense that it is not *con*clusive. The deliberation that is at the core of the forum does not necessarily lead to decision. Certainly, there is nothing to preclude certain groups from deciding to take decisive action while at the forum, but the central function is open-ended deliberation on alternatives.

From the outset, some activists have felt the exclusively deliberative form of the forum to be unsatisfactory, even disempowering. The initial 2001 forum saw the birth of the Social Movements

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[36] Ibid., 260. Emphasis added.

[37] Chico Whitaker, "The World Social Forum as Open Space," Jai Sen and Peter Waterman, *World Social Forum: Challenging Empires* (Black Rose Books, 2007), 82.

Assembly, now called the People's Movement Assembly, a space external to the forum that does make final decisions. Typically, the Assembly has only met after the conclusion of the Forum, but at the 2010 US Social Forum, Assembly organizers claim that it will take place before, after and during the forum.[38] Though this debate continues, this could mark an important transformation in the structure of the forum.

While della Porta's claim that the forum represents a 'significant cultural innovation' may be accurate, there are important limitations on the forum's ability to achieve its stated purpose. Some activists have complained that important meetings are often held late in the evenings limiting the participation of some, that discussions are controlled by a small elite of long-time activists, that discussions often spiral into useless repetition of established ideas or that the forum's promotion of 'star' activists and intellectuals through primetime speaking engagements creates inequalities in the space.[39] Participation in the forum at the most basic level of attendance is also limited. Local groups and activists are always disproportionately represented, and there is a distinct North-South divide in participation as well. Those who can afford to attend are disproportionately Northern activists and intellectuals.[40] However, the establishment of regional fora has allowed for wider participation and the forum has also established various financial assistance programs to assist in the travel funds for individuals who may otherwise be unable to attend. These strategies have improved the inclusiveness of the forum, but have not overcome these challenges entirely.

Deliberation more generally, faces its own limits. The quality of the deliberation depends upon the quality of the discourse and the unevenness of discursive skills can work to limit equal access to deliberation or equal power in the deliberative process. As Cohen notes, 'Deliberative democracy requires attention to encouraging deliberative capacities, which is, *inter alia*, a matter of education, information, and organization.'[41] In a society of growing inequality, the prospects of such education being equitably distributed are dim and thus power within deliberation is skewed to those with access to education, information and organization. These limitations are important and the forum must continually be

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[38] These plans were revealed at a recent organizational meeting for the Peoples' Movement Assembly in San Francisco.

[39] Della Porta, 'Making the New Polis.'

[40] Jackie Smith and Marina Karides, *Global Democracy and the World Social Forums (International Studies Intensives)* (Paradigm Publishers, 2007), 49-77.

[41] Cohen, 'Reflections on Deliberative Democracy,' 249.

scrutinized and improved upon to live up to the principles set out in the Charter. The innovation is significant, but it must be continually innovated.

Given these important limitations, truly radical democracy cannot be practiced on the scale of the social forum as a whole, but the forum does provide a space where smaller groups can form such relations and the deliberative process of the forum works to construct the common that can serve as the basis for such relations. The global nature of the forum presents an opportunity for the production of the common that is not as heavily constrained by space, but the temporal constraints, the fora typically last a few days or a week, may limit the possibility for the sustained social practice necessary to produce the common in a highly robust form. Still these links extend the common rhizomatically, albeit in a weak form, laying the groundwork for future interaction. As participation of individuals in the alterglobalization movements is marked by a 'density of multiple and plural associational membership[s],'[42] the forum may play a critical role in facilitating the rhizomatic network structure necessary for radical democracy on a global scale.

Decision through Affinity

Decision is the most demanding moment in the practice of radical democracy. It requires the strongest form of the common and it follows that the scale of the group must be the most limited for a decision to be reached. Decision, in radical democracy, is also the most difficult to separate from the other moments, particularly deliberation. As we saw above, deliberation can exist without decision; decision, on the other hand, cannot be reached without deliberation. When decision is the end goal of deliberation, the process becomes exponentially more complex. A collective decision must value the preferences of all members equally and be a decision to which all members can agree. In other words, a decision in truly radical democratic practice is reached through an arduous process of deliberation or consensus-building.

