

Theory, Culture & Society

<http://tcs.sagepub.com>

Patterns of Production: Cultural Studies after Hegemony

Nicholas Thoburn

Theory Culture Society 2007; 24; 79

DOI: 10.1177/0263276407075959

The online version of this article can be found at:
<http://tcs.sagepub.com/cgi/content/abstract/24/3/79>

Published by:

 SAGE Publications

<http://www.sagepublications.com>

On behalf of:

The TCS Centre, Nottingham Trent University

Additional services and information for *Theory, Culture & Society* can be found at:

Email Alerts: <http://tcs.sagepub.com/cgi/alerts>

Subscriptions: <http://tcs.sagepub.com/subscriptions>

Reprints: <http://www.sagepub.com/journalsReprints.nav>

Permissions: <http://www.sagepub.com/journalsPermissions.nav>

Citations (this article cites 16 articles hosted on the SAGE Journals Online and HighWire Press platforms):
<http://tcs.sagepub.com/cgi/content/abstract/24/3/79#BIBL>

Patterns of Production

Cultural Studies after Hegemony

Nicholas Thoburn

THE CONCEPT of hegemony had a central place in the crystallization of 1980s cultural studies, drawing together as it did the analysis of the cultural and ideological formations of the Thatcherite or New Right project with the problematic of the popular and governance through the articulation of consent.¹ For Laclau and Mouffe (2001), hegemony was a perspective with which to engage with the realities of a world where the frames of classical Marxism – class, capital, revolution – had become inadequate to the task of understanding the radical openness of the social and the rise of new, non-class-based actors and social movements. In Laclau and Mouffe's (2001: 161–71) argument, there is some suggestion that the concept of hegemony and the formations that it shed light upon were related to changes in processes of commodification but, as has often been noted, it was a severing of the analysis of hegemonic positions (of the right or left) from an apparently deterministic routing through the economic that was the distinctive feature of this approach. It was to be 'democracy' and the 'logic of equivalence' that became the 'new' and 'fundamental' 'mode of institution of the social' (Laclau and Mouffe, 2001: 155) in a fashion that, as Osborne (1991: 211) notes, reinterpreted class struggle as an instance of an expanded and open field of struggle for democratic articulation. This manoeuvre, associated as it was with certain post-structuralist positions, was what marked the newness of the post-Marxist project, but it is on the same axis that its frameworks today feel lacking in purchase, since – as research on fields such as cultural economy, information and communication technologies, and globalization attests – it is clear that neither culture nor politics can be understood without an intimate attention to the way capitalist dynamics and imperatives infuse the social (Dyer-Witheford, 1999: 189).

This article considers how cultural studies is engaging with this situation by suggesting that a set of themes can be seen that approach power

■ *Theory, Culture & Society* 2007 (SAGE, London, Los Angeles, New Delhi, and Singapore), Vol. 24(3): 79–94
DOI: 10.1177/0263276407075959

and culture through an expanded understanding of production, a production considered as the patterning – or mobilization, arrangement and distribution – of rich social, technical, economic and affective relations. Such a perspective does not carry the unifying project that hegemony and democracy gave to an earlier cultural studies, but is instead composed of diverse thematics and problematizations that suggest heterogeneous sites of critical intervention and politicization.² The article starts by highlighting the perspective of production as an alternative articulation of cultural studies, Marxism and post-structuralist theory, and situates contemporary intervention in the power formation that Deleuze calls ‘control society’. It then considers a (by no means exhaustive) number of overlapping thematics through which such an understanding of power and production is being explored: thematics of communication, affect, fear, work, class and war.³

As a model of power, hegemony is also a theory of politics, as it seeks to account for the terrain of struggle for alternative, left hegemonic formations – indeed, it is through the frame of politics that the understanding of power in the concept of hegemony becomes most clear. Freed-up from a theory of economic determination, power here is that which constructs a set of subject positions in a system of equivalences as a hegemonic bloc in a fashion that expels certain subjects and formations from ‘social positivity’ and bars an alternative extension of the democratic chain of equivalents to progressive, minority or socialist subject positions and orientations (Laclau and Mouffe, 2001: 176). A progressive politics of hegemony, routed through the motive forces of new social movements, is in contrast characterized by an ‘extension and deepening’ of such chains of equivalence as an expression of the values of liberty and equality against ‘the system of power which re-defines and limits the operation of those values’ (Laclau and Mouffe, 2001: xv). An important image of the possibilities of such a socialist democratic politics was found for sections of the British left (especially around the influential *Marxism Today*) in the Eurocommunism of the Italian Communist Party (Abse, 1985: 6), then seen, as Laclau and Mouffe (2001: vii) reflect on that period, as ‘a viable political project, going beyond both Leninism and social democracy’.

