

Recognition in the Struggle against Global Injustice

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Introduction

State-specific solutions are necessarily inadequate to the task of effectively addressing the many global issues that humans face today – environmental damage, the ravages of neo-liberalism, violence against women, etc. As Nancy Fraser (2005: 304) has observed, a state focus can aid and abet global injustices by ‘systematically obscur[ing] transborder sources of...injustice that structure transnational social relations’. At the same time, the international institutional apparatus is relatively underdeveloped, and existing institutions face multiple difficulties in promoting cooperation and ensuring enforcement.

In this context, global social movements are especially important in the struggle against injustice. Such movements draw attention to transnational sources of injustice and put pressure on multiple governments to change their behaviour. They also influence and/or give greater legitimacy to international institutions that are in a position to influence governments’ action.

What does ‘recognition’ have to do with such sorely-needed global movements? Some would argue that recognition politics – struggles over the meaning of and status conferred to particular identities – pre-empts the kinds of large-scale unified movements needed to promote justice in this increasingly interconnected age. The seeking and attaining of recognition, for instance, has been criticized for pre-empting cross-identity coalitions by emphasizing difference among identity groups/hardening boundaries and suggesting that certain solidarities are un-natural (Brown 1999; Gitlin 1996). Based on this view, the politics of recognition is something that activists who hope to engender and sustain global resistance movements should avoid.

While recognition politics can certainly have divisive effects, it would be wrong to portray 'recognition' as anathema to transnational or global movements. In fact, it is absolutely essential to their viability and success. For social movements to cross national borders, people have to be integrated across lines of local and national difference. And this is only the tip of the difference iceberg: racial, sexual, class and gender differences must also be bridged. The experiences of the last half century – the demise of Marxism, the splintering of identity movements like feminism – have taught progressive forces that difference will not be repressed and cannot be ignored. It must be engaged directly, and this direct engagement begins with recognition.

In this chapter, I explore three different sites where recognition politics is necessary if global movements are to be realized, and two important functions recognition can play in forging global movements. In doing so, I add to our understanding of the 'variety of sites and ways in which recognition can be thought and practiced' or what Sallie Westwood (2001) calls 'regimes of recognition.' While Westwood focuses on democracy, citizenship and the nation in her elaboration of recognition regimes, however, I focus on the politics of recognition as practised (1) within progressive movements, (2) between progressive movements and (3) by progressive movements on the global stage. Just as the sites Westwood describes, these are 'key sites for the politics of recognition which...move us toward the kind of "planetary humanism" suggested by Paul Gilroy or the cosmopolitan future suggested by Beck among others' (Westwood 2001: 248). And just as with Westwood's argument, this extension of her understanding of regimes of recognition brings together a 'series of sites with the modalities of recognition as we understand them' (Westwood 2001: 254). Specifically, I argue that recognition politics at these different sites can be integrative and/or performative. An 'integrative' recognition politics brings the worldviews of different groups into closer alignment and enables diverse groups to act together. A 'performative' recognition politics manifests the will of a particular coalition and the strength of its claims.

At the same time, as I insist on the necessity of recognition politics to the formation of global movements against injustice, however, I am sympathetic to critics who claim that recognition politics is appropriative or dominative, that it reifies difference and creates rifts. Recognition politics *can* take on pathological forms and have problematic consequences. But it need not. The question, then, is under what conditions does the politics of recognition realize its better self? What are the conditions that encourage an *ethical* integrative recognition politics? I explore these questions in what follows.

The chapter will proceed as follows. First, I specify my understanding of the 'politics of recognition'. In the second section, I explore the integrative function that 'internally-oriented' recognition politics (i.e. conducted both within progressive movements and between progressive movements) can serve, taking global feminism and the World Social Forum (WSF) as my points of reference. In the third section, I use the 2003 anti-war protests as an example of an 'externally-oriented' recognition politics that serves the function both of manifesting and coalescing a global democratic citizenry. In the fourth section, I draw on the work of feminists and analysts of the WSF to suggest some of the conditions that would encourage an ethically integrative recognition politics rather than one defined by domination or appropriation.

Parsing the politics of recognition

The phrase 'the politics of recognition' begs the question: recognition of what? The implicit referent here is identity and, relatedly, status. Misrecognition of identity or lack of recognition of identity can negatively impact the subject's own self-understanding as well as others' understanding of who she is and what is owed to her; both non- and misrecognition can result in damage or distortion, marginalization, exploitation or exclusion. The belief that women are naturally or ideally submissive, for instance, may prevent women from obtaining leadership positions (and the resulting dearth of women leaders perpetuates gender inequity). Another example: people who are not considered citizens of any state are barred from accessing the full range of human rights in a system where states ensure rights. In both cases, mis- or non-recognition of a group justifies the withholding of status (by an international institution, by the state, by a public or by a segment of a public) from a specific group of people. Recognition, on the other hand, involves acknowledgement of an other's self-understanding¹ – both comprehension of this understanding and action in keeping with this comprehension. Recognition politics, then, refers to the symbolic struggle over the meaning and consequences of an identity. Most recognition politics involve efforts either to increase visibility of an identity group or to encourage others to see members of an identity group anew.

