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#### Journal Article

How to cite:

Clarke, John (2006). Disorganising the public? *La Rivista delle Politiche Sociali*, 2006(2), pp. 107–126.

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Version: Accepted Manuscript

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## Disorganising the Public?

John Clarke

Published as 'Disorganizzare il pubblico.' in *La Rivista delle Politiche Sociali*, 2006 N. 2, pp. 107-126.

Ideas and institutions of the public have been central to what Charles Taylor has called the 'modern social imaginary' of the West (2004). In this article I explore some contemporary tendencies at work in, and on, ideas and institutions of the public. In doing so, I will develop three linked arguments. First, it remains important to be attentive to the national formations of the public, and their transitions, even while recognising their transnational connectedness. Second, there are divergent tendencies involved in the realignment of the public, even in these neo-liberal times. Third, many of these tendencies are linked by their capacity to disorganise, rather than eliminate or abolish, the public. I will draw out four aspects of the public that are the sites of four varieties of 'disorganisation' that are central to the current transformations of publicness:

1. the dispersed management of public services (the *institutional* disorganisation of the public realm);
2. the reform of work in public services (the *occupational* disorganisation of the public realm);
3. the proliferation of citizenships (the *social* disorganisation of the public realm);
4. the 're-territorialization' of public governance (the *spatial* disorganisation of the public realm).

This list draws heavily on the experience of the UK. It reflects particular ideas about the public and the institutional assemblages in which they have been embodied. For example, the UK developed a 'national' conception of social citizenship that was expressed in conceptions of the public as a collective identity and the conceptualization of citizens as 'members' of the public. Public services were, at least in principle, services to all members of the public. They were predominantly provided by organisations that formed the 'public sector', distinguished from the 'private sector' of commercial organisations (occasionally a 'third sector' of voluntary associations would be recognised). In the UK, then, there were certain homologies between the public as collective identity, public services and the public sector. Such a tidy fit between meanings of the public has not been the case elsewhere. In particular, public services have not necessarily coincided with a public sector. Of course, neither was the UK wholly unique. The place of the public in the modern social imaginary of the West has been built, in part, on being able to see resemblances between ideas of the public and the forms of their institutionalization in policies, processes and practices. So, conceptions of the public have some sort of global reach (if unevenly), and those conceptions have been institutionalised in a variety of forms.

Both the conceptions and their institutional embodiments seem to be distinctively at risk in the current period (Marquand, 2004). But there are real temptations to treat specific

national examples as if they embody general or universal trends. The British case is particularly dangerous in this respect, since the transnational language structures of both policy and academic networks tend to turn British, US and other Anglophone examples into normative stories. Such stories may be inspirational or depressing. They may celebrate the rolling back of sclerotic and inertial public institutions or they may bewail the liberation of capital and market forces from earlier settlements. Either way, attention to the specificity of national formations and the (multiple) struggles to transform them needs to temper such anglocentric forms of story-telling.

### **Tendencies and Transitions: destabilising the public realm.**

This current period is often represented as the global 'roll back' of publicness under pressure from political and economic forces committed to expanding the scope of the market and the power of corporate capital. Recently, this has been predominantly theorised as the spread of neo-liberalism (see, for example, Harvey, 2005 and the discussion in Clarke, 2004a). Harvey offers a characteristic account of the potency – or virulence – of neo-liberalism:

*There has everywhere been an emphatic turn towards neo-liberalism in political-economic practices and thinking since the 1970s. Deregulation, privatization and withdrawal of the state from many areas of social provision have been all too common. Almost all states, from those newly minted after the collapse of the Soviet Union to old-style social democracies and welfare states such as New Zealand and Sweden have embraced, sometimes voluntarily and in other instances in response to coercive pressures, some version of neo-liberal theory and adjusted at least some policies and practices accordingly. (Harvey, 2005, p. 3)*