Yet for a different Marxist break with orthodoxy, Italian *operaismo*, it was precisely Eurocommunism that showed the *limits* of the conception of power found in the formulation of hegemony.⁴ Through its engagement with Marx’s account of the ‘real subsumption’ of labour in capital and its understanding of the proliferation of productive relations across the social – Tronti’s theory of the ‘social factory’ – *operaismo* came to pose a direct challenge to the notion that the social democratic political was an open terrain that could be filled with different, progressive content (Thoburn, 2003). As Bologna (n.d.) argued, the social factory thesis ‘eliminat[ed] the very bases of the concept of hegemony’, for, far from tending to relative autonomy, the political was seen to be increasingly subordinated to capitalist regimes of production: ‘The process of composition of capitalist society as a unified whole . . . no longer tolerates the existence of a political terrain which is

even formally independent of the network of social relations' (Tronti, cited in Bologna n.d.). As such, the function of social democracy in articulating working-class movements in a hegemonic bloc was to naturalize the exploitation of labour in the national democratic 'people' (Negri, in Hardt and Negri, 1994: 67; Tronti, 1973: 115–16).⁵

While not quite what Foucault would call a 'subjugated knowledge', *operaismo* does suggest an alternative articulation or constellation of Marxism and cultural studies to that of neo-Gramscian hegemony, one centred on the analysis of social production. In *operaismo* this works through a language and set of categories – labour, capital, class, the enterprise – that are not immediately those of cultural studies, but, as the work of Berardi, Hardt, Lazzarato, Negri, Virno and others who have worked through *operaismo* shows, this emphasis on social production has developed in a fashion that relates to more familiar figures in cultural studies, notably Deleuze, Foucault and Guattari. This configuration problematizes a common narrative in accounts of the development of cultural studies where a Marxian concern with productive forces is seen to become progressively more stretched until its analytic efficacy loses out to more complex and subtle postmodern or post-structuralist figurations, since here post-structuralist theory maintains an accord with the perspective of production, and without having taken a route through the liberal democratic political. It engages with the same openness and indeterminacy of the social that the hegemony thesis is concerned with, but sees this as integrated with developments in the nature of capitalism.

As Hardt (1995) has argued, from this perspective civil society does indeed appear to open up from a determination by closed institutions into a more polymorphous space, but this openness is precisely the condition of an 'unleashed production' (Massumi, 1998: 56) as the network of productive regimes or micro-powers perfected in modern, disciplinary enclosures are seen to traverse or subtend all aspects of the social in what Hardt calls a 'postcivil' condition. As such, developments like the breakdown of distinct class aggregates, the demise of the eschatological imaginaries of the workers' movement and the opening of the liberal democratic plane of rights are misdiagnosed as marking a movement toward a relatively autonomous political sphere – they are in fact aspects of the changed dynamics of capitalism, a capitalism precisely built upon fluidity, open identities and indeterminacy. From this perspective, as Žižek argues against Laclau, analysis that seeks to bring the question of capital (the marker of a continued socialism in Laclau and Mouffe's radical democracy project) into a set of other problematics – of gender, racialization, the environment, sexuality – as one element of a chain of struggles, does not address the way that capitalist dynamics infuse or traverse these problematics, operating as '*the very background and terrain for the emergence*' of minority subjectivities (Žižek, in Butler et al., 2000: 108).⁶

Deleuze and Guattari's (1988) understanding of the machinic 'assemblage' or 'arrangement' can be taken as something of a foundation for this

orientation around production. For Deleuze and Guattari, all social formations are heterogeneous arrangements of material and immaterial forces – matter, images, desires, languages, technologies – that function, against any material/ideal or base/superstructure dichotomies, in the production of particular consistencies and effects.⁷ The elements of any assemblage are not integrated in a unitary machine but resonate together, maintaining coherence over time to different degrees, and are always caught up in different assemblages of varying registers and scales. Power, and here the relation between the assemblage and Foucault's *dispositif* or apparatus is clear, is immanent to the production of assemblages, to their relations, identities, forms and effects. As Foucault has shown, in modernity social assemblages tend toward the form of 'biopower', the political investment in the production and modulation of life. For Deleuze and Guattari, this production of life is constituted on the social plane of capitalism, considered, following Marx, not as a closed organic system, but as the engineering of assemblages in relations and identities conducive to the maximization of surplus value. It is not so much that capitalism (or, 'the economy') determines all social relations, but that the conditions of social production are set in a fashion that encourages certain formations, and that are socially posed as, or arise from, economic problems (Deleuze, 1994: 186) – the distribution of humans and technical machines so that the worker becomes an appendage of the machine, the organization of taxation and state expenditure such that scarcity is created in the midst of plenty, the differential attribution of citizenship favourable to the segmented exploitation of labour. A casting of the problem of power in terms of social production suggests that there is no single plane of institution of the social, no social hegemony that is open to be filled with different content, but rather a mesh – a 'mechanosphere' – of global social arrangements of production of varying scales that operate in the production of life. As such, the frame of production, routed through an analysis of capitalist dynamics, serves not to reduce an understanding of politics and power to a circumscribed terrain of the economic, but to open it out to the complexity of the social.

An analysis of social production does of course need to be historically situated, and Deleuze and Guattari, like Foucault, have a clear sense of the importance of the way social 'diagrams' or 'abstract machines' condition the forms and possibilities of the social. The post-civil condition of contemporary diffuse social production is what Deleuze calls 'control'. Deleuze (1995) argues that we are witness to the breakdown of the relatively distinct spaces of Foucault's disciplinary society. Discipline is based on the double figure of individual and mass, where each site of disciplinary enclosure both disciplines and maximizes collective energies, and produces individual identities appropriate to that enclosure. Though discipline has a general consistency, each confinement has its own type of mass and individuality; the subject traverses different sites of enclosure, being a subject of the function of worker, prisoner, patient, student and so on, in series. With the emergence of control, there is a movement away from this model of the

ordered dispensation of energy in discrete spaces of enclosure ('moulds') to a more general cybernetic model of social production, with a self-transmuting overlay of disciplinary techniques across social space ('modulation'). Crucially, control thus operates less through the moulding of 'individual' subjects in mass formations (family member, student, worker, national citizen) than in the modulation of 'dividuals' – sub- and trans-individual arrangements of matter and function (forces, genetic codes, affects, capacities, desires) – that are configured, known and modelled as samples, data, propensities, populations and markets.

