

This essay was submitted as part of TNI's call for papers for its [State of Power 2015](#) report. The essay was not shortlisted for the final report and therefore TNI does not take responsibility for its contents. However the Editorial Board appreciated the essay and it is posted here as recommended reading.

Conceptualizing the State of Movement-Based Counter-power:¹

Peter N. Funke

Abstract

This essay presents a conceptual perspective on the dominant and novel logic informing today's social movement-based counter-power. Drawing on Deleuze and Guattari's image of the rhizome, this essay analytically accentuates the nature and workings as well as the challenges and shortcomings of contemporary movement-based counter-power. This "Rhizomatic Movement Logic" has been emerging in conjunction with shifting dynamics of neoliberal capitalism as well as in conversation with older forms of left movement-based counter power. It thrives on multiplicity and thus lacks a dominant core or main axis and emphasizes radical participatory democracy and horizontal organizational forms, media and communication tools, multi-connectivity and heterogeneity of political struggles, with no central actor, issue, strategy, or ideology beyond opposition to a neoliberal society. Moreover, it displays a reluctance to resilient longer-term organizing and (at least in parts of the global north) to making policy demands on the state.

Introduction

The last decades have seen massive protests and mobilizations against rising inequality, war, the dispossession of rights and entitlements, democratic deficits and austerity politics, ranging from the so-called "bread riots" of the 1970s and 1980s against the International Monetary Fund's structural adjustment programs in the global south to the massive one million strong demonstrations in Korea in 1984, the 1988 Berlin and 1989 Paris mobilizations, the founding of such networks and coalitions as *Via Campesina* and *the Coalition of Immokalee Workers* in 1993, the Zapatista uprising in Chiapas since the mid-1980s, mass demonstrations against war and inequality at virtually all gatherings of world leaders, the launching of the World Social Forum and the global social forum process it has sparked, to the struggles in North Africa and Occupy Wall Street and anti-austerity type mobilizations to the incipient anti-racism uprisings in the U.S. Fed by two main dimensions – first, an economic angle, spanning struggles against corruption and inefficiencies to challenging capitalism itself and second, a political-ideological thrust, ranging from demanding democracy to demands that conventional representative multi-party democracy be overthrown (Zizek) - protests and social movement organizing from the local to the global has been a world-wide and constant phenomenon.

This essay takes a bird's-eye view on this "epoch of contention" (Funke, 2014; McAdam & Sewell, 2001) and seeks to present a conceptual perspective on the dominant logic informing today's counter-power writ large. The amalgamation of social movement based counter-power, I argue, is relying on and enacting a novel and distinct movement logic, which thrives on multiplicity and thus lacks a dominant core or main axis and emphasizes radical participatory democracy and horizontal organizational forms, media and communication tools, multi-connectivity and heterogeneity of political struggles, with no central actor, issue, strategy, or ideology beyond opposition to a neoliberal society and a certain reluctance to resilient longer-term organizing and (at least in parts of the global north) to making policy demands on the state.

Drawing on the work of the two French philosophers and psychotherapists Gilles Deleuze and the Pierre-Félix Guattari, this essay uses their image of the rhizome (think ginger rather than trees) to analytically accentuate the nature and workings as well as the challenges and contemporary shortcomings of today's social movement-based counter-power. The dominant "Rhizomatic Movement Logic" as I have called it elsewhere (Funke, 2012), has been emerging in conjunction with shifting dynamics of neoliberal capitalism and its related modes of socio-political governance as well as in conversation with older forms of left movement-based counter politics and its concomitant logics.

"Rhizomatic Counter-Power" has been fostering remarkable mobilizations and extraordinary connections and has aided in tempering and managing inherent antinomies between contemporary movements and groups. Simultaneously, however, the particularities of this Rhizomatic Logic are limiting the degree of congealed and resilient movement building and thus the societal transformation potential of counter-power, which the concept of the rhizome also helps to analytically unearth and understand.

This essay begins by sketching the shifting dynamics of capitalism and the related movement logics that have undergird movement-based counter-power in the past to then detail the emergent rhizomatic logic of contemporary formations. While I draw on illustrations from various parts of the world such as the Zapatista, the protests of the alter-globalization and anti-war movements of the 1990s/2000s, the emergence of the World Social Forum and the global social forum process it has sparked (Funke 2012), as well as the "Arab Spring," anti-austerity protests and encampments around the globe, this essay has a conceptual focus, detailing the particular logic informing counter-power today, which both enable its successes as well as its challenges.

