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discourses are meant to stake claims about what a given nation's values and populations should look like, they can also ignite debate, resistance, or counternarratives about what a given nation "is" and how it should be represented. Counterhegemonic narratives invoking the idea of nation are also used to emphasize cultural allegiances that function independently of territory, such as black nationalism or queer nationalism (Berlant and Freeman 1994).

One of the paradoxes of globalization is that it produces the desire for cultural difference, often expressed in national terms. This is true not only for citizens but also for consumers. Consider, for example, the ways in which nations compete for global tourists and investors by developing media campaigns that promote their distinctive national culture and heritage (Aronczyk 2013), or how commodities like wine and watches are marketed to consumers all over the world via national symbols (Bandelj and Wherry 2011). Even if those products don't actually originate in the countries being invoked, national origin is a powerful package to generate symbolic and economic value.

In a highly influential definition, Benedict Anderson (1991) calls the nation an "imagined community." "It is imagined because the members of even the smallest nation will never know most of their fellow-members, meet them, or even hear of them, yet in the minds of each lives the image of their communion" (6).

Seeing the nation as an "imagined" community does not mean that it's all in our heads. More than merely about the imagined dimension of community formation, these works balance subjective or ideational understandings of nation with material factors. Scholars working in this vein observe the nation both in terms of the claims made in its name (cultural, political, economic) and in terms of the ways these claims are institutionalized and stabilized.

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Network
Marina Levina

At its most descriptive, the network is defined as a singular and hierarchical entity, a radio or television network responsible for transmitting messages to the audience. Increasingly, however, the term "network" has become an analytical tool embedded in global culture and information technologies, and their multitudes of connections, messages, and topographies. For instance, there is "the terrorist network," a seemingly concrete entity that proves to be a hard-to-define enemy; "a social network," a mediated forum for sharing personal information and cat videos; and finally "network" as a way of life and a cultural norm, a connectivity in perpetuity (Levina and Kien 2010). This network is decidedly not hierarchical, but is not outside of relations and systems of power (Levina 2014). In fact, these relations are probably the best way to understand what it means to live in an always-mediated network environment made possible by media and information technologies. The network is best understood as a topography that organizes everyday experiences in terms of sociality and relationality.

In his influential work, Manuel Castells attributed the rise of the network society, and, with it, a new system of power relations, to the emergence of global capital and information technology in the mid- to late twentieth century. Therefore the network was not a wholly revolutionary force, created in opposition to existing power structures, but rather an inevitable consequence of the evolution of global capitalism, or

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informationalism (Castells 1996). Informationalism can be best understood as a new mode of capitalist development. Whereas industrialization was oriented toward maximizing output, or production of goods, informationalism is oriented toward technological development, or distribution of information. Capitalism under informationalism has been characterized by flexibility, decentralization, individualization, and diversification. Whereas maximizing the output of an assembly line required a hierarchical and rigid structure to manage the productivity of every element, technological development and the pursuit of information required a decentralized network system (Castells 1996). In terms of topographies, this is a transition from Detroit to Silicon Valley, from a car factory to Google offices, and from organized labor to flexible work. The last topography is an especially important one, as the network is a particularly antiunion force. The network economy necessitates constant input of information, and thus a flexible work environment and flexible hours. This results in the production of "free labor"—labor essential to production and distribution of information in digital economy (Terranova 2004). Because of its flexibility, this labor is highly individualized, and therefore limited in communal spaces that often promote labor organizing and economic change. If we were required to do our online activity and work in a large factory setting, we would long question the value of hours so spent.

Some contend that due to its decentralization the network is inherently democratic. This is an argument often made in Silicon Valley—the idea that social media networks will somehow liberate their users from the hierarchy. For example, during the Arab Spring, protesters in countries where traditional media are heavily policed used Twitter to organize revolutions. In the West, the press often referred to the Arab Spring as the Twitter Revolution, a problematic term in part because it ascribes political changes to the technology, rather than to those who paid for these changes with their blood. In this equivalency, the network is treated as an immaterial entity—a technological enterprise that erases the bleeding bodies. In order to inject blood back into the network, it is essential to understand that the network is not outside of power, but rather that power is what gives the network its body.

