

Towards a New Orientation

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By

Matko Meštrović

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P U B L I S H I N G

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by Matko Meštrović

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Introduction	ix
Chapter One.....	1
Geopolitics Undermined	
There is no valid model	
An unbundling of the national	
The paradigm of immaterial production	
The neoliberal agenda	
The geopolitics of knowledge	
A general anthropological transition	
The networked multitude questioned	
An actual understanding we are lacking	
Chapter Two	17
Globalizing Norms	
Form of what?	
Are cultures to compete?	
Competitive figurations	
A normative revolution?	
The constraints	
Double life of cosmopolitanism	
The collective “we”	
Chapter Three	27
Values and Capabilities	
Individual, or total social capital?	
Total subsumption	
Focus and scope	
“Global market forces”	
The overall pattern	

Chapter Four	37
Towards the Real History	
Primary relation	
What we are?	
Return to organic?	
Utopia or ideology?	
Radical question	
Nature Denatured	
New contract	
Humanity	
Homo luminosus	
Chapter Five	53
A Planetary Citizenship	
A conceptual space - commons	
To whom do the commons belong?	
Definancialisation needed	
The political questioned	
The general intellect	
The utopian promises?	
The incipient world-state	
The Global Situation of Emergency	
Chapter Six	75
Economics and Worldview	
Realm without boundaries	
What about Life and Death	
Where coercion comes from?	
Horizon of uncertainty	
Chapter Seven.....	83
Uncertainty of the Notion	
Ochlos not Laos	
People against multitude	
Singularity in singular and plural	
Being and truth	
The common	

Chapter Eight.....	93
Normal Abnormality	
Thematic framework and ideational horizon	
The cardinal mistake of Marxist ideologues	
Which form of ownership?	
Political-economic cycles and the political science of development	
The effect of the idea of measure crisis	
Chapter Nine.....	101
Subjectivity of the Common	
Truth body	
Form determination	
A different character of the historical framework	
Production of subjectivity	
Bibliography	113
Index.....	121

INTRODUCTION

It is the last moment to save our Planet. To corroborate that warning Al Gore pronounced a challenging thought: the political will is a renewable resource. However, what that statement could really mean in the context of a fatal collision between the dominant civilization and the ecological system of the Earth, it is less clear. This book, which consists of nine essays, unintentionally offers some insights into the most relevant dimensions of urgently needed reflection on human destiny. Dealing with the current topics through an interdisciplinary approach able to synthesize more than analyze many partial views from different fields, it opens a crucial question: what is our endeavour as a species, and what are we really looking for?

The multiple processes that constitute economic globalization inhabit and shape specific structurations of the economic, the political, the cultural, and the subjective. New spatialities and temporalities are produced. They are partly inserted in the national and hence evince complex imbrications with the latter (Sassen). For economics to function today it has to be formed around the common, the global, and social cooperation; it must become a *biopolitical science*. Just as we must understand the production of value in terms of common, so too must we try to conceive exploitation as *the expropriation of the common* (Hardt and Negri).

How to identify the extent to which labour is contained within capital (and hence capital's power over labour), and also the extent to which labour exists as an internal contradiction within capital (and hence labour's power over capital) is the key question to comprehending both processes that have led to developments within the global political economy, and the potential for its transformation (Trott). This was the final point in the first essay *Geopolitics undermined*.

We are still far from even mapping out the kind of global culture and cosmopolitan ideal that can truly supersede a world of nations, each cultivating its distinctive historical character. A normative global revolution is underway, but its sustainability and outcome are highly uncertain and beset by contradictory evidence and trends. Because the dimensions of

globalization are co-dependent, financial and corporate globalizations are now more advanced than political and social forms of globalization. Neoliberalism is heading for the existing imbalance between market, state and society that favours market forces. Contesting and transforming this imbalance is one of the major struggles of our time.

There are clearly two meanings of the word “social”: the first one is taken to be a domain among other non-social ones; the second one establishes connections, associations, collections, whatever the name, between all sort of heterogeneous domains, none of them being “social” in the first meaning of the word. The “society”/“nature” divide says nothing at all about what really happened. We are still struggling to find a *positive* narrative, one fitting for the newly redefined Earthlings. Bruno Latour is quoted at the end of the essay *Globalizing norms*.

The ontology behind the science/value split familiar in modernism is one in which mind and matter are considered to be separate ‘things’. There is a given reality ‘out there,’ it is assumed, waiting to be known. While values and purposes are something that humans have and sometimes try to impose, external reality is bereft of intrinsic value, subjectivity, or purpose. Our attempts to find religious, moral, and aesthetic meaning in the universe, in this view, are epiphenomenal and quixotic, if not downright delusional (Julie Nelson).

