(Anti-)globalization and resistance identities

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Introduction: historical/intellectual development of the literature on (anti-)globalization and resistance identities

‘Globalisation’ became an academic buzzword at the start of the 1990s and has since garnered enormous scholarly attention. Among many other topics, contributors to the literature on globalisation have explored the implications for the ways in which identities are formed and sustained. For scholars such as Anthony Giddens, Mike Featherstone and Manuel Castells, a world of global flows is seen as posing challenges to older certainties grounded in spatial fixity and clear boundaries between us and them and as conjuring new cultural hybridities, social ontologies, and defensive or reflexive selves. In this context, there has been much debate about ‘resistance identities’, of varying kinds and in many locations, and their relation to globalisation.

My focus in this chapter is, however, somewhat more specific. Since the ‘Battle of Seattle’ in 1999, when protestors against the World Trade Organisation succeeded in gaining global media attention and in disrupting business as usual among global elites, resistance against the violences and exclusions associated particularly with the economic dimensions of globalisation, or neoliberalism, have captured political imaginations worldwide and given rise to a distinct body of literature. Moreover, for many commentators, apparently disparate phenomena such as the Seattle protest and other actions against international financial institutions, the Zapatista uprising in the Chiapas region of Mexico, and discussions of ‘other possible worlds’ at the World Social Forum in Porto Alegre, Brazil, are all interconnected: part of the most significant social movement to emerge on the world stage in recent years. Thus influential political philosophers Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri write about ‘a great movement of the multitude’ in their foreword to a collection of essays on the World Social Forum (Hardt and Negri 2003: xvi). Similarly, sociologists Donatella della Porta and Mario Diani (2006) invoke what they describe as ‘the global justice movement’ as a key exemplar throughout their textbook on social movements. It is this phenomenon, which I follow della Porta and Diani in calling the global justice movement, and the body of work which it has produced and inspired, that I examine in what follows.

Literature on the global justice movement has grown exponentially since the turn of the century and is highly diverse, serving different purposes and speaking to different audiences...
At least two broad categories can be distinguished. First, activist-oriented commentary writes about and on behalf of the movement, in a partisan, committed way and from an insider standpoint (e.g., Cockburn et al. 2000; Notes from Nowhere 2003). Work in this vein ranges from analyses of the operations of neoliberal globalisation to overviews of the global movement, and from advocacy of political visions and strategies to dispatches from the frontline of protest. Second, although academics have been rather late to the game, a growing scholarly literature now strives to analyse the movement in an ostensibly more objective fashion and from an outsider perspective. Here we have contributions from International Political Economy (e.g., Drainville 2004) and Geography (e.g., Routledge and Cumbers 2009), with perhaps the most sustained theoretical and empirical engagement being undertaken by scholars drawing on sociological social movement theory (e.g., della Porta 2007). Needless to say, the boundary between activist and academic commentary is unstable, with many authors making a conscious effort to bridge the divide (e.g., Reitan 2007; Maeckelbergh 2009). Moreover, it should be acknowledged that neither activist nor academic accounts simply describe the global justice movement, rather both actively participate in its construction (an argument developed at more length in Eschle 2004).

What do these writings have to tell us about identity? Intriguingly, they often position the global justice movement as post-identity, or, more specifically, as post-identity-politics. A preoccupation with identity is associated with the ‘new social movements’ of the 1960s and 1970s and the scholarly paradigm that arose to make sense of them and that emphasised the cultural and symbolic dimension of protest. More recently, it is associated with what is seen as the cooptation and internal fracturing of movements in the 1980s. As Amory Starr puts it:

identity may no longer be the most important organizing principle for social movements as they embrace multiple oppressions, confront corporations on many fronts at once and recognize allies who cannot be contained by an identity-politics framework.

(2000: 166)

More specifically, commentators claim that the global justice movement ‘has transcended [the] identity politics’ of the 1980s ‘by seeking to forge a new internationalism’ (Callinicos 2003: 113) and by returning to an emphasis on material struggles and class politics (Burgmann 2005), thus moving beyond a narrow focus on cultural ‘representation’ (Klein 2000: 107–8). I will suggest later in the chapter that such a characterisation of past and present activism has unfortunate political effects, in terms of narrowing the parameters of our understanding of the global justice movement and sidelining some key voices within it. For now I want to emphasise that we are left with an analytical problem if we abandon the trope of identity altogether – if we conclude with Marianne Maeckelbergh that ‘[u]nderstanding the alterglobalisation movement no longer rests on the “new social movement” analytical category of “identity” and the exploration of how it is constructed’ (2009: 21). I agree with the social movement scholars who argue rather that bringing identity into the picture enables the differentiation of movements from unconnected protest events by drawing our attention to a sense of shared political endeavour over time and space (della Porta and Diani 2006: 20–1). Focusing on identity also offers an alternative to the problems of a reductively rationalist, instrumental ontology which would see movements simply as a response to material incentives and an expression of the convergence of individual interests (Polletta and Jasper 2001: 283–4).