I want to offer three qualifications to this picture of the spread of neo-liberalism and its destructive implications for the public realm. First, we need to be attentive to the uneven conditions and consequences of neo-liberalism. It has certainly constituted a powerful transnational force, shaping political, economic and social policies and institutions, affecting ways of thinking about the governance of social life and reorganising forms of power. But as I have argued elsewhere, neo-liberalism is not universal (though it has universalising ambitions). Nor does it proceed alone: it is forced into alliances and articulations with other political and cultural discourses in particular regional and national settings. I think this implies thinking 'conjuncturally' about how neo-liberalism 'co-habits' with other projects in specific times and places. It cannot remain 'pure' – either in its formulations or its alliances. Neo-liberalism, as I have argued elsewhere (2004b, chapter 5), rarely 'goes out alone' – rather it is to be found keeping company with very different others in specific regional and national 'indigenizations' as it comes to land in different places. This implies some careful and difficult attention to the *transnational* conditions of the constitution of the national (Clarke and Fink, forthcoming; Gupta, 1998; Sharma and Gupta, 2006).

The second qualification to Harvey's conception of neo-liberalism concerns the problem of 'trend spotting'. Most studies of neo-liberalism have pointed to the processes of setting the market free embedded in processes of 'deregulation, privatization and withdrawal of the state from many areas of social provision' (Harvey, 2005: 3). The

problem is that these are by no means the only tendencies that can be discerned in recent political and governmental changes. A substantial growth of regulation has accompanied deregulation, leading some to discuss the rise of 'the regulatory state' (Baldwin and Cave, 1999; Picciotto, 2002; Power, 1997). Indeed, the growth of regulation appears, in part, to be the result of shifting alignments of the public and private: one of the answers of how to exercise direction, control and supervision over a greater number and diversity of 'private agents'. But in the UK, such regulation has also involved new duties of compliance with minimum wage legislation and the requirements of the Disability Discrimination Act.

Privatization has certainly been a highly visible process, as public enterprises and services are sold off to commercial providers. But there are other processes in play, too. The construction of 'partnership' as a key relationship goes beyond the emblematic 'public-private partnerships' with corporate capital implemented by British governments. Partnerships also form a new, and rather unpredictable, mode of governance in the spaces between states and varieties of public actors (Glendinning, Powell and Rummery, 2002; Larner and Craig, 2005). We might want to distinguish between privatization as a 'sector' process (shifting ownership from public to private organisations) and privatization as a 'sphere' process (shifting responsibility from public authorities to private individuals, often imagined as 'families'). In this second process, we can see both the 'individuation' associated with neo-liberalism (people as active, entrepreneurial, calculating agents) and the familialism of social policy developments in which people are expected to provide and care for 'themselves and their families'. There is a point of uncomfortable intersection here between political economy approaches to neo-liberalism and Foucault-inspired studies of neo- (or advanced) liberal governmentality (see, for example, Brown, 2005; Larner, 2000; Petersen et al, 1999; Rose, 1999; and the discussion in Barnett, 2005).

The view of the 'withdrawal of the state from many areas of social provision' raises other difficulties. Again, there is no doubt that the state has retreated from some areas of social provision. But it has also changed the conditions, relations and desired outcomes of many others. 'Welfare to work' programmes, for example, are not exactly 'withdrawal': rather they involve a redirection of the state's resources and energies in the attempt to make people 'work ready' in ways fit for a 'flexible' labour market (see, for example, Hartmann, 2005; Goode and Maskovsky, 2001). Finally, we might also want to think about the expansion of the state's reach in terms of strategies for 'governing the social'. New demands on the behaviour, orientations or conduct of citizens have been enacted and enforced through expanded, rather than reduced, powers of the state. Some of these have been in sites formerly thought of as social welfare. For example, the welfare to work programmes of the United States have been saturated with requirements about the behaviour of mothers and their children beyond their relationship to work and labour markets (Mink, 1998). At other times, governing the social has involved the extension of police powers and practices. In the UK (and elsewhere) a growing interest in 'community safety' has produced new offences, new forms of surveillance and control, and new forms of agency and agents to address such problems (Hughes and Edwards, 2002). Crawford (forthcoming) argues that we need to be able to theorise the *expansion* of the state in these forms rather than its 'withdrawal'.