The kinds of recognition sought are of many varieties, and recognition politics can be conducted in a number of different ways, so it is worthwhile to visit some distinctions that help us understand the lay of the land of recognition politics. In a recent article, Lisa Strömbom distinguishes between 'thin' and 'thick' forms

of recognition. Thin recognition politics involves acceptance into a universal category (human being, for instance) and the conferral of the status (human rights) that entails. Thin recognition, in other words, involves the recognition of an aspect of one's identity that is shared with all others. Thick recognition, on the other hand, is recognition of the 'features that make a subject unique' (Strömbom 2014: 171) – such as race, gender, sexual orientation and so forth. In this form of recognition politics, 'the subjectivity of the other is underscored' (Strömbom 2014: 171), meaning the subject's own understanding of the meaning of a particular aspect of her identity is given weight. As such, thick recognition requires 'acknowledgement, understanding, or empathy for the situation and the views of the other' (Strömbom 2014: 171).

Another important distinction to highlight is that between a monovalent recognition politics and a multivalent recognition politics. As I have argued elsewhere (Snyder 2012), this distinction pushes back against portrayals of the politics of recognition as necessarily promoting essentialist conceptions of identities. Certainly, monovalent forms of the politics of recognition – a form in which recognition is demanded for an identity understood in monolithic terms – have abounded.² But, other forms of recognition politics involve drawing attention to the multiplicity of an identity category – in fact, in these forms, attention to such multiplicity is considered essential to the revaluation of the identity category more generally. Such was the case with the early gay rights movement in America, which celebrated 'unity in diversity' and displayed the breadth of gay identities through gay pride parades. Contemporary 'post-black' identity politics is another example of a multivalent recognition politics; the post-black movement aims not to do away with blackness, but instead to challenge restrictive ideas about blackness placed on black Americans from both outside and inside the racial group.

Having introduced distinctions that will come into play later in the chapter, I end this section with a short discussion of recognition and transformation. Some portray recognition politics merely as reifying one's own perspective – I (am supposed to) reinforce what you think about yourself, you (are supposed to) reinforce what I think about myself and neither of us (our ways of thinking about ourselves or seeing the world) is changed in the encounter. I grant the possibility that one's sense of self and worldview may be unchanged following a recognition encounter; but certainly, this is not true of all types of encounters in all types of contexts. It is equally possible that the recognition encounter changes one's sense of self/view of one's identity. So, we find that identity groups are not just internally heterogeneous (as multivalent recognition highlights); they are also not static. Hence, Charles Taylor suggests that a deepening of relations of recognition only

comes about in terms of an interpretative dialogue oriented towards ‘shared horizons’ – suggesting that one’s horizons (the way one sees the world and oneself in it) can and do shift in recognition encounter. An ethical recognition encounter, then, involves not ensuring the other’s conception of her identity is preserved, but fully respecting her ‘normative power as discourse participant’ (Allen 2010: 209).

So, to summarize: recognition politics involves the struggle over the meaning of an identity and the status conferred based on that meaning. Recognition politics can focus on universal or particular identities and can present identity in more or less monolithic ways. Transformation of one’s self and worldview can be a consequence of a recognition encounter.

The importance of internal recognition politics

In this section, I discuss the importance of intra- and inter-movement recognition politics to the construction of effective and consciously global movements against injustice.

Intra-movement politics

The feminist movement provides a clear example of why those concerned with forging effective global movements need to dedicate time and effort to intra-movement recognition politics, and feminist scholars and activists have expended significant effort reflecting on this. I thus draw from both feminist history and theory to make my argument. It should be noted, however, that similar dynamics have occurred within other progressive movements; the lessons of feminism are applicable to other progressive movements.³

Second-wave feminists made strong and sweeping claims about ‘woman’s’ nature, what ‘women’ need and the kind of society ‘women’ desire. Perhaps by virtue of their breadth, these claims received a great deal of attention and stimulated a significant amount of activism. Yet, most often, those who claimed to be speaking for all women were not representative of the variety of women, but instead just a subset: white, well-off feminists from countries in the global north (especially the United States). These particular women, in other words, mistook their particular experiences and the agenda they derived from them for universal experiences and a global agenda. Instead of ‘speaking for’ all women, such women were in fact imposing their perspective and priorities on women who had very different experiences.

This imposition was aided and abetted by power inequalities. Racist and colonialist ideologies suggest white and Western knowledges to be superior to the knowledges of non-white, non-Western subjects. White Western feminists thus assumed a kind of epistemic privilege that made them certain that they had greater insight into the situation of non-white, non-Western women than they themselves did. Non-white, non-Western women were portrayed as more oppressed, more indoctrinated and less able to help themselves than white Western feminists.

