emerging networking logic, formations such as MRG, PGA, and the Zapatistas have generated new utopian visions of political and social interaction based on global coordination among diverse local struggles. These networks have most clearly articulated the increasing confluence among network norms, forms, and technologies. Finally, autonomous movements, including militant squatters and certain indigenous and poor people’s movements, primarily emphasize local forms of struggle (see Starr and Adams 2004) but sometimes engage in transnational networking. These movements are staunchly anticapitalist, assuming a posture of direct confrontation with, and working toward solutions beyond, the market and state.

Despite their differences, activists within each sector are struggling to regain democratic control over their daily lives, wresting it back from transnational corporations and global financial elites. If social movements are signs that announce the existence of a conflict, as Melucci (1989) contends, anti-corporate globalization movements point to a democratic deficit in the current regime of globalization, where the market has become disembedded from society (Polanyi 1957). What makes contemporary anti-corporate globalization movements unique is their ability to coordinate across vast distances and high levels of diversity and difference, overcoming many of the political and geographic obstacles that stymied mass movements in the past. Indeed, emerging networking logics have reinforced political models based on horizontal coordination, open access, and direct democracy. Although these principles are sometimes violated in practice, often resulting in heated micro-level political struggles, broader networking logics and ideals have helped give rise to ongoing experimentation with new digital technologies, organizational structures, and radically democratic norms. Precisely how these diverse spheres interact will be explored in the chapters to come.

Late one evening in September 2002, three months after the campaign against the World Bank had concluded, I sat down for a round of beers and tapas with a half-dozen activists from MRG and RCADE. We had just finished another marathon meeting—this time about creating a new squatted activist social center in the heart of Barcelona. After wandering through a maze of streets and alleys, we settled on a run-down bar not far from the world-renowned Palau de la Música. Regardless of how long the official meetings lasted, there was always an eager group of colegas ready to continue discussing the important issues of the day in a more intimate setting. Such tightknit friendship networks—a typical Spanish and Catalan institution—provided the social glue that kept more far-flung social movement networks together.

On this evening, we were debating whether or not Catalan anti-corporate globalization networks were stronger in the outlying pueblos surrounding Barcelona precisely because they facilitated stronger interpersonal ties. Indeed, this concern had led to the initial proposal for building a new squatted social center in Barcelona, which would provide a space where activists from RCADE and MRG could gather.

The collective discussion soon gave way to individual conversations, and I found myself chatting with Pascual. As I devoured olives and sipped from...
my caña (a small glass of beer), he explained that he had previously helped build a social center in Gracia, a neighborhood with a long history of anarchist *ateneos populares*, community spaces during the early 1990s that housed political debates, educational forums about issues such as women’s rights, vegetarianism, and free love, and a variety of cultural events (A. Smith 2002, 32). Pascual viewed such ateneos as an important model for present-day projects. When I asked him why he was so committed to building activist social centers, he replied, “Because I’m an anarchist, and we have to create our own institutions! If the antiglobalization movement can do that, we’ll be unstoppable!”

I was initially taken aback by his resoluteness, but I soon came to realize Pascual was passionate about almost everything he did. Although he did not believe in states, for example, he was firmly committed to Catalan “self-determination,” and like so many young Catalan activists, he was a staunch supporter of grassroots struggles in the Global South, having worked with a community-based project in Nicaragua. Above all, Pascual believed in the right of people to collectively forge their own destinies, free from the constraints of the market and state. He saw anti-corporate globalization activism as a logical extension of his dedication to anarchism, Catalan autonomy, and global solidarity. I was also struck that evening by his powerful sense of historical destiny—that somehow we were reliving Barcelona’s revolutionary past. For Pascual, the repression he had experienced during the June anti-World Bank protest was just a small taste of future battles to come. But he was not entirely convinced. When I suggested that authorities did not really view us as such a threat, he ironically replied by citing a headline from the Spanish papers, “Of course they do; we are the ‘antiglobalization soldiers!’”

Since the first PGA Global Days of Action, Barcelona-based activists have played key roles within emerging anti-corporate globalization networks. Militant squatters and solidarity activists spearheaded early organizing efforts in Catalonia, but diverse political forces became involved after Prague, including traditional Marxists and institutional actors. Barcelona-based activists often share strikingly similar visions regarding politics, technology, and organization as their counterparts elsewhere. This can be partly explained by the increasing connections and forms of organization facilitated by the Internet, particularly among younger activists influenced by the global circulation of images, ideas, and tactics related to autonomy, grassroots resistance, direct action, and horizontal networking. Moreover, many European and U.S.-based activists and NGO workers had come into contact during previous solidarity projects and gatherings in places such as Nicaragua, Chiapas, Guatemala, Brazil, and other political hotbeds, particularly in Latin America. Meanwhile, the presence of a similar range of movement actors in so many countries suggests that during the late 1990s “antiglobalization” had emerged as a powerful transnational “master frame” (Snow and Benford 1992), providing a magnet attracting diverse political forces.

At the same time, Catalan anti-corporate globalization movements are also rooted within local social and political contexts. Transnational networking takes place not within abstract, undifferentiated global space but in the historically sedimented contours of concrete places. Instead of viewing place as necessarily opposed to the global, however, I join a growing chorus of scholars who follow Doreen Massey (1994) in conceiving place as always already entangled within a complex nexus of translocal ties and articulations (cf. Escobar 2001; Routledge 2003; Thayer 2001). In this sense, anti-corporate globalization activism articulates with diverse social, cultural, and political dynamics in specific locales, even as activists reach out beyond place to forge transnational connections.

In this chapter, I explore the role of place within anti-corporate globalization networks by advancing two principal arguments. First, I contend that networking logics in Catalonia have been profoundly shaped by the region’s unique political culture and history, including a tradition of “unitary” mobilization forged through decades of nationalist and anti-Franco struggle and its anarchist legacy. Contradictions between deeply ingrained patterns of popular opposition and the perceived oligarchic nature of political parties and unions have accentuated recent conflicts between network-based and traditional organizing practices. Second, I suggest that alternative anti-corporate globalization movement networks in Barcelona involve distinct configurations of norms, forms, and technologies, which are influenced by their own specific genealogies.

**Locating Anti–Corporate Globalization Movements in Catalonia**

Organized by a new network called the Movement for Global Resistance (MGR), the Catalan mobilization against the World Bank and IMF meetings in
Prague in September 2000 was a key turning point for activists in Barcelona. Prague was an opportunity to re-create the Seattle experience closer to home, as Marc, a former squatter and MRG founder, recalled: “Seattle implied something much larger than we thought. Things were changing, and we had to introduce this here in Catalonia.” Activists in Barcelona had organized previous anti-corporate globalization actions, but Prague led to an explosion in participation and media coverage. Prague also helped diffuse an anti-corporate globalization discourse and led to the emergence of MRG as a network linking local and global struggles. As Marta explained, “Prague was a huge step forward in terms of communicating a global message. It brought together sectors that had never worked together before. We created a network, and this could not have happened otherwise.”

MRG specifically involved the convergence of two sectors: a radical anti-capitalist bloc, involving squatters, Zapatista supporters, and anti-EU organizers, and a less militant group of international solidarity and NGO-based activists, many of whom had taken part in RCADE. At the same time, although network-based movements such as MRG and RCADE precipitated anti-corporate globalization activism in Barcelona, the entire Catalan Left would join the fold during the campaign against the World Bank in spring 2001. As we will see, Catalan anti-corporate globalization mobilizations would be organized around broad unitary spaces, recalling previous mass movements in Catalonia.