The real subsumption of traditional culture by capitalist relations of production almost immediately creates an imperious need to invent new forms of non-monetary exchange, so as to escape from the constrictive and sterile realm of pure commodity relations. Brian Holmes believes that the continuing imposition of networked capitalism is backed up increasingly by military force as the symbolic language of money loses its ability to integrate the world system. This is going to bring up waves of violent resistance whose nature we cannot really understand from our positions here in the Western world, it is argued in the third essay *Values and capabilities*.

If there is “eschatology” by Marx, it is not in a theological sense, therefore, not sacred, of a generic survival ethic of an end of prehistory that would be the beginning of the man becoming human. The *Capital*, despite being unfinished, is the most developed critical judgment on philosophies of history where the future of humanity appears as performing

in line with the progress of increasing efficiency in the fields of science and technology.

The disasters that also emerged from the great industry impose the need to recognize the work varied and, the largest development possible of various abilities to work, as an act of modern production. This is a matter of life or death to replace individual fragmented, by full individual.

The earlier master concept of “alternative futures” is now being compressed into one or another variant of the “overshoot and collapse” perspective. One of the burdens of being a futurist is the foreknowledge of species suffering. The fact is that the global ramifications of the culture and dynamic leave humanity ill prepared for the “tsunamis of change” coming its way, as Richard A. Slaughter remarks. It is time to re-direct that culture and dynamic toward more constructive long term ends before the implacable dynamics of natural systems foreclose many of the options that remain. These are the main points in the fourth essay *Toward the real history*.

What capital (not capitalism) does is that it attempts to create life worlds in its own image (like the factory) or colonise existing ones, to put them to work for its priorities and drives. It is possible to identify enclosures as an external limit, posed by capital, to the production of commons. It is this barrier that political and social movements need to overcome through the production of commons, and often, this production is the result of practices of civil disobedience and direct action, rather than traditional party politics. How to politically invert capital's strategies and identify enclosures as limits for non-market social interactions and as a strategic space for new commons? This is a true strategic challenge faced by the many articulations of today's global justice and solidarity movement (Massimo De Angelis).

Capitalism as Jacques Bidet says, cannot be reduced to exploitation, accumulation and extortion. It also entails, just as importantly, abstraction, real abstraction. Its logic is logic of profit, of abstract wealth, no matter what the consequences may be for human beings, for nature and for cultures. Its first contradiction is indeed the contradiction between capital and labour.

But the second contradiction, which impinges on the first, lies between capital and society as a whole, the multitude on which this abstraction bears, and which is life itself that gives rise to and invents concrete wealth, and enables common life to resist. This is an important clarification in the fifth essay under the title *A planetary citizenship*.

Mainstream economics is “autistic” in its deficits in communication and social interaction with other disciplines. This intellectual impairment has led to its inability to address many important real world problems. Our ‘pre-analytic vision’ of both how the human economy and society relate to the rest of nature and of the economy itself is changing. The human economy has passed from an ‘empty world’ era in which human-made capital was the limiting factor in economic development to the current ‘full world’ era in which remaining natural capital has become the limiting factor.

Social complexity emphasizes the complexity that invades all areas of knowledge to the point of paroxysms. That which remains is founded on the logic of utilitarianism and suggests to us nothing other than the “end of history”. The conflict between individual life and social life grows with an accelerating rhythm. How can one dream of a social harmony based on the annihilation of the interior being? - Basarab Nicolescu puts this provocative question.

But still more provocative is a suggestion of Nicholas Ruiz quoted at the end of the essay *Economics and worldview*. A metaphysics of Capital, derived from the preponderance of a capitalizing bare life, supports the idea that Capital has no birth, but is eternally complicit with life, the only variance being, the way in which we define Capital.

Uncertainty of the notion is the title of the next essay dealing with a theological-biblical term, which has unquestionable theo-political function in the text of the Gospel according to Mark. As a political term *multitude* was used by Machiavelli and later also by Spinoza. Only recently it gained a prominent significance thanks to its conceptualization in works of Michael Hardt and Toni Negri as a model of resistance to the global capitalistic system. The repercussion of their deeper and continual theoretical elaboration and large historical contextualization of its meaning is becoming more evident although the time of immediate realization of programmatic revolutionary ideas they are announcing seems still far.

