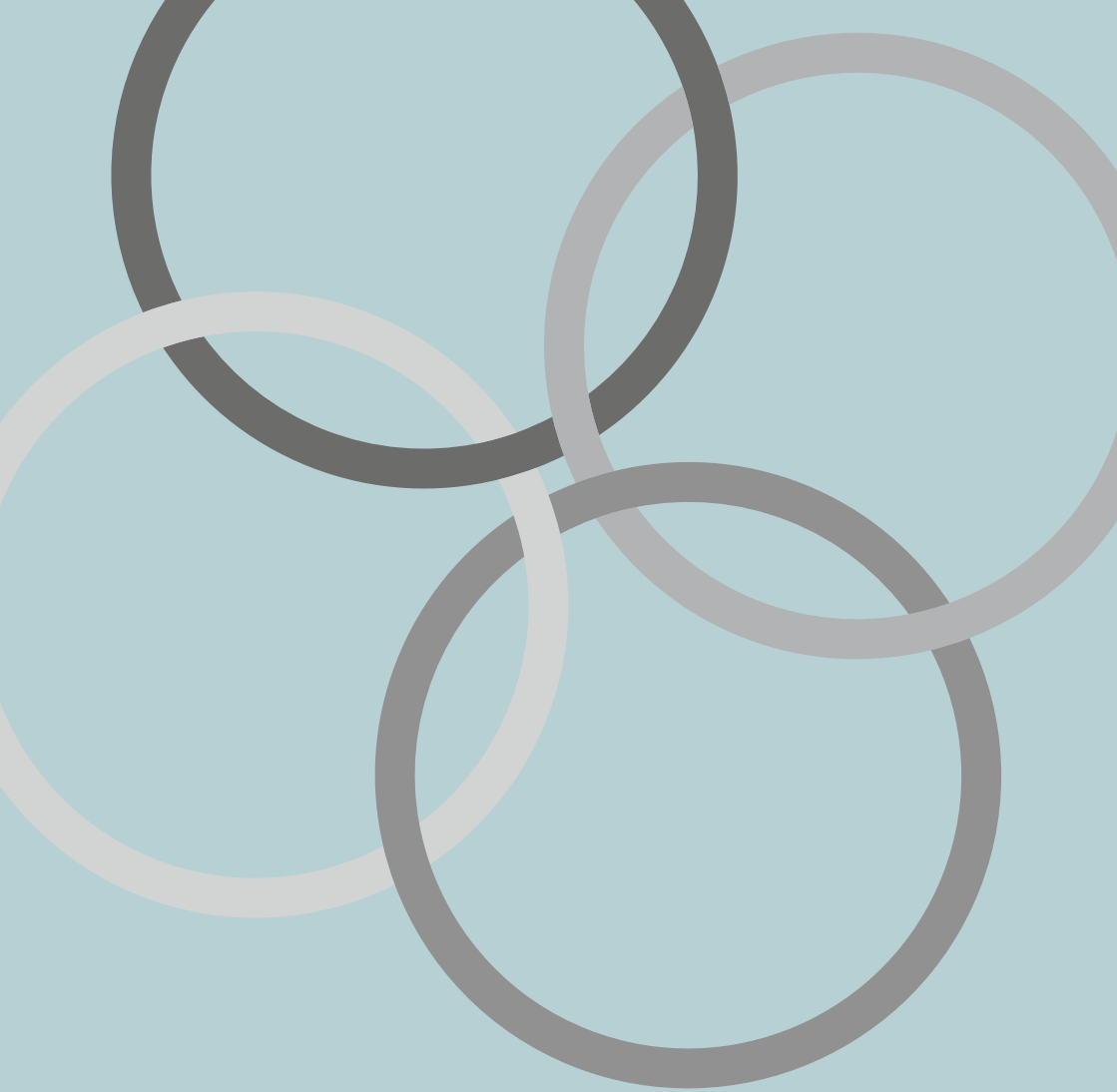

CRITIQUE AND RESISTANCE IN A NEOLIBERAL AGE

Towards a Narrative of Emancipation

CHARLES MASQUELIER

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To my friend, Luke Martell

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1

Introduction

On 23 June 2016, the UK voted to leave the European Union (EU). The result sent shockwaves throughout the UK and Europe, for although polls predicted a close race, the decision to change so suddenly and radically the course of Britain's history was a rather unexpected outcome. Academics, journalists and politicians have, since then, been trying to make sense of the results. Some more or less clear voting patterns are now visible. Working class and uneducated demographics were more likely to vote to leave the EU, with immigration and sovereignty topping their agenda. The vote *against* the EU was in fact also a vote *for* a particular idea of England, where economic issues are wrapped up in issues of (national) identity. The sharp divisions the referendum served to animate were, therefore, both economic and cultural.

But this is by no means an isolated case. Similar developments have been unfolding in other neoliberal societies. In France, for example, Marine Le Pen's National Front has been enjoying unprecedented levels of popularity among French voters, with voting scores reaching almost 30% in the 2015 regional elections (Siraud 2015). The party's success lies in attracting traditionally left-wing voters by wrapping up economic problems, such as rising unemployment and economic insecurity, in

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issues of identity. This, too, is the reason for Donald Trump's unexpected victory at the 2016 American presidential election. Like Le Pen, he is more likely to appeal to the poorer, less educated, male and white demographics (Ross 2015). Like Le Pen, he insists on solving economic problems by, as Hillary Clinton herself put it, "building walls rather than bridges" (Cassidy 2016). Like her, he expresses and relies upon nationalist sentiments in the discussion of economic matters, often wrapped up in traditionally left-wing rhetoric, such as the defence of ordinary workers' rights against precarizing flows of capital.

What these different cases therefore present us with is a striking pattern. In each of them, it is possible to observe a complex articulation of economic and cultural issues, underpinning demands for "making Britain, France or America great again," "taking our country back," or "controlling immigration." What supporters of Brexit, Le Pen and Trump effectively seek to resist, then, are essential features of neoliberal globalization: transnational movements dictated by the logic of an increasingly globalized and free market. The demand for control is, without doubt, a genuine demand for economic change. But in each of the different cases under discussion, it is combined with a return to an apparently glorious cultural past, remembered as pure and unadulterated. The recent surge of reactionary forces across the advanced capitalist world in fact lies in far right parties' capacity to mobilize questions of identity, and matters regarding how individuals want to live, alongside economic ones. Under their guise, the increased precarization of life is not tackled as an exclusively economic matter. It is wrapped up in cultural issues, with identity and, more often than not, race playing the role of signifier for the economic troubles of the white working classes. While these parties may be self-proclaimed anti-establishment parties, the target is not so much the establishment as its overt symbols, such as the incumbent political elites. The enemies are not such a highly unstable, ruthless and exploitative economic regime and a political system corrupted by money as the seemingly undeserving and criminalized "others" believed to be the visible face of the causes of precarization and cultural contamination amid an increasingly globalized and free market.

This state of affairs constitutes an acute challenge for progressive forces opposed to the neoliberal economic political order, such as those

represented by Bernie Sanders in the USA and Jeremy Corbyn in the UK. It is in fact becoming increasingly clear that, if the progressive Left wishes to rise to power once more, it can no longer articulate its political project predominantly articulated around socio-economic injustices. It must, too, recognize the importance of identity politics and be in a position to represent the interests of a broad range of oppressed groups and political causes. Only by connecting solidarities can the Left, today, be in a position to mobilize the critical mass that could turn it into a viable force in politics, namely one equipped with the resources to resist both neoliberalism and reactionary forces. Lisa Duggan understood it very well, as indicated in the following passage:

> A sustainable opposition [to neoliberal capitalism] would need to connect culture, politics, and economics; identity politics and class politics; universalist rhetoric and particular issues and interests; intellectual and material resources. (Duggan 2003: 41)

In her short but powerful book titled *The Twilight of Equality* (2003), Duggan draws on a range of case studies to demonstrate the complex interplay of "cultural values" and "economic goals" in neoliberal domination. In this sense, critical theorists have an important role to play in exposing and conceptualizing the intersection of diverse solidarities. Some notable theoretical developments in this regard can, in fact, already be observed. Intersectionality theorists, for example, have devised conceptual tools with the potential to frame political coalitions between oppressed identity-based and socio-economic groups (Bilge 2013; Collins and Bilge 2016). In a different vein, but following a similar logic, ecological Marxists such as Ted Benton (1993) and James O'Connor (1998) have sought to connect the proletarian cause with the environmentalist one. Strikingly though, there have been few attempts, if any at all, to tackle, head on and at once, the intersection of economic, cultural and environmental struggles in the light of conditions of existence specific to the neoliberal age. Even a book specifically devoted to the task of laying the groundwork for a "sustainable opposition" to neoliberalism such as Duggan's, tends to overlook the environmentalist cause. This book, therefore, aims to fill this gap and make its own, however modest, contribution

to the conceptualization of an emancipatory coalitional politics under the neoliberal age. This task, I nevertheless contend, can be best achieved by probing the processes underpinning the neoliberal political economic architecture and *modus operandi* of neoliberal domination. As such, the conceptualized unity in the diversity of struggles offered here, will form part and, indeed, derive from, a broader critique of neoliberalism. Before acknowledging my broad theoretical debts for choosing to proceed in this manner and introducing the structure of the book, let me clarify what I mean by neoliberalism.

Defining Neoliberalism

Neoliberalism is fraught with conceptual difficulties (Venogupal 2015), not least because of the rather diverse range of theoretical traditions that have shaped what we know today as the neoliberal vision (Gane 2014).[1] The task of defining neoliberalism is a particularly complex affair, too, because of the gap between some of its core tenets, such as minimal state intervention, and its *de facto* existence as a vision requiring a state active in creating the economic and extra-economic conditions for its implementation (Jessop 2002; Harvey 2005). For this reason, some claim that it is more appropriate to regard it either as a "utopia" or ideology (Bourdieu 1998; Levitas 2010; Hall 2011, 2013). Finally, although neoliberalism marks a new stage of political economic development, its manifestation across the Western world has been far from homogeneous. Some societies, such as the USA and the UK, could indeed be regarded as more neoliberalized than others, such as France and Spain. It is therefore important to avoid treating neoliberalism as a set of fully formed characteristics evenly distributed and developed across different advanced Western capitalist societies. Thus, it may be more appropriate to analyse neoliberalism in processual terms than as a *fait accompli*.

Despite such conceptual difficulties, it is possible to identify a broad range of transformations following a "neoliberal trajectory" (Baccaro

[1] Friedrich Hayek, for example, disagreed with the German ordoliberals regarding the conditions under which freedom and competition arise (Bröckling 2016).

and Howell 2011) shared by these societies and marking a new political economic order. Furthermore, different proponents of neoliberalism, be they intellectual or political figures, tend to be united in celebrating the principle of competition (Davies 2014). The latter, they argue, compels individuals to adopt conducts most appropriate for optimizing economic efficiency and is, consequently, viewed as a core engine of economic performance. Thus, it is possible to regard the neoliberal age as one characterized by ideologically driven transformations responsible for furthering the "reach of capitalism by injecting market dynamics, and in particular principles of competition, into the basic fabric of social life and culture" (Gane 2012: 72). Under such a state of affairs, the state does not put an end to its interventions. But, rather than seeking to regulate the economy or secure a fair distribution of wealth, as it did under the preceding stage of capitalist development, it now engineers processes aimed at creating conditions favourable for the competitive pursuit of private gain, such as financialization and privatization.

However, as Gane's succinct definition of neoliberalism suggests, there is more to the phenomenon in question than a mere set of ideologically driven transformations. Neoliberal processes reorganize social life in such a way as to adjust social relations, schemes of perception and individual conducts to market imperatives. As student or educator, worker or consumer, performer or spectator, to name but a few social roles, individuals are continuously compelled to evaluate their own and/or others' performances. Whether self-imposed or institutionally enforced, these different quality assessment strategies or audit cultures are the inevitable result of a logic of competition ever more entrenched in society. They are symptomatic of societies in which market forces are so entrenched that the optimization of performance comes to inform actions in an increasing number of domains of social life.

Neoliberal processes have, therefore, contributed to the emergence of a neoliberal *condition*. In this book, I explore the sociologically relevant features of this condition but do so in an effort to arrive at a conceptualization of a coalitional politics or, as I prefer to call it, a narrative of emancipation. To this end, I shall probe the *modus operandi* of this condition, by scrutinizing the processes underpinning it, exploring the forms of domination it has been responsible for shaping and learning

the conceptual lessons of key contemporary resistance movements. The critique of neoliberalism whose contours I draw in this book is therefore one formulated with an emancipatory intent.

The Core Functions of Emancipatory Critique

My efforts to develop a critique geared towards emancipation are indebted to the work of Marx and Western Marxists, such as the critical theory of the Frankfurt School. Central to this form of critique is the idea that it ought to achieve more than a mere interpretation of the world. In the case of Marx (2000a), for example, it also ought to "change it." Furthermore, despite their more pessimistic outlook on the prospects for radical social change (Adorno and Horkheimer 1997; Marcuse 2002) first generation Frankfurt School theorists devoted a great deal of efforts to the formulation of a critique that could contribute to individuals' enlightenment and their liberation from the shackles of capitalist oppression (Marcuse 1969a; Adorno 1991). However, rather than directly attempting to assess the relevance of the vast range of conceptual tools making up their theoretical frameworks to a critique of the neoliberal condition, I mainly inspire myself from what I regard as the most relevant functions of their emancipatory critique for the broad task set out in this book: defetishizing social reality, exploring the mechanisms of domination, diagnosing the nature of, and prospects for, resistance.[2] In what follows, I explain what each of these functions entails, with the aim of introducing the reader to the core objectives set out in this work. It is worth noting here, though, that in meeting these objectives I draw on additional conceptual tools and frames of reference, whose nature and relevance will be discussed as I progress through the book.

[2] Anyone familiar with the work of these critical theorists will have noticed my omission of one of the principle of immanence's key functions from the list provided, namely, the discovery of internal contradictions. My reason for doing so is simple: the internal contradictions of capitalism, old and new, have already been astutely explored by these critical theorists and more recent ones such as David Harvey (2014). Here, however, I chose to concentrate on those elements I regard as most important for conceptualizing a form of coalitional politics adapted to the neoliberal age, namely the specific forces at work in fragmenting and uniting diverse forms of political struggles.

Defetishizing Social Reality

This particular function of critique originates in the work of Marx. Although one finds its original formulation in the concept of alienation making-up the core conceptual frame of reference of his *Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts* (2000b), Marx provided a more detailed and somewhat revised version in "the fetishism of commodities." Here is how he explained its core operational logic:

> the existence of the things *qua* commodities, and the value relation between the products of labour which stamps them as commodities, have absolutely no connection with their physical properties and with the material relations arising therefrom. There it is a definite relation between men, that assumes, in their eyes, the fantastic form of a relation between things. (Marx 2000b: 473)

Thus, for Marx, although what is being "fetishized" are the objects produced for sale on a market, it is clear that his concern mainly lies in the effects this fetishization bears on interpersonal relations and individuals' relation to social reality as a whole. One is in fact here in the presence of a concept that attempts to make sense of the relationship between the objective and subjective dimensions of social life and to remind us that, despite its seemingly objective facticity or apparent existence as something independent of individuals' minds and interpretations, reality originates in the actions and decisions of individuals.

The task of his critique, then, is to reveal, at least partly, the different social relations, decisions and actions lying behind phenomena that we have come to accept as natural, and at times insurmountable, facts of our existence: the fact that one has to compete with others in securing one's means of subsistence; the fact that society is at the service of the economy; the fact that the few can reap the full benefits of the labour of the many. Defetishizing social reality entails grounding it in human action, for only this way can the interests, biases and generally subjective character of objective reality be accounted for. Only in this way can the facts of social reality be de-naturalized and its inevitability be questioned.

This particular goal is shared by members of the Frankfurt School. Horkheimer put it as follows:

> the critical attitude of which we are speaking is wholly distrustful of the rules of conduct with which society as presently constituted provides each of its members. The separation between individual and society in virtue of which the individual accepts as natural the limits prescribed for his activity is relativized in critical theory. The latter considers the overall framework … to be a function which originates in human action and therefore is a possible object of planful decision and rational determination of goals. (Horkheimer 1972: 206–7)

Before conceptualizing an emancipatory coalitional politics, then, it is essential to reveal the interests lying behind the transformations brought about by neoliberal processes. Indeed, only by grounding the "facts" of the neoliberal condition in "human action" can the inevitability of the *status quo* be questioned. Only then can social reality be opposed and social change be imagined. For this reason, I devote a great deal of efforts to the defetishization of contemporary "facts" of existence in this book, by exploring the political, economic and cultural forces responsible for their emergence.

Exploring the Mechanisms of Domination

This second function also runs through the work of Marx and Western Marxists. For Marx, however, the problem of domination is predominantly construed as an economic matter or as a matter of class domination. In other words, he placed the core focus of his analysis of the mechanisms of domination, such as exploitation, alienation and ideology, on the economic structure of society. In the work of Frankfurt School thinkers, the domination of the bourgeoisie over the proletariat continues to be problematized, but the resilience of capitalism in the face of crises, combined with the rise of consumerism, led them to shift the focus of their critique to culture and knowledge (Adorno and Horkheimer 1997; Marcuse 2002). Although, like Marx, they recognized an essential role for ideology in reproducing the established order, they noted the

increasing influence of mass media and popular culture in "inducing consent" (Kellner 1989: 130) while living in the USA. This prompted them to reassess the role of culture in society and, especially, in domination.

But, also central to their work, is the analysis of the relationship between humanity and nature, both internal and external (Adorno and Horkheimer 1997; Marcuse 2002). Understanding interpersonal domination, they insisted, cannot be achieved without an understanding of the way individuals relate to their own nature and the biophysical environment. For them, modern phenomena such as Enlightenment thinking and capitalism are responsible for raising humanity above nature and compelling the former to dominate the latter. As a result, they give rise to a logic of domination underpinning scientific and technological achievements and informing not only how individuals relate to other individuals but, also, how they relate to the self and external nature. The economy, culture and nature, therefore, are said to give rise to interconnected forms of domination, whose reproduction ideology is instrumental in facilitating.

Frankfurt School thinkers, therefore, provide as useful frame of reference for conceptualizing coalitional politics. However, despite devoting a great deal of their attention to culture and to issues regarding internal nature little, if anything, is said about the role of cultural categories such as race and gender in domination.[3] This is due to the fact that cultural domination is analysed in predominantly systemic or impersonal terms, in abstraction from identity-based hierarchies. Given the centrality of identity-related issues in the advanced capitalist world, it is essential to include them in the scope of analysis. I use the term "identity" to refer to those ways of life, values or beliefs associated with, for example, one's race- or gender-based identity. The latter become organizing principles of social life insofar as they can determine one's position in society, on the basis of one's way of life, values or beliefs. It follows that to recognize the role of identity in domination also means recognizing the role of cultural issues in the phenomenon itself. Thus, the critique I formulate in this book inspires itself from first generation Frankfurt School thinkers'

[3] Nancy Fraser (2003) did nevertheless aim to fill this gap. However, as will be shown in Part III of this book, she excluded nature from the scope of her analysis.

postulation of three interconnected sites, that is, the economy, culture and nature, in domination. It also recognizes the importance of analysing the role played by knowledge, such as economic rationality, in domination, and the role of ideology in legitimating social hierarchies. But I shall also devote a great deal of my efforts in making sense of the mechanisms involved in the articulation of identity-based hierarchies, and their relationship with the economy and nature. When I refer to cultural domination, then, I refer to those forms of personal domination articulated around such cultural categories as race and gender.

Diagnosing the Nature of, and Prospects for, Resistance

Marx and Western Marxists did not limit the tasks of their critique to a mere defetishization of social reality and analysis of domination. They, too, sought to make sense of conditions under which large-scale social change could emerge. Marx (2000c) famously envisioned large-scale social change as an inevitability. The revolutionary uprising of the proletariat, he argued, was an inevitable outcome of capitalism's inherent contradictions. Change, therefore, was not only inevitable but would also be driven by what he regarded as the "universal class" (Marx 2000d). Under Marx's reading, then, the key site of resistance is the economy.

Frankfurt School thinkers did not share Marx's optimism. Nor did they regard the economy as the central site of resistance. Adorno (1991) was in fact highly critical of Marx's scientific approach to change, particularly his conceptualization of resistance as revolutionary action. Instead, he defended what he called "open thinking," for, according to him, "thinking is actually and above all the force of resistance" (Adorno 1991: 202). Liberation, for Adorno, is predominantly a liberation in thought. This view, however, is not shared by Marcuse who, in his *An Essay on Liberation* (1969a), attributed a revolutionary potential to a range of agents such as students and the "Third World." But unlike Marx, Marcuse regarded culture as the central site of resistance. While revolutionary action is possible, it rests on the "methodical disengagement from and refusal of the Establishment […] aiming at the transvaluation of values" (Marcuse

1969a: 6). He was, therefore, more cautious than Marx in his approach to social change but did not want conceptualize resistance as a mere exercise of the mind, like Adorno did. He did, however, emphasize the necessity of a change of consciousness or the emergence of a "new sensibility," as he put it, governed by the "Aesthetic Form" (Marcuse 1969a). In his eyes, this change of consciousness was possible but far from inevitable. It had to be cultivated, culturally laboured upon.

With Marx and Marcuse, I share the optimistic belief in the possibility for social change. This optimism is partly informed by the emergence of two global waves of resistance movement singling out the systemic flaws of the neoliberal architecture. But unlike Marx, and in line with Marcuse's reasoning, I do not confine the emancipatory impetus to the sphere of material reproduction or locate the source of change in capitalism's economic contradictions, for doing so may risk jeopardizing the formation of an emancipatory coalitional politics. Part of this book shall therefore consist in diagnosing the nature of, and prospects for, a coalition of struggles and understanding exactly what ought to be culturally or symbolically laboured upon in order to achieve it. Ultimately, then, it aims to understand how to set in motion those forces capable of coordinating their actions in an effort to initiate emancipatory social change. Establishing whether this requires a radical alternative to the current economic and political system, such as a socialist alternative, falls outside the scope of this book. I shall therefore leave it up to the reader to decide for himself or herself the form a political settlement, based on such a coalition of forces, could be expected to assume.

Those, then, are the premises upon which I chose to execute the formulation of an emancipatory critique in the light of contemporary conditions of existence. They have, too, informed the structure of the book, to which I shall now turn.

Structure of the Book

While I draw my inspiration from some of the core premises set out by Marx and Western Marxism, the critique developed in this book was executed by mobilizing a broad range of theoretical resources, originating

from theoretical traditions located outside their confines. Theoretical breadth, openness and flexibility were indeed key in formulating a critique capable of providing a careful examination of (1) the various resources mobilized by neoliberal processes, (2) the diverse forms of domination characterizing advanced capitalist societies, (3) the intersection of a broad range of struggles involved in contemporary social movements and (4) a narrative of emancipation informed by, and capable of giving concrete political form to, the intersection of these different struggles. Since the work of Pierre Bourdieu provides a useful frame of reference for making sense of the complex interplay of political, economic and cultural forces in the production and reproduction of social reality, it held a prominent place for the completion of the aforementioned theoretical assignments. For the sake of theoretical robustness, it was nevertheless important to put to the test other contemporary critical theoretical traditions relevant to the themes, issues and phenomena discussed in the book. Thus, the critique of the neoliberal condition and conceptualization of a coalitional politics undertaken here are not only executed in the light of contemporary conditions of existence, they are also delivered in the light of a range of germane analyses, whose merits and limitations are assessed.

The book is divided into four parts, divided into chapters. Each of the parts in question is devoted to the completion of one of the aforementioned theoretical assignments. In **Part I**, I analyse the *modus operandi* of core **processes** that have given rise to the neoliberal condition: financialization, flexibilization, personal responsibilization and privatization. The goal, here, is to enhance our understanding of the "facts" of existence they have been responsible for engendering, and ground these facts in "human action." As such, a particular attention is paid to the economic and political structures of power framing the neoliberalization of society and nature, in an effort to defetishize what have come to be regarded as defining features of the present-day situation by a range of contemporary analysts.

In **Part II**, I continue to engage in a defetishizing exercise but tackle the issue directly in relation to the different forms of **domination** emerging under the neoliberal condition. I start by showing that, while it is possible to differentiate analytically economic, cultural and environmental forms of domination under the neoliberal condition, they are intricately

imbricated in practice. I then proceed with a broad conceptualization of neoliberal domination that aims to defetishize the authority of neoliberal economic facts, capture the links between social and environmental forms domination and highlight the neoliberal condition's tendency to erode the emancipatory spirit of the modernist project. As such, this part broadly seeks to provide a detailed examination of constraints on individuals' freedom, in their personal and impersonal manifestations, while aiming to understand what unites them.

After exploring domination, I turn to the issue of **resistance**. I begin **Part III** by attempting to make sense of the distinctive features of key contemporary resistance movements, such as the Global Justice Movement and the more recent anti-austerity protests. Then, I address the implications of this diagnosis for the nature of resistance under the neoliberal condition and explore possible avenues for conceptualizing unity in the diversity of sites of resistance: the economy, culture and nature. I end this part by drawing the conceptual contours of the agent of resistance in an effort to understand the broad, albeit concrete, political form the unity in question could be expected to take. Overall, then, this part is not only aimed at diagnosing contemporary forms of resistance but also involves a sustained attempt to expose the conceptual lessons one can be expected to learn from these movements' historical significance, achievements and shortcomings.

In **Part IV**, I draw the contours of a narrative of **emancipation** informed by the conceptual unity of the diversity of struggles identified in the previous part. For this task, I mainly inspire myself from the concept of "narrative identity" devised by Paul Ricoeur (1984, 1985, 1988). The part begins with a discussion of the contemporary relevance of emancipatory politics. The obstacles to emancipatory political action are, I also argue, predominantly symbolic, assuming the form of narrative components compelling individuals to treat the pursuit of ends as a matter of personal responsibility and regard the constraints imposed by economic facts as inevitable. In turn, I contend that the prospects for emancipatory coalitional politics rest on putting the labour of narrative identity framed by the ethos of "the commons" to work, in such a way as to assert, symbolically, the *de facto* imbrication of struggles marking the neoliberal condition and represent a life emancipated from those facts. I

end this final part of the book by identifying elements of a broad emancipatory strategy in which the narrative in question is expected to play a central role in coordinating the efforts of a range of pre-existing, albeit dispersed, undertakings.

My intent, throughout this book, is to examine a range of political, cultural, economic and environmental developments unfolding since the rise to power of the most familiar political pioneers of neoliberalism, Margaret Thatcher and Ronald Reagan, and understand their implications for the conceptualization of domination, resistance and emancipation. It will be shown that, despite the reigning cynicism regarding the prospects for collective action and the seemingly inexorable rise of reactionary forces and sharp divisions in advanced capitalist societies, contemporary conditions of existence are such that a sustained, progressive and coalitional opposition to the neoliberal condition remains a non-negligible possibility.

Part I

Neoliberal Processes

2

Introduction of Part I

The first part of this book is devoted to telling the story of the relationship between some of the key institutions, actors, resources and sociologically relevant transformations associated with the rise of the neoliberal age. But because I choose to regard this age as a *condition* supported by a range of processes, a particular emphasis is placed on the circumstances affecting how individuals live and interact, and how the biophysical environment comes to be reorganized, under its guise. I have identified four central neoliberal processes, each corresponding to a chapter of this first part: financialization, flexibilization, personal responsibilization and privatization. These were selected for their distinctively neoliberal character or, put differently, for their role in entrenching the logic of competition in society, that is, for neoliberalizing it. In the final chapter I tackle the neoliberalization of nature, in an effort to understand how the processes in question have mediated humanity's relation to the environment.

There is, nevertheless, another reason for choosing to focus on them, namely, their affinity with a range of transformations singled out in diagnoses of contemporary Western societies, such as late modernity and postmodernity narratives. One of the central tasks of this first part shall in fact consist in revealing this affinity, in an effort to enhance our

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understanding of the way neoliberal processes have affected these societies. Crucially, though, I aim to demonstrate that placing the neoliberal condition at the centre of the analysis can consolidate our understanding of the present-day situation.

I propose to achieve these goals by framing my analysis with conceptual tools devised by Karl Polanyi (2001) and Pierre Bourdieu (1998, 2000, 2005). Both regarded the economy as a system of activities and institutions embedded in social relations. Both also emphasized the "utopian" and "artificial" character of the self-regulating market. They wished to bring to our attention the key role played by the state and political elites, as well as non-economic institutions and actors in creating the conditions favourable for a capitalist economy. However, while Polanyi was particularly interested in contradicting the liberal orthodoxy and showing that "the market has been the outcome of a conscious and often violent intervention on the part of government which imposed the market organization on society" (Polanyi 2001: 258), Bourdieu's (2000) distinctive contribution lies in detailing the mechanisms of "symbolic production" involved in this imposition. For him, the state plays an absolutely essential role in producing, cultivating and propagating the symbols and signs individuals employ in making sense of their life. For him, they were central to facilitating the development of, and legitimating, neoliberal processes.

Thus, it is with these conceptual premises in mind that I shall analyse key neoliberal processes and their relation to defining features of our age such as individualization, precarity, social fragmentation, among others. In the process of doing so, I hope to demonstrate the value of formulating a critique equipped with the conceptual tools capable of grasping the non-inevitability of the *status quo*.

3

Financialization

The process of financialization has been central to the neoliberal condition, even prompting Harvey to summarize the latter, somewhat boldly, as "the financialization of everything" (Harvey 2005: 33). Its significance, in fact, reaches far beyond the economic sphere. Expressing his dismay at the impact of financialization, Nassim Nicholas Taleb, who is especially known for his work on the financial industry, once made the following remark:

> We have this culture of financialization. People think they need to make money with their savings rather with their own business. So you end up with dentists who are more traders than dentists. (Taleb cited in Steverman 2010)

Broadly speaking, financialization refers to a process whereby an economy becomes increasingly reliant upon the trade of financial assets for its growth. For Taleb, however, financialization appears to constitute more than a mere process facilitating the accumulation of capital. It is more than a merely *economic* phenomenon. It has become the basis upon which individuals, today, live their life or, at the very least, a *cultural* phenomenon, or means "by which a society, or any social group, represents

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its view of the world" (Lemert 2005: 21). The process, it seems, has paved the way for the development of a distinctive culture whereby "workers, businesses, and countries must start thinking like investors in the financial market" (Martin 2002: 34). But what exactly characterizes financialization? What could a critical sociologist bring to our understanding of the process? In this section, I shall endeavour to explore the sociologically significant transformations associated with this archetypal neoliberal process, in the light of a broad range of available sociological analyses. First, though, let me provide a brief overview of financialization's fundamental features as an economic process.

The Core Features of Financialization

Financialization emerged as a result of a set of economic strategies aimed at opening new outlets for capital accumulation. Since the crisis of 1970s, governments across the Western capitalist world have sought to introduce measures aimed at boosting economic growth following an energy crisis unfolding into a devastating global economic crisis and the collapse of the Bretton Woods Agreement in 1971–1973. The latter, which led to the end of fixed exchange rates, marked the advent of a range of strategies of deregulation facilitating the liberalization of financial market and trade of financial assets or, to use the financial jargon, financial "instruments." It stimulated a "wave of innovations in financial services to produce not only far more sophisticated global interconnections but also new kinds of financial markets" (Harvey 2005: 33). But it also marked a cultural turn in strategies employed by companies to finance their activities, requiring "active and continuous intervention by the state" (Lapavitsas 2013: 3). Financialization led to the institutionalization of "various methods through which capitalist enterprises obtain and deploy funds to support profit-making activities" (Lapavitsas 2013: 109).

These new strategies for growth led to the vast expansion of future trading markets from which a capitalist enterprise (or any individual with the necessary funds to invest on such a market) can expect to find the means to support its own activities through the purchase or sale of tradable financial assets such as company equity shares. The value of these

assets is determined by the supply and demand mechanism. This means that an asset in low supply and high demand will see its value rise over time, at which point the sale of this asset allows its owner to turn a profit. Investments in financial assets do nevertheless always involve a fairly high degree of risk, for their value can rise as quickly and unpredictably as it can fall, as a result of the supply and demand mechanism's reliance on investors' confidence in the performance of a particular enterprise or national economy. Despite the inherently volatile character of these economic activities, governments across advanced capitalist economies have encouraged capitalist enterprises involved in the production of goods and services to rely "increasingly on retained earnings to finance investment" (Lapavitsas 2013: 230). These developments have had the effect of stimulating the development of "a pattern of accumulation in which profits accrue primarily through financial channels rather than through trade and commodity production" (Krippner 2005: 174).

Thus, as an economic process, financialization has entailed the emergence of a vast, complex and sophisticated system of interconnections, integrating dispersed and diverse financial markets within a deregulated global financial structure. It has also been marked by the creation of a range of new economic practices subjected to the pursuit of shareholder value. These, as we shall see, have borne non-negligible effects on neoliberal societies.

Financialization and the Socio-Economic Structure

I wish to begin the discussion on the sociological significance of financialization in somewhat counter-intuitive terms, namely, by addressing accounts that do not explicitly tackle the process head on. They do, nevertheless, provide analytical tools with which to understand the impact of the process on society. Although distinct in several regards, such as their respective view on the prospects for social conflict, the post-industrial narratives I am here referring to do indeed focus on the proliferation of new, information-driven economic activities and service sector jobs, for which the process of financialization played a key part. They acted,

we are told, as a major source of change in the make-up of the labour force and, consequently, the social structure. This position is most boldly expressed by Bell (1999) who, in the 1970s, was "forecasting" the substitution of private property by the "axis of theoretical knowledge" as the "new axial principle of social organisation" (Bell 1999: 112). In such a post-industrial society, conflicts would no longer emerge as a result of a struggle for property ownership between wealthy owners and poor, unskilled manual workers but "between those who have powers of decision and those who have not" (Bell 1999: 119). Despite having formulated a slightly more nuanced diagnosis, both Touraine (1971) and Gorz (1997) have noted a declining role for the workplace and, more generally the sphere of material reproduction, as the key site of struggle in the post-industrial society. While, for the former, "social conflict is no longer defined within a fundamental economic mechanism" (Touraine 1971: 25), for the latter, the "norm to which everyone now refers in his or her actions is no longer the idea of 'work' " (Gorz 2012: 60). Thus, as Bell himself put it:

> If an industrial society is defined by the quantity of goods as marking a standard of living, the post-industrial society is defined by the quality of life as measured by services and amenities—health, education, recreation, and the arts which are now deemed desirable and possible for everyone. (1999: 127)

As information and knowledge become ever more central to economic activities, post-material issues are said to gain prominence. Culture, consequently, turns into a key site of struggle.

Where, then, does financialization fit in all of this? Information and knowledge are, too, central to the process of financialization, for it is on their very basis that market confidence develops and financial strategies, such as loan-based investments, are devised. But its connection with information and knowledge is also observable in relation to its effects on the composition of the workforce. Financialization itself has been a key driving force behind the growth of the service sector, given the multiplication of non-material forms of labour it has engendered, either through the creation of financial services or the divorce between ownership and

management. Under its guise, such jobs as stockbrokers, traders, and mortgage and loan lenders have proliferated. The divorce between ownership and management has also led to the emergence of non-material forms of labour outside of the financial sector, in the form of salaried managers. On the face of it, then, the process appears to underpin several of the phenomena often associated with the emergence of a so-called post-industrial society.

However, despite pertinently anticipating the rapid growth of the service sector which, today, makes up around 80 % of the total workforce in advanced capitalist societies such as the UK (Office for National Statistics 2013) and the USA (Haksever and Render 2013), post-industrial theorists, such as Bell (1999), failed to foresee significant developments resulting from financialization. This is, of course, explained by the fact that, at the time, of their writings, the process was still in its infancy. With the benefit of hindsight, it becomes possible to observe that although financialization induced an increased reliance on information and knowledge by economic activities, led to the transformation of business ownership structures, and contributed to the growth of the service sector, these developments have not, as Bell (1999) anticipated, led to the emergence of a more egalitarian knowledge-based society. Decades after the publication of Bell's work, it is indeed possible to observe the role played by financialization in concentrating the accumulation of capital in a few hands (Piketty 2014). While "monied capitalists" with disposable capital have been in a position to fructify their assets by adopting a range of investment strategies on the financial market, ordinary workers have seen their wages stagnate (Lapavitsas 2013). The effects of financialization on wages were briefly summarized by the Economic Policy Institute as follows:

> First, it has enabled finance professionals to claim excessive pay and bonuses by simply hiding risk that they should be managing. The financial sector has more than doubled in size relative to the rest of the economy over the past generation, and is hugely overrepresented in the top 1 percent of wage and income earners. Second, because wealth holders are significantly more inflation-averse than the rest of the population, the financial industry has used its political power to ensure that economic policy favors low inflation

> rates over low unemployment rates. Third, the extension of financial deregulation to international capital flows has kept policymakers from addressing imbalances (e.g., the U.S. trade deficit) that result from international financial flows. If policymakers had stopped the large influx of capital flows from countries looking to manage the value of their own currency for competitive gain vis-à-vis the United States in the 2000s, this would have not only helped job growth in manufacturing, it could have deprived the financial sector of the cheap financing it used to inflate the housing bubble. (Mishel 2015)

Financialization has, therefore, been responsible for increasing the economy's dependence on information and knowledge, while creating conditions favourable for the kind of socio-economic conflicts which seemed to belong to a distant past for sociologists writing in the immediate aftermath of the counter-cultural movements of the 1960s.

The process has, in this sense, played a role in what David Harvey (2005) called the "restoration of class power." As a second route for capital accumulation, through which pre-existing owners of capital can expect to "profit without producing" (Lapavitsas 2013), it has given additional means for the rich to get richer. This was not achieved without a great deal of efforts aimed at legitimating vast concentrations of wealth, most notably by proponents of "reaganomics" who claimed that wealth would eventually "trickle down" and benefit the bulk of society. Four decades of financialization later, wealth continues to be concentrated in the hands of a few owners of capital (Piketty 2014). Indeed, "in the early 2010s, the richest 10 percent own around 60 percent of the national wealth in most European countries, and in particular in France, Germany, Britain, and Italy" (Piketty 2014: 257). Within the same period, the "top decile" in the USA "own[ed] 72 percent of America's wealth, while the bottom half claim just 2 percent" (Piketty 2014: 257). Meanwhile, the bulk of workers continue to see their wages stagnate (Harvey 2005). But economies cannot be expected to grow on the wealth of the few alone. Neoliberal political and economic elites, therefore, had to find a way to increase demand among ordinary workers. However, this was not achieved through mechanisms aimed at redistributing wealth but, rather, by making it easier for individuals to borrow money. What would eventually trickle down are the financial products themselves.

On the Financialization of Culture

Seeing an opportunity to capitalize on the profit-making logic of financialization, commercial agencies have come to offer a wide range of mass-marketed financial products, such as mortgages, loans and various other forms of consumer credit. These provide ordinary consumers with quick financial solutions to the problem of budget constraints, saving them the time and energy that would be invested in the rather long process involved in saving the funds for the acquisition of these goods. According to a range of contemporary accounts (see, e.g., Martin 2002; Aitken 2007; Langley 2008; Montgomerie 2006), this has marked the emergence of a phenomenon known as the "financialization of culture" or everyday life.

Central to it is a "shift towards financial markets for the provision of people's basic needs" (van der Zwan 2014: 111). Individuals are now said to "think like investors." By increasingly planning their activities around mass-marketed financial products such as mortgages, loans and various other forms of consumer credit, individuals are accepting, and effectively living with, the lifestyle choices and risks associated with the purchase of these products (Martin 2002). In other words, the ordinary worker, the teacher, the nurse, the student all are today relying on sophisticated forms of credit giving them an opportunity to purchase the properties, cars, furniture, degree they would not be in a position to afford otherwise. But these borrowing schemes are risky, for they are dependent on the long-term (and rather unpredictable) capacity of these individuals to repay the debt (plus interest) they owe the lender. An additional set of risks is added to such practices when lenders who, seeing an opportunity to capitalize on the interest-bearing debt of these individuals, adopt financial investment strategies based on the wealth they expect to draw from ordinary individuals' debts. Failure to repay the debt can, therefore, lead to devastating economic consequences, as exemplified by the vast array of home foreclosures following the 2007 sub-prime mortgage crisis in the USA. As a result, individuals are now immersed in a web of strategic investments highly dependent on market confidence. Furthermore, with everyday activities increasingly subjected to the vicissitudes of market forces, individuals are often said to engage increasingly in risk-taking and utility-maximizing everyday practices. To speak of the impact of financialization

on culture in these terms, then, also means to highlight the spread of an efficiency-optimizing, or economic, rationality in everyday life. In short, the financialization of culture refers to "a set of narrative, metaphoric and procedural resources imported from the financial world" that "come to help explain and reproduce everyday life" (Haiven 2014: 14).

This is not to say, however, that individuals' everyday subjectivities have entirely been transformed by the cold, calculative utility-maximizing logic of economic rationality. Accounts of the financialization of everyday life often counterpose economic rationality to culture, suggesting that as the former advances, the latter retreats. This is to oversimplify and, indeed, misunderstand the relationship between the economic and cultural dimensions of social life. New norms of action, such as those made available by everyday financial products, do not so much eradicate pre-existing ones as become integrated within them. For example, in her empirical study of the effects of financialization on everyday life in rural England, Stacey Coppock revealed that individuals "inhabit multiple subject positions within a financial ecology in ways that conform, diverge and subvert neoliberal versions of the responsible, financially self-disciplined individual" (2013: 479). The logic of these findings was confirmed in Léna Pellandini-Simányi et al.'s study of mortgage owners in Hungary who, instead of observing a "one-directional transformation by financial logics of non-financial relations," concluded that it would be more appropriate to speak of a "domestication of finance" (Pellandini-Simányi et al. 2015: 737). The spread of economic rationality induced by the proliferation of mass-marketed financial products need not entail, therefore, the disappearance of culture. One finds, instead, a complex interplay between economic rationality "and the world into which it enters" (Pellandini-Simányi et al. 2015: 737). In their study, for example, Pellandini-Simányi (2015) found that individuals' financial decisions, such as the purchase of a mortgaged home, can even radically contradict the cold, calculative attitude of financial investors. The experience of choosing a house or even losing one as a result of a foreclosure, often embodies a pronounced emotional dimensions rather than being regarded as a mere investment.

Pellandini-Simányi et al. nevertheless noted that although economic rationality is not always explicit in the choices made by individuals in their daily life, "everyday rational calculations … remain implicit,

because they rely on collective, taken-for-granted wisdom about the market, which operates at the habitual level" (2015: 748). The idea that purchasing a home is both more financially sound than renting one and a "form of accumulating prestige and providing security" (Ibid.), constitutes an everyday calculation manifesting itself as common sense. In fact, before choosing to purchase mortgages or other forms of mass-marketed financial products, individuals must be in a position to recognize the value of doing so. They must be able to treat private debt as an acceptable condition, or think like investors, by understanding the value of the responsibilities, risks and lifestyle choices that come with the practice of borrowing and investing. This is not only a mere matter of individual rational calculation but also, and crucially, one of cultural conditioning. Understanding the relationship between financialization and culture may, therefore, require one to explore the mechanisms at work in naturalizing the practices associated with the process or, put differently, to examine those forces contributing to the cultivation of a culture of debt. This, as we will see in the following chapters, and particularly in Chap. 6, means recognizing a role for the state beyond the liberalization of markets and the introduction of legal measures aimed at the democratization of credit.

Financialization and the "Inflation of Culture"

There is, however, another dimension to the relationship between financialization and culture, namely, the contribution the former makes to an "inflation of culture" (Kumar 2005: 137). Take, for example, the process through which value is created within the financial sphere. As sources of non-productive capital, financial assets such as company equity shares generate value for their owners without effectively benefitting society at large, in the form of job creations and wage increases (Lapavitsas 2013). The value of this fictitious capital is instead determined by a mechanism of supply and demand abstracted from material reality. A political decision, an ecological catastrophe, wars or other events capable of affecting the performance of a national economy all tend to play a part in shaping the confidence of investors and driving the supply and demand mechanism in question. A financialized economic system consequently

becomes more vulnerable to the mood of investors who make their decisions to buy or sell financial assets on the basis of the context-specific meanings attributed to such events. As such, a financialized economy is also one more extensively embedded in the cultural or linguistic means "by which a society, or any social group, represents its view of the world" (Lemert 2005: 21). So, while financialization can contribute to a *qualitative change of signs and symbols*, such as those guiding an individual acting like a financial investor in his or her daily life, it also marks the advent of increasingly *symbolically articulated* economic activities.

The sociological implications of the latter set of changes were most explicitly captured by Jean Baudrillard (1975). Despite mainly devoting his attention to the rising significance of consumption in value creation, his early works provide some conceptual tools adaptable to the analysis of financialization. Of particular interest, here, is his stance on the Marxian critique of political economy which, he claims, fails to grasp adequately the implications of recent economic transformations for the creation of value. Because "so many things have erupted in the 'infrastructure,' " he observed, "[s]omething in the capitalist sphere has changed radically" (Baudrillard 1975: 118). What has changed is the fact that capital accumulation now appears to rest predominantly on value created through consumption rather through the exploitation of labour. Branding and marketing strategies have become central to the creation of value through the development of a "super-ideology of the sign" (Baudrillard 1975: 126) aimed at increasing the demand for commodities. Under such conditions, the need or demand for a particular commodity no longer derives from its inherent qualities and the use one could make of it but from its cultural or linguistic construction as a desirable commodity by various branding and marketing agencies. For this reason, Baudrillard went on to claim that "[d]emand and need correspond more and more to a mode of simulation" (Baudrillard 1975: 126). Contemporary economic activities and society, as a whole, consequently, become increasingly invested in and by signs, symbols or codes.

Although Baudrillard was mainly referring to commodities capable of generating productive capital, that is, capital that contributes to a general increase in material conditions of existence, his "arguments resonate with the era of financialization" (Dodd 2014: 194). Financial assets are also

commodities, for their *raison d'être* lies in their capacity to generate value. They, nevertheless, distinguish themselves from commodities in production by having no material form or effective use other than the generation of value in the sphere of circulation. Since demand for, say, company equity shares, arises from confidence in the economic performance of a capitalist enterprise or national economy, it is one that typically "*live[s] off signs and under the protection of signs*" (Baudrillard 1998: 34; emphasis in original). This could help understand why today

> [t]he new regime of accumulation is becoming itself progressively more and more a regime of signification. That is, a greater and greater proportion of all goods produced comprises cultural goods. It is that the means of production are becoming increasingly cultural and that the relations of production are becoming increasingly cultural. That is, the relations of production are thus, not so often mediated by material means of production, but are questions of discourse, of communications between management and employees, the latter illustrated in the large-scale use of 'quality circles' and 'team briefings' by managers in recent times. (Lash 1990: 39)

A financialized economy is, as shown above, also an informationalized one. As it becomes "informationalized," noted Hardt and Negri, it tends to rely increasingly on "linguistic, communicational, and affective networks" (2001: 294), turning economic activities increasingly into systems of cultural production. Cultural and economic practices are no longer divisible into clearly identifiable domains of action and culture loses "that separate mode of existence" (Jameson 1991: 276). The cultural and the economic eventually "collapse back into one another and say the same thing" (Jameson 1991: xx), to produce a situation which "obligate[s] you in advance to talk about cultural phenomena at least in business terms if not in those of political economy" (Jameson 1991: xx). Contrary to Baudrillard's own diagnosis, however, one may not need to abandon the base/superstructure schema embodied in Marx's critique of political economy. Instead, it may be the case that under this new stage, capitalism "generates its superstructures with a new kind of dynamic" (Jameson 1991: xx). Paradoxically, the "inflation of culture" financialization is partly responsible for giving rise to, has unfolded as a result of a

proliferation of *economic activities* increasingly valued, managed and organized in symbolic terms. In short, the inflation in question results from a conflation of economy and culture, which is not so much explained in terms of a complete demise of the economy as a determining power in society, as to a development of the economy into a regime of signification *of its own kind.* Economic life is, more than ever, symbolically *constituted* and *constitutive*.