Consensus in this sense is not seen as merely a state of agreement, but a process for constructing and developing the common. Jacques Rancière, among others, is critical of the notion of

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[42] Andretta, della Porta, Mosca and Reiter (2003) quoted in della Porta 'Making the New Polis,' 191.

consensus, instead promoting *dissensus*, continuous contestation, as the ideal form of the political.[43] Similarly, Chantal Mouffe promotes the idea of *agonism*, in which conflict between enemies is transformed into democratic relations between adversaries. These concepts, in fact, share much with the form of consensus practiced in the affinity groups of contemporary social movements. Here consensus is not seen as passive acceptance to the status quo, but refers instead as the institutionalization of conflict and its management for cooperation rather than competition. According to formal consensus model theory, all members of the group are expected and encouraged to participate in the process of consensus-building. Generally, the decisions being made are those that will directly affect the participants, as in the case of direct actions during which individuals will be participants in the action itself.

Similar to the open deliberation indicative of the social forum, proposals presented to the group are discussed and amended according to reasonable arguments. Proponents of deliberative democracy have also stressed the importance of this stage, though often not accepting the principle of consensus itself. Cohen writes, 'The *point* of deliberative democracy is not for people to reflect on their preferences, but to decide, in light of reasons, what to do. Deciding what to do in light of reasons requires a willingness to change one's mind…'[44] The deliberative process is not merely a process through which each member makes concessions from their list of demands until a proposal is so reduced that all can accept it, if begrudgingly. Rather, deliberation is a positive process of construction through reasoning, by which the interests and perspectives of those involved are transformed. As noted above, through deliberation, the common is produced; the actual interests and values of individuals may be transformed through the deliberative process. Thus, consensus 'building' is just that, an initial proposal is deliberated upon until a new or amended proposal is constructed.

Finally, in consensus decision-making all decisions are collective. Not only have all participated in the deliberation process, each must also give their final approval. Proponents of consensus decision-making argue that collectivity ensures the equality of each group member. A process may emphasize equality in participation and deliberation, but resort to a majority vote for the final decision. Instead of a vote, consensus decision-making provides all participants with the power of veto; all participants may

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[43] Ranciere, *Disagreement.*

[44] Cohen, 'Reflections on Deliberative Democracy,' 251.

'block' a proposal, preventing it from ratification. This negative measure serves to ensure that all have had the opportunity to participate and that the proposal has been deliberated adequately. The 'block' is ultimately a final check on these earlier phases of the process, ensuring the collectivity of the decision.

Within the alterglobalization movement, collective decisions are reached most democratically within small *affinity groups*, 'the elementary particles of voluntary association,'[45] which are 'formed out of a shared desire to accomplish a specific task…and oriented to achieving maximum effectiveness with a minimum of bureaucracy, infighting and exposure to infiltration.'[46] Such tasks generally center on protest events or direct actions and may include anything from blockading intersections to guerrilla theater in fields of genetically modified crops to serving food at a rally.

Unlike the forum, affinity groups are not unique to the alterglobalization movement, but trace their roots back to the Spanish anarchist confederation (FAI) of the 1920s and the consciousness-raising circles of the US feminist movement of the 1960s and 70s.[47] These groups, generally composed of 5-20 individuals, are founded on 'friend-like relationships.'[48] Indeed they are often actually formed of friends. The nature of these relationships makes the complex process of consensus-building a manageable task, as there are typically a common set of values and experiences that such a process requires. The affinity group serves as an ideal type for the consensus-based decision-making necessary for radical democracy. The common exists here in its most robust and permanent form, through shared values, goals, histories, vocabularies, processes and, importantly, obligations.

However, the claim to idealism is only relative. Affinity groups and the process of consensus decision-making are by no means entirely free of domination and hierarchy, as these have been internalized through socialization. An affinity group may have no formal hierarchy, but this does not preclude the existence of informal hierarchies that shape the decisions of the group. Formal consensus process is designed to minimize this problem, but this power imbalance is difficult to eradicate. For

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[45] David Graeber, *Direct Action: An Ethnography* (AK Press, 2009), 288.

[46] Day, *Gramsci is Dead*, 25.