The current world crisis the so-called pocket Marxisms did not foresee, still less have the apologists of neoliberalism hinted on it. The present theoretical disorientation is not permitting to name the crisis exactly let alone to measure its historical significance. The appearance of Dag Strpić's book *Karl Marx and political economy of Modernity*, should be appreciated at least for its reminding us of the desperately needed critical thought today and for the hope that a consistent historical thinking is still possible.

The last essay, *Subjectivity of the Common*, following some incentives from Badiou's new manifest for philosophy, tries to discern what distances the epochs from each other, what borders them.

CHAPTER ONE

GEOPOLITICS UNDERMINED

Despite the diversity of the approaches, most scholars of political science and international relations still share a common assumption: that the division of the world into sovereign states is a permanent trait of politics, and not historically transitory. But as Lucio Levi (Web) argues the state-centric paradigm must not only be viewed as the theory of politics of a given historical epoch – that of the sovereign states – it has also ceased being a guide for political research in our time.

There is no valid model

The state-centric paradigm rests on two axioms: the supremacy of the state over civil society and the predominance of the states in the sphere of international politics. These axioms, as Levi observes, no longer correspond to the reality of our times. Globalization has questioned these two postulates of the state-centric paradigm, which put the state at the centre of political thought and action. In fact the most significant consequence at the political level of globalization is the erosion of state sovereignty. He suggests that the era of the sovereign states is passing.

With the formation of the global civil society, globalization puts in a critical position the principle of state supremacy over civil society, whose dynamic escapes state control. On the other hand, international relations are conditioned in an increasingly glaring way by non-state actors, among them Levi mentions multinational corporations and banks, non-governmental organizations, criminal and terrorist groups, which threaten the control that the states used to exert exclusively over international relations and compete with the states for the decision-making power on the great issues of international politics.

The institutions of the European Union are an expression of a general tendency towards constitutionalizing international relations. The constitutional construction site of the European Union is the laboratory of

a new form of statehood. It should be pointed out that this process creates a new level of government in Europe, which does not substitute but rather joins those existing nationally, regionally and locally.

If we want to govern globalization, it is obvious that like powers must be instituted at the international level. Lucio Levi has no other models than already existing ones exemplified by World Trade Organization or International Criminal Court. Such international organizations govern what were once considered the domestic affairs of the states. The unique remark that he has is that they do so without democratic legitimization.

If the idea is to globalize democracy democratically, should we not allow for other, non-European experiences, aspirations and perspectives as well? - seems to be the most relevant question in this consideration, Heikki Patomäki is asking (Held and Patomäki, 2006: 116). We are limited historical beings, he argues. When we enter into a dialogue, we are preformed, complex, intra- and inter-related systems whose capacity for learning and trans-contextual judgements is structured through our geo-historical experiences. We also know from the history of colonialism what it might mean to posit the superiority of Western understandings and political theories (119).

There is a split between the world of impartial and pure morality and the real world of geo-historical determination, Patomäki continues. This split is both ontologically untenable and ethically a sign of unhappy consciousness, which cannot locate and resolve moral problems in this world. Thus tends to turn to otherworldly solutions in search for rationality and morality (120).

Instead of assuming that global political space must form a hierarchy of territorial layers, like within the modern European nation-states, and a linear upwards movement from the European Middle Age through the era of centralized nation-states to the era of cosmopolitan democracy like in typical modern European world historical narratives, we should rethink, dialogically, the nature of time, space and the emancipatory process, Patomäki emphasizes (121).

An unbundling of the national

The multiple processes that constitute economic globalization inhabit and shape specific structurations of the economic, the political, the

cultural, and the subjective. In so doing, new spatialities and temporalities are produced; these do not stand outside the national. They are partly inserted in the national and hence evince complex imbrications with the latter, Saskia Sassen explains (1999).

A crucial conceptual issue is the analytic construction of the dynamics of interaction and overlap within each the global and the national and between them, Sassen says. In the domain of the global economic, transnational corporations, financial markets, and immigrant workers, are emblematic subjects, as are, at a greater level of complexity, the question of sovereignty in the context of globalization and the formation of a cross-border network of global cities.

What the mainstream accounts tend to leave out of the analysis is the fact that hyper mobility and time-space compression need to be produced, and that this requires vast concentrations of very material and not so mobile facilities and infrastructures. The global city, Sassen argues, is emblematic here, with its vast capacities for controlling hyper mobile dematerialized financial instruments and the enormous concentrations of material and human, mostly place-bound resources that it takes to have the former circulating around the globe in a second.

