

**NANOMEDIA: 'Community' media, 'network' media,
'social movement' media: why do they matter? and what's
in a name?**

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Text prepared for the conference "Mitjans comunitaris, moviments socials i xarxes",
organised by the Unesco Chair in Communication InCom-UAB in collaboration with
Cidob (Barcelona Center for International Affairs). Barcelona (Spain): Cidob,
15/03/2010.

My main task is to address what some in our digital media era have termed "the Long Tail" of media (Anderson 2008; cf. also National Alliance for Media Arts and Culture 2004), in other words small scale media, typically operating on no to low budgets. Mojca Pajnik, of the Peace Research Institute in Ljubljana, and I have suggested calling them 'nano-media' (Pajnik & Downing 2008: 7-16), with the aim of shaking people free of their obsession with the power of macro-media, once they consider the enormous impact of nano-technologies on our contemporary world. Such nano-media have a very long history, especially if we consider them anthropologically rather than simply by technology. This means

grouping together popular song, dance, street theatre, graffiti, murals, dress along with print, broadcasting, film and the internet.

Their history then can be seen to include the flyers (*Flugblätter*) of the Protestant Reformation in Germany; the jokes, songs and ribaldry of François Rabelais' marketplace; the revolutionary pamphlets of the English Civil War of the mid-1600s, and of the American and French revolutions; the diapers worn by the Mothers of the Plaza de Mayo; the dance performances of Indian artist Mallika Sarabhai against Hindu-Muslim communalism; the street theatre of Augusto Boal; the anarchist, socialist and Marxist posters in Spain and Catalunya up to 1939; the street *toyi-toyi* dance challenging *apartheid* in South Africa; the *samizdat* and *magnitizdat* underground media in the former Soviet Union; the internet links of the global social justice (*otromundialista*) movement; the worldwide community radio movement; the political documentary movement in country after country.

Such media have gone under various headings: alternative media, citizens' media, tactical media, independent media, counter-information media, participatory media, Third Sector media. Each of these terms carries its pluses and minuses. I shall review a number of them fairly briefly, and then focus in more detail on three: 'community' media; 'networked media'; and 'social movement media'.

Thus from one perspective "alternative" media is a completely vapid designation, since everything is alternative to something; yet from Chris Atton's

angle of vision, the term's very vagueness encourages us to acknowledge how everyday cultural practice is suffused with an extraordinary variety of alternative media forms (Atton 2001).

"Citizens' media" for Clemencia Rodríguez is a term that acknowledges the force field of cultural citizenship (Rodríguez 2001); yet in the era of mass refugee movements and undocumented labor migration, the word 'citizen' as applied to media has to be explicitly stripped of its legal connotation.

Ellie Rennie has developed a very effective case for using the term "community media" (Rennie 2006); yet in my view, this term is still always haunted by the 'misty-rosy' undertones of the word 'community.'

'Tactical media' is the term favored by internet activist and writer Geert Lovink (2002: 268), even though his explanation of the term is almost an anti-definition:

[tactical media is] "a deliberately slippery term, a tool for creating 'temporary consensus zones' based on unexpected alliances... hackers, artists, critics, journalists and activists... Tactical media retain mobility and velocity."

In situations then where the 'post-modernity' concept has genuine analytical traction, 'tactical media' is no doubt a viable term, moving and grooving in sync with Hakim Bey's notion of Temporary Autonomous Zones (Bey 1991). I am sorry if I horrify anyone here with the prospect that post-modern Amsterdam with a Social-Democratic administration may not be the *Zeitgeist* in its entirety,

but the further one moves from that arena Lovink's term does risk becoming threadbare.

'Independent media' is the term favored by Herman and Chomsky in order to denote non-corporate, non-state, non-religious news media. The term has a primarily rhetorical motivation, namely to dispute the frequent claim that news media in liberal capitalist polities, especially the USA, enjoy full freedom and independence. So far so good; yet the implicit news bias in Herman and Chomsky's use of the term forecloses on a whole array of grassroots media and cultural expression that have nothing directly to do with news or journalism.