From the "Old" and "New Movements" to the Rhizomatic Movements

While recognizing the problematic nature of periodization, in ideal-typical terms the current counter-movements can be contrasted to the counter-power of the "Old Left" of industrial trade unions and political parties, which converged around the central class struggle of bourgeoisie and proletariat and to the decentering of this core struggle by the "New Left" of identity politics, civil rights, gender or environmental concerns. In the most

general sense, counter-power today has to be understood as an attempt to bring together the various historical parts of the political left, forging linkages and synergies across the fractured landscape of the “old” and “new” left while simultaneously upholding the diversity and guarding the autonomy of its constitutive groups and movements.

The current movement logic arguably emerged in the wake of the implementation and consolidation of global neoliberal restructuring policies that began in the 1970s in the global south. These policies usually demand the implementation of orthodox capitalist economic policies including the commodification of publicly owned industries, services and resources as well as the deregulation and liberalization of trade in goods and services. Moreover, these policies go beyond the strictly economic realm and encroach on cultural, ecological, political and social issues such as education, retirement, and health care. Often enforced and administered through international or regional institutions on behalf of its member states, the structural adjustment programs of the International Monetary Fund as well as trade liberalization policies overseen by the World Trade Organization galvanized protests and uprisings that gave birth to current movement-based counter-power.

The first major wave of movement-based counter-power has been most visible in the global north through demonstrations at the meetings of international institutions such as the World Trade Organization, the International Monetary Fund or the Group of Eight meetings. The so-called Alter-Globalization Movement or Global Justice Movement organized massive protests against, for instance, the World Trade Organization in Seattle in 1999 that shut down the Ministerial Conference, fused with the anti-war movement it organized for the massive anti-Iraq War protests on February 15 and 16, 2003 that saw ten to twenty million people demonstrating against the looming Iraq War, and mobilized against various Group of Eight meetings such as in Genoa (2001) Gleneagles (2005) or Heiligendamm (2007). While the 1999 “Battle for Seattle” has been an iconic event for the Global Justice Movement in the global north, seeking to consolidate global resistance to neoliberal policies, it was in fact the earlier Zapatista uprising against the North American Free Trade Agreement in 1994, which initiated the distinct logic that feeds current movement-based counter powers. The Zapatista with their radically democratic and pluralist approach prefigured much of what would become the dominant logic of contemporary movement-based counter-power. Their outlook is epitomized in their slogan “one no and many yeses,” capturing the unified “no” to neoliberalism while acknowledging the diversity and plurality of alternatives, needs, aspirations, tactics or ways of living and doing. This perspective arguably undergirds most contemporary group’s and movements own self-understanding of collectively rejecting neoliberalism while embracing a plurality of alternative worlds thus allowing for linkages and convergences while guaranteeing the participating groups’ autonomy.

Capitalism, the State, Technology & the Rhizomatic Logic

To understand the novel and dominant rhizomatic logic informing contemporary movement-based counter power, it is necessary to examine it in conjunction with the

shifting configurations of the global economic system and the correspondent dynamics in technology and communication practices as well with the implications of the end of the Cold War and with its seismic shifts in the character of socialist/social democratic parties and unions. The massive transformations in capitalism, the state and technology have impacted the strategies, goals and social horizons of social movement based organizing in general and movement-based counter power in particular.

These shifting dynamics of the global political economic order have often been discussed as changes from fordism to post-fordism and to neoliberalism. While the distinction should not be overstated, the current economic system can be differentiated by the speed and mobility of capital, goods, people and ideas. Beginning in the 1970s in the Global South, these restructuring policies increasingly prescribed and implemented market driven approaches based on privatization, deregulation and liberalization (Harvey, 2005). These dynamics have expanded and deepened the scope of the capitalist commodification and its profit logic.

The transformations of the global political economy are in turn generating modified capital and class relations and thus restructures the composition of counter-struggles and -movements as well as their practices and strategies (Funke, 2014; Funke, Robe & Wolfson, 2012). These dynamics have been fragmenting and at the same time broadening the collectivity of progressive groups and movements resisting neoliberalizing capitalism. The center of resistance is no longer predominately comprised of exploitation on factory floors and at conveyor belts but includes increasing numbers of service sector workers or students as well as ongoing oppressions structured by gender, race, or sexual orientation. As such, class in general and counter-power in particular have to be reconceptualized to include other experiences and social subjectivities which comprise the current labor-capital conflict (Lorenzano 1998, pp. 132-33).

