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## Global rörelse

### Den globala rättviserörelsen och modernitetens omvandlingar

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## Summary in English

Wennerhag, Magnus (2008). *Global rörelse: Den globala rättviserörelsen och modernitetens omvandlingar*. Dissertation in Sociology, Lund University.

One of the basic premises of this thesis is that social movements are political and social actors expressing the centrality of autonomy—i.e. the self-government of society—in modernity. Thus, to speak about social movements is to emphasize a central aspect of the democratization, or the massification, of politics. To grasp the nature of the relation between politics and social movements, the latter has to be related to the profound transformation in the forms of politics implied by the breakthrough of modernity, and the subsequent transformations *within* modernity.

The main subject of this thesis is the global justice movement, arguably the foremost social movement intervening today in the central conflicts over the autonomy of society. The global justice movement can in many respects be conceived of as challenging hitherto established notions of social movements. For example, the protests of 1968 are often thought of as expressing a change both of social movements and of society at large. In the same way, the 1999 anti-WTO demonstrations of Seattle—and the summit meeting protests and social forums held since then—can be conceived of as expressions of changing repertoires of movement action and emerging conceptualizations of politics and society.

During the final years of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the global justice movement emerged out of both a critique of the negative social and political impact of economic or corporate globalization, and a desire to make globalization more socially sustainable and democratic. It has emphasized not only a critique of the democratic deficit of supranational bodies and global institutions, but also the market-oriented policies of these institutions. Moreover, by organizing social forums on different geographical levels—most notably the World Social Forum—the movement has created counter-publics as an alternative to the global institutions being criticized. Finally, through

being organized across national borders, the movement has challenged traditionally nation-state based forms of politics and democracy.

In the introduction of the thesis, I briefly discuss Iris Marion Young's interesting points on the ambivalent understanding of the relation between social movements and democracy characterizing our society.<sup>1</sup> Young points out that, while on the one hand, there is a general understanding of social movements as actors of historical significance (through means such as mass demonstrations, sit-ins, strikes and boycotts such movements have enforced important democratic rights), on the other, this type of political action is often criticized for not being based on rational argumentation in an open and polite dialogue, as well as for being unconventional and confrontational, and therefore considered non-democratic. Thus, sometimes social movements are portrayed as actors creating and expanding democracy, sometimes as actors obstructing and destabilizing it.

Historically, this has caused social theorists to conceive social movements alternately as subversive and as necessary prerequisites for a sustainable and flourishing democracy. However, to understand the importance of social movements for politics and social change, both these aspects have to be taken in account. Social movements alternately challenge, change and sustain the institutions and norms of a prevailing society. Therefore, following Peter Wagner's theory of modernity, a central premise of my thesis has been that the tension between liberation and order—or between liberty and discipline—is to be conceived of as a foundation for the cultural self-understanding of modernity.<sup>2</sup> Between the centrality of liberty in the notion of autonomy and the disciplining forces of order, politics is created and social changes are initiated. When the premises for this tension is challenged and renegotiated, social movements have often played a prominent role.

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<sup>1</sup> I. M. Young (2001). "Activist challenges to deliberative democracy" in *Political Theory*, vol. 29, no. 5.

<sup>2</sup> P. Wagner (1994). *A sociology of modernity: Liberty and discipline* (London: Routledge).

The thesis is divided in two parts. The first (chapters 1–5) is oriented towards social theory and history of ideas, while the second part (chapters 6–11) is more empirically oriented. In the latter, I analyze and discuss the global justice movement more explicitly, primarily using activist interviews and survey data from my own research, made in the Swedish context of the global justice movement. To give an overview of the two parts and my conclusions, I will briefly describe their content and, even more schematically, the contents of each chapter.

