Conceptualising glocal organisation: from rhizomes to holoflux in becoming post-human


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**Introducing glocal earth**

Have you ever tried to locate your home using the online program *Google Earth*? I tried this recently. The program opened with a satellite image of the earth against the black background of space, North America the default continent that loomed large in front of me. I typed in my Norwich, UK, postcode – the simple 6 character code of NR1 4JW. Within seconds the globe had spun round and was speeding towards me, initially a blur of blue ocean, green vegetation, and brown built-up areas, rapidly disaggregating as the outline of clusters of trees and the edges of buildings. The process made my stomach lurch, producing a sensation of roller-coaster vertigo. The dive from space to the hill that I live on, and the house that I live in, lasted around five seconds: a bewildering movement from global to local; a near simultaneous representation of inhabiting – of *dwelling* - in both a planet and a place.

For me, this is what is conjured up by the contemporary notion and phenomenon of *glocalisation*. Not only does this describe a collapsing of temporal and spatial scales to produce simultaneous experiences and productions of macro and micro. It also combines with a post-dualist imagining that is suggestive of a dynamic situatedness in both the local and the global, and that produces a corresponding embodied knowledge of comprising and constituting – of being and becoming - both a part of the whole, and the whole which holds the part. Arguably, a key idea and practice distilling something of the zeitgeist of contemporary globalisation phenomena thus is that of 'glocal' organisation. This clever term, originating from Japanese business practices in the 1980s (Wikipedia 2006a) and popularized in the English-speaking academic world by sociologist Roland Robertson in the 1990s (e.g. Robertson 1997), attempts to capture the interrelationships between global and local social and spatial scales that have been facilitated by new and rapidly globalising communications technologies, particularly the internet. It has been taken up by business in considering the provision of local services globally, the customisation of global corporate outputs for local circumstances (as in McDonald’s attempts to woo to local appetites via culturally-relevant
menus), and the amelioration of homogenising tendencies through local agential and hybridising uptakes of products and services (e.g. see www.glocalforum.org). It also is actively present and celebrated in the multiplicitous social movements and contemporary resistances contesting the frequently exploitative and unjust forms of globalisation processes: as indicated by popular slogans such as The personal is political!, Think global, act local!, and Unity in diversity! It is these latter mutinous contexts which constitute my sphere of reference in this piece.

In this contribution I attempt an exploration and theorisation of some key and overlapping organisational metaphors which both describe and inspire 'glocal' organisation. My argument is that the advent of exponential uptake of the internet requires new concepts and metaphors for thinking organisation – in terms of both form and dynamics. Here I move through a range of metaphors – starting with the fabulous organisational metaphor of the rhizome as articulated by philosophers Deleuze and Guattari’s (1988 (1980)), and closing with physicist David Bohm’s articulation of the holoflux as the field of dynamic, enfolded, energetic indeterminacy where every point is connected and thereby mutually constituted. I suggest that these are empowering metaphors that, by indelibly entwining individual and social in conceptual domains (and in contrast to the ethical nihilism frequently associated with extreme postmodern and relativist positions), affirm the possibility for agency and awareness in the dynamic constitution of glocal lifeworlds. As such they both describe and guide a range of practices generating a contemporary (and amodern) politics of the ‘posthuman’: from a groping towards a global autonomous DiY culture in its myriad local manifestations; to multiplicitous attempts to resist and negotiate identification by states and other bureaucracies in favour of fluid and hybrid ‘identities’; and to the upwelling appropriation of the internet in facilitating the emergence of non-geographically defined communities and ‘cultures’. I thus offer some reflections on what the term and concept of ‘glocal’ implies in terms of understanding what it means to be human under conditions of globalisation, where the simultaneous consciousness of being both locally and globally emplaced is constantly produced, signalling both anxiety and possibility regarding desires for participation in socio-political change.

**Distributed networks and glocal politics: from rhizome to holoflux**
A popular idea in the mutinous politics of anti-capitalism and (anti-)globalisation declares that ‘our resistance is as transnational as capitalism’ (Peoples Global Action 2000). This accepts the global penetration of capital and the market into all available spaces (cf. Hardt and Negri 2000). But it also crystallises an understanding that the increased ‘globality’ or supraterritoriality of capital and the market is unable to proceed without simultaneously effecting the spread of ideas and practices that constitute its own nemesis (Chesters 2003: 46). This is related largely to the fact that the communications technology facilitating the recently accelerated pace of capital colonisation also has made possible an exponential increase in the ability of geographically dispersed local social movements and networks to connect with each other. By facilitating the sharing of ideas and experiences, the planning of events and actions, the generation of independently produced media regarding events and issues, and the reinforcing of psychological strength from the knowledge of not being isolated, technology has played an enormous part in permitting the emergence of a social movement that, while diverse, is indeed global (cf. Notes From Nowhere 2003).