In addition to these structural imperatives, the organizational history of the left itself generated the need for novel processes and linkages among this more extensive but also increasingly heterogeneous and splintered grouping. In particular the failures of the state socialist projects made groups and movements of the left “wary of any group playing a vanguard role in defining the society that the overall global movement should pursue” (Fisher & Ponniah, 2003, p. 13) while recognizing the need to “articulate a common vision” (ibid.). As I argue below, rhizomatic organizational constellations are emerging that enable configurations which seek to safeguard the heterogeneity and the groups’ autonomy while at the same time recognizing the need to bridge and congeal leftist groups and movements into new formations.

Consequently, communication serves an even more central function for generating necessary linkages and possibly commonalities between these fractured sectors of counter-power today. As such, communication operates as an infrastructural dimension, having the ability to shape and organize social relations across the fragmented landscape. The pivotal role of on and off line communication tools is readily observable when looking at

manifestations or emergences of current movement-based counter power. From the start, the Zapatista's creatively re-appropriated web-based communication tools. The launching of Indy-Media during the 1999 anti-World Trade Organization protests (Wolfson, 2014) to the role of twitter-feeds during the "Green Revolution" in Iran or more recent facebook and twitter usages for the various occupy-type protests indicate its pivotal nature. However, it would be naïve, as some have done, to discount the ongoing importance of older forms of communication for building counter-power. The type of communication medium is variable and context specific, ranging from older forms such as the radio and print to the newer mediums of predominately internet-based platforms. When organizing cab drivers in cities such as Philadelphia, for example, the radio is still as it was during Fanon's writing during the Algerian War of independence, one of the most efficient ways to organize and reach cabbies as they sit up to 18 hours in their cars. Similarly, "old fashioned" face-to-face communication plays a pivotal role in building trust and thus in organizing while at the same time the impact of instant communication through internet-powered platforms is apparent when examining contemporary protest formations. Hence, during the current "rhizomatic epoch of contention," media and communication provides a pivotal infrastructure for movement-based counter power.

The following charts in more detail the particular contour of the rhizomatic logic informing contemporary counter-power. While I suggest that this logic is widely shared, it is nevertheless variegated and contextually enacted differently. The commonality embodied by such a Rhizomatic Logic is not one of linear progression, of adoption and copying from one moment and location to the next but rather one of being inspired, of adapting and mutating this similar meta-logic under shared structurally analogous yet contextually diverging conditions of globalizing capitalism. Moreover, I am not suggesting that all features and dynamics of this movement-logic are novel but rather that it is the coming together of these characteristics, which marks current counter-power, constituting a distinct cultural epoch of contention.

Rhizomatic Counter-Power

Drawing on Deleuze and Guattari, their metaphor of the rhizome is insightful in understanding current movement-based counter-power. Deleuze and Guattari use the concept of the rhizome to describe singularities that interact to form a multiplicity. As such, rhizomes suggest "networks of heterogenous elements that grow in unplanned direction, following the real-life situations they encounter" (Escobar 2004, p. 352). Like rhizomes, movement-based counter power today is characterized by the heterogeneity of its constitutive groups and movements, ranging from labor, environmental and feminist groups to anti-racist, peasant and indigenous movements among many others. Moreover, counter-power formations today lack a central actor, issue, strategy or ideology beyond opposition to neoliberalism. The image of the rhizome is thus insightful as a framework to illuminate the ideal-typical nature of present-day counter-power as it invokes a structure that is "very different from the tree or root," as Deleuze and Guattari point out (1980, 7). Unlike hierarchical structures such as tress, "which plots a point, fixes an order" (ibid., 7), which

provides only one path from a particular point to any other point, rhizomes represent non-hierarchical structures where any point can connect to any other point, generating links that can stretch - unevenly and asymmetrically - across spaces, and times, scales, issues or strategies. As such, the rhizome is a helpful conceptual framework to better understand the emerged movement based counter-power, its successes and challenges.