'Counter-information media', originating with the late Pio Baldelli (1977), but still very much current (Vitelli & Rodríguez Esperón 2004) is also a term framed very much within the journalism arena, where 'information' is used as a synonym for 'news'. Undoubtedly, the mission to fill in the gaps and distortions in hegemonic news sources and empirical specifics is an important one, as mainstream war and ecological news coverage repeatedly demonstrates. Yet we need much more still than punch-for-punch counter-information, and than an information strategy whose agenda is dictated by the need to respond rather than radically reframe.

'Participatory media' is a term used intensively in global South development projects, and in its original design meant that people affected by these projects should have an active role in framing them and subsequently evaluating their progress (Mefalopulos 2003). This strategy also prioritized the

ways in which media of all kinds should be involved to these ends, in other words the dead reverse of top-down communication strategies. Habits die harder than rhetoric, however, and in practice the term 'participatory' has mostly become an empty buzzword batted to and fro among development administrators in their RFP documents.

"Third Sector media," denoting media in the voluntary social action sphere, is a term sometimes used in European discussions. It is implied, though not actually used, in the European Parliament's report *Community Media In Europe* (European Parliament 2008). It is a policy-based term primarily defining these media as what they are not, in other words that part of the media spectrum which is not commercially, governmentally or institutionally funded. It is thus a convenient term for media policy debate, but offers no more than this.

'Social movement media' is the term I tend to prefer (Downing 2008), inasmuch as it anchors these media projects in social movements large and tiny, constructive and repressive, all of the above. On the other hand, it has to be admitted that there is a vast plethora of small-scale media, from parish magazines to mosque bulletins, from zines to fan websites, which only partially or not at all carry any intimate connection with any kind of social movement.

At this point, we might be inclined to agree with Bolivian video-maker, author, poet, film historian and media activist Alfonso Gumucio Dagron (2004) in his cry of despair at the iron determination among academics to produce absolute definitions of social realities – definitions to which those realities are

then required to conform. And we need to acknowledge a further basic reality, that defining these media is bound to be far more difficult than defining mainstream media, whose forms and genres and organizational structures are really quite restricted in comparison. It should not surprise us then that the definitions that I have just skated through overlap at points, and are always lacking. It is a direct reflection of these anthropologically polymorphous media forms.

Until the beginning of the present decade, media projects of this ilk - most often small-scale, often ephemeral, almost always under-funded or entirely unfunded - were basically under the radar of conventional media research. They were too messy, too pathetic in comparison to mogul media, and altogether too 'nano' to be worth spending precious research energy on.

That scenario has changed quite noticeably, with the publication of more and more research studies in this area, many of them of book-length, and with the emergence of an annual international conference dedicated to such media, the OurMedia/NuestrosMedios conference, which to date has met in the USA, Spain, Colombia, Brazil, India, Australia and Ghana. With the advent mid-decade of the so-called 'social networking' sites such as YouTube, MySpace, Facebook and the rest, to sweep airily past this zone of research has ceased to be plausible.

The question now is whether that should be a matter for satisfaction? Should we break out the champagne to celebrate a new healthy bouncing child

for the rapidly expanding media research family? Or alternatively, from the vantage-point of Britain's critics of media studies for whom our field is a fertile straw man, is it high time to put media research on the morning-after pill?

'Community' media

The term 'community' probably carries different senses in different localities and contexts. Urban planners have used it to refer to community consultations, which meant the planners would subject themselves to the ritual ordeal of being angrily shouted at in one or more public meetings, before going ahead and reconstructing the neighbourhood according to their original plans. It has been used as a way to invoke the shock and dismay of a supposed 'international community' in order to denounce some monstrous terrorist attack - never mind that this very international 'community' was often composed at least partly of a number of countries at war with each other, or close to it, or recently having negotiated a ceasefire. A 'gated community' signifies a group of rich people voluntarily enclosed in their own prison walls in order not to mix with the wider 'community' around them. To take one step further, in India the word 'communalism' means antagonism between Hindus and Muslims.

