

1. Briefly introduce the work in which you are involved in, academically and/or activist-wise.

I am currently finishing a book based on my doctoral dissertation entitled *Digital Age Activism: Anti-Corporate Globalization and the Cultural Politics of Transnational Networking*. Here is a blurb:

This book explores the cultural logic and politics of transnational networking among anti-corporate globalization activists in Barcelona. Since November 1999, when 50,000 protesters converged on Seattle to shut down the World Trade Organization, activists have organized mass protests against multilateral institutions in cities such as Prague, Barcelona, Genoa, and Cancun, while generating innovative network-based practices and organizational forms. Barcelona has emerged as a critical node, as Catalan activists have played key roles in the anarchist-inspired Peoples Global Action (PGA) and broader World Social Forum (WSF) process, both of which involve a complex politics of articulation uniting diverse movements in opposition to corporate globalization. In this book, I specifically argue that anti-corporate globalization movements involve an increasing confluence among network technologies, organizational forms, and political norms, mediated by concrete activist practice. Beyond social morphology, the network has also become a powerful cultural ideal, a guiding logic that provides a model of and model for emerging forms of radical, directly democratic politics at local, regional, and global scales.

Are there any “new” or “different” practices or observations you have been particularly struck or inspired by in the work of the movements with which you work?

a) The relationship between network-based organizational forms and broader political values, i.e. the way activists express their emerging political imaginaries through organizational practice.

b) Similarly, the way activists make innovative use of new digital technologies, not only as tools for communicating and coordinating, but also as laboratories for experimenting with new forms of horizontal collaboration.

c) Finally, the way emerging networking practices and related ideals with respect to autonomy, self-management, and direct democracy are generating new modes of autonomous knowledge production and circulation among and within social movement networks.

2. How are social movements rethinking the political? Do they offer any new articulations between the micro (cultural, everyday) and macro (politico-institutional, policy oriented) political? Do emphases on cultural and micro-political practices, such as horizontality, suggest a new understanding of political effect or effectiveness? Are experiments in or struggles for autonomy that do not make demands on the state reconstituting “the political” or simply avoiding engaging in “real” politics?

The “political” has various dimensions. As mentioned above, contemporary social movements, or at least those which organize according to network-based models (autonomous, indigenous, feminist, etc.), express their emerging utopian political visions directly through organizational (and technological) practice. I would say this takes place at the “meso-level.” At the same time, these networks are often themselves constituted by articulations of more locally rooted spaces,

including squats, neighborhood associations, affinity groups, indigenous communities, etc. which provide forums for more everyday kinds of politico-cultural production and intervention. Finally, such movements also engage in macro-level politics, either directly through occupations, direct actions, etc. or indirectly via mass mediated mobilizations and even institutional forms of action.

Ideally, contemporary movements simultaneously operate along various registers and multiple terrains, without establishing one as necessarily more important or “political” than another. Of course, particular moments and contexts will require different forms of action, and the ability to move flexibly back and forth among distinct domains. This is precisely how I understand the notion of a networking logic, always linking and connecting up diverse spheres. Here I refer to three levels, but elsewhere I take up Cohen and Arato’s notion of “dual politics” to characterize how global justice movements engage in self-managed forms of autonomous networking, while at the same time tactically intervening within dominant publics and institutional spheres. At their best, contemporary activist networking practices explode rigid divisions among different levels and spheres of action.

3. What questions do you want to raise or point to as possible avenues of further discussion and research?

a) To what extent can network-based models, practices and imaginaries migrate from the domain of social movements into broader social, cultural, political, and economic spheres? For example, can emerging modes of networked collaboration generate new modes of political organization or economic production?

b) Can social movements generate their own self-managed networks for knowledge production and distribution that are both autonomous *and* (financially) sustainable? Can these provide an alternative to the academy?

c) Finally, how do activist researchers (or militant ethnographers) negotiate the complex, shifting terrain of the neoliberal university? Is it possible to maintain a commitment to direct democracy and social justice within a hierarchical institution that increasingly rewards research contributing to the bottom line? On the other hand, is the trend toward interdisciplinarity and collaborative “problem-oriented” research a promising development, or yet another fad driven by government and corporate funders? Or both?