### **Part One. Social movements, autonomy and the transformations of modernity**

In the first part of the thesis I offer a survey of various social movement theories since the conceptualization of the emerging worker's movement and "the social question" during the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century. In chapter 1, I introduce some of the central concepts for my thesis (*modernity, society, the social, the political and social movements*). In this chapter, I emphasize that knowledge about social movements was often created as a way to gain certainty against what might be seen as the contingency and unpredictability characterizing modernity. In contrast to institutions which are a part of everyday "normality" and could be characterized by their relative inertia (making them much easier to map and predict), social movements are often fleeting and transitory phenomena; which break with normality in rather unpredictable ways. Indeed such movements have at times served as one of the main targets for the anxiousness, being felt within certain parts of society, for modernity's unpredictability. The dark fantasies of unordered mobs led by agitating rabble-rousers, destroying order and civilization, have always tacitly accompanied theories wanting to grasp the human interactions making society and politics possible within the already given conditions of liberty, as have the pious hopes held by others of the potentialities within these same types of phenomena, accompanied the attempts to think the conditions for establishing a radically different society. If theories of the social try to grasp an underlying order, they have also often pictured the activities associated with social movements as the antithesis of this order—either as the temporal breakdown or end of that order, or as the beginning of something new.

These specific and historically bound knowledge interests are related to what Peter Wagner, in his more general discussion of the rise of the social sciences, has labeled the crises of modernity. Wagner defines these crises as periods during which the dominant institutions and conducts of life are being renegotiated and reinterpreted in light of the “double imaginary signification” of modernity, which is the tension between autonomy/liberty and mastery/discipline.<sup>3</sup>

Furthermore, these attempts to produce knowledge about social movements are closely connected to large-scale transformations in the forms of politics and our understanding of the political. Representations of social movements as important social phenomena, or objects of scientific study, introduced powerful conceptualizations that are still in use, both within the social sciences and more popular accounts. Through these interventions *persistent problématiques* were established, that can also be related to profound transformations within modernity.<sup>4</sup> The three-part periodization of modernity in Western societies that is central for Wagner’s theory of modernity—ranging from “restricted liberal modernity” to “organized modernity”, and to “extended liberal modernity”—have been utilized in my own account to date these shifts within modernity and to interpret their socio-cultural meanings. From these discussions, I derive three persistent *problématiques* that I consider to be central in the study of social movements.

Chapter 2 highlights the first of these *problématiques*: *social movements as mediation*. This *problématique* grew out of the discussions on “the social question” within early social science and can largely be considered a response to the promises of universal liberty and equality of the Enlightenment and the French revolution when confronted with the social reality of the socially and politically excluded masses and their striving to be included within the polity through political representation and

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<sup>3</sup> Ibid.; P. Wagner (2001). *Theorizing modernity: Inescapability and attainability in social theory* (London: SAGE).

<sup>4</sup> Cf. P. Wagner (2003). “The uses of the social sciences”, in T. M. Porter and D. Ross (ed.), *The Cambridge history of science: Volume 7: The Modern Social Sciences* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press).

social reforms. The creation of this *problématique* can thus be conceived of as a way to resolve the unsustainable exclusion of the working class that characterized mid-19<sup>th</sup> century society. This chapter focuses on Lorenz von Stein, the social theorist that first brought the concept of social movements into use in scientific contexts, as well as the theories of Karl Marx and Werner Sombart. Using Wagner's periodization of modernity, the rise of this *problématique* can also be considered as part of the first crisis of modernity, lasting longer than half of a century and expressing the transformation of the first, or "restricted liberal" modernity, into the second or "organized" modernity."

In chapter 3, I derive a second *problématique*—*social movements as collective action*—formulated in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century. The prime focus within this *problématique* is to understand how single individuals form political collectivities and act in common, and also grasp the consequences this collective action has had for both political institutions and the notion of autonomy. In terms of its periodization, this *problématique* can be said to have gained importance during the climax of the first crisis of modernity and the beginning of "organized modernity". At first, this *problématique* was a way to manage the fear of "the dangerous classes" being felt among the elites of society, especially as a reaction to the successes of the growing worker's movement. This focus on the dangers of the crowd is often attributed to Gustave Le Bon and other contemporary "mass psychologists". This chapter focuses on Le Bon due to the fact that his thoughts on the crowd came to influence as diverse thinkers as Émile Durkheim, Sigmund Freud, Georges Sorel, Robert Michels, Joseph Schumpeter. In addition, Le Bon's work had an influence on the proponents of the Chicago school of sociology such as Robert Park and Herbert Blumer (though the alarming pitch of the "mass psychologists" is quite absent among these later theorists of "collective behavior").