The dynamics of collective action in Barcelona have been influenced by the political, cultural, and social history of the region, including the broad-based opposition to Franco, the transition to democracy, and the emergence of new social movements in the 1970s and 1980s. Contemporary social movements also bear the mark of two pre-civil war political legacies: Catalan nationalism and anarchism. Nacionalismo became a unifying force within the democratic opposition to the dictatorship and remains hegemonic within the Catalan Left, while anarchism ceased to be a major political factor after the fall of the Second Republic (1931–39). At the same time, the values and practices associated with Catalan nationalism and anarchism helped forge a unique culture of opposition in Barcelona, whose distinctive features resonate with contemporary network norms and forms. It is no accident that Barcelona has become such an important center of anti-corporate globalization activity.1

Pre-Civil War Movements

Claims for cultural and political autonomy have long dominated the Catalan landscape, but full-fledged political nationalism emerged in the late 1800s, first as a conservative movement uniting traditional rural sectors with a rising urban bourgeoisie (Díez Medrano 1995, 96), and later as a progressive force in the second decade of the twentieth century (Carr 1966, 555). After his victory in the Spanish civil war, Franco repressed Catalan language and culture, sparking a nationalist resistance that would unite the democratic opposition. The anarchist-dominated labor movement represented the other major social struggle in the pre–civil war period, becoming a revolutionary force in Barcelona, Zaragoza, and certain rural areas of Andalusia and Aragon (Alvarez-Junco 1986, 191). Barcelona acquired its reputation as the “Rose of Fire” at the height of the anarchist bombings in the 1890s (A. Smith 2002, 3), but the movement achieved its fullest expression with the rise of the anarcho-syndicalist Confederación Nacional del Trabajo (CNT) during the Second Republic. Although anarchism would disappear as an organized force, many of the ideas, values, and practices it promoted—self-management, autonomy, decentralized coordination, and direct action—would significantly influence contemporary activists.3

The Anti-Franco Movement and the Transition to Democracy

Beginning in the late 1950s, workers helped foment a burgeoning movement against the dictatorship, spontaneously organizing shop floor assemblies. These formed the embryo of a new union movement, Comisiones Obreras (Workers’ Commissions) (CCOO), whose formal structure emerged in the mid-1960s (Fishman 1990, 96–7). CCOO involved an innovative form of organization based on open, loose-knit, and participatory structures. Indeed, CCOO was viewed as a sociopolitical movement, not an organization (Molinero and Ysas 2002, 200). The absence of formal structure facilitated collective action under repressive circumstances, but leaders also believed they were building a new kind of union (un sindicato de nuevo tipo) characterized by grassroots assemblies, direct participation, and the defense of all workers (Fishman 1990, 100). Although the Communist Partit Socialista Unificado de Catalunya (PSUC) would become the leading force within CCOO, the
movement remained open and participatory. This emphasis on participatory assemblies would become part of a wider culture of opposition in Spain and Catalonia.

Students, neighborhood activists, feminists, and ecologists also played key roles in the pro-democracy movement, which Catalan nationalism helped solidify. The church provided an early haven for Catalan cultural resurgence, linguistic expression, and nationalist militancy under Franco (Conversi 1997, 127). Catalan culture and language were also reproduced through a network of voluntary associations, including societies of Sardana dancers, choir singers, Scouts, and football fans (133–35), many of which continue to promote nationalist identities. As nationalism became more confrontational, it fused with Catholic and Marxist traditions to forge a counterhegemonic frame around anti-Francoism and democracy (Johnston 1991), reinforced by an oppositional culture based on Catalan language, symbols, and identity (Conversi 1997, 139).

The anti-Franco movement had a significant impact on future grassroots struggles in Catalonia. First, Catalan nationalism became a dominant political force, which is still evident among social movements today. Second, the tradition of unitary campaigns, together with the unifying force of Catalan nationalism, produced a stronger and less divided oppositional culture in Catalonia than in other regions of the Spanish state. Indeed, the unitary model still forms the basic structure within contemporary campaigns and mobilizations. Finally, many contemporary grassroots leaders were radicalized through their participation in the movement against Franco.

Moreover, the transition to democracy also helped shape future grassroots struggles in Catalonia. According to some observers, leftist party leaders made a conscious effort to moderate mass protest after Franco's death in 1975 in order to create a more stable political environment (Tarrow 1995, 228). The lingering perception among many activists that the transition was top-down and reformist reinforced strong anti-party feelings and an emphasis on civil society as the locus for social change. In addition, by the end of the dictatorship, the Partido Comunista de España (PCP), and PSUC in Catalonia, had largely succeeded in imposing their leadership on the new political actors that emerged, including environmental, pacifist, feminist, and student groups (Alvarez-Junco 1994, 314), generating a widespread critique of political parties and a commitment to autonomy and diversity within subsequent movements.

The 1990s and the Rise of Anti-Corporate Globalization Networks

The late 1980s to early 1990s was a period of relative quiescence, but several important movements formed during this time that would contribute to contemporary anti-corporate globalization networks. Antimilitarism arose as an organized resistance with the Conscientious Objector Movement (moc) in the late 1970s (Pastor 1998, 82), growing substantially after 1989 as moc began a campaign of "insubmission" to all forms of obligatory service, including social alternatives to the military (Equip d'Anàlisis 2002, 10). Antimilitarists have been particularly active within Spanish and Catalan anti-corporate globalization movements, bringing with them their radical critique of the state, emphasis on decentralization, horizontal relations and self-management, and their experience with nonviolent direct action.

Squatters also played a particularly important role in the formation of MRG. Inspired by the Italian tradition of converting squatted buildings into self-managed social centers housing diverse political, cultural, and social activities, Spanish and Catalan activists began squatting in cities such as Barcelona, Madrid, Valencia, and Bilbao in the mid-1980s (Herreros 1999, 14–8; Martínez López 2002, 95–109). The movement expanded particularly rapidly in Barcelona in the early 1990s (Martínez López 2002, 144–47). Squatting involves a radical critique of free market capitalism and urban speculation by reappropriating and collectively self-managing abandoned buildings. Squatters reject all forms of hierarchy, promote self-management, and stress autonomy from political parties, trade unions, and representative institutions (Pallares, Costa, and Feixa 2002, 92–3). Social centers also provide spaces for generating countercultural values and practices (32). Although ideologically diverse, squatting forms part of a wider group of "self-managed movements" that emerged in the 1990s together with antimilitarism, alternative communication (pirate radios, websites, counterinformation), and solidarity economics (fair trade, cooperatives) (123).

Finally, international solidarity activism also had a major influence on the development of Spanish and Catalan anti-corporate globalization networks. In the early 1990s, international solidarity and grassroots labor activists...
created the 0.7 Platform, which pressured government institutions to designate 0.7 percent of their budgets to international development aid. During fall 1994 the platform organized an illegal campout along Barcelona's Diagonal Boulevard, together with similar actions around the Spanish state, leading to an increase in awareness about development and global economic justice issues (Larana 1999, 351-52; Díaz-Salazar 1996, 39-43). Activists from 0.7 later founded RCADE, which incorporated the 0.7 movement's emphasis on grassroots participation and horizontal decision making (Xarxa Ciutadana 2001, 61). In March 2000, six months before Prague, RCADE organized a Zapatista-inspired "Consulta Social" against the foreign debt, which was among the first mobilizations organized along a network-based model in Spain and Catalonia. With the founding of MRG, solidarity activists’ focus on participatory democracy and global solidarity would converge with an emphasis on local autonomy and grassroots self-management among militant squatters, antimilitarists, and Zapatista supporters alike, generating a unique form of activism guided by emerging networking logics and practices.