As a nonlinear power relation that operates through decentralized relations of sociability, network power functions through regulations of standards as opposed to the enforcement of a sovereign will. This does not mean that network power is democratic—although it can definitely be used for democratic means—but rather that it is a diffuse system of control and regulation operating through a multitude of nodes (Grewal 2008). Therefore control is exercised in the network not through a linear exercise of deterministic power structures, but rather as constitutive and social processes of network power. Network power is always relational, always circumstantial, and always mutable. It encourages relations of sociability in order to facilitate expansion. In other words, the network seeks not to exclude, but rather, through openness, to incorporate other systems into the network. The power of the network lies in its continuous and constant growth and openness to divergence and difference. This does not make the exercises of power benign; indeed network power works through incorporation of dividend elements. Nothing can or should be outside of the network (Galloway and Thacker 2007; Hardt and Negri 2000; Terranova 2004). This understanding of power moves us away from a traditional approach to power as something that can be possessed, and toward an understanding of power as a relational practice that ought to be exercised in order to further the goals of the collective. For example, when we share our personal data online, we do so not because

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we are compelled by someone or something, but rather because by doing so we further some common goal, be it medical research, political activism, or affective circulation of cats and cuteness (J. Dean 2010; Levina 2010). This does not make the practices of sharing inherently democratic inasmuch as they are always guided by principles of global capitalism, informationalism, and free labor described above.

This argument builds on the *actor-network* theory, which contends that power is not a possession, but rather a performance. The amount of power exercised therefore varies according to how many actors enter into the network (Kien 2009; Latour 1984). To move a token—be it an idea or a piece of information—through a network requires a multitude of human and nonhuman actors, each of whom translates the token into his or her own language in order to progress it through the network. To make this concrete, think of how *patriotism* became a powerful token in the United States after 9/11. Various individual and institutional actors, including the news media, advertising, and lawmakers, used patriotism as a justification for car buying, wiretapping, or even war. We can agree or disagree with these contradictory justifications, but it is undisputed that patriotism became a powerful token not simply because one group had the power to make it so, but precisely because so many different actors translated the token to mean so many different things. Patriotism became a totalitarian idea; to criticize any of the justifications provided was to position oneself as the enemy of the very essence of the network that is the United States. Tokens, as pieces of information and ideas, grant the network materiality; it is through tracing them through the network that we can see how power acts on the bodies of its human and nonhuman actors.

This means that information flows in the network are not inconsequential; they alter topologies, relationships, and identities. An identity constituted by information is an identity in flux. It lacks a fixed meaning, and therefore it can always be changed and altered. More importantly, it can be understood only in the context of other information, and therefore, in the network, we can understand ourselves only in terms of relationships to others. To be a part of the network is to embrace a network identity, or network subjectivity, which constructs the self as a source of a constant stream of information to be shared with others. The self becomes a node in the network as it parcels through the cyberspace bits of information. In other words, in the network not only are you your information, but also your perceived value or worth is determined by how much of that information is shared with others. Measured through “likes” on Facebook, political petitions signed on Change.org, or the number of steps logged through Fitbit, bodies in the network are in the constant business of generating and sharing information. Without that information, the network would cease to exist. In this way, we are the network.

Our bodies, however, are much more than the data they generate. Any particular information-based snapshot will be inherently incomplete, and therefore contradictory. We are large; we contain multitudes. The network in its many incarnations attempts to contain the entirety of our politics, our bodies, and our selves. The fact that it fails is the only thing that stops it from becoming an absolutely totalitarian force. Therefore, neither is network a benign description, nor is it necessarily a force for good. It is a topography that parcels out bodies into bits of information easily moved, shared, and modulated. It is total; it contains everything. The most important of which are the cat videos.

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