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## **Collective Action and the Politics of Affect**

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### **Introduction: The Politics of Anti-Globalisation**

The anti-globalisation movement is the contested banner for a range of new collectives that gather together diverse participants around common concerns (Callon and Rabeharisoa 2008, Latour 2005; Roelvink 2009). What interests me about these collectives today is that, despite their label, they have explicitly shifted away from a politics that aims to uncover and resist neoliberal ideology. The World Social Forum movement is exemplary in this regard. The WSF began in 2001 in opposition to neoliberalism:

The World Social Forum is an open meeting place where social movements, networks, NGOs and other civil society organisations opposed to neo-liberalism and a world dominated by capital or by any form of imperialism come together to pursue their thinking, to debate ideas democratically, for [sic] formulate proposals, share their experiences freely and network for effective action.

([http://www.forumsocialmundial.org.br/main.php?id\\_menu=19&cd\\_language=2](http://www.forumsocialmundial.org.br/main.php?id_menu=19&cd_language=2) [accessed 23.09.08])

As the WSF has grown from 25-30,000 attendees at its inception to 155,000 in 2005<sup>1</sup> (Keraghel and Sen 2004), participants have become aware that, while mobilising participation, the discourse of neoliberalism does not necessarily prompt the creation of alternatives. Rather, the discussion and generation of knowledge about neoliberalism can stymie participants' hopes for other worlds and strengthen neoliberal discourse.

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<sup>1</sup> The last meeting in one location before the forum took a polycentric form.

Several scholars have investigated this shift in the anti-globalisation movement from a politics focused on ideology to one that bypasses and potentially disrupts habits of thinking about neoliberalism. Focusing on mass gatherings such as the Seattle demonstrations in 1999, Brian Massumi (2002a) and Maria Hynes and Scott Sharpe (2009) suggest that the anti-globalisation movement has embraced a politics of affect. Working in the tradition of Spinoza and Deleuze, Massumi and Hynes and Sharpe view the anti-globalisation collectives as shifting compositions of multiple interacting bodies, where “bodies are reciprocally distinguished with respect to motion or rest, quickness or slowness, and not with respect to substance” (Spinoza as quoted in Hynes and Sharpe 2009, 7). Affect relates to an increase or decrease in the collective body’s capacity to act (Hynes and Sharpe 2009). While affect is thus not the same as emotions felt by an individual,<sup>2</sup> Massumi suggests that it can be felt: “every transition is accompanied by a *feeling* of the change in capacity” (213, original emphasis; see also Massumi 2002b). This feeling of change also has affects; it increases the intensity of affect, “[giving] the body’s movements a kind of depth that stays with it across all its transitions – accumulating in memory, in habit, in reflex, in desire, in *tendency*” (213, original emphasis). As a politics, affect can create feelings of possibility in the context of hegemonic ideology and hopelessness (Anderson 2006; Gibson-Graham 2006). Thus Ben Anderson (2006, 738) suggests that affect expands the political field because it introduces awareness of endless possibilities in every moment and brings attention to practices that might capture some of these possibilities to create change.

An example of a politics of affect practiced in the anti-globalisation movement is provided by Hynes and Sharpe’s (2009) analysis of the shifting bodily relationships in mass protests. Hynes and Sharpe are interested in shifts in the capacity for action of the collective body constituted by protesters at the 1999 Seattle demonstrations. They focus on the protesters’ response to violence waged by police and the passage from bodies paralysed by teargas to bodies joining together in resistance. In this passage Hynes and Sharpe detect a shift in the protesters’ collective capacity for action: “There is a transition from the state of being ‘asphyxiated and blinded’ [by tear gas] to the state of having ‘arms locked more tightly’, which seems to represent an increase in the power of acting” (8). Hynes and Sharpe therefore argue that violence can increase the possibilities of affecting and being affected. Drawing

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<sup>2</sup> Emotions are seen as a personal and qualified experience of the body’s movement (Anderson 2006, 736; Massumi 2002a, 213).

on Spinoza, they suggest joy and sad passions as a way to “gauge affect” (8) and note the joy tinged with sadness in protesters’ accounts of Seattle.