We need then to be cautious with this word 'community', which can be used in such varied ways, at least in English. It is certainly the case that actual locally defined communities very frequently have *internal* tensions of class, of

'race', of religion, of language, of generation, and not least of gender. Everything is rarely rosy in the community garden.

On the other hand, when speaking of media, 'community media' is one of the commonest terms to denote local radio and television, local newspapers and weeklies, telecenters, and public access video facilities. The *radio comunitaria* movement is extremely strong in Latin America, in a number of European countries, in Canada and Australia, and is taking wing in India. In Uruguay there is actually legislation in place now that guarantees the rights of community radio stations and provides support for them. The European Union's new 'Third Sector' policy also provides a defined legal status for community media.

This provides an important contrast to their status in a number of other Latin American nations, where their undefined legal position means they are frequently threatened with closure. Brazil is estimated to have perhaps ten thousand community radio stations, but only a few hundred legal ones. And again, it is important to look beneath the surface. In Bolivia, the long-running miners' stations, with a fierce tradition of independence, have been largely bypassed in favour of new stations with new equipment donated from Venezuela, and tightly harnessed to the Morales administration's priorities and preferences. On paper the legal position of community radio stations in Venezuela itself is extremely strong, but in practice the Chávez administration maintains quite close control over them.

So once again do we need to be cautious when we see the word 'community'?

However, some researchers such as the Australian Ellie Rennie (2006), the Danish researchers Per Jauert and the late Ole Prehn and the Dutch/American Nick Jankowski, the American Kevin Howley (2005; 2009), the Irish researcher Rosemary Day (2007), the Indian researchers Pavarala and Kamchan Malik (2008), to mention only a few, have produced excellent studies using this designation. Let us pause a moment on the work of Rennie and Howley by way of evaluating how they use the term 'community' in the media context.

Rennie argues that the value of the term 'community media' is that it captures the everyday, "ordinary" (p. 41) cultural process of the mass of citizens. She anchors 'community media' within 'civil society', which in turn she defines as "associations formed out of nonprofit motives [which] are seen as legitimate participants in governance" (p. 35). Civil society, she emphasizes, requires there to be "communication platforms" (ibid.) Unlike some writers, she excludes the market, and both commercial and public service media, as constituent parts of civil society, while of course recognizing that they influence civil society in a myriad ways.

Rennie also links the importance of 'community media' to the widespread perception of the failings of liberal democratic politics as currently organized, leading to the confidence gap between political parties and large sections of the public. In her view, 'community media' can help serve to fill that gap,

significantly strengthening participation in governance. The term 'Third Sector media' is also one she endorses. Ultimately her argument appears to be that 'community media' strengthen the living tissue of civil society, and the instances she cites offer a whole gamut of ways in which this happens.

For Howley, the sense of 'community media' partly overlaps elements in Rennie's description, but is especially focused upon their operation as an assertion of local realities against global pressures:

"The growing popular interest in community media across the globe indicates profound dissatisfaction with media industries preoccupied with increasing market share and profitability at the expense of public accountability and social value... community media represent a dynamic response to the forces of globalization, not unlike other more frequently discussed phenomena, such as the rise of ethnic nationalism, religious fundamentalism, terrorism or popular demonstrations [of the *otromundialista* movement]" (p. 33).

Howley flags as well the roles of 'community media' as "a resource for local social service agencies, political activists, and others whose missions, methods and objectives are antithetical to existing power structures" (p. 34), and as "a forum for local arts and cultural organizations" (p. 35). But he does not adopt a binarist perspective, splitting 'community media' radically from the commercial mainstream. Acknowledging his debt to the work of Jesús Martín-Barbero, he writes that "community media provide a unique site to illuminate hegemonic

processes: community media demonstrate not only signs of resistance and subversion but evidence of complicity and submission as well" (ibid.). He also notes how these influences go both ways, how the *cinéma vérité* style of early alternative Super 8 cinema and guerrilla video has become a standard feature of mainstream TV news coverage.