In fact, even an orthodox Marxist like David Harvey, finds it difficult to ignore such an "inflation of culture" in his conceptualisation of the base/superstructure schema. As he put it, an astute analysis of the present-day situation depends on the

> recognition that the production of images and of discourses is an important facet of activity that has to be analysed as part and parcel of the reproduction and transformation of any symbolic order. Aesthetic and cultural practices matter, and the conditions of their production deserve the closest attention. (Harvey 1990: 355)

Although Harvey does locate the "conditions" in question within the sphere of material reproduction, he is forced to concede that the contemporary situation is characterized by an increasingly complex interplay between material and symbolic forces. For him, then, the "reproduction of images and discourses" ought to constitute a central object of analysis. In the "last instance," however, since the symbolic continues to "mirror" the material, the determining power remains in the hands of the latter. This position, however, tends to downplay the extent to which the material and the symbolic are conflated in a financialized economy.

As an economic process, financialization is characterized by the creation of a sophisticated system of global interconnections, enhancing the interdependence of different economic spaces, economic actors and non-economic actors, while providing additional means for the economically powerful to fructify their assets. Although an ostensibly economic project, it has been marked by a cultural project whose logic cannot be reduced to the mere emergence of new ways of life involving strategies of "self-management and self-fulfilment" (Van der Zwan 2014: 112) guided by utility-maximization. It has, too, contributed to the "informational-

ization" of the economy and the ensuing inflation of culture. These developments did nevertheless take place amid the "restoration of class power." Thus, as briefly indicated in this chapter and further elaborated in the following ones, it is important to understand the relationship between transformations of this kind and structures of power. Doing so can make it possible to explain, for example, how the democratization of credit has depended upon a state active in naturalizing schemes of perception aligned with those of economically powerful groups that have an interest in cultivating conducts that have benefitted them. In fact, with economic activities increasingly constitutive of, and constituted by, symbols, the labour of symbolic production rises in significance. As we shall see, failure to understand its role in the emergence and maintenance of the neoliberal condition may risk disarming critical theory of its subversive edge.

4

Flexibilization

Flexibility appears to hold a prominent place in a wide range of accounts on the contemporary situation. It is central to such works as Richard Sennett's *Corrosion of Character* (1998), Ulrich Beck's *Brave New World of Work* (2000), David Harvey's *The Condition of Postmodernity* (1990) and Luc Boltanski and Eve Chiapello's *The New Spirit of Capitalism* (2005). It is also depicted as a key feature of contemporary societies in postmodern narratives. Stretched to their fullest logic, the latter critiques not only turn culture into a central medium for the constitution of identities and social relations, they also become anti-foundational, anti-essentialist and anti-structural. Under such a reading, societies come to be construed as a realm of action in perpetual flux. Culture, we are told, is not only constitutive but it is also fragmented and fragmentary. Baudrillard, for example, came up with the concept of "hyperreality" to denote a condition, whereby it becomes impossible to speak of a distinction between reality and its representation. Reality, in other words, has lost its foundation and individuals are no longer in a position to fix meanings, identities, representations to a point of origin. For Lyotard (1984), the contemporary or "postmodern condition," is characterized by the disappearance of overarching communities of meaning capable of providing a foundation for legitimate

C. Masquelier, *Critique and Resistance in a Neoliberal Age*,
DOI 10.1057/978-1-137-40194-6_4

collective representations. This is combined with the emergence of an increasingly meaningless and erratic economic system, in which the treatment of "securities as exchangeable things […] is no more explicable than the fact that the libido lodged in the genital zones moves towards the anus from the ear" (Lyotard 1993: 236). In the work of Deleuze and Guattari (1983), capitalism is said to mobilize, more than ever, the unconscious in the production of the real, turning the real into nothing more than "desiring-production." In this advanced capitalist world, the real is "simply more and more artificial" (Deleuze and Guattari 1983: 34). With no foundation to rely upon, no reality to conceal behind an ideological veil and no essence to realize, images of fragmentation and directionless flows abound. Although these postmodern narratives are, today, a lot less influential than they were in the 1980s and 1990s, the images of increasingly fluid, differentiated, mobile, complex and unstable societies have become standard depictions of the social world in the contemporary Western sociological literature, as symbolized by accounts having highlighted the emergence of the precariat. Addressing their claims and assessing their relevance to the contemporary social world may, in this sense, shed light onto the process of flexibilization.

In fact, these images have also made their way into other, more moderate approaches, such as those formulated by proponents of the "new modernity" narrative. Nowhere are they most explicitly discussed than in the work of Bauman, who considers "'fluidity' or 'liquidity' as fitting metaphors when we wish to grasp the nature of the present, in many ways *novel*, phase of the history of modernity" (Bauman 2000: 2). What unites these different approaches, then, is the tendency to reject the idea of structurally fixed and determined social relations and identities, in favour of images depicting them as increasingly unstable, fluid and unpredictable. Flexibility, here, is ultimately conceptualized as an inevitable outcome of modernizing processes, making "social life radically unstable" (Nash 2001: 79). But where does this flexibility emanate from? How did social life in advanced capitalist societies come to be increasingly unstable? Does the conceptualization of flexibility as an inevitable outcome of societal developments unfolding under modernity effectively capture the conditions of its emergence? In this section, I attempt to answer these questions by revealing the complex interplay between the economic and

symbolic dimensions of transformations associated with flexibilization. Let me start by exploring the economic transformations associated with its advancement.

Flexibilization as Economic Process

The economic process of flexibilization has been marked by changes in economic relations: within markets, within production and between markets and production. These have resulted from a range of strategies adopted by the neoliberal state and aimed at eliminating "constraints on capital's discretion through the removal of legal or contractual restrictions at the workplace level, in the broader labor market, and in society" (Baccaro and Howell 2011: 527). Deregulation is therefore central to flexibilization. But so is financialization. Indeed, as businesses augment their dependence on financial markets for the funding of their activities, they are forced to pursue "growth strategies" subjected to the rule of "shareholder value" (Thompson 2013: 473). In turn, financialization bears "negative impacts on stable employment relations from the short term focus and requirement to service debt of […] firms" (Thompson 2013: 474). To speak of flexibilization in these terms, means to highlight a change in relations between employers and employees resulting from the increasing subjection of production to the volatile investment decisions of shareholders.

But contemporary commentators have tended to place a particular emphasis on a new regime of production, known as post-Fordism, in their attempt to explain the flexibilization of economic relations (Harvey 1990; Sennett 1998; Beck 2000). Post-Fordism is used to denote a qualitative and temporal change in the regime of production driven by state-led deregulation strategies: qualitative because it is thought to differ fundamentally from Fordist production; temporal because it is thought to have succeeded Fordism. The word "regime" here refers to the totality of relations and practices involved in production, from relations between employers and employees to the type of employment contracts and nature of tasks involved in the production process. So while financialization could be regarded as a process marked by the creation of

new avenues for capital accumulation and the financing of production and individuals' everyday activities, post-Fordism constitutes a way of organizing production and arranging employment practices articulated around the principle of flexibility.

Post-Fordism emerged as a response to the "crisis of accumulation" (Harvey 2010) triggered by the oil shocks of the early 1970s. The Fordist regime of production and concomitant Keynesian political-economic measures had been able to secure unprecedented levels of prosperity and economic security for the bulk of workers. Under the guise of Taylorist methods of management, however, the Fordist workplace had become highly regimented, centralized and hierarchical. The mass production of standardized goods involved a highly routinized regime of production, wherein workers could only be expected to perform highly specialized and simplified tasks (Braverman 1974). They did nevertheless find compensations for such repressive working conditions, such as non-negligible wage increases—symbolized by Ford's "5 dollar a day" minimum wage—shorter working days, as well as various employment and sickness benefits made available by an increasingly interventionist state. Under the guise of Fordism, capitalist economies enjoyed unprecedented growth rates, combined with the rise of a middle class. Thus, although limited in its capacity to yield emancipatory work practices, Fordism was responsible, at least partly, for what is now known as the "golden age" of capitalist development, combining high growth rates, economic stability, full employment and the rise of a large middle class. But the crisis of the 1970s came to question Fordism's capacity to sustain long-term growth. As Kumar put it:

> Fordism was unparalleled in its ability to deliver standardised goods cheaply and on a mass scale. This was all right so long as there were sufficient groups in the population still awaiting their turn to enjoy the fruits of mass production. But what when these new groups of mass consumers were exhausted? What when demand significantly changes? What when the dictates of fashion, new styles of life, ceaseless technological innovation all call out for rapid turnover and swift changes of production? (Kumar 2005: 69)

What became apparent, then, was that production lacked the flexibility required to adapt to consumers' demand. The logic according to which large stocks of cheap standardized goods, produced *en masse* under the

guise of a highly refined division of labour heavily dependent on machinery, came to be construed as wasteful and limited in its capacity to match a volatile demand. What therefore seemed to be needed was a regime of production capable of limiting these so-called wastes and "accommodating ceaseless change" (Piore and Sabel 1984: 17). In short, the task of restoring economic growth came to be regarded as a matter of flexibilization in production.

Political and economic elites sought to achieve it by modifying both production methods and employment practices in such a way as to make economic relations more responsive to the supply and demand mechanism. This led to the creation of a decentred or "networked" (Boltanski and Chiapello 2005) economy. In this network, the computer becomes a central flexibilizing tool, in virtue of its capacity to "put to new uses without physical adjustment" (Piore and Sabel 1984: 260) and facilitate the communication between the different nodes of the network. The introduction of "flatter, leaner, more decentralized and more flexible forms of organization" (Jessop 2002: 100) gave workers scope to perform "multiple tasks" and, more generally, led to the "elimination of job demarcation" (Harvey 1990: 177), thereby decreasing the regimentation and routinization of the labour process, while increasing workers' adaptability to new tasks. A range of new employment practices also emerged, allowing employers to increase even further the flexibility of production by, on the one hand, offering different forms of short-term and part-time contracts and, on the other, freeing the enterprise from the burden of negotiations with trade unions, administrative procedures and legal constraints through various sub-contracting and outsourcing methods. These were made possible by the politically engineered relaxation of a range of "legal or contractual restrictions" on employers' practices and a concomitant attack on the bargaining power of workers, exemplified, under Thatcher's rule, by the 1982 Employment Act.[1] Along with changes implemented by economic elites within the sphere of production, then, one could also witness the emergence of a distinctive political-economic regime aiming to "promote economic and extra-economic conditions deemed appropriate to the emerging post-Fordist accumulation regime" (Jessop 2002: 95).

[1] This piece of legislation partly aimed to make it easier for employers to fire employees.

The mandate of the British Conservative/Liberal Democrat coalition government, which began in 2010, is particularly instructive in this regard. As the British MP David Laws (2016) revealed in his diaries, Chancellor of the Exchequer, George Osborne, made repeated attempts to weaken the power of trade unions and the labour movement as a whole, all in an effort to render the economy more responsive to the flows of capital. The state, therefore, has acted as an active flexibilizing force in economic relations, while creating the conditions favourable for the networks of interdependence between different individuals and economic activities making up the new regime of production.

From Flexibilization to Precarization

The aforementioned transformations make up the analytical core of a range of contemporary accounts depicting flexibility as a defining condition of our age. But this flexibility is, in several of these diagnoses, also problematized as a source of "precarization" for members of contemporary Western societies. As Bauman put it:

> The joint outcome of disparate but converging assaults on the defensive lines is the "absolute rule of flexibility" aimed at the "precarization", and this disablement, of people placed at the potential bridgeheads of resistance. The deepest socio-psychological impact of flexibility consists in making precarious the position of those affected and keeping it precarious. Such measures as the replacement of permanent and legally protected contracts by fixed-term or temporary task-related jobs allowing instant dismissal, rolling contracts and the kind of employment that undermines the principle of accretion of entitlements through continuous evaluation of performance, making the remuneration of each individual employee dependent on current individual results, inducement of competition between sectors and branches of the same enterprise which deprives the employees' united stand of all rationality—all such measures together produce a situation of endemic and permanent uncertainty. (Bauman 1999: 29)

The accommodation to ceaseless change entails "the capacity continually to reshape the productive process through the re-arrangement of its

components" (Piore and Sabel 1984: 269). When these so-called components include individuals and their labour, it becomes easy to understand how "the shifting around is likely to be personally disruptive" (Standing 2011: 11), and especially so when it is imposed on them. For this reason, the flexibilization of production and labour markets is often described as an intolerable source of uncertainty for ordinary workers, who are now said to "lack a secure work-based identity" (Standing 2011: 9).

This diagnosis is observable in the work of several contemporary sociologists including, but not limited to, Bauman (1999, 2000), Standing (2011) and Beck (2000). In Beck's *The Brave New World of Work* (2000), for example, the transformations of employment practices are treated as decisive sources of risks and uncertainty. Similar concerns are expressed in the work of Sennett (1998), whose idea of the "corrosion of character" under post-Fordism bears striking resemblance to the forms of disruption described by Standing (2011). These accounts tend to be united in treating flexibility as a defining feature of our age causing the emergence of new, precarized, forms of life articulated around an economy in a state of perpetual flux. They also seek to problematize these "precarious" lifestyles, whose origins, they argue, can be traced to the changes of economic practices and relations associated with the flexibilization of production and labour markets. Thus, the discussion of the origins of flexibility and flexibility-induced precarity is, in these works, limited to an analysis of material transformations. Little, if anything, is said about the production and cultivation of symbols and meanings involved in their rise to defining features of our age.

On the Cultural Dimension of Flexibilization

Other analysts of flexibilization have nevertheless sought to explore the cultural origins of the process. In the work of Boltanski and Chiapello (2005), for example, one finds a somewhat different narrative. Despite treating it as a defining feature of our age and expressing concerns regarding the precarization of life ensuing from it, they were keen to highlight the role of the means "by which a society, or any social group, represents its view of the world" (Lemert 2005: 21) in giving rise to a flexible regime

of accumulation such as post-Fordism. Their point of departure for their cultural analysis of flexibilization are the social movements of the 1960s and sociological critiques of the time "that denounced the mechanization of the world" (Boltanski and Chiapello 2005: 201) under Fordism. More specifically, they condemned "the destruction of forms of life conducive to the fulfilment of specifically human potential and, in particular, creativity" (Boltanski and Chiapello 2005: 201). Under such a reading, post-Fordism is analysed in terms of a response to pre-existing cultural demands and an attempt, by economic and political elites, to restore the legitimacy of capitalist relations through the symbolically cultivated affinity between the movements' own demands for freedom and flexibility in the economy. As Harvey noted:

> Any political movement that holds individual freedoms to be sacrosanct is vulnerable to incorporation into the neoliberal fold. The worldwide political upheavals of 1968, for example, were strongly inflected with the desire for greater personal freedoms. This was certainly true for students, such as those animated by the Berkeley "free speech" movement of the 1960s or who took to the streets in Paris, Berlin, and Bangkok and were so mercilessly shot down in Mexico City shortly before the 1968 Olympic Games. They demanded freedom from parental, educational, corporate, bureaucratic, and state constraints. (Harvey 2005: 41)

The liberation of production and labour markets from various constraints is, here, conceptualized as a set of material transformations facilitated by specific cultural preconditions, harnessed for political and economic ends. In a rather Weberian and Polanyian vein,[2] these accounts wish to bring to our attention the fact that material changes of the kind witnessed in the aftermath of the 1960s social movements are, at least partly, anchored in a pre-existing system of values and ideals harnessed by the political and economic elites in an effort to turn "them against the interventionist and regulatory practices of the state" (Harvey 2005: 42). But little, if anything, is said by Boltanski and Chiapello (2005) about the cultural cultivation of flexibility following its operationalization as a

[2] Their debt to Karl Polanyi is in fact acknowledged in the preface to the English edition of their work.

core principle of the post-Fordist regime of production. Their conceptual framework, in turn, seeks to uncover only the cultural dimension of flexibilization in its early developmental stage and, consequently, falls short of opening up the scope of analysis to those conditions under which, today, the process continues to be symbolically cultivated. In short, flexibilization is, in their analysis, akin to capitalism in Weber's work, for it is thought to become self-sustaining. It assumes a positive or objective manifestation, stripped of the values that originally supported it.

In his work, however, Kevin Doogan (2009) tells us something striking about flexibilization. Drawing his findings from an analysis of employment data in several advanced capitalist countries, he found that, contrary to "both public perception and widely held assumptions within social science debate," the data reveal that "[o]ver both shorter and longer time frames, the growth of the long-term workforce has been significant in Europe and North America" (2009: 177). Explaining the rise of flexibility to a defining feature of our age, it seems, requires one to undertake more than merely focusing on changes in economic relations and practices. In order to do so, Doogan turns to Bourdieu.

In his analysis of neoliberal capitalism, Bourdieu explores the range of conditions under which themes such as flexibility and precarity have become "common-sense" notions. For him, both are neither strictly economic nor strictly cultural; they emerge out of a "whole world of production" (Bourdieu 1998: 84) in which culture facilitates "the generalization of precarious wage labour and social insecurity, turned into the privileged engine of economic activity" (Bourdieu and Wacquant 2001: 3). Flexibility and precarity, here, assume a symbolically cultivated character, for they are not only the product of a "*political will*" (Bourdieu 1998: 84; emphasis in original) but also instruments "aimed at forcing workers into submission," through the "creation of a generalized and permanent state of insecurity" (Bourdieu 1998: 85). As such, they can play a central role in justifying economic elites' attempts to reduce their production costs and, more specifically, wages. They are deployed as ideological tools.

But they also play a role in shaping ways of life. For, as flexibility and the fear it induces are naturalized, individuals are more inclined to prioritize strategies of efficiency-optimization over less economically fruitful

activities.[3] They become more competitive and disposed to sacrifice their personal well-being such as leisure activities and family life (Burke and Cooper 2008). Fear, though, is not alone in being the cultivated symbol of flexibility. Indeed, "[g]reater freedom and liberty of action in the labour market could be touted as a virtue for capital and labour alike" (Harvey 2005: 53). These ideals play a central part in legitimating flexibility. One does indeed often hear British Conservative political elites defending zero-hour contracts as a "convenient" arrangement for those unwilling to be "constrained" by fixed working hours. The reality on the ground is, however, very different. Research does indeed suggest that these forms of highly flexible contracts or "flexi-contracts" often cause widespread anxiety, stress and depression (McVeigh 2014). In fact, those most likely to find them convenient are employers. Flexibility could, in this sense, be viewed as an object of symbolic production serving political and economic ends. Social critique is, in this sense, confronted with the task of understanding the complex interplay between mechanisms of symbolic production, economic transformations and the state in the neoliberalization of social life.

But even sophisticated Marxist narratives such as David Harvey's *The Condition of Postmodernity* (1990) fall short of giving sufficient recognition to such a complex configuration of forces. Take, for example, the following set of claims:

> First I see no difference in principle between the vast range of speculative and equally unpredictable activities undertaken by entrepreneurs (new products, new marketing stratagems, new technologies, new locations, etc.) and the equally speculative development of cultural, political, legal, and ideological values and institutions under capitalism. Secondly, while it is indeed possible that speculative development in these latter domains would not be reinforced or discarded according to post hoc rationalizations of profit-making, profitability (in either the narrow or the broader sense of generating and acquiring new wealth) has long been implicated in these activities, and with the passing of time the strength of this connection has increased rather than diminished. Precisely because capitalism is expansionary and imperialistic, cultural life in more and more areas gets brought

[3] As Foucault himself put it, "there is no liberalism without a culture of danger" (2008: 66).

> within the grasp of the cash nexus and the logic of capital circulation. (Harvey 1990: 344)

On the one hand, Harvey wishes to show that capitalism's inexorable search for profitable activities, which flexibilization is said to result from, takes place alongside, and is indeed facilitated by, extra-economic developments. On the other, as the search progresses, capitalism becomes ever more culturally embedded. However, for Harvey, the cultural formation corresponding to post-Fordist capitalism, characterized by "all the ferment, instability, and fleeting qualities of a postmodernist aesthetic" (1990: 156) is *determined* by "profit-seeking" and the changes in employment practices meant to accommodate it (Harvey 1990: 337). Here flexibility is, "in the last instance," treated as an economic reality "mirrored" in culture (Harvey 1990: 336). Despite recognizing the "increasing connection" between the economy and culture under post-Fordism, and acknowledging a debt to Bourdieu's own conceptualization of the relationship between the symbolic and the material (Harvey 2005: 77), Harvey actually takes "employment change as [his] starting point" (Doogan 2009: 28). As such, he is more willing to trace the rise of flexibility to material transformations than Bourdieu and Doogan are inclined to. Although Harvey's diagnosis does not exclude the possibility of treating it as an ideological tool harnessed for economic ends, it tends to downplay the role played by mechanisms of symbolic production whereby freedom, as well as the symbols and meanings associated with it, are co-opted for the purpose of naturalizing flexibility and the conditions of existence emanating from it.

Defetishizing Flexibility

An economistic narrative like Harvey's, therefore, falls short of fully appreciating the complex relationship between the material and cultural dimension of flexibility. But culturalist narratives, too, are limited in their capacity to grasp the complexity of the interplay between the state, culture and the economy in the diagnosis of flexibility. For example, Lyotard's (1984) "language games" and Deleuze and Guattari's (1983)

"desiring-production" tend to deny the possibility for a fixed and structurally determined relation between reality and its representation, under what they see as an inevitable outcome of societal developments, namely cultural fragmentation. With such a diagnosis, the ideological character of flexibility's symbolic production vanishes. Flexibility is, this time, construed as a given, faceless and insurmountable cultural condition of the contemporary situation. Critique can no longer be expected to "transcend it" or "counteract it" (Harvey 1990: 44). Instead it "swims, even wallows, in the fragmentary and the chaotic current of change as if that is all there is" (Harvey 1990: 44). Such culturalist narratives, in turn, make it impossible to engage with a "demystification of ideologically distorted belief systems" (Fraser 1989: 18), of which flexibility constitutes a core component.

The nature of flexibility as an ideologically deployed object of symbolic production can be further illustrated by turning to an analysis of the relationship between economic production and consumption within the post-Fordist regime. For advocates of flexibility, such as Piore and Sabel (1984), the benefits of operationalizing such a principle in the economy lie in its capacity to adapt production to fluctuating demand. As such, they articulated their defence of flexibility around the assumption that consumers' needs are in constant flux and that, in turn, the economy ought to reorganize in such a way as to meet these fluctuating needs. Implicit in their view, then, is the idea that flexibility is a given cultural end: that individuals naturally and perpetually seek to satisfy new needs. Flexibility, here, is no product of symbolic cultivation. It is, instead, a given fact of human existence, best operationalized in a flexible economy. But how would they explain the billions invested by companies on advertizing, or other strategies aimed at stimulating consumption, such as the "planned obsolescence" of industrial designs and the democratization of credit? By failing to recognize the role played by the state, manufacturers, service providers and cultural producers in cultivating a culture of flexibility, Piore and Sabel are guilty of participating in the naturalization of dominant, albeit sectional, representations. They overlook the range of mechanisms and social conditions through which flexibility was turned into a "privileged engine of economic activity." Flexibility must be denaturalized so as to reveal the sectional interests it is called upon to meet. It

must be defetishized in order to grasp its socially, historically and culturally specific character, understand its role in reproducing the established order and objectivating dominant schemes of perception.

The case of France in the year 2016 is particularly instructive in this regard. Over the past 20 years or so, France has struggled to maintain sufficiently high growth rates to be able to reduce its relatively high unemployment rate, particularly among the youth. Although successive governments have introduced measures that have successfully neoliberalized the economy (Baccaro and Howell 2011), none have, so far, succeeded in flexibilizing the labour market as profoundly as in the UK or Germany. This is not to say that different governments, particularly on the right of the political spectrum, have not intended to do so. One of the boldest attempts was French Prime Minister Dominque De Villepin's Contrat de Premiere Embauche" (CPE),[4] aimed at reforming the labour legislation by removing the need for an employer to provide reasons for dismissal of employees in their first employment contact. In short, it aimed to make it easier for employers to fire employees early in their career. After months of protests mobilizing trade unions and students, the reform was abandoned. However, for many years, debates about the slow growth and high unemployment rates in France have singled out the French labour law as "archaic," "too complex" and, above all, as the key culprit for the economic and social ills of the French. In short, in order to restore its glorious economic past, we are told, there is no alternative other than reforming the labour legislation. Politicians on the right and left of the political spectrum are often joined by an army of cultural producers, such as journalists and academics, to extol the virtues of flexibilization.

Armed with these schemes of perception, the left-wing government of Francois Hollande forced a set of measures, known as the 2016 El Khomri reforms, into parliament. Central to it is, once again, the attempt to make it easier for employers to fire employees. New protests broke out, most notably in the form of general strikes and a social movement known as the *Nuit Debout*. A non-negligible proportion of the French population, therefore, continues to resist flexibilization. They refuse to treat the attack on labour rights as an inevitable outcome. But, while the protests

[4] This could be translated as "first employment contract."

of 2016 illustrate a continuing opposition to the neoliberalization of the French economy and culture, they also serve to highlight the resilience of neoliberal ideas among the French political elite. They provide additional evidence of the repeated attempts by this elite, on both the right and the left of political spectrum, to make "*political decisions* that reflect the tipping of the balance of class forces in favour of the owners of capital" (Bourdieu and Wacquant 2001: 4).

Flexibility, it was shown, should not escape the labour of defetishization. The risk involved in treating it strictly in terms of an objective, that is given, condition of the contemporary situation, consists in conferring it an unwarranted and unwarrantable degree of inevitability. A successful critique of the neoliberal condition is one that can be expected to reveal the specific social, political, cultural and economic forces involved in naturalizing a phenomenon such as flexibilization, even when these make the task of defetishization an exceptionally challenging one. More specifically, it involves grounding new employment practices and methods of production in the decisions of a political elite active in symbolically cultivating the "self-evidence" (Bourdieu 2000: 174) of a range of schemes of perception aligned with the interests of the economic elites. Such an exercise, as we shall now see, is equally applicable to the third process under discussion in this part of the book: personal responsibilization.

5

Personal Responsibilization

During her rule as prime minister of the UK, Margaret Thatcher famously claimed, "There is no such thing as society. There are individual men and women, and there are families." What Thatcher intended to mean with this assertion, often quoted by analysts of the neoliberal condition, is to dismiss the state's responsibility for the existence of structural inequalities determining individuals' life opportunities. It sought to emphasize and indeed promote the idea that individuals are, as Reagan himself asserted in a speech given to the British Parliament in 1982, free to "determine their own destiny." In such a vision, the constraining effects of social conditions are nowhere to be seen. Instead, one finds a wide variety of personally responsible individuals, freely shaping their destiny according to their needs, desires and abilities. The idea that individuals are personally responsible for their socio-economic fate lies at the core of the neoliberal conception of freedom and informs a range of measures neoliberal political elites have introduced since the 1970s. To speak of personal responsibilization, then, means to refer to a process whereby a range of legal, economic and cultural resources are mobilized in an effort to compel individuals to regard themselves and/or others as personally responsible for their actions. Personal responsibilization has, in

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fact, become a central object of analysis in sociological diagnoses of contemporary Western societies (see, for example, Giddens 1991; Bauman 2000; Beck and Beck-Gernsheim 2002; Foucault 2008). In this chapter, I shall discuss how these different theorists sought to make sense of this seemingly central feature of the contemporary situation and reflect on their respective merits and limitations. The aim shall therefore consist in developing a theoretically robust understanding of the nature and reach of personal responsibilization, in the light of a range of sociological diagnoses of the contemporary situation.

Personal Responsibilization and the Neoliberal State

The neoliberal conception of freedom draws its inspiration from the works of Friedrich Hayek (2001) and Milton Friedman (1962), who both viewed the state and its administrative apparatus as an impediment to self-determination. The latter, they thought, could best be guaranteed by the "system of private property" (Hayek 2001: 108). As Harvey put it:

> Neoliberalism is in the first instance a theory of political economic practices that proposes that human well-being can best be advanced by liberating individual entrepreneurial freedoms and skills within an institutional framework characterised by strong private property rights, free markets, and free trade. The role of the state is to create and preserve an institutional framework appropriate to such practices. (Harvey 2005: 2)

Two striking elements can be observed here: one regarding the nature of freedom itself and the other regarding its institutionalization. First, the concept of freedom referred to here assumes a predominantly economic form—an "entrepreneurial freedom" secured by various strategies of institutionalization. It is also one mainly characterized by the removal of constraints—not on individuals generally but on entrepreneurial freedom more specifically. Second, the state plays an essential role in creating the conditions favourable for the freedom in question. It intervenes in such a way as to remove a range of constraints on capital accumulation in the name of freedom.

But central to the promotion of these freedoms is the principle of competition, for, as Hayek put it, it "will make it necessary for people to act rationally in order to maintain themselves" (1982: 75). Competition is understood as a key market principle and driving force behind the emergence of utility-maximizing and personally responsible individuals. However, Hayek's aversion to all forms of planning meant that he anticipated the development of competitive practices as part of an evolutionary process of adaptation, rather than as the result of institutional strategies. This puts his position at odds with the ordoliberal tradition[1] , and crucially, with really existing neoliberalism. Indeed, under the latter, the state has come to assume an immensely strategic role in promoting and institutionalizing competition by, for example, the creation of free-trade blocs or the withdrawal of subsidies and labour rights. The "freedoms it embodies," therefore, "reflect the interests of private property owners, businesses, multinational corporations, and financial capital" (Harvey 2005: 7). As such, the state has played an active role in promoting conducts appropriate for the free and competitive pursuit of private gain and the rise of what Foucault (2008) called the "entrepreneurial self."

What, then, characterizes the practices associated with this entrepreneurial self? The term "entrepreneur" draws its origins from the business world, where to act as an entrepreneur refers to a person ready to take risks in the self-interested and competitive pursuit of profit. To promote entrepreneurial freedoms, then, entails creating conditions favourable for competitive and self-interested utility-maximization and, crucially, personal responsibility. As such, it presupposes an "aggressive, ruthless, competitive, adversarial" (Acker 2004: 29) conduct, guided by economic rationality. For Foucault, whose work partly sought to deconstruct the neoliberal idea of freedom, these conducts mark a historically specific "subjectivity" emanating from the contingent configuration of a range of economic and extra-economic practices. It marks, more specifically, the rise of an entrepreneurial subjectivity, whereby the individual turns into an "entrepreneur of himself, being for himself his own capital, being for himself his own producer, being for himself the source of [his] earnings"

[1] Contrary to Hayek, ordoliberals believed in "securing an institutional basis for competition" (Bröcking 2016: 54).

(Foucault 2008: 226). Neoliberal policies are, in this sense, said to have given rise to an entrepreneurial self and "enterprise society" (Foucault 2008: 147). In short, they are said to be active in extending the reach of a typically entrepreneurial conduct, namely personal responsibility, beyond the confines of the economic sphere.

Explaining the Rise of the "Entrepreneurial Self"

The rise of this entrepreneurial self has been noted by a broad range of contemporary social commentators. For Bauman, however, the emergence of the ethos of personal responsibility marks the spread of an altogether different logic from the one identified by Foucault, namely that of consumption. While the workplace and, more generally the sphere of production, used to act as "the principal vantage-point from which the individual looked at, planned and modelled his life-process as a whole" (Bauman 1988: 71), individuals are now turning to the sphere of consumption to "reassert the autonomy surrendered in the workplace" (Bauman 1988: 73). They now seek satisfaction in, or realize their identity through, consumption. But such an "individualized" pursuit of pleasure, he noted, emerged alongside the transformation of "human 'identity' from a 'given' into a 'task' and charging the actors with the responsibility for performing that task and for the consequences (also side-effects) of their performance" (Bauman 2000: 32–3). The realization of the self, in other words, became a project to plan for, and a project for which consumption assumes a strategic place.

However, although Bauman is keen to emphasize a break between the production phase of capitalism's history and its consumer phase, Foucault insists that, even the "man of consumption,"

> insofar as he consumes, is a producer. What does he produce? Well, quite simply, he produces his own satisfaction. And we should think of consumption as an enterprise activity by which the individual, precisely on the basis of the capital he has at his disposal, will produce something that will be his own satisfaction. (Foucault 2008: 226)

Consequently, although Foucault and Bauman immediately appear to be in disagreement with each other, they are merely calling the very same phenomenon a different name. Indeed, both highlighted the preponderance of conducts governed by an ethos of personal responsibility. In the act of consumption, the individual follows a conduct which Foucault treats as typically entrepreneurial. The individual *qua* consumer or producer takes charge of his or her life. The self turns into a project to be realized on the basis of individual choices and decisions amid a climate of uncertainty.

Other contemporary commentators, such as Ulrich Beck and Anthony Giddens, have also attributed a central role to the entrepreneurial self in their diagnosis. According to the former, the fact that "the individual is becoming the basic unit of social reproduction for the first time in history" (Beck and Beck-Gernsheim 2002: xxii) constitutes a core feature of our age. Individualism, or the inclination to treat self-realization as something one is personally responsible for, becomes effectively "institutionalized" (Beck and Beck-Gernsheim 2002). This phenomenon, specific to the newly emerging "second modernity," imposes new demands on individuals. It compels them "to plan for the long term and adapt to change" or to "organize and improvise, set goals, recognize obstacles, accept defeats and attempt new starts" (Beck and Beck-Gernsheim 2002: 4). Such claims are echoed in the work of Giddens:

> Each of us not only "has," but lives a biography reflexively organised in terms of flows of social and psychological information about possible ways of life. Modernity is a post-traditional order, in which the question, "How shall I live?" has to be answered in day-to-day decisions about how to behave, what to wear and what to eat—and many other things—as well as interpreted within the temporal unfolding of self-identity. (1991: 14)

The treatment of identity or self-realization as a matter individuals are personally responsible for is, we are told, an inescapable outcome of social evolution, guided by modernization and imposing itself on members of contemporary societies. Indeed, both, along with Bauman (2008) himself, claim that "people no longer have any choice but to *actively think and choose* how to live, what to value and what to become" (Atkinson

2010: 2). Under the guise of personal responsibility, individuals become "reflexive" agents, picking and choosing the goods, activities, and information they deem acceptable for the realization of the self. They are the sole authors of their life stories. They become "entrepreneurs of themselves," in Foucault's sense of the term. For Beck, the "do-it-yourself biography is always a 'risk biography,' … a state of permanent (partly overt, partly concealed) endangerment" (Beck and Beck-Gernsheim 2002: 3). Entrepreneurs must, after all, accept to take risks, and accept full responsibility for their consequences. In a similar vein, Bauman insists that the "unprecedented freedom" to choose granted to individuals manifests itself alongside an "unprecedented impotence" (2000: 23) under a "fluid modernity" (2000: 6). Giddens, on the other hand, tends to paint a more positive picture of "self-identity," by emphasizing the fact that individuals exert a non-negligible degree of "control [over their] life circumstances" (Giddens 1991: 202). So while all attribute a key role to reflexivity in the formation of identity, Beck and Bauman join Latour in claiming that individuals have developed "a heightened awareness that mastery is impossible" (Latour cited in Beck et al. 2003: 3). For Giddens, though, it has been accompanied by a non-negligible degree of empowerment in the formation of identity, even despite the "existentially troubling" (1991: 21) character of late modernity. They are nevertheless in agreement on two facets of reflexivity, namely the fact that it "demand[s] an active contribution by individuals" (Beck and Beck-Gernsheim 2002: 4) and, as will be shown later, that it entails the "'lifting out' of social relations from local contexts of interaction" (Giddens 1990: 21).

The rise of the entrepreneurial self could, in sum, be viewed as the rise of conditions of existence under which individuals are compelled to regard themselves and/or others as personally responsible for their actions. They have "no choice but to choose," take risks and accept full responsibility for the decisions they make. Like a conventional entrepreneur having to adapt to the supply and demand mechanism, the entrepreneurial self is under continuous pressure to maximize his or her utility in the light of new information, new food or fashion trends or changing work conditions. In fact, like the entrepreneur, this individual is compelled to regard the realization of the self as a solitary exercise.

Bringing Neoliberalism Back in the Analysis

These contemporary social theorists, along with Foucault, appear to agree on the idea that individuals are now immersed in a culture of entrepreneurialism, namely one whereby they are compelled to make choices for which they are personally responsible, while having to accept the risks associated with them. As crafters of their identity, they are also continuously encouraged to know themselves. While, in second modernity narratives, this phenomenon is captured by the term "reflexivity," Foucault (1988) uses the phrase "technologies of the self" to emphasize the expertise involved in forming the self. It is at this particular juncture that fundamental differences between the latter's perspective and that of second modernity theorists begin to emerge. Indeed, Foucault (1988) insisted that these "technologies of the self"' unfolded alongside "technologies of power," whereby individuals' behaviour comes to be normalized. So, while the task of knowing oneself can serve the empowerment of individuals, the various power relations within which these same individuals are enmeshed cannot be ignored. Developing an understanding of oneself in relation to pre-existing norms also means understanding what is acceptable and prohibited and, consequently, acquiring the means either to conform to, or transgress, such norms. When "technologies of the self" intersect those of power, individuals are said to be equipped with the knowledge required to normalize their behaviour (Foucault 1988). Foucault named this phenomenon "governmentality," which, he insisted, characterizes the way power manifests itself under the neoliberal condition (Foucault 2008). Foucault, then, wished to show how the cult the entrepreneurial self is inextricably linked to manifest, albeit subtle, forms of domination enacted as self-discipline, which Beck, Giddens and even Bauman excluded from their account of the contemporary situation.

Such an oversight bears significant implications for diagnosing both the origins and character of the entrepreneurial self. Beck, Giddens and Bauman seem to share the view according to which individualization[2]

[2] Exploring the various nuanced differences between their respective accounts of the individualization thesis in detail falls outside the scope of the present discussion. For such a discussion, please see Atkinson (2010) and Howard (2007).

constitutes an inevitable outcome of processes of modernization initiated in early modernity: "surges in technological rationalization and changes in work and organization" for Beck (1992: 50); globalization for Giddens (1990, 1991); the "melting powers" of modernity for Bauman (2000: 6). They have, in short, located the driving forces behind the emergence of the entrepreneurial self outside the "political context of neoliberal societies" (Dawson 2012: 211). For Foucault, however, it cannot be divorced from such a context. It is in fact instrumental for neoliberal capitalism's reproduction. The rise of the entrepreneurial self must be situated within the configuration of forces specific to neoliberal capitalism, which he understood as

> the result of specific compositions of apparatuses, or dispositifs, that are both discursive and non-discursive, put into place as a result of calculations aiming to constitute the world in a determinate way. Capitalism as an historical reality can thus be seen as the contingent product of these institutional arrangements and the practical rules that operate as its conditions of possibility. (Lazzarato 2009: 110)

According to Foucault, the neoliberal age corresponds to a historically specific ensemble of relations shaping a complex system of both discursive (related to statement-making mechanisms) and non-discursive practices (concretely manifested in conduct) in a perpetual state of "mutual presupposition" (Lazzarato 2009: 113). Individualization, or the idea that individuals are, broadly speaking, "entrepreneurs of themselves," is one such set of discursive and non-discursive practices. It is non-discursive to the extent that it refers to a conduct administered by the various institutions making up the neoliberal condition, for example, the free market and the "Schumpeterian Competition State" (Jessop 2002). Its discursive character is observable in the practices of legal, academic and journalistic forms, among others, involved in establishing the "law, the norm, opinion, categories, knowledges" (Lazzarato 2009: 111). The task of framing the entrepreneurial self in this way makes it possible to trace the origins of the phenomenon back to a political-economic regime upholding a "dynamic of competition" (Foucault 2008: 147), which upholds the ethos of personal responsibility. It also opens up the scope of analysis

to include a consideration of the role played by the entrepreneurial self in such a regime. Here, one indeed finds that it makes a non-negligible contribution to the reproduction of the neoliberal condition by framing a conduct appropriate for a regime of growth underpinned by the dynamic of competition. Its normalizing character derives from its function as a subjectivity indissociable from the neoliberal political regime.

Ideology and Personal Responsibilization

The strength of Foucault's diagnosis lies in recognizing the quintessentially (neo)liberal character of the process of personal responsibilization. But in his works, culture or "the system of meaning" acts as the ultimate constitutive force of "institutions, practices and identities" (Larner 2000: 12). Little, if any, room is here given to an analysis of the various mechanisms involved in the production of meanings undertaken by the elites and their army of cultural producers, such as journalists and scientists. Instead, the analysis of meanings he offers consists in treating them as components of a discursive formation constitutive of, and upheld by, (neo)liberal institutions. The forces giving rise to the neoliberal age, and more specifically personal responsibilization, are in this sense impersonal. Thus, although Foucault is successful in locating the process within the political context of neoliberal societies, he falls short of grounding it in the political decisions that were responsible for imposing representations embodying the interests of the socially dominant.

This, in turn, prevents him from grasping the ideological character of personal responsibility. In his diagnosis, this ethos is not construed as a symbolically cultivated "framework within which people represent their lived experience" (Larner 2000: 12). Instead, it is made directly constitutive of their experiences, through the diffuse power of discourse. Constraints and power, more generally, are not so much socially determined as they are discursively so. Doing so tends to downplay the role social power structures play in reproducing the established order. In turn, critique is stripped of its capacity to capture adequately the interest-laden character of objectivated schemes of perception such as personal responsibility. Critique is left unable to differentiate the better from the worse set

of values, or the "better from the worse sets of practices and forms of constraints" (Fraser 1989: 32). For, if all practices are discursively constituted and, consequently, treated as equally constraining and problematic, how can one expect to "distinguish … between the legitimate and illegitimate exercise of power" (Fraser 1989: 18)? A thorough and robust conceptualization of personal responsibilization, therefore, requires critique to ground the process in the social and economic conditions that underpin its cultural production as "undisputed natural reality" (Bourdieu 1998: 121).

A similar problem can be observed in the work of second modernity theorists, who, unlike Foucault, abstracted "individualization" from the political context of neoliberal capitalism. As mentioned earlier, all agree with the idea that under the present situation, individuals are "lifted out of social relations from local contexts of interaction."[3] Beck and Beck-Gernsheim (2002) and Giddens (1991), for example, insisted that in the process of realizing the self, individuals become effectively "dis-embedded" from social relations, such as class or gender. In the case of class, the fact of being economically privileged or disadvantaged is said to have a decreasingly determining power on the nature of the choices or decisions one makes. The formation of the self is therefore said to be the product of an active process of deliberation undertaken independently from "collective habitualizations" (Beck and Beck-Gernsheim 2002: 6). Such a position is, to some extent, shared by Bauman (2000) himself who, although more critical of individualization than Beck and Giddens, repeatedly emphasized the absence of "beds" or fixed identities under the "liquid" stage of modernity.

In an attempt to put the individualization thesis to the test, however, Atkinson discovered the following:

> only the superficial level of personal narrative lends any credibility to the claims of the reflexivity theorists. When we begin to comb through the accounts in greater depth it soon becomes clear that underlying *each* and *every* event in the interviewees' occupational trajectories, whether dominant or dominated, are the continuing effects of structures of class difference … (Atkinson 2010: 114)

[3] For Giddens (1991), though, this is followed by a process of "re-embedding."

For Beck and Giddens (more on Bauman next), the pursuit of identity freed from traditional constraints, the capacity to make choices independently of one's social grouping, make up the reality of pre-existing practices. Personal responsibility is real and manifest because by "becoming independent from traditional ties, people's lives take on an independent quality which, for the first time, makes possible the experience of a personal destiny" (Beck and Beck-Gernsheim 2002: 33). Atkinson's research nevertheless shows that the choices and decisions made by members of contemporary Western societies continue to be informed by one's class structure. His work alerts one to the risk of complying with schemes of perception compelling one to "perceive structural inequalities as personal shortcomings" (Mythen 2005: 135).

The analysis offered by Foucault and second modernity theorists is therefore unable to account adequately for the relationship between personal responsibilization and structural inequalities. But, while the Foucauldian approach lacks the conceptual tools required for grounding the meanings associated with the process in the social power structures of contemporary societies, proponents of the individualization thesis risk, as I shall further demonstrate now, becoming complicit with the neoliberal ideological project.

I now aim to build on the aforementioned discussions in order to address the ideological character of personal responsibilization. To suggest that there is something ideological about the process means, in a first instance, recognizing those sectional interests it is called upon to meet. This particular facet of ideology is, I think, most readily observable in the different strategies adopted by the neoliberal state in its effort to promote entrepreneurial freedoms. The reduction of labour rights, consolidation of private property rights and withdrawal of welfare provisions are among the key measures introduced by this state, in the name of personal responsibility. But as discussed in the first chapter, the wealth creation they have engendered failed to "trickle down" to the bulk of workers. Instead, then, these strategies have tended to reflect the interest of owners of capital. Thus, revealing the ideological character of personal responsibilization also means understanding how the idea that individuals are responsible for their own fate serves the legitimation of illegitimate power relations. Under such a reading, the vision of an individual capable of taking charge

of his or her life serves to naturalize structural inequalities. It contributes to making the illegitimate appear legitimate or self-evident.

Both facets of personal responsibilization are, I think, insufficiently accounted for by second modernity theorists. For example, although Beck is keen to distinguish "institutionalized individualism" from the *"neoliberal idea of the free-market individual"* (2002: xxi; emphasis in original), he tended to underestimate the extent to which relatively stable schemes of perceptions shaped by one's class—or even one's gender (Branaman 2007) and sexuality (Heaphy and Yip 2003)—continue to inform individuals' conduct. Furthermore, both Beck and Giddens have a tendency to suggest, or at least imply, that the "opportunity to exercise [personal responsibility] is universally available" (Dawson 2012: 313). Their diagnosis runs the risk of accepting personal responsibilization at face value, thereby ignoring both the sectional interests it is aligned with and the role it plays in legitimating sharp structural inequalities.

Bauman, on the other hand, recognizes that individuals' capacity to take charge of their lives is not universally available. He insists that some individuals are "unable to respond to the enticements of the consumer market" (Bauman 1997: 14). The existence of "*flawed consumers*" (Bauman 1997: 14; emphasis in original) is, he argues, an indication of the continuing influence of socio-economic inequalities on self-realization. These same individuals are also said to be acting under the guise of an "ideology of privatization" (Bauman 2008: 88) that encourages them to treat their failures as the result of personal shortcomings. What is real and manifest for him, however, is the *individualized nature of the choices* these people make, or the fact that these choices are no longer made on the basis of collectively shared representations. Although the "ideology of privatization" cultivates an imaginary universal capacity to access the goods, activities and information employed for the realization of the self, Bauman treats "self-determination" as a force emanating from the impersonal process of modernization marking second modernity; it manifests itself as something "compulsive and obligatory" (Bauman 2000: 32). Thus, despite rejecting the view according to which the bulk of individuals have acquired the means for self-determination, Bauman falls short of grounding the process of personal responsibilization in the interests of the economically powerful. The problem with his own

account, then, is not so much that he ignores the ideological character of the entrepreneurial self, as the fact that he limits his analysis only to one of its two facets.