There is a specific kind of materiality underlying the world of new business activities even if they take place partly in electronic space. Even the most digitalized, globalized and dematerialized sector, notably global finance, inhabits both physical and digital spaces. These firms' activities are simultaneously partly deterritorialized and partly deeply territorialized, they span the globe yet they are highly concentrated in very specific places.

This produces a strategic geography that cuts across borders and across spaces yet installs itself also in specific cities. The spatiality thus produced can be thought of as a cross border network of specific sites embedded partly in the national but constituted through spatial and temporal practices that distinguishes these from others, notably those of the national as historically constructed. It is a geography that explodes the boundaries of contextuality and the traditional hierarchies of scale. In so doing it contributes to a partial unbundling of national territory, Saskia Sassen observes lucidly.

We can then think of the global economy as materializing in a worldwide grid of strategic places, uppermost among which are major international business and financial centres. We can think of this global grid as constituting a new economic geography of centrality, one that cuts across national boundaries and across the old North-South divide.

The growth of global markets for finance and specialized services, the need for transnational servicing networks due to sharp increases in international investment, the reduced role of the government in the regulation of international economic activity and the corresponding ascendance of other institutional arenas, notably global markets and corporate headquarters, for the governance of the global economy -- all these point to the existence of transnational economic processes with multiple locations in more than one country.

One of the tasks here has to do with rethinking spatial hierarchies that are usually taken as a given: local/national/global, Saskia Sassen continues arguing. For example, both the new international professionals and immigrant workers operate in contexts which are at the same time local and global, thereby overriding these conventional hierarchies of scale. As financial centres, London, New York, Zurich, Amsterdam, Frankfurt, are all part of an international yet very localized work sub-culture. We see here "proximity" but not embedded in territorial space; rather, a deterritorialized form of proximity.

This type of analysis, which Saskia Sassen is pioneering, points to a space economy for major new, transnational economic processes that diverges in significant ways from the duality global/national presupposed in much analysis of the global economy. Economic globalization does indeed extend the economy beyond the boundaries of the nation-state and hence reduces the state's sovereignty over its economy. But these boundaries are not simply geographic; they are also institutional and located inside the national rather than at its geographic borders. It is not simply the push by global firms and markets that is shaping the dynamics of interaction as is implied in much of the literature on the declining significance of the national state under globalization. States are also shaping the dynamics of interaction and are doing so not merely in the form of resistance. Their reconfiguring is shaped both by trends towards standardization, and by national particularities, e.g. the different responses.

Economic globalization entails a set of practices which destabilize another set of practices, i.e. some of the practices that came to constitute national state sovereignty. In their enactment these practices produce distinctive and complex spatialities which cannot simply be subsumed under the national. Thus we cannot simply assume that because a transaction takes place in national territory and in a national institutional setting it is ipso facto national. The imbrication of global actors and national institutions is far more ambiguous. Certain components of the national state operate as necessary instrumentalities for the implementation of a global economic system.

In terms of research this means, among other tasks, decoding what is national today in what has historically been constructed as national, and establishing what are the new territorial and institutional conditionalities of national states. Transnational processes such as economic globalization or the global disjuncture specified by Appadurai, to whom Sassen refers, confront the social sciences with a series of theoretical and methodological challenges.

The paradigm of immaterial production

Contemporary geopolitics demonstrate the same logical schema that defines the contemporary theory of sovereignty and the reality of economic activity: it has two sides that are constantly in contradiction and conflict. Following Hardt and Negri, these internal conflicts or contradictions within the concept of geopolitics should be recognized as the conflict between the multitude (that is, the forces of social production) and imperial sovereignty (that is, the global order of power and exploitation), between biopolitics and biopower.

As they argue, the contemporary global order can no longer be understood adequately in terms of imperialism as it was practiced by the modern powers, based primarily on the sovereignty of the nation-state extended over foreign territory. A new form of sovereignty is emerging, a "network power" which Hardt and Negri claim is "imperial" not "imperialist". Empire rules over a global order that is not only fractured by internal divisions and hierarchies but also plagued by perpetual war which functions as an instrument of rule. Their recent book focuses on the multitude, the living alternative that grows within Empire. Globalization is not a matter of everyone in the world becoming the same; rather it provides the possibility that, while remaining different, we discover the

commonality that enables us to communicate and act together. The multitude too might thus be conceived as a network, open and expansive, in which all differences can be expressed freely and equally (xii-xiii).