The imposition of white Western feminism ignited a slew of criticism. Chandra Mohanty was at the forefront of the critique of solidarity-damaging tendencies within Western feminist scholarship, demonstrating the complicity of the academy in the shaping of a problematic feminist activism. In 'Under Western Eyes' (1984), Mohanty 'expose[s] the power-knowledge nexus of feminist cross-cultural scholarship expressed through Eurocentric, falsely universalizing methodologies that serve the narrow self-interest of Western feminism' (2003: 501). This scholarship, Mohanty claims, underwrites the very kinds of paternalistic attitudes that undermine solidarity between women in different parts of the world.

At the same time, as these internal tensions were rising, feminists were increasingly coming to realize the necessity of global feminism. In 'Mapping the Feminist Imagination: From Redistribution to Recognition to Representation' (2005), Nancy Fraser charts feminism's trajectory as moving from a 'redistribution' phase in which feminists challenge an overly narrow economic political imaginary, through a 'recognition' phase or identity politics phase focused on culture, towards a (superior) 'representation' phase. In the (contemporary) 'representation' phase, feminists (rightly) realize gender injustice to be a global problem, exacerbated by global forces, which requires global activism and solutions.

Fraser understands recognition politics as continuing to be important in this third phase of feminism. This transnational phase, as she says, 'integrates the best of the previous two phases in a new and more adequate synthesis' (Fraser 2005: 297). But, it is worth interrogating what exactly Fraser means by 'recognition politics.' For Fraser, recognition politics aims to change cultural preconceptions about women. She portrays the recognition exchange, in other words, as one that occurs between feminists and non-feminists, with feminists seeking to transform the perspectives of those who buy into chauvinist ideologies.

What is left out of this understanding of the recognition politics that forms part of the representation phase's 'more adequate synthesis' is significant in light of global feminism's recent history. While the exchange between feminists and non-feminists is important, if history has taught us anything, it is that a

recognition exchange between feminists themselves is necessary. For Fraser, recognition politics revalues women, rather than exploring the differences between women. It changes public culture, rather than movement culture. Fraser's understanding of recognition politics is thus too narrow.

Indeed, this lack of concern for internal recognition politics is performed in the way that Fraser constructs her argument. While she extols the importance of global feminism, Fraser limits most of her analysis to the United States and Western Europe, largely ignoring feminism in the 'two-thirds world'.⁴ This is the exact kind of erasure – feminism does not exist outside of the West – that figures like Mohanty fight against. Fraser's argument fails to appreciate the nature of the recognition politics needed to sustain the global feminism she deems essential, and even performs the sorts of misrecognitions/denials of recognition that threaten the viability of a truly global feminism.

The demand for recognition is embedded (sometimes implicitly, sometimes explicitly) in the criticism of a white Western feminism that patronizes women in the two-thirds world and elides feminism there. Resistance to this imposition says: 'You must acknowledge my understanding of myself, my needs, my desires, my political commitments, etc.' Such demands should not be understood as a threat to the feminist movement; indeed, a *lack* of engagement would be much more threatening. Rather, they must be at least partly animated by the possibility of a movement integrated across difference, the hope for 'unity in diversity'.

In the case of feminism, an intra-movement politics must both assume and reinforce the position that there are different ways to parse the identity 'feminist'. Just because women might be critical of the dominant 'women's rights' paradigm, for instance, does not mean they are not feminist – rather, they may believe rights are ineffective in their locales, or they prefer a more community-oriented tack as opposed to an individual-oriented one (Sperling, Ferree and Risling 2001). The idea that women who do not get on board with certain Western-preferred strategies (for instance, rejecting the hijab) are not feminist constitutes a global movement-defeating misrecognition:

Misrecognition is due not to our prejudices as such but the failure to adequately articulate them and to take those of the other seriously. Ethnocentrism means unreflectively judging the other in terms of our own vocabulary of worth. What is offensive about such judgments is that they fail to take sufficient account of the self-understandings of the culture in question. Moreover, in doing so they find these other cultures to be inferior. The other is found to be a transgressor of our own values rather than recognized as possessing his/her own conception of the good. (Schaap 2004: 528)

There are different ways of doing feminism, and people with very different strategic priorities must be able to claim the identity 'feminist'.

To forge a global movement, difference cannot be overcome once and for all – efforts to do so are morally bankrupt and have been shown to be ineffective. Rather, the feminist movement requires 'understanding [of both] the historical and experiential specificities and differences of women's lives as well as the historical and experiential connections between women from different national, racial, and cultural communities' (Mohanty 2003: 522). Intra-movement recognition politics allows for the articulation of common differences by bringing such specificities to light and to bear on global feminism's direction. The transformations wrought by substantive recognition encounters enable a sound and lasting solidarity as well as contributing to movement efficacy.

The global movement against violence against women (VAW) demonstrates this. Although efforts to conduct a global campaign against VAW started to take shape in the mid-1970s, it was not until the 1990s that this campaign gained real traction. The implementation of specific initiatives aimed to facilitate dialogue across the North-South divide was the turning point in this campaign. Specifically, anti-VAW 'activists sought to ensure that Southern women were present, especially among the leadership..., that Southern women had the opportunity to articulate an independent agenda..., and that activists worked to build an agenda all could support, while expecting disagreement about priorities' (Weldon 2006: 61).