To sum up so far: Rennie focuses more on the governance gap, and Howley on the globalization gap, as explanations for the contemporary emergence and importance of these small-scale media forms. Both agree, however, that the strength of 'community media' lies in their being rooted within the processes of everyday life, that they permit ordinary citizens and non-citizens forms of expression and self-organization and connection that are only rarely and partially open to them in mainstream commercial media - and even in public service media as currently organized.

Let me offer two critical comments on their approaches. One is historical, one geographical.

Both define nano-media as a relatively new phenomenon, something emerging to strength particularly over the past couple of decades. As I indicated in my remarks at the beginning, however, nano-media have been a feature of the cultural and political landscape for a very long time now. Historians have often failed to study them, just as media sociologists have until recently failed to study them. But that says more about the assumptions of historians and sociologists,

who were arguably captivated by the illusory equation of size with social significance, and therefore focused on macro-media of various kinds.

It was not only the historians' and sociologists' fault. Very often activists in these media projects were too busy at the time, or too exhausted and saddened when the project collapsed, to archive. Indeed, one of the pluses of both Rennie's and Howley's books is their snapshot summaries of a number of these media projects around the world. I hope that the encyclopedia of social movement media that I have just finished editing will also go some way toward being an archive of these media around the world.

However, a careful comparison and contrast among different nano-media projects past and present is of the greatest importance, and their history is crucial to consider.

The 'geographical' criticism I would voice is that 'community' in both writers' arguments is effectively equated with 'local'. Implicitly, this draws attention away from communities not based on or solely connected to their particular locality, and *their* forms of nano-media: women activists; young people; minority-ethnic communities; migrant workers' and transnational communities; sexual identity communities; environmental activist communities. Admittedly, the face-to-face dimension of locality is often missing or much weaker in such communities, lacking that major dimension of the more conventional community. But the minority-ethnic press, and radio where it exists, are long-standing examples (e.g. Cunningham & Sinclair 2003).

Now particularly in the internet era, with streaming audio/video, a local radio station can easily be picked up even around the world. For example, Radio Popolare, Milano, streams its cutting edge musical selections – young people throughout Italy no longer have to travel up to Milano in order to be, every day if they so wish, active members of its music community from Agrigento to Cagliari to Ventimiglia.

'Networked' Movement Media

I sometimes wonder whether Manuel Castells regrets the day he invented the phrase “the space of flows”! Nonetheless, the phrase does serve quickly to point us towards the extraordinary fresh opportunities presented by the Internet and mobile media to social movements. Not all such movements are ones we can celebrate: one of the earliest U.S. users of the Internet for political mobilization was the Ku Klux Klan, and White Supremacist groups and neo-Nazis continue to be active through these media. Not every regime permits these media to be used freely – currently Chinese internet activists are using the term “Internet winter” to refer to their government’s interventions. Globally, the denial of access is widespread for both economic and political reasons. Internet surveillance is rather easy, and mobile phones are mostly straightforward to locate.

Nonetheless, as we look back over the past decade, beginning with the four-day mobilization against the WTO in Seattle at the end of 1999, democratic communication opportunities have sharply altered. Events in Greece in

December 2008, events in Iran in June and the succeeding months of 2009, are fresh in our minds. Less well known, outside South East Asia, is the space opened up via the Internet for horizontal communication in Indonesia, in Malaysia, and among the exiled opposition groups from Burma. In the so-called 'Middle East', standard low estimates of Internet penetration are often wildly off, because of widespread use of telecenters and Internet cafés. Egyptian bloggers in particular, men and women, are extremely active, often challenging their own and other regional regimes as well as ventilating everyday frustrations.

Thus the term 'network' continues to dominate discussions of alternative communication processes. As a term denoting a global set of electronic connections for Internet use, its meaning is clear. But as used to refer to *social networks*, its sense is much murkier.