In this chapter, then, I aim to show how arguments about identity developed in social movement theory, in general, have been or could be used to help make sense of the global justice movement, in particular. The next section, entitled ‘Identity and the global justice movement:'
Identity and the global justice movement: major claims and developments

Collective identity and social movements

For social movement scholars, one of the most crucial concepts needed to make sense of their subject of study is that of *collective identity*. This term remains controversial (see McDonald 2002; Polletta and Jasper 2001), and it has been defined in a wide variety of ways: as ‘the process by which social actors recognise themselves — and are recognised by other actors — as part of broader groupings, and develop emotional attachments to them’ (della Porta and Diani 2006: 91), for example, or as ‘constituted by a shared and interactive sense of “we-ness” and “collective agency”’ (Snow 2001: 2). But there are some points of agreement. Notably, collective identity is increasingly approached in processual, interactional terms, with scholars highlighting ‘identity work’ and the mechanisms through which activists together negotiate and reconstruct a sense of themselves, or develop this sense through interaction with opponents, rather than focusing on identity as a property or thing, the apparently fixed and static claims about a movement presented to the world (Melucci 1996; Glass 2009; cf Snow 2001).

Moreover, it seems to me that there is considerable convergence among analysts around three key features of collective identity formation. The first is a sense of *solidarity*, which I understand here broadly as a sense of affinity with and commitment to others in shared political struggle. In other words, collective identity involves the deliberate construction of a collectivity for political ends. The second key element has to do with *agency*, with much of the literature emphasising that collective identity may be a crucial ingredient enabling collective action — that shared grievances, for example, or access to social and economic capital are not in themselves sufficient — and, moreover, that the relationship may be reversed, that a sense of who we are is produced through acting together (e.g., della Porta and Diani 2006: 93). A third key element, at least for some scholars, is *emotion*, with collective identity conceived as a kind of ‘emotional connection with a broader community’ (Polletta and Jasper 2001: 285), requiring emotional investment and helping to sustain activists emotionally (e.g., Melucci 1996: 71).

Collective identity understood in these terms is related to, but distinguishable from, other kinds of identity, as David Snow explains. Take *social identity*, for example, a term used widely in sociology to indicate those identities ‘grounded typically in established social roles such as
“teacher” and “mother” or in broader and more inclusive social categories such as gender categories or ethnic and national categories’ (Snow 2001: 2). Social identity is not politicised in all cases, often functioning simply to provide what Snow describes as ‘orientational markers’ in everyday life. However, it can also function as an important resource in the development of a sense of a collective self involved in social struggle, and it may become animated politically and emotionally in a way that effectively transforms it into the basis of social movement action. Or consider personal identity, consisting of ‘the attributes and meanings attributed to oneself by the [individual] actor; they are self-designations and self-attributions regarded as personally distinctive’ (ibid.: 2). Again, personal identities are not necessarily political in character. Nonetheless, collective identities may be adopted by individuals as ‘a highly salient part of their personal identity and sense of self’, and considerable analytical attention has been paid to the ‘convergence’ or ‘correspondence’ of personal and collective identification processes (ibid.: 3, 7–9). I have laboured the analytical distinctions and connections at work here in order to make it possible to disentangle analyses of personal and social identities in the global justice movement literature. I want first, however, to focus on the ways in which the concept of collective identity can help illuminate this movement.

**Collective identity and the global justice movement**

Analysts face a particular challenge when exploring the operations of collective identity in a movement that is not only transnational in scale but markedly diverse in its constituent parts. In general, they have emphasised what is seen as a characteristic heterogeneity and fluidity, rather than seeking to mask this in misleading assumptions of coherence. It is notable, for example, that commentators mostly prefer to outline a range of context-specific aspirations, rather than proffering one unified global programme for change. In this vein, see Amory Starr’s survey of manifestos (2005: part II), which include proposals for the abolition of national debt, assertions of the common ownership of the genetic building blocks of life, and calls for migrant rights and the abolition of national borders. ‘It’s astonishing that our diverse struggles, sustained by an array of cultures, buffeted by devastating assaults, have agreed on so much’, Starr points out (2005: 45), but the overall effect of her representational strategy is to draw out specificity rather than commonality. Or writers may emphasise the diversity of actors and activities in different times and places, as in the vivid, kaleidoscopic overview provided by Notes from Nowhere (2003), ranging from the Sans Papiers in France to South African struggles against service privatisation, and from guerrilla gardening in the UK to the Argentinian Piqueteros. As Christina Flesher Fominaya sums up, ‘the Global Justice Movement encompasses a multiplicity of identities, ideologies, issues, frames, collective action repertoires, and organizational forms’ (2010: 377). In the context of this ‘movement of movements’, then, it seems legitimate to ask whether collective identity is politically feasible – or, indeed, to consider whether it is analytically useful or instead an outdated conceptual tool that should be abandoned (McDonald 2002).

Flesher Fominaya emphasises that the question of how collective identity is forged in the global justice movement is particularly pressing in the context of ‘autonomous groups’, which she defines in terms of ‘their rejection of ‘institutional ties to major parties and unions’ and their organisation in terms of a ‘horizontal network form’ (2010: 378). Yet as the empirical research undertaken by Flesher Fominaya and others has shown, horizontal networks should not be seen as a barrier to collective identity but rather as a key element in its construction. I suggest we can analyse what is going on here in terms of a ‘mode of action’, or set of political practices underpinned by a coherent, normatively driven rationale (see Eschle and Maiguashca
Central to the ‘identity work’ of many within the global justice movement, the horizontal mode of action is built on the assumption of the inextricability of means and ends. In this it is influenced by anarchism, although not limited to self-described anarchists (Graeber 2002). Horizontal organising demands not only the flattening of hierarchies within groups in contradistinction to what are perceived as more ‘vertical’ structures, but also the fostering of open-ended, fluid and egalitarian relations between groups, in which decisions are made through discussion. Moreover, in sharp distinction to a majoritarian and representational politics, no one is entitled to speak for anyone else and each individual or group is free not to participate in actions they have refused to endorse or to organise their own initiatives. Marianne Maeckelbergh sums it up thus:

The structural model being suggested in the democratic praxis of the alterglobalisation movement is not a liberal democratic model of representative democracy but rather a decentralised model based on collective and divisible agents who make decision through consensus . . . [This is] a form of democracy that rejects all formal and fixed representation . . . Through decentralisation and connectivity, decisions that affect an entire network of people can, in principle, be discussed at every node of that network and then decided through communication between nodes.