The substantive recognition encounters enabled within the newly constructed arenas for dialogue across difference clearly facilitated a degree of transformation, as 'issues that had previously been very divisive became unifying issues' (Weldon 2006: 62). Weldon relates:

When Northern women raised the issue of FGM [Female Genital Mutilation] at earlier meetings, for example, many Southern women criticized the move as imperialistic. But at Nairobi, African women themselves organized discussions of FGM and African women's strategies to address the issue. After Nairobi, activists were able to include FGM under the rubric of violence against women with little dissent. (2006: 62)

That transformation occurred, though, is not to say that all differences between feminists disappeared. Instead of repressing or ignoring differences, however, they were given a hearing and met with respect; as Weldon puts it, 'a critical mass of women had decided that they could be feminists and disagree on certain issues' (2006: 61). As a result of these inclusive efforts, many Southern feminists came to feel equal partners in the global movement, rather than clients of it.

The success story that is the VAW campaign can only be built on if intra-movement recognition politics is not considered a phase. Feminists constantly need to be reminded of differences within the 'thick' identities of 'woman' and 'feminist' and encouraged to attend to the meaning and significance of these differences. Continual demands for recognition and efforts to recognize are essential to building a lasting global feminism.

Inter-movement politics

Dynamics within movements like feminism have been reflected on the larger scale of the Left as a whole. The demise of Marxism was not only due to what some have deemed the triumph of capitalism and liberalism, but it was also due to the rejection of the Marxist model by progressive forces. Many progressives did not feel that their particular concerns were adequately represented by the Marxist framework. In fact, many felt that such a universal theory and hierarchical politics actively repressed their concerns and ran counter to their values.

In the wake of this ambitious project, it is unsurprising that we have witnessed the rise of identity politics in which concerns particular to a specific group are foregrounded, as well as issue politics in which issue-specific advocacy occurs on the global level. Boaventura De Sousa Santos describes the post-Marxist progressive arena as follows:

The movements and the NGOs constitute themselves around a number of more or less confined goals, create their own forms and styles of resistance, and specialize in certain kinds of practice and discourse that distinguish them from the others. Their identity is thereby created on the basis of what separates them from all the others. The feminist movement sees itself as very distinct from the labor movement, and vice versa; both distinguish themselves from the indigenous movement or the ecological movement; and so on and so forth. All these distinctions and separations have actually translated themselves into practical differences, and even contradictions push movements apart and foster rivalries and factionalisms. (2008: 262)

This proliferation of distinctions has been both helpful and harmful to struggles against global injustice. Helpful in the sense that it brings focused and sustained attention to issues of injustice that were ignored by previous methods of organizing. Harmful in the sense that it feeds partiality. Resistance has taken the form of 'manifold groups and movements all apparently parochially

concerned with their particular struggles' (Funke 2008: 453). This parochialism has encouraged the attitude that only the actions of one's own movement are important or correct – or even more locally, one's own organization within one's own movement. This mode of organizing the field of resistance and the myopia it encourages have stoked battles among different progressive groups for resources and power. Partiality thus pre-empts collaboration.

While this evolution is understandable, a series of 'silo-ed' movements will have a difficult time addressing global injustices, even if each independent movement is globalized (which, as the above discussion on feminism suggests, is not the case). Why? Injustices are interconnected; as Richard Iton puts it, 'the issues of sexuality, gender, class, race and culture[, etc.] are conjoined' (2008: 103). As such, 'resistance on one front in isolation rarely represents a significant departure from or challenge to the dominant modes of being and production' (Iton 2008: 103). This suggests that an effective struggle against injustice requires coordination and cooperation between multiple global movements – feminism, environmentalism, anti-globalization, peace and so on.

Unification by way of advocating a one-size-fits-all solution is not the way forward.⁵ Such efforts not only smack of irony,⁶ they counter what progressives are trying to achieve. Repressing difference would reinforce the very same 'hierarchical and logo-centric ways of understanding and organizing social reality' (Osterweil 2005: 25) that perpetuate global inequalities.

Instead, the struggle against global injustice requires the forging of connections between movements. The predominant emerging paradigm for a post-Marxist world is one of 'networked' movements – each focused on particular identities or issues in particular context but attentive to other identities/issues/contexts (and thus the particularity of their own positions) and interested in forging connections across difference (Gould 2007). The point of such networks is not to overcome difference, but instead to take advantage of intersections, points of commonality and opportunities for collaboration. 'We's' that are active at the global level are formed of 'solidarities of contingency with degrees of permeability' (Young, quoted in Westwood 2001: 257), part of a politics in process rather than one predetermined.