**Network Norms, Forms, and Technologies in Catalonia**

Anti-corporate globalization networks in Spain and Catalonia thus emerged through a complex interaction among local political and cultural traditions, wider global forces, and new technological practices. In this sense, networks such as RCADE and MRG reflected an increasing confluence among organizational forms, political norms, and digital technologies. For example, the RCADE-sponsored Consulta was organized through a statewide network of autonomous collectives, which coordinated through electronic Listservs and websites. At the same time, the decentralized structure of the Internet articulated with an emphasis on horizontal coordination and grassroots participation among RCADE activists. Although their libertarian ethic was shaped, in part, by the region’s unique culture of opposition, it was significantly reinforced by their interaction with new technologies.

RCADE-based activists self-reflexively employed the terminology of computer networks to characterize their organizational structure. A new political language thus emerged as activists began experimenting with new organizational and technological practices. The "Network," as RCADE was popularly known, was composed of local, regional, and statewide "nodes." Local nodes constituted the Network’s organizational and political base and were defined as “self-defined, self-managed, and self-organized spaces.” Local nodes further coordinated with their regional and statewide counterparts during periodic meetings and annual gatherings. As one early document explained: "We are building an organizational formation that is difficult to classify. We have called it a ‘citizens network’ formed by independent persons and collectives that adhere to the network and can take advantage of its structure. Many of these people are organized into local nodes, which determine the dynamic of collective action through assemblies. These connect to other nodes, creating intermediate spheres of coordination and/or decision.”

Moreover, activists communicated and coordinated through local, regional, and statewide Listservs and web pages between physical assemblies and mobilizations, allowing for exchange, coordination, and collective action beyond the local level. In addition to using new digital technologies as tools, RCADE-based activists thus purposefully appropriated the structure and language of the Internet itself. As Joan explained: “We organized ourselves as nodes, using the nomenclature of the Internet. This was completely new, because we were thinking in network terms. The nodes were the places where information was produced and made public, the physical embodiment of the Internet, what we might call affinity groups today. We took the idea, not of a platform—we didn’t want to work as a platform—but rather of a network.”

Like RCADE before it, MRG was similarly founded as a loose, decentralized space for communication and coordination, designed to mobilize as many sectors, groups, and collectives as possible around specific objectives. As the network’s manifesto declared, “We understand MRG as a tool for collective mobilization, education, and exchange, which at the same time, respects and preserves the autonomy of participating people and groups, reinforcing all the voices taking part in the action.” The network’s organizational structure reflected the emerging networking logic prevalent among many anti-corporate globalization activists, involving, as Pau suggested, “working as a network, through horizontal assemblies, and with local autonomy in order to reach people with a more open and less dogmatic style.”

As with similar networks elsewhere, new digital technologies were central to the early development of MRG. After participating in global English and Spanish-language Listservs, Catalan activists created a statewide list in May.
2000 to plan for the protests against the World Bank and IMF in Prague, out of which Mac emerged. As Mar recalled, "The Internet played a key role in the rise of the antiglobalization movement, both at the international level and in Catalonia." By communicating via Internet, activists from diverse groups and collectives were able to share information and coordinate in a flexible, decentralized manner without hierarchical structures. Before the Internet, horizontal assemblies were tied to our local activity. When we built statewide coordinating mechanisms, we had to use representatives, and this was much slower. According to Joan, the Internet also "favored decentralization and autonomy, which was fantastic in terms of participatory democracy." The Internet thus allowed activists to coordinate more rapidly; it also reinforced their broader libertarian ideals, as technology, norm, and form increasingly coincided.

At the same time, Mac-based activists were also keenly aware of the limitations of new technologies, particularly the threat of information overload. As Mateo suggested, "The Internet is an essential tool, but it's dangerous because it's easy to become overwhelmed." In this respect there was an important generational element, as many older activists found it difficult to keep up. Carme recalled, "Sometimes I'm saturated with too much information. I need to learn how to better identify what interests me and what doesn't. Lots of interesting things come through, but I have to archive them because I don't have time to read everything." Moreover, as Mar pointed out, "New technologies can't replace human interactions. If the movement was only about the Internet, it wouldn't have gone anywhere. Personal relations are still important."

In this sense, the Internet has complemented and facilitated face-to-face interactions, not replaced them. Mac-based activists have thus used electronic networks to stay informed about activities and perform concrete logistical tasks, while complex planning and strategic discussions and relationship building have taken place during periodic assemblies, where virtual networks are embodied. At the same time, digital technologies have reinforced the proliferation of diffuse, loose-knit, and adaptable organizational forms in contrast to traditional models of political organization based on stable structures, clear membership, and political representation. As Nuria and Pau argued in an early document outlining Mac's identity and structure, "Mac provides a space for integration and convergence among people and collectives against global capital, a key role in the antiglobalization movement, both at the international level and in Catalonia." By communicating via Internet, activists from diverse groups and collectives were able to share information and coordinate in a flexible, decentralized manner without hierarchical structures. Before the Internet, horizontal assemblies were tied to our local activity. When we built statewide coordinating mechanisms, we had to use representatives, and this was much slower. According to Joan, the Internet also "favored decentralization and autonomy, which was fantastic in terms of participatory democracy." The Internet thus allowed activists to coordinate more rapidly; it also reinforced their broader libertarian ideals, as technology, norm, and form increasingly coincided.

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Table 4. Anti-corporate globalization movement sectors in Barcelona

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sector</th>
<th>Activist backgrounds</th>
<th>Organizational structure</th>
<th>Participation/commitment</th>
<th>Decision making</th>
<th>Political vision</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Institutional sectors</td>
<td>Older activists with stable jobs and families; most are middle-class Catalan speakers</td>
<td>Formal member organizations with clear leadership, representative structures, and vertical chains of command</td>
<td>Traditional membership and strong organizational identification; paid staff carry out most day-to-day activities</td>
<td>Majority voting; leaders and staff make day-to-day political and administrative decisions</td>
<td>Reformist political orientation; global social democracy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Critical sectors</td>
<td>Working-class activists from Marxist Left, Spanish and Catalan speakers; past experience in anti-Franco movement</td>
<td>Grassroots assemblies; emphasis on centralization</td>
<td>Open participation; strong movement identification</td>
<td>Consensus decision making; little meeting facilitation</td>
<td>Marxism; Trotskyism; reforms as steps toward socialism</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Network-based movements (MSF, SACEF, Indymedia, etc.)</td>
<td>Younger, middle-class activists, mostly Catalan speaking</td>
<td>Diffuse, network-based structures; flat hierarchies (in theory); no formal leaders</td>
<td>Open participation; weak movement identification; extensive use of new digital technologies</td>
<td>Consensus decision making; strong meeting facilitation; collaborative process</td>
<td>Anarchism; ecology, and feminism; local autonomy and global networking</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Militant anticapitalists (squats, anti-militarist collectives, some radical nationalist groups)</td>
<td>Younger, middle-class activists, mostly Catalan speaking (but many also from outside Catalonia)</td>
<td>Small anti-capitalist collectives; flat hierarchies (in theory); no formal leaders</td>
<td>Informal participation; strong identification with local collectives; local self-management</td>
<td>Consensus decision making; strong meeting facilitation; collaborative process</td>
<td>Militant anti-capitalism, anarchism, autonomonous Marxism; direct conflict with state</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
capitalism. It has a diffuse structure, and involves a diffuse sense of individual identification with the movement. MRG should therefore be understood as a movement 'without members'; membership leads to static, non-dynamic structures and a clear and distinct, rather than a more diffuse sense of belonging.20