The self-transforming mesh of control thus moves away from an orientation to particular goals, norms and subjective forms but works in meta-stable fashion where judgement is concerned merely with the stability of the open field. As Massumi (1998: 56) argues, "'Normal" is now free standing', the setting of mutable regulative parameters of the 'visibility and social operativity' of 'every socially recognizable state of being'. Social lines of flight, escape or excess that might have been experienced as politics, transgression or entropy in disciplinary arrangements tend to be caught up and distributed in productive arrangements that are intimately attuned to variations in language, desire, perception, affect, movement: as Guattari (1996: 207) puts it, capitalist general equivalence and valorization operates as the 'integral' of diffuse 'universes of value' through a 'machinic phylum which traverses, bypasses, disperses, miniaturizes, and coopts all human activities'.⁸ Considering these aspects of control as a whole, it should be clear that its variegated mesh circumvents (or functions happily in concert with) the democratic articulation of subjectivities, built as this model is on the representation of minorities-as-subjects in the political sphere. As Clough argues, emphasizing the global span of control:

All around the globe, there is an overriding of representational politics of recognizing individual subjects in terms of communities of belonging by a political economy of biopolitical control where human life is being deterritorialized into statistical populations that become the condition of possibility for the distribution of chances of life and death, health and morbidity, fertility and infertility, happiness and unhappiness, freedom and imprisonment. (2004: 16)

This orientation toward production and control presents a means of exploring the nature of power evident in contemporary cultural and social formations that are marked by a movement away from signification and meaning into communication and affect. Communication lies at the heart of control societies. Rather than the reproduction of meaning in the symbolic, communication today tends toward an *operational* function – it is concerned with the drawing of mutable relations between flows in the production of particular consistencies, effects and forms. In Terranova's (2004b: 57) words, 'communication is an operational problem dominated by the imperatives of channel rather than by a concern with signification, ethical truth,

or rhetorical confrontation'. In this sense, communication is not characterized by sequential, linear relations that transfer meaning from one party to another, but by simultaneity, patterns and pulsions that configure relations directly. Lash (2002: 182) thus argues that the linear, narrative form of information, of legitimating arguments and propositional utterances through which subjectivity and meaning are constructed gives way to the non-linear, byte-size, fragment of information that, as McLuhan writes of television, constructs a mosaic, a 'field of simultaneous impulses'. This is why the icon, the brand, the star become the paradigmatic images of contemporary communication. Icons are 'not specialist fragments . . . but unified and compressed images . . . [that] focus a large region of experience in tiny compass' (McLuhan, cited in Lash, 2002: 184–5). One does not so much read the encoded information, as sense and embody the pattern or the pulsion. Communication, then, is far from immaterial. It is, rather, immanent to the configuration, modelling or transformation of material environments. Such environments are composed of diverse and fluctuating forces and relations that a particular line of communication seeks to regulate or form in a certain way, acting like a "transductive arrow" – as it attempts to determine a direction for future actualization' (Terranova, 2004b: 69).

One can explore the parameters of this productive communication through the problematic of 'affect' and its sub- or pre-signifying mode of bodily activation. Affect is an experience of intensity – of joy, fear, love, sorrow, pity, pride, anger – that changes the state of a body, that has concrete effects on individual and social practice. In Massumi's (2002: 28) influential account, affect is distinguished from emotion in that it refers to a pre-personal experience, whereas emotion is the subjective content, the qualified insertion of affective states 'into semantically and semiotically formed progressions, into narrativizable action–reaction circuits, into function and meaning'. It is precisely the pre-personal, diffuse nature of affect that exists prior to, or subtends, subjective meanings and actions that makes it resistant to analysis. But, as contemporary research on images (Massumi, 2002; Morris, 1998), music (Gilbert, 2004; Grossberg, 1997), brands (Lury, 2004), class (Skeggs, 2004), fear (Massumi, 1993, 2005a; Parisi and Goodman, 2005) has shown, affect is a key dimension of experience in information- and image-based capitalist cultures, and one that most clearly marks the movement of cultural studies away from a conception of culture as signifying practice.

Virno has recently discussed the nature of the affective state of fear with regard to post-Fordist forms of production and power. Virno (2004: 32) distinguishes between the specific and nameable *fear* that is situated within and manageable by the forms of life, communication and governance of delineated communities (the fear of losing one's job is his example), and the 'ubiquitous, unforeseeable, constant' *anguish* that is provoked simply by our being exposed to the world. With the breakdown of the boundary between community or nation and outside – a boundary that Virno ties to the modern, and now passing, politics of a delineated 'people' – that is associated with

globalized relations of production and exchange, and the pervasive sense of openness to the vagaries of the world that has become a prerequisite for successful self-management, this separation comes to an end as particular fear is immediately traversed by a more generalized anguish concerned with the conditions of life as such. This ubiquitous sense of anguish has ramifications in the ways that subjective refuge might be sought through investment in micro or macro sovereignties (a Bin Laden or a Bush), xenophobia or new models of careerism; refuge that is open to social modulation and management in new arrangements of power. It is precisely such motive forces that an approach to power at the level of affect seeks to apprehend. As a diffuse, variegated and modulated affect, fear operates not initially at the level of meaning in constructing community through an ideological set, but through the mobilization and impediment of bodies' movements and intensities, where 'the body [is] the ultimate object of technologies of fear, understood as apparatuses of power aimed at carving into the flesh habits, predispositions, and associated emotions' (Massumi, 1993: viii).