These connections can only be developed in and through an inter-movement politics of recognition. Reflecting on the possibility of global resistance, de Sousa Santos says, 'If the project is to promote counter-hegemonic practices that combine ecological, pacifist, indigenous, feminist, workers,' and other movements, and to do so in an horizontal way and with respect for the identity of every movement, an enormous effort of mutual recognition, dialogue, and

debate will be required to carry out the task' (2008: 262). Part and parcel of this enormous effort are the appreciation of different political identities and the translation of different knowledges, different perspectives on the world and different understandings of how to navigate the fight against injustice.

An effective inter-movement politics of recognition would not, I argue, require activists to submerge their identification with a particular movement into a more universal identity or to trade it for a different 'thick' identity. Some have seen Charles Taylor's understanding of the politics of recognition as working towards 'shared horizons' as opposed to the 'fused horizons' of Gadamer as problematic inasmuch as it hedges between (1) embracing the transformative power of the recognition encounter and (2) the protection of the difference with which actors enter the encounter.⁷ On this criticism, the identities that predate the recognition encounter are more static than they are on the 'fused horizons' model. But perhaps this is exactly what progressive forces should be aiming towards.

Remember that specialization has advantages. Specialization has directed attention and energy to problems undervalued by previous ways of organizing and freed activists to approach these problems in their specificity. This has resulted in the development of new insights and new forms of resistance, brought new people with different talents to the struggle. But, specialization need not entail myopia, just as maintaining one's horizons need not pre-empt transformation in the way that actors see and carry out the struggles with which they identified.

An inter-movement recognition politics that integrates across movements without the threat of eventual incorporation into a shared whole can have innumerable benefits for global progressive forces. It fights the parochialism of siloed movements, by making each aware of the 'incomplete and partial character of their struggles, politics and philosophies' (de Sousa Santos 2008: 252). It decreases suspicion between groups and may even foster trust by acknowledging past wrongs (misrecognition and the repression of difference). And it 'fosters multiple [connections] across different kinds of difference – [connections] which are constantly emergent and demonstrate varying degrees of flux and impermanence' (Conway and Singh 2009: 71–2) – but connections which enable action against mutually imbricated forms of global injustice.

Efforts have been made to put in place structures that facilitate the recognition encounters which can 'de-silo' movements without imposing unity from above. The WSF, constructed as a counterpoint to the World Economic Forum, provides 'open space' in which 'thousands of groups and movements

of insurgent civil society from around the world' can convene for 'the free exchange of ideas, experiences and strategies oriented to enacting alternatives to neoliberalism' (Conway and Singh 2009: 61). Though aiming to be maximally inclusive, the WSF does draw certain general boundaries: all included in the forum are aligned against neo-liberalism and committed to building 'another world' (the slogan of the WSF is 'another world is possible'), and it excludes groups organized as political parties and groups that use violence as a tactic. The format of the WSF does not privilege any particular position (anarchist/liberal), strategy (insider/outsider) or group (indigenous/feminist). It is, instead, intended to enable 'horizontalist modes of relating' (Conway and Singh 2009: 69) between autonomous individuals and groups.

Though many are excited about the innovation that the WSF represents, others are fiercely critical of this forum. It is decried as both too inclusive and not inclusive enough. It has been called a 'post-modern jester' (oriented more towards putting on a show than establishing a valid counter-hegemony) and a tool of the privileged NGOs (Worth and Buckley 2009). These criticisms of the WSF, however, do not diminish the need for inter-movement recognition; they just make the question of how to facilitate this more urgent. Before considering this question, I will discuss the necessity of progressive forces engaging in recognition politics on the global stage.

The importance of externally oriented recognition politics

Those who support the network model of progressive organizing are sceptical of those who call for a universal 'Left' movement – such a movement, they claim, would inevitably repeat the sins of Marxism. Their preferred model instead portrays 'true or qualitative globality as comprised of many nodes, places, interconnections and relations that at no point are totally consolidated into a singular global entity' (Osterweil 2005: 25). But, while there is good reason to be suspect of universal global movements (i.e. global movements that are not constituted in the network form), this does not mean we should extend the same scepticism to global protest events/campaigns. Even Michal Osterweil, critic of 'universalizing globalism', notes that 'place-based globalism does not mean detaching completely from global campaigns' (2005: 26). Such events on the world stage constitute a kind of a performative recognition politics that also has integrative effects, a recognition politics that is as essential to the struggle against global injustice as intra- and inter-movement recognition politics.

As Charles Tripp observes, ‘performance is at the center of the political order through its power to shape social relations and expectations’ (2013: 205). Power is contingent upon right performance and mutual recognition. Power must perform the role of power correctly, and the people must recognize power as power and act accordingly. The *status quo* is perpetuated by all playing the roles which are scripted for them, with those in power having a greater capacity to determine the accepted script. If the people, however, have different ideas about the kind of performance in which they are involved, this can have ‘potentially serious implications for the configuration of power’ (Tripp 2013: 205).

Tripp develops these ideas about performance, recognition and politics in relation to the example of the Arab Spring, but this can equally be said of global resistance movements. In fact, there is reason to believe that performance has a greater potential to disrupt the global political order than local political orders. The relative lack of formal institutionalization of relationships in the global arena (i.e. there is no world state) means that social expectations are more fluid and therefore more open to change. As John Dryzek (1999) has said, where the institutional hardware is relatively underdeveloped, the software (discourses, performances) becomes more important.