Reflecting on the Seattle demonstrations, Massumi is concerned that in addition to potentially making new connections between people, violent performances also often produce fear that heightens existing divisions between people. And Hynes and Sharpe suggest that mass demonstrations can decrease the possibilities of action for those gathered around them, such as the police whose “forceful movements” generate a weakness, a limit in their ability for affecting and being affected (9).<sup>3</sup> Massumi thus asks, “are [there] ways of practising a politics that takes stock of the affective way power operates now, but doesn’t rely on violence and the hardening of divisions along identity lines that it usually brings[?]” (235). In response to Massumi’s question, this article explores the kind of politics the WSF has moved to. In 2003 the WSF shifted in stance from the saying “*no*” to neoliberalism to the “*many yeses*”, that is, to the affirmation of diverse alternative movements and projects currently underway (Keraghel and Sen 2004, 483; Kingsnorth 2003). The WSF joined other anti-globalisation movements to practice a politics centred on affirmation rather than resistance (Hynes, Sharpe and Fagan 2007). While attention has been given to the force of affect in the experience of and resistance to ‘capitalism’ (Hynes and Sharpe 2009, Massumi 2002a, Stewart 2007), I am interested in exploring how affect might be operationalised in a politics of affirmation that aims to generate economic possibility. In this article I investigate the force of affect in an alternative form of collective body to that of mass protests. I begin by extending Bruno Latour’s (2004a) account of how bodies learn to be affected in collectives to consider how thinking is moved by the play of affect (Connolly 2002). William E. Connolly’s (2002) neuropolitics of affect helps me to consider the role of affect in the production of new knowledge. I then turn to Michel Callon and Vololona Rabeharisoa’s (2003) work to begin my exploration of the operation of affect in collective action. I am particularly interested in how affect can be utilised by anti-globalisation collectives in a pedagogy for imagining new economies and in the third section of this article I bring a politics of affect to bear on Paulo Freire’s pedagogy. Freire’s work draws attention to the importance of testimony as a collective affective technique for prompting new thinking. In the fourth section I discuss one session of the 2005 WSF to illustrate how my understanding of a politics

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<sup>3</sup> This is not to simply dismiss violent protest outright, and thereby move towards the assertion of a single strategy for social transformation. As Isabelle Stengers notes, “The matter is not to demand a unifying principle which would be stronger than divergence, but to learn how to work together not in spite but through the divergence” (Stengers and Journazi 2002, 255).

of affect might be practiced. Affect is not a force that can be directly observed or documented and it operates in “a zone of indiscernibility” (Connolly 64). Rather than documenting the force of affect, then, this article draws attention to the WSF in order to gesture towards what a politics of affect might look like<sup>4</sup>. I adopt the description of the WSF as a “pedagogical space” for social movements to analyse current realities and create new ways of re-imagining the future (Andreotti and Dowling 2004, 605). As receivers of testimony, researchers can be caught up in a politics of affect. The article thus concludes by briefly commenting on the role of researchers in collective action.

### **Collective Politics and the Force of Affect**

The Spinozan approach to a politics of affect focuses on the shifting relationships that constitute the collective body’s affect or “force of existence” and capacities for action (Hynes and Sharpe 2009, 7). In order to explore how affect shapes thinking and the production of new knowledge, I need a theory that shows the impact of affect on individual bodies in the collective. I am interested in the way that changes in the collective’s capacity for action are embodied. Latour’s (2004a) work directs attention to the relationship between the individual and collective bodies. Latour’s work on affect suggests that for a body to be alive in the world it must be able to be moved by its relationships with the wider body-world or collective body. Latour calls this “learning to be affected” (see also Hinchliffe 2003; Gibson-Graham and Roelvink 2009). He illustrates learning to be affected with the perfume industry and the training sessions through which a pupil becomes a ‘nose’:

It is not by accident that a person is called ‘a nose’ as if, through practice, she had *acquired* an organ that defined her ability to detect chemical and other differences. Through the training sessions, she learned to have a nose that allowed her to inhabit a (richly differentiated odoriferous) world. Thus body parts are progressively acquired at the same time as ‘world counter-parts’ are being registered in a new way. Acquiring a body is thus a progressive enterprise that produces at once a sensory medium *and* a sensitive world. (Latour 2004a, 207, original emphasis)

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<sup>4</sup> Kathleen Stewart’s (2007, 4) work is instructive on other creative ways of evoking the force of affect or, as she describes it, “to find something to say about ordinary affects by performing some of the intensity and texture that makes them habitable and animate”.

The capacity of a nose to be moved by the world, to detect different odours in this case, is achieved through the training session made up of a teacher, pupil and an odour kit. Without these elements in relationship to each other the body would be static and odours would smell the same. Latour thus suggests that the kit, teacher and pupil can be viewed as a collective body that enables the differentiation of an “odoriferous world” (207). Learning to be affected is thus co-transformative, increasing the collective’s capacity for action in a more highly differentiated world. Latour’s work also shows how this capacity is embodied (in this case through the nose) as individual bodies learn to be affected in collectives/body-worlds.

While Latour’s concept of learning to be affected demonstrates embodied learning in collectives, Connolly’s work provides a way to explore in detail how *thinking* is moved by living bodies. Connolly is interested in a “neuropolitics” of affect which he describes as “the politics through which cultural life mixes into the composition of body/brain processes” (xiii). This mix of culture and bodies occurs in “a zone of indiscernibility because within this zone we are still unclear exactly how the mixing occurs, how complex each layer of capacity is, and how much room there is for mobility and creativity once a set of initial capacities and dispositions has become organized” (64). Although it is indiscernible, Connolly argues that this zone is vital to creativity and he goes on to thematize body/brain/world interactions in order to develop an appreciation of affect as a source of creative thinking. His work is particularly instructive for exploring the role of thinking, language and ideas in a politics that utilises the force of affect.

