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Anti-systemic movements in unity and diversity

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Predgovor: Prispevek predlaga nov način sintezne obravnave “anti-sistemskih gibanj”, kakor je Wallerstein poimenoval grupacije kritičnih državljank in državljanov, ki se krepijo že vse od šestdesetih let in se zavzemajo za ne-sistemske načine obravnave družbenih problemov kot anti-globalisti, zeleni, marginalizirane etnične ali kulturne skupine, migranti, prekarni itn. 'Ne-sistemsko' ne pomeni nujno anarhično ampak predvsem mimo obstoječih sistemskih mehanizmov in z nesistemskimi inštrumenti, saj je ravno dosedanja sistematika in način razmišljanja z državo oz. 'Sistemom' v centru postal vir težav, družbena nasprotja pa so le simptomi črno-bele redukcije družbenih nasprotij.

Kaj ima to opraviti z evalvacijo javnih politik? Pravzaprav – veliko: vsaka evalvacija je vrednostna sodba in vsaka takšna ambicija je nujno povezana z izključevanjem vsega, kar ne sodi v zamišljeni koncept celote. Evalviranje si prizadeva za nevtralnost presoj vendar pa to ne zagotavlja, da bodo evalvacije lahko upoštevale mnenja vseh zainteresiranih ali prizadetih. Prav nasprotno, bolj kot se trudimo pojasniti kompleksne družbene pojave, ki so v bistvu nerazložljivi, tem bolj so naša spoznanja izključevalna. Zato se mora nevtralni evalvator zavedati izključevalnih posledic svojih ravnanj in mora razumeti procese, ki so do izključevanja privedli in tudi načine njihove celostne obravnave - ki pa bo izključevalna za 'Sistem'. Šele tako, sistemske in ne-sistemske pogledano z obeh strani izključevalne enačbe, lahko evalvator uravnovesi negativne posledice svojih sicer hvalevrednih prizadevanj.

Abstract: “It could be said that the only thing that effectively stood in the way of real revolutions were the revolutionary movement themselves” (Wallerstein, 2002). The same holds true for anti-systemic movements (ASMs) in the post-modern era of social complexity. Organisational issues and transformation of micro diversity of a movement into a macro power (scale problem) that is necessary to achieve crucial changes are usually expected to somehow spontaneously resolve driven by enthusiasm and potentiality of a political programme. But what have arisen in the ASMs are improvisations that are ineffective in scale. This lead some authors such as Močnik (2006) to opine that it is probably more important now to find new ways of connecting movements in scale than to continue searching for new ways of expression of a political programme in scope (reformist, revolutionary, innovative). A collective mechanism is necessary writes Grubačić (2003) that would open the way to a more coherent action in social complexity, characterised by incommensurable scale and scope perspectives. Currently the main organisational form in ASM is network, so it is taken as a departure for the experiment. Every network can be seen as of input or output type which coheres into input-output matrix that explains ASM at the meso scale. The meso-matrix is important as a platform of ASM that initiates correlation of obtained mixed (in input and output content) types of ASMs, which opens a possibility for their complex synthesis in scale and in scope. What we obtain is a mechanism of synthesis that enables ASMs to form unity in scale without endangering their diversity in scope because in this mechanism macro emerges only in response to the confirmation of system complexity in scope.

Keywords: anti-systemic movements, network, meso-matrix.

1 Asocial networks

Organisation of ‘anti-systemic movements’, term was coined by Wallerstein in 1970’s (Wallerstein, 2002) is addressed in this paper as a question on how to transform increasingly dispersed micro power of the movements into macro power that is capable not only to achieve irreversible system-level changes but also to maintain in this process their mutually incommensurable value differences (Kuhn, 1970) and world views inscribed in their anti-systemic programmes.

Presently, the main organisational forms for ASMs are networks, so we take a network as a departure for considerations. Network is a simple concept. It consists of at least several members and links between them around a shared central node. Two types of simple networks are distinguished regarding the direction of flows between members and node: *input type* – where flows go from members to the network node; this kind of network is needed, for example, to bring on ideas and collect resources necessary to accomplish a collective programme; *output type* of networks is characterised by flows from the node to the members; this kind of connection is required, for example, to coordinate a collective action.