When applied to the current configuration of the 'war on terror' following the attacks on the US in September 2001, the perspective of affect encourages attention to the way a 'saturation of social space by fear' (Massumi, 1993: ix) has different effects on different bodies – from those constrained, reduced, criminalized or subject to everyday violence or preventative incarceration, to those mobilized in a newly invigorated national collective body around a militarized 'defence' of national cultural and economic interests (Ahmed, 2004: 71–80). Meaning or signification does of course have its place here, as Ahmed (2004) shows with regard to the proliferation of the American flag outside US homes as a signifier that mobilizes home in a patriotic defence against terror. But understanding this signification requires an approach that sees the diffuse, sub-signifying and mobilizing affect – 'alertness, grief, resolve, even love' (George Packer, cited in Ahmed, 2004: 74) – that subtends such signs.

Extending this concern Massumi (2005a) has recently used the philosophy of affect to approach the question of the mode of power associated with post-9/11 US culture, as operationalized through the Department of Homeland Security's calibrated and time-sensitive 'terror alert system' and television as 'social event-medium' (as it has emerged following its tremendous power in glueing the populace to its image during the collapse of the Twin Towers). Operating through colour-coded alert (from the green of 'low' to the red of 'severe' terror threat) and devoid of specific information concerning the sources, targets or nature of the threat,⁹ this system works not at the level of meaning or signifying content but by the modulation of nervous, pre-subjective response: the alerts 'addressed not subjects' cognition, but rather bodies' irritability. Perceptual clues were being used to activate direct bodily responsiveness rather than produce a form or transmit definite content' (Massumi, 2005a: 32). At a second, cognitive and emotional moment, the affective state triggered by the alert-system is channelled into situated and varied subjective form and action (this is not

an image of total control or unilinear cause and effect), but what is important is that the exercise of governmental power triggers reaction while bypassing the proof, persuasion or argument of discursive mediation:

Addressing bodies from the dispositional angle of their affectivity, instead of addressing subjects from the positional angle of their ideations, shunts government function away from the mediations of adherence or belief and toward direct *activation*. What else is a state of alert? (Massumi, 2005a: 34)

The operation of power as affective activation introduces uncertainty as to actual responses into its heart, but this is a recognition by government – at a time of differentiated and disaggregated national populations and the often noted disengagement of populations from parliamentary politics – of the complex and chaotic nature of emergent environments. As such, an affective politics of fear as undetermined threat corresponds to a system of open control, where social modulation seeks not direct outcomes (however much these might be desired) but the meta-stable organization of affective moods and atmospheres as unknowable ‘threat’ – ‘an unspecifiable may-come-to-pass’ (Massumi, 1993: 11) – works as a quasi-cause of futurity on the present.¹⁰

Power as the social modulation of affect can also be seen in the field of work, a field that largely lies outside the framework of the hegemony thesis but that – as it subsumes the dynamics and sentiments of culture, artistic practice and play in concert with regulative mechanisms of precariousness and segmentation (Mute, 2005; Thrift, 2005) – is increasingly visible as an object of cultural studies. Staying with the affect of fear for a moment, Virno (1996a: 17) argues that in much contemporary work the fears of insecurity, of losing one’s privileges, of redundancy, of ‘threatening “opportunities”’ that ‘haunt the workday like a mood’ are transformed into operational requirements, ‘into flexibility, adaptability, and a readiness to reconfigure oneself’, such that ‘fear is no longer what drives us into submission *before* work, but the active component of that stable instability that marks the internal articulations of the productive process itself’. This kind of approach to work orients attention away from the social construction of the working subject as interiorized individual and towards an understanding of the production, circulation and modulation of affects at the level of the population, comprised of moments of dividual-type activity.

When one talks of the affective dimension of ‘immaterial labour’ in the sense developed by Lazzarato (1996) and Hardt and Negri (2000), then, this concerns less the expression of subjective resources than the way particular arrangements seek to generate, mobilize or intensify affective states in relations between producers, consumers and objects. Following Lazzarato (1996), it is true to say that workers’ subjectivity and personality have (in certain prominent sectors) become directly productive, but due to the influence of the consumer in constituting the value of labour (through

consumer feedback mechanisms, face-to-face service interactions and just-in-time production cycles built upon responsiveness to consumer demand) and the importance of the employment of extra-work cultural competences, knowledges and networks during the work-process, this is a collective subjectivity being put to work. As Adkins (2005) has argued, the attributes and qualities of labour are not, then, embodied cumulatively in the subjectivity of the worker, but are alienable properties subject to varied mechanisms of coding, patenting, training and circulation in processes of continual qualification and re-qualification. This has ramifications for the understanding of gender, which becomes less, or not only, a mechanism of the hierarchical distribution of sexed subjectivities in the workplace, but is ‘denaturalized and established as [a] mobile, fluid, and indeterminate’ object (Adkins, 2005: 120). As such, gender is configured in terms of qualities – those aesthetic, stylistic, empathetic skills and attributes associated with the corporate values of flexibility and adaptability – that can be ‘scrambled’ and subject to ‘recombination’ in the assorted arrangements of contemporary work (Adkins, 2005: 120).¹¹