Global protest events are typically incited by matters about which a large proportion of the global citizenry feels strongly, and in which they believe they should have a say. In protesting, individuals demand to be recognized as global citizens who should have a voice in world affairs. They perform their vote. Such citizens not only demonstrate the scope of the global progressive forces, *they can actually bring global democracy into being*, albeit in a partial and incomplete form – and only if the performance of global democratic citizenship is recognized as legitimate.

Take the global protests against the US invasion of Iraq in 2003. Plans for this invasion sparked the largest single coordinated protest in history. As described in a recent retrospective on Time.com:

Roughly 10 million to 15 million people (estimates vary widely) assembled and marched in more than 600 cities: as many as 3 million flooded the streets of Rome; more than a million massed in London and Barcelona; an estimated 200,000 rallied in San Francisco and New York City. From Auckland to Vancouver – and everywhere in between – tens of thousands came out, joining their voices in one simple, global message: no to the Iraq war. (Tharoor 2014)

While US leaders performed the power of national sovereignty (and international hegemony), people across the world met this with a performance

of global democratic counter-power, with the expectation that the general would be heeded if clearly and convincingly performed. The world's citizens acted out roles with the intention of gaining 'international recognition' (Tripp 2013: 205). And indeed, the protests did gain attention and respect, moving the script away from that written by the global hegemon at the time, the United States. Prominent figures such as *New York Times* reporter Patrick Tyler and UN head Kofi Annan helped to legitimize the performance. Tyler deemed world public opinion one of the 'two superpowers on the planet' (Tyler 2003) along with the United States. Annan took up this phrase – the 'other superpower' (Nunberg 2003) – in a speech that referred to anti-war opinion.

This performative recognition politics arguably had serious ramifications in the international institutional arena. The United States sought UN Security Council authorization for its proposed invasion in order to cloak it in international legitimacy. And perhaps such authorization would have been given in the absence of a public outcry. But the clear expression of the global 'no' vote to the invasion bolstered opposition inside the United Nation. The strength of the global anti-war protest ultimately forced the Bush administration to abandon efforts to win UN endorsement (Bennis 2003). Of course, the performance of global democracy by the world's citizens was not enough to stop the invasion – the performance did not totally shift the grounds of power. But it was, according to Immanuel Wallerstein, 'the first time since the United Nations was founded that the United States, on an issue that mattered to it, could not get a majority on the Security Council' (2003: 28). Thus, this performance of global democracy did result in a kind of political defeat, even if it was not the one for which the demos had hoped.

In this recognition encounter – one in which power said 'you will accept our prerogative as head of a nation and a leader of the global order' and to which the people said 'no, we are citizens of the world, and we have a say' – citizens asserted 'the right to play roles with radically transformative implications for the established hierarchy' (Tripp 2013: 208). By performing a democratic will, progressive forces can manifest a kind of global democracy even in the absence of global democratic institutions. To the extent that citizens' performance of global democracy is recognized, such performances can reconfigure expectations and disrupt power relations – influencing discourses and institutions that shape and wield power. 'Performing resistance is... part of the intended reordering of power itself, bringing a new order into being through an appropriation of the spaces and the discourses that appeared hitherto to exist only for the benefit of established power' (Tripp 2013: 203). In this sense, Peter Waterman may be right to suggest that 'global-citizens-in-the-making might be also *creating* a

global sovereignty... over an increasingly privatized sphere that is monopolistic in tendency, individualizing, intrusive and destructive of human sociality and creativity' (2000: 145). Global resistance is a necessary part of – rather than the preface to – the reordering of the global order.

It is important for the powers that be to see progressive resistance on a global scale. But it is also important for the forces themselves to see such resistance. Demands for recognition by the global progressives on the world stage also serve important integrative functions as well as performative functions. As Tripp argues, by appropriating public space, 'the mass of individuals involved in the [Arab Spring] uprisings were performing their [global citizenship], reconstituting an activist and mobilized public and thus, through performance, gaining both *self*-recognition and recognition by others' (2013: 207). Part of the importance of global protests is in enabling individuals to recognize *themselves* as part of a global resistance. For instance, participants in the United States said that 'the global [anti-war] movement was a source of inspiration for those of us who spoke out. We gained confidence and strength in knowing that we were standing with the vast majority of the world's people' (Gillan and Pickerill 2008). Global protest events enable what Gillan and Pickerill call 'imagined solidarity' in which actors, acting locally, project 'locally grounded actions into the global arena, thereby increasing the significance of a campaign for participants' (2008: 72). Global resistance requires the iteration of such performances so that, becoming habitual, they shape individuals at their very cores: 'Kneel, move your lips in prayer, and you will believe' (Tripp 2013: 208).