Arguably, the moment signalling the entrance of the recent wave of glocal post-capitalist protest is January 1st 1994, the date that the Zapatistas of the rather remote rural region of Chiapas, Mexico, took up the internet to communicate their pragmatic and cultural resistance to the extension of an extractive US-led neoliberalism signified by Mexico’s signing of

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1 Iterated, for example, as ‘our resistance will be as global as their capitalism!’ (Antiauthoritarian Movement Salonika 2003a: 1)

2 This phenomenon is critical in both democratising the production of media and combating a situation whereby the corporate media is located firmly in the pockets of the state, as for example, in Italy where media tycoon and Prime Minister, Silvio Berlusconi owns something like 90% of the country’s formal media outlets (e.g. Reporters Without Borders 2003). Since the first coordinated DiY media coverage of anti-capitalist protests in London on June 18th 1999 (to coincide with the G8 meeting in Cologne) over 100 ‘Indymedia’ Centres (IMCs) have been established worldwide (IMC-UK 2003), including recently in Baghdad (at www.almuajaha.com). IMCs aspire to non-hierarchical forms of organisation to provide an interactive media and open publishing platform. Open source software is used, such that anyone can upload information via an openly accessible web interface. IMCs have no ties to political parties or larger NGOs. In contrast to the concealed biases of mainstream corporate media, the IMC subjectivity and ethic is stated clearly as the intent to actively challenge and reject all systems and practices of domination and discrimination (e.g. IMC-UK 2003). As a means for activists to produce updated media regarding issues and protests, and to communicate this information to other activists around the world, IMCs are invaluable. The use of the internet and independently produced media in generating a cogent and broad-based opposition to the recent attack on Iraq, for example, is celebrated in the following quote: ‘[s]o far US power could count on its total control of public consciousness in large parts of the world. In its past wars, the millions of Lilliputians sat glued to their TV sets and watched the propaganda broadcasts, identical on all channels. They watched and believed that the war is for sublime values of peace and justice. Now as well, obedient spokesmen explain that Saddam is Hitler and the Iraqi children must be saved from him. But who is listening? Now the truth is exposed - the US is perceived as a gangster that does whatever he feels like. In the past, the US committed its crimes to the sounds of cheers of the majority of the Western society. It has lost this majority. The change that has occurred in the world can no longer be reversed’ (Reinhart 2003).
NAFTA\(^3\). Since then the emancipatory potential of the internet as a crucial element of new communications technologies has been recognised widely - both as a means of making information available and in providing a vehicle for connecting people. Further, however, the potentialities embodied by the technology itself also can contribute to the form – to the commons-building (anti-)structure and (dis-)organisation - of ‘the movement(s)’ (cf. Sullivan and Day forthcoming). These dimensions are reinforced further in the pursuit of variously anarchist and libertarian values in organisation and decision-making, i.e. that in ideal terms eschew fixed hierarchies and identities, are self-empowering and anti-authoritarian, and which strive for consensus rather than relying on voting practices (through which discontent is fostered through the in-built exclusion of some desires) (e.g. CHESTERS 2003; GRAEBER 2003). The possibilities for intensification and proliferation offered by the internet as a means of producing and sharing information – for communicative action to use Habermas’ term (1990 (1983)) - thus celebrate the indeterminacy of the cyborg zeitgeist of the 21\(^{st}\) century. As such, it becomes the most significant tool in producing a necessary ‘unity of people trying to resist world-wide intensification of domination’ (Haraway 1991: 154).

**Rhizome and mycelium**

Deleuze and Guattari’s (1988 (1980)) now famous organisational metaphor of the rhizome\(^4\), has become a common tool for thinking through the organisational form and dynamics of networks. In botanical terms, a rhizome is ‘[a]n underground stem which grows more or less parallel with the surface of the soil’ (Müller, 1984: 32). Often, rhizomatous plants also are stoloniferous, stolons being ‘[a] part of the stem which grows horizontally along the ground, and often develops roots at the nodes’ (Müller, 1984: 33). Figure 1 shows a species of grass (*Cynodon dactylon* (L.) Pers.) familiar to wetter areas in dryland environments and which has a typically rhizomatous and stoloniferous growth form. Plant species such as this produce horizontally spreading tendrils in all directions both below and above ground, sometimes becoming rooted, sometimes producing inflorescences, fruits and seeds which on release might themselves become rooted, and sometimes coalescing at productive nodes. What this growth form permits is a rapid vegetative spread rate, such that it ‘forms a thick mat under favourable conditions’, can become a ‘weed’, and can be ‘difficult to eradicate because of its underground runners (rhizomes)’ (Müller, 1984: 112, emphasis added). In African drylands,

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\(^3\) The North American Free Trade Agreement between Mexico, USA and Canada.