This inclusive concept tries to capture the importance of the recent shifts of the global economy. The industrial working class no longer plays a hegemonic role in the global economy, and the production today has to be conceived more generally as social production, including the production of communications, relationships, and forms of life. In so far as the multitude is neither an identity (like the people), nor uniform (like the masses), the internal differences of the multitude must discover *the common* that allows them to communicate and act together, Hardt and Negri believes. Our communication, collaboration, and cooperation are not only based on the common, but they in turn produce the common in an expanding spiral relationship. Labour itself tends through the transformation of the economy to create and be embedded in cooperative and communicative network. This is especially true for all labour that creates immaterial projects, including ideas, images, affects and relationships. Hard and Negri call this newly dominant model "biopolitical production" to highlight that it not only involves the production of material goods in strictly economic sense but also touches on and produces all facets of social life, economic, cultural, and political (xv-xvi).

Trying to understand the nature of the emerging global class formation, the multitude, they point out this important observation: "Where the nascent bourgeoisie needed to call on a sovereign power to guarantee its interests, the multitude emerges from within the new imperial sovereignty and points beyond it. The multitude is working through Empire to create an alternative global society" (xvii).

There are several insights that make this assertion plausible. Networks are the form of organization of the cooperative and communicative relationships dictated by immaterial paradigm of production. Whereas material production creates the *means of social life*, immaterial production is biopolitical, it tends to create the *social life itself*. In immaterial production the creation of cooperation has become internal to labour and thus external to capital. Labour and value have become biopolitical in the sense that living and producing tend to be indistinguishable. The real wealth, which is an end in itself, resides in the common; it is the sum of the pleasures, desires, capacities, and needs we all share. The common wealth is the real and proper object of production (142; 146; 147; 149).

In the paradigm of immaterial production, the theory of value cannot be conceived in terms of measured quantities of time. Just as we must understand the production of value in terms of common, so too must we try to conceive exploitation as *the expropriation of the common*. Through financial markets money tends to represent not only the present but also the future value of the common. The profits of finance capital are probably in its purest form the expropriation of the common. Managing the global divisions of labour and power is one weapon at capital's disposal for maintaining command over global production and wealth. "The poor" is excluded from wealth and yet included in its circuits of social production. The double character of poverty and possibility defines the subjectivity of labour increasingly clearly in the immaterial paradigm. The wealth it creates is taken away, and this is the source of its antagonism. Yet it retains its capacity to produce wealth, and this is its power. For economics to function today it has to be formed around the common, the global, and social cooperation; it must become a *biopolitical science*. Global anthropology must overcome the fundamental Eurocentrism, cultural difference must be conceived in itself, as singularity (151-153; 157; 125).

The common social being is the powerful matrix that is central in the production and reproduction of contemporary society and has the potential to create a new society. We should regard this common social being as an amorphous flesh that as yet forms no body, Hardt and Negri remark. This new social flesh may be formed into the productive organs of the global social body of capital. Another possibility is that these common singularities organize themselves autonomously. The recent process of globalization and the declining sovereignty of nation-states have undermined the conditions that made possible the modern construction of a political body. The global political body is not merely a national body grown overlarge. It has a new *physiology* (161-162).

The global political body is defined not only by global divisions of labour but also by closely related global divisions of power. It is not possible to determine in a *fixed* way the degree of development and exploitation but one has to recognize instead the shifting status of the divisions among geographical areas and among populations. The global divisions are the results and the objects of power struggles (164-165).

In the contemporary interregnum, in which the modern national paradigm of political bodies is passing towards a new global form, there is an abundance of new structures of power. The invention of new science of

democracy for the multitude is certainly an enormous task. What Hardt and Negri propose today is calling on ourselves to grasp the present biopolitical needs and imaging the possible conditions of a new life. They recognize the need for it in the real and urgent grievances and demands from so many throughout the world. From where would the power to realize such a project come if not from the desires of the multitude? Their attitude implies an ethical and cognitive immersing in the movements of history and the anthropological transformations of subjectivity (312).

The neoliberal agenda

Obituaries of the state are premature, even if it is imperative to relativise the state as the prime locus of authority and sovereignty, Shalini Randeria (2007: 26) argues. Although inadequate, the state remains indispensable as its laws and policies play a key role in transposing neo-liberal agendas to the national and local levels. If in the age of globalization and economic Empire, political violence has been replaced by legal violence, resistance to it is also articulated in the language of law.

