

GLOBALIZATION AND DEMOCRACY

Michael Hardt

English Department
Duke University
hardt@duke.edu

01/1

The discourse of globalization has become dominant in recent years in an extraordinarily wide variety of contexts, equally on the left and on the right – from journalism to public policy discussions, from business strategy to labor organizing, and within the university across the social sciences and humanities. It is something like the discourse on postmodernism that blossomed about a decade earlier but seems to me even more extensive. This paper is an attempt to sort out some of the political positions taken within the discourse on globalization to help clarify the stakes in the globalization debates and the political consequences of the various theoretical and empirical claims. My assumption, in fact, is that political positions or desires dictate to a large extent the various analytical characterizations of globalization. What I will attempt, then, is to construct a typology of positions on globalization using the question of democracy as the first line of division. In other words, I will first divide theories in two groups: those who claim that globalization fosters democracy and those who maintain that globalization hinders or obstructs democracy. I will further divide these positions into arguments on the right and those on the left because this is a context in which I believe there remain very clear divisions between right and left, and it would be incoherent to group them together.

After sketching out this typology and giving some examples of work in the different segments of it, I will present some of the arguments contained in *Empire*, the book I co-authored with Toni Negri (Hardt and Negri 2000), and try to situate our work with respect to these other arguments and the typology more generally.

Before beginning with this typology, however, it is useful to point out that globalization is a relatively unstable and or perhaps incoherent term in contemporary discussions. It is tempting to say that everyone is talking about globalization, but they are all really talking about different things. What is common is that globalization almost always refers to a periodization argument that locates an historical

break somewhere in the late 20th century. The content of that shift or historical passage, however, varies. As a first approximation we can divide the definitions of globalization into three groups: those that focus on economics, those that focus on politics, and those that focus on culture.¹ Let me run through some of the most common definitions of globalization that fall under each of these three categories.

- **Economics:** a general way that globalization is conceived in economic terms is by the increased volume of exchanges of materials, commodities, labor, and so forth among the various national economies. I think there are several problems with such a formulation. A more specific, and I think more useful, conception is that globalization is the globalization of capital. On one hand, this can be identified as the realization of the capitalist world market – that from the side of consumption. On the other hand, from the side of production, this means that all production (tends to) take place under the rule of capital. This does not necessarily mean that all production is capitalist but rather it means that capital in some sense mediates all forms of production. The shift is normally seen in the expansion of capitalist production (or of the control of capital) throughout the subordinated regions of the world and in the opening to capital of the former Soviet bloc and (to a lesser extent) China.
- **Politics:** globalization refers to the end or modification of the international world order. In other words, globalization indicates the relative decline of the sovereignty of nation-states. The decline of the sovereignty of nation-states is sometimes seen as leading to a deficit of politics (either rule by other social forces – economic forces, for example – or increasing political anarchy and instability). In other arguments the decline of the sovereignty of nation-states is

¹ One might want to add technology to this schema as a fourth category, but I am inclined to include the globalization of technology under both the economic and cultural arguments.

seen as leading to the formation of a supranational sovereignty.

- **Culture:** the general conception of cultural globalization is merely the increased contact and mixture of various cultures across the world that were previously isolated or bounded.

Diasporas and cultural conflicts are part of this. A more specific formulation, more common perhaps outside the U.S., is that globalization is Americanization. U.S. television programs, movies, sports, the American English itself, and the various other elements of US culture are attaining a dominant position over other national cultures and even destroying them. Some also will argue that globalization is the globalization of Eurocentrism; I am interested in the compatibility or incompatibility of these two formulations.

I should point out that each of these characterizations is contested, or at least the economic and political versions. For the economic version, the counter-argument is that globalization does not exist and/or that globalization has existed for a long time. I think world systems theories (in the works of Immanuel Wallerstein in particular) is a good example of the claim that globalization has long existed: capital from its inception has always been a global project. The best example of the other counter-claim, that economic globalization does not exist today is presented by Paul Hirst and Graham Thompson (1999): if you look at the data, they argue, there are no more – ever fewer – international exchanges today than there were a hundred years ago. I will deal more with this Hirst-Thompson argument briefly below.