\(^4\) Possibly after Gregory Bateson’s description of the proliferating kinship network of Iatmul people as ‘like the rhizome of a lotus’ in *Naven* (1958 (1936): 248-9, see Ingold 2000: 426).
Rhizomatous plants comprise invaluable dry season grazing: their underground root networks are inaccessible to grazing livestock which means that they cannot be ‘overgrazed’, such that it is possible for situations to arise whereby livestock die from starvation during droughts, even as the ‘ungrazeable reserves’ of underground plant material remain healthy (e.g. Homewood and Rodgers 1987; Sullivan and Rohde 2002). When occurring as ‘alien’ or introduced species, plants such as this can become invasive. \textit{C. dactylon} thus is considered a ‘noxious weed’ in two US states (California and Utah) and as an ‘invasive weed’ in a number of others (USDA-NRCS 2003)\textsuperscript{5}.

In a conceptual leap that is extraordinarily prescient of both the (dis)organisational significance of networks in late modernity and the organisational phenomena deemed significant in the emerging sciences of complexity (cf. Jantsch 1980; Holland 1992, 1998, 2000; Kauffman 1993, 1995; Cillers 1998), Deleuze and Guattari (1988 (1980)) employ the metaphor of the rhizome to indicate a mode of organisation that is a departure from the dominant organising and structuring metaphor of modernity, namely that of the fixed hierarchical and binary splitting tree. The metaphor of the tree pervades such superficially disparate phenomena as cladistics in evolutionary biology\textsuperscript{6}, the construction of genealogies, the assumed deep structure of Chomskian linguistics, and the pyramidal structure, i.e. upturned tree, of modern hierarchical institutions. The structure of the tree is based on hierarchy, on dichotomies (i.e. either/or classifications, binary oppositions), and on the assumption of a ‘deep structure’ to phenomena that can be revealed through processes of excavation or tracing ‘backwards’ to the ‘truth’, the origin. Instead, a rhizome – a network – is characterised in organisational or (anti-)structural terms by a range of simple principles, which can give rise to complex decentred configurations and networks. Multiple horizontal connections and varying flows – i.e. movement and information exchange - between nodes permit connectivity. Increasing connectivity, both of numbers of nodes connected and the amount or strength of information exchanged create possibilities for emergent change in the character or quality of the network. Multiple entryways or starting points, mean that a network is open in systemic terms. Perpetual branching, i.e. in a fractal-like fashion, produce qualitative similarities (not quantitative sameness) in pattern and form when observed at

\textsuperscript{5} Although as Jensen (2002: 172) conveys, ‘… noxious weeds are at least sometimes a sign that disturbed ground is trying to heal itself’, ‘each one preparing the ground for what was to come next’.

\textsuperscript{6} A method of hypothesizing and analysing evolutionary relationships among groups of organisms to construct their family tree (cladogram), based on shared derived characteristics, a bifurcating (splitting) pattern of cladogenesis – splitting into clades or branches – and the reductionist principle of parsimony, i.e. the assumption that the simplest pattern of branching is probably correct (Clos 1996).
different scales (i.e. self-similarity) (cf. Gleick 1987). And possibilities for spatial and temporal concentrations of activity form temporary, ‘biodegradeable’ (Plows 2002), ‘hubs’ or ‘plateaus’ (Chesters and Welsh 2006). Thus,

As the networks grow more connected, by webs and actions, wires and stories, many things will emerge that we, as mere neurons in the network, don’t expect, don’t understand, can’t control, and may not even perceive. The only way to understand an emergent system is to let it run, because no individual agent will ever be able to reveal the whole. The global movement of movements for life against money, for autonomy and dignity, for the dream of distributed direct democracy, are following an irresistible logic. It is a logic as old as the hills and the forests, an eco-logic, a bio-logic, the profound logic of life. (Notes From Nowhere 2003: 73)

While the rhizome is a powerful metaphor for describing and thinking networked forms of organisation, a perhaps more illuminating and empowering organic metaphorical lens is that of fungal mycelium (cf. Ingold 2000: 426; in what follows I draw playfully on a recent exploration of fungi by Spooner and Roberts 2005). The fungi – recognised by science as a separate ‘kingdom’ of life only since the 1950s, are exuberantly diverse, celebrating the beautiful, the bizarre and the grotesque. This multiplicity inhabits just about every corner, every cramped space, of the globe. With their spreading underground mycelium, they can constitute the largest organisms on earth, as well as being the longest-lived. They form intimate and frequently mutually beneficial associations with myriad other organisms, and play a huge role in making nutrients available from decaying material.