We might perhaps usefully replace the current English term "social media" - a ridiculous expression, for which media are *not* social? - with a term popular in Latin America some thirty years ago to refer to alternative social movement media pre-Internet, namely 'horizontal' media. Except that 'vertical' advertising and political campaign communication flows also run via these media. Perhaps calling them 'meso-media' might be a useful heuristic device, because it would distinguish them from both macro-media and nano-media, allowing space to consider their particular combination of the highly personal, even solipsistic - the blogger no one reads - with the mass diffusion of information as in the Barack Obama presidential campaign.

For a long time, what passed for 'network' analysis was fixated on the analysis of social dyads, and was compulsively empiricist in its methodology. Political scientists Mario Diani and Doug McAdam, in their collection of studies of social movements and networks (2003: 5), have emphasized how social movement research has been one of the factors helping to push traditional network analysis beyond these fixations towards emphasizing

"the inextricable link between social networks and *culture*...the relationship between the social networks and the *cognitive maps* through which actors make sense of and categorize their social environment and locate themselves within broader webs of ties and interactions." [My emphases]

Indeed one of the problems of the term 'network' in the post-Internet age is the way it tends today to push our thinking about networks in the direction of 'channels' of communication, conveying neutral information pulses, which is certainly a component of the process, but which without cultural tissue and texture is as meaningless as a piece of granite rock. Diani and McAdam's point is well taken, although not much in their collection of essays actually addresses cultural issues in any depth, as they are more concerned with the organizational dynamics of movement mobilization: individual recruitment, emergent mobilization and movement expansion (McAdam 2003: 297).

Indeed much of what is written about the internet and mobile telephony is concerned with mobilization issues, as were the examples from Greece and Iran I cited already. A recent study of mobile communication by Castells, Fernández-

Ardèvol and Qiu (2007: ch. 7) has a chapter on its political dimensions, but focuses entirely on mobile telephony and instant political mobilizations (“flash mobs”).

In Qiu’s even more recently published study of what he terms “working-class network society” in China, however, there is a much deeper investigation of the meshing of mobile telephony and the internet in the formation of China’s new working class (Qiu 2009). Qiu particularly focuses upon uses among young workers, migrant workers, and seniors, and writes

“What is achieved through communication technology in this class formation process is therefore not the annihilation of the local but the opportunity to allow critical local incidents to transcend social boundaries and reach other have-less groups under similar conditions...the haves as well as have-nots, may join the cause of the have-less to safeguard the welfare of all citizens, including the right to communicate using working-class ICTs” (Qiu 2009: 245).

A recent contribution to debate by Olga Guedes Bailey, Bart Cammaerts and Nico Carpentier (2008: 25-33) takes the network notion has a less instantaneous focus. They deploy the term “rhizome” to denote the type of network established by alternative media. The rhizome is a type of plant which sends out runners, usually underground, and gradually, almost invisibly, but very effectively, establishes dominance over a wide territory. This is the term they prefer to ‘community media’, ‘alternative media’ or ‘civil society media’. The rhizome metaphor was coined, so far as I know, by Deleuze and Guattari (1987), but it also echoed language common in the political movements of 1970s and early

1980s Italy, which spoke often of the “molecular” and “capillary” processes of social movements. In some sense, Diani and McAdam and their colleagues have been trying to move beyond these metaphors in order to pin down the hydrodynamics of social movements.

Anthropologist Jeffrey Juris’ recent study *Networking Futures: the movements against corporate globalization*, a large part of it developed in interaction with other *otromundialistas* right here in Catalunya, focuses on globalization from below, “from the ground up... a dynamic interaction among multiple practices, flows, and processes at varying scales” (Juris 2008: 297). He specifically addresses what he terms “the cultural logic of networking” at the core of these movements.

He means by this

“Cultural struggles involving ideology (antiglobalization versus anticapitalism), strategies (summit hopping versus sustained organizing), tactics (violence versus non-violence), organizational form (structure versus nonstructure), and decision making (consensus versus voting)” (Juris 2008: 15).