Note that already here we have some slippage in the definition of what constitutes economic globalization: exchanges and markets versus predominance or rule of capital over other forms of production.

For the political version, the counter-argument generally focuses on the continuing powers of the nation-state. States are still important, still have sovereign authority, etc. Again, as with the economic counter-argument, the claim here is that globalization is a myth, a generalization based on isolated

phenomena. I should note again that in this case too the claims are not necessarily exclusive: in other words, one can say both that the nation-states are still important and that their sovereignty has declined, giving way to either a deficit of politics or a supranational power.

I do not want to engage these counter-arguments directly, however, because I think that these various positions – whether globalization is a myth or a reality and also under what rubric globalization is conceived, the economic, the political, the cultural – all these are really effects of political positions and should be understood in those terms. This is why I want to move on to begin my typology by asking the question of the various theories, *What are the political consequences of globalization?* (either of its reality or its myth). In other words, and in more simple terms, does globalization foster or obstruct democracy? Plotting the responses to this question gives me the grid below (Diagram 1).

Diagram 1: Globalization and Democracy

| | Globalization fosters democracy | Globalization inhibits democracy |
|--------------|---|--|
| Left | <p>2. Liberal cosmopolitanism</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • global civil society (Falk 1999) • cosmopolitan governance (Held 1995) • transnational state (Beck 2000) • human rights • cultural mixture promotes human understanding and harmony (global village) | <p>1a. Social Democracy</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the myth of globalization takes power from the nation-state and the nation is the only forum to conduct democratic politics (Hirst and Thompson 1999) • decline of national sovereignty has removed protections that previously guarded society against capital (Barnet and Cavanaugh 1994). <p>1b. Critique of Eurocentrism</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the spread of US imperialism or Eurocentrism is anti-democratic (Coronil 2000, Dirlirk 2000, postcolonial studies, subaltern studies). |
| Right | <p>3. Capitalist democracy</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the globalization of capital is itself the globalization of democracy (Friedman 2000) | <p>4. Traditional values conservatism</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • lack of state controls leads to global anarchy and instability (Gray 1999) • the spread of “the American way of life” (US |

| | | |
|--|---|---|
| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> the spread of “the American way of life” (US hegemony) is in itself the global triumph of democracy (Fukuyama 1992) | <p>hegemony) denies national identity and self-determination (Gray 1999).</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The US is losing control over its own national territory and values (Pat Buchanan) cultural mixture leads to conflict (Huntington 1998) |
|--|---|---|

Keep in mind that, as I said, there is a great deal of slippage here having to do with what is meant by globalization (economic, cultural, political). Designations of right and left are, of course, only approximate, but I think important.

Let me give a very brief, thumbnail description of an exemplary argument in each quadrant, beginning in the top right, quadrant #1. Hirst and Thompson, in their book, *Globalization in Question*, argue that globalization is a myth based on economic data. For example, they maintain that today’s internationalized economy is not unprecedented (the economy has long been internationalized); that genuinely transnational corporations (in contrast to multinational corporations) are still rare; and that the vast majority of trade today is not really global but takes place merely among the US, Europe, and Japan. Economic globalization therefore, they claim, is a myth, but a myth with great powers. The key effect of the concept of globalization, they say, has been to paralyze radical reforming national strategies. In other words, they believe the myth of globalization has served to prohibit national efforts to control the economy and has contributed to massive privatization, the destruction of the welfare state, and so forth. They believe instead that, since globalization is a myth, we can and should have greater state control of the economy at a national and supranational level. Such action would reinstate the democratic functions of the state that have been eroded, most importantly its representative functions and its welfare structures. This is what seems to me an exemplary social democratic response to globalization.

Let me move now to the top-left quadrant, #2, and specifically to the work of David Held (1995) and Richard Falk (1999), authors whose work is highly compatible. I should not suggest by locating them in this quadrant that they have no critique of the contemporary forms of globalization, because indeed they do, especially the most unregulated activities of global capital. They are not, however, arguments against capital, but rather for the better institutional and political regulation of capital. Their work emphasizes the positive effects or potential opened by globalization, particularly globalization considered as a political phenomenon. It seems to me that the democratic potential that they envision is primarily due to our new relative freedom from the rule of nation-states – consider, for example, the question of human rights, which has in many ways taken a greater role against or despite the power of nation-states. Held argues that our old notions of democracy are all tied to the nation-state and thus now we need (or have the opportunity) to formulate a new democracy, a cosmopolitan democracy. The final result of these arguments, it seems to me, is the construction of what Held calls cosmopolitan governance or what Ulrich Beck (2000), somewhat less cautiously, refers to as a transnational state. I hope you can see why I label this quadrant “cosmopolitan liberalism”.