Catalan anti–corporate globalization networks thus reflect an emerging networking logic, as activists express their political imaginaries directly through organizational and technological practice. As I pointed out in the introduction, however, networking logics are unevenly distributed and often provoke fierce resistance, giving rise to intense cultural politics, which I explore further in chapter 3. Before turning to these dynamics, I outline the principal sectors in the Catalan anti–corporate globalization movement field, emphasizing activist backgrounds, political visions, and alternative modes of organization, participation, and commitment. Who are the anti–corporate globalization activists in Catalonia? What do they believe? How do they organize? How do different sectors reflect alternative configurations of norms, forms, and technologies?21

Institutional Sectors

Institutional sectors involve a diverse array of political and civil society associations in Barcelona, such as leftist political parties, trade unions, and non-governmental organizations (NGOs).22 They are generally reformist in political orientation, vertically structured, and characterized by representative forms of participation. Institutional sectors initially took part in the Barcelona 2001 campaign but later split off from the unitary space to form the Barcelona Social Forum before the campaign against the No. Formal organizations mobilize a more traditional base than networks such as MRG and RCADE and are in a better position to translate activist demands into specific policies. At the same time, grassroots actors often criticize formal organizations for their reformism and hierarchical structures and practices.

Activist Backgrounds

Formal institutions tend to involve older members and participants who have stable jobs and families. Like other activists in Catalonia, most come from middle-class Catalan backgrounds, although many rank-and-file union members are working-class Spanish speakers. Class and language are integrally re-
command, and the selection of official delegates to "represent" the membership base. While networks such as MRG and RCADE attempt to create open spaces for communication and coordination, leftist parties, unions, and NGOs seek to recruit new members as a way to increase their base and leverage greater political influence. Adherents thus join institutions as official members, reflecting a stronger sense of organizational identification. Moreover, formal institutions often count large numbers of affiliates, but only a relatively small number of elected leaders or paid staff members carry out much of the ongoing work. In this sense, although formal organizations may point to significant levels of nominal support, the majority of members are excluded from day-to-day operations.

On the other hand, formal structure often translates into greater organizational stability, avoiding the cyclical pattern associated with grassroots movements. Members can still follow organizational activities from a distance and attend periodic events and demonstrations, but the organization continues to function during periods of demobilization, as formally elected officials and permanent staff carry out ongoing logistical and political activities. Finally, decision making usually involves majority voting rather than consensus. Although perhaps less democratic and participatory, voting is faster, making it easier for older people with stable jobs and families to participate. Formal organizations privilege efficiency, stability, and efficacy, while grassroots activists claim this form of organizing stifles participation, creates a class of professional elites, and privileges the interests of specific organizations above the movement. On the other hand, institutional actors retort that open assemblies are chaotic and not sufficiently representative. Neus, the social movement liaison from Intermon (the Catalan affiliate of UNICEF), pointed out, "You can't treat an individual or collective with four people the same way as a large organization with many people behind it. During the World Bank campaign, for example, things were always changing from one day to the next. We decided something and then the next day someone else would come, and we would vote again. It was out of control!"

Enric, the social movement delegate from Iniciativa per Catalunya (ic), a major leftist party, further explained how activists with more time on their hands ended up making all the important decisions during the anti–World Bank campaign, which "isn't democratic either." Generation also plays an important role, as Enric pointed out: "I have friends who are forty or fifty years old, and they don't have a culture of assemblies, but they also have to have channels for participation. Otherwise this will only be a youth movement. Those from a representative culture won't take part." As we will see, debates over organizational process and form constitute an important aspect of the cultural politics of activist networking.

Political Vision

Institutional actors generally share a reformist political orientation, coinciding with their emphasis on representative modes of organization. In this sense, they promote concrete political and economic reforms through formal participation in electoral politics. For example, regarding the age-old debate between anticapitalism and reform, Enric of ic pointed out, "All the revolutions that happened overnight have failed. We need a much slower process, so as many people as possible can participate. If from inside the system we can create a more human face—the Tobin Tax or canceling the foreign debt, that's great, even if these are only reforms."

Following the same logic, the major transnational financial institutions—World Bank, IMF, WTO—should not necessarily be abolished. Rather, Enric told me, "We have to reform them. The financial and economic powers now want to do away with these institutions. We need to reform them while addressing broader inequalities." Rather than return to the nation-state, globally oriented reformists would create a transnational regulatory regime, which might ultimately lead to a form of global social democracy, as Arman of UGT argued: "The global economy today transcends the national scale. We have to move beyond the welfare state and regulate at an international level. The market has always existed and will always exist. I have a social democratic perspective. The conditions of the market are dangerous, not necessarily the market per se."

Others feel viscerally more anticapitalist but fail to see any realistic alternatives beyond specific policy-oriented reforms. "Capitalism is immoral, unjust, and mistaken," explained Neus of Intermon. "An economy that causes millions of people to live on one dollar a day is a failure, but I don't have a solution. We have to try to avoid the negative aspects of capitalism, save the positive ones, and bring as many people as possible into a debate about how we want to live."
Among institutional actors, ideological reformism thus goes along with a more traditional approach to political participation and organizational form. At the same time, such large member organizations are among the least innovative with respect to adapting new technologies. In part, this has to do with the time required to sort through such large amounts of information. Estelle explained, "The Internet is an important tool, and it allows for different kinds of struggle. It's part of the new political generation. But with all the work I have, I can't keep up. There is so much information and so many e-mails, I can't read everything." Moreover, whereas resource-poor actors, including network-based movements, often gain leverage by using new technologies to reorganize along decentralized lines, reflecting their libertarian ideals, formal organizations tend to incorporate new technologies into their bureaucratic structures (cf. Bennett 2003; Norris 2001). Once again, norm, form, and technology are intricately connected.

Critical Sectors

This category includes anticapitalist groups that organize within grassroots assemblies but favor centralized coordination, viewing the "sovereign" assembly as the primary decision-making body and expression of unity. Militants from this sector favor permanent coordinating structures, not around specific organizations, but rather involving wider coalitions. According to this view, social movements are unified subjects as opposed to open spaces of articulation among autonomous networks and collectives. This current specifically includes traditional tendencies on the extreme Left, including dissident Marxists and Trotskyists, many of whom organize within mainstream and leftist parties and unions, as well as grassroots networks such as ATTAe.

Activist Backgrounds

Critical-sector activists are often middle-aged Catalan and Spanish speakers with stable jobs and families who came of age before the transition and were influenced by the assembly-oriented tradition of cccoo and the unitary model of the anti-Franco movement. For example, Albert of cccoo became politically active in the 1960s with the Communist rsvu and Catalan student movement. His past experiences significantly influenced his current outlook: "A common fascist enemy like Franco was a great help. An enemy like capitalism is not as clear; we have to build consciousness that we are all united against it." He specifically compared the assembly-based form of organization within contemporary anti-corporate globalization movements to the student movement of his youth: "There are equal conditions for large and small organizations, and everyone can convince the whole group, so we have reproduced the space we had created with the Democratic Student Union, where the less politicized base was more important than the leaders.