Like self-recognition, the gaining of others' recognition further integrates individuals into global resistance movements – for instance, many in the anti-war movement adopted the label *New York Times* reporter Tyler penned, calling itself 'the other superpower' (Schell 2003). As Tripp says, 'We perform for others, we comport ourselves, and act aware of the gaze of others – possibly only of certain designated others – seeking recognition but also a kind of validation of the self' (Tripp 2013: 207). The validation of world public opinion as represented by the global Left was a validation for the movement, but it was also a validation of the individuals that comprised this 'superpower'.

Encouraging ethical recognition encounters

Above, I paint a rather rosy picture of the potential of recognition politics. I imply recognition encounters that integrate without domination or appropriation,

allowing the insights, diverse talents and numerical strength of variously situated peoples to be leveraged in global resistance movements. But recognition politics certainly can take on more problematic forms – the perspective that hamstrung global feminism can be thought of as arising from a problematic recognition encounter. The question is: what conditions incline the recognition encounter in one direction or another? This section provides some initial reflections on the conditions that encourage such encounters in a more ethical direction.

An absent party will likely not be recognized or not recognized in a way that resonates with the absent party. There are reasons to believe, however, that some limit to inclusion in an arena intended to facilitate recognition paves the way for ‘better’ recognition encounters. An ethically integrative recognition encounter requires ‘a genuine attempt at understanding [that] presumes that the other’s form of life has something valuable to say to us, that in coming to an understanding of the difference between us we may discover some inadequacy in our own conception of the good’ (Schaap 2004: 528–9). This presumption – ‘your form of life has something valuable to say’ – is made easier by inclusion rules that emphasize a *general shared orientation*. De Sousa Santos agrees, saying ‘an overriding sense of a common purpose . . . tends to deemphasize polarizations among the movements and invite the latter to concentrate on building more intense coalitions with the movements with which they have more affinities’ (2008: 256). The interest in facilitating deep and ethical recognition encounters must be balanced with the need for inclusivity, however, and there is no clear formula to be followed. Many have lauded the WSF for its inclusivity, for instance, but others have argued that this very inclusivity makes deep encounters difficult if not impossible.⁸

Beyond the question of who should be invited is the question of the terms on which actors meet. An ethically integrative recognition encounter requires equality between the parties. A neutral but *laissez-faire* format for a meeting (like the WSF has) is a start on the road to equality, but it is not enough to place actors representing different struggles on the same footing given that the power dynamics that exist between groups outside of a meeting space are inevitably at work inside it as well. For instance, Western actors typically have greater power to exert influence in dialogic encounters, thanks to the privileging of Western perspectives and ways of knowing, the dominance of the English language and the fact that many significant funding sources are located in the West. Critics of the WSF have pointed out that ‘treating the WSF as if it were an open space free of power relations simply allows for the reproduction of hierarchies that the movement claims to be opposing’ (Conway 2011: 218).⁹ To enable parties

to encounter one another as equals, then, conditions that neutralize intra- and inter-group power differentials must be established. For instance, initiatives that aim to amplify the voices of the marginalized can be put in place, and efforts to encourage movement actors to recognize their own imbrications with systems of domination made.

Another condition worth exploring is the purpose of the meeting venue. Many have criticized the WSF for being 'directionless-ness', arguing that if it wants to contribute to a viable counter-hegemony, it must mediate between agendas, take stands, dictate strategy, distribute resources and organize actions. I am sympathetic to the criticism that by removing itself from politics, the WSF becomes a sink for progressive energies. But, it is worth considering the benefits of at least distancing recognition encounters from decisions about resources and strategy, as the WSF tries to do. An encounter without the pressure of an impending decision 'frees its participating groups to encounter one another, to listen and to learn, and to be transformed in ways they could not be otherwise' (Conway and Singh 2009: 71). The tone of this dialogue, along with the absence of fear of forced cooperation, may allow for a greater 'fluidification' (della Portia 2005: 88) of positions.

In other words, this setting encourages what might be monovalent recognition politics under threat of an imminent decision to transform into a more multivalent recognition politics. Multivalent recognition enables thick difference to be read 'heterogeneously' – as encompassing 'both similarity and dissimilarity that can be reduced neither to coextensive identity nor overlapping otherness' (Young 1993: 130). By highlighting the differences within difference, this politics illuminates points of commonality which can provide the basis for cooperation. One committed to advancing a particular feminist agenda, for instance, may be more willing to lend support to the cause of indigenous rights when he sees these groups as overlapping. Identification and cooperation are then an 'ever present possibility' made more present by design.

Finally, I maintain that the provision of an outlet for criticizing the conditions under which recognition encounters take place and a responsive process by which conditions can be amended are critical to the facilitation of ethical recognition encounters. The conditions that shape recognition encounters must be responsive to the very recognition processes they direct. In the past, '[subaltern groups have made] a claim on the WSF as a whole, agitating for recognition' (Conway 2011: 226); to its credit, the WSF has been responsive to these demands for more active inclusion strategies, and its lead should be followed. The conditions designed to orient recognition encounters in more positive directions must evolve as relationships do.