But it is their organisation that is compelling here. Fungi largely are comprised of rapidly proliferating, largely underground or underside multi-directional networks of tiny interconnecting, continuously branching, and variously clumping threads (hyphae) which together constitute a dynamic fungal mycelium or meshwork. Like the virtual online ‘backspace’ of decision-making of IndyMedia Centres (IMC) and the global Independent Media network (www.indymedia.org), or the continual buzz of online negotiations ‘behind’ the collaborative wiki website that is the online encyclopedia Wikipedia (www.wikipedia.org), this is the humming, below-ground, ‘virtual’ ‘backspace’ that erupts when developmental triggers are right as a variously colourful, monstrous, spectacular, tiny or

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7 Prior to which they were generally subsumed as ‘lower’ forms of life in the plant kingdom. This rather resonates with a contemporary subsumption of the effervescent ‘radical left’ today as a less serious constellation of conventional class/work/capital-oriented left politics and civil society.
huge, mushroom or toadstool. An ephemeral mushroom ‘fruitbody’ – a knot of hyphae – thus pushes through resistant strata at a rapid and forceful pace, to eventually release an invisible cloud of billions of information-carrying microscopic spores, all capable of germination given suitable environmental circumstances. This metaphorical imagining seems to have a more exciting resonance with the (dis)organisational forms and rhythms of contemporary glocal post-capitalist politics. It captures the mundanity of the everyday work, the myriad exchanges and meetings, that produce actions, campaigns, networks, events, and alternative values and practices of living. It mirrors the accelerating, even manic, pace of activity that enables the coalescence of diversity into the ecstatic counter-events that have met major international governance and economic meetings in recent years. And it is suggestive of the orgasmic proliferation and release of multiple exchanges and experiences released at the ‘plateaus’ of such events, to be buffeted by cyberspace and glocal society into who-knows-what mutated and germinated form. So, think again when you notice mould on your bread or athlete’s foot between your toes! Or maybe wonder afresh at who the UK government is really trying to protect with its recent outlawing of the gathering of live Psilocybin mushrooms, the so-called ‘magic mushrooms’ long-celebrated for their psychoactive and perception-enhancing significance.

At the same time, fungi are able to survive, even benefit from, catastrophe:

The Palaeozoic closed, at the end of the Permian period some 248,000,000 years ago, with a mass extinction probably as a result of geological upheaval and exceptional volcanic activity. This immense ecological catastrophe is estimated to have destroyed more than 90% of all species on Earth. But for fungi, as the primary agents of decay, it appears to have been a period of opportunity and plenty. … It was a time of extreme fungal dominance … (Spooner and Roberts 2005: 46).

Perhaps there is something to be said for quietly sharing thoughts and skills, for carefully building networks, communities and (sub)cultures, and for not burning out too much with the ecstatic headiness of conflictual engagement with macro-processes beyond control.

A significant point from these musings is that information/knowledge/power thus is distributed throughout the system/network/complex/rhizome/mycelium, rather than located at the pinnacle of a hierarchy. This decentred (or acentred cf. Deleuze and Guattari 1988(1980): 17) and distributed nature of power is extremely significant in organisational terms and can be conceptualised in two ways. First, if power genuinely is decentred and trans-local (e.g. De
Angelis 2003: 5), i.e. distributed throughout and located within the parts (nodes) of a complex, as well as in the movement of information, i.e. the connections, between them, then – as with rhizomes and mycelium - the destruction or rupturing of a part of the complex cannot destroy the complex as a whole. Plant shoots and suckers will mushroom ‘above-ground’ from unpredictable locations in the complex in both time and space. Crushing a bunch of protesters, a direct action, a ‘rave’ in one locality, will not prevent these from emerging elsewhere, given that these tendencies are present in broader, non-geographically located ‘cultures’. As Deleuze and Guattari (1988 (1980): 9) state, a rhizome cannot be permanently ruptured (although, at large-scales and in an unpredictable and non-equilibrial world, a nuclear bomb or meteorite indeed might have this effect). A social movement (un)structured on rhizomatous/network/mycelium/complex systems principles thus literally is grassroots and proliferating in n-dimensional space; generating and being a multiplicity of resistances (cf. Foucault 1998 (1976): 91, 96) rather than the two-sided dialectics - the two-dimensional ‘frontline’ - familiar to us from conventional revolutionary politics. Frontlines, instead, are everywhere (cf. Sullivan 2003a).