The term “rhizome” appears cumbersome or outright pretensions, and begs the question why not using the term network as many others do. Rhizome though conjures up an image that is more helpful in understanding the current state of movement-based counter power, its strengths and weaknesses. Contrary to the more static image a network, a rhizome - a ginger-like structure – conveys a much more dynamic and fluid perspective. A rhizome is never complete or incomplete, it can be broken but its parts will seek out new paths. The rhizome thus suggests an “evolving and changing imaginary whereas networks as organizational form [which] while also capturing to a certain degree movement, has definitional boundaries and is less well suited to capture segmented, (semi-)autonomous elements that nevertheless belong to the same phenomenon” (p. 167). The fruitfulness of the rhizome as conceptual framework to better understand contemporary counter-power will become more clear when employing it to bring out the central implications of this shift in movement logic and politics from old and new to rhizomatic movements.

While the contours of the Rhizomatic Left are (always) emergent, in the remainder of this essay, I seek to discuss three core dynamics of the rhizomatic logic as it informs current movement-based counter power. In particular:

- the heterogeneity and multi-connectivity of its agents
- its internal governing dynamics
- its external organizing logics and movement-building capacities

Actors: Heterogeneity and Multi-Connectivity of Contemporary Counter-Power

Even a cursory view on the protests and mobilization of counter-power during the current epoch of contention indicates the diversity of participants. From the anti-World Trade Organization protests in Seattle in 1999 to the various social forums, alter-globalization protests and the more recent occupy-type encampments and demonstrations, claiming to be “the 99%,” the display of a wide array of groups and movements, tactics, strategies and political aspirations are readily observable.

The structural reasons for this diversity have to be located in the shifting dynamics of the political economy. The widening and deepening of the neoliberal capitalist order detailed above has arguably led to a splintering of groups and movements. Consequently, contemporary counter-power relies on a diversity of actors, struggles, themes, and strategies and seeks to generate multiple, non-scalar connections. Movement-based counter-power is thus characterized by a broad diversity of individuals, groups and networks and their range of particular substantive foci (e.g. anti-racist, environment, indigenous, labor, media, women), tactics and strategies (e.g. holding counter-summits; organizing demonstrations, non-violent direct action and (symbolic) property destruction),

their medium-term objectives (e.g. documenting and reporting; conducting specific welfare enhancing activities and programs; establishing autonomous zones, social and workers centers; building networks and movements) and long-term horizons (e.g. systemic reform or revolution).

Like Deleuze and Guattari's notion of the rhizome beseech, contemporary counter-power is made up of singularities that interact to form a multiplicity. That is to say a unity that is multiple in itself. Moreover, "the rhizome connects any point to any other point," Deleuze and Guattari write, "and its traits are not necessarily linked to traits of the same nature. This is very different from the tree or root, which plots a point, fixes an order" (1980, p. 21). Unlike a tree structure, with only one path from one particular point to any other point, rhizomes represent non-hierarchical structures where any point can connect to any other point, generating links that can stretch - unevenly and asymmetrically - across spaces, times, scales, issues or strategies. Unlike a tree-structure with its "root node" or starting point and its "leave nodes" or end points, rhizomatic structures can be entered and exited from any point. Analogously, the current movement-based counter-power has multiple "entranceways," is constructed and produced, reversible and modifiable. For example, unlike more circumscribed meetings of trade unions, human rights networks, environmental conferences or indigenous rights forums, the current logic brings together each of these diverse actors and more. The less inclusive meetings of unions or human rights activists are also less likely to generate this degree of contact points. A participant at a recent World Social Forum, which are emblematic expressions of such a rhizomatic logic, emphasized that organizing a workshop means "you never know who might show up [... .] People that you would otherwise never get at one table [...and] people that prior to the forum have not been aware of each other [... .] A unionist from Nigeria comes, and one from Thailand and another from Indonesia with which you would not have any contacts through the official channel [... .] This possibility to create networks we do not have otherwise."

The characteristic of heterogeneity and multi-connectivity of a rhizomatic logic, I suggest, informs the dominant mode of contemporary movement-based counter-power. Seattle 1999, social forums and occupy-type protests around the world seek to embrace the heterogeneity of participating actors, seeking to allow for un-planned or un-mapped encounters, linkages and possibly convergences, while simultaneously allowing for autonomy.