Chapter 4 is focused on the third *problématique*—*social movements as creativity*—which grew as a response to the rise of the "new social movements" during the 1960s. The target of these movements' criticism was the political and social configuration of

organized modernity; originally an answer to the social question, but now conceived of as having become stagnant, and in which institutional and cultural forms were considered to be patriarchal, inflexible and democratically too limited. This *problématique* coincides with what Wagner labels the second crisis of modernity. In this chapter, Alain Touraine is the social theorist given most attention, due to his importance for the framing of the protests of “sixty-eight” as the rise of new social movements, and his focus on the role of the creative aspects of social movements in the transformations of autonomy in society. In addition, I discuss other social movement scholars who focus on similar aspects of the creative capacities of movements (for instance, Alberto Melucci, Ron Eyerman/Andrew Jamison and the American resource mobilization paradigm), as well as those social theorists touching upon similar subjects in their more general social theories (such as Michael Hardt/Antonio Negri and Ernesto Laclau/Chantal Mouffe).

Chapter 5 is devoted to a summary of all three *problématiques*.

In this first part of the thesis, parallel to this account centered on the history of ideas of social movement theories, I highlight the role occupied by social movements in the historical transformations being described. My aim has primarily been to focus attention on the at times central role social movements have had during epochal shifts within modernity. Partly, this role has consisted in their contribution to processes of cognitive reorientation, in which the primary conflicts of the crises of modernity have been conceptualized. Social movements have been crucial in creating solutions to the crises in question, drafting utopian projects, making social experiments and bringing forward new values and forms of action. Thus, by focusing on the relation between social movements and emerging social forms, the main tendencies in these major shifts can be highlighted, particularly when it comes to changes and developments in the realization of autonomy.

In this part of my account, I show how the conceptualization of the social question by the worker’s movement became important for the rise of organized modernity.



During this second epoch of Western modernity (in most countries from the 1920s and onwards) autonomy was mainly realized through belonging to collectivities—foremost post-traditional collectivities such as class, nation and nuclear family—and political participation was accomplished on a mass basis foremost through trade unions, class based political parties and indirectly through the procedures of universal suffrage and political representation. From the 1960s and onwards the new social movements began to critique these structures of organized modernity. According to them, the political parties were too hierarchical, too much oriented towards loyalty and too closely connected to the state. Instead, the new social movements advocated political forms that expressed more (or complete) autonomy in relation to traditional institutions, and as such they tended to be more oriented towards values as diversity, creativity and individual expression. For instance, the New Left and the Feminist movement criticized the boundary between private and public as a way of concealing seemingly “private” relations of power outside the public realm. Many movements insisted that in addition to making the state more democratic, also other social spheres should be arranged according to the ideals of democracy. Socially, the new social movements were based on social belongings other than class—such as gender, generation, sexuality, ethnicity, etc.—and politically, they articulated questions about environment, peace and international solidarity. The attitude towards autonomy was characterized by a search for political spaces outside of institutionalized politics. Similarly to the struggles and critiques by the worker’s movement in an earlier moment, these movements had an impact on politics and society at large. For instance, new questions entered the political agenda: political parties changed their mode of organizing, new models of work organization entered industry, and “post-material values” broadly impacted in society.

### *Summary of Part One*

As we have seen, a central aspect of Peter Wagner’s theory of modernity is that organized modernity—i.e. the second epoch of Western modernity—was affected by what he names the second crisis of modernity during the late 1960s. For Wagner, the second crisis of modernity implies a transition from organized modernity to a third