Jesus, a grassroots militant with cccoo and Izquierda Unida (iu), also began his activist career with the anti-Franco and student struggles of the 1970s. He subsequently took part in the anti-Nato and international solidarity movements, playing a lead role in the 0.7 mobilization in Barcelona. As a member of cccoo's critical sector, he supports open assemblies: "Early on, cccoo was a movement, more interrelated with pacifism and ecology, but it became a closed organization. It is no longer an open, assembly-based movement, but those of us from the critical sector still think [assemblies] are the best way to operate."

Although their particular organizations are often structured along representative lines, activists from the critical sector emphasize participation in broad assembly-based movements, which feature open participation, informal committee structures, and consensus decision making. Anyone can participate in an open assembly, take part in committees, and help make decisions, regardless of whether they belong to an organization, which increases grassroots participation and internal democracy. At the same time, assemblies have no paid staff or elected positions, making them relatively unstable over time. Traditional assemblies have influenced, but also differ from, contemporary networking practices in many important respects.

First, activists from network-based movements such as MRG and RCJADE emphasize strong meeting facilitation, which enhances participation and consensus building. The classic assembly tradition involves relatively unstructured forums that privilege individual expression, leading to long speeches and uneven participation. Second, in traditional assemblies, activists attempt to persuade others rather than coordinate across diverse perspectives. Third, whereas newer movements stress decentralized interaction among autonomous working groups, traditional movements situate authority within
the assembly itself. Finally, traditional Marxists privilege structure and continuity over fluid, contingent formations. For example, during one heated debate about whether to disband the campaign against the World Bank, Albert stated, "We have to take advantage of everything we have built together. It would be a grave error to destroy it, not to give continuity to our work. The channels and connections are our collective patrimony; they help people to feel part of the movement."

Contemporary mobilizations, including the Barcelona campaigns against the World Bank and EU, have evolved into a hybrid form, involving both traditional and contemporary elements. As Meri explained, "We have an assembly, but the commissions have autonomy; there is no voting, and everything is decentralized." In this sense, contemporary networking practices have articulated with traditional Catalan assemblies, generating a unique form of mobilization that integrates new organizational and technological practices with older political traditions.

Like other anti-corporate globalization activists in Barcelona, many traditional Marxists have incorporated digital technologies into their everyday routines. "We have to know how to use the Internet," suggested Albert. "It helps us make new connections. In my political work, the Internet allows me to communicate rapidly with my contacts around the world." Others, such as Meri, a Trotskyist linked to the United Kingdom-based Socialist Workers Party, are more skeptical: "The Internet allows for more horizontal communication and makes everything faster, but it isn't a panacea. When it comes down to it, if you want to organize an event, you have to call people, have face-to-face meetings, agitate in the streets, and talk to people directly." For Meri, the Internet thus complements and reinforces, but does not replace, traditional organizing activities.

Political Vision

Critical-sector activists are resolutely anticapitalist and are influenced by traditional revolutionary and state-centered Marxist strategies. For example, Jesús told me, "While capitalism still exists, there is no way to get rid of injustice in the world. As long as there are markets and competition, there is no solution." Regarding concrete reforms, Albert exclaimed, "neos don't confront the system. They apply band-aids, while we address root causes. The Tobin Tax is acceptable to the system. I'll struggle for anticapitalism before the Tobin Tax. I'm not against reforms, but reforms don't change the system."

Regarding the major global financial and political institutions, Albert further argued, "They will be destroyed automatically when we destroy capitalism; they are part of the system." Moreover, whereas activists within network-based movements often express anti-party and anti-state positions, traditional leftists view parliamentary politics as a legitimate terrain of struggle. "We have to vote," explained Meri. "I would prefer that it have a seat in parliament than not. Even though I don't agree with everything they do, I want them to win more seats. The anticapitalist vote has to have more weight. If we don't have parliamentary connections, we'll die."

Consonant with their goal of taking state power, dissident Marxists and Trotskyists are not averse to parliamentary politics. However, their emphasis on building popular power from below and their radical rejection of the current political and economic system translate into a style of organizing based on grassroots assemblies. At the same time, whereas newer network-based movements emphasize horizontal coordination among autonomous elements, a political praxis reinforced by new digital technologies, assembly-based movements prioritize permanent structures, unity, and central control. Indeed, such political, organizational, and ideological differences drive the complex networking politics I explore throughout this book.

Network-Based Movements

Network-based movements involve activists associated with RCDE, MRG, Barcelona Indymedia, certain squatted social centers, student and antimilitarist assemblies, and other allied collectives. They are often critical of traditional forms of organizing, including both formal institutions and critical sectors. Beyond open assemblies, network-based movements emphasize decentralized coordination and flexible, diffuse structures. Activists in this sector are thus experimenting with new forms of political participation and "individualized" commitment (Furlong and Cartmel 1997; see also Lichterman 1996), reflecting the values associated with the network as an emerging ideal, rendering the links among norms, forms, and technologies particularly visible.

Activist Backgrounds

During my time in the field, I established close relationships with several key figures out of a core group of roughly forty activists associated with MRG and
RCADE. Their stories are interwoven throughout this book. Here I briefly introduce their personal histories (and later their political visions) to provide additional social and political context, while further exploring the relationships among political norms, organizational forms, and new digital technologies. Despite important exceptions, these activists tend to be young (in their twenties to early thirties) middle-class Catalan speakers with high levels of education. As with the squatters explored later, many have irregular employment situations, given the economic restructuring and job instability that have particularly affected young people in Spain and Catalonia (Martinez Lopez 2002, 137–38). A significant number of the activists I worked with were university students, including many at the graduate level, while others held flexible, part-time jobs in the service sector. Another handful worked for NGOs or had precarious professional positions, including a new university professor, several journalists, and a lawyer. In terms of housing, some continued to live with their parents, while others shared collective apartments or lived in squatted social centers. Activists from network-based movements thus tended not to have families or full-time employment, allowing them ample time for grassroots political activities.

For example, Pau, whom we met in the introduction, comes from a fairly typical upper-middle-class Catholic background. His father had taken part in previous mobilizations against Franco but had moved away from politics after the transition. Pau was a sociology student but left the university after his first year and was able to live for a time on an independent source of income. He became politically active during the Consulta, where he first learned about what he calls “a new way of doing politics.” “The Consulta for the Abolition of the Foreign Debt was my first campaign experience,” Pau explained. “It helped us build and experiment with a new way of doing politics, which valued collective work over our individual organizations, as well as working together as a network in an assembly-based and horizontal manner.”

Moreover, like many activists in Barcelona, Pau grew up in a Catalanist cultural milieu: “We spoke Catalan at home and had a strong but flexible Catalan identity.” Mar of RCADE described a similar upbringing: “We were a middle-class family, but very Catalan. We always spoke Catalan. My family was nationalistic, but not in an exclusive sense. Speaking Catalan was just a way of defending our culture.” Some activists became politically active within a more resolutely nationalist context. For example, Joan, one of the founders of RCADE who worked for a grassroots NGO, recalled, “My family was very nationalist, and my first militant experiences were violent, going to demonstrations on the Catalan national holiday with my separatist friends and throwing rocks at the police.” More generally, widespread Catalanist sentiment has helped create an environment conducive to the development of “contradictory consciousness” (Gramsci 1971).

Beyond overtly nationalist spheres, many activists had previously participated in church-based or secular associations, including the Scouts, which provided a relatively safe space for reproducing Catalan language and culture during the dictatorship. To this day, the Scouts not only expose young people to the Catalan countryside; they also promote nationalist ideals, constituting a vehicle for political socialization. As Sergi from MRG pointed out, “I got involved in social activities through the church, but I didn’t join any political groups until I was eighteen. I was in the Scouts, though, for nine years, and then six as a monitor. The Scouts are a typical Catalan tradition. They promote an ecological and Catalanist vision.”