(2009: 225)

As Flesher Fominaya shows in her ethnography of assemblies in Madrid, organising techniques in this vein are variably applied and can generate tension and the collapse of groups or inter-group projects as well as enabling agreement and joint action. Maeckelbergh agrees, acknowledging that ‘this democratic model is far from perfect and is riddled with problems and inconsistencies at almost every turn’ (2009: 225). It is certainly not uncontested within the movement, with many arguing for and practising more vertical and representational organising strategies. Nonetheless, from efforts to create ‘open space’ at the World Social Forum to the fluid organisation of different coloured ‘blocs’ at street protests, a preoccupation with organising according to principles of horizontality and autonomy is extensive. I am suggesting here that it constitutes one of the key ways in which a distinctive collective identity encompassing differences is constructed within the global justice movement.

Another way this is done is charted in the work of Donatella della Porta on ‘tolerant’ or ‘flexible’ identities in operation at the European Social Forum (2005: 186). If Flesher Fominaya and others direct us towards horizontal organising processes as one form of identity work predicated on openness and respecting diversity, della Porta’s analysis indicates a similar principled flexibility with regard to the way in which ideological affinities and associational memberships are called into play. Specifically, she points to the high ‘associational density’ of the movement – the fact that participants are involved, and have often long been involved, in innumerable organisations from political traditions that opposed each other in the past. Activists navigate such complex movement terrain by valuing ‘diversity’ and ‘inclusiveness’; showing a willingness to be ‘contaminated’ by the ideas and values of others; and focusing on ‘limited identifications’ around ‘concrete initiatives’ rather than expecting sustained collaboration around long term, abstract goals (della Porta 2005: 186–9). In this way, activists within the global justice movement seek to avoid what della Porta calls ‘ideologism’ (ibid.: 196), which I understand as a dogmatic attachment to specific ideological traditions (to a particular brand of Marxism, for example), functioning to narrow down group parameters and to build boundary walls between one group and another. The end result is a movement identity founded on the acknowledgement of difference:
At the cost of leaving margins of ambiguity as to the movement’s proposals . . . the development of a collective identity that is ‘open’ and many-faceted makes it possible to hold together very different spirits, in part combining them, however gradually, and producing a high degree of identification among activists and sympathizers.  

(ibid.: 200)

My own fieldwork with Bice Maiguashca on feminist organisations within the global justice movement strongly supports della Porta’s arguments on this point. We found that feminist ‘anti-globalisation’ activists at the European and World Social Forums in Paris, Mumbai, London and Porto Alegre attach a normative value to the diversity of identities among activists – by being open to national variations in what it means to be feminist, for example, or by recognising and seeking to accommodate diverse ideological attachments amongst themselves. We also documented a marked drive amongst our activists to connect with others within and beyond feminist groups. Indeed, we were struck by the prevalence of the practice of networking, or articulation as our Brazilian interviewees called it, and by the extensiveness of the bonds between feminist ‘anti-globalisation’ groups and others, ranging from peace organisations to economic justice campaigns. In this context, like della Porta, we noted a certain flexibility in the mobilisation of ideological categories with activists declaring they would elaborate on the category of feminist in different ways depending on who they were talking to and even that they were wary of labelling themselves at all in case that proved a barrier in the effort to construct solidarity with others around shared goals (Eschle and Maiguashca 2010: ch. 8).

Taken together with the argument about a horizontal mode of action, these claims about the ways in which ideological and associational affinities are mobilised indicate the centrality of identity work in the global justice movement which acknowledges, navigates and even facilitates differences amongst those involved. It is ultimately, then, an error to puzzle over how collective identity is constructed in the global justice movement despite such extraordinary diversity among its constituent parts, when that diversity is consciously considered by participants to be at the heart of what gives the movement its distinctive character.

Having said that, diversity in the movement is not entirely unbounded, nor are identity construction processes without centripetal dynamics, and it is to the erection of boundaries and the building of bridges that I now turn. There are at least two identity construction processes of this kind visible in commentary on the global justice movement. The first can be seen in the clear convergence around the perception that movement activists share, in general terms, a critique of the current world order. As Paul Kingsnorth puts it (2003), this is a movement of ‘one no, many yeses’. In this regard, it is notable that the literature on the movement does not simply function as a record of the views of activists, but, as a key site where critiques are elaborated and substantiated, contributes to the crystallisation and articulation of such views. In more concrete terms, by far the majority of commentators characterise ‘the enemy’ in terms of what William Ponniah and Thomas Fisher call ‘corporate capitalism’ or ‘neoliberal globalisation’?

The perception is that corporate dominion has been organised across global space by the most powerful Northern states in the world, in collaboration with Southern economic and political elites. . . . Neoliberal globalization is not simply economic dominion of the world but also the imposition of a monolithic thought (pensamiento unico)8 . . . the key instruments of contemporary globalization are the free trade agreements and policies propelled by the WTO, the North American Free Trade Agreement . . . and other regional trade agreements, and the privatisation policies of corporations, the G8 countries, the World Bank and the IMF.  