My point is that heterogeneous tendencies currently swirl around publicness. They are neither linear nor singular. Nor, I think, can they be read as solely 'neo-liberal'. This is not to deny the importance or the impact of neo-liberalism, but to insist that we need to take its conjunctural cohabitations seriously if we are to understand the contemporary realignments of the public. In doing so, we get to the third of my qualifications of Harvey's view of neo-liberalism: the need to think about transitions as open-ended, rather than as having a prescribed or pre-given political character. To treat the remaking of the public as basically neo-liberal obscures the complex dynamics of their formation and the emergent directions of their development (see, inter alia, Larner and Craig, 2005; Newman, 2005b).

One way of addressing the question of heterogeneity is to consider the impact of different tendencies on ideas and institutions of the public. In what follows, I have tried to think about publicness as institutionalised in four related dimensions. These are:

- as public services;
- as public work;
- as a collective identity; and
- as a spatialised system.

This is one way of trying to avoid overly unified conceptions of the public. It draws on Sharma and Gupta's arguments for an 'anthropology of the state' that is attentive to both diverse and potentially contradictory ideas or representations of the state, and the complex assemblages in which such ideas are enacted or practised (Sharma and Gupta, 2006). What follows is exploratory and may fall short of their ambitions.

### **Serving the public**

I start with *public services* because, in the West, publicness has been consistently invested in the production and distribution of services to the public during the 'Golden Age' of the nation-state (Leibfried and Zürn, 2005). Such services have been largely funded by 'public expenditure' and have involved national systems of public provision (e.g., in schooling, housing, transport, policing and health care). The range of such services, and the organisational forms of their provision, have varied substantially between nations. The public possessed more or less clearly specified rights to access or benefit from such services: as a collectivity, as individual 'members' or as distinctive demographic/administrative sub-groups of the (national) population (the young/old; the sick; the unemployed, etc.). Since the late twentieth century, these public services have been subjected to processes of marketization and privatization. The two processes are not identical, since marketization refers as much to the creation of 'market-like mechanisms' within and between organisations (sometimes called 'quasi-markets', Bartlett, Le Grand and Roberts, 1998) as it does to the creation of markets for services. Despite twenty-five years of market-centred political discourse (choice, competition, consumers, etc), many public services have remained 'free at the point of use'. From the point of view of the public, the outcome looks less like a market than the fragmentation of provision. The proliferation of 'providers', the breaking up of large scale public bodies, and the disjunctures between funders, strategic policy makers, regulators, evaluators

and providers of services all work to create the appearance of disorganised or chaotic structures of provision.

There is a growing tension between the conception of a service (such as the National Health Service) and the organisational units that embody that conception, since each of the units is invited to think of itself as 'a business' in what might best be described as *quasi-competitive* relations with other 'businesses'. This model applies whether or not the organisations are 'businesses' in the formal sense of being incorporated as private, profit-making, interests. The 'organisational imaginary' of managerialism assumes that the 'business' is the basic model of organisation, from which public sector 'monopolies' represented a dangerous deviation (Clarke and Newman, 1997). Such organisations work in competition – though the competition may be for consumers, income, reputation or 'success' (reflected in league tables of 'performance'). Although the primary organising principle is competition, it is tempered by overlapping and sometimes conflicting principles: collaboration with other 'providers'; partnership with other 'agencies'; subjection to central target-setting and scrutiny; and engagement with 'the public' in processes of consultation and participation. These mixed modes of governance also create the possibility of disordered or disorganised coordination of public services (Newman, 2001; 2006). Vertical tensions between centralization and decentralization cross-cut horizontal tensions between competition and collaboration. The public (as a collective identity) occupies multiple and contradictory positions in this field of tensions: sometimes addressed as a common interest (public opinion); sometimes as a set of sub-groups to be consulted (the old, the hard-to-reach, local people); and sometimes as a series of individuated consumers to be satisfied (checked through customer satisfaction surveys). In short, the *organisational destabilisation* of public services has profound implications for who the public are imagined to be, and how they are addressed. I shall return to this point later.