Contrary to Hard and Negri's sceptical view of the law and the state as sites for the pursuit of justice in Empire, the material Randeria's exposit on the case of India indicates that the national political arena and judicial fora have not been rendered marginal, and that, contrary to their assertion, civil society has not declined either (27). In the new architecture of global governance, power is diffuse and elusive, just as sovereignties are scattered according to the specific issue and policy, territorial area or the section of the population under study, is Randeria's general remark. Or, as Appadurai puts it, thinking beyond the nation means recognizing that everyone today has a picture of the whole and that we don't know enough about the ways in which people in other places see not only themselves but the whole (Rantanen 2006: 18). We have to allow, in the analysis of any process of social development, a much greater latitude for people's mental make-up and ideas as they are shaped by complex interactions between the dominant mode of production and the historical process by which distinct social groups of widely varying backgrounds become integrated into the expanding 'Western' world of capital, suggests Van der Pijl (2005). The unique trajectory of each ethno-national entity's absorption into this expanding capitalist world is what truly makes the process of globalization global, he argues (273-274). Globalization can only be understood if the analysis of the capitalist market discipline is enlarged by an awareness of

the materiality of ethnic and cultural diversity, which includes the realization that the 'state' has different connotation everywhere (276).

Programmes of economic deregulation, privatisation, the principles of macroeconomic austerity and the ideologies of individualism and consumerism have undoubtedly made deep inroad into the old social democratic amalgams of the West as well as into various systems of state-led capitalism and predatory populism that prevailed elsewhere. But the consequences have, in critical instances, been both unexpected and seemingly counter-intuitive, Richard Robinson (2005) observes. While it has been relatively easy to roll back entrenched regimes and enact market reforms, building neoliberal agenda has proved to be a more difficult matter. In Western industrial economies, the techno-managerial mode of protecting markets from politics, even where it involved the enhancement of state power, was to be a favoured neoliberal mode of governance. Attempt to force reforms through episodes of 'shock therapy', in Russia and Indonesia, have produced powerful social and political oligarchies as the apparent heirs to the old centralised authoritarian political regimes. In Africa, Robinson resumes, three decades of structural adjustment seem only to have consolidated predatory elites which have hijacked the reform process to consolidate the clientelist networks that underpin their power. In Latin America the advance of markets is now being driven more effectively by neopopulist regimes, than previously by technocratic rulers riding on the backs of structural adjustment programmes.

Recognition of the proposition that neoliberal reform is about power and conflict means an admission that the neoliberal agenda itself is not an abstraction of efficiency standing above vested interest, but a political phenomenon no less than any other agenda for radical social change, is Robinson's realistic conclusion (256).

But, if the central problem seems to be who will build the systems of social and political governance required by the neoliberal revolution and what interests will it accommodate, a more crucial question remains: What makes a market economy? That is constitutive problem of political economy as much as of moral philosophy (Watson 2005).

The geopolitics of knowledge

Still today the studies of globalisation and the paradigms of political economy continue to produce knowledge from the "zero point"

perspective. This leads to serious difficulties in conceptualising global capitalism Ramón Grosfoguel (2006: 54) argues. From the Euro centre point of view the capitalist world-system is principally an economic system, the economic and work relations are privileged in comparison with an overall view of the power relations. Therefore the production relations that the European capitalist/colonial expansion produces in the world and the new class structures specific to capitalism and contrary to the social systems and power relations existing before the arrival of Europeans are also privileged.

In the application of the notion geopolitics of knowledge and body-politics of knowledge, the “coloniality of power”, as Grosfoguel explains, appears as a system made up of multiple forms and heterogenous hierarchies/dispositives sexual, political, epistemic, economic, spiritual, linguistic and racial of domination and exploitation on the world scale (57).

Contrary to what the Eurocentric perspective is proposing, these relations are not the elements to be added to the economic and political structures of the capitalist world-system, but an integrand and constitutive part of the packet of the interwoven power relations, he points out (58). The perspective of the “coloniality of power” makes us face the challenge of thinking the alternatives of change and a non-reductionist social transformation.

One of the strongest myths of the 20th century was the idea that the elimination of the colonial administrations has been the equivalent of the world decolonisation. In the same way the myth of a postcolonial world has been created, Grosfoguel retains. The coloniality is related to a continuity of the forms of domination and exploitation after the disappearance of colonial administrations produced by the hegemonic structures and cultures of the capitalist / patriarchal / modern / colonial world system. Accordingly, the coloniality of power represents the crucial processes of structuration in that world-system, which interweave the peripheral localisations of the international work division and the global ethno-racial hierarchies. The peripheral nation-states live today under a regime of global coloniality imposed by US with the aid of IMF, World Bank, Pentagon and NATO (61).

By “colonial situation” or “coloniality of power” Ramón Grosfoguel denotes the political and economic oppression of the subordinated ethno-

social groups by the dominant ethno-social groups with or without colonial administration. The 453 years of European colonial domination and expansion have produced an international division of work between Europeans / Euro-North-American and non-Europeans which continue to reproduce it-self in the current phase called “post-colonial”, of the world-system (62).