It is nevertheless important to stress the fact that, despite their limitations, second modernity narratives do not offer a vision of personal responsibility identical to the neoliberal ideal. Indeed, while the neoliberal approach to personal responsibility presupposes the complete withdrawal of constraints on self-realization, proponents of the individualization thesis provide detailed analyses of the way individuals' actions continue to be constrained *and* enabled (Howard 2007). This is, for example, what Bauman meant by the "obligatory" character of self-determination. Even Giddens (1991) identified a central role for the globalizing institutions of late modernity in compelling individuals to take responsibility for their actions. For this reason, it would appear rather unfair to suggest that their diagnosis gives credibility to the neoliberal vision of the fully unencumbered self. The core issue, though, is that these accounts do tend to treat individual responsibility as a *condition* analysed predominantly in *abstraction* from the *political* context of neoliberal societies. On the one hand, then, they do run the risk of developing frames of analysis "vulnerable to co-option and incorporation within neoliberal agendas and programs" (Howard 2007: 43), not least because neoliberal elites have an interest in cultivating the entrepreneurial self as a cultural ideal and realistic prospect, in an effort to downplay the significance of structural inequalities (Jones 2016). As a result, while they may have been "correct to see the prominence of claims to individuality and individual justification expanding," they were "incorrect to see this as a faithful depiction of how people act" (Dawson 2012: 314). To justify or explain one's action in individualized terms is quite different from acting in individualized terms. Maintaining the analytical focus on the former prevents critique from grasping the labour of symbolic production at work in justifying illegitimate power relations.

In a context marked by a notable decline in welfare provisions and sharpening structural inequalities, the process of personal responsibilization came to perform as essential ideological function. Understanding this character, however, requires one to locate it within the political context of neoliberal societies, to explore its symbolically cultivated dimension and

recognize its status as object of symbolic production. It compels social critique to defetishize the process and reveal the decisions responsible for its emergence and symbolic cultivation. While under Reagan, a broad range of think tanks and universities played an essential part in constructing and propagating "empirical studies and political-philosophical arguments broadly in support of neoliberal policies" (Harvey 2005: 44), Thatcher led the charge in the UK. She, as Harvey further argued, "desperately sought to extend the ideal of personal responsibility (for example through the privatization of health care) across the board and cut back on state obligations" (2005: 61). This process of responsibilization was, and continues to be, central to the neoliberal condition, not least because of its role in compelling individuals to take risks, compete and become competent utility-maximizers. As a phenomenon whereby the entrepreneurial conduct spreads beyond the economic sphere, personal responsibilization complements the creation of new avenues for capital accumulation led by financialization and the flexibilization of production and employment practices in creating the economic and cultural conditions favourable for the entrenchment of the logic of competition in society. Inextricably linked to these developments is the process of privatization, to which I shall now turn.

6

Privatization

Although I chose to end the discussion of the key processes making up the neoliberal condition with an analysis of privatization, its significance cannot be overestimated. In fact, it underpins each of the processes discussed so far. As a phenomenon whereby public goods are turned into privately owned assets, it is central to financialization. Since privatized assets and services are subjected to the vicissitudes of the logic of supply and demand, it increases individuals' exposure to the process of flexibilization. Finally, to privatize entails turning individuals into owners. As such, it compels them to become personally responsible. As we shall see, like the processes whose development it facilitates, neoliberal privatization owes its own existence to a complex interplay of economic, political and cultural forces.

From Economic Process to Cultural Force

In the 1980s, the Reagan and Thatcher governments supervised the conversion of a multitude of public goods, for example, energy resources, telecommunications and transports, into private assets. Individuals, the

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logic goes, would now be free to choose between a range of service providers forced to increase the efficiency of their activities in order to offer as competitive a service as possible to consumers. Under such conditions, the state could also be freed from the responsibility of managing what came to be seen as inefficient and unwieldy bureaucratic machines. The provision of various more or less vital services to the masses no longer came to be construed as a matter of collective responsibility, which the state embodies. Instead, it became the responsibility of competing private service providers subjected to the vicissitudes of a supply and demand mechanism, thought to act as a guarantor of efficiency. Privatizing a hospital or university will, it is argued, create the competitive pressures that will inevitably cause them to increase the quality of the service they provide. Privatization was thus defined by the Reagan administration as

> a strategy to shift the production of goods and services from the Government to the private sector in order to reduce Government expenditures and to take advantage of the efficiencies that normally result when services are provided through the competitive marketplace. (OMB cited in Tingle 1988: 230)

Neoliberal privatization, then, aims to maximize efficiency in the name of a conception of welfare indissociable from the competitive accumulation of private wealth. Although a predominantly economic process, privatization has, too, turned into a regime of signification in its own right.

Its cultural significance becomes immediately evident when one considers the following. During the leadership contest of the UK Labour Party, one candidate, Jeremy Corbyn, attracted a great deal of attention in the media for his somewhat unexpected popularity among Labour Party supporters. Corbyn's ideas distinguish themselves from those of his fellow candidates by their ostensibly left-wing inclination, most clearly manifested in the defence of the renationalization of railways and other forms of public spending. One of his proposed polices attracted particular attention: what Corbyn refers to as the "people's quantitative easing." Broadly speaking, this entails using the state's capacity to print money in order to fund public investments in housing, health, education, and so on. Shortly after the announcement, the head of the Confederation of

British Industry (CBI), John Cridland, attacked the policy, emphasizing its unfeasibility. The main problem, he argued, is that "household finances and government finances are the same" and just like an individual or family cannot live above its means, nor can the state "print money or borrow endlessly" (Sparrow 2015). What Cridland seems to be ignoring or unwilling to accept, however, is that states have lived, and indeed can live, above their means while remaining economically sound. The case of the United States perfectly illustrates it. Also, unlike private households, governments have the capacity to print money.

Cridland's analogy, though, is not unusual. What it symbolizes is a somewhat widespread tendency in neoliberal discourse to turn privatization into the "description of a particular way of life, which expresses certain meanings and values" (Williams 1994: 48), that is, into a cultural force. In the example given, privatization becomes a culture of political governance in its own right. This is indeed reflected in the way successive neoliberal governments have managed public affairs. In the 1980s, for example, Thatcher requested the services of Marks and Spencer's chairman, Lord Rayner, in an effort to optimize the "efficiency" of governmental institutions. The aim was to treat such institutions like a private organization, by applying the same governance criteria as those found in the private sector: efficiency, productivity, cost-effectiveness and so forth. But as privatization unfolds, it also induces, at the societal level, what I regard as a *culture of ownership*. As more and more goods are privatized or commodified, people's relation to both their environment and themselves alters. To own means to possess. It means to have exclusive access to a good or service. It means possessing something that others do not; to be the unique owner of a range of resources. By possessing something others do not possess, I become endowed with distinctive qualities. But the efforts one has to invest in acquiring a good or accessing a service under the highly competitive pursuit of gain compels individuals to become efficient utility-maximizers, while turning the very capacity to own into the ultimate criterion of success. Ownership, thus, turns uniqueness into success; privatization celebrates difference. It has, in short, given rise to new ways of life guided by competitive, self-interested and efficient utility-maximization, while celebrating difference.

Privatization and the New Cultural "Condition"

Before attempting to make greater sense of the nature and significance of this culture of ownership, it is worth reviewing some of the effects of neoliberal privatization strategies on individuals' lifestyles reported by the existing literature. Privatization has, it is argued, come to affect the deepest domains of individuals' everyday life. With an increased reliance on privatized resources for the planning of the satisfaction of their needs and an intense pressure exerted by competition, individuals find themselves confronted with a growing number of everyday choices subjected to the cash nexus. In the United States, for example, the privatized healthcare system has caused large sections of the population to face the choice between a healthy life and economic survival; something which has been vehemently condemned by members of recent social movements such as Occupy Wall Street (Blumenkranz et al. 2011). The further entrenchment of privatization also leads to circumstances whereby individuals are increasingly forced to "negotiate the coexistence of economic interchange and intimate social relations" (Zelizer 2005: 12). Their everyday interactions, for example, often exhibit a "tendency to calculate the long-term chances of […] love relationships according [to] their compatibility with the future mobility demands of a career path that can only be planned in the short term" (Hartmann and Honneth 2006: 56). Demands concerning health, intimacy and a wider range of everyday issues are therefore becoming increasingly subsumed under economic imperatives. Privatization, then, is said to cause the proliferation of ways of life guided by utility-maximization, in the most intimate domains of social life.

For postmodern theorists, however, privatization is partly responsible for even wider, deeper and more pronounced cultural developments. As noted in Chap. 3, these theorists devoted a great deal of their efforts towards attempting to make sense of what they regarded as a new cultural condition. Many themes making up their sociological diagnoses, such as social fragmentation and social differentiation have also become standard notions in the contemporary sociological literature. Several of those contained in Lyotard's classic postmodern perspective are no exception.

Although keen to emphasize the role of technological transformations—captured by what he called "the 'computerization of society'" (Lyotard 1984: 7)—in the emergence of a new cultural condition, he was also struck by the seemingly irreversible effects, on culture, of a process central to privatization, namely commodification. New technologies, we are told, have had a "considerable impact on [scientific] knowledge" (Lyotard 1984: 4) by multiplying the outlets for its circulation. But, by turning knowledge into something "produced in order to be sold" (Lyotard 1984: 4), privatization made a key contribution to this change. Having turned into a commodity, knowledge can no longer serve the training of "an elite capable of guiding the nation towards its emancipation" (Lyotard 1984: 48) but is now harnessed for the ends of economic performance or what Lyotard called the "performativity of the social system" (1984: 48). Privatization has, Lyotard insisted, created conditions whereby what people know, think, believe is no longer legitimated by meanings deriving from a single, master narrative defining "what has the right to be said and done in the culture in question" (Lyotard 1984: 23). The economic process whereby goods become commodities not only changes the way individuals relate to these goods but also the way individuals relate to the self and others. As such, it is thought to bear non-negligible cultural consequences.

As the privatization of goods expands, so does the culture of ownership depicted earlier. Difference and individual success in utility-maximization are celebrated. Similar effects to those discussed in relation to personal responsibilization in Chap. 5 can therefore be observed here. But for Lyotard, the process whereby knowledge itself becomes a good to be bought and sold causes a profound cultural change. It turns the culture of ownership into an obstacle to the universalization of meaning, for as the state comes to regard it as an instrument for economic success or as individuals, such as a student investing in an expensive degree, come to regard knowledge as an investment or means for personal success in utility-maximization, knowledge loses its function as legitimator of collective definitions of justice, truth and so forth. By substituting the goal of truth or justice by the goal of economic performance in science, privatization undermines knowledge's capacity to unite individuals around

a shared goal or vision. A plurality of communities of meaning have, instead, emerged, posing serious challenges for the collective project of emancipation previously attributed to scientific knowledge. Privatization, then, is said to be a central factor causing the decline of those "grand narratives" previously equipping individuals with valuable means for the universalization of meaning. It has shaped the formation of a new, postmodern, cultural condition characterized by fragmentation, plurality and difference. Here is how Bauman captured its essence:

> The contemporary world is […] a site where cultures (this plural form is itself a postmodern symptom!) coexist alongside each other, resisting ordering along axiological or temporal axes. Rather than appearing as a transitory stage in the as-yet-unfinished process of civilizing, their coexistence seems to be a permanent feature of the world, with no authority in sight aspiring to an ecumenical, universal role. Like postmodern art—postmodern culture seems doomed to remain disorderly, to wit plural, rhizomically growing, devoid of direction. (Bauman 1992: 35)

The decline of grand narratives entails the disappearance of a central axis of normative representation bearing legitimating authority over contemporary societies. This "loss of centre," as Lemert (2005) put it, causes these societies to become both culturally and normatively fragmented, for they have effectively lost the capacity to draw on universally shared referents—they have lost their "legislators" (Bauman 1989). While, for Lyotard (1984, 1988), one has no choice but to adjust to, if not celebrate, the existence of competing claims to truth, justice etc., for Bauman, this state of affairs is a central cause for concern. Despite offering individuals the capacity to exercise their freedom, a world characterized by "continuing diversification, under-determination, 'messiness'" (Bauman 1999: 13), marks a "growth of collective impotence" (Bauman 1999: 2). Broadly speaking, then, it appears that Western societies are today far too differentiated and fragmented culturally to equip their members with the necessary means for collective representation and action. Under such a reading, environmentalists could be said to embrace values and notions of justice and truth too differentiated from those of organized labour to be able to formulate a conception of good in common.

However, privatization not only turns goods into commodities. In virtue of giving rise to a culture of ownership, it also becomes a regime of signification in its own right. As it is set free to produce meanings, it also turns into a basis upon which individuals represent their own actions. Such a representation is, as Bauman claimed, "wrapped around the issue of identity" and unites members of advanced capitalist societies in asking the following:

> Who am I? What is my place among the others—among the ones I know, among the ones I know of, or perhaps even the ones I have so far never heard of? What are the threats that make this place of mine insecure? Who stands behind those threats? What kind of countermeasures should I undertake in order to disable those people and so stave off such threats? (Bauman 2008: 88)

A paradoxical situation therefore emerges. Privatization celebrates difference and exhorts individuals to separate their own interests from, and even pit them against, those of others. It is an inherently divisive process. But, in virtue of its function as regime of signification, it equips these same individuals with shared signs and symbols used to narrate their existence. They are united in making sense of their actions and relations in accordance with a culture of ownership that celebrates difference and competitive, efficient and self-interested utility-maximization. In short, privatization underpins a grand narrative with symbolically divisive effects, similar to those attributable to personal responsibilization, but resulting, this time, from a process whereby goods are turned into commodities.

What this tells us, then, is that grand narratives have not so much declined as become a divisive force in society. It also calls into question the inevitability of a so-called postmodern cultural "condition" and paves the way for a discussion of the ideological character of privatization, which theorists like Lyotard or Baudrillard could not be in a position to account for. For example, to argue his case, Baudrillard sought to demonstrate the end of genuine representational referents by detailing the role played by such "devices" as "polls, tests, the referendum, media" in the so-called simulation of meaning (1983: 20). The collapse of meaning is, we are told, observable in the simple but highly significant fact that the "mass" or the "social" solely obtains a meaningful existence through these devices and not, as was previously the case, through direct

and collective forms of expression and mobilization articulated around a shared referent such as class or gender. For Baudrillard, then, the idea of a mass of citizens or "specific social aggregate" (Baudrillard 1983: 5) has now become pure simulation. What is left is a highly differentiated and depoliticized mass of individuals immersed in a "private and asocial universe" (Baudrillard 1983: 40). What is "real" and positively true is that the "mass" no longer has "sociological 'reality'" (Baudrillard 1983: 5). But what if the simulated, or symbolically cultivated, reality was that of a fragmented, disconnected and highly differentiated mass of individuals with only their own private interests to consider? What if the very thing Lyotard and Baudrillard treat as a strictly objective "condition" of existence and inevitable outcome of economic and technological transformations was itself an object of symbolic production, that is, the result of the objectivation, or symbolically cultivated self-evidence, of particular forms of subjectivity?

Privatization and Ideology

As has already been shown, proponents of the neoliberal doctrine place private property at the centre of their political-economic vision. Welfare, they argue, can best be guaranteed by compelling individuals to become utility-maximizers treating ownership as a key criterion of success. Strategies informed by this vision have led to the emergence of a neoliberal culture of ownership, immersing an ever-increasing range of activities, in an ever-increasing range of domains. Indeed, in "a culture where neo-liberal ideas represent a widely circulating current, the free, ubiquitous and all-encompassing character of 'wealth' is a dominant theme" (Hall 2011: 722). This, however, could not have been achieved through privatization policies alone. The desire to own had to be cultivated:

> the old had to be destroyed before the new could take its place, and its agent was in office. Mrs Thatcher conspired with a ruthless war against the Cabinet "wets" (Guardian, 19 February 2011). The infamous Howe budget provoked "stagflation." She plotted to break trade union power—"the enemy within." She impelled people towards new, individualized, competi-

> tive solutions: "get on your bike," become self-employed or a share-holder, buy your council house, invest in the property owning democracy. She coined a homespun equivalent for the key neo-liberal ideas behind the sea-change she was imposing on society: value for money, managing your own budget, fiscal restraint, the money supply and the virtues of competition. (Hall 2011: 712)

Thatcher's decision to, for example, give council housing tenants the "right to buy" the house they live in at a lower price than their market value, was made in an effort to integrate the working classes within a bourgeois culture of ownership.[1] The legislation also banned the building of new state-owned or "council" houses, thereby forcing individuals to become house buyers or seek affordable rentals in the private sectors. The measure was unsurprisingly popular, for it gave individuals previously unable to purchase their own home a chance to finally own one. But the policy aimed to achieve more than that. As the minister in charge of the legislation, Michael Heseltine, put it:

> There is in this country a deeply ingrained desire for home ownership. The Government believe that this spirit should be fostered. It reflects the wishes of the people, ensures the wide spread of wealth through society, encourages a personal desire to improve and modernize one's own home, enables parents to accrue wealth for their children and stimulates the attitudes of independence and self-reliance that are the bedrock of a free society. (Heseltine 1981: 30644)

Thus, the state has been active in naturalizing a culture of ownership and eliciting competitive and self-interested utility-maximization. In fact, the true measure of its achievements lies in its capacity to compel an increasing number of individuals to align their conducts with the neoliberal idea according to which ownership is a prerequisite for success and well-being. Ownership celebrates difference and individualizes success, amid a fast and steady concentration of wealth in a few hands. The cultivation of a culture of ownership, therefore, serves an ideological purpose,

[1] Such a strategy was more recently pursued by the British Conservative Prime Minister David Cameron.

insofar as it naturalizes conducts and modes of representation compelling individuals to treat successes and failures as a matter of personal responsibility; insofar as it cultivates the legitimacy of sharp socio-economic inequalities.

A mass of individuals compelled to become utility-maximizers is, too, more likely to enhance the competitiveness of an economic space, while renouncing mutual obligations. If difference, plurality, diversity are all celebrated today by political elites, it is not so much for the personal freedoms they are said to confer, as their potential role in optimizing economic growth and forestalling social conflicts. Thatcher's "there is no such thing as society" acquires, here, its full ideological weight. It is therefore important, if not essential, to devise conceptual tools capable of equipping critique with the means to reveal what is ideological in the process of privatization. This, however, cannot be achieved by relying on the postmodern narratives discussed in this chapter for, as Eagleton put it, the "'left' cynicism of a Baudrillard is insultingly complicit with what the system would *like* to believe" (Eagleton 1991: 42). This claim is echoed in the work of Hardt and Negri:

> Many of the concepts dear to postmodernists […] find a perfect correspondence in the current ideology of corporate capital and the world market. The ideology of the world market has always been the anti-foundational and anti-essentialist discourse par excellence. Circulation, mobility, diversity, and mixture are its very conditions of possibility. Trade brings differences together and the more the merrier! Differences (of commodities, populations, cultures, and so forth) seem to multiply infinitely in the world market, which attacks nothing more violently than fixed boundaries: it overwhelms any binary division with its infinite multiplicities. (Hardt and Negri 2000: 150)

Thus, because the different themes pervading postmodern accounts share a close affinity with the interests of capital, one if forced to consider the relationship between them. To be sure, and post-Marxists Hardt and Negri recognize it, privatization and commodification have multiplied and diversified the goods and ways of life available to members

of advanced capitalist societies. But because difference, plurality and diversity can be harnessed for the ends of economic growth, while acting as a divisive force among different socio-economic groupings, their ideological function cannot be ignored. What postmodernists treat as features of a given cultural condition could, in fact, best be understood as objects of symbolic production, serving the reproduction of the established order. As such, they do not so much mark the end of "grand narratives" as the emergence of an increasingly all-encompassing, narratively divisive, and ideologically deployed, regime of signification underpinned by privatization.

Thus, although a predominantly economic process whereby public goods are turned into private assets, neoliberal privatization strategies have played an essential role in shaping those narrative components with which contemporary social life is explained, defined and assessed. The discussion of the limitations of postmodern approaches in which social fragmentation, plurality and difference are taken at face value aimed to reveal that a range of sociological critiques not only failed to protect themselves against schemes of perception making up a symbolically cultivated culture of ownership but also run the risk of contributing to its further objectivation. Thus, the task of a social critique aiming to make sense of privatization in contemporary social life consists in revealing the structures of economic and political power connected to, along with the cultural resources mobilized in, the process itself that have been responsible for cultivating the divisive culture of ownership. Only then can the ideological function privatization has come to perform be revealed. For, only then can the various terrains of collective action subsumed under a regime of signification celebrating difference at the expense of unity be exposed. Only then can the "complex of individuals, associations, institutions and customs in varied and multiform relationships" (Cole 1920: 47) making up contemporary social reality be uncovered. To see through the ideological veil of privatization ultimately means, as G.D.H. Cole instructed us to do decades ago, that "[w]e have to start out, not from … the atomized individual …, but from man [*sic*] in all his complex groupings and relations" (Cole 1950: 15), including those between humanity and nature.

7

The Neoliberalization of Nature

The discussion offered so far has concentrated on the analysis of the complex interplay of political, economic and cultural forces in the historical emergence of key neoliberalizing processes. Any such great transformation as the neoliberalization of society nevertheless rests on the mobilization of resources so far excluded from the analysis but equally central to it. These emanate from the biophysical environment. In this chapter, I attempt to understand how the different processes discussed so far have affected humanity's relation to external nature. This, as I hope to show, will help develop a better understanding of the conditions involved in the emergence and reproduction of the neoliberal condition and will also shed further light on the character of this condition.

Social Theory and Nature: Some Preliminary Considerations

Despite sociology's pronounced and understandable tendency to devote its attention predominantly to the realm of interpersonal relations, the discipline has offered valuable analytical tools for understanding and

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evaluating humanity-nature relations. In fact, as Barry pointed out, "the environment and our relationship to it is a long-established issue in social theory" (1999: 1). Ecological Marxists, for example, have sought to revise Marxism in such a way as to articulate the labour movement's struggle with the environmentalist cause (see, for example, Benton 1989; O'Connor 1998). Western Marxists, such as first-generation Frankfurt School thinkers, have emphasized what they consider to be an inextricable connection between the domination of non-human nature, that is of the biophysical environment by humanity; social domination, that is the domination of a social group over another such as class; and the domination of internal nature, namely the repression of instinctual drives, in modern societies (see, for example, Adorno and Horkheimer 1997; Marcuse 2002). Underlying these different narratives is the idea that capitalism corresponds to a way of organizing society that is also a distinctive "way of organizing nature" (Moore 2015: 2) and that the plight facing humanity cannot be conceptually divorced from that faced by non-human nature. The latter, then, holds centre stage in their work.

More recently, and in an effort to reflect on the sociological significance of environmental problems, Beck (1992) proposed a theoretical framework connecting the biophysical environment to the process of modernization. Here, the latter is said to be responsible for a range of risks, including environmental ones, changing the way individuals and institutions relate to themselves and the world around them. The newly emerging "risk" society, he argues, compels modern institutions and individuals to adopt increasingly "reflexive" strategies, giving rise to a process of "reflexive modernization" (Beck 1994). The defining feature of our age, we are told, consists in managing, mitigating and preventing risks. But when neoliberalism is mentioned, it is either as a source of economic or ecological risks or, since it places "ecology […] under the sway of the world-market system" (Beck 2000: 9), as an ideology framing the *management of environmental risks*. Beck is not interested in understanding how neoliberalizing processes have reorganized nature. He does not tell us about their effects on the *management and use of natural resources*. For him, the changes in humanity's relation to nature originate in more profound societal changes, such as those emanating from modernization.

The approach I adopt in this chapter differs from Beck's own. Like the various critical theories I reviewed, I wish to treat capitalism, particularly its neoliberal form, as a distinctive way of organizing nature. So, while I wish to place humanity-nature relations at the centre of the analysis, I do so by exploring the various practices that have been responsible for shaping them and by making sense of the complex interplay of a variety of forces involved in neoliberalizing nature.

Neoliberal Processes and Nature

In order to undertake the aforementioned task, I propose to expand the scope of analysis to research undertaken across a range of disciplines such as human geography, anthropology and agrarian studies. These contain a broad spectrum of empirical studies discussing the processes, effects and outcomes of neoliberalized environmental practices. For this reason, they could provide valuable conceptual tools for making sense of the way neoliberalizing processes have affected humanity-nature relations. The diverse nature of these studies and the "multifaceted" character of neoliberal practices make the task of drawing coherent theoretical-sociological implications a particularly challenging one, not least because neoliberal capitalism itself is "in reality, a complex historical-geographical formation that is marked by unevenness and variety as much as it is by similarity" (Castree 2010: 13). For this reason, it is more reasonable to discuss the relationship between neoliberal practices and the biophysical environment in processual terms than in terms of a complete, homogenous set of conditions. Noel Castree's (2010) own "synthesis" of the multiple and varied pieces of research on the topic provides a very useful and, indeed, convenient starting point for undertaking the task set out in this chapter.

Drawing upon a wide range of empirical studies across a multitude of disciplines, Castree identified seven different but related sets of practices amounting to the "neoliberalization of nature as a whole" (2010: 18). The first three are the "processes of privatization, marketization and deregulation" (Castree 2010: 20). While privatization entails giving individuals ownership rights on nature, marketization makes it possible for these privatized assets to "generate a stream of revenue" (Castree 2010:

19). This includes, for example, the creation of markets for such natural resources as gas and wood through the privatization of fossil fuels and forests. Neoliberalization, here, is said to involve the privatization and marketization of "the commons" on a mass scale. Furthermore, deregulation strategies in Western capitalist societies have either led to the withdrawal or a significant decline of "state control over environmental goods, ecological services, and natural resources" (Castree 2010: 19). This does not, however, mean that the state no longer plays a key role in the neoliberalization of nature. In fact, a fourth set of practices has involved a state active in "creating new markets altogether or by significantly altering existing ones" (Castree 2010: 20) by, for example, facilitating the formation of highly competitive markets for agricultural goods through free trade policies. Furthermore, where the state continues to control or manage natural resources, it seeks to do so as efficiently as possible, often subjecting "state institutions" to a "competitive environment" (Castree 2010: 21). This is what Castree means by the introduction of "*market proxies in the residual state sector*" (2010: 21; emphasis in original), making up the fifth set of practices contributing to the neoliberal reorganization of nature. This is illustrated by, for example, the Cape Town government, which "introduced water demand management through metering and pricing, the outsourcing of some water services as a cost recovery strategy, and water cutoffs for non-paying citizens" (2010: 21). But where neoliberal political elites choose to withdraw their regulatory control, they often compensate it by encouraging "various civil society actors, operating either outside or within the market" to fill the "gaps" (Castree 2010: 22). A non-governmental organization such as Greenpeace is one such example. This sixth set of practices, along with strategies of privatization, marketization and deregulation, have paved the way for the "[c]reation of 'free,' 'self-sufficient,' self-governing and entrepreneurial individuals and communities" (Castree 2010: 22) directly "affected by the neoliberalization of nature" (Castree 2010: 23). By compelling individuals to become competitive and self-interested utility-maximizers, these measures often "threaten to unsettle considerably" the existing economy, values and social relations, as demonstrated by the case of the New England fisheries discussed next. These make up the final set of practices relevant to the present discussion.

From this brief overview of the different practices that have shaped humanity-nature relations under the neoliberal age, it is possible to conclude that most, if not all, of the processes involved in the reorganization of society have played a part in reorganizing nature. Their central achievement lies in further entrenching the capitalist market in humanity-nature relations. Put differently, as the neoliberalization of nature advances, societies come to rely increasingly on the supply and demand mechanism for the use and management of natural resources. This, as we shall now see, has marked a revival and intensification of "perhaps the weirdest of all the undertakings of our ancestors" (Polanyi 2001: 187).

More Than a Mere Reorganization of Nature

What, then, can we learn from this neoliberal reorganization of nature? First, it is important to stress that the implementation of practices causing an increasing subjection of nature to market forces does not take place in a normative or cultural vacuum. In their attempt to bring non-human nature further under the sway of market forces, neoliberal political elites have to confront a range of pre-existing values, lifestyles, practices and norms which do not conform to, and even contradict, the market logic. They are, in short, confronted with the rather challenging task of altering the "moral, cultural and political climate" (Castree 2010: 30) of a particular community. The example of New England fisheries is particularly instructive in this regard:

> there existed in fisheries not just the absence of property rights, but a variety of processes that constituted an economy unlike that of capitalism and whose properties were a barrier to capital accumulation: fisheries was an economy where compensation was through shares rather than wages, where capital was not mobile but tied to places, and where resources were common rather than privately owned. (St. Martin 2008: 137)

What this passage serves to demonstrate are the cultural differences between New England fisheries' way or organizing nature and its neoliberalized form. Both are in fact not merely different but also antagonistic.

The economic culture of these fisheries has "traditionally" been supported by cooperative practices and a distinct subjectivity among fishermen, characterized by "fairness and independence" (St. Martin 2008: 145). Neoliberalizing these fisheries would not only entail altering fishing practices but also shaping a new subjectivity. St. Martin shows that in order to be successful in establishing property rights in these fisheries, neoliberal policymakers would also have to be successful in mobilizing the discursive resources necessary for the formation of a new subject—the "utility maximizing competitive individual" (St. Martin 2008: 149)—whose ethos and practices are appropriate for market behaviour. Neoliberalizing these fisheries, therefore, presupposes the cultivation of "suitable producer identities" (Castree 2010: 23), running the risk of "erasing and/or displacing the cooperative and territorial practices of fishermen embedded within fishing communities" (St. Martin 2008: 149).

The neoliberalization of nature, if successful, does not therefore limit itself to a process whereby nature is simply brought under the sway of market forces. For, these forces not only come to change the way natural resources are used and managed but also mark a change in the way individuals relate to non-human nature, other individuals and themselves. There is, as we have already seen in the previous chapters and continue to see here, something distinctively cultural about neoliberalizing processes. The latter have "entail[ed] a more fundamental restructuring of political–economic and nature–society relations, including people's senses of themselves as subjects (eg subject as owner)" (Mansfield 2008a: 4). For this reason, several analysts have framed their understanding of current nature-society relations around Foucault's concept of "governmentality" (see, for example, Darier 1999; Agrawal 2005). In such "eco-governmentality" narratives, a particular emphasis is placed on the discursive and mutually constitutive character of the way the self and the biophysical environment are governed. Consequently, they have highlighted the inextricable link between the reorganization of nature and the reorganization of society under the neoliberal condition.

However, despite having become "very influential in political ecology" (Mann 2008), Foucault's work has been subject to similar criticisms as those found regarding his work in the field of critical social theory. Of particular interest, here, is his discursive approach's incapacity to capture

the ideological character of the reorganization of nature. As the New England fisheries example showed, neoliberal policymakers have to do more than merely establishing property rights. They also have to promote the ethos of self-interested and competitive utility-maximization. But despite being a necessary precondition for the neoliberalization of nature, it is, as Mann put it, "only a first step" (2009: 343). Understanding why it either succeeds or fails to permeate economic and cultural practices invites us to consider the conditions under which it becomes (or fails to become) a legitimate basis for action. It invites us to address the issue of consent. This is why, alongside Foucauldian narratives, it is possible to find accounts of the neoliberalization of nature inspired by the work of Gramsci and, particularly, his concept of hegemony (see, for example, Mann 2009; Eckers et al. 2013). Here, the ethos of the "utility maximizing competitive individual" is construed as inseparable from the interests of political and economic elites. Attention is paid to the various strategies adopted by the powerful socio-economic groups and their political accomplices in turning the "exploitative or unjust" into something that is "discursively normalized" (Mann 2009: 343). Therefore, developing a robust analysis of the neoliberalization of nature requires one *not* to overlook the processes, as well as political and economic structures of power, involved in normalizing the schemes of perception facilitating the neoliberalization of society-nature relations.

This approach is consistent with environmental sociology's "commitment to exploring the ways in which patterns of social relationships, cultural forms, political practices, and economic institutions are all implanted in the *production* of environmental change" (Benton and Redclift 1994: 1). With it, one can expect to conceptualize the multiple axes around which nature comes to be neoliberalized. Crucially, what this broad analysis of the neoliberal reorganization of nature offers is further evidence for the distinctively "artificial" (Polanyi 2001: 60) character of institutions, social relations, practices and modes of representation under the neoliberal condition. Polanyi's work was prescient in this regard:

> The economic function is but one of many vital functions of land. It invests man's life with stability; it is the site of his habitation; it is a condition of his physical safety; it is the landscape and the seasons. We might as well

> imagine his being born without hands and feet as carrying on his life without land. And yet to separate land from man and to organize society in such a way as to satisfy the requirements of a real-estate market was a vital part of the utopian concept of a market economy. (Polanyi 2001: 187)

Neoliberalism's strength, therefore, lies in its success in "*making itself true* and empirically verifiable" (Bourdieu 1998: 95; emphasis in original), in spite of its inherently artificial and biased character. This, as I hoped to show in this chapter, is made all-the-more evident once external nature is brought within the scope of analysis of the neoliberal condition. But the artificial character of the neoliberalization of society and nature is also visible in the way neoliberal societies are, today, attempting to deal with the problem of climate change. This tends to manifest itself by artificially putting a price on humanity's impact on nature, in the form of fuel duties, carbon-trading schemes and charges for plastic bags, among other things.

8

Conclusion of Part I

This first part offered an analysis of the central processes involved in the emergence of the neoliberal condition. This was undertaken in the light of a range of critical-theoretical accounts of contemporary Western societies, in the hope of identifying the place held by these processes in bringing about what have become defining features of our age: the inflation of culture, the precarization of life, individualization and social and cultural fragmentation. Each of these features were in fact analysed in direct relation to neoliberal processes: financialization, flexibilization, personal responsibilization and privatization. Each process contributes to the creation of economic and cultural conditions appropriate for the entrenchment of the logic of competition in society. Financialization creates new outlets for capital accumulation, while exposing an increasing number of domains of social life to pressures of market forces. As such, it is responsible for extending the reach of ways of life aligned with competitive and self-interested utility-maximization. With production and employment practices articulated around a principle of flexibility symbolically cultivated as a source of freedom, one witnesses an increasing precarization of life. With fewer labour rights and social protections, and an increasingly uncertain, unstable, de-regulated and globalized labour

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market, individuals are evermore compelled to compete. Their freedom is, above all, a freedom to compete. Furthermore, by extending the reach of entrepreneurialism beyond the economic sphere, all in the name of freedom, neoliberal policies have compelled individuals to accept personal responsibility for their choices. By explaining and justifying their actions in such terms, individuals not only come to regard self-realization as a solitary exercise, they also adopt a conduct upon which competition is most likely to thrive, namely the individualization of success. Similar developments can be observed as a result of the conversion of public goods into private assets. The culture of ownership privatization induces does cause individuals to treat their own successes and failures as a matter of individual responsibility. It, too, compels them to innovate and celebrate difference. But in the case of privatization, competition is elicited in the name of efficiency.

The analysis of each of these processes was achieved by grounding contemporary social reality, and what have come to be regarded as its defining features, in human action and, more specifically, in the range of political, economic and cultural resources mobilized for these processes' development. It served to highlight the risks involved in formulating a social critique presupposing that these features constitute the "inevitable outcome of national evolution" (Bourdieu and Wacquant 2001: 4). Social critique must, instead, be in a position to reveal the range of decisions and actors responsible for naturalizing particular schemes of perception and conducts, while revealing their links with economic and political structures of power. As such, it must be in a position to defetishize the established order. Under the reading in question, phenomena like individualization and the precarization of life become significant in terms of the function they perform in the wider neoliberal political-economic regime. They are treated as objects of symbolic production harnessed for political and economic ends. But, to adopt such an approach does not mean denying the phenomena in question an objective existence. It simply means recognizing the role performed by "the production of forms of subjectivity" (Bourdieu 2000: 148) in their historical manifestation.

As the "foundation of … an immediate, prereflexive consensus on the meaning of the world" (Bourdieu 2000: 172), the state is a central agent

in the production, cultivation and propagation of symbolic forms. Its role does not merely limit itself to creating the legal structures appropriate for the expansion of market relations and, as Harvey noted, restoring class power. It also includes the naturalization of schemes of perception and conducts both appropriate for these relations and aligned with the interests of the economically powerful. To defetishize the neoliberal order, therefore, effectively entails recognizing the central role played by the state in symbolic production. But schools, universities and the media also play their part. Scientists, teachers and journalists have, indeed, borne a responsibility in producing and maintaining the *status quo*. As "cultural producers" (Bourdieu 2001), they are instrumental in constructing and normalizing ways of representing life, exposed in the analysis of each of the neoliberal processes included in this part. But this focus on human action should not divert us towards a conspiratorial vision of the contemporary Western world. Instead, it should serve as a stark reminder of the fact that the "sickness lies not in wicked individuals but in the system" (Adorno 1991: 64).

Making sense of the emergence and reproduction of neoliberal processes, therefore, requires one to understand the broad range of resources, actors and institutions they have relied upon and mobilized, including those involved in the neoliberal reorganization of nature. Something central to the purpose of defetishization was in fact revealed in the last chapter. Indeed, as the efforts employed to entrench market relations in nature are revealed, one is able to gain a much better sense of the neoliberal condition's artificial character. But one is also able to appreciate better the value of studying individuals in all their complex relations, including those involving nature. As an ideology, neoliberalism may thrive on compartmentalization. It thrives on dividing the indivisible, separating the inseparable, dissociating the indissociable. But, in effect, neoliberal processes have been supported by a broad range of actors, resources and institutions, and the neoliberal condition they have given rise to enmeshes individuals and institutions in ever more complex networks of interdependence, while uniting them, symbolically at least, around a common action-orientation, such as utility-maximization. In fact, as we shall now see, it also unites them in oppression.

Part II

Domination

9

Introduction of Part II

The task of conceptualizing domination has been a central concern of social critique. This has entailed the analysis of a broad range of power relations between groups, institutions and ideas. Social critiques can nevertheless differ significantly in emphasis. For example, in the work of Marx (2000c), economic forces such as "forces" and "relations" of production are given primacy in domination. Others, such as Gramsci (1971), attributed an equally important role in domination to culture or a group's capacity to control the means of representation. More recently, and following the cultural turn in social theorizing, it has become rather fashionable to speak of domination in discursive terms. In the work of Foucault (2008), for example, power is abstracted from agents. It has become so diffuse that domination assumes an impersonal character, in the form of ideas or ways of seeing the world administered by contemporary institutions and reproduced in individuals' practices. Domination is here said to manifest itself in the form of a normalization of conduct, in line with the dominant ways of seeing the world administered by institutions such as the capitalist market. Given the increasing influence such impersonal forces as markets exert over Western societies under the neoliberal age, it is not difficult to see why this particular approach has

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appealed to contemporary critical theorists (see, for example, Miller and Rose 2008; Lazzarato 2009). The neoliberal condition, it seems, requires critique to locate the sources of power and domination in forces detached from accountable systems of power.

In this part, however, I develop a conceptualization of neoliberal domination predominantly inspired by the work of Pierre Bourdieu (1998, 2000, 2005), especially his concept of "symbolic domination." To speak of domination in these terms means recognizing the central role of symbolic forms in the phenomenon in question. But, unlike Foucault's, Bourdieu's approach is marked by a consistent effort to ground dominant schemes of perception in social, that is personal, domination. This, as I hope to show in the following chapters, is an essential exercise for a critique aiming to grasp the forms of domination emerging under the neoliberal condition. But I also draw inspiration, once again, from Polanyi's work, particularly his claim that "nature is inextricably interwoven with man's institutions" (2001: 187). Along with the first generation of Frankfurt School thinkers' concern for the relationship between humanity and nature in their critique of capitalism, Polanyi's claim has informed my efforts to include a discussion of neoliberal environmental domination and an analysis of its relationship with social domination.

I shall speak of "social" domination to refer to a state of affairs whereby hierarchies of power unfold along socio-economic and identity lines. Socio-economic and identity-based groups exert a dominant influence on other groups and succeed in imposing their own interests on society at large. As such, the term encompasses both economic and cultural domination. In the case of the former the source of power is material, whereas the latter entails the existence of dominant values or value patterns, often grounded in identity. By speaking of "environmental domination," I intend to refer to a situation whereby the influence of humanity on nature is such that, in its efforts to satisfy its needs, it radically alters and deteriorates the biophysical environment. Finally, "symbolic domination," a concept central to the work of Bourdieu (1998, 2000, 2005), involves, broadly speaking, a state of affairs whereby particular symbolic forms or schemes of perceptions aligned with the interests of the socially dominant dominate others and become objectivated or turned into a self-evident reality. This form of domination performs both an ideological

and fetishizing function. It is ideological to the extent that it serves the reproduction of the *status quo*, in the interests of the socially dominant. But it is also a source of fetishization, in virtue of its role in making self-evident or naturalizing the dominant's worldview.

My task, here, shall therefore consist in exploring the conditions under which these forms of domination have manifested themselves under the neoliberal condition. But I also aim to explore their intersections, in an effort to lay the groundwork for the conceptualization of a coalitional politics in the following parts of the book. I begin this part by reviewing the distinctive character assumed by social and environmental domination under this age. I then move onto a broader conceptualization of domination informed, predominantly, by Bourdieu's concept of symbolic domination and end with a set of reflections on the relationship between the neoliberal condition and the emancipatory spirit guiding modernization.

10

Probing Neoliberal Domination

The social consequences of neoliberal reforms have been widely documented since the 1990s (see, for example, Bauman 2000, 2007; Chomsky 1999; Harvey 1990, 2005; Saad-Filho and Johnston 2005; Standing 2011; Kumar 2005). Often highlighted in such analyses are the particularly sharp socio-economic inequalities resulting from the implementation of the different measures aimed at eliminating constraints on capital accumulation. But these measures have, too, contributed to shaping identity-based hierarchies and further elevating humanity above nature. In this chapter, I am interested in exploring the contribution of neoliberal reforms to social and environmental domination. But I am also interested in setting up the premises for conceptualizing their intersections. It will be shown that neoliberal domination has given rise to a complex imbrication of economic, cultural and environmental domination.

Class Domination

In his work on neoliberal capitalism, David Harvey (2005) presented the "restoration of class power" as a defining feature of the age. A decade or so later, the French economist Thomas Piketty (2014) published his criti-

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cally acclaimed book on inequality in the twenty-first century, in which he provides fresh and detailed evidence for the recent rise of extreme inequalities of wealth across the advanced capitalist world. What unites these two authors, then, is the view according to which neoliberal capitalism marks a return to sharp socio-economic inequalities. But both are also united in their effort to show the role played by political decisions in paving the way for this state of affairs. De-regulation strategies have, for example, contributed to the "widening income gap between supermanagers and others" (Piketty 2014: 336), for "these top managers by and large have the power to set their own remuneration" (Piketty 2014: 24). The state-engineered financialization of the economy, on the other hand, has led to a very acute concentration of capital in a few hands and the emergence of a widening "inequality from capital" thought to be even "more worrisome" than "inequality of income from labor" (Piketty 2014: 336). Privatization strategies, too, have borne significant socio-economic consequences, best captured by what Harvey called "accumulation by dispossession," which he described as follows:

> the commodification and privatization of land and the forceful expulsion of peasant populations … conversion of various forms of property rights (common, collective, state, etc.) into exclusive private property rights (most spectacularly represented by China); suppression of rights to the commons; commodification of labour power and the suppression of alternative (indigenous) forms of production and consumption; colonial, neocolonial, and imperial processes of appropriation of assets (including natural resources); monetization of exchange and taxation, particularly of land; the slave trade (which continues particularly in the sex industry); and usury, the national debt and, most devastating of all, the use of the credit system as a radical means of accumulation by dispossession. (Harvey 2005: 158)

The logic upon which privatization rests, namely the conversion of public goods into privately owned assets, is facilitated by various legal and extra-legal means marking a departure from inclusive accessibility to goods, services and land. Use of, and access to, these resources and services become exclusive to those equipped with the requisite purchasing power. But as gains are privatized, losses are socialized. The wealthy can fructify their wealth, and the poor see their own diminishing. Financialization

and privatization have, in short, caused a notable upward redistribution of wealth.

But flexibilization, too, has made its contribution to economic domination. It has, for example, significantly undermined organized labour's power. The rise of casual forms of employment, combined with subcontracting and outsourcing practices, have led to a situation whereby workers "have a large number of employers and [are] managed according to different rules as regards wages, hours, and so on" (Boltanski and Chiapello 2005: 229). These, in turn, create conditions for "the segmentation of the wage-earning class" (Boltanski and Chiapello 2005: 229), and seriously undermine labour's capacity to mobilize against capital. The form of neoliberal social domination described so far, then, could be viewed as a zero-sum game, supervised by a state, whose reforms have increased the power of capital, while decreasing that of labour.

But neoliberal economic domination distinguishes itself in yet another regard. Within the neoliberal socio-economic hierarchy can be found a newly emerging class bearing most of the brunt of neoliberal processes. This class is called the "precariat," and assumes the following distinctive characteristics:

> If everything is commodified—valued in terms of costs and financial rewards—moral reciprocities become fragile. If the state removes labourist forms of social insurance that created a substantive, if inequitable, social solidarity system, without putting anything comparable in its place, then there is no mechanism to create alternative forms of solidarity. To build one, there must be a sense of stability and predictability. The precariat lacks both. It is subject to chronic uncertainty. (Standing 2011, p. 22)

The growth of employment casualization, combined with the flexibilization of work tasks, the spread of the cash nexus driven by privatization, cuts in welfare provisions and the withdrawal of workers' rights have all contributed, in their own way, to the emergence of a "global 'precariat' consisting of many millions around the world without an anchor of stability" (Standing 2011: 1). Since their conditions are not only defined by scarcity but also by "chronic uncertainty," they are subjected to both economic deprivation *and* a lack of "secure identity" (Standing 2011: 17).

So, while neoliberal economic domination has rested on the restoration of class power and the fragmentation of labour, it has also been marked by the emergence of a new class. Particularly striking, here, though is the plight marking this new class, namely the fact that it is stamped by economic problems that are also experienced as a lifestyle issue.

Race, Gender and Domination

Neoliberal reforms have, too, significantly affected identity-based groups. Here, I shall predominantly concentrate on how the former have rearticulated domination around the categories of race and gender, in the hope of revealing the distinctive features of cultural domination under the neoliberal age.

In an effort to maximize the competitiveness of their economic space, neoliberal political elites have sought to create conditions favourable for the further entrenchment of markets in society. These have involved strategies of financialization, de-regulation and privatization which have borne significant and problematic socio-economic consequences for women. Indeed, although some developments, such as the casualization of employment, have given women more opportunities to enter the labour force, these have not eliminated gender-based inequalities. In fact, it is possible to observe the emergence of new forms of patriarchal domination. Women have, for example, come to serve as a resource for capital within advanced capitalist societies. Not only are they under-represented in corporate boards and "financial decision-making" (Walby 2009: 5), in countries like the UK (Davies 2011) or the US (Green 2014), they have also tended to occupy positions aimed at facilitating the "provision of the multiple support services that make possible the existence of the centers of transnational business in 'global cities'" (Acker 2004: 34). Few women, therefore, occupy powerful economic positions. Instead, they tend to occupy vulnerable or marginal positions within a neoliberal economy that is, in gender terms, at once broadly *inclusive* and *hierarchical*.