modernity—which he labels “extended liberal modernity”. Despite this claim, he neither makes a precise characterization of this third modernity in his own theory, nor asserts that we have fully entered this modernity.<sup>5</sup> In his account of the first crisis of modernity, however, Wagner shows that many of the conceptions and institutional forms that were about to become dominant during organized modernity, were already present at the commencement of the social question during mid-19<sup>th</sup> century, and that these forms became more important during the period of crisis that characterized the latter part of the century. In my own account, I lay stress on the fact that the utopian proposals, social experiments and emerging social forms of social movements had an important role to play in this process. Such influences by social movements were especially important when the more institutionally stable forms of second modernity became established during the 1920s and onwards. While this discussion is touched upon in chapter 1 (but in a more theoretically oriented way) chapter 6 opens the second part of the thesis, in which these notions are developed further in an effort to describe the potential role of the global justice movement for today’s period of modernity. Making an analogy with Wagner’s characterization of the first crisis of modernity, I argue in this chapter that what connects the protests of both the new social movements of the 1960s and the global justice movement of today is their part in the processes under which the dominant social forms of organized modernity are transformed, forming an emerging third modernity, whose dominant forms are partly established but still contested and incomplete.<sup>6</sup>

## **Part Two. The global justice movement: some overall characteristics**

Using the perspective established in the first part, I focus almost exclusively on the contemporary global justice movement in the second part of the thesis. Mostly, my

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<sup>5</sup> Cf. M. Carleheden (2001). “Rethinking the epochs of Western modernity”, in M. Carleheden and M. H. Jacobsen (ed.), *The transformation of modernity: Aspects of the past, present and future of an era* (Aldershot: Ashgate).

<sup>6</sup> Cf. M. Carleheden (2006). “The transformation of our conduct of life: One aspect of the three epochs of western modernity” in *Distinktion*, no. 13.

own empirical data concerns the Swedish part of the movement but I make some use of similar survey data from other countries in order to make a comparative analysis possible.

To give a brief account of the second part of the thesis, chapter 6 contains a critical account of some of the theories central to the social sciences for conceptualizing the dominant transformations of society during the last decades. Often, theories aiming to describe these transformations have relied on the concepts of *globalization*, *individualization* and *civil society*. In this chapter, these theories and concepts are related to social movements, politics and the conditions of collective political action during our period of modernity. In chapter 7, the background to the global justice movement is described in relation to the general process of globalization. Here, the growth of the social forum, as an important meeting-place and tool for political change for the movement, is discussed. A short historical account is made both of the global justice movement in general and its Swedish context. In chapter 8, the social and political composition of the movement is analyzed using comparative data of activists in a couple of different countries. In addition, the meaning of the social forum for the activists is discussed using interview data. Here, I highlight the senses in which the global justice movement in different parts of the world shows similar or different characteristics in regard to their social, political and organizational aspects. In chapter 9, the transnational aspects of the movement are analyzed and discussed. Here in particular the activists' views on globalization and the transnational dimension of their activism are emphasized. Chapter 10 focuses on the views of the activists on democracy and politics, in relation to the radicalized individualization often being attributed to our time by contemporary social theories. In all of the above mentioned chapters, I use and analyze semi-structured interviews with organizers of local social forums in Sweden and survey data for participants of these forums. These are then compared with similar activist surveys from other countries.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> The survey was conducted by the author and four other scholars (Hilma Holm, Johan Lindgren, Henrik Nordvall and Adrienne Sörbom) during three local social forums held in May 2004, in Lund, Gothenburg and Stockholm (i.e., in the two largest Swedish cities, and one just next to the third, since

The question of the representation of the global justice movement in the media is the primary issue of chapter 11. In this chapter, the media representation of the movement in the five largest Swedish daily newspapers during the period 1999–2006 is discussed, through a quantitatively oriented content analysis.<sup>8</sup>

One primary characteristic of the global justice movement explored in the more empirically oriented chapters is its *relation to institutionalized politics*. This regards both the activist's views on politics in society at large and their own political activism. While new social movements often have been characterized as searching for new political spaces—rather than taking part in the representative political institutions, or trying to reform or overtake the institutions of the state—my analysis shows that many of the activists of the global justice movement see it as crucial to reform and democratize both national and global institutions. For instance, the survey shows that 62% want to build new global institutions and that 70% want to reform the ones in place today, while only 29% want to strengthen national governments. At the same time the activists consider the institutions of parliamentary democracy as fundamental and important to protect against the contemporary processes that has weakened the bonds between the states and their citizens. Despite the fact that their level of trust in political institutions is lower than the average among the population at large, most of the activists believe it is important to exert influence on the institutions, and their participation in elections is