A prominent feature of the hegemony thesis is a critique of class as a no longer adequate category as it diminishes in numerical, organizational and conceptual relevance. It is certainly true that the unified model of the Fordist working class that was so central to a certain type of Marxism has passed, but it would be misleading to see the waning of this temporally bounded image of the working class as a sign of the demise of class itself. As Balibar (1991), Tamás (2005) and Žižek (in Butler et al., 2000) emphasize, class, or better class struggle, is not a category of identity but is a perspective for approaching the continuous combat to configure life in the value-form against that which would resist it, and the forms of subjectivity that arise from that struggle. Because Laclau sees class as a politics of identity (‘class struggle is just one species of identity politics’) he takes the decline of the unified image of the Fordist working class (with its attendant and reasonably clearly identified culture) as a sign of class ‘becoming less and less important in the world in which we live’ (Laclau in Butler et al., 2000: 203).¹² The ‘class composition’ approach of Negri and others would suggest that the break-up of the Fordist ‘mass worker’ has generated diversified forms of work (in its assorted precarious, affective, immaterial – and industrial and agricultural – manifestations), but the mechanisms of exploitation are no less constitutive of subjectivity for that. One might, as Žižek suggests, see the contemporary lack of proletarian configurations as a result of the balance of forces in the class struggles of globalizing capitalism, or, as Hardt and Negri (2004) do, seek to understand the class struggle nature of new social and political developments, such as struggles over open-source software or anti-globalization movements. Either way (or both ways – they are not mutually exclusive), the point is not to delineate a unified working-class *identity*, but to see how the dynamics of capital are constituting subjectivities, relations of exploitation, and forces of political resistance and invention.

As one aspect of this it is instructive to see how, in mediatized cultures, class has been developing new contours and effects in the context of the waning of the Fordist class composition. In her research on the classed formations of culture, value and self-hood, Skeggs argues that, ‘if more difficult to pin down, leaking beyond the traditional measures of classification’, ‘class is so insinuated in the intimate making of self and culture that it is even more ubiquitous than previously articulated’ (2005: 968–9). Skeggs (2004) shows how in Britain televisual images, media obsessions, political policy and rhetoric, new technologies of the self and cultural anxieties operate through an affective economy of class that de-values, orders and immobilizes working-class persons, acts as a repellent constitutive limit for middle-class authority and propriety, and legitimizes new models of punitive welfare provision (with the return of the undeserving poor, who are seen as lacking appropriate techniques of self-composition) and intensive policing (the Anti-Social Behaviour Order). The language tends not to be directly of class, but, through the figures of the ‘Essex girl’, ‘teenage mother’, ‘hen party’ and ‘chav’, a certain continuity with older pathologizing images of the working class as excess and waste is plain.¹³ At the same time – based on the differential ability of classed subjects to own and direct cultural capital, and new dynamics in the cultural economy – the traits of working-class subjectivity also exist as freed-up dispositions and attributes in media images, fashions and styles to offer a repertoire of partial, temporary objects of value to be assembled and reassembled in the construction of mobile middle-class identities.

It is clear that no consideration of contemporary power relations would be adequate without a perceptual frame open to the global, a frame that is largely absent from the hegemony thesis, located as it is in the democratic and symbolic at the level of the nation. The question of the global can serve as a conclusion to this article, but it should be borne in mind that this is a horizon that bathes the dynamics and power relations of affect, communication, racialization, work, class – some of which have been discussed here – in its light. It would be difficult to see the contemporary actions of the US state in Afghanistan and Iraq (and the reflux of this on domestic political space) as part of a hegemonic formation – it does not so much lead through consent as dictate, albeit in a manner that requires an arrangement of trans- and international corporate and governmental actors. As Agamben (2005), Butler (2004), Hardt and Negri (2000, 2004), and Mbembe (2003), in their different ways, have argued, we are witness to a bio- and necro-political, global configuration that is invested at once in the multiplication of the dynamic and productive propensities of organic matter, and in the production and distribution of precariousness, pain and death across global social space. War is central. From a relationship of disjunction, peace and war have become, in Alliez and Negri’s (2003: 110) words, ‘two faces of a single membrane’ through a ‘meta-politics in which peace no longer appears as anything other than *the continuation of war by other means*’. Peace, that is, has become the condition or motive force of war, where the ‘state of

exception' is the norm and 'war seems to have seeped back and flooded the entire social field' (Hardt and Negri, 2004: 7).¹⁴ For Agamben (2005: 2, 3), the transformation of the state of exception from a 'provisional and exceptional measure into a technique of government' – emerging, from a long gestation, most clearly with the authorization of 'indefinite detention' and trial by 'military commissions' by the US president on 13 November 2001 – is characterized by the emancipation of military authority from wartime situations into the civil sphere and a suspension of constitutional guarantees that creates the 'bare life' that is found in preventative detention and a certain preventative assassination (seen in Britain with Operation Kratos and the fatal shooting of Juan Charles de Menezes), the practice of 'extraordinary rendition', and the prisons, camps and internment centres from Guantánamo Bay and Abu Ghraib, to Woomera and Yarl's Wood. But the state of exception is not an extra-judicial space – rather, it is inscribed in a law that contains both a normative, juridical, and an anomic, meta-judicial pole, such that:

The normative aspect of law can . . . be obliterated and contradicted with impunity by a governmental violence that – while ignoring international law externally and producing a permanent state of exception internally – nevertheless still claims to be applying the law. (Agamben, 2005: 87)

It is, perhaps, with the recasting of the relationship between law and politico-military and economic crises and interventions that is instituted in the state of exception that the time of hegemony is most revealed to have passed. For here, the constitutive outside of the democratic articulation of subjectivities drives less an open-ended and progressive formation of the political, than, in Agamben's (2005: 86) words, a juridico-political system transforming into killing machine.