### **Doing 'public' work**

The emergence of the 'business-like organisation' as the norm is linked to substantial transformations of the public service workforce. The mediating element here has been the growing significance of public sector managerialism, demanding the 'right to manage' and inculcating a stronger attachment to organisational missions. This has been a key terrain of tension between the organizational and occupational dimensions of public service professionalism. It has been the focus of many studies of public service managerialism since Pollitt's path-breaking work (1993). It is the site of struggles over the forms and limits of autonomy in the context of increasingly managerialised organisations. The dominant organizational logic has been to seek the subjection of professional autonomy to organizational goals, values and missions. This does not necessarily mean that organizations seek to erode the whole field of autonomous judgement – indeed, most recognise the necessity of some degree of autonomy for the effective delivery of the service. Autonomy in this view is that which is functionally necessary to the organization's goals, rather than being referenced to some external source (professional standards, ethos, regulation, etc). Such external sources look like 'narrow' professional interests that produce 'inflexibilities' into the rationally managed world of the organization. This is the focus of struggles to '*corporatise*' occupational cultures: making them integral to the organization.

A second tendency in the remaking of public service work has been the dynamic of deskilling and reskilling: recomposing the categorisations of work and who is certified to perform specific tasks and roles. These have not just been processes of professional or occupational dilution, even though many services have constructed new 'assistant' occupational groups (from community safety officers in policing to classroom assistants in schools). There have been processes of up-skilling, too. Nursing has become increasingly professionalized, entering into domains of practice previously identified as 'medical' (the province of clinical decision-making by doctors). Meanwhile, in many professions the 'career ladder' has been extended through the expectation that senior professionals will take on corporate managerial roles.

Simultaneously, a lot of public service work has been expelled from public organisations. Forms of privatization, contracting out and 'trustification' have shifted organizations, labour processes and jobs from the state to the private and voluntary sectors. Through such shifts, working conditions, work processes and the composition of jobs have changed – generally in the direction of cheaper and more flexible labour, exemplified in the 'care work' that grew alongside the private and voluntary sectors' expansion of social and health care provision (both domiciliary and residential). Care work also exemplifies some of the emerging trends of the wider labour market – towards casualization, towards feminization, and towards a growing presence of migrant workers (Mayer, 2000; Yeates, 2004). In these processes, sectoral boundaries have been blurred. These may be public services, but they are rarely delivered by public-sector organizations, or by public employees, even though they may be purchased with public funds. They often involve paradoxical combinations of flexibilities (of contract and managerial discretion) and new rigidities, for example in the specification of what care work means in practice, often rendering the personal or emotional labour of care work as 'beyond the contract' (Stone, 2000).

These trends intersect with the processes of recruiting new sources of labour to the business of welfare. In particular, the growth of the voluntary sector has meant a continuing need to discover – and manage – new volunteers. The voluntary sector is at the hub of a number of contradictory processes. The shift towards a 'contract culture' has fuelled organizational growth (for favoured organizations) while restricting or inhibiting the 'advocacy' and 'innovation' roles that were previously central to much of the sector. The pressure to become 'businesslike', or to look like a 'well managed organization', can run counter to the 'voluntary' ethos of the volunteers who may resent attempts to create forms of managerial authority and labour discipline (Newman and Mooney, 2004).

At this point, we also begin to see the blurring of the category of 'work' itself. Welfare work and care work are subject to different processes – becoming commodified and de-commodified as forms of labour, and regulated by different forms of discipline. The growth of the service sector, for example, includes care work of various kinds and involves the commodification of care work (becoming waged labour). But the shift towards voluntary, familial or personal labour marks a trend towards de-commodification of welfare/care work as it is taken out of the cash nexus. The growth in voluntary provision and the shift of caring responsibilities to the private setting do not form part of

what governments count as 'Work', even though they may be vital to the economic calculus of increasing the efficiency of public governance (Lister, 2002).