[47] Francis Dupuis-Déri, 'Anarchism and the politics of affinity groups,' forthcoming, 4-7.

[48] Kevin McDonald, 'From Solidarity to Fluidarity: social movements beyond 'collective identity'--the case of globalization conflicts,' *Social Movement Studies: Journal of Social, Cultural and Political Protest*, 1(2): 109-128; Francis Dupuis-Déri, 'Anarchism and the politics of affinity groups,' forthcoming, 12.

instance, a racially diverse consensus-based group may aim for full participation, but if it is only the white, heterosexual males are that are actually participating in the deliberation process, the equality for which the structure aims has missed its mark. Such formal structure often contains certain roles that must be filled, such as facilitator and note taker, and the assignment of these roles can reinforce social hierarchies. As women have historically been relegated to clerical work, it is easy for such biases to carry-over into this setting, relegating females to note takers and males subtly guiding deliberation as facilitators.

Jo Freeman examines this danger in her seminal essay, 'The Tyranny of Structurelessness,'[49] stressing the importance of the formal diffusion of power through a series of mechanisms. Many activists are acutely aware of these dangers and even use Freeman's essay in training sessions.[50] In his ethnography *Direct Action*, anthropologist David Graeber examines the New York-based Direct Action Network (DAN) during the early 2000s.[51] DAN's consensus process required two facilitators, one male and one female and alternated speaking among participants to strive for gender parity. While such a structure does aim for gender equality, it does little for the other forms of internalized domination based on race, ethnicity, sexuality, or even age. Regardless, it provides a model for how such forms of informal hierarchy and domination can be addressed through structural means.

The criticisms of consensus issued by theorists such as Rancière and Mouffe, stem largely from their privileging of difference in the political and the fear that consensus limits its possibility. The formal consensus process, given its necessarily small scale may not only limit difference, but can also be exclusionary. Typically, only those with a certain level of shared values form affinity groups and thus those that are not already tied to the group in some way may find it difficult to gain access. However, friendship or a strong set of shared values is certainly not always the chief motivating in the formation of affinity groups. Often groups form out of motivations other than friendship, such as availability, chance, level of militancy or even a desire to work with the activist-celebrities involved in the action. While these

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[49] Jo Freeman, 'The Tyranny of Structurelessness,' *Berkeley Journal of Sociology*, 17, 1972–73: 151–165.

[50] Douglas Bevington and Chris Dixon, "Movement-relevant Theory: Rethinking Social Movement Scholarship and Activism," *Social Movement Studies: Journal of Social, Cultural and Political Protest* 4, no. 3 (2005): 194.

[51] Graeber, *Direct Action*.

groups may not be founded on true friendship, in each of these cases the bonds of affinity could be described as 'friend-like' in the sense that in undertaking a role in the group they became stronger through the acquired obligations.

Despite these limitations, consensus-based decision making within an affinity group most closely fulfills the rigorous demands of radical democracy, requiring and producing the common in its strongest form, but on the smallest scale. Yet while formed of 'friend-like relationships,' many affinity groups are transient. They are formed to accomplish a specific task or project and often cease to exist immediately after, whether the task is completed successfully or unsuccessfully.[52] Such affinity groups may reunite for future tasks, perhaps in a modified form, but on each occasion the actual existence of the collective is relatively brief. Other affinity groups may survive for much longer periods.[53] However, the attendant forms of the common prove more permanent and can be reproduced or resuscitated in future meetings. In affinity groups, all members of the group participate directly in the process of deliberation, make a collective decision, and ultimately act upon this decision. This is a transformative process in common, as the values and interests shift through the collective decision-making process. Though the group may disband upon the completion of the task, this transformation and the production of the common may long outlast the group itself.

Action in Common

Action within the alterglobalization movement happens at numerous levels. Affinity groups do not merely make decisions and call it a day. They act on these decisions. Similarly, the deliberation that happens within the open space of the social forum can also lead to action, though not in the name of the forum. However, action in common does not require deliberation or collective decision-making amongst the entire community. Nor does it require any explicit consensus-building process. This sort of action is

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[52] McDonald, 'From Solidarity to fluidarity,' 115.