Second, in ideal terms, and related to this notion (and empirical reality) of information/power/knowledge being located throughout the network/complex/rhizome, is the possibility of the non-privileging of any single subject position. This emerges as an essential critique of the universalising rationality associated with modernity, which while aspiring to transcendentalism, i.e. to the possibility of universal truths located beyond individual human experience, nonetheless locates a normalising subject position in the individual and socially empowered male (cf. Irigaray 1997), a position that has become empowered to represent all other subjectivities (cf. Tormey forthcoming; Habermann 2004; Sullivan 2005). In rhizomatous thought there is no single unity, entry point or ‘root’ subject position that can be traced via a genealogical or archaeological mode of inquiry. If we can speak of any unity at all, it is indeed the (dis)unity of ‘the multitude’ (Negri 2002) - of ‘unity in diversity’, as a popular slogan of ‘the movement’ declares. All of these ‘characteristics’ allow the micropolitics of local-level interactions – the strength and number of connections/interactions - to influence macrolevel characteristics in spontaneous and unpredictable ways. This confers

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8 Haraway (1997 (1985): 475), following Hilary Klein, also argues against ‘the plot of original unity’ that is relied on in both Marxist conceptions of labour differentiation and psychoanalytic theories of individuation and gender formation, both of which construct difference ‘in a drama of escalating domination of woman/nature’.
nonlinear and nonequilibrial dynamics to a complex such that *more can be different*; such that 1 + 1 can = apples, as Kelly (1994) somewhat flippantly describes (also see Jensen 2002).

Importantly, complexity theory affirms that ‘higher-order’ system change *emerges* when there is a self-reinforcing increase in the strength of connectivity – the amount of interactions between ‘nodes’ at ‘lower-levels’, i.e. change bubbles up from below rather than being imposed from above. Think, for example, of the way that bubbles start to emerge in a saucepan of water that is coming to boil – tiny, discreet, bounded bubbles begin to appear on the base of the pan; they start to rise and burst as they hit the surface; and as the temperature rises, larger bubbles appear and rise at an accelerated pace until it is impossible to see where one bubble ends, and another starts. The qualitative character of these changes may be unpredictable and nonlinear, but are inevitable beyond a level of critical mass (of strength of connections etc.)⁹. From a complex systems perspective – which perceives power/information to be located or distributed throughout a network as opposed to concentrated in a single locality or hierarchical level - all these are *emergent*, self-reinforcing, systemic outcomes of local interactions. As De Angelis (2003: 5) notes, ‘… the *articulation* of the various practices of the movement is giving rise to something greater than the sum of particular positions’.

In this reading, new globally organised technologies challenge old patterns of organisation from the inside out in the following ways. First, by strengthening and making possible forms of community and organisation that are non-geographically-located (i.e. supra-territorial) as well as being embedded locally. Second, by permitting new ways of responding to and/or pre-empting the control and surveillance of citizen/consumer practices (notwithstanding new legislation such as the UK’s Regulation of Investigatory Powers Act 2001). And third, by engendering conceptual and practical models for production, consumption and exchange practices that (can) build sociality, cooperation and solidarity rather than competition and capital.

Deleuze and Guattari (1988 (1980)) extend the rhizome metaphor to suggest the potential for each node/agent/being to be simultaneously connected to any other, a powerful and prescient evocation of the then little known communications technology that became the internet. This

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⁹ This potential is well recognised with ‘the movement’, as signified by the use of names such as ‘critical mass’ and ‘rising tide’ for cyclists and activists against the petrochemical industry (e.g. [www.criticalmasslondon.org.uk](http://www.criticalmasslondon.org.uk), [www.risingtide.org.uk](http://www.risingtide.org.uk)).
echoes the observation in subatomic physics whereby associated particles appear to be able to act on each other from a distance with no apparent material connection between them. Unfortunately, and as Ingold (2000: 426) notes, this aspect of their metaphor is flawed, at least in botanical terms. Thus, while heuristically and conceptually empowering (particularly in affirming the potential of local engagement in producing global/cultural change), the metaphors of both rhizome and mycelium, with their botanical evocation of networks of lines and nodes, to some extent also reproduce the linearity they attempt to avoid. At the same time, in seemingly discounting the relevance of any hierarchical organisation (other than the coalescence of temporary nodes), they contribute to a problematic stalemate between the binaries of networked horizontality and vertical hierarchy: a stalemate reproduced in their corresponding binaries of nomad and state science (cf. Sullivan and Homewood 2003), of the Body-without-Organs and the organised body, and of molecular and molar forms of organisation. It seems to me that a conceptual organisational ‘meeting-place’ that collapses these binaries is theoretically and pragmatically critical, particularly given the conflict regarding ‘horizontal’ versus ‘vertical’ organisational tendencies that has always plagued modern left-oriented politics, and which recently has been vociferous in the UK (e.g. see articles in Böhm et al. 2005).