In each network we usually find a small number of highly-connected members, many less-connected members, and massive redundancy (Halpin, Summer, 2008). A systematic feature of networks is that they both connect and disconnect (van Dijk, 2001). A network raises invisible barrier between its members and leaves majority passive because it usually maintains one-directional and weak direct relation between them. According to Castells (2000) »the network society disembodies social relationships, and introduces the culture of real virtuality«. In networks there is a shared sense of a potentiality that does not have to be realized (Rossiter, 2006). Indifference between, and to a certain extent within networks is a main reason not to get organised in more collective forms with potentially higher systemic impact. Van Dijk observed in this respect that: »networks are becoming the prime mode of organization and among the most important structures of modern society - however, they are not (increasingly) the content of this society; the internal conflict or contradiction in network 'logic' is absent«. In Bookchin's words (1995): »networks are assumed to operate on the consensus but I think this is more the result of impossibility of deep conflict in networks than their ability to intervene actively on antagonistic situations«. Democracy presupposes the capacity of seeing the world from the perspective of the other - and this is what the network, because of its one-eyedness, can never learn to do (Ankersmit, 2005).

Networks are a constrained social organisational form. Observed from the aspect of a complex social system in which it operates, network is a primitive organisational form with a social content that is situated between individuality and collectivity. Beyond certain point of organisational complexity (as scale complexity), networks probably hide hierarchies more successfully than they replace them.

Leaving its members divided, network is vulnerable to the emergence of informal hierarchical

organisation on higher scales of the network system that is not the result of democratic selection on the lower scale. Networks impose the 'tyranny of structurelessness' that permits a well-organized few to control the unwieldy, deinstitutionalized and largely disorganized many within the movement. Such scaling-up in ASMs is directly linked with gradual domestication of anti-systemic elites with their absorption into the System. Dominique Masson (2006) points out that the scales of collective action first have to be recognized as usable, and then constructed as actionable by social movement actors.

Our discussion starts with a distinction between input and output types of network which are combined into input-output matrix that explains ASM at the meso scale. Meso-matrix correlation of obtained mixed – in input and output content (Radej, 2008) – types of ASMs paves pathways for the search of their coherence in scale (from micro to macro) and in scope (reformist movements, revolutionary movements, innovative movements). What is obtained is a mechanism that enables constructing ASM macroscopic unity without endangering its intrinsic microscopic diversity.

2 Matrix of anti-systemic movements

In their micro relations, movements are standing in each other's way, which obstructs their communal anti-systemic project at the macro level. ASMs are diverse in character as their scopes are not only unique but essentially untranslatable. A result is that movements can not recognise each other in the same way as they are seen by themselves. The only way they can recognise each other is in relation to the type of their opposition to the System – i.e., they cannot be recognised 'as such', but only as they appear to an external observer. Differences in scope between ASMs erode their ability to directly communicate substance between them. As they do not share the same understanding, they have difficulties in recognising each other's anti-systemic aspirations and thus are unable to finally coordinate their thinking and action and achieve unity in diversity.

The idea in this paper is to move beyond network metaphors in an attempt to explain a more cohesive approach. In the system theory, a set of interconnected input/output (i/o) networks with a unique set of borders is called a matrix. Meso-economist Leontief (Rus. Леонтьев, 1970; Nobel prize 1973) proposed a quadratic matrix – with equal number of rows and columns – for studying structural conflicts in multi-sectoral economy. Matrical approach is aimed at explaining the systemic process of transformation of diverse systemic inputs into diverse systemic outputs. In its rows, matrix captures input type of networks while columns stand for output type of networks. Each intersection between a column and a row describes a unique combination of i/o content, and specifies a distinctive location in the matrix; this distinction explains the specific role and originality of contribution of each i/o intersection to the overall systemic goal. Through the matrical lens, sectors (movements) reveal their unique i/o content, which is crucial for their mutual recognition in a broadest (anti)systemic frame – which is a precondition for their ability to transgress into a unified perspective.

Distinction between inputs and outputs in the assessment of social movements is not superfluous nor is it redundant. An i/o approach is justified by the fact there are tensions between our ways of

experiencing and interpreting the word as well as between 'theory' and 'practice' (Graeber, 2004) – this is to say between revolutionary programmes (input) and revolutionary actions (output). Each of these two vectors of discontent is further divided into incommensurable (Kuhn; Feyerabend, 1975) – in their core orientations but not entirely incompatible – strategies or anti-systemic scopes: (i) reformist scope is concerned with systemic weaknesses, failures and errors; reformist approach calls for a gradual and instrumental advance to System change; (ii) revolutionary scope; it is assaulting the System as an inappropriate social order; it will tend to revolutionary replace one particular System with another particular System; (iii) every social structure is established in a hierarchy and domination; new social order will be invented from the wreckage of the existing social rule as a 'non-System' based on direct and holistic relations; this particular anti-systemic scope is based on creativity and treated further in this paper as an innovative anti-systemic scope.