For Connolly, affect relates to “body/brain systems” interacting with the world and “traces of past experiences” (62). More specifically, affect operates in the encounter between the different layers of thinking that are triggered by one’s engagement in the world. “Thought embodies” this thinking process (65). Performances, such as film, structured through “‘irrational cuts’ between scenes” are especially effective at producing the “movement of affect” (67). The breaking up of a narrative “opens a new round of intrasubjective communication between your virtual register and a conscious line of reflection” (67); “it allows new thoughts to stroll or run onto stage, now and then setting an internal dialogue into motion that brings something new or exciting into being” (71). Outlining this “multidimensional process of thinking”, Connolly explains:

First, there is the dissonant conjunction between the scene and the distinctive thoughts it might rapidly mobilize in people with different, affectively imbued memory banks. Second, the initial encounter may later spur more disciplined thinking about the fugitive relation between the virtual register and consciousness in thought. And third, the conjunction of the first two moments might later yet encourage a disciplined train of thought about the relations among affect, discipline, and technique in fomenting new thoughts and enabling a disciplined train of thought. For discipline and logic are both essential to a sustained train of thought. (Connolly 2002, 71)

Expression and language, such as bodily posture and words, have a role in articulating the play of affect. Connolly in fact suggests that language and linguistic distinctions operate throughout the process of affects, “even if they do not exhaust them and even if many thoughts move too fast to render the linguistic element explicit” (71). Expressions will also be shaped by the “public context” and transformed through the process of putting affects into language (71-72). Yet new expressions have the potential to intervene in discourse and, importantly, to generate alternatives to restrictive discourses and binary thinking (73). I am interested in exploring how this process of affect might be utilised as a politics to create new knowledge and a more highly differentiated world with greater possibilities for action.

How might a neuropolitics of affect be enacted by contemporary collectives gathered around common concerns? Callon and Rabeharisoa’s (2003) case study of a muscular dystrophy collective is useful for extending Connolly’s work to collective action that creates new possibilities. Callon and Rabeharisoa’s case study investigates the Association Française contre les Myopathies (AFM), a French muscular dystrophy association formed to create new knowledge. They describe this association as a “hybrid collective” to reflect the “mixing [of] humans and non-humans” (195) in the constitution of knowledge, identities and spaces for political intervention (198). Hybrid collectives are engaged in processes of learning to be affected by the collective body-world (Callon and Rabeharisoa 2003; Gibson-Graham and Roelvink 2009). The AFM collective developed in response to the dehumanisation of patients with muscular dystrophy and the medical community’s lack of interest in the disease. The AFM gathered together patients and families to create new possibilities for living with muscular dystrophy. They took photos, collected testimonies and employed other research methods to collect and convey patients’ experiences of life with muscular dystrophy. Just as

the odour kit enables the nose to differentiate odours, through their research patients and families developed a kit of representations that differentiated life with muscular dystrophy. Through their initial research the AFM made bodily experiences available for dialogue with medical researchers. This research disrupted the discourse representing patients with muscular dystrophy as a single homogeneous terminal case. It created a discursive interruption in which the play of affect and creative thinking about the disease could occur in the emerging collective.

The AFM embarked on fundraising to continue research into life with muscular dystrophy and partnered with the medical community. The broader collective that formed through this partnership launched a range of new research projects to build knowledge of the disease. This research has had important effects and demonstrates the possibilities for action potentially generated through processes of learning to be affected. It has created different therapeutic options for patients and personalised and humanised them in the eyes of scientists, constituting them “as individuals caught up in a peculiar network of social relations” (199). Patients, in turn, learnt to experience their body in relation to others in the collective, including scientists, prostheses and genes, and they have come to see these others as “part of themselves” (199). The research has also created opportunities for new alliances between a range of experts to conduct research and further differentiate the picture of muscular dystrophy:

The more knowledge about...the disease advances, the more complex the picture becomes. The number of actants involved (all kinds of proteins, antibodies, enzymes, etc.) multiplies and causal links proliferate. As a result, differences between individual patients intensify, and the number of specialists that can be mobilized increases. This opens the way for strategic options. (Callon and Rabeharisoa 2003, 199)

From my perspective, this case highlights that learning to be affected can be undertaken by collectives to create knowledge that increases the possibilities for action. Callon and Rabeharisoa describe this knowledge in terms of a “discourse [that] combines the biological and the social to produce what Paul Rabinow has suggested calling a ‘bio-sociality’” (1998-1999). More specifically, this discourse “[links] individual behaviour or social relations to biological data in a constantly revisable way” (1998). The possibilities for action Callon and Rabeharisoa highlight are a range of scientific research options each with “a different set of alliances” (1999). This approach to the

politics of affect opens up the possibility that the anti-globalisation movement might create a new econo-sociality, connecting economic information with social relations to create new economic identities, experiments, alliances and options for ethical decision making (see Gibson-Graham and Roelvink 2009).