Conclusion

While some may yearn for the halcyon days of a ‘united Left’ before identity politics tore it apart, it is important to note that these days were in fact only halcyon for some – that unity was won by repression and exclusion. Today’s progressive forces face new and unprecedented global challenges with the knowledge that difference cannot be wished away, ignored or submerged. Iniquitous global dynamics require strong global resistance, and in this chapter, I have argued that recognition politics – within movements, between movements and by progressive forces on the global stage – is essential to a strong resistance.

In this post-Marxist age, recognition politics cannot be understood as a mere phase which prepares the way for an ultimate synthesis. The articulation, negotiation and translation of differences are a continual process. This need to continually recognize need not be seen as hampering progressives though – the diversity that the process of continual recognition brings to light can be a source of collective strength and enrichment (de Sousa Santos 2008: 261). Recognition politics opens people on the Left to new ideas, new strategies and new perspectives. It enables the formation of new and flexible political configurations.

While recognition politics can make diversity into a source of strength, it is also important to note that recognition politics can be conducted in more or less productive ways, with more or less beneficial results for the global struggle against injustice. The conditions under which recognition politics occurs will impact whether the politics is oriented towards a coalition-enabling sharing of horizons or towards a dominative appropriation, whether it encourages the fluidification of identities or the closing of ranks. The analysis above suggests certain conditions that may encourage recognition politics in a more ethical and beneficial direction. It does raise the question, however, of the extent to which substantive recognition encounters can be institutionalized. More consideration of the conditions that encourage ethical integration, and of the structures that might put these conditions in place, would be a boon to the struggle against global injustice.

Notes

- 1 The other’s self-understanding should be acknowledged even when this self-understanding has been deeply influenced by oppressive cultural structures. To continue with the example above, when exposed to the belief that women

are naturally or ideally submissive, at least some women may come to see themselves as best suited to subservient positions and want to be recognized as servants. I advance here a notion of recognition that stresses the importance of process (one takes on others' perceptions about their collective identity), rather than acknowledging a specific objectively emancipatory content (whatever that means). This raises questions about representation – who should be empowered to communicate the group's understanding of its collective identity, who should be involved in the recognition encounter?

- 2 For instance, the US Organization – a black cultural nationalist group that held a great deal of influence in Black Power politics in the United States during the late 1960s and early 1970s – depicted black identity in a very homogenous and static way, as (essentially) African.
- 3 Men held most of the most prominent positions in the Black Power movement, and ideology, tactics and agenda held strongly masculinist overtones (Ogbar 2005). Black feminists criticized not only white feminists for their inattention to black women's struggles, but also male black power activists (Combahee River Collective 1978). The gay rights movement has been dominated in the contemporary period by Western middle-class white gay cis-men, leading to the formulation of a 'gay' agenda that reflects the priorities of this particular subset. The queer movement, comprised of lower-class gay men, gay men of colour, trans-men, in addition to other constituencies, emerged as a criticism of the assertion of the priorities of gay, white, well-off cis-men on them (Armstrong 2002).
- 4 The term 'two-thirds world' is a category based on the quality of life led by peoples and communities in the global South and demonstrates that this category represents a social majority.
- 5 Though some on the Left have tried to do so: '[The conventional Left] applies the same abstract recipe of human rights across the board, thereby attempting to reduce alternative ideologies or symbolic universes to local specificities that leave the universal canon of human rights unscathed' (de Sousa Santos 2008: 252).
- 6 'It would make no sense to fight for the recognition and respect of cultural differences "outside", in society and not to recognize or respect them "at home", inside the organizations and movements' (de Sousa Santos 2008: 261).
- 7 This is Andrew Schaap's (2004: 530) position. He writes: 'Taylor departs from Gadamer in representing the horizon in which undistorted recognition is arrived at as "shared" rather than "fused". Within this shared horizon the constitutive identities of self and other remain as equally valid, but mutually discreet, bases for judgment. The "we" that is constituted by this shared horizon thus serves to preserve the authentic identities that originated the struggle for recognition.'
- 8 What the WSF does ensure is co-presence. But, as Janet Conway points out, 'co-presence in the space, even with amplified visibility and voice does not automatically produce mutual intelligibility... much less genuine dialogue across

cultural, class and colonial divides' (2011: 226). There have, however, been formal efforts to institutionalize dialogues across certain divides. For instance, 'a transnational feminist collaboration hosted an inter-movement dialogue in Dubai featuring two speakers from each of four movements: (1) women's, (2) sexuality rights, (3) labour, and (4) Dalit rights and racial justice movements. Each was asked to speak about how their movement had incorporated class, gender, race and sexuality questions, the dilemmas and problems they had confronted and the strategies they had employed. Activists from other movements were asked to respond. Then the second speaker from the original movement was asked to comment, refute or clarify' (Conway 2011: 229).

- 9 'The WSF has been said to resemble "an international network of liberal-reformist globalisers" working to maintain a dominant vision of global civil society by stifling direct action and promoting unfocused discussion and debate' (Worth and Buckley 2009: 655).