It is a relief to turn to ‘networking’ as a flesh-and-blood set of conflictual practices rather than the frequent image of smoothly lubricated digital links, and Juris’ study taken as a whole is highly commendable, not least his methodology of “militant anthropology.”

Putting these studies and insights together, it is clear that the term ‘network’ has multiple potential applications in understanding the multiple forms of social movement media. At the same time, it is used in multiple senses, and I propose we should avoid pivoting any discussion of these media on the

single term itself, which is more likely to confuse than illuminate. I also think it critically important to de-technologize the term, not least by consistently integrating our discussions of the internet and mobile telephony with the many other forms of social movement media – something Juris’ study does rather well.

‘Social Movement’ Media

We come finally to the term which I broadly prefer – if, that is, we *have* to pick a single term for what I just characterized as the ‘hydrodynamics’ of these multi-dimensional media phenomena. The advantage of this designation is that it anchors these media technologies and their uses in actual social relations and social change. The remarkable impact of nano-media, sometimes in the short term, but most often over the longer term, has everything to do with their integration in the process of social movements. This is what those who fetishize large scale media, macro-media, and dismiss these nano-media as trivial, freakish, irritating, miss. Judged by the standards *and objectives* of macro-media, of course nano-media fail!

At the same time, we find ourselves back in a problem of definition. What is a social movement? And what is not? Indeed, what should we include in or exclude from the social movement category? A national revolution? Fascism? Immigrants’ rights campaigns? Campaigns to deny refugees’ rights? A local environmental defense campaign? The *cristeros* who sought to defend the Catholic Church against Mexico’s anticlerical government in the 1930s? The global anti-apartheid movement? Punk rock? Hip hop? dada? The global social

justice movement? Human rights global networks? Islamist networks? Home improvement? The cell-phone *morpeg* phenomenon [MMORPGs/massively multiplayer online role-playing games]?

This is something I have explored at more length elsewhere (Downing 2008), so let me summarize that argument here. The earliest sociological definition did not use the term 'social movement' at all, but basically lifted a term of the elite to express their fear and disgust at large-scale urban or rural riots and insurgencies: "the mob", or "the crowd", possessed of potentially demonic force that needed to be subdued by much greater force, if necessary an orgy of violence. The story of the Paris Commune comes to mind, as does the devastation by Franco's forces in Spain and Catalunya.

Partly impelled by the global social unrest of the 1960s and 1970s, some sociologists swung the pendulum in the opposite direction, and underscored the rationality of protest, its deployment of those forms of power and resources which people without much money or connections *can* use: blocking highways, occupying factories and government offices, strikes, and many other forms of bodily action. Thus the 'rational actor' model was mobilized to challenge the 'demonic mob' model.

Then arose a third perspective, the so-called 'New Social Movements' model. This one zeroed in on feminist, environmentalist and peace movements, and drew a sharp distinction between their goals and those of labor movements. The difference between them they saw as the attempt of labor movements

historically to negotiate outcomes with the state, or particular corporations or both, such as the 8-hour day, or a new pay contract. These “new” movements, they claimed, were all about reformulating collective social identities and had no expectations of negotiating specific outcomes with the authorities.

From my point of view, the mob approach had one element of validity, namely the capacity of people in large numbers, especially when provoked by aggressive policing, to take extreme actions way beyond what they anticipated when they joined the protest and to have their emotions dynamized. The rational actor approach saw the sense in protest, as opposed to dismissing it out of hand as pointless or misconceived. The New Social Movements school was right to take feminism and the rest seriously and to note their points of difference with other social movements. So far, so good.

Yet obviously the mob approach was basically contemptuous, not analytical. The Rational Actor approach was comprehensively uninterested in emotion, almost by definition, and in its drive to grasp the rationality of social movements often reduces them to mute pieces on a social chessboard, de-cultured, and not apparently involved in any kind of communication process, mediated or face to face – or at least any such process with any dynamics or contradictions.