## **Operationalising Affect through Freireian Pedagogy**

The pedagogy of social movement collective action builds on a long tradition in Latin American politics, instigated by the influential work of Paulo Freire and his well known book *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* ([1968]1996). Beginning in the 1940s, Freire developed a pedagogy through which the masses could come to identify oppressive ideologies of the present and begin a dialogue for utopian futures (Gaudio and Alba 1994).<sup>5</sup> His work suggests that social change arises through assemblages that generate other ways of knowing and being in the world. Freire's pedagogy offers a way of thinking about the practices whereby hybrid collectives come to express affecting body-worlds through collective knowledge and discourse. As I discussed in the previous section, Connolly (2002) shows how in the play of affect which triggers multiple lines of thought, some thoughts are captured and expressed. He further differentiates this process in which affect is expressed and translated into discourse and provides a guide to reading Freire's pedagogy (73-74). The first step involves the creation of a "new word or phrase" and its introduction into public (73). This new word or phrase has an effect on the public discourse which it enters, for instance, it could express "an absence retrospectively where none had been experienced before" (73). Second, this new word or phrase offers others a way to capture and express similar feelings or sensibilities. Third, if the word or phrase comes to express a common experience it can be translated into discursive representation. As the new word or phrase becomes "an object of thought" it might be used to think about and act on the world (73). These steps correspond to Freireian thinking on generative themes and dialogue,

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<sup>5</sup> Freire's vision of social transformation was developed in a context in which the discourse of capitalist imperialism was dominant and Marxist understandings of the peasant and working class as agents of transformation prevailed. Freire's politics is grounded in modernist Marxist ideas about revolution, the unitary singular subject and an instrumental view of political action. Consequently, there has been much debate on the applicability of Freire's work to the diverse agents of social transformation found today. Peter McLaren and Colin Lankshear (1994), for instance, have questioned the importation of Freire's ideas to the global North and to post-colonial contexts. They also ask whether Freire's work can be applied to contemporary forms of capitalist power. Despite this questioning they argue that two central remaining ingredients in Freire's pedagogy are the experience of diverse forms of oppression and the desire for change.



through which an awareness of other possibilities of being in the world is generated and expressed in language.

Social movement groups gather together around common concerns. For Freireian scholars common concern is achieved through *generative themes*. Generative themes are centred on everyday experience and arise from the “thematic [or discursive] universe” in which people see themselves (Freire 1996, 77). Freireian scholars further suggest that gathering around and discussing generative themes, such as neoliberalism and or capitalism, can have a creative effect, generating a space of hope and possibility (Johnston and Goodman 2006). Freire distinguishes the difference between one’s discursive universe and alternative possibilities as the difference between the ‘is’ and the ‘ought’ (see also Johnston and Goodman 2006). Naming the ‘is’ is the initial task for those gathered around generative themes. For Freire (1996, 68) to name something is to problematise it and thus to begin to change the world. Naming the ‘ought’ relates to Connolly’s (2002, 73) first step of the creative force of affect, “revealing an absence” – an alternative to the ‘is’ – “retrospectively where none had been experienced by most before”. Josee Johnston and James Goodman (2006, 20) highlight the WSF as exemplary of a gathering around generative themes and write that the movement “establishes frameworks for living and acting together that provide fertile soil for growing paradigmatic alternatives – for connecting critiques of ‘what is’, to the many different visions of ‘what ought to be’”. In 2005 the WSF was organised into thematic spaces in which participants gathered around a range of generative themes. “Espacio F, Social Struggles and Democratic Alternatives – Against Neoliberal Domination”, for example, included sessions called “Knowledge, democracy and revolutions”, “SCHOOL: Against Education Commodification”, “Global Apartheid, Global Alternatives”, “Reform or Revolution” and “Women and Trade Unions – Towards a Wider Working Class Politics”. All of this is just a taste of what the programme had to offer for the 27th of January, the first full day of sessions (Forum Social Mundial: Programacao 2005). These thematic spaces reflect participants’ concerns about the world. For example, some sessions named and thereby problematised existing forms of oppression or the ‘is’ of generative themes, such as “Global Apartheid”, while at the same time gesturing towards an ‘ought’, such as “Global Alternatives”. This ‘ought’ reveals an absence and a space of possibility (Johnston and Goodman 2006).

Yet the pitfalls – such as the squelching rather than prompting of creativity – of critical discussion of one’s discursive universe have been well documented (Gibson-Graham 2006; Latour 2004b;

Sedgwick 2003; Roelvink 2008). Sedgwick's (2003) work, for example, suggests that critical analysis has become analogous with, and even indistinguishable from, paranoid thinking. Drawing on Melanie Klein and Silvan Tomkin's thinking on paranoia, Sedgwick develops a picture of the critical thinker who, taking a "depressive" "anxiety-mitigating" stance, is continuously expanding their existing discursive universe to anticipate and thus negate any element of surprise (128, 130). The critical thinker achieves this by putting themselves in their enemy's shoes; that is, only by performing the paranoid fear is the theorist able to anticipate surprise. And even the failure to anticipate surprise confirms that "you can never be paranoid enough" (127). Connolly (2002, 76) similarly suggests that "habits of feeling and judgment" capture affect in familiar moralistic, reactive and depressive stances that limit alternative visions of the world and possibilities of being. The sense of possibility and hope and even the ability to name the alternative 'oughts' following discussion of the 'is' in Freireian pedagogy is, then, not automatic and needs to be thought through in relation to affecting bodies in dialogue.