Now to the bottom left, quadrant, #3. The capitalist democracy discourse about globalization is often presented prominently in the media by journalists, T.V. commentators and in editorials. Thomas Friedman’s *The Lexus and the Olive Tree* (2000) and Francis Fukuyama’s *The End of History and the Last Man* (1992) represent two clear examples of this perspective. The argument is either that the rule of capital is inherently democratic and thus the globalization of capital is the globalization of democracy. Or that the US political system and the “American way of life” are synonymous with democracy and thus expanding US hegemony is the expansion of democracy. The two, in fact, usually go together. Capitalist democracy seems like an adequate label for this group.

Now, finally, to the bottom right quadrant #4: right wing arguments that globalization hinders

democracy. The most interesting argument I have read with regard to this position is that of John Gray (1998), *False Dawn: The Delusions of Global Capitalism*. Gray was a supporter of the Thatcher government and then grew very critical because the Thatcher experiment destroyed true conservatism. (In some ways Pat Buchanan occupies a parallel position in the United States.) Now, Gray's major theoretical point is that global markets require state regulation, which is increasingly impossible at the national level. Today's global order is thus unstable and we are threatened by anarchy. The US is incapable of governing the global. Moreover, US society is so corrupt (weak social cohesion, decline of family structures, high criminality and incarceration, etc.) that it does not deserve to rule. "A regime of global governance is needed," Gray writes, "in which world markets are managed so as to promote the cohesion of societies and the integrity of states." I have labeled this quadrant "traditional values conservatism", because it seems to me that traditional values or social institutions (or more generally what Huntington calls civilization) is what, according to this view, needs to be protected against globalization, conceived as unregulated global capital and/or as U.S. global hegemony.

I want to note, before moving on, that, just as there is a great deal of slippage with regard to what is meant by globalization, there is equally great difference with regard to what is meant by democracy. The *concept* of democracy, it seems to me, is really not all that difficult: democracy is the rule of all by all. Difference comes primarily in the articulation of the concept. It is helpful to break down the concept of democracy in terms of what I see as its three essential components or preconditions: equality, freedom / self-determination, and social solidarity. This is the classical modern republican formulation, which I think still valid and useful. Now, different conceptions of democracy can be illuminated by their different conceptions of these three elements. A version of capitalist ideology, for example, that might belong in the bottom left quadrant combines freedom and equality from an economic perspective in the principle of the free trade of commodities: all property is equal (be

it our wealth or our labor-power) and we are free to buy and sell as we please. A version of liberal democracy, in contrast, combines equality and freedom from a political perspective in the right to equal participation in the political sphere through institutions of representation – this might be common to both the top left and top right quadrants. Social solidarity is a much more difficult element and some notions of democracy only include it in a very minor way, those that conceive of freedom strictly in individualist terms. But the most common figure of social solidarity is probably the nation, the primary imagined community, which has indeed functioned comfortably with capitalist ideology and the various notions of liberal or representative democracy. This conception of social solidarity, especially as defined by the nation, seems to me most important in the top right and bottom right quadrants. Certainly, there is in many ideological frameworks a certain conflict between the individual and the social, or between multiplicity and unity, precisely in these terms of freedom or self-determination versus social solidarity. I will come back to this definition of democracy briefly in a few minutes to explain my own rather different notion of democracy. First I want to characterize the general premise about globalization articulated by Toni Negri and myself in our book *Empire* in the context of these positions I have outlined.

EMPIRE

I find it interesting how many of the arguments from various quarters of my typology advocate either as a solution to the problems of globalization or as the promise of globalization some form of global state or global government. This is most prominent in the top left quadrant, where the promise of globalization is the possibility of a new form of cosmopolitan governance, but it is also present in the top right, where Hirst and Thompson, for example, call for greater national and supranational governance, and in the bottom right quadrant, where John Gray also presents the need for a new global

regulatory structure to insure social solidarity.