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Lund is situated 20 kilometers from Malmö). In total, 1066 questionnaires were collected, at an overall response rate of 48%. The interviews were done (by the author) partly in 2006, with activists taking part in the “co-ordination group” of one of the local forums where the survey was conducted, and partly in 2007, with other local social forum activists that participated in the 2007 World Social Forum in Nairobi, Kenya. For comparative data, see in particular D. della Porta, M. Andretta et. al. (2006). *Globalization from below: Transnational activists and protest networks* (Minneapolis, Minnesota: University of Minnesota Press).

<sup>8</sup> The data used is articles (N=355) from the media archives Retriever (former Mediearkivet) and Presstext, where the most frequently used names for the movement have been searched. The daily newspapers analyzed are *Aftonbladet*, *Dagens Nyheter*, *Expressen*, *Göteborgs-Posten* and *Svenska Dagbladet*.

more extensive than among the population at large. Furthermore, one fifth of the activist community is a member of a political party. When it comes to their own political activism, however, there is little difference between today's activists and those of the new social movements. Even though activism today could be described as less focused on creating alternative ways of living than some of the movements of the 1960s and 70s, the majority of the activists of the global justice movement also emphasize values such as creativity, extensive possibilities to express one's commitment and flexible forms of association. In contrast to what established political parties are conceived of as offering, they prefer activism that is grass-roots oriented and organized in less hierarchical, stiff and politically limited forms. The value of acting politically outside of established institutions while at the same time aiming at influencing them, (if often by different means than those traditionally recognized within those institutions), is stressed by these activists in what can be said to be a civil society-oriented view of politics.

The first characteristic is adjacent to the second, which is the movement's thoroughly *global perspective on issues about democracy and social justice*. When it comes to the new social movements being formed in the years around 1968, they primarily managed to shape the political agenda through their (left) libertarian critique of both state and market—what has sometimes been labeled their “artistic critique”.<sup>9</sup> This critique can be considered as part of their “life politics”, which also was manifested in their stress on creativity, diversity and non-hierarchical forms of organization.<sup>10</sup> However, what has been labeled the “social critique” of the new social movements, i.e. their demands for equality and social justice, did not have the same impact.<sup>11</sup> On the contrary, these kinds of questions got significantly less priority on the general political agenda. Regarding the activists of the global justice movements, the “artistic

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<sup>9</sup> L. Boltanski (2002). “The left after May 1968 and the longing for total revolution” in *Thesis Eleven*, no. 69.

<sup>10</sup> Cf. A. Giddens (1990). *The consequences of modernity* (Cambridge: Polity). See also H. Thörn (2002). *Globaliseringens dimensioner: Nationalstat, världssamhälle, demokrati och sociala rörelser* (Stockholm: Atlas).

<sup>11</sup> Cf. Boltanski.

critique” and “life politics” are still an important basis for their activism, but the attention towards inequality and political exclusion on the global level at the same time implies that the “social critique” or “emancipatory politics” has regained its importance, especially due to the discussions on globalization.<sup>12</sup> A central notion the activists share and around which the movement coalesces, is found in the critique of neo-liberal politics, attributed to global economic institutions as well as nation-state governments during the last 20–30 years. Globalization, however, is not only conceived as a global diffusion of neo-liberal politics, but also as a process strengthening the interdependence between people. This interdependence is believed to create a greater mutual understanding of the global situation, which those involved in the global justice movement consider as heightening the possibilities at the global level to articulate alternatives to the neo-liberal policies. Thus, the movement can be considered as articulating the social question of our time; what could be labeled “the global social question”. Similarly to the worker’s movement during the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> century, the global justice movement articulates a critique of the marketization of society and the related undermining of both autonomy and its social basis but this time on a global level. Accordingly, social critique is combined with artistic critique, and life politics with emancipatory politics.

