Dialectics of Diversity

Bolette M. Christensen CASA 2004
A place for academia in the fight for social change?

*Knowledge, theory, research, and intellectuals in the movements of diversity*

**Outline**

- The movement field: Dialectics of Diversity
- The movements within network society
- Pressures and proposals
- The power of Knowledge
- The use of theory
- Academia and academics within the dialectics of diversity
- Some kind of conclusion
Multitude

A field of movements

Networks of diversity
Dialectics of Empowerment

Resistance

Identity

Collectivity

Empowerment

Mass hysteria

Construction

Protest movements

Resistance

Identity

New Age

Life politics

NGOs
Global networks of resistance and alternative

Resources:
- Diversity
- Mobilization capability
- Transformative power
- Networked communication
- Knowledge

Process aims:
- Subordination
- Homogenization

Organizations with leadership aspirations
(aspirations for authority over the movement)

Global networks of dominance

Resources:
- Economic and productive power
- Networked organization

Process aims:
- Inclusion
- Transformation
- Legitimization of corporate power

Corporate networks

Resources:
- Money
- Regulatory power
- Political authority

Process aims:
- Intellectual elites

Political system of local, national, regional and international institutions

Resources:
- Activity
- Organization/discipline
- Articulatory power

Process aims:
- Cooptation
- Inclusion

Withdrawal
- Individualism
- Communalism
- Nationalism
- Fundamentalism
The global political system

Local, national, regional, and international institutions & networks of political power

Resources
• Funding
• Regulatory power
• Political authority
• Military & police

Needs
• Mobilization capability
• Knowledge
• Transformative power
• Creativity & innovation

Process aims
• Cooptation
• Inclusion
The global networks of corporate power

Resources
- Economic strength
- Networked organization
- Productive power
- Expansion

Needs
- Legitimization
- Knowledge
- Transformative power
- Creativity & innovation

Process aims
- Cooperation
- Inclusion
- Transformation
- Utilization
Governance

Global networks of political, corporate, media, cultural and intellectual elites

Resources

• Political authority
• Funding
• Regulatory power
• Military & police

• Economic strength
• Productive power
• Expansion
• Networked organization

Process aims

• Inclusion of creative & innovative powers
• Exclusion of opposition
And some tendencies from below

The quest for hegemony
  • Leadership aspirations
  • Organizational unity: A global organization
  • Ideological & strategic homogenization
  • The idea of a new International

Withdrawal/ Resistance Identity
  • Alternativism
  • Communalism
  • Nationalism
  • Etnocentrism
  • Fundamentalism
  • Individualism
  • Reflective consumerism (life politics)
Worst case scenario

Political system of local, national, regional and international institutions

Intellectual elites

Global networks of dominance: Global Governance

Media

Corporate networks

NGO's

Atomized grassroots

Sectarian groups

Inclusion of construction

Exclusion of opposition

Organizations with leadership aspirations
The power of knowledge

Knowledge: Information making sense: Context

- Knowledge as political practice: Articulatory power
- Knowledge as external strength ● Claim for authoritative knowledge
- Knowledge in the dynamics of self reflection ● Claim for critical & creative thinking connected to practice
- Decentered knowledge of practice is produced and distributed within the networks of diversity
- Knowledge is embedded and articulated within practical and theoretical contexts
A place for theory

• Conceptual discourse
  Conceptual representation of a certain domain of social practices from a certain perspective (Fairclough)
• Conceptual articulation of reflective understanding
• Based upon abstraction & concretion of experience
• Enabling to learn from experience
• Concepts: Linguistic tools for abstraction & concretion

• Relevance depends on practical context
• Diversity of practices is reflected in theoretical diversity
• All theory is reductive
• Eclecticism is better than theoretical purity
Academia

- The institutional setting
- producing institutionalized knowledge
- socializing/ normalising individuals
  - shaping subjectivities
- A central institution of governance

Academics

- Individuals socialized within Academia
- Students, theorists, researchers, professionals
- With or without actual affiliation to Academia
The claims on knowledge, theory and research

Global networks of counter power

Complexity & diversity & decentered networked organization of resistance and alternative

Knowledge Contextualisation Self reflection Learning

Global networks of power

Complexity & diversity & decentered networked relations of dominance, oppression and production

Claims, requirements Opportunities, restrictions Institutions Power

Criticism

Knowledge services

Eclecticism in theory and topical diversity of research

Institutionalized knowledge production

Learning
Knowledge as resource:
Claim for authoritative knowledge

Professional ambitions within academia

Power relations within academic discourse:
The fight for theoretical hegemony

Confirming established paradigms, i.e. dominant ideologies

Disclaiming theoretical diversity and multitude

Power relations within the movements:
The fight for leadership
The academic intellectual

- Wants recognition
- Wants a career
- Wants to be right
- Wants to win the fight about truth
- Identifies with all embracing concepts & theory
- Feels uncomfortable with ambiguity
- Tends towards reductive abstraction
- Wants to demonstrate intellectual superiority

Is familiarized with the fight for power using the techniques of academic discourse
The place for academics in the dialectics of diversity

• Academics are activists
  • Deliver opposition, criticism, alternative knowledge
  • Articulate counter discourses
  • Produce the dynamic resource of knowledge
    - as professional
    - as independent intellectual
    - as participant

• Contribute to the continual dynamics of decentered & networked self reflection on experience and action
In order to do that...

- Give up the privilege of authoritative knowledge
- De-academization of knowledge

- Abstain from the quest for theoretical unambiguity
- Abstain from the wish for hegemony
- Abstain from the claim for absolute truth
- Accept theoretical diversity, lack of clarity, eclecticism, diversity of research topics, diversity of perspectives, internal contradictions

You are neither to be a consultant or the exclusive knower of “What’s to be done”
The task of knowledge, research and theory as self reflection within the movements is to sustain the dialectics of diversity contribute to the dynamics of the field take part in the continual re-contextualisation of experience and practice aiming at social change

Open new horizons for resistance and alternative ...
Beyond globalisation

Mars