Sergi’s activist history provides a revealing snapshot of the various waves of collective action that have periodically swept through the Catalan political landscape since the 1980s. For example, after leaving the Scouts, he took part in the antimilitarist movement and then became involved in the 0.7 campaign of the early 1990s. It was only a short jump from a general interest in international relations to a more politicized critique of neoliberal capitalism and global inequalities:

After becoming a scout leader, I traveled for a year, and began organizing around issues such as the war in Bosnia. I got involved in antimilitarism, and then joined Christian Engineers. After that, I became interested in North-South relations, especially with the 0.7 campaign. Many of us came out of the NGO boom in the 1990s. I came from a nonpolitical family, and the NGOs, such as Greenpeace, Amnesty, or Cooperacció, were the most visible social forces at the time. But we lacked a clear political paradigm. Anticapitalism sounded ridiculous ten years ago, very sectarian, but this is changing.

Many activists from MRG and RCADE also spent time volunteering with community development projects in countries such as Nicaragua, where
numerous Catalan municipalities had established sister cities during the Sandinista revolution in the 1980s. These experiences helped promote an emerging global political consciousness among many younger activists. For example, Nuria, a graduate student and MRG organizer, gained her first political experiences with student assemblies in high school, but she was radicalized during her time with a grassroots development project in Nicaragua: “In Nicaragua I worked in a community, and my blood began to boil from rage when I realized how difficult it was to change the situation because of the external structures. But I also learned a lot about the human condition.”

Upon returning to Catalonia in spring 2000, Nuria continued her political work with the Catalan Unitary Platform for Peace, which mobilized against a Spanish military parade slated to take place in Barcelona despite widespread resistance. Nuria’s parents had not been activists, although her mother had come from a Catalanist milieu, while her father’s family had migrated from Andalusia in the 1950s. However, she recalls strong anti-Franco sentiments at home: “My family was always against Franco, and I used to like talking about the civil war with my grandfather. The military parade was the last straw; saying no to the army just kind of welled up from inside.” Moreover, she met many of her future friends and colleagues from MRG during a direct action against the military parade:

Sometimes it feels like I haven’t stopped since then. That’s where I met Pau, who told me about the Consulta and RCADe. We later formed a participatory democracy group. Then I went to Prague with the collective we had formed during the parade, and with which I continued working around civil disobedience and antimilitarism. In June I began to follow all the e-mails from Pau, even when I couldn’t make it to the assemblies because I was working on my thesis. I remember telling my friends at the university how it felt just like May ’68. I wasn’t sure if I could make it at first, but in the end, I had to go to Prague.

The Zapatistas were also an important influence among many anti-corporate globalization activists. For example, Sergi, who had spent time in Chiapas during a yearlong trip to Mexico, Guatemala, El Salvador, Nicaragua, Colombia, and Venezuela, was greatly affected by his experience: “We never expected the Zapatistas. We didn’t lack the intellectual analysis at that point, but rather the sense of hope. They had a refreshing vision, extremely open, less dogmatic, more like environmentalists.”

Indeed, the Intercontinental Zapatista Encuentros led to the formation of solidarity groups in Spain, Italy, and throughout Europe, which were instrumental in the emergence of future anti-corporate globalization networks. The Zapatista ideal of a global network of autonomous communities resonated widely among global activist networks. Joan from RCADe explained the Zapatista influence thus: “Zapatismo had an international impact, and part of that was the formation of numerous solidarity collectives in Europe, particularly in Spain and Italy, but also in France and Germany. Everyone read Marcos’s texts, which for me were the philosophical foundation of the antiglobalization movement as we understand it today. In Seattle there were a lot of new tactics, but the underlying philosophy comes from the Zapatistas.”

The squatter movement was another crucial politicizing experience for many MRG-based activists, providing an important arena for the development of network norms and forms, particularly in Barcelona, where activists have drawn on the city’s strong culture of opposition, mistrust of central authority, and its powerful anarchist legacy. For example, Marc, a former squatter and early promoter of MRG, explained, “We occupied buildings to create social centers and were inspired by similar experiences in Valencia and Madrid, but also by the ateneos populars built by the anarchist workers’ movement. Social movements needed open spaces, where people could come and teach classes, give talks, socialize in alternative ways, and create a new system of values.”

Organization, Participation, and Commitment

Decentralized networks such as MRG and RCADe involve an organizational model based on flexible patterns of political commitment and participation. For example, as we saw with MRG, rather than identifying with a specific organization, activists are committed to a larger movement and set of guiding values. However, unlike the critical sectors, activists within network-based movements often prefer more temporary, ad hoc coalitions. In this sense, MRG and RCADe provide open spaces for communication and coordination around concrete projects rather than unified political identities. Moreover, activists from network-based movements are willing to work with other sectors but hesitate to create permanent coalitions.
With respect to commitment and belonging, network-based movements thus favor open forms of participation over rigid membership. In this sense, no one belongs to MRG; instead, people participate in network-related meetings, actions, and events. Rather than representing a particular group, participation is more individualized, although still concerned with achieving concrete objectives through collaborative practice. In addition, there are no formal hierarchies, elected positions, or paid staff, and decisions are made by consensus. Horizontal structure and democratic process are thus viewed as political ends, leading to a practical, dynamic, and flexible form of activism. At the same time, networks can be unstable, given the lack of structure and clear chains of responsibility. Moreover, despite a commitment to egalitarianism, informal hierarchies often emerge (cf. Freeman 1973; Polletta 2002).

But what does it actually mean to take part in such networks? What are the diverse modes of participation? First, core groups of activists often take responsibility for much of the detailed planning and logistical arrangements around specific meetings, actions, and events. Rather than relying on elected leaders or staff members, those who are most interested in a project become informal coordinators. For example, during the Prague mobilization, a small cohort arranged all the transportation details, while another took care of relations with the press, and yet another organized direct-action training. In this way, those with the most skills and interest in a particular area are empowered to assume more responsibility. At the same time, this can often reproduce the very sort of hierarchies activists are attempting to overcome.

Second, another larger group of activists may attend general meetings and take on more specific tasks as a particular event gets closer. This can involve more mundane activities such as putting up flyers, creating signs or costumes, or sending an e-mail notice, or more involved contributions, such as giving a talk or writing text for outreach materials. As we shall see, during the lead-up to a particular protest or campaign, activists often spend many hours in physical assemblies and online discussions, engaging in both political and logistical discussions. At the same time, younger activists also spend time together within more informal settings, drinking beer, going to parties, and hanging out in bars and squats. Third, a still larger number of people will follow from a distance, often via electronic Listservs, helping out at particular moments in a limited way. Finally, many others will assume more passive roles, attending protests and events, but not contributing to planning and coordination. Once again, horizontal networking facilitates grassroots participation and democratic decision making among those who are the most informed and skilled or simply have more available time, but may exclude others who lack sufficient access, abilities, or information.

At the same time, activists from this sector are among the most optimistic regarding new technologies. Maria from MAC represents a fairly typical case: "I'm a member of ten Listservs, read 150 messages a day, and regularly visit websites such as Indymedia or the Forum home page." For his part, Joan recalled his experience with the Internet in this way: "I'm connected all day. The Internet has been vital for the articulation of our movements. It allows us to have real-time debates. You are discussing things all the time, coming into contact with diverse visions, seeing what the feminists say, seeing what the anarchists say. It gives you a better understanding, and it's fundamental for organizing actions."