The gendered nature of the neoliberal "architecture," to borrow a term used by Sylvia Walby (2009), can also be observed in the political strategies adopted by neoliberal governments over the past 30 years. Central

to the neoliberal vision is, as discussed in Chap. 5, the idea that individuals are responsible for their own fate. This has involved a decline of the state's intervention in social affairs, characterized by cuts in welfare provisions and regulation that have borne particularly negative effects on women. Since "state expenditures disproportionately benefit gendered issues, including childcare, health and education" (Walby 2009, 5), their withdrawal in the name of personal responsibility can only be expected to worsen women's conditions. In fact, as Walby noted, women are among those social groups most likely to bear the brunt of the stringent austerity measures introduced by several neoliberal governments following the 2007-8 financial crisis. It is estimated that around "85% of the £26 billion worth of cuts to benefits, tax credits, pay and pensions have fallen on women's income" (Smith 2015). Forms of state inactions join the architecture of the economic system and the neoliberal requirement to have children and a career (Gill 2007) in the articulation of a distinctively neoliberal form of social domination articulated around gender.

Similar trends to those I have just identified can nevertheless be observed among racial minorities. Here neoliberal policies have had the overall effect of reinforcing the "racial structure of society" (Roberts and Mahtani 2010: 250). For example, strategies aiming to "dismantle or seriously weaken labor market insurance programs and job-protection legislation" have tended to affect racial minorities in disproportionate ways (Theodore 2007: 252–253). In fact, since Reagan, the "Black-white [unemployment rate] differential has been about a factor of 2.5" (Cha-Jua 2009: 28). In the UK, unemployment for young ethnic minority groups rose by 49% since 2010, compared with a fall of 2% among young white people (Taylor 2015). But neoliberal reforms have also contributed to the rise of an informal economy of "day laborers" mainly comprising illegal immigrants who, given their "precarious legal position [,] bear the brunt of such social change as their access to legal recourses in regards to unfair employment practices are circumscribed" (Roberts and Mahtani 2010: 249). Thus, the plight facing racial minorities consists in either more pronounced rates of *exclusion* from the formal structures of the neoliberal economy than among the majority racial group, or their *inclusion* in undervalued and precarious forms of employment.

Years of neoliberal reforms have nevertheless been characterized by two other phenomena disproportionately affecting, once again, racial minorities. The first one assumes the form of what Theo Goldberg (2009) called the "silencing of race." As the neoliberal political class chooses to de-regulate and privatize, it also chooses to withdraw various forms of public support for those groups that traditionally benefit from welfare provisions. The state, in effect, comes to deny responsibility for structural inequalities articulated around race, as well as for the alleviation of systematic forms of oppression. As a result, race itself is "purged from the explicit lexicon of public administrative arrangements and their assessment while remaining robust and unaddressed in the private realm" (Goldberg 2009: 341). Furthermore, as Cha-Jua noted:

> Concomitant with economic, social, political, and cultural changes in the system of domination has come a new rationalization of racial oppression, *color-blind racial ideology*, whose advocates claim race (read: racism) has declined and is no longer salient, nor should it be, in U.S. Society. (2009: 37)

The neoliberal state's inactions, justified in the name of personal responsibility, have implicitly served to condone, if not legitimate, structural inequalities and systematic oppression articulated around race. They have, despite their apparent neutrality, reinforced the racial structure of society. No such form of inaction can in fact be "neutral," for they turn into an implicit support of pre-existing structures of inequality.

The second phenomenon has, however, involved active state intervention. As Goldberg (2009) also noted, the aforementioned developments have taken place alongside a project of "law and order." Aimed at "delimiting systemic disruption" (2009: 346), law and order initiatives have mainly targeted racial minorities. As such, they play an important role in minimizing disruptions to economic performance by punishing those unwilling to play the legally sanctioned and culturally celebrated game of competitive and self-interested utility-maximization. This has led to the criminalization of racial minorities, not only visible in the "massive increase in incarceration" (Cha-Jua 2009: 33) of African Americans but also in the way people of colour have been targeted by practices such as profiling, "stop and search," detention without charge and indefinite

detention in countries like the UK and the US. As "traffic cop," the state instils a climate of fear amid which race comes to assume the form of a "threat": a threat to the order of advanced capitalist societies. Thus, in addition to being fundamentally gendered, the neoliberalization of society is a process that is also "fundamentally raced" (Roberts and Mahtani 2010: 248).

In short, while neoliberal reforms have sharpened socio-economic hierarchies, they have also created new conditions for patriarchal domination and reinforced racial inequalities. This was achieved through a mix of economic and extra-economic measures, state actions and inactions. But as the aforementioned discussion also revealed, economic and cultural domination cannot be separated in practice. While it is possible to speak of class domination, it is also important to understand how, under the neoliberal condition, socio-economic inequalities are wrapped up around gender and race. Critique, in other words, must make sense of the intricate imbrication of economic and cultural domination.

Exploring the Links Between Economic and Cultural Domination

In her short but insightful book, Lisa Duggan (2003) set out to show the complex interplay between neoliberal "economic goals" and "cultural values" in social domination. At the core of her analysis are what she identifies as neoliberalism's core "concepts":

> The valorized concepts of *privatization* and *personal responsibility* travel widely across the rhetorics of contemporary policy debates, joining economic goals with cultural values while obscuring the identity politics and upwardly redistributive impetus of neoliberalism. Two general policy arenas have proved especially productive for these concepts and help to illustrate the relationship between the economic policies and the cultural projects of neoliberalism—welfare "reform" and "law and order" initiatives. In both arenas, neoliberals have promoted "private" *competition, self-esteem*, and *independences* the roots of *personal responsibility*, and excoriated "public" *entitlement, dependency,* and *irresponsibility* as the sources of social

> ills. And in both arenas, state policies reflect and enact identity and cultural politics invested in hierarchies of race, gender, and sexuality as well as class and nationality. (Duggan 2003: 14)

Both concepts have, in their own way, shaped neoliberal policies, particularly those associated with welfare reforms and the project of law and order, discussed specifically in relation to the issue of race above. Both have also underpinned the articulation of cultural and economic strategies. Indeed, while promoting privatization and personal responsibility aims to justify cost-saving and efficiency-optimizing initiatives, in the form of the sale of public assets and cuts in welfare provisions, it also plays a role in elevating particular conducts and denigrating others. These concepts have shaped the vision of a society comprising self-interested and competitive utility-maximizers, treating their successes and failures as personal achievements or shortcomings, respectively. This vision, in turn, also serves to legitimate the punishment of conducts falling outside the scope of the culture of utility-maximization. In fact, behind the veil of a seemingly gender-, colour- and sexuality-blind capacity to maximize gain, granted by privatization and personal responsibility, lies contemporary instruments of domination that are at once economic and cultural. For example:

> [i]n neoliberal discourse, married women are assumed to be responsible for children and dependent on wage-earning husbands, and are often advised to stay at home during their children's early years to build self-esteem and independence in the young. […] Single, divorced, and widowed women may "choose" to work in a gender and race-segmented labor market without affordable childcare or public assistance in order to build *their* self-esteem and independence—or, some welfare reformers suggest, they may "choose" to put their children up for adoption by married couples, or house them in orphanages. Lesbian and gay, bisexual or transgendered parents may choose only to take their chances amid the patchwork legal minefield of inadequate to hostile partnership provisions, custody rulings, adoptions laws, social services, employment and health insurance practices, and educational (in)visibility. (Duggan 2003: 17)

As already indicated in Chaps. 5 and 6, choice is central to the kind of conduct neoliberal political elites seek to elicit in their attempt to maxi-

mize the competitiveness of their economic space. But as Duggan pointed out, it has served as a means to "hide their investments in identity-based hierarchies" (2003: 15). The case of what she called the "new homonormativity" is particularly instructive. Best exemplified by the recent legalization of same-sex marriage giving homosexuals a "choice" in several advanced capitalist societies, this "homonormativity" does not seek to "contest dominant heteronormative assumptions and institutions" (Duggan 2003: 50) but marks, instead, the assimilation of gay culture with the norms and values making up the heteronormative order. It emerged as a result of various neoconservative "attacks on 'promiscuity' and the 'gay lifestyle' accompanied advocacy of monogamous marriage as a responsible disease prevention strategy" (Duggan 2003: 53). Choosing, here, means to be assimilated into the dominant value system. Combined with the promotion of privatization and personal responsibility, the aforementioned attacks gave rise to a "demobilized gay constituency and a privatized, depoliticized gay culture anchored in domesticity and consumption" (Duggan 2003: 50). Alongside neoconservative values emphasizing the virtues of fidelity, the neoliberal economic project strengthened rather than weakened the heteronormative order. As such, they played an important role in rearticulating cultural domination along sexuality lines.

The inextricable link between the economic goals of the neoliberal project and cultural domination has been explored by other feminist scholars. In their work, the gendered nature of neoliberal processes is highlighted. Joan Acker, for example, shows how gender inequalities have come to be "supported and reinforced by the ethos of the free market, competition, and a 'win or die' environment" (Acker 2004: 29). With the further entrenchment of markets in society, norms appropriate for market behaviour are increasingly celebrated, thereby turning the competitive, adversarial and ruthless conduct, associated with hyper-masculinity, into guiding principles of action. Neoliberal processes, in this sense, elevate masculine behavioural traits at the expense of those associated with femininity, such as "nurturing, love, and altruism" (Beneria 1999: 70). Thus, although ostensibly economic, these processes also promote a cultural universe responsible for reinforcing patriarchal domination.

The promotion of economic rationality by political elites has nevertheless unfolded alongside interventionist measures aimed at eliminating

disruptions to the traditional framework of social reproduction. In the US, for example, "women are caught between neoliberal rhetoric which casts women as the 'new entrepreneurs' … and neoconservative views which emphasize 'family values' and cast women as selfish and irresponsible if they do not fulfill their mothering roles" (Marchand and Sisson Runyan 2000: 15). Often, in fact, feminism is blamed for disrupting the moral fabric of society (Brodie 1994). Thus, despite an immediate opposition between the self-interested character of economic rationality and selfless attitudes promoted by the neoconservative political elite, both have coalesced to produce a dominant pattern of cultural value in line with the interests, and reinforcing the cultural and economic power, of elite white heterosexual men.

But, as highlighted in the previous section, racial minorities have, too, seen their conditions affected by neoliberal processes. Understanding their impact requires one to address, once again, the relationship between the economic and cultural dimensions of the neoliberal project. Indeed, as Goldberg put it, the "neoliberal condition is committed to calculating optimalities in reductively economic terms, to speculative financialization, and … 'selective deregulation'" (2009: 335). Armed with law and order initiatives, the neoliberal state seeks to punish individuals likely to "disrupt," or interfere with, the realization of the aforementioned commitments. Thus, while it celebrates successful utility-maximizers, it "locks up the undesirable (in prisons) or locks out the externally threatening (by way of immigration restrictions)" (Goldberg 2009: 335). Under such a state of affairs, race becomes a "foundational code" (Goldberg 2009: 4), serving to differentiate the "good guy" from the "bad guy," or the acceptable from non-acceptable conducts. In short, the neoliberal state not only genders but also racializes the difference between "ideal" and "flawed" conducts, amid its efforts to maximize the competitiveness of its economic space.

Even an ostensibly economic category such as class has not remained immune to the cultural neoliberal project. Under the guise of privatization and personal responsibility, economic success comes to be construed as an inevitable reward for those who are self-reliant, hard-working and willing to take risks. Any dependence on the few remaining provisions made available by an increasingly shrinking welfare state is, in turn,

construed as a personal economic failure. But it is also construed as a cultural flaw, worthy of the most severe "demonization" (Jones 2016). For the mere reliance on state benefits immediately conjures up images of idleness, waste and abuse, as captured by the term "benefit scrounger" in contemporary public discourses in Britain. Successive British governments have in fact been active not only in punishing these so-called scroungers but also in promoting middle-class values and lifestyles. Under the New Labour government, for example, one could observe a "stream of initiatives designed to regulate childrearing as part of an almost evangelical drive to equip working-class parents with the skills to raise middle-class children" (Gillies 2005: 838). These included such goals as raising children's academic skills, consolidating children's relationships with their parents and ensuring that parents are involved in education. Like sexuality, race and gender, class is inscribed in the neoliberal economic goals and cultural values of the neoliberal project. Like them, it serves to differentiate between "'appropriate" and "inappropriate" conducts.

It is also important to note how the neoliberal economic and cultural project has affected the disabled. Not only do they make up "28% of people in poverty, a further 20% of people in poverty live in a household with a disabled person" in the UK (Tinson et al. 2016: 4). Neoliberal measures of welfare retrenchment have played a significant role in giving rise to this state of affairs, for, with them, "both statutory services and third sector services are being cut, leaving disabled people with nowhere else to turn" (Wood 2012: 7). Deprived of the kind of state support that could allow them to play the requisite and culturally celebrated game of competitive and self-interested maximization, a large proportion of these individuals are forced into poverty. Unlike the law and order initiatives, the punishment is, here, tacitly enforced by neoliberal elites keen to promote personal responsibility, and willing to justify one's economic position on the basis of one's personal (in)capacity to comply with the ways of life currently celebrated. Neoliberal policies do not only reinforce socio-economic inequalities between the non-disabled and disabled, they are also instrumental in "propagat[ing] the idea—the myth—that a person who isn't in work is not just jobless, but worthless" (O'Hara 2015: 110). Thus, the hierarchy at work here is, at once, socio-economic and cultural.

Thus, while it is possible to differentiate the economy and culture analytically in neoliberal social domination, a robust and sufficiently comprehensive understanding of the latter requires one to account for the complex way socio-economic inequalities have intersected with cultural hierarchies. Through a mix of welfare retrenchment and interventionist measures aiming to minimize systemic disruptions, the neoliberal state seeks to create conditions favourable for market relations. In the process, it compels economically and culturally differentiated groups to adopt conducts likely to reinforce pre-existing socio-economic and cultural hierarchies. Indeed, the practice of utility-maximization they elicit does not take place in an economic and cultural vacuum. It not only has to confront unevenly resourced economic and cultural groups but is also accompanied by law and order initiatives, often responsible for imposing a neoconservative agenda (Duggan 2003; Phipps 2015).[1] While race-, gender-, class- and disability-based hierarchies predate the neoliberal condition, they are re-configured by neoliberal reforms responsible for the entrenchment of economic rationality in society and attempts to delimit what the white heterosexual male elite views as disruptive.

But, underlying these developments is a phenomenon Edward Said (1979) viewed as central to domination, namely cultural "othering." This is not only visible in forms of domination articulated around gender (Phipps 2015) and race (Fanon 1983) but also in class domination. In each of these cases, identity turns into a powerful "othering" tool, animated by, and articulated around, sharpening socio-economic inequalities and a mode of action celebrating the competitive pursuit of self-interest: women as "feeble" others, racial "others" as "threats," working classes as "benefit scroungers." Although cultural "othering" is not a new phenomenon, given its centrality in, for example, colonial rule (Goldberg 2009), distinctively neoliberal conditions have shaped the

[1] Although tensions between neoliberalism and neoconservatism can be observed, both sets of ideas and values have often played complementary roles. As Phipps put it, "In neoliberalism and neoconservatism, business and theological models of state power have come together, and the two frameworks are at once hostile and complementary. They conflict over issues such as state spending, and neoconservative moralism is set against neoliberal nihilism and self-interest. However, they have hidden similarities in their regulation of the social sphere, which neoconservatism approaches directly via morality and policy while neoliberalism belies its free-market rhetoric by attempting to incentivize towards the 'right' choices" (2014, 10).

way "the humanity of another culture, people or geographical region" are today being "disregard[ed], essentializ[ed], denud[ed]" (Said 1979: 108).

The case of the 2016 EU referendum in the UK is particularly instructive in this regard. On 24 June, the results were announced, with around 52% of the British population choosing to leave the EU. Explaining this result is a very complex affair, given the broad range of factors involved in voters' decisions. But although no single factor can be attributed to this highly unexpected result, immigration held a prominent place, particularly among the poorer sections of the electorate (Travis 2016). For them, the EU became a symbol of immigration, and immigration a threat to their economic well-being. But economic issues were also wrapped up in issues of identity. The EU was not only viewed as a threat to British workers' jobs, it also became a threat to their culture or identity. "Othering," here, has a socio-economic premise: precarity amid competitive and self-interested utility-maximization. It unfolds within a binary opposition of choices—"in" or "out"—symbolically produced by political elites keen to highlight what one or the other choice would mean for Britain. While "remain" campaigners sought to concentrate on symbols associated with the economy, the "leave" camp often played the immigration card. The latter provided symbolic tools which, under a mix of competition and precarity whereby problems are, more likely than not, projected onto seemingly interfering "others," animate xenophobia, racism and, more generally, turn identity into a means for differentiating the "legitimate" from "'illegitimate" competitors in utility-maximization. This is how, after a long history of cultural "othering," dating back to the Enlightenment and colonial rule (Goldberg 2009), combined with years of neoliberal austerity measures, an EU referendum created the symbolic field for the animation of "othering" practices. The UK is not, however, alone in exhibiting these troubling developments. In other neoliberalized societies like the US and France, Donald Trump and Marine Le Pen have been rather successful in wrapping up economic issues in issues of identity. Neoliberal capitalism, it seems, creates conditions favourable for a process of "othering" and forms of social domination involving the complex imbrication of economic and cultural issues. But, as we shall now see, "othering" has, too, played a key part in shaping humanity-nature relations.

Environmental Domination and the Four Neoliberal Processes

In Part I, I sought to show how humanity-nature relations come to be increasingly mediated by market forces. Here, however, I intend to go further and reveal how such changes have led to the further estrangement of humanity from nature and the exacerbation of humanity's domination of nature. Let me start with the first process identified in Part I, namely financialization.

Under the financialization of the economy, advanced capitalist societies become increasingly reliant on information, knowledge and immaterial labour. This alters humanity's relationship with nature in two distinct, albeit related, ways. First, as economic activities increase their reliance on the pursuit of shareholder value, humanity becomes more than ever cognitively distant from nature, for society-nature relations become increasingly mediated by symbols, images and discourses. Thus, in countries with a highly financialized economic system and a large third sector, the effects of humanity's activities on the biophysical environment become decreasingly palpable. Second, although the value created by financialized economic activities does not derive directly from the exploitation of nature, the pursuit of shareholder value exacerbates the already damaging extractivist practices of private companies. As Klein aptly explained, the stability and growth of an oil or gas company floated on the stock market depends on its capacity "to prove to their shareholders that they have fresh carbon reserves to exploit after they exhaust those currently in production" (2014: 146). Financialization, therefore, both exacerbates humanity's domination of nature, while enhancing their estrangement.

But what can be said regarding the effects of the flexibilization process? For some, such as Welford and Gouldson (1993), flexible specialization can be expected to accommodate environmental goals in business strategies. The logic is as follows: in a decentralized and flexible system of production made up of small firms, the small units are granted more control and autonomy than in centralized, bureaucratic systems and are, as a result, able to exhibit a "greater environmental responsiveness" (Gibbs

1996: 4). However, as Gibbs insisted, the "issue of whether a small unit or firm automatically leads to greater environmental responsiveness is … a highly debatable one" (1996: 4). Also, such optimistic accounts tend to focus on "changes in production as opposed to consumption issues" (Gibbs 1996: 5). In fact, once the latter are considered, it is actually possible to anticipate an exacerbation of the domination of nature induced by flexibility. In a recently published collection of essays, André Gorz (2012) highlighted the inherent tensions between economic rationality, which flexibilization contributes to entrenching, and what he called "ecological rationality":

> [T]he economic imperative of productivity is totally different from the ecological imperative of resource conservation. Ecological rationality consists in satisfying material needs in the best way possible with as small a quantity as possible of goods with high use-value and durability, and this doing so with a minimum of work, capital and natural resources. (Gorz 2012: 32)

While Gorz does not here make explicit references to flexibilization, it is not difficult to see how the tension between the economy and the environment referred to in the passage comes to be exacerbated as a result of this process. While mass production and mass consumption are often associated with Fordism, they continue to prevail under post-Fordism. They are nevertheless brought to life in a different form, or according to a slightly different economic rationality. While Fordist economic rationality was characterized by standardization and durability, post-Fordism relies on flexibility and obsolescence. While post-Fordism relies on "small-batch production" in an effort to minimize wastes, it also cultivates flexible mass consumption by minimizing "use-value" and "durability." It substitutes vast quantities of standardized goods with vast quantities of ephemeral non-standardized goods, and turns into an acute source of environmental degradation. Flexibility joins forces with financialization to explain why "[n]eoliberalization has a rather dismal record when it comes to the exploitation of natural resources" (Harvey 2005: 174).

The rise of the entrepreneurial self, too, has contributed to changes in nature-society relations. As a cultural ideal guiding individuals' practices within the neoliberal political-economic regime, the entrepreneurial self subjects both production and consumption to its rule. For example, in a sphere dominated by post-Fordist methods of management, production is arranged in such a way as to "make use of the desire of all individuals to be creative, autonomous, and to strive to improve themselves and their performance if offered encouragement and reward" (Miller and Rose 1995: 456). Personal responsibility, here, is invoked for the purpose of maximizing the competitiveness of the broader economic space. But it is also invoked in consumption, where the consumer is continuously compelled to make individual choices amid an ever wider range of goods and services. Consequently, because consumerist practices "captivate" the "purchasing impulse" to "bring it … to the highest degree of commitment, to the limits of its economic potential" (Baudrillard 1998: 27) the entrepreneurial self *qua* consumer turns into an agent of environmental degradation. In both production and consumption, then, the entrepreneurial self is "harnessed to national ends" (Miller and Rose 1995: 457) and, more specifically, to the end of economic growth. It becomes instrumental in intensifying the tension between the "economic imperative of productivity" and "ecological rationality" (Gorz 2012: 32).

But the neoliberal celebration of personal responsibility at the expense of collective responsibility is also posing new challenges for addressing environmental problems. Since individuals are now encouraged to "*find biographical solutions to systemic contradictions*" (Beck and Beck-Gernsheim 2002, p. xxii; emphasis in original), they also come to feel personally responsible for them. While this could lead to "feelings of empowerment," it is often accompanied by "feelings of confusion, ambivalence and uncertainty" (Conolly and Prothero 2008: 141). Although an individual may feel like he or she can make a personal contribution to the resolution of environmental problems through, say, the practice of green consumerism, the same individual is also aware of the particularly overwhelming task of seeking individual solutions to global issues. Ultimately, then, the rise of the entrepreneurial self poses significant challenges for the coordination of actions in the search for solutions to contemporary problems such as climate change.

These conditions are compounded by privatization. It, too, has borne significant consequences for the biophysical environment. To privatize a natural resource such as a piece of land means to turn it into an object of utility-maximization and subject it to volatile market forces. It means prioritizing its economic value or profitability over its conservation. As such, it increases the scope for environmental exploitation. But privatization also acts as a "process of remaking nature–society relations" (Mansfield 2008a: 2), for by turning individuals into private owners, it alters the way they relate to themselves, others and their environment. It renders access to, and use of, natural resources exclusive to its owner. What was previously a public good, freely accessible to all, becomes the exclusive property of an individual or organization. Privatization decreases the prospects for collective responsibility in the management and conservation of natural resources. Thus, as neoliberal states keen to withdraw or reduce their regulatory controls privatize resources and services, they fail to make the investments and impose the regulatory controls required for limiting humanity's ecological footprint. They relinquish responsibility for environmental issues, by passing it onto market and non-state actors. In addition to intensifying the exploitation of nature, then, privatization hinders the forms of collective coordination most suitable for environmental conservation and the resolution of environmental problems.

Several practices associated with each of the four neoliberal processes have therefore "*greatly accelerated the speed and volume of the throughput of natural resources and creation of wastes*" (Antonio 2009: 10). This is due to their tendency to exacerbate the domination of nature by humanity. Some of these practices have also affected interpersonal and nature-society relations in such a way that it is becoming increasingly difficult to develop a collective vision and coordination of efforts in environmental management. The neoliberal condition has, in this sense, been responsible for "sabotag[ing] our collective response to climate change" (Klein 2014: 9). Overall, though, these different developments have served to obscure "the ways in which human being relate to the environmental and ecological systems of which they are still part" (Dickens 1996: 130).

Linking Social and Environmental Domination: Conceptual Premises

In Part I, we saw how the emergence of the neoliberal condition has relied upon a historically distinctive and mutually dependent mobilization of political, economic, cultural and natural resources for its emergence and reproduction. Furthermore, it was shown that the task of grasping the distinctive way in which neoliberal processes reorganize nature requires one to account for structures of political and economic power. This, in turn, invites us to think about the relationship between social domination and humanity's domination of nature.

The emergence of capitalism and the rapid industrialization that ensued have marked a profound change in the way humanity relates to non-human nature. Once natural resources were turned into commodities through their integration within a regime of production whose primary *raison d'être* lies in accumulating capital, humanity came to confront nature as an object to be mastered and dominated. Capitalism changes the relationship between humanity and nature by "artificially" (Polanyi 2001) raising the former above the latter. But the history of capitalism is also one of social domination. It is, in short, a history of the way "humans have put nature to work—including other humans—in accumulating wealth and power" (Moore 2015: 9). As Moore put it:

> Modern class relations emerge through early capitalism's primitive accumulation—an audacious movement of environment-making if there ever was one. Modern gender relations were forged through this same process of capitalist agrarian transformation—on both sides of the Atlantic—and symbolically encoded, not least through the era's successive scientific revolutions. Modern racism was born of the transatlantic slave trade, the human pivot of the sugar commodity frontier: among the era's decisive motors of capital accumulation and greatest commodity-centered force for landscape transformation that humanity had ever seen. (Moore 2015: 9)

Changes in the way nature has been reorganized under capitalism have been intricately imbricated with the way different social groups have related to one another. In fact, one can observe, here, striking overlaps

between sources of social domination and factors leading to environmental domination. Such remarks, then, invite us to understand the form these overlaps have assumed under the neoliberal condition. They prompt us to reflect on the affinity between factors that have contributed to the reinforcement of socio-economic and identity-based hierarchies and those responsible for the exacerbation of humanity's domination of nature. In fact, like social domination, the domination of nature has rested upon a process of "othering." Like women, racial minorities and working classes, nature is degraded and debased, while humanity is denaturalized. Nature is an "other" to be mastered or made serviceable for humanity's needs. Neoliberal processes have, thus, both depended upon, and exacerbated, the "othering" of nature.

More will be revealed about the relationship between the economy, culture and nature in domination in the next chapter. What, though, can we conclude from the discussion executed so far? I can think of four elements:

1) Domination unfolds within the *three sites* around which neoliberal capitalism reproduces itself: economy, culture and nature.
2) Each of these sites *shares* the same sources of domination, more or less, directly connected to the entrenchment of markets and economic rationality in an ever-wider range of practices.
3) These different sites are *intricately imbricated* in domination.
4) Given the fact that state *inactions* or claims of *non-responsibility* have contributed to social and environmental domination, it is essential to consider potentially *impersonal* forms of power and domination.

Two broad sets of implications for the conceptualization of domination can be drawn from these: one regarding the relationship between different sites of domination and another regarding the relationship between personal and impersonal forms of power. I begin my conceptualization of domination by tackling the latter.

11

Conceptualizing Neoliberal Domination

Financialization, flexibilization, personal responsibilization and privatization have led to the proliferation of outlets for, and removal of constraints on, economic activities. They have, too, served to liberate trade between national economic spaces and intensify their interdependence. In short, they have increased societies' exposure to the rule of volatile market forces. These developments were driven by a vision, at the core of which welfare is thought to be best secured by the free and private accumulation of gain. It becomes the responsibility of the individual, not the state, to secure their means of subsistence, no matter how competitive and hostile the economic environment is. Under such conditions, the individual is entirely free, that is, free to trade, consume, borrow or choose the occupation that will give him or her satisfaction. But freedom, under the neoliberal condition, is harnessed to the ends of economic competitiveness. A decline of trade signifies a decline of performance. Failure to consume means not playing the requisite economic game and threatens individuals with social exclusion (Bauman 1988). Idleness is not permitted; one has to work at all costs, sometimes even at the cost of mental and physical health (Schofield 2005). What first appeared as a set of conditions giving us unprecedented freedom now emerges a set

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of constraints, obliging individuals to contribute to the competitiveness of their economic space. Individuals' choices, then, are severely circumscribed by the imperative of economic performance. They are subsumed under the seemingly impersonal authority of economic facts.

I begin this chapter by providing an analysis of these facts and attempting to understand their relationship with personal forms of power and domination. This task, I later argue, is best achieved by framing domination with one of Bourdieu's core concepts, namely "symbolic domination." It will in fact be shown that by framing domination in this way, one can begin to better understand the complex ways different in which forms of domination are imbricated under the neoliberal condition.

Economic Facts, Economic Power and Political Power

I shall use the term "authority of economic facts" to refer, broadly speaking, to a situation whereby the decisions of ordinary individuals, as well as the political institutions meant to guarantee their welfare, are subsumed under the imperative of capital-driven economic performance. Neoliberal strategies of de-regulation, financialization, flexibilization and privatization have, in virtue of their role in entrenching the markets and its concomitant logic of competition in society, consolidated the authority of such facts. But their authority manifests itself in diverse ways, despite sharing a logic identical to the one I discussed in the introduction of this chapter. They have, for example, exercised their rule in the form of economic insecurity. As markets between the wealthiest regions of the world become increasingly globalized and interconnected, national economic spaces are brought under an ever-wider range of factors likely to affect and indeed constrain individuals' actions. The poor performance of a distant economic space, a decline in the value of assets, an environmental disaster, a political or economic scandal surfacing in a distant region of the world could all bear potentially dramatic consequences for individuals within a particular economic space. They can significantly affect global free markets and bear a devastating impact on, for example, employment

in one or more regions of the world. This was most recently demonstrated by the US sub-prime mortgage crisis which, although triggered by a decline in house prices specific to the American housing market, turned into one of the most destructive global economic crises since capitalism's inception. As markets are increasingly globalized, de-regulated and financialized, then, the risks of economic instability also increase. It follows that, as economic facts increase in authority, economic uncertainty appears ever more self-evident or inevitable. In fact, as Bauman put it:

> Instead of joining ranks in the war against uncertainty, virtually all effective institutionalized agencies of collective action join the neo-liberal chorus singing the praise of the unbound "market forces" and free trade, the prime sources of existential uncertainty, as the "natural state" of mankind. (Bauman 1999: 28)

This "existential uncertainty" induced by the subjection of societies to the authority of economic facts consolidated by neoliberal processes, acts as a constraining force on the daily activities of individuals and institutions. It compels them to increase their reliance on utility-maximizing strategies. It compels ordinary individuals to sacrifice non-economic matters in favour of those who could enhance their private gain. But, to become such a seemingly inevitable constraint or a "natural state" of affairs, this uncertainty first had to be normalized. Its domination over society effectively had to be recognized as "natural." This, as we shall see next, requires us to account for the symbolic dimension of economic facts. Before doing so, though, it is essential to explore their relationship with structures of economic and political power.

The authority enjoyed by economic facts over neoliberal societies is often presented as a source of conflict between the "invisible hand" of market forces and democratic political institutions. The latter, we are told, have become powerless in the face of markets now free to unleash, and subject societies to, the dynamic of competition and the supply and demand mechanism. That privatization, financialization and de-regulation have given markets a greater scope of action throughout the world is difficult to deny. It is even beginning to "appear as the centerpiece of an

apparatus that could regulate global networks of circulation" (Hardt and Negri 2000: 251). The privatization of health systems, pension schemes, education and transport systems, for example, significantly increases the influence of market forces on societies. But one must not forget that, on the one hand, such a handover is itself the product of strategies devised by neoliberal states. Governments choose to privatize, de-regulate, and financialize. They choose to relinquish their responsibilities. The increasing subjection of societies to the rule of markets is, therefore, the product of conscious political decisions. On the other hand, once the responsibilities have been relinquished, they are not so much passed over to an "invisible hand" in the form of market forces as to the hands of powerful corporations (Crouch 2013). These corporations can influence political decision-making processes in various ways. They can, for example, *indirectly* force a national government to cancel decisions aimed at imposing additional regulations or taxes by threatening to take their investments elsewhere. They can potentially "regime shop," as Crouch (2013) put it. But they can also *directly* shape political decisions by becoming active, albeit unaccountable, agents in the formulation of national policies and international agreements. The case of the much-condemned Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership (TTIP) is particularly instructive in this regard.

The overall declared objective of this treaty consists in boosting trade and, consequently, economic growth, employment between the two most powerful economic powers, the US and EU. Since it is unfolding behind closed doors, without the involvement of democratically elected members of parliament, the public knows very little about the treaty. Wikileaks was even offering 100,000 euros to anyone with information about what it calls "Europe's most wanted secret" (Wikileaks.org). What we do know, though, is that it is involving discussions between governments and big businesses and that it is likely to include an Investor-State Settlement (ISDS) that could allow corporations to dispute any policy aiming to introduce regulation that interferes with the private accumulation of capital (Martell 2014). For example, if a government introduces forms of social protection that could restrict the profits of a company, the latter will be in a position to block such a measure. If a state chooses to renationalize a service that was previously marketized, such as education

or health systems, the private suppliers would be able to take action in order to block such measures.

We do not know yet what the exact form of this treaty will be and whether it will indeed include the ISDS. However, the mere fact that such discussions are taking place behind closed doors is telling. Indeed, why would governments and big businesses choose to reach an agreement in secret, if the public is likely to benefit from it? Why bypass the various decision-making processes thought to protect the common good, if the latter is likely to be enhanced by the treaty? The answer to these questions is simple. The treaty involves a strategy for economic growth that places the private interests of large corporations at the top of the agenda. By doing so, it effectively seeks to overcome "[t]he new tensions between social rights associated with citizenship and the commercial rights deriving from private ownership of financial assets" (Schäfer and Streeck 2013: 20) by tipping the balance in favour of the latter. It seeks to enshrine even further the authority of economic facts, by dismantling the system of social protections, bypassing democratic decision-making processes and promoting the interests of big business. In short, it is responsible for a violent attack on democracy. Thus, in addition to an increasing domination of markets over societies, one could also speak of the "dominance of public life by the giant corporation" (Crouch 2013: 219) or the transfer of "decision making about people's lives and aspirations into the hands of private tyrannies that operate in secret and without public supervision or control" (Chomsky 1999: 132–3). The TTIP symbolizes a distinctively neoliberal and violent attack on democracy under the supervision of, somewhat ironically, democratically elected governments keen to serve the interests of economic elites.

But instances of such "systems of unaccountable power" (Chomsky 1999: 132) have manifested themselves in other ways, as illustrated by the 2011–13 Italian government. In 2011, Mario Monti accepted to form a government in order to bring the public finances of the country back in order, following the destructive financial crisis of 2007-8. What was particularly striking and quite unique about this government was that neither Monti, nor any member of his cabinet, had effectively been elected by Italian citizens. Monti, an ex-Goldman Sachs employee, was instead appointed by the Italian president of the time, Giorgio Napolitano, to

introduce austerity measures amid a state of economic emergency. The members of his cabinet had never held a political office. This was a way to secure political neutrality and unity behind the measures. They were all unelected technocrats with one central goal in mind: reducing the public debt of the country and restoring market confidence. Democracy was suspended to pave the way for what were deemed to be absolutely essential and pressing reforms for Italian citizens' welfare. Restoring the finances of the country through heavy doses of austerity was deemed and presented as the only possible way forward. Nothing could or should interfere with such seemingly inevitable, natural and politically neutral austerity measures. Public debt and market confidence had to be restored at all costs, even if it meant appointing a government of unelected technocrats. So, despite ruling over democratic institutions and having to face a parliament with the power to oppose its measures, Monti's unelected government was in a position to rule the country for a total of two years. This government was the overt and political manifestation of an undisputed authority of economic facts capable of drawing its legitimacy from a set of measures disguised as politically neutral and historically necessary.

But austerity is, in fact, intensely political. Take the example of the different bailouts offered to Greece by the Troika. Most of the bailout money offered to Greece over the years could not actually be used by the Greek government to reform its economy (Inman 2015). Instead, it ended up in the hands of private banks which have been lending money to Greece. As Mark Blyth (2015) pointed out, 65% of the "loans to Greece went straight through Greece to core banks for interest payments, maturing debt, and for domestic bank recapitalization demanded by the lenders." Here, the welfare of an entire nation had to confront the private interests of banks represented, as it were, by the Troika. While these banks could continue to fructify their assets, the Greek government had no choice but to accept, as a condition for bailouts, a range of reforms that would impose stringent demands on the bulk of ordinary Greek citizens and give financial institutions such as the IMF and the European Central Bank unprecedented power in the management of Greece's internal affairs. So, as this example further illustrates, behind the seemingly neutral and inevitable authority of economic facts lies another, highly

troubling, fact: a politically engineered attack on democratic freedoms in the interest of capital.

Attacks on civil liberties also abound. In the UK, for example, the right of assembly in a public space has come under attack by the Conservative government which, in the name of cost-effectiveness, asked protesters involved in the Campaign Against Climate Change planning to organize a demonstration on 7 March 2015, to pay thousands of pounds in order to cover the costs incurred to the police for managing the traffic during the protest (*Guardian* Editorial 2015). It is also planning to introduce a new legislation essentially aiming to minimize economic disruptions caused by industrial actions, with the substitution of agency workers for strikers during disputes (Cable and O'Grady 2015). Such a move would not only further undermine industrial action. It would also mark yet another attack on the fundamental right to protest, all in the name of economic performance.

Combined with the various "law and order" initiatives aiming to criminalize conducts likely to cause "systemic disruption," these measures, as well as those discussed in the rest of this chapter, form a rather striking pattern characterized by the legitimation of a politically mediated attack on democratic freedoms, in the name of economic performance. Thus, despite claims of non-responsibility and inactions, the state exerts a highly constraining influence on social life. The seemingly impersonal authority of neoliberal economic facts is, as the aforementioned examples demonstrated, effectively the product of political decisions. They are manifestations of personal domination masquerading as an impersonal authority, accompanied by a range of law and order initiatives aiming to minimize, at least partly, disruptions to economic performance. Despite some highly significant surges of resistance, such as the Global Justice and Occupy Wall Street movements, measures of this nature continue to proliferate in several advanced capitalist societies. One is therefore justified in asking the following: given the sharp socio-economic and identity-based hierarchies analysed in the preceding chapters and the violent attacks on democracy discussed here, why have neoliberal elites not encountered more sustained forms of resistance? The answer, as we shall see, lies in the neoliberal regime of symbolic domination. Before exploring it, I address the moral and ideological character of economic facts.

The Moral Authority of Neoliberal Economic Facts

Neoliberal economic facts refer to a range of constraining forces resulting from the entrenchment of markets in society, and guided by capital-driven accumulation. They are, in this sense, forces shaping actions appropriate for market relations and compelling individuals to maximize their utility. But since the *raison d'être* of markets consists in maximizing capital accumulation by optimizing efficiency and productivity, neoliberal economic facts include a range of imperatives economic and political elites think are most appropriate for meeting these goals. Under the neoliberal age, they include such imperatives as economic growth, fiscal responsibility and competition. These, as Streeck pertinently noted, have "begun in unprecedented ways to dictate what presumably sovereign and democratic states may still do for their citizens and what they must refuse them" (Streeck 2011: 20).

But in order to appreciate better their nature, as well as the nature of their authority, I propose to turn, first, to Durkheim and his concept of "social fact." In an attempt to make sense of the conditions making social order possible and develop the methodological tools that could explain it, the French sociologist identified a range of forces responsible for regulating individuals' actions. These forces, he thought, exert a moral authority over society. They are not only "beliefs, tendencies and practices of the group taken collectively" (Durkheim 2007: 144) but also "types of behaviour and thinking external to the individual … endued with a compelling and coercive power by virtue of which, whether he wishes it or not, they impose themselves upon him" (Durkheim 2007: 142). Thus, they embody "ways of acting, thinking and feeling," they "possess the remarkable property of existing outside the consciousness of the individual" (Durkheim 2007: 142). While their external character confers them a degree of inevitability and value-neutrality, the moral beliefs of a society are embodied in these "social facts." As such, they are the objective manifestations of subjective forms, exerting a constraining force on individuals. This, I think, marks a logic akin to the one underpinning neoliberal economic facts. Although seemingly value-neutral and inevitable, they

embody historically and culturally specific norms of behaviour, shared by society at large. The entrenchment of markets in society is guided by a distinctive normative vision, namely one that treats such ways of acting as idleness, dependence and emotional attachment as morally reprehensible or signs of weakness and turns others, such as personal responsibility, the competitive pursuit of self-interest, choice, and risk-taking into moral virtues. In turn, because economic facts compel individuals to act according to the latter normative frame of reference, they could effectively be said to exert a moral authority over society.

But although Durkheim provides us with the conceptual means to explain their normative character, more is required to understand how they have come to exert such an authority on society. Social facts are such that we do not question the legitimacy of their authority. But I think it is possible and, indeed, essential to understand how the schemes of perception embodied in neoliberal economic facts have come to assume a legitimate influence on the behaviour of individuals. Take, for example, the authority of economic growth. Although it may appear sufficient to explain its legitimacy in virtue of its capacity to yield empirically verifiable positive material outcomes for the bulk of individuals, or to show that, as Durkheim put it, its "services are real and that the social need has been demonstrated" (2007: 148), this does not fully explain how individuals come to develop the collective sense that it is the "right" goal to pursue. One also has to turn to the "sole sources from which all authority is derived," namely the "establishment of … a common spirit" (Durkheim 2007: 148). But, as shown above, the neoliberal pursuit of economic growth has also produced a range of problematic outcomes, in the form of, for example, sharp socio-economic inequalities and environmental degradation. Despite embodying an empirically verifiable truth, the claim that economic growth necessarily leads to increased material wealth is "false in some deeper, more fundamental way" (Eagleton 1991: 16). Thus, although "true in its empirical content," it is also "deceptive in its force" (Eagleton 1991: 16). In order to explain why the authority of economic facts comes to be treated as legitimate, then, one may need to complement the analysis with an analysis of the ideological mechanisms involved in "establishing the common spirit."

Ideology and Economic Facts: Some Preliminary Considerations

One possible explanation could lie in the economic elites' capacity to mystify the authority of economic facts. Here, such an authority is said to negate the interests of the many and serve the interests of the few, who are consequently inclined to devise strategies for its legitimation. Thus, although objectively false, the legitimate authority of economic facts is interpreted by the many as true, thereby explaining why the latter do not resist their authority. The legitimacy of this authority is mere illusion, made possible through a form of ideological distortion aiming to neutralize social conflicts. The dominated parties are, in turn, bearers of a "false consciousness," with "real" or objective interests opposed to those subjected to mystification. However, although capable of capturing the false dimension of claims to legitimacy, this rather orthodox Marxist "ideology thesis" tends to understate the extent to which individuals identify their interests with the schemes of perception embodied in economic facts. It tends to overlook the degree to which their legitimacy is real for the many. As such, it fails to consider the complex mechanisms through which individuals actively participate in their submission to the rule of economic facts. This explains why the approach in question has lost popularity, even among Marxists themselves who, like Goran Therborn, believe that the idea of a false and true consciousness should be rejected "explicitly and decisively, once and for all" (Therborn in Eagleton 1991: 11).

More popular today, however, is the idea that one ought to move beyond considerations of a normative nature or, put differently, abandon the view that "operations of power" can be "illegitimate" (Cronin 1996: 58). According to Foucault, for example, neoliberal domination rests on an altogether different logic, namely one operating on the basis of a historically distinctive subjectivity. This subjectivity is produced and upheld by both discursive and non-discursive practices articulated around the "dynamic of competition" (Foucault 2008: 147). It is produced by being spoken about by scientists, journalists, experts and the like, and administered by different institutions, such as the state, the media, the market and educational system. Equipped with this subjectivity, individuals

become self-interested, entrepreneurial beings primarily guided by an economic rationality. How, then, is this *homo oeconomicus*, or "man of enterprise and production" (Foucault 2008: 147) expected to apprehend the authority of economic facts under such conditions? Here is how Foucault understood it:

> *Homo oeconomicus* is someone who accepts reality. Rational conduct is any conduct which is sensitive to any modifications in the variables of the environment and which responds to this in a non-random way, in a systematic way, and economics can therefore be defined as the science of the systematic nature of responses to environmental variables (Foucault 2008: 269).

Contrary to the Marxian critique of domination, individuals do not come to accept the authority of economic facts as a result of an ideological distortion executed by a dominant group. There is nothing to demystify, for the legitimacy of this authority is not super-imposed, but is instead viewed as part and parcel of the entrepreneurial subject's own subjectivity. For the latter, it becomes rational to live under the authority of economic facts and inconceivable to engage in practices that do not comply with their rule. Furthermore, domination cannot here be construed as something possessed or exercised, since power itself is relational and diffuse. One can only speak of disciplinary effects provoked by discursive and non-discursive practices, without clearly identifiable disciplining agents. Neoliberal domination, in short, results from "a complex and articulated network of economic, political and cultural interests" (Lazzarato 2009: 113). It assumes, therefore, a highly impersonal form. However, given the acute forms of social domination marking the neoliberal age and problematic outcomes produced by an authority of economic facts mediated by the state, would a critique of neoliberal domination not be better served by devising a frame of reference capable of accommodating normative inclinations and recognizing the relationship between personal and impersonal forms of domination? One of Foucault's main limitations, as highlighted by Fraser (1989), is his incapacity to equip critique with the requisite normative resources for discriminating between effectively legitimate and illegitimate practices or schemes of perception. A key problem with orthodox Marxist approaches to ideology is their

failure to anticipate the possibility for "ruling ideas" to be objectivated in the reality of the dominated. Both, then, provide opposed and partly limited accounts of the relationship between the objective and subjective dimensions of individuals' interests and are, in turn, limited in their capacity to appreciate fully the complex ways in which economic facts are legitimated.

Economic Facts and Symbolic Domination

The aforementioned conceptualizations of the ideological character of economic facts, I wish to argue, make up two opposite ends of a spectrum, at the middle of which lies Bourdieu's concept of "symbolic domination." With it, one indeed finds a sophisticated account of the conditions under which legitimacy comes to be symbolically produced. As we shall see, this is achieved through a complex imbrication of political, economic and cultural forces. Here, I therefore aim to provide a detailed overview of Bourdieu's core concept, all in an effort to lay the groundwork for the conceptualization of the different forms of domination discussed so far. But his concept is, I also argue, capable of overcoming the problems associated with orthodox Marxist and Foucauldian analyses. Thus, revealing how and why this is the case that will not only help grasp the distinctive features of his approach to domination but also highlight its theoretical sophistication and strength. To begin with, then, let's see what Bourdieu had to say about each of two approaches to ideology discussed above:

> One cannot remain satisfied with the objectivist vision, which leads to physicalism, and for which there is a social world in itself, to be treated as a thing, with the scientist being able to treat the necessarily partial (in both senses) points of the view of the agents as simple illusions. Nor can one be satisfied with the subjectivist or marginalist vision, for which the social world is merely the product of the aggregation of all representations and all wills. (Bourdieu 2000: 188–9)

Although Bourdieu is here using the term "subjectivism" to refer directly to social constructionist approaches, such as ethnomethodology, the claim

is sufficiently broad to apply to Foucault's own. Indeed, despite recognizing the role of non-discursive practices in constituting the neoliberal subject, Foucault treats "truth" as something produced discursively and anchored in an "all-pervasive regime of normalizing discipline" (Cronin 1996: 59). Consequently, no "true" reality can exist outside discourse and it becomes impossible to speak, as orthodox Marxists would want us to, of a way of seeing the world symbolically cultivated by dominant groups. This is a problem for Bourdieu, for it risks overlooking the processes whereby particular interests and values come to be universalized, naturalized and, therefore, legitimated. Instead of formulating a "history of ideas," Foucault is interested in how "ideas … make history" (Callewaert 2006: 92), thereby reducing the authority of neoliberal economic facts to a discursive or impersonal form of domination. His approach, then, tends to distract critique's attention away from the *social conditions* under which ideas come to *be produced*, *legitimated* and ultimately *experienced* as "truths."