(2003: 10–11)
Along these lines, neoliberal globalisation is understood as a recently emergent system, one which has been consciously pursued by state and economic elites, and which has become both socially pervasive and global in scope (see, e.g., Starr 2000: ch. 1, 150–1). Accounts of the detrimental impacts of this system may then range from economic inequality and deprivation to political powerlessness and exclusion, and from ecological degradation to cultural imperialism and violence, but the point remains that these are not presented as a shopping list of disparate factors but rather as the effects of a coherent, structured process shaping the world today (see discussion in Eschle and Maiguashca 2010: ch. 5). It is this shared characterisation of ‘the enemy’, I suggest, that functions to draw ideological parameters around the global justice movement itself, shaping priorities for change and lending credence to della Porta’s argument that the movement has a ‘clearly left wing profile’ (2005: 192).

The second set of processes through which boundaries and affinities are constructed in the global justice movement is closely related, and has to do with the ways in which activists and commentators make sense of actual encounters with ‘the enemy’ on the ground. In this regard, it is pertinent to note the overwhelming emphasis in the literature on protest. Indeed it could be argued that ‘disruptive’ modes of protest, and large-scale protest ‘events’ – particularly those taking place in northern, urban centres and directed against the institutions most associated with neoliberal policies such as the World Trade Organisation and the G8 – are widely seen as synonymous with and defining of the movement (see, e.g., Starr 2005). Relatedly, an iconography and aesthetics of protest threads through the literature, most obviously in the form of photographs emphasising the vulnerability and courage of activists, and the creativity involved in their costumes and props, in the face of anonymous, brutal-looking, massed ranks of police (see, for example, Cockburn et al. 2000; Notes from Nowhere 2003). Other widespread elements of this iconography include the use made of the words and images of the Zapatistas (e.g., Kingsnorth 2003: ch. 1) and the transmogrification of victims of confrontation, such as Carlo Giuliani, shot dead by police in Genoa, into martyrs of the movement. As one writer puts it, ‘We are all Carlo’ (Collins 2004: 138). Social movement scholarship would lead us to expect that these elements in the representation of the global justice movement function not only to differentiate activists from their opponent/s, but also to bind the movement together, with a shared language, repetitious imagery and common cultural references providing the glue for a collective identity apparently forged in the white heat of confrontation. As we will see, there is a marked continuity here with arguments about the transformation of identity at the individual level.

**Personal and social identities in the global justice movement**

I explained above that social movement scholars have sought to differentiate collective identity from personal and social identity as conceptual categories, partly in order then to be able to study empirically the interrelationships between all three. Personal identity, and particularly the ways in which transformations in it bring an individual into collective action and help sustain that commitment over time, has been the particular focus of more social psychological approaches, and the literature on the global justice movement is no exception. In line with the emphasis on protest as defining of movement identity, research along these lines has examined pre-existing critical orientations to social hierarchy as predictors of involvement in different types of protest action (Cameron and Nickerson 2009). Subsequent linkages between the mobilisation of individuals in local protests and the processes by which they come to identify with a broader movement have also been analysed – on this, the impact of confrontation with authorities appears particularly key (e.g., Drury et al. 2003) – as have the reasons why individuals
might feel personally empowered after a protest event and committed to further involvement (e.g., Barr and Drury 2009). On this last point, it seems that experienced activists are more likely to be able to (re)interpret the goals and impact of protest in a positive light and that collective discussion of an action in public space is very important to ensure the continued motivation of the less experienced (ibid.: 251–5).

I also want to mention here the very different work of Kevin McDonald (2002), which draws more on social theory to make sense of individual subjectivities within the movement. McDonald draws attention to the ways in which activists seek to find themselves and experience a kind of personal freedom through participation in the kind of loose affinity groups and non-representational politics described by Fominaya. This process should not be understood as a retreat to bourgeois individualism for McDonald, who emphasises that it is not explicable in terms of a rational actor model whereby the individual learns to articulate and pursue predefined interests. Nor is it reducible, in his view, to the process of identification with a collectivity. Rather, McDonald emphasises sensuous, embodied and interrelational ways of ‘finding your place’ (ibid.: 121) in the ephemeral protest contexts of the global justice movement, drawing particular attention to forms of action such as puppetry and music that transcend not only the discursive, but also intentional and representational modes of politics (ibid.: 123–4).

In comparison to personal identity, social identities in the global justice movement have received more limited attention. Della Porta touches on them with her discussion of the heterogeneous ‘social bases’ of collective action (2005). Arguing that participants in the global justice movement come from a surprisingly wide range of social backgrounds, della Porta draws attention to the high level of involvement of women and youth, the participation of ‘new’ middle classes as well as ‘labour’ more traditionally defined (as evidenced in the role of unions), and to those motivated by religion. While her analysis goes some way to confirming a resource mobilisation model by which individual access to economic and social capital is believed to be a key predictor of action, it more centrally stresses the role of prior mobilisation associated with these social groupings as a predictor of involvement in the movement (della Porta 2005: 180–6). Concluding with an emphasis on the relationship between pre-existing ‘associational density’ and the ‘tolerant identities’ constructed in the global justice movement, as explored previously, della Porta’s discussion also hints at the prior and ongoing mobilisation of social identities in this context. This impression is reinforced by references in the wider literature, if rather fleeting, to nationalist identifications among activists and by more extensive discussions of indigenous identity, particularly with regard to the Zapatistas (e.g., Kingsnorth 2003: ch. 1). Nonetheless, analysis of social identity in the global justice movement remains limited overall, as will be discussed in the next section, along with connected problems in the analysis of personal and collective identity.