For Freire knowledge and agency are fundamentally connected (Gaudiano and Alba 1994). Indeed, he writes that "to speak a true word is to transform the world" (1996, 68). Such transformative knowledge is collectively constituted through dialogue. Freire emphasises the co-production of learning and knowledge and in *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* he writes, "Authentic education is not carried out by 'A' for 'B' or by 'A' about 'B', but rather by 'A' with 'B', mediated by the world – a world which impresses and challenges both parties, giving rise to views or opinions about it" (74; see also Gaudiano and Alba 1994, 136). Central to this process is testimony:

For me, teaching is the form or the act of knowing, which the professor or educator exercises; it takes as its witness the student. This act of knowing is given to the student as testimony, so that the student will not merely act as a learner. In other words, teaching is the form that the teacher or educator possesses to bear witness to the student about what knowing is, so that the student will also know instead of simply learning. (Torres and Freire 1994, 103)

In social movement struggles witnesses of an event narrate and give testimony to their experience for judgement by others (Routledge 2003). Testimony calls on the recipient to believe what they say. In Freireian dialogue testimonies are centred on personal experience infused with love for the world

and hope for the future (Freire 1996). In testifying to an experience one conveys memories of that experience as it was lived, bearing witness to elements of that experience that are not governed by dominant discourses linked to oppression (Laub 1992; Oliver 2004). Testimonies are conveyed in words and through bodies (Sharpe 1999), in other words, through cognitive and affective registers. Theorists of affect argue that these two registers need not be consistent with one another and they may be more powerful at producing moments of creativity when they are not. In fact, this is one way in which the affective register can prompt new trains of thought. Gibson-Graham's (2006) and Anderson's (2006) research shows how experiences of surprise, delight, hope and desire that break with existing habits of thought can open thinking to other possibilities. Scott Sharpe (1999), drawing on Julia Kristeva's work on the effects of bodily drives or the "semiotic" on symbolic communication, shows how bodily posture, the rhythm of speech, laughter and other expressions of the semiotic can "disrupt or destabilise the symbolic and thus the social order" (99)<sup>6</sup>. In Sharpe's case study semiotic expressions are seen to disrupt the dualistic discourse of natural and medicalised childbirth, "[enabling] an appreciation of a multiplicity of experiences" (100). Testimonial accounts of social movement struggles expressing hope, like those recounted at the WSF, are often at odds with prevailing cognitive understandings of the oppressive hegemonic powers expressed in the 'is' of generative themes, such as neoliberalism. This disjuncture is an important part of creating a new stance toward the world. While a testimony might discursively document the penetration of capitalism into yet another part of the globe, through other affective registers it can also relay hope for the future that conflicts with this discourse.

Testimonies with affective force can also create connections between people in ways that bypass cognition (Connolly 2002). Described by Connolly as the "contagion of affect", affect is carried through multiple channels, such as public gatherings, and flows, such as through voice, bodily movement, touch and texture (75). Testimonies can operate in this way, creating connections between the person testifying and the recipient. As Freire notes in a passage quoted above, to be a recipient of a testimony is to experience the knowledge conveyed through that testimony. Experiencing what it feels like to know something can have affective and cognitive force on the recipient, prompting a relationship to the other and expanding the collective's capacity for affecting and being affected, prompting joy.

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<sup>6</sup> Connolly too notes that the play of affect is also expressed through "the timbre of our voices, the calmness or intensity of our gestures, our facial expressions, the flush of our faces, the rate of our heartbeats, the receptivity, tightness, or sweatiness of our skin, and the relaxation or turmoil in our guts" (76).

Through dialogue that follows testimonies at the WSF, social movement groups can begin to develop a new discourse corresponding to their hopes and desires of how the world 'ought' to be. Connolly suggests that this sense of possibility, what I have read as Freire's 'ought', can be expressed in a word or phrase, although always with an excess of affect. Theorists of brain body connections argue that the translation of bodily experience into thought and language is vital to the actualisation of the creative force of affect (Connolly 2002). Once the play of affect is captured in thought it might be creatively expressed in language (67). Through collective dialogue this language can become an object of thought and communication – through bodies and words – creating “the practical opportunity that the coining, expression, and representation of the new phase creates for you and others to work on yourselves to render your actual sensibilities more congruent with the self-representation you advance” (74). In Callon and Rabeharisoa's muscular dystrophy case study, for example, “the patient's identity and that of the group of patients, of which he or she becomes a member, are simultaneously shaped” by the new bio-social discourse and they came to consider themselves as part of a hybrid collective (1999). Transformations in identity that are brought about when one becomes part of a collective in this way resonate with the Foucauldian idea of “self cultivation”, the “care of the self” that can lead to new ways of “being in the world” (Gibson-Graham 2006, 6). Connolly draws on Nietzsche to describe this as a “self ‘artistry’” process whereby “consciousness enables humans to devise experimental practices and arts by which to work on affect-imbued thoughts below its direct regulation but pertinent to its conscious deliberations” (77). The WSF can be viewed as a collective experiment enabling self-cultivation.