But Bourdieu is equally critical of orthodox Marxism, which, he claims, has a tendency to ignore both "the extraordinary inertia which results from the inscription of social structures in bodies" (Bourdieu 2000: 172) and "the collaboration of those who undergo [this inscription] because they help to *construct* it as such" (Bourdieu 2000: 171). For this reason, he prefers to treat the problem of domination as a matter of "misrecognition" instead of "mystification." For, the schemes of perception borne by social agents are so deeply internalized that no differentiation between a false to true consciousness can be realistically anticipated. These "incorporated cognitive structures" are so "attuned to the objective structures" (Bourdieu 2000: 178) that it becomes impossible to speak of a "truth" separate from, or lying behind, these agents' schemes of perception. Schemes of perception are effectively structured by a "fundamental point of view on the world which *creates* its own object and finds in itself the principle of understanding and explanation appropriate to that object" (Bourdieu 2000: 99; emphasis in original). This is what Bourdieu called the "doxa" which, in addition to its structuring property, "ensures that practices and relations of domination … are experienced as self-evident and hence are taken for granted" (Cronin 1996: 66). It explains why economic facts come to be "'misrecognised" as neutral and

inevitable. Neoliberal values and norms of action, having turned into common sense or, to use Durkheims' terminology, a "common spirit," become abstracted from social, cultural and historical conditions of their production. They become "desocialised and de-historicised" (Bourdieu 1998: 95) ideas constitutive of social agents' reality (more on this next). They become agents' own truth; their own reality. According to Bourdieu, then, it is important to ground domination in the social, economic and political structures of power and understand their involvement in the symbolic universalization of particular representations.

But, as briefly indicated earlier, Bourdieu also insisted on the fact that agents do not passively experience domination. In fact, symbolic domination is such that they actively, albeit unreflexively, "construct social reality" (Bourdieu 2000: 174) and are therefore complicit in turning the doxa into their own reality. In his theoretical framework, no false reality comes to conceal a fundamentally true existence. Instead, economic facts and the schemes of perception they embody make themselves "*true* and empirically verifiable" (Bourdieu 1998: 95; emphasis in original), partly as a result of agents' active role in constructing their reality. But although Bourdieu proposes to move beyond mystification, he recognizes a key role for the state in symbolic domination. He summarized it as follows:

> Through the structuring it imposes on practices, the State institutes and inculcates common symbolic forms of thought, social frames of perception, understanding or memory, State forms of classification or, more precisely, practical schemes of perception, appreciation and action. (Bourdieu 2000: 175)

Central to processes whereby the "dominant ideology" (Bourdieu and Boltanski 1976) comes to be apprehended as "common sense" (Bourdieu and Wacquant 2001) is the role the state plays in securing the "doxic submission of the dominated to the objective structures of a social order of which their cognitive structures are the product" (Bourdieu 2000: 177). But to become universalized or naturalized, the schemes of perception aligned with the "doxa" must appear neutral. Such a neutral appearance, Bourdieu explains, "results essentially from the eclectic structure of the groups assembled" in the "neutral places," such as universities, where

these representations are openly discussed (Bourdieu and Boltanski 1976, abstract). In the "neutral" places in question, the various politicians, high-level government officials and scientists contribute to the production of ideas discussed in a "neutral language" arising "naturally from the confrontation of individuals belonging to different groups" who "have an interest in its truth" (Bourdieu and Boltanski 1976, abstract). In virtue of the apparent neutrality conferred by these places and discussions to the dominant ideology, the dominant are said to possess "the means of making" their interests "come true" (Bourdieu and Boltanski 1976, abstract) and to produce a symbolic reality that can "present … itself as self-evident, established, settled once and for all, beyond discussion" (Bourdieu 2000: 174). Only once their neutral character has been symbolically produced in these ways can schemes of perception, such as those embodied in neoliberal economic facts, be naturalized and appear inevitable, even despite their alignment with the interests of the dominant.

The neoliberal doxa, objectivated in schemes of perception produced and imposed by the state, but actively internalized by agents, is therefore both a "product" and "mode of production" (Bourdieu and Boltanski 1976, abstract). As the former, it is outcome of conscious decisions, deliberations and policies devised by and for the socially dominant, in such a way as to naturalize their interests. As the latter, it serves to "orient action aimed at perpetuating [domination]" (Bourdieu and Boltanski 1976: 52).[1] What it produces, more specifically, are normative standards on the basis of which "agents actively produce social reality" from the "positions they occupy in an objective space of constraints and facilitations and with cognitive tools issued from that very space" (Wacquant 2013: 277). For this precise reason, a member of the working class is likely to produce the reality of, say, competitive and self-interested utility maximization, on the basis of given economic, cultural and social resources that could lead him or her to experience it as, for example, a desirable end, but a more constraining one than for a member of another class, equipped with more of these resources.

[1] All quotations extracted for Bourdieu and Boltanski (1976) that include page numbers are my own translations from the French.

Unlike Gramsci in his *Prison Notebooks*, then, Bourdieu, did not limit his analysis of power and domination to an analysis of their relation to macro-political and macro-economic structures. He ventured into the everyday world of agents to reveal how "dominant representations come to be objectivated perpetually in things" including the "habitus of agents" (Bourdieu and Boltanski 1976: 55). Indeed, although one can identify a close affinity between Bourdieu's work and Gramsci's, the former, as Eagleton put it, proposes a "way of rethinking and elaborating the Gramscian concept of hegemony" (Eagleton 1991: 158). The strength of Bourdieu's work, then, lies in its capacity to provide a cogent and sophisticated explanation of the relationship between social, economic, cultural and political forces in domination. But its strength also lies in its capacity to reconcile what had opposed Marxian and Foucauldian analyses of domination. Although equipped with the normative resources requisite for revealing the "biased" (Bourdieu and Boltanski 1976: 52) character of the authority of economic facts, it is also capable of grasping its "truth" and explaining why it is regarded as neutral, inevitable and, therefore, legitimate. Bourdieu can consequently account for the personal and impersonal, true and deceptive, seemingly neutral and inherently biased character of economic facts. Although inscribed in "objective structures," and consequently succeeding to orient actions impersonally, schemes of perception embodied in economic facts are also the product of "*domestic political decisions* that reflect the tipping of the balance of class forces in favour of the owners of capital" (Bourdieu and Wacquant 2001: 4; emphasis in original).

Thus, under such a schema, economic facts are understood as the objectivated manifestations of the symbolic forms embodied in the neoliberal doxa, resulting from the efforts of agents who "had an interest in giving universal form to the particular expression of their interests" (Bourdieu 2014: 175). Through a state which "constitutes the social world according to certain structures" (Bourdieu 2014: 183), the neoliberal doxa turns into a structuring principle of schemes of perception. Take, for example, the doxic submission to fiscal responsibility in public expenses. Under the neoliberal age, this form of fiscal responsibility tends to be regarded as a virtue. In a country like the UK, the reduction of the public debt has in fact been ranking very high among voters' concerns, as

illustrated by their decision to elect an austerity government in 2015. At the very same time, however, UK household debt is reaching new heights (Press Association 2015). One is here, therefore, confronted with a striking paradox. Although keen to reduce the public deficit, UK citizens seem less keen to pursue fiscal responsibility in private. However, unlike governments, households do not have the capacity to print money. One is therefore justified in asking how such a paradox could emerge, given the clearly more dramatic consequences of household debt for individuals. This, I think, can be best explained using Bourdieu's theoretical framework. Public debt, it could be argued, is symbolically at odds with the neoliberal doxa, for it contradicts the idea that efficiency is best optimized by rolling back public expenditures and entrenching markets. Household debt, on the other hand, presents no such contradiction, for by boosting consumption, it also serves as an engine of capital-driven growth aligned with the neoliberal idea of free choice. Under the guise of the neoliberal doxa, then, the respective significance of public and household debt comes to be misrecognized. Although the public debt is, in reality, less problematic than the latter for individuals' daily existence, demands for reducing it are aligned with the economic elites' interests in minimizing state interference in the economy. These elites, then, have been rather successful in turning public debt reduction and credit-based consumption into common-sense notions. In fact, the authority of economic facts "imposes itself in a [such a] powerful manner" (Bourdieu 2014: 173) that "the recognition of its legitimacy" has become a "completely unconscious" act or "unknowing act of knowledge" (Bourdieu 2014: 173).

Crucially, though, what this discussion on symbolic domination has revealed is that, despite appearing to be "detached from recognizable structures of political responsibility and accountability" (Cronin 1996: 55), power and domination remain intrinsically connected to them. The authority of neoliberal economic facts over society can, in the light of Bourdieu's schema, be viewed as a form of *cultural conditioning mediated by the state*, and aligned with the interests of the economically powerful, and involving a complicit submission to the doxa on the part of the dominated. As such, the state plays a key role in subjecting societies to the rule of neoliberal economic facts, but succeeds in doing so by con-

tributing to the production and propagation of a symbolic universe or "common spirit" shot through with the interests and values of the economic elites.

Social, Environmental and Symbolic Domination

Having exposed the true face of neoliberal economic facts and concluded the preceding discussion by indicating the concept of symbolic domination's capacity to grasp their relationship with cultural and economic domination, it is now time to tackle, head on, the intricate imbrication of the different sites of domination under the neoliberal condition. This will be achieved by giving economic rationality centre stage in the proposed conceptualization. For, on the one hand, it is by compelling individuals to become competitive and self-interested utility-maximizers that the authority of economic facts manifests itself. On the other, it is a mode of action that crosses the different sites of domination. Making sense of economic rationality through the prism of symbolic domination will, as I hope to show, help better understand the mutually dependent character of the economy, culture and nature in neoliberal domination.

Before doing so, however, it may be appropriate to provide a more detailed explanation of my understanding of economic rationality. As the basis of decisions that aim to secure the best possible personal outcomes, it constitutes the basis of an inherently self-interested form of action and a "spirit of calculation" (Bourdieu 2005: 6). It is, on the one hand, thought to be value-free, because decisions are here made on the basis of facts rather than values: I choose to pursue a particular course of action not as a result of an *ethical predisposition* but because, given such and such circumstances, it is the most appropriate one to pursue. In this sense, it assumes an *instrumental* form. On the other hand, it is responsible for framing *short-term* orientations. This is explained by the fact that the short-term lends itself more readily to calculation than the long term. It is much easier to plan, calculate and decide under circumstances known by the agent, than on the basis of a speculated future course of action. Furthermore, the more competitive an environment, the more inclined

to guide their actions with economic rationality individuals become. For these reasons it marks a form of conduct appropriate for market relations. Thus, the more entrenched the markets, the more individuals subject their decisions to a seemingly instrumental and short-term spirit of calculation.

What, then, could be further explained about economic rationality's role in domination? Answering this question, I think, requires one to understand the conditions under which it rose to prominence in Western societies. To this end, I turn to Bourdieu's *The Social Structures of the Economy* (2005). His work, I aim to show here, provides some of the requisite conceptual tools for making sense of economic rationality's role in the three sites of domination under discussion and, crucially, conceptualizing their intersection. Central to his frame of analysis is the relationship between social structures of power and schemes of perception, which will help explain how and why economic rationality is shot through with the interests of the dominant, and why social domination is inextricably linked to environmental domination.

Economic rationality is often treated as an a-historical mode of action and even, as neoclassical economists claim, a fundamental feature of our human nature. Bourdieu, however, was not at all convinced by such a view. Instead of treating "basic economic dispositions" as "dependent on a universal nature," he wished to show that they are "dependent on a history that is the very history of the economic cosmos in which these dispositions are required and rewarded" (Bourdieu 2005: 8). According to him, one cannot limit the analysis of the "spirit of calculation" to its treatment as a mere "mode of production" of behaviour or actions. One must also tackle "the economic and cultural conditions in which this aptitude (here elevated into a norm) is acquired" (Bourdieu 2005: 5). Under such a reading, economic rationality is the "product" of historically specific conditions of existence. It must be historicized or grounded in the cultural, social and economic conditions that produced it.

Bourdieu traced the origins of the "spirit of calculation" to the emergence of an "economic field that … authorizes and fosters the calculating vision and the strategic dispositions that go with it" (Bourdieu 2005: 196). To speak of an economic "field" in the Bourdieusian sense of the word, means to speak of actions and forms of behaviour that are

governed by rules specific to an economic "game," namely "individual enrichment" (Bourdieu 2005: 8). Each field, economic or not, in fact develops its own cultural life, by legitimating those values, meanings and symbols likely to orient actions in conformity with the rules of the game, while denigrating those failing to comply with them. Some actors are, however, in a better position to play the game than others, because they are "equipped with adequate dispositions and beliefs … acquired in and through early and protracted experience" of the economic field's "regularities and necessity" (Bourdieu 2005: 8). The "dominant" is, in turn, said to occupy a "position in the structure such that the structure acts on its behalf" and can "define the regularities and sometimes the rules of the game, by imposing the definition of strengths most favourable to their interests" (Bourdieu 2005: 195). Under the neoliberal age, economic rationality becomes a key rule of the game. It imposes itself on society as a dominant mode of action. But Bourdieu wishes to remind us that this is no natural outcome. It is the result of actions, decisions and measures taken by those who have an interest in cultivating it. Consequently, the spirit of calculation it compels individuals to adopt, is here said to embody the interests of the dominant and, consequently, assumes a value-laden character.

According to this line of reasoning, then, the increasing mediation, by economic rationality, of individual agents' relation to themselves and other agents under the neoliberal condition, must not only be understood as the result of the spread of rules specific to the economic game. It also marks the spread of a cultural horizon aligned with the interests of the economically dominant who have, historically, mainly comprised white men. Thus, it is essential to ground economic rationality in economically powerful white men's "early and protracted experience" of the economic field's "regularities and necessity." Once this is achieved, it becomes possible to view this mode of action as one embodying "presuppositions about *how and what to value*" (Davies 2014: 8; emphasis in the original) shaped by the experiences of, and internalized by, individuals who have been successful at playing the economic game of individual enrichment. This is how and why economic rationality itself is shot through with the interests of these economic elites who, in turn, have an interest in culturally cultivating it and universalizing it. This universalization is secured by,

as Davies put it, the elevation of "*market-based principles and techniques of evaluation to the level of state-endorsed norms*" (2014: 6; emphasis in original). Once endorsed by the state, itself an "instrument of a mediated exercise of power" (Bourdieu 2001: 88, note 15), economic rationality turns into a hierarchizing force, celebrating conducts and schemes of perception and, more generally, lifestyles deemed appropriate by socially dominant actors, such as economically successful white men. Thus, once endorsed by the state, economic rationality shapes the "principles of domination that go on to be exercised within even the most private universe" (Bourdieu 2001: 4). It is, in this sense, a means through which dominant social agents can, culturally, maintain and consolidate their economic power over society.

But, as was shown in Chap. 10, economic rationality's reach is not limited to the realm of strictly human relations. It also mediates humanity-nature relations. We have just seen that the economically dominant have an interest in promoting economic rationality. But in doing so they also promote a cultural universe aligned with their own interests and values. The rise of economic rationality in advanced capitalist societies is indissociable from cultural and economic forms of domination. But it, too, is indissociable from environmental domination. This is because the latter is, too, aligned with the interests of the socially dominant. In their empirical study, for example, McRight and Dunlap (2011) observed that, given "conservative white males" came to occupy dominant positions in society through the intensive exploitation of nature, this group tends to exhibit "strong system-justifying attitudes" (McRight and Dunlap 2011: 1171). They have become socially dominant partly as a result of activities that have led to the deterioration of natural resources. They have an interest in defending a social, cultural, economic and environmental state of affairs that has benefitted them. Promoting economic rationality is part of their strategy but, as we saw in Chap. 10, this mode of action also compels individuals to treat nature as an object of manipulation. These elite white men, in turn, effectively have an interest in promoting the "doxic submission" to the domination of nature. Economic rationality's "perpetual objectivation in things" is, at once, a basis for the "ever-more-effective domination of nature," symbolized by, for example, mass farming or deforestation, and "the ever-more-effective domination of man by

man" (Marcuse 2002: 162) assuming the form of economic and cultural domination.

The aim of this chapter was to offer a conceptualization of domination that can successfully recognize both the personal and impersonal manifestations of its neoliberal forms, while revealing the intricately imbricated character of neoliberal domination's different sites of operation. It was achieved by, first, revealing the ideological character of the authority of economic facts, with the aim of grounding them in political and economic structures of power. Turning our attention to Bourdieu's concept of symbolic domination made it possible to ground the seemingly impersonal, neutral and inevitable rule of neoliberal economic facts in the interests of the economic elites mediated by the neoliberal state. But what this discussion also offered was a conceptual frame of reference capable of fully capturing economic rationality's role in neoliberal social and environmental domination. Like the authority of economic facts, this mode of action is often imbued with a value-neutral and inevitable quality. But, once its rise to prominence is accounted for, it becomes indissociable from cultural, economic and environmental domination. In fact, it presupposes "metaphysical assumptions about the nature of individuals" (Davies 2014: 15)—as utility-maximizers—and the biophysical environmental—as object of manipulation in utility-maximization—resulting from the experiences of socially dominant groups. Because these "assumptions" match the very dispositions, beliefs and schemes of perception upon which their economic success rests, they are inclined to cultivate and legitimate them. But the labour of symbolic production they engage contributes to the de-historicization and universalization of their values and interests. Economic rationality is, in this sense, "consistency backed by the cultural confidence of a vaguely-digested universal-exceptional theoretical reason" (Spivak 2009: 2). It is shot through with those values grounded in the identity of elite Western white males that has been class-nationalized and "class-globalized in the economic and military spheres, so that it is no longer western [male] and white" (Spivak 2009: 2).

12

Modernization and the Neoliberal Condition

The task of formulating a critique setting out to reveal the various forms of domination making up the advanced capitalist world bears relevance to a discussion of the neoliberal condition in the light of the process of modernization. Driven by Enlightenment thinking, the modernist project set out to transform humanity's relation to itself and external nature through the labour of reason. Scientific knowledge and its corresponding technological advances were put to work in an attempt to release humanity from the constraints of nature and tradition. To a great extent, then, the modernist project was informed by a concern for individuals' empowerment and set out to facilitate political, economic, cultural, scientific and technological transformations suitable for its realization.

As a project founded on the belief in reason's capacity to equip individuals with the capacity to assert their autonomy, it aimed to free individuals from different forms of tutelage; to enable them to become their own masters. It marked a departure from humanity's apprehension of "nature as the source of marvels and new powers," towards attempts aimed at making the forces of nature "serviceable for man's purposes" (Leiss 1972: 76). Modernization would, in this sense, enrich humanity materially and spiritually. It was a process with a purpose, namely

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progress, whose achievements would be measured or assessed on the basis of its capacity to enhance individuals' autonomy and living standards. Despite the modernist project's equivocal record in the latter regard, which such theorists as first-generation members of the Frankfurt School (Adorno and Horkheimer 1997; Marcuse 2002) and Zygmunt Bauman (1989b) took the care of highlighting, it signalled the advent of a stage of social evolution marked by a historically distinct, albeit at times faltering, inclination towards the release of humanity from the shackles of forces limiting self-mastery. But individuals' empowerment rested on an essential differentiation of modes of action, allowing individuals to hold in check or even subvert developments encroaching upon their autonomy. The emergence of the rule of law and parliamentary democracy, alongside an economic system composed of individuals finally free to sell their labour to an employer of their own choosing could all be seen as progressive achievements of the early modern period. They all contributed to increasing individuals' self-mastery, but emerged as a result of these individuals' capacity to differentiate those actions that could secure *autonomous self-realization* (choosing one's political leader or one's job) from those devoted to *self-adjustment* of many forms, such as the payment of taxes for the administration of their needs by the state, or the act of working as a means for self-subsistence. As such, the modernist project is characterized by an emancipatory spirit resting on the existence of normative resources equipping individuals with the means to distinguish those actions oriented towards self-mastery from those oriented towards self-adjustment.

Additional achievements could be witnessed during the Keynesian era of modernity. During this period, often referred to as the "Golden Age" of capitalist development, the state came to play an increasingly interventionist role in modernization. It invested heavily in infrastructures, education, health, among other domains, while providing ordinary workers with a range of welfare provisions and labour rights. The period broadly aimed at democratizing the progressive achievements of modernization and giving the state a key role in the process. The initial, disorganized, phase of modernization was, in this sense, followed by an organized one, underpinned by a logic of inclusivity and supervised by

the state.[1] However, in Chap. 11, we saw that the neoliberal age was marked by notable attacks on democracy throughout the Western world. This is nevertheless one among a range of developments that have led to the erosion of the emancipatory spirit of modernization in recent years. In this chapter, I explore the broad de-modernizing tendencies unfolding under the neoliberal age, namely the conditions under which individuals the differentiation of modes of action underpinning the modernist project come to be eroded.

The Problem with Self-Adjustment

It is not difficult to see how, under the processes of financialization, flexibilization, personal responsibilization and privatization, several of the achievements of the second phase of modernization have come to be dismantled. As Bone put it:

> The devices by which short-term profit generation has been pursued: offshoring, flexibilization, casualization and cheapening of labour, reduced benefits and pension contributions and the withering of the welfare safety net, together with widespread financial speculation, have conspired to undermine or demolish the fledgling pillars of economic security of the Fordist/Keynesian era. (Bone 2010: 732)

Even despite some notable encroachments on autonomy, largely due to the rather dirigiste character of its political and economic institutions (Bauman 2000; Marcuse 2002), the Keynesian stage of modernity was marked by a range of political, economic, scientific, technological and cultural achievements aligned, although imperfectly so, with the emancipatory spirit of modernization. It gave rise to an age characterized by economic security and stability, mass education and a notable reduction of socio-economic inequalities, among other developments. Following the

[1] The logic of inclusivity in question was nevertheless predominantly economic, for it mainly served to alleviate socio-economic inequalities and not, as the 1960s protests illustrated, identity-based hierarchies.

1960s protests and one of capitalism's most destructive crises in the early 1970s, these achievements came to be called into question. Neoliberal economic and political elites took the opportunity to capitalize on the newly emerging demands for autonomy, creativity and authenticity (Boltanski and Chiapello 2005) and project the causes of the crisis onto the different measures that had facilitated the development of the inclusive phase of modernization. Freedom, as opposed to security and equality, became the order of the day, and the justification for the introduction of measures that would, somewhat ironically given the modernist value of freedom, bear de-modernizing effects on society.

Although implemented in the name of a typically modernist principle, that is, freedom, neoliberal policies have tended to exhibit a striking and somewhat troubling feature. Before revealing it, it is worth reminding ourselves of their main target of attack: bureaucracy. Aimed at facilitating the "discharge of business according to calculable rules and without regard for persons" (Weber 1978a: 975), a bureaucratic apparatus serves to maximize the fair and efficient delivery of services, such as healthcare and welfare provisions. Under the Keynesian era, bureaucracy expanded in order to deliver services aimed at making the economy, knowledge, technology serviceable for humanity's purposes. As the institutional embodiment of a form of rationality subjecting individuals to the "spirit of calculation," however, bureaucracy significantly narrows the scope of social action. Indeed, the more bureaucratized a society becomes, the more constrained by imperatives of efficiency and productivity individuals are. Furthermore, as bureaucracies expand, they, in turn, tend to become unwieldy and inefficient. Having emerged as a means to deliver services efficiently, bureaucracy eventually becomes its own end: it, too, needs to be rendered more efficient. In the process, it loses its very *raison d'être*. It is by highlighting these inefficiencies that the 1980s' neoliberal elites defended the large-scale dismantling of those institutions responsible for the progressive achievements of the inclusive phase of modernization. Shrinking the welfare state, privatizing services, financializing the economy and flexibilizing the markets could, it was argued, restore the freedom lost under the organized stage of capitalist development. However, the move from a bureaucracy-induced efficiency

to one induced by privatization, financialization and flexibilization marked the emergence of tendencies severely eroding the kind of emancipatory spirit that underpinned such progressive achievements as the welfare state.

As was shown previously, the problem with bureaucracy is that it eventually loses sight of the very reason for its existence: devising forms of administrative control serviceable for society's needs. It becomes the very thing to administer: the administering agent turns into the administered object. Under the neoliberal age, however, the state relinquishes this responsibility. Instead, it confers it to the market. The efficient delivery of services is, it is thought, best driven by forces independent of political control. It becomes the responsibility of individual workers, consumers and businesses acting under the competitive pressures of the supply and demand mechanism. This gives rise to a paradox, which reveals the de-modernizing tendencies making-up the neoliberal condition. On the one hand, it entails the removal of constraints marking the organized stage of modernity. On the other, it subjects individuals in advanced capitalist societies to a new range of constraints emanating from the capitalist market, in the form of neoliberal economic facts, such as those discussed in Chap. 11. Despite its numerous constraints, the second phase of modernization was able to protect ordinary citizens from the existentially troubling volatility of market forces, amid a fair redistribution of wealth. Under the neoliberal condition, however, the very conditions that were treated as impediments to progress in the stage preceding it, such as uncertainty, insecurity, precariousness, are imbued with inevitability. Individuals are compelled to become efficient and productive utility-maximizers and accept the pressures exerted by market forces over their life, all in the name of economic performance. They are compelled to prioritize actions oriented to *self-adjustment* or economic survival over those oriented towards *autonomous self-realization*. Herein lies the most pronounced departure of the neoliberal condition from the spirit of modernization: the spirit no longer appears to consist in making particular forces serviceable to humanity. Instead, one witnesses the *generalization* of a mode of action nakedly making humanity serviceable to those forces.

The Transmutation of Values and De-modernization

Neoliberal elites, armed with their army of cultural producers such as journalists and scientists, have devised policies compelling individuals to become efficient and productive utility-maximizers. Economic rationality becomes the value standard *par excellence*, turning economic performance into a basis upon which we choose what to value and not to value. Through the relentless entrenchment of the market in Western societies, it eventually came to assume the dominant yardstick according to which one measures and assesses the "truth, normative rightness, authenticity or beauty of actions" (Habermas 1984: 176–77). Thus, the value of a work of art or piece of academic research is, under the rule of economic rationality, determined by its contribution to the performance of an economic space. If modernization rested, as Weber (1978b) argued, on the differentiation of value spheres (science, morality and art), then the development of economic rationality as the dominant standard of value must have de-modernizing effects. Although this claim may appear to echo Jürgen Habermas' (1984) own, I contend that something more profound than what Habermas observed has been unfolding. Let me start, however, by briefly reviewing the critical theorist's stance.

In order to understand his stance, let me start by briefly reviewing his understanding of modernization. Like Weber, Habermas believed that modernization rested on a process of differentiation. He nevertheless criticized his predecessor for not recognizing a "unity of rationality in the multiplicity of value spheres rationalised according to their inner logics" which "is secured precisely at the formal level of the argumentative redemption of validity claims" (Habermas 1984: 249), or through what he called "communicative reason." Put differently, modernization rests, not so much on the differentiation of value spheres but on the "progressive differentiation of ... reason" (Habermas 1987: 113). The differentiation in question is in his view best understood as one between a sphere of meaning formation guided by "communicative reason" uniting the different value spheres, which he called the "lifeworld," and a sphere of action known as the "system," guided by the interest in "technical control" or "instrumental reason."

Under such a schema, modernization is said to be *interrupted* once it becomes impossible to safeguard the integrity of the lifeworld against its encroachment by actions oriented towards control and manipulation. This interruption is characterized by the following:

> The social potential of science is reduced to the powers of technical control—its potential for enlightened action is no longer considered … Emancipation by means of enlightenment is replaced by instruction in control over objective or objectified processes. Socially effective theory is no longer directed toward the consciousness of human beings who live together and discuss matters with each other, but to the behavior of human beings who manipulate. (Habermas 1974: 254–255)

The problem identified as the "colonization of the lifeworld" by instrumental reason (Habermas 1984) refers to a situation whereby individuals are confronted with a depletion of the various communicative resources upon which meaning formation rests. "Ethical life" is here said to shrink in the face of instrumental reason's expanding scope, thereby making it increasingly difficult for individuals to decide what to value or not to value. Since meaning is formed through intersubjective understanding, and instrumental reason can only be expected to orient action towards manipulation and control, the latter's spread causes an effective loss of meaning. It creates obstacles to modernization, that is, it interrupts the process. Habermas' "colonization of the lifeworld" thesis is, thus, his own way of explaining how the world becomes increasingly disenchanted.

But I want to argue that something rather different is taking place under the neoliberal condition, that leads me to conclude that it is more appropriate to speak of the de-modernizing tendencies than an interruption of modernization. First, the colonization thesis itself was formulated as an attempt to make sense of the effects of the increasing bureaucratization of political and everyday life, caused by the emergence of an interventionist Keynesian state. One is not, here, is in the presence of a critique of the authority of economic facts as presented in the early sections of this chapter. Instead, Habermas focused his attention on the problematic recoupling of lifeworld and system driven by the spread of bureaucratic authority, which provides little or no space for actions oriented towards

mutual understanding. The bureaucratic and bureaucratizing state stifles deliberative decision-making and, in turn, undermines the possibility for meaning formation and the intersubjective legitimation of authority. As impersonal rules and actions oriented towards manipulation and control proliferate, the "progressive differentiation of reason" lying at the core of the modern project comes to be interrupted. Consequently, given the various efforts to de-bureaucratize the state by neoliberal elites, the task of explaining the effects of economic rationality on modernization under the neoliberal condition may require one to update the colonization thesis as Habermas formulated it.

This leads me to a second limitation in his approach. Habermas fails to capture adequately the conditions that have made the rule of instrumental or economic reason possible under the neoliberal age. He conceptualized the problem as one of *encroachment* of a value-free economic rationality on a value-laden communicative rationality. Economic rationality, in other words, does not transform ethical life, but merely stifles it. However, as demonstrated above, economic rationality has, under the neoliberal condition, come to assume the form of a normative yardstick. Its capacity to determine what to value or not to value has entailed something more profound than a mere "colonization." As Davies put it:

> Under "actually existing" neoliberalism, techniques of economic rationalization rarely colonize or invade the political, public and sovereign realms, as the metaphor of "economic imperialism" would have it, without some justification of their own. (Davies 2014: 26)

What Davies is suggesting here is that the spread of economic rationality necessarily presupposes a normative agenda. It presupposes a particular or "correct" conception of human conduct shot through with the interests of the dominant, which the state, as we saw in Chap. 11, is partly responsible for symbolically cultivating. By treating economic rationality as a strictly non-normative mode of action, however, Habermas is unwilling to recognize this normative dimension. The spread of economic rationality, as he sees it, consists of a trade-off between the normative and non-normative, in favour of the latter. He accepts at face value the value-neutrality of economic rationality and is, in turn, unable to appreciate

fully the fact that the neoliberal condition does not so much deplete ethical life as it transforms it. It does not so much stifle meaning formation as it *transmutes* it. But because it does so by turning competitive and self-interested utility-maximization into the substance of ethical life, the latter loses its progressive function. Instead of turning into a force devoted to the emancipation or autonomous self-realization of individuals, it alters ethical life in such a way as to turn the adjustment of actions to the precarizing authority of economic facts into a normative ideal. This is why it is possible to observe, here, a de-modernizing tendency.

The Transmutation of Values Illustrated

Although bold and somewhat controversial, the claim that the neoliberal condition exhibits de-modernizing tendencies in the form I have just described, can be illustrated by a range of contemporary examples. The neoliberalization of higher education is a particularly telling example. Although previously "regarded as crucial to the current and future progress of human ideas, knowledge and innovation," universities are, today, "increasingly subject to narrow measures of performance" and required to "focus on 'real world' issues that might further enhance business and economic profitability" (Bone 2010: 733). The privatization of universities transforms the very meaning of education and, with it, transforms its ethical life. Although previously valued as beacons of critical thought and self-realization, they are now valued by government officials as an instrument for the maximization of their economic space's competitiveness. Students, now forced to accumulate large debts in order to access higher education, expect a return on their costly investment. They expect their degree to serve as a means for the maximization of their individual competitive advantage on an increasingly competitive labour market. Higher education continues to be valued and meaningful, but the criteria of evaluation and meaning attributed to it have changed. In short, economic rationality so changes ethical life that universities are no longer valued as spaces for meaningful self-discovery but as means for coping with neoliberal economic facts.

Nowhere is the relationship between higher education and the neoliberal condition's de-modernizing tendencies better illustrated than by the Japanese government's decision, in 2015, to close down liberal arts and social science courses across Japan. Motivated by the desire to "serve areas that better meet society's needs" (Grove 2015), this decision plainly exposes the degree to which economic rationality is transforming ethical life in Japan. Japanese academic institutions were explicitly told by representatives of the population to abandon their attempt to equip individuals with the tools for meaningful self-discovery and concentrate, instead, on making the country more competitive. Although not an official decision of governments in a country like the UK, the closures of several social sciences and humanities departments throughout the country have been justified in very similar terms: the tendency to favour the economic competitiveness of an institution over knowledge's emancipatory capacity. What could easily be seen as a dystopian work of fiction by a fervent advocate of the modernist project is slowly becoming a reality under the neoliberal condition.

Equally troubling, however, is the popularity enjoyed by government austerity programmes in a country like the UK. In 2015, a government willing to implement a stringent programme of austerity measures hitherto drafted in Britain rose to power. Involving a vast range of cuts to the public services that have historically provided individuals with the safety nets and regulatory controls guaranteeing their economic security, this programme marks a new and profound demolition phase of the Keynesian stage of modernity's progressive achievements. To be sure, no such austerity programme would have gained legitimacy without embodying another truth: that of a country who will do all it can to avoid the fate of "fiscally irresponsible" states such as Greece. This was, to a degree, the "minor privilege that people cl[u]ng to" and "ma[de] them forget all the rest" (Bourdieu 2000: 204). But nowhere in this "twofold truth" (Bourdieu 2000) of austerity measures is ethical life showing its progressive face. Very little is progressive or modern about the choice to endure a more precarious existence. Fiscal responsibility, too, offers very little in the way of progress. Predominantly aimed at damaging control, it is better described as a coping mechanism or preventative measure than an effective release from constraints. In fact, austerity measures symbolize

a resignation from the typically modernist attempt to release humanity from various constraints. Instead they have created new conditions for subjugation, deemed inevitable.

Although the claims made here may appear to share an affinity with the work of postmodernists such as Lyotard (1984), I do not intend to claim that the neoliberal condition is, too, a postmodern condition. The nature and reach of economic rationality may be such that it compels individuals and institutions to adjust to constraints rather than seek emancipation, but it would be unreasonable to think that they provide sufficient evidence for declaring the end of the modernist project. The developments discussed above could, for example, coexist with modernizing tendencies. It was not my intention, either, to establish whether it is possible to speak of a new, "reflexive," process of modernization such as the one identified by Beck and Giddens (1994). I will leave it up to the reader to decide whether the discussion provided in this chapter coincides, or not, with their claims. Instead, the aim was to highlight how tendencies specific to the neoliberalization of society stand in relation to the spirit that has, historically, driven the modernization process.

Additional tendencies have nevertheless surfaced, such as those driven by contemporary social movements. In the late 1990s, the Global Justice Movement (GJM) emerged as a "movement of many movements" (Klein 2001: 81) condemning conditions whereby the "economy becomes the master of society and of all within it" (Gill 2000: 5). A decade or so later, the Occupy Wall Street movement in the USA and *Indignados* movement in Spain emerged as components of a wave of resistance condemning the unjust and immoral character of austerity measures. Although emerging at two distinct periods of neoliberal capitalism's history—the former under conditions of prosperity and the latter following a destructive economic crisis—these two waves of resistance opposed the neoliberal political-economic order by defending a range of values and practices broadly oriented towards the restoration of democratic control. The GJM, for example, exhibited "reformist hopes towards the achievements of 'concrete utopias' " (della Porta 2015: 109) based on "innovative conceptions of social justice and solidarity, of social possibility, of knowledge, emancipation, and freedom" (Gill 2000: 140). Anti-austerity protesters, on the other hand, expressed their concern in the form of a "deep outrage

at the indignity of neoliberalism" (della Porta 2015: 109). These movements have, as will be shown in greater detail in the next part, acted as modernizing forces, condemning the constraints and ethical life marking the neoliberal condition. They have opposed its de-modernizing tendencies with an ethical life thought to be capable of re-empowering individuals.

13

Conclusion of Part II

It has become customary for analysts of the contemporary situation to highlight divisions, hierarchies and differences. These do, without doubt, exist, and hold a prominent place in the analysis provided in this part of the book. But while it would be unreasonable to suggest that the plight facing the groups at the bottom of the socio-economic hierarchy, identity-based hierarchies and nature is identical, it is possible to observe notable intersections. These hierarchies are effectively united, in their difference, by the same logic: the entrenchment of markets giving rise to conducts guided by an economic rationality shot through with the values and interests of the socially dominant. But, as I endeavoured to show, the recognition of this state of affairs is predicated upon an account of the labour of symbolic domination performed by these elites. Only then can the true face of neoliberal domination be identified: as an inherently personal form mediated by neoliberal reforms responsible for upholding an economic, cultural and environmental universe aligned with the values and interests of these elites. In this particular de-fetishizing exercise, competitive and self-interested utility-maximization acts as a symbolically cultivated pretext for adjusting to a world filled with sharp socio-economic and cultural inequalities, as well as environmentally destructive practices.

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However, while, in virtue of the individualist outlook it compels individuals to adopt, economic rationality creates artificial divisions within and between groups and underpins de-modernizing tendencies, its ubiquity in domination under the neoliberal condition marks a new dawn for resistance struggles. It brings about conditions under which economically deprived, culturally disrespected and environmentally concerned groups can unite against a common enemy. To be sure, it would be a mistake to view it as the root of all evils, especially given the continuing role of both conservative values (Duggan 2003) and colonial attitudes (Goldberg 2009) in shaping contemporary hierarchies. Nevertheless, its centrality in diverse forms of domination is such that it could provide a fruitful ground for connecting a broad range of solidarities in a project of emancipation. Indeed, the reality of competitive and self-interested utility-maximization may be more constraining, more precarizing or, generally, more existentially troubling for some groups than for others. After all, individuals confront reality, armed with dispositions marked by the social group they occupy. But as a mode of action harnessed for economic ends, upholding an ethical and cultural life adapted to these ends, estranging humanity ever further from nature and causing the emergence of de-modernizing tendencies, it has, and indeed ought to, become a core target of attack in resistance.

Part III

Resistance

14

Introduction of Part III

The 1960s marked a turning point in the evolution of resistance movements under capitalism. Following years of unprecedented growth rates, the rise of a large middle class and the institutionalization of a compromise between class and capital in the social democratic welfare state, the economy lost its position as privileged site of resistance across a range of advanced capitalist societies. Issues of "recognition," or concerns regarding ways of life rose to prominence. In the 1968 protests in France, for example, demands for autonomy, creativity and authenticity emanating from what Boltanski and Chiapello (2005) called the "artistic" critique held a predominant place. In the American civil rights movements of the 1960s, issues of identity ruled the day. Culture, it seemed, had become the central site of resistance.

According to a range of sociologists and social movement theorists, these developments marked the advent of a new age of resistance. Habermas (1981), for example, observed the emergence of "new social movements," articulated, predominantly, around lifestyle issues. In a similar vein, Giddens (1991) observed the emergence of a new form of politics, guided by post-material issues and captured by his concept of "life politics." This cultural turn in resistance could in fact be said to mark

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a departure from a range of concerns regarding social justice to issues involving how individuals choose or "want to live" (Habermas 1971: 57), namely matters regarding self-realization.

However, the analysis of domination provided in the previous part suggests that it would be unreasonable to expect resistance to be articulated predominantly around culture. Neoliberal domination is such that one ought to recognize the overlaps between the economy, culture and nature in the conceptualization and practice of resistance. This not only means that critique ought "confront … the inherent tension between the quest for individual freedoms and social justice" (Harvey 2005: 43), it also means confronting the tension between resistance against social domination and that against environmental domination. Thus, in this part, I devote a great deal of attention to the "redistribution vs. recognition" debate framed by the work of Axel Honneth and Nancy Fraser (2003) and propose an alternative avenue for framing contemporary struggles. Before doing so, however, I provide an analysis of contemporary social movements and discuss the lessons one can learn from both their anatomy and historical significance. I end the part by developing a conception of the subject of resistance adapted to the neoliberal age. Overall, I aim to provide theoretical foundations for a conceptual unity of the diverse, albeit intricately imbricated, struggles making up the neoliberal age.

15

Making Sense of Contemporary Social Movements

The Global Justice Movement (GJM) and recent global anti-austerity protests correspond to two distinct phases in the history of resistance under the neoliberal condition. Yet, close similarities between them can be observed, not only in terms of concerns and demands expressed by their members but also in terms of their operations. As we shall see, despite emerging more than a decade later, anti-austerity protests could be understood as a continuation of the project of resistance initiated by the GJM. In this chapter, I am to make sense of the concerns and demands expressed by members of contemporary social movements and the challenges they face in resisting domination, in an effort to draw some important implications for the conceptualization of resistance.

The Movements in Context

The protests breaking out at the 1999 World Trade Organization (WTO) summit in Seattle are often identified as the birthplace of the GJM. As the largest intergovernmental trade organization, the WTO became the symbol for a range of free-trade agreements introduced in the 1990s,

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involving both developed and developing countries. The protests took place following years of trade and investment liberalization which, despite its apparent neutrality and fairness, had the effect of exacerbating inequalities of wealth within and between the rich and poor countries. Although presented by political and economic elites as necessary conditions for maximizing the competitiveness of economic spaces, it rapidly became clear that these agreements predominantly served to consolidate the power of dominant economic interests, such as those of Western multinational corporations. The GJM emerged as a response to the increasingly notable gap between what these agreements promised and what they effectively delivered. Their members expressed a "demand for greater justice and equality for all" (Flesher-Fominaya 2014: 53).

Around a decade later, the world woke up to one of the most destructive economic crises since capitalism's inception. The response of several neoliberal governments across the Western world consisted in bailing out the culprits of the crisis and introducing a range of austerity measures depriving ordinary citizens of a range of rights and safety nets. By 2011, that is three to four years after the financial crash, members of advanced capitalist societies were facing "widespread socio-economic insecurity, precarious labour, high unemployment and increasing inequality" (Flesher-Fominaya 2014: 154). The policies introduced in the wake of the crisis had done very little to improve the conditions of existence of ordinary citizens. If anything, the public money invested in bank bailouts contributed to the further precarization of these citizens' life and brought to the fore what would become a key source of indignation for, for example, members of the Spanish *Indignados* and American Occupy Wall Street (OWS) movements, namely the "corruption of representative democracy through the overlapping of economic and political power" (della Porta 2015: 113). The global wave of anti-austerity protests, therefore, came to associate the increasing precarization of life with a "crisis of political responsibility" (della Porta 2015). While the GJM condemned the injustices emanating from the increasing power of non-democratic institutions over society, anti-austerity protesters have strongly emphasized politicians' own contribution to the reigning democratic deficit. Both movements treated neoliberal capitalism as a flawed system. However, while the GJM "referred to a master frame as social justice,

articulated through calls for political reforms," the latter "appealed to a common sentiment like outrage or indignation" (della Porta 2015: 108). Furthermore, by focusing on the "immoral" character of the neoliberal political-economic architecture and exposing the responsibility of politicians for the democratic deficit, anti-austerity protests could be said to mark a more fundamental questioning of the legitimacy of the neoliberal agenda.

The Movements and the Neoliberal Regime of Symbolic Domination

In fact, I wish to contend that both waves of protest correspond to distinct, albeit evolutionary, crisis stages in the history of the neoliberal regime of symbolic domination. The GJM emerged following the proliferation of free-trade agreements, whose effects on different regions of the world severely contrasted with ordinary citizens' expectations. As negative consequences accumulated, such as the erosion of labour and indigenous rights, sharp increases in developing countries' debt and accentuated environmental degradation, the rising power of markets, multinational corporations and institutions like the IMF or the World Bank came to be questioned. Concerns quickly came to be articulated around the transfer of decisions in the hands of organizations beyond the reach of citizens' control. Not only were they being held responsible for a range of negative effects on people's life and the environment, they also failed to "represent the interests and desires of citizens" and empower them with the means to control decisions that directly affect their lives (Flesher-Fominaya 2014: 53). The biased and undemocratic character of these distinctively neoliberal agreements became plain to see and, with it, their natural or self-evident character faded away. The symbolic legitimation of the authority of economic facts was therefore beginning to weaken in the face of a power trade-off between democratic and non-democratic institutions in favour of the latter. A major achievement of the GJM, in fact, consisted in bringing "the [hitherto] undiscussed into discussion, the [hitherto] unformulated into formulation" (Bourdieu 1977: 168).

Anti-austerity protests' distinct achievements in this regard could be said to lie in their capacity to bring additional "undiscussed" elements into "discussion." Although the democratic deficit and destructive effects of economic facts continue to be attacked here, the former is no longer predominantly construed as a problem of transfer of decisions. What della Porta (2015) called a "crisis of political responsibility" refers to the collusion of economic and political elites against the interests of the vast majority of citizens within the advanced capitalist world. As Flesher-Fominaya noted, what is "different now is the way in which protesters are explicitly making visible the overlap between economic and political classes" (2014: 187). Here, the neoliberal political class is exposed as accomplice of the so-called 1%. It not only fails to represent the interests of the "losers" of globalized neoliberal capitalism but also those of what were previously globalization's "winners," namely those sections of the population which had benefitted from high levels of protection, such as public sector employees and retirees. Anti-austerity protests therefore strike of more profound blow to the neoliberal political-economic architecture than the GJM had been able to achieve. It not only exposes the neoliberal political class as an anti-democratic agent of precarization, but also marks a break "in the immediate fit between the subjective structures and the objective structures" (Bourdieu 1977: 168) among those who were once in a position to benefit from neoliberal policies. The socio-demographic composition of the protests is quite revealing in this regard:

> These young people are not those who have traditionally been described as losers: they are rather the well educated and the mobile, who were once described as the "winners" of globalization—but are far from perceiving themselves as such. Together with them, in the same or in different protest events, we found other social groups that have lost most from the neoliberal attacks to social and civil rights: from public employees to retired individuals—those once considered as the most protected social groups and now becoming instead, to larger or smaller extent, precarious themselves in terms of their life conditions, including in terms of losing fundamental rights such as those to health care, housing, education. Similarly, blue-collar workers of the small but also large factories, shut down or at risk of being shut down, have participated in the wave of protest … Therefore, the

> protests brought together coalitions of citizens with different socio-biographic backgrounds, but united by their feeling of having been unjustly treated. (della Porta 2015: 214)

The more "losers" the neoliberal condition engenders, the less capable of legitimating itself symbolically it becomes, for the latter entails a process of naturalization and universalization resting on an apparent operational neutrality. Once this neutrality is called into question, or once the symbolic force of an act, such as bank bailouts followed by heavy doses of austerity, fails to make itself "self-evident" in the eyes of the vast majority, it "loses its character as a natural phenomenon" (Bourdieu 1977: 168). What members of anti-austerity protests struggled to find "self-evident," then, was the combination of state-engineered measures aimed at cushioning the shocks of the crisis in the interests of the few and attacking a range of "fundamental rights" for the many. It is not surprising to see here, then, why the symbolic legitimation of such a state of affairs proved to be very difficult to achieve. After years of neoliberal governance and an overtly biased response to a highly destructive economic crisis, the neoliberal regime of symbolic domination experienced, too, one of its most significant crises.