*Holons, holarchy and holoflux*

A good conceptual meeting place perhaps is the philosophical notion of holons. The term ‘holon’ refers to a seemingly consistent organisational phenomenon that organs/organisations always are simultaneously both parts (of broader scales of organisation) and wholes (‘in themselves’), or ‘part-wholes’. Holons also are open, such that information flows bidirectionally between different holonic scales and thereby parts influence wholes and vice versa, i.e. they are in communicative and mutually constitutive relationship (e.g. Koestler 1975 (1967); Edwards n.d.; Wilber 1995; Wikipedia 2006b). These phenomena give rise to the qualitative self-similarity – the eternal return, perhaps? - observed at multiple scales\(^\text{10}\) (Gleick 1987). Further, because ‘holons’ always also are open, i.e. are dynamical and relational, as well as exhibiting qualitative persistence in character, then connectivity, relationship and feedback between holons and between different holonic ‘levels’ or scales

\(^{10}\) e.g. illustrated at [http://micro.magnet.fsu.edu/primer/java/scienceopticsu/powersof10/](http://micro.magnet.fsu.edu/primer/java/scienceopticsu/powersof10/) or [http://www.wordwizz.com/pwrsof10.htm](http://www.wordwizz.com/pwrsof10.htm); or in computer-generated fractal geometries of the Mandelbrot set and other fractal equations e.g. [http://www.jracademy.com/~jtucek/math/picts.html](http://www.jracademy.com/~jtucek/math/picts.html).
also is always present. Again, this generates potential for emergent phenomena, i.e. for unpredictable change and transcendence.

A complementary organisational phenomenon thus is present: namely a holographic principle that means that all parts simultaneously contain information about wholes, such that the character of broader scales is both distributed and emergent and to some extent can by ‘read’ or implied from smaller scales (Bohm 1982). ‘To see a world in a grain of sand …’, as William Blake observed. This is the always enfolding-unfolding, implicate-explicate, virtual-actual (wave-particle) dynamic of a self-organised and ever-changing universe (or holoflux to use David Bohm’s term), whereby the ‘zone’ of enfoldment – the Real of the virtual (cf. Lacan; Žižek 2004) - is the generative, ecstatic, energetic, swirl of immanence where parts are enfolded and distributed throughout wholes at the same time as every part of the whole contributes to – produces the whole, as well as influencing every other part.

These organisational phenomena are in stark contrast to the organisational assumptions infusing modernity, which valorise circumstances in which wholes, the molar structures of modern institutions, constrain and violate the desire for molecular movement (as theorised by Deleuze and Guattari 1988 (1980)). Such conceptualisations provide theoretical succour for the possibility (and necessity?) of a molecular and minoritarian politics that might infiltrate, infect, dislocate and counter-balance the predominating molar structures whose destructive (i.e. unhealthy) tendencies seem rather clear (mass production/proliferation of death technologies; unprecedented suicide rates; palpable disregard for the non-human world (unless amenable to commodification), etc.). Such ideas also mesh well with Max Stirner’s (1907) suggestion of reaching towards a ‘union of egoists’. While frequently misread through the lens of the ‘rugged individualism’ - the ego-driven selfishness – sanctioned by neoliberalism, hyper-capitalism, neo-Darwinism, etc. Stirner’s thesis is that healthy (valued, empowered) parts (individuals/egos) will recursively constitute dynamic and healthy wholes (communities). In terms of social-political organisation, these organisational phenomena affirm the possibility of a proliferation of democratic processes (cf. Gilbert 2005) in which people participate and which people self-organise, together with fostering the dynamic feedback possible via connectivity between scales. Producing something like a fractal democracy, in other words.
These notions are conceptually difficult given a Western universalising rationality based on binary structures (cf. Butler 1997: 282-283). In summary they suggest that if power genuinely is distributed throughout a network then this will confer something of a hologrammatic character to the network - meaning that each part/node will itself contain something of the potentiality of the network as a whole. Distributed power means that ‘the system’ is both absorbed within and reproduced by each of us\textsuperscript{11}, and in the complex socio-political networks – the multilevelled matrix of relationships - in which we are enmeshed. But our variously conscious and unique subjectivities – our potential as ‘poetic animals’ in possession of conscience\textsuperscript{12} - also confer the possibility of ‘waking-up’ to our situatedness within broader contexts, and thereby participating in the production of these contexts – i.e. exerting agency – as well as passively receiving and reacting to where we find ourselves (cf. Giddens 1985). The form of desired change can be imagined, articulated and felt, and therefore motivated for, such that ‘every social node … every individual or network of individuals is a bearer of alternatives’ (De Angelis 2003: 2)\textsuperscript{13}.