Internal Governing Dynamics of Contemporary Counter-Power

Making heterogeneity and opportunities for multi-connectivity of counter-power a possibility relies in the particular governing dynamics that a rhizomatic logic engenders. Taking insights from Deleuze and Guattari's discussion of the metaphor, rhizomes are marked by their multiplicity. Its constitutive entities, groups and individual are irreducible, and "cease to have any relation to the One [... .] image and world" (1980, 8). Concomitantly, contemporary counter-power rejects "the one" meta narrative, central struggle, actor or strategy and rather embraces the multiplicity that operates without a central political protagonist - a multiplicity of diverse and autonomous yet linked actors and their respective

strategies. This modus operandi allows for the diversity of constitutive groups and movements of contemporary counter-power to come together without fear that their autonomy will be compromised. This “horizontalist ethos” does not call on participants to agree on programmatic and binding positions, or submit to an overriding or superior struggle, actor, or strategy. To the contrary, a core characteristic of contemporary counter-power is aimed at protecting the integrity, uniqueness, and independence of each group and movement, while at the same time providing the possibility to articulate and enact linkages, commonalities and convergences.

This logic enables loose coordination for short-term campaigns such as protest mobilizations. It allows activists to agree on demonstrations and protests sites while accepting a host of different tactics and demands thus aspiring to an equality and plurality of fronts of struggles. The outcomes, however, are often more re-active and short-term activities such as “protest swarming,” congregating on a given target and then quickly detaching again. The series of mobilizations against neoliberal globalization such as the 1999 Seattle World Trade Organization protests but also the more recent Tahir Square demonstrations or occupy-type encampments generated massive protests of a diversity of actors and groups, engaging in their autonomous yet linked protest forms.

However, this operating logic presents challenges for resilient movement building. Prioritizing autonomy and diversity does not generate much more commonality beyond accepting differences. The emphasis on autonomy and diversity leads to a wariness of institutions and organizational mechanisms that are geared towards working through differences and coming up with new synthesis. The occupy-type mobilizations are indicative of this. After having very quickly mobilized and accelerated in 2011, they have not been able to organize in sustainable and resilient ways despite the ongoing presence of groups working under the label “occupy” such as Occupy Sandy, Occupy SEC or the related Blockyp actions in Europe and Hong Kong.

Related to the absence of a meta-narrative, struggle or actor is the logic’s emphasize on prefigurative politics or what Deleuze and Guattari refer to as the “cartographic” characteristic of a rhizome. The political, struggles and counter-power writ large are not “traced” but “mapped.” Mapping can also be understood as a learning-processes whereas tracing supposes a more training-like perspective. The idea of cartographic dynamics or prefigurative politics, of imagining the future world(s) through actions and relations and their dynamics in the now and here, of eschewing blueprints, master-plans as well as representative structures is epitomized in the Zapatista’s axiomatic slogan *caminando preguntando* (walking we ask): experimenting, creating and re-creating identities, tactics, new worlds, visions and goals as search processes rather than tracing preordained endpoints. Social forums as “open spaces” for experimentations, chance encounters, and unforeseen collaborations are also indicative of this understanding.

This perspective on strategy, of identifying the means as the ends, of eschewing blueprints or longer-term strategies where the ends might trump the means, informs the dominant

currents of contemporary counter-power. Counter-power today prefigures not an ideal society of the future but a participatory way of practicing politics. The occupy-type demonstrations have displayed a prefigurative understanding of politics and a vision of how to bring about change. Encampments as self-governed communal living spaces were set up in ways the occupiers prefigured a more just society, with general assemblies that run on the high requirement that 90 percent agree to have consensus and thus a decision, with free medical tents (“The People’s Clinic”), food and literature spaces, as well as veterinarian tents. The everyday engagement with other occupiers, the way camps were governed but at the same time the lack of viable and resilient strategizing, I want to suggest, can be traced back to this “dogmatic” feature of a rhizomatic logic, of “tracing” rather than “mapping,” of experimenting in contact with the particularities of space and time.