Moreover, the Internet has helped to promote a global vision, particularly among network-based movements, as Mateo from RCADE pointed out: "I can rapidly find out what's happening around the world, in places like Venezuela or Palestine, without actually being there. It creates a feeling of global citizenship." However, extensive Internet use also requires a great deal of time, energy, and resources. As pointed out earlier, older activists with stable jobs and families, and those from poorer communities, particularly in the South, have a difficult time managing the large number of e-mails and Listserv messages, a situation many grassroots activists recognize. As Mateo told me, "There is a danger that only those who have access to the Internet or who know how to use the Internet can join our movements, which can distance us from many of the sectors we want to reach." For Joan, the important thing is to find a productive balance: "I remember when we celebrated everything about the Internet, and then another period when we criticized everything. Between those two extremes, we've reached a balance, recognizing the Internet has its problems, but that it provides an opportunity to connect with one another and organize in a different, more horizontal way, at least among middle-class activists from Northern countries."

Political Vision

As we have seen, many younger activists from network-based movements in Barcelona have been particularly influenced by anarchist ideas and practices.
Indeed, anarchists have long viewed self-generating networks as a model for organizing society beyond the market and state. For example, Kropotkin argued in 1905 that in a society without government, social order and harmony would arise by “an ever-changing adjustment and readjustment of equilibrium between the multitudes of forces and influences,” organized as “an interwoven network, composed of an infinite variety of groups and federations of all sizes and degrees, local, regional, national, and international.” Colin Ward (1973) more recently described anarchist federations as decentralized networks composed of communes and syndicates that “federate together not like the stones of a pyramid where the biggest burden is borne by the lowest layer, but like the links of a network, the network of autonomous groups” (26).

New technologies have thus reinforced traditional anarchist models of organization within contemporary network-based movements. This growing confluence among norm, form, and technology is reflected in the rise of the network as a metaphor for grassroots democracy and horizontal coordination. For example, RCADE’s political goals involved not only abolishing the foreign debt but also expanding the Network and its directly democratic modus operandi: “The Network is a tool for creating social fabric in our local contexts. Participatory democracy is not only a transversal theme in our work; it constitutes our model of operation.” This network ideal would become an important part of a broader ethos among MRG-based activists. For example, when I asked Nuria to define how she identifies herself politically, she explained:

I am close to the anarchist position, particularly around self-organization. I have a lot of conflict with the issue of power, obedience, and injustice. I can’t give a precise definition, that I’m a communist for this reason, or an anarchist for that reason. It’s more about how I was educated, my way of thinking—that you can build the world you want. For me, the twenty-first century, with the discourse of postmodernity, people are always talking about the “network of networks of networks,” but for me building these networks is actually the world we want to create.

Many younger anti–corporate globalization activists in Barcelona hesitate to classify themselves according to rigid ideologies. Openness and flexibility have given rise to a new anticapitalism shaped by an emerging cultural logic of networking. Despite differences among specific networks (RCade-based activists are more likely to support reforms, electoral politics, and revamped global financial institutions than their counterparts in MRG), activists increasingly define themselves as anticapitalist. As Joan explained, “Anticapitalism was a prohibited word five or six years ago, but capitalism has become so brutal. Until recently I used to talk about neoliberalism, but today we all use anticapitalism to characterize a diversity of positions.” Sergi explicitly linked his conception of anticapitalism to an emerging network ideal: “The revolution is also about process; the way we do things as social movements is also an alternative to capitalism, no? Horizontalism is the abstraction we want, and the tools are the assembly and the network.”

Specifically contrasting parliamentary and assembly-based politics with the network ideal, Pau explained: “We are promoting decentralized participation, making each group responsible for their part so decisions are taken among many people as opposed to the old politics where a small group has all the information and decides everything.” Pau further suggested that networks are the most effective way “to balance freedom and coordination, autonomy with collective work, self-organization with effectiveness.” At the same time, innovative networking tools, such as Indymedia, Listservs, web pages, the European Social Consulta, and the Infospace project, are designed to help people “build networks at whatever rhythm possible” (see chapter 8).

Moreover, the rise of anti-party sentiment among younger activists has accompanied their increasing emphasis on autonomous, self-directed networking. Marc explained, “Political parties are filled with people who have objectives and modes of organizing radically different from ours. The division between institutional politics and social movements is becoming more and more evident.” As we have seen, this critique of formal democracy goes back, at least in part, to the transition. When combined with emerging networking logics, anti-party sentiment increasingly means that grassroots activists view social movements as directly democratic alternatives to representative democracy.

For example, like many Catalan activists, Pau stopped voting after he began participating in grassroots movements. “I am building an alternative political system,” he maintained, “which is much more important.” He later explained how such an alternative requires the development of technological and social
tools to enhance the capacity for building horizontal connections and self-organization among social movements. "We lacked a few elements in order to become truly coherent: tools, technological mechanisms, and specific affinity groups that could assume concrete tasks and promote decentralized coordination." This networking logic resonates with a broader political vision among many younger activists, which involves what Nuria described as a world composed of "small, self-organized, and self-managed communities, coordinated among them on a worldwide scale." Sergi posited a similar ideal:

Exchange is prioritized over commercial products or monetary relations. It would be a world without exploitation, with much more collaborative work, less competition among people and communities, something much more organic. And these regions wouldn't be so nationalist, religious, messianic, or dependent on labor markets. There wouldn't be banana republics. Regions would be self-sufficient and would have food sovereignty, but they wouldn't close themselves off. Instead, they would articulate and work together through a kind of anarcho-eco-regionalist global government.

Sergi's vision not only recalls traditional anarchist principles of autonomous federation, it also reflects emerging network norms and forms within anti-corporate globalization movements and the new technologies that facilitate them. As Pau explained, "The Internet makes it possible to really talk about international coordination from below. It allows us to interact according to models that have always existed but weren't realistic before." Rather than generating entirely new political and cultural models, the Internet thus articulates with existing structures and ideals, including grassroots participation from below and horizontal coordination across diversity and difference. In this sense, new digital technologies reinforce traditional anarchist principles, which have influenced many activists within network-based movements, generating new organizational forms that reflect their emerging political norms.

Autonomous Movements

Autonomous movements encompass an informal network of militant anticapitalist collectives, including squatters, antimilitarists, and media activists who primarily emphasize autonomy, self-management, and confrontation with the state. As pointed out earlier, militant squatters were among the first groups to engage in anti-corporate globalization activism. However, since the entry of more reformist networks, parties, and unions into the wider field, some militants have developed a critical perspective toward broader anti-corporate globalization movements. Many of these collectives have organized alternative anticapitalist platforms during mobilizations in Barcelona, using diverse names such as "Anti-Capitalist Resistance," "Coordination against Military Occupation," or "Barcelona Trembles."

Activist Backgrounds

Militant anticapitalists occupy similar socioeconomic positions as their counterparts from network-based movements, although many were politicized at an earlier age. For example, Manel, an antimilitarist whose family was active in the anti-Franco and nationalist movements, came from an extremely political home. His activist career began with Esquerra Republicana de Catalunya’s nationalist youth when he was fourteen. He was a conscientious objector at seventeen and later became an Insomni. For his part, Fernando, an independent journalist and activist with a local anticapitalist collective, was influenced by his mother, who was active in the labor and nationalist movements in the Basque Country, before moving to Barcelona, where she joined Psuc. He joined the student assembly movement while still in high school and helped organize a regional strike against the Gulf War in 1991.