**Criticisms of the global justice movement literature**

My initial criticism of the global justice movement literature, then, has to do with the treatment of social identities within it. There is a lack of sustained attention to such identities in this movement context, along with a tendency to reduce them to the pre-political ‘bases’ of action, which are in my view problematic. My research with Bice Maiguashca has revealed that social identities such as ‘woman’, ‘Black’, ‘lesbian’ and ‘Muslim’, along with conjunctural combinations of these, are politicised before and during mobilisation in the global justice movement, serving both to precipitate and sustain individual involvement and to demarcate distinct collective actors in the form of autonomous organisations. For instance, gendered marginalisations and exclusions in groups and activities associated with the movement have precipitated a new wave of
women-only spaces, in which younger women, in particular, are coming to a feminist analysis for the first time and which many of our interviewees robustly defended as a necessary element in the struggle for other possible worlds (Eschle and Maiguashca 2010: 73–4, see also 156–63).

Part of the reason why such groups organising around social identities have not been widely acknowledged or fully studied within the global justice movement literature, I suggest, is the tendency to position associated mobilisation as ‘post-identity’, and more particularly as ‘post-identity-politics’, as outlined at the outset of the chapter. When global justice movement commentators invoke the identity-politics of the 1980s, now transcended, they seek to juxtapose a past model of organising on the basis of social identities such as gender, race and sexuality, with what they see as the more inclusive and more materialist politics of the new wave of activism. But I would suggest that there are at least two problems with this move. First, it relies on stereotyped generalisations about the mobilisation of social identities in political contexts. As philosopher Linda Martin Alcoff has argued, leftist political commentary has long characterised identity politics as separatist in orientation, as reifying or fixing identities, and as partisan and solipsistic, incapable of speaking beyond a particular subject position. Moreover, identity-politics is seen as concerned with a politics of representation and symbols rather than with material interests of social justice.10 Now, I do not doubt there are some instances where social identities have been mobilised in separatist, essentialist and solipsistic ways, detached from claims for social justice and seeking only to defend a particular subject position for its own sake. Such an ‘identitarian’ move echoes the ‘ideologism’ alluded to by della Porta in erecting boundaries between groups and preventing wider coalition-building. Yet this should not be regarded as inevitable in the mobilisation of social identities. Indeed, as Alcoff and others such as Iris Marion Young have argued forcefully, much of so-called identity-politics involves groups which face structural discrimination seeking to articulate and negotiate shifting and complex subject positions and to engage with others as equals in a broader politics of social justice.

My work with Maiguashca on feminist activism in the global justice movement reinforces this point. The many women-only groups we investigated during our research may mobilise social identities, but they rarely rely on fixed and unitary categories, as my discussion above already indicates. ‘Women’ as a category has in some cases been politicised during, rather than prior to, global justice movement struggles, and it has also been complicated and fractured by widespread efforts to investigate and accommodate conjunctural identities combining gender with class, race, religious and other identifiers. In addition, these women-only groups may organise separately, but they are not ‘separatist’. Rather, they seek to develop durable, multiple connections with others in the global justice movement – which is why, of course, they were at the World Social Forum in the first place. In this way our interviewees avoid not only ideologism, but also the elements of the identitarian stance so feared by critics of identity-politics. Assumptions about how social identities are mobilised and to what political effect therefore need careful checking against specific empirical instances, including in global justice movement contexts.11

Second, the juxtaposition of the identity-politics of the past to the more inclusive and materialist politics of the present implies that the interlocking axes of oppression contested by members of women’s groups, racialised and ethnic minorities, gays, lesbians and transsexuals continue to organise to contest have been transcended, at least within global justice movement circles. This can be seen, for example, in Maeckelbergh’s thoughtful analysis of why what she calls the alterglobalisation movement is ‘overcoming identity politics’. She argues that the movement in effect builds on the achievements of past identity-based organising while avoiding its pitfalls:

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The respect shown between movement actors for each person ‘as different’ is a necessary prerequisite for the functioning of the alterglobalisation movement . . . Without the fights waged around gender, race, ethnicity and sexuality over the past 30 years, the ‘anti-oppression’ principles of most alterglobalisation movement spaces would not exist. Today meetings between many different groups and actors are possible because structural discriminations have been recognised, and meeting structures are put in place to limit them, but it is no longer ‘identity politics’ because some shared identity is not the basis upon which . . . movement actors are demanding recognition. Rather than insisting the movement should focus on the WTO because it is the quickest means of achieving women’s liberation, the fight against the WTO is carried out while incorporating an awareness of the power hierarchies that exclude women.

(2009: 20, emphasis in original)

Maeckelbergh is careful to indicate that patriarchal power hierarchies are still embedded within neoliberalism and should be challenged by the global justice movement. Yet she also characterises the movement as itself devoid of these hierarchies, as predicated upon their successful erasure among movement participants. Such a picture is likely to be contested by feminist ‘anti-globalisation’ activists. Our book presented considerable evidence that the global justice movement (like all social movements) is itself stratified by the multiple, complex relations of oppression it seeks to transform and that feminist groups active at the World Social Forum are fighting on many fronts: to counter the dominance of elite men and masculine styles in the organising processes of the Forum and in key events; to contest gender-blind characterisations of ‘the enemy’ and of social change; and to end incidences of sexual harassment. Organising as women and in women-only spaces has been a vital part of these efforts. Arguably, the overall point of all this is not to achieve women’s representation in the World Social Forum for its own sake, but rather to ensure the integration of gender into the critiques and alternatives of the global justice movement. So Maeckelbergh may be onto something with her insistence that representational logics are not an end in themselves in this movement. Her overly sharp distinction between current activism and identity-politics, however, functions to obscure the ongoing struggles around diverse categories of oppression that are still to be found within contemporary mobilisation.