Imagining a World Beyond Economic Rationality

However, both movements did not limit their opposition to an attack on the neoliberal political and economic elites. Something more fundamental than a democratic deficit construed either as a transfer of power to dominant economic actors or an "immoral" collusion of political and economic elites could be found in the movements. Overall, their attacks were directed against the neoliberal *system* as a whole. In the case of the GJM, for example, activists pursuing what Pleyers called the "way of reason," based their attack of neoliberal capitalism on forms of "technical and abstract knowledge, expertise and popular education" (Pleyers 2010: 109) setting out to "demonstrate the irrationality of organizing globalization on the basis of domination by markets and finance" (Pleyers 2010:

157). With a range of facts at their disposal, they could highlight the gap between the promises of neoliberal policies and what they effectively delivered. They could provide evidence for the severe human and environmental consequences of competition, de-regulation, financialization, privatization and personal responsibilization, facilitated by free-trade agreements. They even tried to show how these different sets of measures had failed to yield the kind of economic growth rates which justified their existence in the first place (Pleyers 2010: 160).

Thus, although this group of activists opposed the neoliberal political-economic order from a range of different standpoints, they were united in their attempt to denaturalize what they viewed as an inherently irrational political-economic order. At the source of this irrationality is the "model of market-oriented behaviour of individuals seeking to maximize personal interest" denounced as "incapable of integrating long-term thinking, taking the common good into account or sufficiently integrating economic, social and ecological limits" (Pleyers 2010: 161). As such, in addition to condemning the democratic deficit resulting from a transfer of power to dominant economic actors, they expressed concerns regarding some more fundamental transformations this transfer has entailed. Sharpening inequalities both within and between countries participating in free-trade agreements, along with an accentuated environmental degradation, are among some of the key consequences activists of the "way of reason" attributed to the rule of an economic rationality run amok. So while the increasing influence of non-democratic institutions over society was a core concern of theirs, their critique included a stringent attack against a system or configuration of actors, institutions, policies geared towards the spread of an economic rationality failing to fulfil its purported promises, namely the improvement of the material life of ordinary citizens.

Similar concerns could be found among activists of the "way of subjectivity" (Pleyers 2010). They, too, articulated their critique of the neoliberal condition around problems emanating from societies' increased exposure to economic rationality. But instead of emphasizing its irrational character, they focused on its dehumanizing tendencies. Preferring symbolic or "prefigurative (rather than instrumental) forms of mobi-

lization" (della Porta 2015: 163), this group of activists opposed "the commodification of culture, pleasure and experience by global corporations" (Pleyers 2010: 35). They did so by binging "their creativity and subjectivity" (Pleyers 2010: 35) to life in diverse mobilizations. Their performances served as outlets for the lived experience of the alternative they wish to see in their day-to-day life, aiming to create a space for the release of "affects, emotions and thought" repressed or negated by "market utilitarianism" (Pleyers 2010: 36). Their prefigurative form of resistance, therefore, predominantly sought to denounce the pernicious effects of the entrenchment of economic rationality on cultural life. As such, their critique embodied a notable concern for the degradation of ways of life under the neoliberal condition, and could be said to complement the critique of social, economic and environmental degradation formulated by activists of the "way of reason."

It is by employing very similar prefigurative methods that protesters in various camps and occupations across the advanced capitalist world voiced their opposition to the neoliberal political-economic regime in 2011. But, as indicated above, they did so in a different context, namely one marked by a global financial crisis. In the case of OWS, for example, one found an "inner core of the movement" which did not merely "want different policies" but also advocated a "different way of life" (Gitlin 2013: 8). They were motivated by both the "Enlightenment impulse which elevated public assembly to a high place" (Gitlin 2013: 19) and Romantic thought, "dedicated to the direct expression of feelings, to the importance of passion" (Calhoun 2013: 35). Their practices even partly aimed to change those taking part in them "individually, in the workplace and socially" (Ruggiero 2012: 16). Drawing their inspiration from the direct forms of democracy introduced by Argentinian workers following the 2001 crisis, the "horizontal assemblies" making up the occupations were designed to be as inclusive as possible by eliminating "hierarchy, bosses, managers, and pay differentials" (Blumenkranz et al. 2011: 10). Overall, they set out to provide a space for the realization of the very thing the authority of economic facts had been denying individuals, namely giving "everyday people a sense that they can do something about their conditions" (Hayduk 2012: 44).

Like the activists of the "way of subjectivity" making up the GJM, anti-austerity protesters' critique of the neoliberal political-economic order could be observed in the kind of alternative operationalized in their performances. The highly inclusive forms of democratic participation, for example, served as a critique of the democratic deficit revealed by neoliberal political elites' response to the financial crisis. This was complemented by a "new discovery of 'the commons' as spaces in which the common goods are to be managed through the participation of all those affected by them" (della Porta 2015: 140). To their condemnation of the democratic deficit, therefore, is added an attack on the privatization of public services. But the occupations also set out to restore forms of solidarity and security lost as a result of different neoliberal policies seeking to entrench the precarizing ethos of competition and personal responsibility. They aimed to achieve this by creating "alternative solidarity economies such as bartering and exchange systems, and support systems for precarious and vulnerable people suffering the effects of the crisis" (Flesher-Fominaya 2014: 184). In short, the protests comprised a range of values and practices directly opposed to those characterizing a life exposed to the rule of economic rationality. Like the activists pursuing the way of subjectivity within the GJM, then, anti-austerity protesters opposed the neoliberal regime of symbolic domination by embodying a symbolically articulated life imagined outside the confines of economic rationality. While acknowledging and condemning the deterioration of economic, social, cultural and environmental life under the authority of neoliberal economic facts, they also wished to emphasize that, to borrow a famous slogan from the GJM, "another world is possible."

Several of the performances and modes of operation within the movements aimed to create a space for the restoration of services, decision-making processes and social relations that had been demolished or significantly undermined by neoliberal policies. While the concern for participatory democracy in the World and European Social Forums of the GJM and the camps and occupations of anti-austerity protests, seem in line with Habermas' call for "erect[ing] a democratic dam against the colonializing encroachment of system imperatives on areas of the

lifeworld" (1992: 444), I wish to contend that something different was taking place. Although these movements' prefigurative forms of mobilization could be viewed as attempts to revive the modernizing impulse, they gave very little room, if any, to actions oriented by economic rationality. They were, instead, experiments for a life devoid of this mode of action and, consequently, could not be conclusively viewed as experiments merely aimed at keeping systemic imperatives out of the lifeworld. In the case of OWS, for example, the various bartering and exchange systems devised by protesters indicated a desire to move beyond an economy dominated by money and power. They therefore provided a space where individuals could gain control of their social setting independently of the motives that predominate under the neoliberal condition. In fact, rather than seeking to revive the modernizing impulse by protecting some aspects of social life against economic rationality, they did so by inventing a life stripped of utility-maximizing practices. For this reason, they could be more appropriately regarded as spaces for the transvaluation of the values upheld by economic rationality, than attempts to halt the depletion of actions oriented towards mutual understanding.[1]

Particularly striking, then, is the prominent place held by the critique of economic rationality in these movements. But both waves of movements comprised protesters who, despite articulating their concerns around the broad lines of attack discussed above, opposed the neoliberal order from different standpoints. So despite being successful, for a time at least, in uniting protesters behind the symbolic articulation of broad issues of injustice, precarization and democratic deficit, they faced the very challenging task of accommodating a diverse range of interpretations of these issues. The GJM and an anti-austerity movement such as OWS were, as Klein (2001) famously put it, "movements of many movements." While some treated injustice as a predominantly socio-economic issue, others would, for example, attack the identity-based hierarchies emanating from the neoliberal political-economic architecture. Others condemned the devastating environmental effects

[1] See Chap. 12 for a discussion of the role played by economic rationality in the transmutation of values.

of neoliberal policies. Consequently, although the presence of a broad range of protesters contributed to the strength of the movements, it also weakened their capacity to draw and unite behind a clear and broadly shared list of demands. This, in turn, undermined their political efficacy. What, then, could we learn from these movements for the conceptualization of contemporary forms of resistance? It is to this question that I shall now turn.

16

Conceptualizing Resistance

I propose to conceptualize resistance by addressing three core issues. First, I provide a more detailed analysis of the relationship between the neoliberal regime of symbolic domination and contemporary social movements, in an effort to gain a greater insight into both the conditions under which such movements erupt and their historical significance. Second, I turn to an analysis of concerns and demands making up the movements and situate them within the "distribution versus recognition" debate framed by Axel Honneth and Nancy Fraser (2003). Finally, I explore avenues for conceptualizing unity in the diversity of issues raised by members of contemporary social movements, in the light of the conceptualization of neoliberal domination offered in Part II.

The "Double Movement" Thesis and Symbolic Domination

In her recent book *Social Movements in Times of Austerity*, Donatella della Porta builds on Karl Polanyi's (2001) work to suggest that anti-austerity protests mark one of the "continuous double movements between the

C. Masquelier, *Critique and Resistance in a Neoliberal Age*,
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free market and the protection of society" (della Porta 2015: 106). But what does framing these protests in terms of "double movement" actually entail? As Polanyi himself put it:

> if market economy was a threat to the human and natural components of the social fabric, as we insisted, what else would one expect than an urge on the part of a great variety of people to press for some sort of protection. (2001: 156)

Under such a reading, a social movement becomes a force aimed at protecting society against the destructive effects of the market economy. Because, as Polanyi (2001) famously claimed, capitalist markets are necessarily "embedded" in particular social relations, their historical emergence presupposes a large-scale reorganization of social life inevitably prompting individuals to protect what is at threat of being destroyed by the transformation in question, and to "counter" it with an alternative set of values and norms. Consequently, anti-austerity protests could be read as a "countermovement" (Polanyi 2001) which sought to protect society against the destruction of "vital social interests" (Polanyi 2001: 151) by neoliberal elites. Under the great neoliberal transformation, the countermovement is mobilized against the "immoral" character of austerity measures and social relations that ensue.

But the "double movement" thesis says little about the conditions that could either facilitate or hinder the emergence of countermovements. For example, it is difficult to find in Polanyi's and della Porta's work, a consideration of those elements that could affect individuals' own perceptions of the "great transformations" and preclude their interpretation as "threats." One is instead forced to assume that "countermovements" emerge naturally, after the effects of (neo)liberal policies themselves have become clearly visible. For Polanyi, their emergence under the liberal stage of capitalist development constituted a "spontaneous reaction" (Polanyi 2001: 156) that not only aimed to protect society against the threat of the market economy but also testified of the "absurd notion of a self-regulating market" (Polanyi 2001: 151). In other words, these movements marked a spontaneous, rational and almost natural and necessary reaction to a planned and artificial re-organization of social life

by laissez-faire advocates. However, in order for this transformation to become a source of indignation, it must first appear illegitimate. Under Polanyi's framework, this illegitimacy seems to emerge naturally. But, while it is reasonable to suggest that all "great transformations" are likely to encounter resistance, I do not think the "double movement" thesis formulated by Polanyi adequately captures the historical significance and distinctiveness of contemporary social movements. Although both the GJM and anti-austerity protests may have erupted spontaneously against what their members saw as illegitimate policies, they are as much the product of a crisis of symbolic legitimation as necessary responses to the "destruction of vital social interests."

Although their position as two evolutionary crisis-stages within the neoliberal regime of symbolic domination has already been briefly accounted for in the previous section, I shall here further elaborate on the reasons for choosing to identify them as such. Above, I chose to locate them within the narrower context of the neoliberal condition. But their historical significance can be better grasped by analysing them in terms of the *longue durée* of capitalism.

The movements Polanyi referred to, that is predominantly labour movements, emerged at a stage of social evolution during which capitalism had not yet become the cultural hegemon (Bauman 1976). Socialism was, at the time, construed as a real and tangible threat to liberal capitalism. Following the institutionalization of the social democratic compromise, the bourgeois lifestyle became accessible to the vast majority of citizens across the Western world. With it, capitalism could finally become a cultural hegemon and socialism began to lose the "power of supervising the next stage of the human search for perfection" (Bauman 1976: 112). Contrary to its predecessor, then, the neoliberal capitalist stage emerged at a time when the bourgeois lifestyle had succeeded in making itself legitimate. "Still," as Hall put it, "the old had to be destroyed before the new could take its place" (2011: 712). The success of the great neoliberal transformation would therefore come to depend on the capacity of elites to mobilize the symbolic resources that could legitimate the destruction of the old.

Thatcher, as pointed out in Chap. 6, understood it very well. She succeeded in objectivating utility-maximization by a 'common sense appeal

to "what we already think"' (Hall and O'Shea 2013: 14). The demands for freedom and autonomy marking the 1960s protests (Boltanski and Chiapello 2005), combined with the crisis of the Keynesian state and a growing rejection of "really existing socialism" among the Left, had laid the groundwork for a common-sense appeal to freedom. All Thatcher had to do was to appeal to the demand for freedom and symbolically articulate her attack on state intervention, or "collectivist" attitudes, around it. Although the institutionalization of neoliberal values and ideas was initially met with "anger, protest, resistance" (Hall 2011: 712), she succeeded in winning three consecutive elections, which gave Thatcher and her army of cultural producers the scope for consolidating the symbolic legitimation of the neoliberal vision. In fact, whereas Thatcher had to appeal to common sense to legitimate the neoliberal vision, by the time New Labour rose to power, the vision itself had become common sense.

Given the success of neoliberal elites in making the neoliberal utopia "empirically true," how could two global social movements attacking, head on, the neoliberal political-economic architecture erupt? If one were to frame them as mere spontaneous reactions to a "great transformation," one runs the risk of ignoring the labour of symbolic domination central to the reproduction of the neoliberal order. It would mean overlooking the range of conditions that could either preclude or facilitate countermovements. Discussing contemporary social movements' relation to the neoliberal regime of symbolic domination will, in fact, help enhance our understanding of these conditions.

Take, first, the case of the GJM. Although made up of diverse movements, it emerged in the form of a united attack against a range of neoliberal measures enforced by non-democratic institutions, while, broadly speaking, demanding "greater justice and equality for all." What the movement, on the whole, condemned, was the neoliberal political-economic architecture's incapacity to safeguard the interests of ordinary citizens by, among other things, transferring the power of decisions in the hands of powerful economic actors such as MNCs. But the sources of indignation found their origins outside the context of advanced capitalist societies. In fact, what significantly contributed to making such injustices clearly visible to the eyes of members of these societies was the members of less neoliberalized societies' own response to the actions of non-democratic

institutions. The Zapatista uprising in Mexico, for example, served to expose the highly destructive effects and inherently biased character of free-trade agreements, which eventually inspired several activists making-up the GJM. The latter movement was, in this sense, characterized by a spontaneous reaction inspired by events unfolding outside the confines of the Western regime of symbolic domination. It was made possible in the context of an increasingly, albeit unevenly, globalized neoliberal order. Thus, it could be argued that these events provided the impetus for the "recognition"[1] of neoliberal reforms' unjust character, or denaturalization of their legitimate, just and broadly beneficial character. While it would be unreasonable to treat the Zapatista uprising as the dominant cause of the GJM, it certainly provided members of advanced capitalist societies with the empirical and symbolic tools required for contesting the "self-evidence" or natural character of free-trade agreements. But this remarkable instance whereby the dominated no longer identified with the interests of the dominant was, a decade later, followed by an even more profound rift in the process of universalization underpinning the regime of symbolic domination.

The anti-austerity protests of 2011 emerged as a spontaneous reaction to what their members saw as the immoral intervention of the state in favour of dominant economic actors, and at the expense of ordinary citizens. This movement contrasted with the GJM in one central respect, bearing particular relevance to the present discussion. Although the wave of anti-austerity protests in the Western world partly drew their inspiration from developments unfolding in less advanced capitalist societies such as Tunisia and Egypt, the "trigger events and the contexts of these [latter] protests were radically different in many ways from those in Europe" and other parts of the Western world (Flesher-Fominaya 2014: 154). I would in fact suggest that, this time around, the trigger of "recognition" was a predominantly Western affair: measures introduced by neoliberal states for members of neoliberal societies. Crucially, then, in these protests the state came to assume "centre stage" (Flesher-Fominaya 2014:

[1] I am here using the terms "recognition" to refer to a state of affairs whereby individuals are liberated from their "misrecognition" of "symbolic effects" (Bourdieu 2000: 69). Thus, "recognition," here, entails a rupture between one's subjective understanding and objective structures. It entails a denaturalization of reality.

186). By attacking the state—rather than non-democratic institutions—for intervening in favour of the "1%" and at the expense of the "99%," protesters were effectively recognizing the role of what Bourdieu called the "holder of the monopoly of legitimate symbolic violence" (2000: 186) in domination. For this reason, the wave of anti-austerity protests across the advanced capitalist world marked a more complete and transparent instance of "recognition" than its predecessor. What this analysis of contemporary social movements in relation to symbolic domination can offer, then, is not only a better understanding of the conditions under which resistance emerges but also the means to identify an important evolution, namely the decreasingly "self-evident" character of the neoliberal capitalist order. It is this evolution, which the idea of historically necessary "spontaneous reactions" to great (neo)liberal transformations cannot fully grasp.

On the Interplay of the Economy and Culture in Resistance

However, as briefly indicated, it is also important to make sense of the implications of the presence of a highly diverse range of concerns within the movements in a conceptualization of resistance adapted to the neoliberal age. Here is, to start with, how the GJM defined itself:

> We are diverse—women and men, adults and youth, indigenous peoples, rural and urban, workers and unemployed, homeless, the elderly, students, migrants, professionals, peoples of every creed, colour and sexual orientation … (World Social Movements cited in della Porta 2015: 48)

Thus, while the movement was broadly unified in its attack of neoliberal capitalism's negative human and environmental consequences, protesters approached demands for justice and equality from multiple standpoints. In fact, similar features could be found in anti-austerity protests. The OWS movement, for example, comprised a broad range of forces with "socialist, anarchist, environmental, civil rights, and radical political ends" (Jones 2012: 31). Such distinct features, as we shall see, bear further

non-negligible implications for the conceptualization of resistance, particularly with regards to the "redistribution versus recognition" debate.

The first notable implication that can be drawn from the anatomy of these movements nevertheless concerns the "new social movement" thesis put forward by a range of analysts following the protests of the 1960s (see, for example, Habermas 1981; Giddens 1994; Touraine 1971, 2000). Despite embodying some relatively important conceptual differences, their analyses share the now notorious claim that material issues, such as demands for economic redistribution expressed by an exploited working class, are no longer central to social movements. They have, instead, been replaced by lifestyle issues articulated around demands for the good life. Thus, according to their diagnosis, culture has taken over the economy as the central site of crisis and resistance. This way of framing social movements, however, is somewhat limited in its capacity to capture the complex articulation of concerns and demands expressed by contemporary social movements. It does indeed fail to recognize the centrality of a range of economic issues addressed by members of the GJM, as evidenced by the above passage. Furthermore, by "targeting neoliberal capitalism," anti-austerity protests "brought attention back to the mobilization of the losers of globalization," for whom "[p]recariousness was certainly a social and cultural condition" (della Porta 2015: 213). But although this marks a return of material issues to the forefront of social movements' agenda, something more complex than a simple return of the economy[2] as the central site of crisis and resistance is here taking place.

One obvious conceptual choice for making sense of the nature of concerns and demands expressed by members of contemporary social movements is Nancy Fraser's own schema, which accommodates both the economy and culture as sites of crisis and struggle. A detailed discussion of her perspective will, as I hope to show, help provide a robust conceptualization of the complex anatomy of these movements. Understood as two "differentiated but interpenetrating modes of social ordering"

[2] The task of establishing whether the "new social movement" thesis has ever been entirely successful in capturing the evolution of social movements in the past 30 year falls outside the scope set out in this chapter. It is nevertheless to note, as Flesher-Fominaya did, that "many of the movements never lost sight of the issues of the material inequalities that accompanied other forms of discrimination, albeit not always obvious as a core ethic" (2014: 2).

(Fraser 2003: 64), cultural and economic demands are treated by Fraser as equally significant and inseparable from each other. Although keen to recognize the fact that cultural demands making up the "struggle for recognition" have been on the rise in the past 30 years or so, she insists that, given "economic inequalities are growing" (Fraser 2003: 2), these cannot be ignored. Her conceptualization of the "struggle for recognition" as dimension of resistance complemented by "struggle for redistribution" is therefore aimed at capturing changes having taken place within the socio-economic and cultural fabric of advanced capitalist societies, and thought to be reflected in concerns and demands of members of contemporary social movements. What, on the one hand, explains the fact that struggles for recognition are on the rise is the increasingly complex cultural character of globalized societies. The latter are now said to be characterized by an "institutionally differentiated" and "ethically pluralistic cultural order" inevitably leading to forms of "cultural contestation" (Fraser 2003: 55–6). What, on the other hand, explains the need to maintain the focus of analysis on material issues is the fact that the "markets constitute the core institutions of a specialized zone of economic relations" that continue to play an important role in ordering society (Fraser 2003: 58). Although the "result" of this configuration means a "partial uncoupling of the economic mechanisms of distribution from the structures of prestige," or between class and status, each of these two modes of social ordering "influences the other" (Fraser 2003: 53). Take the example of race:

> Rooted simultaneously in the economic structure and the status order of capitalist society, racism's injustices include both maldistribution and misrecognition. In the economy, "race" organizes structural divisions between menial and non-menial paid jobs, on the one hand, and between exploitable and "superfluous" labor power, on the other. As a result, the economic structure generates racially specific forms of maldistribution. Racialized immigrants and/or ethnic minorities suffer disproportionately high rates of unemployment and poverty and over representation in low-paying menial work. These distributive injustices can only be remedied by a politics of redistribution. In the status order, meanwhile, Eurocentric patterns of cultural value privilege traits associated with "whiteness," while stigmatizing

> everything coded as "black," "brown," and "yellow," paradigmatic ally—but not only—people of color. As a result, racialized immigrants and/or ethnic minorities are constructed as deficient and inferior others who cannot be full members of society. (Fraser 2003: 22–3)

Under such a "two dimensional" schema, it appears possible to grasp the interplay of economic and cultural factors in different forms of domination, be they articulated around race, class or gender (Fraser 2003: 20–3). While "[n]either dimension … is wholly an indirect effect of the other" (Fraser 2003: 23), she further argues, both "economic disadvantage and cultural disrespect are currently entwined with and support one another" (Fraser 1995: 69). Thus, what Fraser offers, here, is a fruitful starting point with which to frame the distinctive configuration of concerns and demands making up contemporary social movements. However, despite offering a more adequate framework than the one found in the work of the "new social movement" thesis proponents, her perspective suffers from two correlated limitations: one regarding the sociological claims underpinning her approach and the other regarding the set of issues her framework falls short of accommodating.

In the passages devoted to her diagnosis of the contemporary capitalist stage, Fraser tends to understate the extent to which the "marketized zone" has grown. This, as I shall now explain, poses some non-negligible challenges for her claim that "interaction" within the marketized zone "is not directly regulated by patterns of cultural value" (Fraser 2003: 58) and the relationship between culture and the economy she draws from it. Fraser made the aforementioned sociological claim to highlight the fact that despite having become "entwined," each of the modes of social ordering follows its own logic. However, as the market increases its reach over more and more domains of social life, so does economic rationality. Consequently, actions within the social world come to be, as Habermas himself has observed, increasingly governed "by the functional interlacing of strategic imperatives" (Fraser 2003: 58). While it would be unreasonable to speak of a "fully marketized society" in which markets have come to "organize … marriage and sexual relations," "political relations of authority, reciprocity, and obligation," and "symbolic hierarchies of

status and prestige" (Fraser 2003: 52), it is possible to claim, as I did in Part II, that economic rationality has become central to the logic of social ordering under the neoliberal condition. This has several implications for the conceptualization of resistance.

At first glance, my own position may bear striking resemblance to that of an economistic kind, which would tend to reduce claims of recognition to those of redistribution in a society where economic rationality "constitute[s] the sole and all-pervasive mechanism of valuation" (Fraser 2003: 53). This position was dismissed by Fraser as far too simplistic and more suitable for a work of fiction than for an accurate depiction of contemporary social reality. I would nevertheless suggest that, by failing to account for the conditions that led to the spread of economic rationality under the neoliberal condition, her perspective failed to grasp something of central importance in the relationship between the economy and culture, which calls into question the conclusions drawn from her fictional scenario of a fully marketized society. Indeed, what if the spread of economic rationality could be understood as a process marking something different than the mere dominance of economic issues over cultural ones? What if, instead, such a "wholly calculable, measurable world" was, as Davies put it, "only possible on the basis of particular non-calculable, immeasurable values or vocations" (2014: 8)?

Although unwilling to tackle the colonization of the lifeworld head on, Fraser formulated her account of a fully marketized society in the shadow of a Habermasian presupposition regarding the fate of culture in the face of increasingly influential systemic imperatives. Under such a reading, the spread of economic rationality necessarily entails the depletion of cultural resources. But as demonstrated in the previous chapter, this position fails to grasp the transmutation of values involved in process. It fails to understand how developments unfolding under the guise of increasingly entrenched markets are marked by a complex interplay of economic and cultural forces. Instead of viewing the growth of a marketized zone as indicative of a trade-off between economic and cultural resources in favour of the former, the analysis may be better served by recognizing how economic matters such as redistribution come to be intricately imbricated with cultural issues.

In order to clarify my claim, let me turn to an issue predominant among anti-austerity protests, namely precariousness. What defines this condition is, as Standing insisted, not only the fact that those subjected to it have limited economic resources but also lack a "secure identity" (2011: 17). In fact, central to precariousness is the notion of uncertainty, which anti-austerity protesters attributed to the retrenchment of the welfare state. While protesters united their attack against this social malaise around the "feeling that they were being unjustly treated" (della Porta 2015: 214), making conceptual sense of the plight they face also entails understanding how the climate of uncertainty it engenders impedes self-realization. It entails treating it as a cultural and economic issue, *at once*. Such a state of affairs therefore indicates something even more complex than Fraser herself anticipated. Indeed, although Fraser is keen to conceptualize contemporary struggles as "two-dimensional" struggles *for justice*, such a perspective sits somewhat uneasily with the complex imbrication of demands for justice *and* self-realization regarding a condition like precariousness.

How, then, could the relationship between these two sets of normative demands be conceptualized? Given the distinctive character of anti-austerity protesters' demands, I am inclined to view what Fraser considers to be the central goal of contemporary struggles, namely the call for "participating on a par with others in social interaction" (Fraser 2003: 31), as a means rather than end. Indeed, although anti-austerity protesters may have treated the demands for "social rights and cultural inclusivity" (della Porta 2015: 216) as a matter of justice, overcoming precariousness would also entail securing the means for a stable identity, or what Honneth (2003) called "self-realization." But since such a secure identity can be obtained by, for example, restoring a range of welfare provisions or changing institutionalized patterns of cultural value, the type of participatory parity Fraser has in mind could be better conceptualized as a precondition for self-realization. Struggles in the age of austerity, then, seem to provide evidence for Honneth's claim that the "purpose of social equality is to enable the personal identity-formation of all members of society" (Honneth 2003: 177). However, to suggest, as Honneth eventually does, that "the quality of social relations of recognition should represent the central domain of a political ethics or social morality" (Honneth 2003:

177), may be a step too far. I will now explain why this is the case, which will allow me to return to the core issue of the relationship between the economy and culture as intricately imbricated sites of crisis and struggle.

Since the 1960s, it has become fashionable to construe demands around identity-formation in cultural terms. This is, to a certain extent, how Honneth himself broadly approaches them, by claiming that "social relations of recognition" are central to demands for self-realization. But, like Fraser, Honneth tends to over-simplify the picture, although this time the problem consists in understating the centrality of claims for redistribution. What a contemporary phenomenon like precariousness is highlighting, is that it has become entirely possible for protesters to seek the good life by placing a non-negligible emphasis on redistributive claims. To meet a demand like economic security, some forms of redistribution would be required, for it is likely to involve, among other things, the investment of tax-payer money in services aimed at improving material conditions of those at the bottom of the class, gender, race and sexual hierarchies. But it would also equip these same individuals with the means to enjoy a (more) secure identity. Failure to capture this rather complex interplay would, in turn, entail developing a perspective that, as Duggan herself pointed out with regards to Fraser's work, "obscures the intricate imbrications of relations of race, gender, sexuality, and class in the institutions of capitalist modernity" (2003: 83).

The struggle against precariousness, I want to argue, can be viewed as a struggle against economic and cultural conditions engendered by the rule of an economic rationality run amok, following the growth of the marketized zone. Although markets themselves have not yet fully come to "organize marriage and sexual relations," one can nevertheless find a notable tendency "to calculate the long-term chances of … love relationships according [to] their compatibility with the future mobility demands of a career path that can only be planned in the short term" (Hartmann and Honneth 2006: 56). Economic rationality is, in this sense, responsible for exerting acute pressures and constraints on those least equipped with the economic and cultural resources to engage in competitive and self-interested utility-maximization. As such, it acts as the ultimate precarizing force in societies increasingly subjected to the rule of market forces. In fact, having become a dominant mechanism of valuation and

celebrated mode of action, economic rationality turns into a means for economic and cultural selection or, put differently, into a mode of class- and status-based social ordering.[3] The precarization of social life is inextricably tied to the rise to prominence of economic rationality.

This state of affairs is, in anti-austerity protests, being resisted with innovative conceptions of self-realization. These have not only been marked by demands for justice in the form of participatory parity but have also involved demands for respect and dignity wrapped up in issues of redistribution. One finds, here, neither a differentiated or two-dimensional articulation of demands for recognition and redistribution, nor "distributional injustices … understood as the institutional expression of social disrespect" (Honneth 2003: 114). Because anti-austerity protesters' claims cannot be readily differentiated as either cultural or economic, the task of analysing them may be better served by moving beyond the redistribution/recognition framework. Precariousness is at once a lifestyle issue and an economic one, involving a complex articulation of demands for justice and self-realization, whose analysis requires one to understand and account for the way economic matters have come to be regarded as matters bearing cultural significance, or how a lifestyle issue can be construed as a matter of redistribution.

To be sure, it is still possible to offer an analytically differentiated account of the effects of the entrenchment of markets on the social structure by, for example, highlighting the role it plays in the formation of socio-economic and cultural hierarchies, respectively. But it is also essential to recognize the way they are intricately entwined and the way protesters making up a global wave of protests have collectively responded to such conditions. I wish to argue that these responses indicate a tendency to oppose the forms of domination neoliberal capitalism engenders from the standpoint of egalitarian self-realization. Under such a reading, resistance is conceptualized as the expression of demands for the removal of hindrances to self-realization amid the uneven distribution of a range of cultural and economic resources. Issues of redistribution are entwined with issues of recognition but, in the age of precarity, a demand for, say, more stable forms of employment, is as much an economic demand as

[3] See Part II for a more detailed analysis of its role in these forms of social ordering.

it is a cultural one. For those at the bottom of identity-based hierarchies it is, at once, a demand for overcoming the cultural value patterns responsible for the racialization and gendering of the economy, and an issue of distributive justice wrapped up in demands for self-realization. More will be said about this proposed framework of analysis in the next chapter. Now, though, I wish to turn to another limitation of the redistribution/recognition debate framed by Fraser and Honneth.

Nature and the Conceptualization of Resistance

In the second part of this work I endeavoured to show that the neoliberal regime of domination ought to be construed in relational terms, not only by grasping the inextricable link between different forms of social domination but also between the latter and environmental domination. Implicit in this position is the claim that failure to recognize their complex and intricate interpenetration also entails a failure to understand the cultural and economic implications of environmentalist issues or the environmentalist implications of economic and cultural issues. Members of contemporary social movements, however, understood this very well. The GJM, for example, "saw the issues of economic and social justice, human rights, environmental destruction and the erosion of true democracy as inextricably linked" (Flesher-Fominaya 2014: 53). In an anti-austerity protest movement such as OWS, one could also find the typically romantic "concern for nature both in the sense of the environment and in the sense of being true to human nature" (Calhoun 2013: 35). Thus, given the interpenetration of social and environmental domination exposed in Part II, and its recognition by members of contemporary social movements, an adequate conceptualization of resistance requires one to make sense of the relationship between the economy, culture *and* nature. However, by restricting the focus of their analysis on human-to-human relations, Fraser and Honneth have effectively failed to provide the conceptual tools required for achieving it. In what follows, I shall aim to fill the gap left by these theorists and others, such as intersectionality theorists, in their proposed attempts to conceptualize resistance.

Let me start the proposed discussion by reflecting on what I think is the core reason for theorists like Fraser and Honneth to exclude external nature from the scope of their analysis. In their work, issues of redistribution and recognition have, broadly speaking, corresponded to issues regarding two distinct sites of crisis and struggle: the economy and culture, respectively. Under such a reading, the only possible way to speak of environmental problems is as a matter of either redistribution or recognition. This should come as no surprise, given the fact that we have begun to treat our effects on nature as concerns worthy of the name only once it became clear that they could directly affect material reproduction or our lifestyles. But there is a non-negligible problem with addressing environmental problems in these anthropocentric terms, for it tends to subsume their resolution under economic and cultural matters. To be sure, environmental domination is an outcome of particular lifestyles and economic relations. But, under an anthropocentric schema, the resolution of environmental problems is circumscribed by economic and cultural demands. A hierarchy of issues emerges, whereby those concerning humanity-nature relations are subsumed under those regarding human-to-human relations. A phenomenon like climate change could never become a priority, or be recognized as a basis upon which to define and articulate lifestyle and redistributive demands. In fact, the resolution of environmental problems has, more often than not, been impeded by the latter issues. Take the example of the labour movement. While its demands for higher wages and secure employment may create more favourable conditions of existence for workers, they have also contributed to the maintenance of a bourgeois consumer culture, itself responsible for intense forms of resource extraction (Flipo 2004). What framing the terms of the debate strictly in terms of both recognition and redistribution risks of implicitly achieving, then, is a complicit acceptance of those ways of life and economic conditions that sustain environmental domination.

In order to address this conceptual limitation, I propose to treat external nature as a site of crisis and struggle *sui generis*. Although rather counter-intuitive, given nature itself cannot be expected to make its own demands, this proposed conceptualization rests on the presupposition that humanity both recognizes its natural existence and makes demands on behalf of nature. Oppression and emancipation, in turn, come to

be apprehended "not from the standpoint of humanity and nature but from the perspective of humanity-in-nature … and nature-in-humanity" (Moore 2015: 49). By acknowledging its dependence on nature for its own survival, humanity can in turn be expected to treat ecological issues as matters regarding a struggle for *self-preservation*. This would entail opening up the frame of analysis to a standpoint from which a change in humanity-nature relations could be anticipated and even defended for the sake of nature's, and therefore humanity's, self-preservation, while playing a central role in mobilizing resistance. Under this premise's guise, the struggle for self-preservation is not only a struggle against environmental destruction but, crucially, a struggle for humanity's own survival. So to treat external nature as a site of crisis and struggle would effectively mean moving humanity-nature relations away from the margins and towards the centre of the conceptualization of resistance. It would mean re-conceptualizing resistance in such a way as to overcome a hierarchy of concerns likely to sustain environmental domination.

What, then, could be said about external nature's relationship to the other sites of crisis and struggle: the economy and culture? To begin with, I want to stress that the mere fact of treating nature as such a third site does not here entail that it should be construed as a separate one. I would prefer to view it as a site analytically differentiated from the economy and culture, but inextricably linked to them in practice. It is differentiated from the others, in virtue of encapsulating a distinct axis of domination, based on an equally distinct set of relations. However, I maintain that construing these analytically differentiated sites of struggle in terms of different dimensions of a single phenomenon is an entirely helpful approach. They are too intricately imbricated for critique to view them in dimensional terms. An economic demand presupposes both a particular cultural value pattern and a particular relation between humanity and nature. Take the example of the labour movement's own opposition to socio-economic inequality and the concomitant demand for higher wages. Although an immediately apparent demand for "redistribution," it cannot be treated as a purely economic matter. In fact, it presupposes a demand for a particular lifestyle, emulating the consumerist practices of the bourgeoisie, and grounded in race-, gender and sexuality-based identity. The demand for higher wages is therefore as much a cultural issue

as it is an economic one. Furthermore, because it entails the consumerist logic of a productivist regime of accumulation, it also presupposes a particular set of humanity-nature relations based on the intense exploitation of natural resources, or domination. It is, consequently, a demand with direct, significant and dramatic consequences on nature. As such, a demand for change articulated around the economy can bear a direct implication for those articulated around culture and nature. The different sites of crisis and struggle do not, as Fraser (2003) put it, merely influence or penetrate each other, but can, instead, assume a *mutually dependent* and, indeed, *co-constitutive* character.

So, if, on the one hand, this triangular conceptualization of resistance makes it possible to identify possible tensions between different standpoints in the formulation of one or more particular demands, it is also capable of serving as a platform upon which to identify what they have in common. To take their mutual dependence into account means to anticipate an economic demand's possible cultural and environmental implications or an environmental demand's possible economic and cultural implications, and so forth. As such, it can facilitate the articulation of a project of egalitarian self-realization resting on the discursive unity of diverse struggles. It can also perform the timely function of equipping critique with the capacity to overcome what Duggan called the "ruse" (2003: 83) of neoliberalism, namely the apparent split between different forms of politics that are, in actual fact, mutually dependent. The proposed framework is, in this sense, intended to perform a similar function to the one offered by intersectionality theorists. For by aiming to facilitate the triangulation of diverse forms of struggle, it can serve as a platform upon which to generate "counter-hegemonic and transformative knowledge production, activism, pedagogy, and non-oppressive coalitions" (Bilge 2013: 405). But while these theorists insist on, for example, the fact that "the class hierarchies that produce [the] differentiation between the super rich and the rest of us are already shot through with gender and race and sexual hierarchies" (Davis 2013: 436), I would emphasize the need to consider how it is also shot through with a set of humanity-nature relations based on domination. While it is essential to devise a conceptual framework that does not strip "'cultural' critique or identity politics of their capacity to engage and transform political

economy" (Duggan 2003: 83), it is equally important to enable this same critique to "engage and transform" humanity-nature relations. Treating nature as a site of crisis and struggle in its own right, albeit intricately imbricated with culture and the economy, makes this task possible.

Doing so is indeed necessary. It is necessary in virtue of environmental concerns' intricate imbrications with cultural and economic matters, obscured by a neoliberal regime of domination thriving on the discursive disconnection of intrinsically connected political battles (Duggan 2003). But it is also desirable because it can ultimately equip critique with the conceptual means to unite a diverse range of standpoints, concerns and demands in a strategic narrative of resistance postulating egalitarian self-realization as its end. As such, it may be worth recalling the task set out by first-generation Frankfurt School theorists, which they put as follows:

> The relationship between the individual and society is inseparable from their relationship to nature. The constellation of all three takes a dynamic form. It is not enough to be content with insight into their perennial interplay; it is up to social theory to take a scientific approach, with a view to investigating the laws according to which this interplay develops and discovering the changing forms adopted by the individual, society and nature in their historical dynamics. (Institut für Sozialforschung cited in Wehling 2002: 144)

In light of this, and of the analysis of domination offered in Part II, I want to suggest that the current "historical dynamics" are characterized by the central role played by the authority of economic facts and economic rationality in shaping socio-economic, cultural hierarchies, humanity-nature relations and creating historically specific conditions for their intricate overlap. For, they are responsible for producing the core laws of action around which domination is, today, articulated. Although their legitimacy has recently been called into question by, for example, the two global waves of protest discussed in this part, robust challenges to the neoliberal order have, so far, failed to inform lasting social change. For this reason, I end the analysis of resistance offered in this part by drawing the conceptual contours of the agent of resistance.

17

On the Agent of Resistance

In a vein similar to the discussion that has unfolded throughout this part, I now wish to reflect on the lessons that can be drawn from contemporary social movements and the forms of domination unfolding under the neoliberal condition, but this time with regards to the idea of an agent of resistance, or the concrete political form resistance could be expected to assume. An immediately apparent feature of these movements, briefly referred to above, is their highly fragmented and internally differentiated character. In fact, conscious of its highly heterogeneous character, the Global Justice Movement (GJM) sought to celebrate and, indeed, sought to celebrate and, indeed, cultivate its diversity, which it endeavoured to depict as a strength (Pleyers 2010). But by the time of the anti-austerity protests, which comprised several coalitions of individuals with different socio-economic and cultural backgrounds, it became clear that such an inclusiveness could also act as a source of weakness. For example, the multiplicity of voices making-up a movement like Occupy Wall Street (OWS) tended to act as an obstacle to the formulation of clear demands that could accommodate the concerns of all its members. Even their day-to-day operations were affected by this diversity, particularly their attempt to enact "a truly horizontal, participatory democracy grounded in the principles of collective thinking" (Flank 2011: 262).

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Thus, given the heterogeneous and fragmented character of these movements, to what extent is it still possible to speak of an "agent" of resistance? In what follows, I shall demonstrate that despite the reigning postmodern cynicism regarding the prospects of a narrative capable of uniting individuals around a cause shared in common by citizens across the advanced capitalist world, contemporary resistance movements prompt the formulation of a more optimistic diagnosis. The contours of the agent of resistance that can be drawn from the analysis of these movements do nevertheless assume a somewhat different form from the one anticipated by proponents of the "philosophy of the subject." Contemporary conditions are such that its tenets cannot be fully embraced. But it would be equally mistaken to go as far as suggesting that it no longer bears any relevance to the present-day situation. I begin this chapter by reviewing of key turning points in the conceptual evolution of the agent of resistance, in an effort to contextualize my own conceptualization.

An Agent in Conceptual Evolution

Although originating in the work of Hegel, who understood the liberation of the subject as a "process of becoming conscious," the philosophy of the subject was reformulated by Marx as a matter of "praxis," based on the "relationship between the acting subject and manipulable worldly objects" (Habermas 1987: 64). Unwilling to restrict the scope of liberation to the idea of a subject at the centre of knowledge, Marx envisioned the struggle of the subject as belonging to a "process of self-creation" (Habermas 1987: 64), combining knowledge and action. As he famously put it:

> The actual individual man must take the abstract citizen back into himself and, as an individual man in his empirical life, in his individual work and individual relationships become a species-being; man must recognize his own forces as social forces, organize them, and thus no longer separate social forces from himself in the form of political forces. Only when this has been achieved will human emancipation be completed. (Marx 2000f: 64)

With Marx, then, the problem of autonomy became one of emancipation, presupposing a "self-conscious political action by which the associated laborers … appropriate their fetishistically alienated essential powers" (Habermas 1987: 65). Work, or labour, as opposed to Hegel's "concept" turns into the guiding "principle of modernity" (Habermas 1987: 64), and the alienated working class was accorded the status of universal and transcendental agent of social change. The economy is here construed as the central site of crisis and struggle. Social change is grounded in it. The working class is the bearer of not only the interests of an increasingly large and pauperized group of individuals but also of the interests of humanity at large. The emancipation of the working class, in short, would mark the departure from a condition of servitude to a condition of full self-realization, in line with the interests of all of society's members. This conception of the agent of resistance, therefore, presupposes the idea that society can "influence itself" (Habermas 1987: 357), through a radical reorganization of economic life. However, from the 1960s onwards, the philosophy of the subject as conceptualized by Marx came under severe attack.

In the wake of protests led by members of a newly emerging middle class across the advanced capitalist world, the working class appeared to have lost its privileged status as the central agent of social change. Indeed, how could the working class retain its legitimacy as universal agent of change following the emergence of social movements predominantly concerned with post-material issues? As a result, the economy was denied its previously held function as the central site of struggle and crisis. Furthermore, because the movements comprised a range of protesters with diverse social positions, lacking a clear and identifiable enemy (della Porta and Diani 2006), the very notion of a transcendent (or fixed) and constituent agent of history began to lose credibility. The heterogeneous character of the middle class, symptomatic of societies that have become increasingly complex and differentiated, signalled, it appeared, the end of a "self-relating macrosubject," thereby making "inconceivable" the idea of society "having influence upon itself" (Habermas 1987: 357). With it, disappeared the idea that a social movement could "liberate mankind from the curse of *movement dictated from without*" (Habermas 1987:

61; emphasis in original) upon which the philosophy of the subject as a whole, rests.

Having seemingly been discredited by historical events and the emergence of new conditions of existence, the idea that a fixed subject mobilized in the form of a social movement could change the course of history by inducing a change in the totality of social relations had, it seems, to be abandoned. In the work of Habermas, resistance is re-conceptualized as a form of "rational reconstruction" of the world that "subscribes to the program of heightened consciousness, but is directed towards anonymous rule systems and does not refer to totalities" (1987: 300). In *lieu* of a process of self-creation based on a "subject-centred reason," he chose to locate resistance within the confines of a process of mutual understanding mediated by "communicative reason" (Habermas 1984). Individuals are here said to coordinate their plans of action through the labour of a mutual "understanding about something in the world" (Habermas 1987: 296), governed by the "force of the better argument" (Habermas 1987: 130). Under such a schema, the agent is neither fixed, nor given, but linguistically articulated. Rational reconstruction, here, does not aim at the appropriation of externalized powers through the complete overthrow of liberal democratic and capitalist institutions, but at delimiting the limits of their reach. Society, he argued, can only be expected to protect itself against the distortion of particular domains of social life, such as culture, by money and power. While he has not fully abandoned the universalist claims of the philosophy of the subject, this universalism is now re-conceptualized as the *outcome* of a process of linguistically articulated rational reconstruction.

But with the advent of post-structuralism, a further departure away from the philosophy of the subject was accomplished. This time, one witnesses the "death" or "decentring" of the subject, striking the final blows to universalist claims in the conceptualization of resistance. Take, for example, Foucault's approach:

> One has to dispense with the constituent subject, to get rid of the subject itself, that's to say, to arrive at an analysis which can account for the constitution of the subject within a historical framework. And this is what I would call genealogy, that is, a form of history which can account for the

> constitution of knowledges, discourses, domains of object etc., without having to make reference to a subject which is either transcendental in relation to the field of events or runs in its empty sameness throughout the course of history. (Foucault 2007: 202)

Under such a historicist schema, resistance is hyper-contextualized. The very idea of "social movement" is substituted by localized strategies of self-empowerment taking the form of a "concern for the self" (Foucault 1997) capable of transgressing dominant discourses. The anticipation of a consensus on the "understanding about something in the world" is also abandoned, as fellow postmodern thinker Lyotard (1984) himself insisted we should, by celebrating "paralogy"[1] amid the apparent decline of master narratives. Instead, then, resistance involves setting up one's own standard of justice, beauty, and so forth, in an attempt to resist normalization or, as he later put it, "governmentality" (Foucault 2008).