The new governance of public services, then, throws up significant, if contradictory, changes in what 'work' means in new occupational, organizational and social settings and relationships. These include the transfer of the work of coordination of public services to the boundary between the public and the private spheres in increasingly dispersed systems of provision. Newman draws out this (gendered) dynamic in relation to care services that:

*...are no longer simply provided by the state: assessment and gatekeeping roles may be retained but actual service delivery now takes place through an array of organisations and groups so complex that the boundaries between public and private sector provision are almost impossible to delineate. This fragmentation means that care work has to be composed, managed and coordinated by those in need of care or their carers...*

*In the main, the work of coordination is done by women working in the gendered networks that cut across frontline public service jobs and paid and unpaid care work. As the state retreats into the new governance role of steering, shaping and providing (conditional and often short term funding), while the market picks and chooses where it might be profitable to fill the gaps left by the state's retreat, so new coordination needs arise. This takes place in families, households, communities and friendship networks that organise care and welfare... Women in paid work, then, may have shed some of their direct care responsibilities. Yet the work of organising patchy, imperfect and unreliable networks of care, and filling the gaps when they fail, remains gendered work because of the persistence of gendered inequalities in the distribution of domestic and care work in the home. (2005a: 90).*

This largely invisible work of coordination, Newman argues, is yet another form of 'emotional labour' (2005a: 91; see also Larner and Craig, 2005). It is also a consequence of the organisational and occupational transformations of public services whose effect is a disorganised field of 'provision', characterised by fragmentation, dispersal and unpredictability.

### **Proliferating citizenships:**

The third aspect of publicness concerns the shifting conception of the public as a collective entity that has involved the proliferation of modes of citizenship (see also Clarke, 2005). In the UK, we have seen a concern with *activating* citizens: those making the transition from welfare to work; as active choice making consumers of public services; and as active in the governance and development of their 'local community'. This has been paralleled by an interest in creating *responsible* citizens: planning and taking care of themselves (and their families); exercising 'proper parental control' over children; and conducting themselves in civil (not anti-social) ways in public spaces. There is a constant desire to find *participating citizens* willing to be engaged in some form of dialogue by a variety of public (and quasi-public) authorities. There have been attempts to *teach citizenship* – both in the national curriculum for schools and in the information provided to migrants to enable them to pass 'citizenship tests'. Varieties,

modes and institutional practices of citizenship have proliferated – alongside a decline of involvement in the institutions of formal political action (whether measured by party membership or voting in elections). This proliferation of citizenships is also the site of differentiating governmental practices, directed to their particular ‘target’ groups. So, the law-abiding and hard-working are named and rewarded. They are offered forms of choice and voice, garlanded with varieties of tax-credits, and blessed with ‘relative autonomy’ – the freedom to choose reasonably and responsibly. Others get a ‘hand up, not a hand out’ to help them attain the status of law-abiding, hard-working citizens – increasingly involving ‘personalised’ interventions that aim to build capacity and (re)form character. Still others become the objects of intensified surveillance, criminalisation and incarceration in the drive to extend civility, reduce anti-socialness, and enhance community safety (Garland, 2001; Hughes and Edwards, 2002).

In this remaking of the public as a collective identity (a nation or a people) there are dynamics of homogenisation and heterogeneity. On the one hand political-cultural projects must imagine and try to produce the unity of the Nation. On the other, they must imagine and address the salient differences among the Population. This distinction is taken from Chatterjee who argues that citizenship is bracketed by this double logic:

*In short, the classical idea of popular sovereignty, expressed in the legal-political facts of equal citizenship, produced in the homogeneous construct of the nation, whereas the activities of governmentality required multiple, cross-cutting and shifting classifications of the population as the targets of multiple policies. Here, then, we have the antinomy between the lofty political imaginary of popular sovereignty and the mundane administrative reality of governmentality: it is the antinomy between the homogeneous national and the heterogeneous social. (2003: 36)*

Rather than seeing the classification of the population as reflecting a pre-existing social or demographic ‘character’, we can think of this field of differences as the effect of governmental categorization. Governmental work both constructs its objects – the excluded, the anti-social, the inactive – and the methods by which it intends to work on those differentiated groups. In Chatterjee’s terms, this heterogeneous social is a shifting field composed out of the accommodations between the claims, demands and voices of the governed (as they attempt to assert collective identities and rights) and the classificatory practices of governance apparatuses.