The idea that we are living in a time and a world “postcolonial” and that the world and the metropolitan centres do not need a decolonisation makes part of the same Euro-centric myth. Trough all the history of the world-system until today the culture, the knowledge and epistemology produced in West were constantly privileged. No culture could maintain itself in the absolute outside in relation to the Euro centred modernity. The global monolinguistique and monotopique Western conceptions build their relations with other cultures and other people starting with a position of superiority and remain totally deaf to the cosmologies and epistemologies of the non-Western world (63). If the non-European population do not accept the terms of the liberal democracy, then it is imposed them by force and in the name of the progress and civilisation, Grosfoguel says bitterly.

The democracy needs a re-conceptualisation under a transmodern form, to be able to decolonise itself of its Western liberal form, that is of its form racist, patriarchal and capitalist, he is convinced (67).

A general anthropological transition

How experience can function as a generative principle in the creation of new institutional forms immanent to the dynamics of social-technical networks? In asking this question Brett Neilson and Ned Rossiter (2006) maintain that the existing institutions have tended merely to adapt to prevailing global circumstances, rather than to actively innovate in ways that seek to intervene upon or change these conditions (393).

The notion of experience calls our attention to immanent modes of sociality whose significance derives not from representation or interpretation but from phenomenal life itself. Movement individuates form from the distribution of experience. It is this doubling of movement – individuation coupled with distribution – that comprises ‘the political’ that attends the invention of new institutional forms. As a term with immediate political resonance movement describes nongovernmental forms of organization often associated with activist networks and their complex practices of

horizontal connection and multiscalar engagement, Neilson and Rossiter theorize (394).

The tendency to attribute political status to the activities of social movements but to understand actual physical movement as apolitical is one that has received criticism from those who understand the mobility of migrants, particularly undocumented migrants, to pose a challenge to modern forms of political organization, these authors observe. In such movement, the moment of self-valorisation or self-representation is subtracted, the new institutional forms that might emerge in and through the experience of movement involve 'organization without ends'. Such formulation signals the real challenges faced by political creativity in an institutional environment still dominated by the market and state (396).

Obviously, the situation we face is one that can no longer be fully analyzed using concepts like hegemony or governmentality. We are in the midst of a general anthropological transition where the species-being of human beings, which is without any function and always open to change, is appropriated and subordinated to the specific tasks and aims of a particular historical period. What is at stake is not an attempt to censor individuals or deprive them of a voice, but rather the establishment of power over minds and the collaboration of minds, Neilson and Rossiter underscore (398).

Power no longer seeks its justification from particular institutions and their functions. Rather it operates on the bare conditions of action or the possibilities of life in general. Ethics and public opinion replace formal law and its institutions as the basis of legitimacy. And thus power has no fixed point of reference. Rather it seems to change from day to day.

The question then becomes how to create new institutions, new political spaces and concepts, rather than simply defending the old institutions or, as some would have it, defending politics. Such institutions, Neilson and Rossiter believe, would need to arise in the social forms that networks and other forms of cooperation develop as part of their daily life. They would have to remain open to the brute precariousness of human potentiality while simultaneously recognizing that this potentiality is necessarily installed in the world (400).

The creative action then is not simply one that breaks rules (simultaneously affirming them in the act of transgression) but an action

that changes the grammatical system itself, operating in a space where the grammatical rule cannot be distinguished from the empirical event.

The seemingly impossible tension between distribution and decision can never be overcome. There is no dialectical process that might resolve this conflict in a higher order of sovereign rule or democratic consensus. This is why it is so mistaken to conceive of networks as democratic institutions. Networks do not apportion membership or citizenship. They cannot be hijacked to the legislative model of the parliament or the representative model of the election. This is not to disavow the complex problem of network governance, Neilson and Rossiter say. But it is to recognize that, in conceiving the potentialities inherent in networks, we must heed the difference between law and institutions (404).

The networked multitude questioned

Network cultures come into being as a 'productive friction' between inter-human dynamics and the given framework of software. The social dynamics that develop within networks is not 'garbage' but essence. The aim of networks is not transportation of data but contestation of systems, says Geert Lovink (2005: 6)

The notion that networks are not random but have underlying structures, can be a ground-breaking insight for scientists, but should not come as a surprise for critical Internet scholars. He is very clear in his judgement. Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri use the multitude concept to describe today's social formations in a globalized world (7). Yes, networks constantly undermine the stable boundaries between inside and outside, but provoking a sense of liberation they install themselves into everyday life as ideal machines for control. This is Lovink's fundamental insight (9).