Turning to the treatment of personal identity in the global justice movement literature, it seems to me there is an issue about the overweening emphasis on protest, and particularly disruptive or law-breaking modes of protest. Such an emphasis reflects analytical tendencies within social movement theory more generally, as well as within dominant narratives of the global justice movement. As Maiguashca and I have argued, overall this has resulted in a lack of empirical attention to other types of activities present within the movement and consequently an analytical failure to get to grips with the range of political practices undertaken on the ground (Eschle and Maiguashca 2010: 184). Here I want to make the more specific point that focusing on protest narrows understanding of the processes by which individual activist subjectivities are mobilised, created and sustained. Notably, some versions of social movement theory, particularly that inspired by the work of Alberto Melucci, draw attention to the submerged networks that sustain activism in a more ‘latent’ or ‘subterranean’ form in between protest events (e.g., Polletta and Jasper 2001: 288; della Porta and Diiani 2006: 95–6). Taking on board this dimension of global justice movement activity requires us to enquire into the ways in which personal identities are interwoven with collective identity mechanisms in interpersonal interactions, in cultural events, and in the ongoing maintenance of movement groups. Relatedly, we might investigate the connection between the ‘hidden transcripts’ of resistance to
globalised neoliberalism in everyday life, charted by anthropologists such as James C. Scott and the mobilisation of individuals within the global justice movement. Or what about the more institutionalised forms of the movement, such as the international feminist non-governmental organisations and coordinating networks which were part of the picture in my study with Maiguashca? How do activist subjectivities shift within and between bureaucracies, and when moving between institutional and protest environments? Such questions barely register as yet on the radar of a movement literature which continues to see large-scale, disruptive protest events as defining of its subject matter.

With regard to collective identity, the focus on protest can be seen as problematic here too, limiting analysis of the ways and contexts in which a shared sense of a common political undertaking is constructed in the global justice movement. Flesher Fominaya, for one, insists on the need for further attention to the local assemblies which are the subject of her own research. These are political spaces in which a loose coalition of individuals and groups active on a particular issue get together at regular intervals to plan joint actions. Emphasising their participatory and deliberative character, Flesher Fominaya suggests these assemblies act as ‘feedback loops’ between ‘latent arenas of social interaction’ and more public, goal-oriented activities (2010: 397). And she reaches wider conclusions about the implications of this for the theorisation of collective identity in the global justice movement:

> the process of collective identity should not be confused with the ‘collective identity product’ or visible publicly projected identity of the movement. Visible mobilizations are only one arena in which collective identity formation takes place. Studying collective identity formation as process allows one to reveal the tensions, contradictions, and negotiations in the latent moments that generate the seeming ‘unity’ of movement in its visible moments of protest or confrontation.

(ibid.: 398)

In sum, this is an argument for expanding our study of collective identity in the global justice movement beyond the protest events that have garnered so much attention from both participants and observers.

In contrast, McDonald argues for abandoning entirely this area of research, proposing instead that efforts to make sense of ‘globalization conflicts’ should focus on the ‘public experience of self’ (2002: 109–11, 114, 125). McDonald is concerned that structural shifts in a globalising world have transformed social relations and political responses in fundamental ways. Consequently ‘it is the increasingly problematic status of individual experience . . . in network society, and not the mechanisms involved in mobilizing collective identity in relation to the political system, that needs to be at the centre of analysis’ (ibid.: 114). As described above, his effort to produce such an analysis of global justice movement contexts (among others) is highly suggestive, particularly with regard to the sensual, embodied and interrelational character of individual subjectivities as experienced within the movement. Nonetheless, the claim that we should forsake the trope of collective identity altogether is, in my view, not convincing. McDonald’s analysis is reliant largely on fleeting protest events – and indeed strongly emphasises the ephemeral or biodegradable aspects of affinity groups and collective projects in this context. Yet this is to ignore those groups and networks which have a more durable character, as well as the ongoing subterranean relationships that connect activists between protests. It is also to overstate the cohesion or the degree of solidarity assumed by proponents of the collective identity trope: as I have tried to demonstrate, plenty of research on the global justice movement seeks to put the diversity of participants at the heart of our understanding of the movement’s shared
identity rather than imposing a false unity or lamenting its absence. Finally, it seems to me that McDonald is arguing for a shift in our level of analysis of the global justice movement, from collective to personal identity. I propose, in contrast, that attention to both, and to their interplay, is still required. The global justice movement, after all, is more than the expression of multiple individual wills to freedom: it is a collective undertaking to change the very parameters within which individual freedom can be pursued.