### **Remaking public space**

The final dimension of the public subjected to various transitions is its spatial formation. The public has always been imagined as a national space – reflecting its social composition (the People) and embodied in national institutions of politics, discourse and provision. Ferguson and Gupta (2002) argue that one of the achievements of state construction is the topographic representation of the state as ‘standing above’ society: a hierarchical and integrated block that defines both the unity and the space of the society. The state is then understood as commensurate with national borders. In various ways, different forces have dislocated this nationalised spatial conception. Supranational governmental institutions and practices, together with transnational flows of people, goods and communication, have disrupted the imagined unity of national public spaces

(Larner and Walters, 2004; Hansen and Salskov-Iversen, forthcoming). The spaces of public discourse are no longer only national forums, but public opinion circulates across more 'globalised' landscapes (though not without regional and national formations). In these mediated public spaces, the contested future of the public is displayed, demonstrated and debated. Here we encounter the place of religions in modernity; the rise of cosmopolitan orientations; the emergence of neo-colonialism; or the impacts of globalisation and anti-globalisation.

Within the national territory (though often with transnational conditions), the spaces of the public are being reformed. In the UK, we have seen the partial devolution of political and administrative powers to the 'nation regions', Scotland, Wales and (Northern) Ireland, producing a multi-national nation (Mooney and Williams, forthcoming). There are also attempts to construct new tiers of regional government and experiments in a 'new localism' that devolve some public powers below the level of existing local government to neighbourhoods, communities and parishes. In these processes we can see new spaces and relationships being invented. These spaces are, at least in part, public, but they are organised through new processes and mechanisms (networks, partnerships, or participatory planning). Of course, the national public space always had its internal spatial architecture – its regions, its locales, its cities and towns. In the present, though, we see a proliferation of scales, levels and spaces – built around innovative or hybrid forms of connection and governance (Larner and Craig, 2005; Newman, 2006). These new sites certainly create opportunities for 'participation' of different kinds – popular planning; customer consultation; neighbourhood activism, and the mobilization of different sorts of 'communities' – including the 'business community'. I stress this last point because the construction of corporate capital as a 'community' has been a central discursive device in the US and the UK (at least). Business has acquired the status of favourite or accredited 'partner' in matters of public and social policy, as well as more narrowly defined 'economic' policy (Farnsworth, 2004).

I want to stress the simultaneous fragmentation and proliferation of public spaces and sites – even as some spaces and sites that we have understood as public are closed, privatised or fenced off. In these processes, questions of ownership and belonging (both legal and imaginary relations) become more confused, contested and elusive (Cooper, 1998). Everything from customary rights (of access, of information) through the 'ownership' of resources (land, buildings) to decision-making power (about use or disposal of collective resources) has been put into flux in these changes. One effect is that, as Newman (2005b) has argued, the processes of power, authority and control have become more difficult to track (both politically and analytically).

### **A proliferation of publics?**

This survey of different trends and tendencies has demonstrated something of the complexity of transitions of ideas and institutionalizations of the public (in the UK). But there are questions of how to make sense of this variety of changes. In this conclusion, I want to consider three forms of explanation: the distinction between basic and superficial changes implicit in analyses of neo-liberalism; the conception of dis-organization as a political strategy; and the conjunctural analysis of contradictory tendencies and trajectories.