What this rather brief overview of key turning points in the conceptualization of the agent of resistance has shown is that it has become increasingly difficult for critical theorists to accept the idea that a social movement could, or indeed should, be expected to change social relations in their totality. Driving this evolution is the belief that it is no longer possible to anticipate a society capable of influencing itself. Thus, one finds a conceptual evolution beginning with a transcendental and universal subject making history, to a diffuse and localized agent, produced by historically contingent circumstances. However, unwilling to accept the reigning pessimism regarding the prospects of large-scale social change, while recognizing the material and cultural changes brought about by globalized neoliberal capitalism, post-Marxists Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri (2000) sought to reassess both the nature of, and conditions for, resistance.

In order to do so, they took as their starting point the transformation of capitalism into a global regime of domination they called "empire" (Hardt and Negri 2000). Characterized by the "[d]eterritorialization of the previous structures of exploitation and control" (Hardt and Negri

[1] The term was used by Lyotard to denote a transgression or opposition to an established way of thinking.

2000: 52) and the "informatization of production," the capitalist regime of accumulation has come to rely increasingly on immaterial labour and, in particular, on the "productivity of the corporeal" and the "somatic" (Hardt and Negri 2000: 30). In turn, they proposed to re-conceptualize resistance through a reconciliation of Marx's own philosophy of the subject and Foucault's critique of biopolitics. They not only saw in Foucault, what one would conventionally attribute to Marx, namely a tangible propensity to treat resistance in terms of a "continuous constituent project to create and re-create ourselves and our world" (Hardt and Negri 2000: 92). They also found, in the forms of immaterial labour performed by the global proletariat, a striking potential for cooperation "through linguistic, communicational, and affective networks" (Hardt and Negri 2000: 294). Here the body not only turns into a force animating production, it is also a central locus for political action (Hardt and Negri 2000: 30). But precisely because the body is central to the production of the subjectivity of the "multitude," it is no longer said to emanate from a subject-centred or communicative reason. The subject is here said to be "de-centred" to the extent that its subjectivity is animated, and indeed produced, by the contingencies of an undisciplinable corporeal experience rather than merely through the labour of a rationally unfolding consciousness. But, in a simultaneously Marxian and Habermasian vein, they argue that it remains capable of appealing to a universal liberation through linguistic and communicational practices. Hardt and Negri's agent is therefore at once de-centred, linguistically articulated and universal in scope.

Although successful in recognizing the value of reconciling the universal and particular character of the subjectivity of resistance, as well as the possibility for "strong transnational diffusion processes" (Flesher-Fominaya 2014: 183), in an age marked by global waves of protest comprising a highly diverse range of movements, it offers very little in the way of understanding how the relation between the subjectivity of the multitude and the intricately imbricated struggles discussed above could be conceptualized. In fact, despite claiming that the factory can longer be seen as the central site of crisis and struggle, resistance continues to be, problematically in my view, articulated predominantly around the workplace and, more broadly, the economy. Hardt and Negri may insist

on a "political demand … that links right and labor," but ultimately view this right as a "reward" for "the worker who creates capital" (2000: 400). They therefore present a conception of right principally read through the prism of production. Resistance is, in the last instance, reduced to an economic matter. What conception of political agency, then, could be expected to capture both the set of economic, cultural and environmental conditions brought about by globalized neoliberal capitalism, and the intricate imbrication of struggles these conditions have given rise to?

The Subject as "Collective Will"

I would like to start answering the above question by turning the reader's attention to the conceptual framework proposed in the preceding chapter. There, I emphasized the need to conceptualize different forms of contemporary struggles as mutually dependent and co-constitutive. A first implication that can be drawn from this with regards to political agency is that no oppressed group can claim to embody the purest vision of domination or the interests of humanity at large (Collins 2000). For this reason, the Marxian form of universalism must be abandoned. This should not, however, mean rejecting the possibility for universalism in favour of a radical relativism that would limit the scope of resistance to individualized and hyper-localized struggles. It simply means that universalism must be reconfigured as one emanating from the recognition of the inherent, albeit intricate, intersection of struggles articulated around each of the three sites of resistance. By drawing on a politically infused concept of intersectionality, then, it becomes possible to anticipate a form of political agency capable of giving unity to the diverse struggles making up complex and differentiated societies.

However, given the success of the neoliberal regime of symbolic domination and the "ruse" with which neoliberal capitalism succeeds in discursively individualizing the project of resistance, the prospects for identifying this unity rest on actors' capacity to interrupt the naturalization of economic rationality. The latter individualizes action. It symbolically fragments the social fabric. As such, it constitutes an obstacle to the project of identifying the convergence of struggles, which effectively

depends on an altogether different action-orientation.[2] Contesting economic rationality's self-evidence will surely depend on, as Bourdieu insisted, grounding it in the "economic and social conditions" (1998: 94) that made its rise to prominence possible. It means accepting that it is a "narrow view of rationality" (Bourdieu 1998: 94) shot through with the values and interests of the socially dominant, and that other, non-individualizing, modes of acting and interacting are possible and, indeed, desirable. The task, therefore, crucially entails thinking the "social" as condition and feature of action. This is, in a sense, what seeking unity in the diversity of struggles broadly entails.

I do not wish to claim, however, that what I am proposing here is entirely new. Alain Touraine, for example, anticipated a new form of modernization led by social movements and resting on the reconciliation of the "unity of society and a diversity of personalities and cultures" (2000: 14). He, therefore, anticipated unity in diversity. His stance nevertheless differs from mine in two central respects. First, Touraine claims that contemporary struggles have come to be articulated around culture. But as I showed above, this does not adequately capture the complex articulation of concerns and demands found in contemporary social movements. Second, and equally important, is his claim that advanced capitalist societies have reached what he called a "post-social phase" (Touraine 2007: 187), characterized by the "disappearance of the social roles, norms and values that were once used to construct the lifeworld" (Touraine 2000: 39). The fragmentation or dissolution of the social fabric is therefore treated as a given fact of contemporary existence. In turn, he is forced to demand a "*reconstitution* or recombination of elements which had been separated" (Touraine 2007: 185; emphasis in original), which implies a failure on Touraine's part to recognize the pre-existing imbrication of struggles and predominantly symbolic character of social fragmentation. This is why he is consequently forced to claim that resistance is first and foremost "a revolt against the negation of the actor's subjectivity and self-respect" (Touraine 2007: 154), namely an individual act. Thus, although critical of neoliberal policies and ideas (Touraine 2001), Touraine appears to have fallen victim of neoliberalism's "ruse." The neoliberal condition

[2] In Part IV, I discuss this action-orientation in detail.

thrives on the idea that "there is no such thing as society" and the corresponding symbolic legitimation of self-realization as a matter of personal responsibility. The task of recognizing the pre-existing imbrication of diverse struggles not only entails revealing how an individual's pre-existing attempt to realize the self is inherently connected to that of others but is also a necessary step in the deconstruction of the neoliberal regime of symbolic domination, the necessity of which Touraine fails to anticipate. Thinking the social, as I propose to do here, then, does not so much mean "reconstituting" something torn apart as a result of a range of economic, technological, political and cultural transformations, but seeing the social, the networks of interdependence, connections as both condition and feature of domination and resistance.

As an alternative to his vision of a "personal subject" that reconciles "difference and similarity" into "something that is neither general nor particular" (Touraine 2000: 153), I propose the vision of a "collective will," inspired by Gramsci's (1971) concept of the "modern prince." In Gramsci's own words:

> The modern prince, the myth-prince, cannot be a real person, a concrete individual. It can only be an organism, a complex element of society in which a collective will, which has already been recognised and has to some extent asserted itself in action, begins to take concrete form. (Gramsci 1971: 129)

Social movements could, under such a reading, be regarded as expressions of a collective will, taking a concrete political form. But if individuals come together it is because they are motivated by the belief that they share something in common. Unity in diversity could, in this sense, be construed as both a precondition and product of this will. It is a *precondition* to the extent that the collective will emerges from a pre-existing, albeit not-yet discursively articulated, overlap of struggles. It is a *product* inasmuch as it takes concrete form through the actions of members of contemporary social movements coordinating their plans of action in social forums, camps or occupations. So as the concrete form of the collective will, social movements could be viewed as the locus in which individuals recognize themselves in others by means of a discursive affirmation

of the intricate imbrication and convergence of their struggles. In other words, they are "a political party as well as an educational form and a cultural movement" (Gill 2000: 140). But they achieve this affirmation, *not in spite* of their members' differences, as Touraine himself suggested, *but because* of the struggles' mutual dependence. So, unlike Touraine, I do not think it is useful or adequate to speak of social movements reconnecting what had previously been separated through the *reconciliation* of different "personal meta-narratives" (Touraine 2007: 112). The matter is, in my view, better understood in terms of a rational and discursive *reconstruction* of pre-existing connections.

It is nevertheless important not to confuse the idea of a unity I am proposing here with what Laclau and Mouffe would view and dismiss as an "underlying essence" (1985: 65). Although I wish to insist on the idea that an overlap of struggles pre-date the collective will, I do not intend to claim that it constitutes a single essence waiting to be given concrete political form. It is one thing to argue that the cause of feminist, anti-racist, labour and environmentalist movements intricately overlap, and another to claim that their political unity has a fixed and indispensable quality. The unity in diversity in question could, in fact, assume different forms, depending on the "mobilising myths" (Gill 2000: 140) and issues around which individuals choose to articulate their unity. The myths and issues around which the GJM was articulated differed from those defining anti-austerity protests, even despite some non-negligible similarities.[3] So like Laclau and Mouffe, I anticipate the emergence of a "*plurality of subjects*" (1985: 181; emphasis in original), where each subject is said to emerge out of specific socio-historical conditions, after having achieved a symbolic "equivalence" of diverse struggles. But unlike them, I see this equivalence or unity as dependent upon an underlying imbrication of struggles, which the "equivalential articulation" (Laclau and Mouffe 1985: 182) serves to give concrete political form to.

This nuance is not as negligible as it first appears, for it brings us back to the issue raised with respects to Touraine's stance. In Laclau and Mouffe's frame of analysis, the revised Gramscian concept of hegemony they offer, aims to denote the increasing need for a harmonization of struggles in

[3] See Chap. 15 for a more detailed analysis of their similarities and differences.

the face of an "extension of social conflictuality to a wide range of areas" (1985: 1). The pluralization of struggles is therefore understood as a source of conflictuality, but nowhere is the latter analysed in ideological terms. They, in turn, tend to ignore, or at least under-estimate, the role of the neoliberal ideology in cultivating the potential for conflict emanating from the multiplication of struggles in complex and differentiated societies. For example, they fall short of grasping the fact that, despite neoliberal elites' "overt rhetoric of separation between economic policy on the one hand and cultural life on the other" (Duggan 2003: xiv), the struggles emanating from the economy and culture share a much more fundamental affinity than Laclau and Mouffe are ready to accept. It is fundamental to the extent that neoliberal elites have "never separated these domains in practice" (Duggan 2003: xiv) and are therefore responsible, at least partly, for creating conditions that make unity in the diversity of struggles possible.

So far, then, I proposed to conceptualize the agent of resistance as the work of a collective will resting on the discursive articulation of struggles. The collective will, in other words, gives political form to intersecting struggles, subjected to a divisive regime of symbolic domination. The form this emerging political agent assumes depends on the conditions that triggered the mobilization of citizens in social movements, such as free-trade agreements and austerity measures. For, these conditions determine the myths and issues around which the convergence of struggles is discursively articulated. Thus, the subject in question is neither embodied in a class, nor in any specific social group but, rather, emerges in response to conditions of existence shared, recognized and condemned by a diverse range of social actors. In contemporary social movements, these actors have mobilized around issues such as the democratic deficit and precarity, while being more or less united in condemning the deterioration of life by the spread of an economic rationality induced by the increasing exposure of societies to the authority of economic facts.

Finally, although a collective will becomes a political agent as such once it is capable of shaping the political agenda, it can be expected to do so in various ways. It could, for example, become institutionalized into a political party, in the same way as Podemos in Spain, following the anti-austerity *Indignados* movement. But it could also shape

the political agenda without seeking to seize power (Holloway 2002). A movement like OWS, for example, was highly successful in bringing the issue of socio-economic inequality back into public discourse and onto the political agenda (Chomsky 2012). It did so by resisting institutionalization and the formulation of a clearly defined set of demands. I would in fact argue that a social movement turned into a collective will has the capacity to make a difference by shaping the symbolic terrain. As discursively articulated coalitions of struggles condemning the systemic flaws of the neoliberal political-economic order, they are particularly well-positioned to make a contribution, however short-lived, to the denaturalization of that order. Both the GJM and anti-austerity protests played a key role in questioning the self-evidence of the authority of economic facts, either in relation to free-trade agreements or austerity measures. They did, however, face significant challenges in their attempt to actualize the unity in the diversity of struggles they comprised. With these remarks in mind, I wish to contend that a collective will can make history or make a contribution to social change by weakening the symbolic regime of domination upon which the existing order relies for its reproduction. But its success in doing so, that is, its success in undermining the self-evidence of the *status quo*, rests on the mobilization of a broad range of struggles successful in, first, recognizing their *de facto* intersections and, second, discursively articulating them. Only by giving concrete political form to the intersections of the economy, culture and nature in resistance can the agent in question be expected to gather the symbolic strength required for a credible and sustained opposition to the neoliberal order. I end this chapter by reflecting on the implications of treating nature as a site of resistance for the conception of the agent discussed so far.

Leaving Anthropocentrism Behind, but Not Emancipation

Given the role attributed to external nature in my proposed conceptualization of resistance and the claim that an agent can be expected to "make" history, it is important that I clarify the way I anticipate the former to

be part of the latter. After all, is it not unreasonable to expect nature to "make" history? This, I want to argue, depends on the ontological stance adopted in the analysis. If nature is treated as ontologically distinct from humanity, then, it cannot be included in the vision of the subject formulated here. Only humans, understood as ontologically distinct from nature, can make history. However, once the natural character of human existence is recognized, as Marx (2000b) and first-generation Frankfurt School thinkers (Adorno and Horkheimer 1997; Marcuse 2002) did, one can begin to understand how a human action is, at once, an action *on* and *of* nature. Nature, here, is said to make history through the actions of humans.

But I think something more is required in order to understand how nature can be conceptualized as integral to the agent in question. The mere act of recognizing that humanity's natural existence may not sufficiently capture the extent to which the biophysical environment itself makes history. In Chap. 16, I suggested that success in overcoming environmental domination depends on the recognition of humanity's own dependence on nature. I want to argue here that this particular framing of nature as site of resistance entails attributing agency to the biophysical environment in the same way as actor-network theorists such as Latour (2005) proposed to do. In his work, nature makes history insofar as it "does modify a state of affairs by making a difference" (Latour 2005: 71). In fact, without nature, no human history would be possible. It follows that changing the way humanity relates to nature, not only alters the way the former makes history and relates to itself. It also entails changing the conditions under which nature itself makes history. The conception of the agent of resistance proposed here, then, is one based on the treatment of humanity and nature as indivisible agents of history. Neither a stage marked by humanity's servitude to the forces of nature (pre-capitalist), nor one reversing this relationship (capitalism), can be expected to meet the demands of this approach. One may indeed follow Hans Jonas (1984) in proposing to abandon the anthropocentric relationship with nature in the agent of resistance. But in addition to "recognizing [nature's] intrinsic limitedness and vulnerability in the face of human goals" (O'Mahony 2015: 312), humanity must, too, acknowledge its dependence on nature and nature's own role in making history. Thus, the

collective will I propose to conceptualize here presupposes the recognition of *de facto* networks of dependence between individuals, but also entails humanity's recognition of its dependence on nature.

In sum, then, at the core of this conception of the agent developed in this chapter is the collective will, understood as a discursively articulated unity of diverse struggles and capable of making a difference to the political agenda. To become an agent of change, it was argued, the collective will must, today, emerge from the convergence of struggles emanating from diverse sites of resistance, including nature. It must assume a non-anthropocentric form, or one whereby humanity recognizes nature's limits and understands them as its own. There is nevertheless one final feature of this subject I wish to address, namely the broad form of liberation this subject could be expected to demand.

In the context of a "crisis of legitimation" Habermas (1987, 1988) signalled the demise of a general demand for control, or for the "liberation of mankind from the curse of movement dictated from without." Social movements, he argued, could no longer be expected to demand that society influence itself, in the emancipatory terms anticipated by Marx. He put the matter as follows:

> For a society to influence itself in this sense it must have, on the one hand, a reflexive center, where it builds up a knowledge of itself in a process of self-understanding, and, on the other hand, an executive system that, as a part, can act for the whole and influence the whole. (Habermas 1987: 357)

But, at the time Habermas wrote his work, these conditions were becoming highly unlikely, for

> too great a demand was placed upon the medium of power in expecting it to call forth new forms of life. Once the state has been differentiated out as one among many media-steered functional systems, it should no longer be regarded as the central steering authority in which society brings together its capabilities for organizing itself. (Habermas 1987: 362)

The emergence of the "social-welfare-state" (Habermas 1987: 362) led to a notable depletion of the communicative resources that underpin

the "process of self-understanding." The growth of the administrative apparatus and concomitant spread of systemic imperatives meant that the state could no longer be relied upon for opening up the "space for individual self-realization and spontaneity" (Habermas 1987: 362). With it vanished the possibility for the state to "act for the whole and influence the whole." With it, we are also told, vanished the prospects for emancipation as the "appropriation of externalized powers." As a result, Habermas further argued, social movements would substitute demands for the appropriation of externalized power with demands for the protection of personality, culture and society against the distorting effects of systemic imperatives. However, with the advent of neoliberal capitalism, one witnesses a different configuration from the one analysed by Habermas. Under the authority of economic facts, protesters have come to demand more, rather than less, state intervention (della Porta 2015). They have done so by not only attacking the increasing power of non-democratic actors, as exemplified by the GJM but also by condemning the attack on fundamental rights, as illustrated by anti-austerity protests. What these seem to suggest, then, is that the state resumes centre stage among demands expressed by members of contemporary social movements and that, as a consequence, the demand for an appropriation of externalized powers has made its return. In societies increasingly subjected to the partly de-modernizing rule of economic facts, one witnesses a rather modernist, albeit non-Habermasian, form of resistance to domination in the demand for the restoration of control over seemingly external and remote forces. The age of precarity could, in this sense, be said to create conditions favourable for the emergence of an agent of resistance that has not fully abandoned the demand for "liberation of mankind from the curse of movement dictated from without."

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Conclusion of Part III

In this part, I endeavoured to show the different lessons that can be learned from the analysis of two of the most notable waves of resistance that have emerged under the neoliberal condition. I have done so by pursuing three lines of argumentation. First, it was shown that despite notable differences between the GJM and anti-austerity protests and the heterogeneity of concerns making up each of these two waves, both were united in their attack of the democratic deficit and conditions of existence governed by an economic rationality run amok. Second, I proposed to analyse the position of these movements vis-à-vis the neoliberal regime of symbolic domination. I argued that each could be viewed as two distinct crises within the regime in question. In turn, it was possible to identify a gradual weakening of neoliberal symbolic domination, with anti-austerity protests marking a more profound crisis of legitimacy within the neoliberal order. It was also possible to provide a more comprehensive account of the conditions under which resistance emerges.

The analysis of these movements provided a basis upon which to build my conceptualization of resistance. Although united in their attack of the neoliberal political-economic order, these movements faced numerous challenges in their attempt to unite the diverse struggles comprised

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in them. This is explained, at least partly, by the continuing strength of the neoliberal regime of domination which, although clearly weakening, remains a divisive force in society. Once the *de facto* intricate imbrication of diverse forms of domination engendered by the neoliberal condition is taken into account, however, it becomes possible to begin anticipating a conceptual unity in the diversity of struggles making-up contemporary resistance movements. Third, then, I endeavoured to show how, despite their difference, these struggles are mutually dependent and co-constitutive and, therefore, opened up the scope for their conceptual convergence. This led me to treat nature as a site of crisis and resistance *sui generis* but inextricably tied to the economy and culture. But it also led me to move beyond the "redistribution versus recognition" debate framed by Fraser and Honneth (2003) who, despite their efforts to develop a conceptualization of resistance adapted to the conditions of our age, fell short of capturing adequately the complex imbrication of struggles.

Finally, I turned my attention to the agent of resistance. It was argued that, despite welcomed attempts to depart from strictly universalist or particularist claims (Laclau and Mouffe 1985; Hardt and Negri 2000; Touraine 2007), these, too, tend to overlook the inherent overlap of contemporary forms of domination. With such an overlap holding centre stage, I proposed to frame the unity in the diversity of struggles with a non-anthropocentric conception of the agent of resistance. This entailed equipping critique with the means to grasp nature's liberation from domination as humanity's own. Thus, to speak of a "collective will" in the way I proposed to do here, means anticipating a political agent emerging out of a rationally reconstructed convergence of struggles emanating from three key sites, that is the economy, culture and nature. As such it presupposes the formation of a collective "we," which under the precarizing and symbolically divisive authority of economic facts and economic rationality, requires the politically mobilized individuals to engage in a sustained and coordinated labour of symbolic production. The next part is devoted to exploring the form this labour could be expected to assume.

Part IV

Emancipation

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Introduction of Part IV

Since the rise to prominence of identity politics in the 1960s and 1970s and the cultural turn taken by social theorizing, which culminated in postmodern narratives, it has become somewhat unfashionable to speak of emancipation. Emancipatory politics has come to be construed as a "thing" of the past, a political project tied with, and confined to, social conditions marking a bygone era. In the work of Lyotard (1984), for example, the contemporary "incredulity towards meta-narratives" is thought to mark the demise of collective forms of political action uniting individuals behind a shared emancipatory project. Societies have, we are told, become far too complex and pluralized to be able to speak of a political project capable of uniting the differentiated mass of individuals subjected to disenfranchizement, precarization or exploitation. But postmodern thinkers are not alone in highlighting changes in the nature of political action. For example, for a late modernity theorist like Giddens (1991), contemporary forms of political action have come to assume two distinct characteristics: an articulation around post-material issues, which proponents of the new social movements thesis have also emphasized, and the individualization of political action. Political action, in the form of "life politics," is mainly confined to the sphere of culture and has

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turned into a matter of individual responsibility. For Giddens, then, the advent of "late modernity" marked the demise of emancipatory politics in the face of issues thought to be too biographical and diverse to call for, or require, collective forms of action.

In this chapter, however, I endeavour to show that the conditions of existence and forms of resistance emerging under the neoliberal condition have not, as is often claimed in mainstream sociological literature, marked the full demise of emancipatory politics. Instead, these conditions prompt a reconceptualization of emancipation and emancipatory politics. This, I argue, must be undertaken by taking into account the role of the neoliberal regime of symbolic domination in maintaining the *status quo*. Indeed, since under this mode of domination the reproduction of the established order is achieved through a sustained labour of symbolic production, emancipatory political action itself must, too, be in a position to engage in this labour. For this reason, in this chapter, I aim to draw the contours of a *narrative* of emancipation. This task is executed by drawing on Paul Ricoeur's (1984, 1985, 1988) concept of "narrative identity." I begin my line of argumentation with a detailed justification for viewing emancipation as a project relevant to the contemporary malaise. This is followed by a discussion of the role of both narrative identity and what I call the ethos of "the commons" in framing the narrative-emancipatory project and facilitating the symbolic production of a collective "we" central to any form of emancipatory political action. I end the part by drawing the contours of an emancipatory strategy oriented towards the institutionalization of this ethos. It will be shown that the narrative in question could form the basis of a sustained opposition to the neoliberal symbolic regime drawing its strength from the coordinated unity of pre-existing, albeit dispersed, operations and undertakings.

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Emancipatory Political Action Reimagined

The task of assessing the relevance of emancipatory political action to the neoliberal condition is an important one for two principal reasons: because it has fallen out of favour with several social theorists and because the present-day situation is marked by the cult of the personally responsible individual. In this chapter, I not only aim to demonstrate the contemporary relevance of emancipatory political action but also offer elements for its re-conceptualization in the light of politically relevant developments, such as the rise of identity-politics. Before undertaking these tasks, however, I wish to clarify what I intend to mean by emancipation and emancipatory political action.

Defining Emancipation

The term "emancipation" presupposes, first, the existence of barriers or hindrances to self-realization. To seek emancipation means to aim for the removal of these constraints. Take the example of the "struggle against slavery," to which the term "emancipation" "was originally connected" (Wright 2010: 10, note 1). Legally sanctioned forms of coercion denied

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slaves the capacity to realize the self. They lived a life of servitude. They had no individual liberties. In such a context, their emancipation meant "achieving full liberal rights of equality and social justice" (Wright 2010: 10, note 1). But this could not be achieved without a prior public recognition that these liberties are universal rights, or that slaves are no less human than their own masters. Their freedom from bondage, therefore, rested on the idea that they, too, possessed a human essence and a right to realize it. So, to speak of emancipation in these terms entails recognizing the existence of a range of hindrances on the realization of an essence shared by humanity at large, and seeking to bring about the institutional changes requisite for their removal.

But, although originally connected to the struggle against slavery, the term "emancipation" eventually became appropriated by the left to "refer to a broader vision of eliminating all forms of oppression" (Wright 2010: 10, note 1). No longer restricted to overtly coercive forms of oppression such as slavery, it came to denote a form of politics "aimed at universalizing a high standard of living and the possibilities of having a good life" (Sörbom and Wennerhag 2011: 457). Despite being central to the feminist cause (Nyman 2014), it is with the labour movement that the logic of emancipatory politics came to be most commonly associated. This should not be surprising, given Marx's (2000f) own concern for the emancipation of the proletariat from the repressive rule of political and economic institutions unfolding under capitalism. So while the group seeking emancipation may have changed, the logic remains the same, namely transforming institutions in such a way as to give the dominated the same opportunities to realize their human capacities as those enjoyed by the dominant. But, whereas for Marx, the achievement of such a goal depended on a radical reorganization of economic and political life, trade unions have tended to be less radical in their demands, by promoting redistributive rights compatible with pre-existing institutions. In fact, despite involving collective forms of political action both based on the interests of specific oppressed groups and "directed at political institutions" (Sörbom and Wennerhag 2011, 455), emancipatory politics has not always entailed demands for large-scale social change. It is, instead, essentially characterized by an attack on conditions of servitude and the

removal of constraints these conditions impose on individuals, based on a universalist logic according to which each of us ought to be given equal rights and opportunities for self-realization.

The Rise of Individualization and Apparent Demise of Emancipatory Action

However, according to several contemporary social theorists (see, for example, Giddens 1991; Beck 1992; Touraine 2007), it has become increasingly difficult to expect political action to promote emancipation in the form discussed above. The 1960s are often highlighted as a key turning point, marking the advent of new concerns and demands putting an end to emancipatory politics. Touraine, for example, claimed that the rise of identity politics and corresponding shift towards demands for "cultural rights" (2007) have led to the demise of the universalist claims underpinning emancipatory political action. Under this new type of politics, he further argued, "'we are indeed no longer dealing with the right to be like the others, but to be other" (Touraine 2007: 147). Such a view is echoed in the work of Giddens who, with his concept of "life politics," aims to denote similar changes to those identified by Touraine:

> Life politics does not primarily concern the conditions which liberate us in order to make choices: it is a politics of choice. While emancipatory politics is a politics of life chances, life politics is a politics of life style. Life politics is a politics of a reflexively mobilized order—the system of late modernity…. It is a politics of self-actualization in a reflexively ordered environment, where that reflexivity links self and body to systems of global scope. (Giddens 1991: 214)

Both commentators, therefore, noted the demise of collective forms of action of oppressed groups united by universalist claims and directing their struggle against political institutions, all in an effort to overcome mechanisms of oppression and enjoy the same opportunities as "others." This development, they claimed, is in large part attributable to

the changing nature of society itself. Both did indeed note the advent of increasingly individualized practices not only affecting the identity formation of social agents, but also paving the way for new forms of political action. Now thought to be broadly directed at the assertion of one's identity and difference in a "reflexively ordered environment," these practices are said to be lifted out the very social relations upon which emancipatory politics rested. Political action is thus performed "on one's own" and governed by "political values that promote diversity, self-fulfillment, and independence from political parties and institutions" (Sörbom and Wennerhag 2011: 455).

Both social theorists take the individualizing effects of modernization as the premise for their conceptualization of political action. For example, Touraine suggested that modernity "has led each individual to assert himself as the creator of himself, as being the end of his own action" (2007: 106). Correspondingly, Giddens (1991) spoke of a late modern age characterized by the pursuit of self-identity, arrived at reflexively. Thus, in the case of Touraine, the claim that political action is now characterized by a demand to be different or "to be other" suggests that political action is now governed by *particularist* attitudes. While demanding "to be like others" presupposed a *universalist* outlook, "to be other" redirects political action towards the individual and his or her own discrete well-being. Similar conclusions can be drawn from the work of Giddens who argued that the "politics of self-actualization" flow from deeper societal transformations such as the process of "reflexive modernization" compelling individuals to treat identity formation as a matter they are personally responsible for. A close examination of contemporary forms of political action does nevertheless reveal a different state of affairs. Severe problems with such a diagnosis have already been discussed in Part I of this book. There I endeavoured to show that such claims fail to grasp adequately the ideological character of individualization. What I wish to emphasize here, however, is the implication of this shortcoming for the prospects of emancipatory politics. This implication is, I think, best explained in terms of an incapacity for these theorists to understand the nature of political action today, which will be revealed shortly.

New Prospects for Emancipatory Political Action

In their empirical work on the political practices of members of the Global Justice Movement (GJM), Sörbom and Wennerhag concluded the following:

> To the extent that we would still wish to use Giddens's concepts, our study indicates that activists within the Global Justice Movement are in fact *combining* life politics with emancipatory politics, thereby overriding the assumed contradiction between these two concepts. On one hand, activists of this movement are maintaining membership in political parties to a much larger extent than the population in general and they remain committed to reducing economic inequalities at a systemic level … On the other hand, with respect to the question of "life politics," there are certainly many activists participating within the movement who do not have a particular bond to any kind of organization. A majority of them claim that it is more important to create alternative ways of doing politics than it is to use the existing political system. And along these lines, they often value political diversity more than the need to be united around a common political strategy (Sörbom and Wennerhag 2011: 471–2; emphasis in original)

Their research presents us with a much more complex and nuanced picture than the one painted by Giddens and Touraine. Here, collective action, or the formulation of a common political strategy directed at political institutions in an effort to remove unjust hindrances to self-realization continues to play a part in contemporary politics. Instead of being substituted by a highly individualized set of practices, "the very meanings of 'individual' and 'collective' are being interpreted in far more complex ways" (Sörbom and Wennerhag 2011: 472). The neoliberal age has not so much put an end to emancipatory politics as to create conditions whereby its universalist logic coexists with the particularist logic of individualized practices. Thus, while placing the focus of analysis predominantly on the latter runs the risk of falling victim to the ruse of a divisive neoliberal ideology articulated around the notion of a competitive, self-interested and personally responsible individual forced to

accept the constraints imposed by economic facts, failing to recognize the emergence of new, individualized, political strategies risks denying social agents a range of actions which they themselves deem valuable. Before drawing on the conceptual implications of this diagnosis (see next section "Identity-Political and Emancipatory Action: Bridging the Divide"), let me provide additional evidence of the continuing relevance of the emancipatory project to the contemporary situation.

Since emancipation entails the liberation of one or more groups from structures, mechanisms or systems of oppression, the emergence of an emancipatory political project is predicated upon both the presence and identification of a condition of servitude by political actors. Can a language articulated around the liberation from servitude be observed in contemporary forms of political action? If so, what kind of servitude is here being referred to? As I showed in Part III, despite the existence of a diverse range of concerns making up contemporary social movements, their members tend to be united in condemning what they consider to be systemic flaws of the neoliberal capitalist order. In the case of the GJM, these flaws were associated with the effects of free trade and the increasing influence of non-democratic institutions on society. These developments were effectively regarded as sources of illegitimate constraints on democratic self-determination. But they were also identified as causes for a broad range of injustices. With the emergence of anti-austerity protests, the role of ostensibly democratic institutions in eroding self-determination came to be highlighted. It was no longer sufficient to attack dominant economic interests and condemn the injustices emanating from their increasing encroachment on society. The political elite itself was now being identified as an agent of oppression, for its decision to introduce austerity measures following the bailout of large private banks not only gave these measures an illegitimate character, it also imposed significant constraints on ordinary individuals' capacity to realize the self. Conditions of servitude were highlighted in both waves of resistance. In the GJM, the key faces of this servitude were the non-democratic institutions, whose power was enhanced by free-trade agreements. In anti-austerity protests, the neoliberal state took centre stage as a core culprit. Several of the ingredients for the development of a political project directed at different economic and political institutions

and the illegitimate constraints they impose on society can therefore be observed here.

As the "We Are the 99%" slogan illustrated, the condition of servitude the anti-austerity protesters articulated their struggle around was not limited to the experiences of a particular oppressed group. Students, middle-class professionals, blue-collar workers, and pensioners all joined forces in the protests to condemn what they saw as an illegitimate precarization of life under the increasing influence of economic facts mediated by the neoliberal political class. They were all united in the denunciation of their servitude to the rule of these facts. This bears significant implications for both the nature and organization of political action. However, although such a state of affairs may not necessarily induce a form of political action governed by the desire "to be like others" or like the "1%," this falls short of marking, as Touraine suggests, an overall shift in the nature of struggles. What it marks, instead, is a tendency, in the condition of servitude, to be generalized. These protesters are less in a position to demand rights or conditions enjoyed by "others," or "to be like others," simply because those who were previously "winners" under the neoliberal condition, are now "losers." The condition of servitude in question, therefore, crosses the divides around which emancipatory politics had previously been articulated. But this does not so much mark an end of emancipatory politics as a generalization of the conditions under which it thrives. What the neoliberal condition offers, then, is the potential to achieve a new kind of emancipatory politics resting on the unity of a diverse range of oppressed groups. In fact, rather than diminishing the prospects for emancipatory political action, it effectively broadens its scope.

Identity-Political and Emancipatory Action: Bridging the Divide

Such striking developments should not, however, distract us from the other reality of political action in contemporary capitalist societies. Indeed, although the condition of servitude may be tending towards universalization, individual, political strategies have emerged. This could be explained, on the one hand, by the fact that individuals are, under

a symbolically cultivated ethos of personal responsibility, compelled to treat their conditions of existence as the result of personal successes or shortcomings. On the other hand, and crucially for the present discussion, it could be explained by the fact that, despite affecting individuals across a broad range of social categories, the experience of oppression continues to be shaped by these categories. For example, the experiences of precarity of middle-class women cannot be equated with those of working-class men are subjected to. Similarly, it would be unreasonable to suggest that the experiences of black working-class men are identical to those of white blue-collar workers, or that those of non-disabled individuals are on a par with those of the disabled. Each individual makes sense of the constraints on self-realization from a particular standpoint, emerging from the intersection of different social categories, such as class, race, gender and sexuality. Some constraints may indeed be more meaningful or acute for an individual whose experiences are shaped by a particular intersection of these categories than for another individual whose experiences are defined by a different intersection. Identity-based politics is, therefore, often said to bear individualizing effects on action and create obstacles to the formulation of a common political strategy (Touraine 2007). How then, could the tendency towards universalization of the condition of servitude and its particular manifestations assume be conceptually reconciled?

Of particular interest, here, is the implication of the absence of a drive "to be like others," or, put differently, of a unificatory standard of justice serving emancipatory political action today. In the absence of such a standard, how can a common political strategy or project be formed? This form of action relies on the existence of a language of oppression shared by a particular group seeking to attain conditions of self-realization that have been denied to them. But this language has, historically, drawn its political and unificatory strength from the denunciation of a clearly uneven and illegitimate distribution of rights, wealth and, more generally, opportunities between different groups. The goal of emancipation, here, consists in gaining opportunities previously denied by structures and mechanisms of oppression. Although a movement like OWS denounced the power of the "1%" as illegitimate, it did not so much aim "to be like the 1%" as condemn a deterioration of ordinary individuals' capacity

for self-realization by a political class appearing to favour the interests of the economically powerful. So the language used here is emancipatory to the extent that the different groups of protesters could identify a structure of oppression shared in common and against which to mobilize their struggle. But, despite being united by a condition of servitude each of these groups could identify with, protesters faced notable challenges in formulating demands they could all agree upon. This is explained by the presence of not one but several standards of justice and the good life grounded in the experiences of these different members. The conceptual challenge, therefore, does not so much consist in abandoning the emancipatory project, as understanding the role identity-based experiences could play in emancipatory politics. To this end, it is worth reminding ourselves that, as Nyman put it

> selfhood and self-determination are part and parcel of any pursuit of emancipation because the latter must involve an identity to be emancipated, and further, what has been historically sought in struggles for liberation is a realization of a freedom that is inextricably bound to the right to determine one's own life. With this in mind, at least minimal notions of agency, autonomy, and selfhood seem necessary for emancipation to be possible. (Nyman 2014: 206)

Emancipatory political action necessarily presupposes the idea of self-hood or identity. The latter is in fact, as Collins and Bilge put it, "central to building a collective we" (2016: 135) for, without it, the very idea of emancipation becomes meaningless. Indeed, without it, how could individuals effectively know what to realize and identify the constraints on self-realization? Thus, the prospects of successful emancipatory politics do not rest, as is often assumed, on the denial of difference, identity or particularity. Indeed, it shares with identity-politics the postulation of a notion of self-hood as the driving force of political action. But in order to reconcile them fully, no single self-hood or identity must be prioritized over others in the formation of a collective "we."[1] This conceptual premise is crucial, for it opens up the scope for reconciling the universalist claims

[1] I am thinking here of Marx's treatment of the working class as the "universal class."

of emancipatory politics with the particularist claims of identity-politics. As such, the collective "we" in question ought to be regarded as the outcome of a labour of symbolic production drawn from the discursively articulated *de facto* intersection(s) of diverse struggles united against the precarization of life. It entails members of different oppressed groups putting the logic of intersectionality to work, in an effort to bring under discussion the "shared locations within power relations" (Collins and Bilge 2016: 135) in an age of precarity.

Contrary to diagnoses offered by a range of social theorists in recent years, it is still possible to anticipate a central role for emancipatory politics. With its tendency to universalize servitude, it is in fact possible to suggest that the neoliberal condition has opened up new possibilities for action oriented towards emancipation. However, no conceptualization relying on either a strictly universalist or strictly particularist logic can be expected to offer a suitable framework of analysis. The task one is, therefore, confronted with consists in identifying the conditions under which a collective "we" could emerge out of the diverse experiences of a generalizing form of servitude. While the logic of intersectionality can be expected to perform an essential function, I contend that it also ought to be complemented by the labour of "narrative identity."

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Narrative Identity and Emancipation

In the preceding part of this book, I placed a particular emphasis on the intricate imbrication of different forms of domination and its implication for the conceptualization of resistance under the neoliberal condition. Recognizing these connections is, in fact, central to a project of emancipation that can successfully overcome the "unproductive battles over economic versus cultural politics, identity-based vs. left universalist rhetoric" (Duggan 2003: xix) affecting political action over the past three or four decades. In turn, it becomes essential to recognize that the emancipation of a group from servitude is inextricably linked to, if not dependent upon, that of another. This, I argue, presupposes a relational conception of self-hood or the capacity to narrate an idea of the self whose existence and fate are connected to those of others. For this reason, I propose to address the problem of emancipatory political action by adopting a "narrative identity" approach. In what follows, I discuss the core features of this approach and begin to draw the broad contours of a narrative of emancipation.

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The Features and Centrality of Ontological Narratives

The concept of "narrative identity," often associated with the three-volume work of Paul Ricoeur (1984, 1985, 1988) titled *Time and Narrative*, rests on the logic according to which one's identity is not given but defined and formed by a process of storytelling. Under its guise, experiences are not said to give form to our identity or self in a direct manner. To perform such a function, they first have to be made intelligible or understandable to the self. This entails a process whereby the meaningfulness of these experiences and events that have given rise to them, is assessed. As such, experiences have to be recounted, integrated and allocated a role within a narrative in order for individuals to develop a sense of who they are. These are what Ricoeur (1991) called "first-order" narratives, also known as "ontological narratives" in virtue of their role in defining who we are and giving meaning and purpose to our existence. Because identity is narrated, it necessarily involves "historicity and relationality" (Somers and Gibson 1994: 60), which are central to the task of developing a politically mobilized collective "we." In fact, as Somers and Gibson argued:

> A narrative identity approach to action assumes that social action can only be intelligible if we recognize that people are guided to act by the relationships in which they are embedded and by the stories with which they identify. (Somers and Gibson 1994: 67)

So, in addition to defining who we are, narrative identity is a precondition of action that involves an understanding of self-hood through the construction of "a significant network or configuration of relationships" (Somers and Gibson 1994: 60). It follows that, to speak of a political action in these narrative terms, entails the presence of individuals making their experiences of oppression intelligible or understandable, by situating them within an ensemble of power relations between individuals, as well as between individuals and the social or biophysical environment. In sum, then, as an "*ontological condition of social life*" (Somers and Gibson 1994: 38; emphasis in original), narrative identity provides means for

relational self-definition, while acting as a "precondition for knowing what to do" (Somers and Gibson 1994: 61).

Given the relational character of identity in this kind of narrative approach, it is possible to anticipate a role for ontological narratives in the development of collective forms of self-definition and action. Often, however, the labour of collective self-definition is attributed to "grand" narratives. As the "collective form of human self-consciousness" (Bernstein 1991: 120), these "second-order" narratives, act as a "precondition for knowing what to do" *collectively and representationally*. Furthermore, since they "order, criticize, align, disperse, disrupt and gather the first-order discourses and practices that make up the woof of social life" (Bernstein 1991: 111), they also embody the potential to guide social change. But as "second-order" narratives, they do not perform an ontological function like the first-order narratives. Instead, they provide the representational means for collective self-representation. The nature of the neoliberal condition, however, is such that it has become increasingly difficult to anticipate the formation of grand narratives. Lyotard (1984), for example, famously claimed that individuals in advanced capitalist societies have lost the means to find those universal referents necessary for collective representations. While there are significant limitations to this claim, some of which I exposed in Chap. 6, it is not unreasonable to suggest that the present-day situation presents individuals with severe obstacles to the formation of grand narratives.

Moreover, since their function is merely representational, as opposed to ontological, the representational labour they call forth is forced to rely upon those ontological definitions contained in first-order narratives. Thus, no matter how important they might be for emancipatory political action, grand narratives depend on ontological narratives. In fact, although social theorists like Lyotard (1984) have discussed obstacles to emancipatory action in relation to matters concerning representational storytelling, the so-called incredulity towards grand narratives may instead by better treated as a problem emanating from conditions under which first-order narratives themselves are formed. For, the difficulties in representing collective action may derive from the way we have come to define ourselves and our relation to others. For this reason, it is important

to turn to what Ricoeur called the "notion of untold story" (1991: 30) regarding ontological narratives.

Broadly speaking, the mere fact of recognizing the existence of untold (ontological) stories entails suggesting that there could be particular ways of defining who we are that have not yet been recounted. These stories have either been so "repressed" or "tangled up" that the "quest for personal identity" (Ricoeur 1991: 30) could yield very different results from those likely to emerge following the recounting of these repressed and entangled stories. Furthermore, while "human experience is already mediated by all sorts of symbolic systems" and "by all sorts of stories that we have heard" (Ricoeur 1991: 29), we also "never cease to reinterpret the narrative identity that constitutes us, in the light of the narratives proposed to us by our culture" (Ricoeur 1991: 32). Storytelling never takes place in a symbolic vacuum. Thus, it is in turn possible to suggest that a symbolic regime underpinned by the principles of personal responsibility and privatization produces signs and symbols more likely to facilitate the formation of first-person ontological narratives than those of a first-person plural form. Under such a state of affairs, the responsibility for connecting what tend to be recounted as conflicting and diverging destinies cannot be expected to lie in the labour of representational narratives. For, how can such a task ever be successfully accomplished without a prior ontological understanding of these destinies' ontological overlaps? An entire category of untold stories—the first-person plural category—could consequently be said to lie latent everywhere, waiting for narrators to recount them through the labour of narrative identity. Approached from that angle, the prospects for emancipatory political action could be said to rest, predominantly, on the development of new ontological narratives of domination.

Towards First-Person Plural Narratives

Given the particular emphasis placed on contemporary individualizing forces and the fragmentation of the social fabric by a range of contemporary social theorists (see, for example, Giddens 1991; Bauman 2000; Touraine 2007), anticipating conditions favourable for the develop-

ment of first-person plural ontological narratives may seem somewhat unorthodox, if not counter-intuitive. I can nevertheless think of two non-negligible elements making such an anticipation less counter-intuitive than it immediately appears. The first one was discussed in Parts II and III, namely the intricate imbrication of forms of domination unfolding under the neoliberal age. Despite the ubiquity of symbols diffused, and practices supported, by an ideology celebrating individual action, it remains possible to identify points of intersection and convergence between a diverse range of struggles, not least because neoliberal policies themselves have never separated the different domains of domination in practice. In fact, individuals are, to borrow Ricoeur's terminology, immersed in "tangled up," albeit *untold*, stories of domination, "which happen to [them] before any story is recounted" (1991: 30). Recounting them leads to the formation of a "background" which "connects [the story] up to a vaster whole" (Ricoeur 1991: 30). The imbrication of forms of domination could thus be said to form the background in question, for as this imbrication suggests, the story of oppression of a member of a particular identity-based group overlaps with stories of economic and environmental domination.[1] The background for a first-person plural ontological narrative is here said to emerge through the recounting of the "living imbrication of all lived stories [of domination]" (Ricoeur 1991: 30) based on an *individual's own* experiences of oppression. But in the process of recognizing the relationships within which they are embedded, the possibility of telling stories of oppression overlapping with *that of others* opens up. This "pre-history of the story" (1991: 30) nevertheless remains untold until individuals are equipped with the motives and means for recounting it. This leads me to the second element in question.

Although ontological narratives never develop in a symbolic vacuum and, consequently, draw on symbols made available by the pre-existing culture, contemporary social movements offer evidence of the fact that individuals hold the motives and seek the means for building a collective "we." Both the GJM and anti-austerity protests took place in spaces, such as forums or camps, in which the members could recount their stories in the presence of others, in such a way as to narrate, in common, the

[1] See Part II for a more detailed account of these overlaps.

configuration of relationships in which they are all embedded. Read in these terms, the movements represent a space within which individuals are given the opportunity to recount previously untold stories. They devised principles and methods aimed at developing a first-person plural ontology, such as the principle of "collective thinking" or the "people's microphone" (Flank: 2011) in the case of Occupy Wall Street (OWS). More recently, protesters involved in the *Nuit Debout* movement in France have launched a campaign titled *Convergence des Luttes* (Convergence of Struggles).[2] This aims to recount the experiences of such groups as teachers, farmers, industry workers, the homeless, students and immigrants in an effort to oppose a labour legislation which has become the symbol of the neoliberalization of French society. Members of these movements have, therefore, exhibited inclinations towards the development of a collective selfhood upon which to organize political action. In addition to the *de facto* intricate imbrication of diverse forms of domination, these inclinations provide evidence for the contemporary relevance of first-person plural ontological narratives in political action.