**Conclusion: future lines of enquiry**

This chapter has taken a very particular cut into the question of ‘(anti-)globalization and resistance identities’. Drawing on social movement theorising about collective identity, I have focused on the processes through which such identities have been constructed in the global justice movement. On the one hand, literature on that movement emphasises that autonomous and horizontal principles of organising, along with tolerance of ideological difference, have contributed to an identity construction process which has diversity at its heart. On the other hand, the literature has developed analyses of a common enemy, and participated in the circulation of symbols and mythology about confrontation with that enemy in protest contexts, that together have helped to bind diverse groups in a common political project. I then discussed arguments in the field about the transformation of personal identities through protest and the mobilisation of pre-existing social identities, before exploring some of the limitations in the conceptualisation of each of these kinds of identities in the literature thus far. I closed the body of the chapter by defending from its critics the trope of collective identity as still of utility where the global justice movement is concerned.

I want in this conclusion to offer some speculations about future developments in analyses of this movement. For this, I return to the broad consensus around collective identity emerging in social movement theory and elaborated at the outset of the chapter. This consensus, I argued, has three conceptual pillars: solidarity, agency and emotion. I will now show that there is plenty of scope for further work on all three of these dimensions of collective identity in the context of the global justice movement.

To begin with, the relationship between solidarity and collective identity needs further empirical and conceptual unpacking. Such work has already begun. Peter Waterman (1998: 235–8) has long advocated the need to revise and complicate old understandings of solidarity in the light of the new movement context. This analysis has been echoed by Ruth Reitan in her more recent effort to construct a typology of solidarity in the movement based on how individuals become politicised (2007: 51–6). Both scholars distinguish several forms or mechanisms of solidarity at work, of which identity is only one (the others include altruism, reciprocity, substitution, complementarity, affinity and restitution). Yet there is a danger in these formulations of equating identity with a claim of sameness or ‘exclusion of unalikes’ (Waterman 1998: 235), when we know this is not necessarily the case for the mobilisation of collective identity claims in the context of the global justice movement. In addition, further empirical study would reveal, I suspect, that boundaries between the different types of solidarity distinguished by these authors are porous and context-dependent. In sum, the effort to distinguish different solidarity dynamics is to be lauded, but there is scope for further work on this point. Moreover, the concept of fluidity, invoked by McDonald as an alternative to what he sees as static and bureaucratic processes of solidarity-building (2002: 124), is deserving of further investigation. Indeed, the language of ‘fluidifying’ has been documented in some quarters of the movement, indicating an openness to others’ viewpoints and a consequent slipperiness and instability in collective identity processes (della Porta 2005: 187). This language might perhaps offer a way forward for reframing the
relationship between identity and solidarity, one allowing for a fuller understanding of how both work in a particularly heterogeneous, fast-moving transnational movement context.

As for agency and collective identity, I have already implied that there is a need to expand our understanding of the kinds of agency found in the movement. As argued above, I see a pressing need to look ‘beyond protest’ in order to develop a more holistic, complex understanding of the relationship between the individual, the group and political practice. Here I want to point to the fact that, in addition, the sequential relationship between agency and identity need attention. It is too often emphasised in the literature on social movements that the formation of a collective identity is a necessary precursor to action, even as there are hints at the fact that action can produce identity. Taking the latter position seriously raises two sets of questions about the global justice movement. The first is suggested by Flesher Fominaya’s argument that the failure of collective actions can contribute to the ‘strengthening of movement collective identity through building up a shared history of having weathered difficulties together’ (2010: 399). This analysis finds an intriguing echo in the social psychological literature in the preoccupation with how individuals maintain their commitment despite the fact that actions often do not achieve their tactical goals (Barr and Drury 2009). So how is it that even ostensibly unsuccessful movement outcomes can contribute to the successful construction of collective identities?

The second set of questions stems from my argument about the horizontal mode of action as a key way in which diverse identities are parlayed into a collective self-understanding in the global justice movement. Are there other modes of action which similarly shape collective identity formation? In this connection, the emphasis on surrealism and carnivalesque techniques of protest, widely found within the movement and its commentary, is highly suggestive. Ranging from parades of giant puppets, as described by McDonald, to parodical protests such as those by apparent business people aiming to save capitalism, to the slapstick activities of the Clandestine Insurgent Rebel Clown Army, this mode of action is based on a ‘methodology’ which refuses dichotomies between ‘the personal and the political . . . activist and non-activist’, and is oriented to ‘transforming and sustaining the inner emotional life of . . . activists’ (Klepto and Up Evil 2005: 244–5, 247). In what ways, then, does this mode of action help to forge a correspondence between personal and collective identities? In what ways does its humorous and subversive mediation of the relationship the movement and those with which it is in confrontation reforge activist understandings of self and other?

This brings me finally to the issue of the relationship between emotion and collective identity. On this point, there are widespread references in the literature to the importance of anger, rage and fury as passions driving involvement in, and presumably identification with, the global justice movement. However, as Maiguashca and I have argued, there is a need for a more nuanced understanding of the range of emotions involved in motivating global justice movement activists and of the ways in which emotional triggers are intertwined with and feed into cognitive processes (Eschle and Maiguashca 2010: 176). In relation to this, Flesher Fominaya has again blazed a trail in her analysis of the role of humour in collective identity construction (2007). She uncovers several facets to this role in the context of autonomous groups in Madrid, including the mobilisation of jokes to construct boundaries between insiders and outsiders, their use to defuse tensions within groups, and the connection of wit to charismatic leadership. As Flesher Fominaya concludes, ‘[p]laying attention to humour and to emotions in general can help explain the emergence and trajectories of social movement groups’, especially in the context of the global justice movement where the imposition of a unified ideological identity is refused (2007: 257). I would add that the prominence of a carnivalesque mode of action in the movement, as described above, encourages the view that further exploration of the implications of
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humour and play in this context could yield very rich results for our understanding of collective identity processes.