It is possible to read these changes in terms of the rise and impact of a neo-liberal politics that is fundamentally hostile to ideas and institutions of the public sphere. Neo-liberalism has been profoundly anti-statist and anti-welfarist (Clarke, 2004a). Public institutions – services, infrastructure, media – have represented important targets for politics and policies of neo-liberalism. They offer profit-making possibilities for corporate capital, but also form institutionalised forms of power, voice and ideology that challenge the logics and demands of resurgent capital. Not surprisingly then, their transformation by privatization, marketization and the logics of 'being businesslike' fits the dynamic of neo-liberalism. Other types of change – new forms of regulation, new modes of citizenship, new practices of governance – tend to be seen as superficial or merely rhetorical. They have the effect of concealing the underlying dynamic, performing an ideological function that masks the realignment of economic, political and social power sought in neo-liberalism. I do not think this provides a satisfactory analysis: the distinction between real and epi-phenomenal events or dynamics has long been a problem in Marxist political economy and recurs here in ways that impoverish our understanding of contemporary changes. A view of neo-liberalism as a mode of governmentality rather than a class political project might be more attentive to the diversity of tendencies in play in the remaking of the public (see, for example, Hartmann, 2005; and Larner, 2000).

An alternative analysis of this heterogeneity might also start from questions of class power and strategy but would view the diversity of tendencies as altogether more significant, treating 'dis-organisation' as an active principle, rather than unintended effect. Drawing on Nicos Poulantzas' view of politics as a terrain of organization and dis-organization, this might take the processes of dislocation of ideas and institutions of the public realm as strategic (Poulantzas, 1978: 140-145). To the extent that the public (as a collective imaginary and an assemblage of institutions) embodies a certain (class) political settlement, the dislocation of those institutions creates disorganization within the popular bloc. It fragments and disperses power, making its effects difficult to trace. It proliferates little points of connection while deconstructing larger ones. It de-nationalizes public space and public identities, fragmenting the collective imaginary. It multiplies modes and points of engagement while de-politicising such participation. This view is also reductive – at least in the sense of treating a set of class forces (the recomposed ruling bloc) as a collective and strategic agent. However, it does take the diversity of changes rather more seriously – rather than distinguishing the real from the merely rhetorical. Nevertheless, it is rather less attentive to the conjunctural presence of diverse forces, politics and tendencies than seems necessary to me.

So, I turn in conclusion to a concern with conjunctural analysis – an attention to the diverse, multiple and potentially contradictory forces that make up a specific moment of time and space. Raymond Williams distinguished between 'epochal analysis' that concentrated only on a 'selected and abstracted dominant system' and 'authentic historical analysis' in which it was 'necessary at every point to recognize the complex interrelations between movements and tendencies both within and beyond a specific and effective dominance' (1977:121). We might, in Williams' terms, consider the 'residual': older ideas and institutionalizations of the public that have resisted transformation. Ideas of the public as a collective identity persist, articulated in demands

for services and institutions that are public. This publicness also provides a standpoint for both popular and academic criticism of current changes. Williams suggested that there are 'emergent' possibilities alongside the dominant. We can see new collective identities and solidarities being formed in the remaking of the public – and new ways of working that challenge or exist in uncomfortable relationship with the dominant orientations of neo-liberalism. For, example, 'community' acts as a site for competing politics, identifications, practices and modes of governing.

What then are the relations between the dominant, residual and emergent formations? We might focus on the politics of articulation and 'transformism' (Hall, 2003). The 'dominant' – neo-liberalism – tries to articulate other politics, other discourses and other movements into the logics of neo-liberalism (citizens becoming 'consumers' of public services, Vidler and Clarke, 2005). The dominant aims to direct the conjuncture: assembling the different elements into a definition of the one 'best way' forward, asserting its necessity and inscribing it into the organization of society. But in these practices, the dominant also becomes modified – neo-liberalism is translated and indigenised in distinctive ways by its articulations (Kingfisher, 2002). But it is also possible that neo-liberalism does not successfully articulate other movements or tendencies – it fails to coopt, displace or subordinate them. They persist as 'emergent' possibilities in the conjuncture. The current heterogeneity of forms of remaking the public contain all these dynamics: the dominant logics, their attempts at articulation and cooption, the persistence of the 'residual' and the rise of emergent alternative identities, practices and 'counter-publics' (Warner, 2002; Newman, 2005b). The public has indeed become increasingly disorganised – but remains the focus of competing projects for how it might be reimagined and reassembled.

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