This threefold scope distinction is presented as a quadratic input-output matrix in Table below. Matrix determines the nature of both AS problems (input) and their solutions (output). It uniquely defines nine types of anti-systemic movements by their anti-systemic footprints. This typology of anti-systemic movements is a necessary framework for strategic thinking that is indispensable for understanding emergence of the ASM's as macro-organised forms.

Table: Input-output typology of anti-systemic movements

		ACT (**output**): How should be the existing System changed?		
		1 Adapt it within existing System	**2** Replace it with different System	**3** New system emerges parallel to the existing
DIAGNOSE (**input**): What is wrong?	**1** Specific deficiencies and shortcomings	**1-1** Reformers operating as reformers (such as civil society)	**1-2** Reformers as opponents (such as human rights movements, Greenpeace, Amnesty Internat.)	**1-3** Reformers as innovators (such as bottom-up or participatory democracy, open source community)
	2 Persistent problems, System failures	**2-1** Opponents as reformers (trade unions, NGOs)	**2-2** Opponents as opponents (revolutionary movements)	**2-3** Opponents as innovators (such as Zapatista from Chiapas)
	3 Incapability of every hierarchical System to induce autonomy	**3-1** Innovators as reformers ('white plans', fair trade, co-operatives)	**3-2** Innovators as opponents (Negri-Hardt's urban multitude)	**3-3** Innovators as innovators (such as producers of creative commons, autonomous communities)

Nine matrix cells are divided according to their cohesive potential into two groups: cells in diagonal (shaded) and in non-diagonal locations. In the former are located three incompatible types of movements: reformist, revolutionary and innovative. These three are specific in the sense that their input and output components are of the same type. Non-diagonal locations are characterised by mixed or heterogeneous input-output content. Movements located in non-diagonal cells absorb hybrid characteristics which induces them to cohere with other ASM of the inverse hybrid pattern. In this way two concepts of unity are obtained: homogenous cells are located on the diagonal of the matrix and tend to operate as self-sufficient; and heterogeneous cells that are located elsewhere in the matrix, which tend to correlate with their exact inversions. Our main aspiration in this paper is

to put forward a heterogeneous concept of unity in vertical sense, micro to macro, and in a horizontal sense – between three incompatible (diagonal) types of ASM. A step-by-step elaboration of matrix topography and its consequences follows by the end of the paper.

In the given typology cell 1-1 actually does not possess anything anti-systemic and is not in any respect focused on deep system change. The critique of System imperfection is functional to the achievement of perfection, seeing the System 'as something we need to correct but that we cannot do without' (Chrissus, Odotheus, 2004). This implies that the uttermost upper-left cell of the matrix shall be abandoned as a non-credible anti-systemic location. On the one side, ASM shall not tend to operate as reformist; however, on the other side, we should not ignore the fact that reformist strategy is an integral part of certain anti-systemic groups and projects that do not present themselves as reformers (2-1, 3-1), nor can we disregard the fact that certain reformist projects produce anti-systemic impact (1-2, 1-3). Hence, in spite of the fact that 1-1 itself does not posses anti-systemic character at all, the reformist aspect needs to be included as an integral part of anti-systemic considerations. There is an important reason for this claim; it will be elaborated in the next chapter as a crucial factor for the possibility of vertical – micro to macro - construction of ASMs as a unity in diversity.

Revolutionary programmes are situated in the next diagonal cell, located at 2-2. This cell contains movements with antagonistic relation to the existing ruling order. In this location ASMs are driven by their antagonist relation to the System they want to overthrow and not by plurality of the relation between ASMs that defines them internally. Revolutionary movements are rarely internally democratic if they want to remain effective in forwarding their strategy against much stronger enemy. So here arises a dilemma from the anti-systemic point of view. The dilemma is between negation of the System because it is not democratic and because it is unable to operate as internally plural, which is the defining characteristic of anti-systemic movements. So there is a deep conflict in every ASM located in 2-2 between their external and internal behaviours that is squeezing their revolutionary strength in the post-modern context. Than movements in cell 2-2 need to reconsider their revolutionary approach and in particular assess their possibilities if they relocate into a hybrid section of the matrix, whichever they might prefer, and achieve internal consistency in correlation with other ASMs.