In this context, our argument can be seen as claiming that a new global governance is already here. Let me explain. Our book is centered about the concept of Empire, which is meant to name the political form of capitalist globalization. Our primary question is, what is the political constitution of global order?

This notion of Empire is most easily understood in terms of sovereignty. We use Empire to name the new form of sovereignty, a new form of political rule. It is certainly true that, as many of these authors claim, in step with the processes of globalization, the sovereignty of nation-states, while still important, has progressively declined. The primary factors of production and exchange--money, technology, people, and goods--move with increasing ease across national boundaries; hence the nation-state has less and less power to regulate these flows and impose its authority over the economy. Even the most dominant nation-states should no longer be thought of as supreme and sovereign authorities, neither outside nor even within their own borders. *However, the declining sovereignty of nation-states does not mean that sovereignty as such has declined.* Throughout the contemporary transformations, political controls, state functions, and regulatory mechanisms continue to rule the realm of economic and social production and exchange. Our basic hypothesis, then, is that sovereignty has taken a new form, composed of a series of national and supranational organisms united under a single logic of rule. This new global form of sovereignty is what we call Empire. Empire, in other words, is today the ultimate *subject* of sovereignty.

This is not to say, however, that Empire is a homogeneous and univocal subject. It is a hybrid subject in the sense that it consists of various differing and often conflicting elements. Empire has a mixed or hybrid constitution. Mixed constitution is the term that Polybius uses to describe (and celebrate) the ancient Roman Empire. This is one reason why we apply the term Empire to the

contemporary world. The ancient Roman Empire was a mixed constitution, according to Polybius, in that it brought together in a single constitution all three primary forms of government: monarchy, aristocracy, and democracy. In other words, in Empire monarchic, aristocratic, and democratic powers all function together. Today, it sometimes appears that there is a single monarchic power that rules the world: during the Gulf War, for example, it seemed that the Pentagon was a monarchic global power; at other times the IMF or the WTO might appear that way. Sometimes it appears that aristocratic forces rule the world – not the rule of one but the rule of the few. Transnational corporations are aristocratic in this sense, as are often the nation-states. Finally there are those so-called democratic powers, those that at least claim to represent the people. Nation-states often fill this role too on the global scene, but the most interesting and complex democratic forces in Empire are the NGOs. In any case, a theory of mixed constitution allows us to recognize all of these powers within one coherent global constitution, but does not force us to claim these forces are uniform or univocal. A theory of mixed constitution is a theory of difference within the constitution that allows for various separations of powers within the framework of a single order. The challenge then for our notion of the contemporary Empire as a mixed constitution is to discover what the various powers are and how they interact and negotiate with or dominate each other, in concert and in conflict. That's the difficult part. Mixed constitution only names the problematic; it doesn't really describe the dynamics of rule. But I hope it gives you a first approach to the framework in which we conceive Empire.

I should point out that, although I said that the sovereignty of nation-states has declined with the formation of Empire, nation-states are still very powerful and play very important roles. One might say that the various powers of nation-states – economic, financial, social, legal, and so forth – have not declined but have rather been reorganized in a new framework. And, of course, this is different for different nation-states. My point is that we should not see Empire and nation-states in direct conflict or

inversely related, as if the increasing power of one were the corresponding decrease of the other. The power of nation-states continues in a reorganized form under Empire, within a new form of sovereignty. Sovereignty is thus the crucial issue here.

The sovereignty of the nation-state was the cornerstone of the imperialisms that European powers constructed throughout the modern era. By “Empire,” however, we understand something altogether different from “imperialism.” The boundaries defined by the modern system of nation-states were fundamental to European colonialism and economic expansion: the territorial boundaries of the nation delimited the center of power from which rule was exerted over external, foreign territories through a system of channels and barriers that alternately facilitated and obstructed the flows of production and circulation. Imperialism was really an extension of the sovereignty of the European nation-states beyond their own boundaries. The imperialist era was characterized by the contest among European powers (along with the US and Japan) on the international scene.