A third characteristic of the movement is its *diversity*, regarding both its organizational and political composition and the values embraced by its activists. Even though it is the issue of globalization that has brought the different actors of the movement together, a variety of issues underlie this overarching problem. Furthermore, their common critique does not necessarily imply that the activists elevate a single or specific model for a future society, which has sometimes been the case in earlier social movements. Against what is conceived of as a neo-liberal dogma that society can only be organized in *one* way, the activists rather embrace a pluralistic point of view regarding society’s autonomy. Against capitalist conformity, they claim the diversity of society. As in the slogan of the World Social Forum, the activists rather claim “another world is possible”. Moreover, regarding

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<sup>12</sup> Cf. *ibid.*; Giddens.

organizational issues, it is widely believed that the movement context must give room for diversity in opinions and views. Nevertheless, this diversity does not imply a fragmentation of the movement identity. Most of the activists (72%) show a high degree of identification with the movement as a whole.

Regarding the organizational composition, one can at the same time see continuity in relation to earlier waves of radicalization. Within the global justice movement one finds many organizations that emerged from the “old social movements” (trade unions, Left parties, etc.) as well as from the new social movements (environmentalists, international solidarity activists, etc.), together with new organizations as Attac, being formed during the last decade around globalization issues. A large majority of the activists (75%) identify themselves as left, but most of them are affiliated with new social movement organizations. One difference from earlier waves of radicalization is that the different organizations do not work in isolation or only with specific issues, but constitute a multiplicity of nodes in a common debate over the social and political challenges of globalization. Furthermore, the social composition of the movement in many respects coincides with the new social movements. A majority of the activists are young (48% are 25 years or younger, 24% 26–35 years old), highly educated (47%) and socio-economically belongs to the middle classes. However, the presence of organizations from the old social movements means that also other socio-economic groups, such as workers, are part of this otherwise middle class dominated milieu. Also within national contexts of the movement other than the Swedish, these diverse socio-economic tendencies are prevalent.

A forth characteristic of the movement is its *creation of new political spaces*, especially the social forums. On the pattern of the World Social Forum held in Porto Alegre, Brasil, in 2001, the social forum has become an important form for facilitating political discussions and political action, at the continental, regional, national and local level. The social forum can be conceived of as a new kind of public, within which experiences are shared, world-views discussed and common knowledge and

cosmologies created. Through these processes a common identity and solidarity is shaped. The forum also makes possible collective action aiming at social change, since the forum is used as a space for the creation of common projects and making political statements. Hence, the forum can be considered as a hybrid of a public and a political actor. At the same time, it makes possible creative action and the creation of knowledge. Moreover, the utilization of digital means of communication have been an important way to intensify transnational intellectual exchanges within the movement, as well as facilitated the planning and realization of common campaigns and other political action.

This aspect connects to the fifth characteristic of the global justice movement, which is its *transgression of the national political context* that has often been conceived of as the natural space for politics. Through the local social forum, local activism is connected with transnational networks. It also makes a globally diffused political phenomenon locally connected. Thus, the activism of the global justice movement takes place at different geographical levels that are made interconnected. While on the one hand, many of the activists (62%) have at sometime participated in international campaigns or other movement activities, or have had e-mail contact with activists in other countries (46%), on the other, and despite the fact that the activism partly takes place within cross-border networks and is characterized by a global identity, a majority (62%) of the activists are continuously active on the local level. Everyday activism is much more common on the local level than on the global (11%), the continental (6%) or the national level (24%). However, the national political scene is still believed by the activists to have a central importance, for their own action and for politics at large. In the interviews, this is shown by the will to protect what is considered as the typically Swedish “social movement tradition” [*folkrörelsetraditionen*]. This is conceived as consisting in relatively close connections between the politicians and the people, which at the same time gives social movements the role of being a link between citizens and institutionalized politics. Furthermore, in comparison to activists from other countries, the Swedish activists show a higher degree of trust in political institutions and display a greater willingness to negotiate with these entities.