Spreading and External Organizing Capacities of Contemporary Counter-Power

The dominant rhizomatic logic also impacts the contemporary movement-based counter power’s organizing capacity. Like rhizomes, we can witness in current counter-power formations the characteristic of what Deleuze and Guattari have referred to as “deterritorialization,” which de-emphasizes breaks and understands them as new beginnings. Like the plant metaphor suggests, a rhizome may be broken at a certain point and time but the now detached parts are not dysfunctional but rather start up again albeit with changed or morphed characteristics. This dynamic is closely related to a further rhizomatic particularity, Deleuze and Guattari name “decalcomania,” which stresses the importance of context. As ideas, images or patterns, strategies, governing models and organizational tactics are being transferred from one space, time or structure to the next the different contexts and moments will color, shift and change the original patterns. Similar to transferring a picture from a piece of paper to, for example, ceramics will keep the resemblance but the different surface as well as the process of transfer changes the new iteration. Sub-commandante Marcos of the Zapatista captures this notion, when he announced that “Marcos is gay in San Francisco, black in South Africa, an Asian in Europe, a Chicano in San Ysidro, an anarchist in Spain, a Palestinian in Israel, a Mayan Indian in the streets of San Cristobal, a Jew in Germany, a Gypsy in Poland, a Mohawk in Quebec, a pacifist in Bosnia, a single woman on the Metro at 10pm, a peasant without land, a gang member in the slums, an unemployed worker, an unhappy student and, of course, a Zapatista in the mountains.”

The powering logic of the World Social Forum process is also displaying this dynamic. The autonomous, open nature of social forums makes them contingent on time and space. World Social Forums in Porto Alegre, in Mumbai or in Nairobi and Dakar are not duplicates. As the social forum idea is taken up in different locations and contexts, it adapts and transforms. As Janet Conway writes with respect to the World Social Forum: “I have sought to problematize treating the World Social Forum, as event or process, as a single thing, an undifferentiated whole. Instead, I have advocated recognizing the plurality of the spaces, places and differences that constitute the World Social Forum, both as event and as a global process’ (2008, p. 69).

The occupy-type protests serve as a further illustration of this dynamic. It is not a mere copying like party meetings of the Old Left might have been but rather the adoption of the overall occupy Zuccoti Park logic to other contexts, ushering in such processes as “blockyp” in Frankfurt or Occupy Central in Hong Kong. Similarly, when we take a broader view on the entire epoch of contention, we can see a similar dynamics of and for global democratization, when de-emphasizing the breaks between the peaks of mobilization in this time frame. From its birth in the 1990s to the recent “homecoming” to the global North of military overstretch and deep economic crisis, this movement-powered epoch has morphed from a more protest-oriented anti-neoliberalism movement (at the time also referred to as anti- or alter-globalization movement), to a movement incorporating the global peace and justice movement, to, most recently – and in the wake of the Arab Spring and Occupy Wall Street – a movement that might be “congealing into a counter-hegemonic project of and for *global democratization*” (Reitan 2013, p. 324; italics in original), while retaining its fundamental rhizomatic logic.

The organizing capacity of the rhizomatic logic is more sobering though. Rhizomes denote an “in-betweenness,” an “interbeing” as Deleuze and Guattari (1980, 519) put it. Moreover, the rhizome invokes an “unplanned” nature, an un-strategized or at least under-strategized direction of current counter-power. That is to say, the metaphor of the rhizome also alludes to barriers for strategizing and sustained movement building. The integral characteristics of the rhizome foster a rather thin articulation of commonalities and convergences, which results in a politics that is often unable to move beyond mere symbolic acts and resistances and towards a politics of organizing and concrete movement building. With the important exceptions of the “Pink Tide” in Latin America, Podemos in Spain or Syriza in Greece, counter-power today often bypasses the state apparatus and tilts towards a politics of resistance that eschews institution- and movement-building as well as sustained organizing (Epstein, 1991). By its very nature, the rhizome lacks “genetic axis or deep structures” that can bind movement-based counter-power in more incessant formations. The iconic diversity of contemporary movement in general and the principled safeguarding of the groups’ and movements’ autonomy as well as the resulting cacophony allude to barriers for strategizing and sustained movement building. The contemporary weakening or rather waning of, for instance, the alter-globalization movement or the Occupy Wall Street movement might be due to the challenges inherent in such a rhizomatic logic for building resilient, potent movements. The rhizoma, the rhizome’s “mass of roots,” makes it demanding to work through diversity and differences and toward new synthesis. While the rhizomatic logic is well suited to generating contacts, linkages and awareness of the various struggles without encroaching on the independence of groups and movements, for organizing and movement building it needs more concerted efforts to produce sustainable commonality and agreements. That is to say, in order to generate a process of “becoming other together,” it needs mechanisms for decision-making that approach differences not as absolutes but rather as something “to work through and coming up with new synthesis” (Nunes, 2006, 305). This would arguably require transversal axis and structures that could generate a new synthesis across movements and groups, but which is simultaneously a

project that would likely sow derision among today's diversity and autonomous social movements.