Networks are complex techno-social environments that defy simplistic reductions. They are large-scale power transformation mechanisms in place. If networks were to dissolve power as such, the first such network has yet to be built. What defines the Internet is its social architecture. It's the living environment that counts, the live interaction, not just the storage and retrieval procedure (11).

Collaboration itself is not generating issues that can be translated into (political) campaigns, Lovink continues with his critical comments. Key to

our effort to theorize individual and collective experiences, is the recognition that there must be a freedom to refuse to collaborate. There must be a constitutive exit strategy. The question of 'free cooperation' is, in essence, one of organization and comes up after the crisis of the (Fordist) factory model and its political mirror, the political party. The focus on 'new social movements' may already be outdated, and should perhaps be replaced with much more temporary ruptures (13).

Geert Lovink is ready to say that multitudes are a highly problematic category, not for capital or the 'control society', but for the multitudes themselves. It will take a while to get used to the fact that there is no consciousness in and for it-self (14). General network theory might be useful for enlightenment purposes, but that doesn't answer the issues that new media based social networks face. Does it satisfy to know that molecules and DNA patterns also network? – Lovink is asking prudentially.

There are no networks outside of society. Like all human techno entities, they are infected by power. Their diagram of power may operate on a range of scales, traversing intra-local networks and overlapping with transnational insurgencies. No matter how harmless they seem, networks bring on differences (18).

It is time to abandon the illusion that the myths of representational democracy might somehow be transferred and realized within networked settings. The emerging theme of non-representative democracies places an emphasis on process over its after-effect, consensus. Certainly, there's something attractive in process-oriented forms of governance, Lovink admits (23).

Networks are never hundred per cent virtual and always connected at some point with the monetary economy. This is where the story of organized networks starts he clarifies. Ideally, online projects are high on communitarian spirits and are able to access the necessary skills. But the further we leave behind the moment of initiation, the more likely it will be that work will have to be paid. Organized networks have to face this economic reality or find themselves marginalized, no matter how advanced their dialogues and network use might be.

Roughly speaking, Lovink says, one can witness a 'convergence' between the informality of virtual networks and the formality of institutions.

This process, however, is anything but harmonious. Clashes between networks and organizations are occurring before our very own eyes. Debris spreads in every possible direction, depending on the locality. The networked multitude is constituted – and crushed – as a part of this process. It is naive to believe that, under the current circumstances, networks will win this battle (21).

An actual understanding we are lacking

Many of the criticisms made of Hardt and Negri's work have been based, to a large extent, upon a failure to comprehend the *tendential* nature of their argument. However, it should also be made clear that there nevertheless exist a number of real and important weaknesses in Hardt and Negri's work, related in particular to their claim as to the possibilities for radical social change opened up by the processes and transformations taking place through the global political economy, Ben Trott (2007: 207) finds out.

Hardt and Negri describe the multitude as 'legion'; at once *one* and *many*, composed of a set of singularities all of which are nevertheless said to produce within an increasingly common condition. Its boundaries are "indefinite and open", and are said to include all of those involved in social production/reproduction today. The multitude, furthermore, Trott remarks, is said to be the only social subject capable of realizing democracy. Whilst it constitutes the creative and productive force, which called the current order into being, it nevertheless remains a political project as yet to be fully realised.

Trott believes Hardt and Negri's central argument, that a series of transformations have taken place, or are in the process of taking place, within the realm of production, and that these transformations correspond to a large extent to changes taking place throughout society and even within the structures of international power itself, to be broadly correct. That a networked form of power – in which nations states and a range of non-state actors, including major corporations, international organisations, NGOs and others, constitute a form of global governance – has emerged alongside post-Fordist forms of production seems to him almost undeniable. But he refuses Hardt and Negri's claim as to the immeasurability of value in today's global political economy, furthermore the grounds upon which they attempt to substantiate their claim as to the possibilities for liberation opened up in the age of Empire, namely: the

increasingly communicative and cooperative manner in which production is understood as taking place today (221).

Contrary to them, Trott strongly emphasize the notion that capital is a function of the working class upon which it depends for its own reproduction. How to identify the extent to which labour is contained within capital (and hence capital's power over labour), and also the extent to which labour exists as an internal contradiction within capital (and hence labour's power over capital) surely is the key question to comprehending both processes that have led to developments within the global political economy, and the potential for its transformation (223). But we are lacking an actual understanding of both these aspects of the global capital/labour relation of today.