Now, in contrast to imperialism, Empire establishes no territorial center of power and does not rely on fixed boundaries or barriers. It is a *decentered* and *detrterritorializing* apparatus of rule that progressively incorporates the entire global realm within its open, expanding frontiers. Empire manages hybrid identities, flexible hierarchies, and plural exchanges through modulating networks of command. And finally Empire is the single sovereign power. It has no peer of the same genre.

I should emphasize that we use Empire here not as a *metaphor*, which would require demonstration of the resemblances between today's world order and the Empires of Rome, China, the Americas, and so forth, but rather as a *concept*, which calls primarily for a theoretical approach. The concept of Empire is characterized fundamentally by a lack of boundaries: Empire's rule has no limits. First and foremost, then, the concept of Empire poses a regime that effectively encompasses the spatial totality, or really that rules over the entire "civilized" world. No territorial boundaries limit its reign.

Second, the concept of Empire presents itself not as a historical regime originating in conquest, but rather as an order that effectively suspends history and thereby fixes the existing state of affairs for eternity. From the perspective of Empire, this is the way things will always be and the way they were always meant to be. In other words, Empire presents its rule not as a transitory moment in the movement of history, but as a regime with no temporal boundaries, and in this sense outside of history or at the end of history. Third, the rule of Empire operates on all registers of the social order extending down to the depths of the social world. Empire not only manages a territory and a population, but also creates the very world it inhabits. It not only regulates human interactions, but also seeks directly to rule over human nature. The object of its rule is social life in its entirety, and thus Empire presents the paradigmatic form of biopower. Finally, although the practice of Empire is continually bathed in blood, the concept of Empire is always dedicated to peace--a perpetual and universal peace outside of history.

I should add here that although I have presented the notion of Empire primarily in political terms (in terms of a new form of sovereignty) we intend the concept equally to name the global economic and global cultural order. In fact, it is probably counter-productive today to attempt any analysis of globalization or global order in purely economic, purely political, or purely cultural terms. The economy is increasingly cultural, cultures increasingly economic, and politics increasingly indistinguishable from the two. This is what Fred Jameson (2000) refers to as the dedifferentiation of fields he that associates with postmodernity. The challenge it poses for our notion of Empire and indeed any account of globalization is to recognize the new form of power simultaneously from these various disciplinary perspectives. Empire makes necessary an inter- or transdisciplinary analysis.

THE DIALECTIC OF PROGRESS

Now, when I try to situate our conception of Empire in the typology I have established, I have to locate it both in the upper left and the upper right quadrants: Empire both inhibits democracy and

simultaneously increases the potential for (if not the present reality of) democracy. It may be easiest, as a first approximation, to formulate this seemingly paradoxical claim in dialectical form. Here is our dialectical proposition.

Flirting with Hegel, one could say that the construction of Empire is good *in itself* but not *for itself*. One of the most powerful operations of the modern imperialist power structures was to drive wedges among the masses of the globe, dividing them into opposing camps, or really a myriad of conflicting parties. Segments of the proletariat in the dominant countries were even led to believe that their interests were tied exclusively to their national identity and imperial destiny. The most significant instances of revolt and revolution against these modern power structures therefore were those that posed the struggle against exploitation together with the struggle against nationalism, colonialism, and imperialism. In these events, humanity appeared for a magical moment to be united by a common desire for liberation, and we seemed to catch a glimpse of a future when the modern mechanisms of domination would once and for all be destroyed. The revolting masses, their desire for liberation, their experiments to construct alternatives, and their instances of constituent power have all at their best moments pointed toward the internationalization and globalization of relationships, beyond the divisions of national, colonial, and imperialist rule. In our time this desire that was set in motion by the multitude has been addressed (in a strange and perverted but nonetheless real way) by the construction of Empire. One might even say that the construction of Empire and its global networks is a *response* to the various struggles against the modern machines of power, and specifically to class struggle driven by the multitude's desire for liberation. The multitude called Empire into being.

Saying that Empire is good *in itself*, however, does not mean that it is good *for itself*. Although Empire may have played a role in putting an end to colonialism and imperialism, it nonetheless constructs its own relationships of power based on exploitation that are in many respects more brutal

than those it destroyed. The end of the dialectic of modernity has not resulted in the end of the dialectic of exploitation. Today nearly all of humanity is to some degree absorbed within or subordinated to the networks of capitalist exploitation. We see now an ever more extreme condition of radical separation of a small minority that controls enormous wealth from multitudes that live in poverty at the limit of powerlessness. The geographical and racial lines of oppression and exploitation that were established during the era of colonialism and imperialism have in many respects not declined but instead increased exponentially.