Cell 3-3 represents the core inner part of the AS matrix. There they operate within their own cultural, legal and economic environment. Their relationship to the outer System is benevolent because of their superiority as a social form for the communally creative, ecologically responsible and autonomous members. Today a majority of ASMs are inclined to see themselves, uncritically, located in 3-3, so this area of ASM matrix is densely populated. The reason for this is that most ASMs are probably uncritically representing their input or output content, or both. Very few ASMs actually developed strategies to consistently pursue autonomy from the ruling System and to effectively practice it as self-sustaining practice over a longer period of time. In fact only a very small part of all ASMs can rightfully declare themselves as located in 3-3. Anti-systemic project would benefit when a self-deception in part of ASMs is revealed. Just in the same manner as previously (1-1, 2-2), they need to abandon their diagonal location or get expelled from the their

imaginary autonomist anti-systemic heavens into the hybrid section of the matrix, where they the first need to learn heterogeneity of AS idea of totality and cohesion, driven by inner need for unity instead of external relation to the System.

The conclusion to be drawn from this consideration of homogeneous cells in ASM matrix is that ASMs that are located on the diagonal – reformist, revolutionary, innovative – are not providing ASMs with decisive cohesive potential that is necessary to develop their macro competence.

3 Hybrid anti-systemic views

The second group of cells in the matrix above embraces ASMs with a heterogeneous input-output content. ASMs located below the shaded diagonal can be seen as 'input driven' as the AS outputs they produce are one or two degrees less radical in AS terms than their AS inputs. For ASMs above the diagonal the opposite holds true.

This 'unbalance' between an input and an output that produces hybrid AS contents is important as a main driver of their cohesion. It is driven by the inner force of each ASMs to correlate with others of just the opposite composition of input-output unbalance. In this way, ASMs are counterbalancing their internal imbalances and internal tension between how they see the world in principle and how they actually contribute to its change by their actions. Correlation between ASMs with hybrid input and output contents that are located symmetrically to the diagonal results in the emergence of three overlapping AS correlates that are named according to their mixed functionalities as collaborative, communitarian and radical anti-systemic correlate.

The term collaborative refers to the type of interaction of certain ASMs towards the ruling powers, whereby they are partly compromising their primary anti-systemic goal for the benefit of the System. It emerges from the correlation between ASMs located in cell 1-2 with their functional counterpart - ASMs located in cell 2-1. They give each other or complement each other exactly in what they lack as hybrids. In their correlation, ASMs in 1-2 merge their reformist ideals with a reformist action, while 2-1 obtains a chance to link their revolutionary character with radical system changes. For example, non-governmental organisations (NGOs) are a part of those ASMs that in principle demand a radical change of the existing social order, but in practice they succeed to achieve only minor and sporadic System changes (2-1). On the other side there are, for example, international (thus non-systemic) coalitions like Greenpeace or Amnesty International, or world public opinion, that are themselves not declared against the particular system in question, but have the ability to interfere with it and sometimes effectively constrain its behaviour (1-2). Thus, 2-1 and 2-1 in correlation enhance each others abilities beyond their otherwise rather limited contribution to the achievement of their primary AS goal. Examples of such ASMs correlation can be occasionally seen in large scale global responses to-certain local political, ecological or human right abuses that are alerted by local NGOs.

Second anti-systemic hybrid compound in the proposed typology is 'communitarian'. It emerges from the overlap between movements located in cell 1-3 and 3-1. The latter are characterised by

innovative contributions reaching beyond System operation, not necessarily to replace it but to supplement it – as in social cooperatives and in the voluntary provision of public and common goods. Its counterpart is located in cell 1-3 who is led by aspiration to construct alternate or parallel spheres of social reality that exist under their own rules and resources as a ‘non-Systemic’. Correlation between these two independent strategies is productive for both. Let us illustrate it by an example of the emergence of innovation. If an AS innovation tends to develop into the overall social change, it must operate, at least in the interim, in interaction with the old regime. The relationship is, of course, deeply conflicting, but this conflict is of entirely different nature than the revolutionary antagonism. Conflict that is related to AS innovation is not associated with attempts to destroy social hierarchy, but with the expansion of systemic capabilities, which is not as such a threat to the System. We can for example purchase fair trade goods in supermarkets together with goods from ‘unfair trade’, equally supporting the latter. This illustrates that anti-systemic innovation does not become effective when it is adopted by the System. Anti-systemic innovation is wholly successful only when it is adopted by marginal social groups that live in alternate or parallel communities, as in the case of fair trade with locally produced goods intermediated within local exchange systems (with locally emitted money). Anti-systemic innovation is successful only when it is adopted for the achievement of AS goal, such as with interaction between 1-3 and 3-1.