Notes

1. If hegemony was a key theoretical tool in cultural studies at this time, the use of the concept took varied forms and alternate frameworks were clearly evident even among central figures such as Meaghan Morris and Paul Gilroy. It did, nevertheless, function as a guiding principle for the political project and approach to the problem of power of a good deal of cultural studies. It is in departure from this principle (as most explicitly set out by Laclau and Mouffe), rather than from the situated research on cultural formations that made use of aspects of hegemony theory, that the argument of this article is developed.
2. Production is presented here as one way into the terrain of contemporary cultural studies, not as a paradigm. As Seigworth (2006) argues, if the experimental and heterogeneous style of cultural studies is to be maintained, it is not delimiting paradigms that it needs.
3. These thematics are presented more as spaces of research that explore the terrain of power and production beyond that which is conceptualized in the hegemony thesis than as point-by-point critique, though at times the departure from hegemony theory is explicitly marked. For a theory of 'post-hegemony' that directly

engages with the parameters of the hegemony thesis – through the decline of ideology, the movement from discourse to affect, the emergence of the multitude against the people, and the supplanting of the problematic of solidarity with organization – see Beasley-Murray (2003).

4. See Wright (2002) for a rich critical analysis of the history and politics of *operaismo*.

5. In the Italian case, an apparently radical left hegemonic articulation not only failed to develop progressive social policy, but actually functioned as a mechanism for the institution of the most pernicious cuts in the standards of living of the Italian working class – the PCI national secretary, Enrico Berlinguer, even went so far as to put forward austerity (for the working class) as a communist moral ideal (Abse, 1985: 27). In any analysis of the function of democracy today, it is of course crucial to consider the way the social democratic ‘people’ operates through the modulation of rights, citizenship and racialization under bio- and necro-political imperatives to constitute patterns of exploitation at a *global* scale (Brown, 2004; Mitropoulos, 2006; Žižek, 2005).

6. This is certainly not to say that cultural studies should not maintain a clear focus on minority formations, but rather that these need to be understood as traversed by and constituted within cultural, political *and* economic forces and imperatives, an approach for which Stuart Hall et al.’s (1978) *Policing the Crisis* is a foundational exemplar. Such an orientation is currently developed in varied ways across cultural studies, but two important areas can be noted: contemporary critique of multiculturalism that considers the simultaneous segmentation of racialized bodies, and the activation of mobile objects and affective states of ethnicity as commodities and styles in the cultural economy (Gilroy, 2004; Hutnyk, 2000); and research that is attentive to the reactionary aspects of the incorporation (or constitution) of minority subjectivities and concerns in national democratic formations and agendas, such as the articulation of apparently queer political thematics and concerns within the discourses of the ‘war on terror’ (Puar, 2005).

7. To be a little more precise, assemblages are tetravalent, comprised of content (states of things, bodies) and expression (regimes of signs, utterances) in reciprocal presupposition, and degrees of territoriality and deterritorialization (Deleuze and Guattari, 1988: 503–5).

8. This free-floating mechanism of capture is for Deleuze associated with the prominence of the ‘business’, a productive arrangement which is conceived less as a demarcated site of activity (unlike the factory model, ‘a business is a soul, a gas’) than as a generalization of administration, training, competition, profiling and marketing across the social (Deleuze, 1995: 179). This image of the business encapsulates the disposition of control toward a certain experimental openness that, as Terranova (2004a: 108) argues, works through setting operational rules and harvesting emergent outputs in a ‘soft’ modulation of autopoietic systems that respond badly to the external imposition of rigid command. Such open control can be seen in actual business practice in the emergence of what Thrift (2005) has called a ‘new ecology of business’, where technologies, cultures and organizational models are oriented around a ‘sensitivity to anomaly’ and values of ‘creativity’ and ‘passion’ that generate new practices of labour, affective investment, embodiment and management strategy in a strange reframing of work through sensibilities derived from artistic practice and play (see also Virno, 1996a, 1996b). It is important to

stress that the business (and control more generally), while subsuming discipline's sites of enclosure, is still only one diagram of governance and accumulation, integrated with those of, say, the debt economy, the camp and war.

9. As Massumi (2005b) argues in a related essay, any information concerning the object or subject of threat that may exist (the suspected toxic substance, terrorist, or Weapons of Mass Destruction) is immediately subsumed in the 'affective fact' of the quality of threat or fear that the event produces and manages. Even if the facts are subsequently shown to have been wrong (in Massumi's example the toxic substance is later shown to be flour), the affective fact associated with the event remains its abiding truth.

10. The quasi-cause of threat is explained by Massumi thus:

Threat is the cause of fear in the sense that it triggers and conditions fear's occurrence, but without the fear it effects, the threat would have no handle on actual existence, remaining purely virtual. The causality is bidirectional, operating immediately on both poles, in a kind of time-slip through which a futurity is made directly present in an effective expression that brings it into the present without it ceasing to be a futurity. (2005a: 36)

This is the mode of governance Massumi names 'command power' and 'pre-emption', not a prevention of the event but its controlled inducement as a foregone conclusion: '[Preemption] makes present the future consequences of an eventuality that may or may not occur, indifferent to its actual occurrence. The event's consequences precede it, as if it had already occurred' (Massumi, 2005b: 8). In accordance with the regime of the affective fact (see note 9), command power thus overrides the process of deliberation ("at no time did the president sit down with his cabinet and discuss" the merits of an invasion of Iraq' [2005b: 5, quoting Bob Woodward]) with 'lightning decision' that bypasses time, that 'elid[es] the present of its own making' (2005b: 6).