I should point out here that our position very closely resembles Marx's historical treatment of the rise of the capitalist mode of production: in Marx's view capital brought with it simultaneously brutal regimes of exploitation and enormous potential for liberation. Such logic, however, may only be dialectical at first sight. Let us look at a properly dialectical argument for contrast, such as the arguments advanced by many of the European communist terrorist groups of the 1970s, including the Red Brigades in Italy and the Red Army Faction in Germany. The poor were suffering under the domination of the State and capital, and the revolutionary path, they believed, was to make things worse, because only through pushing that negation to the extreme would the poor rise up in revolution. This kind of dialectical logic led, for example, to a campaign of a French terrorist group to bomb the Tati department stores where the poorest shopped. This is properly dialectical history: pushing the negation or contradiction to the extreme is believed to result in the revolutionary synthesis.

In contrast, our view of the simultaneously positive and negative nature of Empire has to be explained by our distinguishing among its elements. In other words, what is known as globalization is a complex composed of many different elements and processes. Some of these processes – such as the growing gap globally between rich and poor, the brutal repression of certain populations either through famine or military force, the new and intensified sexual and racial divisions of labor and so forth – are

entirely anti-democratic and present nothing redeemable. On the other hand, there are other processes within globalization – such as increased interactions among populations and increasingly powerful networks of social cooperation – that do, although presently configured in undemocratic forms, in fact present enormous potential for democracy and liberation. These two aspects – greater social interaction that brings increased potential for commonality and intensified social cooperation – are indeed the same aspects of capitalist society that Marx saw primarily as promising a more democratic noncapitalist future. I want to emphasize again that this is not a dialectical view in that the negative elements are not the ones that are claimed to hold the promise (through a dialectical reversal) of a positive future. Rather, there is a differentiation among the processes that constitute globalization between the negative ones, which must be rejected, and the positive ones, which if pushed further hold the promise of a better future.

THE MULTITUDE

I have indicated several differences of our approach to globalization – first the claim that Empire or a global order is already existing; second, that its sovereignty is characterized by a mixed constitution, which deploys within its order various older forms of sovereignty such as nation-states; third, that Empire must be grasped as an order that is equally political, economic, and cultural; and fourth that Empire brings both new more virulent forms of domination and simultaneously new potentials for liberation. All this should indicate too that our perspective is grounded in a different notion of democracy. Our notion of democracy is still based on the three republican elements I referred to earlier: equality, freedom or self-determination, and social solidarity. It is most easily characterized, however, in negative relation to the ways the previous formulations have posed these three elements. In other words, our notion of democracy refuses the conception of equality and freedom offered by capital: the

equality of property owners and the freedom to buy and sell one's properties. Our notion equally refuses the conception of equality and freedom offered by representative institutions, a conception whereby one's freedom or self-determination is configured strictly by one's transfer of power to a ruling authority. And finally, our notion refuses the conception of social solidarity offered by the nation. So in negative terms our notion of democracy is noncapitalist, nonrepresentative, and nonnational.

But, of course, such negative definitions are never very satisfying. Our positive conception of the subject of democracy is what we call the multitude. It seems to me that our usage of this term remains poetic in our book and that it needs to be developed further both theoretically and empirically. Nonetheless, we do make clear some basic outlines of the concept. In the context of the history of European political theory, it is important, first of all, to distinguish the concept of the multitude from that of the people. The people is a single and unified identity, a representation or synthesis of the population, and in this sense the concept of the people is fundamentally opposed to that of the multitude. Thomas Hobbes, for instance, puts great emphasis on this distinction, because the people, since it is one, is capable of sovereignty whereas the multitude is not. In fact, I would say that the concept of the nation itself and the entire tradition of national sovereignty is predicated on this concept of the people. The people is a sovereign subject and the multitude clearly is not. In refusing representation, the multitude denies not only the national formation but sovereignty itself.