The third functionally overlapping AS compound is termed 'radicalism'. These ASMs are driven by their negation of the System which is the main focus for their operation. Their approach is strongly attached to the agenda of elites and is usually driven by the events that are initiated by them, such as global economic summits, anti-war demonstrations, protests against welfare cuts, against trade agreements. Radicalism overlaps cell 3-2, idealist movements (such as urban multitude) that are known for their subversive attitude towards the System which is perceived as omnipresent (Negri, Hardt, 2000) and unbeatable Empire. In cell 2-3, revolutionary innovators such as rural rebels Zapatista are located who developed new radical practices for taking over their sovereign power and autonomy without fighting for political supremacy (Holloway, 2004). ASMs in 2-3 developed alternatives that go beyond revolutionary and binary struggles of the past that are inspiration for urban multitude in 3-2 frustrated by the impossibility to change the System. On the other side, the latter as highly mobile and techno-connected movements are able to form worldwide coalitions in support of local struggles led by ASMs in 2-3. In the diversity of nine ASMs, these two types appear as the most ‘natural’ allies in their radical efforts to revert present progression of System into non-System space.

4 Conclusion: scale and scope complexity of anti-systemic movements

ASMs are diversified in their incommensurable scope as well as in their correlative functionalities. Correlation of counterbalancing hybrid types of ASMs enables their scaling-up from micro level without ignoring deep differences between their scopes. Macro unity of ASM correlates is obtained from a meso-matrix of ASMs that is located at an intermediate level between micro and macro. Unity is not constructed to impose universal claims because substantial anti-systemic issues are situated and resolved at meso-matrical level. Macro is constructed only to inscribe the multi-valued

logic of ASMs as its consciousness that it is complex in scope and in scale (systems of hierarchy are constructed with only one scope – defined at the top of hierarchy – and very limited perspective of scale). The decisive question remains if ASMs are able to creatively consider the conflicts contained in their scope-related differences, not necessarily all but at least the counterbalancing ones, as well as in their local, sectoral or personal horizons.

Conclusion is that the macro capabilities of movements for achieving anti-systemic goals depend on their ability to put forward their plural and innovative capabilities for establishing autonomous and independent living. But it is important to note that collective achievement of ASMs in scale depends not on their primary (antagonistic) relation taken to the system but on how they correlate between themselves their scope-related differences. Anti-systemic impact depends in scale on how ASMs intersect beyond their incommensurable (not antagonistic!) differences.

This scheme includes all micro networks that accept the classification logic which differentiates them according to their input and output content. All ASMs can not be expected to accept the proposed principle. Some of them – e.g. genuine post-modernist – simply will not want to buy an idea that is aimed at forming collective anti-system power. Various movements will remain uninvolved because they may find it impossible to overlap with dissimilar ASMs of different input-output content, such as extreme militant religious or nationalistic groups. The final aim of the proposed synthesis experiment is therefore to exclude from the scheme only those ASMs that are constituted on exclusion of others. Both aspects – integrative and exclusive – need to be understood and clearly delimited to enable unity in diversity to take place in AS considerations.

The multilayered goal of ASM is to construct a parallel anti-system with its own rules, where domination is neither possible nor necessary, where it is easily recognised and dissolved so it cannot interfere in the formation of collective will. The meso-matrical view has been applied to elaborate – from the perspective of scope diversity – why the present ASMs strategies fail to transform from micro into macro entities as autonomous plural powers.

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1/2009: Anti-systemic movement in unity and diversity (Bojan Radej, 12. pp)
2/2009: Meso-matrical Impact Assessment - peer to peer discussion of the working paper 3/2008; report for the period 8/08-2/09 (Bojan Radej, ed., 30. pp)
3/2009: Touristic regionalisation of Slovenia, forthcomming (Jože Kos Grabar, forthcomming).

About the proposed methodology (meso-matrical impact assessment)

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