Nature and First-Person Plural Ontological Narratives

Thus, despite the existence of a deeply entrenched neoliberal symbolic regime bearing divisive effects on society, these movements have acted as a locus for the development of the kind of ontological narrative that could potentially inform emancipatory political action. So far, however, I have discussed the formation of ontological narratives based on the assumption that all parties subject to domination are, in principle, in a position to recount their untold stories. But as already highlighted in Chap. 17, the biophysical environment is not equipped with the means to participate actively in the process. This should not mean, however, that its own stories ought to be excluded from the formation of first-person plural ontological narratives. How, then, could nature be included in the collective "we"? The answer lies in overcoming the "othering" of

[2] More details of this campaign can be found at: https://www.convergence-des-luttes.org/

nature, which is responsible for its subjugation by humanity. It entails recognizing, as I proposed to do in Chap. 17, that humanity belongs to nature and that, consequently, defining who we are necessarily involves recognizing that we are natural beings. It follows that the responsibility for recounting external nature's untold stories lies in the hands of humanity itself, which must first be in a position to recognize these stories as its own or that the story of the domination/emancipation of nature is, at once, the story of humanity's domination/emancipation of itself.

Bringing external nature into the scope of narrative identity formation can, too, further consolidate the scope for building a collective "we." Since the latter rests on asserting what different individuals have in common, the act of recognizing that humanity *as a whole* belongs to nature and is affected by changes within it can be expected to play a central role in narrating emancipation. External nature could in fact be said to hold a privileged ontological status in defining a collective "we," in virtue of its capacity to serve as universal referent. Moreover, although one's relation to nature differs according to one's lifestyle, values or position within the economy, the effects of environmental domination such as climate change are universal in their reach (Beck 1992). Confronting the domination of nature responsible for climate change could, in this sense, exert a unifying force on political action. That being said, consecutive failures to reach a meaningful consensus on solutions to environmental problems are a stark reminder of the need to develop measures at the intersection of economic, cultural and environmental demands. As Wehling pointed out:

> society's relationship to nature in different fields of action (like, e.g. production, nutrition, reproduction, mobility, and so on) are regulated both on a material and on a symbolic level. This can be illustrated by taking nutrition as an example. The material forms of producing, distributing, and also preparing and consuming food are evidently closely connected not only with economic and technological structures, but also with diverse symbolic practices ranging from cultural-religious eating taboos through socially shaped "nutritional styles" and "eating cultures" to scientific recommendations and legal norms. (Wehling 2002: 159)

Since our relationship with nature is always mediated by culture and the economy, defining who we are as dominated or emancipated beings belonging to nature, but not reducible to it, necessarily involves making intelligible or understandable the factors (symbolic or material) shaping relationships between individuals, social groups and external nature. Under capitalism, these factors have tended to shape relationships through a process of "othering," leading to the production of sacrificial "others" such as indigenous populations, racial minorities, low-paid workers and nature. As such, "othering" crosses over cultural, economic and environmental practices. It unites individuals immersed in a broad range of practices through a shared condition of sacrificial "otherness." Recounting the "untold stories" could, in this sense, involve different "others" recognizing and recounting the various conditions and relationships of "otherness" in which they are embedded. The task of anticipating exactly who those involved in the recounting process are, along with the specific conditions and relationships of "otherness" being recounted, cannot be realistically undertaken here. For, they depend on the specific triggers of the movements in question and particular socio-historical context under which they emerge.

Premises for a Narrative of Emancipation

Having reviewed some of the preconditions for the development of a narrative of emancipation, it is now time to turn to the broad features it is expected to embody. Although details of its content or specific stories to be narrated can only be formulated by politically mobilized individuals themselves, it is possible to anticipate some of its core elements in the light of conditions unfolding under the neoliberal age. Since the very idea of emancipation rests on the recognition of oppressive forces, and oppression presupposes domination, no narrative of emancipation can be constructed without, first, the formulation of a narrative of domination. But while the latter is articulated around the "living imbrication of all lived stories," the narrative of emancipation is future-oriented. In other words, it is formed on the basis of stories yet-to-be-lived, driven by a vision of a world-yet-to-be. One is therefore ontological and the other

representational, to the extent that the former involves stories that are effectively lived and recounted, while the latter tends to draw its content predominantly on the labour of the imagination.

Elements of a narrative of domination were provided in Parts II and III of this work. There I endeavoured to show that different forms of domination are intricately entwined and that, under the neoliberal condition, economic rationality ought to be construed as a key protagonist in the different "lived stories" of neoliberal domination. It is responsible for guiding conducts under which structural inequalities are perceived as personal shortcomings. It plays a non-negligible part in articulating and legitimating relations of domination, be they cultural, economic or between humanity and nature. But it, too, plays a role in hindering the formulation of a collective "we." The competitive and self-interested outlook it compels individuals to adopt causes them to "repress" the recounting of the "living imbrication of all lived stories." It compels them to isolate or separate, symbolically, practices embedded in intricately imbricated relationships. A narrative of emancipation adapted to the neoliberal age, therefore, rests, on the one hand, upon the formulation of a first-person plural ontological narrative recognizing economic rationality's role in domination. On the other, it rests on the recognition of its symbolically divisive force. Only then can the labour of the imagination be put to work to represent a life beyond neoliberal domination.

But, given this economic rationality's ubiquity and apparent inexorability, what kind of role could it be expected to play in this representation? Is it not more realistic and desirable to imagine a world in which it can be put to contribution rather than minimized or eliminated? Could it not provide solutions to, for example, environmental problems? Proponents of "green capitalism" seem to think so. The problem, as they see it, consists in excluding the effects of individual or organizational practices on nature from processes of economic valuation. Rather than calling for less economic rationality, they want more of it. The logic entails that if, for example, pollution has a cost, those responsible for it will seek to reduce their polluting activities in an effort to maximize their utility. But while factoring these effects in economic valuation may, in principle, appear to contribute to the elimination of the "othering" of nature by increasing its economic "value," in practice they have exacerbated the

domination of nature. The case of carbon trading schemes is a perfect illustration. Instead of altering humanity-nature relations, they became "licenses to pollute" resulting in the "commodification of the Earth's carbon cycling system," making carbon trading "just one more attempt to privatize nature" (Frank 2009: 33). Expecting utility-maximization to solve environmental problems is to misunderstand the full ramifications of the logic underpinning it. While it is true that organizations will seek to reduce their costs, they may not do so by reducing those concerning nature. They could adopt strategies that could offset these new costs by passing them onto consumers or enforcing workforce reductions, among other things. For these reasons, economic rationality cannot be expected to serve as guarantee for a change in those practices responsible for environmental domination.

There is, in fact, an inherent antagonism between economic rationality and emancipatory action. While it must be conceded that the former presupposes a non-negligible degree of freedom from constraints, it has been involved in articulating and reproducing constraining power relations: between different economic agents, different patterns of cultural value or between humanity and nature. Furthermore, the rational attitude required for self-interested and competitive utility-maximization often causes individuals to repress a range of instinctual energies (Marcuse 2002). It compels them to dominate their internal nature or engage in a form of self-sacrifice, whereby creative and instinctual impulses are subsumed under imperatives of efficiency. As first-generation critical theorists themselves note, it constitutes the "causal link between mastery over nature, a state of social control and domination, and a self-repressive structure of individual identity" (Wehling 2002: 148). This economic rationality does more than making a mere contribution to the articulation and reproduction of power relations. Its logic of action is inherently a logic of domination. Thus, a central feature of the narrative of emancipation I wish to identify here consists in representing the liberation of lifestyles, the economy and nature from economic rationality. What representational frame of reference could, then, be expected to provide the requisite narrative components? As implied by the preceding discussion, these ought to be selected on the basis of their capacity to anticipate alternative ways of life, economic relations and humanity-nature relations.

This, as I now intend to show, is what a concept such as "the commons" can offer.

Most commonly associated with the environmentalist literature, such as Garrett Hardin's (1991) famous "tragedy of the commons," it is often used to refer to land or resources affecting an entire community. For this reason, it tends to be more readily discussed in research concerned with relations between economic practices and the biophysical environment and, more specifically, with matters of natural-resource management and ownership. To speak of a "commons," however, requires one to speak of practices not only involving the economy and nature but also culture. Take, for example, the following interpretation:

> the commons challenges notions of property rights understood in a narrow legal sense and proposes instead property rights understood in terms of complex social relations that are alien to modern culture, which is based on efficiency and individualism. (Editor's introduction 2016: 274)

The concept of "the commons" entails a cultural logic radically different from the one framed by self-interested and competitive utility-maximization. In fact, it "'carries an essentially ethical content" (Boda 2003: 221) informing a notably different mode of action. Under the guise of the commons, resources are public goods or goods that members of the public can all equally benefit from. While the ethos of competition and self-interest atomizes demands for self-realization, the ethos of "the commons" presupposes a form of action that recognizes self-realization as something that is collectively achieved and shared. One therefore finds, in the former, a logic of exclusivity and, in the latter, a logic of inclusivity. The two are not only different but also antithetical.

This was, in fact, a valuable lesson one could learn from Hardin's essay, in which he pits the two logics of action against one another. But, instead of anticipating values and lifestyles beyond those framed by competitive and self-interested utility-maximization, Hardin naturalized this conduct. In turn, he favoured the accommodation of practices to the ethos of competition and self-interest over its elimination. Under such a reading the ethos of "the commons" is denaturalized. It is viewed as an obstacle to the sustainable enactment of an inescapable fact of the human condition.

But once the social and economic conditions of economic rationality's rise are revealed, as I endeavoured to do in Chap. 16, one realizes that what effectively ought to be denaturalized is the atomization of self-realization itself. Having done so, it becomes possible to anticipate a more legitimate role for "the commons" in guiding action than Hardin expected to. Thus, I wish to argue that the ethos of "the commons" presents individuals with a logic of action that could help represent a life emancipated from neoliberal domination. How, then, could this be achieved? I shall address this issue as part of an emancipatory strategy, whose core elements will now be discussed.

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Emancipatory Strategy

Since, under commons-based action, resources involved in self-realization are treated as goods shared by the public, and self-realization itself is regarded as a collective enterprise, it compels individuals to engage in cooperative and collaborative practices. It involves individuals recognizing their dependence on each other and on nature in self-realization. However, given the seemingly inexorable spread of the ethos of competition and self-interest in neoliberal societies, the development of a narrative of emancipation framed by the ethos of "the commons" faces a range of inevitable challenges. This chapter is devoted to addressing these challenges. However, since the benefits of institutionalizing commons-based action more immediately appear to concern the economic sphere and the biophysical environment, one is justified in questioning its value for addressing cultural domination. For this reason, I begin this chapter by reviewing the emancipatory potential of the ethos of "the commons" for each of the three sites of domination/emancipation I have discussed in this work. I then review a range of undertakings that have put this ethos to work and identify possible conditions for its development into a force with the potential to counter the self-evidence of the neoliberal symbolic regime. I end the chapter by detailing the features of the mode

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of action expected to inform the narrative representation of emancipatory practices.

On the Emancipatory Potential of the Ethos of "the Commons"

The ethos of "the commons," whose symbolic and concrete forms I aim discuss in this chapter, refers to practices including, but not exclusive to, property relations. In fact, as already indicated above, I propose to construe the ethos in question as a set of principles based on a logic of inclusivity and capable of guiding action beyond the narrow confines of property relations. Its core principles include cooperation, equity, sharing and collective responsibility. Under its guise, self-realization comes to assume a collective character. Well-being is construed as a communal endeavour.

Worker-owned enterprises represent one possible avenue for translating "the commons" into economic practices. They differ, in many respects, from conventional businesses. Underpinned by the ethos of competition and self-interest, these organizations pit the interests of different parties, such as shareholders, company managers and ordinary workers against one another, despite their state of mutual dependence. Company managers, for example, often choose to respond to challenging market conditions and shareholder demands by unilaterally imposing employment adjustments in the form of workforce reductions. Here, the interests of employees are regarded as separate from the interests of the organization as a whole. Worker-owned cooperatives, on the other hand, deal with such situations by, for example, collectively agreeing to adjust pay. They regard each member of the cooperative's interest as indivisible from other member's and the organization as a while. They provide a much higher degree of employment security to their members (Pérotin 2016), while recognizing the underlying mutual dependence of their members in economic action. Through a collective responsibility facilitated by horizontal decision-making processes and shared ownership, workers are united in their pursuit of self-realization. They are in a position to protect themselves against the precarizing effects of eco-

nomic facts. These rather unconventional organizations, therefore, provide evidence for the emancipatory benefits of commons-based action in economic life (Wyatt 2011).

Other benefits have been documented in the environmentalist literature. In fact, nowhere has the impact of commons-based action been more documented than in relation to the management of natural resources. This is due to the fact that the biophysical environment "turns out to function as a 'commons' whether we like it or not, in the sense that it is impossible to keep private natures truly cordoned off from the rest of the world" (McCarthy 2005: 9). Such an inescapable fact, however, has not deterred neoliberal political elites from accelerating the pace and broadening the scope of the privatization of natural resources. While some have highlighted the positive environmental effects of privatization, such as the introduction of Individual Trading Quotas (ITQs) into fishing practices (Toft et al. 2011), others have insisted that no conclusive link can be found between ITQs and the emergence of an ethos of "environmental stewardship" (Van Putten et al. 2014). In fact, as discussed in Chap. 10, the neoliberal processes of privatization, financialization and personal responsibilization are more likely to cause environmental problems than solve them. For example, by creating new markets for the trading of natural resources such as food commodities, financialization induces attitudes towards the short-term creation of value that fail to factor the environmental and socio-economic consequences of these exchanges. Instead, these new markets tend to put additional pressures on national economies to exploit natural resources (Tricarico 2012). Moreover, by turning individuals' relation to nature into a matter of personal responsibility, privatization acts as an obstacle to the collective efforts necessitated for solving what are effectively matters affecting entire communities. Personal responsibility, competition and privatization engender a confrontational relation between individuals in their management of natural resources and amplify humanity's estrangement from, and domination of, nature. Under such a state of affairs, then, calls for "reclaiming the commons" (Klein 2001) emerge as attempts to assert collective responsibility for the management of natural resources. They represent an effort to recognize, in practice, individuals' dependence on each other and the biophysical environment in self-realization.

The emancipatory potential of the ethos of "the commons" is not confined to economic and environmental matters. In fact, given its ethical character, it can prove particularly useful for anticipating alternative interpersonal relations and value patterns. As discussed in Chap. 10, preexisting cultural relations are characterized by relations of domination. This is, for example, visible in the way identity-based hierarchies have, under neoliberal policies driven by the principles of privatization and personal responsibility, rested upon the symbolic production of unworthy "others." For example, despite women's entry into the labour force, they continue to occupy "'social' positions within the bureaucratic field as well as with those sectors of private companies which are most vulnerable to 'flexible labour' policies" and are, in this sense, some of the core "victims of the neoliberal policy aimed at reducing the welfare role of the state and favouring the 'deregulation' of the labour market" (Bourdieu 1998: 92). Women's exclusion from positions of power, combined with the withdrawal of provisions that could enhance their prospects for self-realization, rests on their "othering" as "embodiments of the *vulnerability* of honour" (1998: 51). Meanwhile, neoliberal reforms have cultivated and elevated a mode of action and pattern of cultural value, historically marked by masculine character traits: aggressiveness, competitiveness, adversarialism, individualism, emotional detachment (Acker 2004). Men's continued economic domination is, in this sense, inextricably tied to the dominance of a cultural value pattern framed by an ethos aligned with their own interests. It has led to the propagation of schemes of perception responsible for "othering" and denigrating conducts historically associated with female roles and character traits. Economic rationality, in other words, sanctions a form of "othering" articulated around gender identity.

But under the ethos of "the commons," alternative conducts and representations are celebrated. It compels individuals to recognize what unites them, in spite of their difference. It compels them to accept their dependence on others in self-realization. As such, it has the potential to eliminate the logic of action responsible for "othering" and domination. In the case of gender, the ethos of "the commons" could play an important role in overcoming masculine domination by compelling individuals to recognize their dependence on each other. Similar developments could

be anticipated regarding race relations. For, by compelling individuals to recognize their dependence on others, it could, too, contribute to eliminating those conditions responsible for "othering" racial minorities as "threats" (Goldberg 2009), such as recognizing that they not only have, too, a right to realize the self, but also that, in the process of realizing it, they do not undermine the self-realization of others but, rather, make a contribution to it. This could, for example, mean recognizing that immigration is "good for the economy" (OECD 2014).

Institutionalizing the ethos "the commons" could therefore alter economic, cultural and environmental life, in such a way as to eliminate the conditions responsible for "othering" under the neoliberal condition, and substitute this logic with one of *partnering*. But to what extent is this ethos already a reality? Under what conditions can it be expected to become a force for change? It is to these questions that I now turn.

The Reality of the Ethos of "the Commons"

Prior to any intentional transformations, be they economic, cultural, environmental or political, a change in representations is required. As such, in order to become a transformative force, the ethos of "the commons" must, first, be expected to inform the development of new symbolic forms capable of subverting the established symbolic order. However, as Bourdieu pointed out:

> [T]he action of symbolic subversion, if it wants to be realistic, cannot draw the line at symbolic breaks even if, like some aesthetic provocations, they are effective in suspending self-evidences. To accomplish a durable change in representations, it must perform and impose a durable transformation of the internalized categories (schemes of thought) which, through upbringing and education, confer the status of self-evident, necessary, undisputed natural reality, within the scope of their validity, on the social categories that they produce. (Bourdieu 2001: 121)

Women have, for example, historically been at the forefront of struggles against land enclosures, offering alternatives to privatization in the

organization of reproductive labour (Federici 2012). In doing so, they not only opposed dominant reproductive labour practices. They also suspended these practices' self-evidence. But these were isolated acts of symbolic subversion only capable of temporarily interrupting the naturalization of dominant schemes of perception. They were therefore limited in their capacity to cultivate durable representations. In what follows, I develop an emancipatory strategy aimed at cultivating the symbolically and institutionally subversive potential of pre-existing undertakings. This, I argue, rests on uniting a range of actually existing values and practices within a narrative of emancipation framed by the ethos of "the commons." I therefore begin by reviewing these values and practices.

Despite its seemingly utopian character, the ethos of "the commons" is no mere product of the imagination. Practices based on the notion of communal well-being have, in spite of the symbolic strength of the individualist bourgeois ethos, surfaced throughout the history of capitalism. While some, such as those making up contemporary social movements, have enjoyed a rather short lifespan, others have been much more durable, as illustrated by the rather long history of worker cooperatives in countries like the US and the UK. But a vast gulf lies between "the commons" as a "reality" and its status as "undisputed natural reality." Achieving the latter rests, on the one hand, on the identification of current endeavours, whose practices and values produce symbolic forms falling outside the confines of the neoliberal symbolic regime, but aligned with the ethos of "the commons." However, as Bourdieu himself noted, while "there are currently many connections between movements and many shared undertakings … these remain extremely dispersed within each country and even more so between countries" (2003: 43). In other words, despite being a "reality," they lack the form of symbolic unity that could help them turn into an "undisputed reality." On the other hand, then, one is confronted with the task of "establish[ing] a coordination of demands and actions" (Bourdieu 2003: 42), around the ethos of "the commons." In this section, I provide examples of such "actions." In the next, I propose avenues for their coordination.

There are too many examples of these "movements and undertakings" to be able to provide an exhaustive list here. I shall therefore devote my attention to a selection of what, I think, are particularly instructive

examples. Some have already been discussed at length in the previous part, namely the GJM and anti-austerity protests. Their significance is nevertheless worth highlighting again, for they developed an operational culture sharing a close affinity with the values associated with the ethos of "the commons." Through the implementation of horizontal decision-making processes, their members devoted a great deal of efforts to the cultivation of collective responsibility for matters they regarded as mutually dependent and co-constitutive. They sought to make the movements as inclusive as possible and unravel the intricate imbrication of a highly diverse range of solidarities, such as anti-racism, feminism and environmentalism. They opposed neoliberal measures by devising modes of action through which individuals could assert their unity in diversity. For these reasons, they represent contemporary attempts to suspend the self-evidence of the bourgeois individualist ethos and oppose it with alternative symbolic forms articulated around the notion of communal well-being.[1]

Worker cooperatives, too, belong to a movement. They, too, operate on the basis of horizontal decision-making processes. But because they are economic undertakings and operate within the confines of the capitalist market, their capacity to bring the ethos of "the commons" to life rests on complementing democratic forms of decision-making with shared ownership. These economic endeavours are, as stated in the International Cooperative Alliance's (ICA) principles, "democratic organisations controlled by their members, who actively participate in setting their policies and making decisions" in which "capital is usually the common property of the co-operative" (International Cooperative Alliance 2016). As such, they uphold an economic culture capable of bringing to life the logic according to which the well-being of one member is indissociable from the well-being of another. In fact, they could be regarded as undertakings successful in protecting economic practices against economic rationality. As Gorz put it:

> To be guided by economic rationality, production must not only be intended for commodity exchange; it must be intended for exchange on a

[1] See Part III for a more detailed analysis of these movements.

> free *market* where unconnected producers find themselves in competition facing similar unconnected purchasers. This condition is not fulfilled so long as producers can, in the manner of guilds, corporations and producers' syndicates, set the price of each sort of product and, especially, *lay down the permissible processes and techniques of production*. (Gorz 1989: 111; my emphasis)

By famously prioritizing "people over profit" and devising successful forms of collective control, worker cooperatives uphold an economic culture filled with symbolic forms falling outside the confines of the neoliberal symbolic regime. Instead of being guided by an individualistic "desire to *economize*" (Gorz 1989: 2), the production of goods or delivery of services is guided by a desire to realize the self in collective and egalitarian terms. Their success in actualizing communal self-realization and resilience in the face of precarizing economic facts could, in turn, help diminish the self-evidence of economic practices guided by economic rationality and increase that of practices articulated around the ethos of "the commons."

It is also important to note that these organizations have borne positive effects on gender and race relations, as well as on the environment. While the International Labour Organization report shows that "the co-operative model is particularly adept at addressing women's empowerment and gender equality concerns" (2015: 3), a *Co-operative News* article highlights cooperatives' notable success in "empowering" (Voinea 2014) immigrants. Furthermore, in her book on the effects of "through-the-prison gate social cooperative structures of employment" on desistance, Beth Weaver (2016) demonstrated the highly positive role these organizations could play in social relations. Renn et al. also pointed out that, in virtue of their collaborative decision-making processes, "cooperatives can be especially effective in contributing to the achievement of climate protection goal at the local level" (2012: 120).

However, nowhere has the ethos of "the commons" been most fully operationalized than in parts of the digital economy. While worker cooperatives can help protect workers against the precarizing rule of market forces, forms of commons-based peer production tend to operate outside its confines. They have almost completely eliminated the profit motive

from their activities.[2] Products known as Free and Open Source Software (FOSS) programmes, for example, are produced voluntarily and are free of charge. Mozilla Firefox or Wordpress are such successful FOSS programmes, which operate on the basis of a "voluntaristic cooperation that does not depend on exclusive proprietary control or command relations as among the co-operators" (Benkler 2013: 214). These undertakings are driven by core values, reflecting those of the ethos of "the commons." The Mozilla community, for example, aims to "magnify… the public benefit aspects of the internet" by ensuring that it becomes a "public resource that … remain[s] open and accessible" (Mozilla community 2016). Other undertakings, such as Wikipedia, aim to achieve similar ends, by striving to "empower and engage people around the world to collect and develop educational content" (Wikimedia Foundation 2016). They have developed economic cultures based on the recognition that the interests of those providing the service are one and the same as those of the community at large. As such, they mark highly successful attempts to organize economic relations around the principle of communal self-realization.

Similar organizational features can be observed in undertakings whose core activities involve the use of natural resources. The Maine lobster fisheries of the USA is a particularly instructive case. Like members of worker cooperatives and participants in commons-based online peer production, Maine lobster fishermen have devised innovative forms of co-management, through a "sharing of resource decision making between government and resource users" (Brewer 2012: 320). Through their collaboration in the creation of "rules that constrain lobstering effort, some enforced through local custom, others codified as law or regulation," they have been successful in maintaining "reproductive capacity, including harvest protections for egg-bearing female lobsters, and for small and large lobsters" (Brewer 2012: 323). As such, Maine lobster fisheries are examples of natural-resource management whereby individuals are able to translate the recognition of their dependence on each other and on nature into concrete practices.

[2] They continue to rely, albeit indirectly, from capital accumulation for their self-sustenance. Mozilla Firefox, for example, draws revenues from the search functionality in its browser through partnerships with Google, Bing and Yahoo.

Thus, despite economic rationality's seemingly inexorable spread, it has fallen short of precluding the emergence of movements and economic cultures underpinned by an altogether different logic of action. Their values and practices, in fact, provide valuable narrative components with the potential to represent a life articulated around the ethos of "the commons" and opposed to the neoliberal symbolic regime. Realizing their symbolically subversive potential, however, rests on devising strategies for their coordination—a task to which I now turn.

A Strategy for Coordination

Coordinating the efforts of diverse movements and undertakings that broadly share the same values and practices could help them devise, in common, strategies for expansion and symbolic representation. It could help them develop those forms of support required for their mutual reinforcement and increasing their influence on society. To this end, I have identified a strategy of coordination based on institutional synergies.

This strategy aims to create synergies between discrete practices of the form I have discussed in the previous section. This task can be led by a variety of undertakings, such as movements, foundations or non-governmental organizations. The International Cooperative Alliance (ICA) represents an example of the latter form. Its goal is to provide a "global voice and forum for knowledge, expertise and co-ordinated action for and about co-operatives" (ICA 2016). As such, it aims to support, coordinate and facilitate the creation of economic undertakings that share its core values. But its scope remains limited to the creation of synergies between cooperatives. This prompted the creation of an organization devoted to expanding the scope of institutional coordination between endeavours broadly sharing the same set of values and practices. Known as the P2P Foundation, this organization aims to achieve the following:

> [T]he P2P Foundation exists as an "organized network" which can facilitate the creation of networks, yet without directing them. Our primary aim is to be an incubator and catalyst for the emerging ecosystem, focusing on the "missing pieces," and the interconnectedness that can lead to a wider movement.

> P2P, in practice, is often invisible to those involved, for a variety of cultural reasons. We want to reveal its presence in discrete movements in order to unite them in their common ethos. (P2P Foundation 2016)

Two central goals can be identified here. The first one consists in creating institutional synergies by uniting dispersed and discrete sets of practices within a movement framed by a common ethos. This could assume the form of, for example, an institutional synergy between the cooperative movements and commons-based online peer production. Bauwens and Kostakis (2014) called for the formation of a movement devoted to this particular end, which they named "open cooperativism." Governed by the ethos of "the commons," this movement aims to promote practices "oriented towards the creation of the common good" (Bauwens and Kostakis 2014: 358). It aims to unite cooperative values and practices making up an economy characterized by "scarcity" (worker cooperatives) with those of commons-based peer production, making up a digital economy characterized by "abundance." Their vision is one of a "reciprocal economy" in which goods (both material and immaterial) are made freely available "to all that contribute" (Bauwens and Kostakis 2014: 358), and involving "multi-stakeholders' forms of governance which would include workers, users-consumers, investors and the concerned communities" (Bauwens and Kostakis 2014: 358). But the broad movement advocated by the P2P Foundation also aims to show "how a transition to the new modes of production, governance and ownership can solve the ecological and climate crises" (P2P Foundation 2016). As such, it would also seek institutional synergies between "open cooperativism" and forms of common-pool resources management such as those found in Maine lobster fisheries. But it could also seek synergies between a social movement such as OWS, and the cooperative movement. In fact, as Noam Chomsky himself pointed out, "community-based enterprises" (2012: 75) could serve as a means for social movements to "persist and … be brought into the wider community" (2012: 74).

The additional goal mentioned in the above passage consists in highlighting the need to make the connections between different sets of practices "visible." As such it implies a role in making what, symbolically, these different endeavours share or, put differently, narrating a story that unites them. Different undertakings, such as those discussed in the pre-

vious section, do not simply correspond to different ways of organizing economic life or managing natural resources. They mark alternative ways of relating to the self, others and nature, guided by a particular ethos. Essentially, they are responsible for cultivating distinct symbolic articulated around an ecological and anthropological ethic "that is essentially based on an understanding of the interconnectedness of all life forms" (Deb 2009: 269). The labour of narration in question, which is also a labour of symbolic production, rests on making visible the values and representations comprised in the social movements and economic organizations discussed above. It is, above all, about narrating a collective "we" or, as John Holloway put it, a "struggle to find adequate forms of articulating our we-ness, to find ways of uniting in mutual respect our distinct dignities" (Holloway 2002: 105). Asserting the collective "we" is these narrative terms, then, not only entails making visible the interconnections between different commons-based undertakings, but also means shedding light on what binds individuals, as well as individuals and nature, together.

The Rationality of "the Commons"

Both the above labour of symbolic production rests on yet another element. I call it the rationality of "the commons." While it informs practices making up the undertakings under discussion in this chapter, it could also play an essential part in guiding the narration of a collective "we." For, to be able to narrate individuals' dependence on others and nature in self-realization, one must be in a position to account for the existence of a mode of action capable of actualizing communal well-being. I therefore end this chapter by reviewing a mode of action I regard as central to the narrative of emancipation whose broad features I sought to draw in this part of the book.

To act rationally means acting on the basis of reason or logic. It follows that to act on the basis of *economic* reason entails regarding utility-maximization as the most rational or logical end of action. Under its guise, acting rationally turns into a *solitary* and *exclusive* mode of action. It individualizes action to the extent that utility-maximization is construed as a matter of self-interest, whose pursuit is realized as a competitive endeav-

our. As such, it is predicated upon a first-person singular ontology. But it is, too, imperialist. Although "its "European" identity has been class-globalized … so that it is no longer western and white" (Spivak 2009: 2),[3] it remains shot through with values and interests of economically powerful Western white men. Universalizing it through the entrenchment of markets in societies across the world, therefore, entails the universalization of character traits, conducts and norms of action aligned with the interests of the socially dominant. As it imposes itself on societies both within and outside the Western world, economic reason also imposes this group's interests.

The rationality of "the commons," on the other hand, necessarily presupposes a first-person plural ontology. It entails a mode of action whereby individuals seek to meet an end shared with other individuals. Under its guise the *communal* character of ends is both recognized and acted upon. Commons-based rationality thereby changes what individuals regard as the logical course of action, in such a way as to compel individuals to favour cooperation over competition in the pursuit of their ends. It compels them to recognize the inextricable link between personal and communal well-being. For example, worker cooperative members' collective decision to favour general wage cuts over the dismissal of a few individuals in economically challenging times, rests on the recognition that an individual member's interest is inseparable from the interest of the cooperative as a whole. Similarly, forms of common-pool resources management, such as those of the Maine Lobster fisheries, depend on individuals recognizing the interest they share with other individuals in both meeting their needs and conserving natural resources. Unlike economic rationality, then, the rationality of "the commons" rests on an *inclusive* logic of action predicated upon a first-person plural ontology.

Furthermore, despite its apparent affinity with Habermas' (1984) "communicative rationality," the form of rationality I conceptualize here is characterized by a somewhat different mode of action. Although it rests on cooperation and, consequently, involves actions oriented towards mutual understanding, it presupposes a different harmonization of plans of action from the one anticipated by the member of the Frankfurt School. In the

[3] See Part II for a more detailed discussion of the interest- and value-laden character of economic rationality.

latter's theoretical framework, communicative reason is said to guide a consensual reconciliation of difference through the "force of the better argument." As such, Habermas's rationality is premised upon a first-person singular ontology, whereby each participant's difference is an *obstacle to overcome* in consensus. Each is effectively an "other" whose interests, needs and desires ought to be "understood" and reconciled with. Thus, despite his sustained efforts to conceptualize an inter-subjective form of emancipation, Habermas was unable to safeguard his theoretical framework against the (neo)liberal conception of a self whose interests, self-definition and self-understanding predate interpersonal understanding. Under the guise of the rationality of the commons, however, individuals are compelled to recognize that their interests are *fundamentally inseparable* from those of others. Other individuals are not so much "others" as "partners" in self-realization. What is to be communicatively "understood" is what *unites* these individuals, *amid their differences*. It can neither serve the universalization of the interests of the few, nor prioritize the force of the better argument, for it elicits the discovery of an intrinsic *sameness in difference.* Instead, then, it compels individuals to both recognize their dependence on other individuals *and* nature[4] in the pursuit of ends and "bring about the harmony between individual and universal gratification" (Marcuse 1969b: 191).

The rationality of "the commons" is not only a means for giving concrete form to a first-person plural ontology *in action*. It also constitutes an indispensable narrative frame of reference for the representation of a life emancipated from economic rationality. In sum, then, although the collective "we" is already a reality in varied and dispersed undertakings, putting the labour of representation to work in such a way as to make visible both what unites these different endeavours and the "interconnectedness of all life forms" is an essential step in the long march towards emancipation. It is an essential step in mobilizing a sustained opposition to a symbolic regime that incessantly seeks to tear apart the inseverable.

[4] It is worth noting here that Habermas (1971) did not wish to regard nature as a partner in emancipation. For a critique of this claim, see Masquelier (2014).

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Conclusion of Part IV

This chapter broadly aimed to draw the contours of a narrative of emancipation and identify possible avenues for its development into a sustained source of opposition to the neoliberal symbolic regime. Before doing so, I nevertheless endeavoured to show that the prospects for emancipatory political action are brighter than is often assumed in the sociological literature. The symbolic production of a collective "we," upon which this form of action rests, is not only a task members of contemporary social movements themselves have sought to undertake. It also constitutes a timely project under the guise of a universalizing condition of neoliberal servitude. But the united mobilization against the precarization of life induced by economic facts need not deny the presence of individualized and dispersed strategies of resistance or the existence of diverse experiences of precarity. Rather, it entails putting the labour of narrative identity to work in such a way as to assert what unites individuals amid their differences. This, I further argued, can be achieved by, firstly, recounting the untold entanglement of diverse stories of domination in such a way as to assert the inherent collective "we-ness" in domination. It presupposes the development of what I chose to call an *ontological narrative of domination*, symbolically asserting togetherness in "otherness" and servitude.

C. Masquelier, *Critique and Resistance in a Neoliberal Age*,
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The plights of white blue-collar men, female temporary workers, black working-class men, female immigrant housekeepers, oil sands of Canada and the Amazonian forest are, under this narrative's guise, at once matters disrespect *and* injustice, all united in a sacrificial otherness animated by the entrenchment of the logic of competitive and self-interested utility-maximization in societies. Only once such a first-order narrative has been formulated can the representation of an emancipated collective "we" articulated around the core sites of struggle identified in this work begin to be formulated.

Second, then, I showed how the labour of symbolic production could be put to work for the formulation of a *representational narrative of emancipation*. This involved imagining a life governed by the ethos of "the commons." At this stage of my argumentation, the narration of a collective "we" involved recognizing the communal or collective character of self-realization. But the latter was not so much imagined as located in pre-existing undertakings. What was imagined, however, was the symbolic convergence of these dispersed undertakings articulated around the ethos of "the commons" and its concomitant rationality that could, in turn, serve as a guide for institutional synergies. Thus, the emancipation from the precarizing and hierarchizing rule of economic facts envisioned here is no mere utopia in the cloud. Instead, its onset is predicated upon a form of political action that harnesses, cultivates and coordinates the values and practices found in pre-existing undertakings such as worker cooperatives, social movements, online peer production and common-pool resource management. I nevertheless wish to leave the form of political settlement expected to emerge from these developments open for discussion, for such a complex set of issues is, I think, best left to the labour of the imagination of those directly involved in the protests.

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Conclusion

Contemporary sociological accounts are filled with a myriad of images of flows and perpetual movements, often evoking feelings of insecurity and uncertainty, amid an increasingly fragmented social fabric (Harvey 1990; Giddens 1991; Beck 1992; Sennett 1998). The neoliberal capitalist world, it seems, comprises highly complex and differentiated societies governed by instability and unpredictability. They have become "existentially troubling" (Giddens 1991: 21).

Under the guise of such precarious conditions of life, individuals are said to devote a great deal of their energy adapting to new situations. They are continuously compelled to devise strategies for self-realization in the light of new information and rapidly changing circumstances. Control is incessantly sought, but nowhere to be found. As the spirit of survival rises to prominence, the emancipatory spirit is relegated to the dustbin of history. For, pressures to adjust to ceaseless change force the collective demand for releasing humanity from various constraints into obscurity. But precarity has also come to affect how individuals relate to each other and their environment. The spirit of survival it induces compels individuals to prioritize self-defence in the pursuit of their ends. It further entrenches and exacerbates the divisive rule of competi-

C. Masquelier, *Critique and Resistance in a Neoliberal Age*,
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tive and self-interested utility-maximization. It expands and deepens the reach of the logic of "othering," whereby "others," be they individuals or nature, are debased, mastered and/or manipulated in utility-maximization. Under the guise of precarity, then, predispositions upon which the project of emancipation rests, namely the treatment of the release from servitude *and* collective action as desirable and, indeed, possible endeavours, appear to vanish.

In fact, precarity is no mere social condition, it also marks the advent of a culture of self-defence, whereby economic issues are, more often than not, wrapped up in issues of identity. Uncertainty and insecurity are not only apprehended as obstacles to one's economic well-being, they are also experienced as obstacles to a secure identity. Their rule has led to a complex interplay of economic and cultural issues in the concerns and demands expressed by citizens across the advanced capitalist world, recently surfacing in the form of reactionary forces among large proportions of the electorate across Europe and the United States. Self-defence, here, entails defending the self against scarcity and threats to identity, *at once*. Meanwhile, environmental issues retreat into the background. When survival is apprehended as a form of self-defence, it independences self-preservation. Solving environmental problems, however, rests on an altogether different logic, namely one according to which individuals recognize and act upon their dependence on nature in self-preservation.

This rather bleak diagnosis of the present-day situation appears to offer little hope, if any at all, for emancipatory coalitional politics. The divisive character of precarity, along with that of other defining features of the neoliberal condition could, if treated at face value, be regarded as far too divisive to be able to expect the emergence of an emancipatory project based on the intersection of diverse that is economic, cultural and environmental, solidarities. But this book reached a very different conclusion, made possible by performing the different functions of critique exposed in the introduction.

First, social reality was defetishized. This was achieved by locating the defining features of our age, such as flexibility, precarity and individualization, within the political-economic context of the neoliberal condition. Indeed, doing so made it possible to appreciate the role of political *decisions* behind processes serving the entrenchment of markets

and economic rationality in society. But to create the new, the old first had to be destroyed. This did not only entail such reforms as the vast reductions in welfare provisions, withdrawal of regulatory controls and curtailment of labour rights but also involved sustained efforts, by the neoliberal political elites, to cultivate the legitimacy of their decisions. This was achieved through a labour of *symbolic production*, instrumental in objectivating schemes of perception aligned with the interests of economic elites keen to maximize the competitiveness of their economic space. Under such a reading, for example, flexibility-induced precarity is no inevitable outcome of social evolution, but a symbolically *cultivated engine of economic growth*. Personal responsibility is no natural predisposition but a cultivated conduct, *harnessed for economic ends*. Analysing social reality in these terms, then, helped better appreciate the *artificial* and *ideological* character of the great neoliberal transformation, while capturing the broad range of political, economic, cultural and environmental practices instrumental in supporting it. Above all, this exercise served to assert both the non-inevitability of the *status quo* and value of human action in social change.

But it was also essential for critique not to fall victim of neoliberalism's ruse, by asserting the existence of *de facto* and clearly defined divisions between diverse political struggles. In Part II, I therefore turned to an analysis of domination in an effort to understand what could unite its different forms under the neoliberal condition. A particular emphasis was placed upon the role of economic rationality in domination. The reasons for doing so are simple. Not only is it the privileged mode of action under the logic of competition, it, too, plays a central role in reinforcing pre-existing hierarchies. Part of the explanation is to be found in the following passage:

> A competition must in some way perform [the] abstract idea of equality. Inevitably, contestants will bring varying levels of skill, power and enthusiasm to any competition, which ought (ideally) to influence what type of unequal outcome results. The contestants will seek to ensure that the competition is conducted in ways that maximize their own contingent advantages, but the rules must be applied such that, to some minimal extent, those contestants are restricted to an equal extent. (Davies 2014: 61)

The competition game presupposes a *de jure* equality of opportunity and rejects any intervention aimed at increasing an individual's competitive advantage in utility-maximization. For, under its guise, any such intervention would mean giving this individual an unfair advantage in competition. This explains why neoliberal elites keen to entrench the logic of competition and economic rationality have supervised such vast projects as welfare cuts. However, while the competition game presupposes an abstract level-playing field between utility-maximizers, no such equality exists *de facto*. The logic of competition and economic rationality were entrenched amid pre-existing structural inequalities. Denying their existence, as proponents of the game in question often do, means denying the existence of uneven and illegitimate restrictions on "contestants" at the bottom of socio-economic and identity-based hierarchies. In turn, it means protecting the competitive advantage of individuals better equipped with economic and cultural resources in their efforts to maximize utility.

In fact, in Part II, I sought to show that the apparent fairness of the competition-game-turned-economic-fact, as well as the neutrality of economic rationality, conceal a socially biased moral agenda: that of elite white men who have, historically, been successful at playing the game of individual enrichment and occupied positions of power. Unconstrained by their race or gender, these elites are particularly well positioned to rationalize their own successes and the failures of others as matters of personal responsibility. They are inclined to promote presuppositions about the nature of individuals modelled on their own experiences. Their efforts to entrench the logic of competition and economic rationality are, too, efforts to objectivate their schemes of perception, articulated around the vision of self-interested individuals naturally inclined to compete in the maximization of gain and accept responsibility for their successes or failures. Conducts and schemes of perception, such as those grounded in altogether different experiences of the competitive game of individual enrichment are, in turn, denigrated, denaturalized or condemned as lacking moral virtue. *Shot through with the interests and values of the socially dominant*, economic rationality acts as an *economically hierarchizing* and *culturally selective* mode of action. But it, too, raises humanity above nature, by compelling individuals to regard the biophysical environment

as an object of manipulation or merely *exploitable resource* in the competition game. As such, economic rationality lies at the *de facto* intersection of diverse forms of domination.

The negative consequences of this particular mode of action also constituted a core target of attack of contemporary social movements. But despite uniting individuals around a condemnation of injustices, precarity or environmental problems resulting from the entrenchment of markets in society, these internally differentiated movements did struggle to give concrete form to the unity of their diverse struggles. While they succeeded in interrupting the self-evidence of the neoliberal condition, they were less successful in denaturalizing the divisions and conflicts the neoliberal symbolic regime cultivates. I therefore sought to build upon the discussion of the intricately imbricated forms of domination provided in Part II to assert, conceptually, the unity of struggles emanating from the three key sites of resistance: the economy, culture and nature. Because a demand for, say, economic security is also a demand for securing the conditions for a stable identity and one very likely to affect the economy's environmental impact by contracting market flexibilization, the sites in question are far more entwined than anticipated by Nancy Fraser or Axel Honneth (2003). It was therefore important to move beyond their respective framework to recognize the *mutually dependent* and *co-constitutive* character of these different sites. But it was also important to do so in order to regard *nature as a site of struggle in its own right*, namely as one likely to affect how economic and lifestyle or identity issues themselves are articulated. As such, recognizing the intricate entwinement conceptually was an essential step for grasping possible tensions between defining struggles of our age but also, and crucially, for identifying their *points of intersection*. Once this is achieved, a *collective will* giving political form to these intersections begins to emerge and sets an agent of resistance based on a coalition of struggles in motion.

This agent is, as argued in Part IV, one that could be expected to seek emancipation. Indeed, despite the notable emergence of individualized practices and rise to prominence of identity politics, the emergence of *collective* political action oriented towards the *elimination of various (economic and extra-economic) constraints* on self-realization remains a reasonable possibility. In fact, identity politics and emancipatory politics

are linked by their appeal to a self or an identity to be liberated from constraints. Both are also linked by the condition of servitude induced by economic facts, constraining individuals economically and culturally. But only once this oppressed self is construed in collective terms or as a collective "we" can they both be reconciled in practice. Moreover, only once humanity's natural existence and dependence on the biophysical environment for its own self-preservation is recognized, can the latter be included in the collective "we" in question, and the reconciliation of political struggles be extended to environmentalist issues.

Emancipatory coalitional politics does nevertheless face the non-negligible task of counteracting a symbolic regime compelling different oppressed groups to separate their struggles symbolically and regard self-realization as a matter of individual responsibility. For this reason, the labour of symbolic production could play a valuable role in the project of emancipation. It could be put to work for the narration of a collective "we" in both domination and emancipation. It could provide individuals with the means to assert, symbolically, the *de facto* first-person plural *ontology of domination*. But it could, too, set in motion a future-oriented *representational narrative of emancipation*, informed by the ethos of "the commons." In virtue of its actual existence in dispersed undertakings, its actual and potential emancipatory benefits in the economy, culture and nature, and capacity to assert a collective "we" in self-realization, the ethos in question could serve as a valuable basis upon which to represent a life outside the confines of the competition game and economic rationality.

This book, then, set out to formulate a critique of the neoliberal age predominantly concerned with highlighting what unites individuals. This has broadly involved efforts to ground social reality in human action and reveal what connects individuals in oppression, as well as what could potentially unite them in political action. Too often are we confronted with diagnoses of the contemporary situation with a tendency to highlight what separates individuals, at the expense of what connects them. Along with images of divisions are also often evoked increasingly remote and distant structures governing social life (Giddens 1990; Bauman 2000 Beck and Beck-Gernsheim 2002) and impersonal forms of power and domination (Foucault 2008). To be sure, there are real and tangible divisions in the contemporary world. The increasing influence of market

forces on neoliberal societies cannot be ignored either. But even markets are reliant on economic actors' decisions. In fact, no market would exist without buyers and sellers. No market would be "free" without individuals active in de-regulating them and entrenching property rights. Furthermore, as the neoliberal condition divides, it also creates potentially favourable conditions for collective action, beyond the intersections of diverse forms of domination discussed in this book. Neoliberal capitalism is inherently globalizing. It opens borders to movements of capital, goods, individuals and information. De-regulation, financialization and flexibilization have played a significant role in immersing individuals in complex networks of interdependence. Financialization has, too, led to the spread of shared ownership and share-based decision making, thereby prompting G.D.H. Cole, decades ago, to regard it as a "sign of the growing 'democratisation' of the capitalist system" (Cole 1938: 123). Moreover, while under the guise of post-Fordism, flexibilization precarizes life, the former's distinctive emphasis on team work, along with its reliance on outsourcing and decentralization strategies have opened the door for "cooperation" to become "a key managerial strategy and a dominant corporate ideology of flexible accumulation" (Kasmir 1996: 20). Despite leading to the growing concentration of wealth in a few hands, increased precariousness and the further entrenchment of the individualist bourgeois ethos, the neoliberal condition falls short of eliminating conditions fruitful for emancipatory political action. Instead, it acts as a stark reminder of the desirability of collective action mobilized against the servitude of socially hierarchizing and oppressive economic facts, as well as of the fact that any great transformation is achieved through human action.

Even an archetypical neoliberal condition of existence such as precarity, which exerts a divisive influence on societies and increase individuals' sense of powerlessness, could have progressively transformative effects. It could compel individuals lacking "structural or positional power" to appreciate the value of "bulk[ing] up the muscle of collective power" (Meyer 2016: 13) and connect solidarities in political action. This particular orientation is nevertheless predicated upon two core predispositions: recognizing that human action can successfully lead to change and accepting the possibility for discovering sameness in difference. These, as

Rachel Meyer (2016) demonstrated, can be cultivated. In the face of a political-economic order and reactionary forces that divide to conquer, a campaign, movement or foundation could indeed play a vital and timely strategic role in asserting the value of solidarity in transformative action. It could help facilitate the conversion of the reigning discontent with political elites into a progressive force, namely one for which change is best achieved by resisting together.

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