Partly, this data demonstrates the centrality of national political culture alongside globalization. In addition, this fact can be related to what has been thought of as a peculiarity of Swedish civil society, at least if compared internationally, namely that it has traditionally consisted in both a participatory democracy based on free associations *and* close bonds between these associations and the state.<sup>13</sup> In accordance with such a description, the Swedish activists of the global justice movements value independent grass-roots activism and close bonds between the movements and the state, and believe this “social movement tradition” to be a still desirable model for the realization of political autonomy.

When it comes to the media representation of the global justice movement in Sweden, however, a picture quite different from the one made above emerges. In the five major daily newspapers analyzed, it can be shown that the movement is most often characterized as negative to globalization as such, and in general it is portrayed as an actor that criticizes and protests the policies of others rather than presents its own proposals. Furthermore, the movement is often associated with violence. In some sense, this shows that the Le Bonian view of social movements as a threat to democracy still is alive in representations of contemporary movements.

### **Part Three. Conclusion: The global justice movement and the processes of globalization, individualization and civil society**

As mentioned earlier, chapter 6 of my thesis is devoted to a discussion of what can be said to be the specificity of our epoch of modernity, that is to say, the third modernity. In conclusion, I relate the above outlined characteristics of the global justice movement, outlined on the basis on my own data, to this more general discussion of the political and social transformations of our epoch of modernity. This discussion develops primarily in relation to the concepts discussed in chapter 6: globalization, individualization and civil society.

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<sup>13</sup> Cf. L. Trägårdh (2007). “Introduction”, in L. Trägårdh (ed.), *State and civil society in Northern Europe: the Swedish model reconsidered* (New York: Berghahn books).

## *Globalization*

Firstly, in connection with the discussion on globalization, the significance of the global justice movement can be related to the change in *institutional* conditions for political action during the last 20–30 years. In short, those processes which have, in spite of the fact that nation-states have remained important actors in this development, implied a denationalization of political power and a strengthening of global institutions such as IMF, EU, WTO and the World Bank. In addition, the policies recommended by these supranational bodies have contributed to the privatization or semi-privatization of many public and welfare arrangements. At the same time, the executive power of many nation-states has been strengthened at the expense of their parliaments. These transformations have both implied a weakening of the bond between citizens and the state, as well as the boundary between private and public.<sup>14</sup> Contrary to the critique of the new social movements, this has not been a matter of making the private political or democratic. On the contrary, the public has been privatized and processes that were earlier public have been withdrawn from public scrutiny and democratic political influence.

The global justice movement can be considered as a political response to this problem in two ways. The first being that the movement draws political attention to the democratic deficit of such global institutions as those mentioned above and the concurrent democratic weakening of the nation-state. The second way the movement responds to globalization is in articulating what can be considered *the* social question of our time, since it makes the growing inequality, resulting from the market-oriented policies of global institutions and nation-states, a political issue. Against the developments of privatization, the common is upheld as well as a will to democratize global power.

However, globalization has not only meant privatization, de-politization and the diffusion of market relations. The global agendas that have guided the supranational

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<sup>14</sup> Cf. S. Sassen (2006). *Territory, authority, rights: From medieval to global assemblages* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press).

bodies have also facilitated the production of new political spaces. Parallel to, and sometimes in opposition to these bodies, transnational publics like the World Social Forum have been created. The forum contributes to the formation of identities of global grass-roots politics, to the creation of demands of global rights and the establishment of transnational publics for political interaction. The local connectedness of the social forums and the local character of the activists in the global justice movement also play a role in these processes, since unlike global institutions that command globalization from above, these social actors drive and build it from below.<sup>15</sup>

### *Individualization*

Secondly, in connection with the discussion on individualization, the global justice movement can be related to changes in the *cultural* conditions of political action since the late 1960s. Here, as discussed above, the impact of the new social movements must be seen as crucial for the production of the cultural values being embraced in today's society. Through the impact of "artistic critique", the values of belonging to post-traditional collectivities—typical of "organized modernity"—have been replaced by values such as authenticity, creativity and self-fulfillment, which are often in short designated as "post-material values".<sup>16</sup> In line with these values, political activism has often been based on a skepticism towards political institutions, and a conception of "the political" as something broader than institutionalized politics and parliamentary democracy. Unlike the significant impact had on society by the "artistic critique", the traditional "social critique" arguably became less and less important in the decades following sixty-eight. Instead the processes of privatization have targeted the claims on social leveling and inclusion being characteristic of organized modernity. At times, elements of the artistic critique—e.g. the claims for individual autonomy and decentralization—have even been used against the arguments and gains of the earlier social critique in order to legitimize such developments as, for instance, the "flexibilization" of the labor market or the