### **The World Social Forum: Putting this Pedagogy into Practice**

Closer examination of the thematic spaces of the WSF suggests how affect might be utilised in pedagogical practice. Particular sessions brought many different groups together. The sessions were mostly self-organised by groups coming together around a particular issue, including picking up from discussions begun at previous forums and affiliated events. Sessions typically took the form of individuals testifying to groups gathered in tents about the struggles and interventions they were part of, closely followed by discussion and debate. The session “Change the World Without Taking Power: Intercontinental Dialogue on Theory and Praxis of Social Movements Against-In-and-Beyond State and Capital” is of particular interest here because it focused on new forms of power

like “affect modulation” (Massumi 2002a). The generative theme of this session might be described as, ‘oppression is installed through diffuse channels and transforms relationships’ (the ‘is’) and, ‘alternatives are constituted through material struggles in everyday life’ (the ‘ought’). This session involved many different participants, from academics, such as sociologist John Holloway, to social movement representatives, such as representatives from the Argentina Movement of the Unemployed, the Occupied Factory Movement of Argentina and activist representatives from a number of different countries such as Germany, the Philippines, Italy, Brazil, South Africa, Thailand and India. These participants shared their experiences through testimonies to struggle, such as the testimony of the representative from the Coalition Against Water Privatisation in South Africa.

The Coalition Against Water Privatisation was formed in 2003 by the Anti-Privatisation Forum, the Anti-Eviction Campaign and many other social movements and activists. The work of the Coalition has been documented in a research report written by Prishani Naidoo (2005a) and published by the Centre for Civil Society at the University of KwaZulu-Natal. The Centre for Civil Society is a research centre committed to supporting non-profit and community organisations and collaboration more generally.<sup>7</sup> The Coalition was initiated by residents of Phiri in Johannesburg in response to the privatisation of the commons, in particular public services like water and electricity. Previously residents of Phiri and other areas had free access to water and saw this access as “essential for meeting their basic needs for survival” (Naidoo 2005a, 156). As Naidoo explains, water was viewed as a common and shared source of life and thus, in Stephen Gudeman’s (2001) terms, as a foundation for community (157). In South Africa the provision of common resources to all sectors of society was offered by the South African government in 1994 as a response to the social divisions and exclusions created through apartheid (Naidoo 2005a, 159). At the 2005 WSF Naidoo’s testimony placed the Coalition’s intervention within this longer history of struggle and shifting regimes of governance in South Africa, from collective struggle and strategies of ‘ungovernability’ during apartheid (such as mass boycotts, strikes and armed struggle), to the struggle to create alternatives as the new regime of post-apartheid governance shifted to a politics of ‘inclusion’.

I was a recipient of this testimony and what I initially heard was a sophisticated, confidently delivered narrative of the development and adaptation of neoliberal governmentality. For instance, I heard how the new post-apartheid regime of governance has linked the idea of ‘responsible citizenship’ with the

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<sup>7</sup> See <http://www.nu.ac.za/ccs/> [accessed 06.06.08]

privatisation and commodification of public services and has sought to implement this neoliberal rationality through pre-paid meters and other user-pays systems. In the broader historical context of South Africa, Naidoo's testimony and report suggested that after the period of ungovernability it has been difficult for the South African government to shift the responsibility for public services to citizens as consumers, because consumers simply do not pay and use debt as a form of resistance (160). The pre-paid meter is seen by the government as a technology to eliminate the 'option' of debt altogether. That is, the meter is viewed as a technology of neoliberal governance implemented to transform how people relate to and use common resources. The prepaid water meter threatens not only the commons but also, by powerfully "individualising the relationship of people to the resources necessary for life"<sup>8</sup>, shifts government responsibility for public provisions to individuals. This technology is linked by the Coalition to practices like budgetary advice, planning and other technologies to reveal a broad network of neoliberal governance. Together these technologies aim to reshape community life. This testimony fitted nicely with my thinking at the time (Roelvink and Craig 2005) which was highly attuned to intellectual debates about neoliberalism and my written comments show how I used these habits of thinking about neoliberalism to digest these accounts. My notes included, for example, statements such as "sounds like 'roll-out neoliberalism' (Peck and Tickell 2002) and reflects the adaption of neoliberal policy".