Clearly, the internet and other new communications and media-generating technologies, as with any tool, are only as good as the extent to which, and the ways in which, they are taken-up and participated in by users. Post-capitalist politics is not the only emerging ‘netocracy’ – to use Bard and Söderqvist’s term (2002). As well as the explosion of financial markets over recent decades in which this ‘anti-structural’ potential of new communications technologies has been exploited and emerged as a means of avoiding regulation and accountability (cf. Strange 1998), terrorist networks also have demonstrated their ability to utilise this form of rhizomatous (dis)organisation, to devastating effect. In addition, the accessibility of these technologies becomes simply another means of facilitating capital’s colonising of new

\textsuperscript{11} aka Fromm (1993) ‘[t]he outer chains have simply been put inside of man’ and Foucault’s panoptical society of self-censorship. Or Sartre (1966 (1945): 300) who equates the passage into adulthood – the ‘the age of reason’ – with assimilating the ‘services’ offered by ‘[v]arious well-bred moralities …: disillusioned epicureanism, smiling tolerance, resignation, common sense, stoicism’, described as ‘all the aids whereby a man may savour, minute by minute, like a connoisseur, the failure of a life’.

\textsuperscript{12} cf. Thoreau (1993 (1849): 2): ‘Must the citizen ever for a moment, or in the least degree, resign his conscience to the legislator? Why has every man a conscience then? I think that we should be men first, and subjects afterward. It is not desirable to cultivate a respect for the law, so much as for the right. The only obligation which I have a right to assume, is to do at any time what I think right. … Law never made men a whit more just; and, by means of their respect for it, even the well-disposed are daily made the agents of injustice.’

\textsuperscript{13} This runs counter to a harnessing of complexity theory by business which equates people (employees and consumers) with social insects such as bees and attempts to delineate the ‘rules that govern how agents make choices’ so as to profitably manage the emergent properties of ‘the system’ at ‘higher levels’ (e.g. Meyer 1998). What the latter application overlooks is the potential for unpredictable and radical change to emerge from local-level interactions, a potential that is particularly significant where the components of a complex are consciously subjective ‘agents’ – otherwise known as people.
consumer practices and markets and may itself enhance the potential of their use by states as a surveillance tool, as evidenced by emerging legislation such as the Regulation of Investigatory Powers Act in the UK). I also am not blind to the realities of the global inequality that exists in terms of the ability of people to access these technologies; although since they are relatively cheap and require low energy inputs, they are potentially able to be relatively dispersed throughout communities and across the globe and currently are being used by people in remote areas of the ‘developing world’ as a means of sharing experiences and publicising causes. Nevertheless, a ‘joining up’ of the different symbolic orders of similarly-oriented autonomous groups - permitted by the deterritorialising technology of the internet and other communications technologies, is tactically powerful in producing a subverting biopolitics that is as fluid and distributed as *Empire* - the globally distributed panopticon society of control (Foucault 1977 (1975)). These may all be ‘singularities’ (aka Baudrillard). But as networked singularities and ‘coalitions of discontent’ (Esteva 1997 (1994), p. 304) – sharing concerns, experiences, desires, ideas, and fears - they may indeed constitute a meaningful element in an inexorable and creative moving beyond to a post-capitalist world - the ‘audacious project’ of the ‘alternative globalisation movement’ (Chesters 2003: 50).

**Concluding remarks: think glocally – act glocally!**

Globalisation is not only about the deterritorialisation of capital and the governance issues regarding justice and distribution at a global level that arise there-from. As Scholte (2005) identifies, what distinguishes globalisation from earlier epochs is the attendant creation and emergence of new conceptions of social space and culture. For the first time in history it is possible to easily conceptualise ourselves as functionally interconnected beyond the boundaries of geographical territories and bounded cultural identities: the populist phrase ‘think globally, act locally’ neatly captures this conceptual shift. Aided by visual images first produced in the 1960s of our spherical planet floating isolated in space is a forcing of the recognition that events in one locality and/or moment in time can generate ripples of unpredictable effects in places/times that are seemingly far removed. Relentless interpenetrations of global and local abound. Hybridisation is the name of the glocal game.14

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14 Thus in my own early 1990s fieldwork (prior to my take-up of the internet!) in a rather remote area of north-west Namibia I recall having my rather conventional preconceptions regarding indigeneity and tradition somewhat shattered on entering the ‘traditional’ hut that constituted home for my field assistant. Inside I found
Surviving these exhilarating, exhausting, disorienting and dislocating contexts requires ideas and concepts that are enabling and empowering: that err on the side of hope rather than fear; that produce a sense of possibility to counter subjective submersion (considered further in Sullivan forthcoming). But I confess that I find it hard to maintain optimism when considering some of the other glocal patterns that are emerging: a resurgence in Abu Ghraib and Guantanamo Bay (etc.) of ‘the camp’ as ‘the subterranean stream of western history’ (cf. Arendt 1951; Agamben 1998 (1995); Varikas 1998); the move towards biometrics and molecular management of identity (‘[t]he Kafkaesque plot is working its way through my genetic apparatus’ (Braidotti 1996: 7)); the intensification of citizen surveillance as the informatics of control society (cf. Haraway 1991); the abusive exertions of authority by petty officials (e.g. Russell 2006); and the multiplicitous proliferation of arms. All of these seem to me to signal a world teetering on the brink of global identity fascism, encapsulated in the alarming Project for the New American Century statement that ‘… advanced forms of biological warfare that can “target” specific genotypes may transform biological warfare from the realm of terror to a politically useful tool’ (Donnelly (principle author) 2000: 72).