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<sup>15</sup> Cf. *ibid.*

<sup>16</sup> Cf. Carleheden (2006).

transformation of welfare state services into private or semi-private systems.<sup>17</sup> The result often being larger insecurity, inequality and marginalization. This shows the ambiguity of the artistic critique with respect to the new social movements, since at times it has also meant the weakening of social critique.

This changed balance between social security and individual autonomy could be understood as one of the initial impetuses of the globalization protests. What might be called a revival of the social critique has been a central concern for the global justice movement. While the new social movements criticized political representation for being insufficient and the boundary between private and public spheres as effectively obscuring the social inequalities outside of the public realm and the state, these kinds of issues have been discussed from another angle by the activists of the global justice movement. While still recognizing the importance of the critique offered by the new social movements, for today's activists, the question of defending the public and political institutions against privatization and de-politization has been more important. Therefore, there has been a larger interest among activists in extending political representation and other forms of political autonomy that have been undermined by globalization. Thus, they express a will to restore the meaning of the public. More in line with the artistic critique discussed above, however, the importance given to social justice, equality and the role of the public have been combined with a focus on diversity, and non-hierarchical and more flexible forms of organization. Moreover, this attitude of openness towards one's own way of making politics is used to politicize or make public what formerly has been de-politicized, as well as to create political communities that remain autonomous from the institutions of the state.

#### *Civil society and participatory democracy*

Thirdly, all of these aspects of the global just movement point towards a discussion on civil society, in relation to which the movement can serve as an example of the

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<sup>17</sup> Cf. A. Honneth (2004). "Organized self-realization: Some paradoxes of individualization" in *European Journal of Social Theory*, vol. 7, no. 4.; Boltanski.

changes in the *social* conditions for political action. In connection to the discussions on civil society, the centrality of social movements for democratization has often been asserted. This, for instance, was the case during the 1970s and 1980s, when social movements were considered as central actors in the democratization of former dictatorships, as well in the debates on “global civil society” since the 1990s, as many global institutions have been increasingly found to be in need of democratization. In terms of existing models of democracy, this has meant that the idea of “participatory democracy” has come to challenge the idea of “legal democracy” characterizing the policies of global institutions as well as nation-states.<sup>18</sup> The relation between these models can thus be understood as defining the crucial differences in how democracy is understood during our epoch of modernity. On the one hand, there is the model of “legal democracy”, based on an ambition to minimize the influence of social interests over the state and to limit political power to enlightened elites. On the other, there is the model of “participatory democracy”, based on a will to make the political more conscious of its social foundations, wanting to include more actors within the realm of politics, as well as expanding the realm of democracy to more spheres of society. The differences between these two models forces the question of how the autonomy of society should be realized during a time when political power is being denationalized and becoming more transnational.

As we have seen, the attitudes of the activists of the global justice movement towards politics and democracy are much more in line with such a “participatory democratic” view. Against the de-politization and privatization of the state and political institutions, many wish to strengthen representative political institutions. At the same time, they stress that political parties and institutions must be counter-weighted by social movements, and they give priority in their own activism to grass-roots politics. Thus, the global justice movement can be said to embrace a “participatory democratic” view of politics, rooted in the institutional transformations created by globalization and the cultural changes connected to the individualization of our time.

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<sup>18</sup> Cf. D. Held (1987). *Models of democracy* (Cambridge: Polity).

Which role the global justice movement will play in the tensions between different views on society's autonomy in the long run is of course an open question.

Historically, social movements have played an important role in the democratization of nation-states. In my thesis, I have—with a focus on the Swedish part of the movement—showed that the global justice movement articulates central issues on the functioning of democracy under an increasingly global political order, while at the same time creating the democratic publics that this global order hitherto has been lacking.