Although Fernando joined a local youth group associated with the Partido Comunista de Catalunya (Pcc), he has since moved toward the autonomous Left. He is now extremely critical of institutional politics; as he pointed out, "Leftist parties won't bring more democracy or social change. It's more important to work in my neighborhood with grassroots projects and try to influence things from the outside." Contrasting two very different views of democracy, Manel explained, "I'm a democrat, but in a much more radical way. It's not about voting every four years, but rather doing politics in the street on a daily basis." Such views are becoming more and more prevalent among younger activists, both within network-based movements and among more radical anticapitalists.

Organization, Participation, and Commitment

Regarding organizational dynamics, militant anticapitalists tend to emphasize communal self-organization within intimate spheres of daily life. As Martinez
López (2002, 120) points out, they can be distinguished from similar movements by their concern for self-management within each collective, rather than among the larger network. Regarding the unitary antiglobalization campaigns in Barcelona, for example, Manel suggested, "It's easy to coordinate around concrete tasks. We built an interesting network, but I don't feel the need to maintain it. I work with my friends in my own spaces, and when I have to coordinate, I do, but I have a lot of work."

Moreover, militant anticapitalists tend to prioritize local struggles over open networking, and they are often skeptical of countercamp mobilizations. Manel pointed out, "I have never gone to Prague, Genoa, or Davos. Countersummit are important, but not as much as our day-to-day organizing." In addition, militant anticapitalists stress ideological and practical coherence over broad spaces of convergence, which include organizations and networks with significantly different values, objectives, and methodologies. For example, in response to a question about whether he feels he is part of the anti-corporate globalization movement, Fernando responded, "I guess so, in terms of consciousness, as part of my local collective, but I feel much more part of an emerging anticapitalist critique. I have no problem saying I'm part of the antiglobalization movement, but around the world, as in Porto Alegre, movements from the institutional Left are entering the antiglobalization terrain. I don't identify with them. If they are the antiglobalization movement, then I don't feel part of it, not for sectarian reasons, but in terms of ideological coherence."

With respect to new digital technologies, militant anticapitalists tend to use the Internet extensively, although they are often more skeptical of it than are their counterparts from network-based movements. For example, Fernando explained, "I use the Internet a great deal, mainly to send documents and organize logistics, not so much to chat. It's an important tool, but it also has advantages and disadvantages. It was an important leap forward for social movements in Catalonia, but there is always a risk of information overload." Gaizka was even more dubious, suggesting that "the Internet is often romanticized. It's an important tool, but it can't substitute for physical gatherings, assemblies, and common struggles. Very few people around the world are connected. When I go to Mexico, not even 10 percent of the people I see have access."

Political Vision

Militant anticapitalists also tend to express a more complete rejection of the political and economic system than their RCade or MRG-based counterparts. As Fernando explained, "I'm struggling to end all inequalities and injustice. I believe strongly in direct, self-managed action. You might call this libertarian communism, beyond the market and the state." He identified with the German and Italian autonomous movements, and the writings of Antonio Negri, pointing out that "in the case of Italy, workers became an autonomous force outside the political and union structures." Fernando was also strongly influenced by Catalan anarchism: "During the civil war there were cultural houses, ateneos populars, and cooperatives. We haven't come close to that, but we are saying similar things. When I talk about autonomy, we have the example of the workers' movement here and their experiences with popular, direct, and self-managed democracy."

Ricart, who had taken part in many high-profile squats around Barcelona, was committed to living completely outside capitalism: "I don't believe in the market, and I don't want to live inside it. But anticapitalists have to become grounded. It's the typical discussion. Should we spend our lives stealing from the supermarket? It's a multinational, even if we rob the food. If we steal our electricity, the state still provides it, or Endesa [a private electric company]. We have to go further. If we want to defeat this system, we have to learn to live without it. The first thing is to self-manage our food, energy, transport, and begin creating networks of exchange."

Whereas network-based activists emphasize the use of new technologies to build broader ties and connections, thereby developing new anticapitalist visions from within the system, militant anticapitalists tend to favor local self-management in order to live completely beyond the market and state. Their smaller, more autonomous collectives thus correspond to a more radical anti-systemic critique. Likewise, at the tactical level, their more aggressive direct-action styles and practices embody their militant visions. In this sense, while network-based movements such as RCade and MRG tend to carry out nonviolent forms of civil disobedience, militant anticapitalists often practice "self-defense" and violence against property, including sabotage against bank tellers and corporate storefronts. As Fernando explained, "Our collective
accepts all forms of struggle, civil disobedience, street occupations, banner hangs, but when there is a situation in the neighborhood, such as an eviction, you respond however you can. Violence doesn't resolve anything, but as a form of self-defense, you have to be able to respond.” Debates surrounding violence and nonviolence represent a crucial terrain in the cultural politics of anti-corporate globalization networking.

Conclusion: Political Cultures and Cultural Politics in Catalonia

Emerging network norms and forms among Barcelona-based anti-corporate globalization activists have been shaped by Catalonia’s unique political and historical context, including the region’s history of anarchism, nationalism, and assembly-based struggles. Moreover, diverse activist sectors in Barcelona have their own distinct trajectories characterized by alternative political norms, organizational forms, and technological practices. In this sense, the introduction of new technologies has reworked and reinforced traditional modes of popular mobilization involving grassroots organization, open participation, and decentralized coordination. At the same time, Catalan activists also bring their backgrounds and experiences to bear as they reach out across space to participate in larger regional and global processes. The specific cultural and political characteristics associated with concrete places, understood as nodes within regional and global networks of circulation and exchange, thus remain significant, even within transnational networks.

Indeed, given Catalonia’s unique culture of opposition, it should come as no surprise that anti-corporate globalization movements have been so prominent in Barcelona, or that Catalans have played key roles in statewide, regional, and global networks. At the same time, the Catalan movement field is extremely diverse, involving competing organizations, groups, and collectives with vastly different political visions, traditions, and goals. Despite their political and cultural differences, however, competing sectors periodically converge within broad convergence spaces, reflecting a deeply established tradition of unitary mobilization in Catalonia. Nevertheless, struggles within and among distinct movement sectors, particularly those around organizational identity, structure, and process, have generated a complex micropolitics, involving perpetually shifting and often confusing political alliances. It is to these dynamics we now turn.

We understand freedom as our ability to think critically and intervene in the activities that most affect us. It is therefore necessary to rediscover the importance of democracy in politics—beyond the elitism and professionalism of today’s political parties, and the value of a collectivized and cooperative economy . . . beyond capitalism.

On January 26, 2003, MRG-Catalonia was “self-dissolved,” two and a half years after it was founded to mobilize Catalan activists against the World Bank and IMF meetings in Prague. Rather than lament the occasion, activists pointed to their decision as an example of a new fluid network-based politics, explaining, “MRG was born as a network, a space of communication among collectives and struggles. But today it is becoming a fixed identity, a static structure, and we thought it was time to destroy it!” Their public communiqué went on to describe how MRG had become an important symbol of the new radical activism within an emerging transnational anti-corporate globalization movement field. Indeed, the previous April, MRG had been invited to join the WSI International Council as a permanent member. However, for many grassroots activists, taking part in an international representative structure constituted a serious perversion of their networking logic. In its final collective statement, MRG thus declared, “Our definitive response is dissolution. We desert the boring politics of Porto Alegre, the false representations and micro-level struggles for power!”

MRG’s deft political manifesto exhibited all the rhetorical virtuosity characteristic of its craft, yet as is often the case, it obscured as much as it revealed.