[53] Dupuis-Déri discusses such groups in his 'Anarchism and the politics of affinity groups,' and I have personally worked with a number of groups that have managed to sustain themselves for years.

similar to 'swarm intelligence' by which groups of insects such as bees or ants act without an actual command issued from a central authority. Neurobiologists have shown that the brain functions similarly, producing action through a complex neural network without a central command, without a true decision. The development of free software parallels this process as well, as programs are developed through the common labor of countless programmers.[54] In none of these cases is there a central command making strategic decisions, nor is there a collective decision made by the entire body, as is the case within an affinity group. However, in each case there are certain elements that guide the process and possibility of collective action. Swarms of insects require a complex of instincts through which to interpret pheromones, the brain requires shared neural pathways, and computer programmers require protocols, which make the programming commands communicable. Action occurs without decision, but through the common.

In the alterglobalization movement we have seen the various ways in which this common is produced. Similar to the social forum, the most remarkable forms of action within the alterglobalization movement are those that happen on a large scale. Affinity groups are of course capable of collective action, but in the face of the global challenges to which the movement is aimed, the actions of an isolated affinity group are likely to amount to little more than the sting of a single worker bee, a mere pest to the honey-hungry grizzly. As a swarm of affinity groups, acting in common, however, the hive is a formidable opponent.

The alterglobalization movement, particularly the direct action wing, largely expresses itself through insurrection, large-scale acts of resistance, such as 'summit crashing' and Global Days of Action. At these actions, activists and organizations from around the world converge on a single point or act simultaneously in multiple locations. As interventions, these actions seek to 'disrupt or even destroy established patterns, policies, relationships or institutions,'[55] such as the functioning of WTO. They may also serve to demonstrate public opinion, such as the 2003 Global Day of Action against the US invasion of Iraq, which included millions of protesters worldwide.[56] All of this is accomplished without a central

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[54] Hardt and Negri, *Multitude*, 336-340.

[55] Gene Sharp quoted in John Lofland, *Protest: Studies of Collective Behavior and Social Movements* (Transaction Publishers, 1985), 264.

[56] Peter Gelderloos, *How Nonviolence Protects the State* (South End Press, 2007), 16.

leader or decision-making body. In these actions, groups with very different organizational structures participate, some highly centralized, such as the Socialist Worker's Party or NGOs. This diversity is to the advantage of the movement for the simple fact of scale, but these types of organizations generally do not seek to actualize radical democratic relations as the direct action wing of the movement does. Such vertically organized groups may also participate in the swarm tactics of the action at large, but are themselves internally centralized.

All of this is not to say that there is no organization in a massive protest action of the alterglobalization movement, quite the contrary. Planning and organization may take months, but the nature of this planning process is such that there are few if any centralized decisions. When the affinity groups do gather prior to the event, they may do so in the form of a *consulta* or *spokescouncil.* In the former case, groups share their plans for action. Perhaps one group has decided to blockade a particular intersection, another group has decided to use a certain level of militant tactics such as tearing down a fence at a particular location. These various plans are coordinated in such meetings. There is no committee that decides which actions should or should not take place, but organization is essentially facilitation to ensure that all are informed and that coordination can occur where necessary and effective. The process of these actions generally begins with a 'call to action' by a certain group, coalition or network of groups. Some groups then convene for a planning meeting, while others participate independently

In the case of a spokescouncil, there is more actual collective decision-making, but only at the most general level. Each affinity group elects a proxy to serve as their spoke and these spokes agree on a set of basic principles governing action in the most general way, often while the other members of the affinity group are present. This may include limiting the level of militancy, but increasingly activists promote a 'diversity of tactics' and reject restrictions on action, further limiting the amount of decision-making that occurs outside of the affinity group.

The nature of the common at either of these types of planning meetings is necessarily weak. Though the meetings may be many hours long, the format limits a great deal of free interaction. But more importantly, individuals and groups often do not know each other and are guarded in their interaction at such meetings for practical reasons. Given that the actions that they will be undertaking are typically

illegal and that the meetings are for the most part public, the openness of individuals and groups is limited for fear of police informants or infiltration. Actions are described only in their most basic form, allowing for some level of coordination, but decisions on the actual actions that an affinity group plans to take are impossible due to these limits on openness. At the 2009 G20 Summit in Pittsburgh, the only individuals admitted to the spokescouncil meeting were members of pre-organized groups. Those wishing to take part were required to provide two others willing to verify that they were in fact members of a group. This process certainly does not preclude the infiltration of the meeting by unfriendly elements, but illustrates the limits to these forms of organizing in the face of repression.