11. That this, in keeping with the perspective of control, is a movement away from mechanisms of both the gendered self and the individual itself is marked in the words of one management specialist: 'corporate growth is dependent on "sexual fusion and recombination" involving a recognition and integration of "those parts of ourselves – male/female identities, left/right brains, divergent/convergent thinking – that we have all neglected while striving for a strong sense of "self"' (Adkins, 2005: 120, quoting from Martin, 1994).

12. Laclau is actually presenting a prominent interpretation of class in Marxist research: class as identity rather than, following Rancière's characterization of the two poles of Marxism, class as dissolution (in Blechman et al., 2005: 287). It is however, as Tamás (2005) has recently argued, the latter formulation which is the properly Marxian figure.

13. While functioning in an expanded realm of social production (that includes the formation and distribution of subjective resources, media effects, cultural capitals), these formations of class are of course closely related to the reconfiguration of the labour market and unemployment policy associated with flexibilization and workfare, premised as this is on a renewed emphasis on the work ethic against a pathologized, 'work shy' 'underclass' (Jessop, 2003).

14. The further development of this kind of analysis in cultural studies certainly

requires empirical attention to the varied patterns of the global spatialization and temporality of power and exploitation as well as an understanding of how war folds-back upon the postmodern cultural and political forms and forces that cultural studies has historically taken as its object (Arrighi, 2005; Buchanan, 2006; Harvey, 2003; Massumi, 2005a).

References

- Abse, T. (1985) 'Judging the PCI', *New Left Review* 153: 5–40.
- Adkins, L. (2005) 'The New Economy, Property and Personhood', *Theory, Culture & Society* 22(1): 111–30.
- Agamben, G. (2005) *State of Exception*, trans. K. Attell. London: University of Chicago Press.
- Ahmed, S. (2004) *The Cultural Politics of Emotion*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press.
- Alliez, É. and A. Negri (2003) 'Peace and War', trans. A. Toscano, *Theory, Culture & Society* 20(2): 109–18.
- Arrighi, G. (2005) 'Hegemony Unravelling – I', *New Left Review* 32: 23–80.
- Balibar, É. (1991) 'From Class Struggle to Classless Struggle', trans. C. Turner, in E. Balibar and I. Wallerstein, *Race, Nation, Class: Ambiguous Identities*. London: Verso.
- Beasley-Murray, J. (2003) 'On Posthegemony', *Bulletin of Latin American Research* 22(1): 117–25.
- Blechman, M., A. Chari and R. Hasan (2005) 'Democracy, Dissensus and the Aesthetics of Class Struggle: An Exchange with Jacques Rancière', *Historical Materialism* 13(4): 285–301.
- Bologna, S. (n.d.) 'The Factory–Society Relationship as an Historical Category', trans. E. Emery, unpublished, from the Red Notes Italian Archive.
- Brown, W. (2004) "'The Most We Can Hope For . . .': Human Rights and the Politics of Fatalism", *South Atlantic Quarterly* 103(2/3): 451–63.
- Buchanan, I. (2006) 'Treatise on Militarism', in I. Buchanan and A. Parr (eds) *Deleuze and the Contemporary World*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press.
- Butler, J. (2004) *Precarious Life: The Power of Mourning and Violence*. London: Verso.
- Butler, J., E. Laclau and S. Žižek (2000) *Contingency, Hegemony, Universality: Contemporary Dialogues on the Left*. London: Verso.
- Clough, P.T. (2004) 'Future Matters: Technoscience, Global Politics, and Cultural Criticism', *Social Text* 22(3): 1–23.
- Deleuze, G. (1994) *Difference and Repetition*, trans. P. Patton. New York: Columbia University Press.
- Deleuze, G. (1995) 'Postscript on Control Societies', in *Negotiations: 1972–1990*, trans. M. Joughin. New York: Columbia University Press.
- Deleuze, G. and F. Guattari (1988) *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia, Vol. 2*, trans. B. Massumi. London: Athlone Press.
- Dyer-Witheford, N. (1999) *Cyber-Marx: Cycles and Circuits of Struggle in High-Technology Capitalism*. Urbana: University of Illinois Press.
- Gilbert, J. (2004) 'Signifying Nothing: "Culture", "discourse" and the sociality of