We also have to make another distinction in the context of the history of European political theory, however. If the multitude is defined on one side by not being a people, on the other side we must distinguish the multitude from the masses or the mob. The masses and the mob are most often used to name an irrational and passive social force, dangerous and violent precisely because so easily manipulated. The multitude, in contrast, is an active social agent – a multiplicity that acts. The multitude is not a unity but in contrast to the masses and the mob we can see that it is organized. It is

an active, self-organizing agent.

On one hand, then, in contrast to the people, the multitude is a multiplicity of social forces and, on the other hand, in contrast to the mob, the multitude comes together in a common act. In this sense, the concept of multitude is meant to indicate the ineluctable persistence of plurality in the social field – the multitude is the marker of difference – but it does not leave us with a series of fragmentary, episodic, or unarticulated social elements. Whereas multiplicity is the social *condition* of the multitude, common action is its *project*, and thus the multitude is meant to name a form of organization that does not negate but works through difference. The concept of multitude, in other words, holds together, paradoxically, multiplicity and commonality. The multitude is the organization of common singularities.

This question of the multitude has to be addressed not only in theoretical terms but also empirical terms. Who and what is this global multitude, and what can it become? The empirical issue of what or who is the multitude can be addressed first of all in terms of the contemporary forms and practices of labor. This is a question we begin to treat in our book in the context of the new forms of immaterial labor, which we see as emerging and tendentially dominant in various parts of the world. But the question of the multitude as subject is really a political issue, that is, a matter of political organization. The empirical question in this sense is what are the new forms of political struggle and organization emerging today? Addressing this question requires understudying the forms of organization of various contemporary struggles, such as the protests against the WTO, World Bank, and IMF, the apparent re-emergence of a variety of anarchist groups in the U.S., the student movements in Indonesia and South Korea, the anti-dollarization struggle in Ecuador last December, and probably the organizational forms of a variety of groups that go under the name of NGOs. This kind of empirical investigation of political organization is also an important way of posing the question of the existing and potential subjectivity of the multitude.

I want to emphasize, finally, that this concept of multitude is meant to name what already exists but also to refer to what is to be done. The multitude is an organizational project, a project of common singularities and this is the sense in which it is capable of forming a new society and ultimately posing a democratic alternative to Empire.

References

Barnet, Richard and John Cavanagh. (1994). *Global Dreams: Imperial Corporations and the New World Order*. New York: Simon and Schuster.

Beck, Ulrich. (2000). *What is Globalization?* Translated by Patrick Camiller. Oxford: Blackwell.

Chakrabarty, Dipesh. (2000). *Provincializing Europe*. Princeton: Princeton U.P.

Coronil, Fernando. (2000) "Towards a Critique of Globalcentrism." *Public Culture*, vol. 12, no. 2, Spring, pp. 351-374.

- Dirlik, Arif. (2000). *Postmodernity's Histories*. Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield.
- Falk, Richard. (1999). *Predatory Globalization*. Oxford: Blackwell.
- Friedman, Thomas. (2000). *The Lexus and the Olive Tree*. Anchor Books.
- Fukuyama, Francis. (1992). *The End of History and the Last Man*. New York: Free Press.
- Gray, John. (1999). *False Dawn*. New York: New Press.
- Greider, William. (1997). *One World, Ready or Not*. New York: Simon & Schuster.
- Hardt, Michael and Antonio Negri. (2000). *Empire*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.
- Held, David. (1995). *Democracy and the Global Order: From the Modern State to Cosmopolitan Governance*. Palo Alto, CA: Stanford U.P.
- Hirst, Paul and Grahame Thompson. (1999). *Globalization in Question*, 2nd ed. Oxford: Polity.
- Huntington, Samuel. (1998). *The Clash of Civilizations*. Touchstone.
- Jameson, Fredric. (2000). "Globalization and Political Strategy." *New Left Review*, no. 4, Jul-Aug, pp. 49-68.
- Jones, R.J. Barry. (2000). *The World Turned Upside Down? Globalization and the Future of the State*. Manchester: Manchester U.P.
- Korten, David. (1996). *When Corporations Rule the World*. West Hartford, CT: Kumarian Press.
- Spivak, Gayatri. (1999). *A Critique of Postcolonial Reason*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard U.P.