Further the actions themselves are limited. The central goal for many of these large-scale actions, beginning with Seattle, has been 'Shut them down!' but this has only occurred on a few occasions. Even when this goal has been achieved, the tangible effects amount to little more than a more secluded and secure summit next time. The WTO has moved meetings to high-security, inaccessible locations such as Doha, Qatar, essentially eliminating any threat protests could have on its running.

Still action on this scale and the coordination of affinity groups is an important moment in the radical democratic project. Given the nature of the enemy – capitalism, the state and all forms of domination or hierarchy – action must be taken on a large scale. But the scale is also important as a prefigurative practice, revealing the potential large-scale coordination of radically democratic groups. This action may not stem directly from a collective decision, but does rest on the development of the common at other moments in the process. Deliberation at the forum and decision within the affinity group, produce the common necessary for action in the network.

Possibilities and Pitfalls of the Forum-Affinity-Network

We have focused here on three key moments in the alterglobalization movement –deliberation in the open space of the forum, decision within the friend-like affinity group, and action through a network of weak links. These are practices of resistance to the domination of capital and of hierarchy in all forms. In this sense they are a negation of the dominant paradigm, but they are also attempts to actualize new forms of the political. In many ways, alterglobalization produces the common that is the necessary

foundation for a radical democracy. As we noted earlier, radical democracy has been conceived largely either as a reformist project of a more participatory and more deliberative nation-state or through hegemonic identities such as 'the people'. The radical democracy project of the alterglobalization movement challenges these conceptions, breaking from current forms of political organization and taking participation, deliberation, difference and autonomy as fundamental principles.

Each of the three moments of radical democracy – deliberation, decision, and action – is best suited to a particular scale and organizational form. Taken individually each of these forms has their limitations. The forum is well-suited as a space for open discussion and deliberation, but the scale is far too large for a consensus process that guarantees the equitable participation of all members. The affinity group, on the other hand, based on 'friend-like relationships' carries with it the shared values and obligations necessary for the arduous process of consensus-building, but alone can accomplish little in the face of global problems. Finally, the network is capable of global action, but lacks the ability for deliberation or decision-making.

The forum, affinity group and network each fills a particular role in the alterglobalization movement, but within the alterglobalization none of these structures is entirely isolated from the others. As such, we must also consider these elements as a system: forum-affinity-network. Such a system avoids the hegemonic tendencies of Laclau's notion of 'the people,' as well as the reformist forms of radical democracy that limit the difference and autonomy of various individuals, communities and struggles. Within this system, radically democratic practice is possible at a range of scales, complexities and intensities. To conceptualize radical democracy as limited to a single plane or the state as the principal site of interaction with a radically democratic civil society limits the potential for radical democracy to exist in its formal multiplicity. Some tasks are better accomplished through global action, some through local. The forum-affinity-network system allows for this possibility.

Our discussion of these moments began with the World Social Forum as a response to criticisms of empty negation and our conclusion with action as protest has returned us to this point of departure. This return reveals the difficulties of producing alternatives on a large scale through radical democracy and the limitations of such forms of insurrection as a Global Day of Action. Radical social transformation will require more than a *day* of action, though such actions can prove useful in the sense of motivation

through the 'propaganda of the deed.' Still, these brief moments of insurrection are ultimately incapable of bringing about the social transformation that the movement demands.

Indeed, the model has important limitations at which we have thus far only hinted. First, and foremost, while this model illustrates the possibility for radically democratic organization within the alterglobalization movement, it does not provide the means for movement building or organizing beyond the movement itself. This structure serves as a means to organize those already involved in the movement. In his powerful critique of the US anarchist movement, Joel Olson argues that the movement is largely focused around infoshops and insurrections.[57] That is, anarchists are able to create autonomous zones such as infoshops that function as spaces for the exchange of ideas and political work, spaces that roughly parallel the social forum, though on a smaller scale. And they engage in acts of insurrection, such as the networked summit crashing, Global Days of Action or the more militant uprisings in Greece in 2008. However, Olson contends, 'Radical change may be initiated by spontaneous revolts that are supported by subterranean free spaces, but these revolts are almost always the product of prior movement building.'[58] In the alterglobalization movement more broadly, movement-building must play a central role; the forum-affinity-network structure and the typical insurrectionary acts of the movement are limited in their capacity to accomplish this.