Notes

1 Many thanks to Christina Flesher Fominaya for sending me her articles and for her supportive and perceptive comments on the first draft of this chapter. I look forward to continuing our discussion. Thanks also to Bice Maiguashca for allowing me to draw on our joint book Making Feminist Sense of the Global Justice Movement and for sparking and contesting many of the ideas that I continue to develop here. The faults that remain are of course entirely my own responsibility.

There is continuing disagreement about what the movement should be called. The ‘anti-globalisation’ label became widespread after the Seattle demonstration, apparently ‘a coinage of the US media’ (Graeber 2002: 63). The term has always been strongly contested by activists as overly negative and falsely implying an isolationist, parochial and protectionist orientation. Many activists prefer to describe the movement in which they participate as ‘anti-neoliberal’, ‘anti-capitalist’ or ‘anti-economic globalisation’, although the term ‘anti-globalisation’ still functions as a useful shorthand or codeword in much of the literature. Efforts to formulate a more accurate and more aspirational appellation include the ‘global democracy movement’, ‘globalisation from below’ and the ‘global justice movement’, with the latter becoming particularly widespread in Anglophone academic circles in recent years (e.g., della Porta 2007).

2 Verity Burgmann offers a slightly different take on this by claiming that the global justice movement ‘could be interpreted as identity politics based upon class or at least upon socioeconomic disadvantage’ (2005: 12). In other words, she is arguing that the movement expands our understanding of what ‘counts’ as identity politics rather than seeing it as abandoning the terrain of identity altogether. However, she also relies upon a distinction between identity–politics more narrowly understood and a more materialist and class–based politics to make her argument (see the comments by critics in the symposium that follows Burgmann’s paper). Burgmann insists that, in expanding identity to encompass class, the movement in effect ‘is an identity politics to end identity politics’ (ibid.: 12).

3 This emphasis on identity as process problematises the distinction drawn by Marianne Maeckelbergh between what she characterises as an analysis of the category of identity, typical of new social movement theory, and a focus on ‘process – where process is a practice, a fluid action, an ongoing activity’, which she thinks more suitable for research on the global justice movement (Maeckelbergh 2009: 21, emphasis in original).

4 Note that Polletta and Jasper are critical of the ‘overextension’ of the concept of collective identity, preferring a narrower definition in terms of ‘an individual’s cognitive, moral, and emotional connection with a broader community, category, practice, or institution’ (2001: 285). They insist this is analytically separable from the concept of personal identity, but I find the shift to the level of the individual rather unhelpful in this regard. I also disagree with their effort to differentiate ideology from identity, as it seems to me that the ways in which ideology is mobilised in the identity claims of activists is a particularly interesting avenue of enquiry, particularly in global justice movement contexts.

5 There is a potential confusion on this point, with social psychological approaches to social movements using the term social identity in the same way as others use the term collective identity, or even invoking the two interchangeably (see, e.g., Cameron and Nickerson 2009).

6 Hence the popular moniker ‘movement of movements’.

7 Note also that there is a significant strand of analysis among commentators and activists which prefers to characterise the problem in terms of continuities in the underlying system of capitalism (e.g., Callinicos 2003: 26; Tormey 2004). My research with Maiguashca on feminists in the movement also found this view, but a focus on the specific neoliberal formation of contemporary capitalism was substantially more prevalent (see Eschle and Maiguashca 2010: 86).

8 There seems to be no direct equivalent for this phrase in English. Perhaps the nearest we have is Margaret Thatcher’s infamous TINA phrase ‘There Is No Alternative’.

9 Although a handful of commentators have drawn attention to the existence of a right-wing, populist ‘anti-globalisation’ position (e.g., Starr 2000: 136–44), by far the bulk of the literature on the global justice movement does not include such elements in its characterisation of its subject matter.

10 See www.alcoff.com/content/afraidid.html. I should perhaps clarify that leftist anxiety around identity–politics gains much of its force from an implicit dichotomous juxtaposition of organising on the basis of social identities with class-based politics. This functions not only to obscure the economic
dimension of claims contesting discrimination on the basis of gender, race and sexuality but also to neglect the cultural and identity elements of class-based politics, see the symposium in *International Labor and Working Class History* following Burgmann 2005. This symposium also points to the very tangled and complicated class politics at work in the global justice movement, making it difficult to depict that movement straightforwardly in terms of a revival of a politics of class.

11 While accepting that social identities as a category may be overly neglected by analysts of the global justice movement, Flesher Fominaya suggests that activists in Western European movement contexts, particularly those associated with anti-capitalist and autonomous politics, see themselves not so much as post-identity as anti-identitarian, which she defines in terms of a rejection of shopping list, single-issue politics. As part of this, they are hostile to organising on the basis of discrete social identities. Such organising, Flesher Fominaya further suggests, may be more prevalent or important in global justice movement contexts beyond Western Europe (personal correspondence with author). The women’s groups I describe above, however, were tracked by Maiguashca and myself in France and the UK as well as in Brazil and India. Moreover, I am arguing that these groups mobilise social identities but are non-identitarian in character. Nonetheless, I take the point that further investigation of social identities in the global justice movement will need to pay very close attention to the specificities of the highly diverse geopolitical and ideological terrains in which that movement operates.

12 Alcoff has indicated that this is a widespread usage of the concept of identity in scholarly literature but one which departs from both common-sense understandings and its mobilisation in social movements (see www.alcoff.com/content/afraidid.html).

References