- affect', *Culture Machine* 6. URL (consulted June 2006): http://culturemachine.tees.ac.uk/firm_f1.htm
- Gilroy, P. (2004) *Between Camps: Nations, Cultures and the Allure of Race*, 2nd edn. London: Routledge.
- Grossberg, L. (1997) *Dancing in Spite of Myself: Essays on Popular Culture*. London: Duke University Press.
- Guattari, F. (1996) *Soft Subversions*, ed. S. Lotringer, trans. D.L. Sweet and C. Wiener. New York: Semiotext(e).
- Hall, S., C. Critcher, T. Jefferson, J. Clarke and B. Roberts (1978) *Policing the Crisis: Mugging, the State, and Law and Order*. London: Macmillan.
- Hardt, M. (1995) 'The Withering of Civil Society', *Social Text* 45: 27–44.
- Hardt, M. and A. Negri (1994) *Labor of Dionysus: A Critique of the State-Form*. London: University of Minnesota.
- Hardt, M. and A. Negri (2000) *Empire*. London: Harvard University Press.
- Hardt, M. and A. Negri (2004) *Multitude: War and Democracy in the Age of Empire*. New York: Penguin.
- Harvey, D. (2003) *The New Imperialism*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Hutnyk, J. (2000) *Critique of Exotica: Music, Politics and the Culture Industry*. London: Pluto Press.
- Jessop, B. (2003) 'From Thatcherism to New Labour: Neo-liberalism, Workfarism and Labour Market Regulation', H. Overbeek (ed.) *The Political Economy of European Employment: European Integration and the Transnationalization of the (Un)Employment Question*. London: Routledge.
- Laclau, E. and C. Mouffe (2001) *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy: Towards a Radical Democratic Politics*, 2nd edn. London: Verso.
- Lash, S. (2002) *Critique of Information*. London: Sage.
- Lazzarato, M. (1996) 'Immaterial Labor', trans. P. Colilli and E. Emery, in P. Virno and M. Hardt (eds) *Radical Thought in Italy: A Potential Politics*. London: University of Minnesota Press.
- Lury, C. (2004) *Brands: The Logos of the Global Economy*. London: Routledge.
- Martin, E. (1994) *Flexible Bodies: Tracking Immunity on American Culture from the Days of Polio to the Age of AIDS*. Boston, MA: Beacon Press.
- Massumi, B. (ed.) (1993) *The Politics of Everyday Fear*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.
- Massumi, B. (1998) 'Requiem for Our Prospective Dead (Toward a Participatory Critique of Capitalist Power)', E. Kaufman and K.J. Heller (eds) *Deleuze and Guattari: New Mappings in Politics, Philosophy, and Culture*. London: University of Minnesota Press.
- Massumi, B. (2002) *Parables for the Virtual: Movement, Affect, Sensation*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.
- Massumi, B. (2005a) 'Fear (the Spectrum Said)', *Positions* 13(1): 31–48.
- Massumi, B. (2005b) 'The Future Birth of the Affective Fact', *Conference Proceedings: Genealogies of Biopolitics*. URL (consulted June 2006): <http://www.radicalempiricism.org/biotextes/textes/massumi.pdf>
- Mbembe, A. (2003) 'Necropolitics', trans. L. Meintjes, *Public Culture* 15(1): 11–40.

- Mitropoulos, A. (2006) 'Under the Beach, the Barbed Wire', URL (consulted June 2006): <http://www.metamute.org/en/Under-the-Beach-the-Barbed-Wire>
- Morris, M. (1998) 'Ecstasy and Economics', in *Too Soon Too Late: History in Popular Culture*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press.
- Mute (eds) (2005) *Precarious Reader*, Mute 2(0). URL (consulted June 2006): <http://www.metamute.org/en/Precarious-Reader>
- Osborne, P. (1991) 'Radicalism without Limits?', in P. Osborne (ed.) *Socialism and the Limits of Liberalism*. London: Verso.
- Parisi, L. and S. Goodman (2005) 'The Affect of Nanoterror', *Culture Machine* 7. URL (consulted June 2006): http://culturemachine.tees.ac.uk/frm_f1.htm
- Puar, J.K. (2005) 'Queer Times, Queer Assemblages', *Social Text* 23(3–4): 121–39.
- Seigworth, G.J. (2006) 'Cultural Studies and Deleuze', in G. Hall and C. Birchall (eds) *New Cultural Studies: Adventures in Theory*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press.
- Skeggs, B. (2004) *Class, Self, Culture*. London: Routledge.
- Skeggs, B. (2005) 'The Making of Class and Gender through Visualizing Moral Subject Formation', *Sociology* 39(5): 965–82.
- Tamás, G.M. (2005) 'Telling the Truth about Class', L. Panitch and C. Leys (eds) *Socialist Register 2006*. London: Merlin Press.
- Terranova, T. (2004a) *Network Culture: Politics for the Information Age*. London: Pluto Press.
- Terranova, T. (2004b) 'Communication beyond Meaning: On the Cultural Politics of Information', *Social Text* 80: 51–73.
- Thoburn, N. (2003) *Deleuze, Marx and Politics*. London: Routledge.
- Thrift, N. (2005) *Knowing Capitalism*. London: Sage.
- Tronti, M. (1973) 'Social Capital', *Telos* 17: 98–121.
- Virno, P. (1996a) 'The Ambivalence of Disenchantment', trans. M. Turits in P. Virno and M. Hardt (eds) *Radical Thought in Italy: A Potential Politics*. London: University of Minnesota Press.
- Virno, P. (1996b) 'Virtuosity and Revolution: The Political Theory of Exodus', trans. E. Emery, in P. Virno and M. Hardt (eds) *Radical Thought in Italy: A Potential Politics*. London: University of Minnesota Press.
- Virno, P. (2004) *A Grammar of the Multitude: For an Analysis of Contemporary Forms of Life*, trans. I. Bertolotti, J. Cascaito and A. Casson. New York: Semiotext(e).
- Wright, S. (2002) *Storming Heaven: Class Composition and Struggle in Italian Autonomist Marxism*. London: Pluto Press.
- Žižek, S. (2005) 'Against Human Right', *New Left Review* 34: 115–31.

Nicholas Thoburn is a lecturer in Sociology at the University of Manchester. He has published on political movements and cultural theory, and is the author of *Deleuze, Marx and Politics* (Routledge, 2003). His current research on 'Communist Objects' is concerned with the material values of political media.