Further, as we saw in both the forum and affinity group, systemic inequality leads to multiple obstacles for radical democracy, the forum-affinity-network structure and the alterglobalization movement. We have already mentioned a number of these issues. A formal consensus process can serve to mitigate some level of inequality within the group, but again, this process does nothing to bring people to the table. In fact, as Graeber shows in his ethnography with New York DAN, such a process can serve to alienate newcomers or those with differing cultural backgrounds or produce exclusionary groups of relatively homogenous activists.[59] Similarly, a lack of equitable participation has plagued the social fora. Local organizations and individuals, as well as those with the time and resources to travel, typically white

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[57] Joel Olson, "The problem with infoshops and insurrection," Randall Amster et al., *Contemporary Anarchist Studies: An Introductory Anthology of Anarchy in the Academy*, 1st ed. (Routledge, 2009), 35-45.

[58] Ibid., 40.

[59] Graeber, *Direct Action*, 336-354.

activists from the Global North, are disproportionately represented.[60] Finally, at the level of networks, access to networks requires communication technology resources, which are still unavailable to large parts of the world, as well as the time and resources to travel to insurrectionary events.

A new conception of insurrection is necessary to overcome these limits. Hardt & Negri have written, 'The insurrectional event…must be consolidated in an institutional process of transformation that develops the multitude's capacity for democratic decision-making. Making the multitude is thus a project of democratic organizing aimed at democracy.'[61] Their use of 'institutional' here does not refer to the ossified political institutions that structure modern democratic forms, but instead the codification of radical democratic practices to facilitate their reproduction. Taken as a whole, the movement does make important steps towards this project of democratic development. Through their concept of the common we are able to focus on what is necessary to produce the conditions for radically democratic social relations, but movement-building is necessary to expand the reach of the common rather than waiting for excluded populations to demand inclusion.

Finally, these democratic practices must be aimed at more than discussion and protest, or even social relations. The common as the results of social production must not eclipse the importance of common material resources and the results of material production. Rather, it can be used to reinterpret those and reveal the social nature of their production. The production of the common in the social must lead to radically democratic decisions on the production of life. Alternatives must include more than spaces for open deliberation; they must include alternatives for the production of food, the distribution of resources, the actual material for survival in common. This must be a central goal of any radical project.

In a recent lecture Michael Hardt has argued for the importance of 'putting the common back into communism.'[62] Our discussion on the moments of the common revealed that radical democracy is only able to function in a complete form when the common is at its most robust, on a relatively small scale. This fact coupled with the importance of material resources leads to the conclusion that putting the common in communism may only be possible on the scale of the *commune*. In their recent, controversial

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[60] Smith and Karides, *Global Democracy and the World Social Forums (International Studies Intensives)*, 49-60.

[61] Hardt and Negri, *Commonwealth*, 363.

[62] Lecture at the European Graduate School, 2009. http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Q_Ey5ioS4GU. Accessed 22 January 2010.

pamphlet, *The Coming Insurrection*, the Invisible Committee has sought to redefine insurrection in just these terms. They write, 'The commune is the basic unit of partisan reality. An insurrectional surge may be nothing more than the multiplication of communes, their coming into contact and forming ties.'[63] This is precisely the project for radical democracy that we put forth at the opening of this discussion. Individuals participating in multiplicity of radically democratic relations could work to extend the form rhizomatically, establishing a dense network of radically democratic relations. Indeed, if radical democracy is at all possible on a global scale it is through this network form. The codification of social fora, affinity groups and networked direct actions as points of resistance in the common is an important first step in this project of democratic insurrection.

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[63] The Invisible Committee, *The Coming Insurrection (Semiotex*, 1st ed. (Semiotext(e), 2009), 117.

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