In her testimony Naidoo also bore witness to the Coalition's struggle. In doing so, her narrative of neoliberalism was punctured by something different – an intervention centred on "reclaiming of our common":

It is in the struggles of people against these attacks on life, that our movements, such as the Anti-Privatisation Forum and the Anti-Eviction Campaign, have emerged. One of our key strategies in these struggles has been that of reclaiming our common – reconnecting water and electricity that has been disconnected, and putting people back into the homes from which they have been evicted, denying the commodification of resources that are basic necessities for life and insisting on their common ownership by us all. Against the language of 'responsibility to pay', campaigns such as 'Operation Khanyisa' ('Operation Switch On/Light Up') and 'Operation Vula 'manzi'' ('Operation Open The Water') have allowed for

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<sup>8</sup> Transcript from the 2005 WSF session "Change the World Without Taking Power", available online: <http://www.all4all.org/2007/06/3160.shtml> [accessed 23.09.08].

people to come together again in refusal of a logic that speaks against life and the common, and to institute in the immediate an alternative to this logic – freely connected water and electricity. (Transcript from the 2005 WSF session “Change the World Without Taking Power” available online: <http://www.all4all.org/2007/06/3160.shtml> [accessed 23.09.08])

Naidoo described the Coalition’s enormously challenging and constantly shifting struggle to reconnect people with resources while assisting them to reassert common ownership. Following this description, she went on to testify to the government’s response to the Coalition’s efforts, such as the criminalisation of the Coalition’s actions and attempts to convert the struggle through concessions including reducing electricity debt and provision of a certain quantity of free water. Naidoo was again picking up the narrative of neoliberalism, noting “that these measures are but partial solutions to problems that persist, replicate, and change their form, with an unchallenged overall framework of neoliberalism”.<sup>9</sup> Yet the interruption in Naidoo’s testimony – her recollection of the Coalition’s inventions – had produced a break through which affect could play. Her testimony to this invention/alternative was by no means clearly formed – it was a gesture to other possibilities conveyed largely by her physical presence; on stage she looked small while her voice was powerful, confident and energised. The stories about the struggle to truck water to people, the dangers of reconnecting electricity illegally and the risks of contesting state power expressed strength, hope and a will that could affect participant witnesses in the session. Naidoo’s description of “freely connected water and electricity” provided words from which a discourse of the commons and the collective subject could be developed in dialogue with other participants in the session.

The session “Change the World Without Taking Power” included many other testimonies. In one moving example a woman conveyed her experience of the precarious yet hopeful life shared among a group that occupy a forest in Germany. There were also testimonies from agricultural plantation workers from the Philippines and from a movement in Northern Italy that utilises squatting as a form of social provisioning, especially for migrants. As with that of the Coalition, these testimonies included experiences of social movement struggle and intervention. Yet each testimony was very different. The representatives spoke of radically different interventions in a variety of languages and their testimonies were more or less formed with some narratives delivered confidently and others in

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<sup>9</sup>Transcript from the 2005 WSF session “Change the World Without Taking Power”, available online: <http://www.all4all.org/2007/06/3160.shtml> [accessed 23.09.08]

stuttering, less confident ways. Each representative and a range of other participants were recipients of these testimonies. Interrupting my notes on and thinking about neoliberalism, I recorded these gruelling stories of experimental interventions, including the German woman's life in the occupied forest which she described as "dodgy". Not captured in my notes, but recalled through the excitement I experienced which in turn has driven this research, was the physical presence of these representatives in Porto Alegre, their strength to get up and tell their stories, the performance of their interventions as existing alternatives, their calls for others to join them, and the sense of possibility that energised the participants in dialogue. This sense of possibility, I think, was related to the affecting bodies gathered in the session and the increased opportunities of being affected generated by the testimonies

Following the simultaneously translated testimonies of the participants the session divided into small groups to discuss specific themes arising from the testimonies. This framework for discussion developed by the organisers gave each group a specific question which required the proposal of an intervention as an answer. The questions included:

How do we refuse and live? How do we defend ourselves against state oppression? How can we develop alternative social relations? What is our relation to the state-centred struggle against capitalism? How do we multiply and expand our fissures? What other questions should we be asking?

While the testimonies performed particular experiences from around the globe, dialogue in the small group discussions that followed aimed to articulate common visions to feed back to the larger group.

The small group discussions brought together representatives who had given testimony and recipients of that testimony. Having both experienced and been affected by the preceding testimonies, the dialogue between participants that followed aimed to capture and magnify this affect in order to generate new thoughts and build a collective language. The action-directed questions were important in guiding participants' dialogue to explore absences and possibilities rather than focusing only on the constraining discourses at odds with the hope felt by participants yet penetrating each testimony, such as the logic of neoliberalism. Through collective investigation of the testimonies and discussion questions participants were able to form relationships with one another and together,



through dialogue, to discover new possibilities of being. These exchanges enabled participants to capture and magnify moments of affect generated in the words of the testimonies and this was reflected in a shift in discourse. The suggestions put forward were notably stripped of concern about neoliberalism and instead proposed diverse alternatives such as traditional medicine, new technologies, systems of reciprocity, the formation of cooperatives and ideas about how to maintain and build the connections initiated in the session. The co-constitution of proposals and the ideas that emerged for future intervention further connected these participants and the projects they represented through a common language that could be used for self-cultivation. In the session “Change the World Without Taking Power” this language concerned the multiple and diverse registers of being shaping social movement struggle. As Naidoo reflected after the session:

Without seeking to derive any consensus out of the discussions, activists were able to share and engage in a discussion about the creation of alternatives to capitalism through new, shared understandings of power to understand the ways in which capitalism controls us as individuals and ways in which we are able to live outside of it... In the words of a comrade from the MTD-Matanzas [the occupied factory movement in Argentina], ‘... Before, our slogans were for freeing the prisoners, fighting neoliberalism; today, our struggle is on a different terrain – it is in our heads; in how we live; in our family structures; it is in creating new forms of family and love; it is in rethinking life’. (Naidoo 2005b)

This vision was accompanied by an orientation to self-cultivation, with participants drawing attention to the relationships between thought, language and the way in which the world is lived and experienced. This was demonstrated by the debate over how workers might redefine themselves in accordance with their vision of alternative economies rather than as unemployed as in the occupied factory movement in Argentina and the Argentina Movement of the Unemployed (Naidoo 2005b).

Following the small group sessions, the subsequent forum regrouped all participants to share ideas, generate email lists and proclaim a collective. In addition to the more traditional sense of a collective organisation, the session had performed a collective of interacting body-worlds akin to a hybrid collective. The Freireian pedagogical techniques of the WSF can be seen as enabling Latour’s (2004a, 2005) “learning to be affected”, “meaning ‘effectuated,’ moved, put into motion by other entities, humans or non-humans”. The session, a hybrid collective involving diverse representatives,

translators, speakers and microphones, tents and chairs and so on, differentiated and transformed body-worlds into a range of possibilities for action and experience. In bringing together diverse participants and, through dialogue, developing a collective knowledge of the world, the session “Change the World Without Taking Power” can be understood as enacting a new econo-sociality.

### **Conclusion: Performing New Worlds through Hybrid Collectives**

As it has grown and shifted from a stance of opposition to one of affirmation, the WSF has re-oriented itself towards the creation of new knowledge. It shows little concern, however, with the creation of a singular prescription for action or manifesto. Rather, like other social movement performances (Hynes et al. 2007), its force lies in the act of participation and the arousal of hope for new worlds. This is not just a hope for the future, although it is that too, but an experience of new possibilities in the present; the experience of learning to be affected in collectives and thereby contributing to the differentiation and proliferation of alternative economic possibilities for action. In this article I reread Freire’s pedagogy through Connolly’s *Neuropolitics* to show how such an experience of possibility can be generated through learning centred on dialogue. The 2005 WSF session “Change the World Without Taking Power” juxtaposed a range of narratives about neoliberalism punctured with accounts of experimental economic interventions. Together these testimonies triggered moments of “affective energy” for creative thinking (Connolly 2002, 76). In collective dialogue this energy was harnessed and new thoughts were captured and expressed through a language of the multiple and diverse forces that shape social movement struggle. This session can be seen as a first step in the generation of an alternative economic discourse to guide experiments in self-world cultivation.

When I arrived at the 2005 WSF, I believed that my role as a researcher was to document the mutations of neoliberalism and to analyse how shifts in neoliberal governance were co-opting social movements. In doing so, I hoped to help social movements resist neoliberalism. Participating in the WSF sessions, however, and receiving social movement testimonies to experimental interventions and economic alternatives, shifted my thinking from neoliberalism to the alternative economic experimentations currently underway. I also began to see myself as part of a hybrid collective creating new worlds. This collective includes all that made the WSF possible (such as technologies required for dialogue, tents, food markets and so on), participants of the WSF and the collectives

they represent and more. Taking this point further, the hybrid collective in which I have learnt to be affected reaches out to encompass debates in the research fields of social movement studies, actor network theory, neuroscience and pedagogy, and the academic infrastructure through which this knowledge travels<sup>10</sup>. Importantly, this hybrid collective has created a different role for me than that of a critical observer; it has produced openings in my habits of thinking and trained me to appreciate the diverse economic interventions and alternatives around the world. Ultimately this hybrid collective has enabled me to engage in this line of thinking and has led to this article. In turn, by elaborating a technique for creative thinking that can be used to increase the options for economic action, this article can be seen to contribute to the performance of a new econo-sociality (see also Gibson-Graham and Roelvink 2009). This research thus joins others aiming to perform diverse economic experimentation around the world and to open up the economy as a site of decision making, ethical debate and possibility (Gibson-Graham 2008). The politics that I have gestured to in this article embraces a utopia of hope, that is, a utopia centred on the possibilities contained in the present (Stengers and Zournazi 2002, 254).

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<sup>10</sup> While beyond the scope of this article, one could explore further the infrastructure through which the alternative knowledges produced at the WSF travels (see for example Gibson-Graham’s (2008) discussion the research collective created through intellectual networks of Michael Piore and Charles Sabel (1984) and their book *The Second Industrial Divide*).

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