Nevertheless, the collapsing of temporal and spatial scales, coupled with the simultaneity, the non-locality, produced by the internet, perhaps also can offer the potential for an empowering, entrancing, ‘glocal politics’ which affirms that local practices – from ‘care of the self’ (cf. Foucault 1988 (1984)) to ethical consumerism to voluntary care to DiY exchange and other social practices - can contribute to emergent, life-affirming global change. This is a post-dualist orientation that resonates with a similar collapsing of boundaries and binaries familiar in post-structuralist ontologies. Donna Haraway’s (1997 (1985): 474) articulation of as our postmodern ontology as cyborgs, of the joined centres of machine and organism - the ‘perversely fruitful alliance between technology and culture’ (Braidotti 1996: 2) – structuring ‘… any possibility of historical transformation’\(^\text{15}\) is, for example, also an affirmation of the glocally-located, the simultaneously centred and dispersed, posthuman(ist) human.

\(^{15}\) As Haraway (1997 (1985): 477) notes, ‘[t]echnological determinism is only one ideological space opened up by the reconceptions of machine and organism as coded texts through which we engage in the play of writing and reading the world’. 

magazine pictures of the reconstituted face of Michael Jackson stuck to the walls, and learnt that her favourite western popstar was Phil Collins.
Thinking and acting *glocally* thus might move towards reclaiming a critical ‘discourse of freedom’ and autonomy (e.g. De Angelis 2003: 9; also Fromm 1993; Black 2001), by making possible a cultural politics of embodied subjectivity which holonically and holographically mirrors and refracts macropolitical scales. Problematising what it means to be (and become) human infuses post-capitalist resistance politics, producing a politics of the ‘posthuman’ (e.g. Braidotti 1996). This is a politics that, in thought and direct action, contests the universalising Enlightenment/humanist traditions of Western science and rationality: what feminist authors such as Haraway (1997 (1985): 474) frame as ‘… the tradition of racist, male-dominant capitalism; the tradition of progress; the tradition of the appropriation of nature as a resource for the productions of culture …’. It becomes a politics of experience that knows that the map is not the territory, the sign is not the signified. And it elucidates a constellation of subjective tendencies that designate self-interested economic rationality as only one aspect of the range of affective motivations influencing choices and decision-making (e.g. Lumpkin 2000). This makes room for an understanding of ‘the human animal’ as relational as well as individual (e.g. Kumar 2002); for affirming cooperative relations as integral to the health of individuals and communities (e.g. Stirner 1907; De Angelis 2003); for understanding ego-consciousness – our ‘particulate’ as opposed to energetic, relational self (cf. Zohar 1990) - as only one layer in our multi-levelled experience and construction of ‘reality’, influenced greatly by sub- and super-conscious repressions and desires; and for suggesting that our individual and cultural identities are linked indelibly with recursive experiences of the environments in which we dwell (Ingold 2000).

Awareness of these phenomenological aspects of human subjective experience takes ‘the movements’ – or, at least, some elements of them - into a simultaneously pre- and post-capitalist moment – where it is possible to imagine, and thereby manifest, an idea of ‘being human’ that is not solely defined by position *vis à vis* either the state or the market. Monstrous, agential, shamanic cyborgs collapsing boundaries between machinic, organic and spirit realms. Subverting static gender and sexual categories – resisting orientation, as Heckert (2005) puts it. Celebrating the information produced by ecstatically experiencing the body-without-organs (Deleuze and Guattari 1988 (1980)), subjective experiences which themselves are produced paradoxically via the holarchical and relational organisation of ‘the

16 Although, as numerous thinkers have described, ‘freedom’ – being awake - also comes at a cost. Sartre (1966 (1945): 243) writes of being ‘… condemned forever to be free’, and Fromm (1993: 113) talks of ‘our’ ‘fear of freedom’ and ‘the attraction of unfreedom’, acknowledging that ‘[t]o be free, rather than have security, is frightening …’.
body’ (as Braidotti (1996: 12) suggests, ‘the last thing we need at this point in Western history is a renewal of the old myth of transcendence as flight from the body’). In combination with the similarly post-dualist organisational notion of ‘the glocal’, these offer a means of escape from the ontological closures of modernity and humanism, producing mutiny, metaphorical or otherwise.

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Figure 1. Line drawing of the rhizomatous grass species *Cynodon dactylon* (L.) Pers. after Hitchcock (1950).