Bio

Peter is Assistant Professor of Government at the University of South Florida, Tampa. He received his Ph.D. from the University of Pennsylvania and his Vordiplom from the Freie Universität Berlin. His publications include "Building Rhizomatic Social Movements? Movement-Building Relays during the Current Epoch of Contention" (*Studies in Social Justice* 2014), "Class in Formation" (*Social Movement Studies* 2014), "Communication, Class and Concentric Media Practices" (*New Media & Society*, 2014), and "The Global Social Forum Rhizome: A Theoretical Framework" (*Globalizations* 2012). Peter's work has been supported by the Social Science Research Council and from the Miami-Florida European Union Center of Excellence at Florida International University. Currently he is working on a book length study on "The World Social Forum and the Rhizomatic Left" as well as on several articles and chapters on contemporary social movement based politics, class formation and the role of (new) media in neoliberal capitalism. More information at: <http://www.peterfunke.net/>

References

- Conway, J. M. (2008). Reading Nairobi: Place, space, and difference at the 2007 World Social Forum," *Societies Without Borders*, 3(1), 48-71.
- Deleuze, G., & Guattari, F. (1980). *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*. Paris: Minuit.
- Epstein, B. (1991). *Political Protest and Cultural Revolution: Nonviolent Direct Action in the 1970s and 1980s*. Berkeley and Los Angeles, CA: University of California Press.
- Escobar, A. (2004). Other Worlds are (already) possible: Self-Organisation, Complexity, and Post-Capitalist Cultures. In J. Sen, A. Anand, A. Escobar & P. Waterman (Eds.), *The World Social Forum: Challenging Empires* (349–58). New Delhi: Viveka.
- Fisher, W. F. & Ponniah, T. (Eds.). (2003) *Another World is Possible: Popular Alternatives to Globalization at the World Social Forum*. London: Zed Books.
- Funke, P. (2014). Building Rhizomatic Social Movements? Movement-Building Relays during the Current Epoch of Contention. *Studies in Social Justice*, 8(1), 27-44.
- Funke, P. (2012). The Global Social Forum Rhizome: A Theoretical Framework. *Globalizations*, 9(3), 351-364.

Funke, P. (2012). The Rhizomatic Left, neoliberal capitalism and class: Theoretical interventions on contemporary social movements in the global north. *International Critical Thought*, 2(1), 30-41.

Funke, P, Robe, C. & Wolfson, T. (2012). Suturing Working Class Subjectivities: Media Mobilizing Project and the Role of Media Building a Class-Based Social Movement. *triple C*, 10(1), 16-29.

Harvey, D. (2005). *A Brief History of Neoliberalism*. New York: Oxford University Press.

Lorenzano, L. (1998). Zapatismo: Recomposition of labour, radical democracy and revolutionary project. In J. Holloway & E. Pelaez (Eds.), *Zapatista! Reinventing Revolution in Mexico* (126 – 58). London: Pluto Press.

McAdam, D., & Sewell, W. H. (2001). It's About Time: Temporality in the Study of Social Movements and Revolutions. In R. R. Aminzade, J. A. Goldstone, D. McAdam, E. J. Perry, W. H. Sewell, S. Tarrow & C. Tilly (Eds.), *Silence and Voice in the Study of Contentious Politics* (89-125). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Nunes, R. (2006). Nothing is what democracy looks like: Openness, horizontality and the movements of movements. In D. Harvie, K. Milburn, B. Trott, D. Watts (Eds.), *Shut them Down! The Global G8, Gleneagles 2005 and the Movement of Movements* (299-319). Automeia.

Reitan, R. (2011). Coordinated Power in Contemporary Leftist Activism. In T. Olesen (Ed.), *Power and Transnational Activism*. London and New York: Routledge, (51-72).

Wolfson, T. (2014). *Digital Rebellion: The Birth of the Cyber Left*. Champaign: University of Illinois Press.

i This essay draws and quotes from various of my earlier publications.