The New Social Movement school was seemingly entirely uninterested in any movements outside the Global North, such as Brazil’s landless workers’ movement, the anti-apartheid movement, the movement against Indonesian

dictator Suharto, indigenous people's movements, or anything outside their framework. Moreover, anything resembling the labor movement model within New Social Movements was banished from the frame – such as feminists demanding child care rights, or environmentalists demanding new legislation, or peace activists demanding the abolition of nuclear arsenals.

More than many social phenomena, social movements and their media are often fluctuating and transitory and thus especially resistant to ironclad theorizing. They frequently demand the subtlety and delicacy of an Antonio Gramsci or a Raymond Williams for genuinely penetrating analysis. Latin American researchers have especially insisted on these issues, and on the centrality of *process* in the analysis of social movement media (Gumucio Dagron 2004; Huesca 1995; Rodríguez 2001).

One issue is the question of size. Does a social movement need to be citywide, region-wide or national to qualify as a real social movement? I would argue not, and in support would cite examples such as the Bogotá *barrio* rural migrant women whose video activism Clemencia Rodríguez describes in her book *Fissures in the Mediascape* (Rodríguez 2001). These women had no ambition to talk to the whole of Bogotá, let alone the whole of Colombia. At the same time, in the process of learning to document their neighborhood's issues and its residents' lives, including their own, they became a local social movement. The dramatic role of social movements and their media in successfully consolidating the overthrow of fascism and colonialism in Portugal 36 years ago was on a

national scale. Indeed it was on an international scale, given its repercussions in Spain, in Greece, in Brazil, in Moçambique, in Angola, in Guiné-Bissau, in Timor Leste. But we risk sliding back into the fallacy of gigantism, of fetishizing macro-media and macro-impact, if we take such cases as the yardstick of the authentic.

The other question is one of the formal organizational components of social movements. In Italian usage around thirty years back, the plural *movimenti sociali* was often used to describe what elsewhere would have been called leftist micro-parties or splinter organizations, each one usually with its own little newspaper, often operating on a blend of messianic and Leninist fervor. What was interesting however was how by the early 1980s, partly under the influence of the 1976 self-dissolution of the nationally influential *Lotta Continua* organization, a number of these media were effectively declaring independence of their official sects. In some sense, therefore, the social movement logic was disrupting the assembly-line editorial logic of the would-be Leninists.

In the 21st century, with the Soviet experiment long behind us and hopefully never to be repeated, the vast variety of social movement media, operating in direct relation to movements for constructive social change, represents our best prospect for an alternative, counter-hegemonic public sphere. Within that sphere, within “the global movement of movements”, the numerous challenges that face us – climate change, women’s subordination, the repression of labor activism, digital surveillance, and war and terrorism – can begin to be

addressed over time with collective wisdom, insight and argument, not with the pathetic solutions trotted out by our official political leaders.

So, let me pull together the threads of my argument. I would suggest that the term 'community media', though in the two studies by Rennie and Howley I have cited it also carries an oppositional and contestatory sense, mainly focuses attention nonetheless on the undramatic, everyday stuff of our lives. The 'network' media terminology draws our attention to the new and important opportunities for social movement mobilization that now exist, but tends to draw attention more to the very immediate and dramatic, in a sense the opposite of the quiet, almost humdrum flavor of 'community media'.

I would suggest a melding of both. The ongoing almost invisible social activism of groups and communities in developing the thick cultural tissue of their daily lives, is the fertile soil of political activism. The extension of such social networking through digital media is important over the long term, as well as in situations of immediate emergency and high drama, though I think Juris (2008) maps the technological too smoothly on to the political in his analysis of digital networks. Taken together, these are however vital components within the growth of local and transnational social movement activism in collectively determining the human future on a democratic rather than authoritarian basis.

I would like to express my thanks to Ms Genève Gil, MA, of Austin, Texas, for her expert translation of this presentation into Spanish.

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